

Idealism, the doctrine that the only things that exist are minds and their ideas, was the centerpiece of Berkeley's philosophical thinking. It was, in fact, the center of his entire web of beliefs, a thesis that he never revised and never waived from. Consequently, his arguments in support of it have long attracted philosophical attention. Hume famously quipped that all of Berkeley's arguments produced only amazement and confusion and never produced any conviction.<sup>1</sup> The quip—and scholars' fondness for repeating it—is telling: Why didn't Berkeley share everyone else's amazement and confusion? What did he see or know that none of the rest of us can? Is the problem with us, or with Berkeley? Of course, the problem could lie with Berkeley. But clearly, he was an insightful and incisive thinker with a penetrating philosophical gaze. So, because historians ought to give their figures of study the benefit of the doubt, we typically assume, as at least a matter of heuristic principle, that the problem lies with us rather than with Berkeley. Furthermore, we typically presume that if we just understood Berkeley's arguments a bit better, we'd be better positioned to see their coherence and plausibility.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, little consensus regarding Berkeley's arguments and how they worked has yet emerged. What have proved especially difficult for scholars to agree on have been the connections between the various arguments Berkeley presented across his various texts and the roles played by several concepts or sub-theses Berkeley flagged when presenting his arguments, i.e. the heterogeneity thesis, anti-abstractionism, anti-representationalism, and immaterialism. This contribution will outline the current state of the recent attempts to interpret Berkeley's argument(s) for idealism.

### **Berkeley's Idealistic Thesis**

One of the most important things in interpreting and assessing an argument is identifying what exactly the conclusion is supposed to be. Berkeley defended idealism of course, but what exactly did that involve? There are at least three grades of idealistic commitment, each of which have been implicated in scholarly discussions of Berkeley's philosophy.

The first and weakest grade consists of partial forms of idealism.<sup>3</sup> Partial forms would be doctrines that maintain only some features or properties of things are, properly speaking, mind dependent. Other properties therefore are mind independent or objective, or at the very least their mind independent status is left open. In the case of Berkeley,

---

<sup>1</sup> “[Berkeley] professes, however, in his title-page (and undoubted with great truth) to have composed his book against the sceptics as well as against the atheists and free thinkers. But that all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are, in reality, merely sceptical, appears from this, *that they admit of no answer and produce no conviction*. Their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of scepticism.” (Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 116n32)

<sup>2</sup> Berkeley himself asked us to carefully reconstruct his thinking when reading the text: “Whoever therefore designs to read the following sheets, I entreat him to make my words the occasion of his own thinking, and endeavour to attain the same train of thoughts in reading, that I had in writing them. By this means it will be easy for him to discover the truth or falsity of what I say.” (Berkeley, Introduction to *The Principle of Human Knowledge*, I.25, in *Works* 2: 40)

<sup>3</sup> Something similar can be found in Tom Lennon's distinction between partial and full idealism. See “The Historical Consistency of Berkeley's Idealism,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16 (2008): 103, DOI 10.1080/09608780701789319.

there is a tradition of maintaining that he defended a partial idealism in the *New Theory of Vision* (NTV) before moving on to full-blown idealism in *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (PHK).<sup>4</sup> The idea is that Berkeley defended in NTV an idealism with regard to all the sensible qualities except the tangible. The tangible qualities in NTV are therefore mind independent features of the world and the things in it, according to this tradition. Accordingly, Berkeley's major insight there is alleged to have been that the visual qualities align with the obviously subjective odiferous, auditory, and the gustatory qualities. The reasoning behind this interpretative tradition is that since Berkeley's resolutions of the paradoxes of vision rely on learning associations between the mind dependent visual experiences and the experiences of a mind independent tactile world, it is concluded that he only needed, and so was defending, only a partial idealism. Thomas Lennon has, however, conclusively rebutted this interpretation of NTV in "The Historical Consistency of Berkeley's Idealism."<sup>5</sup> So, there is really no longer any reason to talk about Berkeley arguing for a form of partial idealism, at least in NTV.

A second, yet also weak, grade of idealism consists of limited forms of idealism. These would be doctrines that maintain some type of thing or entity, which is commonly thought to be mind independent, is in fact mind dependent. It differs from partial idealism in that it concerns things or entities (along with their properties), rather than just the properties of things, and maintains that those things that are ideal are wholly and completely ideal, unlike partial idealism, which maintains that things are in some part ideal and in some other part real. Yet in allowing that other things do or may exist that are real or non-idealistic, it differs from the total idealism described below. Limited idealism is, just as the name suggests, a limited ontological thesis, in other words. In the case of Berkeley, limited idealism seems to be on the table when he speaks just of the idealism of sensible objects. Sensible objects are one very important type of thing, but they are only one type. Other types are possible, at least *prima facie* or in principle, and arguments that only establish the idealism of sensible things establish thereby only a limited form of idealism. Samuel Rickless has suggested that this limited form of idealism is for Berkeley "idealism *par excellence*" and that further principles extend this limited form of idealism, which was established independently and prior to these further principles.<sup>6</sup>

A third, strong form of idealism consists of total idealism, which is the thesis that the *only* things that exist are minds and their ideas. The "only" strengthens the idealistic commitment by excluding the possibility of non-ideal things also existing. This grade of

---

<sup>4</sup> Berkeley's texts are usually referred to use acronyms and passages are usually identified through the section number or the pagination of the Luce-Jessop edition. PHK 1–24, for example, refers to sections 1 through 24 of *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710). DHP 171–207 refers to Luce and Jessop, eds. pages 171 through 207 in the *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713). NTV, cited here, refers to *A New Theory of Vision* (1709). Others that I shall cite are: ALC., *Alciphron* (1732); TVV, *Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained* (1733); and PC, *Philosophical Commentaries* (1871; 1705?–08). The standard edition of Berkeley's works is the nine volume Luce-Jessop edition, *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1948–57).

