

Berkeley's Idealism A Reply to My Critics

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Abstract: This essay replies to criticisms of my *Berkeley's Idealism: A Critical Examination* made by Margaret Atherton and Samuel Rickless. These critics both focus primarily on my treatment of Berkeley's arguments in the opening sections of *Principles* Part I and the first of his *Three Dialogues*. They mainly agree that the arguments I attribute to Berkeley are unsound for the reasons that I give, but also argue that I misrepresent his arguments and that his real arguments are better. Here I defend both my interpretations and my assessments of Berkeley's arguments.

There is a saying that it is better to be criticized than to be ignored. By that measure, one of the two main critics of my *Berkeley's Idealism: A Critical Examination*,¹ Samuel Rickless, has done me a great honor, for he has published a highly critical, 25-page review of the book in this journal.² To be sure, his review begins with a compliment ("Dicker has done us all the great service of producing a delightfully clear and analytically precise evaluation of Berkeley's metaphysics and epistemology"), contains over a dozen occurrences of phrases like "Dicker rightly says that" or "Dicker's accurate reconstruction," and ends with a very sincere and generous acknowledgment. Nevertheless, Rickless holds that my book misrepresents most of Berkeley's best arguments and thereby makes the Good Bishop out to be a purveyor of sophomoric errors—"an example of how *not* to do philosophy (e.g., how to fall into confusion and fallacy), rather than a major intellect from whom there is much to learn" (15), so that "if Dicker were right ... the *Principles* and the *Dialogues* could be expunged from the history of western philosophy canon, and those of us already schooled in how to avoid fallacies would be none the worse for it." He concludes, "happily for all serious admirers of Berkeley's work, Dicker is wrong. Despite Dicker's best efforts to stop it in its tracks, Berkeley's argument for idealism lives on" (39).

My other main critic, Margaret Atherton, concludes her review in *Mind* by saying that while "those who want to examine what Dicker is offering, a realist's critique of Berkeley's case for idealism, will find much to interest them in Dicker's book, [t]hose who are interested in the historical Berkeley will be happier to look elsewhere."³ As this appraisal suggests, Atherton, too, believes that my book underrates Berkeley's case for idealism. To a certain extent, her reasons echo Rickless's: she thinks that I misrepresent Berkeley's arguments. But that is not her only complaint: she also objects to my method, and goes so far as to speculate about my motives for adopting that method and to question whether the way I apply it to Berkeley conforms to common courtesy. She writes:

¹ Georges Dicker, *Berkeley's Idealism: A Critical Examination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Hereafter referred to as *BI* with page number.

² "Review of Georges Dicker, *Berkeley's Idealism: A Critical Examination*," *Berkeley Studies* 23 (2012), 15-39.

³ Margaret Atherton, "Review of Georges Dicker, *Berkeley's Idealism: A Critical Examination*," *Mind* 122 (2013), 278-81.

Dicker's method throughout the book is, as he tells us, to work his way systematically through Berkeley's arguments. He takes it that it is appropriate to regard Berkeley as putting forward a series of discrete arguments, each containing an identifiable set of numbered premises, from which a conclusion can be deduced, and assessed with respect to validity. His motives in undertaking such a project are also quite straightforward. Dicker, as he has explained unequivocally in an earlier paper, is not a Berkeleian. In fact, as the title of that paper proclaims, he is "Anti-Berkeley" [*British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16 (2008), 335–50]. His motive therefore in working in this way through Berkeley's arguments is to reassure himself that there is nothing in them that ought to require him to give up his stance as an Anti-Berkeleian. There is nothing the matter, of course, with setting about to refute arguments found to be uncongenial. . . . But there are pitfalls the refuter must seek to avoid. First of all, common courtesy requires that the premises identified in the argument be well-understood and genuinely attributable to the author in question, and this is not always an easy matter. . . . Secondly, if your goal is to reassure yourself that you do not have to accept Berkeley's conclusions, then to achieve your goal it must be the case that the arguments you refute are the same as the ones Berkeley advances. This task too is not as easy as it might seem, for Berkeley did not write in explicit, separable arguments, but in much longer argument arcs. Isolating different arguments is the joint product of author and critic, and the critic must be sure that there are not additional premises and that the claim identified as the alleged conclusion is the one the author wished to draw. And finally, you have to make sure that you have correctly understood the thrust of a particular argument, where it fits into an overall project. I would not want to underplay the difficulties these pitfalls present, nevertheless I am afraid Dicker falls into them, almost at every turn. It would require a book as long as Dicker's to deal with all of them, but I will single out a few [three] examples. (279)

Before addressing Atherton's examples and Rickless's specific criticisms, I need to make some prefatory general remarks about each of their critiques. I start with Atherton. Her speculation concerning my motive for writing the book is mistaken. My purpose in working through Berkeley's arguments for idealism was to present, in a unified, coordinated, and reasonably complete way, the totality of my reasons for rejecting his idealism, many of which were scattered in articles published over three decades. Most of these reasons occurred to me long before I published "Anti-Berkeley," and in fact, as noted in the acknowledgments section of the book and in the footnotes to "Anti-Berkeley" itself, I published several of them in article form in the 1980's. My purpose for incorporating them in the book was not to reassure myself that my previously-developed and long-held views are right, but to offer to my readers a full-scale, unified, and updated defense of those views, enriched by some recent thoughts on Berkeley's positive metaphysics. "Anti-Berkeley," like my other papers on Berkeley, only presents a part of a package that I regard as an organic whole. As for Atherton's suggestion that Berkeley's arguments ought not to be treated in the way I do, I can only say that I certainly believe that it is appropriate to distinguish, to regiment, and to assess Berkeley's arguments for

validity and soundness, just as those of a Descartes or a Hume or a Kant. I hasten to add that my book also takes pains to show how Berkeley's arguments dovetail with each other, for example how the arguments of *Principles* sections 1-7 are buttressed by those in the *Dialogues* (including how the argument in section 5 of the *Principles* is buttressed by the generally ignored argument from the principle of perceptual immediacy in the *Dialogues*). The fact is that Berkeley, not unlike Descartes or Hume or Kant, wrote both in "explicit, separable arguments" and in "much longer argument arcs," and I hope that nothing in my book belies that fact. As for the question of whether Atherton has given any evidence for her sweeping claim that "at almost every turn" I fall into the pitfalls of misidentifying, or misunderstanding, or falsely attributing to Berkeley, any number of premises, and of failing to "correctly understand the thrust of a particular argument [or] where it fits in an overall project," I will try to show in what follows that the case is simply not there.

I turn to my prefatory comment about Rickless. As I indicate in the Preface and Introduction of *BI*, I do not believe that Berkeley's errors are sophomoric or obvious, and I think that there is a great deal to be learned, both historically and philosophically, by seeing why they are errors and, perhaps especially, how they can be corrected. To cite only a few examples, my positive view of the nature of secondary qualities, as having both a dispositional aspect and a manifest aspect, stems largely from reflecting on Berkeley's attempt in *DHP 1* to deny such a distinction, as does my view of the need to distinguish, in philosophizing about perception, between different senses of immediate perception. My view that there is a sense, due to the need to recognize the manifest aspect of secondary qualities, in which their *esse* really is *percipi*, is one that I was led to by Berkeley's argument in section 5 of *PHK*, and which I suspect many philosophers would see as overly sympathetic to Berkeley. I see Berkeley's epistemological arguments against Locke in *PHK* 18-20 as very powerful; likewise for his regress argument against substance-*substratum* in *DHP 1*. I think that in his defense of a substantial self in *DHP 3*, Berkeley anticipates important points made by Kant about the unity of consciousness. Rickless may not agree with all of these views or assessments, but the point is that whether they are right or wrong, they show that I certainly do not see Berkeley as the lightweight that Rickless accuses me of attacking.

I now turn to these critics' specific objections.⁴ I shall take these up in an order that corresponds to the episodes in Berkeley's *PHK* and *DHP 1* with which they are chiefly concerned. Thus, the next section will address the early sections of *PHK* Part I; section 3, the opening moves of *DHP 1*; section 4, the pleasure-pain argument; sections 5 and 6, the arguments from perceptual relativity; section 7, arguments concerning the Likeness Principle and material substance. Since Atherton and Rickless do not both address all of these topics, I shall go back and forth between these two critics, and some sections will

⁴ *BI* was also reviewed by Benjamin Hill in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* on 2011.09.29 (<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/26532-berkeley-s-idealism-a-critical-examination-2/>). Although Hill has some reservations, on the whole his review is so positive and generous that it would be churlish to respond to them here.

be responses to only one of them. Except for the dovetailing sections 5 and 6, the sections are quite independent and can be read in any order.⁵

1. The Early Sections of the *Principles of Human Knowledge, Part I*

Part I of *PHK* begins with a battery of intertwined arguments that purport to prove, in just seven brief sections, that “there is not any other substance than spirit, or that which perceives” (*PHK* 7). The fourth chapter of *BI*, which is preceded by three chapters on Locke, reconstructs each of those arguments and offers a section-by-section critique of them. While Atherton does not comment on that chapter (except for characterizing it as “brief”), Rickless’s review begins by focusing closely on its treatment of the arguments in just the first four sections. He accepts my “accurate reconstruction” of the argument in section 4, where Berkeley writes

What are the aforementioned objects [“houses, mountains, rivers, in a word all sensible objects”] but the things we perceive by sense? And what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations? And is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these or any combination of them should exist unperceived? (*PHK* 4)

Rickless reproduces (with a harmless modification) my formulation of Berkeley’s argument this way:

- (1) Sensible objects are what we perceive by sense.
 - (2) What we perceive by sense are ideas.
 - (3) Ideas cannot exist unperceived.
- So, (4) Sensible objects cannot exist unperceived.

Rickless then pertinently asks, “now how should we evaluate the argument of *PHK* 4? In particular, would the argument persuade Berkeley’s materialist, anti-idealist predecessors and contemporaries, such as Descartes and Locke?” He answers:

Dicker rightly notes that it would not, for Cartesians and Lockeans would surely insist that many of the things that we perceive by sense (including tables and chairs) are not ideas, but rather material substances whose existence does not depend on being perceived (p. 72). So Berkeley needs some sort of argument to establish (2), an argument based on premises that do not beg the question against his opponents. As Dicker also rightly notes, Berkeley provides such an argument in the First Dialogue (*DHP* 1). (20)

⁵ Versions of sections 5 and 6 were presented at the International Berkeley Conference held in Krakow in August 2013, and at the Berkeley Society session held during the 2013 Central Division APA meeting in New Orleans. The discussion in sections 4 and 5 also draws on my “Reply to Margaret Atherton and Samuel Rickless” delivered at an author-meets-critics session at the 2012 Central Division APA meeting in Chicago.

So far, there is complete agreement between Rickless and me: I say very explicitly that Berkeley needs to argue for (2), and one of the points I emphasize is that Berkeley provides no support at all for (2) in *PHK*, but argues at length for it in *DHP 1*.

