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## *Berkeley's Theory of Common Sense*

Matthew Holtzman

**Abstract:** This essay situates Berkeley's views on common sense within the context of eighteenth-century debates about the nature of common sense. It argues that in his *Notebooks*, Berkeley develops a theory according to which to possess common sense is to use the faculties of the mind properly, and that Berkeley's approach to common sense can be understood as a response to John Toland's epistemology of religion. It concludes with a discussion of consequences of this analysis for our understanding of Berkeley's later works, his methods, and his overarching philosophical aims.

In *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (PHK) and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (DHP), Berkeley argues that matter does not exist (PHK 9),<sup>1</sup> that spirit is the only substance (PHK 6), and that physical objects are not causes but signs (PHK 66). If these claims initially shock readers' philosophical sensibilities, the effort required to come to terms with them will seem familiar enough. One must take pains to work one's way into a perspective from which they can be seen as not only consistent but mutually supporting or even inevitable. Yet Berkeley seems firmly to deny that effort is required, for he repeatedly insists that his philosophy agrees with common sense: immaterialism is difficult to accept not because it is abstruse, but because readers come to it corrupted by modern philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Learning to accept immaterialism is not like an initiation into an esoteric system of thought, but, as Berkeley claims in the preface to the *Three Dialogues*, like a long journey home (DHP 2:168).

Berkeley's appraisal of his philosophy has provoked strong and dismissive responses. When Samuel Johnson kicked a stone to refute Berkeley,<sup>3</sup> he also expressed the view that Berkeley was deeply wrong to consider his philosophy commonsensical. Near contemporaries like David Hume, who considered immaterialism a variety of skepticism,<sup>4</sup> and Thomas Reid, who considered Berkeley's view of his own philosophy amusing and ridiculous,<sup>5</sup> agreed; and this attitude has persisted. Dismissal remains a common response not only among Berkeley scholars but among recent philosophers working on common sense.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, eds. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop (9 vols.; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1948-57), 2:45.

<sup>2</sup> DHP 2:168; DHP 2:172; DHP 2:234; DHP 2:244; DHP 2:259; DHP 2:262.

<sup>3</sup> *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. ed. Lawrence Fitzroy Powell (6 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-50), 1:471.

<sup>4</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. T.L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.16.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. Derek Brookes (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 439: "It is pleasant, to observe the fruitless pains which Bishop Berkeley took to shew that his system of the non-existence of the material world did not contradict the sentiments of the vulgar but only those of the philosophers."

<sup>6</sup> Among philosophers writing on Berkeley, Bennett and Yandell have been among the most dismissive, and Rescher and Lemos have made similar appraisals. See Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 2:177; David Yandell, "Berkeley on

More charitable commentators are inclined to treat Berkeley's views on common sense as a puzzle to be solved either by showing how immaterialism can be seen as intuitive or, failing that, by domesticating Berkeley's views on common sense and minimizing his commitment to its philosophical significance.<sup>7</sup> These approaches have the virtue of making Berkeley's thought more intelligible to contemporary readers who find it odd that Berkeley considered immaterialism obvious. However, they presuppose that contemporary readers already understand what Berkeley means when he claims that a philosophical view is commonsensical, and so they neglect the context in which Berkeley developed his views on common sense.<sup>8</sup>

As a general rule, the kind of interpretive puzzles that Berkeley's views on common sense present should call for historical diagnosis. Philosophical analysis should be coordinated with historical analysis so as to determine the extent to which the problems Berkeley's views on immaterialism and common sense seem to raise are artifacts of our ignorance or of historically contingent ways of framing the issues involved. In this particular case, that is of the claim that a commonsensical belief should be widely held or intuitively true, contextualization might well seem unnecessary. Of course some contextualization may be required. It may be necessary to consider whether Berkeley or his contemporaries would have considered his views intuitive for reasons that are no longer compelling.<sup>9</sup> Yet it would be paradoxical to suggest that Berkeley should have had a *theory* of the nature of something as apparently pre-theoretical as common sense. I suggest that scholars have yet to consider Berkeley's place in the history of views about

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Common Sense and the Privacy of Ideas," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12 (1995): 411-23; Nicholas Rescher, *Common Sense: A New Look at an Old Philosophical Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005), 209; and Noah Lemos, *Common Sense: A Contemporary Defense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>7</sup> George Pappas [*Berkeley's Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 213-34; and "Adversary Metaphysics," *Philosophy Research Archives* 9 (1983), 571-86] argues that, for Berkeley, "common sense" is a term that modifies beliefs or propositions, that the principal commitments of immaterialism are more intuitive than one might otherwise have suspected, and that compatibility with common sense is not an especially significant theoretical virtue for Berkeley. David Kline criticizes many of the details of Pappas' earlier articulation of his interpretation but adopts the same kind of approach; see Kline, "Berkeley's Theory of Common Sense," *International Studies in Philosophy* 19 (1987), 21-31. John R. Roberts [*A Metaphysics for the Mob* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 124-45] suggests that although the principal commitments of immaterialism are not intuitive for 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophers, they would have been intuitive for many of Berkeley's contemporaries. Seth Bordner ["Berkeley's 'Defense' of 'Common Sense'," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 49 (2011), 315-38] argues that Berkeley does not aim to prove that immaterialism is a common sense philosophical position but to show that immaterialism "vindicates" common sense.

<sup>8</sup> Here, then, the principle of charity is "stultifying" in Gary Hatfield's sense of the word. See Hatfield, "The Workings of the Intellect: Mind and Psychology," in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind: The Logic of Ideas and Faculty Psychology in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Patricia Easton (Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing, 1997), 38. Developing "charitable" readings of Berkeley on common sense forecloses the possibility that attention to his views could illuminate the historical origins of contemporary conceptions of common sense.

<sup>9</sup> Some recent commentators (e.g., Bordner, Roberts) have noted that Berkeley's contemporaries could have thought of his views as commonsensical or intuitive.

the nature of common sense because it has been assumed that, in this respect, “common sense” has no history.<sup>10</sup>

In this essay, I suggest that this assumption is associated with a theory of the nature of common sense that Berkeley did not share, and I present a new interpretation of Berkeley’s views on common sense that foregrounds the context in which he developed them.

In the first section of this essay, I situate Berkeley’s views from the *Notebooks* in the context of debates about the nature of common sense at the turn of the eighteenth century, specifically, debates between John Locke, John Toland, and Edward Stillingfleet. Drawing on this context, I argue, in the first part of the second section, that Berkeley developed his own distinctive theory of common sense in response to Locke’s views on the nature of certainty and I argue that, in his *Notebooks*, Berkeley holds that to possess common sense is to properly use one’s mind. Then, in the second part of section two, I show how Berkeley’s views on common sense were designed to challenge Toland’s epistemology of religion.

Though I do not think it is possible fully to understand Berkeley’s views on the relationship between immaterialism and common sense without appealing to Berkeley’s later works,<sup>11</sup> I argue that Berkeley’s account from the *Notebooks* provides enough evidence to suggest that it would be fruitful to reframe the problems that typically arise in understanding this relationship. Instead of holding that a person possesses common sense in virtue of believing a certain set of propositions or accepting a certain view of the world, Berkeley should be read as holding that a view is commonsensical only if it is the kind of view that would be accepted by those who properly use their minds. I conclude,

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<sup>10</sup> Hatfield suggests that at least some historians of philosophy fail to adopt an “historically-oriented philosophical methodology” because they read texts in the history of philosophy primarily to solve current philosophical problems and not to understand them on their own terms. See Gary Hatfield, “The History of Philosophy as Philosophy,” in *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy*, eds. Tom Sorrell and G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 91. Though I do not deny that some scholars have neglected Berkeley’s views on common sense because their treatments are primarily motivated by contemporary philosophical concerns, I propose here that this neglect is better understood as a failure to recognize that contextual sensitivity is required. Desmond Clarke’s introduction to *Berkeley: Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, ix-xxxvi) is a clear illustration of this tendency. Berkeley’s claim that immaterialism is commonsensical is, for Clarke (ix-x), the paradox at the core of Berkeley’s philosophy, and Clarke claims that it can be resolved only through historical analysis. However, Clarke does not mean that historical analysis is required to understand what Berkeley meant by calling immaterialism commonsensical; rather, he means that historical analysis should reveal why Berkeley would have presented his philosophy as intuitive. On the basis of a consideration of the culture and politics of eighteenth-century Ireland, Clarke suggests that Berkeley presented immaterialism as plausible for much the same reason that Swift presented his proposal that the children of the poor should be eaten as “modest”: the *Principles* is to English metaphysics and epistemology as *A Modest Proposal* is to English social and political philosophy.

<sup>11</sup> A complete treatment of Berkeley’s views on common sense would require an analysis of *Alciphron* since it is there that Berkeley defines “common sense” (*Alc*, 6.12, 3:241) and further develops his conception of the nature of common sense.

in the third section, by examining the implications of this analysis focusing on implications for readings of the *Principles* and *Dialogues* and for an appreciation of Berkeley's place in the history of early modern philosophy.

### I. Berkeley, Toland, and Stillingfleet on Common Sense

Berkeley's *Notebooks* are epigrammatic, often enigmatic, records of sophisticated internal dialogues with Locke and with Locke's admirers and critics. It is well established that Berkeley engaged directly with many of the issues at stake in debates between Stillingfleet, Toland and Locke in the *Notebooks*.<sup>12</sup> He refers to satisfying "the Stillingfleetians" in entry 700, and entry 720 is usually thought to refer disparagingly to Toland. Toland is one of the "proud men" who call matters of scripture which are above reason "blind, popish, implicit, [and] irrational."<sup>13</sup> This hypothesis is plausible since the principal aim of Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious*, was to undermine the political authority of the clergy through an attack on religious mysteries, an aim which, naturally, "set the whole clergy against him."<sup>14</sup> What has gone unrecognized is that Berkeley

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<sup>12</sup> The central issue in the debate between Locke and Stillingfleet is the status of the doctrine of the Trinity. Specifically, Stillingfleet worried that Locke's theory of knowledge "discarded substance out of the reasonable parts of the world" leaving no basis for the doctrine, and so the debate concerned many of the most fundamental principles of Locke's metaphysics and epistemology. See Edward Stillingfleet, *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Henry Mortlock, 1697), 234. Toland is a party to this debate since Stillingfleet's *Vindication* is principally a response to *Christianity not Mysterious* (hereafter: CNM). Stillingfleet does not address Locke directly until the tenth and last chapter. Kenneth Pearce has pointed out to me that Stillingfleet's expression of frustration with Locke's views on substance became a slogan in the debate, and that the slogan is repeated in the *Notebooks* 512: "I ought not to be accus'd of discarding Substance out of the reasonable World," and in a slightly modified form in the *Principles* where Berkeley answers the objection that immaterialism implies that "all that is real and substantial in nature is banished out of the world" (PHK 34). Keota Fields [*Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 170] points out that section 17 of the *Principles* is copied from one of Locke's letters to Stillingfleet. It is clear that Berkeley followed this debate closely, and Bracken goes so far as to suggest that Berkeley's chief motivation for publishing the *Principles* and *Dialogues* was to defend an orthodox view on the immortality of the soul in light of the "unsatisfactory status that the soul's immortality had been left in, particularly by the Locke-Stillingfleet controversy." See Harry M. Bracken, "Berkeley on the Immortality of the Soul," *Modern Schoolman* 37 (1959/1960), 197. In the *Notebooks*, Berkeley also engages with Locke and Stillingfleet over the meaning of terms such as "substance" (NB 700) and "Trinity" (NB 584).

<sup>13</sup> "When I say I will reject all Propositions wherein I know not fully & adequately & clearly so far as knowable the Thing meant thereby. This is not to be extended to propositions in the Scripture. I speak of Matters of Reason & Philosophy not Revelation. In this I think an Humble Implicit faith becomes us just (where we cannot comprehend & Understand the proposition) such as a popish peasant gives to propositions he hears at Mass in Latin. This proud men may call blind, popish, implicit, irrational. For my part I think it more irrational to pretend to dispute at cavil & ridicule holy mysteries i.e. propositions about things out of our reach that are altogether above our knowlege out of our reach. W<sup>n</sup> I shall come to plenary knowlege of the meaning of any Text then I shall yield an explicit belief" (NB 720). David Berman suggests that Berkeley alludes to Toland in this passage. See *The Irish Enlightenment and Counterenlightenment*, ed. David Berman (3 vols.; Bristol: Thoemmes, 2002), 1: xiii-xiv.

<sup>14</sup> See Justin Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696-1722* (Vancouver: Manchester University Press, 2003), 69. A religious mystery is an article of

considered Toland one of the men who “with a supercilious Pride disdain the common informations of sense” (NB 747-48).<sup>15</sup> This is significant because, from Berkeley’s perspective, it is disdain of the senses that leads to skepticism and Berkeley composed the *Principles* and *Dialogues* in order to combat skepticism and atheism.<sup>16</sup> Although Toland was notorious for his attack on mysteries, I suggest that Berkeley was no less provoked by Toland’s insinuation that those whose faith exceeds their knowledge lack common sense (which Berkeley intimately associates with Toland’s disdain for the senses).

According to Toland, everyone knows that human beings possess certain faculties or capacities: a faculty for forming ideas or perceptions, a faculty of affirming and denying the agreement or disagreement between perceptions or ideas, and a faculty of loving what seems good and hating what seems evil. “The right use of these faculties,” he explains, “is what we call Common Sense or reason in general.”<sup>17</sup>

Many of Berkeley’s contemporaries used the term “common sense” in a manner that presupposes a definition in terms of the functioning or the use of the mind.<sup>18</sup> It is

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faith that is above reason. An article of faith is a religious doctrine typically included in the list of those that one must accept in order to be considered a believer, and a doctrine is above reason if it is incomprehensible without special revelation or enlightenment or comprehensible only through analogies, parables, or metaphors. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, then, because it is often, though not always, considered to be an article of faith and because the claim that God is both three and one is usually considered to be incomprehensible.

<sup>15</sup> I return to these passages several times below, and so include them in full here. “It is a strange thing & deserves our attention, that the more time & pains men have consum’d in the study of Philosophy by so much the more they look upon themselves to be ignorant & weak Creatures, they discover flaws & imperfections in their Faculties w<sup>ch</sup> Other Men never spy out. They find themselves under a Necessity of admitting many inconsistent irreconcilable opinions for true. There is nothing they touch with their hand or behold with their eyes but has its dark sides much larger & more numerous than w<sup>t</sup> is perceiv’d. & at length turn scepticks at least in most things etc. I imagine all this proceeds from etc Exord: Introd:” (NB 747).

“These men with a supercilious Pride disdain the common single informations of sense. They grasp at Knowledge by sheaves & bundles (‘tis well if catching at two much at once they hold nothing but emptyness & air). They in y<sup>e</sup> depths of their understanding Contemplate Abstract Ideas. etc Introduction” (NB 748).

<sup>16</sup> There are many paths that lead from materialism, through skepticism, to atheism for Berkeley. To mention just one: materialists claim that unthinking mind-independent objects exist, but they cannot know this, since the objects of knowledge are ideas, and though ideas might represent physical objects they cannot be identical to them. So materialists must doubt the existence of all physical objects, even their own bodies, and so materialism leads to skepticism (PHK 88). Skepticism leads to atheism since those who doubt the existence of something as clearly obvious as the existence of the world will naturally be “tempted to entertain suspicions concerning the most important truths, which they had hitherto held sacred and unquestionable” and will eventually become atheists (DHP 2:172). See the title page of the *Three Dialogues* for a concise statement of Berkeley’s philosophical aims and motivations (DHP 2:147).

<sup>17</sup> John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (London: Sam Buckley, 1696), 9.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, see Anthony Collins: “What our *Casulist* hath said, or any one can say to disprove this, I refer to any *Reader* indued but with common sense to Judge” [*An answer to Dr. Scot’s cases against dissenters concerning forms of prayer and the fallacy of the story of Commin, plainly discovered* (A. Baldwin: London, 1700), 18]. Or Edward Stillingfleet: “It is very absurd to demand of

somewhat unusual, then, for Toland to define “common sense” as the proper use of all of the faculties of the mind and not as a separate faculty, like reason. Although Toland’s definition may be somewhat idiosyncratic, it was conspicuous as a subject of controversy. In his debate with Locke, Stillingfleet refers to it in his defense of Christian mysteries, specifically, in his defense of a distinction between faith and reason.

In the *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, responding to Toland and Locke among others, Stillingfleet claims that it is reasonable to assent to doctrines, such as the Trinity, that are not certain.

We differ not with them about the right use of the Faculties which God hath given us, of right Understanding such matters as are offer’d to our Assent. For it is to no purpose to require them to believe, who cannot use the Faculties which are necessary in order to it.<sup>19</sup>

Stillingfleet, like Toland, claims that the principal points of faith must agree with common sense: they must be such as to be believed by those who use their minds in the right way. One of the aims of the *Vindication* is to show that to assent to uncertain propositions is not to misuse the mind. Although Stillingfleet does not adopt Toland’s account of the proper use of the mind, he criticizes it at a crucial juncture in what was meant to serve as a reply to *Christianity not Mystrious*, and seems to accept Toland’s approach to defining common sense in terms of the proper use of the faculties.

This exchange sets the context in which Berkeley’s own account of common sense should be understood.<sup>20</sup> Since Berkeley engaged with Toland and Stillingfleet in his

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us the *Absolute Certainty* of our *Faith* in such things, wherein we never pretend to a *Certainty* of *Faith*; but of common Sense and Reason proceeding according to the *Rule of Scripture*” [*A discourse concerning the nature and grounds of the certainty of faith in answer to J. S., his Catholick letters* (London: Henry Mortlock, 1688), 30]. Thomas Reid defines “common sense” as a state of sanity or mental health, and, more specifically, as the God-given capacity for judgment, and he argues that the term may be used synonymously with “reason” in contexts in which one judges (by “reason”) that a proposition is self-evidently true or false (*Intellectual Powers*, 422). Reid is anxious to prove that his view of the nature of common sense is the standard or common view and not the mistaken “philosophical” understanding of common sense that he attributes to Locke. It is significant that Reid, who was very well acquainted with Berkeley’s works, considers Berkeley to be among those philosophers who share his view of the nature of common sense, and put “as much stress upon common sense as any philosopher that has come after him” (*Intellectual Powers*, 342). As I mentioned above, Reid also believed that it was absurd for Berkeley to think that immaterialism is commonsensical, and I suggest that an evaluation of this claim would require a comparative analysis of Reid’s and Berkeley’s views of the nature of the mind. This, however, is beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>19</sup> Stillingfleet, *Vindication*, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, I agree with Fourny-Etchegaray, who claims that Berkeley’s views on common sense were developed in response to debates between Stillingfleet and Toland (Claire Fourny-Etchegaray, “Note sur les rapports entre raison et sens commun chez Stillingfleet et Berkeley,” in *Berkeley’s Alciphron: English Text and Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Geneviève Brykman, Laurent Jaffro, and Claire Schwartz [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009], 353-55). Fourny-Etchegaray does not, however, treat Berkeley’s discussion of common sense in the *Notebooks* against the backdrop of this context.



*Notebooks*, specifically with the debate between Locke and Stillingfleet which prominently includes Stillingfleet's *Vindication*, it is good practice to see whether entries in the *Notebooks* should be interpreted in light of this debate. Since it has been established that Berkeley engages with issues central to this debate at precisely the point where he first announces that he is a "common sense" philosopher, his response to Toland should be seen as structurally similar to Stillingfleet's. He endorses Toland's approach to defining "common sense" in terms of the proper use of the mind, but, like Stillingfleet, he rejects many of the details of Toland's account of how the faculties of the mind should be used. And like Stillingfleet, Berkeley is motivated to do so because of the dangerous consequences of Toland's views on common sense.

In *Christianity not Mysterious*, Toland insists that he can hold nothing as an article of his religion unless it is certain, and suggests that this religious epistemology is commonsensical.<sup>21</sup> Since common sense is the proper use of the cognitive faculties, those who apportion their belief according to rules other than those that Toland allows are not using their minds as they ought.

Toland's account of religious knowledge infuriated Berkeley and, like Stillingfleet, Berkeley sought justification for belief in indemonstrable propositions. As Berkeley saw it, the pride of freethinkers like Toland is a twofold narrowness: on the one hand freethinkers disdain those religious mysteries which are above "knowledge" (as they define it); on the other hand they disdain the principles of knowledge, the "common informations of sense." In the next section of the paper, I argue that Berkeley, in the *Notebooks*, developed an epistemology designed to humble the pride of freethinkers and that he did so, in part, by challenging the view that one can be certain only of those things that one has judged to be certain.

## II. Certainty and Common Sense in Berkeley's *Notebooks*

Many passages from the second half of Berkeley's *Notebook A* explore the relationship between certainty, knowledge, and demonstration.<sup>22</sup> In this section, I argue that Berkeley, in the course of these reflections, develops a novel account of the nature of common sense or the proper use of the faculties of the mind in response to Toland's epistemology of religion. In part A, I show that this early and somewhat limited account of the nature of common sense derives from what Berkeley refers to as his "doctrine of certainty" which he develops as a response to Locke's doctrine of certainty by ideas; a doctrine which Berkeley claims "comes to nothing" (NB 729).<sup>23</sup> I explain why Locke's view, by Berkeley's lights, comes to nothing, focusing on his account of perceptions of the identity

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<sup>21</sup> Toland recognizes that indemonstrable, "self-evident" propositions are also certain, but he derives his account of what it means to grasp indemonstrable propositions from Locke, specifically from Locke's account of intuition. I discuss Berkeley's response to Locke's account of intuitive knowledge in the following section.

<sup>22</sup> NB 718 ff. and especially NB 718-50. Winkler treats these passages at length but for different purposes [Kenneth Winkler, *Berkeley: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 76-102].

<sup>23</sup> The account is early and limited because Berkeley develops the view considerably in a later work, *Alciphron*. See section three below.

and existence of objects. Berkeley rejects Locke's account of certainty and replaces it with his own according to which simple perception constitutes certainty. This account of certainty becomes central to Berkeley's early conception of common sense, and, in part B, I explain how his view of common sense can be understood as a reply to Toland.

a. *Perception, Certainty, and Common Sense*

According to Locke, knowledge is nothing but the perception of agreement or disagreement between two ideas (*Essay* 4.1.2).<sup>24</sup> Since every perception of agreement or disagreement yields certainty (*Essay* 4.2.1), one is certain just in case one knows. Knowledge, then, requires an act of the mind, a perception of an agreement or disagreement between ideas, or between ideas and the real essences of which they are supposedly copies or representations. This means that certainty requires judgment: an act of affirmation or negation. Once such a judgment has been made, the mind forms a mental proposition, and it is this proposition which is then an item of knowledge known to be true (*Essay* 4.5.2-5).

A mental proposition, according to Locke, is formed when "the ideas in our understanding are, without the use of words, put together, or separated by the mind, perceiving or judging of their agreement or disagreement" (*Essay* 4.5.5). So for each meaningful verbal proposition, like "The apple is red," there is, or at least can be, a corresponding mental proposition, which seems to be a mental object with a propositional structure wherein, for instance, an idea of an apple stands to an (abstract) idea of redness in a relation of agreement.

One of the reasons that Locke introduces mental propositions is to provide a two-part account of the truth conditions for utterances. A verbal proposition is said to be verbally or nominally true whenever the words are joined in a manner that corresponds to the structure of the mental proposition it is intended to express. Verbal propositions are *really* true, when they are "verbally" or "nominally" true, *and* it is known that the ideas that constitute the mental proposition are "capable of having a real existence in nature" (*Essay* 4.5.8). So people are really certain when they affirm a mental proposition that is really true.

Berkeley argues, however, that real truth in Locke's sense cannot always depend on the existence of mental propositions. Locke's account cannot apply to verbal propositions of the form "An x is an x" (e.g. "A man is a man") since mental propositions of this form would be "nonsensical," by which Berkeley means empty or insignificant (NB 592).

Locke says all our knowledge is about Particulars. if so, pray w<sup>t</sup> is the following ratiocination but a jumble of words: Omnis Homo est animal, omne animal vivit, ergo omnis Homo vivit. It amounts (if you annex particular Ideas to the Words

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<sup>24</sup> John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). ed. Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

animal & vivit) to no more than this. Omnis Homo est Homo, omnis Homo est Homo, ergo omnis Homo est Homo. A mere Sport & trifling with sounds. (NB 668)

Homo est Homo etc comes at last to Petrus est Petrus etc Now if these identical Propositions are sought after in the Mind they will not be found. There are no identical mental Propositions tis all about sounds & terms. (NB 728)

The second passage continues a line of thought from the first. “Homo est animal” becomes “Homo est homo,” and ultimately “Petrus est Petrus,” when one annexes particular ideas to one’s words because the only idea of a particular animal that could agree with the idea of a particular man, Peter, would be the idea of that man itself, the idea of Peter. Part of Berkeley’s problem concerns the meaning of general terms, an issue that Berkeley does not resolve until the *Principles*. Both “homo” and “animal” are general terms, each of which refers indifferently to any member of a set of particular ideas, so “Homo est animal” is meaningful because it tells us that the ideas to which “homo” refers comprise a subset of the ideas to which “animal” refers.