<sup>5</sup> Lennon, "Historical Consistency," 101–24.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Rickless, *Berkeley's Argument for Idealism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1n1. The importance of this for Rickless's overall interpretation will be evident below.

idealism captures the meaning of the Berkeley-esque slogan, *esse est percipi aut percipere* (to be is to be perceived or to perceive). The key for reading total idealism into this slogan is taking the disjunction to be exhaustive and not allowing additional types of existence. The closest Berkeley ever came to actually articulating this slogan was in *Philosophical Commentaries* (PC) 429, where he wrote, “Existere is percipi or percipere.”<sup>7</sup> Even if, however, Berkeley seemed to limit himself in his published works to saying only that the *esse* of sensible things is *percipi*, Samuel Johnson naturally read Berkeley in the broader way,<sup>8</sup> and traditionally, scholars seemed to have largely followed Johnson in understanding this to be Berkeley’s doctrine. It is commonplace, therefore, to think that Berkeley’s idealism consisted of the thesis of *esse est percipi aut percipere* read as a form of total idealism.

The significance of getting clear about what Berkeley’s idealistic thesis is consists in how it determines an interpreter’s divisions of the arguments presented in Berkeley’s texts (especially PHK). Scholars have long recognized that Berkeley’s idealism and his immaterialism (the thesis that material substance is impossible) are closely connected. They have also long recognized that they are spatially closely aligned in the text of PHK. It is traditional to identify PHK 1–6 as containing Berkeley’s arguments for idealism and PHK 7–24 as containing his arguments for immaterialism. And it is traditional to ask the questions, “Does Berkeley’s idealism depend on his immaterialism?” (This was, in fact, how my advisor, the great Berkeley scholar Phil Cummins, formulated the question in graduate seminar many years ago.) But what’s being asked here depends on how one understands the scope and import of the phrase “Berkeley’s idealism.” If “Berkeley’s idealism” is equated with the limited idealistic thesis that for all sensible things, their *esse* is *percipi* and for all minds, their *esse* is *percipere*, maintaining that Berkeley’s idealism does not depend on his immaterial looks easier and more promising. But if “Berkeley’s idealism” is equated with the thesis of total idealism, the thesis that for all things, their *esse* is either *percipi* or *percipere*, maintaining that Berkeley’s idealism does not depend on his immaterialism looks, *prima facie*, more difficult to maintain precisely because the role of the immaterialist arguments seems to be to establish that nothing else exists except sensible things and the minds that perceive them. See fig. 1 below for breakdown of the theses involved.

Limited Idealism (PHK 1–6)	Total Idealism (PHK 1–24)
For sensible things, <i>esse</i> is <i>percipi</i> . For minds, <i>esse</i> is <i>percipere</i> .	For sensible things, <i>esse</i> is <i>percipi</i> . For minds, <i>esse</i> is <i>percipere</i> .

<sup>7</sup> George Berkeley, PC 429, in Luce and Jessop, eds., *Works* 1: 53. Berkeley later emended this to read “Existere is percipi or percipere ^ or velle i.e. agere,” which is an important change but does not, obviously, move it any further away from a form of total idealism. Berkeley nodded toward this slogan in PHK 3 when he wrote of unthinking things, “Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.”

<sup>8</sup> Johnson to Berkeley, 10 September 1729, in Marc Hight, ed. *The Correspondence of George Berkeley*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 293. “What is the *esse* of spirits? ... Is then the *esse* of minds nothing else but *percipere*, as the *esse* of ideas is *percipi*?”

Insensible, non-minds may also exist (for all we know. For all things, <i>esse is percipi</i> or <i>percipere</i> or ???....	Material things (insensible, non-minds) are impossible. For insensible things, <i>esse is percipere</i> . For all things, <i>esse is percipi</i> or <i>percipere</i> .
---	--

This difference in focus and conception regarding what “Berkeley’s idealism” means divides a lot of the scholarship and gives the impression that scholars are disagreeing more, and more deeply than, they in fact are. Indeed, not only may this difference obscure significant interpretative overlaps, it may also obscure potential alignments of interpretations that can in fact be reconciled. Rickless’s interpretation, which I mentioned above, is a case in point. When Rickless maintains that “Berkeley did not rest his arguments for idealism in PHK on immaterialism, anti-abstractionism, or the likeness principle,”<sup>9</sup> he is focusing solely on the limited idealism that he previously labeled Berkeley’s “idealism *par excellence*,” the thesis that for all sensible things their *esse is percipi*. For this, Rickless makes a powerful and compelling case, and I am personally quite drawn toward his interpretation. But when Lisa Downing writes, “Berkeley defends idealism by attacking the materialist alternatives,”<sup>10</sup> and Georges Dicker maintains that Berkeley “argues for his idealism indirectly, by attacking philosophical theses that upheld the existence of matter,”<sup>11</sup> they see, to be focused on Berkeley’s total idealistic commitment instead. In fact, looking at Rickless’s whole footnote on page 1, we might think that Rickless, Downing, and Dicker in the end agree to a large extent in that Rickless suggests that it is the likeness principle that for Berkeley eliminates the possibility that some insensible, non-minds can exist. There are differences, however, but they concern the larger structures into which their interpretations of specific passages and texts fit. On Rickless’s interpretation, the overall structure of Berkeley’s thinking is something like this:

1. Berkeley establishes that the *esse* of sensible things is *percipi*;
2. Berkeley accepts that the *esse* of mind is *percipere*;
3. Thereby Berkeley establishes Limited Idealism;
4. Berkeley establishes that non-sensible, non-minds do not exist;
5. Thereby Berkeley establishes Total Idealism.

On the others’ interpretation, however, the overall structure of Berkeley’s thinking is something like this:

1. Berkeley accepts that sensible things exist;
2. Berkeley accepts that minds exist;
3. Nothing can exist whose *esse* is not *percipi* or *percipere*;
4. Therefore, the *esse* of sensible things must be *percipi*;
5. Therefore, the *esse* of minds must be *percipere*,
6. Thereby Berkeley establishes Total Idealism.

<sup>9</sup> Rickless, *Berkeley’s Argument for Idealism*, 138.

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Downing, “George Berkeley,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2013 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2013), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/berkeley/>.

<sup>11</sup> Georges Dicker, *Berkeley’s Idealism: A Critical Examination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

With those differences regarding the theses Berkeley is thought to establish and the larger structure of how he is thought to establish them, let's turn to Berkeley's texts and the arguments themselves. Since Lennon has already conclusively showing that NTV began as a response to an objection to total idealism, we need not look to it for arguments in favor of idealism. Let's begin with PHK 1–6, then.

