

Mediate Perception and the Likeness Principles:
George Berkeley's Refutation of the Indirect Realist Theory of Perception

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Introduction:

Scholars note that George Berkeley makes two arguments from the likeness principle in his polemic against a resemblance-based theory of indirect realism (RIR, henceforth).¹ Indirect realism is the theory of perception according to which veridical perception is an immediate perceptual awareness of sense data, which are wholly phenomenal, mental qualities with representative content that gives us mediate perceptual access to material objects.² RIR is the conjunction of indirect realism and the claim that sense data represent material objects insofar as they *resemble* one another.³ The first version of the likeness principle is characterized by the claim that 'an idea can be like nothing but an idea' (LP1, henceforth), and the second by the claim that 'something sensible cannot be like something insensible' (LP2, henceforth). The standard interpretation of Berkeley's intent for the argument from LP1 is to show that RIR is by necessity false. If material objects are not ideas, and if only ideas can resemble ideas, then ideas cannot resemble material objects, and resultantly RIR must be false. The standard interpretation of Berkeley's intent for the argument from LP2 is also to show that RIR is by necessity false. If material objects are not sensible, then they cannot resemble ideas, which are by their nature sensible, and resultantly RIR must be false.

¹ The term 'likeness principle' comes from Phillip Cummins' 1966 article *Berkeley's Likeness Principle*. See (Ryan, 562) and (Dicker 2011, 150-151) for the claim that Berkeley makes two arguments from the likeness principle.

² 'Sense data' is practically synonymous with 'ideas', though Berkeley denies that ideas represent material objects.

³ Descartes, Malebranche, and Locke are traditionally read as defending a version of RIR. For more contemporary defenses of indirect realism generally, see (Russell, 1912), (Brown, 1987), (Brown, 1992), and (French, 2018).

Scholars think that Berkeley fails to refute RIR by appealing to LP1 because he does not show that the purely phenomenal aspect of ideas cannot resemble the dispositional aspect of material objects, like an object's primary qualities, which are supposed to exist as qualities inherent in material objects.⁴ Scholars think that Berkeley fails to refute RIR by appealing to LP2 because he does not show that, granting RIR is true, material objects are never sensible.⁵ In this essay, I will first argue that the standard interpretation of Berkeley's formulation of the argument from LP1 is flawed. I will then argue that, instead, LP1 should be viewed as an attack on anybody that holds RIR and John Locke's metaphysical assumptions. Specifically, I will argue that Berkeley thinks it is inconceivable that what RIR holds is compatible with Locke's other metaphysical assumptions. I will then argue that the argument from LP1 is successful, understood as an attack on RIR *given Locke's metaphysical assumptions*. I will then proceed to consider LP2. I will argue first that Berkeley contends that material objects can never be perceived by an indirect realist. I will argue that he does so by demonstrating that material objects can never be perceived by an indirect realist on all forms of perception, immediate or mediate. Consequently, the indirect realist theory of perception is false. I will then argue that LP2 shows that RIR is false because there can be no resemblance between a necessarily unperceivable material object and a necessarily perceivable idea.

In Section 1.1, I discuss the likeness principle and present Georges Dicker's interpretation of LP1. I then show how the argument Dicker interprets Berkeley as making in defense of LP1 is invalid and contend that to make it valid would involve making LP1 redundant for Berkeley's argument for immaterialism. Hence, I argue that if there is a consistent, non-

⁴ See (Cummins, 68), and (Dicker 2011, 169)

⁵ See (Dicker 2011, 151-152)

redundant reading of Berkeley's defense of LP1, then Dicker's interpretation is probably flawed. In Section 1.2, I show how scholars interpret Berkeley's "Philosophical Commentaries" (*PC*, henceforth) as providing argumentative support for LP1 against RIR generally. I argue that LP1 fails to refute RIR generally even with such a support. In Section 1.3, I argue that *PC* is directed against RIR not generally but against RIR given Locke's metaphysical assumptions. In Section 1.4, I argue that if indeed *PC* is directed at the compatibility of RIR with Locke's other metaphysical assumptions, then LP1 shows the inconceivability of RIR's compatibility with Locke's other metaphysical assumptions. In Section 1.5, I respond to two potential objections. In Section 1.6, I conclude my discussion of LP1.

In section 2.1, I will show how Dicker interprets Berkeley's argument from LP2. I will argue that his conclusion that Berkeley fails to refute RIR is true only if, as he suggests, Berkeley cannot establish that material objects are never perceived on the indirect realist account of perception. I will then proceed to show, in the following sections, how Berkeley establishes that material objects are never perceived on the indirect realist account of perception. In section 2.2, I will show how Berkeley defines immediate and mediate perception. In section 2.3, I will show how Berkeley contends that on no account of perception, immediate or mediate, can material objects be perceived according to the indirect realist account of perception. In section 2.4, I will show how LP2 demonstrates that RIR is false because there can be no resemblance between an unperceived material object, and ideas. In section 2.5, I respond to a potential objection.⁶ In section 2.6, I conclude my essay.

⁶ Namely, that Berkeley's theory of perception implies a version of indirect realism..

SECTION 1, LP1: ‘AN IDEA CAN BE LIKE NOTHING BUT AN IDEA’

Section 1.1, Dicker and LP1:

Proponents of RIR hold that sense data represent material objects insofar as features of material objects resemble certain sense data.⁷ Typically, scholars interpret Berkeley as formulating LP1 to show that material objects cannot possibly resemble sense data.⁸ For example, Georges Dicker states that if, as Berkeley claims, an idea can be like nothing but an idea, then “it demolishes virtually all, if not all, versions of [RIR]. For virtually all, if not all, [indirect realists] hold that ideas represent material things by virtue of resembling (at least the primary qualities of) those things” (Dicker 2011, 152).⁹ Dicker presents the most recent and thorough consideration of LP1. Therefore, in this section, I present his formulation of LP1 and show that he conflates LP1 and LP2. In the next section, I will contend that LP1 should not be interpreted as part of a metaphysical argument against the possibility of RIR and defend an epistemic reading of LP1, which makes Berkeley’s argument effective against RIR given Locke’s metaphysical assumptions.

⁷ Typically, sense data are thought to represent material objects by resembling the so-called primary qualities of material objects, like their size, shape, and number. Descartes seems to imply that the immediate perception of size, shape, and number probably resemble real qualities of objects because those qualities are discussed in (or are objects of) pure-mathematics and *seem* to belong equally to the senses of sight and touch. See for example (*CSM*, I:91), (*CSM*, I:218 sec. 70), and (*CSM*, II:55). Berkeley argues throughout *NTV* that our ideas of sight and touch are heterogeneous, they have nothing in common besides our arbitrary association of them together due to our experience of sight and touch in a very frequent conjunction. But this is beside the point of the paper.

⁸ Winkler is an exception. He makes an epistemic interpretation in (Winkler, 1989). Ryan offers a twofold critique of Winkler on the grounds that 1) Berkeley offers two arguments from the likeness principle, while Winkler only thinks Berkeley accepts one, and 2) Winkler’s reading is textually inconsistent and would commit Berkeley to claims he explicitly denies, like verificationism. I contend that Berkeley’s commitment to LP1 is epistemic in nature, but not because of verificationist assumptions. Rather, LP1 is effective against Locke when taken as an epistemic argument, and I argue there is textual evidence to support such a claim. Moreover, there is, as Ryan notes, a second version of the likeness principle, which principle is not meant to provide epistemic support at all, but rather metaphysical support. Since Winkler runs together LP1 and LP2, he is at best only partially right, and for largely erroneous reasons.

⁹ Contemporary proponents of RIR usually refer to our immediate perceptions as sense data, but Berkeley’s contemporaries refer to them as ideas. Also, it should be noted that some indirect realists, especially contemporary realists, hold that there need not be resemblance between ideas and material objects for material objects to be represented by ideas. They claim something like “ideas represent material objects insofar as ideas succeeding one another in a law-like way represents the existence of a law-like causal relation with real, external material objects”.

Turing to the likeness principle, Berkeley pens both LP1 and LP2 in a variety of his works, but their most famous instantiation is in section 8 of the *Principles*,¹⁰ where he writes

But say you, though the ideas themselves do not exist without the mind, yet there may be things like them whereof they are copies or resemblances, which things exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance. I answer, an idea can be like nothing but an idea; a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure. If we look but ever so little into our thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness except only between our ideas. [LP1]

Again, I ask whether those supposed originals or external things, which our ideas are the pictures or representations, be themselves perceivable or no? If they are, then they are ideas, and we have gained our point; but if you say they are not, I appeal to anyone whether it be sense to assert a colour is like something which is invisible; hard or soft, like something which is intangible; and so of the rest.

[LP2] (*Principles*, 8)

LP1 is explicitly characterized by the claim that an idea can be like nothing but an idea. LP2 is characterized by the claim that something sensible cannot be like something insensible.

An argument from LP1 can be reconstructed in standard argument form as:

A. Only ideas conceivably resemble ideas. (LP1)

¹⁰ See also (*Dialogues*, 155), (*TVV*, 11), (*PC*, 46-47), (*PC*, 50-51), (*PC*, 299), and (*PC*, 378).

B. RIR entails that physical¹¹ objects resemble ideas.¹² (RIR Thesis)

C. Either RIR entails that physical objects are only conceivably ideas, or RIR is inconceivable. (A & B)

D. If RIR entails that physical objects are only conceivably ideas, then RIR entails that we can only conceive of Berkeley's perceptual thesis as true.

E. Either RIR entails that we can only conceive of Berkeley's perceptual thesis as true, or RIR is inconceivable. (C & D)

By 'Berkeley's perceptual thesis', I mean the theory of perception according to which veridical perception is an immediate perceptual awareness of physical objects. For Berkeley, physical objects are ideas, which are wholly phenomenal, mental qualities. To help elucidate the importance of LP1, then, we can think of concrete examples of ideas like shape. I cannot conceive of something shapeless resembling a shape. But, if ideas are the only things we ever perceive with shape, and only ideas resemble ideas, then physical objects must either be ideas, in which case Berkeley's perceptual thesis is true, or RIR is inconceivable. However, if Berkeley does not provide support for premise (A), then a proponent of RIR can reject the argument from LP1 by saying that material objects have a particular shape and can thus resemble ideas of shapes. If material objects can resemble ideas of shapes, then ideas of shapes can represent

¹¹ I say "physical object" and not "material object" here because 'material object' implies an ontological existence independent of sense perception, whereas 'physical object' is neutral to the point. *Ergo*, 'physical object' is neutral to the perceptual theses of both Berkeley and the proponent of RIR, whereas 'material object' is not.

¹² Berkeley also seems to have this in mind when he writes in *Draft* section 12 "They [ideas] are not thought to represent them [material objects] any otherwise, than as they resemble them." (*Draft*, 12)

material objects. Georges Dicker proposes that Berkeley might have in mind an implicit metaphysical support for LP1, which if accurate would make RIR false.¹³ The argument Dicker suggests as supporting LP1 is based on assumptions he thinks Berkeley holds, and goes:

- (A) Whatever is immediately perceivable can be like only something perceivable.
- (B) Whatever is immediately perceivable, or mediately perceivable and suggested to the mind by something immediately perceivable, is an idea.
- (C) Whatever is an idea is immediately perceivable.
- (D) Whatever is an idea can be like only something perceivable. (from [A] and [C])
- (E) Whatever can be like only something immediately perceivable, or mediately perceivable and suggested to the mind by something immediately perceivable, can be like only an idea. (from [B])
- (F) Whatever is perceivable is immediately perceivable, or mediately perceivable and suggested to the mind by something immediately perceivable.
- (G) Whatever can be like only something perceivable can be like only something immediately perceivable, or mediately perceivable and suggested to the mind by something immediately perceivable. (from [F])
- (H) Whatever is an idea can be like only something immediately perceivable or mediately perceivable and suggested to the mind by something immediately perceivable. (from [D] and [G])

¹³ Before reconstructing Dicker's argument, it should be noted that Dicker acknowledges that Berkeley is operating under the assumption "PPIQ" that "Whatever is perceived by the senses is either immediately perceived and is not something suggested to the mind by something immediately perceived, or is perceived and is something suggested to the mind by something immediately perceived." (Dicker 2011, 167) A full account of Berkeley's theory of immediate and mediate perception is found in section 2.2 of this paper. I argue there that Berkeley allows for perception via suggestion, but he exclusively refers to such perception as mediate perception. Thus, I reformulate Dicker's premises (B), (E), (F), (G), and (H) to adhere properly to Berkeley's theory of mediate perception/"PPIQ".

