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George Berkeley's Idealism

An Examination of the Idealist Metaphysics and its Connection to Philosophy of Mind

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Departmental Honors Thesis

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Department of Philosophy and Religion

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Abstract

The prominent 18th century empirical philosopher George Berkeley espoused a philosophy known as “idealism.” This thesis aims to show that George Berkeley’s idealism is a formidable player in philosophy of mind. The present research unfolds his arguments for idealism as they appear in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, turning at several points to *The Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* for clarification. This research further explores the fundamentals of idealism in light of philosophy of mind, highlighting idealism’s intrinsic connection to this discipline. While this work is far from exhaustive, it provides the reader with essential information on Berkeley’s idealism and proves its worth as a philosophy in today’s world.

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INTRODUCTION

General Intro – Berkeley the Gadfly

What does the philosopher do? Most professions are easy to pin down. If I say, “musician,” we are talking of someone that plays music. If I say, “sculptor,” we are talking of someone that sculpts. The English language is so exacting in this regard that we even have “arkwrights” – people that earn a living making wooden chests. Yet, if I say, “philosopher,” hardly anyone comes to a decisive definition. Some have tried – the Merriam Webster dictionary offers that a philosopher is “a person who seeks wisdom or enlightenment.”¹ Even this effort begs the question. For starters, what is wisdom? What is enlightenment? What is it to seek them? I submit that the work of a philosopher does not define easily precisely because it relies on whom it describes for its features.

In George Berkeley’s case, we find an archaic sort of philosopher on display, in the sense that the archetypally first philosopher called himself by a name that suits Berkeley very well. In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates famously calls himself the “gadfly of Athens” – a gadfly literally being “any of various flies, as a stable fly or warble fly, that bite or annoy domestic animals.”² Reflecting Socrates’ discourse, the dictionary carries a second definition of the term: “a person who persistently annoys or provokes others with criticism, schemes, ideas, demands, requests, etc.”³ Contrary to the image of a stodgy school don in a robe, smoking a pipe in the corner, and generally looking like Gandalf on homestay, Berkeley actively engages with the thinkers of his own time. In fact, he is so good at engaging with his contemporaries that Berkeley’s philosophy lives in many cases primarily as a critique of his colleagues or predecessors.

¹ “Philosopher,” Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/philosopher>.

² “Gadfly,” Dictionary.com, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/gadfly?s=t>.

³ “Gadfly,” Dictionary.com.

To pick a name that everyone knows, Berkeley criticizes Isaac Newton's *Principia*, a book which, at the time, was in vogue among philosophers. Leaving out the particulars, notice the way that Berkeley introduces what he has to say about Newton: "...which distinction, as it is at large explained by the author, does suppose those quantities to have an existence without the mind: and that they are ordinarily conceived with relation to sensible things, to which nevertheless in their own nature, they bear no relation at all."⁴ Berkeley's Socratic roots show in his tactic with Newton. Berkeley's critiques of contemporary and past philosophy are thoroughgoing and fascinating. Here I propose to consider George Berkeley the great gadfly of 18th century philosophy.⁵

Berkeley's primary texts are famously quite short. The Penguin Classics edition of *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* lasts a mere seventy-six pages.⁶ *The Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* likewise endures only eighty-seven pages.⁷ It is my contention that idealism went out of style rather than was defeated; I believe that Berkeley's idealism is a viable contender in the contemporary world of philosophy. In his book *Mind*, John Searle notes: "Idealism had a prodigious influence in philosophy, literally for centuries, but as far as I can tell it has been dead as a doornail among nearly all of the philosophers whose opinions I

⁴ George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, in *Berkeley: Philosophical Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Introduction ¶110. As we will see, one of Berkeley's central tenets is that there are no objects or forces existing without the mind (or a mind, or a couple of minds... the intricacies of this view will be addressed later).

⁵ See David Berman, "Berkeley's Life and Works," in *The Cambridge Philosophy to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13-33 for an examination of scholarship on Berkeley's life and works. His personal intellectual development is worth the read.

⁶ George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, in *George Berkeley: Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 31-113.

⁷ George Berkeley, *The Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, in *George Berkeley: Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 115-208.

respect, for many decades, so I will not say much about it.”⁸ In contrast to Searle, I think idealism more than holds its own in today’s intellectual space; the challenge is bringing the reader up to speed.

Thesis Statement

Here is my ultimate thesis: to show that idealism, when thoroughly investigated, remains a strong philosophical player, especially in philosophy of mind and self.⁹ In order to prove this, I will house the discussion primarily within (what is to me) his most important text, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. I will investigate three selections of this work: the Introduction to the *Principles*, “Against the Existence of Matter,” and “Spirits and Epistemology.”¹⁰ Where necessary, I will make recourse to his work in the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, another of his principal writings. In discussing the Introduction to the *Principles* and “Against the Existence of Matter,” I will lay the foundations of idealist metaphysics. Beginning with “Spirits and Epistemology,” I will turn towards the claim that Berkeley’s idealism is a strong philosophical contender by speaking to its capabilities as a philosophy of mind and self. Ultimately, I will conclude in a cursory section on philosophy of mind that Berkeleyan idealism is far from dead – it as strong or stronger a contender than its chief competitors in the field.

⁸ John Searle, *Mind: a brief introduction (Fundamentals of Philosophy Series)*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 47-48.

⁹ I unfortunately do not have space to adequately address each party within the philosophy of mind to show that idealism holds its own in each case. I have chosen to show idealism’s superiority over Cartesian dualism because each prominent philosophy of mind today can do this (or at least attempts to) – I hope that in showing idealism’s similar ability, it will be manifest to the reader that, although not presently demonstrated, it is reasonable to claim that idealism is yet a lively, active contender in philosophy of mind.

¹⁰ “Against the Existence of Matter” and “Spirits and Epistemology” are names of my own invention. I will clarify their proper purview under the heading “Discussion of the Main Text of the Principles.”

A TREATISE CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

INTRODUCTION TO THE *PRINCIPLES*

Introductory notes on the Introduction to the *Principles*

In the introduction to *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, Berkeley makes a fascinating case concerning the difficulty and confusion that often surrounds philosophical discourse. According to my reading of the introduction, Berkeley makes twenty-five individual points. Some of these points are his general observations and others are substantive to his underlying argument. The references given throughout this section refer to the paragraph number in question.¹¹ Where I have placed a letter next to the paragraph number (such as “¶2a”), this is to indicate which part of the paragraph I am referring to. Assume that I am referencing the introduction unless I state otherwise. Concerning the text itself, Berkeley starts us off in a very philosophically honest place with the observation that as soon as reasoning starts, scruples appear.^{12, 13}

Scruples and Berkeley’s take on them

From the outset of any philosophical discussion, scruples are cropping up left and right. In today’s context, we hear it often in the classroom: Aristotle sees it this way, Hume sees it this way, and Locke sees it yet another way... scruples are omnipresent in philosophical discourse.

¹¹ Some authors (see, for example: Kenneth Winkler *Berkeley and the Doctrine of Signs*, in “Berkeley: Philosophical Writings” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 126.) use the word “section” in place of paragraph when speaking of Berkeley. I have chosen paragraphs to allow use of the paragraph symbol (¶).

¹² Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶1.

¹³ This is Berkeley’s chosen word for disagreements, contentions, and generally not seeing something the same way as another. Fair warning: I am about to use the word scruples an annoying amount. Avoiding synonyms allows me to stay true to the wording in the paragraphs where he addresses the present subject.

Berkeley makes note of several common interpretations of the omnipresence of scruples. Some say that scruples are due to weakness of human minds; we just are not capable of seeing clearly enough to get beyond our scruples.¹⁴ Similarly, scruples could be the result of human finitude; we are relatively small beings, so we miss out on the grander elements in the reality of the world.¹⁵ Or yet, scruples could be the result of the misuse of our faculties rather than the incapacity of our faculties.¹⁶ For Berkeley, this third option (that scruples are the result of the misuse of our faculties) holds water.¹⁷

In fact, not only does the third option hold water, Berkeley casts with it a very promising vision of human intellectual ability. We are capable of much better than these scruples, Berkeley says.¹⁸ To unravel our scruples, we need only find the head scruple-causer and eliminate it: for Berkeley, this is “the opinion that the mind has a power of framing abstract ideas or notions of things.”¹⁹ Berkeley’s primary evidence against the claim to the power of abstraction is that, in a word, you are always imagining something specific; or, what is the same thing, you are never imagining something abstract.^{20, 21} As Robert Fogelin puts it, Berkeley “is not simply arguing that we do not possess this or that particular abstract idea; his claim is generic. According to him, it is not in our power to form any abstract ideas whatsoever.”²²

¹⁴ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶12a.

¹⁵ Berkeley, ¶12b.

¹⁶ Berkeley, ¶13a.

¹⁷ Berkeley, ¶13b.

¹⁸ Berkeley, ¶14.

¹⁹ Berkeley, ¶16.

²⁰ Berkeley, ¶10.

²¹ This claim (that you are always imagining something specific) is known as “particularism.” Berkeley, as will be shown momentarily, is quite a stringent particularist.

²² Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 108.

Abstract ideas and Berkeley's take on them

Now, this claim that the mind cannot form abstract ideas lacks a certain sort of colloquial sense. When I am in class and my teacher wants me to focus on the broader concept at play, she says to me, “think of this in the abstract.” Or, I will be in conversation and as a clarification will say that I am speaking abstractly, not just of this or that. The word abstract has a very welcome home in the English language – so, in what manner is Berkeley saying that we do not have the power of abstraction?

Berkeley has a simple way of explaining himself. He has no desire to rid us of the common-sense notion that we can speak generally instead of specifically. His solution to the stated question is simple: general ideas exist, abstract ideas do not.²³ Fogelin explains that by this point, it is clear that “Berkeley is thus faced with two tasks: the first, to produce decisive reasons for rejecting the doctrine of abstract ideas, the second, to give a satisfactory account of general terms in place of the abstractionist account.”²⁴ Berkeley's tactic is to prove that abstract ideas do nothing that general ideas do not; and, because (as will be shown) general ideas do not need abstraction to be explained, there is no reason to posit the existence of abstract ideas.

One must distinguish at this point between the colloquial use of the word “abstract” and philosophical use of the word. Berkeley describes abstraction's philosophical use in some length, and I think it is worthwhile to see the full selection. Here is the passage:

“It is agreed on all hands, that the qualities or modes of things do never really exist each of them apart by it self and separated from all others, but are mixed, as it were, and blended together, several in the same object. But we are told, the mind being able to consider each quality singly, or abstracted from those other qualities with which it is united, does by that means frame to it self abstract ideas... Not that it is possible for colour or motion to exist without extension, but only that the mind can frame to it self by

²³ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶12.

²⁴ Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, 109.

abstraction the idea of colour exclusive of extension, and of motion exclusive of both colour and extension.”²⁵

Abstraction, in the philosophical sense, is not simply generalizing to talk about qualities that two or more entities share, although this is one important facet of it. Abstraction is also the ability to consider a single quality of a single entity exclusive of the entity’s other qualities. So, in the last sentence of the quotation, we see that “the mind can frame to it self by abstraction the idea of colour exclusive of extension,” etcetera. The abstractionist account of general terms is that if, for example, I saw an apple, I could abstract the apple’s redness and plug that redness back in when I notice that the cap on the bottle of Jamison whiskey is also red. Thus, in the abstractionist account, we come by general terms: pluck one quality out of the set of qualities composing one object and pluck the same (or a very similar) quality out of the set composing some other object. This gives us a “redness” which is not tied to any particular instantiation of the color red. Fogelin speaks of this as the ability to “abstract a ‘determinable’ distinct from any of its specific determinations.”²⁶ He continues, “For example, presented with a variety of differing figures and magnitudes, the mind is supposed to be able to abstract a notion of something *common to all*, namely, extension.”²⁷ By this process, we are able to speak generally of redness (and the same for all other qualities). The final way to abstract is that of “complex or compounded ideas” (Berkeley’s term). Fogelin simply quotes Berkeley’s explanation, and I will follow suit:

“For example, the mind having observed that Peter, James, and John resemble each other, in certain common agreements of shape and other qualities, leaves out of the complex or compounded idea it has of Peter, James, and any other particular man, that which is peculiar to each, retaining only what is common to all; and so makes an abstract idea wherein the particulars equally partake, abstracting entirely from and cutting off all those circumstances and differences, which might determine it to any particular existence.”²⁸

²⁵ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶7.