In light of this key point of agreement, I see most of the objections that Rickless raises against my treatment of the early sections of *PHK* as debater's points that do not affect the real issues at stake. His first objection is that I misrepresent the argument that Berkeley gives in *PHK 1* and 3, whose premises Berkeley states this way:

[premise 1] It is evident to any one who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly ideas formed by help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways. (*PHK 1*)

[premise 2] That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind, is what every body will allow. And it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose) cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. (*PHK 3*)

I paraphrase those premises as:

- (1) All the objects of human knowledge are either (a) ideas perceived by the senses or (b) ideas perceived introspectively or (c) complex ideas formed by operating on (a) and (b).
- (2) No idea or collection of ideas, whether of types (a), (b), or (c), can exist unperceived by a mind.

I then say that although Berkeley does not state the conclusion that follows from (1) and (2) in matching language, "having prominently stated (1) and (2) as the topic sentences of sections 1 and 2, and taken pains to elaborate on each of these propositions, Berkeley must surely have meant to employ them as premises supporting what follows so obviously from them," namely

- (3) No objects of human knowledge can exist unperceived by a mind

And I call the argument from (1) and (2) to (3) Berkeley's "Opening Syllogism" (*BI 71*).

Against this account of *PHK 1* and 3, Rickless objects that

Now surely this is an overstatement of Berkeley's position. Berkeley himself would deny (1), because he thinks that minds are objects of human knowledge Given that Berkeley does not hold that minds are ideas, it follows that he rejects (1). But *PHK 1* makes it quite clear that Berkeley wants to secure, not (1), but rather (1*):

(1*) All sensible objects are ideas or collections of ideas. (16)

This objection seems to me to be a quibble that ignores the context of the opening sections of *PHK*. As even section 2 (in which Berkeley first talks about the mind) implies, (3) of course does not express Berkeley's *final* position; to do that, it would have to be qualified to say, "no objects of human knowledge, *except minds*, can exist unperceived by a mind," and the same qualification would have to be built into (1): "All the objects of human knowledge, *except minds*, are either (a) ideas perceived by the senses or (b) ideas perceived introspectively or (c) complex ideas formed by operating on (a) and (b)." Given that minds and sensible things are the only items in Berkeley's ontology, (1) would then indeed reduce to (1*). But to say flatly that Berkeley "rejects (1)" ignores the heuristic nature of his opening syllogism, which is designed to echo Locke's language, and to say that (3) is "an overstatement of Berkeley's position" wrongly suggests that (3) is supposed to capture his final position with full accuracy.

Rickless's next point concerns my comments on premise (2). He writes:

There is no doubt that Berkeley endorses (2) in *PHK* 3. But Dicker thinks that Berkeley provides an *argument* in support of (2). Dicker calls this argument "*the argument from the meaning of 'exist'*", and he finds it in a famous passage in *PHK* 3 where Berkeley says that "the table I write on, I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it" (p. 70). But this is a mistake, I think. Berkeley clearly takes premise (2) to be self-evident: it is *obvious* to him that no idea or collection of ideas can exist unperceived. What is *not* obvious (at least initially) is that no *sensible object* can exist unperceived. It is *this* proposition—call it (3*)—that Berkeley uses the table passage to establish. (16)

This criticism is based on a misunderstanding. As I make clear in the book, *Berkeley* presents his argument from the meaning of "exist" *as if* it could support premise (2), for he asserts that premise and then immediately backs it up by saying than an "intuitive knowledge" may be obtained of *it* by reflecting on the meaning of the word "exist" when applied to sensible things. But then I write:

Proposition (2) is obvious without *any* reflection on the meaning of the word "exist." No considerations about the meaning of "exist" are needed or even relevant to verify or justify the claim that an *idea* cannot exist unperceived, for as Berkeley says in the last sentence of section 2, "the existence of an idea consists in being perceived." Even if "what is meant by the word *exist* when applied to sensible things" had nothing at all to do with perception, Berkeley would still hold that necessarily no idea can exist unperceived. So the real function of the argument from the meaning of "exist" must be a different one from that of supporting (2). (*BI* 70)

Subsequently, I identify that function in *exactly the same way* as Rickless does—as that of providing direct support for the thesis that sensible things cannot exist unperceived (*BI*

73-74). The upshot is that when Rickless says that “Dicker thinks that Berkeley provides an *argument* in support of (2),” he is criticizing me for going along with the very mistake that I meant to be exposing—that of supposing that the “table” passage *could* serve as an argument for (2), when in fact it is irrelevant to (2) and Berkeley regards (2) as self-evident anyway! What I say in the book is that *Berkeley says* that the “table” passage supports (2), but I then strongly deny that the passage *does* provide any support for (2). The truth is that Rickless and I are in complete agreement about the true function of the “table” passage.

Although one would hardly know it from even a fairly careful reading of Rickless’s discussion, I think that we also agree about whether the “table” passage provides any real support for Berkeley’s idealism. The key passage, once more, is just this sentence: “the table I write on, I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it.” My analysis of it goes this way:

[Berkeley] is asking, in effect, “what does it mean to say that a sensible object, such as the table in my study, now exists?” The first part of his ... sentence answers that it means, “I perceive (“see and feel”) it.” But he knows that I would still say that it now exists even if I did not now perceive it. So the second part of the sentence adds: “and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit does perceive it.” In the sentence as a whole, then, Berkeley is saying that “sensible thing X exists” can only mean:

- (a) I perceive X,
- or
- (b) under appropriate circumstances, I would perceive X,
- or
- (c) some other mind perceives X.

His thought is that (a)-(c) exhaust the meaning of “sensible thing X exists,” and that this fact supports his view that sensible things cannot exist unperceived. (BI 73)

I then object that:

Suppose then that we grant, at least for the sake of the argument, that (a)-(c) exhaust the meaning of “sensible thing X exists;” does this really support *esse is percipi*? No. For the proposition that (a) or (b) or (c) is a disjunction, which is true even if only one of its disjuncts is true. So, if only (b) is true, then (a) or (b) or (c) is true, and so “sensible thing X exists” is true, since we are assuming that it means the same as (a) or (b) or (c). But (b) does not say that X is actually perceived; (b) only says that X is *perceivable*. In order for Berkeley’s argument ... to support his idealism, the meaning of “sensible thing X exists” would have to be exhausted by just (a) and (c). A slightly more formal way to put what I am saying is this. Berkeley’s argument could be formulated this way:

For any sensible thing *x*, *x* exists if and only if (a) I perceive *x*, or (b) under appropriate circumstances I would perceive *x*, or (c) some other mind perceives *x*.

∴ For any sensible thing *x*, *x* exists only if (a) I perceive *x* or (c) some other mind perceives *x*.

.... [T]he argument ... is invalid, as can be seen by assigning the truth-value *true* to “*x* exists” and to (b) and the truth-value *false* to (a) and (c). (BI 74)

On these grounds, I conclude that the argument from the meaning of “exist” provides no support for the thesis that the *esse* of sensible things is *percipi*, and that the argument is simply a “nonstarter” (BI 74).

Rickless makes a flurry of points against this analysis. First, he objects that “no human in her right mind would think that [‘sensible thing X exists’] is identical to the proposition that [(a) or (b) or (c)].” This ignores the point that the phenomenologists, who may have been wrong, but were presumably not out of their minds, thought that [“sensible thing X exists” is identical with only (b), or perhaps with [(a) or (b)].

Second, Rickless objects to my substitution of “would perceive” for Berkeley’s “might perceive.” But there are two reasons for this substitution. First, while it makes at least some sense to say that “the table in my room exists” means “under appropriate circumstances, I would perceive a table,” it makes no sense to say that it means “under appropriate circumstances, I might (or might not!) perceive a table.” Second, when Berkeley returns to the same line of thought later in the *PHK*, he himself resorts to the subjunctive conditional “would/should” locution:

The question whether the earth moves or no, amounts in reality to no more than this, to wit, whether we have reason to conclude, from what has been observed by astronomers, that if we were placed in such and such circumstances, and such or such a position and distance both from the earth and sun, we *should* perceive the former to move among the choir of the planets, and appearing in all respects like one of them. (*PHK* 58; my emphasis)

We may, from the experience we have had of the train and succession of ideas in our minds, often make ... sure well-grounded predictions concerning the ideas we shall be affected with pursuant to a great train of actions, and be enabled to pass a right judgment of what *would* have appeared to us, in case we were placed in circumstances very different from those we are in at present. Herein consists the knowledge of nature (*PHK* 59; my emphasis)

There is every reason, then, to read the “table” passage in a manner parallel to these two phenomenological-sounding passages. As I have already said, only so does the passage make sense internally; furthermore, externally it coheres with the passages just cited, thereby attributing a unity to Berkeley’s thought that Rickless’s reading erases.

Third, Rickless says that in the “table” passage, Berkeley is not saying that “sensible thing X exists” means the same as the disjunction [(a) or (b) or (c)], but only that on some occasions “sensible thing X exists” is used to mean (a), on other occasions it is used to mean (b), and on still other occasions it is used to mean (c). This seems to me to be a

distinction without a difference. But be that as it may, the important point here is one on which Rickless and I agree, namely that Berkeley thinks that his account of the meaning(s) of “sensible thing X exists” supports his thesis that the *esse* of sensible things is *percipi*.

Fourth, Rickless tries to show that even I *agree* with Berkeley that the “table” passage does ultimately support that thesis. His discussion of this point is complicated and defies summarization, so I will quote it at some length:

As Dicker himself recognizes (albeit around 200 pages later), Berkeley actually *argues* that the perceivability of sensible things entails that they can’t exist unperceived! Dicker points to the following passage:

HYLAS: Yes, I grant the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, but not in being perceived.

PHILONOUS: And what is perceivable but an idea? And can an idea exist without being actually perceived? These are points long since agreed between us. (W2: 234; p. 271)

Dicker’s reconstruction of the argument in this passage (simplifying slightly) is this:

- (1) For something to be perceivable, it must exist.
- So, (2) For any idea to be perceivable, it must exist. (from [1])
- (3) For any idea to exist, it must be actually perceived.
- So, (4) For any idea to be perceivable, it must be actually perceived. (from [2] and [3])
- (5) Sensible things are identical with ideas.
- So, (6) For a sensible thing to be perceivable, it must be actually perceived. (from [4] and [5], by Leibniz’s Law)

I think this reconstruction is erroneous. Philonous does not state either (1) or (2). What he says instead is this:

- (1#) Anything that is perceivable is an idea.

And the argument Philonous runs is a *reductio* of Hylas’s claim that the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, not in being perceived. The reasoning runs as follows:

(AR) The existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, not in being perceived. [assumption for *reductio*]

- (1#) Anything that is perceivable is an idea.
- So, (2#) If the existence of Y consists in being perceivable, then Y is an idea. (from [1#])
- So, (3#) Sensible things are ideas. (from [AR] and [2#])
- (4#) The existence of an idea consists in being perceived.
- So, (5#) The existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceived. (from [3#] and [4#])
- So, (6#) It is not the case that the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceived. (from [AR])

Given that (5#) and (6#) constitute a contradiction, Berkeley infers from the truth of (1#) and (4#) that the assumption for *reductio* is false.

Notice now that (1#) and (4#) together entail:

(7#) The existence of anything perceivable consists in being perceived.

And suppose that sometimes, when I say that table T exists, I mean that T is perceivable. It follows from (7#), then, that if what I say is true, the existence of T consists in being perceived, and thus T cannot exist unperceived.