### **The Argument(s) from PHK 1–6**

As mentioned above, it is customary to see PHK 1–6 as containing Berkeley's argument(s) for idealism. This is so simply because he stated and seems to have drawn the idealistic conclusion there. There seem to be there four statements *in toto* of the idealistic conclusion there. In PHK 3, Berkeley claimed regarding “unthinking things...[that] their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.” In PHK 4, he claimed that “whoever shall find in his heart to call [the strangely prevailing opinion that all sensible objects have a natural or real existence distinct from being perceived] in question, may ... perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction.” In PHK 5, he claimed “so is it impossible for me to conceive in my thought any sensible thing or object distinct from the sensation or perception of it.” And finally, in PHK 6, he claimed that: “Some truths are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind, that their being is to be perceived or known.” Each formulation of the thesis is slightly different, but they are all trending toward the same thing—that for sensible things, their *esse* is *percipi*.<sup>12</sup> The bases of these conclusion-like statements are what scholars are debating about. There are three approaches to this.

**The Intuitively-Known Interpretation:** There is some clear and compelling evidence that Berkeley was presenting the idealistic thesis as self-evident. This means that it was not something that had to be argued for but rather something that philosophers need only be pointed towards. In PHK 3, for example, Berkeley said that “an intuitive knowledge of this [i.e., that sensible objection cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them]” may be obtained through reflecting on the meaning of “the term *exist* when applied to sensible things.” Intuitive knowledge, as any early eighteenth-century reader of Locke would have known, should be contrasted with demonstrative knowledge in that intuitive knowledge occurs “immediately” and “without the intervention of any other” ideas because “the Mind is at no pains of proving or examining, but perceives the

---

<sup>12</sup> The statement from PHK 3 can give the impression of making a larger claim, one that is closer to total idealism than limited idealism, because it purports to be about “unthinking things” *simpliciter* rather than merely “sensible things.” But this broader reading is mitigated when put in its textual context of what came before and what follows, which emphasizes that it was perceived unthinking things that Berkeley was talking about, not unperceived or even, *a fortiori* unperceivable unthinking things. There is not much to indicate that “unthinking things” should be read in a strong way that closes off the categories needing to be closed off if the conclusion were to support total idealism. But, whether to read “unthinking things” as a synonym for “sensible things” or as a more extensive ontological category is one of the many interpretative decisions that need to be made.

Truth, as the Eye doth light, only by being directed toward it.”<sup>13</sup> For Lockeans, what was intuitively known was self-evidently known, and not to be proved or argued for. This notion of self-evidence is reinforced in PHK 6 when Berkeley in introducing the idealistic thesis emphasized that “some truths are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them.” And the way he put it in PHK 4 and 5, namely that the denial of the idealistic thesis was a “manifest contradiction” and impossibility, again by seeming to echo Locke’s way of talking about self-evident, intuitively-known propositions of identity, further supports the notion that what Berkeley really wanted to do here was to show readers that idealism was, properly speaking, self-evident, rather than present an argument, proof, or demonstration of it in PHK 1–6. Despite that textual evidence, however, few scholars have put much weight onto this interpretation of idealism as intuitively known as an account of Berkeley’s thinking.

**The Demonstratively-Known, Metaphysical Interpretation:** The vast majority of interpreters want to locate some sort of philosophical argument in PHK 1–6. Some see several distinct arguments manifesting at various sections of the text, but others see an argument or two extended across several sections of the text. Although there is no consensus, there are some clear trends among the interpretations.

PHK 3 is often flagged as containing a semantic argument for the idealistic thesis, an argument from the meaning of the word “exist”.

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. There was an odour, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.<sup>14</sup>

There is really not much to say about this argument: Because “existence” when applied to a sensible thing means only that it is perceived, or at least perceivable, according to Berkeley it follows that the notion of an absolute existence unrelated to being perceived is, in the case of sensible things, unintelligible.

Often, PHK 3 is dismissed as a bad or failed argument. Dicker goes so far as to say that he “regards it as a nonstarter, at least as an argument for idealism” (74). Rickless maintains that “when appropriately supplemented” it is “far from a non-starter,” but nevertheless concedes that because “it does implicitly rely on two claims, [which] require support that is independent from the Semantic Argument, ...there is no easy road from the semantics of existence claims to idealism” (97). Earlier, Winkler had flagged it as “the least argumentative” in that “Berkeley simply assumes a general view about the meaning

---

<sup>13</sup> John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), IV.ii.1, 530–31.

<sup>14</sup> Berkeley, PHK 3, in Luce and Jessop, 2: 42.

of sentences or statements, and then reaches the only conclusion about the meaning of the word *exist* that is consistent with that view;” and he concluded that it “provides very little that can be used against the materialist who affirms the kind of absolute existence Berkeley so confidently denies” (178). The central problem seen in the argument concerns the connection between the three disjuncts and the idealistic conclusion. In particular, the second disjunct—to say that the table exists means that were I in the study, I might perceive it—does not entail the idealism of the table, which is sufficient to render the argument invalid.<sup>15</sup>

PHK 4 and PHK 1 (or 1–3) contain what most interpreters identify as Berkeley’s main argument(s) for idealism: “For what are the forementioned objects but the things we perceive by sense, and what do we perceive by sense besides our own ideas or sensations; and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these or any combination of these should exist unperceived?”<sup>16</sup> Rickless identifies this as the only explicit argument for idealism in PHK 1–6 and calls it “The First Simple Argument”:

Sensible objects are perceived by means of the senses.

Anything perceived by means of the senses is an idea.

So, Sensible objects are ideas.

It is not, Rickless concedes, very plausible on its own. But, he suggests, it fits with an implicit argument contained in PHK 1, what he calls “The Second Simple Argument.”

Sensible objects are collections of sensible qualities.

Sensible qualities are ideas.

So, Sensible objects are collections of ideas.

These two arguments are, more or less, Pappas’s two “Collections” arguments, mentioned above. Dicker also, like Pappas, focuses on PHK 1–3 and PHK 4 to locate two primary arguments rooted here. And Winkler too identifies PHK 4 as one of Berkeley’s most important arguments and offers a reconstruction much like Rickless’s.<sup>17</sup>

Even though everyone acknowledges the significance of these arguments for Berkeley, they are not any kinder in their assessments than they were regarding the semantic argument. Rickless identifies the arguments as question-begging. According to Rickless, both premises of the Second Simple Argument beg the question, the first because realists would not all agree that sensible objects consist only of sensible qualities (think Locke’s substratum) and the second because no one would agree that all sensible

---

<sup>15</sup> Pappas offers perhaps the most sophisticated discussion of the semantic argument. Ironically, however, Pappas’ discussion involves neither a reconstruction or a defense of the argument as such, but rather is meant to show that Berkeley’s thinking about the meaning of existence was disjointed in the same way as his thinking about material substratum, which blinded him to the logical error in the two arguments Pappas flagged as Berkeley’s primary arguments, the “collections” arguments of PHK 1–3 and PHK 4. George Pappas, *Berkeley’s Thought*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 113–24. (Cf. Rickless’s two “simple” arguments (120–27).) See below for more on these arguments.