(LP1) Whatever is an idea can be like only an idea. (from [H] and [E]) (Dicker 2011, 165-166)

Dicker's argument says, in short, that an idea can only be like an idea because, per (F), whatever is perceivable is perceived either immediately or by suggestion; and (E) and (H) together imply that all and only that which is perceived immediately or by suggestion can be like an idea. So, whatever is perceivable can only be like an idea; hence, (LP1): an idea can be like only an idea.

I grant that Dicker's premises fairly depict views to which Berkeley is committed. Dicker rightly notes, however, that Berkeley faces a problem if he formulates his argument in support of LP1 as above. The problem is that a proponent of RIR can reject some of its premises. For, not all of the views regarding perception that Berkeley is committed to coincide with those of a proponent of RIR. Dicker suggests that the proponent of RIR "may object there is no reason why we should accept premise (B)" (Dicker 2011, 169). Proponents of RIR can reject premise (B) because they think we can mediate perceive material objects by suggestion. This would make the argument for LP1 invalid because its conclusion is partially contingent on premise (E), and premise (E) is partially contingent on premise (B). Thus, if premise (B) is false, the argument for LP1 is invalid.

There is, however, a problem with Dicker's formulation of premise (E). While Dicker is right that Berkeley thinks mediate perception occurs via suggestion, Berkeley and some indirect realists might also hold that mediate perception occurs via inference. That would imply that the inference from premise (B) to premise (E) invalid. For, some indirect realists could accept premise (B) without accepting premise (E) because they think material objects are perceived by inference, not perceived by suggestion. Therefore, to preserve the validity of Dicker's argument, premise (B) and consequently (E), (F), (G), and (H) must be amended to allow for mediate

perception via inference. The problem however with amending Berkeley's argument to allow for perception via inference is that such a formulation is redundant for Berkeley's immaterialist purposes.

If Berkeley accepts the possibility of perception via inference, then the reconstruction of his argument would hold only if, on all forms of perception, we perceive only ideas. If on all forms of perception we perceive only ideas, then on all forms of perception material objects are unperceivable. So, if Berkeley does accept the possibility of perception via inference, then he would be committed to the claim that on all forms of perception material objects are unperceivable. Thus, the reconstructed form of premise (E) "Whatever can be like only something immediately perceivable, or mediately perceivable and suggested to the mind by something immediately perceivable, or mediately perceivable and inferred by the mind from something immediately perceivable, can be like only an idea" is true only if material objects cannot be like something perceivable. In other words, the reconstructed form of (E) is another way of stating LP2, "something sensible [ideas] cannot be like something insensible [material objects]", and hence the truth of LP1 relies on the truth of LP2. But, Dicker explicitly maintains that LP1 and LP2 are two distinct arguments, and that LP1 and LP2 are meant to be individually sufficient to refute RIR.¹⁴ *Ergo*, if Berkeley thinks LP2 is sufficient to refute RIR on its own, then LP1 is redundant for Berkeley's immaterialist purposes. LP1 would be redundant for Berkeley's immaterialist purposes because LP1 would be unable to provide argumentative support to refute RIR without LP2 already refuting RIR.

In short, Dicker's proposed reconstruction of Berkeley's argumentative support for LP1 is invalid. To make it valid, he must amend its premises to allow for perception via inference.

¹⁴ See (Dicker 2011, 150-151)

However, such a formulation of LP1 becomes redundant for Berkeley's immaterialist purposes. For, it relies on the truth of LP2. But, if LP2 is true, then LP2 refutes RIR. Hence, contra Dicker's claim, LP1 would do nothing for Berkeley's immaterialist purposes. In the next section, I show a passage in *PC* where Berkeley appears to offer explicit support for LP1. I show how the arguments in *PC* cannot show that LP1 refutes RIR generally. In Section 1.3, I show how the arguments from *PC* play a major role in showing that LP1 is effective against RIR given Locke's metaphysical assumptions. Such an interpretation is therefore preferable to Dicker's on the grounds of both textual evidence and charity to Berkeley.

Section 1.2, LP1 in PC:

Commentators suggest that the explicit support Berkeley provided for LP1 can be found in entry 378 of his posthumously published philosophical notebooks (*PC*) written from 1707-1708.¹⁵ Entry 378 contains a 19-step series of arguments that seems to provide support for LP1 through two distinct arguments.¹⁶ Scholars hold that premises 11-15 represent the first argument, and they construe it as an argument ('LPm' henceforth) providing metaphysical support for LP1. Scholars hold that premises 16-19 represent the second argument, and they construe it as an argument ('LPe', henceforth) providing epistemic support for LP1. I will now present Berkeley's notebook entries and argue that neither LPe nor LPm provides sufficient support for the claim that LP1 refutes RIR generally. Berkeley writes

- +1 All significant words stand for ideas
- 2 All knowledge about our ideas

¹⁵ See (Winkler, 146), and (Ryan, 562-563).

¹⁶ Winkler only discusses premises 11 and 16-19, while Ryan only discusses premises 11-19 as supporting LP/LP1. I write and discuss the whole 19 premise argument because, as I will argue, premises 1-9 seem to indicate Locke's metaphysical commitments.

- +3 All ideas come from without or from within.
- 4 If from without it must be by the senses & they are call'd sensations.
- +5 If from within they are the operations of the mind & are called thoughts.
- 6 No sensation can be in a senseless thing.
- 7 No thought can be in a thoughtless thing.
- +8 All our ideas are either sensations or thoughts, by 3. 4. 5.
- 9 None of our ideas can be in a thing which is both thoughtless & senseless.
6. 7. 8.
- 10 the bare passive reception or having of ideas is call'd perception
- 11 Whatever has in it an idea, tho it be never so passive, tho it exert no
manner of act about it, yet it must perceive. 10
- 12 all ideas either are simple ideas, or made up of simple ideas.
- 13 that thing which is like unto another thing must agree with it in one or
more simple ideas.
- 14 whatever is like a simple idea must either be another simple idea of the
same sort or contain a simple idea of the same sort. 13.
- 15 nothing like an idea can be in an unperceiving thing. 11. 14.
- another demonstration of the same thing¹⁷
- 16 Two things cannot be said to be alike or unlike till they have been
compar'd

¹⁷ These are Berkeley's words, he is setting up a second version of the argument.

- 17 Comparing is the viewing two ideas together, & marking what they agree in & what they disagree in.
- 18 The mind can compare nothing but its' own ideas. 17
- 19 Nothing like an idea can be in an unperceiving thing. 11. 16. 18. (*PC*, 378)

LPm (11-15) reads as an argument for the impossibility of something like an idea (color or figure, for example) existing in a material object (in other words a material object being colored or figured), while LPe (16-19) reads as an argument for the inconceivability of the same point.

Indeed, it seems plausible that Berkeley has *PC* 378 in mind as the implicit support for LP1 when writing the *Principles*. For, if sound, LPm provides direct support for the claim that “an idea can be like nothing but an idea; a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure” (*Principles*, 8). It would thus be impossible for an idea or anything like an idea to be inherent in a material object, and hence RIR would be false, since it would be impossible for material objects to resemble ideas. Similarly, if LPe is sound, then LPe provides direct support for the claim that “If we look but ever so little into our thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness except only between our ideas.” (*Principles*, 8) It would thus be impossible to conceive of an idea or anything like an idea to be inherent in a material object, and hence the truth conditions of RIR would be inconceivable due to the consequential inconceivability of material objects resembling ideas. Moreover, immediately following this entry in the notebooks, Berkeley writes “These arguments must be proposed shorter & more separate in the Treatise.” (*PC*, 378a) To keep the *Principles* succinct, he might have left his support for LP1 implicit by omitting the explicit arguments from his notebooks. For now, I will tentatively accept that Berkeley initially wrote LPm and LPe to provide support for LP1.

I will now evaluate how effectively LPm and LPe provide support for LP1. Berkeley concludes LPm in premise 15 by saying that “nothing like an idea can be in an unperceiving thing”. He derives support for 15 from premises 11 “Whatever has in it an idea, tho it be never so passive, tho it exert no manner of act about it, yet it must perceive”, and 14 “whatever is like a simple idea must either be another simple idea of the same sort or contain a simple idea of the same sort”. The support for premise 11 comes from the seemingly uncontroversial premise 10 “the bare passive reception or having of ideas is call’d perception”. The support for 14 comes from premise 13 “that thing which is like unto another thing must agree with it in one or more simple ideas”, and premise 13, it seems, can be partially, but not fully, explained by the seemingly uncontroversial premise 12 “all ideas either are simple ideas, or made up of simple ideas”. By this, I mean that premise 13 seems to be derivable from 12 insofar as we take Berkeley’s reference to ‘that thing’ in 13 to be synonymous with reference to ‘ideas.’

However, to assume without argument that ‘that thing’ in premise 13 can refer to *nothing* besides ideas would obviously beg the question against the proponent of RIR. The proponent of RIR at least *prima facie* does not need to accept that ‘that thing’ can only meaningfully signify ideas, for, proponents of RIR think material objects exist and can resemble ideas without thereby being an idea, by, say, possessing the quality(s) of color and/or figure. It seems therefore that without further support, the argument from premises 11-15 does not provide adequate support of LP1 against RIR generally.

As for LPe, Berkeley concludes with line 19, that “Nothing like an idea can be in an unperceiving thing.” He derives support for 19 from premises 11, 16 and 18. As stated previously, the support for premise 11 comes from the seemingly uncontroversial premise 10. Premise 16 “Two things cannot be said to be alike or unlike till they have been

compar'd" seems unobjectionable, and premise 18 "The mind can compare nothing but its' own ideas" is derived from premise 17 "Comparing is the viewing two ideas together, & marking what they agree in & what they disagree in". The problem with 17 is that it is uncontroversial only if we accept that ideas are the only comparable referential entities. However, proponents of RIR need not at least *prima facie* accept that the only genuinely referential things that are comparable are ideas. For, proponents of RIR think material objects are genuinely referential things that have particular qualities inherent in them, like color and/or figure. Proponents of RIR therefore need only say that we can conceive of material objects with a particular determination of color and/or figure in order to compare them to our ideas. It seems therefore that without further support, the argument from premises 16-19 does not provide adequate epistemic support of LP1 against RIR generally.

Section 1.3, LP1 vs. Locke's RIR:

Consequently, it seems that premises 10-19 do not provide the argumentative support needed for LP1 to refute RIR. However, taking the arguments in premises 10-19 as stand-alone is to ignore premises 1-9. These premises seem to represent metaphysical views, many of which Berkeley never held in his notebooks, nor in his published works. Moreover, those views are ones Berkeley goes out of his way to refute. Specifically, these premises seem to represent Berkeley's reading of Locke's metaphysical assumptions. If this is right, then instead of viewing premises 10-19 as directed at RIR as a whole, we should view premises 10-19 as an attempt to knock down RIR when set up with the metaphysical assumptions of Locke's philosophy in premises 1-9. Therefore, we need not view LP1 as directed at RIR as a whole, but rather as directed against RIR given Locke's metaphysical assumptions. I now show how Locke is

construed as a proponent of RIR, and how his metaphysical commitments are probably the target of Berkeley's premises 1-9.

