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# WHY WE DO NOT SEE WHAT WE FEEL<sup>1</sup>

BY

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**Abstract:** Of all of Berkeley's claims about perception, perhaps the most unusual is his assertion that we do not see the numerically same objects we feel. Ideas are radically heterogeneous. The question I seek to answer is why Berkeley thought this thesis true. Traditional accounts hold that Berkeley was forced into accepting heterogeneity by his views concerning either distance or abstraction, but careful analysis reveals these to be mistaken. I conclude that how Berkeley thought of the ontic status of ideas finishes the incomplete picture provided by traditional accounts, and supplies us with a better understanding of his views on perceptual heterogeneity.

Berkeley believes that "[W]e do not see the same object that we feel. . . ."<sup>2</sup> I call this the Heterogeneity Thesis: no object of one sense is identical with any object of another.<sup>3</sup> He makes the point boldly.

The extensions, figures, and motions perceived by sight are specifically distinct from the ideas of touch called by the same names, nor is there any such thing as one idea or kind of idea common to both senses.<sup>4</sup>

The thesis is clear enough, but his reasons for supposing it to be true are decidedly less transparent. In what follows I explore why Berkeley felt so confident about the truth of perceptual heterogeneity and attempt to reconstruct some of his analysis that is not explicitly presented in order to complete his account. Ultimately we will discover that Berkeley marries the representative content of ideas too closely with their ontological status, such that he is led to believe that differences in content generate deep ontic distinctions.

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***Was Berkeley forced into accepting perceptual heterogeneity?***

Many philosophers think Berkeley's views about distance perception drove him to endorse heterogeneity. D. M. Armstrong reports "He is *forced* into holding such a view, because he thinks that the objects revealed by sight are merely two-dimensional while touch alone gives us access to ordinary three-dimensional objects."<sup>5</sup> The argument relies on Berkeley's prior premise that distance is never immediately seen.<sup>6</sup> Even if one can learn to represent three dimensions by sight (as we presumably do with pictures), the content of what we immediately perceive by sight has two dimensions while the content of what we strictly feel has three. Hence we do not see and touch the "same" things.<sup>7</sup> Our spatial ideas of sight and those of touch have no relations to one another.

Unfortunately, Berkeley's premise that distance is never immediately seen does not logically entail heterogeneity. Two-dimensional properties are a subset of three-dimensional ones, just as two-dimensional geometry is a subset of three-dimensional geometry. It cannot be merely because the dimensionalities differ that heterogeneity is true. Perhaps Armstrong meant to be reporting Berkeley's state of mind when he mentioned force, for he comes to a similar conclusion.<sup>8</sup> The actual content of our ideas of sight and touch is irrelevant. Suppose Berkeley underestimates the richness of what we visually perceive, such that we do perceive distance immediately.<sup>9</sup> The question remains whether the space perceived by sight is numerically identical with that perceived by touch. The contingency of the relations between the seen and the felt is the real issue. Berkeley holds we could feel roundly when we see squarely, even if sight and touch have similar content.<sup>10</sup> Thus his position that sight is two-dimensional and touch is not cannot explain his adherence to the heterogeneity of ideas.

Alternatively, one might think Berkeley's strategy in the *New Theory of Vision* forced him into accepting heterogeneity. After introducing the issue, but before arguing for the thesis, he briefly skirmishes with abstract ideas at NTV 122–126. Only after disposing of abstraction does he turn and argue seriously that the thesis is true. One might suppose Berkeley is thinking along the following lines. If there were common sensibles, what could they have in common? What intrinsic characteristic would the ideas of sight and touch share? Abstract ideas are the only viable candidates. If extension is a common sensible – to use Berkeley's example – then an idea of it must be abstractable from both our visual and tactual experiences. But Berkeley is antecedently committed to denying abstract ideas. The only other remotely plausible candidate is a material substratum, and he would not allow that as a live option. Thinking he has exhausted the options, Berkeley concludes there can be nothing shared in common.

If we cannot abstract, then ideas cannot share content, and hence the ideas of sight and touch must be radically distinct.

Although an interesting and reasonable conjecture about part of Berkeley's thinking, it suffers from the same flaw as the distance account. His objections to abstraction do not entail the truth of heterogeneity. Even more interesting, as it turns out abstraction does not depend on the truth of heterogeneity either. If one takes the heterogeneity of ideas seriously, then one must apply the divisions between kinds of ideas as deeply as they can go. Allowing Lockean abstract ideas into Berkeley's system does not affect the thesis.<sup>11</sup> What common element do we see and feel in the case of extension? The abstract idea itself is not available. An abstract idea is still an *idea* perceived by some sense. When I feel the length of the book and attempt to abstract from that experience, I am abstracting from a *tactual* experience. I am not yet entitled to assume that I am abstracting from a tactual-visual experience, or an experience that extends beyond what I sense with that particular modality. Hence the phrase 'abstract idea of extension' fails to disambiguate an abstract tangible idea of extension from an abstract visible idea of extension.