<sup>16</sup> It is noteworthy for those who read Berkeley as pushing the intuitive self-evidence of idealism that the argument from PHK 4 is presented in terms of a rhetorical question rather than as anything like a demonstration or proof.

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Winkler, *Berkeley: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, 137–38. “The argument is simple: We perceive houses, mountains, and rivers (the ‘real things’ of Philonous’s peroration). But we perceive nothing but our own ideas or sensations, which exist only in the mind. Therefore houses, mountains, and rivers—real things of all kinds—are ideas and sensations, which exist only in the mind.”

qualities are ideas, even though they might allow that some qualities are (e.g., the secondary qualities). And both of these concerns feed into the central problem with the second premise in the First Simple Argument: because realists allow that sensible objects and sensible qualities that are not themselves ideas are nevertheless perceived by sense, they would not accept that second premise. If there is any consensus among interpreters here, it is that Berkeley's argument(s) for idealism in PHK 1–6 require substantial additional support for the claim that all the objects of sense are nothing but ideas, support which Berkeley completely failed to offer.

Therefore, interpreters seeking philosophical arguments in PHK1–6 are facing a bit of a crisis. Berkeley's simple-mindedness and his insouciance (bordering on negligence), along with the obvious implausibility and the abject philosophical inadequacy of his arguments, force commentators to think that there must be more to the story and to look elsewhere. Interpreters of Berkeley's arguments stand, therefore, at a crossroads after PHK 1–6. It is worth noting that advocates of the Intuitively-Known Interpretation do not face any such crisis or stand at any crossroads here. For them, the simplicity and philosophical inadequacy are just as expected, and constitute further evidence in favor of their interpretation precisely because the idealist thesis, according to Berkeley, is supposed to be evident as soon as it is understood. Indeed, the next thing Berkeley does in PHK, i.e. dismantling the realists' materialism, is natural and expected on this interpretation in that it involves removing the epistemological obstacles and mistaken beliefs that hinder philosophers from properly seeing what is "so near and obvious to the mind" and that are the potential causes of backsliding away from the idealistic commitment. But, as was said, for all the advocates of a Demonstratively-Known Metaphysical Interpretation, the inadequacy of the arguments and Berkeley's lack of concern with their bases is a problem that forces them to turn elsewhere. They have a few directions they can turn, however.

Daniel Flage provides one possible approach, namely retracing the path just covered and finding something previously overlooked that makes the simple arguments better. He focuses on the epistemological context of the arguments and encourages us to read into them a restriction to the object in so far as it is known.<sup>18</sup> This gives us what we might call **The Demonstratively-Known Epistemological Interpretation**. By limiting the scope of Berkeley's arguments, they might be made more plausible and easier to defend, but, as Flage well-knows, it comes at the cost of limiting the idealistic conclusion and commitments that they can support to mere partial idealism.<sup>19</sup> Flage needs to find something more to move Berkeley's position past partial idealism and toward some form of total idealism. Although Lennon's critique of the usual partial

---

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Flage, "Berkeley's Epistemic Ontology: The *Principles*," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 34 (2004): 25-60; idem, *Berkeley*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 56–96. "Berkeley is primarily an epistemologist. He is concerned with what is known and the conditions for knowing. If he is also building an ontology, then there is an isomorphic relationship between the elements in his epistemology and those in his ontology." (Flage, *Berkeley*, 68)

<sup>19</sup> "Thus, a commitment to idealism, as such, does not show that matter does not exist. To show that ordinary objects are *at least* ideas does not show that they have no other properties. To show that the only kind of substance that exists is mental does not also show that it is not composed of matter. Defending immaterialism is Berkeley's next task." (Flage, *Berkeley*, 70)

idealism interpretation does not address Flage's version, laying Flage's version along the total idealism interpretation defended by Lennon makes Flage's interpretation look odd: why would Berkeley have decided to defend only a partial idealism in PHK and then transition to a total idealism after having presented and defended total idealism in NTV?

A more common reaction is to return to Cummins' question and answer it in the affirmative ("Yes, Berkeley's idealism in even the limited sense must somehow depend on his immaterialism"), and then look for proper support for the Two Simple Arguments in PHK 7–24, or even for an entirely new argument supporting the idealistic thesis. Lisa Downing in her already-mentioned Stanford Encyclopedia article "George Berkeley" runs down this path from the very outset of her presentation, for example.<sup>20</sup> Let's thus consider Berkeley's immaterialism as support for his idealism.

### **The Argument(s) from PHK 7–24**

The Simple Arguments are considered question begging because realists can invoke a distinction between how non-ideas are perceived by sense (mediately) and how ideas are perceived by sense (immediately). Of course, what this distinction amounts to is the invocation of indirect or representational realism. So, interpreters zoom in on PHK 8 and Berkeley's Likeness Principle as the needed support for the Simple Arguments because it closes off the main option available to representational realist, the possibility of resemblance grounding the mediate perception of non-ideas.

But say you, though the ideas themselves do not exist without the mind, yet there may be things like them whereof they are copies or resemblances, which things exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance. I answer, an idea can be like nothing but an idea; a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure. If we look but ever so little into our thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness except only between our ideas.

