

## BERKELEY'S ARGUMENT FOR IDEALISM<sup>1</sup>

George Berkeley is an idealist.<sup>2</sup> In the first two sections of the *Principles*, he claims that all sensible objects (such as tables and chairs, apples and pears) are nothing but collections of ideas, and hence that they must exist in some mind (or minds). But why? This is, as one commentator puts it, “an extremely perplexing question in the history of philosophy,”<sup>3</sup> and my aim in this talk is to provide the beginnings of an answer to it.

As many scholars have noted, *Principles* 3 and 6 reveal that Berkeley takes idealism to be self-evident.<sup>4</sup> In *Principles* 6, Berkeley claims that idealism is “so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see [it].” In *Principles* 3, Berkeley argues that it can be intuitively (i.e., non-demonstratively) known that sensible objects *must* be perceived if they exist. The argument rests on the semantic thesis that *to say that X exists (where X is a sensible object) is just to say that X is actually perceived*. Needless to say, this argument is far from persuasive. According to the semantic thesis, those who insist that it is possible without contradiction for sensible objects to exist unperceived are not merely making a *metaphysical* mistake: they have failed to grasp the relevant concepts and literally don't know what they're saying. Berkeley's opponents may be wrong; but they aren't *semantically blind*.

Luckily, Berkeley also offers a straightforwardly metaphysical (non-semantic) argument for idealism. The argument appears in *Principles* 4 (W2:42):

For what are [sensible objects] but the things we perceive by sense? And what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations?

Replacing Berkeley's questions with statements, we arrive at the following piece of reasoning:

## THE ARGUMENT OF *PRINCIPLES* 4

- P1. Sensible objects are perceived by means of the senses.  
L1. Ideas are the only things perceived by means of the senses.<sup>5</sup>  
So, C. Sensible objects are ideas. [P1, L1]

On its own, however, this argument is hardly persuasive. Although Berkeley's realist opponents will grant him the truth of P1, they will hardly grant him the truth of L1. For they will insist that mind-independent material things are (or at least can be) perceived by means of the senses. The trick, then, is to find a way of cleaning up the argument on Berkeley's behalf without straying from the relevant texts.

In the rest of this talk, I want to consider two ways of doing this. The first, which is due to Winkler (1989), depends on the Likeness Principle and on a particular (and, as I will argue, erroneous) way of understanding Berkeley's distinction between mediate and immediate perception. The second, which I will defend, depends on the right way of understanding this distinction and does not depend on the Likeness Principle. It also requires us to read the *First Dialogue Between Hylas and Philonous* as providing us with all the material required to fill in the argument of *Principles* 4. With the help of this reading, we will understand *exactly why* Berkeley thought it necessary to revisit the issue of idealism only three years after the publication of the *Principles*.<sup>6</sup>

Winkler begins his discussion of the argument of *Principles* 4 with the claim that there is a "structural" cause for concern, for (as he puts it) "the argument appears to turn on an ambiguity in the notion of perception" (138). As Berkeley himself recognizes, there is an important difference between *mediate* perception and *immediate* perception. As Winkler understands the distinction, for X to *mediately* perceive Y is for X to perceive Y by virtue of perceiving an idea that *represents* Y, and for X to *immediately* perceive Y

is for X to perceive Y, but not mediately. According to Winkler, Berkeley is “vividly aware” of an equivocation objection that turns on this distinction. A Lockean materialist, for instance, could easily object that Berkeley begs the question against her unless the word “perceived” is read one way in P1 and another way in L1. In particular, since the Lockean materialist insists both that sensible objects are not ideas and that they are *mediately* perceived (namely, by immediately perceiving ideas that represent them), she won’t grant the truth of P1 and L1 unless they are read as follows:

- P1\*. Sensible objects are *mediately* perceived by means of the senses.
- L1\*. Ideas are the only things *immediately* perceived by means of the senses.

But in that case the argument of *Principles* 4 becomes:

#### THE ARGUMENT\* OF *PRINCIPLES* 4

- P1\*. Sensible objects are *mediately* perceived by means of the senses.
  - L1\*. Ideas are the only things *immediately* perceived by means of the senses.
- So, C. Sensible objects are ideas.