Berkeley's argument in the "table" passage for the claim that the existence of sensible objects consists in being perceived, when appropriately supplemented, is therefore far from a non-starter. But it does rely on two claims: (i) that perceivable things (and so, sensible things) are ideas, and (ii) that ideas cannot exist unperceived. (18-19)

I have three points to make in response. First and foremost, notice that Rickless implicitly concedes my main point about the "table" passage, albeit without seeming to recognize that he is conceding it. This point is that the passage provides no *independent* support for *esse is percipi*. That is just as true on his reading of the *Dialogues* exchange as on mine, because his reading, just like mine, and just as he says, makes Berkeley "rely on [the claim ... that] perceivable things (and so, sensible things) are ideas." But this is precisely the premise that anyone who does not already accept *esse is percipi* will reject! On the other hand, anyone who accepts that premise will not need the argument from the meaning of "exists" to be convinced that sensible things exist only in the mind. That is why I call the argument from the meaning of "exists" a "non-starter," and Rickless in effect concedes the point when he writes, "the upshot is that *the argument from the meaning of "exist" ... depends on (and so ultimately reduces to) the opening syllogism*" (19).

Second, the above exchange from the *Dialogues* certainly does not look like a *reductio*, and casting it that way would be quite unnecessary for the purpose of establishing that what is perceivable must also be perceived. For suppose we omit Rickless's assumption for *reductio*, (AR), and use only his premises, like this:

(1#) Anything that is perceivable is an idea.

(4#) The existence of an idea consists in being perceived.

Then, Rickless says, we can derive from (1#) and (4#) that

(7#) The existence of anything perceivable consists in being perceived.

So by Rickless's lights (1#) and (4#) would already show, if they were both true, that Hylas was wrong to say that "the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, but not in being perceived." Further, the continuation of Rickless's reasoning could be added without the *reductio* trappings, as follows:

- (8#) “T exists” means “T is perceivable.”
- (9#) Table T exists.
- (10#) The existence of T consists in being perceived. [from (7#) and (9#)]
- (11#) T cannot exist unperceived. [from (8#) and (10#)]

The upshot is that Rickless has given no good reason to think that Berkeley is using a *reductio* argument.

Third, in calling my reconstruction of Philonous’s reasoning “erroneous,” Rickless ignores its context. This comes out in the way that he takes my (1)—“For something to be perceivable, it must exist”—as if it had come out of thin air, and says that “Philonous does not state either (1) or (2).” But although Philonous does not state these, he assumes them. For when he says, “And what is perceivable but an idea? And can idea exist without being perceived?” he is assuming that just because an idea is perceivable, it has to exist, which is precisely what (2) *says*, and is surely based on assuming (1).

To see how those assumptions underlie Philonous’s reasoning, Rickless needed to recognize that in the episode of the book that he was discussing, I was trying to fault a criticism that Jonathan Bennett makes of that reasoning. Let me explain. Bennett notes that in the last-quoted passage Hylas poses the following equivalence:

- (E) ST (a given sensible thing) exists *iff* an idea of kind K is perceivable and that Philonous takes this equivalence to mean
- (E1) ST exists *iff* there is a K idea such that if circumstances C obtained, then it would be perceived.

Now on this interpretation of (E), when one says that ST exists, one is thereby saying that a K idea actually exists, which must then of course be perceived. So on the (E1) reading, the phenomenalist-sounding (E) leads back to idealism, which is why Bennett calls this episode an “anti-phenomenalist skirmish.”⁶ But, Bennett claims, Philonous is wrong to take (E) to mean (E1), because “the natural way to take” (E) is not (E1) but rather

- (E2) ST exists *iff* if circumstances C obtained, then a K idea would be perceived.⁷

On that reading of (E), when one says that ST exists, one is not thereby saying that a K idea currently exists, or, therefore, that some mind is currently perceiving a K idea. Therefore, Bennett concludes, Philonous is wrong to think that (what we now call) phenomenism leads to idealism.

In the book, I side with Berkeley and against Bennett on this issue. For, I claim that although Bennett is right to distinguish, with his usual perspicacity, between (E1) and (E2), he is wrong to think that the natural way to understand (E) is (E2); instead, (E1)

⁶ Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 150.

⁷ Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 195-96.

is the natural way to understand it. In saying this, I follow A. C. Grayling, who rightly says that normally, when people say that X is perceivable, they mean to imply that X exists. Grayling puts it this way:

The point is intuitive. If it is possible for S to see a desk, say, then S must be sighted, there must be a desk available, and things must be such that S has the means to position himself relative to the desk so that, for example, no opaque structures block his line of vision . . . and so on. . . . One cannot say that it is possible for S to see a desk if S is blind, or has no means of getting at a desk, or if there are no desks. Accordingly what makes it *possible* for S to see a desk is the fact that the required conditions are fulfilled, that is, are *actual*: he actually has sight, actually has the means to position himself appropriately relative to the desk, *and there actually is a desk* [my italics after the comma]. . . . The explanation of what makes it possible for S to perceive the desk is therefore a set of actually fulfilled conditions, *one of which is there being a desk* [my italics].⁸

It is this point that lies behind the assumption, (1), which I make explicit in my reconstruction of Philonous's reply to Hylas in the "anti-phenomenalist skirmish." I also point out that the equation of (E) with (E1) is very natural, whereas the equation of (E) with (E2) represents a subtle philosophical innovation that was proposed, only after Berkeley's time, by J. S. Mill, in his talk of permanent possibilities of sensation. Thus, my account explains why Berkeley cannot, without significant anachronism, be criticized for failing to anticipate Bennett's criticism of his anti-phenomenalist skirmish. The explanation is that Mill's concept of a merely possible sensation, as one that does not actually exist but would exist under certain circumstances, that is, as one that is perceivable but does not exist, was not yet invented and never occurred to Berkeley. By the same token, the flaw in Bennett's treatment is that it wrongly (and anachronistically) reads Mill's innovation as if it reflected the ordinary way to think about perceivability.

By contrast, Rickless's reconstruction of Philonous's reasoning does not help us to understand why Bennett's objection to Philonous's anti-phenomenalist skirmish is flawed. For, unlike the natural and straightforward move from "idea I is perceivable" to "idea I exists" and then to "idea I is perceived," on which my reconstruction turns, his reconstruction relies on a problematic inference. This is the inference:

- (1#) Anything that is perceivable is an idea.
 (4#) The existence of an idea consists in being perceived.
 ∴ (7#) The existence of anything perceivable consists in being perceived.

The notion of X's existence consisting in Y is unclear, and cannot really bear the weight of the inference from (1#) and (4#) to (7#). This can be seen, for example, by comparing the inference with this one:

- (1a) Anything that is an opera singer is a human being.

⁸ A. C. Grayling, *Berkeley: The Central Arguments* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986), 105-106.

(2a) The existence of a human being consists in being a member of the species *homo sapiens*.

∴ (3a) The existence of an opera singer consists in being a member of the species *homo sapiens*.

Finally, it is true that Rickless's version uses a premise directly extracted from the text, namely (1#), "anything that is perceivable is an idea," while mine does not. But my (5), "sensible things are ideas," obviously follows from (1#) and another premise that Berkeley unquestionably accepts, namely "anything that is a sensible thing is perceivable." And I have already shown how (1) and (2) can be elicited from the text. So, I do not think that Rickless's reconstruction, even when stripped of its textually unfounded and unnecessary *reductio* trappings, fits Berkeley's text any better than mine.

2. The Opening Moves in *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*

The rest of Rickless's review, as well as virtually all of Atherton's, address the arguments of *DHP*. There is an important difference, however, between their respective accounts of what is supposed to be wrong with my treatment of those arguments. By way of introducing her objection to my critique of Berkeley's argument about the water that seems hot to one hand and cold to the other, Atherton writes

Dicker assumes, as do many others, that in this, as in all the arguments of the First Dialogue, the burden of proof has been placed by Berkeley on Philonous, who must show, as Dicker puts it, "sensible things exist only by being perceived" (p. 89). But, at this point in the text where the argument is being set up, Philonous merely raises questions. The only assertions are made by Hylas, who says: "To exist is one thing, and to be perceived is another;" "whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same exists in the object that occasions it" (3DI, p. 175). Hylas, at least initially, is a proponent of the view Berkeley at the end of *Three Dialogues* ascribes to the vulgar: "those things they immediately perceive are the real things" (3DI, p. 262) and this is the notion Berkeley initially sets out to refute. He has placed the burden of proof in the subsequent arguments on Hylas. (279-80)

Now quite apart from the specific issue of how to read the "water" passage, which I shall address in section 5, Atherton's claim that Berkeley places the burden of proof on Hylas seems to me to be clearly wrong. It is true that at the outset Philonous prods Hylas into categorically asserting the mind-independence of sensible things, but that does not mean that he puts the burden of proof on Hylas to prove that they are mind-independent. On the contrary, after Hylas asserts their mind-independence, Philonous takes it upon himself (i.e., assumes the burden of proof) to prove that they are really mind-dependent. Not only is this the dominant, recurring pattern in *DHP*, but it is also quite evident from this stage-setting passage:

HYLAS. I am glad to find there was nothing in the accounts I heard of you.
 PHILONOUS. Pray, what were those?

- HYLAS. You were represented in last night's conversation, as one who maintained the most extravagant opinion that ever entered into the mind of man, to wit, that there is no such thing as *material substance* in the world.
- PHILONOUS. That there is no such thing as what philosophers call *material substance*, I am seriously persuaded: but if I were made to see any thing absurd or sceptical in this, I should then have the same reason to renounce this, that I imagine I have now to reject the contrary opinion.
- HYLAS. What! can any thing be more fantastical, more repugnant to common sense, or a more manifest piece of scepticism, than to believe there is no such thing as *matter*?
- PHILONOUS. Softly, good Hylas. What if it should prove, that you, who hold there is, are by virtue of that opinion a greater *sceptic*, and maintain more paradoxes and repugnancies to common sense, than I who believe no such thing?
- HYLAS. You may as soon persuade me, the part is greater than the whole, as that, in order to avoid absurdity and scepticism, I should ever be obliged to give up my opinion in this point.
- PHILONOUS. Well then, are you content to admit that opinion for true, which upon examination shall appear most agreeable to common sense, and remote from scepticism?
- HYLAS. With all my heart. Since you are for raising disputes about the plainest things in nature, I am content for once to hear what you have to say. (W2 172)

Here Philonous announces that he will confront Hylas with absurdities and paradoxes that flow from the belief in matter—that he will try to prove that Hylas's belief in matter reduces to absurdity. And that is of course something that Philonous tries to do throughout *DHP*. But this should not blind us to the fact that Philonous has no intention of putting the burden of proof on Hylas. Rather, he proposes to “persuade” Hylas that matter does not exist, and Hylas replies that he will be “content for once to hear” Philonous's arguments for this extraordinary view. For all of Berkeley's clever artistry, he does not try to mislead his readers into thinking that the burden of proof falls on Hylas's shoulders.

In contrast to Atherton, and with the qualifications about Philonous's relativity arguments to be addressed in section 5, Rickless recognizes that Philonous assumes the burden of establishing his doctrine that sensible things are ideas. He correctly sees that throughout *DHP I*, Philonous is developing an argument intended to prove that sensible things are mind-dependent. Rickless construes Berkeley's opening moves as being themselves an argument, which goes this way (I use his nomenclature):

- (D1) Sensible things = df things that are perceived by the senses.
 - (PPI*) Whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived by the senses.
 - (P1) Everything that is immediately perceived by the senses is either a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities.
- So, (C) Every sensible thing is either a sensible quality or collection of sensible qualities.