Locke is often cited as being a proponent of RIR operating under the mechanistic philosophical/scientific assumptions popular in the 17th century, where "bodies produce *Ideas* in us, and that is manifestly *by impulse*, the only way which we can conceive Bodies operate in" (Locke, II.viii.31:135-136:31-2).¹⁸ Thus, Locke writes

If then external Objects be not united to our Minds, when they produce Ideas in it; and yet we perceive these original Qualities in such of them as singly fall under our Senses, 'tis evident, that some motion must be thence continued by our Nerves, or animal Spirits, by some parts of our Bodies, to the Brains or the seat of Sensation, there to produce in our Minds the particular Ideas we have of them. And since the Extension, Figure, Number, and Motion of Bodies of an observableness, may be perceived at a distance by the sight, 'tis evident some singly imperceptible Bodies must come from them to the Eyes, and thereby convey to the Brain some Motion, which produces these Ideas, which we have of them in us (II.viii.12:136:3-14).¹⁹

As Georges Dicker points out, "Locke's language here involves his corpuscularianism and appeals to the archaic conception of animal spirits, but this part of the theory is innocuous... something like what Locke describes happens in sense-perception; neurophysiology supplies the

¹⁸ Popularized by intellectuals such as Boyle, Descartes, Gassendi, Hobbes, and Newton.

¹⁹ For more passages where Locke seems to ascribe to such a theory, see (Locke, II.viii.15:137:10-17) (II.xxxi.3:377:4-7) (II.xxxi.6:378:15-19) (IV.iv.12:568:18-19, 32-33)

details” (Dicker 2019, 263).²⁰ Therefore, Locke is an indirect realist because he thinks material objects cause our experience of ideas by sensation.

If Locke is rightly construed as an indirect realist, then it is evident that he is a proponent of RIR from the passage “the *Ideas of primary Qualities of Bodies, are Resemblances of them, and their Patterns do really exist in the Bodies themselves*” (Locke, II.viii.15:137:10-11). For Locke, then, primary qualities have a twofold existence. First, primary qualities have a dispositional existence, where they exist as qualities inherent in material objects. Second, primary qualities have a manifest existence, where they exist as sensible ideas in the minds of perceivers. These sensible ideas represent material objects due to the resemblance they bear to the aforementioned object’s dispositional qualities.

Perceptible secondary qualities on the other hand do not resemble anything existing in material objects for Locke. He writes “the *Ideas, produced in us by these Secondary Qualities, have no resemblance of them at all. There is nothing like our Ideas, existing in the Bodies themselves. They are in the Bodies, we denominate from them, only a Power to produce those Sensations in us*” (Locke, II.viii.15:137:11-15).²¹ Like primary qualities, for Locke, then, secondary qualities have a twofold existence. Firstly, secondary qualities have a dispositional existence, where they exist as powers in material objects to produce certain sensations in perceivers. Secondly, secondary qualities have a manifest existence, where they exist as sensible

²⁰ Of course, if Berkeley’s metaphysical picture is true, then neurophysiological findings are just the noticing of frequent conjunctions of correlations between our having sense-perception and feeling bodily occurrences. J.L. Mackie argues that this explanation of neurophysiology is problematic for Berkeley in (Mackie, 77f.), to which Robert Merrihew Adams responded in (Adams, 149). Essentially, Adams writes, our understanding of neurophysiology would not be unimportant in Berkeley’s metaphysical picture. For, understanding these correlations would allow us to gain some rational control over what ideas we experience- we would know that, all things the same, performing a particular action in such and such scenarios would be followed with such and such effects.

²¹ Locke makes similar points about secondary qualities in the *Essay*: (II.viii.14:137:3-8) (II.viii.22-26:140-143) (II.xxi.3:234:24-32) (II.xxx.2:372:19-27) (II.xxxi.2:375-376) (II.xxxi.8-9:380-382) (II.xxxi.13:383:25-31) (II.xxxii.14:388-389) (II.xxxii.16:390)

ideas in the minds of perceivers. These sensible ideas do not resemble the aforementioned object's dispositional qualities. I now argue that the unique metaphysical assumptions Locke is committed to would best explain who Berkeley represents in premises 1-9 of *PC* 378.

Locke's support of the ideational theory of meaning, according to which words are meaningful only insofar as they signify ideas, is well known among scholars. For example, in the *Essay*, Locke writes "*Words, in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the Ideas in the Mind of him that uses them*" (Locke, III.ii.2:405:21-22).²² Thus, since premise 1 delineates the view that all significant words stand for ideas, it seems that premise 1 is minimally a characterization of an ideational theory of meaning in general, if not Locke's particular ideational theory of meaning.²³

Locke's doctrine that our mind is initially like a blank slate with reference to knowledge, and that knowledge is only inscribed on our mind through experience, is very famous. For example, in the *Essay*, Locke writes "Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished?... To this I answer, in one word, From Experience" (Locke, II.i.2:104:15-20). Berkeley's premise 2 marks the view that all of our knowledge comes from our ideas, which implies that our mind is naturally like a blank slate with reference to knowledge. Thus, since premise 2 delineates the view that our mind is naturally like a blank slate with reference to knowledge, it seems that premise 2 is minimally a characterization of the view that the mind is like a *tabula rasa*, if not a characterization of Locke's particular view that the mind is like a *tabula rasa*.

²² See also in Locke's *Essay*: (III.i.2:402:1-14) (III.ii.405:15-17) (III.ii.4:406:29-31) (III.ii.4:407:30-31); (III.iv.1:420:26-27) (III.iv.6:422:6-7)

²³ Descartes, (*CSM*, II:113) as well as the Port Royale scholars Antoine Arnauld (1660) and (1662), Claude Lancelot (1660), and Pierre Nicole (1662) seem to hold an ideational theory of language. For a useful introduction to their thought especially in relation to Berkeley, see (Pearce 2019, 2-9)

Locke's claim that all of our ideas/knowledge comes from either sense perception, or from internal mental events, is well known. He writes in the *Essay* directly after professing that the mind is like white paper that "Our Observation employ'd either about *external, sensible Objects; or about the internal Operations of our Minds, perceived and reflected on by our selves, is that, which supplies our Understandings with all the materials of thinking.* These two are the Fountains of Knowledge, from whence all the *Ideas* we have, or can naturally have, do spring" (Locke, II.i.4:104:22-26). Thus since Berkeley's premise 3 marks the view that all ideas come from without or within, it seems that premise 3 is minimally a characterization of the foundations of a broadly empirical philosophy, if not Locke's own empirical philosophy.

Locke continues in the *Essay* to explain what type of ideas/knowledge we receive from without, and what type of ideas/knowledge we receive from within. For Locke, sense perception furnishes us with the ideas "we have of *Yellow, White, Heat, Cold, Soft, Hard, Bitter, Sweet,* and all those which we call sensible qualities" (Locke, II.i.3:105:4-6). He even refers to ideas from without as "SENSATION" (Locke, II.i.3:105:10). Berkeley's premise 4 indicates that if those ideas come from without, then they must be from sense perception, and that they are called sensations. Likewise for Locke, the operations of the mind furnishes us with the ideas which are "*Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing,* and all the different actings of our own minds" (Locke, II.i.4:105:16-18). For Berkeley, premise 5 indicates that if those ideas come from within, they must be from the operations of the mind, which would naturally include the faculties Locke references directly above. Thus, premises 4 and 5 are minimally characterizations of what knowledge by experience we receive from either sense perception or internal mental events, if not a characterization of Locke's particular view on what knowledge we derive from experience.

Premises 6, no sensation can be in a senseless thing, and 7, no thought can be in a thoughtless thing, seem to be pretty uncontroversially true and would have been accepted by both Locke and Berkeley. Premise 8, all our ideas are either sensations or thoughts, follows from premises 3, 4 and 5. Premise 9, none of our ideas can be in a thing which is both thoughtless & senseless, follows from premise 6, 7 and 8. It seems therefore that Locke's metaphysical assumptions are meant to be characterized by premises 1-5.²⁴ Since premises 10-19 come directly after premises 1-9, it seems then that we can at least tentatively view LP1, and Berkeley's support thereof, as directed against Locke.

Section 1.4, the Epistemic Significance of LP1:

How then should we understand the argumentative significance of LPm and LPe in support of LP1 against RIR given Locke's metaphysical assumptions? I argue that LPm remains flawed and so is ineffective against Locke; however, LPe is effective in showing that RIR is necessarily inconceivable given Locke's metaphysical assumptions. LPe is necessarily inconceivable given Locke's metaphysical assumptions because any reference to 'matter' will be meaningless. Recall that the problem discussed with LPm's support for LP1 is that a proponent of RIR need not hold that 'that thing' in premise 13 can signify only ideas. For, as I suggested, proponents of RIR can hold that material objects are genuinely referential entities that can resemble ideas without thereby being an idea. Similarly, recall that the problem with LPe's

²⁴ It might be contested that these premises alone do not clearly indicate that Berkeley has Locke in mind as his representative target for premises 1-9. However, the conjunction of an ideational theory of language with an all too Lockean anti-innatism empiricism seem to make it obvious that premises 1-9 are meant to represent Locke's metaphysical assumptions. Moreover, Locke's influence on Berkeley's early philosophical thought is no secret. Locke along with Malebranche are the most cited philosophers in Berkeley's *PC*. Berkeley makes several explicit references to Locke's *Essay* throughout *NTV* (125, 130 and 132) and in the introduction to the *Principles* (11 and 13). In *NTV* Berkeley refers to Locke as "he who has so far distinguished himself from the generality of writers by the clearness and significance of what he says" (*NTV*, 125) and as a "celebrated author" (*NTV*, 125). In the introduction to the *Principles*, Berkeley refers to Locke as an "esteemed philosopher." (*Principles*, Intro. 11)

support of LP1 is that a proponent of RIR need not affirm premise 17—that the only genuinely referential entities that can be compared are ideas. For, as I suggested, proponents of RIR can hold that they conceive of material objects, and hence material objects are genuinely referential entities with determinate sensible qualities. Therefore, they can say that material objects can be compared to ideas without thereby being an idea.

Things are different when it comes to Locke, however. For Locke, all significant words stand for ideas, and all of our knowledge comes from either particular ideas/sense data, which originate from sense perception, or from our particular internal mental states. Since material objects are not particular ideas which originate from sense perception, nor are they in any way particular ideas which originate from the operations of our minds, it seems that any reference to ‘matter’ will be meaningless. Thus, for Locke, it is self-defeating to use ‘matter’ in language given that any determinate idea necessarily cannot be derived from the direct *experience* of material objects. As such we cannot form a particular conception of matter. We cannot have an idea of matter because it is impossible to perceive matter directly, and thus it is impossible to *experience* it. Since we cannot experience matter, we cannot conceive of it, and hence it is “an O without a figure... nothing... a shelled peascod” (*Lear*, Act 1 Scene 4 lines 197-205). In a word, the term ‘matter’ is meaningless because it has no corresponding concept. It follows from thence that it is nonsense to say that matter can resemble an idea. Thus, LPe provides support for the claim that an idea cannot resemble a material object because it is impossible that we conceive of matter, it being impossible to frame in our mind an idea of something meaningless, and thus impossible to compare it to something meaningful, i.e., our ideas. *Ergo* LPe provides direct support for the claim that we cannot conceive of an idea as being like material objects.

From Locke's metaphysical assumptions, it follows that it is inconceivable that matter resembles ideas. But as it stands, LPm does not provide irrefutable support for the claim that an idea can be like nothing but an idea. For LPm to be sound, it must be the case that it is impossible for a non-idea to resemble an idea, or a color to resemble a non-color. The inconceivability of matter as demonstrated in premises 1-9 is, however, the only support Berkeley provides for premises 10-19. Wherefore proponents of RIR need not suppose that inconceivability entails impossibility, and as such they need not accept that it is impossible for ideas to resemble material objects. Furthermore, Berkeley nowhere explicitly affirms that inconceivability entails impossibility,²⁵ and I do not think we should saddle him with such a claim here. An epistemic reading of the argumentative support Berkeley intends for LP1 makes more sense than a metaphysical one given Berkeley's epistemic wording in saying "we shall find it impossible to conceive of a likeness except only between our ideas." (*Principles*, 8) *Ergo*, I think we should read LP1 as an epistemic argument against Locke's RIR, as opposed to a metaphysical one. Moreover, since this exegesis of LP1 is internally and textually consistent, and would play a role in Berkeley's argument for immaterialism, I contend that we should prefer this epistemic reading to Dicker's metaphysical one, on the grounds of charitability to Berkeley, and textual evidence.