²⁶ Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, 109.

²⁷ Fogelin, 109.

²⁸ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶9

To make a brief resume of Berkeley's take on abstraction, we have three manners of abstraction: the ability to frame qualities exclusive of those with which they are presented to us ("the mind frames to itself by abstraction the idea of colour exclusive of extension..."), the ability to abstract to speak of general terms, and the ability to simplify a complex idea down to only those qualities shared equally by each similar complex idea. Recall from Fogelin that Berkeley has two jobs: to show that abstraction is false and to give a satisfactory account of general terms.²⁹ The stage is set for Berkeley's answer – which answer comes as a jumbled response to both of these tasks.

Berkeley's position is that mind is constantly moving to generalize and organize experiences but is engaged in so doing such that it neither abstracts a single quality exclusive of others, nor abstracts a single quality in order to speak generally, nor simplifies complex ideas to gain only the equally shared qualities. How so? As previously noted from ¶10, Berkeley endorses what is called "particularism," or the theory of perception which says that no matter how hard you try to conceive of a single quality at a time, you must be conceiving of a single quality *of a single entity*.³⁰ You can get particular, you can get specific, you can think with clarity about one certain aspect... *of a certain thing*. Here is the clincher: if that certain aspect is tied to that certain thing, it is always really a quality as it relates to the other qualities of the entity.

Try it for yourself, says Berkeley: can you picture extension without thinking of something extended? Can you picture color without thinking of something colored? Can you picture motion without thinking of something moving? Of course not.³¹ Abstracts lack explanatory power; or, to put that in a more Berkeleyan way, abstracts exist only to cause

²⁹ Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, 109.

³⁰ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶10.

³¹ Berkeley, ¶14.

scruples. As Fields notes, “The cause [of scruples] is not ‘the obscurity of things, or the natural weakness and imperfection our understanding’ (PHKI 2), as Locke would have us believe, but rather abuse of language stemming from ‘the opinion that the mind hath a of framing abstract ideas or notions of things’ (PHKI 6).”³² In short, if we want to move beyond mere philosophical bickering and scruples, we must lose the chief scruple-causer: the opinion that the mind has the power of framing to itself abstract ideas.

Root of the error that is abstract ideas

Now, Berkeley realizes that the power to form abstract ideas has a longstanding place in philosophy. His immediate predecessor, John Locke, makes a great deal of the power of abstraction, and so Berkeley is very often addressing himself against Locke. Nonetheless, it is not Locke that invented abstracted ideas; arguably, abstracts date to ancient Greek philosophy and well before. They are a common philosophical motif. This means that the burden of proof is on Berkeley to show why such a staple of the philosophical diet should be gotten rid of. In other words, how, if it is so false, did abstraction become so accepted? Answering this question gives us yet more of Berkeley’s argument against abstract ideas themselves.

Berkeley pins the root of the error on the fact that language makes it seem as though abstract ideas must exist.³³ The first mistake that philosophers make is thinking that each name in a language (chair, cat, car, guitar, lamp...) must have one unchanging, unaltering definition.³⁴ Furthermore, we have assumed that this unchanging definition denotes one idea, and the same idea, forever and without end. Keeping a single name (a noun) to a single definition (a group of words describing the noun) is good, necessary, and perfectly feasible. Keeping a single name to a

³² Keota Fields, *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 100.

³³ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶18a.

³⁴ Berkeley, ¶18b.

single idea, however, is impossible.³⁵ We have wrongly assumed that the only end of language is the communication of ideas, and so we wrongly assume that every significant name must stand for an idea.^{36, 37} Berkeley posits that the communication of ideas is *not* the only point of language.³⁸ Words often garner results without conjuring up an intermediary idea.³⁹ This is especially true (and obvious) in the case of familiar language.⁴⁰

Take the phrase “How is it going?” for example. I am not asking whether you are literally moving well, am I? I have not even defined the “it” that I am asking about, much less what I mean by this verb “to go.” Nonetheless, this question garners immediate results. If I ask you how it is going, you respond with, “well, my last exam was really difficult.” Or, “I love this cup of coffee!” Or, as a direct answer to the question, “It is going well.” This question is so vague that its purpose cannot possibly be to garner an intermediary idea with which I interact. This is Berkeley’s point – especially in the case of familiar words and phrases, there is no conjuring of ideas occurring in the mind.⁴¹ There is no power of abstraction active during the process of communication; neither is it necessary to posit the power of abstraction to explain what is happening when language is in use. We very often go straight from hearing to doing without reflecting or inventing or considering (or, notably, abstracting) anything at all. Even when we do “abstract” in the colloquial sense, we are really making general ideas; and general ideas are not abstract ideas in the philosophical sense. Berkeley’s argument is that to posit the mind’s activity as being “abstraction” is to mutilate and overcomplicate basic linguistic interactions, and that

³⁵ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶18c.

³⁶ Berkeley, ¶19a.

³⁷ Berkeley, ¶19b.

³⁸ Berkeley, ¶20a.

³⁹ Berkeley, ¶20b.

⁴⁰ Berkeley, ¶20c.

⁴¹ Berkeley, ¶20.

where generalization is necessary, we are not talking about something that fits the given philosophical definition of an abstract idea anyhow.

Returning to the question at hand, how is it that abstraction became so widely accepted if it is so evidently wrong? Berkeley maintains that language makes it appear that abstraction is necessary by virtue of our keeping a single name to a single a definition on the assumption that this definition marks out a single idea. Since one definition marking one idea is the would-be starting point of abstraction, and since this is not possible, abstraction never gets off the ground. Pretending that abstraction does get off the ground, abstraction still is not necessary to explain language and communication. There are two elements of language at play: the bit where we talk about general ideas and the bit where we go straight from word to action. We obviously do not need abstraction to explain the words-to-action bit; and the philosophical definition of abstract ideas does not fit the general ideas we employ in the other case. If we do not need the power of abstraction to explain language, then all this talk about abstraction being the ability to do such-and-such a thing is both secondary to a mistake and not necessary. If what is secondary to a mistake must be wrong, and if what is not necessary is not necessary, then the opinion that the mind has power to form abstract ideas is out on all counts.

Berkeley's action plan, now that we know the problem with philosophy

Fogelin summarizes that for Berkeley, “the commitment to abstract ideas has not only been nonproductive, it has been an actual source of error. The root error, for Berkeley, is the thought that we can form, through the power of abstraction, the idea of something existing that is neither a perceiver nor a thing perceived.”⁴² Fields writes that “by placing his attack on abstract

⁴² Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley*, 113.

ideas in the introduction Berkeley intends to clear the reader's mind of any lingering false principles in preparation for the philosophical arguments presented in the main text."⁴³ The question at this point is how we are to rid ourselves of the opinion that the mind has the power of framing abstract ideas. Berkeley's suggestion is that if the old names for things are confusing (if our old philosophical terminology constantly makes us assume, like sliding into a rut on a dirt road, the power of framing abstract ideas), we should switch up our names and start again from top.⁴⁴ The idea is that reworking our language, even given the difficulty of this project, is the proper way of dealing with abstract ideas.⁴⁵ The work of discerning agreements and disagreements between one's thoughts equals out to attentiveness to one's own understanding.⁴⁶ In other words, here is our solution: we know that we have given bad definitions for words in the past. So, let us start with a new slate of words and pay sharp attention to our further use of these words to make sure we do not contradict ourselves and invent new errors or reinvent old errors by sliding back into the rut of abstract ideas.

Conclusion to discussion on the Introduction

Berkeley finishes his Introduction to *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* with an appeal to the reader. If the reader wants to understand what Berkeley is about (namely, what follows in the main text of the *Principles*), then the reader must make himself think the sorts of thoughts that Berkeley had to think in the way that Berkeley had to think them for him to conclude that his idealism paints the right picture of our experiences.⁴⁷ This appeal

⁴³ Fields, *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence*, 100.

⁴⁴ Berkeley, *Principles*, Introduction ¶121.

⁴⁵ Berkeley, ¶122a.

⁴⁶ Berkeley, ¶122b.

⁴⁷ For an interesting discussion of why Berkeley must be read so carefully, consider Fogelin's treatment of the simple term "idealism." A.A. Luce, a premier Berkeley scholar, considers Berkeley an "immaterialist" instead of an

makes good sense given Berkeley's solution to the problem of thinking that the mind has the power to frame abstract ideas. He is asking you not merely to think hard and do good philosophy; he is asking you to first take the philosophy you already know and toss it to the side such that you can start fresh with new terminology and from this point examine and explain the world marked out by your experience.

“AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF MATTER”

Introductory notes on “Against the Existence of Matter”

In “Against the Existence of Matter,” Berkeley makes twenty-nine individual points. As in the introduction to the *Principles*, some of Berkeley's points make contributions to his overall argument and some are more like observations or evidences to demonstrate his propositions. As this pseudo-title title implies, “Against the Existence of Matter” is orchestrated to prove that materialism, and the concept of matter more generally, is false. It seems to the reader during the greater part of this selection that Berkeley assumes he is proving idealism right by proving matter false. This is problematic because idealism is not the unique alternative to a matter-only view; he could just as well say that he proves property dualism true. In ¶15, however, Berkeley explains precisely what he thinks he is proving in this section. He is arguing that if we are good empiricists, holding tightly that knowledge comes in by the senses, then to prove that no sense of ours can tell whether extension or color exists in an outward object is to prove that neither extension nor color exist outside the mind. Understanding this aim of Berkeley's will help guide the discussion that precedes this conclusion in his text.

idealist for the reason that so many misunderstand idealism. Berkeley, even with this admonition to the reader, is often misread. See both Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Routledge (New York: 2001), 31 and the first chapters of Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Taxonomy of objects of human knowledge

So, then, to a walkthrough of “Against the Existence of Matter.” Berkeley’s first move is to give us a taxonomy of human knowledge. This is an immense claim because Berkeley is specific about this being a *complete* taxonomy; no object of human knowledge is left out of this classification system. Note well that this is a taxonomy of the *objects* of human knowledge. The fact that Berkeley is speaking of the objects of human knowledge (rather than speaking of human knowledge itself) becomes critically important when he later makes the claim that he is for “turning ideas into things, not things into ideas.”^{48, 49} Bear in mind that Berkeley’s preferred word for ‘objects of human knowledge’ is ‘ideas.’ Jump ahead to “Difference between knowledge of ideas and knowledge of spirits” under “Spirits and Epistemology” for discussion on the importance of these objects of human knowledge as pertains to their being ‘ideas’ in juxtaposition to ‘spirits.’⁵⁰ Berkeley writes in ¶1 of the *Principles*,

“It is evident to anyone 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.”⁵¹

Berkeley gives us the three types or categories of objects of human knowledge. These categories of the objects of human knowledge play a critical role in developing the Berkeleyan metaphysics. They are also rather difficult to understand on a single pass. As such, I will address them in one sense presently and will return to them in a more robust way later – specifically, I

⁴⁸ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, in “Berkeley: Philosophical Writings” (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2008), pg. 225.