But this argument is plainly invalid.

Now, as Winkler sees it, Berkeley’s reply to this objection relies on the Likeness Principle (LP), which appears in *Principles* 8 (W2:44). According to LP, “an idea can be like nothing but an idea,” that is, an idea cannot resemble anything that is not itself an idea. Winkler imagines Berkeley’s opponent insisting that P1 is true only if it is read as saying (P1\*) that sensible objects are *mediately* perceived by means of the senses. But on Winkler’s account of the nature of mediate perception, X mediately perceives Y only if X perceives Y by virtue of perceiving an idea that *represents* Y. The objector must then accept that we perceive sensible objects by virtue of perceiving ideas that represent them, and must therefore accept that sensible objects are represented by ideas. However, as Winkler rightly points out, “Berkeley believes that representation can only be a matter of

resemblance” (138). For example, in the First Draft of the Introduction to the *Principles*, Berkeley writes that ideas “are suppos’d to be the copies & images” of things, and that “they are not thought to represent them any otherwise, than as they resemble them” (W2:129). But then if the objector accepts that sensible objects are represented by ideas, then she must also accept that ideas resemble the sensible objects they represent. Thus LP entails that sensible objects, which resemble the ideas that represent them, must themselves be ideas. And this is simply to grant Berkeley’s idealist conclusion.

If we put this all together on Winkler’s behalf, we arrive at the following completion of the argument of *Principles* 4:

#### WINKLER’S RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ARGUMENT OF *PRINCIPLES* 4

- P1. Sensible objects are perceived by means of the senses.
- P2. All perception is either mediate or immediate.
- L1\*. Ideas are the only things immediately perceived by means of the senses.
- So, L2. If sensible objects are immediately perceived by means of the senses, then they are ideas. [L1\*]
- P3. For X to perceive Y mediately is for X to perceive Y by perceiving an idea that represents Y. [Definition of Mediate Perception]
- So, L3. If sensible objects are mediately perceived by means of the senses, then they are represented by ideas. [P3]
- P4. For an idea X to represent Y is for X to resemble (to be like) Y.
- P5. An idea can be like nothing but an idea. [Likeness Principle]
- So, L4. If sensible objects are mediately perceived by means of the senses, then they are ideas. [L3, P4, P5]
- So, C. Sensible objects are ideas. [P1, P2, L2, L4]

Now this is a really clever interpretation of Berkeley’s reasons for accepting idealism. But I don’t think it is accurate to Berkeley’s intentions. The main problem here is that there is considerable textual evidence against the claim that Berkeley embraces the definition of mediate perception Winkler attributes to him (in the shape of P3). As Winkler (1989, 149) himself recognizes, Berkeley allows for mediate perception of Y only when there is intervention of something other than Y that either *suggests* or

*entails* Y. For Berkeley, suggestion and inference are two very different mental operations belonging to separate mental faculties, the one to imagination and memory, the other to reason (or understanding). It is sufficient for suggestion that there be memory of past association.<sup>7</sup> This sort of relation obtains between, e.g., words and their meanings. To use an example of Berkeley's own, I might, by means of my imagination, arbitrarily associate the word "God" with a certain notion (the notion of God). [***Berkeley distinguishes between ideas and notions (see Principles 142 (W2:106), and Three Dialogues (W2:231-232)). Ideas are passive, whereas notions, which Berkeley identifies with the meanings of words denoting minds and their operations (as well as relations) are "active thinking image[s]."***] The next time I meet up with the word "God," I think of the right notion by virtue of the fact that I remember the relevant association. It is in this sense that the word "God" now *suggests* the notion of God. And my perception of the notion is here *mediated* by my perception of the word that suggests it. By contrast, memory of past association is not sufficient for inference. Rather, inference requires passing from one idea to another idea that is logically (and so necessarily) connected with it. To use one of Berkeley's own examples, given the self-evidence of the principle that everything has a cause, I might think of the cause of my sensations by inferring that something must be producing them (W2:174-175). In that case, my thinking of the cause of my sensations is *mediated* by my perception of the sensations from which I infer the existence of their cause.