Section 1.5, Responses to Potential Challenges:

²⁵ Despite this, several scholars think Berkeley held that inconceivability entails impossibility; Rickless even goes so far as to say that it is crucial for Berkeley's argument for immaterialism. See for example (Dancy, 31) (Grayling, 173) (Kail, 275) (Pappas, 133) (Rickless, 181-182) (Stoneham, 135) and (Winkler, 30-31). On the other hand, (Holden, 107-122) and (Ott, 411) argue that Berkeley is not committed to the principle that inconceivability entails impossibility. I am quite sure this is right; for Berkeley, inconceivability does not entail impossibility. Rather, impossibility entails inconceivability, and "whatsoever therefore is said to be somewhat which cannot exist, the idea thereof must be inconsistent" (*DFM*, 45) I strongly recommend Holden's article for such an exegesis of Berkeley.

There are two potential challenges my interpretation faces regarding the argumentative support *PC* provides for LP1 against Locke's version of RIR. The first challenge is that Locke does modify his ideational theory of language to allow us to have "An obscure and relative idea of substance in general." (Locke, II.xxiii.3:296:20) Locke thinks we cannot acquire an idea of material substance by sense, and thus that we cannot frame a determinate idea of matter when we discuss it. However, he thinks we can still have at least some relative idea or notion of such a thing. This would allow Locke to maintain that we do have some sort of idea or notion of matter, and *ergo* we can both conceive of matter and discuss it meaningfully in linguistic convention. If this is the case, then it is conceivable that material objects resemble sensible ideas, because we can conceive of some idea or notion of matter. I will first examine Locke's view, and then show how Berkeley rejects it.

Locke says: "because we cannot conceive, how they [ideas] should subsist alone, nor one in another, we suppose them existing in, and supported by some common subject; *which support we denote by the name Substance*, though it be certain, we have no clear, or distinct *Idea* of that *thing* we suppose a Support" (Locke, II.xxiii.4:297:19-23). So, for Locke, we cannot conceive of how the manifest aspect of primary qualities, or sensible ideas, can subsist alone, nor in another idea. But, the dispositional aspect of primary qualities represented by sensible ideas, Locke claims, can exist if some substance supports them. This substance is a material object, which he understands as that which stands under or upholds the dispositional aspect of primary qualities inherent in material objects, as represented by ideas. This is evident from this passage: "The *Idea* then we have, to which we give the general name Substance, being nothing, but the supposed, but unknown support of those Qualities, we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist, *sine re substante*; without something to support them, we call that Support *Substantia*; which,

according to the true import of the Word, is in plain *English, standing under, or upholding*” (Locke, II.xxii.2:296:13-19). Thus our relative notion or idea of matter, Locke thinks, is that thing or entity which stands under and supports the existence of the dispositional aspect of primary qualities.

In response to this I note that in the first place, this does not challenge my *interpretation* of Berkeley as almost certainly having Locke’s metaphysical assumptions in mind when writing *PC 378*. Rather, it challenges the argumentative support Berkeley thinks *PC 378* provides for LP1 against Locke’s RIR given Locke’s metaphysical assumptions. I say in the second place, that Berkeley is well aware of this potential Lockean response, and Berkeley rejects it in both the *Principles* and the *Dialogues* by arguing that we do not have even a relative idea or notion of material substance. If right, Berkeley effectively denies that Locke can meaningfully say that matter is that thing or entity which stands under and supports the existence of the dispositional aspect of primary qualities, and hence it is still inconceivable that matter can resemble ideas. Berkeley writes

It is said extension is a mode or accident of matter, and that matter is the *substratum* that supports it. Now I desire that you would explain what is meant by matter’s *supporting* extension: say you, I have no idea of matter, and therefore cannot explain it. I answer, though you have no positive, yet if you have any meaning at all, you must at least have a relative idea of matter; though you know not what it is, yet you must be supposed to know what relation it bears to accidents, and what is meant by its supporting them. It is evident *support* cannot here be taken in its usual or literal sense, as when we say that pillars support a building: in what sense therefore must it be taken? (*Principles*, 16)

... by *material substance*... they have no other meaning annexed to those sounds, but the idea of being in general, together with the relative notion of its supporting accidents. The general idea of being appeareth to me the most abstract and incomprehensible of all other; and as for its supporting accidents, this, as we have just now observed, cannot be understood in the common sense of those words; it must therefore be taken in some other sense, but what that is they do not explain. So that when I consider the two parts or branches which make the signification of the words *material substance*, I am convinced there is no distinct meaning annexed to them (*Principles*, 17).²⁶

Berkeley seems to be referring to Locke again here, as is evident from his consideration of the notion of matter as a being in general that supports accidents. By ‘accidents’ Berkeley seems to be referring to Locke’s dispositional aspects of primary qualities. Berkeley denies that Locke is right to say that we have a relative notion of matter supporting dispositional aspects of primary qualities because we cannot conceive of how unperceiving matter supports such a thing. Moreover, Berkeley denies that we can ascribe matter as a ‘being in general’ because that would make it an abstract general idea, and Berkeley is known to deny the existence of abstract general ideas in the introduction to the *Principles*.²⁷ Even granting that matter exists as a being in general without any particular positive qualities proves nothing for Locke’s point. For, there would be no

²⁶ For the sake of space, I omit including the *Dialogues* passage. The passage is contained in *Dialogues* 187-189.

²⁷ Berkeley also rejects the existence of abstract general ideas in *PC* 318, *NTV* 122-125, *Dialogues* 182-184, and *Alciphron* Appendix I in edition C (the Luce edition). In the first two editions of *Alciphron*, however, Berkeley’s rejection of abstract general ideas occurs in dialogue VII sec. 5-7. It seems that Berkeley omitted this section for stylistic purposes; see Luce/Jessop’s note on page 291.

positive signification in the word ‘matter’, and as such, nothing about matter could resemble ideas. Thus, Berkeley maintains that we have neither a relative idea, nor an idea in particular, of material substance, and therefore that the words ‘material substance’ are meaningless. Because of this, we can neither conceive of material substances, nor discuss them meaningfully (on Locke’s account) because we cannot conceive of any idea or notion of them. From thence, it follows that given Locke’s metaphysical assumptions about language and our understanding of ‘material substance’, it is inconceivable that material objects resemble sensible ideas, and hence Locke’s commitment to RIR is still self-defeating.

The second challenge is that it might seem plausible that we can interpret premises 1-9 as representative of Berkeley’s metaphysical commitments, at least at the time of his writing *PC*. The consequence of this is that Berkeley can be viewed as setting up his position in premises 1-9 of *PC* 378, and responding to potential objections in 10-19.²⁸ I argue that there is enough textual evidence to suppose that 1-9 does not represent Berkeley’s views. First, Berkeley puts a “+” mark only next to premises 1, 3, 5, and 8. These premises, in short, indicate that all significant words stand for ideas, and that some ideas come from the operations of our minds. Locke asserts both of these points, but Berkeley patently denies them in his published works. Premises 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9 however are not marked with a “+” mark. These premises in short say that all of our knowledge of sensible things come from ideas, and that none of our ideas can be in a thing which is both thoughtless & senseless. Berkeley is known to be committed to those assumptions in his published works. It therefore seems likely that Berkeley affirms premises 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9, but denies premises 1, 3, 5, and 8, insofar as they are concerned with both all significant words

²⁸ This is how I first read [erroneously] this passage.

standing for ideas, and some ideas coming from the operations of our minds. I will instance places where Berkeley denies 1, 3, 5, and 8 in his published works.

The problem with 3, 5, and 8 is that for Berkeley, ‘ideas’ only refer to sensible ideas; thus, ideas are only begotten through sense perception, or perceived by the imagination, “which faculty represents all sensible things.” (TVV 10) Berkeley contrasts the imagination and its ability to frame ideas with the pure intellect in the *Three Dialogues*. He writes “Besides, not to inquire into the nature of pure intellect and its spiritual objects, as *virtue, reason, God*, or the like; thus much seems manifest, that sensible things are only to be perceived by sense, or represented by the imagination” (*Dialogues*, 184).²⁹ Thus, ‘ideas’ never signify internal mental states for Berkeley in his published works, and it seems likely that he rejects such a possibility in *PC*. *Ergo*, premises 3, 5, and 8 still make more sense as seen as representing Locke’s metaphysical assumptions, and *some* rather than all of Berkeley’s early metaphysical assumptions.

Several commentators have viewed Berkeley as holding an ideational theory of meaning.³⁰ Arguing wholly against such an interpretation would be beyond the scope of this paper.³¹ However, at least as early as *PC*, Berkeley makes comments suggesting the ideational theory of meaning is false. In *PC* 318, Berkeley writes “Qu. is it not impossible there should be General ideas? All ideas come from without, they are all particular.” In *NTV* 122-125, Berkeley argues against the existence of abstract general ideas, considering and rejecting what Locke said about them. At the end of *NTV* 125, Berkeley writes “That a man who laid so great a stress on

²⁹ Likewise, in *De Motu* Berkeley writes “the imagination is nothing else than the faculty which represents sensible things... Pure intellect... is concerned only with spiritual and inextended things, such as our minds, their states, passions, virtues, and such like.” (*DM* 53) In *Siris*, Berkeley writes “there are properly no ideas, or passive objects, in the mind but what were derived from sense: but that there are also besides these her own acts or operations; such are notions.” (*Siris*, 308) In *PC* 318, he writes “All ideas come from without, they are all particular.”

³⁰ For such an interpretation, see (Bennett, 57), (Bordner, 263), and (Hacking, 15-16, 36-39).

³¹ Kenneth Pearce argues convincingly against such a view in his “Berkeley’s Theory of Language” (2019), while arguing simultaneously (I think correctly) that Berkeley held a use-theory of meaning, not unlike the late Wittgenstein. See also (Pearce, 2017).

clear and determinate ideas should nevertheless talk at this rate seems very surprising. But the wonder will lessen if it be considered that the source whence this opinion flows is the prolific womb which has brought forth innumerable errors and difficulties in all parts of philosophy and in all sciences: but this matter, taken in its full extent, were a subject too comprehensive to be insisted on in this place.” (*NTV*, 125) Compare this to section 21 of the introduction to the *Principles*: “We have, I think, shewn the impossibility of *abstract ideas*... And lastly, we have traced them to the source from whence they flow, which appears to be language.” Berkeley’s syntax is practically identical in these two passages, and their semantics *are* identical; the philosophical source of Locke’s (and other philosophers’) error is therefore language. It seems then that Berkeley thinks the ideational theory of meaning is false, and he argues against it.

It should seem to follow that Berkeley likely never held an ideational theory of meaning. As such, the purpose of his reference to such a theory in premise 1 of *PC* 378 is to represent Locke’s metaphysical commitments. Furthermore, premises 3, 5, and 8 seem not to be representative of Berkeley’s metaphysical commitments because he never holds that ideas come from the operations of our minds. If I am right, then it follows from thence that premises 1, 3, 5, and 8 are not representative of Berkeley’s metaphysical commitments at the time of his writing *PC* 378, but rather they represent Locke’s metaphysical commitments.

Section 1.6, Conclusion:

In section 1, I argued that Berkeley’s argument from LP1 is best viewed as an epistemic argument against RIR given Locke’s metaphysical assumptions. I argued that when viewed in such a light, Berkeley’s argument is successful, and that the compatibility of RIR with Locke’s other metaphysical assumptions is inconceivable. I argued that Berkeley refutes Locke’s attempt

to clinch the defense of RIR by appeal to relative ideas of matter. Lastly, I argued that the first 9 premises of *PC* 378 are not wholly representative of Berkeley's early philosophical thinking. Rather, they both represent Locke's view, and distinguish what aspects of it Berkeley agrees and disagrees with.