⁴⁹ I grant that this may be only a difference in terms (human knowledge vs. objects of human knowledge). In any case, Berkeley’s phrasing becomes paramount in understanding his metaphysics. So, even if there was no difference in fleshed-out meaning between the alternatives, the second phrasing is significantly more Berkeleyan for its plug-and-play connection with the wording of his overall metaphysics.

⁵⁰ See also Tom Stoneham, “George Berkeley: A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge,” in *Central Works of Philosophy Vol. 2: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Chesham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2005), 141-142.

⁵¹ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶1.

will return to the categories of the objects of human knowledge and interpret them in light of other passages in the discussion of “Spirits and Epistemology.” For now, consider that one (admittedly incomplete) way of seeing the distinction between the objects of human knowledge is in terms of “avoidability.” The first type is unavoidable; the second type is avoidable if you fail to reflect; and the third type is avoidable or not, depending on rather arbitrary factors.

1st-category objects of human knowledge

In what sense is the first type of object of human knowledge unavoidable? These knowledge objects are “ideas actually imprinted on the senses.”⁵² These are the sensations that fit the normal bill for the term “sensation:” I stub my toe and say ouch. This type of knowledge object comes entirely from outside of the individual; they are, in Berkeley’s words, “imprinted” onto the perceiver’s senses. If this were baseball, knowledge objects of the first variety would be like a ball that hits you square on the jaw. Whether you wanted to catch it with your jaw, whether you saw it coming, whether you tried to get your glove up... none of this really matters: the fact is that you got slugged by a baseball. Answer me this: can you, in the pure power of your volition, avoid the sensation of a broken jaw?

2nd-category objects of human knowledge

The second type of knowledge object is avoidable if you choose not to reflect on the sense data you are receiving (read: if you choose to not intellectually engage with the first-category knowledge objects coming in through the senses). Berkeley says that these second-category knowledge objects are “such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind.”⁵³ This second type of knowledge object is more avoidable than the first in view of the fact that I choose whether to pay attention to the “passions and operations of the

⁵² Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶1.

⁵³ Berkeley, ¶1.

mind.” If we continue with the previous example, where in playing a game of baseball you get clocked in the jaw, then the process of procuring these second-category knowledge objects is akin to deciphering who threw the baseball and when. If you chose not to think about it, you would not be confronted with the objects of human knowledge that are the ideas of the cause and timing of your getting hit by the baseball. The critical difference between first and second-variety knowledge objects is in the fact that you must pay attention to what passes in your mind to receive the second (something like the mental effort involved in finding out who threw the ball and thinking about the timing of when they threw it) and that you have nothing much to do with choosing whether you feel the ball connecting with your jaw. Although it varies from situation to situation, the presence of this second type of object of human knowledge is mostly under the control of my volition.

3rd-category objects of human knowledge

The third type of knowledge object is best described in terms of its being within oneself and its being sometimes willed, sometimes unwilled. These, Berkeley says, are “ideas formed by help of memory and imagination.”⁵⁴ These knowledge objects are sometime ephemeral, sometimes long-lasting. Berkeley intends with this category to capture all of those slightly-less-than-real thoughts that we entertain; memories, intuitions, fears, pains, and emotions belong to this category of knowledge object. Bear in mind that the third type of knowledge object *is not* the result of deep thinking or reasoning; those belong to the second type. The third category knowledge objects do not necessarily accord with the time in which they are being had, neither are they always under the control of the person that has them. Perhaps it is best to think of it like this: there are knowledge objects coming directly from sensation due to input from without

⁵⁴ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶1.

oneself (first category knowledge objects). There are also knowledge objects coming directly from mental operations of one kind or another due to any variety of inputs both from without and within oneself. There is a variety of these mental operations which belong to deep thinking and intense reasoning – these are the second category knowledge objects. The rest of the knowledge objects coming from mental operations belong to the third category of knowledge object.

Rendering the differences between categories of knowledge objects

It is important to clearly render the difference between these categories of objects of human knowledge. If confused, they will cause serious problems down the road – this will become clearer in the discussion of “Spirits and Epistemology.” The first category stands distinct from the second two because knowledge objects of the first category come from *without* the individual whereas these come from *within*. Knowledge objects of the second two categories come from a sort of reflection on other knowledge objects.

Not one of these objects (whether first, second, or third category) is more of a knowledge object than the next; however, there is a degradation of epistemological reliability that occurs the further one gets from knowledge objects coming from without the self (first category). The second category is absolutely essential because it interprets and infuses meaning into mere sensation. The third category is less epistemologically real than both of the others because it is neither knowledge objects relating to your experience (first category) or knowledge objects resulting from reflection on your experience or your memories and imaginations (second category). It is, rather, your memories and your imaginations; your knowledge objects concerning what happened in the past (whether accurate or not) and your knowledge objects considering what could be in the future or just is in your mind (whether accurate or not). As

mentioned already, this is an incomplete description of the objects of human knowledge. This discussion picks up again in greater detail in “Spirits and Epistemology.”

Equality of the terms mind, soul, self, spirit

After giving us this taxonomy of knowledge objects, Berkeley moves on to define his use of the term “mind.” More often than not, Berkeley speaks to “spirits” instead of “minds” or “souls.” Here in ¶2, Berkeley equates all of these terms: “mind” is equal to “soul,” “spirit,” and “self.”⁵⁵ This is important in light of how many philosophies contain a distinction between mind and spirit or differentiate mind from soul. For Berkeley, all of these terms indicate the same: mind, self, soul, spirit... these are identical in Berkeley’s philosophy.

Esse is percipi, epistemological empiricism

Notice that at this point in the *Principles*, Berkeley is writing in a system-building mode. He is giving definitions of terms and patching together the groundworks of idealism... he is, in short, building up the idealist metaphysics. Possibly the most well-known phrase from this system-building section is “*esse is percipi*,” which many take to be the central point of Berkeleyan idealism.⁵⁶ Berkeley begins *Principles* ¶3 with the remark that no matter how blended or jumbled-up, “the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense... cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them.”⁵⁷ Grayling remarks, “From these claims it follows that the gap between things and ideas vanishes. If things are collections of qualities, and qualities are sensible ideas, and sensible ideas exist only in mind, then what it is for a thing to exist is for it to be perceived – in Berkeley’s phrase, to be is to be perceived: *esse is percipi*.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶2.

⁵⁶ Berkeley, ¶3. *Esse is percipi* is an odd combination of Latin (*esse* and *percipi*) and the English verb “to be.” Translated literally, this phrase reads, “to be is to be perceived.”

⁵⁷ Berkeley, ¶3.

⁵⁸ A. C. Grayling, “Berkeley’s Argument for Immaterialism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (New York, Cambridge University Press: 2005), 169.

One erroneous way to take Berkeley's meaning is to assume that he is limiting the domain of *actually* existing things to the scope of an individual's perception. Such that, were I to leave the room I am in, I could not say that the table continues to exist. Berkeley is *not* making this claim! In fact, he is claiming much the opposite. Just before using the phrase "*esse is percipi*," Berkeley speaks of the table in his study. How might one say that the table exists? Berkeley responds, "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."⁵⁹

This sets up a rhetorical question, the answer of which highlights Berkeley's theistic roots. How can the table continue to exist, if *esse is percipi*, when no individual perceives it? Berkeley replies in ¶6 that either the table must not exist when no one is looking, or else it must "subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit." The reason that an object is still there when I am not looking (and neither is anyone else) is that God himself constantly perceives and maintains his creation – this is the distinctly Christian bent of Berkeley's philosophy. The grounding of reality as we know it is not some external matter; no, the grounding of reality, the thing which makes X still there when no one is looking, is God – the eternal spirit in whose mind subsist all things.

Notice also that this quotation highlights what we might call Berkeley's "epistemological empiricism." How do we mean when we say that the table exists? Do we mean that it has certain qualities? Do we mean it has a certain shape? Do we mean it is built of a certain type of stuff? According to Berkeley, what we mean is that we perceive it.⁶⁰ Existence ("to be," or *esse*) is determined by perception (is "to be perceived," or *percipi*). If X is being perceived, this indicates

⁵⁹ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶3.

⁶⁰ Berkeley, ¶6.

that X must be existing. The critical component is that our way to determine whether a thing exists is rooted in determining whether it is being perceived or not.⁶¹

Self-knowledge issue at heart of B.'s metaphysics

Branching from the claim that to be is to be perceived, one must ask whether Berkeley considers all existing thing to be perceived things. Roberts confirms “that the being of *sensible things* consists in their being perceived.”⁶² Yet, as already seen in ¶2, Berkeley speaks to things which exist (spirits) which are not objects of human knowledge (ideas). Speaking to the synonyms spirit, soul, and oneself, Berkeley writes, “By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or, what is the same thing, whereby they are perceived.”⁶³ In ¶27, Berkeley defines “spirit” as “one, simple, undivided, active being.” In ¶33, he defines real things as the ideas imprinted on the senses. In ¶142, Berkeley clarifies 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 any thing common to both natures.” If ideas are the sort of stuff that an individual might know, and “spirit” is specifically, decidedly, and by nature *not* of this stuff, then presumably there should be no knowledge of spirits. If the rationale for the existence of things without the mind is that their existence is justified and defined by the mind’s perception of them, then we should only be able to speak of things existing without the mind. Grayling writes of this issue as it appears in the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, “The nub of the problem is that if we are acquainted only with our own perceptions, and never with the things which are supposed to lie

⁶¹ As will be seen later, Berkeley makes hay out of the fact that nothing you perceive can simultaneously be unperceived... and thus nothing can exist outside the purview of perception. This is addressed in “Difference between knowledge of ideas and knowledge of spirits” under “Spirits and Epistemology.”

⁶² John Russel Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: the Philosophy of George Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

⁶³ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶2.

beyond them, how can we hope for knowledge of those things, or even be justified in asserting their existence?”⁶⁴

In fact, the problem is graver even than this. Back in ¶2, Berkeley tells us that mind, spirit, self, and soul are one and the same. If we simply swap our words out and restate the issue, we get this startling revelation: if ideas are the stuff of what a perceiver can know, and if the *self* is specifically, decidedly, and by nature *not* of this stuff, then we can have no knowledge of the self. This problem (the second problem deriving from the second error made in considering “*esse is percipi*”) is of critical importance to Berkeley’s philosophy – if Berkeley fails on this count, then his metaphysics contains within itself the means of its own defeat.⁶⁵

The question stands thusly: is there a way to remedy the discord between Berkeley’s description of mind-external objects and his overall metaphysics? For now, it is best to leave this question as it is and continue with our discussion of the main text of the *Principles*. I will return to this question in the section on “Spirits and Epistemology” because answering to the issue of self-knowledge in Berkeley’s metaphysics requires analysis of “Spirits and Epistemology” and several selections from *The Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*.

Locke, primary and secondary qualities

In answer to the question of how perceiving external things equates to them being ideas, Berkeley begins in ¶10 and ¶11 a very interesting argument concerning the inseparability of primary and secondary qualities of objects and how the relationship between these qualities reflects upon the being of the objects in question themselves. The assertion from his opponents

⁶⁴ A. C. Grayling, “Berkeley’s Argument for Immaterialism,” 167.