Now the important point here is that the relata of the only relations that make mediate perception possible, namely suggestion and inference, need not be (and often are not) similar to each other. Consider suggestion. At *Principles* 27 (W2:52), Berkeley

points out that ideas cannot resemble minds because, whereas ideas are passive, minds are active, and nothing passive can resemble anything active. By the same token, the word “God” cannot resemble the notion of God it suggests because, whereas the word “God” is a passive idea (as is entailed by Berkeley’s idealism), notions are active. And consider inference. Berkeley claims that the mental process of inference may lead me from perception of my sensations to thinking of their cause. But, as Berkeley argues at *Principles* 29-33 (W2:53-55), the cause of our sensations is God. And my sensations, which are passive ideas, do not resemble God, who is an active mental substance. Yet the relevant relata would have to be similar to each other if Winkler’s account of Berkeley’s definition of mediate perception were accurate. This is because, as Winkler sees it, for Berkeley mediate perception of Y requires perception of an intervening idea that represents, and so resembles, Y. I conclude that there is sufficient textual evidence to deny that Berkeley accepts P3. It follows that Winkler’s supplementation of the argument of *Principles* 4 with material extracted from *Principles* 8, clever as it may be as a defense of idealism, should not be attributed to Berkeley.<sup>8</sup>

If Winkler’s suggestion fails, then how does Berkeley propose to supplement the argument of *Principles* 4 in such a way as to vanquish his stubborn realist opponents?

The first thing to notice is that Berkeley’s remarks in *Principles* 1 indicate that the argument could be made more precise. The relevant passage reads as follows:

It is evident to any one who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly ideas formed by help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways...And as several of these [ideas] 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*. Other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things. [W2:41]

This passage makes clear that Berkeley thinks that an apple (and, by parity of reasoning, any sensible object) is not a *single* idea, but rather a *collection of ideas*. Thus, when Berkeley writes in *Principles* 4 that ideas are the only things perceived by means of the senses, he should be understood to mean that ideas *or collections thereof* are the only things perceived by means of the senses. And from this he means us to conclude, not that all sensible objects are *single* ideas, but rather that sensible objects are either single ideas *or collections thereof*.

But *why* does Berkeley hold that ideas or collections thereof are the only things perceived by means of the senses? This is the \$64,000 question. Read carefully, *Principles* 1 already provides us with the beginnings of an answer. Notice that Berkeley moves easily from the claim that an apple is a collection of *sensible qualities* (such as “colour, smell, taste, figure, and consistence”) to the claim that an apple is a collection of *ideas*. This strongly suggests that Berkeley takes sensible qualities to *be* ideas, and infers that sensible objects are collections of ideas from the fact that sensible objects are (not single qualities, but rather) collections of sensible qualities.

Modified in the light of *Principles* 1, the argument of *Principles* 4 becomes:

THE ARGUMENT OF PRINCIPLES 4  
(Supplemented with Material from *Principles* 1)

- P1. Sensible objects are perceived by means of the senses.
  - P2. The only things perceived by means of the senses are sensible qualities or collections thereof.
  - P3. Sensible qualities are ideas.
  - P4. Sensible objects are not identical to single qualities.
- So, L1. The only things perceived by means of the senses are ideas or collections thereof. [P2, P3]

- So, L2. Sensible objects are sensible qualities or collections thereof. [P1, P2]
- So, L3. Sensible objects are ideas or collections thereof. [P1, L1] or [P3, L2]
- So, L4. Sensible objects are not identical to single ideas. [P3, P4]
- So, C. Sensible objects are collections of ideas. [L3, L4]

P1 and L1 are clearly stated in *Principles* 4. P3 and L2 are implicit, while C is clearly stated, in *Principles* 1. Although P2 and P4 are not explicitly stated in either section, they are needed to fill in an argument that would otherwise remain enthymematic.