SECTION 2, LP2: ‘SOMETHING SENSIBLE CANNOT BE LIKE SOMETHING INSENSIBLE’

Introduction:

In this section, I will argue that Berkeley demonstrates that the indirect realist theory of perception, and so RIR, is inconsistent. Berkeley contends that material objects can never be perceived by an indirect realist. I will argue that he does so by showing that on no forms of perception, immediate or mediate, can material objects be perceived by an indirect realist. Consequently, Berkeley thinks that the indirect realist theory of perception is false. I will then argue that LP2 shows that RIR is false because there can be no resemblance between an unperceived material object, and ideas.³²

The standard interpretation of Berkeley’s intent for the argument from LP2 is to show that RIR is by necessity false. If material objects are not perceivable, then they cannot resemble ideas, which are by their nature perceivable. As a result of which, RIR is false. Scholars think that Berkeley fails to refute RIR by appealing to LP2 because he does not show that, granting RIR is true, material objects are never perceivable. In section 2.1, I will show how Dicker interprets Berkeley’s argument from LP2. I maintain that his conclusion that Berkeley fails to refute RIR is true only if Berkeley cannot establish that material objects are never perceived. In section 2.2, I will show how Berkeley defines immediate and mediate perception. In section 2.3, I will show how Berkeley contends that on no account of perception, immediate or mediate, can material objects be perceived for an indirect realist. *Ergo*, I show that Berkeley refutes the indirect realist theory of perception. In section 2.4, I will show how LP2 demonstrates that RIR

³² Recall that LP2 is characterized by the claim that ‘something sensible cannot be like something insensible.

is false because there can be no resemblance between an unperceived material object, and ideas. In section 2.5, I respond to a potential objection.³³ In section 2.6, I conclude my essay.

Section 2.1, Dicker and LP2:

In this section, I show how Dicker interprets Berkeley's argument from LP2. As Dicker sees it, LP2 is directed against any form of indirect realism where material objects are supposed to be actually unperceivable. This is a view that is sometimes, though I think wrongly, attributed to Locke. The problem Dicker sees for Berkeley is that while an indirect realist grants that material objects cannot be perceived immediately, Dicker thinks there is no reason for them to deny that material objects can be perceived mediately.³⁴ Thus, Dicker sees no reason to believe that material objects are in themselves unperceivable on the indirect realist theory of perception. Consequently, he thinks Berkeley fails to refute RIR, since Berkeley does not establish that material objects are never perceived by an indirect realist on any form of perception.

Dicker writes that the passage containing LP2 "is plainly directed against any version of representationalism that holds that material objects are unperceivable and that only ideas are perceivable... insofar as Berkeley's target is this version of representationalism, his objection is very powerful — indeed, I am inclined to say, decisive. For I do not see how something that is perceivable could resemble something that is unperceivable" (Dicker 2011, 151).³⁵ Here, Dicker and I are in agreement. LP2 is directed against any form of indirect realism where material objects are unperceivable.

³³ Namely, that Berkeley's own theory of perception implies a version of indirect realism

³⁴ I define both immediate perception and mediate perception in the next section. In short, immediate perception is what is perceived without any intermediary, representation, or act of the mind. In short, mediate perception is what is perceived by some intermediary, representation, or act of the mind upon having an immediate perception. Mediate perception occurs due to an expectation of a perception occurring due to a previous experience of a similar perception occurring.

³⁵ 'Representationalism' often (and here) is used synonymously with 'indirect realism'.

However, Dicker thinks that an indirect realist “need not hold that only ideas are perceivable; instead, she can hold that only ideas are *immediately* perceivable” (Dicker 2011, 151). It is Dicker’s opinion that the indirect realist can hold that, though ideas are the only things that are immediately perceived, material objects can still be perceived mediately. If material objects can still be perceived, even if only mediately, then there could still be a relation of similitude between ideas, and material objects. Namely, the indirect or mediate *perception* of material objects is what would make material objects resemble ideas, the *perception* of which is done directly or immediately. Thus, Dicker states that LP2, “while very ingenious and trenchant so far as it goes, fails to refute any version of representationalism that distinguishes between immediate perception and perception *tout court*” (Dicker 2011, 152).

As stated previously, I agree with Dicker that LP2 is directed against any form of indirect realism where material objects are unperceivable. My problem with his contention is that I think Berkeley provides good reasons for thinking that, on no form of perception (immediate or mediate), can material objects be perceived. In other words, I think that Berkeley shows that material objects are necessarily unperceivable. If Berkeley is able to show that material objects cannot be perceived by an indirect realist on any form of perception, then there can be no resemblance between material objects and ideas, and consequently both RIR and the indirect realist theory of perception in general are false. I will argue in the next sections that Berkeley shows that material objects are necessarily unperceivable on the indirect realist account of perception, and hence not only is his argument from LP2 liberated, but the indirect realist theory of perception is false.

Section 2.2, Immediate and Mediate Perception:

Much of Berkeley's philosophical projects revolve around a proper understanding of perception; hence, he writes "To explain how the mind or soul of man simply sees is one thing, and belongs to philosophy" (*TVV*, 43). Berkeley boils perception down to its bare components, which he divides into two sects: immediate, and mediate; if mediately, then by suggestion, or inference. In this section, I show how Berkeley defines immediate and mediate perception.

By immediate perception, I understand Berkeley to mean what is perceived, and "would have been perceived in case that same sense had then been first conferred on us" (*Dialogues*, 153). The things which we immediately perceive are thus the things that we perceive through our distinct sense modalities, and are the same things that we would perceive if this were the first time we had ever used those sense modalities. So for example, a person born blind and made to see would experience a whole new set of immediate perceptions, which perceptions would be entirely new to them. Namely, they would perceive lights and colors in their varying degrees and hues. But, they would see the same thing immediately by sight then, as they would have in an identical situation, assuming they had always had their sight.³⁶ Thus, Berkeley has Philonous say "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 besides tastes: by the smell, beside odours: or by the touch, more than tangible qualities" (*Dialogues*, 165), to which Hylas responds "We do not" (*Dialogues*, 165).³⁷ Berkeley therefore thinks that the only things we immediately perceive by sense are the bare, strictly phenomenal experiences or (which is the same thing) sensations, which we receive through each distinct sense modality.

³⁶ And assuming, of course, that time had neither strengthened, nor weakened, nor varied any otherwise, their eyesight. But even if their eyesight had been altered, they would still equally immediately perceive only colors.

³⁷ For similar passages, see (*TVV*, 42), and (*Principles*, 1).

Berkeley notes that we regularly perceive a whole host of things which we do not perceive immediately. These things Berkeley says are “formed by help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways” (*Principles*, 1). All of the qualities I imagine are both copies of, and in some way resemble, qualities I immediately perceive(d) by sense in the past. So for example, I can consciously imagine an apple. The apple I imagine is red, round, hard, sweet, fragrant, and loud when knocked on. These imagined qualities are sensible, and yet they were not perceived immediately. For, I perceive them by the conscious application of my imagination, “which is nothing else than the faculty which represents sensible things” (*DM*, 53).³⁸ Thus, I can perceive things by a conscious application of my imagination, though this is not a form of immediate sense perception.

Besides the things we perceive by a conscious application of our imagination, Berkeley notes that we may perceive things by an *unconscious* application of our imagination. Berkeley refers to these unconsciously apprehended perceptions as *suggested* to the mind. Hence, he writes “there may be also other things *suggested* to the mind by means of... immediate [perceptions]. Which things so *suggested* are not objects of that sense, being in truth only objects of the imagination, and originally belonging to some other sense or faculty. Thus, sounds are the proper object of hearing, being properly and immediately perceived by that, and by no other sense. But, by the mediation of sounds or words all other things may be *suggested* to the mind, and yet things so *suggested* are not thought the object of hearing” (*TVV*, 9).³⁹ So, upon having an immediate perception, a non-immediate perception might be unconsciously suggested to the mind.

³⁸ See also (*Dialogues*, 184), and (*TVV*, 10).

³⁹ All emphases on “suggested” are my own.

An empiricist through and through, Berkeley holds that non-immediate perceptions, which are unconsciously suggested to the mind upon having an immediate perception, can and do only occur as a result of *experience*. As such, he writes “That one idea may suggest another to the mind it will suffice that they have been observed to go together, without any demonstration of the necessity of their coexistence, or so much as knowing what it is that makes them so coexist” (*NTV* 25).⁴⁰ So, by experiencing perceptions in some way existing together, we might come to expect the experience of those perceptions together in the future. Regardless of if we understand how or why they go together, or if they always will go together or not, we can and do still expect or anticipate the future existence of perceptions. This is based on custom or habit.

By mediate perception via suggestion, I therefore understand Berkeley to mean the unconscious anticipation of a perception existing in the future, which occurs upon having an immediate perception. This anticipation is the result of a previous experience of a perception(s) existing simultaneously with, or occurring after having, an immediate perception. So for example, when I see fire, I anticipate that it will feel hot as I move towards it. This anticipation is the result of having perceived the sight and heat of fire together in the past. Thus, when I see fire, I may properly be said to mediately perceive its heat. So likewise, Berkeley writes “A colour, therefore, which is truly perceived by sight alone, may, nevertheless, upon hearing the words *blue* or *red*, be apprehended by the imagination. It is in a primary and peculiar manner the object of sight: in a secondary manner it is the object of imagination: but cannot properly be supposed the object of hearing” (*TVV*, 10). Berkeley’s point is that, due to my having noticed the sight of a color in conjunction with the sound of the words *blue* or *red* in the past, I come to unconsciously

⁴⁰ Berkeley makes a similar point in several passages. See for example (*NTV*, 108), (*Dialogues*, 194), (*Alciphron*, IV, 8: 151), (*Alciphron*, IV, 9: 152-153), (*TVV*, 39).

anticipate, and so perceive mediately, the colors blue or red by my imagination upon hearing the sound of the words *blue* or *red*.

Any idea may come to suggest any other idea for Berkeley, and thereby become mediately perceived, as long as they have been in some way experienced together. Thus, he writes “there being no idea which may not offer to the mind another idea which hath been frequently joined with it... two things, by their mere coexistence, or two ideas, merely by being perceived together, may suggest or signify one the other, their connexion being all the while arbitrary; for it is the connexion only, as such, that causeth this effect (*TVV* 39). Berkeley’s point is that the experience of the coexistence of an idea with something else is all that is requisite for ideas to suggest something to the mind. But, an idea may coexist with any other idea. So, the immediate perception of any idea may be followed by the mediate perception of any other idea, as long as we have experienced a connection between the two.

Berkeley views what is suggested to the mind upon having an immediate perception as a mediate perception via suggestion, just as long as what is suggested is itself a sensible thing, or (which is the same thing) if our concept of what is suggested has its origin in a completely sensible thing. Suggestion however does not apply only to sensible things. For example, hearing the word “God” might suggest the notion I have of the concept of “God” to my mind, due to the connection I have between the concept itself, and the word “God”. So likewise, the word “God” might suggest the notion I have of the concept of “virtue” to my mind, due to having experienced the two terms together in conversation before. And yet neither the concept we have of God, nor virtue, beyond the word used to refer to the thing in question, is perceptible. Since God and

virtue are not themselves perceptible, the suggestion of them cannot be properly termed a perception, because neither God nor virtue are themselves sensible things.⁴¹

To elucidate the point that non-sensible things can be suggested to our mind, Berkeley has Philonous say “In ready a book, what I immediately perceive are the letters, but mediately, or by means of these, are suggested to my mind the notions of God, virtue, truth, &c. Now, that the letters are truly sensible things, or perceived by the sense, there is no doubt: but I would know whether you take the things suggested by them to be so too” (*Dialogues*, 164), to which Hylas responds “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 connection” (*Dialogues*, 164).⁴² Thus, it seems that the notions we have of concepts such as God, virtue, truth, &c. can be suggested to our minds. But, it would be inappropriate to call these notions or concepts “sensible”. For, they are not themselves a perceivable thing.

Berkeley also maintains that we perceive things mediately via inference. For Berkeley, like any other person, an inference of reason is an act of the mind. When we infer something, we actively (consciously/deliberately) use reason to deduce some conclusion. We can and do deduce a whole host of different conclusions from a whole host of different premises. Just as both

⁴¹ This is important for Berkeley’s argument from LP2 because he contends that material objects are never perceivable. So, if material objects exist, then they can only be suggested to the mind like the notion we have of “God”, or “virtue” can. That is to say that they are *not* suggested to our minds as a sensible thing, but rather as a non-sensible thing, so it is *wrong* to call them mediately *perceived*. Of course, Berkeley still doesn’t think that material objects exist. But, to establish that claim requires considering his arguments which do not pertain to perception.