However, Berkeley also suggests, in the *Notebooks*, that the propositions “Homo est Homo” and “Petrus est Petrus” (the propositions to which all of the statements in the syllogism from NB 668 supposedly reduce) are meaningless, and this is a problem that is not solved by Berkeley’s theory of general terms. The theory may seem to address it, since Berkeley offers the theory as an alternative to the doctrine of abstract ideas, and one reason why “Homo est Homo” could be considered meaningless is because there can be no such thing as an abstract idea of man in general in Locke’s sense.<sup>25</sup> This cannot be Berkeley’s primary point, however, for one could have a particular idea of Petrus, and yet Berkeley says that “Petrus est Petrus” is also “all about sounds & terms.” The point, rather, is that there can be no mental proposition expressed by strings of words like “Petrus est Petrus” or “A man is a man” because identification does not require an act of judgment.<sup>26</sup>

If knowledge consists in the perception of agreement and disagreement between ideas as Locke thinks that it does, and if propositions like “A man is a man” are nonsensical for the reasons outlined above, then (strictly speaking) whether ideas are what they are would be unknowable, and knowledge and certainty would only apply to perceptions of relations and coexistence (the other varieties of Lockean knowledge). But this pared

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<sup>25</sup> I have in mind Berkeley’s well-known remarks concerning triangles at section 14 of the introduction to the *Principles*. Berkeley develops his theory of general terms in section 16 of the introduction to the *Principles*.

<sup>26</sup> To be clear, the issue at hand is the identification of objects and should be distinguished from noticing objects or recognizing them. It is possible to see something without noticing it, and at any time there will be many objects in one’s visual field of which one is unaware. It is also possible to notice an object without knowing what it is, and so in that case as well, recognition might require additional mental activity. Still, it is not clear that there is any distinction to be drawn between seeing (and recognizing) a rock and seeing (and recognizing) that the rock is what it is and not some other thing. Locke offers a plausible account of the perception of self-identity. The problem is that it is meant to serve as an account of the certainty that ideas are what they are and not some other thing, and it does not seem as integral to perception or as immediate as it needs to be for this purpose.

down, minimalist account cannot stand, because then *all* certainty will prove to be nominal since one will be certain only of propositions not of things. For certainty about the relationship between two things requires the formation of a mental proposition the terms of which are ideas of those things, a proposition in which the ideas are perceived to agree or disagree, and this will be impossible if one cannot be certain the ideas in question are what they are. Berkeley reflects on this consequence when he writes:

It seems to me that we have no certainty about Ideas, but only about words. Tis improper to say I am certain I see, I feel etc.: there are no Mental propositions form'd answering to these Words & in simple perception tis allowed by all there is no affirmation or negation & consequently no certainty. (NB 731)

If, as Locke maintains, there is knowledge of real existence and identity, then there can be certainty about both propositions and objects in virtue of the fact that one can be certain of the truth of mental propositions concerning the identity and existence of objects. As previously mentioned, Berkeley denies that there are any mental propositions corresponding to strings of words such as “A man is a man,” and here he notes that similar considerations undermine the possibility of perceptual knowledge. Berkeley denies that there are mental propositions that correspond to statements such as “I see a tree.” Although I may have a visible idea of a tree when I utter the sentence “I see a tree,” I do not perceive any agreement or disagreement that would allow me to say that I have any kind of certainty about this idea, at least on Locke’s account. The same criticism applies, according to Berkeley, to tautological propositions expressing self-knowledge. He suggests, for instance, that Locke will have trouble accounting for the *cogito*: “Cogito ergo sum, Tautology, no mental Proposition. answering thereto” (NB 738).

This proposition is significant because it is one which not only Locke,<sup>27</sup> but many others would consider to be an indubitable item of knowledge. It is, for this reason, meant to serve as a straightforward *reductio* of Locke’s theory with the suppressed conclusion that, according to Locke, one cannot be said to be certain of one’s own existence. On my reading, Berkeley holds that no Lockean mental proposition corresponds to the words “Cogito ergo sum,” because in this case, as in the case of tautologies with terms like “Homo” and “Petrus,” one does not perceive an agreement or disagreement between two ideas. This is either because there can be no idea of soul without thought (NB 704), or because our idea of the soul is nothing other than an idea of a thinking, active thing.<sup>28</sup> The former suggestion is an application of what might be called Berkeley’s “containment” thesis: there can be no Lockean mental proposition corresponding to verbal propositions in which the idea expressed by the subject contains the idea expressed by the predicate. This thesis is not limited to proper containment and so it applies to “Homo est Homo” and “Petrus est Petrus,” but it also applies to a range of other propositions in which containment is proper, underlining the claim that even propositions concerning relations and coexistence cannot be really known on Locke’s account.

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<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, the opening of *Essay* 2.1.1.

<sup>28</sup> For present purposes, the issue of whether one can have an idea of the soul, according to Berkeley, has been bracketed, since Berkeley’s position on this issue does not seem directly relevant to determining his views on Locke’s doctrine of certainty.

There are four sorts of Propositions. Gold is a Metall, Gold is yellow; Gold is fixt, Gold is not a stone. Of w<sup>ch</sup> ye 1st 2nd & 3d are only Nominal & have no mental propositions answering them. (NB 793)

Also of non-coexistence as Gold is not blue. (NB 793a)

Here, Berkeley operates with a complex idea of gold compounded of many of its well-known qualities. For this reason, he claims that the first three propositions are nominal: on Locke's theory these propositions concern the nominal essence of the term *gold*.<sup>29</sup> They are *only* nominal, that is, purely verbal truths, because they do not express mental propositions, and I suggest that they do not express mental propositions because they fall afoul of the containment thesis. In each of the first three statements, the subject contains the predicate and this means that the statement "Gold is a metal," for instance, does not express a judgment in which the mind compares two ideas. The final two propositions, "Gold is not a stone" and "Gold is not blue," express mental propositions because the complex idea of gold does not contain the ideas "blue" or "stone." In both cases, two ideas are compared and are found to disagree. Here again, Berkeley's remarks are meant to undermine Locke's doctrine of certainty by ideas. Any account of certainty should show us that all five of the propositions considered are known, but Locke's account only succeeds for two of them.

Berkeley applies the containment thesis quite generally then, but for present purposes, I am interested in the extent to which it undermines Locke's account of the knowledge of the identity and existence of objects and in Berkeley's response. Locke feels that knowledge claims about the identity and existence of physical objects must be understood in terms of judgments that relations of existence and identity obtain. Concerning the existence of objects, he writes to Stillingfleet, that

the two ideas, that in [this case] are perceived to agree, and do thereby produce knowledge, are the idea of actual sensation (which is an action whereof I have a clear and distinct idea) and the idea of actual existence of something without me that causes that sensation. And what other certainty your lordship has by your senses of the existing of anything without you, but the perceived connexion of those two ideas, I would gladly know.<sup>30</sup> (WJL, 3:360)

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<sup>29</sup> It is not clear what Berkeley would say about the proposition "Gold is fixt" where this is a report of the discovery that gold is not a volatile element, though there seems to be no reason to think that he would deny that, in this case, a mental proposition is formed. Many thanks to Sam Rickless for drawing my attention to these passages from the *Notebooks*.

<sup>30</sup> This passage has not always been thought to express Locke's considered view of sensitive knowledge, but Newman has persuasively argued that it ought to be; see Lex Newman, "Locke on Sensitive Knowledge and the Veil of Perception – Four Misconceptions," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004), 280. As I have indicated, the problem with Lockean sensitive knowledge is that (1) Locke claims that knowledge always consists in the perception of an agreement or disagreement between ideas while also holding that (2) knowledge of the existence of objects is possible (which, it seems, cannot be explained in terms of an agreement between ideas). This has led some commentators (e.g., Yolton), to deny the first claim and defend an interpretation of Locke according to which he

Locke's challenge to Stillingfleet could be met in at least two ways. It could be met by proposing a different pair of ideas between which an agreement is perceived when one becomes certain that an object exists, or by proposing a new account of knowledge according to which one can perceive that an object exists without perceiving an agreement between ideas. Berkeley takes the latter approach with respect to both perception of identity and real existence. He suggests that certainty that something is what it is is not a matter of passing judgment on a proposition or comparing an idea with itself. The position presented in 731 (quoted above) is deeply mistaken: "certainty, real certainty, is of sensible Ideas *pro hic & nunc*. I may be certain without affirmation or negation" (NB 731a). That is to say, we must, with the mob, place certainty in the senses (NB 740). On Berkeley's account, an act of simple perception yields certainty about the existence and identity of ideas, so there is no act of judgment in perceptions of existence and identity, and thoughts about the identity of a thing or its existence do not possess a propositional structure. Instead of two ideas standing in a particular relation to one another (i.e., a relation that admits of being perceived and affirmed), there is only one idea, the existence of which is certain because it is perceived.

Consequently, according to Berkeley, the senses operating independently of the faculty of judgment are reliable vehicles of certainty, and this requires a reconception of the limits of certainty and a new account of the cognitive state of being certain. Locke develops an account of habitual knowledge which allows him to say that a person can be said to know a proposition of which s/he retains the memory, but does not occurrently recall, so long as that proposition was previously known and the person in question remembers perceiving an agreement or disagreement between the relevant ideas (*Essay* 4.1.8). However, on Locke's account of the occurrent cognitive state of certainty, certainty is a state of awareness, for example, that things exist or are what they are. Perceiving an agreement between ideas and judging that it obtains are acts of which one is necessarily aware, at least while performing them.<sup>31</sup> It is possible, then, to perceive an object without knowing whether it exists, since in order to know that the object exists, one would need to perceive an agreement between ideas of actual sensation and actual existence. Assuming that it is possible to form these ideas in the first place, which is not clear, the ideas must be called up and examined.<sup>32</sup>

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does not restrict knowledge to the perception of agreements or disagreements between ideas. On such an interpretation, this response to Stillingfleet must be some kind of aberration, and, according to Yolton, Locke is distorting his account here under pressure from Stillingfleet. Newman suggests that this would be incredible since, "Stillingfleet's attacks [in the letter to which Locke is responding] are aimed at the between-ideas formulation of knowledge" ("Locke on Sensitive Knowledge," 280). I assume that Newman is right: there is no reason not to consider this passage an expression of Locke's considered view of sensitive knowledge.

<sup>31</sup> To be clear, I am not suggesting that, on Locke's account, when one occurrently knows that p one also knows that one knows that p (though this might be true). I suggest, rather, that the state of being certain that an object is what it is or exists involves, according to Locke, forming a judgment, and so occurrently knowing something is always a state of awareness that things are thus and so.

<sup>32</sup> This account derives from section 45 of Descartes *Principles of Philosophy* (AT, VIII.A.22). Locke claims that knowledge requires the clear and distinct perception of ideas throughout the *Essay*

For Berkeley, on the other hand, there are many things of which one can be unwittingly certain: knowing that an object exists just is to perceive that object. This is a metaphysical point since it concerns the proper characterization of certainty as a mental state, but it is also an epistemological point since it is part of an account of what it means to know. Skepticism threatens given a Lockean account of knowledge, since a survey of the contents of the mind discovers little that would count as certain knowledge for Locke. What little one finds will seem purely nominal or verbal (or at least so Berkeley thought), and yet there will remain many things of which one is completely certain all the while without realizing it. Lockeans, then, misuse their minds when they attempt to determine that a particular object exists by means of reason. Through an act of simple perception alone, one is certain that the object perceived exists and possesses all of the qualities it is perceived to possess. This same account can be applied to the other propositions considered above as well. “Cogito ergo sum” is certain from a simple perception of the idea of the self,<sup>33</sup> and “Gold is a metal” can be certainly known simply in virtue of the nature of the idea of gold entertained.<sup>34</sup>

#### b. *Common Sense and Toland’s Epistemology of Religion*

Many lines of thought in Berkeley’s *Notebooks* converge on the view that immediate perception yields certainty. I have focused on Berkeley’s reflections on certainty and judgment because they culminate in an amendment to Toland’s account of common sense. Shortly after Berkeley claims that we must place certainty in the senses he reviews some of the dangers of doing otherwise. He suggests that when philosophers neglect the “common single informations of sense,” they come to believe that every physical object “has its dark sides much larger & more numerous than w<sup>t</sup> is perceiv’d” and eventually become skeptics.

This passage refers, I suggest, to a central theme from Locke’s *Essay*, one that Toland adapts to his own purposes in *Christianity Not Mysterious*: that nothing lacks its dark side. After completing his account of the scope of human knowledge, Locke considers the scope of human ignorance, which he finds to be vast.

The meanest, and most obvious things that come in our way, have dark sides, that the quickest sight cannot penetrate into. The clearest, and most enlarged understandings of thinking Men, find themselves puzzled, and at a loss, in every particle of matter.  
(*Essay* 4.3.22)

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as, for instance, in his discussion of acquiring knowledge at 1.2.16; and his discussion of what it would mean to have a clear and distinct idea of space is the same as Descartes.

<sup>33</sup> Since I have bracketed questions concerning the possibility of forming an idea of the self, the result here is conditional: if there can be an idea of the self, then on Berkeley’s view one can be certain that the self exists in virtue of the fact that one thinks through a simple perception of that idea.

<sup>34</sup> This does not imply that a state of certainty is a passive state for Berkeley. Rather, it implies that the characterization of the state of certainty will crucially depend on Berkeley’s account of the nature of ideas. For instance, if, as Fields has persuasively argued, Berkeleian ideas are perceptual acts then the state of being certain will be active (Fields, *Objective Presence*, 53).

But Locke is not so much pessimistic as humble about human epistemic prospects. As he puts it, “[t]he candle that is set up in us shines bright enough for all our purposes” (*Essay* 1.1.5), so where understanding is unattainable, we should content ourselves with probability. Toland accepts Locke’s account of our knowledge of real essences, and the limitations on human knowledge it imposes, but feels that merely probable religious doctrines should not be believed. When he claims that Christianity is not “mysterious,” he does not contrast religion with natural philosophy or ordinary perception, but draws a parallel between them. Just as God in His goodness would not make physical and temporal well-being depend on responses to imperceptible aspects of the environment, He would not make spiritual, eternal well-being depend on dispositions toward doctrines beyond human ken (CNM 86-87). Toland, therefore, claims that he will believe nothing but what the highest evidence forces upon him. He will only accept what is certain, and by this he means only what is self-evident or demonstrable. He will accept the doctrines of Christianity on faith adding only that “faith is knowledge” (CNM 139).

Almost immediately after Berkeley writes in the *Notebooks* that men, like Toland, err when they neglect the senses, he declares for the first time that he is a common sense philosopher, writing that it is his intention to be “eternally banishing metaphysics and recalling men to common sense” (NB 751). Though he had already remarked on the coincidence between immaterialism and common sense in the *Notebooks*,<sup>35</sup> up until NB 751 it might have seemed that Berkeley was simply highlighting one of the many virtues of his position. NB 751, on the other hand, is a statement of Berkeley’s philosophical vocation. When Berkeley says that he intends to recall men to common sense, he means that he intends to recall them to the common single informations of sense.

This is his amendment to Toland’s definition of common sense. At the most general level, Berkeley agrees with Toland. Only those who use their faculties as they ought to use them possess common sense, and the faculties must be employed in a particular way in order to pursue knowledge and certainty. Berkeley departs from Toland because he has a different conception of the proper use of the cognitive faculties, according to which the pursuit of Lockean knowledge, understood as the perception of agreements and disagreements between ideas, is distinct from the pursuit of certainty. In order to use the faculties of the mind properly, according to Berkeley, it is necessary first and foremost to understand the sense in which one is always already certain of all one sees, hears and feels.

Toland denied that his debt to Locke in *Christianity not Mysterious* was considerable,<sup>36</sup> but his definition of “knowledge” is (almost word for word) the same as Locke’s.<sup>37</sup> So to say that Christianity is reasonable in light of the claim that Christian faith is knowledge, is to say that the doctrines of saving faith can all be known in Locke’s sense. If, however,

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<sup>35</sup> For example, “I side in all things with the Mob” (NB 405).

<sup>36</sup> See Champion, *Republican Learning*, 79-80 for a discussion and appraisal of Toland’s disavowal.

<sup>37</sup> “[A]ll our Knowledge is, in effect, nothing else but the Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas in a greater or lesser Number, whereinsoever this Agreement or Disagreement may consist” (CNM 11).



there can be certainty without Lockean knowledge, as Berkeley claims, then Toland's method of testing doctrines for reasonableness is not sufficiently motivated, and the results Toland obtains through the application of his method are inconclusive. Berkeley retains the analogy between temporal and eternal well-being, but he denies that the objects of sensation have unknowable aspects. Berkeley is convinced that there are religious mysteries which must be accepted with a "humble and implicit faith" (NB 720), but he also proves that God has been much more generous with mankind than Toland allows, identifying a source of certainty that Toland had neglected. It is possible, according to Berkeley, that the knowledge of God and one's duty is as plain and easy as understanding the true nature of objects, a task that Toland, for his part, considers superhuman.

### III. Retrospect and Prospect

I have argued that Berkeley, in his *Notebooks*, adopts a view of the nature of common sense similar to Stillingfleet's and Toland's, according to which to possess common sense is to properly use the faculties of the mind, and I have focused on his account of the proper use of the senses. The senses, not the faculty of judgment, secure our certain knowledge of the existence and the identity of objects, so it is a misuse of the faculty of judgment to attempt to demonstrate, for instance, that physical objects exist.<sup>38</sup>

It might be helpful to refer to the kind of view I attribute to Berkeley as a psychological account of the nature of common sense, since, on this view, to say that someone possesses common sense is to praise them for being psychologically or spiritually healthy. This view is distinct from the other views typically ascribed to Berkeley: propositional accounts and perspectival accounts.

According to propositional accounts, the term "common sense" applies primarily to propositions. If a proposition possesses certain qualities, usually if it is either obviously true, widely held or both, then it is said to be "commonsensical." There are, then, infinitely many common-sense propositions, including banal propositions like "Water is wet" and more philosophically significant propositions such as "Physical objects exist." George Pappas, for instance, argues that Berkeley's claim that immaterialism is commonsensical should be taken comparatively, and he determines that Berkeley is right because immaterialism implies the truth of more of the common sense propositions at

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<sup>38</sup> To say that belief in materialism arises from the improper use of the cognitive faculties is not identical to the claim that the belief is false. For it is possible to use the mind properly and still form a false belief. For instance, I might believe that a stick submerged in water is bent and by this mean that if I were to remove it from the water, I would have the same visible idea. It was not because I used my faculties for purposes other than those for which they were intended that I formed this belief: I did not, for instance, attempt to use the faculty of judgment when I should have relied on the testimony of the senses only. The view that the quality of being bent is a mind-independent property of a mind-independent object, the stick, is both false *and* contrary to common sense, according to the argument in the preceding section, when it arises because of a misuse of the mind, which happens when it arises because of a conviction that the faculty of judgment is required for understanding the existence and identity of physical objects.

issue between materialists and immaterialists. Berkeley comes out ahead by a score of five and a half to seven.<sup>39</sup>

Perspectival accounts are similar to propositional accounts insofar as they focus, at least in part, on what a person believes, but the perspectivalist insists that a person possesses common sense only relative to a particular worldview. Suffice it to say for present purposes that a worldview would include not merely a set of beliefs but a system of beliefs about the nature of the world, personhood, and the relationship between persons and the world, that lead those who share the same “worldview” to agree about a broad range of claims both general and particular. On this approach, when one claims that a person possesses common sense one is usually complimenting that person for sharing one’s worldview, and so, for the perspectivalist, the propositional theorist is someone who privileges a particular perspective on the world as commonsensical (e.g. her own perspective or the perspective of the proverbial man in the street), perhaps naively. John Russell Roberts, a perspectivalist, argues that immaterialism will seem commonsensical only to those like Berkeley who accept a person-based metaphysics associated with a traditional Christian worldview.<sup>40</sup>

For both perspectivalist and propositionalist views of the nature of common sense, it is in virtue of believing a certain set of propositions or accepting a certain “worldview” that a person possesses common sense. On the psychological account however, the order of explanation between propositions, beliefs, or worldviews and the possession of common sense is reversed: a belief is considered commonsensical if it is accepted by someone who possesses common sense, which is to say that it is a belief acquired through a proper use of the cognitive faculties of the mind.

Most recent analyses of the relationship between immaterialism and common sense focus on the question of whether a propositional or a perspectival account is most likely to produce satisfactory answers to philosophical puzzles associated with Berkeley’s views,<sup>41</sup> but my narrow focus excluded many of Berkeley’s best-known discussions of the relationship between immaterialism and common sense, discussions on which most analyses of Berkeley’s view turn. The evidence for the interpretation I advance has, instead, been indirect: I do not find that there are any star texts which support the view I develop over others proposed or *vice versa*, and the passages on which I focus become suggestive only when read against a detailed historical and intellectual backdrop. Similar support can, however, be derived from similar treatments of Berkeley’s later works and

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<sup>39</sup> Pappas, *Berkeley’s Thought*, 232. This is an elaboration of an earlier propositional account (Pappas, “Adversary Metaphysics”) similar to Russell A. Lascola’s “Berkeley: Inconsistencies and Common Sense” [*Idealistic Studies* 14 (1984): 193-99] and to which Kline’s “Berkeley’s Theory” is a sympathetic response.

<sup>40</sup> Roberts, *Metaphysics for the Mob*, 142-43.

<sup>41</sup> Seth Bordner (“Defense’ of ‘Common Sense’,” 335-36) has recently argued that a revised propositional account—according to which Berkeley intends to vindicate a particularly significant subset of “common sense” philosophical beliefs, especially the claim that the world we perceive is the real world—is preferable to Roberts’ approach. The puzzles I have in mind include the question of why Berkeley should be interested in asserting that his metaphysics should agree with common sense, and why he rejects certain plausibly commonsensical (i.e. intuitive and commonly held) propositions.

so I will conclude by suggesting how this might be derived and explaining some of the reasons one might pursue the hypothesis that the view of common sense I attribute to Berkeley was one he developed throughout his philosophical career.

As before, my argument is primarily contextual. I suggest that when Berkeley's works are read in the light of texts that most provoked and inspired him, it becomes natural to expect that he should have held that restoring the minds of readers to spiritual health should be seen as a principal motivation for composing works of philosophy. Evidence drawn from works throughout Berkeley's career confirms this expectation, and I believe that Berkeley's psychological view of common sense should be seen as fundamental to his conception of the nature of philosophical therapy.

Malebranche's *Search after Truth* and Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* are widely recognized as two of the texts that inspired and influenced Berkeley's *Principles* and *Dialogues*. The therapeutic aims of the *Search* are explicit since the text is explicitly presented as a training manual for the will designed to teach its readers to use their freedom as much as possible.<sup>42</sup> Richard Yeo, John Marshall, and (most recently and extensively) Sorana Corneanu have developed analyses of the therapeutic aims of Locke's *Essay*.<sup>43</sup> Corneanu, for instance, has argued that an important aim of the *Essay* is to help its readers pursue truth by regulating their assent and that, for this reason, it should be seen as a contribution to the *cultura animi* philosophical tradition which "permeated the cultural space of early Modern Europe."<sup>44</sup> Philosophers working in this tradition devoted themselves to the study of the powers and weaknesses of the human mind and composed works of philosophy as regimens or cures designed to restore the mind and maintain its health.

In the preface of the *Dialogues*, Berkeley insists that he intends his philosophy to be useful.<sup>45</sup> By this, Berkeley clearly meant that immaterialism constitutes a bulwark against atheism and immorality but he also claims that the text will be useful because it will reduce its readers from paradoxes to common sense so that they will "come to think like other men" (DHP 168). I suggest that the proposed analysis of the *Notebooks* above suggests a way of explaining how we should understand Berkeley's claim that his works will teach us how to think, and also how his works should be situated, on the one hand, with respect to rationalist therapeutic texts like Descartes' *Meditations* and Malebranche's *Search*,<sup>46</sup> and on the other, with respect to texts within the *cultura animi*

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<sup>42</sup> Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth* (1674-75), ed. and trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.1.3.10.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Yeo, "John Locke and Polite Philosophy" in *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity*, eds. Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 254-75; John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion, and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 170; and Sorana Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Corneanu, *Regimens*, 46-47.

<sup>45</sup> Berkeley suggests that the *Dialogues* will refer speculation to practice and reduce its readers from paradoxes to common sense so that they will "come to think like other men" (DHP 168).