Confirmation that Berkeley accepts P1 and L2 may be found in a passage that appears early in the *First Dialogue*. Here is how the relevant passage reads (W2:174-75):

- Philonous: What mean you by sensible things?
- Hylas: Those things which are perceived by the senses. Can you imagine that I mean any thing else? [This gives us P1.]
- [Excised material]
- Hylas: To prevent any more questions of this kind, I tell you once for all, that by *sensible things* I mean those only which are perceived by sense... [This is P1 again.]
- [Excised material]
- Philonous: It seems therefore, that if you take away all sensible qualities, there remains nothing sensible.
- Hylas: I grant it.
- Philonous: Sensible things therefore are nothing else but so many sensible qualities, or combinations of sensible qualities?
- Hylas: Nothing else. [This gives us L2]

A passage that begins with P1 and ends with L2 as its conclusion strongly suggests that Berkeley accepts P2. And, indeed, when we look at the rest of the passage, what we get is an actual argument for P2. The structure of this argument comes out in the following section (call it “A”, W2:174-75):

- Hylas: [I]n truth the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive immediately.
- [Excised material]
- Philonous: You will farther inform me, whether we immediately perceive by sight any thing beside light, and colours, and figures: or by hearing, any thing but sounds: by the palate, any thing beside tastes: by the smell, beside odours: or by the touch, more than tangible qualities.

Hylas:           We do not.

In passage A, Philonous gets Hylas to agree to two claims, A1 and A2:

- (A1)           Everything that is perceived by means of the senses is *immediately* perceived by means of the senses.
- (A2)           The only things that are *immediately* perceived by means of the senses are sensible qualities (or collections thereof).

From these two premises, P2 follows directly.

So there is ample evidence from early in the *First Dialogue* that Berkeley's argument for idealism has the structure we have extracted from the early sections of the *Principles*. But this is as far as the argument goes in the *Principles*. In particular, there is no argument in the *Principles* to support the two most important premises of this argument, namely P2 and P3. For all Berkeley writes in 1710, it is unclear why he thinks we should accept that the only things that are perceived by means of the senses are sensible qualities (or collections thereof), or that sensible qualities are ideas.<sup>9</sup>

It should therefore be less than surprising to find detailed arguments for both P2 and P3 in the *First Dialogue*. Since the arguments for P3 are well known, I will concentrate on the arguments for P2.

As I have argued, Philonous's strategy for establishing P2 runs through A1 and A2. Now it is clear from passage A that Philonous and Hylas both take A2 for granted. They find it obvious that by means of the senses we do not *immediately* perceive anything other than sensible qualities (alone or in combination). But what of A1? Do Philonous and Hylas take this to be obvious too? Far from it: a good chunk of the material I excised from passage A is devoted to a defense of A1. In fact, there are two arguments here, one designed to show that it is not the case that what we perceive by means of the senses we perceive by virtue of perceiving something else that *suggests* it to

us, the other designed to show that it is not the case that what we perceive by means of the senses we perceive by virtue of *inferring* its existence from something else.

The first argument appears in the following passage (call the passage “B”, W2:174):

- Philonous: Are those things only perceived by the senses which are perceived immediately? Or may those things properly be said to be *sensible*, which are perceived mediately, or not without the intervention of others?
- Hylas: I do not sufficiently understand you.
- Philonous: In reading a book, what I immediately perceive are the letters, but mediately, or by means of these, are suggested to my mind the notions of God, virtue, truth, etc. Now, that the letters are truly sensible things, or perceived by sense, there is no doubt: but I would know whether you take the things suggested by them to be so too.
- Hylas: No certainly, it were absurd to think *God* or *Virtue* sensible things, though they may be signified and suggested to the mind by sensible marks, with which they have an arbitrary connexion.
- Philonous: It seems then, that by *sensible things* you mean those only which can be perceived immediately by sense.
- Hylas: Right.

It is clear from passage B that Philonous appeals to examples of words that signify non-sensible notions to support his claim that what we perceive by means of the senses we do not perceive by perceiving something else that suggests it to us. As I understand it, the example works like this. Consider something (such as the notion of God) that is perceived by the mind by virtue of the fact that it is suggested to the mind by something else that is perceived (namely, the word “God”). Such a notion, as Hylas (rightly) admits, is not itself perceived by *sense*, but rather by some other mental faculty, presumably in this case imagination (or memory). Philonous concludes from this example that *nothing* that is perceived by the mind by virtue of the fact that it is suggested to the mind by something else is itself perceived by *sense*.