⁴² Berkeley makes a similar point in (*TVV*, 39). There, he writes that “In certain cases, a sign may suggest its correlate as an image, in others as an effect, in others as a cause” (*TVV*, 39). By a sign here, Berkeley means ideas generally. But, Berkeley adamantly maintains that a cause is never, and can never be, perceived. Thus, a cause can be suggested to our mind. But, that same cause cannot be perceived by our mind. For example, if God, or Descartes’ evil deceiver, &c. exists, they are not sensible. But they would be a cause which we can associate with signs or their effects, namely, ideas. Likewise, I cannot perceive my own mind (setting aside that the mind is the brain). But, I can perceive the ideas I create in my imagination. Thus, the existence and (which is the same thing) perception of those ideas might suggest the notion I have of the concept of my mind, to my mind. But, that does not imply my mind is sensible.

sensible and non-sensible things can be *suggested* to our minds, so too can both sensible and non-sensible things be *inferred* by our minds.

Recall that mediate perception via suggestion occurs when something sensible is unconsciously suggested to, and so is perceived by, our imagination. So, in a like manner, mediate perception via inference occurs when something sensible is consciously inferred to, and so is perceived by, our imagination. *Ergo*, just as what is perceived via suggestion is perceived by the imagination, so too are the things which are perceived via inference perceived by the imagination. That is because Berkeley maintains that everything which is perceived must be perceived either immediately by sense, or mediately, in some way, by the imagination. Hence, Berkeley writes “sensible things are only to be [immediately] perceived by sense, or represented by the imagination” (*Dialogues*, 184).⁴³

Berkeley maintains that an inference of reason cannot be an immediate perception because, in the first place, we wouldn’t be able to make an inference about an immediate perception if it were now the first time we had a sense experience by a new sense modality. Hence, he writes “How, therefore, can I, before experience teaches me, know that the visible legs, because two, are connected with the tangible legs, or the visible head, because one, is connected with the tangible head? The truth is, the things I see are so very different and heterogeneous from the things I feel that the perception of the one would never have *suggested* the other to my thoughts, or enabled me to pass the least *judgment* thereon, until I had experienced their connection” (*NTV*, 108). In the second place, an immediate perception involves no intermediary or acts of the mind. As such, Berkeley writes “the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive immediately: for they make no inferences” (*Dialogues*, 165). Making an

⁴³ For a similar point, see (*DM*, 53), and (*TVV*, 10).

inference involves performing an act of the mind, and immediate perceptions involve absolutely no acts of the mind. A person who has severe cognitive impairments might not be able to perform an inference. But, they would still nevertheless be able to immediately perceive, simply by experiencing a train of phenomenal experiences.

Mediate perception via suggestion and mediate perception via inference differ in two important manners. Mediate perception via suggestion is never done consciously, nor deliberately, and hence mediate perception by suggestion is never the result of a conscious or deliberate application of the imagination. An inference on the other hand can be done either 1) consciously and deliberately, in which case mediate perception by inference is the result of a conscious application of the imagination, or 2) unconsciously and not deliberately, but was based on a previous conscious and deliberate application of the imagination, and in this case the mediate perception by inference would be the result of an unconscious application of the imagination, like suggestion. Thus, a mediate perception via inference can be done consciously or unconsciously. In the second place, a mediate perception by a conscious application of reason is similar to any perception we experience via a conscious application of our imagination, in that they both involve a conscious application of our imagination. Mediate perception via suggestion is similar to a *non-inferential*, conscious application of our imagination in that neither of the resultant sensory experiences were due to a conscious inference.

Since not all applications of our imagination are inferential, it will be worth considering now how it is that we can (and often do) use reason to perceive via imagination. The imagination is the place where we perceive copies of sensible things which we (apparently) have memory of perceiving in the past. To perceive via inference then requires perceive something by the imagination on the basis of memory. But, for Berkeley, it is the understanding's interaction with

the imagination that allows us to perceive mediately via reason; hence, he writes “We make judgements and inferences by the understanding” (*TVV*, 42). We need to have a base level of understanding to make inferences. For, the use of reason in using our imagination implies a level of understanding that is not found in the bare application of the imagination. This is evident from a passage in *Siris*, in which Berkeley writes “Sense supplies images to memory. These become subjects for fancy to work upon. Reason considers and judges of the imaginations. And these acts of reason become new objects to the understanding. In this scale, each lower faculty is a step that leads to one above it.” (*Siris*, 303). Without memory, we could have no understanding, for there would be nothing for us to understand. But without understanding, we could make no inferences, for we would have nothing intelligent to make inferences with. Thus, we must have memory, and understanding, to make inferences for Berkeley.

So, like in the case of suggestion, Berkeley maintains that a mediate perception via inference entails memory, and memory entails *experience*. Hence, Berkeley writes, in respect to the case of distance perception “the estimate we make of the distance of objects considerably remote is rather an act of judgement grounded on experience than of sense. For example, when I perceive a great number of intermediate objects, such as houses, fields, rivers, and the like, which I have perceived to take up a considerable space, I thence form a judgement or conclusion that the object I see beyond them is at a great distance. Again, when an object appears faint and small, which at a near distance I have experienced to make a vigorous and large appearance, I instantly conclude it to be far off: And this, ‘tis evident, is the result of experience; without which, from the faintness and littleness I should not have inferred anything concerning the distance of objects” (*NTV*, 3).⁴⁴ Without an experience of objects existing at a distance, I would

⁴⁴ Berkeley also affirms perception via reason as a form of perception in (*NTV*, 20), (*Dialogues*, 193-195), (*Dialogues*, 211).

not be able to infer (or be suggested) their distance. This explains why newborn babies have no understanding of depth perception. They have not experienced moving about, and, as such, they can no more understand that the objects actually existing at a distance from them *actually* exist at a distance from them, than they can understand that the objects existing apparently at a distance from them only *apparently* exist at a distance from them. Newborns might develop a disposition to judge their perceptions as apparently representing objects existing at a distance from them pretty early on. But, it nevertheless will take *some* experience for this disposition to develop. Seeing a football game in a picture, or a phone, or a T.V. will seem as real to them as seeing a football game out the window.⁴⁵

In short, Berkeley maintains that we can perceive either 1) immediately, 2) through a conscious application of our imagination, which has its basis in (apparent) memory of former experiences, 3) through an unconscious application of our imagination, whereby a *suggestion* or expectancy of an experience, which has its basis in (apparent) memory of former experiences, occurs, or 4) through a conscious application of reason, whereby we infer an expected experience to exist on the basis of (apparent) memory of former experiences.

Section 2.3, the Argument:

For the indirect realist theory of perception to be consistent, it must at least be possible that material objects can be perceived mediately. That is to say, on the basis of either suggestion, or inference, it must at least be possible that objects, which can exist independently of our perception of them, can be perceived. In this section, I will show how Berkeley contends that on

⁴⁵ I often find videos of people trying virtual reality headsets on entertaining. Many find that the lights glowing on the screen, and the sounds (apparently) surrounding them, make it seem as though there are real objects existing at a distance there. But, of course, that is absurd, all the objects they perceive as existing at a distance from them are only *apparent*. It is like they are an infant in reverse.

no account of perception, immediate or mediate, can material objects be perceived for an indirect realist. *Ergo*, I show that Berkeley refutes the indirect realist theory of perception. In short, Berkeley argues that since material objects are never immediately perceived, and since the only things we perceive mediately are copies of experienced immediate perceptions (which are only ideas), it follows that we never perceive objects which can exist independently of our perception of them.

The crux of Berkeley's argument against indirect realism occurs in the famed "Julius Caesar" passage. The passage is lengthy, but with our understanding of mediate perception, the passage should be fairly clear. Berkeley writes:

Philonous: is there anything perceived by sense, which is not immediately perceived?

Hylas: Yet, Philonous, in some sense there is. For example, when I look on a picture or statue of Julius Caesar, I may be said after a manner to perceive him (though not immediately) by my senses.

Philonous: It seems then, you will have our ideas, which alone are immediately perceived, to be pictures of external things: and that these also are perceived by sense, inasmuch as they have a conformity or resemblance to our ideas.

Hylas: That is my meaning.

Philonous: And in the same way that Julius Caesar, in himself invisible, is nevertheless perceived by sight; real things in themselves imperceptible, are perceived by sense.

Hylas: In the very same.

- Philonous: Tell me, Hylas, when you behold the picture of Julius Caesar, do you see with your eyes any more than some colours and figures with a certain symmetry and composition of the whole?
- Hylas: Nothing else.
- Philonous: And would not a man, who had never known anything of Julius Caesar, see as much?
- Hylas: He would.
- Philonous: Consequently he hath his sight, and the use of it, in as perfect a degree as you.
- Hylas: I agree with you.
- Philonous: Whence comes it then that your thoughts are directed to the Roman Emperor, and his are not? This cannot proceed from the sensations or ideas of sense by you then perceived; since you acknowledge you have no advantage over him in that respect. It should seem therefore to proceed from reason and memory: should it not?
- Hylas: It should.
- Philonous: Consequently it will not follow from that instance, that any thing is perceived by sense which is not immediately perceived. Though I grant we may in one acceptation be said to perceive sensible things mediately by sense: that is, when from a frequently perceived connexion, the immediate perception of ideas by one sense suggests to the mind others perhaps belonging to another sense, which are wont to be connected with them. For instance, when I

hear a coach drive along the streets, immediately I perceive only sound; but from the experience I have had that such a sound is connected with a coach, I am said to hear the coach. It is nevertheless evident, that in truth and strictness, nothing can be *heard* but *sound*; and the coach is not then properly heard by sense, but suggested from experience. So likewise when we are said to see a red-hot bar of iron; the solidity and heat of the iron are not the objects of sight, but suggested to the imagination by the colour and figure, which are properly perceived by that sense. In short, those things alone that are actually and strictly perceived by any sense, which would have been perceived, in case that same sense had then been first conferred on us. As for other things, it is plain they are only suggested to the mind by experience grounded on former perceptions. But to return to your comparison of Caesar's picture, it is plain, if you keep to that, you must hold the real things or archetypes of our ideas are not perceived by sense, but by some internal faculty of the soul, as reason or memory. I would therefore fain know, what arguments you can draw from reason for the existence of what you call *real things* or *material objects*. Or whether you remember to have seen them formerly as they are in themselves? or if you have read or heard of anyone that did.

Hylas: I see, Philonous, that you are disposed to railey; but that will never convince me.

Philonous: My aim is only to learn from you, the way to come at the knowledge of *material beings*. Whatever is perceived, is perceived either immediately or mediately: by sense, or by reason and reflexion. But as you have excluded sense, pray shew me what reason you have to believe their existence; or what *medium* you can possibly make use of, to prove it either to mine or your own understanding.

Hylas: To deal ingenuously, Philonous, now I consider the point, I do not find I can give you any good reason for it (*Dialogues*, 193-195).

