

Berkeley's Metaphysics of Perception A Reply to My Critics

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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*¹ 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,² 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.

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

² *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.³ 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

³ 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,⁴ 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

⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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

⁵ I thank Ville Paukkonen for raising this objection.

⁶ 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 prior⁷ 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.⁸

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

⁷ This priority is logical, not temporal.

⁸ 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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