⁶⁵ For outside proof that Berkeley is not the only philosopher to have trouble with issues of self-knowledge, see Wright, Crispin, “Self-Knowledge: the Wittgensteinian Legacy,” *Current Issues in Philosophy of Mind*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 43, ed. Anthony O’Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 101-122. For an extended treatment of the history of philosophy of self-knowledge, see Ursula Renz (ed.), *Self-Knowledge: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

(notably John Locke) is that one must make a distinction between the primary and secondary qualities of an object. The primary qualities of an object are those that exist in the external object itself, namely, solidity (or bulk), motion, and extension (or shape).⁶⁶ Secondary qualities are mind-dependent qualities, such as color, taste, or the sharpness of a sound.⁶⁷ Nadler notes, “Thus, while primary qualities really belong to objects, secondary qualities (at least as we know them) are merely the effects in the mind of the object's own primary qualities and of the bulk, texture, and motion of the insensible parts of which the object is composed.”^{68, 69}

The inseparability argument (of primary and secondary qualities)

The crux of the issue for Berkeley is that if one can prove that primary qualities always go together with secondary qualities, and secondary qualities only exist in the mind, then primary qualities must also exist only in the mind. Berkeley recognizes the limitations of what he is about to argue. He is not proving that primary qualities do not exist in some external matter.⁷⁰ Rather, he is proving that, if our criteria for the realness of something is tied to our epistemic access to it, then our inability to explain primary qualities as distinct from secondary qualities (which he holds himself to have proved in the preceding paragraphs) entails that external objects, just like their supposed primary qualities, must be mental.⁷¹ Nadler summarizes that “close examination

⁶⁶ Hylarie Kochiras, “3.1 Tension in Locke’s Thought,” in “Locke’s Philosophy of Science,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/locke-philosophy-science/>>.

⁶⁷ Berkeley takes these secondary qualities likewise from Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Reference section 3.2.1 of Kochiras’s article (given in footnote 66 above).

⁶⁸ Steven Nadler, “Berkeley’s Ideas and the Primary/Secondary Distinction,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 20, no. 1 (1990): 49, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40231683>.

⁶⁹ See Daniel Flage, “Notes and discussions Berkeley’s Principles, section 10,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy; Baltimore* 41, no. 4 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 544. Flage discusses how Berkeley, in targeting the primary/secondary quality distinction, implicitly rejects the causality hypothesis (where primary qualities cause secondary qualities). There is not space to discuss it here, but it is a fascinating outrigger of Berkeley’s argumentation.

⁷⁰ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶15.

⁷¹ Berkeley, ¶15.

reveals that the same or equally strong arguments can be used to prove either set of qualities ‘mind dependent.’ Since these two sets together comprise all the possible properties of a body, bodies are thus reducible to collections of sensible qualities, all similarly in the mind of some perceiver.”⁷²

Fogelin calls this Berkeley’s “inseparability argument” because it relies centrally upon the logic that if A only exists in X place, and B never appears except in conjunction with A, then B must only exist in X place. In this case, B’s only existing in X place means that the one type of thing (primary qualities) which would necessitate external matter (as the stuff in which primary qualities reside) exists only in the mind. And if these primary qualities exist only in the mind, we have no room to posit that objects external to the mind exist. Fogelin frames it in the following way:

“We recognize intuitively that things of type A are inseparably united with things of type B in the sense that we cannot so much as conceive of them existing independently. If it is further acknowledged that things of type A cannot exist otherwise than in a mind, then, as the reasoning goes, it must also be acknowledged that things of type B cannot exist otherwise than in a mind.”⁷³

The importance of this argument is that by it, Berkeley shows the explanatory *unnecessity* of matter and, thereby, gives impetus to idealism. There is a slight problem with Berkeley’s argumentation, however. Berkeley is attempting to position himself contrary to Lockean materialism, which means Locke would have to be claiming that secondary qualities exist only in the mind for Berkeley’s argument to hold sway against him. As Fogelin notes, Locke does not take this view! Rather, “Locke held that secondary qualities *do* exist in objects, though only as powers to produce certain sensations in us.”⁷⁴ How, then, can Berkeley take himself to have made a positive advance if the materialist position against which he is arguing

⁷² Nadler, “Berkeley’s Ideas and the Primary/Secondary Distinction,” 47.

⁷³ Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, 55.

⁷⁴ Fogelin, 55.

does not fall subject to his axiomatic distinction between secondary and primary qualities? One possible conclusion is that we should throw out Berkeley's argument because he commits this seeming *ad hominem* fallacy against Locke. For my own part, I think that ¶11 alleviates this tension and allows us to keep Berkeley's argument.

Doc. of abstract ideas founded on concept of mind-independent qualities

In ¶11 of the *Principles*, Berkeley makes a fascinating argument correlating the idea of primary or secondary qualities existing in some external matter to the doctrine of abstract ideas. He reasons that qualities like “great and small, swift and slow are allowed to exist no where without the mind, being entirely relative, and changing as the frame or position of the organs of sense varies.”⁷⁵ In a word, Berkeley is claiming that at least some subset of the qualities that all philosophers recognize are seen on all hands as belonging only to the mind. Berkeley continues to reason that if these qualities (like greatness or smallness, swiftness or slowness) exist only in the mind, then “the extension therefore which exists without the mind is neither great nor small, the motion neither swift nor slow, that is, they are nothing at all.”⁷⁶ So, then, what must this extension and motion be which exists without the mind in some external matter? They must be “extension in general, and motion in general; thus we see how much the tenet of extended, moveable substances existing without the mind depends on that strange doctrine of abstract ideas.”⁷⁷

The point of the eleventh paragraph is none other than to show that the Lockean concept of *anything* (much less some category such as primary or secondary qualities) existing without the mind rests upon what Berkeley calls the “doctrine of abstract ideas.” This is the same

⁷⁵ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶11.

⁷⁶ Berkeley, ¶11.

⁷⁷ Berkeley, ¶11.

doctrine he holds himself to have overcome in the Introduction to the *Principles*. In other words, the ¶11 illustrates that there is no *ad hominem* fallacy occurring in the ¶10, provided that Berkeley was right in the Introduction to the *Principles* and has, in fact, defeated the Lockean contention for the doctrine of abstract ideas.

In *Principles* ¶91, Berkeley makes much the same point. Richard van Iten summarizes Berkeley's work there in the following words:

“First, he has delivered the final blow to the doctrine of abstract general ideas, along with its "hidden" Platonism. This much is accomplished by the introduction of (Q) *Qualities must inhere in a substance*. Second, he has arrived at idealism. The pattern followed in arriving there can be sketched as follows. After eliminating material substance and analyzing sensible objects as congeries of qualities, Berkeley invokes (Q). This leaves him with one alternative, i.e., sensible objects must inhere in a mind (mental substance).”⁷⁸

This theme is common among Berkeley's writings: that after abstract ideas go, idealism comes in. As van Iten illustrates, this is precisely because the existence of mind-independent matter rests upon the doctrine of abstract ideas and, once the throwing out of that doctrine is combined with the necessity of qualities to inhere in a substance (Q), the only appropriate substance is mind.

Denial of unity's status as abstract idea

In *Principles* ¶12, Berkeley moves on to one final contention for the doctrine of abstract ideas. Some philosophers, he alleges, claim that unity is a simple idea. In this context, “simple” is meant to indicate that unity, in the fashion of Locke's abstract ideas, can be conceived in exclusion of its normally attendant qualities. Berkeley counters that unity, just like the greatness and smallness or fastness and slowness from the inseparability argument in ¶10, changes with a person's perspective.⁷⁹ Is the unity of a single meter the same as the unity of a single foot? No –

⁷⁸ Richard J. van Iten, “Berkeley's Analysis of Mind,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24, no. 3 (International Phenomenological Society, 1964), 376.

⁷⁹ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶10.

they differ by a notable amount. Even more obviously: is the unity of a single gallon the same as the unity of a single yard? Of course not. Although there is obviously a quality which each of these shares (the quality of being “one” of something), there is nothing more than this general sharing of a quality. Each unity is a unity of something particular, even more obviously, Berkeley claims, than is extension or motion.

By the same argument as in the Introduction to the *Principles*, this indicates that although we recognize unity in multiple cases, the thought that this necessitates an abstract “unity” which they all share is a trick of language; we have no abstract concept of unity. As Jesseph concisely puts it, “The most general characterization of Berkeley’s philosophy of mathematics identifies it as a denial of abstractionism.”⁸⁰ At each step, here including even philosophy of mathematics, Berkeley denies the doctrine of abstract ideas as presented in the Introduction to the *Principles*. In showing that even unity is mind-dependent, Berkeley demonstrates again that there is nothing – and really nothing – that exists independently of mind.

Circumspection on defeating abstract ideas

Having shown that nothing exists independently of the mind, Berkeley circumspectly gives us his conclusion on the matter. Using extension and color as his example of qualities supposed to exist in external matter, he asserts in ¶15 that he has proven *not* that there is no extension or color in an outward object, but that our senses tell us nothing of an object’s true extension or color.⁸¹ This conclusion hits home on Berkeley’s epistemological empiricism. If we remain true to the epistemological empiricism which Berkeley endorses in ¶3, then the fact that our senses tell us nothing of an object’s true extension or color (meaning its extension or color as

⁸⁰ Douglas M. Jesseph, “Berkeley’s Philosophy of Mathematics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 277.

⁸¹ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶15.

they exist in some external matter) indicates that there is no such thing as mind-independent matter.⁸²

Master Argument: conclusion of “Against the Existence of Matter”

Berkeley concludes “Against the Existence of Matter” with what scholars have called his “Master Argument.” In ¶22-23, “Berkeley gives a version of what has come to be called ‘The Master Argument’ because of the apparent strength with which he endorses it.”⁸³ The axe of this argument is that mind-independent objects cannot be conceived of – and what cannot be conceived of, based on Berkeley’s epistemological empiricism, cannot be said to exist. The court length of the Master Argument is telling of how much stock Berkeley puts into this argument. Although Berkeley gives the Master Argument in ¶22-23 of the *Principles*, he retells it more interestingly in the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. In order to dissect the argument, we will turn presently to the second of these dialogues.

The Master Argument in the Second Dialogue

The Master Argument gets at the question of whether perception is fundamental to an object’s reality. Imagine, if you would, a tree in an open field. Does this tree exist independent of your perception? In the personage of Philonous (the quasi-Berkeley character), Berkeley asks rhetorically: “How say you, Hylas, can you see a thing which is at the same time unseen?”⁸⁴ Hylas responds that this is a contradiction; of course you cannot simultaneously see a thing and have that thing be unseen. Philonous then jumps from seeing to conceiving, saying, “Is it not as great a contradiction to talk of ‘conceiving’ a thing which is unconceived?”⁸⁵ He continues,

⁸² Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶13.

⁸³ Lisa Downing, “2.2.1 The Master Argument?” in “George Berkeley,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/berkeley/>>.

⁸⁴ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, in “Berkeley: Philosophical Writings” (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2008), pg. 182

⁸⁵ Berkeley, 182.

“And what is conceived is surely in the mind... How then came you to say, you conceived a house or tree existing independent and out of all minds whatsoever?”⁸⁶ The ultimate conclusion to the Master Argument comes only a paragraph further down the same page. Berkeley writes in the voice of Philonous, “You ought not therefore to conclude that sensible objects are without the mind, from their appearance or manner wherein they are perceived.”⁸⁷ Lisa Downing notes that there are several authors who have picked apart Berkeley’s argument on the claim that he conflates our representation of a thing with the thing itself. Thus, in the argument she cites from Pitcher’s work, Berkeley’s Master Argument fails because it ignores the difference between that which is our representation of a tree and that tree itself.⁸⁸ I find Pitcher’s critique to be very unsatisfying because it ignores Berkeley’s underlying critique of representationalism. Berkeley’s very point is that there is no verifiable difference between the supposed actual tree in the field and our supposed representation of the tree – an appeal to the senses simply confirms that we have an idea of the tree and, further, that we have never conceived of an unconceived tree (because this is a manifest contradiction). Therefore, on grounds of his epistemological empiricism, Berkeley is justified in making the claim that nothing exists “independent and out of all minds whatsoever.”⁸⁹

Returning to Berkeley’s iteration of the Master Argument in the *Principles*, we see that he makes the same point as in the *Dialogues*. In this case, he gives the example of trees in a park and books in a closet. “But say you,” he writes in ¶23 of the *Principles*, “surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and no body by to perceive them.” Berkeley sets the stage to look as though objects easily exist alone and

⁸⁶ Berkeley, *Dialogues*, 182.

