Berkeley’s Bodies

by

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Abstract

George Berkeley (1685-1753) defends immaterialism, the view that there is no such thing as matter. In place of matter, what exists are only minds and ideas. Berkeley also styles himself a defender of common sense. From early on many of Berkeley’s readers doubted that these two commitments could be reconciled.

I consider Berkeley’s joint commitment to immaterialism and common sense in respect of two philosophical theses. (1) Berkeley argues against a version of scepticism that bodies are single collections, constituted by many ideas placed in certain relations, and veridically sensed by finite minds. I identify these collections as Berkeley’s enigmatic archetypes. (2) Berkeley argues that finite minds are able to act causally upon their own bodies by nothing more than an act of will. Both of these theses are defended in the context of immaterialism, and Berkeley persuasively presents them as elements of common sense. I reconstruct Berkeley’s arguments for these theses, and suggest that he succeeds in reconciling immaterialism and common sense in these areas.

My account draws on previous research, but I introduce a single mechanism to understand both theses. I call this mechanism overlap. On Berkeley’s view, finite minds represent bodies by constructing representing-collections that are intended to resemble body-
collections. However, these representing-collections overlap with body-collections, meaning that they share members which are numerically the same. My account of (1) depends on the fact that sensed ideas are in the overlapping area, and therefore represent the body-collection exactly as it is. My account of (2) depends on supposing that the causal powers of finite minds are exercised on ideas in the area of overlap, and thus they act on ideas that are accessible to them but are also constituent parts of bodies.
Acknowledgments

a diis bonos avos, bonos parentes, bonos praeceptores, bonos familiares, necessarios, amicos, omnes fere habui… quod, quum animum ad philosophiam adjecissem, non in sophistam incidi.
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Introduction

The topic of this dissertation is George Berkeley’s philosophy of bodies. Many of Berkeley’s readers – even philosophers, who should know better – take Berkeley to have been the character memorably captured by W. B. Yeats, who “proved all things a dream/ that this pragmatical, preposterous pig of a world, its farrow that so solid seem/ must vanish on the instant if the mind but change its theme.”¹ The characterization is memorable, but it is wrong. Berkeley had nothing against the sensible world. He thought that philosophy shows it to be exactly as non-philosophers believe it to be, i.e. filled with bodies, some under the influence of human agents, most not. True, the constituents of the world are ultimately mind-dependent, but from this he certainly did not think it followed that things change at the mind’s whim. The mind only acts on external things, as non-philosophers generally suppose, by moving the body.

Readers such as Yeats are not my immediate targets in this project. But I hope that by sketching an account of Berkeley’s philosophy that avoids some of the implausible reconstructions offered by more careful and philosophical readers today, I may indirectly arrive at an alternative to Yeats’ Berkeley, one who is perhaps a little more believable, and one who is a friend to common sense where Yeats’ Berkeley is not.

The discussion of Berkeley at which I will aim has taken place in mostly English-speaking venues, roughly in the last thirty years. I propose that Berkeley accounted for bodies as collections of ideas, and I defend the suggestion that each body, or, as Berkeley would also say, each ‘archetype’, is a collection in God’s mind, and is represented by a collection in a human mind. I then suggest that such collections might overlap, i.e. they might share member-ideas. What I mean is that in a case of overlap the idea in a finite mind is numerically identical with one that is in God’s mind. In my second chapter, I explore the way that such overlap occurs in sensation. If the same idea is present in both collections during sensation, then Berkeley can (as he wants to) avoid a sceptical problem that afflicts Locke. On Berkeley’s view, the object of sensation is present in the mind, but is also a constituent of the body. There is thus no gap for the sceptic to exploit. In my third chapter, I defend the view that a similar overlap accounts for human activity. This is because the collections of ideas that represent our own bodies overlap

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with God’s collections when we act upon our own bodies. The man on the street supposes that he moves his body by willing that it move – on Berkeley’s view, it turns out to be exactly true that a volitional act (or acts) on the man’s part are the immediate causes of bodily movement.

I have just appealed to common sense, and I will need to expand on what that entails. In brief, I take common sense to consist of a large cluster of beliefs that is vaguely defined around the periphery but with a relatively well-defined inner core. I take Berkeley’s position to be a defense of common sense because I think the views he tries to defend are those of the inner core. Philosophical accounts of Berkeley’s motivations vary greatly, largely because – and here philosophers are often rather close to Yeats – there is a widespread assumption that Berkeley cannot be successfully defending common sense, and so that it is charitable to suppose he is not (or not in the ordinary sense) even trying to do so. Although establishing this would take us far beyond the topic of bodies, I am not certain that such a project is doomed to fail. At any rate, I am quite certain that Berkeley’s project was to defend common sense, in a way comparable to the defenses offered by contemporary common sense philosophers. And seeing how Berkeley is aligned makes it clear that his target is not John Locke, but rather a view that Berkeley calls ‘scepticism’ – the word has a special sense for Berkeley. For Berkeley, the sceptic is a person who has adopted the conclusions of an early modern account of bodies, and has given up the common sense view in consequence.

That is the plan for the following chapters. In what is left of this introduction, I would like to offer two sketches, one of Berkeley’s philosophical commitments, and one of his works. Neither sketch aims at completeness, or at originality. I use them to lay on the table the commitments that will be in the background in what follows. Let me begin by sketching the immaterialist position in metaphysics as I understand it to be.
Immaterialism

Berkeley never called his view ‘idealism’ or ‘subjective idealism’, though it is often so called today. Berkeley preferred ‘immaterialism’. The term ‘immaterialism’ contrasts with ‘materialism’, dividing those who believe that there is a mind-independent thing called ‘matter’ from those who don’t, and Berkeley’s arguments are aimed at those he sees on the wrong side of the divide. That means that Berkeley aims at the materialist, i.e. the person who supposes that all there is, is material, but equally at the dualist, who allows that there is such a thing as matter.

Immaterialism is a position in metaphysics, but its adherents are motivated by an observation about experience. If one supposes that one’s experience consists of mental content, one might ask whether one has evidence of the existence of anything that is not mental. Berkeley thinks we do: we have evidence for the existence of our own minds, and this allows inferences about the existence of other minds. But there is no evidence, he thinks, for the existence of anything but minds and ideas. These ideas are understood to be exactly as they appear to us, such that phenomenal quality is reflected at the level of ontology. The idea is a reification of the feeling. Berkeley thinks, as I will consider in my survey of his so-called ‘Master Argument’, that there is no way to conceive of material things, and therefore that everyone ought to be an immaterialist. “I wonder,” Berkeley privately mused, “how men cannot see a truth so obvious, as that extension cannot exist without a a thinking substance [sic].”

The upshot of immaterialism can be formulated in what Berkeley called ‘the Principle’.

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2 The standard edition of Berkeley’s works is that of A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop. All my quotations will be drawn from Luce and Jessop, and except in those works in which there are section numbers, pagination will refer to Luce and Jessop as well. I follow these conventions for citing Berkeley’s works: Berkeley’s Notebooks, the so-called Philosophical Commentaries = NB; An Essay Towards A New Theory Of Vision = NTV; A Treatise Concerning The Principles Of Human Knowledge = PHK, or PHKi when referring to the introduction; Three Dialogues Between Hylas And Philonous = DHP; Passive Obedience = PO; De Motu = DM; The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Revised = TVV; Alciphron = Alc.; Siris = S, and for Berkeley’s correspondence with Johnson, found in volume 2, I abbreviate J-B/B-J with the sender’s initial on the left. I refer to other works by name and volume number in Luce and Jessop. All pagination and quotations are taken from The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne. (ed.s) A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 vols. (London: Nelson, 1948-1957). DHP 254.

3 NB 270.

4 NB 379.
[P]: “Existere is percipi or percpiere [or velle i.e. agere].”

Without matter, what remains are two ways of being, and two kinds of entities that exemplify those two ways. One can be an idea, or one can be the sort of thing that contains an idea, a spirit – or, to use a more contemporary term that I will generally employ, a mind. Minds are finite (except for God, who is infinite), immaterial, active, naturally immortal substances. Animals, human beings, devils, angels and God are all entities of this sort. Ideas are finite, immaterial, completely passive entities that depend on substances for their existence. This or that red patch is a good example of an idea.

It is important to be clear that there is only one sort of idea for Berkeley, although ideas may come to be in our minds in different ways. Ideas are passively sensed and actively imagined (or sometimes, I will argue in chapter three, produced in the external world). So, for example, ‘idea of sensation’ refers not to a sort of idea, but to a way of receiving an idea, i.e. usually passively.

My discussion below is concerned to fit bodies into this picture. Bodies fit in as collections of ideas. Therefore in chapter two I will introduce a distinction between those ideas that are individual and fleeting, e.g. this instance of red, and those collections of ideas (one might say, those ideal entities) that have a relative stability, e.g. this red apple. I will call the former, ‘member-ideas’, and the latter, ‘collections’.

Berkeley is not willing to make metaphysical accommodation for anything that could not occur in experience. Indeed, Berkeley’s desire to vindicate common sense, something to be discussed in greater detail in chapter one, is really an extension of this to a sort of ultra-empiricism. If an entity does not figure in the life of a fairly unimaginative and uneducated person, Berkeley has deep reservations about it.

In my opinion, this ‘ultra-empiricism’ is the basic commitment which leads Berkeley to reject abstract ideas and mathematical realism, as both promise to provide knowledge

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5 NB 429, the material in square brackets is designated to be inserted by Berkeley. 429a.
6 The finitism which Berkeley defends in all other cases does not apply to God. Berkeley never strays from Christian orthodoxy in this matter to suppose that God is anything other than infinite.
7 It also, I think, raises interesting questions about the extent to which it is possible for human beings to know God.
independent of experience. Abstract ideas are supposed to be both less particular but have a
greater extension than those received in experience. Mathematical entities are similarly both less
and more than what is experienced. If Berkeley allowed the existence of abstract ideas or of
mathematical entities, the materialist could reply to the Berkeleian, “Yes, I believe in something
which I did not get from experience, but so do you, since we both believe there are abstract
ideas, or since we both believe there are numbers in some Platonic sense.” Berkeley was
centered to block such a reply.

Though I cannot give these interesting arguments the treatment they deserve, it is
interesting that the rejection of abstracta and mathematical entities parallels that of matter. As to
abstract ideas, Berkeley challenges the reader to imagine (or otherwise conceive of) the universal
triangle, one that is “neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon,
but all and none of these at once.” Berkeley thinks this cannot be done; Berkeley also sees no
need for it to be done. One can regard a particular idea (one’s own winter coat) as general by
using it as a stand in for all winter coats. But the idea remains particular, and loses none of its
features or characteristics. So Berkeley’s general ideas are particular ideas that are made to
function as others suppose abstract ideas do function. Mathematical entities receive similar
treatment, Berkeley writing that “number is entirely the creature of the mind.” In this case, of
course, Berkeley means that number is a creature of human minds, rather than God’s mind;
numbers are constructed, rather than discovered. With a few exceptions (such as the supposed
idea of a positive infinity) Berkeley thinks that mathematics can go on as it is – as can
generalization – but that philosophers should understand these things in nominalist terms. I will
not say much more about the rejection of abstraction here – an evaluation of this Berkeleian
thesis would require a different dissertation. But I think it is pretty obvious that Berkeley needs
to reject abstracta, and in what follows I will assume, as virtually everybody does, that
Berkeley does reject them.

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8 PHK i13.
9 PHK i12.
10 PHK i12.
11 PHK 123.
12 The only case I know of is Peter Wenz, in the extremely unpersuasive “Berkeley’s Christian Neo-Platonism,”
Minds are, one might suppose, no more possible objects of experience than are abstract ideas.\footnote{Berkeley’s response to the problem of other minds is in fact very standard. We are directly aware of our own minds, and of our actions. When we see purposive behaviour similar to our own in the world, we conclude that entities like us are responsible for it.} To the contrary, however, Berkeley thinks we are directly aware of our own minds, and of our actions. What is the nature of this knowledge? In answer, Berkeley introduces an epistemic category, \textit{notions}. The dual ontology (ideas and minds) gets matched onto a dual epistemic categorization, of ideas and ‘notions’, such that notions are of active things. Berkeley does not say much more than this, and his discussion leaves much to be desired. In what follows, I will talk about notions, but I will try to avoid entanglement in the thorny question of whether they ultimately do preserve the consistency of Berkeley’s account. That too is beyond the scope of my project. This is the immaterialist backdrop against which my argument proceeds.
Works

Berkeley’s life was dominated by three projects, and one natural way to sum up his major works is to consider them in these three periods. Berkeley (b. 1685) began his period of association with Trinity College, Dublin, in 1700, and it lasted until 1724. Though he was not always present at the college, it was during this time that Berkeley wrote the works for which he is for the most part remembered: *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709, 1709, 1732, 1732), *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge Part 1* (1710, 1734), *Passive Obedience* (1712), *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713, 1725, 1734), and *De Motu* (1721).

Thanks to a discovery in the 19th century, we know that Berkeley also filled two notebooks with categorized notes. The *Notebooks* (formerly the *Philosophical Commentaries*, before that the *Commonplace Book*) were likely compiled between 1706 and 1709. I will draw on Berkeley’s *Notebooks* frequently in what follows. When quoting from the *Notebooks*, I will quote without editorial improvements. For one thing, I think that this better represents the sometimes hasty and haphazard nature of notebook entries, but it also prevents an accidental loss of nuance. There has also been considerable controversy about those entries in the *Notebooks* marked by a ‘+’ sign. It was for a long time believed that these signs indicated that Berkeley rejected these entries, but scholarly consensus is shifting away from this view. However, this controversy can be avoided for my purposes, because nothing that I say in what follows will refer to a ‘+’ sign entry.

There is one other reason to regard the *Notebooks* as important. Berkeley published the *Principles* as “Part 1” and obviously intended at least one additional volume. But then, deeply disappointed by the reception (or, rather, the lack of reception) of the *Principles*, he instead wrote the *Dialogues* as a catchier reprise of mostly the same material. He told a correspondent 

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that he had drafted some of Part 2, but lost the draft, and could not be bothered to rewrite it – not perhaps surprising since the reception of the Dialogues was very poor as well.\textsuperscript{15} Since Part 1 of the Principles is reflected in the Notebooks, we may be able to catch glimpses of Part 2 there as well.

In 1724, Berkeley conceived of and began to promote a rather ingenious project. Berkeley wanted to set up a college in North America. Berkeley thought that he could train talented English North Americans, and also the “Children of savage Americans”,\textsuperscript{16} sending the latter back into their communities as emissaries, not only of the Christian religion, but also of Western civilization, since they would have learned something of farming, carpentry and weaving at the college. In Berkeley’s conception, it seems to me that all his students would have been emissaries of a conservative Christianity opposed to the emerging ‘free-thinkers’. As a location Berkeley chose Bermuda, a warm, safe island archipelago, only a sea voyage away from most colonies. At first Berkeley got a great deal of public support, on the strength of which he moved to Rhode Island in 1729. But public support dried up, and in 1731 it became clear that Berkeley would not receive the funding necessary to continue to Bermuda, and so he returned to England. When Berkeley returned, he published Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher (1732, 1732, 1752), a long and philosophically loaded dialogue that serves as a sort of guide to Berkeleian apologetics, and is explicitly aimed at free-thinkers. In Alciphron, we find Berkeley’s account of free will. Soon afterward Berkeley published a reprise of his New Theory of Vision, entitled The Theory of Vision, or Visual Language, shewing the immediate presence and providence of a deity, vindicated and explained (1733). These two works are the literary fruits of Berkeley’s second great project.

In 1734 Berkeley became Bishop of Cloyne. Afterwards, although he was not inactive, his work was of a political and episcopal nature. However, the cold winter of 1739, and the famine and disease that followed in Ireland seem to have prompted Berkeley to recall a folk remedy he had witnessed among the natives in Rhode Island: a concoction of pine tar in water. Berkeley promoted the tar-water cure, and faithfully drank tar-water until his death in 1753, and

\textsuperscript{15} B-J Nov 25 (1729) 282.

\textsuperscript{16} George Berkeley, A Proposal for the better supplying of Churches in our foreign Plantations vol. 7 347.
for a time, tar-water was very popular. In 1744, he published *Siris: a chain of philosophical reflexions and inquiries concerning the virtues of tar-water, and divers other subjects connected together and arising one from another*. *Siris* is a very strange book — and certainly not one that would singlehandedly have assured Berkeley of his place in philosophy. The title refers to a chain, conceived by Berkeley as a sort of chain of being, “A golden chain, whose radiant links on high/ Fix’d to the sovereign throne from thence depend/ And reach e’en down to tar the nether end.” There is some question of whether Berkeley gives up his immaterialism in *Siris*. For my part, I do not think he does. But although I will occasionally make reference to *Siris*, I will for the most part deal with Berkeley’s works up to 1732.

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

My topic in this dissertation is Berkeley’s treatment of bodies. I am going to argue that Berkeley thought of bodies as collections of ideas, collections that are directly available to us in sensation, and upon which we may, under certain circumstances, directly act. These are bold claims on his part, and certainly require a defense. But it is hard to understand the claims or the defense until we appreciate the context in which they take place. That context, I am going to argue in this chapter, consists of Berkeley’s rejection of the primary and secondary quality distinction, and is Berkeley’s defense of common sense. Berkeley believes that by rejecting the former he is defending the latter.

Berkeley’s defense of common sense is a defense against a position that he calls scepticism. Berkeley’s sceptic, though, is not like an ancient sceptic, much less a Cartesian sceptic. Berkeley uses the term ‘sceptic’ in an idiosyncratic way; for him ‘sceptic’ is a term of art. Berkeley’s sceptic has views and is persuaded by an approach to natural science that is very characteristic of the early modern period in philosophy, and so the sceptic is a person whose understanding of the world is a result of certain philosophical commitments. The trouble is that, according to the sceptic, science invalidates beliefs held by most people, including, or perhaps especially, non-philosophical people, the ‘vulgar’ in the language of the day. The vulgar believe that we know the world around us as well as it is possible to know anything, implying (though perhaps to state the implication as follows is not characteristic of the vulgar) that human beings occupy a place of epistemic and metaphysical privilege in the universe. Because we are privileged in an epistemic way, sensation reveals the natures of bodies to us. Because we are privileged in a metaphysical way, an act of will is enough to make our bodies move. Berkeley’s sceptic is one who finds such views naïve.

Berkeley’s sceptic comes to his doubts by adopting the “common principles of philosophers” – principles that Berkeley of course hopes to supplant.\(^1\) But although those who

\(^1\) DHP 167.
begin from such principles break with the vulgar, this need not mark the end of their philosophical development. They might develop in the direction of Locke, who, as I will argue, is read by Berkeley as trying to repair the sceptical tendencies in his own thought by bringing together primary and secondary qualities. Or they might develop like the free-thinkers, whom Berkeley attacked in various ways in 1713, 1721, 1732, 1736, and 1752, and reject conventional views on morality, politics, religion, and free will. In what follows, I will focus, as Berkeley largely does in his early works (up to 1713), on the Lockean version. Scepticism destroys the vulgar picture of the world, putting in its place a picture that is, in Berkeley’s view, barer and more austere, one without traditional views about what bodies are and the way that persons interact with them.

This is, I think, the philosophical landscape as Berkeley saw it. The scene is dominated by a conflict of two pictures, the rich Common Sense Picture [CSP], and the New Sceptical Picture [NSP]. In what follows, I am going to fill in some of the details of both pictures. What I will leave largely unevaluated is the overall fairness of this characterization of Berkeley’s philosophical enemies as sceptics. What I would like to emphasize is the radical nature of Berkeley’s approach to other philosophers. As he sees it, the philosophers whom he wants to address share commitments that put them at odds with the beliefs of ordinary persons. Berkeley strikes at the root assumptions that lead to this divide. By striking at the “common principles” of philosophers he hopes to address and refute all his opponents at once. The early modern conception of natural science which drives [NSP] depends on material bodies, sensed but not thereby fully understood. Berkeley tries to show that there are no such bodies, indeed that the very suggestion is unintelligible, thereby depriving [NSP] of its starting point, leaving common sense to fill the void.

In my view, then, Berkeley’s target is [NSP]. Berkeley is often presented quite differently, as aiming his critique at Locke. I think this interpretation oversimplifies a more complex aim and a more difficult relation to Locke. Berkeley, it is true, argues against Locke, but he does so in the recognition that Locke’s view contains not only the seeds of [NSP], but also those of [CSP]. Although he had some “dangerous opinions”\(^2\), Berkeley nevertheless admired

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\(^2\) “such as the Infinity & eternity of space. The Possibility of Matter’s Thinking.” NB 695
him, and took very seriously what I shall argue Berkeley saw as the Lockean project of preventing conflict between the two pictures from arising in the first place. Berkeley thinks this Lockean project is unsuccessful, but the consequence is not just an attack on Locke, but an attempt to preserve what was best about Locke in a new, immaterialist account.

In this chapter, I will set the scene for the chapters that follow by clarifying the two pictures that Berkeley takes to be in opposition, [NSP] and [CSP]. These are intended to be fairly all-encompassing positions, although the remainder of this dissertation will focus more on components of the pictures than on the wholes.

The next section will concern [NSP]. I aim to show how the sceptical worry (sceptical in Berkeley’s sense of the term) that drives it finds its origins in antiquity, and was already recognized at Locke’s time of writing.

In section three I will describe [CSP]. If we consider what [NSP] denies, we can infer what Berkeley defends in opposition: this I will argue is his conception of common sense. It is quite a standard conception of common sense, a cluster of views, and although different conceptions of common sense put different views on the margins of the cluster, Berkeley agrees with contemporary accounts as to what belongs at the centre. It is these central views that will be at issue in the remainder of this dissertation. So I am going to argue that there is no good reason to resist reading Berkeley as a philosopher of common sense, in the tradition of Thomas Reid (or rather, Reid is in the tradition of Berkeley).

Section four will explain ‘Berkeley’s Locke’, that is, the construction of Lockean views that we encounter especially in the Dialogues. Though I recognize that this is not a characterization that would be accepted by all readers of Locke today, I take Berkeley’s Locke to

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3 I find Berkeley’s frequent attempts to capture his debt to Locke, preserved in the Notebooks, to be difficult to square with any other reading. Cf. “Such was the Candour of this great Man that I perswade my Self were he alive. he would not be offended that I differ from him seeing that even in so doing. I follow his advice viz. to use my own Judgement, see with my own eyes & not with anothers. Introd:” NB 688; “Gyant who shakes the Mountain that’s on him must be acknowleg’d. I or rather Thus. I am no more to be reckon’d stronger than Locke than a pigmy should be reckon’d stronger than a Gyant because he could throw of the Molehill wch lay upon him, & the Gyant could onely shake or shove the Mountain that oppresed him This in the Preface.” NB 678; “Wonderful in Locke that he could wn advanc’d in years see at all thro a mist yt had been so long a gathering & was consequently thick. This more to be admir’d than yt he didn't see farther.” NB 567.
be a representationalist in his understanding of ideas, and to argue that ideas of primary qualities resemble their objects, while ideas of secondary qualities do not.

Next and still in the fourth section, I will turn to Locke’s – or Berkeley’s Locke’s – claim that ideas of primary qualities resemble, and thus reveal, material objects. I will consider in some detail Berkeley’s arguments in the *Dialogues* to the effect that this cannot be the case. At the beginning of the *Dialogues*, Hylas, the Lockean interlocutor, accuses Philonous, Berkeley’s mouthpiece, of being a sceptic.4 By the second dialogue, Hylas is reduced to the same scepticism of which he accused Philonous.5 By the end of the third *Dialogue*, Hylas has given up his belief in material substance. In the course of the argument, Hylas’ position is gradually stripped away. But he discovers that, without matter, he is able to “see things in their native forms; and [is] no longer in pain about their unknown natures or absolute existence.”6 In other words, once he gives up material substance, he discovers that a quite unsuspected conflict between his common sense and his philosophical commitments has been resolved. Once he stops listing toward [NSP], Hylas is comfortable in [CSP]. Hylas is a stand-in for Locke, or rather for the aspects of Locke that Berkeley rejects. But just as Hylas finds he is perfectly satisfied as an immaterialist, Berkeley thinks that a great deal of Locke can endure on an immaterialist reading. As an example of how this might work, I will point out one way in which Berkeley might, so to speak, repurpose Locke’s account of language in Book 3 of the *Essay*. Then, in the course of the next two chapters, it will become apparent that, even after the blistering critique of the *Dialogues*, Berkeley goes out of his way to follow Locke whenever he can. The suggestion that Berkeley saw within the framework of Locke’s thought many of the structures of an immaterialist position goes a long way toward explaining this fact.

### 2.1 The Sceptic

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4 DHP 171.
5 DHP 211.
6 DHP 262.
Berkeley was deeply troubled by a view that he called ‘scepticism’. It is named as his target in the titles of both the Principles and the Dialogues. However, in order to understand how Berkeley positions himself in the history of philosophy, we must understand the enigmatic figure of the sceptic whom Berkeley is forever trying to push back.

In the Dialogues, Berkeley uses the preface to sketch the philosophical landscape he is about to enter. Scepticism, we learn, arises from distinguishing esse from percipi. This is, of course, a very Berkeleian formulation of the problem. Here it is in his own words.

Upon the common principles of philosophers, we are not assured of the existence of things from their being perceived. And we are taught to distinguish their real nature from that which falls under our senses. Hence arise scepticism and paradoxes. It is not enough, that we see and feel, that we taste and smell a thing. Its true nature, its absolute external entity, is still concealed. For, though it be the fiction of our own brain, we have made it inaccessible to all our faculties. Sense is fallacious, reason defective. We spend our lives in doubting of those things which other men evidently know, and believing those things which they laugh at, and despise.

It is pretty clear from the passage above that Berkeley takes scepticism to arise from a gap between a thing’s appearance and its true nature. Not only do the “common principles of philosophers” not close this gap, they make it gape the wider.

The philosophical view in question is a form of representationalism, on which ideas represent reality, but do not constitute it. Berkeley imaginatively puts himself and the reader into the sceptical camp, allowing us to see things as the sceptic sees them. The sceptic doubts what other people claim that they know – obvious things, such as that honey is sweet or that velvet is

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7 Most people suppose that Berkeley was engaged with scepticism. Barry Stroud is an exception, and writes that Berkeley’s target was not the appearance/reality gap, but was rather “a faulty notion of existence” employed by his philosophical rivals. I am at a loss to guess what would count, for Stroud, as evidence that the target is scepticism. But this may be because I do not see why he thinks the interest in existence excludes such a possibility, as Berkeley certainly did not think so. He writes in the Notebooks, “The Reverse of ye Principle introduc’d Scepticism” NB 304. The Principle, of course, is Berkeley’s classical statement about the nature of existence, “Existence is percipi.” NB 429; see Barry Stroud, “Berkeley v. Locke on Primary Qualities,” Philosophy 55:212 (1980) 149-66, 150f.

8 DHP 167.
soft. Presumably these others aren’t impressed by the fact that something is common among philosophers, either because they are ignorant of the whole issue, like the vulgar, or because they repudiate the common principles of philosophers, as Berkeley is about to do. And so the lines are pretty clearly drawn: on one side we find Berkeley and the vulgar, and on the other are sceptics and philosophers.

We do not have to look far in the early modern period to find people who think as Berkeley’s sceptic does. Consider for example the statement by Galileo Galilei in the *Assayer (Il Saggiatore*, 1623).⁹

…I must consider what it is that we call heat, as I suspect that people in general have a concept of this which is very remote from the truth. For they believe that heat is a real phenomenon or property, or quality, which actually resides in the material by which we feel ourselves warmed. Now I say that whenever I conceive any material or corporeal substance, I immediately feel the need to think of it as bounded, and as having this or that shape; as being large or small in relation to other things, and in some specific place at any given time; as being in motion or at rest; as touching or not touching some other body; and as being one in number, or few, or many. From these conditions I cannot separate such a substance by any stretch of my imagination. But that it must be white or red, bitter or sweet, noisy or silent, and of sweet or foul odor, my mind does not feel compelled to bring in as necessary accompaniments. Without the senses as our guides, reason or imagination unaided would probably never arrive at qualities like these. Hence I think that tastes, odors, colors, and so on are no more than mere names so far as the object in which we place them is concerned, and that they reside only in the consciousness. Hence if the living creature were removed, all these qualities would be wiped away and annihilated.¹⁰

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⁹ Though the roots of the view are much older. We can find something similar, as well as a precursor to the sceptical conclusions which Berkeley worries about, in Democritus of Abdera, writing in the 5th century BC. “By convention there is sweet, by convention there is bitter, by convention hot and cold, by convention color, but in reality only there are only atoms and the void.” “The truth is that what we meet with perceptually is nothing reliable, for it shifts its character according to the body’s dispositions, influences, and confrontations.” Philip Wheelwright, trans., *The Presocratics* (New York: Macmillan, 1966) DK 9 183; DK 9 182.

Here we find the roots of what Berkeley called ‘scepticism’ are the roots of early modernity – at least according to one of early modernity’s most able authors, for the sceptic is pointing to what David Hume would call the “fundamental principle” of early modern philosophy: the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

The fundamental principle of that philosophy is the opinion about colours, sounds, tastes, smells, heat, and cold, which it asserts to be nothing but impressions in the mind, derived from the operation of external objects and without any resemblance to the qualities of the objects... Once this principle has been accepted, all the other doctrines of the modern philosophy seem to follow by an easy inference: Once we have removed sounds, colours, heat, cold, and other perceptible qualities from the category of continuous independent existents, we are left with only what are called ‘primary qualities’, as the only real ones of which we have any adequate notion. These primary qualities are extension and solidity, with their different mixtures and special cases: shape, motion, gravity, and cohesion.  

Berkeley’s provocative claim is that this central principle empowers the sceptic, who points out that for all the reasons that we think secondary qualities are nothing but “impressions in the mind”, we should regard primary qualities the same way. Berkeley was not the first to see the seeds of scepticism in this approach. Pierre Bayle had made a similar observation in the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique (1695), and as Richard Popkin has persuasively argued, similarities in style and approach make it quite plausible to think that Berkeley was directly influenced by the Dictionary.  

12 In commentary on two entries, Bayle playfully suggests that philosophers in his day had revived one of the themes of ancient Pyrrhonism, namely the contrasting of appearances and reality to lead to the suspension of belief.

In the Outlines of Pyrrhonism, Sextus Empiricus explains that appearance-based arguments are indeed part of the sceptic’s toolkit. The sceptic will contrast appearances,

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understood as sense impressions, with ideas, understood as considered accounts.\textsuperscript{13} “We oppose ideas to appearances in the way in which Anaxagoras opposed to snow’s being white the consideration: snow is frozen water, and water is black, therefore snow is black too.”\textsuperscript{14} Whatever the merits of this argument, it is intended to bring into conflict the ordinary person’s belief that snow is white, and the learned person’s belief that snow is frozen water. But the contrast between the views of the learned and those who are not has only been sharpened, Bayle explains, by the philosophy of his day.

Today the new philosophy takes a stronger line [than old Pyrrhonism]: heat, smell, colours, etc., are not in the objects of our senses; these are modifications of my soul; I know that bodies are not those that appear to me. Some wanted to exclude extension and movement, but it wasn’t possible, for if the objects of sense seem coloured to us, or hot, cold, or odorous, while they are not these things, why can’t they seem extended and figured, at rest and in motion, while being none of these?\textsuperscript{15}

No idea of a ‘secondary quality’, to use John Locke’s term, such as an idea of heat or smell or sound or taste or sight will fare any better in characterizing the true natures of things than the suggestion of some untaught Athenian that snow is by nature white. But the problem is even more acute, Bayle suggests, because ideas of primary qualities are likewise appearances, and may well fail to represent things accurately. And so Bayle casts his contemporaries as ultra-Pyrrhonists.

It is important, in order to understand Berkeley’s sceptic, to see that Bayle is being playful. Of course Bayle was not suggesting that his contemporaries were real Pyrrhonists.\textsuperscript{16} The point of Pyrrhonism is to attain peace by giving up on the attempt to find knowledge. Pyrrhonists therefore do not employ theories of their own; Pyrrhonism is philosophical Judo, and the sceptic

\textsuperscript{13} Sextus’ contrast is between φαίνομενα and νοούμενα.

\textsuperscript{14} Sextus Empiricus Outlines of Pyrrhonism, in The Hellenistic Philosophers, trans. A. A. Long and David Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 1.31, LS 72A.

\textsuperscript{15} Pierre Bayle, Dictionaire Historique et Critique (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1697) my translation, Pyrrho note B.

\textsuperscript{16} Indeed, Bayle’s discussion is carefully set up in the form of a dramatic exchange, and although one side is much more compelling than the other and therefore clearly represents Bayle in some way, Bayle is not exactly asserting anything.
uses the theory of the opponent to bring him down. But Bayle’s new philosophers obviously are propounding theories of their own, so their scepticism is aimed at other positions. Berkeley’s presentation of sceptics is similar. In a parallel passage to the one I quoted from the preface to the Dialogues, Berkeley writes in the Principles,

On this subject [natural philosophy] it is, that the sceptics triumph: all that stock of arguments they produce to depreciate our faculties, and make mankind appear ignorant and low, are drawn principally from this head, to wit, that we are under an invincible blindness as to the true and real nature of things. This they exaggerate, and love to enlarge on. We are miserably bantered, say they, by our senses, and amused only with the outside and shew of things. The real essence, the internal qualities, and constitution of every the meanest object, is hid from our view.

And after the passage just now quoted, Berkeley goes on to list some of those assumptions, assumptions on science in general, time, motion, and space. In PHK 105 Berkeley discusses scientific knowledge in general. Scientists suppose that they know the real natures of things – a belief which as we have just seen leads to the abandonment of [CSP] for [NSP]. Berkeley thinks they are wrong. In fact what they have is a “greater largeness of comprehension, whereby analogies, harmonies, and agreements are discovered in the works of Nature”. But neither in the Berkeleian sceptic’s self-evaluation nor in Berkeley’s reevaluation is there any suggestion that the sceptic might know nothing at all, or even that his assertions are not dogmatic. Popkin writes that Berkeley’s sceptic doubts “everything”. I find no evidence for this view. Berkeley’s sceptic does not doubt the scientific assumptions that cause scepticism to “triumph” in the first place.

If the roots of scepticism in Berkeley’s sense are also the roots of early modern philosophy, namely the primary and secondary quality distinction, is every early modern philosopher a sceptic by Berkeley’s lights? Not quite. Berkeley’s sceptic has a perverse

17 PHK 101.
18 PHK 101-117.
19 PHK 105.
psychological trait. The sceptic enjoys pointing out to other people just how ignorant they are, like a smug Socrates, despite the fact that by the same token he is virtually as ignorant as they. True natures, or, to use the Lockean term that Berkeley employs, “real essences” of things, are obscure, although perhaps the sceptic supposes that future science will uncover them. The mark of the Berkeleian sceptic is that, even after realizing that embracing a certain view in natural philosophy puts him at odds with the vulgar, who trust that sensory knowledge is as good as knowledge gets, and perhaps also with this own inclination to trust his senses, he nevertheless cheerfully embraces natural philosophy. The cheerful embrace of the one and the rejection of the other is what makes up the New Sceptical Picture, [NSP], and it is compatible with developing other views that are consistent with natural science. Real sceptics – Pyrrhonian sceptics, for instance – do not subscribe to any picture at all.