Let's walk through the argument Berkeley is making. In the first place, Berkeley, through Philonous, establishes that the subject in question is the indirect realist theory of perception. Hence, he writes "It seems then, you will have our ideas, which alone are immediately perceived, to be pictures of external things: and that these also are perceived by sense inasmuch as they have a conformity or resemblance to our ideas" (*Dialogues*, 193-194).⁴⁶ This is tantamount to

⁴⁶ It may be worth noting that images don't need to bear any, or perhaps almost any, relation of similitude to the things they represent. Recall that seeing the letters composing the word "God" suggests to us the notion of the concept of God that we have. But, God does not at all resemble something sensible for Berkeley (and most other people). Likewise, the visible symbols composing the word "BANG!" might suggest, and so represent, to us a sound frequently connected with these colors arranged with a certain symmetry. But, sounds and colors have nothing in common to resemble one another, barring a shared ability to be perceived. It seems to me that Berkeley must have been aware of this point, especially given his points on suggestion. But also, Berkeley read and commented much on Descartes (especially in *PC* and *NTV*). Descartes recognized that material objects can be represented by ideas, even if there is no relation of similitude between the two, or at least, very little. Hence, in his *Optics*, discourse four, he writes: "It is enough that the image resembles its object in a few respects... it often happens that in order to be more perfect as an image and to represent an object better, an engraving ought not to resemble it. Now we must think of the images formed in our brain in just the same way, and note that the problem is to know simply how they can enable the soul to have sensory perceptions of all the various qualities of the objects to which they correspond -- not to know how they can resemble their objects" (*CSM*, I:165-166). Berkeley does make a similar point at the end of *Principles*, 137: "it is not necessary that an Idea or Image be in all respects like the Original." I think what he wrote here about resemblance is not to be taken completely strictly, there are other non-resemblance forms of indirect realism, and Berkeley seems patently aware of that.

saying that only ideas are immediately perceived, and material objects are perceived mediately, which is the indirect realist theory of perception. Hylas goes on to claim that ideas come to represent material objects, like an indirect realist, in just the way that ideas of a picture or statue come to represent who they are marked out to designate. Thus, when we perceive a picture or a statue of Julius Caesar, immediately we perceive nothing “more than some colours and figures with a certain symmetry and composition of the whole” (*Dialogues*, 193). But, our “thoughts are directed to the Roman Emperor... from reason and memory” (*Dialogues*, 194).

Berkeley has no qualms with admitting here that we do perceive mediately, by both reason, and memory (which is suggestion). Hence, he writes “I grant we may in one acceptation be said to perceive sensible things mediately by sense: that is, when from a frequently perceived connexion, the immediate perception of ideas by one sense suggests to the mind others perhaps belonging to another sense, which are wont to be connected with them” (*Dialogues*, 194) So, from the previous experience of perceiving statues or pictures with colors that have a certain symmetry being connected to Julius Caesar, we can now expect or infer (on the basis of memory) that Julius Caesar is represented by colors with a similar symmetry in a picture or a statue. That is because the picture or statue which represents Caesar, that we now perceive, resembles the previously perceived pictures of statues with colors that have a certain symmetry- which previously perceived statues or images had colors which were connected with Julius Caesar. Thus, upon immediately perceiving a statue or picture of Julius Caesar, Caesar comes to be represented, and so in a sense perceived, by our mind. This represented perception of Caesar is due to a suggestion, or inference, which suggestion or inference is founded on a previous immediate experience of a statue or a picture which we noted as representing Caesar.

Though Berkeley has no qualms with admitting that we can perceive mediately via suggestion or inference, he objects to saying that we can perceive a material object mediately by suggestion or inference. Thus, he writes “to return to your comparison of Caesar’s picture, it is plain, if you keep to that, you must hold the real things or archetypes of our ideas are not perceived by sense, but by some internal faculty of the soul, as reason or memory. I would therefore fain know, what arguments you can draw from reason for the existence of what you call real things or material objects. Or whether you remember to have seen them formerly as they are in themselves? or if you have read or heard of anyone that did” (*Dialogues*, 194). Here, Berkeley is explicitly asking Hylas, the indirect realist, how it is that material objects are perceived mediately. Are they perceived by memory/suggestion, or reason/inference? Berkeley reiterates this point when he writes: “My aim is only to learn from you, the way to come at the knowledge of material beings. Whatever is perceived, is perceived either immediately or mediately: by sense, or by reason and reflexion. But as you have excluded sense, pray shew me what reason you have to believe their existence; or what medium you can possibly make use of, to prove it either to mine or your own understanding” (*Dialogues*, 195).⁴⁷

Hylas responds to Philonous’ pestering by conceding Philonous’ point. He says “To deal ingenuously, Philonous, now I consider the point, I do not find I can give you any good reason for it” (*Dialogues*, 195). The indirect realist Hylas has given up the claim that material objects are sensible. The question we should ask is, why? Why can we not perceive material objects mediately, by reason/inference, and/or by suggestion/memory? Because, Berkeley would surely

⁴⁷ Similarly, in the second of the three *Dialogues*, Berkeley writes that “Either you perceive the being of matter immediately, or mediately. If immediately, pray inform me by which of the senses you perceived it. If mediately, let me know by which reasoning it is inferred from those things which you perceive immediately. So much for the perception” (*Dialogues*, 211). Again, Berkeley is saying that if we perceive things mediately by reason, they must be inferred solely on the basis of those things we perceive immediately, which are ideas perceived now, or in the past.

answer, it would be impossible to do so. Let us consider mediate perception. We either mediately perceive things which are based on previously perceived immediate perceptions, or previously perceived mediate perceptions, or previously perceived applications of our imagination. There must have, however, been a first time that we ever mediately perceived something. This mediate perception could not have been based on a prior mediate perception, since we had never previously had a mediate perception. Our first mediate perceptions therefore must have been perceived on the basis of either a prior immediate perception, or a previous conscious, non-inferential application of our imagination.

Berkeley maintains that we can perceive any number of things by a conscious application of our imagination. For example, he writes that “for myself I find indeed I have a faculty of imagining, or representing to myself the ideas of those particular things I have perceived and of variously compounding and dividing them. I can imagine a man with two heads or the upper body of a man joined to the body of a horse...” (*Introduction to the Principles*, 10). But, though we can imagine a whole variety of things which we have never experienced particularly, Berkeley thinks that we can never perceive things by the imagination unless we had first immediately perceived something which our imagined perception is a copy of.

As such, in the first section of the *Principles*, Berkeley writes that “It is evident to anyone who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses, or... ideas formed by help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways” (*Principles*, 1). All of the ideas we perceive by imagination are in some way copies of the ideas we actually perceive(d), immediately, by sense. We could never consciously imagine something sensible unless we first had (apparent) memories, which are copies, of previously immediately

perceived ideas. These copies of immediate perceptions can thereafter be recollected and perceived, at will, by our imagination. Thus, to mediately perceive something we had previously perceived by a conscious application of our imagination is to perceive a copy of an immediate perception.

But, as Berkeley notes, “That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind, is what everybody will allow. And it seems no less evident that 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” (*Principles*, 3). This point will be granted by any indirect realist, since they maintain that we only immediately perceive mind-dependent sensations or (which is the same thing) ideas. And, as Berkeley said, it really does seem evident to all that the sensations we perceive by our imaginations exist only in our minds. It therefore seems that the first time we ever mediately perceived something must have had its basis in either 1) an immediate perception, which are mind-dependent ideas, or 2) a consciously imagined perception, which are mind-dependent ideas, and are copies of the mind-dependent ideas we immediately perceive(d). So, in short, our first mediate perception must have been a copy of an immediately perceived, mind-dependent idea, or it must have been a copy of a mind-dependent, ideational copy of an immediately perceived, mind-dependent idea.

Finally, we can return to the heart of Berkeley’s challenge: how can we mediately perceive a material object? Where can our memory, and consequently our expectation, of the perception of a material object come from? How can a perception of a material object be suggested, or inferred, by our mind? Once again, an empiricist through and through, Berkeley maintains that we can only mediately perceive things which we have had an *experience* of. Thus,

to expect or infer that we perceive a material object would involve first perceiving/experiencing a material object. But, we do not experience material objects in our immediate perceptions. For, indirect realists grant that material objects are never immediately perceived. The only other things we can experience, prior to an initial mediate perception, would be a perception due to a conscious, non-inferential application of our imagination.⁴⁸

Unfortunately for the indirect realist however, material objects cannot be consciously, non-inferentially, imagined. For, before we had ever mediately perceived whatsoever, or ever consciously, non-inferentially imagined, our (apparent) memory alone could have only provided us with copies of immediately perceived, mind-dependent ideas. That is because there would be nothing else that we had ever *experienced*. Thus, the only things we could first consciously imagine would be mind-dependent ideas, which are copies of immediately perceived mind-dependent ideas. It follows that the first thing we *ever* mediately perceived must have been either a perception due to an expectancy of the perception of a mind-dependent sensation which we (apparently) previously immediately perceive(d), or a mind-dependent, consciously (and non-inferentially) imagined, copy thereof. Thus, the first thing we ever mediately perceived must

⁴⁸ It might be replied that the occurrence of phi-phenomenon, which is the visual presentation of multiple lights flashing such that it appears as if there is an object in motion when really there is not, shows that we immediately perceive material objects sometimes. The occurrence of phi-phenomenon is supposed to strongly support the claim that we can have perceptual (specifically, visual) experiences (as) of there being objects that possess (and can undergo a change of) properties. For, if we often judge that there are objects in motion, then perhaps this judgement is based on the assumption that we do perceive objects in motion. Hence, Berkeley's argument cannot refute a type of indirect realism that affirms this type of phenomenon.

In response to this, I say that in the first place, to change the signification of 'indirect realism' to include the immediate perception of material objects does not make Berkeley's argument against indirect realism understood in the regular sense of the word any less potent. In the second place, I do not see how sometimes judging that there is an object in motion when really there is not one shows that we ever immediately perceive material objects, since an immediate perception is bare and includes no judgement. In the third place, even granting that such a judgement *can* feasibly lend credence to the notion that we do immediately perceive material objects, I cannot understand how sometimes judging erroneously that an object is in motion can in any way prove that there are ever objects in motion. In fact, I would think the case of phi-phenomenon only serves to further support Berkeley's own view. If we sometimes judge that there is an object in motion when really there is no object in motion there, then perhaps all objects that appear to be in motion is just an illusion. Anytime we watch T.V. it seems as if there is an object in motion there, when really, we only perceive lights flashing. Why not think that all visible sensations suggesting apparent motion are really just a series of flashing lights, or a succession of mind-dependent ideas?

have also been a mind-dependent idea, since it would have been the only type of thing we could have expected or inferred to perceive on the basis of our previous experiences. For, our previous experiences would have been immediately perceived ideas, or consciously, non-inferentially imagined ideas.

From the fact that 1) our immediate perceptions, 2) our perceptions via a conscious, non-inferential application of our imagination, and 3) our first mediate perception, are/were all mind-dependent ideas, it follows that we can never mediately perceive material objects. We cannot now mediately perceive material objects via suggestion or inference on the basis of a previous mediate perception, since mediate perceptions bottom out in either our first mediate perceptions, or they bottom out in our conscious, non-inferential applications of our imagination, or they bottom out in our immediate perceptions. But, our first mediate perception bottoms out in either our conscious, non-inferential applications of our imagination, or they bottom out in our immediate perceptions. However, all of our conscious, non-inferential applications of our imagination must eventually bottom out in our first first conscious, non-inferential application of our imagination, or in an immediate perception. And, our first conscious, non-inferential applications of our imagination bottom out in immediate perceptions. Lastly, as has been noted previously, immediate perceptions are only *mind-dependent ideas*. Thus, all of our mediate perceptions bottom out in mind-dependent ideas. So, it follows that we can never perceive material objects mediately. For, the only things we ever perceive mediately are mind-dependent ideas, which bottom out in ideas which are previously, or concurrently, immediately perceived. Therefore, Berkeley concludes, we only ever perceive mind-dependent ideas, and the indirect realist theory of perception is false.

Section 2.4, the Likeness Principle:

Now that Berkeley has shown that we neither perceive material objects immediately, nor mediately, we can return to the likeness principle. Specifically, we can return to LP2, which is characterized by the claim that ‘something sensible cannot be like something insensible’.

Berkeley uses LP2 to show that insensible material objects cannot resemble wholly perceptible ideas. If insensible material objects cannot resemble wholly perceptible ideas, then insensible material objects cannot have any of the (sensible) properties commonly attributed to them. For example, when we see a banana, it is commonly expected that, independently of our perceptions, that banana will still be yellow, crescent-shaped, soft, fragrant, etc. But this object, existing absolutely independently of any of our perceptions, cannot possibly have any of these properties, since all of those properties are identical to mind-dependent perceptions. Hence, to believe that material objects exist is to believe that something completely unlike what they are regularly supposed to be like, exists. Hence, Berkeley writes (through Philonous’ mouth) near the end of the third dialogue that “Every thing that is seen, felt, heard, or any way perceived by the senses, is on the principles I embrace, a real thing, but not on yours” (*Dialogues*, 250).⁴⁹

In the paragraph following directly thereafter the Julius Caesar passage (discussed on pages 41-46), Berkeley has Philonous say “you say our ideas do not exist without the mind; but that they are copies, images, or representations of certain originals that do” (*Dialogues*, 195), to which Hylas replies “They are” (*Dialogues*, 195). Berkeley then proceeds to make some brief but powerful epistemic arguments, before forwarding LP2. He pens LP2 on page 196:

Philonous: But neither is this all. Which are material objects in themselves,
perceptible or imperceptible?