⁸⁷ Berkeley, 182.

⁸⁸ Downing, “2.2.1 The Master Argument?” in “George Berkeley,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

⁸⁹ Downing, “2.2.1 The Master Argument?”

unperceived. Yet, not so fast, Berkeley reasons: “But, do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose; it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind.” Claiming that one conceives of something unperceived does nothing to support the claim that mind-independent objects exist. “To make this out,” Berkeley writes, “it is necessary that you conceive them existing unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy.”⁹⁰

In the first paragraph of my commentary on the Master Argument, I wrote that the axe of the argument is that you cannot conceive of mind-independent objects. How so? One cannot perceive of mind-independent objects because to perceive an object is precisely to prove its mind dependency! Since every object which you perceive is mind-dependent, and since there is therefore no proof for any unperceived objects, the following must hold: we have no ground to claim that there is such a thing as mind-independent matter. The Master Argument concludes Berkeley’s thoughts in “Against the Existence of Matter.” His next task in the *Principles* is to address a long string of possible objections to his idealism. For us, the next stop is at ¶135-156 and the turn to the subject of spirits and epistemology.

“SPIRITS AND EPISTEMOLOGY” (Or: Philosophy of self and other minds)

Introductory notes on “Spirits and Epistemology”

My tactic concerning “Spirits and Epistemology”⁹¹ is somewhat different than that for “Against the Existence of Matter” and the introduction to the *Principles*. It is best in this section to follow a topical, rather than exegetical, approach. Berkeley’s work in “Spirits and Epistemology” centers around one simple question: can I have knowledge of spirits? In the

⁹⁰ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶23.

⁹¹ Remember that this is my title for ¶135-156 and not Berkeley’s, although I am not alone in recognizing these paragraphs as a defined section of the *Principles* – see also Cummins, 191.

subsection, “Self-knowledge issue at the heart of B.’s metaphysics,” I promised a further exploration of the subject of self-knowledge and the knowledge of other spirits.⁹² This is a tenuous issue for Berkeley because of his strict definitions of the objects of human knowledge in ¶1 of the *Principles*. Rephrased briefly, Berkeley’s problem is that he has robustly distinguished between spirits (which are active, thinking beings – PHK ¶27, 135, 138, 139, et al.) and ideas (which are passive and derive existence only from being perceived – PHK ¶25, 27, 33, 139, et al.). Cummins notes that “the material which precedes the metaphysical/religious finale, Sections 135 through 145, considers chiefly the consequences of the sharp contrast between minds and ideas, which was introduced in Section 2 and expanded in Section 27.”⁹³ As Berkeley makes perfectly clear in ¶25 and ¶27 especially, spirits perceive ideas – and ideas are so unlike spirits that they cannot even resemble them. “Minds are not sensibles,” writes Cummins, “and cannot be represented by them or their images, because the only thing like an idea is an idea, and the two are utterly unlike.”⁹⁴ One must get at spirits somehow in a philosophy that makes such a big deal of them – for Berkeley, spirits are essential because they are the sole substance and grounding of ideas.⁹⁵ If he cannot get at them (spirits) by having an idea of them, then it must be that we have some sort of knowledge (but no direct ideas) of spirits. Berkeley rejects the “implied major premise” of the unlikeness of minds and ideas that “the only knowledge is knowledge of or through ideas.”⁹⁶ This begs the question: how does one have knowledge of

⁹² Recall that for Berkeley, self-knowledge and knowledge of others concern knowledge of spirits because he equates spirit with mind, soul, and self.

⁹³ Phillip D. Cummins, “Berkeley on Minds and Agency,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 191.

⁹⁴ Cummins, 192.

⁹⁵ Not to mention the fact that on Berkeley’s view, you *are* a spirit – and so it would be rather odd indeed if you had no knowledge of spirits.

⁹⁶ Cummins, “Berkeley on Minds and Agency,” 192.

spirits? What type of knowledge does one have of spirits? Let us examine these questions closely.

Difference between knowledge of ideas and knowledge of spirits

First, the most pressing question in its broadest form: how does Berkeley tally the need to have knowledge of spirits and the inability of ideas to resemble spirits? I think the best entry into Berkeley's answer is to pretend for the time being that we can have knowledge of spirits. If we make this pretension, then there is a critical follow-up question: does my knowledge of spirits (either of my own soul, of someone else's soul, or of both if it is the same kind of knowledge) differ in kind from my knowledge of ideas? Berkeley answers with a stout yes – the knowledge of spirits is not the same as the knowledge of ideas.⁹⁷

The logic is that spirits have ideas, not more spirits – the claim being that ideas and spirits are so vastly and perfectly unlike that if ideas are what a spirit “operates about” (Berkeley's wording from ¶27 PHK), then a spirit most obviously cannot operate about spirits. Here is Berkeley's way of making the same point in ¶135 PHK, “I shall here add that a spirit has been shown to be the only substance or support, wherein the unthinking beings or ideas can exist. But that this substance which supports or perceives ideas should be it self an idea, or like an idea, is evidently absurd.” So far, Berkeley is very clear: ideas and spirits are perfectly unlike, ideas being passive and deriving their existence from being perceived by spirits and spirits being the substance of ideas and deriving their existence from perceiving and thinking.⁹⁸

Here's the snag: how are we then speaking and reasoning about spirits? After all, if ideas are what the mind operates about (¶27 PHK), if we are operating about something when speaking presently of spirits, and if spirits are absolutely *not* ideas, then how are we speaking of spirits?

⁹⁷ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶135.

⁹⁸ Berkeley, ¶139.

How, if the objects of all varieties of human knowledge are ideas, and spirits are not ideas, do we gain a place from which to have knowledge of spirits? The short answer is the concession that we are indeed only ever speaking of ideas. Berkeley makes it obvious that no matter what subject we approach, we are operating about ideas – not spirits.⁹⁹ Even if we say the word spirit, we are still working with an idea. Berkeley sees that this is problematic; spirits are essential to his metaphysics. The first step to expanding the answer to this issue stems from edits Berkeley makes in *Principles* ¶27, ¶138, and ¶140.

Of all the edits that Berkeley makes in the second edition of the *Principles*, these are the most important. His edits are almost completely devoted to clarifying how and in what sense we have knowledge of spirits. The most important change is in his use of the term “notions.” In the 1710 edition of the *Principles* (1st edition), he used notions and ideas interchangeably. Look, for example, at the last phrase of ¶138 in the 1710 edition: “... it is evident there can be no idea or notion of a spirit.” In the 1734 edition, he omits the words “or notion,” paving the way for a new use of the term in ¶140, where he adds the term notion in the 1734 edition. Here is how the first sentence of ¶140 reads in the 1734 edition: “In a large sense indeed, we may be said to have an idea or a notion of spirit.” So, by the 1734 edition, notion has become the technical term for the knowledge that one has of spirits. As to a technical definition, notions appear to be some kind of inferred ideas. This definition is corroborated and expanded in the 1734 edition (3rd edition) of the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶135 and ¶139.

¹⁰⁰ Reference Daniel Flage, “Berkeley’s Notions.” Flage argues along similar lines, pulling heavily from the philosopher Thomas Reid to construct an interpretive paradigm of Berkeley’s notions based on Reid’s distinction between direction and relative conception.

Defending view that Berkeley has two fundamental categories of knowledge

Using Berkeley's now-established terminology, we can say that we have two kinds of knowledge: ideas and notions. Berkeley's use of the term idea in this sense causes some confusion. In "Spirits and Epistemology", Berkeley equivocates the term idea to mean on the one hand, "the information one gets directly from sense perception" and on the other hand, "any of the processes which one does notice or could notice in one's mind." In large brush strokes, Berkeley's play is to conflate these definitions such that literally any subject of one's attention, no matter its' origin, is to be called an idea. I think that Berkeley makes this all-are-ideas point and sticks to it – meaning that he equivocates by accident, not design, and his argument should be given the benefit of the doubt. The problem is that in a section like "Spirits and Epistemology," where he distinguishes the two definitions to nuance his epistemology in order to talk of spirits, he reuses the word idea and juxtaposes it to the word notions. This gives us the mixed message that at once all human knowledge is composed of ideas and some human knowledge is composed of notions, which are like vaguer ideas. For Berkeley's system to function, we must have both ideas (the first definition) and notions (the second definition) and we must have each of these as types or versions or forms of the objects of human knowledge. It needs to look something like this:

- 1) We have objects of human knowledge
- 2) These could be ideas (direct knowledge)
- 3) These could be notions (inferred knowledge)

These types of knowledge, whether direct or inferred (2 or 3), are equally composed of these objects of human knowledge (1), which objects must fall into one of the three categories of

human knowledge given in *Principles* ¶1. Defending this view as Berkeley's own requires us to look outside of the *Principles* by turning to *The Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*.

Defending knowledge objects dichotomy from Dialogues

As stated above, the most fundamental paradigm of knowledge is that each object of human knowledge (while all being equally objects of human knowledge) is of one of two sorts of knowledge: directly sensed knowledge or inferred knowledge.¹⁰¹ Here is my present thesis: while every object of human knowledge falls into the taxonomy of the objects of human knowledge from PHK ¶1, the distinction between directly sensed and inferred knowledge comes logically prior to it.

I hold this to be the case for three reasons. First, the primacy of the position of the argument for an inferred versus directly sensed knowledge distinction in the text of the *Dialogues*. It is the very first argument that Philonous makes as proof for idealism. This tells us, if nothing else, that Berkeley esteems this argument highly. Second, Berkeley publishes three editions of the *Dialogues* (where this argument figures prominently in dialogues one and two) and two editions of the *Principles* (where this argument figures notably in PHK ¶27, ¶80, ¶140, ¶142, and as backdrop for "Spirits and Epistemology" generally). If nothing else, the number of times he edits and republishes versions of this argument should tell us how important it is to his own thinking. Third, the taxonomy of the objects of human knowledge (PHK ¶1) functions well

¹⁰¹ See Flage, "Berkeley's Notions," 409 for support of this interpretation. Despite a difference in wording between my own interpretation and Reid's, this central tenet holds true: there are two kinds of knowledge, one of them stemming from direct sense perception and the other stemming from inference, or what Reid calls relative conception.

if it is logically preceded by the directly sensed versus inferred knowledge distinction, but not vice versa.¹⁰²

In order to support my three claims, we must first examine the argument in question. Beginning on page 157, Philonous (the quasi-Berkeley personage) begins arguing with Hylas (the quasi-materialist/skeptic personage) over the causes of things.¹⁰³ Hylas, being the quasi-materialist, takes the Lockean position on primary versus secondary qualities. Just as in the *Principles*, Berkeley argues against the position that there is mind-independent matter (or substance) in which qualities (such as texture, color, sound, and shape) subsist. In the guise of Philonous, Berkeley presents several example scenarios designed to pry open the issue of what is directly sensed versus what is inferred, and specifically what this tells us about the question of the existence of mind-independent matter.

Philonous first presents the question in a standardized form. He asks, “Are those things only perceived by the senses which are perceived immediately? Or, may those things properly be said to be ‘sensible’ which are perceived mediately, or not without the intervention of others?”¹⁰⁴ Philonous is in the process of critiquing Hylas’s concept of sensible things. Hylas just defined sensible things as “those things which are perceived by the senses”¹⁰⁵ – but this definition needs clarifying in Philonous’s view. What does Philonous’s two-pronged question intend to clarify about Hylas’s definition of sensible things? It aims at prying Hylas back from claiming that things discovered by way of inference are sensible things. This is the route to the error that there

¹⁰² I take this to mean that the directly sensed/inferred distinction is prior to the taxonomy of the objects of human knowledge because neither characterization of knowledge functions if flipped the other way around. My rationale is the principle of charity – it seems it must work this way or else his system is rather rough-shod.