However, although every early modern philosopher is not a sceptic, Berkeley’s argument strikes at all alike. As we will see, anyone whose theories rely on matter will be a target. Nevertheless, if Berkeley’s arguments against matter are successful, there may well be much of value left over in the views of other philosophers.

3.1 Berkeley’s Defense of Common Sense

Berkeley’s attack on the sceptic is a defense of the thing the sceptic is attacking. Let me now suggest that this thing which Berkeley seeks to preserve is common sense. “I side in all things with the Mob.”, he writes in an oft-quoted section of the Notebooks. And we see the mob, the vulgar, the common, those whipping boys of eighteenth century thought, happily strolling along the “high-road of plain, common sense” in the Principles, and “most evidently”

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21 See e.g. Locke, Essay, 2.31.6. Whether they are in Locke’s view permanently obscure or only obscure given the current state of science is a matter of some dispute.

22 Of course Berkeley does not suppose the vulgar have beliefs about natures of things being revealed by sensation or anything of this sort. Berkeley presents the vulgar as being simply untouched by philosophical concerns. “To them nothing that’s familiar appears unaccountable or difficult to comprehend. They complain not of any want of evidence in their senses, and are out of all danger of becoming sceptics.” PHK i1, see also DHP 167.

23 NB 405.

24 PHK i1.
knowing the “true natures” of things in the *Dialogues* Berkeley consistently indicates his sympathies for this point of view. But there is a great deal of controversy over what he means.

I take Berkeley at what I think is face value. He is identifying himself with the tradition that would come to be defended by Thomas Reid and by G. E. Moore. He thinks ordinary people gain knowledge about the world just by living in it. A. A. Luce thinks something similar. But this view has lately lacked in defenders.

Jonathan Bennett, for example, thinks that Berkeley merely postures toward common sense, expecting ‘the learned’ to see through this rhetorical concession to the unwashed masses: “In his published works, I contend, Berkeley had little interest in rescuing the plain person’s beliefs about sensible things. He did not want to connect them rigorously with his ontology, or even to show that this could in principle be done.” But if Berkeley is engaged in a deception, it is a thorough one, for in the dialogues Philonous is willing to wrestle with Hylas over the question of whose view is more commonsensical, to argue that without the prejudicing effects of education, everyone would find immaterialism commonsensical, and to endorse a method by which Hylas would “embrace that opinion, which upon examination should appear most agreeable to common sense, and remote from scepticism.”

Others are less pessimistic about the common sense commitment. George Pappas devotes a considerable part of his recent book to the question. He settles on ten common sense theses, and concludes that Berkeley is committed to seven of them, giving Berkeley an edge over at least some other views as far as common sense goes. But the inherent ungainliness of a reduction of common sense into anything so definite as ten theses has, I think, left Pappas’ argument less persuasive than it might have been.

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25 DHP 167.
28 DHP 234f.
29 DHP 237.
30 DHP 259.
32 Indeed, I find it likely that Berkeley would deny that the theses where Pappas takes him to diverge with common sense are in fact theses of common sense, but are rather theoretically laden statements of the materialism he opposes. The theses which Pappas takes Berkeley to reject are “No macro physical object has phenomenal individuals (sensa,
Anyway, in Berkeley’s usage, common sense plainly goes beyond such theses, for the things revealed by common sense are remarkably diverse. People are said to have common sense knowledge of the nature of motion. In *Siris* we learn that the taking of tar-water should be regulated by common sense. Common sense should moderate the treatment of dissenters from Anglicanism, and in general help us to correctly apply moral principles. Such applications of common sense are not what I am going to focus on here. But I indicate them to show that Berkeley’s common sense commitments are diverse, and extend well beyond what could strictly be called philosophy.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that some have argued that Berkeley picks and chooses among common sense theses. One such view that has influenced my approach is that of John Russell Roberts. According to Roberts, Berkeley is interested in just one point of contact with common sense, and it is a religious one. Roberts casts this in Sellarsian terms of the manifest and the scientific image. Berkeley is interested in the manifest image, or rather, for Roberts, the religious image, the viewpoint of Christianity. I think this two-pictures view is quite correct, though I understand the content of the pictures differently than does Roberts. For one thing, Roberts thinks Berkeley is trying to defend the religious person’s picture of the world, as one fundamentally populated by supernatural entities. It is not obvious to me that religion plays such an overt role in Berkeley’s view of common sense. And the primarily religious image view of common sense is at least on the face of it difficult to reconcile with the very diverse applications of common sense to be found in Berkeley’s writings.

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33 PHK 113.
34 George Berkeley, *An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* vol. 6, 70.
35 Alc. 3.16.140. So says Alciphron, but Berkeley’s mouthpiece Euphranor does not raise any objections to the claim, and we see something similar in Berkeley’s reasoning in PO 52.
38 Ibid 130.
39 Moreover, in *Alciphron* Berkeley seems to distinguish common sense from revelation. Alc. 6.10.240.
This has prompted Seth Bordner to reinterpret Berkeley’s defense of common sense by shifting the focus from the words ‘common sense’ and onto the meaning of ‘defense’. Berkeley is defending common sense, Bordner suggests, as a lawyer might defend an unsavoury client. Just as the lawyerly defense becomes an offensive attack against legal charges, Berkeley’s defense collapses into his positive philosophy, immaterialism and anti-abstractionism. Taken together, these are going to defeat the enemies of common sense. Bordner allows that Berkeley agrees with the vulgar that what we sense is the real thing, but in general the defense is not supposed to entail an endorsement of vulgar views. “Berkeley is not out to show that every vulgar opinion is true, or even justified – he is not writing for them, he is writing on behalf of them.”

It is surely true that Berkeley does not totally side with the vulgar. As Euphranor says, no matter what the majority believe and choose to read, there is “a real difference between good and bad writing”. But even deflationary accounts such as Bordner’s grant that Berkeley is interested in defending the vulgar claim “that the world perceived immediately is the real world”, though Bordner singles out common sense approaches to bodies – the topic of my second chapter – as paradigmatically hopeless. I am not so sure.

It would be naïve to think that philosophers’ own intuitions about what sorts of philosophies can call themselves commonsensical play no role in the reluctance to fit Berkeley into the common sense tradition. Berkeleianism seems, to many, too bizarre to have much to do with common sense. And so, just as historians of philosophy have reservations about categorizing Berkeley as a common sense philosopher, contemporary defenders of the common sense tradition are unwilling to admit Berkeley to their ranks. (Thomas Reid, on the other hand,

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41 Ibid., 329.
42 Alc. 2.15.88.
44 Ibid. 337f.
is more sympathetic.\textsuperscript{46} I am not sure how to break through this intuitive gridlock. Let me instead point out that Berkeley’s defense of common sense is structurally similar to other defenses of common sense.

### 3.2 Berkeley in the Common Sense Tradition

When we look at what Berkeley has to say about common sense, we find a cluster of loosely related views, only some of which have to do with philosophy, some of which are at odds with [NSP], and some of which, such as the commonsensical means of taking tar-water, are quite far from having philosophical significance. However, I am now going to argue that the diversity of these views is a good reason for thinking that Berkeley is in fact a philosopher of common sense. Let me first explain what I take to be the significance of attributing these beliefs to common sense, and then consider how the beliefs that Berkeley defends qualify him to be a common sense philosopher.

In a recent study of common sense, Noah Lemos suggests that common sense forms a kind of base of knowledge that we have before we engage in philosophical speculation. This knowledge matters, not \textit{because} it is common sense, but because it is \textit{knowledge}.\textsuperscript{47} The common sense tradition, at least as Lemos sees it, consists of philosophers who recognize the existence of such knowledge. How that knowledge is articulated matters less, but a common core of beliefs is apparent in most cases.\textsuperscript{48} Common sense is not \textit{indefeasible} by philosophical arguments,\textsuperscript{49} but philosophers of common sense try to integrate common sense knowledge with philosophical argument.\textsuperscript{50} Berkeley does argue as though common sense formed a core of beliefs of this sort. Just as everyone can see how to use tar-water properly, everyone can reach certain philosophical commitments as well. Berkeley sometimes argues against a philosophical position on the grounds that it is incompatible with common sense knowledge to which one has a prior


\textsuperscript{47} Lemos, \textit{Common Sense}, 7.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid. 5

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. 8.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. 9.
commitment. In *Passive Obedience*, Berkeley considers whether a view might be so absurd that incompatibility with common sense makes it untenable.\(^{51}\) Common sense allows us to reject views which are incompatible with the knowledge it provides, such as abstraction,\(^{52}\) and the reality of infinity.\(^{53}\)

Common sense, for Berkeley, is then knowledge that any normally functioning person has, without need for doing philosophy. But Berkeley’s idiosyncratic philosophical commitments have caused some to think that Berkeley cannot be working from the same list as other common sense philosophers. Even outside the context of immaterialism, those who try to give lists of common sense knowledge rarely generate identical lists. It is in virtue of resemblance in the conceptual cores of two lists that two philosophers are both considered members of the common sense tradition. *Contra* Lemos, I believe that Berkeley’s list is close enough to that of other common sense philosophers in its conceptual core, that Berkeley counts as a member of the tradition.

Noah Lemos suggests that we understand common sense as a cluster of beliefs of which some are more central than others. At the very heart of the tradition, he thinks, are beliefs such as the belief that there are material bodies (a belief which Lemos, wrongly in my view, and as I will discuss further below, takes to exclude Berkeley), “that there are other people, they have bodies, they think, the earth has existed for many years.”\(^{54}\) Moving slightly outward from the conceptual core, Lemos thinks, is the belief in free will, specifically in agent causation.\(^{55}\) Surely there is, as he puts it, a “fuzziness” around the edges of the tradition – as there may well be around the edge of every tradition.\(^{56}\) I would place beliefs about the proper application of tar-water at the fuzzy edge. Still, Lemos’ short list looks like the views that Berkeley adopts in opposition to the sceptic.

\(^{51}\) PO 52.
\(^{52}\) PHK1i 11.
\(^{53}\) PHK 123.
\(^{54}\) Lemos, *Common Sense*, 11.
\(^{55}\) Ibid. 12. See also, “it is, if I mistake not, evident to every thinking man of common sense, that human minds are so far from being engines or footballs, acted upon and bandied about by corporeal objects, without any inward principle of freedom or action, that the only original true notions that we have of freedom, agent, or action are obtained by reflecting on ourselves, and the operations of our own minds.” Alc. 6.29.318.
\(^{56}\) Ibid.
The next two chapters of this dissertation are intended to establish that Berkeley defends the existence of directly perceived bodies and of robust personal agency of an agent causal variety. One might object that Berkeley reinterprets them in ways that are ruled out by common sense. Lemos does: “Bishop Berkeley is not a member of the common sense tradition however much he insists that his denial of the existence of material objects is compatible with common sense and thinks it important that his philosophical views be compatible with common sense.”

But this is unfair. Berkeley does not deny the existence of material objects, he denies one (admittedly very influential) philosophical account of what material objects are. (To deny this in turn supposes that common sense encodes, as it were, a rejection of Berkeleianism – an unlikely suggestion.) Philonous answers just such a misconception, “[w]ith all my heart: retain the word matter, and apply it to the objects of sense, if you please, provided you do not attribute to them any subsistence distinct from their being perceived.” It seems to me that Philonous is right to reply as he does. It is commonsensical to believe that the tables and chairs which we experience exist. But we go beyond what common sense warrants if we understand this on some particular philosophical account of matter. Indeed, it seems to me that it is important not to do so. There was a time – before Aristotle defined ‘ὑλή’ in philosophical terms – that there was no theory of matter to be had. But surely people were perfectly capable of believing in bodies at that time. This suggests to me that one can believe in one without believing in the other. Though many common sense philosophers might suppose that a belief in bodies entails, or is best explained given a belief in matter, Berkeley is surely entitled to question this consensus.

If Lemos is right about how we should understand the common sense project in general, then no wonder different common sense philosophers employ slightly different approaches. We

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57 Ibid. 11.

58 DHP 261. See also “if by material substance is meant only sensible body, that which is seen and felt (and the unphilosophical part of the world, I dare say, mean no more) then I am more certain of matter’s existence than you, or any other philosopher, pretend to be.” DHP 237

59 One reply to Berkeley is to observe that common sense supposes that bodies are independent of anyone’s perception. Berkeley has a ready answer. If one believes in God, one is already committed to the thesis that nothing exists unperceived by God. “to a Christian it cannot surely be shocking to say, the real tree existing without his mind is truly known and comprehended by (that is, exists in) the infinite mind of God. Probably he may not at first glance be aware of the direct and immediate proof there is of this, inasmuch as the very being of a tree, or any other sensible thing, implies a mind wherein it is. But the point it self he cannot deny.” DHP 235.
should be looking for overall similarities. Stephen Boulter, in another recent study of common sense, defends the following non-exhaustive list of common sense commitments.

[1] That there is a real world that exists independently of us, of our thoughts, language and representations
[2] That human beings have direct, non-projective perceptual access to this world via the senses
[3] That causation is a real relation among objects and events in the world, a relation whereby one phenomenon, the cause, brings about another, the effect
[4] That statements are either true or false in virtue of states of affairs in the world
[5] That human beings have beliefs, desires, hopes and fears and other mental states to which one can appeal to in order to explain and predict human actions
[6] That human beings are responsible for their actions in certain specifiable circumstances, and so are proper objects of approval, condemnation, praise, blame and punishment
[7] That moral and evaluative statements, like other statements, are typically true or false depending on whether they correspond to how things are. That is, value exists independently of our language and representations.  

Boulter doesn’t see Berkeley as a common sense philosopher either. But again, this is unfair. The first item on this list, for example, could be understood as saying that the world is independent of finite minds. Berkeley agrees: “Neither can it be denied, that this tulip may exist independent of your mind or mine”.  

Berkeley’s response to the sceptic could be summed up as an attempt to establish the truth of 1, 2, and 5. Berkeley’s targets do not doubt the truth of 4, and neither does he. Moreover, I hope to show that Berkeley defends the truth of 5 and 6 in chapter three. I will not be able to consider 7 in this dissertation, but it seems to me that Alciphron and Passive Obedience defend a view such as 7. It might seem that 3 would pose some problems for Berkeley. Certainly,

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60 Boulter, Rediscovery, 30.
61 Ibid. xii.
62 DHP 195.
Berkeley does not allow for events as causes. But he does allow that some objects (minds) are real causes – indeed, Berkeley regards this as integral to his account of moral responsibility. And though it is true that God is the true cause of all natural motions, this is a truth about metaphysics, and not necessarily incompatible with common sense judgments about the causal interactions of things. So Berkeley’s views about causation might also be reconciled with the common sense tradition.

And Berkeley’s overall goals are in line with the common sense tradition. It is the stream in philosophy with which Berkeley would have wanted to be associated. He writes in the preface of the Dialogues:

> In this treatise... it has been my aim to introduce the notions I advance, into the mind, in the most easy and familiar manner; especially, because they carry with them a great opposition to the prejudices of philosophers, which have so far prevailed against the common sense and natural notions of mankind.\(^{63}\)

Comparing Berkeley to the common sense tradition in its modern form allows us to discard certain misconceptions about what being a common sense philosopher entails. If Berkeley really cared about common sense, asks Seth Bordner, would he not be in the business of defending such claims as that the earth does not move?\(^{64}\) Of course not. Common sense is informed by the best science of the day. In this case, the common sense knowledge that the earth does not move beneath our feet (as it does when there is an earthquake) is informed by the suggestion that we and the earth move at the same speed around the sun.

**4.1 Berkeley’s Locke**

I have up to now passed over the most important person in Berkeley’s philosophical landscape, John Locke. That is because, in order to see where Locke fits in, it is important to understand that he is not a sceptic in Berkeley’s sense, nor one of the advocates of common

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\(^{63}\) DHP 168.

\(^{64}\) Bordner, “Defense,” 332.
sense either. Locke is a hybrid. I am not so interested in the question of whether this is getting Locke right. I am much more interested in whether I am getting Berkeley’s Locke right.

My suggestion is that Berkeley saw in Locke a clear thinker who was able to set the intellectual agenda for his time. However, Locke’s representationalism exemplifies the problem of his time and sets the stage for [NSP]. Locke thinks that he has a way of avoiding any such consequences – one that Berkeley thinks powerful enough to be worth engaging with. This way out is the thesis that ideas of primary qualities resemble their objects, and thus provide an area of overlap between appearance and reality. However, Berkeley argues that for all the same reasons that ideas of secondary qualities are thought to be disconnected from their objects, one ought to think that ideas of primary qualities are likewise disconnected. Therefore, contra Locke, we are still in need of an argument against [NSP]. But Berkeley recognizes that [NSP] can be avoided in quite another way, and in fact without any argument: one can recognize that the picture depends on the existence of matter, while in reality there is no such thing. And this matters, because if Locke had seen it, he could have rid himself of matter, and still kept many of the best insights of the Essay Concerning Human Understanding.

I am going to try to show all this in five stages. (1) I will begin by establishing that Locke – rather, Berkeley’s Locke – was indeed a representationalist. That Berkeley thought so is generally believed, and it seems to me that Locke’s own ambiguity makes Berkeley’s approach at least fair. (2) Next, I want to examine the Lockean way out that Berkeley took most seriously, the argument that ideas of primary qualities resemble. (3) But Berkeley presents the view in order to attack it, and his attack in the Dialogues is generally thought to be quite successful. (4) However, Berkeley thought he had a solution, the so-called Master Argument. (5) Finally, I am going to propose that Berkeley harboured a desire to see Locke restored as a kind of proto-immaterialist, and speculate briefly on what Locke might be like without the matter.

Let us begin with Locke’s conception of idea. Locke defends a theory of ideas, but manages to do so without ever giving a very clear definition of ‘idea’. The word, he says, “serves best to stand for whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks; I have used it to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking.” 65 An idea is the “immediate object” of thought. 66 It is surprising

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65 Locke, Essay, 1.1.8.
66 Locke, Essay, 2.8.8, 4.1.1.
to find so little in the way of a definition for what Vere Chappell has calculated is the most repeated noun in the Essay.\textsuperscript{67} Locke sheepishly writes “I could not avoid frequently using it.”\textsuperscript{68}

The elusive nature of ideas poses a major puzzle for those setting out to interpret Locke. Happily, my aims are much more circumspect. But it’s important to recognize that Locke was aware of two options for understanding ideas. Locke read the Malebranche-Arnauld debate, in which Malebranche proposed that ideas were the direct objects of perception (contained, indeed, in God), while Arnauld thought that ideas were to be understood adverbially, as \textit{ways} in which we directly perceive objects. My view is that Berkeley takes Locke to be siding with Malebranche.

Malebranche is a representationalist. He writes, “I think everyone will agree that we don’t perceive objects outside ourselves by [\textit{par}] themselves.”\textsuperscript{69} It is not as though our minds go wandering out of our bodies to somehow \textit{capture} physical bodies, he says dryly. How then can we have the sun and the stars \textit{in mind}? “The immediate object of our spirit, when it sees, for example, the sun, is not the sun, but something which is intimately united to our soul, and that which I call \textit{idea}.”\textsuperscript{70} Malebranche is not merely worrying about what we are in contact with in cases of illusion. No, Malebranche’s is a muscular representationalism, and he does not resort to hard cases to motivate it. In the best-case scenario, he thinks, it is just obvious that a mind cannot be in contact with a star because a star cannot be \textit{in} a mind. What can be in minds, Malebranche thinks, are ideas. These are the immediate, imagistic objects of thought, the things “closest to the spirit”.\textsuperscript{71} (Malebranche infamously supposed that God’s mind, though not his essence,\textsuperscript{72} was the locus of and source of our ideas.\textsuperscript{73})


\textsuperscript{68} Locke, \textit{Essay}, 1.1.8.


\textsuperscript{70} Malebranche, \textit{Recherche}, 3.2.1.1 Vrin 414/ 59.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{72} Malebranche, \textit{Recherche}, 3.2.6 Vrin 438/ 97-8.

\textsuperscript{73} Malebranche, \textit{Recherche}, 3.2.2 Vrin 418ff/ 66ff.
Antoine Arnauld, already an established philosopher and theologian when the *Recherche de la vérité* appeared in 1674, was very critical of the young Malebranche. He wrote *Des vraies et des fausses idées* in reply, and attacked the assumptions which struck Malebranche as so obvious. Ideas are not like images, writes Arnauld, nor are they intermediaries between us and the world. Arnauld explained Malebranche’s imagistic approach to ideas by reference to a visual bias he claimed to find in children.\(^{74}\) When we see ourselves reflected imagistically in a mirror or in still water, we come to suppose that ideas are like these images.\(^{75}\) Arnauld argues in what he understands as the geometric method, albeit with some rather pointed axioms such as

4. We must reject as imaginary certain *entities* of which we have no clear idea, and which we can easily see someone has invented only to explain things which he thought he wouldn’t be able to understand without them.

5. This is even more indubitable when one can perfectly well explain them without these *entities* invented by new philosophers.\(^{76}\)

Armed with these axioms, it is perhaps not a surprise that Arnauld can quickly conclude that Malebranche’s view of ideas is utterly mistaken. But the real work of Arnauld’s proof is deflationary. He hopes to puncture Malebranche’s grand ontology by showing that epistemic matters do not warrant or require it. Thus we find in his section on definitions:

> I said that I took *the perception* and *the idea* as the same thing. It must nevertheless be noted that this thing, though one thing, stands in two relations [*a deux rapports*]: one to the soul which it modifies, the other to the thing perceived\(^{77}\)

Arnauld invokes the scholastic locution of things existing objectively in the soul to explain how this second relation, to the thing perceived, gives rise to the ‘ideas’ which Malebranche employs.

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\(^{74}\) Antoine Arnauld, *Oeuvres Philosophique de Antoine Arnauld*, Jules Simon, ed. (Paris: Adolph Delahayes, 1843) 440. This will be my source for the entire Malebranche Arnauld exchange, translations are my own.

\(^{75}\) Arnauld, *Oeuvres*, 4 40f.

\(^{76}\) Arnauld, *Oeuvres*, 5 54.

\(^{77}\) Arnauld, *Oeuvres*, 5 51.
The former relation is best characterized as ‘perceptions’. But Arnauld is not arguing for perceptions rather than ideas, he is instead saying that the careful philosopher may have both. For both are just “one and the same modification of our souls which essentially contains these two relations.”

Locke owned at least fifteen texts dealing with this debate, and yet his own stance even on the debate is frustratingly unclear. Locke at least suggests in his *Examination of P. Malebranche’s Opinion of Seeing all Things in God* that he finds Malebranche’s argument that we cannot directly know physical things unconvincing, but of course this does not constitute a rejection. Berkeley is by no means the only reader who thinks Locke himself ultimately came closer to Malebranche.

There are of course alternatives. John Yolton has suggested that the *Examination* contains some endorsement of Arnauld’s position against Malebranche, for example when Locke defends against Malebranche the views of “[o]ne who thinks ideas are nothing but perceptions of the mind annexed to certain motions of the body by the will of God”. Yolton reads this as coming closer to Arnauld. (Yolton mentions this passage, and I am quoting it to illustrate his view, but I do not find it altogether convincing evidence. The conclusions drawn from it are not mine.) It is just not obvious to me that such passages decide much. Locke does not even identify the view at issue as his, and it is no surprise to see him presenting the logical alternative to Malebranche as being some version of Arnauld. But this need not be an endorsement.

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78 Arnauld, *Oeuvres*, 5 51.
79 Arnauld, *Oeuvres*, 5 52.
81 “The reason that he gives why “material things cannot be united to our souls after a manner” that is necessary to the soul’s perceiving them, is this; viz. That “material things being extended, and the soul not, there is no proportion between them.” This, if it shows any thing, shows only that a soul and a body cannot be united, because one has surface to be united by, and the other none. But it shows not why soul, united to a body as ours is, cannot, by that body, have the idea of a triangle excited in it, as well as by being united to God (between whom and the soul there is as little proportion, as between any creature immaterial or material and the soul) see in God the idea of a triangle that is in him, since we cannot conceive a triangle, whether seen in matter, or in God, to be without extension.” Locke, *An Examination of P. Malebranche’s Opinion of Seeing all Things in God* 5, see also 7.
Yolton’s reading of the *Examination* is part of a larger reading of Lockean ideas.\(^83\) Consider this example of Yolton’s drawn from the *Essay*: “To ask at what time a man has first any ideas, is to ask when he begins to perceive; having ideas, and perception, being the same thing.”\(^84\) Here Locke *might* be taking Arnauld’s side, but he might also be expressing a standard empiricist view about innate ideas, that perceiving (the world) and thinking must begin at the same time.\(^85\)

Perhaps Locke himself never settled his view on the nature of ideas. John Norris, a onetime friend of Locke’s,\(^86\) wrote critically about the essay, complaining that Locke had not defined the term ‘idea’. We have Locke’s unpublished response, and he is clearly determined not to answer the question. He heaps ironic praise on Norris, calling him a “happy genius” and a “son of light” for being able to glibly prescribe what Locke cannot do, namely to offer an account of ideas.\(^87\) Locke “confesse[s his] ignorance”, and so would “acknowledg it as a great favour from the Reflector to instruct [him] better in the nature of Ideas which he soe magisterially accused [Locke] for haveing against the laws of all method omitted”.\(^88\) In the passage as it continues I have noted Locke’s interesting manuscript deletions.

\[\text{If you once mention Ideas if you have a minde to consider noe more of than as perhaps know noe farther of them but only that they are the object of perception though you must be presently cald to an account. what Kinde of things you make these same Ideas to be though perhaps you have noe designe to consider them any farther than as the immediate objects of perception or if you should goo about it should suspect you should lose your labour had 1st finde they are a set of sullen things which will only shew them selves but will not tell}\]

\(^83\) Yolton suggests Locke, *Essay*, 1.4.20, 2.1.3, 2.1.9, 2.32.1, 2.32.3, 2.10.2. Yolton, *Dictionary* 91.

\(^84\) Locke, *Essay*, 2.1.9.

\(^85\) Cf. Berkeley’s own tongue-in-cheek endorsement of innate ideas. NB 649.

\(^86\) Locke and Norris had fallen out on account of a letter that Norris was to deliver to Locke from Lady Masham. It arrived, but with the seal broken, and Locke came to resent Norris as a result. Charlotte Johnston, “Locke’s *Examination of Malebranche* and John Norris,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19:4 (1958) 551-558. 551-2.

\(^87\) Locke MS c.28, fol 110r. I am basing this text on the one found at the Digital Locke Project, http://dpc.uba.uva.nl/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=locke;sid=f6f3970ff1b56b9579509a9ae0de62f8;rgn=div1;idno=dlp-AEA;view=text;node=AEA:1.

\(^88\) Locke MS c.28, fol 109v.
you whence they come | nor whether they goe nor what they are made of and yet you must be examind to all these particulars Iº whether they be naturall Beings or noe. in the next place whether they be Substances or Modifications of Substances and farther whether they are Materiall or immaterial substances & then upon their being material you must answer to an hundred solid questions.\textsuperscript{89}

Locke concludes the passage with a convoluted culinary metaphor, where ideas take on the shapes of extravagant dishes in Norris’ hands.\textsuperscript{90} It is unclear to me whether Locke is expressing dissatisfaction with any account of ideas, but he is anyway not inclined to sample Norris’ cooking, and refuses to give an account of ideas in his own right. One reader has suggested that perhaps he does not even need one.\textsuperscript{91} As another reader puts it, “Berkeley has popularized the opinion that Locke’s thought on these issues had the weight and deliberateness ordinarily associated with a ‘theory’ or ‘doctrine’, but the opinion is false.”\textsuperscript{92}

Locke’s own presentation leaves space for Berkeley’s interpretation, in what has been called “the orthodox interpretation”.\textsuperscript{93} Indeed, it is possible that association with a critic like Berkeley has contributed to rejection of this interpretation.\textsuperscript{94} At any rate, Berkeley writes of a position like Locke’s,

Things remaining the same, our ideas vary, and which of them, or even whether any of them at all represent the true quality really existing in the thing, it is out of our reach to determine. So that, for aught we know, all we see, hear, and feel, may be only phantom and vain chimera, and not at all agree with the real things, existing in \textit{rerum natura}.\textsuperscript{95}

Given the orthodox interpretation, it is easy to set up [NSP] as Berkeley sees it:“[t]he supposition that things are distinct from Ideas takes away all real Truth, & consequently brings in a Universal

\textsuperscript{89} John Locke MS c.28, fol 110r-v.
\textsuperscript{90} Locke MS c.28, fol 110v-11r.
\textsuperscript{92} Jonathan Bennett, \textit{Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 69. See e.g. PHK 87.
\textsuperscript{94} Chappell, “Theory,” 36; Allen, “Ideas,” 237.
\textsuperscript{95} PHK 87.
Scepticism, since all our knowlege & contemplation is confin’d barely to our own Ideas.” But Locke – or Berkeley’s Locke, as I should continue to emphasize – thinks he has a reply internal to his own representationalism. That is because ideas of primary qualities share characteristics with real things, and therefore these ideas resemble their objects, and in this resemblance we rest assured of at least some of the characteristics of real objects.

4.2 Berkeley’s Locke and the Primary and Secondary Quality Distinction

The real Locke had at least one other argument against scepticism. In the Essay Locke describes a kind of knowledge gained directly from the senses, “sensitive knowledge”, that assures of the reality of the objects of sensation. In fact, Berkeley agrees with Locke that we have such knowledge, but disagrees about the nature of things so revealed. “I am more certain of ye existence & reality of Bodies than Mr Locke since he pretends onely to wt he calls sensitive knowlege, whereas I think I have demonstrative knowlege of their Existence, by them meaning combinations of powers in an unknown substratum.” I think Berkeley writes this way because he is happy to grant that sensitive knowledge can be applied against, say, Cartesian dream-scepticism. The disagreement with Locke would rather concern what sensitive knowledge establishes. For Berkeley, we do have knowledge of sensible bodies, but these are ideal.

We encounter Berkeley’s Locke early in the Principles.

Some there are who make a distinction betwixt primary and secondary qualities: by the former, they mean extension, figure, motion, rest, solidity or impenetrability and number: by the latter they denote all other sensible qualities, as colours, sounds, tastes, and so forth. The ideas we have of these they acknowledge not to be the resemblances of any thing existing without the mind or unperceived; but they will have our ideas of the primary qualities to be patterns or images of things which exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance which they call matter.

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96 NB 606, see also PHK 86, 87.
97 Locke, Essay, 4.2.14.
98 NB 80.
99 PHK 9.
The challenge for Berkeley’s Locke is to bridge the gap between ideas and things, for which he used ideas of primary qualities, which resemble their objects. Locke writes of qualities as powers: “the power to produce any idea in our mind I call a quality of the subject wherein that power is.”100 A snowball is white, cold, and round, meaning that there is something in the snowball that causes the ideas of white, cold, and round in a human perceiver. But there is a crucial difference between the ideas in this list. The whiteness and coldness are secondary qualities, meaning that they represent the snowball as it is related to a human perceiver. The idea of roundness, however, represents the snowball as it really is.

Berkeley takes very seriously Locke’s attempt to distinguish primary from secondary qualities in that the former resemble their objects, that “our ideas, which alone are immediately perceived, [are] pictures of external things: and that these also are perceived by sense, inasmuch as they have a conformity or resemblance to our ideas.”101 The natural source in Locke for the account as it is given by Berkeley is 2.8.9 in the Essay.

Qualities thus considered in bodies are, first, such as are utterly inseparable from the body, in what state soever it be; such as in all the alterations and changes it suffers, all the force can be used upon it, it constantly keeps; and such as sense constantly finds in every particle of matter which has bulk enough to be perceived, and the mind finds inseparable from every particle of matter, though less than to make itself singly be perceived by our senses, v.g. Take a grain of wheat, divide it into two parts, each part has still solidity, extension, figure, and mobility; divide it again, and it retains still the same qualities; and so divide it on till the parts become insensible, they must retain still each of them all those qualities [my italics].102

This passage is part thought experiment, part real experiment: any flour mill would confirm that grains of wheat when ground into flour retain some primary qualities. And Locke is fond of such do-it-yourself examples: “Pound an almond, and the clear white colour will be altered into a dirty

100 Locke, Essay, 2.8.8.
101 DHP 203.
102 Locke, Essay, 2.8.9.
one, and the sweet taste into an oily one. What real alteration can the beating of the pestle make in any body, but an alteration of the texture of it?" But Locke is also placing himself in a tradition along with Galileo, who makes the point in terms of what can be imagined: we cannot imagine a body without figure, motion and so on. Locke calls primary qualities those which “the mind finds inseparable from every particle of matter”, and contrasts this with the discoveries of sense. Both reflection and experiment then establish a distinction between these two sorts of qualities.

The question of just how Locke understands secondary qualities is controversial. Berkeley is happy to let Hylas say that secondary qualities are “only so many sensations or ideas existing no where but in the mind”, although it is not obvious to me whether Hylas is speaking loosely or giving a definition of secondary qualities that reduces them to sensations. For Berkeley’s purposes, I think it is not so important to establish what secondary qualities are as it is to establish that for Locke they do not resemble their material sources.

It seems obvious to Hylas that one mark of a primary quality is that it is one which is not perceiver-relative: everyone ought to perceive the same shape. That is why, when Philonous shows him that this is not obviously the case, Hylas takes it as an argument against distinguishing primary qualities from secondary qualities. There are intimations of such a view in Locke.

the ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves; but the ideas, produced in us by these secondary

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105 DHP 188.
106 See “[Secondary qualities are] such qualities which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities, i.e. by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as colours, sounds, tastes, &c. these I call secondary qualities.” Locke, *Essay*, 2.8.10. Locke also distinguishes a third sort of quality, namely the power in a thing to produce changes in the primary or secondary qualities of a second thing. This third sort of quality has not been incorporated into philosophical tradition, perhaps because it seems to fit more naturally into Locke’s discussion of active powers.
107 DHP 188ff. Locke uses secondary qualities to explain how an experience of lukewarm water varies depending on the state of the perceiver Locke, *Essay*, 2.21.8.
qualities, have no resemblance of them at all. There is nothing like our ideas existing in the bodies themselves [my italics].\textsuperscript{108}

Later, Locke gives an example in terms of motion and figure.

A piece of manna of a sensible bulk is able to produce in us the idea of a round or square figure, and, by being removed from one place to another, the idea of motion. This idea of motion represents it as it really is in the manna moving: \textit{A circle or square are the same, whether in idea or existence,} in the mind, or in the manna; and this both motion and figure are really in the manna, whether we take notice of them or no [my italics]\textsuperscript{109}

I take it that Berkeley’s Locke is fairly represented by passages such as those just quoted. This version of Locke would say that our ideas of primary qualities, resemble, or ‘are like’ the primary qualities that are in things. That is to say, ideas are understood imagistically, and some features of the images may be more like features of the objects than they are like anything else. Thus the features of our ideas are also features of the external world.