Because representative realists conceive of sense perception as consisting of an immediately perceived ideas that resemble qualities inhering in a substance, they can label those qualities (and the substances consisting of them) as sensible without being forced to label them ideas. Berkeley, these interpreters maintain, seeks to break that—and thereby defend idealism—by breaking the resemblance relation between the realists' sensible ideas and their sensible qualities. And with that broken, Berkeley can then force the realists to admit that their sensible qualities collapse into sensible ideas. Berkeley's point thus revolved around the concept of resemblance rather than the concept of idea:

---

<sup>20</sup> "In his two great works of metaphysics, Berkeley defends idealism by attacking the materialist alternative. ... Berkeley recognizes that these philosophers [the realists Descartes and Locke] have an obvious response available to this argument [the First Simple Argument from PHK 4]. ... Berkeley devotes the succeeding sections of the *Principles* to undermining the representationalist response to his initial argument." (Lisa Downing, "George Berkeley," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2013 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2013), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/berkeley/>)

resemblance requires some sort of ontological parity between items said to resemble, and the representative realist's position violates this.<sup>21</sup>

There seems to be widespread agreement that PHK 8 is an effective criticism of representational realism in general (Dicker seems to be an exception: Dicker, 163–69). But Rickless casts doubt on its use as support for idealism by pointing out that the context for the argument is immaterialism and immaterialism alone: “Berkeley appeals to the likeness principle to answer an objection to the claim of PHK 7 (W2: 43) that ‘there is not any other substance than *spirit*, or that which perceives,” (Rickless, 120). In other words, the Likeness Principle argument is not, as Rickless rightly points out, a response to an objection to PHK 4. Interpreters like Winkler, Dicker, and Downing see it as such a response, and want to see it as such a response, precisely because of the interpretative crisis generated by PHK 1–6, however.

As previously noted, much of the remainder of PHK 7–21 is directed at establishing immaterialism, which transforms a limited idealistic thesis into total idealism by eliminating the possibility of material objects whose *esse* is neither *percipi* or *percipere*. There is, however, one final candidate for Berkeley's argument for idealism, his infamous Master Argument (PHK 22–24). The name was coined by Andre Gallois<sup>22</sup> because Berkeley suggested that he was “content to put the whole upon this issue” and granted that “the bare possibility of [the realist's] opinion being true, shall pass for an argument that it is so.”<sup>23</sup> There is as much in the Master Argument's buildup and summation to support the Intuitively Known Interpretation (that it is guided self-reflection pointing to a self-evident truth) as there is to support either Demonstratively Known Interpretation (that it is an argument providing a demonstration).

The argument is set up as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the realist's doctrine of the “*absolute existence of sensible objects in themselves, or without the mind.*” It runs as follows:

1. Assume the realist's account of the absolute existence of sensible objects;
2. Therefore, according to the realist, it is possible to imagine a sensible object existing “and no body by to perceive” it;
3. But this, according to Berkeley, is merely framing in one's own mind one set of ideas (the sensible object) without another set of ideas (an observer);
4. And doing that, emphasizes Berkeley, is irrelevant, and not at all what the realist's position dictates;

---

<sup>21</sup> There is considerable disagreement within the scholarly literature regarding the grounds for Berkeley's Likeness Principle. Cummins gave the classic exposition in “Berkeley's Likeness Principle,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 4 (1966): 63–68. Todd Ryan has offered an important alternative account in “A New Account of Berkeley's Likeness Principle,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006): 561–80. Winkler has offered criticism of Cummins and sketches an epistemological basis rooted in PC 378, which points toward Ryan's alternative (Winkler, 141–48). The grounds for Berkeley's commitment to the Likeness Principle is not unrelated to its use in arguing for idealism, of course; but it is strictly speaking a separate matter from using it as part of an argument for idealism.

<sup>22</sup> Andre Gallois, “Berkeley's Master Argument,” *Philosophical Review* 83 (1974): 55–69.

<sup>23</sup> Berkeley, PHK 22, in *Works* 2: 50.

5. Were the realist's position true, it would be possible for us to conceive of the sensible object existing "unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy";
6. Therefore, the realist's position regarding absolute existence "marks out either a direct contradiction, or else nothing at all."

As an argument for idealism, this would be a direct argument for total idealism as there does not seem to be any reason why it would not work for sensible as well as insensible objects.

Almost all scholarly attention regarding this argument is directed as why it so badly fails.<sup>24</sup> Rickless is one of the notable exceptions, who provides a reconstruction of the argument that emphasizes its validity, although it must be said that he does not see it as being offered in support of idealism but rather yet another anti-materialist argument (Rickless 127–130). Rickless also emphasizes that the plausibility of the Master Argument is hampered only by Berkeley's leaving a key premise undefended, namely that the objects of conception are only ideas. Rickless, however, argues that Berkeley supplied the missing support for the Master Argument in the First Dialogue of DHP, and indeed that the primary purpose of the First Dialogue of DHP was to supply the missing supports for both the Simple Arguments and the Master Argument as presented in PHK. It is perhaps then time to turn our attention away from PHK and look toward DHP to see if we can find Berkeley's more considered arguments for idealism.

### **The Argument(s) from DHP**

There is a persistent view that Berkeley published DHP in 1713 to merely popularize the arguments and positions of PHK. The idea is that PHK's poor reception so bothered Berkeley that he thought it better to repackage it in an easier format before moving on to parts 2–4 of the *Principles* project. This view strongly suggests that there should be no essential change in the arguments for idealism between PHK and DHP; there might be some added detail in DHP and some of the enthythematic arguments presented in an expanded form or some of the concept explained further, but the overall character of the argument(s) for idealism should be preserved if DHP was merely meant to popularize the theses of PHK. Rickless's interpretation suggests something stronger regarding the relationship between PHK and DHP, however. According to Rickless's view, DHP is intended to correct an oversight in PHK, namely the failures to properly support the Simple Arguments and the Master Argument by allowing for the realist to invoke the mediate-immediate perception distinction and wiggle out of the idealists' snare.<sup>25</sup> The similarities here with what other interpreters see as going on in PHK 8 should be obvious,

---

<sup>24</sup> Rickless writes, "Berkeley scholars are almost all agreed that the Master Argument fails, indeed that it commits a spectacularly shameful blunder." (Rickless, 127)