After some discussion of this argument, he moves to an examination of my critique of Berkeley's arguments for holding that sensible qualities or collection of sensible qualities are only ideas or collections of ideas.

I have no objection to this account of Berkeley's opening moves. My own account of them is streamlined: I note that Berkeley defines sensible things as things that are perceived by the senses, that he adds that things that are perceived by the senses are sensible qualities or collections of sensible qualities, and that he concludes that "sensible things are therefore nothing but (a) sensible qualities and (b) combinations of sensible qualities" (BI 89). The streamlining consists in omitting, in my exposition of Berkeley's rationale for (a) and (b), the reference to immediate perception. In fact, I do not even treat these opening moves as part of the argument for idealism, but rather as "stage-setting" for the pleasure–pain and relativity arguments that follow in the text. This leads Rickless so say, "the fact that there is an argument here really flies under the radar in [Dicker's] book" (22). That is a bit unfair, since a streamlined argument intended to set the stage for further arguments is still an argument. But in light of Rickless's own recent book, *Berkeley's Argument for Idealism*—in which he finds an ambiguity in the phrase "perceived by the senses" (on which it may mean either "perceived wholly by the senses" or "perceived partly by the senses") that threatens to generate a fallacy of equivocation in the move from (D1), (PPI*) and (P1) to (C)—I can see why he treats Berkeley's opening moves as part of his argument for idealism, and I agree that his account of those moves faithfully follows the textual details.⁹ I do have doubts as to whether his point about the ambiguity of "perceived by the senses" poses as much of a difficulty for Berkeley as Rickless thinks, but this is not the place to discuss those doubts.¹⁰ Rather, here I need only say since I see the fundamental difficulties in Berkeley's case for idealism to be in the argumentation that comes later in the First Dialogue, my book's reliance on a streamlined account of Berkeley's rationale for (C) is harmless.

Before I turn to Rickless's critique of my treatment of the later argumentation, however, I need to make one further point about his comments on the opening moves. He notes that in the same section where I set these out, I see Berkeley as offering two different definitions of immediate perception (I here use my numbering of these):

D3: X is immediately perceived_o = *df* X is perceived, and it is false that X would be perceived only if some item that is not identical with X and that is not a part of X were perceived.

D4: X is immediately perceived_p = *df* X is perceived without (the perceiver's) performing any (conscious) inference.

⁹ Samuel Rickless, *Berkeley's Argument for Idealism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 188-97.

¹⁰ I discuss them in a forthcoming review of Rickless's book in *Mind*.

Now Rickless does not agree that Berkeley uses either of these definitions, much less another, epistemological one, to which I attach great importance, and which I think Berkeley invokes later:

D2: X is immediately perceived_e = *df* X is perceived in such a way that its existence and nature can be known solely on the basis of a given perceptual experience.

Instead, he thinks that Berkeley always uses only one sense of immediate perception, culled from his *New Theory of Vision*, which goes like this:

(DIP) X is immediately perceived = *df* X is perceived, but not by perceiving something numerically distinct from X that suggests X.

I shall not attempt to defend here my view that Berkeley operates with the several different senses of immediate perception mentioned above; for although Rickless disagrees with that view, it plays no role in the Berkeleian arguments my treatment of which he chooses to criticize in his review. Let me explain. In the book, I try to show that Berkeley has a key argument for idealism that has not been noticed by commentators and that I call the “argument from the principle of perceptual immediacy,” and that this argument is unsound because it trades on an equivocation between “immediately perceived_p” and “immediately perceived_e.” The core of the argument is

- (1) Whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived.
 - (2) No causes of sensations are immediately perceived.
- ∴ (3) No causes of sensations are perceived by the senses.

Both in my book and elsewhere, I try to show that Berkeley builds on this argument in attempts to refute both a dispositional, Lockean account of secondary qualities and a causal theory of perception. I also argue that the argument is unsound because premise (1) is true only if “immediately perceived” means “immediately perceived_p,” but premise (2) is true only if “immediately perceived” means “immediately perceived_e.” Thus, the charge of equivocation on senses of immediate perception plays an important role in my overall critique of Berkeley’s case for idealism. But I shall not further discuss that role here, because Rickless (as well as Atherton) never discusses the argument from the principle of perceptual immediacy.¹¹

That brings me to the point I do wish to make, which is that, at least in his review of *BI*, Rickless completely misunderstands the role that, according to me, the equivocation on “immediately perceived” plays in Berkeley’s arguments. Referring to the argument from

¹¹ In his *Berkeley’s Argument for Idealism*, Rickless does report this argument, and he criticizes and rejects my view that Berkeley uses an epistemological sense of immediate perception (33–42). In the present paper, however, I limit my responses to him by answering the criticisms that he makes in his review of *BI*, except only when points he makes in his book dovetail directly with ones in that review. Answering the objections in his new book to ascribing “immediately perceived_e” to Berkeley must await another occasion.

(D1) and (PPI*) and (P1) to (C), he writes:

As Dicker sees it, there is a problem with the argument if (D3) is accepted. For although (P1) may be true if read through the lens of (D3), representationalists (including Locke) “will say that it is false that whatever is perceived by the senses is immediately perceived_o, because material objects are perceived by the senses, but not immediately perceived_o,” (p. 131). In other words, if (D3) is accepted, then representationalists will reasonably reject ... (PPI*). . . . On the other hand, there is also a problem with the argument if (D4) is accepted. For although (PPI*), read through the lens of (D4), is true, representationalists would now be well within their rights to deny (P1), for they hold that no conscious inference is required to perceive material objects by means of the senses, and yet material objects are not identical with sensible qualities or collections of sensible qualities. And if the phrase “immediately perceived” is given a (D3) reading in (P1) and a (D4) reading in (PPI*), then Berkeley’s argument is straightforwardly invalid. (23)

This is a completely fictional account of how I think equivocation on “immediately perceived” enters into Berkeley’s arguments. For it assumes that I see Berkeley’s equivocation as contained in the argument from (D1) and (PPI*) and (P1) to (C)—an argument that I never even state, and that Rickless himself says “passes under my radar”! Further, it says that the equivocation on “immediately perceived”—which I think vitiates an argument that Rickless never mentions (the argument from the principle of perceptual immediacy)—is between “immediately perceived_p” and “immediately perceived_o,” whereas I hold that it is between “immediately perceived_p” and “immediately perceived_e.” I suspect that because Rickless sees a problem involving equivocation in the argument from (D1) and (PPI*) to (D), he may have assumed that the equivocation that I see is in the same place; in fact it is in a different place, on a different term, and of a different kind.

Contrary to what Rickless thinks, then, I have no difficulty with Berkeley’s argument that every sensible object is either a sensible quality or a collection of sensible qualities. Rather, my critique of Berkeley’s case for idealism addresses the next stages of his reasoning, in which he tries to show that sensible qualities and collections thereof are only ideas and collections thereof. Of course, Rickless goes on to oppose this critique too. He opposes it from the point of view of his own theory about the overall structure of Berkeley’s case for idealism, and it will be useful to sketch that theory before launching into details.

On Rickless’s view, which as he says is influenced by Robert Muehlmann’s *Berkeley’s Ontology*,¹² the foundation of Berkeley’s case is what Muehlmann calls the “Identification Argument” and I call the “pain-pleasure argument.” This is Philonous’s argument that since secondary qualities possess a hedonic element, pain or pleasure, that can exist only in a mind, those qualities themselves can exist only in a mind. The next, clinching step is the anti-abstractionist point that, since a primary quality can never be

¹² Cf. Robert G. Muehlmann, *Berkeley’s Ontology* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992).

conceived apart from some secondary quality, and things that can't be conceived apart cannot exist apart, primary qualities too can exist only in a mind.

One feature of this Muehlmann–Rickless view of Berkeley's strategy is that the argument from perceptual relativity, which Philonous deploys at great length, is not an argument for the thesis that sensible qualities are only ideas; instead, it is only an *ad hominem* argument directed against a crude form of naïve realism, according to which material things have all the qualities that they are perceived as having. Rickless contrasts this construal of Berkeley's strategy with what he calls "the standard view," which he rejects, according to which the pain-pleasure argument plays only the limited role of showing that a few secondary qualities are ideas, and the argument from perceptual relativity has the key function of showing that the other secondary qualities, as well as all the primary qualities, are only ideas.

According to Rickless, then, it is very important for Berkeley that the pleasure-argument be highly convincing and that the job of the relativity argument be recognized as narrowly confined to refuting naïve realism. Further, Rickless thinks he can show, philosophically, that the pleasure–pain argument is strong and, textually, that the relativity argument is only a (good) argument against a crude form of naïve realism. It is from this point of view that he criticizes my view, which is that both the pleasure–pain argument and the argument from perceptual relativity are bad arguments for Berkeley's fundamental thesis that qualities are only ideas. In sections 4-6, I defend that view. Since only Rickless discusses the pleasure–pain argument, section 4 continues to address only his review, but since his and Atherton's objections to my treatment of the relativity argument overlap, section 5 will address Atherton as well.

3. The Pleasure–Pain Argument

Philonous starts the pleasure–pain argument by getting Hylas to concede its opening premise, namely, that a very intense degree of heat is a great pain. He then easily shows that it follows that a very intense heat is nothing but an idea that exists only in the mind; he extends the argument to intense degrees of cold; he shows that the same reasoning applies to mild degree of heat and cold since they are pleasures; and he applies the same reasoning to tastes and smells. Rickless rightly points out that it could easily be applied to sounds and colors as well. In my book, I say that Hylas *should not* have granted the premise that intense heat is the same as pain, since that is simply false. I also point out that Hylas himself quickly corrects his mistake by saying, correctly, "I fear I was out in yielding intense heat to be a pain. It should seem, rather, that pain is something distinct from heat, and the consequence or effect of it" (W2 176). Philonous, however, immediately comes back with what I call Berkeley's subargument for the first premise of the pleasure–pain argument, contained in the following passage:

PHILONOUS. Upon putting your hand near the fire, do you perceive one simple uniform sensation, or two distinct sensations?

HYLAS. But one simple sensation.

PHILONOUS. Is not the heat immediately perceived?

HYLAS. It is.

PHILONOUS. And the pain?

HYLAS. True.

PHILONOUS. Seeing therefore they are both immediately perceived at the same time, and the fire affects you with one simple, or uncompounded idea, it follows that this same simple idea is both the intense heat immediately perceived, and the pain; and consequently, that the intense heat immediately perceived, is nothing distinct from a particular sort of pain.

HYLAS. It seems so. (W2: 176)

Rickless's objection to my treatment of the pleasure–pain argument concerns my reconstruction and evaluation of this subargument. He first raised it in correspondence; I incorporated it and my response in the book; his review and the present reply thus constitute a further stage in an ongoing debate.