It is clear that Berkeley does read Locke this way, because he appeals to the resemblance view to criticize Locke. For example, Berkeley says that Locke’s use of resemblance complicates beyond hope his suggestion that ideas represent minds, since ideas are passive and minds are active: the one is thus too dissimilar to represent the other. “No Perception according to Locke is active. Therefore no perception (i.e. no Idea) can be the image of or like unto that wch is altogether active & not at all passive i.e. the Will [my italics].”\textsuperscript{110} Locke’s abstract ideas come in for the same treatment. “Our ideas we call figure & extension not images of the figure & extension of matter, these (if such there be) being infinitely divisible, those not so.”\textsuperscript{111} Berkeley’s reading of Locke on resemblance is not the dominant reading of Locke today. Many readers

\textsuperscript{108}\textit{Locke}, \textit{Essay}, 2.8.15.
\textsuperscript{109}\textit{Locke}, \textit{Essay}, 2.8.18.
\textsuperscript{110}NB 706. For this use of ‘resemble’, see “all ideas whatever, being passive and inert… cannot represent unto us, \textit{by way of image or likeness}, that which acts [my italics].” PHK 27. Later in 27 he uses the ‘or’ of equivalence to make the same point: “cannot be like unto, or represented by”.
\textsuperscript{111}NB 81.
suppose that the difference between primary qualities and secondary qualities is merely that primary qualities figure in the causal account of one’s perception, and secondary ones don’t.\footnote{See E. M. Curley, “Locke, Boyle, and the Distinction between Primary and Secondary Qualities,” \textit{The Philosophical Review} 81:4 (1972) 438-64, 453f.} But Berkeley’s Locke is not so implausible as to be a straw man; Michael Jacovides defends a similar account today.\footnote{Michael Jacovides, “Locke’s Resemblance Theses,” \textit{The Philosophical Review} 108:4 (1999) 461-496.}

I take it that Berkeley appeals to resemblance as he does because he thinks that resemblance provides at least the hope of an answer to the sceptic, and thus would allow Locke to escape from [NSP]. That Berkeley brings this approach to Locke is apparent in the structure of the First Dialogue. Berkeley has Hylas commit to Lockean principles, which Philonous then reduces to scepticism.\footnote{“I am the farthest from Scepticism of any. man. I know with an intuitive knowlege the existence of other things as well as my own Soul. this is wt Locke nor scarce any other Thinking Philosopher will pretend to.” NB 563.} It seems to me that Berkeley admired Locke, and did not want to see him as falling into [NSP], but if a reading on which Locke was unconcerned with scepticism turned out to be true, I think Berkeley could simply say, “So much the worse for Locke.”

What Berkeley does say, though, casts Locke as someone with a way of avoiding [NSP], by making representations and reality share certain features. Our senses may mislead us and make us think that the world is coloured, say, but a great deal remains even after all the ideas of secondary qualities have been stripped away. Thus the upshot of Locke’s account is not scepticism, but rather that we are knocked back from a richer account of things to a less rich one. If common sense envisaged the world as a movie shot in colour and with sound, Locke reveals a silent, black and white movie. While this is less than common sense expects, it is at least less of the same, rather than something completely different.

Locke describes book 2, chapter 8 of the \textit{Essay}, from which I have been quoting his discussion of resemblance, as a “little excursion into natural philosophy”, which is necessary to make clear the difference between primary and secondary qualities, “whereby we may also come to know what ideas are, and what are not, resemblances of some thing really existing in the bodies we denominate from them.”\footnote{Locke, \textit{Essay}, 2.8.22.} Berkeley thinks that [NSP] springs from “natural philosophy”, and so presumably this foray of Locke’s is unsuccessful.\footnote{PHK 101.}
4.3 Berkeley’s Critique of Locke

I have been arguing that Berkeley’s Locke employs the resemblance between ideas of primary qualities and their objects to avoid sliding into [NSP]. Berkeley’s argument against resemblance is to show that ideas of primary qualities are unable to play the special role Locke assigns to them; for all the same reasons that we think ideas of secondary qualities don’t resemble their objects, we should think ideas of primary qualities don’t either. The critique is put into the mouth of Philonous in the First Dialogue.

Early on in the Dialogues, Philonous defines “sensible things”, as “those only which are immediately perceived by sense.” Using this definition, he presses Hylas in the direction of Locke’s primary and secondary quality distinction, of which Berkeley intends to make an example. Heat is sensible, and so is a sensible thing. Philonous first argues this by an argument that tries to assimilate heat and pain. He seems to be working on the assumption that pain is obviously in us and not in things. If great heat just is a kind of pain, and mild heat just is a kind of pleasure, then “[heat] cannot exist without the mind in any unperceiving substance, or body.”

The argument does not convince Hylas. He is no pushover as an interlocutor, and grants that extreme heat is pain, but not that mild heat is pleasure. Mild heat, Hylas insists, is rather an “indolence”. So Philonous turns to an old chestnut of an argument. When someone puts his

117 Like Malebranche and Descartes, Locke also argued that if our ideas did not reveal the true existence of things, God would in some way be guilty of a deception. Berkeley does not seem to have taken this argument very seriously, and he ignores it in Locke. Of Malebranche he says, “Scripture & possibility are the onely proofs with Malbranch add to these wt he calls a great propension to think so. this perhaps may be question’d. perhaps men if they think before they speak will not be found so thoroughly perswaded of the Existence of Matter.” See Locke, Essay, 4.4.4; NB 686. For a very different approach to Berkeley’s rejection of this argument, see David Berman, “The Distrustful Philosopher: Berkeley Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea of Faith”, in George Berkeley: Religion and Science in the Age of Enlightenment, Silvia Parigi, ed. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010) 141-157, 150.
118 DHP 175.
119 DHP 176f.
120 DHP 177, 178.
121 DHP 178.
122 DHP 178.
hands, one pre-heated and the other pre-cooled, into a basin of lukewarm water, the water feels hot to one hand and cool to the other. Philonous concludes that heat is not in the water, but in the perceiver. It is, in the Lockean terms that Hylas has not yet accepted, an idea of a secondary quality.

After the false start in the discussion of heat, it is as though Philonous has figured out how to work with his interlocutor. Hylas’ admissions that ideas of other secondary qualities are in us, but not in their objects come thick and fast. He finds it strange to say out loud, but “sugar is not sweet.” To animals that feed on garbage and carrion, these things must not smell as they smell to us. Hylas tries to dig his heels when talking about sound, and Berkeley the parodist makes a brief appearance: “It seems then there are two sorts of sound, the one vulgar, or that which is heard, the other philosophical and real.” Hylas’ resistance does not last long. He contests the mind-dependence of our ideas of colours, but gives the argument up there as well. Light seems to go if colours go, and so “[l]ight and colours, as immediately perceived by us, I grant cannot exist without the mind.”

After these arguments, Hylas recalls some terminology. “Colours, sounds, tastes, in a word, all those termed secondary qualities, have certainly no existence without the mind.” These ideas of secondary qualities, though, are by no means to be conflated with ideas of primary qualities. These are “extension, figure, solidity, gravity, motion, and rest. And these [philosophers] hold exist really in bodies.” Hylas says he has heard of this view before, but now he’s convinced by it. That is to say, Hylas has cast in his lot with the Lockeans.

Philonous now turns to Hylas’ newfound conviction that figure and extension are really in things.

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123 DHP 179.
124 DHP 180.
125 DHP 180f.
126 DHP 182.
127 DHP 186.
128 DHP 187.
129 DHP 187.
130 DHP 187f.
PHILONOUS. But what if the same arguments which are brought against secondary qualities, will hold good against [ideas of primary qualities] also?

HYLAS. Why then I shall be obliged to think, they too exist only in the mind.\textsuperscript{131}

The argument that really convinced Hylas that heat did not reveal a real feature of things turned on the fact that it could be felt in two different degrees by the same person at the same time. So Philonous makes a similar argument about extension. He imagines a person looking through a microscope with one eye, and squinting at the thing on the plate with the other eye. Such a person would receive two very different ideas of the extension before him.\textsuperscript{132} Or a mite – Berkeley’s favourite example of a very small animal – perceives its own foot as regular-sized. A mite’s parasite would see it as huge. We see it as tiny.\textsuperscript{133}

In stating the point, Berkeley makes reference to his theory of visible \textit{minima}, discussed in the \textit{New Theory of Vision}.\textsuperscript{134} The difference in perception between the two eyes or the two perceivers is roughly quantifiable. Suppose that sighted creatures have some fixed number of visible \textit{minima}, like pixels on a screen. When all perceivers view the mite’s foot from a middle distance, say, the percentage of \textit{minima} occupied by the mite’s foot in the visual field of whatever parasitizes mites will be greater than the percentage of \textit{minima} representing the mite’s foot in the visual field of the mite itself, which in turn will be greater than the percentage of \textit{minima} representing the mite’s foot in the visual field of the human observer.

The upshot: just as our ideas of secondary qualities are relative to both the perceiver and the occasion of perception, so are our ideas of primary qualities. At this stage the argument is essentially complete, Berkeley thinks, for extension is the most fundamental of the so-called primary qualities.\textsuperscript{135} But, to be on the safe side, Philonous argues against motion and solidity as well.\textsuperscript{136} In the 1734 edition of the \textit{Dialogues}, Berkeley underlines the fact: “Be the sensible

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} DHP 188.
\item \textsuperscript{132} DHP 189.
\item \textsuperscript{133} DHP 188. Popkin points out that this kind of example is taken from Bayle’s entry \textit{Zeno}. Popkin, “Pyrrhonism,” 244.
\item \textsuperscript{134} DHP 188; NTV 82f.
\item \textsuperscript{135} DHP 191.
\item \textsuperscript{136} DHP 190f.
\end{itemize}
quality what it will, figure, or sound, or colour; it seems alike impossible it should subsist in that which doth not perceive it.”

Moreover, it is illicit for Hylas to try to conceive of a world bare of secondary qualities. Hylas cannot “separate the ideas of extension and motion, from the ideas of all those qualities which they who make the distinction, term secondary”. Hylas makes the mistake of appealing to the way mathematicians do this, which allows Philonous to expound on the absurdity of such abstraction. He closes by inviting Hylas to perform a thought experiment, reminiscent of Berkeley’s explicitly anti-Lockean argument about abstraction, one which he privately called a “killing blow” against Locke. “[T]ry if you can frame the idea of any figure, abstracted from all particularities of size, or even from other sensible qualities.”

Hylas discovers that he can’t frame an idea of this sort. So he grants Philonous’ contention that as things appear, “sensible qualities coexist, … [they] appear as being in the same place”. So just as the relativity arguments show that there is no reason to suppose that extension, or any other primary quality reveals the world, this argument is to show that we can’t imagine a world without secondary qualities. Our ideas, as it were, are woven together.

Philonous has effectively driven a wedge between Hylas’ ideas and the supposed material world. Hylas could reply: “Very well, I’ll be a sceptic about the external world then.” However, Hylas is determined not to be a sceptic, a determination that Berkeley extends, perhaps with misplaced charity, to Locke. (While the historical Locke was not a sceptic, it may well be that he was just not seriously concerned with avoiding scepticism.) And so, after a few other false starts on Hylas’ part, Philonous goes on the offensive.

4.4 The So-Called ‘Master Argument’
What Philonous presents is often misleadingly called the ‘master argument’. This is misleading because, as we will see, it is not an argument, but rather an articulation of what is wrong with any view that includes matter, and *a fortiori* with [NSP]: the material entities that play a role in such a view are inconceivable. In the context of the *Dialogues*, this gives Hylas a choice. He can keep his certainties only if he gives up on matter.

As we consider the so-called master argument, it is good to have in mind the parallel passage from the *Principles*. There Berkeley apologizes for going on at length about immaterialism when he could easily establish that there is no matter “with the utmost evidence in a line or two”:

> It is but looking into your own thoughts, and so trying whether you can conceive it possible for a sound, or figure, or motion, or colour, to exist without the mind, or unperceived. This easy trial may make you see, that what you contend for, is a downright contradiction. Insomuch that I am content to put the whole upon this issue; if you can but conceive it possible for one extended moveable substance, or in general, for any one idea or any thing like an idea, to exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it, I shall readily give up the cause … the bare possibility of your opinion’s being true, shall pass for an argument that it is so.

As Philonous puts the point to Hylas, “I am content to put the whole upon this issue. If you can conceive it possible for any mixture or combination of qualities, or any sensible object whatever, to exist without the mind, then I will grant it actually to be so.” With no sounding board but himself, we find Berkeley musing in the *Notebooks*, “I wonder how men cannot see a truth so obvious, as that extension cannot exist without a a [sic] thinking substance.”

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144 PHK 22.
145 DHP 200.
146 NB 270.
It is important to note that none of the above contain an argument: these are observations.\textsuperscript{147} Berkeley’s dialectical means of presenting the observation is to invite his interlocutor to conceive of a mind independent thing, with the promise that if he does, \textit{then} he, Berkeley, will give up his metaphysical project. This has the logical form of a conditional with a false antecedent, from which Berkeley’s supposed conclusion would not follow.\textsuperscript{148} But it also has the conversational form of a conditional with an absurdly strong consequent. It is like saying, “If that’s true, I’ll be a monkey’s uncle.” The extreme consequent serves to underline just how certain the speaker is that the antecedent is false.

If Berkeley had written “If you can conceive of an unconceived thing, I’ll pay you a million pounds,” no one would confuse this with an argument. But this is the force of what he did write. It is not an argument, but a challenge. Since it is a challenge that cannot be met, Berkeley thinks, it does not matter what he promises to do if, \textit{per impossibile}, the challenge were met. Hylas tries to conceive of an unperceived tree, and Philonous points out that Hylas is thinking of the tree, and it is therefore perceived. In the \textit{Principles}, Berkeley invites the reader to do the experiment for himself by thinking of something unperceived: “[D]o not you yourself perceive or think of [it] all the while?”\textsuperscript{149} Berkeley thinks that the point established by this simple observation.

The upshot of the observation is that nobody knows what an unconceived thing is. Anyone who tries to conceive of one ends up conceiving of a what Berkeley calls a ‘sensible thing’, namely a combination of qualities.\textsuperscript{150} So in Berkeley’s view, the defender of matter is violating a basic rule of dialectic, that only coherent claims may be put forward. It’s one thing to introduce a concept which is not entirely worked out, but quite another to introduce a concept

\textsuperscript{147} Although Samuel Rickless has recently made a powerful case for the strength of the argument that emerges if the Master Argument is read as a real argument. Unfortunately, I just think this cannot be Berkeley’s intent. See Samuel Rickless, \textit{Berkeley’s Argument for Idealism} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 127ff.

\textsuperscript{148} “If A then B”, and “not-A”, does not allow one to conclude “not-B”, and thus “If you can conceive of something unconceived, then I’ll give up the argument,” and “You can’t conceive of something unconceived” does not yield the conclusion “Then it is not the case that I will give up the argument”.

\textsuperscript{149} PHK 23.

\textsuperscript{150} This claim would be easily refuted by counterexample if Berkeley did not also defend anti-abstractionism and reject realism about mathematics. Thus he would say that general ideas and mathematical statements are meaningful only when expressed as relations between particular sensible things.
that no party to the discussion has worked out, or can work out. A tedious person might insist on the role of flibbertigibbets in a theory, and force his interlocutor to deduce their nature. But someone who defends the role of flibbertigibbets while neither he nor his interlocutor know what flibbertigibbets are is guilty of something much more bizarre. It is not clear that such a person is even arguing. If Berkeley is right, the defender of matter is like such a person. He is defending ___. [NSP], thus, asserts that the world is not as sensible things suggest, but it is instead properly understood as consisting of ___. Until the blank space is filled in, neither of these are positions, and thus neither of them could be established by arguments. It seems fair to reply to the advancement of a non-position with the observation that it is too undeveloped to be argued about. This is what Philonous does, when he entreats Hylas, “consider whether it be like a philosopher, or even like a man of common sense, to pretend to believe you know not what, and you know not why.”

Hylas is thus offered the choice that Berkeley thinks confronts the Lockean: give up matter, or give up certainty about those things which common sense assures us are true. But the choice should be easy, for the motivation for giving up certainty cannot even be expressed! That is because Berkeley thinks that such a motivation would have to make reference to something unconceived, an impossible requirement to meet. Besides, belief in matter puts into question the things our senses reveal.

Look! are not the fields covered with a delightful verdure? Is there not something in the woods and groves, in the rivers and clear springs that sooths, that delights, that transports the soul? … How sincere a pleasure is it to behold the natural beauties of the earth! … What delicacy, what beauty, what contrivance in animal and vegetable bodies? … Raise now your thoughts from this ball of earth, to all those glorious luminaries that adorn the high arch of heaven. The motion and situation of the planets, are they not admirable for use and order? … How vivid and radiant is the lustre of the fixed stars! How magnificent and rich that negligent profusion, with which they appear to be scattered throughout the whole azure vault! … How should those principles be entertained, that lead us to think all the visible beauty of the creation a false imaginary glare?

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151 DHP 219.
152 DHP 210f.
The promise of immaterialism is that sensible bodies turn out to exist, and to be revealed to us by our senses. As Berkeley puts it in the Notebooks, “I am the farthest from Scepticism of any man. I know with an intuitive knowlege the existence of other things as well as my own Soul. this is wt Locke nor scarce any other Thinking Philosopher will pretend to.”

In the event, Hylas makes the right choice. It shouldn’t surprise the careful reader. Berkeley knew the classics well, and always chose the names of his interlocutors with care. The name Hylas is a conceptual pun. For one thing, it is derived from the Greek word for matter, for another, it was the name of a lover of Hercules who vanished under peculiar circumstances. The two were travelling on the Argo, and on a stop at Kios (modern Gemlik) Hylas went to fetch water alone. The nymphs of the stream pulled Hylas in, and he was never again seen by mortal eyes. So the reader knows that Hylas is going to lose the argument in a very interesting way: he is going to lose himself. In the dialogue, Hylas’ views are completely eliminated, and Philonous speaks the concluding words of the dialogues, suggestively, by a fountain.

You see, Hylas, the water of yonder fountain, how it is forced upwards, in a round column, to a certain height; at which it breaks and falls back into the bason from whence it rose: its ascent as well as descent, proceeding from the same uniform law or principle of gravitation. Just so, the same principles which at first view lead to scepticism, pursued to a certain point, bring men back to common sense.

4.5 Locke Saved

With Hylas gone, his materialism vanished, what is left for Locke? Berkeley thought there was quite a bit of Locke left to salvage. In the second and third chapters, I will consider elements of Locke that reappear in the accounts of body and agency I attribute to Berkeley. But

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153 NB 563.
154 In antiquity to ‘cry Hylas’ meant to search for something that had been lost. P. Kretschmer argues that the name Hylas is etymologically related to the Greek verb 'υλάω' which is related to the Latin ‘ululare’ to give us the English ‘howl’. P. Kretschmer, “Mythische Namen,” Glotta 14.1 (1923) 33-36, 35.
155 DHP 262f.
Chapter One 4.5 Locke Saved

Berkeley gives a hint at another salvageable and important aspect of Locke in the *Notebooks*. “Locke’s great oversight seems to be that he did not Begin wth his Third Book at least that he had not some thought of it at first. Certainly the 2 1st books don’t agree wth wt he says in ye 3d.” My suggestion is that Berkeley thought Locke’s theory on language, and, as I will argue in the course of this dissertation, various other positions, could flourish after Locke’s commitment to material substance was excised.

Book Three, “Of Words”, is primarily about language. Words are “signs of internal conceptions”. Locke gives an anthropological explanation of the need for words. We need these signs because we live in community. “The comfort and advantage of society not being to be had without communication of thoughts, it was necessary that man should find out some external sensible signs, whereof those invisible ideas, which his thoughts are made up for, might be made known to others.” This is true for Berkeley too. If I want you to know what I am thinking about, I cannot show you my private ideas (the privacy of ideas does not entail that ideas are private in the sense that God does not know about them, but rather that they cannot be in more than one finite mind). I therefore need a sign that we can both recognize, so that when I display this sign, you will know what I am thinking about. Language fills this gap. So far so Berkeleian: in the *Notebooks*, Berkeley lists as one of four central explanatory principles of his philosophy “Language & knowlege are all about ideas, words stand for nothing else.”

When I speak to you, it would be impractical for me to give you a list of each and every idea. General terms allow me to cluster multiple ideas together under a single word. I wonder whether in Lockean general terms, we find Berkeley’s Lockean alternative to abstraction. Now, often for Locke general terms will signify general *ideas*. Berkeley would not go along with this, at least if the general ideas are supposed to be abstract. One of the theses for which Berkeley is most famous is his repudiation of abstract ideas. In Berkeley’s view, an idea can never be anything but a particular, it cannot be indeterminate in respect of particular features. However, a

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156 NB 717.
158 Locke, *Essay*, 3.2.2.
159 Locke, *Essay*, 3.1.1f.
160 NB 312.
particular idea may be made to stand for many other similar ideas. For example, my idea of the Bodleian library might be that of which I think when someone says the word ‘library’, not because I believe that every library looks like the Bodleian, but because I use the Bodleian library as a kind of mental shorthand. In this instance, the idea of the Bodleian would be a general idea.¹⁶² (This theory of course raises many questions, but they would require dissertation length answers in their own rights, and I will not address them here.) Most of the time, writes Berkeley, “it seems that a word becomes general by being made the sign, not of an abstract general idea but, of several particular ideas, any one of which it indifferently suggests to the mind.”¹⁶³

For Locke, words are a public semiotic system that does not require any particular ontological commitment about bodies. Now Locke thinks that while ideas come to us in regular ways, this does not make it possible to get our words to signify “the reality of things.”¹⁶⁴ Thus “it is a perverting the use of words, and brings unavoidable obscurity and confusion into their signification, whenever we make them stand for any thing, but those ideas we have in our own minds.”¹⁶⁵ As an account of language, Locke’s theory has not fared well since the linguistic turn. It seems to have the result of trapping us all in a linguistic solipsism: since all my words stand for ideas, and since ideas are private,¹⁶⁶ a word really cannot mean the same to you that it does to me.¹⁶⁷ But without the matter, if Berkeleian immaterialism is true, our words once again do refer to real things, namely to our ideas of sense, and the account takes on a new dimension. Language offers a way for me to be influenced by others without compromising the privacy of my own ideas. When you tell me something, I reorder my ideas in keeping with your words (transmitted via ideas of sense), and thus learn about you, without ever needing to leave my own experience. Language provides Berkeley with the resources for an immaterialist account of intersubjectivity.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² PHK i12.
¹⁶³ PHK i11.
¹⁶⁴ Locke, Essay, 3.2.5.
¹⁶⁵ Locke, Essay, 3.2.5.
¹⁶⁶ Locke, Essay, 3.2.1
¹⁶⁸ Does all of this mean that on my view of Berkeley, ideas are not private? The answer to this is yes. On my view, God’s omniscience extends to our ideas, and God allows us to sense some of his ideas. Thus it would be wrong to
I propose that Berkeley wanted to save more than just the account of language in Book Three. He wanted to save what he could of Locke’s conception of bodies, as I will try to show in the next chapter. He wanted to save Locke’s understanding of how the mind affected the human body, as I will show in the third chapter. My suggestion is that we can find reasons for much of Berkeley’s approach in the assumption that he wanted to vindicate an immaterialist version of Locke.

5.1 Conclusion

I’ve argued above against a certain fairly common view about Berkeley: that Berkeley is Locke’s philosophical nemesis. I think this is wrong for a number of reasons. It obscures Berkeley’s real target, which is [NSP]. It muddies his motivation, which was to preserve [CSP]. I find it much more plausible to think that Berkeley’s Locke fits into a story of which he is neither the hero nor the villain. The villain is the sceptic. But, like that of the sceptic, Locke’s thought makes reference to the primary/secondary quality distinction. To Berkeley, Locke contains something of the sceptic, and something of common sense. By showing how Locke could be, as it were, purified, Berkeley is showing the route into his own view. It is to that view which I now turn.
Chapter Two

1.1 Introduction

Berkeley claims to be defending common sense. As I discussed in the last chapter, he defends it by trying to preserve the Common Sense Picture [CSP] against a rival that involves a commitment to the existence of matter. As Berkeley saw it, this leads to the New Sceptical Picture, [NSP]. Berkeley’s attack on Locke is an attempt to preserve [CSP]. Berkeley tries to show, in the so-called Master Argument, that the motivation for [NSP] cannot even be stated.

But supposing we granted that [CSP] is coherent and [NSP] is not, it still does not follow that common sense is Berkeleian. Indeed, it does not even follow that common sense is compatible with Berkelian doctrines. This worry arose early and in the case of bodies in particular. Boswell suspected that Berkeley could not be answered by “pure reasoning.”¹ But it is precisely because of this that he recounts the stone-kicking ‘refutation’ of Samuel Johnson.² In Boswell’s admiring eyes, Johnson’s kick “was a stout exemplification of the first truths of Pere Bouffier [sic], or the original principles of Reid and Beattie”.³ Even so early on, Boswell’s instinct is to reach for Claude Buffier, Thomas Reid, and James Beattie, three philosophers often identified as champions of common sense, and to say of Berkeley that he is not like them. Unlike such philosophers, runs the suggestion, Berkeley thinks that bodies are ideal, and thus somehow less than they appear to be. In Boswell’s eyes, common sense shows otherwise. Johnson’s foot does not pass through a dreamy ideal stone, but bounces off a very real and commonsensical one. Few philosophers take Johnson’s kick seriously,⁴ but Boswell’s worry has endured. The question then is: can Berkeley deny the materiality of so-called material objects, without denying or even diluting his commitment to their existence? Certainly Berkeley thought so. In his view, theological problems would fade along with philosophical ones if we could just “mean by body what every plain ordinary person means by that word, to wit, that which is immediately

¹ James Boswell, Life of Samuel Johnson (London: Henry Baldwin, 1791) 257.
² Dated by Boswell to 1763.
³ Boswell, Johnson, 257.
seen and felt, which is only a combination of sensible qualities, or ideas”.\(^5\) I think Berkeley’s case for identifying his view with common sense is better than has previously been recognized. This chapter is an attempt to show why.

### 1.2 Chapter Outline

There is no consensus as to what Berkeley thinks bodies are. But most current views fall into one of two families, called respectively *phenomenalism* and the *collections view*. I am going to defend a version of the *collections view*.

The disagreement between the two views is really one about how to apply Berkeley’s famous *esse est percipi* principle to bodies. The *phenomenalist* supposes that what Berkeley has in mind is best expressed as a counterfactual. A body exists so long as someone, some mind that is, when correctly disposed would perceive that body. This means that the apple in the cupboard may now be unperceived by everyone, but exists because of what would happen if you or I opened the cupboard: you or I would then perceive it. The view is parsimonious, since it does not require that bodies such as the apple in the cupboard be perceived when we would conventionally say that they are unperceived. But the parsimony comes at a cost to common sense. The fact that someone who was there would sense the chair does not seem enough to explain why the chair exists *now*. Let me repeat a quotation just given: Berkeley encourages his reader to “mean by body what every plain ordinary person means by that word, *to wit, that which is immediately seen and felt, which is only a combination of sensible qualities, or ideas* [my italics]”.\(^6\) Since Berkeley is committed to *esse est percipi*, it seems to me that the strongest reading of *percipi*, namely that someone actually does perceive the body now, is necessary to account in the most commonsensical way for its continued existence.

A *collections view* is one on which a body is a collection of ideas. A body exists when a certain collection of ideas exists because it is nothing more than that collection. But what is in the collection? Different answers are possible. On mine, the collection contains all the ideas that

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\(^5\) PHK 95.

\(^6\) PHK 95.
are available for a finite mind to sense. This is not phenomenalism, because I think it is important that all these ideas exist, whether they are sensed by finite minds or not. The category of finite minds includes human beings, animals, and spiritual beings such as angels; God brings into being everything that one of us could sense. God does not bring these ideas into being at any time. On my view, God’s creation of collections is atemporal (if one supposes that ‘creation’ implies an act in time, then we might substitute a non-temporal word, e.g. ‘actualization’), and collections exist timelessly. Because these collections exist timelessly in God’s mind, Berkeley calls the Mosaic creation, which he wants to defend, ‘relative’ – it is an act of creation relative to finite minds. As possible objects of experience, plants came before gazelles. But considered as sequences of ideas, plants and gazelles both exist timelessly in the mind of God. “All objects are eternally known by God, or which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in his mind: but when things before imperceptible to creatures, are by a decree of God, made perceptible to them; then are they said to begin a relative existence, with respect to created minds.”

On the view that I am proposing, collections exist atemporally in the mind of God; and these collections are bodies. The temporality of bodies – all time in fact – is a feature of a finite mind’s experience: it is the sequence of ideas in a mind, and is nothing over and above this. Sensation is one way in which that sequence manifests itself (imagination, memory, thought, would be other ways). Common sense suggests that bodies go out of existence, in that they cease to be available for finite minds to sense. Thus bodies are members of some finite minds’ possible experiences, but not those of others. This ordering is what accounts for the common sense knowledge that bodies are temporal. However, time itself requires metaphysical explanation, on

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7 God knows which ideas I am going to sense. Could he save himself additional effort by creating only those? Thus, for example, if I own a coconut that God knows I will never crack open, does God need to bother creating ideas of the inside of the coconut? It seems to me that Berkeley thinks the answer is yes. I will discuss this further in section 5.4.

8 I take it that these are, or are among the “finite created spirits” that may have witnessed the creation of the world. DHP 252.

9 DHP 252.

10 “Time therefore being nothing, abstracted from the succession of ideas in our minds, it follows that the duration of any finite spirit must be estimated by the number of ideas or actions succeeding each other in that same spirit or mind.” PHK 98.
Berkeley’s view. And in metaphysical truth, just as minds experience time but are not in time, so bodies are experienced temporally but exist timelessly in God’s mind.\(^{11}\)

Sensation, the passive reception of ideas,\(^ {12}\) consists in the reception of member-ideas. It is important to draw attention, as a number of scholars have,\(^ {13}\) to the ways in which God’s stance toward ideas is very different from ours, since God “perceives nothing by sense as we do”.\(^ {14}\) But Berkeley has a ready means of making this distinction. His American correspondent, Johnson, once echoes Newton and calls the world “God’s boundless sensorium”.\(^ {15}\) And though Berkeley does not correct him, Johnson has gotten things completely backward. Berkeley distinguishes sensation and imagination, and so the world is more like God’s ‘imaginarium’. It is finite minds who inhabit it as a sensorium. God no more senses the ideas that we sense than we sense those ideas that we imagine. So I think that nothing prevents Berkeley from supposing, as most Christians do, that God knows all the ideas that we experience without supposing that he senses any of them.\(^ {16}\) God knows what we remember and imagine too, of course, but he does not provide these ideas to us. That is what it is to be omniscient.

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11 It is not obvious that there is a common sense position on time, but Berkeley points out in the Notebooks that his view on time helps to explain the resurrection and miracles. NB 590; NB 390.

12 In the next chapter I will argue that neither the term ‘sensation’ nor the term ‘imagination’ can quite capture the relation in which we stand to those ideas which we bring about, but conclude that ‘sensation’ comes closest. Thus sensation is in my view, for the most part the passive reception of ideas.


15 JB Feb. 5 (1730) 287. In coining this beautiful term, Johnson was drawing on Newton: “[The order of the world] can be nothing else than the Wisdom and Skill of a powerful ever-living Agent, who being in all Places, is more able by his Will to move the Bodies within his boundless uniform Sensorium, and thereby to form and reform the Parts of the Universe, than we are by our Will to move the Parts of our own Bodies” Isaac Newton, Opticks: or, A treatise of the reflections, refractions, inflections and colours of light (Printed for W. and J. Innys, printers to the Royal Society, at the Prince’s-Arms in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1718) 379.

Berkeley thinks that we humans experience member-ideas, and that these (numerically) same member-ideas make up God’s timeless collections. However, we do not experience most of the ideas in a collection. Collections are finite, but even so, to sense the whole collection that is an apple would be to sense it as a mouse would sense it, and as a flea would sense it, and also as one would sense it from every vantage point repeated across each of one’s sense modalities, and throughout all the times that it exists. The collection is not only greater than the total experience of the body of one finite mind, but it is greater than the combined experience of the body of all finite minds. One experiences only a very small fraction of the member-ideas, and only those appropriate to one’s current vantage point.

Now, when someone, A say, senses an apple, he receives a member-idea from God’s timeless collection. God effects this by willing that A will sense the member-idea. But if A wants to understand the collection, he must imagine or recall other ideas in that collection (sweet ideas, red ideas, and so on), and A must also make inferences about the nature of the relations that obtain between these ideas. He thus represents the apple as having a past (it grew) and having a future (it will decay). What A is doing is weaving an imitation, or a representation of God’s collection around the thing he senses. He connects the idea of sensation to a constellation of ideas of memory and imagination by a network of relations. A’s collection is finite, and so is God’s, but A’s collection will always fall far short. For one thing, A can only draw on his past experience in furnishing it. For another, he may make mistakes, either by imagining the wrong ideas to be in the collection (e.g.: putting in sweet ideas when the apple has gone sour) or by wrongly relating the ideas together (e.g.: supposing that the stem will have a sweet smell).

To prevent confusion, let me label these two collections now in play. Let us call the divine collection a collection_D, and that of A – or of any other finite mind – a collection_F. If A and B sense the same apple, their sensations will be different, and so their collections_F must differ at least a little bit. In figure 1 below, A and B both sense the same body. Now the ideas of sense received by A and B will differ, for they are different member-ideas of the collection_D. Further, their construals of the other ideas in God’s collection_D will differ. I have shaded these gray, as they are memories or imaginings of what the other ideas in God’s collection_D are like, and are thus less “strong, lively, and distinct” than those sensed. And finally, their construals of the relations at issue, represented below by dotted lines, may differ. That is to say, they may

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17 PHK 30.
differ in effect. Every act is similar to every other act, in that all acts are exercises of the will. They will probably differ a lot, with A and B both supplying different ideas of memory and imagination, and relating them together in different ways.

Because sensation puts them in touch with the real body (for sensation is of one of the body’s member-ideas, although it is not the whole body at once), A and B can never be completely wrong about a body when they sense it. At least one item in their collections will be of the body. But though this point of contact guarantees that A and B cannot be totally wrong, they certainly can be wildly wrong. As in the fable about the blind men and the elephant, the nature of a single body can be construed in many different ways. Berkeley’s stance toward Lockean representationalism is, I think, best understood by considering collections. Collections are tied closely enough to real bodies that there is at least one ready reply to the sceptic, since one cannot be completely wrong about the sensed thing.