<sup>25</sup> "I argue that the most important function of DHP 1 is to remedy the defects of the two Simple Arguments and the Master Argument (thereby remedying the defects of the Semantic Argument) in PHK. Once it is understood what DHP 1 is designed to accomplish, it becomes impossible to read it as anything other than a deliberate attempt to shore up the earlier arguments for idealism by defending the very principles that Whiston and Clarke so breezily dismissed [Berkeley's 'first principles'—'that everything that is perceived by sense is an idea; that sensible objects are collections of sensible qualities; and that sensible qualities are ideas']." (Rickless, 138)

though Rickless does not see Berkeley attempting to address this realist move in PHK. Under Rickless's version of the Deductive, Metaphysical Interpretation, then, DHP is a necessary improvement that Berkeley had to write after digesting the criticism of PHK and not a mere rephrasing or simplification of it. In other words, in Rickless's estimation, even if the same argument(s) are being presented by Berkeley in DHP, they are significantly improved versions and worthier of being considered Berkeley's argument(s) for idealism than the two limited or faulty versions of PHK. Interpreters advocating an Intuitively Known Interpretation also take a stronger view of DHP, albeit somewhat different from Rickless's. According to the Intuitively Known Interpretation, what Berkeley came to realize based upon the poor reception and critical feedback of PHK was that idealism was not in fact self-evident and intuitively knowable for early eighteenth-century realists. It was something that either needed to be argued for or something whose evidence needed to be further excavated before Lockeans and other realists could see it just by opening their eyes. There is, in fact, considerable overlap between Rickless and the Intuitively-Known Interpreters here; the only real difference seems to be in whether Berkeley was failing to present good arguments in PHK, even though he himself might have been persuaded by them, or whether Berkeley was successfully presenting something in PHK that really was self-evident to him but that other early eighteenth-century philosophers were not yet ready receive or yet positioned to see and appreciate the self-evidence of.

Regardless, on all interpretations there is a clear change in strategy in DHP. Berkeley began DHP with an important analysis of the concept of *sensible*. He characterized the sensible as what is immediately perceived: "PHILONOUS: It seems then, that by *sensible thing* you mean those only which can be perceived immediately by sense."<sup>26</sup> He also adopted a new approach toward the claim that all sensible qualities are ideas. In DHP, Berkeley offers an enumerative argument structure that purports to show that all sensible qualities are ideas whose *esse* is *percipi* by showing for each and every sensible quality that it is an idea. Together, these seem to address the main deficiencies scholars have flagged in the argument(s) for idealism in PHK. Restricting the topic to objects immediately perceived by sense cuts off the realist's dodge of the Simple Arguments and providing an exhaustive enumeration of the sensible qualities and showing that each is an idea provides the missing support for the second premise in each of the Simple Arguments (as well as the missing support for the Master Argument).

Within this enumerative argument structure, Berkeley used two argument forms to establish that a particular sensible quality type is an idea. One is typically called the Pain-Pleasure Argument and the other the Argument from Perceptual Relativity. Most scholars prioritize the Argument from Perceptual Relativity. The form of this argument revolves around the fact that different perspectives result in perceptions containing incompatible sensible qualities even though the change in perspective entails no change in the object observed. This fact, conjoined with the law of non-contradiction (nothing can contain contradictory properties), entails that the sensible quality type in question is not a quality contained in the observed object but rather must be contained within the

---

<sup>26</sup> Berkeley, DHP, in *Works*, 2: 174.

different perceptions. The sensible quality must be, in other words, an idea immediately perceived in the different acts of perception. Berkeley walks the reader through various examples of sensible qualities and versions of this argument form, but scholars credit his application of it to the so-called primary qualities (in addition to the so-called secondary qualities) as the real breakthrough. “PHILONOUS: But what if the same arguments which are brought against secondary qualities, will hold good against these [primary qualities] also? HYLAS: Why then I shall be obliged to think, they too exist only in the mind.”<sup>27</sup>

Most scholars privilege the Argument from Perceptual Relativity, as mentioned above, because it is believed to be a wiser approach for dealing with the early eighteenth-century audience of realists and because it is believed to be a more defensible argument than the Pain-Pleasure Argument as well as being applicable to more of the sensible qualities Berkeley needed to enumerate. Most scholars view the Pain-Pleasure argument as merely softening up the reader. Rickless, however, is one of the notable exceptions. Rickless advocates for the Pain-Pleasure Argument as Berkeley’s real argument for idealism and reads the Argument from Perceptual Relativity (along with Muehlmann 1992) as “no more than an *ad hominem* attack on materialism,” as it was in PHK 14.<sup>28</sup>

The Pain-Pleasure Argument revolves around the identification of the perception of a sensible quality with pain or pleasure, which are ideas whose *esse* is *percipi*:

1. An experience of an intense heat (or cold) is *eo ipso* a great pain;
2. An experience of a gentle warmth is *eo ipso* a genuine pleasure;
3. Pain and pleasure are nothing but ideas within the perceiver;
4. Therefore, heat and cold are also nothing but ideas within the perceiver.

This type of argument looks difficult to apply to all sensible qualities, especially the so-called primary qualities. Moreover, it seems to strain credulity even in best case scenarios like heat, odor, and taste. Rickless, however, has a clever approach toward making the Pain-Pleasure Argument relevant for all qualities. He interprets Berkeley as offering the Pain-Pleasure Argument only for the secondary qualities, but then he has Berkeley invoking an Inseparability Thesis—primary qualities are inseparable in reality from secondary qualities—to bring them under the umbrella of the ideal characterization of the secondary qualities. Rickless draws this Inseparability Thesis the following passage: “PHILONOUS: Since therefore it is impossible even for the mind to disunite the ideas of extension and motion from all other sensible qualities, doth it not follow, that where the one exists, there necessarily the other exist likewise? ... Consequently the very same arguments which you admitted, as conclusive against the secondary qualities, are without any farther application of force against the primary too.”<sup>29</sup> What scholars need to do to follow Rickless here is buy into his analysis that the Argument from Perceptual Relativity is nothing more than an *ad hominem* against materialism that, like Rickless’s take on PHK 8, has nothing to do with idealism. Thus, the downgrading of PHK 8 and Perceptual Relativity seem to go hand-in-hand for Rickless and his interpretation of Berkeley’s argument for idealism. Some, however, might find this challenging because the various

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 2: 188.

<sup>28</sup> Rickless, 166.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 2: 194. This passage, Rickless points out, echoes PHK 10.

Arguments from Perceptual Relativity are so tightly woven into the development of the idealistic thesis in DHP. Add to this the facts that Berkeley did not actually offer Pain-Pleasure Arguments for all of the secondary qualities and the invocation of the Inseparability Thesis occurs after Berkeley had ended the series of enumerations (DHP, *Works*, 2: 191) and began addressing moves that shield the realist from admitting the force of the idealistic argument (in particular, the thesis is invoked to counter the claim that pure intellect allows for a distinction between absolute and sensible extension [*Works*, 2: 192–194]), and some interpreters might prefer to stay with the conventional view that Berkeley primarily relies on the Argument from Perceptual Relativity to fill out the enumerations constituting the argument for idealism in DHP. Whichever direction one leans to, it seems that the differences regarding the importance of PHK 8 and Perceptual Relativity is a tipping point between Rickless's interpretation and more traditional ones.