Before moving on to the second argument, let us pause to consider whether the first holds any water. Upon reflection, it should be clear that it does not. Berkeley quite plainly generalizes from *one* case to *all possible* cases, and this is illegitimate. The fact that there is *one non-sensible* thing that is perceived by perceiving something else that suggests it to the mind does not entail that *everything* that is perceived by perceiving something else that suggests it to the mind is *non-sensible*. And, in fact, Berkeley himself is committed to the existence of *sensible* qualities that are perceived by perceiving other things that suggest them to the mind. For in *NTV* 16-27 (W1:174-77) Berkeley argues that visual qualities (such as distance) are sometimes perceived by perceiving sensations (such as the somewhat painful sensation of eye strain) that suggest them to the mind, i.e., that there is such a thing as the mediate perception of visual qualities.<sup>10</sup> But if this is so then Berkeley is actually committed to the falsity of A1.

The second argument appears immediately on the heels of the first, in the following passage (call it “C”, W2:174-75):

Philonous: Doth it not follow from this [i.e., the fact that sensible things are those only which can be perceived immediately by sense], that though I see one part of the sky red, and another blue, and that my reason doth thence evidently conclude there must be some cause of that diversity of colours, yet that cause cannot be said to be a sensible thing, or perceived by the sense of seeing?

Hylas: It doth.

Philonous: In like manner, though I hear a variety of sounds, yet I cannot be said to hear the causes of those sounds.

Hylas: You cannot.

Philonous: And when by my touch I perceive a thing to be hot and heavy, I cannot say with any truth or propriety, that I feel the cause of its heat or weight.

Hylas: To prevent any more questions of this kind, I tell you once for all, that...in truth the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive immediately: for they make no inferences. The deducing therefore of causes or occasions from effects and appearances, which alone are perceived by sense, entirely relates to reason.

Berkeley's strategy in passage C is to argue that, since it is not the province of the senses, but rather the province of reason, to make inferences, the senses cannot be responsible for perceiving something that is perceived by virtue of the fact that its existence is inferred from something else. It appears to follow that anything that is perceived by means of an inference is not perceived by means of the senses; contrapositively, anything that is perceived by means of the senses is not perceived by means of an inference.

Is this argument any more persuasive than the first? Again, far from it. What Berkeley needs to show is that *nothing* that is perceived by virtue of the fact that its existence is inferred from something else is itself perceived *by means of the senses*. Now the phrase "by means of the senses" can be shortened to "by the senses". Using the shortened version, we can say that Berkeley would consider the argument successful if it could establish that *nothing* that is perceived by virtue of the fact that its existence is inferred from something else is itself perceived *by the senses*. But now, in general, to say that X is perceived by Y is to say that Y perceives X. Berkeley therefore reasons that it would be good enough for his purposes if he could show that *the senses do not perceive* anything that is perceived by virtue of the fact that its existence is inferred from something else. And this he thinks he *can* show, for he finds it obvious that we do not infer by using our senses (but by using our reason), and hence, as Hylas puts it, "the senses make no inferences."

The problem occurs with respect to the proper interpretation of the phrase "the senses." If "the senses" is not treated as a singular term (call this "the ordinary reading"), the phrase "X is perceived by the senses" just means "X is perceived by the mind through the exercise of one or other of its sense modalities," and "the senses make no inferences"

just means “the mind does not infer by exercising one or the other of its sense modalities.” If “the senses” is treated as a singular term (call this “the singular term reading”), “X is perceived by the senses” means that the senses (thought of here as agents) perceive X, and “the senses make no inferences” means that the senses (thought of as agents) do not make inferences. Now it is true on the *ordinary* reading that the senses make no inferences. That is, it is true that the mind does not infer by exercising one or the other of its sense-modalities. But in order to obtain his conclusion, Berkeley must argue, on the basis of the *singular term* reading of the claim that the senses make no inferences, that, on the *singular term* reading, *nothing* that is perceived by virtue of the fact that its existence is inferred from something else is itself perceived *by the senses*. Then, at the end of the argument, he must switch back to the *ordinary* sense of this claim, namely that *nothing* that is perceived by virtue of the fact that its existence is inferred from something else is itself perceived *through the exercise of any of the mind’s sense-modalities*. Both switches, from the *ordinary* reading to the *singular term* reading at the start of the argument, and from the *singular term* reading to the *ordinary* reading at the end of the argument, are illegitimate. The second argument therefore fails because it commits the fallacy of equivocation.