My reconstruction of the subargument is this:

- (1S) Upon putting one's hand near a fire, one immediately perceives one uniform sensation or idea of intense heat and pain.
- (2S) If upon putting one's hand near a fire, one immediately perceives one uniform sensation of intense heat and pain, then the intense heat one immediately perceives is not distinct from the pain.
- ∴ (3S) The intense heat one immediately perceives is not distinct from the pain.

My objection is that in the consequent of (2S), “intense heat” may mean either “quality of intense heat” or “sensation of intense heat,” and that (2S) is false if “intense heat” means “quality of intense heat” and useless to Berkeley if it means merely “sensation of intense heat.” Rickless rejects this objection because he thinks that it misinterprets Philonous's argument. He thinks that the argument should go this way:

- (1A) On putting one's hand near a fire, one immediately perceives one uniform sensation.
- (2A) On putting one's hand near a fire, one immediately perceives intense heat and pain.
- (3A) If one immediately perceives X and Y at the same time t and immediately perceives one uniform sensation at t , then X is not distinct from Y.
- ∴ (4A) The intense heat one immediately perceives on putting one's hand near a fire is not distinct from the pain one immediately perceives at that time.

In the book, I concede that Rickless's reading limns the text more closely than mine, but I reject it because, as Rickless agrees in his review, (3A) is obviously false; counterexample: *If one immediately perceives a red dot and a blue dot at t and one immediately perceives one uniform sensation (say, of middle C) at t , then the red dot is not distinct from the blue dot.* I then go on to suggest an amended version of Rickless's premise:

(3Ar**) *If one immediately perceives only X and Y by sense modality S at t and one immediately perceives one uniform sensation by sense modality S at t, then X is identical to Y.*

But I then argue that (3Ar**) is still vulnerable to counterexample. I say, “imagine that my visual field is completely filled by two black slabs, A and B, whose adjoining edges are so tightly conjoined that I cannot see any division between A and B. Then A and B give me one uniform black visual sensation, but it does not follow that A is identical with B” (BI 97). In his review, however Rickless, defends (3Ar**) against this counterexample. He writes:

But this counterexample fails. Dicker’s mistake here lies in misconceiving Berkeley’s idea of *uniformity* as *phenomenological*. But, as the relevant passage makes clear, Berkeley’s conception of *uniformity* is one of *simplicity* or *lack of composition*: as he puts it, “the fire affects you with one simple, uncompounded idea.” So it is false to say that A and B give Dicker one uniform black visual sensation. For the visible blackness is divisible into a left half and a right half, and thus can be thought of as a composite of two black expanses (which is certainly how we should think of the expanses if the slabs were pulled apart!). The black visual sensation may be uniform in one sense, but it is not uniform in Berkeley’s sense. I conclude that Dicker has given us no good reason to reject (3Ar**), which is certainly all to the good from Berkeley’s point of view. (27)

My reply is simply that I see no good reason to say that the divisibility of a phenomenologically uniform color patch into a left half and a right half renders it composite or “not uniform in Berkeley’s sense.” That seems to me to be a mere and quite unnatural stipulation as to what Berkeley must have meant by “uniform.” So I think that my counterexample does refute (3Ar**).

In the book I make the conciliatory remark that “the difference between Rickless’s interpretation and mine is that he attributes to Berkeley a dubious premise, whereas I attribute to him a seductive equivocation. There is probably no way to show definitively that one interpretation is ‘right’ and the other ‘wrong’” (BI 97). But I then offer a further piece of evidence in order to tip the balance in favor of my reading. This is that Philonous buttresses his identification of pain and heat by means of a second subargument:

PHILONOUS. Again, try in your thoughts, Hylas, if you can conceive a vehement sensation to be without pain or pleasure.

HYLAS. I cannot.

PHILONOUS. Or can you frame to yourself an idea of sensible pain or pleasure, in general, abstracted from every particular idea of heat, cold, tastes, smells? &c.

HYLAS. I do not find that I can.

PHILONOUS. Doth it not therefore follow, that sensible pain is nothing distinct from those sensations or ideas—in an intense degree?

HYLAS. It is undeniable. (W2: 176-77)

I formulate Philonous’s argument this way:

- (1) A vehement sensation of heat, cold, taste, smell etc. cannot be conceived apart from pain or pleasure.
- (2) A pain or pleasure cannot be conceived apart from a vehement sensation of heat, cold, taste, smell etc.
- ∴ (3) A pain or a pleasure is nothing distinct from a vehement sensation or idea of heat, cold, smell, taste, etc.

I then go on to say:

This argument is simply irrelevant to what Berkeley is trying to prove. He is trying to prove that pain/pleasure is not distinct from intense heat, cold, smell, taste, etc. But all the argument's conclusion says is that pain/pleasure is not distinct from *sensations* of intense heat, cold, smell, taste, etc. Here, Berkeley seems to be just assuming that a sensation of heat is the same thing as heat, that a sensation of cold is the same thing as cold, etc.—the very thesis that he was supposedly proving. (BI 98)

Rickless objects that this evaluation of Berkeley's reasoning is "excessively uncharitable" (28). For he thinks that Philonous's challenge to Hylas—to "frame to yourself an idea of sensible pain or pleasure, in general, abstracted from every particular idea of heat, cold, tastes, smells &c"—is a clear instance of Berkeley's principle that if the idea of X cannot be separated from the idea of Y, then X and Y cannot be separated in reality. For Rickless, this reveals that the references to sensations of heat and cold in the passage, faithfully included in my (1) and (3), are just botched references to heat and cold themselves, so that Berkeley's argument is really this:

- (B1) If the idea of X cannot be abstracted from the idea of Y, then X is not distinct from Y.
- (B2) The idea of intense heat cannot be abstracted from the idea of pain.
- ∴ (B3) Intense heat is not distinct from pain.

Rickless's treatment of this point is so ingenious and elegant that I almost wish I had written it myself. But whether it shows, as he thinks, that Berkeley's talk of sensations of heat and cold in place of heat and cold *simpliciter* is just a Freudian slip, is certainly debatable. To quote an acerbic remark made in a graduate seminar by a former teacher of mine, "it is in the nature of the case impossible to psychoanalyze the dead." Be that as it may, Rickless's refurbished argument still does not establish its conclusion, for there is a deep problem embedded in premise B2. The problem is that although it is true that I cannot abstract the idea of *feeling* or *experiencing* intense heat from the idea of pain, it does not follow, and it is false, that I cannot abstract the idea of (the quality of) intense heat from the idea of pain. I have an idea of the intense heat of a fire, or of the Sun, and I can abstract those ideas from the idea of pain, even if I cannot abstract the idea of the feeling I would have if I put my hand in a fire or were thrust into the sun from the idea of pain.

The basic flaw in the pain–pleasure argument seems to me to be this. A realist holds, with Locke, that "Ideas [are] in the Mind, Qualities in Bodies" (*Essay* II.viii.7-8). The purpose

of the pleasure–pain argument is to persuade the realist that certain qualities are only ideas. The nerve of the argument is that the hedonic sensation had when the quality is perceived is phenomenally indistinguishable from the quality. But at best this shows only that the hedonic sensation is identical with the experience, awareness, or consciousness of the quality, not with the quality itself. For the idealist to reply that the experience, awareness, or consciousness of the quality is identical with the quality would obviously beg the question against the realist. Therefore, the argument cannot serve its purpose.

IV. The First-Version Argument from Perceptual Relativity

The argument to which Berkeley devotes the most space in *DHP I* is the Argument from Perceptual Relativity (hereafter referred to as “the APR”). In my book, I interpret the APR, as have most readers of Berkeley, as an attempt to demonstrate that all sensible qualities are really only ideas in our minds, and I argue that as such it is invalid. Rickless and Atherton agree that the argument I attribute to Berkeley is indeed invalid. But they also think that I have misunderstood Berkeley’s argument. For they both endorse the “negative” interpretation of Berkeley’s APR, first proposed I believe by Robert Muehlmann, according to which the argument is solely an *ad hominem* argument against naïve realism.¹³ I shall now defend my treatment of Berkeley’s APR, focusing partly on Atherton’s discussion but mainly on Rickless’s, which is the more detailed critique.

Rickless first quotes the key passage from Berkeley, and then objects to my interpretation of it. Here is Berkeley:

PHILONOUS. Those bodies, therefore, upon whose application to our own, we perceive a moderate degree of heat, must be thought to have a moderate degree of heat or warmth in them; and those, upon whose application we feel a like degree of cold, must be thought to have cold in them.

HYLAS. They must

PHILONOUS. Suppose now one of your hands hot, and the other cold, and that they are both at once put into the same vessel of water, in an intermediate state; will not the water seem cold to one hand, and warm to the other?

HYLAS. It will.

PHILONOUS. Ought we not therefore by your principles to conclude that it is really both cold and warm at the same time, that is to believe an absurdity?

HYLAS. I confess it seems so. (W2: 178-79)

And here is a substantial extract from Rickless’s review that contains both his summary of my analysis of the passage and his objection to that analysis:

Dicker rightly points out that this argument is a *reductio*. But he thinks that Philonous’s opening statement does not clearly identify the assumption for *reductio*. The part before the semi-colon, says Dicker, suggests that the *reductio* assumption is (a):

¹³ See Muehlmann, *Berkeley’s Ontology*, 149-69.

(a) Material things really have whatever moderate degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.

But the part after the [semicolon] (“must be thought to have cold in them”) suggests that the *reductio* assumption is (b):

(b) Material things in which one perceives a moderate degree of cold (or heat) really have the quality of cold (or heat) in them.

The difference between these statements is subtle. (a) says that if one perceives a material object O to have quality Q in degree D, then O really has quality Q in degree D. (b) says that if one perceives a material object O to have quality Q in degree D, then O really has quality Q. What (b) does not say, but (a) does say, is that O must have quality Q in the degree it is perceived to have it. From (a), I can conclude from the fact that I perceive a fire to be intensely hot that the fire really is intensely hot; but from (b), all I can conclude from the same fact is that the fire has some degree of heat.

Dicker claims that if (a) is the *reductio* assumption, then the *reductio* “cannot be used to support Berkeley’s thesis that...heat and cold are merely...ideas”. By contrast, he says, “only if (b) is the assumption to be disproved can the argument support [that thesis]” (p. 101). Assuming, then, that the argument is designed to show that heat and cold are merely ideas, Dicker interprets the argument as directed against both (a) and (b), and reconstructs it as follows:

- (1) Heat and cold are qualities of material things. (assumption for *reductio*)
- (2) The same material thing ... can seem hot to one hand and cold to the other.

So, (3) The same material thing can be both hot and cold. (p. 101 [in Dicker])

Dicker then claims that the argument commits a “basic fallacy,” namely that of confusing “seeming with being”: for the argument moves “from a single premise about how things are together with a single premise about how things seem, to a completely new statement about how things are” (p. 105 [in Dicker]).