¹⁰³ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, 157. Unlike the *Principles*, Berkeley does not give us established paragraph numbers in the *Dialogues*. As such, the references I give will refer to the page numbers in this *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* edition of Berkeley’s collected works. For reference: this edition begins the first dialogue on page 151.

¹⁰⁴ Berkeley, 157.

¹⁰⁵ Berkeley, 157.

is mind-independent substance, Berkeley insinuates. To clarify his concern, Philonous gives an example concerning a person reading a book. “In reading a book, what I immediately perceive are the letters; but mediately, or by means of these, are suggested to my mind the notions of God, virtue, truth, &c. Now, that the letters are truly sensible things or perceived by sense, there is no doubt; but I would know whether you take the things suggested by them to be so too.”¹⁰⁶

Here, as in the *Principles*, Berkeley uses the term “notions” to describe the sort of knowledge that one has of things determined by inference rather than by direct sensation. In this case, it is the “notions of God, virtue, truth, &c.” The letters on the page are sensible things, and therefore are ideas (they are on the directly perceived side of the dichotomy between inferred and directly sensed knowledge). The concepts (or, to use Berkeley’s technical term, the notions) insinuated by these letters on the page are real objects of knowledge – only, they are not objects of knowledge by the same fashion as the letters themselves. Hylas admits that Philonous has made a good point and agrees that sensible things are “those only which can be perceived immediately by sense.”¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere, Berkeley cleanly equates sensible things with ideas (ideas in the sense of the word within the inferred/directly perceived knowledge distinction).¹⁰⁸ Philonous carries on with his argument: “Does it not follow from this, that though I see one part of the sky red, and another blue, and that my reason does thence evidently conclude there must be some cause of that diversity of colours, yet that cause cannot be said to be a sensible thing, or perceived by the sense of seeing?”¹⁰⁹

Philonous is already starting to make the grander point at play. The axe of his argument is not just that sensible things are of a certain sort – his argument aims to prove that the causes of

¹⁰⁶ Berkeley, *Dialogues*, 157.

¹⁰⁷ Berkeley, 157.

¹⁰⁸ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶125.

¹⁰⁹ Berkeley, *Dialogues*, 157.

sensible things *are not themselves sensible things*. He is not doing so in a generalized or purely conceptual way, either. The example is quite practical. Look at the sky during sunset and pay attention to its colors. The reds, the burnt oranges, the deep purples and hazy blues... we directly perceive the color of the sky, but the cause of its color? We never perceive the cause of the color because the cause of a sensible thing is not itself sensible! Philonous sharpens his point with another example: “In like manner, though I hear [a] variety of sounds, yet I cannot be said to hear the causes of those sounds.”¹¹⁰ Now in the voice of Hylas, Berkeley gives the conclusion to this argument:

“I tell you once for all, that by ‘sensible things’ I mean those only which are perceived by sense, and that in truth the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive immediately, for they make no inferences. The deducing therefore of causes or occasions from effects and appearances, which alone are perceived by sense, entirely relates to reason.”¹¹¹

Sensible things are those things directly perceived by sense.¹¹² Things directly perceived by sense are ideas.¹¹³ We see here that Berkeley is making a fundamental claim about human knowledge: at rock bottom, humans have knowledge of two kinds – directly sensed knowledge (“...by ‘sensible things’ I mean those only which are perceived by sense...”) and inferred knowledge (“...The deducing therefore of causes or occasions from effects and appearances, which alone are perceived by sense, entirely relates to reason.”). At the outset of this section, I alleged to prove that the distinction between directly sensed and inferred knowledge comes logically prior to Berkeley’s tripartite taxonomy of the objects of human knowledge in ¶1 of the *Principles*. In fact, the method by which this dichotomy fits prior to the *Principles* ¶1 trichotomy is rather simple.

¹¹⁰ Berkeley, *Dialogues*, 157.

¹¹¹ Berkeley, 158.

¹¹² Berkeley, 158.

¹¹³ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶158.

Fitting Dialogues dichotomy with Principles trichotomy

The first two categories of the objects of human knowledge in PHK ¶1 are: “ideas actually imprinted on the senses” and “such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind.”¹¹⁴ These two categories seem familiar, do they not? Here, Berkeley is using “idea” in the conflated sense I mentioned a few paragraphs back – where he means at once “the information one gets directly from sense perception” and “any of the processes which one does notice or could notice in one’s mind.” These two definitions map directly onto these first two categories of the objects of human knowledge!¹¹⁵ Where does the third category of the objects of human knowledge fall? It seems to me that in the PHK ¶1 trichotomy, Berkeley is attempting to get at a nuance within the way that we perceive our own mental operations. There are mental processes which generally map onto the external world like passions (love, hate, fear, etc.) and operations (willing, deciding, reasoning, etc.). There are also mental processes which do not cleanly correspond to anything happening in the world outside of us, at least not at the time at which these processes are occurring. Memory (re-conjuring past operations and passions, etc.) and imagination (considering possible operations and passions, and ways things could change or be altered in the external world, etc.) both fall into this category.

Whether Berkeley has a well-reasoned rationale for breaking up the dichotomy of the *Dialogues* into the trichotomy of the *Principles*, I am not sure. Commentators on Berkeley have expressed a variety of opinions.¹¹⁶ Perhaps he saw a pressing need to insist on the distinction between types of mental processes – the reasons why are not clear. In interpreting the trichotomy

¹¹⁴ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶1

¹¹⁵ See E. J. Furlong, “An Ambiguity in Berkeley’s ‘Principles,’” *Hermathena*, no. 94 (Trinity College Dublin: July 1960), 84-102. The two common schools of thought regarding Berkeley’s trichotomy of human knowledge objects are that of Professor T. E. Jessop and A. C. Fraser. I side with Professor Jessop.

¹¹⁶ Furlong, 85-86.

of *Principles* ¶1, Furlong takes note of entry 775 in Berkeley's *Philosophical Commentaries*, a collection of Berkeley's personal notebooks. Furlong writes, "The entry, and the deletion it contains, show him to be restricting ideas to the two kinds, namely, ideas of sense and ideas of imagination – roughly, sense data and mental images."¹¹⁷

Terminology to repair Berkeley's "idea" equivocation

The real confusion in Berkeley's writings is this unfortunate equivocation on the term "idea" – if he had used separate terms to indicate the objects of human knowledge (the stuff of which all human knowledge is composed) and the things that constitute directly perceived knowledge (the narrow sense of "idea" constituting directly sensed knowledge as juxtaposed to the "notions" constituting inferred knowledge, or Furlong's "mental images"), his writings would be much clearer.¹¹⁸ It seems to me that, when parred down to the most fundamental level, the trichotomy of PHK ¶1 is nothing more than a restatement of the dichotomy for which Berkeley argues in the *Dialogues*. I propose that from this point forward, in order to clarify which definition of idea I am using, the conflated, categorical version of the term (meaning any subject of one's attention, no matter its' origin – what Berkeley calls the objects of human knowledge) is to be called idea_{OHK} (OHK indicates object of human knowledge) and the narrow version of the term (meaning exclusively the objects of human knowledge gained from direct sense perception) is to be called idea_{DSK} (DSK indicated directly sensed knowledge). To restate for clarity: idea_{OHK} is the genus defined as the objects of human knowledge. Ideas_{DSK} and notions constitute the two species of the genus ideas_{OHK}.

¹¹⁷ Furlong, "An Ambiguity in Berkeley's 'Principles,'" 91-92.

¹¹⁸ Furlong, 91-92.

Returning to the Q of self-knowledge

Where does this leave us with the problem of self-knowledge? Can one have knowledge of spirits? I hope it is becoming obvious at this point why Berkeley answers with such a resounding *yes* in the “Spirits and Epistemology” section of the *Principles*. The issue as stated before is how, if the objects of all varieties of human knowledge are ideas, and spirits are not ideas, we have knowledge of spirits. This issue exists only because Berkeley equivocates the term *idea* to his own detriment. Allow me to restate the question using the clarified terms *idea_{OHK}* and *idea_{DSK}*. How, if the objects of all varieties of human knowledge are ideas *OHK*, and spirits are not ideas *OHK*, do we have knowledge of spirits? The question has become a non-sequitur; the fact that the objects of all varieties of human knowledge are ideas *OHK* and the fact that the term *spirit* is not identical with the term *idea_{OHK}* do not play into the question of the knowability of spirits, just as it would not if we replaced *spirits* in this question with ideas *DSK*. The question of *spirits* or ideas *DSK* not being identical with ideas *OHK* has no input into the question of our having knowledge of *spirits* or ideas *DSK*. From the very giving of the dichotomy of human knowledge in the *Dialogues*, Berkeley has answered this sort of question. We can have knowledge of directly sensed things (ideas *DSK* being the objects of directly sensed knowledge) and knowledge of inferred things (*spirits* being the objects of inferred knowledge)¹¹⁹

Two outstanding questions

There are two connected outstanding questions concerning Berkeley’s claim that we can have knowledge of the causes of things.¹²⁰ First, how certain are we that Berkeley’s argument (that we have inferred knowledge, which type of knowledge is of the causes of things) proves that the causes of things are not material? Berkeley has certainly proved that there is something

¹¹⁹ Remember that for Berkeley, *causes*, *spirits*, *minds*, and *soul* are all equivalent terms!

¹²⁰ Or what is the same thing, that we can have knowledge of *minds* or *spirits*.

which stands a step behind our ideas DSK and he has certainly proved that we have knowledge of that something-a-step-behind (by inference). How does Berkeley safeguard himself from having accidentally lent equally as much weight to the materialist position as to his own idealism? To put it another way, does Berkeley adequately ensure that his argument will not drag-and-drop into the materialist logic for the something-behind being mind-independent matter? Second, how certain are we that Berkeley allows himself room to argue for spirits or minds as the substance of ideas? He has argued extensively against the idea that there is material substance behind the qualities that we perceive on the grounds that one cannot directly sense this material substance.¹²¹ It seems as though he must backtrack to make the claim that there *is* a substance behind our ideas, even if he changes the character of that substance to some degree. Cummins notes the key paragraphs as ¶26 and ¶49 of the *Principles*.¹²² In ¶26, Berkeley employs the term “spiritual substance” to support his idealism. In ¶49, Berkeley seems to deny the existence of any spiritual substance.¹²³ Does Berkeley contradict his own logic by at once arguing against the grounding of sensible qualities in a substance and arguing for a substance behind sensible qualities? Let us tackle these questions individually.

First outstanding question

Berkeley is positing that spirit is the only substance and that ideas are moved, altered, changed, invented, and even destroyed by spirits.¹²⁴ If Berkeley is on board with the proposition that there is something behind the ideas that we perceive, how can Berkeley conclude that this

¹²¹ See ¶10 and ¶11 of the *Principles*, “The inseparability argument” above, and Fogelin, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, 55.

¹²² Cummins, “Berkeley on Minds and Agency,” 214-215.

¹²³ He seems to deny the existence of any spiritual substance in ¶49 in order to distance himself from the accusation that he is contradicting himself by arguing against the materialist’s substance while simultaneously positing another type of substance.

¹²⁴ See Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶3, ¶25, ¶28, and ¶139.

something is not mind-independent matter? Berkeley's defense is that he has already defeated the notion of abstract ideas. If the argument against abstract ideas succeeds, and Berkeley is right that something has got to be behind sensible qualities, then we are left asking what kind of a thing meets these criteria. The "thing behind" must be active (since it cannot be an idea, and ideas are by definition passive) and it must not necessitate the process of abstraction (although, one should recall that generalizing is still an option – refer back to the discussion of the *Principles*' introduction). For Berkeley's part, the only type of thing meeting both criteria is spirits.