In the argument of *Principles* 4, properly understood, Berkeley does not rely on the Likeness Principle or on Winkler’s version of the distinction between mediate and immediate perception. Rather, the core of his case consists in his arguments for P2 and P3. These arguments appear in the *First Dialogue*, but do not appear anywhere in the *Principles*. I therefore conjecture that Berkeley wrote the *First Dialogue* because he knew that he had failed to give readers of the *Principles* sufficient reason to accept the

fundamental premises of his main argument for idealism. If I am right about this, the *First Dialogue* fulfills an important *philosophical*, and not merely a *rhetorical*, purpose. Unfortunately for Berkeley, even if the argument for P3 succeeds, the argument for P2, based as it is on invalid reasons for accepting A1, fails. So we unabashed materialists, myself included, can all breathe a momentary sigh of relief; momentary, because, for all I've said or shown, it may yet be, as the good Bishop so adamantly maintained, that idealism is true.

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<sup>1</sup> All references below are to *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, 9 vols, edited by A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Nelson and Sons, 1948-57). Quotations from the *Works* will be referred to with a “W”, followed by the relevant volume number, followed a colon, followed by the relevant page number(s). I also abbreviate “*A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*” as “*Principles*”, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* as “*Three Dialogues*”, and “*An Essay toward a New Theory of Vision*” as “*NTV*”.

<sup>2</sup> Some, e.g., Winkler (1989, 191-201), claim that Berkeley is best read as endorsing phenomenalism, according to which sensible objects are not to be identified with collections of ideas, but rather all *propositions about* sensible objects are translatable into (counterfactual) propositions fully expressible in the language of minds and ideas. I do not have the space to argue here that Berkeley is more than a phenomenalist. Suffice it to say that even Winkler acknowledges that “[t]here is ample textual evidence that Berkeley himself follows the idealist path of development” (1989, 194-195), and that the reasons for preferring the phenomenalist reading “are not...decisive even in the aggregate” (1989, 201).

<sup>3</sup> See Hausman (1984, 422).

<sup>4</sup> See, in particular, Luce (1945) and Fogelin (2001).

<sup>5</sup> I am calling this premise “L1” because, as I argue below, Berkeley thinks of it as a lemma, rather than as an independent premise, of his argument for idealism.

<sup>6</sup> Numerous scholars claim to find arguments for idealism in passages other than *Principles* 3 or 4. According to Atherton (1987), Bolton (1987), Muehlmann (1978; 1992), and Pappas (1985), Berkeley takes idealism to follow from anti-abstractionism (or nominalism). The central text in defense of this interpretation comes from *Principles* 5, where Berkeley writes that opposition to idealism “will, perhaps, be found at bottom to depend on the doctrine of *abstract ideas*.” However, as I argue in [reference omitted], Berkeley actually reasons in reverse: rather than using his opposition to the doctrine of abstraction as a premise in an argument for idealism, he uses idealism as a premise in an argument against the doctrine of abstraction.

According to Allaire (1963), Cummins (1963), Watson (1963), and Hausman (1984), Berkeley takes idealism to follow from immaterialism (the thesis—articulated in *Principles* 7 and 9—that there could be no such thing as matter) and the Scholastic assumption (apparently stated in *Principles* 91) that all qualities (including sensible qualities) cannot exist on their own, but must instead *inhere* in some substance or other. However, I agree with Pappas (1980) that Berkeley (again) argues in reverse: rather than using immaterialism as a premise in an argument for idealism, he uses idealism as a premise in an argument for immaterialism. For additional criticisms of the claim that Berkeley adopts the “inherence” strategy, see Muehlmann (1978) and Oaklander (1977).