Berkeley again offered the Master Argument in DHP. But there does not seem to be any great change or improvement in that formulation of the Master Argument. Most interpreters simply consolidate the presentations of the argument in PHK and DHP (e.g., Winkler, Pappas, Downing, and Dicker). Thus, there is not much for us to say about Berkeley's re-presentation of the Master Argument in DHP other than he still seemed equally committed to essentially the same argument despite any changes or improvements he made to his other argument(s) between the publication of PHK and that of DHP. Whether that suggests that Berkeley believed the alterations he made to the earlier argument(s) for idealism in DHP were minor, irrelevant, or independent of the reasoning underlying the Master Argument is left to the reader to decide. One might use this to defend the traditional conception of DHP as merely repackaging the same arguments as PHK. Or one might put it in the service of defending the Intuitively Known Interpretation by claiming that Berkeley is able to retain the Master Argument as originally presented because now, given the changes made in the earlier bits of DHP, Berkeley expects realists to be properly positioned to see the self-evidence of idealism in the thought-experiment that composes the Master Argument, which he expected them to have seen in PHK but which they proved not yet ready to.

### **The Conceptual Basis for Berkeley's Idealism**

We have seen that there is considerable disagreement among interpreters regarding whether Berkeley believed that idealism was intuitively known or demonstratively known as well as considerable disagreement regarding which argument(s) are being offered by Berkeley in support of the idealistic thesis and which are being offered in support of the immaterialistic thesis. And we have seen that there are disagreements in how to outline and reconstruct many of the specific premises and inferences in those arguments. It should come as no surprise, then, that there will be considerable disagreement regarding the underlying conceptual source and motivation for Berkeley's idealism. There are three main candidates for the conceptual core and source of Berkeley's idealism: perceptual heterogeneity, anti-abstractionism, and immediate perception.

Thomas Lennon, following the lead of Robert Muehlmann (though taking it in a much different direction), had argued on behalf of perceptual heterogeneity as the core, the “main part and pillar” of Berkeley’s idealism.<sup>30</sup> The perceptual heterogeneity interpretation begins with the idea that each sensible quality is a proper or special sensible, that there are no common sensibles and there is no commensurability between the different types of sensible qualities. On Lennon’s reconstruction of Berkeley’s argument for idealism, perceptual heterogeneity is a direct consequence of the passivity of perception (what Lennon calls “the *pathos* principle”): in perception, the perceiver is always a patient suffering an experience (103). The model is the experience of pain (and pleasure), something is done to us. Because we passively suffer and receive experience, there is no act or activity that we do or engage in. Because there is no act or activity that we engage in, there is no act-object distinction. And because there is no act-object distinction, there is no object either; on Berkeley’s pain model of immediate perception, there is just a mind in a perceptual state and nothing more. Consequently, in perception there is no thing (external or otherwise) that we engage with, there is only our suffering or sensing. The sensible object, in other words, is only perceived and exists only if and when perceived, just like a pain is only felt and exists if, when, and just as it is felt.

Lennon does not systematically interpret the arguments of PHK or DHP in light of his emphasis on the pathos principle. But he does point to places in Berkeley’s arguments where the principle plays an important role, and it is not difficult to gain a sense of how the arguments could be interpreted. Lennon’s interpretation casts the arguments of DHP, especially the Pain-Pleasure Argument and the Master Argument, in a completely new light. Like on Rickless’s interpretation, the Pain-Pleasure Argument is given the central place, but unlike on Rickless’s interpretation, the Master Argument is also thrust into the spotlight. In both cases, Lennon sees the arguments as illustrating how the act-object distinction in immediate perception is rejected by Berkeley. Lennon is keen to emphasize that what’s at stake between the idealist and the realist here is a commitment to a model of sensation and the “logic of sensation.”<sup>31</sup> This seems to suggest that the “arguments” Berkeley is offering might not be best understood as deductive arguments establishing the truth of idealism but rather illustrations of the idealist’s model and logic of sensation. Lennon’s analysis seems, furthermore, to cohere nicely with an Intuitively-Known Interpretation. But a detailed exploration of how Lennon’s suggestion fits the texts of the argument(s) for idealism would be a welcome addition to the scholarly discussion.

One nice feature of Lennon’s heterogeneity analysis is that it places considerable emphasis on the Cartesian and Malebranchean accounts of abstraction and the purely intellectual conception of extension as obstacles to accepting Berkeley’s pathos principle and his logic of sensation. Berkeley himself flagged abstraction as a source for the realists’ error and a barrier to perceiving the idealistic thesis in the introduction to PHK.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Lennon, “The Main Part and Pillar of Berkeley’s Theory: Idealism and Perceptual Heterogeneity,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 49 (2011): 91–115.

<sup>31</sup> He expresses this in terms of the “familiar situation in philosophy, where one man’s *modus poens* is another man’s *modus tollens*.” (Lennon, “The Main Part and Pillar,” 106)

<sup>32</sup> “In order to prepare the mind of the reader for the easier conceiving what follows, it is proper to premise somewhat, by way of introduction, concerning the nature and abuse of language. But the

According to Lennon, even though Berkeley seems to target Locke and his process of abstracting in his criticism of abstraction, it is really the Cartesian and Malebranchian doctrines of intelligible extension that threaten his idealism. It is that misguided acceptance of intelligible extension that blinds realists to the pathos principle and its concomitant denial of the act-object distinction in perception. Lennon's analysis, therefore, explains why anti-abstractionism is so important to Berkeley's vision, but without suggesting that Berkeley's idealism follows from or is motivated by anti-abstractionism.