<sup>46</sup> I have in mind here Gary Hatfield's reading of the *Meditations*, according to which Descartes composed the meditations as a series of cognitive exercises modeled on the spiritual exercises of

tradition, including many of the most influential works by empiricist philosophers from Great Britain, Locke's *Essay* Francis Bacon's *Great Instauration*, and Robert Boyle's *Christian Virtuoso*. For Berkeley, as for many of his predecessors, the usefulness of a philosophical text must be gauged not only by the extent to which it contributes to knowledge and supports morality but by the extent to which it cultivates the faculties of its readers, a project thought to be of primarily ethical significance. The foregoing analysis suggests that it could be fruitful to consider whether Berkeley understood the early modern project of composing therapeutic philosophical texts as a way of restoring readers' minds to a state of health, framed in terms of restoring readers to common sense.

On the face of it, the prospects for this approach seem bright. In *Alciphron*, Euphranor endorses a therapeutic view of the aims of philosophy when he claims that philosophy is "medicine for the soul of man" and Crito suggests that the improved reason of thinking men should be understood as an exemplary state of spiritual health that one might hope to achieve through philosophy, a state of mind he calls "common sense" (*Alc.* 3.16.139; *Alc.* 6.12.241).

Many of Berkeley's works are designed to improve the minds of their readers. I have argued elsewhere that this is one of the principal aims of *Siris*,<sup>47</sup> and a *prima facie* case can be made for claiming that the *Principles* and *Dialogues* have a similar objective. The explicit aim of the *Three Dialogues* is to restore Hylas, and through Hylas the reader, to common sense through a comparison of materialism and immaterialism. Hylas agrees at the outset of the first dialogue to the more commonsensical position, and, at the end of the *Dialogues*, Philonous suggests that by embracing immaterialism, Hylas has been restored to common sense. In his concluding description of the trajectory of the *Dialogues*, Philonous claims that the principles "which at first view lead to *skepticism*, pursued to a certain point, bring men back to common sense" (DHP 262). These principles include those that Hylas (the Lockean materialist) and Philonous (the evangelist of immaterialism) share in common and which form the dialectical basis from which their conversation proceeds: the claim that the senses make no inferences and that sensible things are those which are immediately perceived by sense (DHP 174-75). In the third dialogue, Hylas loses confidence in the powers of the human mind and repeats the skeptical complaints Berkeley lists in the opening passages of the *Principles*: human beings devote their whole lives to knowledge but are doomed to frustration because of the weakness of the human mind (DHP 227-28; PHK 2). These complaints precede a diagnosis in the *Principles*. The skeptic who complains fails to appreciate that these expressions of inadequacy are actually evasions of responsibility: the fault lies not in our faculties but "in the wrong use we make of them" (PHK 3). These passages suggest that the chief difference between skeptics who lack common sense and immaterialists who possess common sense should be explained not only and not primarily in terms of the propositions that they endorse, but in terms of the way that they use their minds.

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Ignatius Loyola in order to retrain the mental faculties of his readers [Gary Hatfield, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Descartes and the Meditations* (London: Routledge, 2003)].

<sup>47</sup> "Berkeley's Two Panaceas," *Intellectual History Review* 21 (2011), 472-95.

Though it may well be that Berkeley's views about the nature of common sense developed in the time between the composition of the *Notebooks* and the publication of the *Dialogues*, I suggest that it would be fruitful nonetheless to examine whether the differences between the way skeptics and immaterialists use their minds in the *Dialogues* can be analyzed in terms of the account of the use of the senses and the faculty of judgment developed above. I believe it is worth asking whether, in the *Dialogues*, Berkeley attempts more directly to address the failure he notes in the *Principles*, by having Philonous teach Hylas how to think, that is, by enacting the therapeutic techniques Berkeley believed were required to cure skepticism and restore common sense.

One of the virtues of this approach to Berkeley's views on common sense, then, is that it raises questions like these, new questions which lead to new interpretive approaches to Berkeley's works. By pursuing these questions, we stand to illuminate the nature of Berkeley's philosophical system and his conception of the aims of philosophy. But we also stand to deepen our understanding of Berkeley's relationship to Malebranche and other rationalists who took the task of philosophy to involve retraining the faculties of the mind and to situate Berkeley's works, for the first time, within the *cultura animi* philosophical tradition.<sup>48</sup>

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## *Berkeley's Mental Realism* A Reply to My Critics

John Russell Roberts

**Abstract:** This essay summarizes the argument of my *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley*, and it provides replies to objections raised against it, particularly about my focus on Berkeley's view of the nature of spirits. Specifically, I address worries about identifying mind as will, how we can think of God, the relation of mind and ideas, and how thinking of Berkeley's efforts as metaphysical is compatible with his commitment to common sense.

My book, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* is a bit unusual in that it is focused not on the most famous aspect of Berkeley's metaphysics, his immaterialism, what I call his "negative metaphysics," but rather on his "positive metaphysics," his mental realism.<sup>1</sup> But of course, Berkeley left me very little to work with. His principle concern was tearing down materialism, not building up a systematic metaphysics of spirit. This, I suggest, leaves the reader feeling that Berkeley has robbed reality of its substance and given us nothing with which to replace it. Without a coherent account of the basic stuff of reality, spiritual substances, and some plausible connection between the view of the world as consisting of spiritual substances and the views of common sense, Berkeley's metaphysics won't be very satisfying. My basic strategy is to develop an account of Berkeleyan spirits based on an interpretation of the active/passive distinction and then to use this to illuminate an overlooked connection between his positive metaphysics and common sense, one that runs through a fundamentally religious perspective on the nature of reality.

For the most part, I will limit myself to responding to criticisms/concerns/questions that are primarily directed at my account of spirits. Before doing that, it would be helpful for me to provide a summary of my position. At the heart of my interpretation of Berkeley's account of the nature of spiritual substances is what I take to be his identification of the soul with the will. Here's the basic idea: I take the active/passive distinction to be the fundamental distinction of Berkeley's metaphysics, and I take the category of activity to be the fundamental category of his ontology. Spirits, the only substances of Berkeley's ontology, are defined as active things. Activity, Berkeley tells us, is volition. Thus, spirits are volitional things (i.e., agents). This, I claim, is what Berkeley means by identifying the soul with the will. Since all causation, according to Berkeley, is volitional in nature, this also means that Berkeley gives us a kind of powers ontology.

There are two kinds of spirit, "infinite spirit" and "finite spirit." God is the only possible instance of the former. God as infinite spirit is pure act. There are two aspects to this. First, God as pure act is without passivity. Second, He is pure act in that there is no potentiality in God, so God doesn't even admit of the distinction between power and act. We, of course, possess only finite power and admit of passivity, so we are not pure act;

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<sup>1</sup> John Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

rather, in us there is a distinction between power and act. This yields a Platonic, hierarchical character to Berkeley's ontology. Berkeley, I argue, identifies *unum* and *ens*, so that at the head of his metaphysics is God, the omnipotent, and perfectly simple spirit. Next are finite spirits, active, but not omnipotent, subject to passivity and not quite as simple as God because they consist of the "parts" *power* and *act*. At the bottom of the metaphysics is the fleeting, ever-changing realm of sensible things. They are utterly powerless, passive things that enjoy no genuine unity in themselves. What unity they possess is entirely dependent upon the unity that the two kinds of spirits give to them. God gives them unity by causing them to occur in orderly succession. We give them unity through the practice of naming bundles of them and treating them as if they were one thing, when in reality they are fleeting multiplicities.

To this interpretation of the nature of spirits I join a view about the nature of concepts. I argue that Berkeley rejects the "ideational theory" of meaning, understanding, and communication because it is the source of the most pernicious belief in philosophy, the belief in abstract ideas. Following Anthony Flew, I argue instead that Berkeley pursued a view more akin to a "use-theory." Flew argues that this was a late addition to Berkeley's philosophy and that it was inconsistent with his attack on abstract ideas. I argue instead that his attack on the ideational theory underlies his attack on abstract ideas. Berkeley does not present a detailed philosophy of language, but the basic idea is that having a concept should not be thought of as perceiving an idea before the mind, but should be thought of more as a matter of possessing an ability.<sup>2</sup> The abilities view of concept possession nicely dovetails with my interpretation of spirits as essentially agents.

In developing my interpretation of spirits I exploit two explanatory devices. The first proved controversial. But I'll start with the second one. I claim that Berkeley's spiritual substances can be seen as a kind of hybrid of Cartesian mental substances and Lockean persons. They are like Cartesian substances in that their being and essence coincide. For Descartes, the being of a mental substance is thought. To be is to think. If you aren't thinking, you aren't being. This, I think makes a pretty good case for viewing Descartes' substances as active things as well. But regardless, Berkeley's view is a little different. For Berkeley, the being of a spiritual substance is volition. To be is to act. The connection to Locke is through his insightful treatment of the notion of person as a "forensic" term. Persons are, if you will, loci of responsibility. Identifying the essence of spirit with volition means that Berkeleian substances are also loci of responsibility. This, I claim, gives a normative cast to the active/passive distinction that divides his ontology accordingly. Spirits are the sorts of thing that can be the subject of moral evaluation due to their essentially active nature. Ideas cannot, due to their passive nature.

This provides then for another key contrast with Descartes. Descartes divides his ontology along the conscious/non-conscious line. One result of this is that sensations are considered modes of thought and thus modes of the mental substance. This leads, for instance, to the famous "painted soul" problem, i.e., when a Cartesian mind experiences a

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<sup>2</sup> One of my regrets is that when I sent my book to press, I had not read Tom Stoneham's *Berkeley's World* where he presents a concepts-as-abilities interpretation as well. I am here borrowing the label from him.

sensation of blue, is the soul then blue? If the sensation is a modification of the thinking substances, it looks like the Cartesian will have to say yes. But Berkeley won't. I am an active thing, but not omnipotent. Not being omnipotent, I suffer passivities when God acts on me. This manifests in a number of ways but the important one in Berkeley's metaphysics is in the having of sensations. I can will to look to the right or the left, but what sensations follow isn't up to me; it's not dependent on my volition. I am not responsible for them. Sensations are then passivities. They are the upshot of God, the omnipotent will, acting upon me. Thus, my ability to have sensations is not so much an ability as a *liability*. The upshot is that sensations are not modes of Berkeleian spiritual substances. The soul is the will, the volitional thing, and sensations are not modes of volition. Sensations are what finite spirits meet at the limit of their activity. They mark a limit to our being and thus are not part of the being. And that's just as it should be. Sensations constitute the physical world. I am not physical. They don't constitute me; they are in no sense parts of me. This still leaves the physical world ontologically dependent not just upon God but upon finite minds as well. Sensations are passivities. In order for there to be passivities there must be non-omnipotent (finitely) active things to suffer passivities. So, the switch from thought to volition as the essence of mind is subtle but has profound ramifications that are fundamental to Berkeley's metaphysics.

My aim was to give an interpretation that rescued Berkeley's view of spirits from the charge of incoherence. So long as one regards Descartes as having a coherent view of substance, then I think it is fair to say that Berkeley does too. And of course, I think Berkeley's view offers some improvement upon Descartes'.

This then yields an account of the faculty of understanding as an activity. For other philosophers, understanding tends to be viewed as a kind of perception, perception of an idea before the mind. But Berkeley's view emphasizes the active aspect as the faculty of understanding proper. Perceiving ideas is just the passive reception of sensations. Here there is no understanding. However, the sensory world, Berkeley argues, is linguistically organized. Understanding only comes when we learn how to interpret the language. The faculty of understanding can be reduced to the will.

The other explanatory device I used to develop my interpretation, the one that proved somewhat controversial, was to compare and contrast Berkeley's view with a more contemporary trend in philosophy of mind. As an example, I used Daniel Dennett's approach. The compare and contrast exercise was obviously meant to be a bit provocative because, of course, Dennett is everything Berkeley isn't. Dennett is a materialist reductionist of the instrumentalist variety. His view even teeters on the edge of eliminativism. I had hoped that by the time I reached this discussion the fact that I was arguing that Berkeley was a hardcore mental realist who regarded minds as simple immaterial substances would be clear enough to ward off any temptation to think that by exploiting Dennett's work that I was attempting to give a reductionist account of Berkeleian minds. The connection between Dennettian stances and a certain strain of contemporary physicalism and Berkeley that I was hoping to exploit was the centrality the former give to the evaluative activities that go into what it is to think of something as a mind. My aim was to say that that can be a helpful approach to how to think about



minds, but it needn't lead to anti-realism about the mind. If minds are, as I argue Berkeleyan minds are, volitional substances, evaluative beings through and through, then some of the valuable insights from the trend toward evaluative approaches to mind in contemporary physical, reductionist philosophy of mind can be seen to be compatible with mental realism. Several commenters found this confounding, most notably Margaret Atherton in her review, and it led to misunderstandings about just what my position was.<sup>3</sup> In hindsight, I think that's understandable. I can see how this might just end up being too much of a Rube Goldberg device to be a helpful explanatory device. On the other hand, many others found it helpful. So I'm torn. On the whole, I think I'm now inclined to agree with Atherton.

In a review of the book, Samuel Rickless objects to my identification of the soul with the will.<sup>4</sup> As he points out, Berkeley at one point in the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* even says, "will and understanding constitute in the strictest sense a mind or spirit."<sup>5</sup> My response is that one has to have a way to reconcile sentences like this one with the identification of minds with *active* things, and activity with volition, and thus, in this sense, minds with wills. The solution I offer in the book is the reductive account of the understanding summarized above. It appeals, on the one hand, to the finiteness of our active natures and passivity in our reception of ideas, and on the other hand, to the active nature of understanding in interpreting ideas as signs. This allows Berkeley to say that mind consists of both will and understanding while maintaining the identification of the soul as an essentially active being. Rickless does not address this solution to the problem.

Rickless also raises an objection to my non-representationalist interpretation of Berkeley on meaning and understanding. Against it he cites Berkeley's account of how we come by our concept of God as an example of Berkeley's treating even our *notions* of spirits as ideational-cum-representational in nature. The objection is that Berkeley does say that we have an "image" of God, after all. But Berkeley is, as is his practice, using "image" and "idea" here in what he calls a "large sense," i.e., not strictly.<sup>6</sup> Berkeley is perfectly clear about the fact that spirits are not perceivable and not imaginable. In addition, it should be noted that what Berkeley says in the passage that Rickless is referring to is that the *immaterial spiritual substance itself* is an image of God. When Berkeley says that *I*, myself, am a kind of acting thinking image of the Deity, I read Berkeley as working with the conventional image of God doctrine, that is, the view that we are made in God's

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<sup>3</sup> Margaret Atherton, "Review of *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley*," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009), 428-31.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Rickless, "Review of *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley*," *Philosophical Review* 118 (2009), 244-47.

<sup>5</sup> *Works of George Berkeley*, eds. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Nelson, 1948-57), 2: 240. All references will be to this edition of Berkeley's works.

<sup>6</sup> "Ideas are things inactive, and perceived: and spirits a sort of beings altogether different from them. I do not therefore say my soul is an idea, or like an idea. However, taking the word idea in a large sense my soul may be said to furnish me with an idea, that is, an image, or likeness of God, though indeed extremely inadequate. For all the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections. I have therefore, though not an inactive idea, yet in my self some sort of an active thinking image of the Deity" (*Three Dialogues*, in *Works* 2: 232).

image. Now, certainly, within this doctrine there is sense to be made of the idea that each of us is an “image,” a representation of God here on earth. But in the present context that would mean that we have to hold that *the self* is *literally* a representational item. That seems to me to be pretty far out of the spirit of what people have in mind by a representational theory of meaning and understanding. And Berkeley makes it clear in the passage that this is not what he means. He explicitly guides us away from it. In *Siris*, Berkeley explores and appears to endorse a Neoplatonic account of reflection on our own nature that brings us to an understanding of God’s.<sup>7</sup> It would be a considerable task to lay out the view, but it looks nothing like a representational theory. In keeping with the image of God doctrine, understanding the Divine nature is a matter of *participation* with Divine nature, rather than having a representational item before the mind.

Marc Hight objects that I do not say what the ontological nature of ideas are.<sup>8</sup> It’s unclear to me what he’s looking for. But he gives some indication when he asks, if “ideas are modifications or something else?” The request seems to be that I place ideas in one of the traditional ontological categories. But I take it that part of the point of Berkeley’s account is that ideas don’t fit the traditional categories and yet their ontological nature is perfectly familiar to us. My sensations are not modes, or accidents, or attributes, etc. of me. When I perceive a cube I do not become cube-shaped. Nor is an idea a mode, etc. of anything else. Ideas are simply what we perceive them to be and they don’t stand in some obscure metaphysical relation of substance to mode, but in the familiar perceiving relation to minds. In the book, I present this as one of the strengths of Berkeley’s account. Beyond that I take myself to be describing their ontological nature by describing their ontological dependence conditions, which I do at considerable length via appeal to my interpretation of the active/passive distinction. Once that’s done I don’t think there’s anything left to do in order to explain their ontological nature. However, if one should insist on their being given some ontological category label, then I think it’s best to call them “passivities.”

Some have objected to identifying the soul with the will along the following lines: Isn’t the soul rather something that wills? That would make the soul one thing and its volitions just something the soul does. Hight writes, “Berkeley most often writes as if minds are beings that are essentially active, breaking the identity of mind and activity.” But I fail to see how this breaks the identification of the mind and will. My view is that Berkeleian minds are substances, like Cartesian substances, except their essence is activity. So they are not thinking things for whom *to be is to think*, rather they are active things, for whom *to be is to act*. So they are not thinking things, but active things. So, if Hight’s concern is a real problem, it’s a problem for Cartesian substances as well. Now, it is, in fact, an old objection that was raised against Descartes in his own time. It’s the question of how to understand the relation between a substance and its principle attribute. As it happens, I don’t think this is a real problem for Descartes (nor for Berkeley), but set that aside. Again, my aim was to defend the coherence of Berkeley’s account of spiritual substances. Descartes’ is one of the standard accounts of substance. If I can show that his view can be explained as a kind of modified Cartesian view, and that the modification doesn’t

<sup>7</sup> *Siris*, §§333-34, *Works* 5: 152.

<sup>8</sup> Marc Hight. (<http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23200-a-metaphysics-for-the-mob-the-philosophy-of-george-berkeley>)

introduce some incoherence and even improves on the Cartesian view, then I've done my job and then some. All accounts of substance face objections. The problem I was dealing with was the big problem. Berkeley faces the charge that either he doesn't really have an account of spiritual substance or that his account is a non-starter because it's incoherent. Hight chides me for not considering the rival Cartesian view of substances, although he acknowledges that what I offer is a modified Cartesian view. This is confusing. I guess I have to assume that he means a view that takes *thought* as its essence rather than *volition*. But, as reviewed above, a central part of my view is that Berkeley's modification of the Cartesian view is of great importance because it allows him to deny that sensations are modes of the mental substance. So, I take myself to have explicitly addressed the Cartesian view according to which the essence of mind is thought rather than volition.

Dale Jacquette objects to my opening chapter's opening device for getting us focused on the being of spirits rather than ideas.<sup>9</sup> In a somewhat lighthearted spirit, I remark how every freshman philosophy student knows that for Berkeley "to be is to be perceived." That, of course, is horribly misleading because Berkeley sharply distinguishes the being of spirits from that of ideas; spirits cannot be perceived, and spirits are the fundamental beings of the ontology. Jacquette objects that I'm attacking a straw man and complains that I don't cite anybody who holds that for Berkeley to be is to be perceived. But I deny that I even attempted to create any men, straw or otherwise. I explicitly say both that we later get disabused of this notion and that professional philosophers know better. That is why there is no citation to any professional philosophers making this mistake. Rather than creating a straw man to attack, I use this historical fact about how we first get introduced to Berkeley's philosophy to draw attention to the fact that we are traditionally focused on the nature of secondary beings of Berkeley's ontology, ideas, and that this has typically come at the expense of paying attention to the nature of the fundamental beings of Berkeley's ontology, spirits. Since my book was in large part about the nature of the being of the basic items of the Berkeley's ontology, spirits, I wanted to draw attention to their more fundamental place in his metaphysics. I hoped that the contrast with what we first learned (and let's be honest, the only thing most people remember about the Berkeley they were taught) would be an engaging way to get the discussion started.

Jacquette also objects to my taking spirits to be the fundamental items of Berkeley's metaphysics. He writes,

minds or spirits need not be ontically more fundamental than their ideas, if, as in Schopenhauer and other later idealists, spirits and ideas as designated in their distinct terminologies are inter-implicative or inter-presuppositional. For these thinkers also there are no ideas without minds—but equally there are no minds without ideas. Which, then, ideas or minds, are supposed to be ontically more fundamental if one never exists without the other? Schopenhauer would insist that neither is ontically more basic, and Roberts gives us no reason to believe that Berkeley would disagree. (470)

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<sup>9</sup> Dale Jacquette, "Review of *A Metaphysics for the Mob. The Philosophy of George Berkeley*," *Faith and Philosophy* 28 (2011), 468-72.

I reply that the bulk of the first chapter of my book is devoted to showing that Berkeley does think otherwise. Again, Berkeley, with the Neoplatonists, identifies being and unity. At the ground of being is God, the perfectly simple active being. Then there's us; we do not enjoy divine simplicity but still qualify as simple substances in a qualified sense. At the bottom of the ontological ladder is the sensible world. Nothing in this realm enjoys true unity. Berkeley's metaphysics is a version of the great chain of being. That's my main reason for saying spirits are more fundamental than ideas. I would add to this all the traditional reasons for holding that substances qualify as more basic beings than other things. Ideas come and go; the sensible world is always in flux. Substances, however, persist, etc. Furthermore, my interpretation of finite spirits as finitely active things is compatible with saying that finite spirits must always have ideas, because as finite they are always subject to passivity. This, however, doesn't change their position in the ontological hierarchy. So, I think my view is compatible with the spirit of one of the points that Jacques is making here, but I believe his central point is mistaken.

Finally, Seth Bordner argues that, "[s]tandard interpretations take Berkeley to be defending commonsense by building a metaphysical system that somehow shows how commonly held beliefs are either true or at least justifiable."<sup>10</sup> This, he argues, is a mistake. Bordner's view is that "Berkeley's defense of commonsense is instead destructive—his aim is to prevent the corruption of the vulgar by attacking and destroying that which threatens them." My view of Berkeley is cited as one of the paradigm examples of treating Berkeley as attempting to build up a metaphysical system. But for Bordner, "[Berkeley's] is not the project of divining the mind of the common person so that he can build up a metaphysics for the mob" (329).

This misidentifies which side of the debate I'm on. A pivotal element of my approach to Berkeley's metaphysics is my claim that it is essential that we see Berkeley as pursuing what (for better or worse) I dub a "deflationary strategy." (See especially II.3-6, pp. 44-58.) So just to give you an idea, in a section titled "Berkeley's Deflationary Strategy" (ch. II.3), I begin by quoting a line from his notebooks:

[Remember]: To be eternally banishing Metaphysics & recalling Men to Common Sense.<sup>11</sup>

Among other things, I quote Anne Berkeley, the Bishop's learned wife. I think she had it exactly right when in a letter to their son after the Bishop's death she wrote,

[H]ad he *built* as he has pulled down he had been then a Master Builder indeed, but unto every man his work. Some must remove rubbish.<sup>12</sup>

It's in the approving context of such quotations that I say we should recall the title of the Bishop's principle work, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*.

<sup>10</sup> Seth Bordner, "Berkeley's Defense of Common Sense," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 49 (2011), 327.

<sup>11</sup> NB 750, *Works* 1: 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Works* 8: 388; emphasis in original.

What I was very keen to draw attention to here is the fact that the “principles” Berkeley is immediately interested in are not principles that will provide us with a foundation upon which to build a metaphysics. Rather, what Berkeley tells us is,

My purpose... is, to try if I can discover what those principles are, which have introduced all that doubtfulness and uncertainty, those absurdities and contradictions into the several sects of philosophy. (Intro 4)

As I put it, “[Berkeley’s] is no Cartesian project. The principles he is most interested in laying bare are the principles—i.e. the origins, the sources—of *error* in our philosophical thinking” (45). I insist upon the importance of taking the good Bishop seriously, when in the *Introduction* to the *Principles* he tells us that,

Upon the whole, I am inclined to think that the far greater part, if not the whole, of those difficulties which have hitherto amused philosophers, and blocked up the way to knowledge, are entirely owing to ourselves. That we have first raised a dust, and then complain, we cannot see. (Intro 3)

This, I say, is Berkeley’s philosophy of philosophy, and “we should let it guide our understanding of his argumentative strategy” (45). And I do. I immediately put it to use to produce a reinterpretation of Berkeley’s famous attack on abstract ideas. But its central role comes in the final chapter where I argue that we can see an important connection between Berkeley’s positive metaphysics and common sense if we see him as working his deflationary strategy toward metaphysics from a fundamentally religious view of reality. So, far from being a paradigm example of the approach Bordner rejects, I think mine is a paradigm example of the one he pursues.

My sincere thanks go out to all of these reviewers and to those whose questions and objections I have not included here. I greatly appreciate their time and thoughtful, helpful comments. If only I could have run the manuscript past each of them, the final product would have been a far sight better than it was.