But for Berkeley, most of our thinking will rely upon what I am calling collections, and these are, for the most part, cobbled together out of memory and imagination. It seems right to me then to call Berkeley a representationalist, and to call these collections made by finite minds ‘representations’. They represent their objects (God’s collections) primarily by resemblance. Berkeley avoids the dangers of Lockean representationalism though, because for Berkeley the

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18 I am here following George Pappas’ approach to ideas that make up sensible bodies, and which we directly perceive. Indeed, I am deeply indebted to his approach. See George Pappas, *Berkeley’s Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 173ff.
collections\textsubscript{F} made by finite minds (1) may contain constituent parts of the things they represent, i.e. member-ideas of God’s collections\textsubscript{D}, and (2) because they are composed of the very same sorts of things as God’s collections\textsubscript{D}, i.e. ideas in constituent relations. Unlike Locke, Berkeley does not suppose that representations cut us off from the world. But like Locke, Berkeley thinks that daily life for the most part relies on representations. In the morning, I see part of the surface of my toothbrush; a great deal is added before I am aware of anything that could brush my teeth. And Berkeley writes that bodies are “represented by the imagination” (it is important that for Berkeley, ‘imagination’ does not refer to a faculty, but rather to one application of the will).\textsuperscript{19}

So Berkeley has an answer to the sceptic. The sceptic asks how we can know that our experience of subjective appearances reveals an objective reality. On Berkeley’s view, reality or objectivity turns out to be the sum of all subjective appearances – i.e. the sum of all possible sensations, and nothing cuts us off from these sensations. However, our sensations comprise such tiny parts of bodies that it can sometimes be difficult to be certain that our collections\textsubscript{F} do a good job of imitating collections\textsubscript{D}. Hallucinations and illusions, as I will argue below, are extreme cases of misconstrual – the collection\textsubscript{D} that is sensed turns out to be almost entirely different from one’s collection\textsubscript{F}. If our collections\textsubscript{F} are like photographs, we are nearsighted photographers, never certain enough of having our object even mostly in the frame.

As to collections\textsubscript{D}, Berkeley calls and thinks of bodies as ‘archetypes’, the originals at which our representations aim. But everything about Berkeley’s use of the word ‘archetype’ is controversial, and so what I am saying is controversial too. Berkeley’s archetypes avoid the central problem of Lockean archetypes, for the member-ideas of Berkeley’s archetypes can be directly sensed.

Berkeley sees the difference between collections\textsubscript{F} and collections\textsubscript{D} in terms of control. The ideas in a collection\textsubscript{D} are almost entirely controlled by God. The ideas of a collection\textsubscript{F} are almost entirely controlled by us. The exception in the latter case is the idea of sense, which is a member-idea of both a collection\textsubscript{F} and a collection\textsubscript{D} in the moment of sensation. We don’t control this idea, we passively receive it in sensation.\textsuperscript{20} Now, on Berkeley’s view, we control those ideas which we provide by acts of will. These acts of will are like the divine fiat, in that

\textsuperscript{19} DHP 194. See also PHK 1.

\textsuperscript{20} As I will argue in chapter three, at times we act, and in so doing produce what might be called a sensation. But I will save consideration of this special sort of sensation for chapter three.
ideas are inherently receptive to our wills, and exist or cease to exist depending upon such acts of will.\(^2\) Berkeley also thinks that human free action may by means of willing bring about, which is to say directly change, certain features of bodies, i.e. that we can affect some collections\(_D\). But I will take up that topic in the next chapter.

My view is not the only variant of the collections view. My first task in the next section will be to explain how having two collections – collections\(_F\) and collections\(_D\) – improves upon a standard version of the collections view, one that has only one collection. The greatest advantages of my view are philosophical. But there is textual reason to adopt my view too. Section three will show that Berkeley’s term, ‘archetype’, refers to bodies, to collections\(_D\). Section four will locate discussions of collections\(_D\) in the Principles and the Dialogues. I will consider the philosophical implications of these texts in section five, where I will go into more detail about my two-collection view, by considering God’s collections\(_D\) by analogy with human collections\(_F\).

In section six, I will consider some objections to the view that I have put forward. First, I will consider whether my view has troubling implications for Berkeley’s philosophical theology on account of the role of God. Does Berkeley portray God unworthily, as a cosmic micromanager? I think Berkeley’s view requires no more managing from God than does any theistic account. Does my view depend on the continuity argument, a proof for the existence of God that is often thought to be one of Berkeley’s weakest arguments? I argue that while what I have said turns on some premises of the continuity argument, the reasoning is distinct. I consider also the worry that my position must collapse into phenomenalism, and also whether I can accommodate the quality of fleetingness that Berkeley attributes to ideas.

Still in section six, I consider the problem posed by the heterogeneity of ideas. Bodies, according to me, are made of ideas from the different sense modalities. But Berkeley writes that these ideas are totally heterogeneous, and not interconvertible. I argue that they can, nevertheless, be joined in collections\(_D\) and collections\(_F\).

### 2.1 How Collections\(_F\) are Formed

\(^2\) Cf. PHK 28: “I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy: and by the same power it is obliterated, and makes way for another.”
Let us begin with those collections upon the existence of which all collection views agree: the collections made by finite minds. The view is right, I think, insofar as it maintains that bodies, according to Berkeley, must be collections of ideas. Berkeley argues that knowledge comes from experience, and that experience consists of the possession of ideas. These ideas are received and preserved in certain relations to one another. That is, ideas are presented in order. The relations that can be observed in that order, though not sensed, can be known. (We will have notional knowledge of these relations, since the relations are not ideas and cannot be represented by means of ideas. A great many questions remain about how Berkeley intends the reader to understand notional knowledge. Perhaps these questions can never be answered. At any rate, I am not going to try to answer them. Instead, I will assume that we can know relations, and merely observe that this is notional knowledge.) If we can have knowledge of bodies, that knowledge must come to us in this sequence of ideas.

What is the sensed apple, then? Vision reveals an idea: the red shape. As Margaret Atherton has recognized, Berkeley employs the scenario originally raised by William Molyneux of the Man-Born-Blind-and-Made-to-See as a way for the reader to consider the contents of perception. Berkeley thinks – and he seems always to have thought it obvious – that such a man would not immediately recognize the way that ideas of different sense modalities fit together.22

…a man born blind, and afterwards, …made to see would not in the first act of vision parcel out the ideas of sight into the same distinct collections that others do, who have experienced which do regularly coexist and are proper to be bundled up together under one name. He would not, for example, make into one complex idea, and thereby esteem and unite, all those particular ideas, which constitute the visible head or foot.23

On becoming able to see, the man only sees individual ideas of sight. He sees member ideas, but not a yet a collection.24

23 NTV 110.
24 It is also worth noting here that Berkeley states that some collections are more proper than others.
In the case of the apple, the red shape “suggests to the mind” other ideas. What kinds of ideas are these? Berkeley begins the *Principles* by considering three objects of human knowledge, (1) “ideas actually imprinted on the senses”, in this case the red shape, (2) “such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind”, notional knowledge of the actions of minds,25 and (3) “ideas formed by help of memory and imagination”.26 Clearly, it is this third sort that is at issue here. Berkeley explains how memory and imagination get us to ideas of bodies: “either [by] compounding, dividing, or barely representing those [ideas] originally perceived in the aforesaid ways.”27 In other words, all the ideas supplied to furnish a collection must be drawn from experience. The medieval maxim, that nothing enters the mind but through the senses, holds true.28

It is right to say that every perceiver makes apple collections out of his own experience – in my locution these are collections, but as we will see, according to a one collection view these are the only sorts of collections there are.

Smelling furnishes me with odours; the palate with tastes, and hearing conveys sounds to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition. And as several of these are observed to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one thing. Thus, for example, a certain colour, taste, smell, figure and consistence having been observed to go together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name *apple.*29

Since every finite mind perceives something slightly different, and has different memories, each finite mind’s collection of the same apple will be different. The collections view finds its source in passages such as those just now quoted. And it is ubiquitous in the secondary literature.

25 Though Berkeley sometimes suggests that these should be called notions, he also at times refers to them as ideas, as is the case here.

26 PHK 1.

27 PHK 1.

28 Cf. NB 779.

29 PHK 1. Berkeley goes on “Other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things.” While I would be delighted with a reading that allowed me to take these as collections, I suspect Berkeley has in mind only collections in PHK 1.
“When we refer to any object,” writes one reader of Berkeley, “we are referring to a certain collection of ideas, perception of any of which suggests the existence and perceivability of all the others.”30 “Objects are collections of [sensory] ideas”, writes another.31 Berkeley, we read in a recent book, “is proposing that we think of physical objects as nothing more than the sum of their qualities.”32

One question for a defender of a collections view is this: is any collectionF more correct, or truer than any other? Many readers would say that the answer is no. One collectionF might be more useful relative to some end than another collectionF would be. But there is no standard beyond expediency by which both may be compared. I think the answer is yes. A collectionF is more correct, the more it resembles God’s collectionD. (Though of course I grant that an incorrect collection might sometimes happen to be more expedient than a correct one.) So let me now consider the version of the collections view against which I am arguing, which I will call a one collection view. This is in contrast to my own view, which involves two types of collections, collectionsF and collectionsD.

2.2 One Collection Views

The dominant version of the collections view is a one collection view, in that on this version, there is in metaphysical truth only one type of collection: the sort of collection made by finite minds. Thus when humans (or animals, or angels) sense bodies, we combine our sensations with other ideas. The resulting collections are bodies. And so while a defender of a one-collection view is committed to the existence of a great many instances of collections, each of these will be of the same sort, i.e. it will be a collection produced by a finite mind.

One advocate of a one collection view writes, “[a] thing is, then, a collection of aspects or qualities which are colligated by the perceiver.”33 Bodily things are collections of ideas, says

30 G. J. Warnock, Berkeley (Hampshire: Gregg Revivals, 1992) 130.
32 Stoneham, Berkeley’s World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 249. The term ‘object’ has always struck me as misleading, since minds can be called ‘objects’ in ordinary English. But I think I intend the same thing by my term ‘body’.
another, and “[t]hese collections are the products of human mental activity”\textsuperscript{34}. Another argues that when Berkeley writes “a cherry, I say, is nothing but a congeries of sensible impressions”,\textsuperscript{35} by using ‘congeries’ rather than ‘collection’ Berkeley is stating that collections are human constructs, for the word ‘congeries’ means something that is made, not found.\textsuperscript{36}

The view is parsimonious compared to mine: I have two types of collection, it has only one. And while I don’t think any text forces the view upon us, some certainly lend themselves to such a reading. Perhaps one of the most powerful is this statement of Philonous’ in the Dialogues.

But in case every variation was thought sufficient to constitute a new kind or individual, the endless number or confusion of names would render language impracticable. Therefore to avoid this as well as other inconveniencies which are obvious upon a little


\textsuperscript{35} DHP 249.

\textsuperscript{36} Stoneham, *World*, 250. I think Stoneham has missed the point of the introduction of the word ‘congeries’ here. Hylas is arguing that immaterialism does not really offer an escape from scepticism. “it amounts to no more than this. We are sure that we really see, hear, feel; in a word, that we are affected with sensible impressions.” DHP 249. Philonous responds, “I see this cherry, I feel it, I taste it: and I am sure nothing cannot be seen, or felt, or tasted: it is therefore real. Take away the sensations of softness, moisture, redness, tartness, and you take away the cherry.” DHP 249. I think the image of the cherry is significant here. Berkeley never again talks about cherries. But in Locke’s correspondence with Stillingfleet, Locke uses a cherry as an example. Stillingfleet had asked Locke how we come up with an idea of substance (wrongly assuming that we sense it). Locke replies “all the ideas of all the sensible qualities of a cherry come into my mind by sensation; [we reason that] they cannot exist or subsist of themselves. Hence the mind perceives their necessary connexion with inherence or being supported; which being a relative idea superadded to the red colour in a cherry, or to thinking in a man, the mind frames the correlative idea of a support.” John Locke, *A Letter to Edward, Bishop of Worcester*, *Philosophical Works and Selected Correspondence of John Locke*. Mark C. Rooks, ed. (Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation, 1995) v. 4, 21, 27. Hylas is supposing that he must come up with an idea of substance *over and above* the ideas of sense that make up the cherry if we are going to answer the sceptic. And if, we had a Stillingfleetean substance-sensing power it might be possible to respond to the sceptic along these lines. But Locke does not allow for such a power. And since he does not, a gap opens up between appearance and reality, the very gap which Philonous has been using to force Hylas into unhappy scepticism. The argument, then, is *ad hominem*, surely legitimate though in the dialectical context, and the word ‘congeries’ points out that the collection at issue is made by Hylas.
thought, men combine together several ideas, apprehended by divers senses, or by the same sense at different times, or in different circumstances, but observed however to have some connexion in Nature, either with respect to co-existence or succession; all which they refer to one name, and consider as one thing.37

One might be tempted to understand Philonous as saying that there are no collections beyond those we make ourselves. Philonous seems to say that all collections are produced on grounds of expediency.

But one must be careful not to take such passages as this one out of context. Hylas has challenged Philonous to reconcile his view with common sense and common practice. Philonous claims that every sensation is somehow right, that every sensation is correct. But how can that be when different people experience different things, and we all have recourse to a closer look – or even to a look through a microscope – to confirm what we see with the naked eye? What is the cause of disagreement or the point of verification if we all see what is there right from the start? Philonous begins his reply, “[s]trictly speaking, Hylas, we do not see the same object that we feel”.38 Nor do we see the same thing when we look with a microscope, or, I suppose, if we come back and look again tomorrow. It is rather that we notice the connections between these ‘proper’ objects of perception and the rest of the network of ideas that is the thing. It is this thing that we notice by observing the “connexion[s] in Nature”. Such an interpretation seems to me to be the right one of passages such as the one above quoted. Ultimately, though, the strength of my case will depend less on how I can interpret passages that appear to force a one collection view, and more on showing that Berkeley talks about a second, divine, collection.

The weakness of one collection views is that they seem to have a number of implications that are counterintuitive even by the low standards that some apply to Berkeley. If the collections that count are those we assemble over the course of our own lives, then no two people really experience the same body. There will in metaphysical truth be multiple collections where common sense suggests that there is but a single apple. If collections are understood more globally, as sums of all the ideas had by finite minds, they may avoid this worry, but they will still be constantly shifting and changing. Apples today won’t be what they used to be, not even

37 DHP 245.
38 DHP 245.
what they used to be this morning. But perhaps the most odd implication of a *one collection view* is that human beings (and angels, and animals) make apples. These collections are the products of our activity. This seems odd to those of us who suppose that apples existed independently of any finite minds, and that apples were discovered but not created by the first finite minds who came into contact with apples. Apples had to come from somewhere, from a creation or perhaps from the working out of certain laws. But after that it seems commonsensical to think that apples were discovered, rather than invented.

I am not the first to think that a *one collection view* commits Berkeley to a very strange position. David Raynor, though he does take Berkeley to believe that collections are human fictions, describes his project of explaining this as “bringing the bizarre Berkeley out from under the shadow of his dominant commonsense alter-ego.”\(^{39}\) And others have agreed that understanding collections which are fundamentally human products as being what are ordinarily regarded as (finite) mind-independent bodies is in tension with Berkeley’s commitment to common sense.\(^{40}\)

### 2.3 Representing the Natural Order

My view is that one type of collection is not enough. What is needed is a *two collections view*, where one type of collection, namely God’s, will serve as the standard for the other.

On my view, collections are constituted by ideas in relations. The whiteness of the apple is not merely associated with the redness, the whiteness is *inside* the redness. To put ideas into certain constitutive relations is to order them in such ways: although the apple is not opened, there is a right way to represent the unsensed inside of the apple. In Berkeley’s presentation, we do so in an attempt to imitate ideas in relations that we *discover* in nature – ideas that no finite

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\(^{40}\) Richard Glauser “The Problem of the Unity of a Physical Object in Berkeley”, in *Reexamining Berkeley’s Philosophy*, Stephen Daniel, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) Glauser points to this as evidence for supposing there is more to a body than any finite mind’s collection “Unity” 52f. Jonathan Bennett recognizes the tension too, but thinks that Berkeley was never truly committed to common sense: “In his published works, I contend, Berkeley had little interest in rescuing the plain person’s beliefs about sensible things. He did not want to connect them rigorously with his ontology, or even to show that this could in principle be done.” Bennett, *Learning*, 176.
mind has related. If our collections are imitations of related ideas that we find but do not make, then there are collections out there waiting to be found and imitated. That is my central argument for the existence of Berkeley’s collections.

The reader who puts himself in the place of Berkeley’s Man-Born-Blind-and-Made-to-See is supposed to recognize that only experience could teach him even about his own body, that “the visible legs, because two, are connected with the tangible legs, or the visible head, because one, is connected with the tangible head”. Experience reveals that some ideas are such as “are proper to be bundled together”. The order of our collections reflects an external standard; representing is about getting the world right.

For Berkeley, understanding the world grows out of understanding regularities. “There are certain general laws that run through the whole chain of natural effects:” he writes, “these are learned by the observation and study of Nature, and are by men applied …to the explaining the various phenomena”. And we explain, he goes on to say, by “shewing the conformity any particular phenomenon hath to the general Laws of Nature”. When we try to get the relations in our collections right, we are arranging our ideas in the same ways. Human knowledge is of minds, ideas, and relations; our knowledge of regularities in nature seems to be neither the first nor the second kind, and so it must be of the third.

Berkeley thinks that God imposes the regularities of the natural order to make things comprehensible. As Berkeley puts it in Siris, “in the government of the world physical agents, improperly so called, or mechanical, or second causes, or natural causes, or instruments, are necessary to assist, not the Governor, but the governed.” The regularities that we observe are as they are through God’s will. Berkeley sometimes slips into a description of these regularities from God’s point of view, as when he claims to have shown “[t]hat there is a great and conspicuous use in these regular constant methods of working observed by the Supreme Agent”. Or in the Dialogues, when we hear about the “omnipresent eternal Mind, which knows

41 NTV 108.
42 NTV 110.
43 PHK 62.
44 PHK 62.
45 PHK 89. The first category being known by ideas, the second by notions.
46 S 160.
47 PHK 62.
and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules as he himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the *Laws of Nature.*\(^{48}\)

The laws of nature are not a special case of divine activity. Everything that occurs by nature occurs because it is the will of God. And God causes through volition alone, for “[t]he will of an omnipotent Spirit, is no sooner exerted than executed”.\(^ {49}\) The claim is supposed to be logical, I take it, but it has an empirical aspect as well. That is because we too, Berkeley thinks, may cause by means of volition. “I have no notion of any action distinct from volition, neither can I conceive volition to be any where but in a spirit”.\(^ {50}\) I will consider this at greater length in my next chapter. As to nature, only God seems to be an appropriate choice, for “when we talk of unthinking agents, or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse our selves with words.”\(^ {51}\) The order in which things occur, then, is a regularity imposed *for* finite minds *by* God *by means of* a volition.\(^ {52}\)

When one sees an apple, one forms certain expectations about it, that it is red all the way around, that it is sweet inside, that it has a certain firmness when touched, and so on. I think Berkeley would take the formation of such expectations as adjusting the scenes of our representations. But insofar as we are trying to produce an imitation of a body, it seems that there must be an external ordering which is the object of our imitation. Given the number of member-ideas in a collection\(_D\), such imitation can only be successful in limited ways. So when we represent, we are (even if we don’t know it) imitating relations that govern the world. If we are successful in this imitative project, the relations that we impose between member-ideas of collections\(_F\) will reflect relations between ideas of a finite-mind-independent world that we

\(^{48}\) DHP 257.

\(^{49}\) DHP 219.

\(^{50}\) DHP 239, see also DM 25ff.

\(^{51}\) PHK 28.

\(^{52}\) Our agency, Berkeley thinks, is most clearly manifest in imagination. “I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy: and by the same power it is obliterated, and makes way for another.” One thing that we apparently can do is to set these ideas in relation to each other. If one imagines how to fit the new couch into the living room, one is ‘varying the scene’, imagining it now here, now there, and the other bodies moved in relation to it. PHK 28.
sense. My suggestion is that in representing the natural order, we place ideas in relations, and thereby gain some insight into the way that God sets up the natural order in the first place.

On much of what I have written so far, I have following quite closely the conclusions presented by Richard Glauser in a recent article. Like Glauser, I think that God sets up collections, that human beings sense parts of those collections, and that we represent those collections. But the point where we now find ourselves is where Glauser and I part ways.

The difference is that I think Berkeley intends the relations that obtain between member-ideas of collections to be understood as constitutive. But Glauser understands relations as “corellations” between sign and signified. I grant that relations may serve as signs, but I am going to suggest in what follows that there is more to many Berkeleian relations than Glauser allows. In defense of his reading, Glauser points to PHK 65-6, and 108. PHK 65 begins “To all which my answer is, the connexion of ideas does not imply the relation of cause and effect, but only of a mark or sign with the thing signified.” Glauser thinks that snow’s whiteness is nothing but a sign of its coldness, the apple’s redness is nothing but a sign of its sweetness, and so on.

Now I think that Glauser has missed the point of PHK 65, which is crucially answering a question posed earlier, about how we are to reconcile the “curious organization of plants, and the admirable mechanism of animals” and even “all the clockwork of Nature” with the lack of necessary connections between physical causes and effects. Human beings rely upon these regularities in the “framing artificial things for the use and ornament of life”. The question posed by the imagined objector is: “since one idea cannot be the cause of another, to what purpose is that connexion?” The answer to this question should not be read as entailing a general thesis about connections between ideas. Berkeley is only ruling out one kind of relation between ideas: that of cause to effect. So he is answering his own question in PHK 65, by saying that the connection in question is not cause to effect, but sign to signified. His point is that a sign

54 PHK 65. In TVV 13, Berkeley writes that “[i]deas which are observed to be connected together are vulgarly considered under the relation of cause and effect, whereas, in strict and philosophic truth, they are only related as the sign to the thing signified.” This passage is subject to the same interpretation that I will shortly suggest.
55 PHK 60.
56 PHK 62.
57 PHK 64.
to signified relation is as good an explanation for why we can predict, produce, and control ideas as is a cause to effect connection.

The fact that those relations that obtain between ideas are not causal does not entail that all relations are sign to signified. If I read Glauser correctly, he takes Berkeley’s dismissive attitude toward the sorts of relations which figure in some scientific accounts to be his attitude toward relations tout court. That’s wrong. There are lots of relations which don’t boil down to signification: being beside something, or being bigger than a thing, or indeed being the true cause of a thing, which is a relation between minds and ideas. The fact that all apparently causal relations between bodies turn out to be merely sign to signified relations should not weigh in our consideration about whether there is a special ‘constitution relation’ that obtains between all the member-ideas of a body, as I am going to argue that there is.

Because I think there is a constitution relation that obtains between member-ideas of bodies, it seems to me that bodies have a kind of unity. But Glauser does not read things this way, and so his conclusion is that bodies lack unity: “there is no positive theory of the unity of a physical object in Berkeley”. Though Glauser grants that bodies “have a right to be called one”, the emphasis is on the word ‘call’: we can call bodies one, because such uses of language have a “foundation” in “sequences of sensible ideas”. These sequences don’t produce single bodies. They fall short of unity, argues Glauser, and underlines the point with a series of quotations from *Siris*, in which Berkeley unfavourably contrasts the unity of bodies with that of minds, while Glauser himself contrasts physical objects with God. I am not convinced that these passages are relevant, because Berkeley held the traditional view that minds are simple, hence indivisible, hence “naturally immortal” – and obviously nobody would want to ascribe these properties to bodies. So the focus on unity of the mental sort forces a choice between making bodies like minds and making them mere aggregates. But this overlooks a wide and teeming gray area, which contains aggregates that do not warrant the qualifier ‘mere’.

58 PHK 61.
59 It’s not completely obvious to me why sign-signified relations don’t suffice for unity on Glauser’s view, but he does not think that they do suffice. Glauser, “Unity,” 71.
60 Glauser, “Unity,” 61.
61 Ibid.
63 PHK 141.
Glauser’s view raises a false dichotomy. Because it does, Glauser assumes that when human beings represent bodies, neither the collections they represent, nor the collections that are bodies have any real orderliness. On Glauser’s view bodies are merely united by the relation of sign to signified, and perhaps this is not sufficient to constitute a body – at any rate this is what Glauser thinks. In what follows, I am going to argue that Berkeley claims that those relations that obtain between the member-ideas in bodies, although perhaps sometimes serving as or including sign to signified, are first and foremost relations of constitution.

2.4 A Case for a Second Sort of Collections

I have given two reasons to doubt a one collection view. First, as I have just now argued, the relations in which we place ideas in order to form collections$_F$ are based on, indeed, are imitations of relations that we find in our experience. Our experience is orderly, and it is this very order which we call the laws of nature. We find it natural to group certain ideas together, and to suppose of them that they are ideas of bodies. But in grouping them together that way when we form collections$_F$, then our behaviour suggests that the ideas we are imitating are forming collections of another kind already.

The second reason to doubt the one collection view is that it is in prima facie tension with common sense. If there is one belief that is paradigmatic of common sense, it is the belief in “houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects”

64 – things that are not made by each perceiver who senses them, or even by some ancient ur-perceiver: they were there to be found. (God, of course, perceived them first. But God is their creator, and common sense can recognize that a thing must in some way come to be if it is to exist.)

We might add a third reason. If the relations between member-ideas of collections$_F$ are supposed to imitate relations in the world, so are the ideas of our collections$_F$. When A sees the apple, and supposes that the apple is sweet inside and has a certain smell, A forms a collection$_F$ intended to represent the as yet unsmelled and untasted apple. The smell and taste are represented with ideas from those modalities - after all, only an idea can represent an idea.

65 But just as only an idea can represent another idea, so the only thing that could imitate a collection is

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64 PHK 4.

65 NB 46, 861; PHK 90; DHP 206.
a collection. Berkeley writes, “[c]omplex thoughts or ideas are onely an assemblage of simple ideas and can be the image of nothing or like unto nothing but another assemblage of simple ideas.” One’s collection, then, if it is supposed to be like anything in one’s experience, must be like another collection. So it seems that there is a second collection out there to be imitated.

Finally, a phenomenological argument. The collection of the apple grows with one’s experience of this apple in particular, and of apples in general. Suppose that A learns that apples have five carpels, each of which may contain several seeds. It seems to me that this knowledge will henceforth be incorporated into his apple collections. But while the collection grows, one is not aware of the object of experience growing as one learns more about it. Rather, one has the sense that the object stays the same, and that the collection reveals the nature of the object.

All these considerations suggest that there is more than one collection at issue. And so in what follows, I will examine the textual evidence for a two-collection view. On this view, our collections are made by us, by means of relating ideas together, in order to resemble collections, which are made by God in such a way as to be comprehensible to finite beings.

2.5 Textual Evidence for A Second Collection

Berkeley does not explicitly state a two collections view, let alone an account of constitution: these things must be inferred from what he does say. However, one recurrent thesis in his work is that the world has a lawful structure, and that these laws are so formed as to be comprehensible by us. Berkeley puts this in a very interesting way: nature forms a conversation. Clearly God does most of the talking. As I read him, this means that the member-ideas that we sense are like utterances, and the words form of which they are utterances of can only be collections. This conversation with God is the context within which we gradually become able to pick out collections.

Vision, for Berkeley, plays a special role here, signifying distance and facts about tangible figure.

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66 NB 280.

67 Berkeley would not want to suppose that this other relation were of a new type. Rather, the relation imposed by God is a much more powerful token of the same type as the relation that we reproduce.
Visible figures are the marks of tangible figures, … which by nature they are ordained to signify. And because this language of nature does not vary in different ages or nations, hence it is, that in all times and places, visible figures are called by the same names as the respective tangible figures suggested by them, and not because they are alike, or of the same sort with them.\(^{68}\)

As I have discussed above (1.4.5.), Berkeley takes from Locke the notion that words stand for ideas.\(^{69}\) Since in the language of nature, the words are themselves ideas, Berkeley is suggesting that ideas signify other ideas. At first glance, this might seem to be very unlike Locke, who can say that ideas represent material archetypes.

But for Berkeley, the ideas that we sense – member-ideas of collections\(_D\) – stand for these and different collections\(_D\). The summer smells wafting in the window are signs of unseen flowers. The flash of red in the garden is a sign that the cardinal has returned. The flowers and the cardinal (or, rather, the cardinal’s body) are collections of ideas, and the sensation of member-ideas suggests to us the whole.\(^{70}\) In *Alciphron*, the eponymous interlocutor sums things up this way:

You would have us think, then, that light, shades, and colours, variously combined, answer to the several articulations of sound in language; and that, by means thereof, all sorts of objects are suggested to the mind through the eye, in the same manner as they are suggested by words or sounds through the ear, that is, neither from necessary deduction to the judgment, nor from similitude to the fancy, but purely and solely from experience, custom, and habit.\(^{71}\)

Berkeley’s mouthpiece Euphranor agrees.

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\(^{68}\) NTV 140.

\(^{69}\) Locke, *Essay*, 3.1.2.

\(^{70}\) DHP 248.

\(^{71}\) Alc. 7.10.154.
Now Berkeley thinks that, strictly speaking, only ideas of vision form a *language* of nature.\textsuperscript{72} I have been proceeding as though ideas of other sense modalities together with ideas of sight are part of what we receive in the language of nature. But if only sight counts as linguistic, it may seem that there is no room for smells, say, in our discourse with God. This would be bad for my overall argument, because I am suggesting that the words of our discourse with God are multi-modal collections\textsubscript{D}. The worry is that perhaps only visual member ideas will be counted.

However, I think that Berkeley’s claim that only vision counts as a language does not imply that ideas of other sense modalities cannot figure in discourse with God. It is a question of complexity. According to Berkeley, only sights have enough complexity and variance to count as a language. Ideas of other sense modalities are signs, but not complex enough to count as language in their own right. When Alciphron mentions tastes and smells, Euphranor replies “That they are signs is certain, … [b]ut it is as certain that all signs are not language… [i]t is the articulation, combination, variety, copiousness, extensive and general use and easy application of signs (all which are commonly found in vision) that constitute the true nature of language.”\textsuperscript{73}

Nevertheless, there is no avoiding the fact that Berkeley is committed to the claim that a person without eyesight is not just missing a sense modality, he is missing the one that deserves to be called the language in which God communicates with his creations. Thus on Berkeley’s view, blindness is a far greater affliction than one might ordinarily suppose, since it mutes, as it were, the voice of God.

### 3.1 Berkeley’s use of the word ‘Archetype’

If I am right, and Berkeley’s usage implies the existence of a second sort of collection – a collection\textsubscript{D} in my terms – why does he say so little about it? One reason can be seen in Berkeley’s choice of titles for the *Principles*: he is interested in human knowledge. In this he follows Locke who studies human understanding, and indeed expresses the spirit of the age,

\textsuperscript{72} NVT 140, 143, 147. In fact, this is Berkeley’s considered view. In the 1710 *Principles*, Berkeley calls all of our sense impressions parts of a language, but he changed this in the 1734 edition, to call these only “signs”. PHK 66; PHK 108. In the last edition of *Alciphron*, Euphranor makes clear that only vision counts as a language. Alc. 4.12.157; See the discussion in David Berman, *Alciphron in Focus* (London: Routledge, 1993) 8f.

\textsuperscript{73} Alc. 7.12.157.
captured by Pope in 1734, “Know the thyself, presume not God to scan/The proper study of mankind is man.” As David Berman has detailed in his biography of Berkeley, as a young man Berkeley got into serious trouble for a lecture that seemed to cast into doubt divine infinity. One can see how he might have been careful to say as little about theological matters as possible, and follow his own advice in the Notebooks, “N.B. To use utmost Caution not to give the least Handle of offence to the Church or Church-men.” I find Berkeley’s focus on human beings understandable. But with all that said, I would now like to argue that Berkeley does on occasion talk explicitly about collections, calling them ‘archetypes’. In the Dialogues, when Philonous tells Hylas he may “suppose an external archetype on my principles”, he means a body – a collection.

One of the central puzzles about the word ‘archetype’ is that it appears to have two possible referents, and Berkeley denies the existence of both. First, an archetype might be a Platonic archetype, perhaps even what Plato called a ‘Form’. Second, an archetype might be a Lockean archetype, i.e. a material thing. Since Berkeley does not believe in material objects, and he also does not believe in abstract objects, such as Forms, his unexplained introduction of the term has vexed and puzzles readers right from the start – even his correspondent Johnson asked for clarification, but unfortunately did not get it.

On the one hand, Locke does not seem an obvious source for Berkeley’s use of ‘archetype’. For Locke, archetypes are material objects, ideas of which we perceive. The trouble is that we “cannot be sure that [the perceived idea] exactly answers all that are in that substance”, and so these archetypes are obscure to us. What we experience – our representations – are

75 Berman, Irish, 17f
76 NB 715.
79 Locke Essay 2.31.13.
Berkeley’s use of the word ‘Archetype’

‘ectypes’, and these stand to the archetypes as copies to original. But, “the complex ideas of substances are ectypes, copies too but not perfect ones, not adequate”.\(^{80}\)

When Berkeley writes about archetypes, he constantly says that they are not material, a denial that begins in the Notebooks and is repeated throughout the early works.\(^{81}\) Of course, this does not rule out Locke as a source, since (as I argued in the last chapter), Berkeley’s approach to Locke is to re-imagine Locke without matter. But then it is not obvious how this particular term, which refers to a material object, is supposed to make the transition into Berkeley’s new version of Locke.

Could Berkeley be using the word ‘archetype’ to indicate his closeness to the Platonic tradition? Such an identification needs to be made with care. A fundamental feature of Platonism is the privileging of internal, innate knowledge over knowledge gained from the senses. This privileging can have a metaphysical aspect. One scholar calls it “beyond dispute” that, at as far as the ancient Platonists were concerned, “Platonism is firmly committed to the existence of an intelligible, that is, immaterial or incorporeal realm, that is ontologically prior to the sensible realm.”\(^{82}\) This seems to me to be at odds with Berkeley’s approach at a fundamental level. Berkeley wants to elevate sensation and its objects, is a nominalist, and opposes abstraction.\(^{83}\)

On the other hand, if the Platonic influence on the concept of archetypes is taken to consist of not much more than the thought that things have archetypes, understood as sources or models, in God’s mind, then Berkeley looks very much like a Platonist. To an extent Berkeley even encouraged the comparison, for not only did he write like a Cambridge Platonist in Siris, but in the same book Berkeley claims that Plato (and Aristotle, and Plotinus) are proto-Berkeleians.\(^{84}\) But I am reluctant to identify the doctrine of archetypes too strongly with that

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\(^{80}\) Locke Essay 2.31.12.

\(^{81}\) NTV 118; NB 689; PHK 9, 45, 87, 90; DHP 204, 206, 222, 234.


\(^{83}\) PHK 86.

\(^{84}\) S 311. This is the subject of a famous article by Myles Burnyeat, which has generated a considerable amount of discussion. See Myles Burnyeat, “Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed” in Idealism Past and Present, G. Vesey, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 19-50, and responses in Richard Sorabji, Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) pp. 287-94; and in Matter, Space, and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and Their
Platonic influence. For if the extent of Berkeley’s debt to Platonism is the thought that the sensible things we perceive were earlier in the mind of God, then one wonders whether Berkeley is really taking much from Platonism at all. As Hylas says on this point, “this is no more than I and all Christians hold”.

Stephen Daniel has argued for identifying Berkeley’s archetypes with Platonic archetypes, but in a much stronger sense than the weak one I considered just now. According to Daniel, archetypes are in metaphysical truth the divine activity that leads to human ideas. Thus, when I perceive a chair, the archetype of the body I am perceiving is not another idea, or collection of ideas, but an act. My disagreement with Daniel runs deep. I understand Berkeley’s references to mental substances as being to entities that would feature in a relatively traditional substance ontology. On Daniel’s view, a mind is the active principle of a certain determinate series of ideas, and so as he writes “there is no mind apart from the specific succession of perceived, thought, or willed ideas”. Although like Daniel I think Berkeley models our understanding of the divine mind on the human mind, in Daniel’s case this leads to the conclusion that “divine ideas… constitute the divine mind.” If divine ideas were constitutive of the divine mind, then I think Daniel would be right to conclude that the ideas we perceive, which are passive, could hardly be the same as those that constitute an active God. But since my view diverges from his early on, I do not feel any need to think that God’s acts, rather than ideas, serve as archetypes for our actions. And therefore I can take at what seems closer to face value

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85 Hylas is responding to the suggestion that “As sure therefore as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent spirit who contains and supports it.” DHP 212.