My sense of all this is that Dicker misunderstands APR, that the argument he rightly criticizes as invalid is not the argument that Berkeley puts forward in the relevant passage. The main problem, I believe, is that Dicker unthinkingly assumes, along with the standard view, that the purpose of APR is to establish that heat and cold are ideas. This assumption distorts his interpretation of the passage, and leads him to criticize Berkeley unfairly. (29-30)

More briefly but in the same vein, Atherton writes:

In one version of the perceptual variability argument, Philonous restates Hylas’s contention [that “whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same exists in the object that occasions it”], points out to Hylas that, under appropriate circumstances the same water will seem hot to one hand and cold to the

other, and then asks: “ought we not therefore by your principles to conclude: it is really both hot and cold at the same time?” From *Hylas*’ principles, this follows. But since Dicker takes the argument to be in favor of idealism, and not a refutation of naïve realism, he substitutes a new starting premise: “Heat and cold are qualities of material things.” From this premise, not found in the text, he is able to find a familiar but invalid form of the Argument from Illusion. In altering Berkeley’s argument in this fashion, Dicker has substituted a bad argument for a better one, and in so doing, misses Berkeley’s point. (280)

I agree with Rickless and Atherton that *one* function of the APR is to serve as an *ad hominem* argument against the view that the very qualities we (seem to) perceive by sense in material things are always qualities of those things.¹⁴ But I cannot believe that Berkeley’s *only* purpose, in the many pages he devotes to that argument, is to refute this crudest version of naïve realism. Minimally, he means to show that *no* sensible qualities are in material things, which is millimeters away from showing that instead they are only ideas in the mind. After all, a key thesis of *DHP I* is that all sensible qualities are ideas. There are scores of reminders in the Dialogue that this is the thesis that Philonous is advocating and that Hylas is reluctantly conceding (e.g., W2: 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 183, 185, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 194, 197). If only for this reason, it would be bizarre if Philonous’s chief argument about sensible qualities in the Dialogue were not meant to establish it.

Is there specific textual evidence showing that at least one purpose of the “water” argument is to establish that heat and cold are ideas? There is. In a backward reference to the “water” passage, Philonous makes it clear that his argument’s purpose included showing that heat and cold are not in material objects, and that he is prepared to apply the same reasoning to shape and size:

PHILONOUS. Was it not admitted as a good argument, that neither heat nor cold was in the water, because it seemed warm to one hand and cold to the other?

HYLAS. It was.

PHILONOUS. Is it not the same reasoning to conclude there is no extension or figure in an object, because to one eye it shall seem little, smooth, and round, when at the same time it appears to the other great, uneven, and angular?

HYLAS. The very same. (W2: 189)

In his own recent book, Rickless claims that in this passage, “Philonous makes it quite clear that it was Hylas who admitted that the Argument from Perceptual Relativity established that ‘neither heat nor cold was in the water.’ Pointedly, Philonous does not say that he himself endorses this conclusion.”¹⁵ But the first part of this, at least, is quite

¹⁴ The argument is *ad hominem*, not in the classic sense of being an attack on a person rather than the person’s position or argument, nor of course merely in that it is a *reductio* argument, but rather in the sense that the assumption for *reductio* is accepted as *true* by those who hold the position that the argument is supposed to refute. Thanks to Richard Brook for raising the question of what “*ad hominem*” means in the present context.

¹⁵ Rickless, *Berkeley’s Argument*, 177. See also Muelhmann, *Berkeley’s Ontology*, 159.

unfounded: “Was it not admitted as a good argument?” is much more naturally taken to mean “did we not both agree that it is a good argument?” than to mean “did you not say that it is a good argument?”

Further textual evidence for my reading of the “water” passage is that there are several other places where Philonous appeals to the same argument for the purpose of showing that sensible qualities are only ideas. Here are some of them:

PHILONOUS. [T]hat which at other times seems sweet, shall to a distempered palate appear bitter. And nothing can be plainer, than that divers persons perceive different tastes in the same food, since that which one man delights in, another abhors. And how could this be, if the taste was something really inherent in the food?

HYLAS. I acknowledge I know not how. (W2 280)

PHILONOUS. Or can you imagine that filth and ordure affect those brute beasts that feed on them out of choice, with the same smells which we perceive in them?

HYLAS. By no means. . . .

PHILONOUS. May we not therefore conclude of them, as of the other aforementioned qualities, that they cannot exist in any but a perceiving substance or mind?

HYLAS. I think so. (W2 181)

PHILONOUS. Even our own eyes do not always represent objects to us in the same manner. In the *jaundice*, everyone knows that all things seem yellow. Is it not therefore highly probable, those animals in whose eyes we discern a very different texture from that of ours, and whose bodies abound with different humors, do not see the same colors in every object that we do? From all which, should it not seem to follow, that all colors are equally apparent, and that none of those which we perceive are really inherent in any outward object?

HYLAS. It should. (W2 185)

Defenders of the purely “negative” view of the APR are fond of saying that in these passages, the denials that qualities are in material things and the affirmations that they are only ideas always come out of Hylas’s mouth rather than Philonous’s.¹⁶ But this does not show that they are not meant to express Philonous’s views, since, like a host of other things that no one thinks are not being asserted by Philonous, they come as responses to rhetorical questions raised by Philonous. There are dozens of places throughout *DHP* where Hylas’s remarks are limited to “right,” “it doth,” “I grant it,” “certainly,” “it must,” “no one can deny it,” “it is,” “true,” “I own it,” and so forth, and where he is plainly assenting to Philonous’s (Berkeley’s) own views and arguments. Hylas’s repeated concessions that qualities are only ideas should be read as Berkeley’s trying to convey that even one who initially strongly rejects that view is compelled by the force of the argument to yield to it. That is rhetorically much more effective than would be

¹⁶ Rickless, *Berkeley’s Argument*, 176-77; Muelhmann, *Berkeley’s Ontology*, 159.

Philonous's just tiresomely repeating or insisting on Berkeley's view. This, I think, is also why Philonous "pointedly" does not repeat that view in his backward reference to the "water" example.

The best evidence I can see for the negative interpretation of the APR is Berkeley's concession in 1710 that "this method of arguing doth not so much prove that there is no extension or colour in an outward object, as that we do not know by sense which is the true extension or color of the object" (*PHK* 15). But I think that Berkeley's massive use of the argument in the *Dialogues* shows that by the time he published it in 1713, he had come to realize that he needed the argument to establish his idealism and had convinced himself (however mistakenly) that it could legitimately be used for that purpose.

Let me now go to Rickless's specific objections to my discussion of the APR. Rickless begins by arguing that I am wrong to take (b) ["Material things in which one perceives a moderate degree of cold (or heat) really have the quality of cold (or heat) in them"] to be even part of the assumption for *reductio*. His reason for denying that (b) is one of Berkeley's targets is Philonous's use of the word "therefore" at the start of his opening speech that "Those bodies, *therefore* [my emphasis] upon whose application to our own, we perceive a moderate degree of heat, must be thought to have a moderate degree of heat or warmth in them [etc.]." Rickless says that "we find nothing [in Hylas's immediately preceding speech] that could serve as a reason for holding anything Philonous says in the passage;" so he traces the reason referred back to by the word "therefore" to Hylas's flat declaration, *four pages earlier*, that "whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same degree exists in the object that occasions it" (W2: 175). Rickless infers that the assumption for *reductio* that Berkeley really has in mind is

(Ga) Material things really have whatever degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them

and that the sole purpose of Berkeley's argument is to refute (Ga) by refuting a particular instance of (Ga), namely (a) ["material things have whatever moderate degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them"].

I think it is a misreading to see the APR as targeting (Ga). For by the time Philonous presents the APR, Hylas has *already* been persuaded by Philonous's pleasure-pain argument to *give up* the view that *intense* degrees of heat exist in objects; he is no longer holding that a very intense degree of heat perceived by sense exists in an object, and hence also no longer holding that material things really have *whatever* degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them. The "therefore" that Rickless highlights does not refer back to Hylas's now-abandoned view, stated before Philonous had advanced the pleasure-pain argument, that "whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same degree exists in the object that occasions it." That such is not the function of this "therefore" is clear from the relevant portion of the text:

PHILONOUS. But what think you of cold?

HYLAS. The same as I do of heat. An intense degree of cold is a pain; for to feel a very great cold, is to perceive a great uneasiness: it cannot therefore exist without the mind; but a lesser degree of cold may, as well as a lesser degree of heat.

PHILONOUS. Those bodies, *therefore* [my italics], upon whose application to our own, we perceive a moderate degree of heat, must be thought to have a moderate degree of heat or warmth in them; and those, upon whose application we feel a like degree of cold, must be thought to have cold in them.

This plainly shows that Philonous's "therefore" is intended to recapitulate Hylas's now-amended view, stated in his immediately preceding speech, that moderate degrees of cold and heat can exist in material things; it is not intended to refer back to a view that Hylas asserted four pages earlier and has now given up. Therefore, Rickless has not shown that Philonous is not targeting (b).

Rickless's objection also slides over the fact that in what I take to be Berkeley's basic argument, I drop the restriction in (b) to "moderate" degrees of heat and cold, on the ground that "it plays no role in the reasoning" (BI 102). This slip leads Rickless to make a neat but ultimately ineffectual criticism. Using some nifty quantificational logic, he shows that the denial of (b), that is, of "Material things in which one perceives a moderate degree of cold (or heat) in them have the quality of cold (or heat) in them," means that

(not-b) For some material thing X and for some subject S , S perceives a moderate degree of cold/heat in X , but X does not have cold/heat in X

and that (not-b) leads to

(not-b-cons) For some material thing X , X does not have cold/heat in X .

However, (not-b-cons) does not entail

(u) For every material thing X , X does not have cold/heat in X .

So, Rickless concludes, "it is not reasonable ... to believe that establishing the falsity of (b) really goes any way towards establishing that heat and cold are nothing but ideas" (31).

Rickless is right that (not-b-cons) does not entail (u). But since I do not take the fundamental assumption for *reductio* in the "water" passage to be (b), but rather to be simply "heat and cold are qualities of material things," his criticism is beside the point. Furthermore, there is a good argument that shows that if Berkeley can establish even so much as (not-b), he can also establish (u). That argument goes as follows:

(not-b) For some material thing X and for some subject S , S perceives a moderate degree of cold/heat in X , but X does not have cold/heat in it.

- (1) If for some material thing X and for some subject S , S perceives a moderate degree of cold/heat in X , but X does not have cold/heat in it, then for *every* material thing X in which S perceives a moderate degree of heat/cold, X does not have heat/cold in it.
 - (2) If for every material thing X in which S perceives a moderate degree of heat/cold, X does not have heat/cold in it, then for every material thing X in which S perceives *any* degree of heat/cold, X does not have heat/cold in it.
 - (3) If for every material thing X in which S perceives any degree of heat/cold, X does not have heat/cold in it, then for every material thing X , X does not have heat/cold in it.
-
- ∴ (u) For every material thing X , X does not have heat/cold in it.

The rationale for premise (1) is that it would be arbitrary to hold that some material things in which we perceive a moderate degree of heat/cold are neither hot nor cold, but other material things in which we perceive a moderate degree of heat/cold are hot or cold. The rationale for (2) is that it would be arbitrary to treat the perception of moderate degrees of heat/cold as always unveridical but to treat the perception of other degrees of heat/cold as not always unveridical. The rationale for (3) is that it would be arbitrary to hold that material things that we perceive are never hot or cold but that material things that we do not perceive are hot or cold.