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## *The Importance of Idea Ontology* A Reply to My Critics

Marc A. Hight

**Abstract:** In my book *Idea and Ontology* I argue for a re-evaluation of how we read and engage early modern philosophy with respect to the so-called way of ideas. I contend that, despite current trends that emphasize epistemology as first philosophy, we need to retain the importance of ontology when interpreting and learning from the early moderns. In this piece, I respond to critical reviews of my book, deepening the discussion of several topics. The main topics include whether ideas are private to the finite minds that perceive them in Berkeley's philosophy, the nature of modes in typical early modern ontologies, and issues regarding the charitable reading of other scholars.

In *Idea and Ontology*<sup>1</sup> I argue for a re-evaluation of how we read and engage early modern philosophy with respect to the so-called “way of ideas.” One traditional story often repeated goes as follows: Descartes appropriated the word “idea” and used it in a novel way to represent the contents of finite minds. He and those who followed him then used the concept to explain and resolve a great many epistemic problems. Ideas explained how we sensed and perceived, how we attached meaning to words, how we classified, and so on. But there was a problem in idea paradise. For, along with the new way of ideas, Descartes adhered to the older substance/modification ontology. As it turned out, ideas were a bad fit with the old ontology. Despite how useful they were for engaging epistemological issues, ideas were not clearly substances in their own right (mental, material, or some third realm substance). But there were reasons for denying that they could be modes as well. As a result of this ontological tension—and larger anti-metaphysical trends in mainstream contemporary philosophy generally—some scholars have been tempted by a reading that alleges the early moderns “abandoned ontology.” That is, they either completely ignored ontological issues with respect to ideas, or they “de-ontologized” ideas. As a result, contemporary early modern scholarship has been pushed in a direction that reads what was happening in the early modern period as a sort of “epistemic turn.” All of the great early moderns from Descartes to Hume were to be read as if they were doing epistemology as first philosophy.

In my book, I argue that the last part of this interpretation or approach to the history of early modern philosophy is an error. It is a mistake to read Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, and others as if they were grappling primarily (if not only) with epistemic issues at the expense of ontological concerns. That there were epistemological engagements is, of course, obvious. But I maintain that the early moderns remained aware of the ontological facets of idea philosophy even in the face of the intractable difficulties they faced when trying to reconcile the way of ideas with traditional substance-modification ontology. The point is not that some particular interpretation of this or that early modern is better, but rather that there are significant philosophical insights to be gained by reading the early moderns as equally concerned with the ontology of ideas. Taking an anti-metaphysical approach threatens to obscure some of the insights of the period and renders early modern

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<sup>1</sup> *Idea and Ontology* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2008).

thought uncharitably less potent. In particular, the book focuses on Berkeley, arguing that a much superior philosopher emerges, avoiding the all too common error these days of not seeking charitable readings of the claims they made in their historical context. For instance, I believe that my account provides us with a Berkeley who can field stronger positions with respect to his immaterialism, his views about divine ideas, and render other of his views more plausible, including the heterogeneity thesis and his claims about abstraction. Additional chapters concern arguments about how to read and understand other views about ideas, like those of Leibniz and Hume, but for this discussion I will focus on what has drawn the most attention: my discussion of Berkeley.

I am pleased to note at the outset that many of the reviews have been generous, and even those that are not entirely so have taken my claims and arguments seriously. For instance, Samuel Rickless, in his careful and smart review, finds my “elegant and novel interpretation” of Berkeley’s ontology of ideas “in the end unconvincing.”<sup>2</sup> It would be nice to be right; I am happy to be philosophically provocative in order to have better work in the history of philosophy. I have not the room to recast all of the arguments of the book. Here I have selected what I take to be some of the primary concerns expressed about the monograph. These are not necessarily the claims I take to be most important; if anything, what I took to be the most controversial of the arguments (namely the readings of Berkeley, Leibniz, and Hume) have occasioned relatively less response. The most prominent criticisms engage my ontological reading of Berkeley’s philosophy, my claims about the traditional ontology, and my reading of other scholars. I engage each in turn.

### The Privacy Thesis

One of the more controversial upshots of the ontological emphasis of my reading of Berkeley is my claim that he is best read as denying the privacy of ideas of sense. As I note throughout the latter part of my book, Berkeley is far from clear about the ontological status of ideas relative to minds (mental substances). No doubt, he believes that the regularity and orderliness of our ideas of sense constitutes reality. As he notes, things are more real when they are “more affecting, orderly, and distinct.”<sup>3</sup> He continues:

the sun that I see by day is the real sun, and that which I imagine by night is the idea of the former. In the sense here given of *reality*, it is evident that every vegetable, star, mineral, and in general each part of the mundane system, is as much a *real being* by our principles as by any other.<sup>4</sup>

As long as we perceive our own orderly sensory ideas, we are perceiving reality. At this point I argue in the book that the best way to explain *why* our orderly ideas constitute a volitionally independent reality is because they are numerically identical to the ideas God

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Rickless, “Review of *Idea and Ontology*,” *Berkeley Studies* 20 (2009), 33. Hereafter, references to this review will be embedded in the text as R with the page number.

<sup>3</sup> PHK 36, *Works* II: 56. All citations from Berkeley’s published works are from A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop, eds. *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*. 9 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1948-57).

<sup>4</sup> PHK 36, *Works* II: 56.

perceives.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, if our ideas are not numerically identical to those of God's, then the possibility of a veil-of-perception form of skepticism arises, since we could reasonably doubt whether our ideas are proper copies of the archetypes of God. In the book I highlight this anti-skeptical argument as a motivation for attributing the thesis to Berkeley.

Rickless objects on two grounds. First, he contends that veil-of-perception skepticism is not an issue given Berkeley's theory of reality and hence cannot be a motivation for denying the privacy of ideas. If the sensory ideas we perceive *just are* reality, then skeptical worries about our ideas being intermediaries do not arise. If God has archetypal ideas that are perfect originals of our own ideas, that is all well and good; but reality is *not* constituted by those archetypes, for it is our own ideas that are real in virtue of their orderliness. That is the criterion Berkeley advances in the texts. Hence the real world might be numerically plural across individual minds. All that matters is that the ideas are qualitatively identical. The charge of skepticism can only arise if one supposes that God's archetypes constitute reality and *not* what we directly perceive.

On this point I believe Rickless is correct and am thankful for his insight. The real world for Berkeley is composed of the ideas of sense we perceive and so veil-of-perception of skepticism cannot be a motivation for Berkeley denying the privacy of ideas. I implicitly (and improperly) assumed that reality must be single and grounded in God's archetypes, which was in effect to beg the question. This realization helps explain the second objection, which is that my reading of Berkeley cannot account for a few passages, most notably his exchange with Samuel Johnson, where Berkeley appears to be willing to accept that our ideas are not numerically identical to those of God.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, in those same passages Berkeley has the opportunity to note that reality is constituted by divine archetypes, but refuses to do so. Having diagnosed the earlier error, I am happy to concede the point.

Granting Rickless' point, however, only forces us to concede that veil-of-perception skepticism is not a reason for Berkeley denying the privacy of ideas. Informed by the correction, it also makes it less likely that *Berkeley* explicitly or reflectively advocated the numerical identity of our ideas of sense and God's divine ideas. It remains an open question, however, whether one should believe that Berkeley ought to have made such a move in order to produce a stronger system. Such suggestions are fraught with difficulty, since it becomes less clear how charitable one is really being the farther one moves from the actual claims of the author.

I submit there are still some reasons for thinking that one ought to deny the privacy of ideas in a Berkeleian system. Guided by Rickless' comments, I have perhaps sharpened my concerns. I start by noting that the recognition that reality is constituted by the

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<sup>5</sup> There are complications here I engage in the book. God does not *sense* ideas as finite minds do, but he does perceive them, which is sufficient for my thesis.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Correspondence of Berkeley*, ed. Marc A. Hight (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Letter 197, Johnson to Berkeley (5 Feb 1729/30) and Letter 199, Berkeley to Johnson (24 March 1730).



orderliness and regularity of our sensory ideas does not preclude there being a *reason* for that order. Consider the possibility of a set of sensory ideas that are coherent, orderly, and regular but qualitatively different from the ideas I actually perceive. We can imagine such a case and I think Berkeley could have as well. Berkeley, I should think, would have two options when confronted with that possibility. He might believe that reality could be plural. That is, the alternate experience would be fully real and just as real as what I actually perceive. And if two persons were having qualitatively distinct but coherent and orderly experiences, they would be experiencing equally real (but distinct) worlds. Alternatively, Berkeley might have the intuition that reality is single and ultimately grounded by God. God could have created alternate sets of coherent experiences, but chose to give us (presumably *all* of us) *this* one. At times Berkeley seems to write as if this were his intention:

PHILONOUS: To me it is evident, for the reasons you allow of, that sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in a mind or spirit. Whence I conclude, not that they have no real existence, but that seeing they depend not on my thought, and have an existence distinct from being perceived by me, there must be some other mind wherein they exist. As sure therefore as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent spirit who contains and supports it.<sup>7</sup>

Berkeley appears to write as if the sensible world is singular. One way of securing the singleness of reality is to have God create an archetypal order that we directly perceive. It has the added advantage of being economical; God need only create one idea of sense for each possible experience, rather than many qualitatively identical ideas for each finite mind that perceives that content. I raised this point with Rickless (who nonetheless believes that Berkeley might well be committed to a plural reality), and he replies as follows:

I'm not sure what Berkeley would say about a situation in which, as you imagine, I have an orderly and coherent experience that is qualitatively different from the orderly and coherent experience I have now. I am guessing that Berkeley would be committed to the view that *that* world would be real too. I say this in part because God perceives all the ideas we do, *but not by sense* (as Berkeley tells us). So, presumably, God's ideas do not have the same qualitative feel (the same what-it-is-like-to-perceive) to him that ours do to us. And yet, of course, God's ideas are no less real for all that. Indeed, it seems that God might have chosen to give us ideas that are qualitatively different from those we now possess, but, being the perfect being that he is, those ideas would be just as orderly and coherent, and would, as I read Berkeley, constitute the real world in that case. Perhaps these commitments are problematic, perhaps not. But I think that Berkeley is probably committed to them.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> DHP, *Works* II: 211-12.

<sup>8</sup> Private conversation, October 2013. My thanks to Sam Rickless for allowing me to reproduce this portion of our correspondence. I also owe him a debt of gratitude more generally for generously elaborating upon his criticisms.

I still have no argument against this alternative. The issue, however, is illustrative of the deeper and larger point that I want to draw from the book: how one reads Berkeley's ontology of ideas can *matter*.

There are also a few brief points worth emphasizing with respect to the denial of the privacy of ideas. There is, I believe, still some substance in the question of whether Berkeley really believes that our *private* ideas constitute reality, or whether he believes that our sensory ideas *that are numerically identical to God's divine ideas* constitute reality. That is, even granting that Berkeley does not commit himself to the claim that God's archetypes ground the orderliness of our ideas as real, should he do so? There are at least two reasons for thinking perhaps he should. First, since God is omnipotent, in a trivial sense he already perceives (but does not sense) the ideas we do. Perceiving those ideas is a part of God's knowledge of the world. Since God's omnipotence arguably already has him perceiving my ideas, it would be otiose to require God to duplicate effort by creating additional copies. Second, Berkeley allows that we communicate meaningfully with other minds. Yet if *all* ideas were private, no individual could *ever* know that they were successfully communicating with another finite mind. What they perceived would be real, but it would not be clear that anyone could ever infer genuine communication with another mind. Wittgenstein's private language argument springs to mind.

I freely confess that Rickless has persuaded me that my stronger claim—that Berkeley has anti-skeptical motivations for denying the privacy of ideas—is most likely mistaken. I continue to believe that there are philosophical pressures that militate towards denying the privacy of sensory ideas, but that is a separate issue.

### The Substance–Modification Ontology

Another concern, also advanced by Rickless, is about my claim early in the book that the moderns operated within a substance–modification ontology. I argue that by the time of Descartes, there is a traditional implicit conception of the categories of being. Everything is either an enduring substance, or a modification of a substance. I characterize the distinction between substances and modes as one principally of *dependence*. Substances are (to some degree) independent things that can exist without other kinds of things. Modes are *dependent* things, but things nonetheless. I invoke Quine's conception of a thing as "that over which one can quantify" to arrive at a serviceable understanding of the distinction. The distinction matters because of discussions that invoke the reification of ideas. I argue that the "problem" with reification is not one of treating treats modes as things, but rather treating modes as *independent* things. So, assuming that irritability is some sort of mode, to reify irritability is to make a mistake. But the mistake is not in treating the mode like a thing. It *is* a thing. The mistake is to treat irritability as if it were an independent thing. I then argue that this clarification helps us resolve certain issues that arise when discussing early modern conceptions of ideas.

There wind up being two important points worthy of attention here. First, Rickless contends that my analysis overlooks a careful analysis of another ontological category,

that of substratum as a separate criterion for substancehood (R 26). As a result of this oversight, Rickless presents a second, more important criticism: that I endorse an inappropriate conception of mode. He suggests that to resolve the infelicity of my initial discussion of substance I should give up my understanding of the traditional conception of mode as a dependent thing. Instead, he wants to give up the notion that modes for the moderns are things at all. Instead, they are simply “ways of being” (R 27).

My response to the first complaint is short: Rickless is correct. My argument as intended was that the early moderns operated initially within the confines of an ontology that treated substance and mode as mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. It was not my intention to exclude the existence of other conceptions of substancehood or to deny the complications he raises. The text was not sufficiently clear about my precise intentions and I am indebted to him for the illumination about possible complications with the substance ontology.

Yet I reject the solution Rickless provides. He attacks my conception of the early modern mode on the grounds that modes are not things. But I argue instead for a specific conception of thinghood using Quine’s criterion that a thing is that over which one can quantify. So imagine that one considers red a mode of the mind. I mostly certainly *can* count the instances of red, and there is some “thing” about which I am speaking when I discuss red or the instances of red in the room. I discuss this in the context of engaging the common concern that we not reify certain items. I ask in the book what it *means* to say that an early modern reifies (in particular) ideas. I disagree with Jonathan Bennett’s analysis on this point, arguing that it is perfectly meaningful to treat modes like things.<sup>9</sup> The key is that modes are not *independent* things. So what violates our intuitions about reifying moods (like irritability) is not that the mood is not a thing, but rather that the mood is not an *independent* thing.

Rickless rejects my conception of a mode as a thing and that leads him to attribute an error to my thinking. The point at issue is whether it is appropriate to invoke Quine’s conception when discussing modes. He writes “What I am suggesting is not that modes are not things *in Quine’s sense*, but rather that modes are not things in the sense of persisting entities that underlie change” (R 28). He concludes at one point, “Importantly, what becomes evident is that modes are ways of being, not things themselves” (R 27). Yet I see no argument as to why ways of being cannot themselves be persisting things that underlie change. That is, we can quantify over ways of being in many circumstances.

Independently, I confess that I am not sure what it *means* to say that something is a “way of being” without itself being anything. In working on the book one of my most difficult struggles was with the concept of reification, how philosophers used the term, and how to apply those discussions to substances and modes. Rickless recognizes the point, and explicitly admits that using the Quinean sense modes are indeed things. He disagrees, however, that one should use the Quinean sense at all. His replacement is that modes are “not things in the sense of persisting entities that underlie change” (R 28). So for

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<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2:8-12, secs. 158-59.

Rickless, modes are ways that substances are such that these “ways” are not persisting nor do they underlie change. I actually considered such an account and was disabused of the notion by early commentators, being persuaded it was an error. It was pointed out to me that a color might itself underlie change and endure. Thus some instance of red might undergo a change in brilliance. An instance of irritability might be more or less irrationally expressed. Yet if these are meaningful cases, then modes *can* underlie change and they *can* persist. Indeed, why should we suppose that modes *cannot* persist? If Rickless is right that modes never persist, then I must grant him the point. But I see no reason to think he actually is right on this issue.

### Charity and the Early Modern Tale

The last sort of criticism leveled against the book is that I have violated my own charge to be charitable. I argue in the book that—in part owing to the influence of a general anti-metaphysical attitude in contemporary work in general—some scholars have asserted that the progression from Descartes via Locke and Berkeley to Hume is one where ideas are slowly stripped of their ontological status. That is, by the time we reach Berkeley and Hume, the early moderns no longer thought of ideas as having an ontological status at all. They are “purely epistemic” beings. Attributing such a radical view to others might well raise suspicion. In the words of reviewer Monte Cook, “Lacking a clear sense of why Yolton and Watson subscribe to the early modern tale and being struck by how strong Hight’s arguments are, one might naturally wonder whether they actually do subscribe to it.”<sup>10</sup> The charge is particularly painful, since I went to considerable lengths both in my research and in writing the book to be as charitable as possible.

There are two straightforward issues: (1) have I saddled some philosophers with an uncharitable reading? and (2) independently of whether I have, what are the upshots of making the claims that I do? Cook, like the few others who have leveled this charge, does not emphasize the second issue, but I will return to it, since I believe it is telling.

The basic issue at hand is *what* philosophers like John Yolton, Thomas Lennon, Richard Watson, and others actually believe with respect to the ontological status of ideas in the early modern period. This issue is difficult primarily because, despite reading what these scholars have written, I still don’t know what they had in mind. No one has risen to defend the Yolton thesis beyond a few short reviews of my book. That might be because I have produced a straw man, but it might also be because the position is vague and unclear from the start.

Have I been uncharitable? Consider some sample claims about ideas in the early modern period:

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<sup>10</sup> Monte Cook, “Review of *Idea and Ontology*,” *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* 1.16.2009. <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23884-idea-and-ontology-an-essay-in-early-modern-metaphysics-of-ideas/>

Berkeley tells us that he has not turned things into ideas, but just the reverse. Thus ideas *are* things. Does this mean they are entities?<sup>11</sup>

Neither Malebranche nor Foucher saw that the modern way out was to be an utter denial of the meaningfulness of the question ‘What is an idea?’ taken as a demand to provide an ontological model that explains how representation can and does take place, and that the modern answer to how causal interaction takes place was to be the rejection or at the very least the ignoring of the demand for an ontological explanatory model.<sup>12</sup>

Asking whether an idea could be an entity at all seems suggestive, but I grant the case is more complicated. Cook complains that the more reasonable reading of the Yolton position is that he is not denying that ideas have an ontological status; rather Yolton intends that ideas for Locke “have no ontological status *distinct from our perceptions*.” That is, Yolton is just trying to separate Locke from Malebranche. Ideas are not some *tertium quid*. Fair enough, but that might leave it open as to what they are. Cook’s reading is certainly plausible. If that were obviously Yolton’s position, then I would happily concede the point and return to the analysis of the moderns that occupies the larger part of my book. If we can read the early moderns as keeping a heavy finger on ontological issues and not forgetting them when plying their epistemological practices, then I feel vindicated. Yet if others read him differently, or if he wants a stronger view, I have an obligation to fend off the challenge. So is that all Yolton and others wish to say, that ideas are not some intermediary in the perceptual process?

Unfortunately, I find evidence that the view extends further. First, the modest view Cook wishes to attribute to Yolton is eminently plausible and easy to express. If that is all Yolton wished to say, he had ample opportunity to do so in his many books and articles. But Yolton consciously pushes his reading of Locke and the early moderns further.

Had Locke seen sufficiently clearly these implications of his position, he could have written a reply to clarify the difference between his own epistemological analysis and that which used the older metaphysical categories of substance and accident. He so quietly dispensed with the traditional categories on this question that many of his critics did not appreciate the novelty which he was introducing.<sup>13</sup>

Now this passage does not say that Locke abandoned ontology; it says that Locke abandoned the *traditional* ontology, consonant with my own reading of Locke. But Yolton also says things like “The point of this remark [about Norris] is that Locke did not consider ideas to have an ontological status.”<sup>14</sup> Frankly, the problem is that I just do not

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<sup>11</sup> John Yolton, “Reply to Mr. Tipton,” *History of European Ideas* 7 (1986), 584.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Watson, “Foucher’s Mistake and Malebranche’s Break: Ideas, Intelligible Extension, and the End of Ontology,” in *Nicolas Malebranche: His Philosophical Critics and Successors*, Stuart Brown, ed. (Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1991), 31-32.

<sup>13</sup> John Yolton, *Locke and the Way of Ideas* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1996), 97.

<sup>14</sup> John Yolton, *Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 94.

know what to do with such claims. As a result, I was forced to engage the more radical position and take it seriously. I am not the first to wonder about the position being expressed. Vere Chappell, for example, tries to interpret Yolton as well, considering several readings because he is not clear about the position either.<sup>15</sup> Chappell also notes the equivocal use Yolton puts to the term “perception” when interpreting Locke, making his pronouncements yet more difficult to untangle. Given that the view is hard to untangle and that there are several striking passages that seem to directly deny that ideas have an ontological status, I was obligated to consider the position seriously.

Thomas Lennon adds a third interpretation of Yolton (one which he happens to endorse). According to Lennon, Locke does not think of ideas as distinct entities; rather, the word “idea” refers to a material object *as it appears*.<sup>16</sup> Thus he advocates attributing a form of a theory of appearing to Locke. Lennon’s reading has the virtue of actually being clear about *what* ideas are: they are appearances. As such, my complaint about “epistemology as first philosophy” is at least minimally met (although one might reasonably press for an account of the ontological status of appearances). But I am pursuing a stronger thesis, namely that Locke and the other early moderns are struggling *within* the traditional confines of the substance–modification ontology. I argue in my book against portions of Lennon’s reading of Locke. I am able to engage Lennon without worry of charity concerns because he has a clear position about the ontology of ideas.<sup>17</sup>

One might also worry about whether my larger claim that this reading is a “traditional” one is true. After all, perhaps as Rickless suggests, Yolton and others are notable precisely because their interpretations run against the grain (R 23). In fact, I partly agree with this claim. Amongst serious early modern scholars these views have been influential but are by no means ubiquitous. My target was—and remains—larger. My claim is that, concerning contemporary work and attitudes, there is a decided tilt towards “epistemology as first philosophy.” That gets applied generally, but in particular to our readings of the early moderns. I once attended a colloquium where an invited speaker claimed privately afterwards that what we learned from the early moderns was the utter failure of an ontological approach to the world. Thus I introduced my book by citing some leading philosophers, such as Hilary Putnam, who claimed that ontology is an exhausted enterprise.<sup>18</sup> I am not the only person to note this attitude,<sup>19</sup> but having noted the trend, it was not to my purpose to ferret out every instance of it. Instead, my purpose was to *show* the value of ontological readings of the early moderns. The upshot of my claims about the early modern tale was that there is value in taking the ontology of ideas seriously.

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<sup>15</sup> Vere Chappell, “Locke’s Theory of Ideas,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, ed. Vere Chappell (New York: Cambridge, 1994), 32-35.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Lennon, “Through a Glass Darkly: More on Locke’s Logic of Ideas,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004): 322-37.

<sup>17</sup> See Hight, *Idea and Ontology*, section 4.2.

<sup>18</sup> Hilary Putnam, “Ontology: An Obituary,” in *Ethics without Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 71-88.

<sup>19</sup> See John Heil, *From an Ontological Point of View* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

I suggest therefore that I have not been uncharitable, but cautious. To the extent that I have been uncharitable, I would choose to revise and sharpen my analysis rather than mischaracterize views, no matter how difficult they are to interpret. What I wish to emphasize is my attempt to refocus attention on taking early modern ontology seriously by demonstrating that there are philosophical insights still to be gleaned from so doing. If I should be so fortunate as to provoke serious discussion about the ontology of ideas in the early modern period, then I shall count my efforts a success.

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## *How Berkeley Redefines Substance* A Reply to My Critics

Stephen H. Daniel

**Abstract:** In several essays I have argued that Berkeley maintains the same basic notion of spiritual substance throughout his life. Because that notion is not the traditional (Aristotelian, Cartesian, or Lockean) doctrine of substance, critics (e.g., John Roberts, Tom Stoneham, Talia Mae Bettcher, Margaret Atherton, Walter Ott, Marc Hight) claim that on my reading Berkeley either endorses a Humean notion of substance or has no recognizable theory of substance at all. In this essay I point out how my interpretation does not assume that Berkeley adopts a bundle theory of mind, but instead redefines what it means for a simple substance to be the principle by which ideas are perceived.

Over the past decade I have argued that Berkeley adopts a consistent notion of spiritual substance throughout his life that is neither a Humean bundle of ideas nor a Cartesian or Lockean substance.<sup>1</sup> I have proposed that what he says in his *Notebooks*—for example, that “the very existence of ideas constitutes the soul” (NB 577) and “mind is a congeries of perceptions. Take away perceptions and you take away the mind” (NB 580)—does not at all contradict his published accounts of the “active, indivisible substances” in which ideas exist (PHK 89, 91, 141; DHP 231, 233).<sup>2</sup> In his published works when he says that the mind is a substance, he means that the mind is the activity whereby the objects we perceive are differentiated and associated. In this sense, minds are nothing like ideas but are rather the principles in terms of which ideas are identified as those ideas.