In summary, Berkeley's argument for spiritual substance would only work as a plug-and-play argument for material substance *if* he had not laid out these two accompanying criteria: that the substance of ideas must be active and it must not rest on the doctrine of abstract ideas. Granted, this answer is only satisfactory if Berkeley's argument against abstract ideas works. It is apparent from the *Principles* that Berkeley thinks he has soundly defeated abstract ideas.¹²⁵ If Berkeley's argument against abstraction succeeds as he thinks it does, then he is in perfect position to answer the critic who demands why his move for spiritual substance is not hypocritical with regards to his attack on material substance.

Second outstanding question

The best answer to the second outstanding question starts with a look at Berkeley's words in ¶26 and ¶49. In ¶26, Berkeley begins by noting the constant "succession of ideas" that confronts us. He reasons that "there is therefore some cause of these ideas whereon they depend, and which produces and changes them."¹²⁶ This cause of ideas cannot itself be an idea or a

¹²⁵ See Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶22 and ¶23, "Master Argument: conclusion of 'Against the Existence of Matter'" above, and "2.2.1 The Master Argument?" in Downing, "George Berkeley," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

¹²⁶ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶26.

combination of ideas; in ¶25, Berkeley made this point very clear. If this cause of ideas cannot be an idea or a combination of ideas, then it must be a substance.¹²⁷ “But,” Berkeley writes, “it has been shown that there is no corporeal or material substance; it remains therefore that the cause of ideas is an incorporeal active substance or spirit.”¹²⁸ In ¶49, Berkeley answers an objection to idealism based on the relationship between qualities and substance. The problem for Berkeley is that qualities inhere in their substance – and as Cummins show, this is a serious problem for Berkeley in that spirit is supposed to be immortal and cannot, therefore, take on a quality like extension.

“On the traditional doctrine of substance, a quality’s name is or can be predicated of any substance in which it inheres. Thus the objection portrays Berkeley as holding the qualities that make up sensible objects inhere in the mind that perceives them, in which case their names are to be predicated of that mind. This result would commit Berkeley to extension, figure, and motion being predicated of the mind, a very embarrassing result for a philosopher who insists again and again that the mind is unextended and who is anxious to secure the natural immortality of the soul on the basis of its unextendedness.”¹²⁹

So, how does Berkeley rectify the need to have a substance as the support of ideas (PHK ¶26) and his need for the mind to *not* take on the qualities which it somehow supports (PHK ¶49)? Here is the question as Berkeley words it: “It may perhaps be objected, that if extension and figure exist only in the mind, it follows that the mind is extended and figured, since extension is a mode or attribute which (to speak with the Schools) is predicated of the subject in which it exists.”¹³⁰ He responds to this objection, “I answer, those qualities are in the mind only as they are perceived by it, that is, not by way of mode or attribute, but only by way of idea.”¹³¹ Cummins rightly notes that “the crucial words are ‘qualities are in the mind only as they are

¹²⁷ Van Iten, “Berkeley’s Analysis of Mind,” 376.

¹²⁸ Van Iten, 376.

¹²⁹ Cummins, “Berkeley on Minds and Agency,” 215.

¹³⁰ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶49.

¹³¹ Berkeley, ¶49.

perceived by it.”¹³² The way out of the conundrum is that Berkeley is offering an alternative manner in which a substance supports its qualities. “As a quality is in the mind only by way of idea, that is, only as being perceived by that mind,” Cummins comments, “there is no basis for predicating it of the mind as there would be were being perceived interpreted as inhering in.”¹³³ In other words, Berkeley is toying with the fundamental concept of what it is to be a substance. In so doing, Berkeley resolves the tension between the need to have a support for ideas and the traditional implications of that support being a substance.

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Introductory notes to “Philosophy of Mind”

Philosophy of mind is a broad field of study, including everything from classic questions (such as the mind/body problem) to recent developments (such as incorporating advances in quantum theory). In “Spirits and Epistemology,” we have specifically addressed the Berkeleyan answer to the question of the knowledge of spirits.¹³⁴ Before concluding, I want to place idealism within the broader framework of leading philosophies of mind today. I will do this using a hypothetical which I am calling the ‘question of worlds.’ This question speaks specifically to the role of substance in determining one’s philosophical camp. Traditionally, questions of substance within philosophy of mind fall under the ‘mind/body problem.’¹³⁵ This is a large category; as Alva Noë notes, “There isn’t a mind/body problem – there are many mind/body problems.”¹³⁶

¹³² Cummins, “Berkeley on Minds and Agency,” 216.

¹³³ Cummins, 216.

¹³⁴ See Alva Noë’s interview on “What is the Mind-Body Problem,” *Closer to Truth*, <https://www.closetotruth.com/series/what-the-mind-body-problem>, 3’ 30” mark.

¹³⁵ For a brief recapitulation of the mind/body problem as it stands today, see the first five pages of Jaegwon Kim, “The Mind-Body Problem after Fifty Years,” *Current Issues in Philosophy of Mind*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 43, ed. Anthony O’Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-21.

¹³⁶ Noë, <https://www.closetotruth.com/series/what-the-mind-body-problem>, 0’ 45” mark.

Of these mind/body problems, I am choosing to address the question of the difference of substance between the mind and the body.

The Question of Worlds

In this hypothetical, the question of first importance is how many worlds exist. In this context, a world is a full set of objects and their operations. An object is something which can act or be acted upon (like a rock with potential momentum or a golf club in full swing). An operation designates that thing or things which a given object can do: the golf club might swing, the car might move forward, and the rock might fall downhill. Functionally, the distinction between an object and an operation is like nouns and verbs. One of them sets the stage for something to happen (an airplane), the other denotes the thing that does happen (to fly). Consider the terms “world,” “object,” and “operation” to be our working vocabulary.

A car is a fairly clean example of what I mean by a world. Why? Because it looks to operate independently of anything outside of itself. It has hoses, a transmission, an engine, a vast number of fluids, and all sorts of other mechanical and aesthetic components. Built perfectly, a car will virtually run on its own. Nonetheless, a car is not a perfect example of a world because it also needs a host of outside factors to make it drive. Refueling, regular maintenance, and a good mechanic, to name a few, are essential to a car’s functioning. A car is like a world in the sense that it looks to function independent of anything besides itself; a car is not a world because it does not fully succeed in this aim. Speaking technically, a car is not a world because it cannot singularly describe its own existence. To answer “what is a car” takes the introduction of items which are not the car itself. The fuel comes in from outside the vehicle; likewise, for maintenance and many other components throughout the car’s lifetime. This explanatory issue continues in a branching fashion for each item on which the car depends. The car needs a

manufacturer; the manufacturer needs employees; the employees need housing; housing requires real estate; etc.

At some point, however, it can reasonably be expected that this line of dependence will stop, and we will be left with the conglomerate whole. Each operation in our conglomerate will work on some object within the system and each object's properties will be explained by other operations and objects. In this conglomerate, no explanatory gaps will remain; each piece will be fully explained. Critically, each piece will be fully explained by the other pieces within this conglomerate – within the whole, no outside help is needed in any form to explain any of its components. To make a short resume of this hypothetical: there are worlds (explanatorily complete sets of objects and operations), objects (the “nouns,” or things that can act or be acted upon in some manner), and operations (the “verbs,” or actions done by and to the objects). To return to the question asked at the start of this experiment: how many worlds exist?

Conceptually, I can imagine that the world which includes the car and manufacturer exists without excluding the thought that some other world exists. An implied bit of the definition of a world is this: that were two worlds to exist, they must exist in a perfectly never-the-twain-shall-meet fashion. The relationship between these two existing worlds must be precisely that the two relate in no way whatsoever; if they connect even marginally, we have one big world, not two small worlds. For Berkeley, there is only one world. His inseparability argument would be aimed, in this hypothetical, at demonstrating that there is only one explanatorily complete set of objects and operations. When broken down, Berkeley would say, even Locke's ingenious distinctions between primary and secondary qualities demonstrate there to be only one world, the mental world. This claim is significant because it clearly marks the break between idealism and its two chief competitors, dualism (in its various forms) and

physicalism (in its various forms). Berkeley plays an intriguing role between these philosophies of mind. Both idealism and physicalism are monistic; meaning, at metaphysical rock-bottom, they posit only one kind of substance. Dualisms are dualistic; meaning, at metaphysical rock-bottom, there are two kinds of stuff – yet, one of these kinds of stuff (the substance of mind) looks significantly more like Berkeley’s substance than does the single kind of substance of his monistic counterpart. Additionally, Berkeley manages, through the introduction of ideas as the objects of human knowledge, to hold onto dualism’s assertion that there are two kinds of existing things. In a word, Berkeley takes on pieces of each competitor’s philosophy and, in my estimation, crafts a monism that retains the benefits both of dualisms *and* monisms.

Dualism and the question of worlds

One must be careful in understanding the dualist’s assertion that there are two kinds of stuff. “It is important,” writes Lowe, “not to confuse ‘substance’ in this sense with ‘substance’ understood as denoting some kind of *stuff*, such as water or iron.”¹³⁷ In this context, “a substance... is to be understood, quite simply, as any sort of persisting *object* or *thing* which is capable of undergoing changes in its properties over time.”¹³⁸ Put otherwise, a substance is “that which exists independently as an objective entity. A substance, such as a dog, is thus distinguished from a property, such as the dog’s color, which must be possessed or owned by a substance.”¹³⁹ The simplified rationale of dualism is this: that on analysis, there seem to be two substances which are capable of undergoing change in properties over time. The one is physical substance and the other is mental substance.

¹³⁷ Lowe, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, 9.

¹³⁸ Lowe, 9.

¹³⁹ C. S. Evans, *Pocket dictionary of apologetics & philosophy of religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 111.

In other words, the dualist answers the question of worlds by positing two worlds. One of these worlds is the full set of mental objects and their operations and the other is the full set of physical objects and their operations. For Descartes, the quintessential dualist, the logic underlying the claim that there must be two substances (not just one) is that there are two explanatorily separate realms of reality, the mental and the physical.¹⁴⁰ In Cartesian terminology, we have two substances, mind and body, which are fully separate. Thus, applying dualism back to the question of worlds, we see that there are two worlds, one mental and one bodily, which exist as separate sets of objects (physical objects and mental objects, like baseballs and decisions) and operations (like throwing baseball and choosing an entrée).

The problem for dualism is causation. The physical world does not seem explanatorily complete without accounting for the influence of mental activity. I tied my shoes, I chose to run, and I ran through a thicket along the way, getting briars and burs all over my socks. Must not I account for the choice to tie my shoes, the choice to run, and the choice of running path to explain the briars and burrs on my socks? Lowe comments on the interaction problem, “The alleged conceptual difficulties centre upon the contention that we cannot really make sense of there being causal transactions between items as radically different in nature from one another as the dualist conceives mental and physical states to be.”¹⁴¹ If the two worlds interact, it seems we have one big world instead of two. The problem of causal interactions between worlds is the ultimate problem for dualism and has caused many to look elsewhere for an answer to the question of worlds. Is there a way to retain the explanatory advantage of having two substances

¹⁴⁰ See Rene Descartes, *Meditations, Book II*, trans. Elizabeth Haldance and G. R. T. Ross, in *Great Books of the Western World 31: Descartes and Spinoza*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, (Chicago: William Benton, 1952) 81.

¹⁴¹ Lowe, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, 21.

while avoiding the causality problem? Berkeley's idealism may offer a way forward – we will discuss this momentarily.