As indicated earlier, I agree with Rickless and Atherton that *one* function of the APR is to serve as an *ad hominem* argument against the view(s) that Berkeley opposes. What views? First and foremost, the crude version of naïve realism that holds that the very qualities we seem to perceive in an object are always qualities of the object itself. But Atherton and Rickless each also suggest some other targets, and also seem to imply that they are the *only* targets of the APR. To start with Atherton, the continuation of the passage from her review that I quoted above goes this way:

Qualities thought to exist mind-independently in the object are held to be fixed and stable, a point of view Hylas' approach assumes. Sensible ideas, on the other hand, are fleeting and changeable. There is no way the one can be like the other. In Dicker's discussion, a preconception about what Berkeley is up to, has led him to put forward an argument that not only does Berkeley the disservice of being fallacious, but obscures Berkeley's broader point. (280)

Now there is indeed a passage, late in *DHP 1*, where Philonous appeals to perceptual relativity in the way Atherton here describes:

PHILONOUS. How then is it possible, that things perpetually fleeting and variable as our ideas, should be copies or images of any thing fixed and constant? Or in other words, since all sensible qualities, as size, figure, colour, &c. that is, our ideas are continually changing upon every alteration in the distance, medium, or

instruments of sensation; how can any determinate material objects be properly represented or painted forth by several distinct things, each of which is so different from and unlike the rest? Or if you say it resembles some one only of our Ideas, how shall we be able to distinguish the true copy from all the false ones? HYLAS. I profess, Philonous, I am at a loss. I know not what to say to this. (W2: 205-206)

However, this passage provides no evidence at all against my view that Berkeley uses the APR as direct support for his idealism. Rather, it only show that, later in *DHP 1*, he *also* appeals to relativity considerations in his endeavor to refute Lockean representationalism and to support his own Likeness Principle.

What Atherton could have reasonably said is that *one* of Berkeley's important targets in arguing from perceptual relativity is a naïve realism that holds that, e.g., the very degree of heat or cold that I perceive in an object is always that of the object itself. Since the relativity argument against that view could be reiterated for all the degrees of heat and cold perceived by me at different times, by other people, and by other animals, and applied to all the other sensible qualities as well, it might be developed so as to ultimately show that no sensible qualities exist in mind-independent objects at all. Then the variability of ideas could also be appealed to, at a second stage of argument, in the way Philonous does in the passage Atherton quotes, to show that ideas cannot represent such fixed, mind-independent objects.

Reading between the lines of Professor Atherton's review, I am guessing that this is the line of argument that she has in mind for Berkeley. I agree that it is there and that it is worth pursuing, and it would be interesting to see it developed rigorously (though I think that it would fall prey to my objections to what I call the "second version argument from perceptual relativity," to be discussed in the next section). But instead of proposing this as another and potentially more defensible line of thought that exists alongside the one that I focus on, Atherton insists, falsely, that the latter is not to be found in Berkeley's text at all. Her line of reasoning seems to be: "Berkeley appeals to perceptual relativity at point A to show that X, therefore he cannot be appealing to perceptual relativity at point B to show that Y."

Rickless, on the other hand, thinks that APR has yet another purpose. He writes:

The obvious question is why Berkeley *cares* about establishing the falsity of (Ga) [the proposition that "Material things really have whatever degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them"]. How this supposed to move him any closer to establishing that all sensible qualities are ideas? Answer: it doesn't, *but it's not meant to!* The point of APR is to beat up on relatively unsophisticated materialists, such as Aristotle, who think that perception works by means of the transmission of accidental forms through various media to our sense organs, forms that are then stored by the imagination as phantasms, and then intellectualized as notions. If Aristotle's theory of perception is true, then material objects really do have all the sensible qualities we perceive them to have. What APR shows is that material

objects *don't* necessarily have all the sensible qualities we perceive them to have, and hence that Aristotle's theory of perception is false. This is an important and perfectly respectable result. (32)

This strikes me as an odd speculation. So far as I know, Berkeley never alludes to the transmission of accidental forms, to forms stored by the imagination as phantasms, or to forms intellectualized as notions; such notions and their associated terminology are far from any that he attacks. I agree that his argument, to the extent that it is a negative argument against realism, would count against any theory that holds that material objects "really do have all the sensible qualities we perceive them to have." But it does not follow that Berkeley had an Aristotelian theory of perception in mind; and even if he did, it would not follow that his APR is not also or chiefly an attempt to prove idealism.

V. The Second-Version Argument from Perceptual Relativity

My book contends that Berkeley offers two subtly different versions of the APR. Atherton does not address what I call the "second-version APR," but Rickless devotes five pages to criticizing my treatment of it; in this section I defend that treatment against his objections. The second-version APR, I claim, first occurs in the following passage:

PHILONOUS. Is it your opinion the very figure and extension which you perceive by sense exist in the outward object or material substance?

HYLAS. It is.

PHILONOUS. Have all other animals as good grounds to think the same of the figure and extension which they see and feel?

HYLAS. Without doubt

PHILONOUS. A mite therefore must be supposed to see his own foot, and things equal or even less than it, as bodies of some considerable dimension; though at the same time they appear to you scarce discernible, or at best as so many visible points?

HYLAS. I cannot deny it

PHILONOUS. Can one and the same thing be at the same time in itself of different dimensions?

HYLAS. That were absurd to imagine.

PHILONOUS. But, from what you have laid down it follows that the extension by you perceived, and that perceived by the mite itself ... are each of them the true extension of the mite's foot; that is to say, by your own principles you are led into an absurdity. (W2: 188-189)

Why is this *reductio* argument different from the first? Basically, because the first argument tries to show that what we take to be the qualities of material things are really only appearances or ideas, while the second *starts* by reifying appearances and then argues that those appearances cannot be identical with the qualities of material things.

Let me explain. I summarize the above argument this way (here using Rickless's numbering, in which "S" stands for "Second Version"):

- (S1) The very shape and size perceived by sense in an object is always that of the object itself. (assumption for *reductio*)
- (S2) An object's shape and size looks (seems, appears) different to different perceivers, different species of perceivers, and to the same perceiver under different conditions of observation.
-
- ∴ (S3) An object can actually have many incompatible shapes and sizes.

Now what does the noun phrase “The very shape and size perceived by sense in an object” refer to? As I argue in the book, it can only refer to the shape(s) and size(s) of what later came to be called a sense-datum (sense-data)—the type of entity to which G.E. Moore tried to call his students' attention by having them all look at an envelope from their different vantage points and noticing that they must all be seeing color patches of slightly different shapes, sizes, and shades. The need to invoke such special entities becomes quite clear when one sees that the above argument is simply invalid, but can nonetheless be felt as quite persuasive. This is because it can easily be made valid by reformulating (S2), in a way that reifies appearances so as to mesh with (S1), namely as:

(S2') Many incompatible shapes and sizes are perceived by sense in an object.

Now I think that the exposure of “the sense-datum fallacy,” committed whenever one moves from “x seems F to S” to “S perceives an appearance which is F,” shows that there is no deductive route from (S2) to (S2'), so that the correct way to deal with the amended argument is simply to reject the substitution of (S2') for (S2). I regard the exposure of that fallacy, simple and obvious as it is, as a signal achievement in the philosophy of perception of the second half of the 20th century.¹⁷ In my book, however, I content myself with saying only that there is no good reason to prefer (S2') over (S2) and that the argument from (S1) and (S2') to (S3) is therefore unreliable.

What does Rickless have to say about all of this? I shall not discuss all of his points but will respond to three of them:

1. Rickless argues that the “mite” and the “water” arguments are in one respect more different from each other than I say, and in another respect more alike than I allow. They are more different because:

Dicker sees in the “mite” passage commitment to the assumption that “an object's shape and size seems different . . . to the same perceiver under different conditions of observation.” But this is not accurate. The “mite” passage does not consider what Hylas's principles commit him to in a hypothetical situation in which a single perceiver perceives a material object to have two different sizes or two different shapes at the same time. There is good reason for this: it is very difficult, if not

¹⁷ The *locus classicus* of this exposure is Roderick M. Chisholm, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 151-52. For further references to and discussion of Chisholm on this point, see *BI* 117-118 (n. 22); for a comment on his last relevant published remarks, see *BI* 38 n. 11.

impossible, to place a single perceiver in a situation relevantly similar to the “water” example with respect to the perception of different shapes or sizes by sight. (33)

My reply is that the difference Rickless points to is not important to Berkeley’s reasoning. In the “mite” passage Berkeley appeals to different perceivers, and even to perceivers of different species, in order to bring out more dramatically the phenomenon of perceptual variability (relativity). But shortly after the “mite” passage, he himself shifts to an example involving only one perceiver:

PHILONOUS. Is it not the same reasoning to conclude, there is no extension or figure in an object, because to one eye it shall seem little, smooth and round when at the same time it appears to the other, great, uneven, and angular?

HYLAS. The very same. But does this ... ever happen?

PHILONOUS. You may at any time make the experiment, by looking with one bare eye, and with the other through a microscope. (W2: 189)¹⁸

The reason why (according to Rickless) the arguments are more alike than I allow is that the assumption for *reductio* in the “water” passage “corresponds exactly” to the one in the “mite” passage; for Rickless takes the assumption for *reductio* in the “water” passage to be his (Ga), that is, the statement that “Material things really have whatever degree of heat (or cold) one perceives in them.” He is right that “what (Ga) says about heat and cold, (S1) says about size and shape” (33). But my reply is that since, as I argued in section 5, (Ga) is not the assumption for *reductio* in the “water” passage, (Ga)’s close resemblance to (S1) does not show that the argument in the “mite” passage corresponds exactly to the one that I attribute to Berkeley in the “water passage.” That claim glosses over the important difference that the “mite” passage starts by reifying appearances (resulting in a valid but unsound or at least unreliable argument), while the “water” argument confuses seeming with being (resulting in an invalid argument).

2. Having argued on the sole, flawed grounds that the “mite” argument is inapplicable to cases of a single perceiver, and that the assumption for *reductio* in the “water” argument is more like the one in the “mite” argument than I allow, that “Dicker has misidentified the argument and reasoning of the ‘mite’ passage,” Rickless goes on to say, “it is not surprising to learn that he also misevaluates the argument” (34). What does the misevaluation consist in? Well, not in my saying that the argument from (S1) and (S2’) to (S3) is invalid: Rickless says, “Dicker is right about that, of course” (34). Rather, the misevaluation is supposed to be that argument from (S1) and (S2’) to (S3) “*is not the argument of the ‘mite’ passage!*” (34, Rickless’s italics) But the *only* reason Rickless gives for that claim is the faulty one about single versus multiple perceivers. Is there any other basis for the “misevaluation” charge? Here things become complicated. Simplifying a bit, Rickless first reproduces my amended reconstruction:

(S1) The very shape and size perceived by sense in an object is always that of the object itself. (assumption for *reductio*)

¹⁸ Philonous has here also shifted back to the first version of his APR, but this does not affect my point.

- (S2') Many incompatible shapes and sizes are perceived by sense in an object.
 ∴ (S3) An object can actually have many incompatible shapes and sizes.