87 I am not the first to point out, against Daniel, that as Berkeley was perfectly capable of rejecting such an ontology when it did not suit his purposes, the fact that he calls minds substances (e.g. at PHK 89) therefore suggests that he meant it in a quite traditional sense. See Talia Mae Bettcher, “Berkeley’s Theory of Mind: Some New Models,” Philosophy Compass 6:10 (2011) 689-98, 691f.


89 Daniel “Neoplatonism” 249.
Berkeley’s comment to Johnson, “I have no objection against calling the ideas in the mind of God archetypes of ours.”

There is another possible influence on Berkeley’s use of ‘archetype’. Then as now, ‘archetype’ was often used in merely learned but not overtly philosophical contexts, to refer to the original in an original/copy relation. Goclenius’ *Lexicon Philosophicum* mentions archetypes in another definition, as “archetype, or the exemplar represented [archetypus, seu exemplar representatum]”\(^91\) In the first edition of the *Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson does not define ‘archetype’ either, but he uses the word in his definition of ‘copy’: “[a] transcript from the archetype, or original.”

In some works, such as the *Notebooks*, the *New Theory*, and an essay on “Immortality”, Berkeley seems to be using the word in this ordinary sense of ‘original’. Thus in the *Notebooks*: “Ideas of Sense are the Real things or Archetypes. Ideas of Imagination, Dreams etc are copies, images of these.”\(^92\) In the *New Theory* Berkeley discusses archetypes as the contrast term to ‘copies’.\(^93\) Later, in an essay for the *Guardian*, Berkeley writes of his soul “I regard my own soul as the image of her Creator, and receive great consolation from beholding those perfections which testify her divine original, and lead me into some knowledge of her everlasting archetype.”\(^94\) This again is a fairly unremarkable use of the term.

### 3.2 Archetypes in the *Principles*

Berkeley’s doctrine of archetypes really emerges in the *Dialogues*. Nevertheless, I think it is worth considering the word as used in the *Principles* first. There we find Berkeley concerned to establish that there are no material archetypes. And as I will suggest after I survey some instances of this denial, this concern on Berkeley’s part implies conversationally, though not of

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\(^90\) B-J, March (1730) 292.

\(^91\) Rudolph Goclenius, *Lexicon Philosophicum* (Frankfurt: Matthias Becker, 1613) *Relatio* 976. Goclenius’ lexicon does not give ‘archetypus’ its own entry, but assumes that the person who needs a dictionary of philosophy will already know what it means.

\(^92\) NB 823.

\(^93\) NTV 118.

\(^94\) George Berkeley, “Immortality” no. 89, vol. 7 222.
course logically, that Berkeley cares enough about the term ‘archetype’ to want to save it for a special place in his own thought.

[It has been shown that] extension, figure and motion are only ideas existing in the mind, and that an idea can be like nothing but another idea, and that consequently neither they nor their archetypes can exist in an unperceiving substance. Hence it is plain, that the very notion of what is called *matter or corporeal substance*, involves a contradiction in it.\(^95\)

Elsewhere Berkeley writes, “[i]f [anyone] can conceive it possible either for his ideas or their archetypes to exist without being perceived, then I give up the cause”.\(^96\) Here we find the denial of mind-independent archetypes presented in the same breath as the so-called master argument, which as I have shown in the last section, is no argument at all, but rather Berkeley’s way of putting his challenge to the Lockean and by extension to the sceptic. Or consider this instance, which begins with a survey of primary and secondary qualities, and follows the trajectory of what I argued in the last chapter is Berkeley’s approach, to end on the note of scepticism.

Colour, figure, motion, extension and the like, considered only as so many *sensations* in the mind, are perfectly known, there being nothing in them which is not perceived. But if they are looked on as notes or images, referred to *things or archetypes* existing without the mind, then are we involved all in *scepticism*.\(^97\)

Berkeley also puts the point in terms of resemblances:

Ideas imprinted on the senses are real things, or do really exist; this we do not deny, but we deny they can subsist without the minds which perceive them, or that they are resemblances of any archetypes existing without the mind: since the very being of a sensation or idea consists in being perceived, and an idea can be like nothing but an idea.\(^98\)

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\(^{95}\) PHK 9.  
\(^{96}\) PHK 59.  
\(^{97}\) PHK 87.  
\(^{98}\) PHK 90.
Finally, Berkeley writes that his right-thinking reader will recognize that extension is not in material substances, but is a sensible quality. The reader will therefore see that “all sensible qualities are alike *sensations*, and alike *real*; that where the extension is, there is the colour too, to wit, in his mind, and that their archetypes can exist only in some other *mind*: and that the objects of sense are nothing but those sensations combined, blended, or (if one may so speak) concreted together: none of all which can be supposed to exist unperceived.” So: it is an error to think that extension can exist, so to speak, on its own. But it is equally erroneous to suppose that the archetypes of sensations can exist outside of someone’s mind.

Obviously the passages just quoted are logically consistent with a reading of Berkeley on which he has no view about archetypes whatsoever. If there is any implication that Berkeley believes in mind-dependent archetypes, it is conversational implication. That is because it would be odd for Berkeley to work so hard to establish that there are no mind-independent archetypes, when this seems to be implied *a priori* by his argument that there are no mind-independent things at all. Luce wrote that Berkeley treads lightly when talking about archetypes; “[h]e is always afraid of matter creeping back in disguise”. I read things differently. I think Berkeley repeatedly signals the role archetypes will not play in his view to suggest that they will play another role, without yet telling his reader how this is to be done. Why does Berkeley not state this clearly, if it is his view? Perhaps the doctrine of archetypes was not fully developed in his own mind. Or, perhaps Part 2 of the *Principles* would have picked up on this theme. At any rate, in the *Dialogues*, we find the theory in greater detail.

### 3.3 Archetypes in the Dialogues

If I am right, Berkeley has given some warning when he introduces a positive doctrine of archetypes to solve various problems, without much preamble, in the *Dialogues*, first, in answer to a question from Hylas, the gist of which is how the immaterialist can assert both that:

1. A and B looking at an apple perceive two different ideas, and

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99 PHK 99.

100 Ibid. 86.
(2) A and B looking at an apple perceive the same thing.

The materialists (or dualists – as always, Berkeley contrasts those who admit of matter with those who don’t) can appeal to an archetype: the material, if perhaps ultimately unknowable source of our ideas. Immaterialism, Hylas says, seems to lead to the conclusion that “no two can see the same thing.”

HYLAS. [Materialists] suppose an external archetype, to which referring their several ideas, they may truly be said to perceive the same thing.

PHILONOUS. And (not to mention your having discarded those archetypes) so may you suppose an external archetype on my principles; external, I mean, to your own mind; though indeed it must be supposed to exist in that mind which comprehends all things; but then this serves all the ends of identity, as well as if it existed out of a mind. And I am sure you your self will not say, it is less intelligible.

The mind which comprehends all things, by which Philonous presumably means all ideas, is the mind of God.

Let us return to the problem that Philonous uses archetypes to solve. When A and B look at the tree standing between their houses, the defender of matter can affirm that though they perceive different ideas, these ideas are of one external object, the tree, and thus both A and B perceive the same thing. Philonous’ response in a nutshell is to say that he too can appeal to ‘archetypes’ to save the day, and that although these archetypes are immaterial ones, they allow him to argue just like someone who can appeal to matter.

Philonous cannot mean that A’s immediately perceived idea of sense (the visual idea of one side of a tree, say) has an idea in God’s collectionD as an archetype, and B’s immediately perceived idea of (of the other side of the tree) has a different member of God’s collectionD as an

101 DHP 247.

102 DHP 248.

103 Does God comprehend finite minds? I would be reluctant to say so. Of course God knows of finite minds (presumably he has notional knowledge) and in some sense his creative activity made and sustains finite minds. But to suggest that God comprehends us makes it seem as though our esse is percipi, and that is not the case.
archetype. But let us take a moment to see why this is not the view at issue. Saying this would not make the argument work, for the archetype that A saw would not be the one that B saw, and so the two would still not perceive the same thing.

The best way to understand Philonous is as saying that the archetype is an ordered collection of ideas. A and B both sense member-ideas of that collection. We have seen above that A and B each build collections \( F \) around those sensed ideas. But for the argument to work, Philonous must be identifying a further collection as the archetype. This third collection, not A’s or B’s but God’s, is composed of ideas in those regular relations that lead both A and B to form their collections \( F \) as they do. That is what I mean by a divine collection, a collection \( D \). Employing such collections will allow Berkeley to achieve parity with the defender of matter, who maintains that two people can look at two different parts of the same body and still be said to see the same body.\(^{104}\)

In fact, Berkeley does better than just achieving parity. On Berkeley’s view, there is a connection between what we perceive and what really exists. A and B both sense the collection \( D \), although it is important to note that the member-idea sensed by A is never the same as the member-idea sensed by B. Thus both A and B can, by sensing a different member-idea, connect directly to the collection \( D \).

In another important discussion in the Dialogues, Philonous uses archetypes to answer another question. Hylas is worried that there is some tension between what Philonous has said and the Mosaic account of the creation, “though indeed where to fix it, I do not distinctly know.”\(^{105}\) Philonous has had enough of such nebulous worries.

What would you have! do I not acknowledge a twofold state of things, the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal? The former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God. Is not this agreeable to the common notions of divines? or is any more than this necessary in order to conceive the Creation?\(^{106}\)

\(^{104}\) This is a tricky claim. It seems to me that one may directly perceive a thing by perceiving one of its constituents. In this I follow George Pappas. But I recognize that this is contentious. Importantly, I think, it is contentious whether or not one is an immaterialist. Pappas, Thought, 192.

\(^{105}\) DHP 254.

\(^{106}\) DHP 254.
Philonous’ answer can help us to understand Hylas’ problem. What Philonous takes Hylas to be advancing is a *one collection view*. On this view, where bodies really are human collections, it is unclear how God could have created them before there were finite minds. And Philonous responds, in sum, “No, there are two kinds of collections, and one is God’s.” (A different worry, one which arises one page earlier and is not at issue here, is whether God’s collections, being eternal, can explain the Mosaic account. Berkeley thinks that they can, if we understand the creation to be ‘relative’ to finite minds. In other words, what changes at the time of the Mosaic creation is that bodies become possible objects of experience for human and animal minds and actual objects of experience for angels, although God had always perceived them.107)

So as I read him, Berkeley says that collections are “created in time”, whereas collections exist “from everlasting.”108 This did not strike him as a controversial claim. The belief that God is not in time would have been sufficiently standard fare to be “agreeable to the notions of the divines”. Writing to Berkeley about archetypes, Samuel Johnson refers to Philonous, who says “to a Christian it cannot surely be shocking to say, the real tree existing without his mind is truly known and comprehended by (that is, *exists in*) the infinite mind of God.”109 Johnson has trouble with the doctrine, but the role of God is not the problem. Both Johnson and Berkeley seemed to think that this association of the collections that are bodies with God would fit comfortably with Christian doctrine.

### 4.1 Divine Collections in the *Principles*

I have up to now argued, drawing on discussions in the *Dialogues*, that Berkeley’s archetypes should be understood as collections. But my approach to such collections has been mostly by analogy with human collections, which imitate them. It is now time to consider

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107 DHP 253.
108 See also DHP 251f. “When things are said to begin or end their existence, we do not mean this with regard to God, but His creatures. All objects are eternally known by God, or which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in his mind”
109 DHP 235.
Berkeley’s positive claims about collections\textsubscript{D} \textit{qua} collections. For this, we must turn again to the \textit{Principles}.

The texts are in much scarcer supply than one might wish. There is no single description of the view, and what is new here will be gleaned from places that have been picked over many times already. I consider a few otherwise cryptic passages in the \textit{Principles} and the \textit{Dialogues}. When these passages are placed in their proper context, we may begin to see the outlines of an account. But it is just an outline, and the reader of Berkeley must come prepared to do some interpretation.

Berkeley’s first discussion of collections\textsubscript{D} comes – as we might expect – at the start of the \textit{Principles}, in PHK 3 to be exact, as he is presenting a quick sketch of his positive doctrine.

PHK 3 begins with a statement of the mind-dependent nature of our experience. “That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind, is what every body will allow.”\footnote{PHK 3.} Thoughts, passions, and imaginings are what Berkeley has surveyed in PHK 1. He has just finished introducing the mind, a “perceiving, active being” in PHK 2.\footnote{PHK 2.} In good empiricist fashion, Berkeley presents his topics in the order of discovery. First we experience our ideas of the world, and next we experience ourselves.

Third in the order of discovery we would expect to hear about bodies, things in the external world. And indeed, by PHK 4 we are talking about the “strangely” common opinion that “houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects” have a mind independent existence, a view that Berkeley rejects. When did Berkeley begin talking about bodies? I suggest that they are introduced in PHK 3, when Berkeley writes

And it seems no less evident that \textbf{the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose)} cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this, by any one that shall attend to what is meant by the term \textit{exist} when applied to sensible things. 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

\footnote{PHK 3.} \footnote{PHK 2.}
might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it [my emphasis is bolded].

Berkeley here contrasts “sensible thing” with “sensation”. He is saying that sensible things, of which kind his example is a table, are composed by the blending or combining together of sensations, i.e. that a sensible body is made up of blended sensations. As an example of a sensible body, Berkeley gives the table. There are two persons mentioned in the passage as perceivers of the table, Berkeley and the ‘other spirit’ – one who need not be understood as human. But we may assume that Berkeley has in mind another finite spirit rather than God. That is because if the other spirit were God, it would render Berkeley’s sustaining act in the perception of the table redundant, and just at the moment when Berkeley is drawing the reader’s attention to it. Moreover, it would be strange for Berkeley to introduce divine perception in a disjunction like this. If Berkeley’s view is that God has all ideas that are possible experiences of finite minds – I think that is his view, but not everyone would agree – then it is misleading at best to treat God as though he were just another perceiver. It is doubly misleading because the passage makes no distinction between the way in which Berkeley perceives the table (by passive sensation) and the way that the other spirit does. If the other spirit were God, though, the mode of perception would not be passive sensation. For all these reasons, we ought to assume that the other spirit is a finite mind: let us call this other finite mind O.

I have already in 2.2.2 argued against one collection views. I take it that the one collection view reading of this passage has it that Berkeley and O each perceive sensations, and they colligate these together into private collections, and by convention Berkeley and O give the same name to these two distinct collections. It does not seem to me that this reading fits well with the passage, but my main argument against the one collection view is given above, and it is primarily on the basis of that argument that I do not read the passage this way.

The phenomenalist reading of the passage is also troubled. Berkeley’s immediate invocation of O is worse than unnecessary from the phenomenalist point of view. For the phenomenalist, the table exists in virtue of the fact that either Berkeley or O could perceive it. It

112 PHK 3.
is not clear, on such a view, why Berkeley is concerned to say that O “actually does perceive it”.

I think my version of a two collection view can fully make sense of this passage. I take it that both Berkeley and O perceive sensations, and that these sensations are colligated (presumably with others) to make up the table. But this means that neither Berkeley nor O are in a position to colligate the sensations. That is because Berkeley does not have O’s sensations, nor does O have Berkeley’s sensations. Even if, somehow, Berkeley could have O’s sensations, then the table that Berkeley colligated using his sensations and O’s would be private to Berkeley. But the passage makes it explicit that both Berkeley and O see the same table. Moreover, the passage makes it clear that the table is made up of colligated ideas. But who could be in a position to colligate Berkeley’s sensation with O’s – and presumably also those of countless other minds?

It seems to me that only God is in a position to do this. God knows the goings on in every finite mind, and could therefore colligate a sensation in Berkeley’s mind with a sensation in O’s, or one in my mind with one in yours. If God knows the content of a sensation, it seems to me right to say that it is in his mind in some fashion – never forgetting Berkeley’s stipulation that God “perceives nothing by sense as we do”. So it seems right to say that the full version of the collection will be found in God’s mind, although, as is at issue in this passage, elements of the collection are presented to finite minds in sensation. On my view, then, the table is the collection in God’s mind, composed of sensations, what I have been calling member-ideas.

If my reading is correct, in this passage we also are introduced to Berkeley’s terminology for the way in which God makes collections. Ideas are “blended” or “combined together” and in virtue of this process, ideas “compose”.

The description of blending and combining ideas together at PHK 3 is not unique. At PHK 99, a discussion I have already considered once in regard to archetypes, Berkeley writes:

[a sensible person will] if I mistake not, acknowledge that all sensible qualities are alike sensations, and alike real; that where the extension is, there is the colour too, to wit,

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113 PHK 3. Even Winkler admits that the presence of the “other spirit” is vexing and unnecessary for a phenomenalist interpretation, suggesting to me that Berkeley has something else in mind. Winkler, Interpretation, 199f.

114 DHP 241.
in his mind, and that their archetypes can exist only in some other mind: and that the objects of sense are nothing but those sensations combined, blended, or (if one may so speak) concreted together: none of all which can be supposed to exist unperceived [my emphasis is bolded].

The passage does however use the word ‘archetype’ in a way not congenial to my project. It seems that Berkeley is here saying that the archetypes of individual sensations exist in God’s mind, i.e. that there is an archetype of this shade of red, and of this round shape. This is an objection to my entire project if I take Berkeley to be articulating a completed doctrine of archetypes in the Principles. But as I said above, the most I can claim is that he is hinting at the uses for the doctrine in the Principles.

4.2 To Blend, to Concrete, to Compose, and to form a Complexion

What is the significance of Berkeley’s terms, ‘blend’ and ‘concrete’? Berkeley takes ‘blend’ from Locke. Despite the fact that ideas enter separately via our five sense modalities, “the qualities that affect our senses are, in the things themselves, so united and blended, that there is no separation, no distance between them”. As I read Berkeley, ‘blend’ refers to a process by which various member-ideas are united so that an observer might see the totality as more than just disconnected individuals.

‘Concrete’ as a verb is for Berkeley a philosophical term, but what does it mean? Of course, ‘concrete’ generally is contrasted with ‘abstract’, and there is a verbal sense of ‘to abstract’, so ‘to concrete’ might be taken as a contrast with this. I am not sure that this contrast much advances our understanding of Berkeley, since for Berkeley, ‘abstract’ lacks an intension and an extension. Moreover, in Berkeley’s usage, ‘concrete’ has a rich and suggestive meaning. In the Notebooks he uses it as a verbal noun: “The Concrete of of [sic] the Will & understanding I must call Mind”. I take it that Berkeley is here referring to the unity of mind, which consists

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115 PHK 99.
116 Locke, Essay, 2.2.1.
117 The continuation of this entry goes a long way toward showing why Berkeley’s philosophy of mind has proved so difficult to reconstruct: “… mind not person, lest offence be given, there being but one acknowleged to be God.
in some fashion of a capacity for receiving ideas, the understanding, and the will, which is active, and will be the discussed below in 3.2.1. As I wrote above in my discussion of Glauser, it would be odd to expect the unity of bodies to be comparable to the unity of minds. But Berkeley is willing to use “concrete” for the unifying process by which the faculties (or parts, or aspects) of the mind are one, and for the way member-ideas are unified, as just discussed. Moreover, ‘concrete’ has a rich non-philosophical meaning. Berkeley uses the word in a description of scurvy, referring to having the “capillary vessels gradually cleared from the concreted stuff that adheres and obstructs them.” He also describes the process by which stone particles clump together and form stalactites as ‘concretion’.

If the verbal form of ‘concrete’ isn’t philosophical, we might look to Johnson’s Dictionary for a well-read layman’s definition: “To coalesce into one mass; to grow by the union and cohesion of parts.” Johnson uses as examples the forming of new compounds from heterogeneous constituents, such as the mixture of metallic and crystalline components into a single substance, or the formation of crystalline structures out of drying salt, or the production of clots out of drying blood. To concrete y from x and z is to cause (since minds are true causes) x and y to be so arranged as to compose y. Berkeley does not go out of his way to develop a philosophical vocabulary in which to discuss such relations as constitution. However, it seems to me that ‘to concrete’ picks out just such a relation, by which disparate elements are so related as to form something new.

If I am right that Berkeley uses ‘concrete’ with an eye to natural science as well as to his somewhat obscure philosophy of mind to indicate what happens when sensations form objects such as tables, then we might look for other similar terms in the Dialogues. Berkeley is writing about our bodies, and says, “which sensible body [i.e. a human body] rightly considered, is

Mem: Carefully to omit Defining of Person, or making much mention of it.” NB 713. I take it that Berkeley is not papering over any private heterodoxy, but rather is acknowledging that his view has all the usual difficulties accommodating the Trinitarian orthodoxy of three persons in one.

“All the Understanding seemeth not to differ from its perceptions or Ideas” NB 587. Berkeley is extremely careful in his uses of these terms, and I will not here enter into the murky matter of getting an overview of Berkeley’s philosophy of mind, for this would be a separate project.

S 94.

“Description of the Cave at Dunmore” vol. 4 264.

nothing but a complexion of such qualities or ideas, as have no existence distinct from being perceived by a mind.” What is a “complexion of qualities”? Berkeley never again uses the word ‘complexion’ in anything but the more familiar sense of a person’s appearance, but the other usage is not odd for the time. ‘Complexion’, then, sounds similar to ‘concretion’.

Finally, recall ‘composition’, which Berkeley also uses to describe how member-ideas come together. In the *Notebooks*, Berkeley toys with the suggestion that what sets us apart from the animals is our unique ability to compose ideas, such as when we add together ideas of a goat, lion, and serpent to compose a chimera.

Composing, blending, causing things to concrete, forming a complexion, all these are words for processes by which member-ideas come together to form, as I have argued above, archetypes, which is to say that these collected ideas form a new thing. I take Berkeley then to be describing a case of constitution. As I will now discuss, when we form imaginary collections, that is what we cause our ideas to do.

5.1 How we Make Collections

Berkeley has something to say about the human activity of collection making, and in Berkeley’s empiricist framework, we turn to cases of human activity to understand divine activity since only thus can we gain knowledge about God: “all the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections.” Perhaps then considering the way in which we produce collections can help us to understand how God produces collections.

So let me begin with a case of forming a collection in the imagination, Berkeley’s paradigm when he wants to showcase the creative power of the mind. “It is no more than

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122 DHP 241.
123 Johnson’s *Dictionary* gives as the first meaning of ‘complexion’, “[t]he inclosure or involution of one thing in another.” This rather cryptic definition is illustrated with a now archaic example: a simple syllogism may have complex premises, and in this case “it is properly called a simple syllogism, since the complexion does not belong to the syllogistick form of it.” The premises, as I understand the illustration, are the complexions, for only when terms are put into propositional form can they serve as premises. Johnson, *Dictionary*, complexion.
124 NB 753.
125 DHP 231f.
willing,” he writes, “and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy: and by the same power it is obliterated, and makes way for another.” I take it that Berkeley intends this creative activity to include the production of imaginary bodies, imaginary because the collection$_F$ does not share even one member-idea with a collection$_D$ and is not intended to represent a collection$_D$. We will have such a case if we compose – to use Berkeley’s own example – an imaginary chimera. According to Homer, the chimera is composed of a lion’s body, minus the tail, a goat’s head and neck, and a serpent’s body and head where the lion’s tail would be. Homer’s decision was to specify some arrangement of these parts in such a way as to produce a new entity; such that rather than being merely contiguous, the various animal parts count as a new thing.

In the private realm of the imagination, how is it that Homer’s imagined chimera is separate from Homer’s imagined idea of Mount Olympus? The collection, chimera, is not part of the collection, Olympus, because the chimera can come down from the mountain. Changes in the chimera occur independently of the mountain. In the ordinary course of things, the chimera will presumably act independently of the mountain, that is to say across time the chimera collection and the mountain collection will be revealed as independent. Either the chimera or the mountain might be annihilated, without the disappearance of the other.

Let us now turn to collections$_F$ formed to represent God’s collections$_D$. According to Berkeley, ideas of sense are “impressed upon [finite minds] according to certain rules or laws of Nature” and we rely upon these rules to guide the ways in which we form our representative

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126 PHK 28.

127 What else could Homer do? Homer could imagine another entity, made up both parts of the chimera and parts of Mount Olympus. This would be a chimera-mountain hybrid. Also, Homer could imagine and relate ideas without relating them so as to constitute a single collection$_F$. He might imagine a blue horse and a chimera, and merely relate them as imaginary ideas, perhaps imagining them side by side, without forming a single collection out of both beasts. What even many-minded Homer could not do is to form a collection$_D$. Only God can do that.

When Homer imagined a chimera, did it have a determined number of hairs on its body? This might pose a problem for my view, because while saying yes commits us to a psychologically implausible account of what it is like to form collections$_F$ in the imagination, saying no seems to suggest that one could imagine a thing that is mathematically indeterminate. It seems to me that Berkeley should say no. The obligation to imagine a chimera with some suitably large number of hairs only arises relative to the goal of making one’s imaginary chimera such as could exist in the context of natural laws, where things do have some determinate and usually large number of hairs. But often collections$_F$ are imagined without much reference to such laws. PHK 36.
collections. But if we cause ideas to constitute imaginary collections, it seems to me that we should say something similar about those collections that we use to represent bodies. When for example I see a horse, some idea of sensation is put together with ideas of imagination and memory, and together these ideas constitute a representative collection. But if that is true, we should recall Berkeley’s maxim that “[c]omplex thoughts or ideas are onely an assemblage of simple ideas and can be the image of nothing or like unto nothing but another assemblage of simple ideas.” If our collection is composed of member-ideas that stand in relations of constitution, and if moreover the member-ideas in our collection represent member-ideas of a collection existing in the world, then Berkeley’s maxim seems to warrant the inference that the “assemblage” of our ideas too is an imitation of the collection.

I propose that we think of the act of putting together ideas as a kind of constitution. It is to such a relation that Berkeley’s use of terms such as ‘to concrete’ points. It is, moreover, one way of describing the experience of forming collections. Homer produces a new thing (the chimera), and I represent just one single thing, (the horse). On this view, Berkeley would say that the various member-ideas are related together so that the member-ideas are (employing the ‘is’ of constitution) the collection, and the collection is (using the ‘is’ of identity) the body. We ought to suppose that what we are doing in constituting collections, is imitating a constitution relation that characterizes collections.

Berkeley does not have a discussion of the metaphysics of constitution. If he had one, though, it seems to me that he ought to say that the process by which ideas are made to constitute is sui generis, it is one of the basic sorts of things that a mind can make ideas do. The reason that member-ideas constitute is thus, most basically, that a mind has willed that they should stand in certain relations.

Just as some contemporary defenders of constitution would suppose that it is brute fact that certain causal relations bring about constitution, I think Berkeley ought to argue that it is a brute fact certain of the relations in which minds are able to put ideas are constitutive relations. Contemporary defenders of material constitution have worked to carve out just such a niche for

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128 PHK 36.
129 NB 280.
the ‘is’ of constitution.\textsuperscript{130} But this would put Berkeley in a slightly better position than a material-constitution view. For Berkeley, all causes are acts of mind, and this means that all causes are intentional. Thus he can say that constitution is not a vague relation, since on his view it would only be true that x and z constitute y if some mind wills that x and z stand in constitutive relations so as to constitute y. I suppose that Berkeley would say that we could determine by introspection which of our ideas constitute collections\textsubscript{F}.\textsuperscript{131} But certainly God specifies some precise set of member-ideas that are going to constitute each body.

This section has contained an extrapolation as to what I think Berkeley should say, and could say given the terminological framework that he has laid. Nevertheless, it is an interpretation. My explanation opens Berkeley up to the disadvantages and weaknesses, as well as the advantages and explanatory power of a constitution account. But I will not try to fit Berkeley into contemporary discussions. In what remains of this chapter, I will instead try to show how the account I am attributing to Berkeley would fit into his account more generally, and consider several inconsistencies with other positions of Berkeley’s that seem to arise.

\section*{5.2 Epistemic Failure and Success}

Berkeley’s work is, in a sense, an extended conversation with a materialist or dualist interlocutor sometimes named, as in the case of Alciphron’s ‘minute philosopher’, but always lurking behind the scenes. The interlocutor supposes that the New Sceptical Picture must replace that of common sense; Berkeley disagrees. Berkeley answers the imagined interlocutor by pointing out that the content of sensation constitutes bodies. By sensing constituent parts, one senses the collections\textsubscript{D} that are the bodies.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{130} Despite her materialism, I think that Berkeley’s view has surprising similarities to Lynne Rudder Baker’s constitution view. See e.g. The Metaphysics of Everyday Life: An Essay in Practical Realism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

\textsuperscript{131} Although here, as often, Berkeley’s view shows its lack of an account of the phenomenon of the unconscious, and so is perhaps not on the face of it very plausible. I will not consider whether this could be remedied.

\textsuperscript{132} I would like to note in passing a related question, one which I have no room to discuss here, and which it is not necessary to resolve in order for my view to stand. This is whether on Berkeley’s view one directly perceives bodies. Does perceiving a tiny part of a collection\textsubscript{D} count as directly, or as mediately perceiving the collection\textsubscript{D}? On my view, one directly perceives a member-idea of a collection\textsubscript{D}, but then one also understands this sensation through the
On Berkeley’s view, then, nothing keeps us necessarily cut off from the world. But that is not to say that we cannot be mistaken. Let me now consider the tremendous scope for error that my view allows. When someone senses a red round shape, he may be certain that there is a red round shape. But beyond this very modest certainty, there are no guarantees. Here are some possible scenarios.

(A) A senses the red round shape, and supposes that this member-idea is related to other apple ideas in a collection_D. But A is wrong, what he sees is in fact a tomato. On closer examination, it does not even really look like an apple. He is thus wrong about the taste, the classification, and the provenance of the body.

(B) A senses the red round shape, and supposes that this member-idea is related to other apple ideas in a collection_D. In fact it is a hollow plastic imitation apple. He is wrong about most member-ideas in the collection_D, and even about what sort of thing it is. But A is a victim of his own success. He was quite right to notice that the thing before him looked like an apple, but he made the wrong inferences from that fact. By getting his collection_F to resemble God’s collection_D in certain ways, he has been misled about the nature of other member-ideas of the collection_D.

(C) A senses the red round shape, and supposes that this member-idea is related to other apple ideas in a collection_D. In fact, A has worked himself to exhaustion on his orchard, and he is hallucinating: what he is actually looking at is an empty spot on the table. A doctor might

construction of a collection_F. So it is certainly true that one is in metaphysical truth in contact with the real body, and there is no veil between the body and the perceiver. But one might nevertheless ask whether perceiving a (relevantly large) part of a thing is sufficient to count as directly perceiving that thing, or whether this should be classified as a mediate perception. On my view, member-ideas constitute bodies, and so there is a secondary question, of whether the ‘is’ of constitution is strong enough to support direct perception. That is to say, if A perceives something that is a constituent of X, but is not identical to X, does that count as directly perceiving X? George Pappas, whose view is a close relative of my own, writes in this context, “I doubt if there is any principled way of specifying how great a percentage of parts or properties one needs to immediately perceive if one is to immediately perceive an object.” Pappas Thought 192. It seems to me that he is right—but I point to this debate only to say that I aim to avoid it. What matters to me is that the object of sensation is an ineliminable component of the body that is sensed. In the final analysis, when Lockean secondary qualities are stripped away, Berkeleian sensations endure. See this recent contribution to the discussion by Margaret Atherton, “The Objects of Immediate Perception,” in New Interpretations of Berkeley’s Thought, Stephen Daniel, ed. (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2007) 107-119, 113. Cf. NB 32.
recognize that it is very natural for a hallucinating apple farmer to hallucinate apples, and so that, given A’s exhausted condition, it is in a sense predictable that he would perceive empty spots on the table as apples. The fact that A does not, and probably could not know this does not make it less true.

There are many ways to mistakenly construe what ideas go with the ideas that we sense. The analysis I have given is an extrapolation from Berkeley’s treatment of similar cases of illusion.

HYLAS. ….Since, according to you, men judge of the reality of things by their senses, how can a man be mistaken in thinking the moon a plain lucid surface, about a foot in diameter; or a square tower, seen at a distance, round; or an oar, with one end in the water, crooked?

PHILONOUS. He is not mistaken with regard to the ideas he actually perceives; but in the inferences he makes from his present perceptions. Thus in the case of the oar, what he immediately perceives by sight is certainly crooked; and so far he is in the right. But if he thence conclude, that upon taking the oar out of the water he shall perceive the same crookedness; or that it would affect his touch, as crooked things are wont to do: in that he is mistaken. In like manner, if he shall conclude from what he perceives in one station, that in case he advances toward the moon or tower, he should still be affected with the like ideas, he is mistaken. But his mistake lies not in what he perceives immediately and at present (it being a manifest contradiction to suppose he should err in respect of that) but in the wrong judgment he makes concerning the ideas he apprehends to be connected with those immediately perceived: or concerning the ideas that, from what he perceives at present, he imagines would be perceived in other circumstances.133

Philonous’ answer does not strike me as a weak one. It’s strength is that the same sort of explanation can work from (A) – (C), and whether the case is illusion, hallucination, or just ordinary error. All these can be explained in the same way: our collection$_F$ does not match God’s collection$_D$ either in its member ideas or in the ways they are related together.

133 DHP 240.
5.3 God’s Production of Collections
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I take it that Berkeley’s common sense commitment forces certain commitments about collectionsD. Any spirit, human or divine, “immediately produces every effect by a fiat, or act of his will”. Some of these effects are relatings, and some acts of relating are constitutive. Just as we can relate ideas together such that they constitute imaginary bodies (one sort of collectionF), so God can relate ideas together such that they constitute real bodies (i.e. collectionsD). In a way, I think that this is all that can be said: God chooses to create a world in which there is a constitution relation that obtains between the constituents of bodies, and which brings bodies into existence.

I am suggesting that God relates together member-ideas constitutively to form collectionsD. What sorts of member-ideas are at issue here? As I read him, Berkeley’s approach to this question is in the context of trying to achieve with his immaterialism the same sort of explanation that a religious dualist or a materialist might achieve. The dualist or the materialist supposes that the tree exists all the time, even when no one is perceiving it. Berkeley’s consistent approach is to simply transpose this approach to an immaterialist context. Thus when Hylas asks Philonous what a commonsensical person would say about whether bodies such as trees exist unperceived, Philonous replies,

The same that I should my self, to wit, that it doth exist out of his mind. But then to a Christian it cannot surely be shocking to say, the real tree existing without his mind is truly known and comprehended by (that is, exists in) the infinite mind of God. Probably he may not at first glance be aware of the direct and immediate proof there is of this, inasmuch as the very being of a tree, or any other sensible thing, implies a mind wherein it is. But the point it self he cannot deny. The question between the materialists and me is not, whether things have a real existence out of the mind of this or that person, but whether they have an absolute existence, distinct from being perceived by God, and exterior to all minds.