Of course, there is also the famous “Master Argument” of *Principles* 22-23. (The moniker is due to Gallois (1974).) There Berkeley appears to argue as follows: (i) it is

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impossible to conceive a sensible object's existing unperceived, (ii) inconceivability entails impossibility, hence (iii) it is impossible for a sensible object to exist unperceived. However, although I accept that Berkeley is committed to (i)-(iii), I don't think that *Principles* 22-23 can fairly be read as including an *argument* from (i) and (ii) to (iii). Rather, as I believe (but do not have the space to argue here), Berkeley uses *Principles* 22-23 to establish the unsoundness of the following argument *against* idealism: (a) it is possible to conceive a sensible object's existing unperceived, (b) conceivability entails possibility, hence (c) it is possible for a sensible object to exist unperceived. He does this by arguing for (i), and hence for the falsity of (a).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, *NTV* 25 (W1:176), where Berkeley writes: "That one idea may suggest another to the mind it will suffice that they have been observed to go together."

<sup>8</sup> Further evidence that Berkeley does not automatically suppose that the mediately perceived thing resembles the mediator appears in *Alciphron* (W3:152), where Euphranor (Berkeley's mouthpiece) says: "To me it seems that a man may know whether he perceives a thing or no; and, if he perceives it, whether it be immediately or mediately; and, *if mediately, whether by means of something like or unlike*, necessarily or arbitrarily connected with it" [Emphasis added]. Here Euphranor explicitly countenances the possibility of mediately perceiving something by perceiving something else that is *unlike* it, a possibility that Winkler's interpretation of Berkeley's account of the relation of mediate perception automatically precludes.

<sup>9</sup> As far as I know, no Berkeley scholar has argued that the *Principles* contains an argument for P2. But some scholars have been tempted by the thought that Berkeley argues for P3 at *Principles* 10-15. For example, they have been tempted to read the Inseparability Argument of *Principles* 10 as follows. Secondary qualities are ideas; primary qualities are inseparable from secondary qualities in reality; if X is inseparable from Y in reality and Y is an idea, then X is an idea; therefore, primary qualities are ideas; and given that there are no qualities besides primary and secondary qualities, it follows that all sensible qualities are ideas. But it is actually rather plain that Berkeley does not use *Principles* 10 to *affirm* (in his own voice) that secondary qualities are ideas. Rather, he attributes the belief that secondary qualities are ideas to those of his opponents (such as Descartes and his followers) who distinguish between primary and secondary qualities and hold that primary qualities are mind-independent. And the point of *Principles* 10 is to show that *these* opponents are guilty of inconsistency.

Similarly for *Principles* 14-15. There Berkeley argues (again *ad hominem*) that those who think that the Argument from Perceptual Relativity successfully establishes that secondary qualities are ideas must also, on pain of inconsistency, accept that primary qualities (and hence all sensible qualities) are ideas. For, as Berkeley argues, the same kind of perceptual relativity that obtains with respect to the secondary qualities also obtains with respect to the primary qualities. At no point in these sections does Berkeley affirm the soundness of the Argument from Perceptual Relativity (whether it be with respect to secondary qualities or with respect to primary qualities), at least insofar as the

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argument is designed to establish that sensible qualities are ideas. In fact, as we have already seen, in section 15 Berkeley takes pains to affirm the *invalidity* of this kind of argument.

For extensive discussion and defense of these points, see Muehlmann (1992).

<sup>10</sup> And consider the following remark at *NTV* 9 (W1:172-73): “It is evident that when the mind perceives any idea, not immediately and of it self, it must be by the means of some other idea. Thus, for instance, the passions which are in the mind of another are of themselves to me invisible. I may nevertheless perceive them *by sight*, though not immediately, yet by means of the colours they produce in the countenance. We often *see* shame or fear in the looks of a man, by perceiving the changes of his countenance to red or pale” [Emphasis added]. Here it is plain that Berkeley commits himself to the claim that it is possible for sensible things (such as the passions in the minds of others) to be perceived mediately.