Then he reports (correctly) that

Dicker's worry is that premise (S2') of the amended argument leads to unintuitive ontological profligacy. . . . As Dicker sees it . . . if Berkeley relies on (S2') then he ends up with a bloated ontology; but if he replaces (S2') with the "commonplace" (S2) [i.e. with "an object's shape and size looks (seems, appears) different to different perceivers, different species of perceivers, and to the same perceiver under different conditions of observation"], then his argument is invalid. (35)

Finally, he states his objection:

Dicker has lost sight of the fact that the relevant argument is a *reductio*. Berkeley's point is that materialist principles [here (S1), (S2') . . .] lead to absurdity. Philonous does not himself endorse (S2'): *Hylas* the materialist does. . . . [I]t is important to read (S2') as applying to *material* objects: what Hylas accepts is that the object perceived by the mite is the same object as the object perceived by me. His reason for thinking this is that the mite and I are both looking at the same *material* object. If physical objects such as mite's feet were merely collections of ideas in minds, then it would not be obvious that the mite and I are perceiving the same object. Dicker is therefore mistaken in thinking that the argument from the "mite" passage commits Berkeley to a bloated ontology. (35)

My reply is this. First, the assumption for *reductio* here is not (S2'), but (S1). Second, even a *reductio* argument needs to employ some premise, and the only premise on offer here is (S2'). Third, Philonous does endorse that premise, with the understanding that it applies to material objects. Of course, he does not think that it then carries existential import, since he believes that there are no material objects, and indeed that "mite's feet [are] merely collections of ideas in minds." But that view cannot be read into the argument without begging the question in favor of the very idealism for which Berkeley is laying the foundation. Fourth, Rickless himself seems to recognize, a few lines later, that the argument does commit Berkeley to his bloated ontology, for he writes: "[If] Berkeley did not think that the mite and I were perceiving different feet, then he would be committed to the absurd view that the same foot has different dimensions at the same time" (36).

3. Although Rickless (mistakenly, as I have just argued) denies that Berkeley's use of the APR *commits* him to a "bloated ontology," he cheerfully accepts that in fact, "Berkeley *does* have a bloated ontology" (35, Rickless's italics). Further, he thinks that this is not a problem for Berkeley "because, as it happens, Berkeley has an *argument* for his boated ontology" (36). In support of this claim, he cites the passage from the *New Theory of Vision* where Berkeley argues that the Moon seen from the earth is numerically distinct from the Moon seen from close up, since the former is "a small, round, luminous flat" while the latter is "nothing like it," but is instead "a vast globe, with several unequal

risings and valleys” mentioned in *Alciphron* (36). Now Rickless is well aware that any materialist worth her salt “will scoff at Berkeley’s description of what is seen in this thought-experiment . . . and will say instead that there is only one moon, a moon that appears when seen from Earth to be a small, round, luminous flat, when it is actually in itself a vast opaque globe” (36). Rickless’s rebuttal is this:

But notice that the materialist must deny the very commonsensical statement that what one sees from Earth is small, luminous, round, and flat. Berkeley therefore not only has an *argument* for his bloated ontology; he can also point out that the materialist can only defend his ontological minimalism by running afoul of common sense. . . . If it is then pointed out to Berkeley that premises similar to [those of the APR] force him to accept a bloated ontology, his response is to embrace ontological profligacy for solid philosophical reasons that, unlike materialism, are consistent with common sense. (36)

My reply is this. I see nothing that “runs afoul of common sense” in holding the following view: When we say, on looking at the moon from Earth, that we see a small luminous disk, we are speaking with the vulgar; but we should think, with the learned, that what we see when we look at the moon from the Earth is a huge globe that only *looks* small, luminous, round, and flat when seen at night from 365,000 miles away.¹⁹

VI. Representationalism and Substance-Substratum

In this section I turn to points raised only by Atherton. In defense of her sweeping claim that I fall “almost at every turn” into the pitfalls of misrepresenting Berkeley’s arguments, she adduces two more “quick examples” (280), one concerning my treatments of Berkeley’s Likeness Principle and the other my treatment of his critique of material substance. I will argue that neither episode misrepresents Berkeley.

With respect to the Likeness Principle, Atherton correctly reports that

In his chapter on Berkeley’s claim that an idea can be like nothing but an idea, defended in *Principles* 8, Dicker allows that Berkeley’s arguments are conclusive against the view that “only ideas can be perceived and the material things these ideas supposedly resemble are in principle unperceivable” (163). But Berkeley’s arguments do not refute all representationalists, as those who hold that things are indeed perceived, while ideas are immediately perceived. (280)

Then she says:

¹⁹ In a discussion of the version of sections 5 and 6 of this paper held at the International Berkeley Conference in Krakow in summer 2013, George Pappas pointed out, in effect, that today and probably even in Berkeley’s own day, even the vulgar would say that the moon is a huge globe that only looks small, luminous, round, and flat when seen at night from the earth. So, my remark is no doubt a bit hyperbolic, but I hope that does not detract from its point.

What is puzzling here is that it seems that there is a sense in which Berkeley himself is a representationalist, since he holds that the sensible ideas we immediately perceive suggest to us further ideas habitually connected in experience. Thus we perceive distance, or, as explained at the end of the First Dialogue, we perceive a coach upon immediately perceiving its characteristic sound. Berkeley is showing that we do not have to believe in unperceivable things in order to meaningfully say we perceive coaches. Berkeley's discussion of the likeness principle in *Three Dialogues* in fact occurs in the context of this discussion of the way in which ideas represent other ideas. Dicker might retort that in his version of representationalism, the object perceived is not a collection of ideas, but then it is he who has the burden of showing how to characterize this object non-ideationally. (280)

This seems to me to combine truth and error in peculiar ways. It is true that Berkeley means to show "that we do not have to believe in unperceivable things in order to meaningfully say we perceive coaches." But on the version of representationalism that I say escapes refutation by the Likeness Principle, according to which only ideas are immediately perceived but material things are nonetheless perceived, we do not "have to believe in unperceivable things in order to meaningfully say we perceive coaches," anymore than on Berkeley's view. Again, it is true that for Berkeley, "the sensible ideas we immediately perceive suggest to us further ideas habitually connected in experience. Thus we perceive distance, or ... we perceive a coach upon immediately perceiving its characteristic sound" (280). But why should one think that this tenet makes Berkeley a kind of representationalist? Atherton is of course free to invent a new sense of "representationalist" on which Berkeley would count as a representationalist, but I do not see the point of that, and it strikes me as quite misleading, because representationalists paradigmatically hold that ideas represent external, mind-independent objects, not other ideas. In this connection, it is simply false to say that Berkeley's discussion of the likeness principle in *Three Dialogues* "occurs in the context of a discussion of the way in which ideas represent other ideas." The discussion begins with Hylas's saying,

To speak the Truth, *Philonous*, I think there are two kinds of objects, the one perceived immediately, which are likewise called *ideas*; the other are real things or external objects perceived by the mediation of ideas, which are their images and representations. Now I own, ideas do not exist without the mind; but the latter sort of objects do. I am sorry I did not think of this distinction sooner; it would probably have cut short your discourse. (W2 203)

A little later, there is this exchange:

PHILONOUS. But to pass over all this; if I understand you rightly, you say our Ideas do not exist without the mind; but that they are copies, Images, or representations of certain things that do.

HYLAS. You take me right.

PHILONOUS. They are then like external things.

HYLAS. They are. (W2 205)

These passages clearly show that Hylas and Philonous are not here discussing “the way in which ideas represent other ideas;” the issue they are debating is whether ideas represent material things.

Finally, the main point of my chapter on the Likeness Principle was that, in view of Berkeley’s argument for that principle, the principle cannot refute a representationalist who holds that mind-independent objects are perceived mediately, but not immediately. This required that I give a reconstruction of Berkeley’s argument for the Likeness Principle, that I explain the immediate/mediate distinction, and that I address Berkeley’s frequent claim in the *Dialogues* that whatever is perceived by the senses is perceived immediately—all of which I do. But it did not require that I take on “the burden of showing how to characterize [an] object non-ideationally,” whatever that is supposed to mean, over and above saying that the object exists independently of a mind, whether or not it is perceived.

Atherton’s final example concerns my treatment of Philonous’s attack on substance-substratum. She writes:

A similar sort of glitch occurs in Dicker’s discussion of Berkeley’s rejection of material substance. Dicker again expresses admiration for Berkeley’s negative arguments, but claims that a “friend of matter” would still be free to adopt a “bundle theory,” that “a material thing is a collection of co-instantiated properties” (193). Again, it seems relevant to ask, but isn’t this Berkeley’s view, and indeed, Dicker quotes *Principles* 49, where he says Berkeley appears to endorse a bundle theory. Dicker, however, has something slightly different from what Berkeley would endorse in his mind, since he takes *his* bundle theory to be a way of adopting “the belief in extended, solid things that exist independently of being perceived by any mind” (193). But mind-independence is exactly the issue at stake in Berkeley’s rejection of material substance while endorsing a belief in solid, extended things, and here, Dicker appears to be helping himself to it for free. (280-81)

Aside from Atherton’s unwarranted assumption that not going along with her suggestion that Berkeley should be called a representationalist was a “glitch,” this passage puts a demand on my discussion of substance that it was plainly never intended to meet. It was not intended to establish that “the belief in extended, solid things that exist independently of being perceived by any mind” is a true belief (though I do indeed hold it to be true). Rather, it was intended only to show that Berkeley’s infinite regress argument against substance–substratum does not establish that this belief is *false*, since it is open to a materialist to adopt a bundle theory. It was necessary to make this point because, as I show in the book, in the passage in question, as well as in parallel passages in *PHK* 16, 35, and 92, Berkeley simply equates “material substratum” with matter, thus wrongly implying that refuting belief in the former refutes belief in the latter.²⁰ Furthermore, in making this point, I tried to be fair to Berkeley by saying this:

²⁰ To the best of my knowledge, this important point was first made by Bennett. See his *Locke, Berkeley, Hume*, 70-83 and his *Six Philosophers*, 2: 149-52.

This is not to say that Berkeley's attack on *substratum* is completely unfair to Locke or to other 17th and 18th century philosophers who believed in matter. For although it would go too far to say that they simply conflated the concept of matter with that of *substratum*, as Berkeley appears to have done, they did hold that the substance theory is the *true theory* about the nature of matter, or at least about the nature of particular material things. Berkeley's argument gives us a strong reason to reject that view. But his argument does not give us any reason to reject the existence of matter; nor, by the same token, does it provide any support for his idealism. (*BI* 193)

Conclusions

In response to Rickless, I have argued for three claims:

- (1) He does not dispute my view that in *PHK* Berkeley offers no support for his thesis that sensible things are only ideas, and his disagreements with my analysis of the parts of *PHK* that he discusses are more apparent than real.
- (2) The pain–pleasure argument, whether we reconstruct it as he does or as I do, is a bad argument that fails to show that any sensible qualities are merely ideas.
- (3) The argument from perceptual relativity is not, *pace* Rickless (and Muehlmann and Atherton), merely an argument against naïve realism, but also a positive argument for idealism, and so taken it is, as Rickless himself (and Atherton) agrees, a bad argument.

In response to Atherton, I have argued that not even one of her three examples supports her sweeping charge that “at almost every turn,” I fall into the pitfalls of misrepresenting Berkeley's arguments.

I conclude that neither Rickless nor Atherton have given any good reason to reject my critique of Berkeley's idealism.²¹

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²¹ I thank Stephen Daniel for giving me the opportunity, and indeed for encouraging me, to write a detailed response to both of my main critics for *Berkeley Studies*.