134 PHK 60.
135 DHP 235.
The basic content of the passage is familiar. As one commentator puts it, “everyone knows how Berkeley proposes to reconcile this view with commonsense: there is somebody who “neither slumbers nor sleeps,” who perceives all things always.” But it is worth considering two features of the discussion just now quoted. First, Berkeley is pointing out something that is surely true. Anyone who believes in an omniscient God, believes that the arrangement of things is in some way reflected in, if not contained in God’s mind. Berkeley takes this to show that such a person will already be committed to the basic mechanism by which immaterialism explains the existence of bodies – a commitment which, as he notes, need not coincide with Berkeley’s continuity argument for the existence of God (to be discussed in 2.6.2 below). Second, Berkeley is saying that he is not disagreeing with ‘materialists’ – anyone who believes that there is such a thing as matter – about the way in which bodies exist when nobody (but God) is aware of them.

Berkeley is not engaging the interesting question of whether he, the immaterialist, has evidence that trees exist unperceived by finite minds. Perhaps Berkeley should have addressed this sort of sceptical question, but it seems to me that he does not do so. Instead, Berkeley is content with the position of the materialist – and surely also that of common sense – that bodies do continue unperceived. Not everyone is content to leave it at that. Jonathan Bennett writes, “Berkeley ought to realize that by his standards there cannot be empirical evidence for continuity, so it poses no problem for him.” Bennett points out that no one’s experience can reveal anything that is not a part of his experience. Therefore, no amount of experience of a body would suffice to quell the sceptical doubt that, when one stopped experiencing it, the body might cease to exist.

As we see in the quotation from the Dialogues above, though, Berkeley is not arguing the point at all. He takes it as a starting point that bodies exist unperceived by finite minds. And,


137 In other words, Berkeley finds the question “If a tree falls in the forest, and no one hears it, does it make a sound?” as inane as does everyone else.

138 Bennett, Learning, 182. What Bennett really means here is that this view would pose no problem for Berkeley if he had made explicit what Bennett finds implicit in his writing: a lofty contempt for the beliefs of ‘plain persons’, or ‘the mob’, and specifically for their belief in ordinary, continuous sensible things - a sentiment that Bennett makes it clear that he shares. Bennett, Learning, 177. I explained why this interpretation is wrong in 1.3.1.
since Berkeley says that he has no quarrel with ‘materialists’ here, perhaps we might consider what would happen if Berkeley allowed the materialist to answer on his behalf. If asked why the material tree continues to exist unperceived, it would be natural to say given the sort of thing the tree is, and the regularities that govern such objects, it is simpler to suppose that it continues unperceived than to suppose that it ceases to be. Berkeley’s materialist would not appeal to his own experience, in the way that Bennett intends, any more than Berkeley would. Now, it would not be right to say that of member-ideas, that they appear to continue unperceived. But if bodies are understood as collections$_D$, then Berkeley has some reason for thinking that they continue when unperceived. When we think about bodies, our collections$_F$ represent these bodies as engaging in natural processes even unperceived by finite minds. When we imitate the constitutive relations that God enacts, we do not suppose that they are dependent on the presence of finite perceivers. While member-ideas do not seem to continue unperceived, collections$_D$ do.$^{139}$

For Berkeley, the way things appear is reason enough to suppose that, in metaphysical truth, collections$_D$ exist unperceived by anyone but God. Thus there is a set of member-ideas of collections$_D$ actually perceived by finite minds, and there is a larger set of member-ideas of collections$_D$ which are unperceived by finite minds but the existence of which is in some fashion implied by the constitutive relations among those member-ideas of collections$_D$ which finite minds do perceive. Berkeley thinks that all these member-ideas exist in God’s mind. As I read him, he offers very little defense for this view, perhaps because it forms part of common sense, and he takes it as a starting point.$^{140}$

### 5.4 Divine Collections Across Time

$^{139}$ Whatever the merits of such an attempt to use other people’s justifications as his own, it is undeniably a dialectical move for answering objections which Berkeley thought worthwhile (cf. NB 312) and which he frequently used. He tells his correspondent Johnson to “consider... [w]hether the difficulties proposed in objection to my scheme can be solved by the contrary, for if they cannot, it is plain they can be no objection to mine.” B-J Nov. 25 (1729) 282f. See also PHK 84; DHP 251.

$^{140}$ I take it that Berkeley would use a similar argument to account for bodies of which no one perceived even one member idea. They are just to be understood as parts of God’s creation.
Collections\(_D\) are bodies that change and endure. If the apple began to grow last spring, and if A turns it into apple cider today, then Berkeley must maintain that the apple exists continuously from then to now. Surely that is what the owner of the orchard believes. But since the philosopher knows that the apple is a collection of ideas, namely, that collection\(_D\), it must be the case that that collection\(_D\) exists from now to then.

In Berkeley’s view, where time is a feature of the experience of finite minds, God maintains ideas in his mind timelessly. “All objects are eternally known by God, or which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in his mind.”\(^{141}\) God does not know every state of the apple by means of sensing it. After all, God “perceives nothing by sense as we do”.\(^{142}\) But ideas of sensation are not different in kind from ideas of imagination.\(^{143}\) It is just that ideas of sense are richer, and they are not chosen by us, they simply come to us. There is no reason that God should not know the content of these ideas, though not of course by sensation. Indeed, God’s omniscience surely requires that he knows them. Every state of the apple thus exists timelessly. To God, the apple is like our imaginary chimera. He could compose it any way he likes. But the way that he chooses is regular enough when manifest in our temporal experience that we can imitate it.

Objection: on this view, apples exist eternally. But they don’t! Everyone knows that apples grow and ripen and rot. Reply: The human experience of the apple is time-bound. Berkeley supposes that time is something that human perceivers bring with them, since it is “the succession of ideas in our minds”.\(^{144}\) So the apple is in time, precisely in that its member-ideas are experienced in succession by us, and this is fully consistent with supposing that the apple may exist timelessly in God’s mind. But this allows me to add another kind of error to the list above, in 2.5.2.:  

\(^{141}\) DHP 252. I take the passage to refer to timeless existence, and in this context see also Philonous: “do I not acknowledge a twofold state of things, the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal? The former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God.” DHP 254. However, it doesn’t really matter whether we take this in the sense of ‘timeless’ or ‘for all time’. If the latter, it merely means that for every ideal moment experienced by any finite mind, God has a corresponding ideal moment in which these objects exist.

\(^{142}\) DHP 241.

\(^{143}\) PHK 89.

\(^{144}\) PHK 98.
(D) A senses the red round shape, and supposes that this member-idea is related to other apple ideas in a collection\textsubscript{D}. He supposes that member-ideas which occur subsequently in his experience – future member-ideas – will continue to be of the apple sitting still in place on the countertop. Thus, future member-ideas of the apple will stand in certain spatial relations to other collections\textsubscript{D}. A has not noticed, or at least not considered the implications of a slight incline in the countertop. In fact, this incline should have led A to suppose that the apple would roll off the counter, and fall onto the floor.

6.1 Some Problems

So far then, I have defended my two collections view of Berkeleian bodies. Common sense observers are right to believe in bodies: they are collections\textsubscript{D}, constituted by member-ideas by means of God’s acts of relating. In sensation, we receive member-ideas of these collections\textsubscript{D}, member-ideas timelessly known but un-sensed by God, and around these we construct our collections\textsubscript{F}. That is the view I have been laying out, but on the way I passed by a number of objections, to which I turn now.

6.2 Two Worries about the Role of God’s Perceptions

On my view, God knows all ideas, including those otherwise unperceived. This seems to me to be a basic Berkeleian doctrine.\textsuperscript{145} But some do not find this persuasive. One reason for scholarly resistance to the role of God as guarantor of the continued existence of objects, is that the claim seems related to Berkeley’s very strange and apparently very weak proof for the existence of God, sometimes called the ‘continuity argument’.\textsuperscript{146} The best example of this argument is found in the Dialogues. Philonous announces that, “[m]en commonly believe that all things are known or perceived by God, because they believe the being of a God, whereas I on the

\textsuperscript{145} See e.g. DHP 252.

other side, immediately and necessarily conclude the being of a God, because all sensible things must be perceived by him.”

I take it that the proof, although Berkeley describes it as one that is immediate and necessary, is more easily read as being inductive, an inference to the best explanation. Any change in ideas has to come from a mind. We are therefore entitled to postulate the existence of a mind to explain all those phenomena that are not accounted for by finite minds, and God fills this explanatory gap. Whether this argument can be made persuasive is beyond my interests here. I want to point out rather that the account I have been developing runs in the other direction from the continuity argument. On this account, we assume that there is an omniscient deity, and set out to establish that his divine ideas are the right sort of thing to provide a human collection with “an external archetype”.  

Perhaps another reason that some interpreters are leery of stating that God perceives everything is because it is not always obvious that it serves a purpose. As George Pitcher scathingly puts it,

[The view that God perceives everything] suffers from being altogether ad hoc. God has ideas of all things, both actual and merely possible, in His understanding and He stands ready to cause ideas of sense of the actual things in finite minds; what conceivable motive could He have for wanting to cause perpetual ideas of actual things in His own mind?

On my view, the answer to this question can be given in terms of the constitutive relations that obtain between member-ideas of bodies. If God merely caused ideas in our minds, but did not

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147 DHP 212. Jonathan Bennett, who argues strongly against the importance of God in explaining the continuous existence of objects, locates this argument in only one passage, and it is not the one I quoted above. Rather, it is this:

“H: Supposing you were annihilated, cannot you conceive it possible, that things perceivable by sense may still exist?

P: I can; but then it must be in another mind. When I deny sensible things an existence out of the mind, I do not mean my mind in particular, but all minds.” Bennett Learning 184, DHP 230.

148 DHP 248. Thus we are in the position of the person who does not see the alleged necessity of the continuity argument, but nevertheless believes that God contains all ideas. DHP 235 (the passage was discussed at length in 2.5.3 above).

also contain those ideas, and relate them as we suppose, then in metaphysical truth there would be no mind-independent bodies. If our perceptions suggested otherwise, they would be systematically misleading.

Pitcher also writes as though Berkeley’s view requires an egregious amount of work on God’s part, whatever that might mean for an omnipotent being. Perhaps the worry is that it makes God an inelegant cosmic micromanager. But it seems to me that God can be thought of as producing everything in one initial creative act. On this view, collections would be produced, timelessly intersecting with (also timeless) minds. The time-bound actions of each finite mind would be taken into account in that initial creation.

6.3 Is my View a Version of Phenomenalism?

I have argued that we cannot read Berkeley as having a one collection view, but rather that we must suppose he endorses two different types of collections. But does this stray so far from a standard one collection view that I am in danger of dropping into some version of phenomenalism?

I don’t think it does. On the phenomenalist view, perhaps most notably defended by Kenneth Winkler, a body exists when certain counterfactuals regarding the conditions for a finite mind to perceive it hold true. Thus, the table exists although no one is perceiving it, so long as it is true that a perceiver under the right circumstances would perceive it.

I grant that these counterfactuals are true. But on my view, it is not on account of these counterfactuals that bodies exist. Bodies exist because of constitutive relations that obtain between member-ideas, in virtue of which member-ideas constitute a body. God’s counterfactual intentions are better explained as just one facet of his general creation of collections. And the phenomenalist account ignores or places less value on two things which my account emphasizes, (1) God’s relatings of ideas that are unperceived by finite minds, and (2) God’s maintenance of all ideas in his own mind.

6.4 The “Fleetingness” of Ideas
In the ontological survey in PHK 89, Berkeley calls ideas “inert, fleeting, dependent beings”.\textsuperscript{150} We have seen that they are inert (being completely passive) and dependent (since their esse is percipi), but in what sense are they fleeting? And how can fleeting ideas be the (relatively) stable bodies of common sense? On my view, Berkeley approaches ideas in two ways. When he is talking about member-ideas, he calls them ‘fleeting’. When he is talking about collections\textsubscript{D}, he recognizes that they endure – at least they are as enduring as any physical thing can be. The characteristic of fleetingness is thus not intended to apply to collections\textsubscript{D}.

### 6.5 The Heterogeneity Problem

The immediate objects of sensation are ideas, and such ideas come, so to speak, in five flavours, corresponding to our five senses. Ideas must enter our minds, as Locke would put it, “by the proper inlets appointed to each sort”.\textsuperscript{151} Berkeley is adamant that, beyond all being kinds of ideas, the contents of the different sense modalities are heterogeneous. As I take it, Berkeley’s heterogeneity thesis states that ideas are not interconvertible between senses. There are no common sensibles in terms of which we can understand the content of a sight and a sound; the proper sensibles of each sense modality must be understood individually.\textsuperscript{152} This thesis is not yet in conflict with anything that I have said. But some readers take the heterogeneity to which Berkeley appeals to be so radical that a sight can have nothing to do with a sound, and thus that a sight could not be in a collection\textsubscript{D} with a sound. Such a thesis would be problematic, but I do not think it is Berkeley’s.

\textsuperscript{150} PHK 89.

\textsuperscript{151} Locke, Essay, 3.4.11. In fact I think that Berkeley may think that positive notions come to us by a sixth, inner sensation – what he follows Locke in calling ‘reflexion’. “We comprehend our own existence by inward feeling or reflexion, and that of other spirits by reason. We may be said to have some knowledge or notion of our own minds, of spirits and active beings, whereof in a strict sense we have not ideas.” (PHK §89). It seems clear that we come by these notions by a kind of experience, but it is nothing like our five senses. Perhaps our contemporary notion of qualia would come close to Berkeley’s intention here. Alas, the second part of the Principles, where these things were to be discussed in detail, was lost in Italy.

Berkeley emphasizes the heterogeneity thesis in his works on vision. In the New Theory he writes:

The question now remaining is, whether the particular extensions, figures, and motions perceived by sight be of the same kind, with the particular extensions, figures, and motions perceived by touch? In answer to which, I shall venture to lay down the following proposition: The extension, figures, and motions, perceived by sight are specifically distinct from the ideas of touch, called by the same names, nor is there any such thing as one idea or kind of idea common to both senses [my italics].153

Berkeley is arguing that the “proper object” of vision is not the same as the proper object of touch,154 and, one presumes, so on for the other five senses.

Why does Berkeley think that ideas are not interconvertible? Marc Hight, in whose view the heterogeneity thesis plays a central role in Berkeley’s thought, is right to say that it is because Berkeley’s ideas’ epistemic features are their ontological features. Since Berkeley has made ideas into things, and there are no physical substances to support properties, the phenomenal characteristics of ideas are essential to them, they are present, so to speak, at the ground level. Hight thinks this may be a mistake.

Berkeley took the differences between the contents of the various senses to be grounded on ontological differences in kind between the ideas. The reason these ontic discrepancies affect content is because Berkeley thinks of representation as by likeness. In effect, Berkeley is encoding content into the ontology of ideas.155

I think that Berkeley did indeed suppose that the phenomenal character of an idea displays ontological characteristics. But Hight also supposes that this precludes for Berkeley an account on which these heterogeneous components form single things.156 I disagree.

153 NTV 127.
154 NTV 95, 137; TVV 41.
The thesis of radical heterogeneity, Hight thinks, is found in passages such as this one, “[trees, houses, men, rivers\(^{157}\)], in truth and strictness, are not seen, but only suggested and apprehended by means of the proper objects of sight, which alone are seen.”\(^{158}\) Now I grant that no idea of vision can be changed into an idea of sound, or touch, or any other modality. But it seems to me to be quite a different thing to suppose that no idea of vision can constitute a body along with ideas of other modalities. Hight, who defends a non-traditional version of the collections view,\(^{159}\) argues that if ontology is built into ideas, no mere grouping of ideas will form any kind of unity on its own. But on my view, the constituted object is produced through mental activity without violating the heterogeneity thesis.

I am not the first to take such a relaxed reading of the heterogeneity thesis.\(^{160}\) Berkeley’s own discussion is closely tied to the Molyneux question of whether the Man-Born-Blind-and-Made-to-See would immediately recognize how tactile and visual shapes fit together. Berkeley thinks the answer is no. But this requires only that no idea of one sense modality can be translated into another. Berkeley’s claim is merely that ideas from different sense modalities are not interconvertible. No amount of experience in another modality could supplement these missing ideas. And if this is the content of the heterogeneity thesis, then it is preserved on my view as well.

### 7.1 Conclusion

I have considered a number of objections to the two collections view I am attributing to Berkeley. None of them seem to me to warrant abandoning the view. I have suggested that the view makes sense of Berkeley’s core metaphysical and epistemic commitments concerning bodies. On the view I have proposed, we (a) directly perceive member-ideas of bodies, and thus

\(^{157}\) These examples are offered by Alciphron a few pages earlier. Alc 4.10 154.

\(^{158}\) Alc 4.12 156.

\(^{159}\) Hight, “Single Idea,” 100-105. Hight thinks that the phenomenal unity we associate with objects comes from using a single idea to represent them to ourselves in thought. In metaphysical strictness, though, for Hight bodies remain mere aggregates.

\(^{160}\) See Pappas’ careful discussion. Pappas, Thought, 182f.
(b) perceive bodies. We (c) cannot be mistaken about the content of our perception, but (d) we can certainly make poor inferences and get things wrong.

This chapter has advanced a view about what bodies are. They are collections of ideas. They are collections because all the member-ideas stand in relations such that together they constitute a new thing, the collection. For the most part, ideas in these collections are ordered and kept in place by God. When finite minds think about bodies, we too form collections of ideas, collections that resemble God’s collections. When someone senses a body, however, I argue that the collection in God’s mind and the collection formed by the finite mind overlap, which is to say they share at least one member. In sensation this sharing is (largely) passive: God imprints an idea of sense into the mind of the perceiver. This shared idea enables Berkeley to overcome the skepticism inherent in Lockeanism: it enables him to say that we sense things as they are. Nevertheless, Berkeley does not pretend that human beings have special insight into the natures of things. We must strive to eek out what knowledge of the world we have.

In his survey of collections views, Richard Glauser considers three possible origins for collections. First, the standard version of the collections view: we produce collections (and thus the only collections are collections \( F \)). Glauser and I both reject this. Second, God produces collections \( D \), and we (mostly) produce collections \( F \), with God producing the ideas of sensation that they contain. This is Glauser’s preferred alternative. My view is his third alternative, that bodies – some bodies, at any rate – are collaborative efforts between God and other minds. What I mean by this is that the constituting ideas and volitions are sometimes supplied by finite minds. Of such a view, Glauser says that Berkeley “says nothing of the sort” and that “it contradicts what he does say”.\(^{161}\) I will argue that he is mistaken on both points in the next chapter.

\(^{161}\) Glauser, “Unity,” 72.
Chapter Three

1.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, I argued that Berkeleian bodies are collections\textsubscript{D}, that is, collections maintained by and contained in the mind of God. Our sensations are of these collections\textsubscript{D}, because in sensation our minds passively receive one of the ideas that makes up a collection\textsubscript{D}. My guiding principle, established in chapter one and applied in the last chapter, has been to show that Berkeley is trying to vindicate the views of the common sense person. In the last chapter, I considered Berkeley’s account of what bodies are – a topic on which Berkeley’s philosophy and his common sense commitments are often thought to be in tension.

Let me now turn to another area in which there seems to be tension between Berkeley’s commitments. Berkeley is often thought to hold that God is responsible for everything that transpires in the external world – and thus every change within collections\textsubscript{D}. Finite minds can act, but only on ideas that they contain, by wishing, imagining, daydreaming, and so on. Presumably then, if A tries to move his arm, what happens is that God takes notice of A’s attempt, and God alters the collection\textsubscript{D} – A’s arm – so that A senses the arm as moved. Following a convention in Berkeley scholarship, I will call the view that God is responsible for everything that happens in the external world, and so for collections\textsubscript{D}, occasionalism, and the application of this view to Berkeley the occasionalist reading. It is important to make sure that this label is not misleading. Defenders of this view are not painting Berkeley as a follower of Malebranche. All that is intended by it is the suggestion that God does all the acting in the external world, i.e. on collections\textsubscript{D}. The occasionalist reading, I say, is in tension with common sense, and so I am arguing against it.

The occasionalist reading has it that God moves the limbs of our bodies, but common sense suggests that we, and not God, are the causes of bodily change. (I take this to be a reasonable thing to say about common sense, but it is also, as I will show, Berkeley’s explicit view.) If the occasionalist reading were true, then Berkeley would end up with a split between the way common sense suggests that things are and metaphysical truth. This is exactly the kind
of split that the account of bodies I defended in the last chapter was supposed to avoid. I would like to show here that such a split does not arise in the context of human activity on bodies.

I believe that the apparent gap between common sense and Berkeleian doctrine can be bridged by a means quite similar to that which I used in the last chapter. In chapter two, I argued that appearance (as \( \text{collections}_F \)) and reality (as \( \text{collections}_D \)) are not, for Berkeley, two separate realms, for they overlap in sensation. When one senses, a member-idea of a \( \text{collection}_D \) is passively received into one’s \( \text{collection}_F \), and thus one directly though synechdochally receives the real thing in one’s mind. I am going to argue now that actions of a certain kind, for Berkeley, reverse that process. When one acts, a member-idea of one’s \( \text{collection}_F \) is actively put into God’s \( \text{collection}_D \), meaning that it is actively related by the finite mind to the other member-ideas in the \( \text{collection}_D \). I do not suggest on Berkeley’s behalf that human beings act on God – such a view would be heterodox.\(^1\) (In 3.4.8. below I consider how this problem is avoided.) Just as our sensations, as it were, anchor our \( \text{collections}_F \) to ultimate reality, so the ideas that we put into \( \text{collections}_D \) connect us to the external world as agents. As I will explain below, the view that I attribute to Berkeley could be understood as concurrentism or as mere conservationism, or perhaps as something altogether different. And thus while my analysis has considerable points of similarity to that of Jeffrey McDonough, I do not take it as desirable to settle the question of whether Berkeley was a concurrentist or whether he was something else – so long as it is clear that he was not an occasionalist. It is just not in the nature of Berkeley’s approach to make theological commitments that he does not need to make.

A part of the cluster of views that makes up common sense, as I suggested in chapter one, is a commitment to some account of human freedom. I will briefly show how Berkeley is committed to such an account, although how to work it out will be left as a project for future research. According to Berkeley, we are in a fashion co-creators with God of the external world. Our creations are movements of our bodies, and though \( \text{sub specie aeternitatis} \) they are very small, and limited in scope, they are not insignificant. Our creative power extends no further.

This chapter concerns Berkeley’s account of mind. However, his account is very controversial. This is in no small part because it is fragmentary, and if Berkeley ever explained how the pieces fit together, then that must have been in the lost second part of the Principles. It is not even obvious how to assign weight to the things Berkeley does say. Some of the enduring

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\(^1\) Although it was presumably possible to act on Christ incarnate.
questions are these. Berkeley calls minds ‘substances’, but is there any room for a traditional notion of substance in his ontology?\(^2\) Can Berkeley avoid a Humean bundle theory of the mind – and did he even want to?\(^3\) Minds are active, but how exactly should we understand this activity?\(^4\) Since neither minds nor their acts are ideas, what is the nature of our knowledge of the mind?\(^5\) Each of these questions could easily be a dissertation in its own right, and so in what follows I am going to try, as much as possible, to avoid taking sides. I want to focus on an aspect of minds that is relatively understudied. I want to consider what it means for minds to act on bodies.

In the last chapter, I used Berkeley’s description of the manner in which human beings make collections\(_F\) to understand his view of the manner in which God makes collections\(_D\). In this chapter, I reverse that strategy. Good empiricist that he is, Berkeley turns to human power to understand divine power, sometimes in striking ways, such as when he muses “[w]hy may we not conceive it possible for God to create things out of Nothing. certainly we our selves create in some wise whenever we imagine.”\(^6\) Passages like this one, though explicitly about God, are veined with assumptions about human beings. In the absence of other discussions, I aim to mine these assumptions.


\(^5\) Discussions of this are extremely diverse, but see especially Daniel Flage, Berkeley’s doctrine of notions: a reconstruction based on his theory of meaning (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

\(^6\) NB 830.
To understand Berkeley’s view of acting on bodies, I will begin with his somewhat idiosyncratic view of activity. I will argue in the next section that for Berkeley, every act is to be understood as a volition. One wills, then, no matter what one is trying to accomplish, whether the object is internal and imagined, or external and part of a collectionD.

In section three, I will look at the evidence put forward for the occasionalist reading. The occasionalist reading is generally taken for granted without much argument, but it has been ably defended in a recent paper by Sukjae Lee. I am going to argue that Lee gets the texts wrong, not by misinterpreting their content, but by misunderstanding their tone. Where Lee sees a carefully articulated distinction between real and imaginary things, I see a rule of thumb, the sort of thing one might say to a person who suffered from hallucinations and was genuinely unsure how to tell real from imaginary things. My reading, I will argue, fully accounts for Berkeley’s discussions, and makes them fit better with the surrounding ones.

Section four contains the bulk of my interpretation. There I turn to the texts, and show that they contain a robust account of human activity on bodies, showing why this account is not vulnerable to several objections along the way. I want to show that Berkeley recognizes the conflict between what common sense suggests – we move our limbs – and the occasionalist reading. Berkeley does not in this instance directly rule out the occasionalist reading, but he rules out any view on which a person’s bodily acts are performed through an ‘instrument’. An instrument can be inanimate, such as a wrench, or animate, such as a confederate. I take it that Berkeley thinks some, though not necessarily all, of his intellectual opponents are committed to some version of an instrument view of how bodily action works, putting them at odds with common sense. And as it will turn out, by Berkeley’s lights the occasionalist reading is definitely committed to such a view, and it is therefore, in Berkeley’s eyes, opposed to common sense. If the arguments of sections one to three are correct, we should find texts where Berkeley describes a power to move our bodies. Although they have been fairly neglected by scholars, such texts are there to be found. I will survey these in section four, and show how in them Berkeley lays out an account of activity on ideas that are members both of collectionsF and collectionsD.

In my final two sections, I want to address two themes that have appeared in chapter one in the course of stating the Common Sense Picture [CSP] and its sceptical rival. In section five I will consider (albeit quite briefly) human freedom and moral responsibility. These are enormous
topics, of course. But to Berkeley, as to many common sense philosophers, they are part of the common sense package, even paradigm cases of common sense beliefs. These are, as I argued in the first chapter, exactly the sorts of beliefs Berkeley sets out to defend. I will sketch without much defense the argument for freedom of the will that complements the freedom of action that will mostly be my focus here.

The other topic on which it is important to touch is natural science. If the New Sceptical Picture [NSP] is false, what will be left of science without it? Does Berkeley have to give up on the scientific project? In section six, I will show that Berkeley remains quite committed to the value of science, but sees science as a project to be carried out well above the level of metaphysical bedrock. So conceived, Berkeleianism is not hostile to scientific projects or discoveries.

2.1 What is Willing?

To understand Berkeley’s conception of action, it is necessary I think to see that he identifies as the same three things that might be thought of as distinct: willing is the same thing as (mental) acting which is the same thing as causing. I put ‘mental’ in parentheses because it is, for Berkeley, redundant. In Berkeley’s ontology there are two sorts of beings, and only minds are of the right sort to be active. “Philosophers amuse themselves in vain,” he writes, “when they inquire for any natural efficient cause, distinct from a mind or spirit.” That Berkeley thinks that only minds are agents is widely agreed upon.

However, to suggest, as I do, that every mental act is a volition, an exercise of the will, is to meet with some opposition. In his discussion of Berkeley on agency, Phillip Cummins argues that Berkeley “does not explicitly equate” willing and causal activity. As evidence that Berkeley’s view can perhaps not be captured in a simple equivalence, Cummins raises the question of whether sensation does not have a certain activity to it as well, for example when we collate ideas, such as when we suppose that the heat of the fire goes with its orange colour.

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7 PHK 107.
9 Ibid.
grant that these do not look like volitions, on the face of it anyway, and if Berkeley did not embrace this very strong claim that willing is causal activity, it would be foolish to try to shoehorn his account into that shape.

But he does embrace it! In the *Principles*, Berkeley divides the mind into the active and passive component: “as [a mind] perceives ideas, it is called the *understanding*, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called the *will*.”\(^{11}\) In the *Notebooks*, Berkeley writes “velle i.e. agere”,\(^{12}\) or “[t]o say ye Will is a power. Volition is an act. This is idem per idem.”\(^{13}\) Elsewhere in the *Notebooks*, Berkeley writes, “The Will is purus actus”,\(^{14}\) and “No active power but the will”.\(^{15}\) Still, these mentions are in the *Notebooks*, and the second and third instances might be taken merely to indicate that volition is a kind of activity. To confirm that volition *is the same thing as* activity, we need an inference from the mere fact that a spirit acts to the conclusion that he wills. We find that in the *Dialogues*. Philonous proves the existence of a mind that perceives the world by considering change in Nature. “From the effects I see produced, I conclude there are actions; and because actions, volitions; and because there are volitions, there must be a will.”\(^{16}\) No other reading is available to an immaterialist, reasons Philonous: “I have no notion of any action distinct from volition, neither can I conceive volition to be any where but in a spirit”\(^{17}\)

If Berkeley has a way to account for activity in sensation, then it must be in terms of volitions.\(^{18}\) One way to satisfy Cummins’ suggestion that there might be something active about sensation would be by pointing to the activity of forming collections. In the last chapter, I presented this activity as a process of relating together member-ideas. Thus although ideas are passively received from God in sensation, in coming to grasp how they fit together the mind acts.

\(^{11}\) PHK 27.

\(^{12}\) NB 429a

\(^{13}\) NB 621.

\(^{14}\) NB 828.

\(^{15}\) NB 131.

\(^{16}\) DHP 239.

\(^{17}\) DHP 239. Stephen Daniel has, in my view, given the right weight to the will in Berkeley’s accounting of the mind Daniel, “Stoic,” 214. But though the question of how to understand Berkeley on mental substance is beyond the scope of my argument here, it is perhaps enough to say that I am unable to endorse Daniel’s reading on account of the determinism that is built into it. Ibid. 215.

\(^{18}\) Indeed, several puzzling *Notebook* entries seem to say as much. NB 773, 833.
Whether this is philosophically satisfying is another question. Berkeley does not make any room for anything resembling an unconscious; in the Berkeleian mind, all activity is of a conscious, volitional sort. This obviously leaves open many questions in philosophical psychology, and perhaps these are questions that cannot for Berkeley be properly answered. Even to try would take me beyond the bounds of this project. But recognizing that any Berkeleian account of the mind will incur an explanatory debt not to be paid here anyway, we might perhaps say that if there are lower and higher level volitions, perhaps Berkeley could account for an activity in ordinary cases of sensation by supposing that very low-level volitions are involved in the formation of collections.

If I am right to identify willing as the only sort of causing or acting there is, we can draw on Berkeley’s discussions of willing to understand agency in general. And I think it is significant that Berkeley takes as his paradigm case of the will the imagination (though certainly imagination is not the only case, see 3.4.4.), making the willing seem a kind of creation.

I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy: and by the same power it is obliterated, and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of ideas doth very properly denominate the mind active. Thus much is certain, and grounded on experience: but when we talk of unthinking agents, or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse our selves with words.¹⁹

The person who daydreams a floating castle wills it into imaginary being – he creates it. I have already quoted Berkeley’s striking note, “Why may we not conceive it possible for God to create things out of Nothing. certainly we our selves create in some wise whenever we imagine.”²⁰ If I am right, the same creative activity characterizes our interventions in the order of the world.

Willing, as Berkeley presents it, consists most basically of manipulating ideas or their relations. Willing might then be described as idea- or notion-manipulation,²¹ although my focus

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¹⁹ PHK 28.
²⁰ NB 830.
²¹ Or perhaps, depending on how one understands notions, ‘notion-production’ – notions are “active, thinking image[s]”. DHP 232.
will be mostly on idea-manipulation in what follows. Take a very simple case of willing. Suppose that A represents his house as painted red.

Let us suppose that A has been imagining his collection one way, as including gray circle. Perhaps A’s house is green. But then he contemplates what it would be like if it were red. As represented above, A removes the original member-idea of the house’s facade as green, drawn as gray circle, and replaces it with red star, house as red. A also adjusts the relations between ideas, depicted above by dotted lines, accordingly. We will soon have occasion to revise this basic model to include A’s action on God’s collectionD. But let me now turn to the occasionalist reading, which holds that the creative activity of the will can only ever be exercised, as above, in the imagination.

3.1 The Occasionalist Reading

I am going to argue that human beings are the causes of some bodily motions. But many interpreters understand Berkeley to say that God is, in the words of one, “the cause of all physical events” the view conventionally referred to as ‘occasionalism’. This has always been a popular way of reading Berkeley. Caterina Menichelli points out that early on, Berkeley was

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22 Jonathan Dancy, notes in *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 174, quoted in Dicker 237. See also Berman, who suggests that occasionalism was a source of embarrassment to Berkeley, who wanted to say that we move our own bodies, but had no way of explaining how it could be so. Berman, *Idealism*, 42.
even read as a quasi-Spinozist for his defense of the “omni-pervasive action of God”.\(^{23}\) In a recent book, Georges Dicker concludes that on Berkeley’s view, a person is without agency since for Berkeley it turns out “that it is not I who raise my hand, but that God is the real author of this action”.\(^{24}\) Dicker’s assertion is all the more interesting, since he grants that it is the opposite of what Philonous actually says.\(^{25}\) According to Dicker, Hylas should have pointed out to Philonous that Berkeleianism entails occasionalism.

Sukjae Lee has recently presented an influential version of the occasionalist reading.\(^{26}\) The core of Lee’s case is a logical one. Berkeley imagines this challenge to his view: “You, the idealist, cannot distinguish real things from imaginary ones.” The reply, in both the Principles and the Dialogues, is that real things are more vivid, regular, and are beyond our control, whereas imaginary ones are less vivid, less regular, and we control them. Lee calls this the “involuntariness is necessary for objectivity’ principle”,\(^{27}\) and as the name suggests, he believes that involuntariness is a necessary criterion for a thing’s being objective. If a thing is at all voluntary, i.e. the result of a volition in a finite mind, it is not objective. I am going to claim that the occasionalist reading is false, because certain real bodies – namely, our own human bodies – are, in certain ways, under our control. But this seems to rob them of the defining characteristic of involuntariness. And so it seems to contradict Berkeley’s reply to this objection.

Between PHK 29 and PHK 36, Berkeley introduces two general ways of distinguishing real from imaginary ideas. Real ideas are more strong, lively, distinct, steady, ordered, regular, vivid, constant and coherent than are imaginary ideas. I take it that all these adjectives point to a related group of characteristics, and for simplicity’s sake I group them all together as a single criterion: the vividness criterion. On the other hand, there is the criterion that seems to cause special trouble for my view. Real things are not framed by us, they are not excited by us, and as the Dialogues quotation will put it, they do not depend on our wills. I will call this way of


\(^{25}\) The relevant passage is DHP 237, which I will consider in some detail below. Dicker, Idealism, 237f.


\(^{27}\) Lee, “Spirits,” 548.
distinguishing real from imaginary things the *involuntariness criterion*. Here are several instances from the *Principles*.