Physicalism and the question of worlds

The physicalist's suggestion is that if having two worlds gives us trouble, perhaps there is only one world. In this case, the one world is described as something purely physical; that is, the physicalist is positing that beneath everything there is a bedrock of physical something. Each object and operation are physical. The physicalist position sounds already like what Berkeley argues against in the *Principles* and *Dialogues*. To a great extent, this is true; bear in mind, however, that there are key distinctions between the “physicalism” of Locke, which is usually called Lockean atomism, and today's physicalism.¹⁴² Atomism is technically a type of materialism (which in turn is normally cast as a type of physicalism). Materialism is “the view that only material objects exist;” physicalism differs in that they also “accept the existence of matter and energy.”^{143, 144} For our present purposes, these distinctions are superficial. At heart, atomism, materialism, and physicalism (no matter the chosen term) indicate the proposition that rather than two worlds, there is one world – and in this world, the bedrock characteristic of all things (apparently ‘mental’ things included) is physicality. The ultimate problem for these views is that they do not satisfactorily explain the mental. Thus, Howell's book (see footnote 142 above); explaining consciousness and other distinctly mental phenomena is difficult for the ardent physicalist. As Noë puts it, “it saddens me to have to say that very little progress has been

¹⁴² See Howell, Robert J., *Consciousness and the Limits of Objectivity: The Case for Subjective Physicalism*, Oxford University Press (Oxford: 2013). Howell's work is a fascinating approach to resolving current difficulties within the physicalist camp on philosophy of mind and, along the way, clearly presents the traditional physicalist view(s).

¹⁴³ C. S. Evans, *Pocket dictionary of apologetics & philosophy of religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 92.

¹⁴⁴ C. S. Evans, 73.

made in neuroscience on these questions;”¹⁴⁵ these questions being what it is to have consciousness and mental activity in a purely physical world.

Idealism and the question of worlds

As idealism connects to both...

As mentioned, Berkeley finds a sort of middle ground between dualism and physicalism. He finds this middle ground in that he takes on important characteristics of both philosophies. From dualism, he takes on the reality of mental activity. He does not, like the physicalist, try to reduce mentality to something seemingly nonmental (physical matter). He also, like the dualist, recognizes the need for having two sorts of existing things (minds and ideas) but differs in that only mind is a substance whereas dualism posits mental substance *and* physical substance. From physicalism, he takes on that there is only one substance. Importantly, he also takes on the *reductionist* aspect of physicalism; meaning, the physicalist holds that everything can be reduced in one sense or another to a single substance. Berkeley differs in that his substance is mind, not matter – yet, this reductionist tendency is critical to his thought.¹⁴⁶

Dualistic issues that idealism resolves...

In positing two substances, the dualist clears up some notable issues regarding mental and physical properties. Chief among these issues is that pains and microwaves seem to be two very different sorts of things. The dualist position carries explanatory power in its ability to simply say that pains belong to mental substance and microwaves belong to physical substance.

However, as mentioned already, the dualist position struggles heavily in regard to causality. How

¹⁴⁵ Alva Noë, “What is the Mind-Body Problem,” 10’ 12” mark.

¹⁴⁶ Refer, for example, to the aforementioned inseparability argument. Even more obviously in the *Dialogues* than in the *Principles*, Berkeley makes hay out of reducing Locke’s material substance into his mental substance, primarily by demonstrating that his mental substance explains everything about Locke’s material substance – and, therefore, Locke’s material substance (and its supposed ‘primary’ qualities) does not exist.

does a change in mental substance (the pain I experience on stubbing my toe) cause a change in physical substance (the “Ow!” I yell in response)? On a cost-benefit analysis, dualism is generally disregarded by philosophers today; the issue of causation seems a bigger detractor than dualism’s explanatory power is a positive.¹⁴⁷ The real hero of the story would be a philosophy that can retain the ability to speak of two types of existing things *and* avoid the issue of causality.

I hold that idealism is this philosophy. Where the division between mental and physical substance causes problems for the dualist, idealism enjoy a simpler explanation of causation: both the pain I experience on stubbing my toe and the Ow! I yell in response have their roots in the same substance – mind.¹⁴⁸ In short, there is no problem of causation because the issue rests on having two kinds of substance and idealism only has one. Berkeley’s idealism also retains the explanatory power of the ‘two things’ of dualism. Within idealism, there are minds and ideas OHK. Only mind is a substance, but for reasons already discussed at length, we retain a second sort of existing stuff. As such, idealism keeps the ability to speak of two kinds of existing things, putting it in the unique position of at once claiming dualism’s explanatory power and the monistic ability to disband the problem of causality.

Monistic issues that idealism resolves...

One further difficulty for monisms is their need to separates themselves one from the next. Each is claiming that there is only one substance, so no immediate distinction appears between, say, idealism and physicalism. As explored in, “Two Outstanding Questions,” Berkeley must define ‘mind’ carefully so as to avoid crafting arguments that could just as well support the case of material substance. Berkeley’s is not the only monism to need clarity on account of

¹⁴⁷ See, for furthers on dualism’s perennial issues, Chapter I: “A Dozen Problems in the Philosophy of Mind” in Searle, *Mind*.

¹⁴⁸ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶135.

definitions. We will presently address physicalism since, at this point in time, it is the most widely held monism in philosophy of mind.¹⁴⁹

Howell makes note of a serious problem of definition for physicalism in his *Consciousness and the Limits of Objectivity: The Case for Subjective Physicalism*. In Chapter II: “The Base Problem,” he directly confronts the difficulty of defining the physical. This problem is especially grave because without a proper definition of the physical, physicalism cannot hope to get off the ground. Howell identifies four problems which make it rather difficult to arrive at a satisfactory definition.

The first problem is that you cannot define the physical simply by saying that it is not mental.¹⁵⁰ This does not define the physical – nor does it define the mental which the physical is not. “It would be far preferable,” writes Howell, “to have a definition that said what physical properties *are*, rather than what they are not – is there really a unified nature shared by all things not mental, unlike the nature shared by things that are not cucumbers?”¹⁵¹ The second problem is that you cannot define the physical by saying that it is the kind of stuff discovered by X method.¹⁵² This would put us in the troubling position deciding whether what was discovered by the methods of Galileo or the methods of Einstein is really physical – obviously, we would like to say that they both discovered something physical. The third problem is that you cannot define the physical by saying that it is like collection X.¹⁵³ Howell remarks, “One might be inclined to say that things are physical if they are sufficiently similar to ‘that stuff’ where a sufficiently

¹⁴⁹ Reference, for confirmation of physicalism’s predominance in the field, Searle, *Mind*, 12. Note that Searle uses the term ‘materialism’ to designate what I presently mean by the term ‘physicalism.’ There is a constant debate over which terms mean what... but then that is my bigger point presently, regardless.

¹⁵⁰ Howell, *Consciousness and the Limits of Objectivity: The Case for Subjective Physicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20.

¹⁵¹ Howell, 21.

¹⁵² Howell, 18.

¹⁵³ Howell, 19.

comprehensive sample of dirt, tables, chairs, and unequivocally physical things are demonstrated.”¹⁵⁴ The issue is that “the fundamental physical properties of the universe probably bear little salient resemblance to paradigmatic physical objects. A quark is not much like a chair.”¹⁵⁵ So, we would again have to decide whether one group (fundamental physical properties) or another (paradigmatic physical objects) is physical – and, obviously, we would like to say that they both are. Finally, the fourth problem is that you cannot define the physical by saying that it is the stuff or type of stuff studied by physics.¹⁵⁶ Howell clarifies that in this case “Either the definition proceeds in terms of what is countenanced by current physics or it proceeds in terms of what would be acknowledged by some future, perhaps completed physics. If the former, physicalism is surely false since current physics is almost certainly incomplete. If the latter, however, it is hard to give content to the notion since no one knows what a future physics will look like.”¹⁵⁷

These are not small problems. How, if one cannot define the physical, is it appropriate to claim that the universe is physical? This seems a hollow argument indeed. Descartes first encountered this problem when he defined to be material as “to be extended in space.”¹⁵⁸ Howell comments, “The Cartesian definition of the physical failed in part because the progress of the physical sciences led us to see that very strange things, such as electrons, quarks, and fields, make up the physical world.”¹⁵⁹ Just as for Descartes, so for today’s physicalism: the problem of defining the physical remains.

¹⁵⁴ Howell, *Consciousness and the Limits of Objectivity*, 19.

¹⁵⁵ Howell, 19.

¹⁵⁶ Howell, 15.

¹⁵⁷ Howell, 16.

¹⁵⁸ Howell, 14.

¹⁵⁹ Howell, 15.

So, what does this say to the viability of idealism? Does idealism have a similar issue or set of issues, being itself a monism? Referencing the discussion of “Spirits and Epistemology,” it is fair to claim that idealism is clearer in its definitions of idea and of mind than physicalism is in its definition of physical. It is given, then, that idealism holds at least an equally viable position as physicalism. Although there is not space to properly make this argument, idealism’s ability to define its fundamentals in contrast to physicalism’s (at least seeming) inability indicates that idealism may even achieve a higher place yet than its monistic competitor.¹⁶⁰

BRIEF CONCLUDING WORD

Idealism, of course, comes with its own set of issues. Over the years, Berkeley’s idealism has been refashioned by many other philosophers. Some of these idealisms have so far diverged from Berkeley that they merit names besides Berkeleyan idealism. Among these, we find mereological idealism, causal idealism, and conceptual idealism.^{161, 162, 163} It also bears mentioning that scholarship on idealism is not limited to Berkeley. There are significant strains of idealism in Jewish thought and in Buddhist thought, to name two alternate sources. Even within the Berkeleyan tradition of idealism, there are philosophers branching into realms that Berkeley would never have touched. Hellen Yetter-Chappell, for example, writes an article entitled, “Idealism Without God.”¹⁶⁴ This paper has not sustained any real discussion of the

¹⁶⁰ The cited book of Howell’s (*Consciousness and the Limits of Objectivity*) is an attempt to straighten out the difficulty of defining the physical. I supremely enjoyed his work to this end and would love, if time permits someday, to write of how similar his physicalism becomes to Berkeley’s idealism before he reaches a satisfying definition of the physical.

¹⁶¹ For mereological idealism: Kenneth Pearce, “Mereological Idealism,” *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics*, ed. Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth Pearce (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 200-216.

¹⁶² For causal idealism: Sarah Bernstein, “Causal Idealism,” *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics*, ed. Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth Pearce (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 217-230.

¹⁶³ For conceptual idealism: Thomas Hofweber, “Conceptual Idealism Without Ontological Idealism,” *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics*, ed. Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth Pearce (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 124-141.

¹⁶⁴ Hellen Yetter-Chappell, “Idealism Without God,” *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics*, ed. Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth Pearce (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 66-81.

importance of God in Berkeleyan idealism but suffice to say: God is of fundamental importance to Berkeley's idealism. One of the chief impetuses for Berkeley's idealism is that it allows him to argue for a universe that depends intricately and constantly on God for its existence and operation.¹⁶⁵ That there could be an idealism without God represents just how far scholarship on idealism has branched from Berkeley's own philosophy.

In any case, I believe it is clear that on investigation, idealism is a strong philosophical contender in today's world, especially in the philosophy of mind and self. I recognize that this paper only touches the surfaces of many deep and difficult subjects. It would be false to pretend that we have discussed even the first quarter of any of the subjects approached, and it bears mentioning that idealism has many features that have not gotten even the slightest treatment. The role of God in Berkeleyan idealism, for example, and Berkeley's philosophy of vision are two important pieces of his philosophy that have fallen by the wayside for reasons of length. By housing the discussion within Berkeley's *Principles*, we have regardless made an excellent foray into the heart of his philosophy. To conclude without bedraggling the issue: Berkeley's idealism shows itself to be far from dead and a worthy philosophy in many fields, notably the philosophy of mind. The great gadfly of 18th century philosophy remains today as adept a philosopher as ever and merits the attention of all who read him.

¹⁶⁵ Berkeley, *Principles*, Main Text ¶156.

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