This shifts the focus of how to understand Berkeley’s doctrine of substance away from thinking of it as a thing that can be conceptualized to its being the cause by which something can be conceptualized in the first place. So rather than describing ideas as modes of spiritual substance (à la Descartes) or treating mental substances as bundles of ideas (à la Hume), I argue that Berkeley thinks of substance not as a thing at all but as the principle of differentiation and association of objects. No idea can have an identity apart from the activity by which it is identified, and no particular mental substance can be identified apart from the ideas it identifies.

This reading of Berkeley has been difficult to understand for some commentators who contend that, by referring to the mind as a “substance,” Berkeley certainly cannot have meant anything other than the traditional notion of something that does not depend on

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<sup>1</sup> See Stephen H. Daniel, “Berkeley, Suárez, and the *Esse-Existere* Distinction,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000), 621-36; “Berkeley’s Christian Neoplatonism, Archetypes, and Divine Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39 (2001), 239-58; “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion of Spiritual Substance,” in *New Interpretations of Berkeley’s Thought*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2008), 203-30.

<sup>2</sup> Because of errors in *The Works of George Berkeley*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson, 1948–57), quotations are from corrected texts in George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, ed. Michael R. Ayers (London: J. M. Dent, 1992): NB = *Notebooks* (entry); PHK = *Principles of Human Knowledge* (section); DHP = *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Luce-Jessop vol. 2 pagination noted in the margins of the Ayers edition).



anything else and that persists through change.<sup>3</sup> So they have rejected my interpretation in favor of a strategy that requires that we think that he adopts various views in his writings but ultimately does not provide us with much of a doctrine of mind.

To make that case, they have often appealed to the canard of the “black list hypothesis,” A. A. Luce’s claim that the + signs in Berkeley’s *Notebooks* indicate views about which Berkeley had doubts or subsequently rejected. Because a good part of my interpretation of Berkeley’s treatment of spiritual substance depends on comments marked with the + sign, I have had to show how the black list hypothesis is unwarranted and needs to be consigned to the dustbin of philosophical historiography.<sup>4</sup>

But because interpreters still use Luce’s position as the “standard reading” of the + sign, I think it is important to indicate how my account of Berkeley stands up to their challenges.<sup>5</sup> In particular, I want to respond to objections raised by John Roberts, Tom Stoneham, and Talia Mae Bettcher. Others have alluded in passing to my views. For example, Margaret Atherton notes that, “Some [citing me as one] have been unhappy with Berkeley’s claim that mind is a substance and have put forward interpretations in which he does not endorse this view.”<sup>6</sup> As I have insisted in numerous places, that is not my view. I do not object to Berkeley’s claim that mind is a substance; I object only to the view that in appealing to the term “substance,” he must be understood to be endorsing an Aristotelian, Cartesian or Lockean notion of substance—as if they are the only possible senses in which the concept of substance can be developed.

No doubt, not everyone assumes that I deny that Berkeley believes that the mind is a substance. Genevieve Migely, for example, recognizes that in my view, Berkeley’s doctrine of mind emphasizes how spiritual substance is defined in terms of the activities of perceiving and willing, not in terms of the things perceived or willed.<sup>7</sup> But other commentators continue to think with Atherton that, for me, Berkeleian minds are not

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<sup>3</sup> See Marc A. Hight and Walter Ott, “The New Berkeley,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 34 (2004), 1–18, 24; Talia Mae Bettcher, *Berkeley’s Philosophy of Spirit* (London: Continuum, 2007), 26, 102; Talia Mae Bettcher, “Berkeley’s Theory of Mind: Some New Models,” *Philosophy Compass* 6 (2011), 691–92.

<sup>4</sup> See Stephen H. Daniel, “Berkeley’s Doctrine of Mind and the ‘Black List Hypothesis’: A Dialogue,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 51 (2013), 24–41.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John R. Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7; Walter Ott, “The Cartesian Context of Berkeley’s Attack on Abstraction,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004), 409–10; Patrick Fleming, “Berkeley’s Immaterialist Account of Action,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006), 420; Marc A. Hight, *Idea and Ontology* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 166–67; and John R. Roberts, “‘Strange Impotence of Men’: Immaterialism, Anaemic Agents, and Immanent Causation,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18 (2010), 411–14, 430.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Atherton, “Berkeley’s Last Word on Spirit,” in *Essays on the Concept of Mind in Early-Modern Philosophy*, eds. Petr Glombiček and James Hill (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 127.

<sup>7</sup> Genevieve Migely, “Berkeley’s Actively Passive Mind,” in *Reexamining Berkeley’s Philosophy*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 164–65, 170.

“real” (read: Cartesian or Lockean) substances, because I do not endorse the view that Berkeley adopts a “traditional” concept of substance.

This way of misinterpreting my account appears in most references to my work by way of allusions—usually without much comment—to a surprisingly influential article by Marc Hight and Walter Ott that linked me to Robert Muehlmann’s bundle-theory interpretation of Berkeley’s doctrine of mind.<sup>8</sup> Even though Hight and Ott acknowledge that my position differs from Muehlmann’s, they conclude that, since I (like Muehlmann) accept Berkeley’s claim that the mind is a congeries, I must not believe that he has a doctrine of substance. However, as I have repeatedly noted, a congeries of perceptions for Berkeley is not a *collection* of activities that have been differentiated prior to their being collected together; rather, it is the *simple* activity of perceiving, imagining, or willing in terms of which objects (i.e., ideas) are identified and related. In this sense, a congeries is a spiritual substance, the indivisible thinking, active principle and undifferentiated cause in terms of which the differentiation and association of ideas occur.

### I. The Bundle Theory: John Roberts

To see how difficult it has been for some to read Berkeley this way (i.e., given our familiarity with Hume), we need only turn to John Roberts’ *Metaphysics for the Mob*. There Roberts notes that Hume’s characterization of the self as a bundle of perceptions

has had a very unusual—one might even say ironic—impact on Berkeley scholarship in particular. It has helped a number of contemporary commentators to the conclusion that, all things considered, it is preferable that we not take Berkeley’s description of spirits as “simple substances” too seriously. Instead, they recommend that we read him as holding some sort of bundle account of spirits. Clearly, this move will be especially attractive to anyone in the grip of the *esse is percipi* caricature because now, since spirits consist of perceptions, the *esse* of spirits is *percipi*. (6)

Roberts follows this by observing that my interpretation is one of three strategies for attributing a bundle theory of spirits to Berkeley. The first is that of Muehlmann, who adopts a “fairly straightforward Humean view of spirits” that simply adds volitions to ideas (6). The second strategy, which Roberts associates with me, “sees in Berkeley’s work some Suárezian influences that lead to an account of minds as bundles of ‘particular and determinate apprehensions’ of ideas” (6-7). The third strategy (attributed to Ian Tipton) ends up treating minds “as collections in something like the way a herd is a collection” (7). Roberts concludes that each strategy endorses a bundle theory of spirit which he aims to show fails.

Not surprisingly, Roberts does not discuss how my appeal to Suárez reveals the distinctly non-Humean way in which the term *perceptions* can refer not only to the objects of mind but also how the mind’s acts are reflexively identified in virtue of the products of its

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<sup>8</sup> See Hight and Ott, “New Berkeley,” 2, 11-18, 24.

activity. The point that I have made in several venues (and which Roberts is not alone in missing) is that a mental substance is defined by its activity of perceiving and willing, and that activity is specified as this or that particular mind by acts of perception and willing that are themselves distinguished only by their objects. That is why Berkeley insists that if you take away ideas, you take away the only means you have to identify the activities of perceiving and willing by which those objects are identified. So it comes as no surprise that Berkeley says:

Consult, ransack your understanding; what find you there besides several perceptions or thoughts? What mean you by the word *mind*? You must mean something that you perceive or that you do not perceive. A thing not perceived is a contradiction.” (NB 579)

That is, in having a perception or thought, we are aware of the thing perceived—and that means that we are aware of a particular object that is distinguished from and associated with other objects in very specific ways. The awareness of this thing as *differentiated from and associated with* other things is exactly what it means to be aware of the mind. That is why Berkeley remarks, “Say you the mind is not the perceptions, but that thing which perceives. I answer you are abused by the words *that* and *thing*: these are vague empty words without a meaning” (NB 581). In other words, there is no mental thing *apart from* the activity of perceiving and willing; but that does not mean that the mind is no thing. Instead, as Berkeley notes in the *Principles*, the words *soul*, *spirit*, *substance* “do mean or signify a real thing. . . . a soul or spirit is an active being, whose existence consists, not in being perceived, but in perceiving ideas and thinking” (PHK 139). Since it is impossible to perceive something without perceiving some particular thing, we can be sure of the existence of the mind precisely as a thing, not because we perceive the mind but rather because we perceive its effects in the fact that we perceive one thing as differentiated from and associated with others.

It is a mistake, then, to think of the mind as a collection or bundle of ideas or volitions, because that would require us to have assumed already that ideas or volitions are differentiated and associated without having explained how that differentiation and association occurs. My analysis of mind in Berkeley is intended to do just that, because it focuses on how the activity by which ideas are differentiated and associated is unavoidably simple—which is exactly what Berkeley means in his published work in claiming that minds are simple, indivisible substances (PHK 89, 141).

I suspect that Roberts might have seen that were it not for two things that stand in his way: first, he can’t get past the fact that my account draws heavily on + entries in the *Notebooks* (which the “standard reading” rejects); and second (following Hight and Ott), he thinks that by associating me with Muehlmann, he avoids the possibility that my Suárezian interpretation differs (as it certainly does) from Muehlmann’s Humean interpretation (7, 99, 103-104).

In reply to Roberts, then: I don’t think that acts of mind are identical with their objects, even though the word *perceptions* can refer to either. Berkeley never adopted a Humean

bundle theory of the mind; he always maintained a theory of spiritual substance, just not one that allows the mind to be conceptually distinct from its activities. The mind is a *specific* congeries of activities, which for Berkeley means that “consciousness, perception, existence of ideas seem to be all one” (NB 578). For as Suárez suggests, the mind is the consciousness (and thus the existence) of those ideas.<sup>9</sup> That is what allows Berkeley to say “the very existence of ideas constitutes the soul” (NB 577), for ideas become *these specific ideas* by means of the simple activity of being identified as those ideas. In this way, spirit is not related to its ideas as one thing that just happens to be different from other determinately identifiable things (i.e., ideas). Rather, as the active principle of principle of differentiation and association, spirit cannot be differentiated from or associated with its ideas, because it is that in terms of which things are identified as things in the first place. As Berkeley puts it in the *Dialogues*, “It is therefore evident there can be no *substratum* of those [sensible] qualities but spirit, in which they exist, not by way of mode or property, but as a thing perceived in that which perceives it” (D 237). To refer to the activity of spirit is not to refer to some substratum that underlies or holds together a distinctive complex of acts that come to identify objects of mind. Rather, it is to refer to the knowing or perceiving of objects precisely as those objects: that is what it means for spirit to be a substance or support of ideas (PHK 7, 135; DHP 234).

In comments on a paper I presented at the 2012 APA Pacific Division meeting,<sup>10</sup> Roberts notes that this way of thinking of substance makes Berkeley sound much more like Spinoza than is usually recognized, and with that I agree. That is why I have written elsewhere on how considering Berkeley in the context of Spinoza is not as implausible as it might first appear.<sup>11</sup> Of course, for Berkeley, minds and bodies are not Spinozistic modes; indeed, the whole vocabulary of modes is anathema to Berkeley. But instead of highlighting their differences, I think the juxtaposition of Berkeley and Spinoza only makes us reconsider our understanding of what Spinoza means by substance and mode and why Berkeley insists that the mind–idea relation should not be modeled on the Cartesian way of understanding substance and mode. In particular, it makes us reconsider how Berkeley’s doctrine of ideas forces us to address questions about God’s creation of finite minds, their nature, and freedom. Roberts believes that Berkeley says very little about these topics, but I propose that his views on these issues are all over the place, but only if you know what to look for. Specifically, that means reading Berkeley in the context of Malebranche and Puritan thinkers (e.g., Jonathan Edwards), for whom the creation of the corporeal world is unintelligible apart from the creation of finite minds.<sup>12</sup>

Contrary to Roberts’ claims, then, my reading is hardly “just imposed, without argument” or simply contrary to “the apparent aim of the text.” Instead, it invites us to frame the discussion of God’s creation of minds in the context of Berkeley’s entire philosophic enterprise. To assume that the creation of incorporeal spirits is nowhere to be seen in his

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<sup>9</sup> See my “Berkeley, Suárez, and the *Esse–Existere* Distinction,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000), 621-36.

<sup>10</sup> “Berkeley on God’s Creation of Minds and Human Freedom.”

<sup>11</sup> See my “Berkeley and Spinoza,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 135 (2010), 123-34.

<sup>12</sup> See Daniel, “Stoic Notion,” 222-24.

account of corporeal objects is indefensible, considering how it is a hallmark of his immaterialist position that no corporeal object can exist or even be thought apart from minds. Indeed, as the active principles by which objects are identified and related, minds are everywhere where there are objects, because something's being known as this or that particular object depends on (i.e., consists in) its being perceived just as that object. In Berkeley's view, what would need explanation is how it could be otherwise—that is, how God's creation of minds could ever occur apart from his creation of the corporeal world. That is why it has been a central feature of my discussions to highlight Berkeley's account of the intrinsic relation of mind and ideas.

## II. The Threat to Freedom: Tom Stoneham

In his comments at the same APA session, Tom Stoneham accurately notes that, in my account, when God creates a specific finite mind, he creates all of its perceptions, including volitions. From this, Stoneham concludes, that freedom and responsibility do not consist in “being able to perceive, imagine or will other than we do.” He finds this shocking, in that it suggests that “the existing views of Berkeley on action are all mistaken,” and that my view is a “radically different account from standard interpretations of Berkeley.” Obviously this fallacious appeal to authority highlights the importance of showing how my interpretation is not as novel or as inconsistent with Berkeley's texts as Stoneham implies.

First, I should point out that the view that I attribute to Berkeley is not as unusual among his contemporaries as it might initially seem. For example, even though he rejects Malebranche's occasionalism, he endorses the doctrine of consent that Malebranche—along with Jonathan Edwards and many Puritan thinkers—accept as crucial for reconciling human freedom and divine sovereignty.<sup>13</sup>

Second, I reject Stoneham's suggestion that God can do things *to* finite minds, because that would mean that a mind could be considered as a principle of activity that exists apart from its being the principle of the specific activities that identify it as that particular mind. This would violate Berkeley's nominalism by suggesting that a specific mind could be free not to be that specific mind. In Stoneham's account, minds can be individuated either by “exercising their active principles in different manners” or by having different (passively received) sense perceptions. God could thus create Adam without considering how Adam might exercise his power: that is, God can create a finite mind that he subsequently wills to perceive certain ideas. In this way, substances could be individuated, as Stoneham puts it, “by contingent and even relational properties (e.g., location in space and time).” But as Berkeley insists, space and time cannot be abstracted from the order and succession of our ideas (PHK 98). That is why the purported “missing premise” in my argument—namely, that “the identity of a finite mind depends upon its having exactly the perceptions it does and no others, and that had it had different perceptions, it would have been a different mind”—is not missing at all. Indeed, it is at the heart of my account of finite substances.

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<sup>13</sup> See Daniel, “Berkeley's Christian Neoplatonism,” 254-56; and Stephen H. Daniel, “Edwards, Berkeley, and Ramist Logic,” *Idealistic Studies* 31 (2001), 55-72.

Third, Stoneham suggests that the “obvious and common reading” of Berkeley’s remark that “I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure” (PHK 28) indicates that I can imagine things in the world differently, and that this shows that in creating my mind God does not determine my imaginings and volitions. Stoneham adds that we can conceive of a person as having a different height, or of a mind as having different ideas, by “making it general.” But, I argue, treating a mind or idea as a general placeholder for others does not make that mind or idea any less specific, and to think of it as possibly otherwise is to make it an abstraction, a *potential* principle of activity rather than an actual one. But in creating me, God specifies which of my alignments of things in the world are real or imaginative, and in this way God simultaneously creates all other objects and the minds that perceive them. Sin or error thus consists simply in my willing that the world be perceived contrary to its divine ordination.

Fourth, Stoneham claims that my interpretation contradicts Berkeley’s view that minds are ontologically distinct from ideas by implying that the sum total of my perceptions is what differentiates me from other minds. But Berkeley explicitly says, “I know that I am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking, active principle” (DHP 233). My answer: to say that minds and ideas are not the same is not to say that they are ontologically distinct. If by perceptions we mean ideas, then obviously I am not my ideas. If by perceptions we mean the acts in virtue of which those ideas are intelligible and exist, then my mind is the principle of differentiation that produces the totality of my perceptions. In that case, I am still not my own principle of differentiation or cause of my own existence.

Fifth, Stoneham challenges my “very unfamiliar reading” that we can *choose* to think of our ideas differently because such a view conflicts with Berkeley’s contemporaries. As I have already mentioned, Malebranche and the Puritans often make this point, noting that the difference between the saint and sinner lies not in having different ideas but in choosing to think of those ideas in terms of promoting God’s will or not. This is what I mean in referring to Berkeley’s “Stoic” (and seemingly deterministic) explanation of how God creates finite minds. I am not suggesting that Berkeley relies on aspects of Stoicism that appear in Lipsius, Grotius, Shaftesbury, Spinoza, Leibniz, or Locke to explain his doctrine of mind. Rather, my account highlights the way in which Berkeley’s doctrine of mind complements a Stoic account of freedom. My interpretation thus invites readers to expand their understanding of what “Berkeley’s intended audience would have found most natural” by expanding who they consider Berkeley’s audience to have been.

Sixth, Stoneham asks whether it isn’t more plausible (i.e., in keeping with the “standard reading”) to think that, by saying we “recreate and exalt the mind . . . by proper inferences” (PHK 109), Berkeley is talking about industry and social development rather than the metaphysics of mind and personal sanctity. My answer: when Berkeley writes that we should develop an appreciation of “the beauty, order, extent, and variety of natural things” (PHK 109), we recommend that we glorify God by recognizing that all thing in the world are ordered. In this way, his doctrine of self-awareness (and thus his metaphysics of mind) can be seen as one with his social thought.

### III. The Challenge to Tradition: Talia Mae Bettcher

This attention to what it means for Berkeley to speak about consciousness of the self has been a primary interest of Talia Mae Bettcher, and it probably accounts for the fact that she has provided the most extensive critique of my work. In *Berkeley's Philosophy of Spirit* (2007), she too maintains that I reject spiritual substance (26, 102, 138). That would be true if, like others I have mentioned (especially Hight and Ott), we were locked into thinking that spiritual substance must be understood only in terms of the “traditional conception.” As I have argued, though, I don’t think that Berkeley endorses such a view. She says that I claim that “for Berkeley spirit is not a thing but the sheer existence of its ideas (and its very activity of willing and perceiving)” (138). In one sense, she is right, for I claim that, for Berkeley, minds are not things like ideas, but rather the existence of the ideas it wills and perceives to be as those ideas. That is, spirit is the activity of willing and perceiving whereby *those* ideas are said to exist. I do not claim that the mind’s activity of willing and perceiving is different from *its* ideas—as is implied by her claim that, for me, spirit is the existence of its ideas *and* its activity of willing and perceiving—for that would suggest (contrary to my interpretation) that it is possible to think of the mind apart from the activities by means of which its ideas are identified. She claims that, in saying that spirits are the existence of ideas, I allow spirits and ideas to have something in common (*viz.*, the idea itself). Again, in one sense she is right; but to see this as a criticism of my interpretation of Berkeley would require confusing the act of perceiving with the product of that act. Both are, no doubt, called perceptions, but I certainly do not think of them as the same, and I have not suggested that Berkeley does either.

In a 2011 article Bettcher provides a further analysis of my account.<sup>14</sup> She observes that, like her, I argue that for Berkeley, a mind is not a Cartesian ego, Lockean spiritual substratum, Lockean self, or Humean bundle of perceptions. But she says that my “Stoic” view “implausibly removes Berkeley from this tradition altogether” and is “extreme” because it substitutes a perception–object ontology for a Cartesian substance–mode ontology in which a mind could be different from its actual thoughts (690). These objections are no problem for me, because they are based less on textual critique than on the expectation that philosophers of the period “just have to” buy into a certain tradition or ontology. As I see it, an interpretation might force a commentator out of her comfort zone, but that hardly seems like a good reason to reject the interpretation.

She also claims that in my account, Berkeley thinks of ideas as distinct from the activity of cognition by which they are cognized, because (for me) the mind is nothing other than that activity. This, she says, is what I propose distinguishes Berkeley from Descartes, for whom ideas are simply cognitions themselves (690). I agree with that characterization of how to distinguish the two thinkers, for in my view Descartes thinks that spirit is related to ideas as substance is to modes, whereas Berkeley thinks that spirit is related to ideas as the existence of those ideas is related to the ideas themselves. That is why I maintain that, for Berkeley, mind *is* the existence of ideas. This she finds troubling—I suspect because, in true Thomistic form, she is reluctant to define a thing in terms of its existence. By contrast, I (drawing again on Berkeley’s Suárezian background) do not hesitate to make

<sup>14</sup> Bettcher, “Berkeley’s Theory of Mind,” 689-92.

that claim, because in my interpretation, to be a substance is to be the existence of the differentiation and association of specific ideas. So unlike Bettcher, I am not “perplexed” or find “peculiar” Berkeley’s remark that “Spirits and ideas are things so wholly different, that when we say, *they exist, they are known*, or the like, these words must not be thought to signify anything common to both natures” (PHK I 142; also PHK I 89). Unlike her, I don’t think that minds are intelligible apart from the activities in terms of which ideas are identified. When I claim, then, that spirits don’t really exist nor are they beings at all—a claim with which she takes issue—she fails to see that my point is simply that, for Berkeley, existence itself does not exist.<sup>15</sup>

All of this leads Bettcher to conclude that, despite my insistence that spiritual substance is “the unique, singular, divinely instituted principle or activity of differentiation and association by means of which ideas are identified and related,” for me (at least in her view), a Berkeleian mind cannot be all that different from Hume’s bundle theory (691).<sup>16</sup> She acknowledges that I claim that Berkeley’s notion of mind differs from Hume’s, because for Hume ideas are already differentiated and for Berkeley they are differentiated by the mind. But that, she says, is “slightly misleading” because, for me, the mind itself is ultimately distinguished with reference to ideas themselves. So in her view, “there still *does* remain the worry about how all the particular acts are united into a single mind” (691). As I have noted, though, the unity of the mind consists simply in being the distinctive principle identified by the complex or “congeries” of ideas it differentiates and associates. Her mistake is that she assumes that, for me, ideas are differentiated by “particular” acts that themselves need to be united by a mind. My view, though, is that just as with ideas, acts are differentiated only in how they are related as a unified complex willed by God.

No doubt, my strategy abandons the “traditional notion of substance in a fairly dramatic way,” because as Bettcher puts it, my interpretation departs from “a Cartesian account which refers the various activities of a mind to a single substance” (691). Indeed, my point is that, for Berkeley, minds are *not* like Aristotelian or Cartesian substances. But that does not mean that Berkeleian substances have no permanence, only that their permanence cannot be thought apart from how their activities are related to one another. Instead of describing substance as that which persists through change—as if time were distinct from the order of ideas—Berkeley describes persistence and change in terms of substance (i.e., in terms of the activity of differentiating and associating ideas). Because this way of thinking of spiritual substance is so different from that found in standard accounts of Descartes and Locke, it is no wonder that my interpretation of Berkeley’s doctrine does not engage that tradition.<sup>17</sup>

In short, instead of appealing to an Aristotelian tradition in which substance is understood as that which does not depend on anything else and of which accidents are predicated, I suggest that Berkeley appeals to another tradition, namely, that of Stoicism. In that

<sup>15</sup> See Daniel, “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion,” 203.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel, “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion,” 216.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, I am now looking into how Berkeley’s strategy for interpreting substance reveals unnoticed features in the doctrines of other early modern thinkers.



tradition, spirits don't "exist" but rather "subsist" as the existence of ideas. Bettcher claims that I appear to be drawing on the "traditional" use of *subsistence* "according to which substances possess self-subsistence (that is, roughly, independence) whereas items such as accidents, modes, etc. do not," and she cites the *Port Royal Logic* in support of her claim (692). But Arnauld and Nicole's *Logic* does not distinguish subsistence and existence, and so (contrary to her attempt to associate me with that viewpoint) it adopts the very same strategy as the Aristotelian-Cartesian-Lockean presuppositions that I argue Berkeley challenges. My point is that, in fact, Berkeley appeals to a "traditional" (i.e., Stoic) distinction between subsistence and existence, one that describes substance in terms other than independence and predication. The tradition that I recommend we think of Berkeley in terms of, then, is *not* one typically associated with Descartes, Arnauld and Nicole, or Locke, because they do not place any importance on the distinction between subsistence and existence.