The ideas of sense are *more strong, lively, and distinct* than those of the imagination; they have likewise a *steadiness, order, and coherence*, and are not excited at random, as those *which are the effects of human wills often are*, but in a regular train or series, the admirable connexion whereof sufficiently testifies the wisdom and benevolence of its Author [my italics].

Are [houses, rivers, mountains, trees, stones, and human bodies] but so many chimeras and illusions on the fancy? …[No,] we are not deprived of any one thing in Nature. Whatever we see, feel, hear, or any wise conceive or understand, remains as secure as ever, and is as real as ever. There is a *rerum natura*, and the distinction between realities and chimeras retains its full force. This is evident from *Sect. 29, 30, and 33*, where we have shewn what is meant by *real things* in opposition to *chimeras, or ideas of our own framing*; but then they both equally exist in the mind, and in that sense are alike *ideas* [emphasis in bold].

In the *Dialogues*, Hylas asks Philonous to distinguish chimeras from real things. Philonous’ reply is worth quoting in its entirety. Here the *vividness criterion* and the *involuntariness criterion* appear together, and Berkeley introduces a third case to be distinguished, dreams.

The ideas formed by the imagination are faint and indistinct; they have besides an entire dependence on the will. But the *ideas perceived by sense, that is, real things, are more vivid and clear, and being imprinted on the mind by a spirit distinct from us, have not a like dependence on our will*. There is therefore no danger of confounding these with the foregoing: and there is as little of confounding them with the visions of a dream, which are

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28 PHK 30. See also “The ideas imprinted on the senses by the Author of Nature are called *real things*: and those excited in the imagination being less regular, vivid and constant, are more properly termed *ideas, or images of things*, which they copy and represent.” PHK 32.

29 PHK 34.
dim, irregular, and confused. And though they should happen to be never so lively and natural, yet by their not being connected, and of a piece with the preceding and subsequent transactions of our lives, they might easily be distinguished from realities. In short, by whatever method you distinguish things from chimeras on your own scheme, the same, it is evident, will hold also upon mine. For it must be, I presume, by some perceived difference, and I am not for depriving you of any one thing that you perceive [my emphasis in bold].

Talia Mae Bettcher has rightly, to my mind, suggested that there might be a certain sort of ideas, “internal kinesthetic ideas”, to use her term, that are vivid enough that “[t]hey can count as real despite the fact that we cause them.” These ideas would then meet the vividness criterion. But as Dicker argues against her, this still leaves the involuntariness criterion unaddressed. Let me suggest that Bettcher’s answer is a good one, and it is a different aspect of her approach that is mistaken.

Bettcher is willing to take Berkeley’s criteria here as fairly serious rules governing his philosophy. This is a mistake, and for two reasons. First, the involuntariness criterion is a bad philosophical position to attribute to Berkeley (or to anybody else). And second, if we take the vividness criterion as seriously as, according to Dicker and Lee, we should take the involuntariness criterion – and surely we should treat both similarly, since Berkeley does – then Berkeley’s claims are false. Instead of taking these two criteria to be without exception, we should read them as rules of thumb.

First then, if it is rigidly applied, the involuntariness criterion does a poor job distinguishing real from imaginary things. Philonous is trying to show that we run no risk of “confounding” real and imaginary things, since they can “easily be distinguished from realities.” This sounds like a rule meant to be applied to everyday cases, i.e. not rigidly applied. Of course there is a difference between a real lion and an imagined lion, or between imagining that one is hungry or tired and actually being so. For the most part, the involuntariness criterion

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30 DHP 235.
31 Bettcher, Spirit, 85f.
32 Dicker, Idealism, 238.
33 DHP 235.
distinguishes real from imaginary things. But according to the ordinary way of thinking, there are lots of things – board games, airplanes, economies, bonsai trees – that are partly under human control and thus seem not to meet the involuntariness criterion. Berkeley does not want the criterion to complicate cases such as these. Nor need it, provided that we say that board games etc. are characterized by involuntariness: most things about them are not up to us.

Second, if we apply the vividness criterion in a rigid way, then the view is false. Someone who daydreams of a sunny beach on a rainy day may well imagine a more vivid sky than the monotone gray one outside. Overall, the real sky is more vivid, and more regular, and so on, but surely daydreams and imaginings can be more vivid in some particulars and at some times. And recall that in the passage from the Dialogues, Berkeley also uses the vividness criterion to distinguish dreams from real things. Who is lucky enough not to know that nightmares can be much more vivid than waking life?

What I think is overlooked by Lee is that the criteria which Berkeley employs are in fact adequate to the challenge even without being exceptionless. And so I follow Jeffrey McDonough in thinking that the involuntariness criterion need not be read as exceptionless. The challenge to which the involuntariness criterion and the vividness criterion are replies is not philosophically profound, but it is familiar to anyone who has ever taught Berkeley. The challenge rests on a simple mistake, for it supposes that the idealist understands all bodies as ideal in a context that allows of a distinction between real (i.e. material) and imaginary (i.e. ideal) objects. It is, indeed, what I suspect Johnson had in mind when he kicked the stone. But the view fails to note that idealists are not operating in the context of a distinction between material and merely ideal objects. If everything is ideal, then nothing is merely ideal. It is as though a reader of The Hound of the Baskervilles wondered why Dr. Watson is frightened of a fictional dog. In the story, everything is fictional, so nothing is merely fictional. As just as in the story, Watson can perfectly well distinguish fiction from fact, so in the context of immaterialism, whatever means a person initially used to distinguish real from imaginary things continues to apply. What Berkeley ought to do – what I think he does do – is to gesture toward some rule of thumb that distinguishes real and imaginary things, and show how it can be accommodated in the context of immaterialism. And then he ought to say that any other rule of thumb could be used, which is what Philonous concludes. “In short, by whatever method you

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34 McDonough, “Concurrentism,” 584.
distinguish things from chimeras on your own scheme, the same, it is evident, will hold also upon mine.”\textsuperscript{35}

Let me conclude my discussion of the occasionalist reading by considering one further aspect of Lee’s discussion. One of the arguments that he presents in its favour is unaffected by anything that I have written so far, and although I do not think the argument succeeds, it is worth considering since I think that it shows the spirit in which Berkeley intends his discussion of involuntariness to be read. Berkeley rests a proof for the existence of God on the involuntariness criterion. The worry that Lee raises, is that if we allow a weakening in the involuntariness criterion, are we not thereby weakening the strength of the proof?\textsuperscript{36} Here is the passage in which Berkeley goes from involuntariness to the existence of God.

There are spiritual substances, minds, or human souls, which will or excite ideas in themselves at pleasure: but these are faint, weak, and unsteady in respect of others they perceive by sense, which being impressed upon them according to certain rules or laws of Nature, speak themselves the effects of a mind more powerful and wise than human spirits.\textsuperscript{37}

Lee thinks that the proof requires that the involuntariness criterion be taken strongly here, because “[t]he involuntariness of sensory ideas is a critical premise in [Berkeley’s] argument for why he is not the cause of his sensory ideas.”\textsuperscript{38} Lee rightly points out that if we are the causes of our bodily motion, then it seems odd to say that the same motions prove the existence of God. The part of Lee’s argument which I reject is the assumption that motions of our body must figure in the proof. We have seen that there is less textual evidence for an iron rule about involuntariness than Lee supposes. But, I suggest, even the argument is not affected by taking the involuntariness criterion as a rule of thumb.

Lee’s worry is that if we cause some of the changes in our bodies, there remain only a smaller number for God to make. On my view the reduction in God’s actions is vanishingly

\textsuperscript{35} DHP 235.
\textsuperscript{36} Lee, “Activity,” 554.
\textsuperscript{37} PHK 36.
\textsuperscript{38} Lee, “Activity,” 554.
small, since although we act on collections, it remains for God to adjust them so that other finite minds can even detect one’s agency. But the problem that this raises occurs anyway. Berkeley is a finitist about everything but God. The evidence that is given by involuntariness will thus necessarily fall short of demonstrating God’s infinite grandeur. And in fact Berkeley recognizes this, writing merely that we have evidence for the existence of “a mind more powerful and wise than human spirits.” Any proof for the existence of the God of orthodox Christianity has to connect with revelation somewhere, and it seems to me that on the reading that I have proposed, Berkeley could identify this powerful and wise mind with God. And at any rate, my response to Lee, in which some things show the existence of finite minds, but most show the existence of God is stated by Berkeley (although in this passage he uses ‘infinitely’ in very inopportune hyperbole): “We may even assert, that the existence of GOD is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men; because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to humane agents.”

So it seems to me then that there is no really good textual argument for the occasionalist reading. The supposed involuntariness criterion is a bland rule of thumb that Berkeley uses to silence a weak objection. All we can draw from it is that are real things are for the most part beyond our control – and this is something that no reasonable person would deny.

4.1 What to Look for in Berkeley’s Account

So far I have largely been following Jeffrey McDonough’s account. For example, his article contains a version of the objection that I develop against the interpretations of Berkeley’s distinction between real things and chimeras in Principles 29-36. Moreover, McDonough has,

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39 PHK 36.
40 This is as true of the ontological or cosmological arguments as it is of Berkeley’s design argument. All these views must say that the being whose existence is proved by the argument is the same being who, say, communicated with Moses through a burning bush. No logical argument is going to establish this.
41 PHK 147.
43 McDonough, “Concurrentism” 584.
in my view, accurately identified the importance of and the direction of Berkeley’s account of human agency.

However, it seems to me that McDonough makes a serious mistake in trying to identify Berkeley as a concurrentist. In McDonough’s usage, ‘concurrentism’ is the view that God allows to finite agents an ability to act, but that this ability is exercised only with the “active general assistance” of God.\(^{44}\) It is to this that the word ‘concurrence’ refers. As McDonough understands the view, it entails that God is always active in the exercise of the active powers of any other being. However, if concurrentism grants creatures some active powers, a more extreme option exists: ‘mere conservationism’, on which God merely maintains, or conserves his creatures in existence as they act.\(^{45}\) McDonough is concerned to show that Berkeley falls into the concurrentist camp.

To be sure, there are things that Berkeley says that might be read as endorsing concurrentism. For example, in the Principles, Berkeley argues in favour of “limited powers, ultimately indeed derived from God, but immediately under the direction of [our] own wills, which is sufficient to entitle [us] to all the guilt of [our] actions.”\(^{46}\) But what I find puzzling is McDonough’s interest in establishing anything over and above the thesis that Berkeley is not an occasionalist. Berkeley is generally careful about theological commitment, as when in the Dialogues he argues merely to establish that the Mosaic creation account is consistent with his view.\(^{47}\) The young Berkeley, it is worth recalling, suffered serious setbacks in his career for making philosophical claims insufficiently distinguished from theological ones (in “Of Infinites”) and for insufficiently qualifying the scope of theological claims (in Passive Obedience).\(^{48}\) It is not surprising, then, that in Berkeley’s last mention of active power, he qualifies it. He says of the human power to move one’s limbs that it obtains “by whatever reason [it] may in the end be the case [quacunque tandem ratione id fiat].”\(^{49}\) A person is a principle of

\(^{44}\) Ibid. 569.
\(^{45}\) Ibid. 570.
\(^{46}\) DHP 237.
\(^{47}\) DHP 250-6.
\(^{48}\) See Berman, Idealism, 17ff.
\(^{49}\) DM 25.
motion, but one that is dependent upon, and subordinate to the first principle. It seems to me that Berkeley is precisely not advancing a theory here.

It is good that Berkeley is not advancing a theory, since he does not need to. On his view, as we shall see, it is important to establish that human bodies are directly affected by the mind. In Berkeley’s terms, this means that we can to a limited extent contribute to the collections that are our bodies. It seems to me that the account could be presented so as to be palatable either to a concurrentist or to a conservationist, and perhaps the appeal is wider still, since I expect that Berkeley’s desire here, as it is with the Mosaic creation account, is that any person with orthodox Christian beliefs ought to be able to adopt the view.

Many philosophers yearn to achieve systematic completeness. Berkeley is not such a philosopher. He is just not interested in having a Berkeleian answer to every question; for many questions – probably for most questions – any reasonable answer will do. Berkeley often points this out. When Johnson asks him questions, Berkeley tells Johnson that he does not care about the answers to questions that do not turn on problems particular to immaterialism. Johnson should “consider... [w]ether the difficulties proposed in objection to my scheme can be solved by the contrary, for if they cannot, it is plain they can be no objection to mine.” And if they aren’t, well then Berkeley is certainly not going to answer them. The theological question of concurrentism strikes me as an excellent example of a view on which I would not expect Berkeley to take sides.

Let us now consider one of Berkeley’s motivations which as we will see counts against the occasionalist reading: his view that there is a difference between acting directly and acting by an instrument.

4.2 Action by an Instrument

I have up to now argued that there is no textual reason to read Berkeley as an occasionalist in my technical sense, i.e. as someone who supposes that our volitions, though

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50 DM 25. “Hoc certe constat, corpora moveri ad nutum animæ, eamque proinde haud inepte dici posse principium motus; particulare quidem & subordinatum, quodque ipsum dependeat a primo & universalis principio.”

51 I find expressions of this temperament at NB 312; PHK 84; DHP 251.

52 BJ Nov. 25 (1729) 282f.
insufficient to bring about changes in the external world, are occasions upon which God brings about those changes, or upon which God’s fixed volitions kick in, so that we are unable to act in the external world under our own power. Berkeley sometimes employs a distinction between acting by an instrument, such as by using a tool or by a person employed, and acting directly, which involves no intermediary object. The distinction arises in the context of discussions about God, for example whether God could use matter as an instrument, but it is the distinction, and not the question about matter that I am interested in. When Berkeley makes this distinction, he illustrates it with examples drawn from the human context, and bodily action is paradigmatically direct, whereas action by means of a tool or a person counts as action by means of an instrument. And so this is my argument: (1) the occasionalist reading supposes that when I move my body, I will, and God recognizes my volition and causes my body to move. (2) However, in Berkeley’s terms, the occasionalist reading describes a case where I use another person (God) as an instrument. (3) But Berkeley repeatedly says that cases of moving one’s own body are not cases of action by an instrument. (4) Therefore the occasionalist reading is at odds with the texts.

Berkeley thinks that the difference between acting on a thing directly and acting by an instrument is one of common sense that everyone knows. Because he thinks this, he introduces the distinction casually and with very little warning or explanation. But his illustrations, which are drawn from the human realm, suffice to focus the discussion to follow.

Hylas raises the question of whether matter might be, to God, a kind of instrument. Use of an instrument, Philonous replies, would be beneath God’s dignity, for “the use of an instrument sheweth the agent to be limited by rules of another’s prescription, and that he cannot obtain his end, but in such a way and by such conditions.” God is never limited that way. Philonous leadingly asks Hylas whether “[i]s it not common to all instruments, that they are applied to the doing those things only, which cannot be performed by the mere act of our wills?” Fortunately for us, Berkeley illustrates the point with examples drawn from the human realm. As an example of acting by one’s will, Philonous gives moving one’s finger. As an example of acting by an instrument, he gives breaking stones or tearing up trees by the roots. In another discussion, when his correspondent Johnson wonders whether God is not morally tainted

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53 DHP 219.
54 DHP 218.
55 DHP 218.
by the evil deeds in which he seems to be causally involved, Berkeley is quick to argue that human beings may still receive the condemnation they deserve. He writes, “it is the same thing whether I kill a man with my hands or an instrument; whether I do it myself or make use of a ruffian.”56

Here then are three examples of acting by an instrument: pulling up a tree, smashing stones, and hiring a ruffian. Berkeley’s discussion in the Dialogues purports to be about “the most general notion of instrument”, and it seems to me that he intends the usage of common sense. Moreover, it seems to me that he is right – though perhaps it would be difficult to prove this. Common sense does draw a line between those things we do with our bodies, and those things for which we need to use tools – even living ones, such as persons.

To see why the fact that moving our bodies counts as direct action, rather than action by an instrument, is evidence against the occasionalist reading, we must appreciate that for Berkeley, all instruments fundamentally mental. That is because for Berkeley, it is God who “immediately produces every effect by a fiat, or act of his will”,57 and God’s action extends to “the effects of Nature [which] are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to humane agents.”58 Thus when A uses what we might ordinarily think of as inanimate things as instruments, he is, in metaphysical truth, relying on God’s agency just as, to use Berkeley’s example, he might rely on a ruffian.

When A moves his finger, he isn’t likewise dependent upon God – at least not in the execution of this particular movement. This clashes with the occasionalist reading. For the occasionalist, A’s volition is the occasion for God to move the finger. In Berkeley’s terms, this makes God A’s instrument. Berkeley clearly says, however, that the finger is not moved by an instrument. Therefore the occasionalist view is false.

4.3 Causal Remoteness

57 PHK 60. Of course God maintains us in existence too, but we exist as substances.
58 PHK 147.
Berkeley does not enlarge on the advantages of his view on instruments. He just mentions *en passant* that there is a distinction between acting by an instrument and acting directly. But we can see that Berkeley has used it to position himself closer to common sense. Berkeley saw at least some of his rivals as substance dualists, who understood the brain as the locus of the soul. Berkeley attributes the view to Descartes, who supposed that the soul, the self, connected to the body via the pineal gland. On this view, the body is like “a machine or piece of clockwork, which performed all the vital operations without the concurrence of the will”. 59 It is, in other words, an instrument. It also seems to be the view that Hylas espouses in the *Dialogues*.

It is supposed the soul makes her residence in some part of the brain, from which the nerves take their rise, and are thence extended to all parts of the body: and that outward objects by the different impressions they make on the organs of sense, communicate certain vibrative motions to the nerves; and these being filled with spirits, propagate them to the brain or seat of the soul, which according to the various impressions or traces thereby made in the brain, is variously affected with ideas. 60

Someone who thinks that the person resides in, or is connected in a special way to the brain 61 is going to face what we may call the *causal remoteness problem*. That is because it *seems that* we

59 Descartes, of course, insisted that he was not “merely present in [his] body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that [he] is very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it” Descartes, *Meditations* Med. 6 AT 81 CSM 56. Whether Cartesian dualism is able to bear this out is another question. Berkeley, “The Pineal Gland” [part one] *The Guardian* 35 (April 21 1713) vol. 7 186.

60 DHP 209. The process seems to work in reverse as well. In *Siris*, Berkeley rejects the views of “some learned men”, who suppose that brain signals travel in aether. “[Aether] alone, therefore, cannot, as some learned men have supposed, be the cause of muscular motion, by a mere impulse of the nerves communicated from the brain to the membranes of the muscles, and thereby to the enclosed aether, whose expansive motion, being by that means increased, is thought to swell the muscles and cause a contraction of the fleshy fibres.” S 200.

61 Does Locke fall into this category? Locke’s views on personal identity are famously complex. Although a tepid dualist, he believes that identity consists in consciousness, and is reflected at the metaphysical level by whatever substance is conscious, be it the soul, the body, or both. “That this is so,” writes Locke, “we have some kind of evidence in our very bodies, all whose particles, whilst vitally united to this same thinking conscious self, so that we feel when they are touched, and are affected by, and conscious of good or harm that happens to them, are a part of ourselves; i.e. of our thinking conscious self [my italics].” I take it that Locke could then reply to the *causal*
move our limbs directly. But if the soul connects to the body at the brain, there is a sequence of intervening causes necessary to move even our fingers. On Berkeley’s view, by way of contrast, there are no intermediate occurrences between the act of will and its object.

Consider a scenario: A causes his enemy to be killed by hiring a ruffian to do it. A does not know, perhaps, exactly how the ruffian will go about the deed. A only knows the outcome that he desires. In scenario two, B types with his hands. B’s soul influences his brain, and his brain sends animal spirits to his hands (to give the scenario a more modern ring, a neuron firing in B’s brain alters the state of his cerebral cortex, which sends a signal to his cerebellum, which sends a signal to his spinal cord, which sends nerve impulses into his arms and hands). B may well be just as ignorant of the way in which his body accomplishes the hand movement as A is ignorant of the machinations of his hired ruffian. Are these two cases really so different? If the answer is no, then any philosophical theory that understands the cases this way has a prima facie conflict with Berkeley’s distinction between acting by an instrument and acting directly, and if Berkeley is right to view the distinction as commonsensical, with common sense. The point was familiar to early modern philosophers. Here it is as made, although in the service of a very different argument, by David Hume.

We learn from anatomy, that the immediate object of power in voluntary motion, is not the member itself which is moved, but certain muscles, and nerves, and animal spirits, and, perhaps, something still more minute and more unknown, through which the motion is successively propagated, ere it reach the member itself whose motion is the immediate object of volition. Can there be a more certain proof, that the power, by which this whole operation is performed, so far from being directly and fully known by an inward sentiment or consciousness is, to the last degree, mysterious and unintelligible?

remoteness problem, that one is identical with one’s body when one acts upon it, and so there is no causal remoteness problem. Whether Locke is entitled to hold this position is another question again. Locke, Essay, 2.27.11.

Berkeley too ought to say that such a view is both mysterious and unintelligible. An alternative is needed. And Berkeley does, as I will show in the next section, give an alternative.

But wait. Is this not overlooking a simple way to preserve the distinction between the actions of A and B without resorting to Berkeleian immaterialism? Perhaps the processes of the body are mysterious. But if A hires the ruffian and B types, isn’t A’s action simply more mysterious than B’s? A hires the ruffian through some bodily action – maybe A even typed him an email. If so, the causal path between A’s soul and the murder of his enemy resembles the path between B’s mind and the hand movement; it is just that A’s path keeps going after that. No wonder, then, that A’s path seems to leave him more remote from the outcome: it is longer.

It seems to me that a quantitative distinction of this sort will not capture the distinction made by common sense. For suppose that C brings about the death of an enemy in a way so complicated that it doubles or triples the total complexity of A’s action. The plan is so byzantine that it would require a multi-volume history to explain. If the distinction between A and B were merely quantitative, we might expect to notice a bigger distinction between A and B on the one hand, and C on the other. But to my mind, the distinction still seems to cut between A and C, who use instruments, and B, who acts with his body.

I have suggested that Berkeley could use this causal remoteness problem to tar some of his philosophical opponents. I do not think that every alternative view is vulnerable. Only someone who thinks that (1) the person is, or is physically manifested in the brain, and (2) who recognizes the distinction between acting by an instrument and direct action, and (3) who thinks that the distinction has common sense status, is vulnerable. Certainly the causal remoteness problem does apply to the occasionalist reading of Berkeley. That is because on the occasionalist reading, every action performed by us is performed by using God as an instrument. Thus we are causally remote from the consequences of our actions. And this remains true regardless of when God acts. Even if God acts so that we are not aware of any delay between willing and movement (as the occasionalist reader might choose to say) it would still be the case, in metaphysical truth, that we would be causally remote from the action. If I am right to argue, as I do in 3.3.1, that the occasionalist reading is unmotivated in the first place, then we have found a motivation for not defending it. Berkeley’s own view will be one on which persons are not causally remote from their actions. The occasionalist reading cannot bear this out. Let us now turn to the texts to find a view that can.
4.4 Acting on Bodies: the Textual Evidence

For Berkeley, our human bodies are, like all bodies, collections of ideas. God has given us these bodies, but there is no natural reason that we should experience through them, rather than through some animal body, or indeed through a cup or a tree. As it happens, though, “[w]e are chained to a body, that is to say, our perceptions are connected with corporeal motions.” On the occasionalist reading, the chain symbolizes the direction of causal force from God, but our abilities are not such as to flow back up the chain. At best, our powers are restricted to imagination, i.e. to the manipulation of ideas that have come ‘down the chain’ and registered in our sense modalities. But I want to argue that there is a second direction of flow along the chain.

In a limited way, we act on our limbs. Thus our volitions flow along the chain too. But our control is limited. In the ordinary course of things, we have no volitions about our spleens, or about the marrow in our bones. We couldn’t move those things as such if we tried (though of course some of the actions we do perform result in their moving). Berkeley is saying that we can move our fingers, hands, and arms, toes, feet, and legs, flex our muscles, straighten our backs, turn our necks, turn up our chins, make faces, roll our eyes, make noises, wiggle our ears, and so on and on.

The claim that we have special control over our own bodies is found throughout Berkeley’s metaphysical writings. Nevertheless, with some important exceptions, the passages I am about to quote are often ignored, and, when they are read, they are often, as by Dicker, simply dismissed. While I am not the first to notice these passages, I do not understand my interpretation as a version of an existing view. It is new.

We find the claim that human beings have special control over a certain aspect of the physical world in the Notebooks. “We move our Legs our selves. ’tis we that will their movement.” Apparently to underline that he is here rejecting the view that God does everything

63 DHP 241.
65 NB 548.
in the external world, Berkeley finishes with the observation “Herein I differ from Malbranch.”

This short sentence seems to me to deliver the *coup de grâce* to the occasionalist reading.

In the *Principles*, Berkeley gives an argument for the conclusion that we know the existence of God because of the order in unthinking nature (the order in thinking nature indicates rather the existence of other minds). But in saying so, Berkeley makes an interesting claim about how far we finite spirits affect the physical world.

We may even assert, that the existence of GOD is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men; because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to humane agents. There is not any one mark that denotes a man, or effect produced by him, which doth not more strongly evince the being of that spirit who is the *Author of Nature*. For it is evident that in affecting other persons, the will of man hath no other object, than barely the motion of the limbs of his body; but that such a motion should be attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the CREATOR. He alone it is who *upholding all things by the Word of his Power*, maintains that intercourse between spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other [my emphasis in bold].

Two things are worth noting about this passage. One is that Berkeley is distinguishing between God’s actions (God brings about the effects of nature) and ours. As we see, an example of human action is the movement of limbs. The second point to which I would like to draw attention is one that will be even more apparent in the next text I will quote below: as always, Berkeley is being very careful about his theological position. And so he is careful to state that everything that we do shows that God exists, since it is only through God’s help that we can have effects on other minds. This suggestion will be important for my reconstruction of Berkeley’s view.

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66 NB 548.

67 PHK 147. Let me take a moment to consider the second major claim. One might, I grant, take an *occasionalist reading* of this passage. It would go like this. When one wills a characteristically human action, Q, God brings it about that Q. Thus when one observes Q-like events occurring in the world, one concludes that there are other finite minds. But it seems to me that it is more natural to read it as I have, as saying that sometimes when one tries to bring it about that Q, one succeeds, and Q obtains. Observing Q-like events, one concludes that other minds have been acting too.
In the *Dialogues*, the suggestion that we can move our own bodies comes up in an explicitly theological context. We have already encountered the beginning of this passage in this chapter. Hylas asks Philonous whether God, as the only cause in the external world is not “the author of murder, sacrilege, adultery, and the like heinous sins”? God is not the author of sins, says Philonous, for two reasons. The first, which we saw above, is that one retains full guilt when one acts by an instrument. The murderer who employs the laws of nature in his killing, though he makes an instrument of God’s regular activity, does not thereby lose ‘authorship’ of the action. Philonous’ second response is to question Hylas’ assumption that God is in fact the only cause in the external world.

Lastly, I have nowhere said that God is the only agent who produces all the motions in bodies. It is true, I have denied there are any other agents beside spirits: but this is very consistent with allowing to thinking rational beings, in the production of motions, the use of limited powers, ultimately indeed derived from God, but immediately under the direction of their own wills, which is sufficient to entitle them to all the guilt of their actions.

This is about as clear a renunciation of the *occasionalist reading* as a dialogue could afford. But once again we see that Berkeley is being theologically careful. Our powers are limited, derived from God, but our own. Although these have the sound of concessions, it is important to see that Berkeley has given up nothing of consequence. If the view is that we can move our limbs, and only in certain ways (only so fast, or only against so much resistance, for example), then our powers are limited from the start.

Souls are “naturally immortal”, but this does not in any way

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68 DHP 236.
69 DHP 237.
70 And while Berkeley can say that our powers are limited in scope, i.e. we can only act on our bodies, whereas God acts on the whole world, Berkeley has no resources for an account of powers that are somehow of a secondary sort compared to God’s power. In other words, he cannot distinguish qualitatively between human powers and God’s, but only as a difference of degree. That is because everything that I can know about God in general, and his power in particular, comes from “reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections.” DHP 231f.
suggest, as Berkeley hastens to make very clear, that we are independent of God’s will. Our very being is thus dependent upon God’s continued grace. And to have a power “under the direction” of one’s will just is to have a power.

The last instance I would like to consider comes from De Motu, Berkeley’s unsuccessful prize essay. There Berkeley calls the soul a principle of motion. Again, Berkeley’s empiricist approach to God helps us to understand how important this identification is to his philosophical anthropology. Implicitly in the Dialogues, and explicitly in De Motu, Berkeley argues that we gain our understanding of all activity through experience of ourselves. Thus we understand God second, Berkeley thinks: “all the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections.” Now since we understand God’s creative activity by understanding our own volitions, and since Berkeley thinks our terms are to be applied to God univocally, it really is right to say that what we discover in ourselves is an ability to act creatively – on our bodies.

Aside from corporeal things there is another kind, thinking things, but in them, as we have learned from personal experience, is the ability to move bodies, since our mind can at will move and stop the motion of our limbs, by whatever reason that may in the end be the case. This is surely clear, that bodies are moved according to the will of the spirit, which can then be called without absurdity a principle of motion.

I conclude that Berkeley’s very provocative, but very well-attested view is that human beings have creative, albeit limited power of affecting their bodies by a direct act of will. Let me now propose a theory that will weave together the assertions in these texts.

71 PHK 141.
72 DHP 239f.
73 DM 30.
74 DHP 231f.
75 DHP 239f.
76 Berkeley was a fierce critic of the scholastic doctrine of analogical knowledge, and devotes four sections to attacking it in Alciphron. 4.19.166-4.22.171.
77 DM 25, my translation.
4.5 How Does One Act on a Body?

My suggestion is that acting on bodies involves the creation by us of tiny subsets of the set of member-ideas of God’s collection\(_D\) that is our body. This is an interpretation of what I think Berkeley could, consistently with his other commitments, assert. Let us, for the sake of simplicity, suppose that these subsets have but one member each. Thus when A wills to reach for something, A causes the idea, arm-as-reaching to become a member-idea of God’s collection\(_D\) of his body. He inserts arm-as-reaching and to a limited extent relates it to other ideas. God does not perform the action of making arm-as-reaching appear in the collection\(_D\); God does adjust the collection\(_D\) to reflect the presence of arm-as-reaching. I believe that only such a view will make complete sense of the texts above.

When one acts on one’s own body, one creates a new idea that is added to one’s collection\(_F\), and relates this new idea to God’s collection\(_D\). A wills to reach – he decides to move his arm, rather than just leaving it hanging. A creates the new idea, arm-as-reaching, represented in Figure 3 below by red star. A’s collection\(_F\) consists of A’s sensations, plus representations of other ideas which A believes are in God’s collection\(_D\). God’s collection\(_D\) is timeless, and A’s collection\(_F\) reflects that fact, so both A’s recollections and his expectations are parts of his collection\(_F\).

A is able to directly perceive bodies because, in the case of sensation, as represented by black square in Figure 3 above, his collection\(_F\) and God’s collection\(_D\) share a member-idea. Because of this direct perception, A’s mind has something, so to speak, to grip while acting on God’s
collection\textsubscript{D}. Sensation and action are alike, then, in that both involve an overlap between God’s collections\textsubscript{D} and our finite collections\textsubscript{F}. If A acts at \( t_1 \), in the moment of activity A senses both black square and red star. After he has acted, A would ordinarily be aware at \( t_2 \) of the feedback in terms of other sensory ideas: the sensation of air on the moving hand, for example.

Let me add some detail to this example. Suppose that A reaches out to open a door. The metaphysical analysis of this action is as follows. A creatively wills arm-as-reaching. Arm-as-reaching is an idea, or more likely a set of ideas, some tactile, some visual (in other cases there might be ideas drawn from other sense modalities). A does not conceive of all the member-ideas in his arm – there are far too many. Instead, A conceives of a subset which, if they were to obtain in the external world, would in accordance with the laws of nature entail (in A’s estimation) that his arm would be at the door. A brings arm-as-reaching into existence, and to the best of his abilities relates it to other member-ideas of his arm, particularly to those he receives in passive sensation. The way that A relates arm-as-reaching to these other ideas is by trying to make arm-as-reaching appear in the external world, rather than by trying merely to produce it in his imagination. At \( t_1 \), then, A’s action consists of the creation and relating to other ideas of arm-as-reaching.

What is the nature of A’s awareness of arm-as-reaching at \( t_1 \)? There is no natural way in Berkeley’s approach to answer this question. If A is successful, arm-as-reaching is real, and so we might call it an idea of sensation. But obviously if A is creating arm-at-reaching at \( t_1 \) it would be bizarre to say he receives it passively. On the other hand, arm-as-reaching is certainly not what Berkeley often calls an idea of the imagination, because it is part of the real world. As I argued against Lee’s occasionalist reading, the fact that it is not easy to know what to call arm-as-reaching stems only from a rule of thumb that Berkeley uses to divide up sorts of ideas. My preference is to call arm-as-reaching a sensation, but note that, unlike most sensations, it is actively, rather than passively perceived. Though this does not preserve Berkeley’s rule of thumb about the passivity of sensation, it does preserve my suggestion that each sensation is a case of overlap between God’s collections\textsubscript{D} and our collections\textsubscript{F}. But nothing hangs on this terminological preference.

At \( t_2 \), supposing that A has successfully moved his arm, he will experience what I called feedback. (I will consider cases of failure below in 3.4.7.) A will experience the consequences of moving his arm out toward the door – increased gravitational pull, a shift in his balance, and so
on. These things may or may not be the consequences that he is expecting; that depends on how well A has predicted the natures of the regularities in question.\footnote{78}

I have been describing A’s act as ‘creation’. This is a fair description, not only because Berkeley describes imagining in these terms,\footnote{79} but also because Berkeley’s understanding of divine agency and, \textit{a fortiori}, divine creation, is simply an extended version of human action. So when A creates a new member-idea in the collection_D, his will aims to make arm-as-reaching appear in the external world. A will have to therefore make it end up in God’s collection_D, which he will do by relating the new member-ideas to currently sensed member-ideas of God’s collection_D that he happens to be receiving, as well as to all ideas of his own fashioning which represent God’s collection_D. But A’s activities will not suffice to link his new idea to all the ideas in God’s collection_D – in this A’s efforts will fall \textit{vastly} short, for we also need to explain the perception of the action by others. That is why Berkeley says in the passage I quoted from the \textit{Principles} above, that the fact “that [a human caused limb motion] should be attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the CREATOR. He alone it is who \textit{upholding all things by the Word of his Power}, maintains that intercourse between spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other.”\footnote{80} If B witnesses A reaching for the door, A is producing arm-as-reaching, but B is not sensing arm-as-reaching. B is sensing a different member-idea of the collection_D, A’s arm. B is able to perceive the existence of A because arm-as-reaching, and more importantly A’s activity, is entailed by what B sees. And so it remains true that God’s power, not A’s, causes B to sense what he does sense. As an account of agency, what I have given raises questions that Berkeley’s texts do not give us many resources to answer. My more circumspect concern has been to show that it is at least coherent. I will now argue that it is also consistent with some of Berkeley’s other commitments.