⁴⁹ Likewise, this is one of the pieces of the puzzle to why Berkeley insists that the notions he advances are more consistent with common sense, and are less skeptical, than materialism- particularly, indirect realism.

- Hylas: Properly and immediately nothing can be perceived but ideas. All material things therefore are in themselves insensible, and to be perceived only by their ideas.
- Philonous: Ideas then are sensible, and their archetypes or originals insensible.
- Hylas: Right.
- Philonous: But how can that which is sensible be like that which is insensible? Can a real thing in itself *invisible* be like a *colour*; or a real thing which is not *audible*, be like a *sound*? In a word, can anything be like a sensation or idea, but another sensation or idea?
- Hylas: I must own, I think not (*Dialogues*, 196).

Here, Berkeley has Hylas maintain that material objects are themselves unperceivable, and yet they nevertheless resemble ideas. But, it seems self-evident that something entirely unperceivable cannot be like something that is wholly perceptible. Hence, something sensible cannot be like something insensible, and so likewise, something inaudible cannot be like something that is audible, and thus the same can be said for the rest of the sensible qualities.⁵⁰

Recall that Dicker writes that LP2 “is plainly directed against any version of representationalism that holds that material objects are unperceivable and that only ideas are perceivable... insofar as Berkeley’s target is this version of representationalism, his objection is

⁵⁰ One might expect that the inference Philonous makes here is supposed to go the other way. Visual things cannot be like invisible things; audible things cannot be like inaudible things; etc. So, generalizing, we get this: sensible things cannot be like insensible things. My reply to this is that if it is granted that material objects are entirely insensible and ideas are wholly sensible, which is what I have argued that Berkeley has established by this point in the text, then it just follows by definition that each particular instance of sensibility, that is, touch, smell, taste, sound, and sight, will also not be able to resemble something that is intangible, invisible, etc. For, each particular instance of the sensibility and insensibility of each individual sense modality would fall under the umbrella of sensible/insensible things. Hence, if sensible things cannot resemble insensible things *generally*, then it follows that *particular* instances of sensible things will be unable to resemble *particular* instances of insensible things.

very powerful — indeed, I am inclined to say, decisive. For I do not see how something that is perceivable could resemble something that is unperceivable” (Dicker 2011, 151). Dicker’s problem with LP2 however is that he sees no reason an indirect realist should affirm that material objects are actually unperceivable. For, he thinks the indirect realist can maintain that only ideas are immediately perceivable, but that material objects are still mediately perceivable. However, as I think I have shown in sections 2.2 and 2.3, Berkeley has demonstrated that material objects cannot be perceived mediately. Hence, they cannot be perceived at all. Thus, it follows that a proponent of RIR is forced to maintain that material objects are themselves insensible, but that material objects nevertheless resemble sensible things. But, per LP2, this contradicts reality. It seems therefore that both the indirect realist theory of perception, and RIR, are false.

Section V, Response to Potential Objections:

In this section, I reply to one potential objection. The objection I want to consider is that Berkeley’s own alternative theory of perception (allegedly) implies that material objects are still perceived. Hence, a version of indirect realism is implicit in Berkeley’s theory of perception. Recall that Berkeley’s theory of perception is that we immediately perceive only mind-dependent sensations. To explain the origin of our ideas of sense, without reference to material objects, Berkeley argues that some other causal mind (namely, God) causes our perceptions. From the claims that “I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit” (*Principles*, 28), and “But whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by sense have not a like dependence on my will (*Principles*, 29), Berkeley concludes that “There is therefore some other will or spirit that produces them”

(*Principles*, 29).⁵¹ From the claim that another mind causes our immediately perceived, mind-dependent sensations, Berkeley argues that this other causal mind is God.⁵² Thus completes an admittedly rudimentary, but nevertheless sufficient (for our purposes), account of Berkeley's theory of perception.

An objection that can be made against Berkeley's argument contra the indirect realist theory of perception, given Berkeley's own theory of perception, is that it is not (at least *prima facie*) obvious that material objects can never be perceived by God. Even if our finite minds are incapable of perceiving material objects, it might still be possible that God perceives material objects. That would make it the case that the indirect realist theory of perception is still in some sense true. For, although we never can perceive material objects, God can still perceive material objects. Berkeley considers this objection in sections 70-71, and 76. He writes:

70. You will perhaps say that matter, though it is not perceived by God, is nevertheless perceived by God, to whom it is the occasion of exciting ideas in our minds. For, say you, since we observe our sensations to be imprinted in an orderly and constant manner, it is but reasonable to suppose there are certain constant and regular occasions of their being produced. That is to say, that there are certain permanent and distinct parcels of matter, corresponding to our ideas, which, though they do not excite them in our minds, or any ways immediately affect us, they are nevertheless to God, by whom they are perceived, as it were so many

⁵¹ This argument of course assumes that material objects either do not exist, or that they are casually inert, and as such cannot cause our immediately perceived, mind-dependent sensations.

⁵² See (*Principles*, 30-33), (*Principles*, 72), and (*Dialogues*, 205). Whether or not this causal mind is actually God is not necessary for our purposes here. All that is relevant here is that our perceptions *rerum natura* are caused by another mind. To avoid being needlessly prolix, and for the sake of scholarly and Berkeley's own prose, I will refer to this mind henceforth as "God". Though, nevertheless, you may think or refer to this mind any otherwise as you please.

occasions to remind him when and what ideas to imprint on our minds: that so things may go on in a constant uniform manner (*Principles*, 70).

71. In answer to this I observe, that as the notion of matter is here stated, the question is no longer concerning the existence of a thing distinct from *spirit* and *idea*, from perceiving and being perceived: but whether there are not certain ideas, of I know not what sort, in the mind of God, which are so many marks or notes that direct him to produce sensations in our minds, in a constant and regular method: much after the same manner as a musician is directed by the notes of music to produce that harmonious train and composition of sound, which is called a *tune*; though they who hear music do not perceive the notes, and may be entirely ignorant of them. But this notion of matter seems too extravagant to deserve a confutation. Besides, it is in effect no objection against what we have advanced, to wit, that there is no senseless, unperceived *substance* (*Principles*, 71).

...

76. Whether therefore there are such ideas in the mind of God, and whether they may be called by the name *matter*, I shall not dispute. But if you stick to the notion of an unthinking substance, or support of extension, motion, and other sensible qualities, then to me it is most evidently impossible there should be any such thing. Since it is a plain repugnancy, that those qualities should exist in or be supported by an unperceiving substance (*Principles*, 76).

Similarly, in the second of the three *Dialogues*, Berkeley writes:

Hylas: ... notwithstanding what has been said, [matter] may still be an

Occasion...

- Hylas: ... by *occasion* I mean an inactive unthinking being, at the presence whereof God excites ideas in our minds...
- Hylas: When we see ideas produced in our minds after an orderly and constant manner, it is natural to think they have some fixed and regular occasions, at the presence whereof they are excited...
- Philonous: Those things which you say are present to God, without doubt He perceives.
- Hylas: Certainly; otherwise they could not be to Him an occasion of acting.
- Philonous: Not to insist now on your making sense of this hypothesis, or answering all the puzzling questions and difficulties it is liable to: I only ask whether the order and regularity observable in the series of our ideas, or the course of nature, be not sufficiently account for by the wisdom and power of God; and whether it doth not derogate from those attributes; to suppose He is influenced, directed, or put in mind, when and what He is to act, by any unthinking substance. And lastly whether, in case I granted all you contend for, it would make anything to your purpose, it not being easy to conceive how the external or absolute existence of an unthinking substance, external or distinct from its being perceived, can be inferred from my allowing that there are certain things perceived by the mind of God, which are to Him the occasion of producing ideas in us.

Hylas: I am perfectly at a loss what to think, this notion of *occasion* seeming now altogether as groundless as the rest (*Dialogues*, 209-210).

In these passages, Berkeley asserts the potential objection that his theory implies a version of the indirect realist theory of perception, in that we never immediately perceive material objects, but that they exist, and though they are never perceived at all by us, they are nevertheless still perceived by God.

But, as Berkeley replies, to say that material objects are insensible to us, but perceptible by God, is tantamount to saying that there are ideas which exist in God's mind. They must be ideas because those "parcels of matter" (*Principles*, 70) would still be perceived by God's mind. Given what Berkeley writes about immediate/mediate perception however, the only things that are perceived are things which are immediately perceived, or are mind-dependent copies of things previously immediately perceived. Material objects therefore, conceived of as an "occasion of producing ideas in us" (*Dialogues*, 210), must themselves be considered ideas in just the way that the ideas we perceive by sense must themselves be considered ideas. But, as Berkeley notes, "this notion of matter seems too extravagant to deserve a confutation. Besides, it is in no effect an objection against what we have advanced, to wit, that there is no senseless, unperceived *substance*" (*Principles*, 71). Matter in this sense cannot be an unperceived substance, given that it is perceived. Also, it seems that this type of matter would be perceived immediately, and hence God's perception of matter could not be explained by the indirect realist account of perception. So, if matter exists as some eternal, archetypal idea in God's mind, it is no objection to Berkeley's system.

In short, and in Berkeley's own words, "I have no objection against calling ideas in the mind of God archetypes of our own. But I object against those archetypes by philosophers supposed to be real things, and to have an absolute rational existence distinct from their being perceived by any mind whatsoever; it being the opinion of all materialists that an ideal existence in the Divine Mind is one thing and the real existence of material things another" (*B to J*, 433-434:1). Those "parcels of matter" (*Principles*, 70), or "occasions of producing ideas in us" (*Dialogues*, 210), are nothing but ideas in the mind of God. Hence, Berkeley has nothing against suggesting that there are archetypal ideas existing in God's mind; for, those archetypal ideas are nevertheless ideas.⁵³ *Ergo*, Berkeley rests his case against the indirect realist.

Section 2.6, Conclusion:

In this section, I argued that Berkeley demonstrates that the indirect realist theory of perception, and so RIR, is inconsistent. I showed how Berkeley proves that material objects can never be perceived by an indirect realist. I argued that he does so by showing that on no forms of perception, immediate or mediate, can material objects be perceived by an indirect realist. Consequently, I showed why it is that Berkeley thinks the indirect realist theory of perception is false. I then argued that LP2 shows that RIR is false because there can be no resemblance between an unperceived material object, and ideas. Lastly, I showed that the objection that Berkeley's own theory of perception implies a version of the indirect realist theory of perception, is erroneous. If we grant Berkeley the claim that we only immediately perceive ideas, then his theory of perception, that we only immediately (and mediately) perceive mind-dependent sensations, is true.

⁵³ Geoffrey Gorham (regarding Berkeley's letters to Johnson) and George H. Thomas (regarding *Principles* 70 and 71) recognize the importance of these passages. See (Gorham, 443-446 (especially 446)), and (Thomas, 164).

Abbreviations:

<i>B2J</i>	“Philosophical Correspondence Between Berkeley and Samuel Johnson.”
<i>CSM</i>	<i>The Philosophical Writings of Descartes.</i>
<i>DFM</i>	“A Defence of Free-thinking in Mathematics.”
<i>Dialogues</i>	“Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous.”
<i>DM</i>	“De Motu.”
<i>Draft</i>	“First Draft of the Introduction to the Principles.”
<i>Essay</i>	<i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.</i>
<i>Lear</i>	<i>The Tragedy of King Lear.</i>
LP1	An idea can only be like an idea.
LP2	Something sensible cannot be like something insensible.
<i>NTV</i>	“An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision.”
<i>PC</i>	“Philosophical Commentaries.”
<i>Principles</i>	“A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge.”
RIR	Resemblance-based theory of indirect realism.
<i>TVV</i>	“Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained.”

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