I thus resist the effort by Bettcher and others to legitimate their interpretations by claiming their views are consistent with "the tradition," because I maintain that there is another tradition that does not assume that substances *exist* and *are known* as things in ways that are like accidents, modes, or qualities. No doubt, in terms of the tradition that I associate Berkeley with, "spirits don't properly exist, aren't properly things" (692). What I reject, though, is the claim that the subsistence of spirits can't be considered (in this alternative tradition) as the existence of things. To say that spirits don't "properly" exist and aren't "properly" things gives the impression that, in my account, spirits are not things that exist. In a non-technical sense, that's silly: of course, they exist. But in saying that Berkeley's contemporaries would have understood him to be claiming that spirits are "proper" things that possess independence, she gets both me and Berkeley wrong.

Rather than appealing to Descartes or Locke to explicate Berkeley, I think of his account of spirit (as an integrated and complex unity of all of its acts) as more like a Leibnizian substance.<sup>18</sup> It cannot be abstracted from its acts because it is nothing other than the principle of those acts. That principle is definitely different from and independent of any one of its acts and even of the accidental collection or bundle of those acts, because it identifies all of those acts and their objects in virtue of defining them in temporal, spatial, and thematic relations. So contrary to Bettcher's charge, in my account Berkeley's view of mind would not have seemed implausible to his contemporaries, for it would not have seemed implausible to anyone familiar with Leibniz.

### Concluding Remarks

Bettcher admits that my account might be able to handle Berkeley's "cryptic" remarks about mind in his *Notebooks*, but it leads to "extreme" and "unpalatable" consequences because it "departs so wildly from the Aristotelian-Cartesian-Lockean traditions" (692). Like my other critics, she prefers the reading "commonly adopted by scholars," namely,

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Stephen H. Daniel, "The Harmony of the Leibniz-Berkeley Juxtaposition," in *Leibniz and the English-Speaking World*, ed. Stuart Brown and Pauline Phemister (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 163-80.

that Berkeley's notes reflect changes in his thought. Instead, I have proposed an interpretation that accommodates all of Berkeley's texts, from his earliest writings to *Siris*, not by proposing that he changed his position on the nature of mind, but by indicating how his doctrine differs in significant respects from those of some of his contemporaries. Such an account, I conclude, is hardly so wild as to be branded "extreme" or "unpalatable"—unless, of course, we simply assume that the "standard" or "considered" interpretation must be correct. That is something I am unwilling to do.

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## *Berkeley's Metaphysics of Perception* A Reply to My Critics

Keota Fields

**Abstract:** In this reply, I use an act theory to explain divine ideas and Berkeley's archetype-ectype distinction. I argue that divine ideas are acts of divine self-consciousness in reply to the objection that if divine ideas are acts, then for Berkeley they are acts without objects. The result is a much more plausible account of Berkeley's archetype-ectype distinction than is available on representationalist interpretations. Lastly, while arguments from illusion are indispensable to representationalist theories, Berkeley's rejection of arguments from illusion is evidence that he endorsed an act theory of ideas.

In *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence*<sup>1</sup> I interpreted various aspects of Berkeley's early philosophy in terms of an act theory of ideas. This goes against the grain of a scholarly consensus that Berkeley was a representationalist with respect to ideas. According to an act theory, ideas are cognitive operations of the mind rather than the objects of such operations. They take external things as their direct or immediate objects. On a representationalist theory, ideas are the immediate objects of cognitive operations. They represent external things to the mind, and those things are the indirect or mediate objects of cognitive operations. The choice between these two theories of ideas influences how perception is understood. An act theory of ideas implies a direct theory of perception whereas a representationalist theory implies an indirect theory of perception. Furthermore, a representationalist theory allows for skepticism in ways that an act theory does not. I offered a number of reasons for interpreting Berkeley as an act theorist rather than a representationalist, including his commitment to a direct theory of perception and his insistence that his idealism rules out skepticism.

In her generous review of the book,<sup>2</sup> Melissa Frankel suggests several topics that might benefit from further development. Chief among these are the relationship between Berkeley's act theory of ideas and his rejection of geometric theories of distance vision in the *New Theory of Vision*; an act theoretical explanation for why Berkeley rejects Lockean abstract ideas; the relationship between Berkeley's act theory of ideas and his empiricism; and how divine ideas might be understood on an act theory, with particular consideration of the archetype-ectype relation as it functions in Berkeley's metaphysics. Since I cannot hope to address all of these issues in the space provided, I focus my attention on using an act theory to explain divine ideas and Berkeley's archetype-ectype distinction. I argue that divine ideas are acts of divine self-consciousness. They are operations of the divine mind that take God himself as their immediate object. Taking archetypes to be divine ideas in this sense, I then argue that ectypes are operations of finite minds that take divine ideas as their immediate objects.

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<sup>1</sup> *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> *Berkeley Studies* 23 (2012): 46-50.

A focus on Berkeley's metaphysics of perception allows me the opportunity to introduce new reasons to think that Berkeley was an act theorist. These reasons are grounded in his approach to familiar arguments from illusion. Such arguments are routinely presented as evidence for a representationalist theory of ideas. Yet Berkeley's approach to them is characteristic of an act theorist. Along the way I present new challenges to those who read Berkeley as committed to a representationalist theory of ideas. One challenge is that such a reading conflicts with Berkeley's theological views. Another challenge is that a representationalist reading conflicts with Berkeley's insistence that ideas are inert.

### 1. Two Theories of Ideas

It's worth rehearsing the differences between an act theory of ideas and a representationalist theory. According to an act theorist one perceives the sun, the moon, this pineapple, and so on. According to a representationalist one perceives an idea that represents the sun, an idea that represents the moon, an idea that represents this pineapple, and so on. This difference is ontological rather than merely terminological. Representationalist theories posit an ontology of representational entities that act theorists reject. I call them "representational entities" rather than "ideas" in order to distinguish the ontology required by a representationalist theory from Berkeley's ontology of ideas. Representational entities are numerically distinct from both the external objects they represent and the mental operations in virtue of which the mind is engaged in perception. Act theorists seek to explain perception without recourse to such an ontology.

This ontological difference between act theories and representationalist theories leads to different accounts of the semantic content of perceptual experiences. According to an act theorist, to say that some mind has an idea of the sun is to say that the sun itself is meaningful to or understood by that mind (no matter how incompletely that mind understands the sun). Cognitive operations are the means by which the mind grasps the semantic content of a perceptual experience. Conversely, according to a representationalist theory, to say that some mind has an idea of the sun is to say that there is a representational entity numerically distinct from the sun itself that exists in that mind and represents the sun. Cognitive operations are the means by which the mind grasps the semantic content of that representational entity. Those cognitive operations are numerically distinct from both the sun and the mind-dependent entity that represents the sun. The sun itself is indirectly understood or grasped by means of representational entities.

Without an ontology of representational entities, act theorists propose a distinctive account of perception. That account includes an explanation of the intentionality of perceptual experience. In perception external objects cause physical motions in the nervous system, including the brain. Those motions prompt the mind to produce an interpretation of them in terms of their causes.<sup>3</sup> The motions themselves are signs that the mind must interpret and it does so by means of its own cognitive operations. Such operations *just are* interpretations. They are the means by which the mind grasps or

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<sup>3</sup> That the mind is prompted rather than caused appears to be a concession to the interaction problem.

understands whatever external object is signified by specific neural motion. So, when one sees the sun it causes neural motion in the optic nerves and the brain. The mind is thereby prompted to interpret that motion as being a sign for its cause, which is the sun itself.

This signification relation helps explain the fact that perceptual experiences are about a world that exists independently of the mind of the perceiver. Act theorists explain this data by claiming that perceptual experiences inherently include signs for objects that exist in a world beyond the perceiver's mind. Intentionality is understood as a form of signification. The relation between an intentional perceptual state and the intentional object of that state is analyzed in terms of the relation between sign and signified. Intentional perceptual states include signs, and the intentional objects of those states are signified by those signs. But since perception is causal, this analysis must also include causal roles. Neural motion signifies its cause in virtue of being an effect of that cause. The mind interprets neural motion as being about its cause because it signifies that cause. Notably, the balance between the causal aspect of perception, the signification aspect, and the interpretive aspect permits act theorists to explain perceptual error, misperception and the like, all while maintaining that perception is a causal process. Perceptual error involves misinterpretation, anomalous signification (including failing to signify), or both.

Representationalist theories of perception proceed quite differently. Since representational entities rather than external things are the immediate objects of cognitive operations, a perceptual experience can occur in the absence of any external object. The understanding of perception as a causal process is thereby muddled. Perceivers can have a perceptual experience caused by the sun and an exactly similar perceptual experience that is not caused by the sun. In the latter scenario, it is obviously not the case that the sun causes neural motion in the optic nerves and brain. Since signification is a dyadic relation,<sup>4</sup> when neural motion that is typically caused by the sun occurs in the absence of the sun, it is not the case that such motion is a sign for the sun. Thus, the intentionality of perceptual experience is not easily analyzed in terms of signification for a representationalist. Instead, representationalists typically explain the intentionality of perceptual experience in terms of representative entities. Those entities are inherently intentional, just as they inherently include semantic content. It is in virtue of representational entities that individual cognitive operations are directed towards a world beyond the mind of the perceiver, even when no such world exists. An ontology of representational entities is necessary, it is claimed, if hallucinations and other perceptual illusions are to be explained.

## 2. Divine Ideas

According to an act theory of ideas, all ideas are cognitive operations that take things external to themselves as their immediate objects. If so, and if this is the case for both divine ideas and finite ideas, then it's natural to wonder what the external objects of

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<sup>4</sup> More precisely, signification is *at least* dyadic. In cases where one sign simultaneously signifies multiple things, the signification relation is obviously polyadic. Berkeley uses polyadic signification relations to explain general ideas in the Introduction to the *Principles concerning Human Knowledge (PHK)*.

divine cognitive operations might be. The answer is obvious for those who Berkeley calls “materialists” (anyone who believes in the existence of material substance, even if they also believe that minds are immaterial). The external objects of divine cognitive operations are the same material objects—tables, chairs, the sun, the moon, and so on—that are the objects of the cognitive operations of finite minds. But Berkeley presents a unique case. He argues that there are no material objects. What finite minds take to be material objects are actually divine ideas. While they exist independently of finite minds they are not mind-independent in the global sense of existing independently of all minds whatsoever. This is because they depend on God’s mind for their existence. They are his ideas, after all. Berkeley is therefore in no position to claim that the objects of divine cognitive operations are tables, chairs, and the like. If the external world is comprised of divine ideas and those ideas are divine cognitive operations that take something other than themselves as their immediate objects, then the lack of material things apparently deprives divine ideas of the external world of any immediate objects whatsoever.<sup>5</sup> Berkeley’s idealism seems to run aground on my interpretation.

Fortunately, there is a clear path out of this difficulty. Divine ideas are acts of divine self-consciousness. Other than individual finite minds, the immediate object of God’s cognitive operations is God himself. I set aside the question of whether God has a single infinitely complex idea of himself or infinitely many distinct ideas of himself.<sup>6</sup> There is textual evidence that Berkeley holds that divine ideas are God’s ideas of himself. This evidence is independent of the question of whether Berkeley was an act theorist, but suggests that he was. For example, in the *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous (DHP)* Berkeley claims that God necessarily lacks a faculty of sensation:

To know everything knowable, is certainly a perfection; but to endure, or suffer, or feel anything by sense, is an imperfection. The former, I say, agrees to God, but not the latter. God knows, or hath ideas; but His ideas are not conveyed to Him by sense, as ours are. (*DHP* 241)

Note that Berkeley claims that having a faculty of sensation is an imperfection and a mark of a finite mind. Possession of a faculty of sensation is an imperfection because of the nature of that faculty. In sensation objects external to the mind thwart one’s will in order to produce ideas in that mind:

We, who are limited and dependent spirits, are liable to impressions of sense, the effects of an external Agent, which, being produced against our wills, are sometimes painful and uneasy. (*DHP* 240-241)

But, whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by sense have not a like dependence on my will. When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so

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<sup>5</sup> I thank Ville Paukkonen for raising this objection.

<sup>6</sup> I think this question is undecidable for Berkeley, and has little or no bearing on his arguments.

likewise as to the hearing and other senses; the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. (*PHK* 29)

it is evident to every one that those things which are called the Works of Nature, that is, the far greater part of the ideas or sensations perceived by us, are not produced by, or dependent on, the wills of men. (*PHK* 146)

That the will in question can be thwarted at all implies that it is finite. A finite will is not perfectly powerful. Thus, the very presence of a faculty of sensation implies an imperfect will. Analysis of the concept of God as a perfect mind with a perfect will implies that he necessarily lacks a faculty of sensation:

But God, whom no external being can affect, who perceives nothing by sense as we do; whose will is absolute and independent, causing all things, and liable to be thwarted or resisted by nothing: it is evident, such a Being as this can suffer nothing, nor be affected with ... any sensation at all. (*DHP* 241)

Since God's ideas cannot be ideas of sensation yet he is omniscient, he must have ideas that provide him with perfect knowledge in some other way.

Berkeley follows Locke in recognizing two general categories of cognitive operations: sensation and reflection (*PHK* 1). By reflection I understand Berkeley to have in mind introspection in general, including memory and imagination. Sensation has been ruled out as necessarily inapplicable to God. But since God must have ideas that provide him with perfect knowledge, those ideas must be the result of introspection. All introspections take the introspective mind and its contents as their objects, whether that mind is finite or infinite. Thus, the objects of all of God's cognitive operations are his mind and its contents. God's ideas are all ideas of himself. I set aside the question of how God might have introspective ideas of minds other than his own.

There is a novel argument for reading Berkeley as an act theorist suggested by the interpretation of divine ideas as God's ideas of himself. It seems that Berkeley would consider theologically problematic the claim that God cannot know himself directly, but only indirectly through entities of his creation that represent his nature to himself. Such entities seem cognitively and epistemically superfluous for God. Consider that Berkeley repeatedly rejects matter as superfluous to God's will:

But then, that [materialists] should suppose an innumerable multitude of created beings, which ... are made to no manner of purpose, since God might have done everything as well without them: this I say ... must yet be a very unaccountable and extravagant supposition. (*PHK* 53)

it may still be demanded to what end God should take those roundabout methods of effecting things by instruments and machines, which no one can deny might have been effected by the mere command of His will without all that apparatus. (*PHK* 61)

God does not need material objects in order to cause ideas in finite minds. Since his will is infinite, he can do that work directly. Berkeley therefore rejects arguments in support of the existence of matter that claim matter is necessary to cause perceptual ideas in finite minds.

It must be pointed out that Berkeley thinks there is another problem with such arguments. Perceptual illusions are typically explained by claiming that, if they are after all illusions, material objects *do not* cause a perceptual experience:

I say it is granted on all hands (and what happens in dreams, phrensies, and the like, puts it beyond dispute) that it is possible we might be affected with all the ideas we have now, though there were no bodies existing without resembling them. Hence, it is evident the supposition of external bodies is not necessary for the producing our ideas; since it is granted they are produced sometimes, and might possibly be produced always in the same order, we see them in at present, without their concurrence. (*PHK* 18)

Not only is it the case that God could cause perceptual ideas directly without relying on material objects, arguments from illusion suggest that perceptual ideas do not require corresponding material bodies in order to be produced in finite minds.

A representationalist theory of ideas applied to divine ideas suffers from a similar difficulty. Like the claim that God needs material objects in order to cause perceptual ideas in finite minds, a representationalist about divine ideas must claim that God needs representational entities in order to know his own nature. This is especially so, given Berkeley's implication that divine ideas are God's ideas of himself, in that he necessarily lacks a faculty of sensation. Berkeley's reply to the representationalist about divine ideas may be modeled on his reply to the argument about the need for material bodies to cause perceptual ideas. Representational entities are superfluous to God's self-knowledge, just as material bodies are superfluous to his will. God can know himself directly and immediately because his intellect is infinite, just as God can directly cause ideas in finite minds because his will is infinite.

The fact that arguments from illusion are used to justify the existence of representational entities presents a unique theological challenge to representational theories applied to divine ideas. As Berkeley points out in the above passage, materialists claim that dreams and hallucinations are evidence of the possibility of having false or deceptive ideas. But if the existence of representational entities is inseparable from explanations of the possibility of false appearances, as representationalists suggest, then strictly speaking the possibility of having false or deceptive ideas applies to God's ideas about himself. Representational entities would isolate God within a "palace of ideas" with respect to his own nature, even if his ideas never misrepresent him. This is a result that Berkeley cannot accept. Again, analysis of the concept of God as a perfect mind with a perfect intellect suggests that he directly and immediately understands himself. The possibility of misrepresentation or being deceived by one's ideas contradicts the notion of a perfect intellect. This is particularly so if the only ideas included in a perfect intellect are its ideas



of itself. The possibility of being deceived, like the need for a faculty of sensation, appears to be a mark of a finite, imperfect mind. Moreover, it seems that God must have perfect self-knowledge prior<sup>7</sup> to creating divine ideas, both in order to create them and in order to ensure that they do not misrepresent his nature. This is a vicious regress for a representationalist about divine ideas, but not for an act theorist. Taken together, these theological problems are a challenge to those who interpret Berkeley as a representationalist about ideas.<sup>8</sup>

An important detail of the present account of divine ideas concerns Berkeley's distinction between actuality and possibility. Given that the world consists of minds and ideas, there must be some criterion for distinguishing between those divine ideas that constitute the actual world and those that remain mere possibilities. For Berkeley, possibilities are divine ideas that exist only in God's understanding, whereas actualities are divine ideas that exist in *both* the divine understanding and the divine will. God wills that some divine ideas are revealed to finite minds, and those ideas constitute actuality:

When things are said to begin or end their existence, we do not mean this with regard to God, but His creatures. All objects are eternally known by God, or, which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in His mind: but when things, before imperceptible to creatures, are, by a decree of God, perceptible to them, then are they said to begin a relative existence, with respect to created minds. (*DHP* 251-52)

things, with regard to us, may properly be said to begin their existence, or be created, when God decreed they should become perceptible to intelligent creatures, in that order and manner which He then established. (*DHP* 253)

The decrees in virtue of which divine ideas become perceptible to finite minds are divine volitions. In another passage Berkeley says that divine ideas "must therefore exist in some other Mind, whose Will it is they should be exhibited to me" (*DHP* 214-15). Divine ideas are eternal. They always exist in God's mind. However, from the perspective of finite minds divine ideas are mere possibilities with "relative or hypothetical existence" (*DHP* 253) until God wills that they be revealed to finite minds. The order of this revelation is what "we now call the laws of nature" (*DHP* 253). Natural laws, natural history, and apparently time are created by these divine decrees.

### 3. Archetypes and Ectypes

One feature of Berkeley's idealism that presents a persistent challenge for scholars is the archetype–ectype distinction. Berkeley posits "a twofold state of things—the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal[.] The former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God" (*DHP* 254). The distinction between archetypes and ectypes is typically understood along the lines of a representationalist

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<sup>7</sup> This priority is logical, not temporal.

<sup>8</sup> It may be objected that one can be a representationalist about sensory ideas only, but not with respect to introspective ideas; or that one can be a representationalist about finite minds but not the divine mind. These objections seem *ad hoc* and may raise other difficulties.

theory of ideas. Divine ideas are representational entities, and the archetypes of which the representational entities of finite minds are ectypes or copies. On this reading, finite minds directly or immediately perceive ectypes and indirectly perceive archetypes in virtue of the latter being represented by the former. Samuel Johnson, in his correspondence with Berkeley, understands the distinction this way:

When, therefore, you say sensible things exist in, as being perceived by, the infinite mind I humbly conceive you must be understood that the originals or archetypes of our sensible things or ideas exist independent of us in the finite mind, or that sensible things exist *in archetype* in the divine mind. The divine idea, therefore, of a tree I suppose (or a tree in the divine mind), must be the original or archetype of ours, and ours a copy or image of His ... of which there may be several, in several created minds, like so many several pictures of the same original to which they are all to be referred. (*Works II*: 286.)

Johnson understands representation in terms of qualitative similarity between ectypes and archetypes. When a finite mind has an idea of a tree, it is a “picture” of the original divine idea existing in that finite mind. Note that the use of terms like *picture* and *image* imply that ectypes are representational entities.

One problem with this reading is that Berkeley repeatedly claims that finite minds directly perceive the external world. Indeed, these claims are crucial to Berkeley’s anti-skeptical outlook. For Berkeley the claim that “a thing should be really perceived by my senses, and at the same time not really exist, is to me a plain contradiction” (*DHP* 230). Later in the same passage he says that it is a jest for “philosophers to question the existence of sensible things,” and compares skepticism about the external world to “doubt of my own being.” That is, we have *as little* reason to doubt the existence of the external world as we have to doubt our own existence. But if we suppose that ectypes are representational entities and that they are the immediate objects of perception rather than archetypes, then his claim that finite minds directly perceive the world implies that the external world is comprised of our own subjective ideas. Alternatively, if the external world is composed of divine ideas but we do not immediately perceive divine ideas, then we do not directly perceive the world despite Berkeley’s insistence to the contrary.

On the reading of Berkeley as an act theorist, this problem simply doesn’t arise. According to the interpretation I defend, archetypes are divine acts of self-consciousness that God wills to be revealed or communicated to finite minds. These volitions prompt interpretive cognitive operations in finite minds, and those operations are prompted against the will of those minds. These cognitive operations are ectypes, or subjective ideas, that take archetypes as their immediate objects. As Johnson suggests, for each finite mind there is a numerically distinct ectype taking the (numerically) same divine idea as its immediate object. A single archetype can be communicated simultaneously to multiple finite minds with no more trouble than when a speaker communicates a single thought to multiple listeners simultaneously. On this reading, since we directly and immediately perceive archetypes, and the world is composed of archetypes, we directly and immediately perceive the world. The world is not composed of subjective ideas,

since archetypes are not identical to subjective ectypes. Nor is there a problem of explaining why finite minds indirectly perceive archetypes given Berkeley's commitment to a direct theory of perception. To repeat, these problems simply don't arise.

A question that does arise on this reading is how ectypes could be the immediate objects of perception (as Berkeley repeatedly describes ideas) if they are not objects at all. My reply is the same as the one given in my book. Finite minds immediately perceive ectypes in the trivial sense that cognitive operations make themselves available to consciousness at the same time that they present their objects to consciousness. Every perception makes the mind aware of two things: *that* it engaged in perception in virtue of a cognitive operation, and *what* is being perceived by that operation. To these two forms of awareness correspond two forms of immediate perception: robust immediate perception and thin immediate perception. Archetypes are immediately perceived in the robust sense that they are the objects of perception rather than representative entities. Ectypes are immediately perceived in the thin sense that the mind is aware of the cognitive operation in virtue of which it is engaged in an act of perception.

I argued at length in my monograph that the fact that Berkeley uses "idea" as a noun rather than a verb is not conclusive evidence that he was a representationalist. I will not rehearse those arguments here except to note that Arnauld, who is explicitly committed to an act theory and defends it at length, also uses "idea" as a noun rather than a verb. However, I do want to address the suggestion that ideas cannot be cognitive operations for Berkeley because he claims that ideas are inert:

for all ideas whatever, being passive and inert ... they cannot represent unto us, by way of image or likeness, that which acts. A little attention will make it plain to any one, that to have an idea which shall be like that active principle of motion and change of ideas is absolutely impossible. (*PHK* 27)

This objection assumes that by "inert" Berkeley means something like "motionless," which seems to be supported by the above passage. While this is certainly one sense of the term "inert" and one way to understand the claim that ideas are inactive, it is not the only way. Indeed, Berkeley claims that matter is inert and that motion nevertheless inheres in it:

By Matter, therefore, we are to understand an inert, senseless substance, in which extension, figure, and motion do actually subsist. (*PHK* 9)

If Berkeley meant "motionless" by "inert" in this passage, he would either be contradicting himself or presenting a straw man definition of matter, since the resulting definition is a contradiction (which he goes on to point out as a reason to reject matter).

There is another sense of "inert" according to which ideas are inert in virtue of being *powerless*. This sense is suggested by another passage where Berkeley claims that ideas are inert:

but whoever shall attend to his ideas, whether of sense or reflexion, will not perceive in them any power or activity; there is, therefore, no such thing contained in them. A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it, *insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do anything, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of anything.* (PHK 25, my emphasis.)

For Berkeley ideas are powerless because they are not causes. Since he thinks that volitions are the only causal powers, ideas are not powers because they are not volitions. Rather, ideas are the effects of causal powers. To say that ideas have causal powers is analytically false, because that would be to say that causally inert effects are causes, perhaps even their own causes.