\footnote{78} Berkeley says that we can act upon our bodies. He makes no such claims about other things, such as cups or chairs. One reason for this restriction may be to avoid cases of blind agency, a matter which I will consider in more detail in 3.4.6. below. And it would not be implausible to think that one is always aware of one’s body, in that one is always sensing at least one idea of one’s body, and one is thus so to speak anchored to the collection_D. Perhaps this is what Berkeley means by saying that we are “chained” to our bodies. One is not in the same way anchored to cups and chairs; one might reach for a cup while turning away one’s eyes, and thus one would only be aware of one’s memory of the cup.

\footnote{79} NB 830.

\footnote{80} PHK 147.
4.6 Blind Agency

One danger for an account like mine is that it may seem to commit Berkeley to blind agency – something he rejects in the Notebooks as a “Contradiction.”\(^{81}\) I have already suggested that in limiting human powers to our own bodies, Berkeley may be trying to avoid a commitment to blind agency. But one might wonder whether the entire account of human agency is not vulnerable to it. To say that one cannot act blindly is to say that one cannot simply act – an act must have some object.\(^{82}\) So is the creative process I have been arguing for here a case of blind agency?

I think that Philip Cummins would say yes. He writes, “volition, to avoid blind agency, must include a thought of its would-be effect.”\(^{83}\) On Cummins’ view, a volition includes a representation of its intended outcome. Let us call Cummins’ model, which has three components, a three-component model. I am suggesting that the content of a volition is the very thing it is trying to bring about. I too think the content serves as a representation, but it seems to me that a single idea can be both a representation of what I want my body to do, and a member-idea of the collection\(_D\). On my view, willing is creative, and so willing X makes X take place. Because on Berkeley’s view, things are (collections of) ideas, there is no need for a mental intermediary between us and things. The contents of our own volitions just are real things. These contents are member-ideas of collection\(_D\), and so along with the other member-ideas the contents of our willing constitute bodies. Since on my view there is no third component in cases of volition, let us call my view a two-component model.

As Cummins sees it, If A wants to bring about arm-as-reaching, A must form a thought of arm-as-reaching, an idea of an idea, in order to give his volition a direction and avoid the charge of blind agency. This strategy is not without cost. First, I have trouble seeing how it avoids a regress.\(^{84}\) Would not the activity of forming the content of a volition itself be an act that requires

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\(^{81}\) NB 812.

\(^{82}\) See the very rich discussion in Winkler, who thematises blind agency in his interpretation of Berkeley. Winkler, *Interpretation*, 208.

\(^{83}\) Cummins, “Agency”, 222.

\(^{84}\) This worry can be found in McDonough, “Concurrentism,” 588f.
a representation to avoid blindness, on Cummins’ view? Second, as Cummins himself observes, the need for representations of actions to avoid blind agency violates a Berkeleian distinction, postulating that volitions contain ideal (i.e. passive) components, and so it “destroys the wall [Berkeley] has built between activities and ideas.”

Third, if Cummins view is correct, it strikes me that any philosopher who believes in creation ex nihilo is going to have a blind agency problem. Creation is supposed to be the bringing of something out of nothing.

The elegance of immaterialism is that ideas can play the role of mental object and also of thing. For that reason, two components suffice. When A wills arm-as-reaching, he does represent it – it is a member-idea of his collection_{F}. On my view of Berkeley, as defended in the last chapter, representation just is collection_{F}-making. However, collection_{F} on occasion overlap with God’s collection_{D}, and this is such an occasion. Thus arm-as-reaching is also a member-idea of the collection_{D}, which is to say that it is a constituent part of A’s actual hand. However, since it is also related to ideas in the collection_{D}, the placing of arm-as-reaching into the collection_{D} is also the result of A’s activity.

4.7 The Paralysis Case

As a way of clarifying the view I am attributing to Berkeley, let me consider another worry. On my view, A produces member-ideas that fit into collection_{D} by his own agency. But how then to account for the following common enough case: suppose A wakes up and tries to move his arm, which is to say he wills arm-as-reaching, but alas, A has been lying on his arm and it has fallen asleep, and so nothing happens. Should we say that A’s volition failed to achieve its effect? If so, it seems that the content that renders A’s volition non-blind – arm-as-reaching – occurs without an act, suggesting that it is a mere representation, and that Cummins’ view about volition is correct. But to say that A’s volition succeeded seems to fly in the face of the facts. His arm did not move. If A’s volition succeeds and his arm does not move, then it seems that volitions are not sufficient to bring about changes in collection_{D}. This would be bad news for my view.

I think Berkeley should say that our volitions never fail. This is speculation on my part; there are, so far as I know, no texts where Berkeley says that volitions are always successful. But

\[85\] Ibid.
it seems to me that he might make this claim by distinguishing between two ways of looking at collections, a nomic approach and a metaphysical approach. Berkeley should say that when we act, in those cases in which the world fails to conform to our volition, God does not relate our creations to the other member-ideas in the collection_D. Collections_D are related together in accordance with the causal regularities that characterize our world. God’s collection_D that is A’s body consequently has member-ideas that are, given the regular laws of nature, incompatible with A’s idea, arm-as-reaching. That is to say, one’s failed volition does not figure in the collection_D nomically understood.

But we might consider collections_D differently. The metaphysician can recognize, at least if he is driven to it by other commitments, that arm-as-reaching and the member-idea(s) it was intended to replace are not logically incompatible. There could then be then a metaphysical sense in which the collection_D includes both member-ideas, in which bodies bear faint traces even of our of our failures. Thus when we say that A tried to move his hand and *nothing happened*, we are speaking a little too freely. Something did happen; A made an attempt. And, to take this speculation one step further, Berkeley might say that making an attempt *means* attaching the object(s) of one’s volition to the collection_D, conceived logically but not nomically.86

It is worth explaining how a failed attempt relates to the illusion/hallucination cases which I discussed in the last chapter. An illusion is a false inference or series of inferences made about a correctly perceived idea of sense. Strictly speaking, one might fail in one’s attempt to perform some action, but not even suppose that one had been successful. Perhaps a person with great self-doubt might do so. But most failures of action will be accompanied by illusions, as we expect the world to unfold as though we had been successful.

There is one other reason to adopt the distinction between collections_D understood nomically and metaphysically. If I am right to argue that human agency is in a way parallel to sensation, in that both serve to anchor us to collections_F, it is perhaps significant that Berkeley is of the view that sensations are never false, though we may go very wrong in forming collections_F

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86 What exactly ought to be our analysis of someone who tries to move a cup by telekinesis and, inevitably, fails? Should we say that this person has attached the object(s) of his volition to the collection_D, logically understood? Or should we say of the would-be telekinetic that his action has failed because he does not have a grasp (or enough of a grasp) on the cup, and thus his action is somehow blind? I am not sure what Berkeley would say here.
around them. There would be a pleasant symmetry in saying that volitions likewise are never inefficacious, however disappointed we may be at the results. The “chain” between our bodies and our minds would then be a two-way conductor transmitting sensations of external things in one direction, and the contents of our acts in the other.

4.8 Divine Passivity

Let me consider one more potential problem. It may seem that my description of human activity commits Berkeley to a theologically untenable view about God. I am claiming that God allows human beings to act on some collections. So when we act, we alter the collection. But God knows these collections. When God changes the collection, we passively sense that change. Does this work in reverse? Does God passively receive our changes to collections? No.

God is not passive, because God is not in time. A may passively sense his body at and actively move it at . But God is timelessly aware of every state of A’s body, as he is aware of every state of every collection. Thus, A imposes no change upon God. God always intended the collection to reflect A’s decision. Berkeley has no philosophical qualms about attributing to God this sort of timeless certainty. This seems to me to be what Berkeley means when he has Philonous say that “[a]ll objects are eternally known by God, or which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in his mind.”

One might think that there is another reason to suppose that Berkeley does not have a problem with divine passivity. Any orthodox Christian will grant that God knows all our deeds. So any Christian philosopher, immaterialist or not, who supposes that human beings can act ipso facto supposes that human choices can be the reason why this rather than that knowledge is in the mind of God. Berkeley is certainly committed to this, but it is not obvious that he is committed to anything more than this. If not, then there is no special problem for the immaterialist here.

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87 DHP 238.
88 And Berkeley is not worried that this sort of certainty may determine action. In Alciphron, Berkeley’s mouthpieces distinguish certainty from necessity. Alc. 7.17.313f, 7.20.317.
89 DHP 252.
4.9 Locke’s Legacy

One might suppose that this account of Berkeley’s, on which human beings can move the limbs of their bodies, has strayed far indeed from Locke. But this would be a mistake. Even here the process of saving an immaterialist version of Locke, introduced above (1.4.5), continues. The Essay has intimations of just such a power, in a passage that has troubled readers such as Vere Chappell on account of its sheer implausibility in the Lockean context.

The idea of the beginning of motion we have only from reflection on what passes in ourselves, where we find by experience, that barely by willing it, barely by a thought of the mind, we can move the parts of our bodies, which were before at rest. 90

As we can see, in the Principles Berkeley is not just following Locke, he is practically plagiarizing him, when he writes, “the will of man hath no other object, than barely the motion of the limbs of his body”. 91 Berkeley’s interpretation of this passage plainly takes it the strongest possible sense.

Vere Chappell has called this talk of directly moving limbs “loose talk on Locke’s part.” 92 That may well be true. Certainly it is hard to see how a Lockean dualist (if Locke is a dualist) explains the direct action of a volition on a limb. It seems that such an action would illicitly bypass the brain. But while I am happy to grant that Locke’s discussion may not represent the general thrust of his thought, I cannot grant that Berkeley’s apparent employment of it is also, as one reader calls it, “mistake”. 93 It seems likely that, to Berkeley, Locke’s musings suggested the outline of an immaterialist account in which they would play a prominent role.

5.1 Freedom of the Will

90 Locke Essay 2.21.4.
91 PHK 147.
I have argued that Berkeley has a developed account of human agency. In his own view, such an account needed to be paired with an account of freedom, in order to really satisfy common sense. Unfortunately Berkeley’s account of free will is not very developed, but it is worth considering a sketch anyway, to appreciate the full sense in which persons may be responsible for actions. Berkeley takes the view that without a power to do otherwise, there is no free will, and without free will, there can be no moral responsibility. Since he defends free will at the expense of determinism, he is a libertarian incompatibilist. I have up to now been explaining what it means for Berkeley to have freedom of action. But on Berkeley’s own view, such freedom would be insufficient for example for securing moral responsibility without freedom of the will.

The free-thinker Alciphron poses for Euphranor a determinist challenge, quoting — strangely — the Earl of Shaftesbury. Alciphron’s challenge, as I read it, is an intellectualist version of a very old dilemma posed by the determinist (whether hard or soft) against the libertarian. Is freedom governed by reason, or character, or something of the sort, or is it independent of such things? On the first horn, freedom seems to be constrained. But the libertarian who tries to avoid this conclusion discovers that on the second horn, freedom seems to boil down to randomness. The libertarian must try to get through the horns.

Euphranor has a response, one that draws heavily on common sense.

94 Cf. “In freedom there should be an indifference to either side of the question, a power to act or not to act, without prescription or control: and without this indifference and this power, it is evident the will cannot be free.” Alc. 7.17.311.
95 Alc. 7.16 309.
96 Geneviève Brykman takes Berkeley to be a compatibilist, and points out that Alciphron’s description of free will is interestingly similar to that of Anthony Collins. But this does not seem to me to be sufficient evidence to discount Berkeley’s endorsement of the principle of alternative possibilities, which makes it difficult for me to see how he could be arguing in favour of compatibilism. Brykman, “On Human Liberty in Berkeley’s Alciphron VII” Stephen Daniel, ed., New Interpretations of Berkeley’s Thought (Amherst: Journal of the History of Philosophy Books Humanity Press, 2008) 231-46, 240.
97 “APPETITE, which is elder Brother to REASON, being the Lad of stronger growth, is sure, on every Contest, to take the advantage of drawing all to his own side. And Will, so highly boasted, is, at best, merely a Top or Foot-Ball between these Youngsters” Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (John Darby, 1732) vol. 1 2.187.
it is evident to me, in the gross and concrete, that I am a free agent. Nor will it avail to say, the will is governed by the judgment, or determined by the object, while, in every sudden common cause, I cannot discern nor abstract the decree of the judgment from the command of the will; while I know the sensible object to be absolutely inert; and lastly, while I am conscious\textsuperscript{98} that I am an active being, who can and do determine myself.\textsuperscript{99}

As I read it, the argument consists of a denial and two positive theses.

(1) I cannot discern nor abstract the decree of the judgment from the command of the will;  
(2) ...I know the sensible object to be absolutely inert; and lastly,  
(3) ...I am conscious that I am an active being, who can and do determine myself.\textsuperscript{100}

(1) is an expression of Berkeley’s view that acting just is willing. \textit{A fortiori}, judging is a kind of willing. (2) is a thesis about ideas, namely that they are totally passive. Euphranor is here talking about “sensible object[s]”, ideas of sense, because these are what Alciphron brought up. But the reader knows that the more general point is true. Ideas cannot act, and they cannot \textit{transmit} action. They cannot even endure passively: without the support of a mind, they would simply cease to be.\textsuperscript{101} Finally, (3) affirms the experience of freedom. I think that (2) and (3) are intended to deflate the determinist’s dilemma.

If Berkeley is entitled to (2), it is hard to see how mental content could determine a mind in any way. Every idea that is received, whether it comes to us by sense, or whether we remember it, brings with it no causal force. No matter how loud the explosion or how oppressive the smell, \textit{the ideas themselves} do not cause anything, and \textit{a fortiori}, do not cause anything in us. If immaterialism is true, and someone is determined, then the thing that determines him must be (a) an idea, or (b) some other mind, or (c) his own mind. If none of these are in a position to

\textsuperscript{98} I think nothing hangs on the world ‘conscious’ for Berkeley, who uses it quite casually as when he writes “Consciousness, perception, existence of Ideas seem to be all one.” NB 578.  
\textsuperscript{99} Alc. 7.18.314.  
\textsuperscript{100} Alc. 7.18.314.  
\textsuperscript{101} See PHK 25, 89, 139; DHP 217, 231; DM 29.
determine him, then he is not determined. And the first of these possibilities has already been ruled out.

Finite minds can’t affect other finite minds directly, so the only way that (b) might be true is if God determined us. He could, of course, but the worry seems unmotivated, and I am not aware of anyone who is troubled by this possibility. What about (c), do we determine ourselves? In one unproblematic way, we do, and Euphranor calls us “self-determined.” But the worry is that mental faculties may in some way constrain the choice of the will. Euphranor’s denial of faculty psychology in (1), by means of the insistence that every act is an act of will is supposed to block this.

Euphranor wants to show that Alciphron’s argument cannot catch the nimble immaterialist, who slips through the horns of the determinist’s dilemma. So the determinist has no argument against the libertarian, and the libertarian has no argument against the determinist – except perhaps to point out that, for the libertarian, moral responsibility was never threatened. What now?

Euphranor – Berkeley – thinks that, though there is no argument for free will, we know that we are free, as stated in (3). This knowledge forms part of common sense. Thus Euphranor, if I take things as they are, and ask any plain untutored man whether he acts or is free in this or that particular action, he readily assents, and I as readily believe him from what I find within. And thus, by an induction of particulars, I may conclude man to be a free agent, although I may be puzzled to define or conceive a notion of freedom in general and abstract. And if man be free, he is plainly accountable. But if you shall define, abstract, suppose, and it shall follow that, according to your definitions, abstractions, and

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102 We cannot perceive them, and indeed only know them and interact with them (if at all) by observing and creating changes in the physical world DHP 233.

103 Alc. 7.19.316.

104 Euphranor is being ironic: he has accused Alciphron of abstraction, and Berkeley’s usual rhetorical strategy is to try to shame advocates of abstraction into admitting that they literally do not know what they are talking about (e.g. PHKi10). Recall that the introduction to the Principles is devoted to Berkeley’s rejection of abstraction, where he blames it for “innumerable errors and difficulties in almost all parts of knowledge”. PHK i6. Indeed, common sense based anti-abstractionism is, after immaterialism, perhaps Berkeley’s most famous view. And thus one that, though no doubt many interesting things could be written about it, could easily be the subject of a thesis in its own right.
suppositions, there can be no freedom in man, and you shall thence infer that he is not accountable, I shall make bold to depart from your metaphysical abstracted sense, and appeal to the common sense of mankind [my italics].\textsuperscript{105}

It is here explicit that the “plain untutored man”, exemplar of “common sense of mankind”, believes that he is free. If common sense has any value, it tips the scale in favour of free will.

On Berkeley’s view, the will is to be understood through the lens of libertarianism. Given his views on the will detailed in 3.2.1., it seems clear to me that Berkeley belongs in the tradition of agent causal libertarianism. Agent causation views claim that agents are causes in a special (and free) way. This specialness is measured against non agent causes, such as a row of falling dominoes. We share agent causal power with God. (Berkeley, of course, allows only agent causes.) Roderick Chisholm, in a seminal discussion of agent causation, writes,

If we are responsible, and if what I have been trying to say is true, then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we act, is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing – or no one – causes us to cause those events to happen.\textsuperscript{106}

One contemporary defender of common sense has argued that being an agent causal libertarian is part of what could place one in the free will tradition. This is good news for Berkeley, if true.\textsuperscript{107}

\begin{small}
\begin{itemize}
\item Since it is acknowledged by virtually everybody that Berkeley is thoroughly opposed to abstract ideas, I feel relatively secure in saying this without further defense. Berkeley makes it very clear here that he counts as common, at least insofar as he cannot understand talk of abstraction. “The generality of men which are simple and illiterate never pretend to abstract notions.” PHK i10. Philosophers do, and that is where they go wrong.
\item Lemos, Defense, 12. There are, of course, many people who profess not to believe that they are free. Berkeley, or any other defender of common sense, seems to me to have three possible ways of understanding such denials. Such people either (a) lack the experiences that shape common sense knowledge in the rest of us, or (b) had the experiences but began doubting them because of bad arguments or other influences, or (c) they are somehow defective. Since Berkeley presents arguments against the view, a tactic that would be ineffective against persons of type (a) or (c), it seems to me that he thinks the correct diagnosis is (b).
\end{itemize}
\end{small}
Classifying Berkeley as an agent causationist of course does nothing to resolve the great many puzzles that assail any view on free will. Showing how Berkeley could engage such questions would be a project for future research.

But let me consider one textual question. If Berkeley is an incompatibilist, there are no deterministic laws of nature. Some think that Berkeley describes such exceptionless laws, and certainly some sort of natural laws have indeed played an important part in my account. He mentions the “the settled laws of Nature”, and ascribes to these laws a kind of necessity when we writes that “a particular size, figure, motion and disposition of parts are necessary, though not absolutely to the producing any effect, yet to the producing it according to the standing mechanical Laws of Nature”. Berkeley even calls this necessity ‘absolute’: “the... methods of Nature are absolutely necessary, in order to working by the most simple and general rules, and after a steady and consistent manner”.

I don’t think Berkeley is endorsing exceptionless laws. The necessity in question is said to aim at simplicity. Simplicity, as the wider context of these quotations makes clear, is only a means to the ultimate end which having such natural laws achieves: laws are simple because being so makes them comprehensible. In each instance quoted above, Berkeley explains this motivation. “[T]he operating according to general and stated laws, is so necessary for our guidance in the affairs of life, and letting us into the secret of Nature, that without it, all reach and compass of thought, all human sagacity and design could serve to no manner of purpose [my italics].” There is no more necessity in “all the clockwork of Nature” than in a pocket watch, where God “might, if he were minded to produce a miracle, cause all the motions on the dial-plate of a watch, though no body had ever made the movements, and put them in it: but yet if he will act agreeably to the rules of mechanism, by him for wise ends established and

110 PHK 31.
111 PHK 62.
112 PHK 151.
113 PHK 151.
114 PHK 60.
maintained in the Creation”. So the question could be put this way: is it necessary for operating in the affairs of life that we assume that human beings follow exception-less laws in their actions? And the answer, it seems obvious to me, is No.

Epicurus asked his determinist interlocutors why, given their views, they bothered arguing at all: isn’t persuasion meaningless if both parties’ views are formed by deterministic processes anyway? The merits of this argument are debatable, but the insight that drives it is one that Epicurus shares with Berkeley. Like Epicurus, he thinks that human action appears to be free, that “man hath all the marks of a free agent.”

There are several ways in which Berkeley could defend this position. For example, he might take a roughly Leibnizean view, on which God sets up the laws of nature taking into account our free actions. On this view, there is no tension between human free will and the laws, for the two have been rendered harmonious in advance. Another alternative, characteristically Berkeleian, would be for Berkeley to rest his case on the observation that human beings are shown by common sense to be free, and to remain an agnostic about the scope of natural laws. Perhaps the scope of natural laws is one of the many philosophical topics that Berkeley is just not interested in arguing about.

I think there is another and more radical possibility. Perhaps Berkeley is rejecting the entire framework of exceptionless laws. We might think of this rejection by analogy with his rejection of abstract mathematics. Berkeley would not be denying that there are natural regularities, just as he does not reject the value of calculation, but rather he would be wondering whether we need to suppose there is a system of laws as some suppose there is a system of numbers. If this was Berkeley’s view, he would recognize that God could have set up the world in a deterministic way, or he could have retroactively set up laws of nature around our free choices. But he would be rejecting both of these views. On this bold approach, the world would turn out to be freer, with more power devolved to finite beings, than Berkeley’s contemporaries would or could allow.

\[\text{PHK 62.}\]

\[\text{116 Epicurus }\text{On Nature }34.26-30,\text{ in Long and Sedley, }\text{Hellenistic, }20\text{C 1-8. See the discussion in Lisa Wendlandt}\]


\[\text{117 Alc. 7.17.313.}\]
6.1 Berkeley and Science

Berkeley’s ambivalence about natural laws might seem to be but the last in a long list of Berkeleian attacks on science. But let me suggest in closing that Berkeley is really quite committed to the importance of science, so long as the scientific project remains divorced from the metaphysical one.

Berkeley’s view is not at odds with science, but with the optimistic spirit in which some scientists, and many of their philosophical admirers, view the scientific project. Eric Schliesser has presented Berkeley as opposed to anyone who infers from scientific advances that the scientist has, so to speak, struck metaphysical bedrock, and is therefore able to see the true natures of things. In his *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes views his project in such a way, arguing that the successes of his own physics should retroactively grant his principles a ‘moral certainty’ (although this is for Descartes a restricted sort of certainty).

Now if people look at the many properties relating to magnetism, fire and the fabric of the entire world, which I have deduced in this book from just a few principles, then, even if they think that my assumption of these principles was arbitrary and groundless, they will still perhaps acknowledge that it would hardly have been possible for so many items to fit into a coherent pattern if the original principles had been false.

Descartes’ claim to moral certainty has bled into contemporary philosophy of science under the heading of the *miracle argument*, or sometimes the *no miracles argument*. Realism, wrote Hilary Putnam, “is the only philosophy that doesn’t make the success of science a miracle”. Just as Descartes believed of his principles, Putnam is saying that the only reasonable explanation for

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scientific success is that scientists have at last penetrated the metaphysical silt and anchored their observations on the firm bedrock of reality. The modern defender of the miracle argument points to airplanes, computers, earthquake predictions: these would be miraculous if they were not seeing things as they truly are.

Berkeley is unconvinced. One way to explain the successes of science is that scientists have stuck metaphysical bedrock. Another way is that the spirit who places ideas in our minds does so in a way that is comprehensible to us and wishes to see us succeed. While the scientist – qua scientist, that is – has no good reason to prefer one of these explanations over the other, Berkeley believes that he has given quite compelling reasons to prefer the latter. Namely, that his metaphysics bears out the worldview of people of common sense.

The attempt to generate a metaphysical account from a scientific one gives rise to the New Sceptical Pictures [NSP] that I identified as Berkeley’s target in chapter one. It is thus in the context of natural philosophy that Berkeley writes, “all that stock of arguments [sceptics] produce to depreciate our faculties, and make mankind appear ignorant and low, are drawn principally from this head, to wit, that we are under an invincible blindness as to the true and real nature of things.” According to this view, the truth of things on this view is found at the level of scientific accounts, on the micro-level, or the quantum-level, or at any rate on some level that admits of quantification. But, asks Berkeley, why give up the perfectly respectable view that the truth of things is found at the level of sensible bodies if one does not have to?

Berkeley, I have been arguing, is motivated by the [NSP], the view that puts science and common sense into opposition. Berkeley argues that only the Common Sense Picture [CSP] is even coherent enough really count as a picture. That is because the scientist who tries to give an account of quarks or atoms or whatever in non-phenomenal terms will find himself unable to meet the challenge of the so-called ‘Master Argument’, which I discussed in 1.4.4. above. What role is left for the scientist who takes Berkeley’s warning to heart? Such a scientist should recognize that his particular skills consist of predicting, producing, and controlling phenomena, but not of giving explanations that account for them in metaphysical truth.

121 The scientist qua scientist is not involved in the study of metaphysics. As these are metaphysical questions, I take it that the scientist qua scientist will have no particular views about them.

122 PHK 101.
the difference there is betwixt natural philosophers and other men, with regard to their
knowledge of the *phenomena*, we shall find it consists, not in an exacter knowledge of the
efficient cause that produces them, for that can be no other than the *will of a spirit*, but only
in a greater largeness of comprehension, whereby analogies, harmonies, and agreements
are discovered in the works of Nature, and the particular effects explained, that is, reduced
to general rules, see *Sect. 62*, which rules grounded on the analogy, and uniformness
observed in the production of natural effects, are most agreeable, and sought after by the
mind; for that they extend our prospect beyond what is present, and near to us, and enable
us to make very probable conjectures, touching things that may have happened at very
great distances of time and place, as well as to predict things to come; which sort of
endeavour towards omniscience, is much affected by the mind.¹²³

Scientific prediction, Berkeley argues, will always fall short of “demonstration”, since in order to
demonstrate any prediction, one would need certainty that God would not choose this instance to
act miraculously.¹²⁴ Scientists should rest content with “very probably conjectures”.

When scientists aim to extend laws to places in which ordinary people can see that they
do not apply – free will seems an obvious example, though Berkeley does not give it here –
scientists are like bores who weary one by their strict adherence to grammatical rules. “And as it
is very possible to write improperly, through too strict an observance of general grammar-rules:
so in arguing from general rules of Nature, it is not impossible we may extend the analogy too
far, and by that means run into mistakes.”¹²⁵ The person of common sense ought to be the master
and not the slave, not only of the language, but also of the science of the age.

### 7.1 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued against the view of Berkeley that is generally called
‘occasionalism’. According to the *occasionalist reading*, human actions are confined to the realm

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¹²³ PHK 105.
¹²⁴ PHK 107.
¹²⁵ PHK 108.
of the imagination, and God performs every action in the external world – in a word, God moves our bodies for us.

Despite its popularity, the occasionalist reading is, I argued, without strong textual support, as the passages that seem to speak in its favour have been misconstrued. On the other hand, there is quite a bit of evidence against the occasionalist reading. The first piece of evidence I considered was Berkeley’s distinction between acting by an instrument and acting with one’s body. For the occasionalist – as perhaps for others – these amount to the same thing. But common sense suggests that there is a difference. Berkeley is on the side of common sense.

Berkeley writes repeatedly about a special human ability to move one’s limbs. Given that this is just what he needs to make sense of his own distinction about bodily vs. instrumental action, I argue that Berkeley intended his reader to take such passages to heart. In them, I propose, we can find a bold theory, on which human beings are, in metaphysical truth, causes of the motions of our limbs. Our wills bring ideas into existence, and we can relate these ideas to God’s collection$D$ in such a way as to make them parts of the collection$D$. I argued that such acts are always successful, but do not always reflect that success in the external world.

In the first chapter, I argued that Berkeley is motivated by a view he attributes to sceptics in general: a kind of sneering disregard for the things ordinary people believe they know. [NSP] can be seen as opposing a picture consisting of the material bodies that feature in scientific theories to [CSP]. In the last two chapters, I defended the common sense account of bodies, as collections of ideas that are directly perceived, and the common sense view that we may act directly on some of these bodies, namely, on the human body that is specifically our own. I also argued that Berkeley gives a defense of agent causal libertarianism in Alciphron. I said very little to evaluate the account, but merely pointed out that it is a very good fit for Berkeley’s overall agenda as I have presented it, and especially with his views on bodily motion. Berkeley could thus cast human beings as having both freedom of action and freedom of will.

I closed above with a consideration of science as Berkeley thinks it ought to be practiced. Berkeley was not trying to discourage science – he was an active scientist himself. What he resists is the slide from the scientific arena into the metaphysical one. It is here that scepticism takes hold.
Conclusion

Throughout the course of this dissertation, I have been arguing that Berkeley has an account of bodies that does not put him at odds with common sense, in two important respects. For Berkeley, bodies are real entities. They are collections, ‘collections\(_D\)’ in my terminology, made of various ideas so related as to constitute.

I am adapting to my purposes the view that the veridical nature of perception might be secured for Berkeley by the supposition that the direct object of sensation, an idea, is a constituent part a body. My suggestion is however that a similar account can work in reverse, when we act upon bodies. In this case, an idea of our own fashioning is put into the collection that is the body by an act of will. Just as we cannot be wrong in sensation, so we cannot fail in action. We always produce an idea, and relate it to the collection in question. However, just as a true sensation may utterly mislead a person, so a successful action may fall far short of what one had thought to accomplish. The former case shows our epistemic weakness, the latter illustrates our causal weakness, both underscore our dependence upon God.

It is in the nature of any research that in pursuing it one passes by several interesting and connected, but ultimately separable questions. In future work, I hope to pick up a number of these threads. Let me consider three of these now.

(1) Free Will. I argued above that Berkeley defends a form of agent-causationism. But I said very little about the strength of his position, and I tried to avoid speculating about how a defense of it might fare. I would like to answer some of these questions to my own satisfaction.

Berkeley’s discussion of agent-causal free will is very brief. But his account has one major advantage over more familiar versions of agent-causationism, which is that for Berkeley there is only one sort of cause to begin with. Berkeley is entitled to say this because of his immaterialism. But freed of the very notion of a non-agent cause, it seems to me that Berkeley has a great deal of latitude to redefine causation in such a way as to make the problem of determinism impossible to articulate in the first place.

If Berkeley’s account can be defended as one that places human free will at the centre of the cosmos, then it would perhaps be more plausible to attribute to Berkeley the radical view that I mentioned as a possibility in 4.5.1, that natural laws simply do not apply to human beings.
Instead, we would be conceived of as movers-unmoved whose contributions to the cosmos, albeit small, are completely independent of natural laws. It seems to me that Berkeley’s view of freedom has little in common with Locke’s. In pursuing this, I would like to consider as possible influences upon Berkeley Malebranche and the Cambridge Platonists.¹

(2) Moral Responsibility. Whereas Berkeley breaks with Locke on free will (perhaps because Locke’s position is so obscure), I would like to consider Berkeley’s account of moral responsibility in a Lockean context. On Berkeley’s view, one is responsible for things that one has freely done. Presumably the account of praiseworthy action is similar to that of blameworthy action, and “sin or moral turpitude doth not consist in the outward physical action or motion, but in the internal deviation of the will from the laws of reason and religion. …sin doth not consist in the physical action”.²

On my view, acts of will have contents which are, at least in principle, distinct. If I will to move my arm, I will that certain member-ideas should enter God’s collection, and stand there in certain relations. I suggested above that our acts of will are causally efficacious and that this remains true in a sense even when they fail to bring about completely the end at which we aimed (3.4.7.). It might be possible to export this way of thinking to the case of moral responsibility. Perhaps Berkeley can say that we are morally responsible only, or primarily, for those things which are acts of our will. This would open up to him a number of fine-grained moral distinctions. For example, consider a case of double effect, where a surgeon’s activity saves a mother at the cost of her unborn child. If the surgeon had willed the one thing, but not the other, Berkeley could say that, in metaphysical truth, the surgeon’s activity had figured in the explanation of the one event, but not in the other.

Moreover, such an account might be seen as a Berkeleian attempt to make sense of Locke’s notorious approach to moral responsibility. For Locke, continuity of consciousness is necessary for personal responsibility,³ leading him to suppose that some people who get very

¹ David Cunning argues that both were committed to such a view of human will, however problematically. David Cunning, “Systematic Divergences in Malebranche and Cudworth,” Journal of the History of Philosophy 41:3 (2003) 343-363, 360f.
² DHP 236-7.
³ “And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.” Locke Essay 2.27.9
drunk and commit crimes are not guilty because they fail to meet this criterion. Locke compares the drunk man to the sleepwalker who gets into trouble while asleep. I am not sure Berkeley would be eager to defend the drunk, but he could. The person who is sleepwalking is not willing, and if drunkenness is analogous to sleepwalking in this regard, then Berkeley could say that the drunk does no wrong. Does Berkeley’s approach represent a desire to save Locke’s commitments? I would like to find out.

(2) Berkeley’s Philosophical Theology. Berkeley is generally thought to be among the most religious of religious philosophers, and there is surely much that is true about this perception. However, Berkeley’s philosophical theology leaves God surprisingly obscure. My arguments throughout my second and third chapters turned on the analogy between human actions and God’s action. Berkeley writes, “all the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections [my italics].” What interests me is in this instance is just how much that leaves obscured. What I know about my own nature is that I have a power to act, and that I am a substance. Now God is surely a much more independent being than I am, and so the metaphysical category of substance in which I find myself doesn’t tell me much about the nature of God. Moreover, God can act in ways that I cannot act, namely, he can act on minds. My experience furnishes me with very little in terms of which this might be understood. But Berkeley is not willing to say that our terms apply to God in some analogical or equivocal way, they apply univocally to him. I am left to conclude that in a philosophical sense, we know very little about God.

Berkeleianism contains many proofs of God’s existence, all of the argument from design and cosmological variety. But Berkeley is hostile to ontological arguments. “Absurd to Argue the Existence of God from his Idea.”, he writes, “we have no Idea of God. tis impossible!” I would like to explore the parallel between Hume’s Cleanthes and Berkeley in this connection. Cleanthes, who opposes arguments for the existence of God that are not drawn from natural

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4 Locke *Essay* 2.27.22.
5 DHP 231f.
6 Alc. 4.19.166-4.22.171.
7 NB 782.
religion, is thus very close to Berkeley, as is widely recognized. But perhaps this can help us understand both philosophers. For example, Hume plays Cleanthes, who thinks that arguments from natural religion are the only good arguments for the existence of God, off against Demea, who thinks the opposite. This makes for entertaining reading, but considerably weakens Hume’s overall case, since there is no reason internal to his dialogue that I know of why Cleanthes and Demea could not pool their resources against the sceptical Philo. But if Cleanthes is Berkeley, there is a reason why he cannot join up with Demea, for then the real Cleanthes’ other views would get in the way.

Hume was a great admirer of Berkeley’s, and read not only his early works but also Alciphron. If it can be shown that Cleanthes is closely modeled on Berkeley, it would be interesting to approach the account in Alciphron in light of the Humean critique, and reevaluate Hume’s Dialogues with a clearer sense of the position defended by Cleanthes.

These are some of the questions to which, as I continue to read Berkeley, I hope to discover the answers.

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8 David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and Other Writings, Dorothy Coleman, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) xx.
9 Hume, Dialogues, 4.158.1f.
11 It is worth recalling that Hume declares Cleanthes the winner. Hume, Dialogues, 228.12.34.
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