George Pappas, however, is a scholar who sees Berkeley's idealism as following from anti-abstractionism and sees a central role for it in the Simple Arguments and the Master Argument for idealism. According to Pappas, the abstract idea of existence was Berkeley's target, and its rejection is central to how he thought about idealism.<sup>33</sup> Pappas attaches his interpretation onto the seemingly inconsistent way that Berkeley described the denial of the idealistic thesis, as a contradiction or manifest repugnancy or as a meaningless expression. This duality of description suggests a duality of how Berkeley conceived of the idea of existence.<sup>34</sup> The duality revolves around a Lockean conception of existence as something we can have an idea of versus a Berkeleyan conception in which existence is not a quality or feature of things that we have an idea of but rather the state of being perceived. Uncovering this duality in Berkeley's thinking leads Pappas to a versions of the Intuitively-Known Interpretation of Idealism: the Simple Arguments and the Master Argument are "dispensable" because they highlight the absurd consequences of thinking about existence in the Lockean way; the Semantic "Argument" of PHK 3, which is really an occasion for "a moment's" "calm reflection" about the notion of existence, is the primary support for idealism, provided that the reader has followed the anti-abstractionism Berkeley defended in the introduction to PHK.<sup>35</sup>

Rickless is critical of interpretations of the argument(s) for idealism that use or appeal to Berkeley's anti-abstractionism as a premise.<sup>36</sup> Rickless does, however, find a

---

unraveling this matter leads me in some measure to anticipate my design, by taking notice of what seems to have had a chief part in rendering speculation intricate and perplexed, and to have occasioned innumerable errors and difficulties in almost all parts of knowledge. And that is the opinion that the mind hath a power of framing *abstract ideas* or notions of things." (Berkeley, Introduction to PHK, I.6, in *Works 2*: 27)

<sup>33</sup> Pappas, *Berkeley's Thought*, 23–146.

<sup>34</sup> "It is natural to think that when Berkeley states his [critical] point variably or disjunctively ["meaningless" or "contradictory"], he is saying that one or the other of these is the case depending on certain other factors or depending on how one conceives of certain things. This would be an exact parallel to how he reasons on the question of matter. Under some ways of understanding what matter is, he holds it to be contradictory; on others, ... his point would be instead that the word 'matter' has no meaning. I think Berkeley has the same sort of thought about the concept of existence. In one way of thing about existence the EIP principle will come out as a necessary truth because its denial will be a necessary falsehood. In another way of thinking about existence, the denial of the EIP principle will lack meaning and thus be unintelligible." (Pappas, *Berkeley's Thought*, 122)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 144–46.

<sup>36</sup> He singles out Pappas's reconstruction of the Master Argument and an interpretation offered by Margaret Atherton. He also criticizes the idea-object interpretation developed by Martha Brandt Bolton as being "just too easy." See Samuel C. Rickless, "The Relation between Anti-Abstractionism and Idealism in

crucial, but limited role for Berkeley's anti-abstractionism in extending the ideality of the secondary qualities as established by DHP's Pain-Pleasure argument to the primary qualities. The Inseparability Thesis that Rickless has Berkeley using here is grounded, says Rickless, in the impossibility of mentally separating an idea of a primary quality from the concomitant ideas of secondary qualities, which is one component of his analysis and critique of Lockean abstractionism (anti-abstractionism toward "singling abstraction").<sup>37</sup> This limited role, Rickless emphasizes, is a long way from constituting the conceptual core and basis for Berkeley's idealism, and we might add that under Rickless's analysis it only occurs in DHP, which is late in the developed and defense of Berkeley's idealism.

Rickless himself favors the hypothesis that Berkeley's idealism ultimately rests on his doctrine of immediate perception:

Berkeley's argument rests on two crucial premises, (OP) and (PIP):

(OP) Sensible things are perceived by sense.

(PIP) Everything perceived by sense is immediately perceived.

... Berkeley struggles with these premises over the course of his life. The problem lies in the fact that the premises are ambiguous, because the phrase 'perceived by sense' can be understood in two different ways. On one interpretation, to perceive something by sense is to perceive it *wholly* by sense. ... On another interpretation, to perceive something by sense is to perceive it *partly* by sense.<sup>38</sup>

According to Rickless, Berkeley's idealism needs the wholly perceived interpretation to be sound, but he has to make some room for a type of mediate perception, since it is so obvious that we do mediately perceive many things. The development of this distinction between mediate and immediate perception and its deployment in DHP were the lynchpins to Berkeley's argument for idealism and its defense. In the end, Rickless does not believe Berkeley was successful because there is no reason for realists to grant the wholly perceived interpretation of OP. Although "Berkeley had hoped to be able to produce a valid argument for idealism grounded in premises that his realist opponents could not reasonably deny," what results is "a kind of philosophical stalemate."<sup>39</sup>

Although Rickless does not mention or explore heterogeneity as an underlying principle, there are clear synergies and overlaps between Rickless's and Lennon's analyses. Personally, I am inclined to see that they can merge and that placing heterogeneity and the pathos principle at the core of Berkeley's account of immediate perception can explain why there seems to be a stalemate between the realists and idealists as well as providing material for potentially shifting the allegiances some might have to realism or idealism. And I am personally inclined to synthesize their analyses within the framework of the Intuitively-Known Interpretation of Idealism. How such a synthesis would go should be relatively clear to readers of both interpretations, as well as

---

Berkeley's Metaphysics," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20 (2012): 723–40 and idem, *Berkeley's Argument*, 104–15.

<sup>37</sup> Rickless, *Berkeley's Argument*, 184.

<sup>38</sup> Rickless, *Berkeley's Argument*, 188.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

its powers and limitations as an interpretation of Berkeley's argument(s) for idealism (what is to be done with the Perceptual Relativity Arguments, for example).

### **Conclusion**

This contribution has sought to showcase the diversity of current approaches to and interpretations of Berkeley's argument(s) for idealism. The emphasis has been on the current lack of consensus. But it is hoped that by bringing this variety together, pathways forward and toward a firmer and widespread consensus might appear. It is clear, I hope, that I wish scholars would seriously consider the hypothesis that Berkeley believed the idealistic thesis was intuitively known by his philosophical contemporaries, that it just needed to be stated and brought before their minds for them to accept it; and that when the presentation of PHK failed to reach them, he changed his approach toward positioning their thinking about idealism, but retained the conception that it was something they could, and should, find self-evident. It is also clear, I hope, that I think Lennon's and Rickless's analyses together show promise for "attaining the same train of thought in reading, that [Berkeley] had in writing" his argument for idealism. So, I hope that despite the current lack of scholarly consensus, this survey of the current state of scholarship optimistically points toward a future of better understandings of Berkeley's texts, deeper appreciations of their plausibility and coherence, and growing consensus regarding their interpretation and assessment.