Notice that the reading of “inert” as powerless also explains Berkeley’s PHK 9 dismissal of the idea that matter could be a substance in which extension, figure, and motion subsist. For him, matter is inert in the sense that it is powerless to cause ideas:

extension, figure, and motion cannot be the cause of our sensations. To say, therefore, that these are the effects of powers resulting from the configuration, number, motion, and size of corpuscles, must certainly be false. (PHK 25)

The inertness of matter is evidenced by arguments from illusion. The claim that hallucinations are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical perceptual experiences implies that matter isn’t the cause of those perceptual experiences, as Berkeley points out at the end of PHK 18 quoted earlier. If causation is a relation of dependence between cause and effect such that the occurrence of an effect depends on its cause, the claim that perceptual experiences may occur in the absence of material bodies implies that material bodies are not the causes of such experiences. Furthermore, Berkeley points out that even if material bodies were the causes of perceptual experiences, materialists “own themselves unable to comprehend in what manner body can act upon spirit, or how it is possible it should imprint any idea in the mind” (PHK 19). I take Berkeley’s point to be that causes are indispensable to causal explanations, and vice-versa. If some phenomenon requires a causal explanation, but such an explanation is not forthcoming given some cause, then the cause has been misidentified. Likewise, if something is said to be the cause of some phenomenon, but the occurrence of that phenomenon is inexplicable “with or without” the supposition of the putative cause, then it is *not* the cause of the phenomenon in question. So Berkeley concludes that even if matter exists it is powerless to cause perceptual experiences.

#### 4. Arguments from Illusion

Representationalist theories of ideas are often justified by claiming that such theories are required by arguments from illusion. As remarked above, hallucinations are explained by claiming that they are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical perceptions. Veridical perceptions are perceptual experiences that occur in the presence of an appropriate external object, whereas hallucinations are subjectively indistinguishable perceptual experiences that occur in the absence of that object or any external object at all. In order

to explain the difference between hallucinations and veridical perceptual experiences while maintaining that they are subjectively indistinguishable, representationalists posit representational entities as the immediate objects of perception. The difference between veridically seeing this pineapple and having a hallucination of a pineapple is that the former perceptual experience is caused by the pineapple but the latter is not. Perhaps the misperception is caused by some object that is not a pineapple but closely resembles one. Perhaps there is no external world at all and the misperception is caused by an evil genius. Whatever the case may be, what determines whether a perceptual experience is veridical or a hallucination has to do with its cause rather than its qualitative features.

But the subjective sameness of qualitative features requires explanation. The explanation endorsed by representationalists is that in both cases the same (or very similar) representational entities are the immediate objects of perception. Since representational entities are mind-dependent, they may occur in the absence of any mind-independent cause; or they may result from an anomalous mind-independent cause. By way of critique of alternative explanations—particularly act theories—representationalists claim that if there were no representational entities mediating perception of external objects, then hallucinations couldn't be explained. All perception would be veridical, since any variation in the cause of a perceptual act would produce subjectively distinguishable variations in the qualitative features of a perceptual state. It wouldn't be possible, representationalists claim, for me to have a hallucination of a pineapple that is subjectively indistinguishable from seeing a pineapple. Without representational entities we would have to say that only a pineapple could produce the relevant perceptual experience, not some other object or no object at all. But such a claim contradicts a variety of mundane perceptual illusions, such as the stick that looks bent in water.

Act theorists reject this argument based on considerations about the intentionality and semantic content of perceptual experiences. Briefly, act theorists contend that an appearance–reality distinction with respect to the intentionality and semantic content of perceptual experiences is indispensable to arguments from illusion when such arguments are used to support the existence of representational entities. Such entities appear to be about objects beyond the mind of the perceiver whether or not there are any such objects. Since intentionality is a dyadic relation, when there is no intentional object, there is no such relation. Hence, when there is no intentional object—as is the case with complete perceptual illusions—a perceptual experience lacks intentionality altogether. Complete perceptual illusions appear to have intentionality even though they don't.

Likewise, representational entities appear to refer to objects beyond the mind of the perceiver whether or not there are any such objects. Since reference is also a dyadic relation, where there is no referent there is no reference. In complete perceptual illusions external objects appear to be part of the referential content of perceptual experiences even though they are not. Act theorists argue that the appearance of intentionality and referential content in the absence of intentional objects or referents is a serious problem for representationalist accounts of perceptual experience. Complete perceptual illusions lack intentionality and referential content. Since veridical perceptual experiences are subjectively indistinguishable from hallucinations, either veridical perceptual experiences

also lack intentionality and referential content, or these features of perceptual experience are inexplicable. Moreover, no matter which horn of this dilemma one takes, skepticism is unavoidable. Act theorists reject representational entities for these reasons. In my book this is partly how I understand Arnauld's critique of Malebranche's ontology of representational entities.

Given that arguments from illusion are essential justifications for the existence of representational entities, if Berkeley were a representationalist about ideas, one would expect him to employ arguments from illusion in defense of the existence of representational entities. Not only does Berkeley reject arguments from illusion, he endorses the aforementioned arguments regarding the inexplicability of the intentionality and semantic content of representational entities. As mentioned earlier, he considers a typical argument from illusion in *PHK* 18-19. But while he mentions such arguments, I doubt that he *endorses* them. Those passages in *PHK* are presented as evidence that matter is not the cause of perceptual experience and cannot causally explain such experiences. Likewise, Berkeley's anti-skepticism leads him to claim that philosophers jest when they doubt the existence of an external world. As I noted, for Berkeley, we have as little reason to doubt the existence of the external world as we have to doubt our own existence (*DHP* 230). In these ways Berkeley does not endorse the argument from illusion mentioned in *PHK* 18-19.

Moreover, in other passages Berkeley explicitly *rejects* arguments from illusion. In *PHK* 87 he says that if qualities such as color, figure and motion "are looked on as notes or images, referred to *things* or *archetypes* existing without the mind, then are we involved all in scepticism." That is, skepticism results when these qualities are considered to be representational entities that refer the mind to imperceptible external qualities:

We see only the appearances, and not the real qualities of things. What may be the extension, figure, or motion of anything really and absolutely, or in itself, it is impossible for us to know. . . . Things remaining the same, our ideas vary, and which of them, or even whether any of them at all, represent the true quality really existing in the thing, it is out of our reach to determine. So that, for aught we know, all we see, hear, and feel may be only phantom and vain chimera, and not at all agree with the real things existing in *rerum natura*. All this scepticism follows from our supposing a difference between things and ideas. (*PHK* 87)

Skepticism results because philosophers assume that we see "only appearances and not the real qualities of things" and then suppose "a real difference between things and ideas." While the latter phrase might be viewed as an endorsement of subjective idealism, I caution against such a reading. Subjective idealism conflicts with the account of Berkeley's archetype-ectype distinction defended earlier. As was pointed out in the course of that defense, if Berkeley understood archetypes and ectypes to be representative entities, he could not also claim that finite minds directly perceive archetypes and so he also could not reject skepticism as a philosophical jest.

Rather, when Berkeley says that skepticism results from “supposing a real difference between things and ideas,” I take him to mean that skepticism results from adopting an ontology of representative entities. He rejects the claim that “we only see appearances”—that is, representational entities—in favor of the claim that we directly perceive the world. Act theorists do not suppose a “real” ontological difference between things and ideas, in the sense that the intentional object of a perceptual experience is the external thing perceived rather than a representational entity. But for a representationalist, perceptual experiences can have the same intentional object whether or not some external thing is perceived. This is why “for aught we know” our perceptual experiences might be hallucinations.

Likewise, representational entities allow perceptual experiences to appear to have the same referential content even though “it is out of our reach to determine” what the actual referents of perceptual experiences are or even whether a particular perceptual experience has a referent at all. Crucially, Berkeley claims that skeptical doubt “vanishes if we annex a meaning to our words” and realize that it is “a manifest contradiction that any sensible object should be immediately perceived by sight or touch, and at the same time have no existence in nature” (*PHK* 88). This is only a contradiction on a direct theory of perception, since representational entities could be the immediate objects of perception even if the objects the putatively represent don’t exist in nature. That is why I maintain that direct theories of perception are closely linked to act theories of ideas.

As further evidence against representationalist theories of ideas, direct perception theorists point out that if representationalism were true, then ordinary perceptual language would have a very different structure. Assuming that the grammatical structure of perceptual language simulates the ontological structure of perceptual experience, instead of “I see this pineapple,” where “see” is a verb indicating a cognitive operation and “this pineapple” is a noun phrase indicating an external object, we should say “I see such-and-such collection of my own ideas.” But ordinary perceptual language has the former rather than the latter style, suggesting that representationalism is false. Again, I read Arnauld as proposing such an argument in his debate with Malebranche.

At least one of Berkeley’s comments about “vulgar” speech may be fruitfully compared to Arnauld’s argument. Consider the following passage about common sense perceptual language:

I am content . . . to appeal to the common sense of the world for the truth of my notion. Ask the gardener why he thinks yonder cherry-tree exists in the garden, and he shall tell you, because he sees and feels it; in a word, because he perceives it by his senses. (*DHP* 234)

The gardener doesn’t say that he sees appearances, where (as Hylas would have it) those appearances are distinguished from the existence of external things. The gardener simply says that he sees the cherry tree. Presumably, if the gardener perceived a representational entity he would speak the way Hylas does and distinguish between an appearance and the real existence of the cherry tree in the garden. But the gardener doesn’t speak the way

Hylas would have him speak because the vulgar are of the opinion “that *those things they immediately perceive are the real things*,” whereas philosophers are of the opinion “that *the things immediately perceived are ideas, which exist only in the mind*” (DHP 262). Berkeley concludes from the gardener’s speech that the cherry tree is the object of perception.

I conclude by considering how Berkeley might regard a representationalist response to the aforementioned dilemma. The response is that representational entities have intentionality even in the absence of an external object. They can also have semantic content in the absence of a referent with no more difficulty than the name “Pegasus” has semantic content in the absence of a referent. (These appear to be Malebranche’s replies to Arnauld). Intentionality and semantic content are simply primitive features of representational entities.

The problem with this response is that it suggests that representational entities can cause minds to be conscious of their intentionality and semantic content on their own, whether or not there is an external world beyond them. But Berkeley flatly denies that ideas have any causal power whatsoever. As mentioned earlier, to say that ideas have causal powers is analytically false because it is to say that causally inert effects are causes. Thus, for Berkeley, ideas cannot cause minds to be conscious of their intentionality or semantic content. This suggests that Berkeley would reject a typical representationalist reply to an objection that favors direct perception theories (and thereby act theories). Such a rejection is another indication that Berkeley was not committed to a representationalist theory of ideas.

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*Berkeley and the Irish Enlightenment:  
How ‘Irish’ Are ‘We Irish’  
A Reply to My Critics<sup>1</sup>*

Scott C. Breuninger

**Abstract:** The contemporary view of scholars that Berkeley’s legacy stems from his philosophical work has traditionally dominated discussions of his significance, despite the prolific nature of his writings. This disjunction between his reputation and historical interests can be addressed by locating Berkeley’s career within his Irish context(s) and examining those aspects of his career that have often been disregarded as immaterial to his philosophical projects. When seen from this perspective, the trajectory of Berkeley’s intellectual pursuits mirrored those of the broader Irish Enlightenment and represents an important contribution to this emerging field.

Generations of thinkers have wrestled with Berkeley’s insights regarding the nature of perception and the limits of understanding, firmly establishing his place in the history of philosophy. My *Recovering Bishop Berkeley: Virtue and Society in the Anglo-Irish Context*<sup>2</sup> was predicated on the simple fact that while George Berkeley was undoubtedly an important philosophical figure, his significant contributions to economic, social, and moral thought have often been overlooked in studies of his work, especially within the context of early eighteenth-century Irish studies. Writing from the perspective of an intellectual historian and not as a philosopher, it seemed to me that that contemporary scholarship on Berkeley heavily favors his epistemological work at the expense of the actions he took during his lifetime and his contemporaries’ views of his contributions to Irish (and British) society.

This disconnect between how Berkeley was seen during the eighteenth century and how his work is interpreted today parallels a similar problem that some scholars have identified as the *Das Adam Smith Problem*. Smith scholars have long had trouble reconciling Smith’s views in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* with those expounded in the *Wealth of Nations*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the discrepancy between Berkeley’s legacy and his actions leads to a question that could be termed the “Two Berkeley” problem. In this case, the work of Berkeley “the philosopher” has been rightfully well-explored, but this

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this essay was originally presented at the 2013 APA Meeting in New Orleans. I would like to thank my fellow panelists and those in attendance for their insightful comments.

<sup>2</sup> New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the ‘Two Adam Smith’ problem, see Laurence Dickey, “Historicizing the ‘Adam Smith Problem’: Conceptual, Historiographical, and Textual Issues,” *Journal of Modern History* 58 (1986), 579-609. Also see Dogan Gocmen, *The Adam Smith Problem: Reconciling Human Nature and Society in “The Theory of Moral Sentiments” and “Wealth of Nations”* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), and Leonidas Montes, “Das Adam Smith Problem: Its Origins, the Stages of the Current Debate, and One Implication for Our Understanding of Sympathy,” *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 25 (2003), 63-90.

focus has come at the cost of neglecting the vast corpus of Berkeley “the Bishop” whose writings (particularly those dealing with Ireland) were even more influential. *Recovering Bishop Berkeley* was meant to be a step toward redressing this disjuncture and exploring his works written after he left Dublin in 1713.

Although a number of factors have contributed to this state of affairs, two are of particular note: the dominance of philosophical readings of Berkeley’s significance and the reluctance of scholars to appreciate the Irish dimension of his work. Berkeley’s reputation in the history of philosophy has traditionally been built upon the belief that there was a developmental sequence running from Locke to Berkeley to Hume. French writers published the earliest engagements with Berkeley’s thought, reading him as a disciple of Malebranche, but by the 1730s English and Scottish thinkers began to grapple with the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues*.<sup>4</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that Berkeley came to the attention of the Scottish Rankenian Club attention as early as the 1720s, although Thomas Reid and James Beattie published the first extensive responses to Berkeley in Scotland during the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Between 1764 and 1784 both Reid and Beattie surveyed the history of philosophy and noticed an apparent continuity between Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Reid’s major works developed a critique of Hume’s philosophy that advanced the Locke-Berkeley-Hume sequence.<sup>6</sup> In a telling passage, Reid outlined how philosophy had fallen (unwittingly) into the very skepticism that it originally sought to refute, tracing its development from Descartes, through Malebranche and Locke, and eventually culminating in Berkeley and Hume.<sup>7</sup> With this fell stroke Reid set up a conceptualization of the history of philosophy that contrasted nicely with his own theories and has lingered to the present day. During the 1770s, Reid’s fellow Scot, James Beattie adopted his analysis and his work likely became the vehicle through which the Locke-Berkeley-Hume interpretation spread to the continent (via Kant).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In December 1713, the French Jesuit journal *Mémoires de Trévoux* published announcements of Berkeley’s *Principles* and *Three Dialogues* in its *Nouvelles Littéraires* section, in which Berkeley was charged with being a “Malbranchiste de bonne foi.” See *Mémoires de Trévoux* (May 1713), 921-22; reprinted in Harry Bracken, *The Early Reception of Berkeley’s Immaterialism, 1710-1733* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), 17.

<sup>5</sup> According to M. A. Stewart, the first recorded link between Berkeley and the Rankenian Club was an anonymous obituary for Robert Wallace, in the *Scots Magazine* (July 1771). In this obituary, the writer mentions Wallace’s role in the formation of the Rankenian Club, and suggests that the “abstruse principles vented by Dr. Berkeley” were “accurately canvassed in it.” See M. A. Stewart, “Berkeley and the Rankenian Club,” in *George Berkeley: Essays and Replies*, ed. David Berman (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986), 25.

<sup>6</sup> See Reid’s *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) and *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (1788).

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Reid, *Principles of Common Sense*, in Thomas Reid, *Philosophical Works*, ed. Sir William Hamilton (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1967), 1:103.

<sup>8</sup> In particular, see Chapter II, section I of Beattie’s *Essay*, “General Observations, Rise and Progress of Modern Scepticism.” Beattie’s analyses are taken almost verbatim from Reid’s *Inquiry into the Human Mind*. See also James Beattie, *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism*, reprinted in *The Philosophical and Critical Works of James*

Within the history of philosophy, this identification of Berkeley as the central link in a philosophical chain running from Locke to Hume has been quite influential. Many modern accounts identify this triad as advancing a specific theory of mind, from its origins in Locke's thought to its culmination in Hume's skepticism. According to this interpretation, Berkeley's philosophical writings are "classics," whose meaning can be disclosed only by careful reading of the texts themselves, with no knowledge of the author's biography or his historical context(s) deemed necessary. Even among philosophers sympathetic to Berkeley's corpus (e.g., Ian Tipton), investigations of Berkeley's work focus almost exclusively on "the views he was concerned to propound in the *Principles* and *Dialogues*," rather than the full body of his work.<sup>9</sup>

Paul Ricoeur has called attention to this interpretive problem, arguing that individual authors' writings are typically seen as existing within one of two frames of reference. First, the writings of Plato (or Berkeley) may be "raised to the status of a *work*, a network of significations where the author's biography is expressed or masked but where it is nevertheless suppressed in favor of a *meaning*." In this sense, the corpus of ideas associated with the author is seen as possessing a "truth" that is dependent upon the totality of his or her work and the subjectivity of the historian (or philosopher) investigating it. The other alternative, according to Ricoeur, centers on developing an understanding of the "philosophical singularities" associated with "the meaning of the work and not that of the author's peculiar experience." Instead of stressing the meaning of a philosopher's corpus, this type of exploration narrows its focus to a single text, seen as the "singular essence" that the historian is seeking to explain.<sup>10</sup> This attitude can be seen in a wide range of recent and not-so-recent works by philosophers, some of whom would express astonishment that Berkeley even had a moral or social philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Thus, one of the fundamental goals of my book was to illustrate and explore Berkeley's concern for virtue and morality across the corpus of his works.

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Beattie, ed. Bernhard Fabian (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), 1:141-69; and Robert Wolff, "Kant's Debt to Hume via Beattie," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21 (1960), 117. Werkmeister suggests that Kant may have been exposed to Berkeley's philosophy through Beattie, since the first of his essays were translated into German in 1781, while the first German edition of the *Principles* was published only in 1869. See W. H. Werkmeister, "Notes to an Interpretation of Berkeley," in *New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy*, ed. Warren Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 164.

<sup>9</sup> Ian Tipton, *Berkeley: The Philosophy of Immaterialism* [1974] (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), 10. Also, see George Pappas, *Berkeley's Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 1; John Russell Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xv; and Costica Bradatan, *The Other Bishop Berkeley: An Exercise in Reenchantment* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 1 and 7.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 47.

<sup>11</sup> This can be seen by a quick survey of bibliographies of Berkeley scholarship. See Colin Turbayne, "A Bibliography of George Berkeley: 1963-1979," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, ed. by Colin Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Matthew Kapstein, "A Bibliography of George Berkeley: 1980-85," in *Essays on the Philosophy of George Berkeley*, ed. by Ernest Sosa (Boston: D. Reidel, 1987); and the running bibliography compiled by Silvia Parigi for *Berkeley Studies* (<http://berkeleystudies.philosophy.fsu.edu/Berkeley-Bibliography>).

The second major issue that I aimed to address in *Recovering Bishop Berkeley* was the fact that these philosophical investigations of Berkeley's work have failed to account for the Irish context within which he wrote. On this point, it is essential to note that Berkeley was "Irish" and wrote extensively about Irish issues. While Berkeley "the philosopher" played a crucial part in shaping modern traditions of thought, scholars have not accounted for the depth of his engagement with eighteenth-century society and thus have failed to locate his work within the intellectual context of the early Irish and British Enlightenments. As a result, Berkeley's commitment to Irish economic, social, and moral issues has been obscured or overlooked. In fact, as I hoped to suggest, Berkeley's contributions to the Irish Enlightenment were much more significant and in a much different arena, than is typically understood.<sup>12</sup>

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The current essay was originally written for a panel focused on "responses to our critics," so I would like to use a few of the comments in these reviews as a point of departure for clarifying and amplifying some of the key arguments in the book. In his review of *Recovering Bishop Berkeley*, Tomokiyo Nomura mentions the problem of determining the nature of Berkeley's legacy and locating his work within contemporary scholarship.<sup>13</sup> Nomura sees this book as contributing to the vein of Berkeley scholarship initiated by David Berman, which focuses Berkeley's place within the "Irish philosophical tradition." Technically, this is correct, but does not entirely get at the point of my project. Although I located Berkeley's work in a variety of intellectual contexts in my book, these were focused on issues of politics, economics, society, and morality. In a broad sense, these areas can certainly be considered "philosophical," but within the Irish context what I was trying to do was more specifically linked to the contours of Irish history and has implications for how we understand the key issues associated with Irish intellectual history during the first half of the eighteenth century. Berkeley's emphasis on the importance of "virtue" throughout his work was reflective of a broader trend within the Irish Enlightenment to establish a language and terminology for Anglo-Irish thinkers to address the "common good" in a manner that elided the confessional divides throughout the nation. Thus, my goal was to not to explore Berkeley's philosophical debts, but rather to look at his writings outside the Irish philosophical tradition—taking a cue from Berman, but moving in a different direction.

The prolific nature of Berkeley's writings makes the task of exploring the depth of Berkeley's engagement with social issues and the question of virtue throughout his life difficult. Many of his contributions to these fields have been overshadowed by his philosophy, and thus any discussion of them requires some contextual explanation. Writing from the perspective of an historian, my main concern was to explicate the ideas

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<sup>12</sup> For a variety of perspectives on the Irish Enlightenment, see the essays in the spring 2012 issue of *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (45.3), ed. Sean Moore. Also see Michael Brown, "Was there an Irish Enlightenment? The Case of the Anglicans," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (2008), 49-64.

<sup>13</sup> Tomokiyo Nomura, "Recovering Bishop Berkeley: Virtue and Society in the Anglo-Irish Context (review)," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45 (2012), 455-57.

that he advanced (and revised) throughout his career within his specific intellectual contexts. Catherine Skeen's review of *Recovering Bishop Berkeley* suggests that the "astute and linguistically incisive Berkeley" is relatively unexplored, claiming that this could be overcome through more engagement with his "rhetorical choices."<sup>14</sup> Skeen's call for a close examination of Berkeley's rhetoric raises an important point; however, my primary concern was not to explore his use of language *per se*, but rather how he understood notions of virtue and society. His rhetorical choices are certainly an important part of this process, but since other scholars have already focused on this aspect of Berkeley's writings, my goal was more historical in nature.<sup>15</sup>

The first goal of *Recovering Bishop Berkeley* was to balance the traditional philosophical interpretation of his work with one that took his social engagement seriously, but I also sought to locate Berkeley within his Irish contexts. In his review, Nomura argues that it is important to place Berkeley's work within a global context. I agree, but would further suggest that the study of Berkeley allows us to place an Irish tradition within a global context as well. In fact, I would like to suggest that the trajectory of the Irish Enlightenment in general is best followed through the careful study of Berkeley's writings outside the realm of epistemology or "pure philosophy."

Marta Szymanska's review identifies the key to what I mean about this vision of the Irish Enlightenment, although it too does not quite capture the larger implications of what I would like to argue.<sup>16</sup> Szymanska notes that the main thesis of my book is that Berkeley was an "Irish and cosmopolitan patriot." This is generally accurate, since much of my book focuses on Berkeley's devotion to his native land and projects for ameliorating the lives of his countrymen; however, I would suggest that these ideals were core principles of the Irish Enlightenment itself. In this sense, my contention that Berkeley was a "representative figure" actually indicates his broader reflection of the development of the Irish Enlightenment as a whole.

In order to address both Nomura and Szymanska's points, it is useful to consider the nature of the Irish Enlightenment. Traditionally, notions of the Enlightenment have been associated with the French *philosophes*, but this perception has been challenged by a number of studies highlighting the contributions of other nations and traditions of thought to eighteenth-century culture. As a result of this work, historians are now familiar with the explosion of intellectual fervor in such diverse places as Naples, Königsberg, Edinburgh, and London. Along with a host of others, each of these cities was a place where thinkers from a wide variety of backgrounds could participate in a conversation about ideas holding domestic and international relevance. While the scholarly task of

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Skeen, "Recovering Bishop Berkeley: Virtue and Society in the Anglo-Irish Context (review)," *The Scriblerian and the Kit-Cats* 45 (2013), 275.

<sup>15</sup> For consideration of Berkeley's use of rhetoric, see Peter Walmsley, *The Rhetoric of Berkeley's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Michael Prince, *Philosophical Dialogue in the British Enlightenment: Theology, Aesthetics, and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Tom Jones, *Pope and Berkeley: The Language of Poetry and Philosophy* (London: Palgrave, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Marta Szymanska, "Berkeley's Moral and Social Considerations Vindicated," *Berkeley Studies* 22 (2011), 15-19.

recovering the contours of these debates along the “periphery” of the Enlightenment has made great progress, there are still a number of glaring lacunae to be filled.<sup>17</sup> The study of the Irish Enlightenment is one such field.

A number of factors have contributed to the relative neglect of the Irish Enlightenment, despite the fact that the volume and quality of thought in Ireland during this period rivaled that of more celebrated Enlightenment centers. One of the fundamental problems facing this field stems from the paucity of intellectual histories of Ireland. While there have been a number of studies of specific Irish thinkers, until recently there has been almost no comprehensive overview of Irish intellectual traditions during the eighteenth century. David Berman’s pioneering work on the early Irish Enlightenment does provide an important point of entry, but he highlights primarily the philosophical fervor in Dublin during this period and fails to address its larger historical context.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Duddy’s recent wide-ranging study has also helped illuminate the robust nature of Irish thought, but his effort to outline thinkers ranging from John Scotus Eriugena to William Desmond results in a corresponding lack of detailed analysis for many of these figures.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, there have been a few important collections of essays that have investigated Irish political thinkers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but these too neglect to locate their subjects within a larger Irish context.<sup>20</sup>

Writing as a student at Trinity in 1707, Berkeley rejected the contemporary theories of Locke and Newton with the claim that “we Irish men cannot attain to these truths” (*NB* 392; also 393-94 and 398). It was this brazen refutation of the dominant English philosophy that led Yeats to praise Berkeley as a “fierce young man” whose intellectual struggles concerned “all those who feel a responsibility for the thought of modern Ireland.”<sup>21</sup> While Yeats lauded Berkeley’s connection to Ireland, the confessional divides that split the nation during the eighteenth century raise questions as to how he defined the nation. During this career, Berkeley served as a leading figure the Church of Ireland, yet

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<sup>17</sup> See Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *Peripheries of the Enlightenment*, eds. Richard Butterwick, Simon Davies, and Gabriel Espinosa (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2008); and *The Atlantic Enlightenment*, eds. Susan Manning and Francis Cogliano (London: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> David Berman, “Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment in Irish Philosophy,” and “The Culmination and Causation of Irish Philosophy,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 64 (1982), 148-65 and 257-79 [respectively]; and “The Irish Counter-Enlightenment,” in *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions*, ed. Richard Kearney (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1984).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Duddy, *A History of Irish Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2002), and Thomas Duddy, “Thinking Ireland: Cultural Nationalism and the Problem of Irish Ideas,” *New Hibernia Review* 7 (2003), 14-23. Also see *Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist Tradition*, ed. Stephen Gersh and Dermot Moran (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Perhaps most notably, see *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth Century Ireland*, eds. D. George Boyce, Robert Eccleshall, and Vincent Geoghegan (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Jane Ohlmeyer, ed., *Political Thought in Seventeenth Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and *Political Ideas in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. S. J. Connolly (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> W. B. Yeats, Introduction to *Bishop Berkeley*, J. M. Hone and H. M. Rossi (New York: Faber & Faber, 1931), xv-xvi.

exhibited an abiding concern for the social well-being of Protestants and Catholics alike. Furthermore, a quick survey of Berkeley's career illustrates that over time he became more engaged with the practical problems facing the nation. In this sense, his proscriptions for the economic well-being of his native land demonstrate his vision of Irish "patriotism" grounded in practical recognition of the challenges facing Ireland as a whole: a trend that was reflected by the leading Ascendancy intellectuals of his time. While his (and their) mature position contained elements of religious prejudice, these were tempered by a concern for creating a self-sufficient state able to weather the storms of social upheaval. If this is the case, what then was the Irish Enlightenment?

The hesitancy of scholars to associate Irish thinkers with a larger Irish Enlightenment was also encouraged by the traditional readings of the Enlightenment as a monolithic movement grounded in reason, liberty, and toleration. In many ways, this was not the Enlightenment that developed in Ireland. Rather, I would like to suggest that between 1689 and 1750s (roughly the years of Berkeley's life), the Irish Enlightenment passed through three distinct phases that were mirrored by Berkeley's work. In this sense, Berkeley may be seen as a representative figure of the broader trends in Irish thought, since the trajectory of his career mirrors these movements.

The first period began in 1689 in the aftermath of the Glorious (or Bloodless) Revolution, the political settlement of which acted as the dominant concern for much of Irish thought. During this time, Ireland did not grant liberty to large sections of the population, and toleration for Catholics and Dissenters was a distant dream. By this reading, an age commonly remembered for its Ascendancy culture and Penal Laws would seem to be an unlikely place to find aspects of political enlightenment. Still, while the bulk of the population may have unfortunately been political disenfranchised, does this mean that there were no glimmerings of enlightenment?

As the generation of Irish Protestants who lived through 1689 justified their actions (or inaction), Lockean principles were the touchstone of debates in Dublin. According to traditional accounts, one of the fundamental political texts of the Enlightenment was John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1690), which was grounded in notions of natural law and the right to resist oppressive government. Along with his epistemological writings, this work has led Roy Porter to dub Locke the "father" of the Enlightenment. It is telling that his influence was quite prominent in Irish thought as well.<sup>22</sup>

Locke's political thought was primarily articulated in Ireland through William Molyneux's famous 1698 tract, *The Case of Ireland's being bound by acts of parliament in England, stated*.<sup>23</sup> Although known during his lifetime for his philosophical and

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<sup>22</sup> Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: Norton, 2000), 418. Also see Ultán Gillen, "Varieties of Enlightenment: the Enlightenment and Irish Political Culture in the Age of Revolutions," in *Peripheries of the Enlightenment*, 167.

<sup>23</sup> *The Case of Ireland's being bound by acts of parliament in England, stated* was published at least eleven times during the eighteenth century and was commonly cited by Irish thinkers wishing to refute English claims of authority. See Patrick Kelly, "William Molyneux and the Spirit of Liberty in

scientific experiments (such as the famous thought problem bearing his name), Molyneux's legacy has been dominated by the influence of this vindication of Irish Protestant rights, which has been described as one of the most influential Irish political pamphlets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Stressing the legacy of the "original compact" between Henry II and the people of Ireland, Molyneux argued that Ireland was a kingdom, empathetically *not* a colony, and was linked to England only through the person of the monarch.<sup>24</sup> Molyneux's arguments were supported by William King's *State of the Protestants*, which relied heavily upon Locke's position to justify the actions of the Irish Church during this period.<sup>25</sup>

When considering Berkeley, it is significant that the main writings we have from him during this period are his *Sermons on Passive Obedience*. While these have raised questions concerning his political beliefs, they illustrate that he was closely engaged with questions of politics, the right to resist, and sovereignty. While Berkeley was not a leading figure in these debates, his work reflected the larger trends in Irish society and the early Irish Enlightenment focus on political issues.

During the late 1710s the Irish Enlightenment shifted away from politics and toward consideration of economic development and the social sphere. This change stemmed from series of steps that formalized English control over Ireland and had significant ramifications upon the contours of the Irish Enlightenment. First, in 1707, the Anglo-Scottish Union called into question the dreams of Irish Protestants who wished for a complete political union between Ireland and England. These hopes were further dashed by the events associated with the Jacobite uprising of 1715 and the 1720 Declaratory Act, which effectively eliminated the political power of the Irish Ascendancy within their own nation. Collectively these changes resulted in a shift of focus by the Irish intellectuals (and the Irish Enlightenment) towards the Irish social sphere.

On this point, the uneven distribution of power may indicate that Ireland had faint claim to being considered an "Enlightened" country, recent scholarship concerning the role of "improvement" during the Enlightenment suggests that this needs to be reassessed. Drawing upon his work on the Scottish Enlightenment, John Robertson argues that due to the political loss of independence caused by the 1707 Act of Union, Scottish thinkers sought to fashion a new sense of identity in the commercial field.<sup>26</sup> According to Robertson, Scottish Enlightenment explorations of human nature, political economy, and the civilizing process "converged upon the concept of 'sociability' . . . to establish the material and moral conditions and mechanisms of sociability, the better to clear the path

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Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *Eighteenth Century Ireland* 3 (1988), 133-48, and Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 138-43.

<sup>24</sup> William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland's being bound by acts of parliament in England*, stated (Dublin: Joseph Ray, 1698), 115-16.

<sup>25</sup> See William King, *State of the Protestants of Ireland under the late King James's Government* (London, 1691).

<sup>26</sup> John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-26.



for human betterment, and to assess the prospects of its realization.”<sup>27</sup> If Robertson’s analysis is correct, then political economy may be a more useful standard of “enlightenment” during the early eighteenth century. By this criterion, the second phase of the Irish Enlightenment, which ran from the early 1720s through the 1740s, was at the forefront of this broader movement.

In addition to Swift’s *Drapier’s Letters*, the Irish writers associated with the Dublin Society confronted the challenge of placing their nation on the track for growth during the 1730s and shared a number of common concerns. Although the foci of their investigations differed, they tended to eschew grand theories in favor of solving immediate, practical issues.<sup>28</sup> Taken as a whole, thinkers such Thomas Prior and David Bindon agreed with Berkeley’s identification of three interrelated problems as underlying Ireland’s economic plight: the actions of absentee landowners, the lack of coinage in the realm, and the dangers of luxury. In terms of “enlightened” sociability, the Dublin Society served as an important model of an improving organization for similar groups throughout Europe and helps bolster the claim that Ireland possessed a modicum of “enlightenment” during this period.

This is strengthened if we consider a second point concerning “sociability.” Although historians have identified the Scottish Enlightenment as providing particularly fertile ground for ideas of an innate sociability, questions concerning the nature of human interaction had been addressed across the Irish Sea prior to consuming the drawing rooms and lectures halls of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Once again, Berkeley’s writings reflect the larger movement of the Irish Enlightenment. His essays in *The Guardian* illustrated a sophisticated vision of sociability grounded in contemporary scientific notions. His economic writings during this period, including *An Essay toward Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* and *The Querist*, advanced proposals for improving the nation via practical and moral means.

Finally, the third phase of the Irish Enlightenment began in the mid-1740s and was characterized by a more inclusive (nearly cosmopolitan) program of national renewal. In this case, the famine conditions of the early 1704s, coupled with the end of the political danger of Jacobitism in 1745, led Irish thinkers such as Berkeley to devise patriotic plans designed to help Protestants and Catholics alike. Berkeley’s *Siris* and popularization of tarwater, as well as his *Maxims Concerning Patriotism*, all indicated an increasingly inclusive Irish Enlightenment that was shared by his contemporaries.

This has been a cursory sketch, but I think an important one. The Irish Enlightenment was certainly not a single “moment” in time, any more than other philosophical

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<sup>27</sup> Robertson, *Case for the Enlightenment*, 29-30. On the notion that concerns about the “civilizing process” were particularly acute on the “peripheries” of the Enlightenment, see Richard Butterwick, “Peripheries of the Enlightenment: an introduction,” 7.

<sup>28</sup> See James Livesey, *Empire and Civil Society: Ireland and Scotland in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale, 2009), and Toby Barnard, “The Dublin Society and other improving societies, 1731-85,” in *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. James Kelly and Martyn Powell (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 53-88.

movements. I would like to suggest that for the first fifty years of the Irish Enlightenment, Berkeley's work reflected this larger movement. While Berkeley's philosophy has long been seen as a staple of Enlightenment thought, his works on virtue, society, and religion have not received the same accolades. However, if we consider his writings within the context of this more nuanced reading of the Irish Enlightenment, a different view emerges. Rather than dismissing his contributions to these areas of inquiry as being peripheral to his thought, we can see how this engagement with questions of human nature, political economy, and sociability were central to his goals for improving Ireland and thus mark a crucial part of his contributions to this under-researched field.

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## *Berkeley's Idealism* A Reply to My Critics

Georges Dicker

**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*,<sup>1</sup> Samuel Rickless, has done me a great honor, for he has published a highly critical, 25-page review of the book in this journal.<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup> 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:

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

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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

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<sup>4</sup> *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.<sup>5</sup>

### 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)

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<sup>5</sup> 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 I*.

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 that 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*.

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∴ 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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)

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

<sup>7</sup> 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].<sup>8</sup>

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.

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<sup>8</sup> 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*.

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∴ (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 1*, 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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<sub>o</sub> = *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<sub>p</sub> = *df* X is perceived without (the perceiver's) performing any (conscious) inference.

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

<sup>10</sup> 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<sub>e</sub> = *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<sub>p</sub>” and “immediately perceived<sub>e</sub>.” 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<sub>p</sub>,” but premise (2) is true only if “immediately perceived” means “immediately perceived<sub>e</sub>.” 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.<sup>11</sup>

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

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<sup>11</sup> 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<sub>e</sub>” 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<sub>o</sub>, because material objects are perceived by the senses, but not immediately perceived<sub>o</sub>” (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<sub>p</sub>” and “immediately perceived<sub>o</sub>,” whereas I hold that it is between “immediately perceived<sub>p</sub>” and “immediately perceived<sub>e</sub>.” 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*,<sup>12</sup> 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

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<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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):

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<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.”<sup>15</sup> But the first part of this, at least, is quite

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<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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

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<sup>16</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> 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

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<sup>17</sup> 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)<sup>18</sup>

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*)

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<sup>18</sup> 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 bloated 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.<sup>19</sup>

## 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:

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<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in making this point, I tried to be fair to Berkeley by saying this:

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<sup>20</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> 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*.

## Review

*The Correspondence of George Berkeley*. Marc A. Hight, ed.  
Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxxviii + 674 pages.  
ISBN: 978-1-107-00074-2

In this edition of letters to and from George Berkeley, Marc A. Hight has made an immense contribution to the study of the various facets of this complex individual and his career. Editions of the correspondence of the last 150 years have been in one way or another incomplete. Alexander Campbell Fraser published letters and parts of letters to and from Berkeley, with a focus on the Berkeley Papers now held in the British Library.<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Rand published the correspondence of Berkeley and John Percival, Earl of Egmont.<sup>2</sup> A. A. Luce published only letters from Berkeley in vol. 8 of *The Works of George Berkeley*. Hight has taken the timely and necessary step of including all known correspondence to and from Berkeley in his volume, and therefore its scheme is the most comprehensive.

In the cumulative work of historical scholarship, one has the advantage of sitting on the shoulders of giants, yet (to mix allusions), even those giants sometimes nod. Hight corrects some basic mistakes and omissions by including letters simply passed over by Rand (such as letter 87, Percival to Berkeley, 25 July 1717), as well as other correspondence that he has discovered in his researches. The volume includes, by my own reckoning, eleven letters by Berkeley not in Luce, three of them never before published, in addition to the three new letters recently published by Hight, and five other letters published in earlier numbers of the *Berkeley Newsletter* (2-4) and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> One letter Hight published in 2010 (that from a George Berkeley to Robert Nelson) is now acknowledged not to be by the relevant George Berkeley ("Introduction," xiv). The only other letter I am aware of that has been attributed to Berkeley's correspondence, and which is not included in this volume, is that from Berkeley to Thomas McDonnell, referring to an intention to write an answer to a book called *Essay on Spirit*, published by David Berman.<sup>4</sup>

For those readers who have already worked with the previous editions of Berkeley's letters, and the piecemeal publications of new letters since the Luce and Jessop *Works*, a brief discussion of those sources and grounds for any exclusions in the "Introduction" to this volume would have been helpful. A key to the list of letters, providing marks for those letters previously uncollected by Fraser, Rand or Luce might also have been a useful addition to the clear and economical introductory material.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Letters of George Berkeley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871).

<sup>2</sup> *Berkeley and Percival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914).

<sup>3</sup> Hight's note appears in *Berkeley Studies* 21 (2010), 16-21; David Berman, "Some New Bermuda Berkleiana," *Hermathena* 110 (1970), 24-31 publishes a letter.

<sup>4</sup> *Berkeley and Irish Philosophy* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 223.



Though any such attempt is necessarily selective, a review of this volume ought to give an indication of those aspects of Berkeley that are most evident in his correspondence (references are to letter numbers). To begin with matters of philosophy and natural philosophy, the reader is made aware of a lifelong interest in geology, astronomy and meteorology. This is often seen in open letters (intended for publication), right from the first letter (reprinted in editions of Berkeley's works as "Description of the Cave of Dunmore"), through accounts of volcanic eruptions, to late discussions of meteorological phenomena with Tom Prior (1, 89, 351, 362, 367). The most important addition to the corpus here is letter 2, to Hans Sloane, 11 June 1706, principally on the effects of gravity upon the form of the earth's atmosphere. The correspondence also demonstrates a lifelong concern with the theory and practice of political obligation and allegiance, often in discussions with Percival, and mostly relating to the individual's obligations to the state (6, 37, 73, 75). In later letters, the threat of a Jacobite invasion around 1745, and the duties of both Protestants and Catholics in such circumstances, prompt similar discussions, again often in open letters (323, 324). And, of course, Berkeley defends what have become his key philosophical arguments, concerning the non-existence of matter, the dualism of spirit and idea, the impossibility of abstract ideas, and the capacity of the mind to operate usefully without reference to clear and distinct ideas, in letters to Samuel Molyneux and Samuel Johnson in particular (9, 10, 18, 190, 194, 197, 199).

Beyond natural philosophy and philosophy, readers develop a strong sense of Berkeley's commitment to social projects of various kinds. Ireland is one chief area in which this concern is seen. There is a desire to protect Ireland from a punitive economic relationship with England, in a variety of different forms (as a tax on Irish yarn, letter 30). Berkeley clearly regarded his position in the Church as a social and economic as well as a religious mission, particularly during his Cloyne years (254, 263, 346). The scheme for founding a college on Bermuda, which, right from the start, in 1723, Berkeley acknowledges may make him seem "mad and chimerical" (p. 187), is ever-present in the correspondence for nearly a decade. The associated work of political lobbying, and questions of whether Berkeley should have left for America without his grant in hand, whether he should ask for a change in the grant to allow the college to be built in Rhode Island, and so on, are communicated clearly by the correspondence (117 onwards).

Despite the failure of the grant, one outcome of Berkeley's time in America was his sponsorship of American liberal education, through donations of books, land, and scholarships (199, 216, 253, 355, 357, 363). Several of Berkeley's correspondents, often implicitly responding to his own writings, relate the failure of the project for the college to the rise of infidelity and free-thinking at home, a tendency that must be combated (191, 258). Berkeley's social interests also encompass the cultural domain. As a traveller, in his two visits to France and Italy, he offers accounts of continental European landscape, culture, learning and economy (62, 65, 66, 85, 88), and his developing interest in architecture (110) and his later interest in music (289 onwards, particularly in the correspondence with Isaac Gervais) have roots in this period. Correspondence relating to tar water, which features frequently from letter 176 onwards, combines Berkeley's interests in social improvement, experimental or natural philosophy, and a form of philosophical therapeutics (a philosophical regime of living) that are all long-standing

concerns. Throughout all of these letters the impression of a committed individual, a person capable of deep and demanding friendship, an advocate of family life—at least once his early years of monkish retirement are past him (see letter 34)—is strong.

In reviewing such a useful and impressive volume it is ungenerous to quibble with minute aspects of the presentation of the text, but it is nonetheless the reviewer's lot to do so. Hight's policy for annotations seems to have focused on the clarification of the referents of proper names, in which he has been tireless. So, for example, in the annotations to letter 72, 18 individuals are identified unambiguously. Yet the annotations provide no clarification of the matter of this letter from Berkeley to Percival (the impeachment of Ormond for high treason as a result of his corresponding with the exiled Stuart court). The reader can find most of what is required to make basic sense of the letter in the back matter to the volume, in entries in Hight's excellent biographical and place register. But a little more annotation at the foot of the page on the substance of events described (what were the Dutch designs on Newport and Furnes, for example?) might make the volume easier to use and more approachable for the beginning doctoral student Hight identifies as the user he had in mind when preparing the annotations (xii).

When Hight does annotate more fully, he tends to focus on very specific issues. The longest annotations given in relation to Jacobitism in the early eighteenth century pertain directly to the situation at Trinity College, Dublin, such as the long note on the Forbes case accompanying letter 50 (Forbes was a student who had refused to drink a toast to King William). Whilst this case is clearly important, the level of detail provided here is not matched by other contextualizing annotation. (See also letter 68 for a similar focus on TCD at the expense of the broader political context.) Hight makes little reference to more recent (later 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century) historical and contextual scholarship (see pp. 448, 531 for examples). The occasional presence of such citations makes the reader question why such material is not employed with reference to a broader range of historical and philosophical issues raised by the letters. But, however helpful a more developed body of annotation might have been, the preparation of such a text would have taken many, many years, and perhaps required a second volume for its publication. Few readers will regret the decisions Hight has made concerning the type and volume of annotation, as it has brought the text of the letters quickly and unobstructed into the public domain.

Hight also does a very good job of clarifying to which authors and texts Berkeley and correspondents are referring in their letters. Occasionally such references are vague, and Hight has to make conjectures. Sometimes other possibilities than those suggested by Hight may strike the reader. In letter 22, Berkeley to Percival, 20 December 1710, Berkeley is sympathizing with an old school acquaintance, Langton, who has been harangued by his parishioners for supposedly preaching passive obedience. Langton said he had copied his sermon from Dr. Scot (basing one's sermons on published texts was by no means an unusual phenomenon). Hight suggests this Scot is Patrick Scot, a clergyman writing between 1618 and 1625. It seems just as likely to me to be a reference to John Scott, a canon of St Paul's whose *Sermons on Several Occasions* was published in 1704. This same John Scott's *Christian Life* is included by Berkeley in a list of books to be sent to Harvard (letter 357), and it is a work from which he made selections for *The Ladies*

*Library*. That letter also suggests donating “the most approved writings of the divines of the Church of England” (as they are called in letter 355), including “Tillotson Sharp & Clarke.” Hight suggests that the text in question is Richard Clerke’s *Sermons* (1637), when Samuel Clarke’s *Sermons*, including those on the being and attributes of God, might be thought a stronger candidate. A copy of Clarke on the attributes from 1725 appears in the sale catalogue of Berkeley’s library, and Samuel Clarke appears in the gift of books Berkeley had earlier made to Yale.<sup>5</sup> Earlier letters also demonstrate Berkeley’s attempt to draw Clarke into a dialogue on the subject of Berkeley’s early publications (letters 20, 23). Again, in letter 360, Berkeley to Percival, 3 December 1747, Berkeley commends Gilbert West’s *Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. He says there is also “another very well writ treatise of Mr Lyttleton’s,” and that Lyttelton and West “draw their pens in defence of Christianity” (p. 538). Hight notes that George Lyttelton published *A Letter to the Tories* in 1747, but in the same year, Lyttelton also published *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul. In a letter to Gilbert West*, which seems more likely to be the work to which Berkeley is referring. But these points are minute when considered in the context of the work of annotating the volume as a whole.

Whilst, then, some readers might benefit from further contextual annotation of the letters, Hight has delivered the most comprehensive edition to date. Every student of Berkeley will be grateful for this edition, and for the diligence, accuracy, economy and energy with which Hight has executed his charge. This book puts the study of Berkeley, particularly from historical and contextual perspectives, on a surer footing than ever before.

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<sup>5</sup> *A Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the late Right Rev. Dr. Berkeley, Lord Bishop of Cloyne. Together with the libraries of his Son and Grandson, the late Rev. George Berkeley, D.D. Prebendary of Canterbury, and the later George Monk Berkeley Esq. To be sold by Leigh and Sotheby, Monday June 6, 1796*, 33; and Andrew Keogh, “Bishop Berkeley’s Gift of Books in 1733,” *Yale University Library Gazette* 8:1 (July 1933), 1-25, esp. 21-22.

## News and Announcements

### **International Berkeley Conference**

*Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*

Trinity College Dublin

Dublin, Ireland

4-6 April 2014

- David Berman (Trinity College Dublin): “Irish Philosophy: Past and Present”
- Lisa Downing (Ohio State): “Ideas and Sensible Qualities: The Structure of Idealism in the *Principles* vs. the *Dialogues*”
- John Russell Roberts (Florida State): “A Platonic Solution to a Puzzle in the *Three Dialogues*”
- Tom Stoneham (York): “Refractions, Reflections and Dreams”
- Stephen Daniel (Texas A&M): “Berkeley on God’s Knowledge of Pain”
- Keota Fields (Massachusetts, Dartmouth): “Berkeley on Idealism, Meaning and the Naturalistic Fallacy”
- James Hill (Charles U Prague): “‘I do not perceive it as I perceive a triangle, a colour, or a sound’: Knowledge of the Self in the *Three Dialogues*”
- Sukjae Lee (Seoul National): “Berkeley’s Occasionalism in the *Dialogues*”
- James Levine (Trinity College Dublin): “Prior vs. Williams on the Master Argument”
- Jennifer Marušić (Brandeis): “Berkeley on Sensations as Acts of Mind and the Passivity of Perception”
- Kenneth Pearce (Southern California): “Matter, God, and Nonsense: Berkeley’s Polemic Against the Freethinkers in the *Three Dialogues*”
- David Wilkins (Trinity College Dublin): TBA

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- Glauser, Richard. "Berkeley on the Numerical Identity of What Several Immediately Perceive: *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* III 247–8." *Philosophy Compass* 7 (2012): 517-30.
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