To conclude that the truth of the heterogeneity thesis is independent of abstraction, however, we need to establish further that the rejection of abstraction is compatible with the homogeneity of ideas. This is a relatively weak claim and correspondingly easy to establish. Assume that homogeneity is true. Thus, when we see and touch the extension of an object, we are accessing the numerically same quality. We need not think abstraction is true to account for this phenomenon. It just so happens that the idea of extension associated with this object can be translated into two different sensory languages: a tactual and a visual one. The idea remains particular, and it cannot be understood absent *some* sensory 'language,' but it just so happens that in our sensory lives we are multi-lingual. Of course this straightforwardly denies Berkeley's thesis, but it is entirely possible. As a result, we have no independent reason to suppose that the rejection of abstraction in itself drove Berkeley to endorse heterogeneity. His views concerning the perception of distance and abstract ideas provide no reasons for endorsing a radical divide between kinds of ideas. Nonetheless, he thought it was true. Let us turn to why he thought so and evaluate his reasons for so thinking. The *New Theory of Vision* presents us with three separate arguments.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Molyneux thought experiment*

The first argument Berkeley uses in defense of heterogeneity is actually an appeal to a thought experiment first raised by William Molyneux.

But it has been, if I mistake not, clearly made out that a man born blind would not at first reception of his sight think the things he saw were of the same nature with the objects of touch, or had anything in common with them; but that they were a new set of ideas, perceived in a new manner, and entirely different from all he had ever perceived before. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Part of the reason this constitutes an initially compelling case for Berkeley is that he subscribes to the view that the contents of the mind are self-transparent. That is, one cannot entertain two ideas and not know whether they are identical. Thus, Berkeley thought that the subject described by Molyneux would have to come to some definite conclusion. Either he would recognize the similarity in the ideas, or he would not. Although the case has an undeniable intuitive appeal, as an argument it falls short. Even were such a person ('Molyneux Man' for short) to be unable to properly judge the nature of things by sight alone, that in and of itself would not constitute proof of heterogeneity. If correct about the divergence between the ideas of sight and touch, Berkeley needs a *conceptual* test that will confirm his hypothesis. He needs more than the mere fact that a Molyneux Man would not be able to recognize objects by sight, since there might be other factors which could explain such a failure.<sup>14</sup> Rather, he needs the stronger claim that such a person would never be able determine the matchups between the felt and the seen *by sight and reason alone*. This would require an alternate experiment. Imagine a subject blind from birth who later acquires her sight. However, at the moment sight is restored, the person loses all tactual and kinesthetic abilities, preventing the subject from using mere correlation to make tangible-visual matchups. If ideas are heterogeneous, such a Molyneux Man should not be able to figure out the visible-tangible correspondences *ever*. I think Berkeley believes this, but he does not in fact argue for this stronger claim, settling instead for reasons that might appeal more to a lay audience.

Independently, it is hard to see how the thought experiment accomplishes much. If perceptual heterogeneity is true, then the connections between the seen and the felt will be contingent. Thus, Berkeley needs to motivate the *possibility* of connections between experiences like felt squares and visible circles, but the Molyneux case does not speak to this issue. Pitcher remarks:

Thus, a world in which tangible squares answered to what we, in our world, would call visible circles would be a world that is very radically different from our actual world, and its laws would have to be so fantastically complicated, that it is uncertain whether any coherent description of it could possibly be formulated. It is, therefore, uncertain that it *is* a possible world.<sup>15</sup>

Imagining a coherent physics with felt squares and seen circles is daunting, yet it is what he requires. The inability of the Molyneux Man to match up his visual and tactual sensations provides no direct evidence of the sort of radical contingency he needs.

*The argument from difference in content*

The second argument Berkeley advances in the *New Theory* comes at NTV 129.

*Secondly*, light and colours are allowed by all to constitute a sort or species entirely different from the ideas of touch: nor will any man, I presume, say they can make themselves perceived by that sense: but there is no other immediate object of sight besides light and colours. It is therefore a direct consequence that there is no idea common to both senses.<sup>16</sup>

Essentially, Berkeley argues that ordinary people will grant that what they strictly perceive by sight and touch are in fact distinct. He admits that there is a 'prevailing opinion' that by sight we perceive considerably more than just light and color, but he thinks he has already proven earlier in the *New Theory* that those cases are instances of mediate perception.<sup>17</sup> Yet this argument does not support Berkeley's conclusion. Having distinct phenomenal contents does not entail heterogeneity. Perhaps the content of a single idea is presented differently to (has different effects upon) various senses. Berkeley is here describing heterogeneity, not explaining why it is true. If by sight I perceive only light and color, and by touch only solidity and shape, then what prevents the idea of a triangle from affecting my eye in one way and my tactual senses in another?<sup>18</sup> The content will thus differ, but that *alone* does not guarantee the sort of radical heterogeneity Berkeley seeks to establish.

In short, I do not think much philosophical substance lies here.<sup>19</sup> At best we might reconstruct the argument Armstrong uses to claim that Berkeley is forced into accepting the heterogeneity thesis, but as we have seen that line of reasoning fails. Most of the mileage Berkeley gets from the argument stems from its intuitive appeal. On the surface, it sounds reasonable to say that we do not "feel" light or color, and we do not strictly "see" things like shape, warmth, and solidity. Berkeley simply asks us to look closely at what we see and feel, and to notice that each is a distinct kind of sensing. Yet such distinctness, even if genuinely present, is not sufficient to establish heterogeneity. It has some rhetorical persuasiveness, and that is why I think Berkeley leans so heavily upon it, but it fails to capture any deep philosophy.

*Adding visible and tangible lines*

Of more interest is Berkeley's last explicit argument. He claims that if extension in particular is common to both sight and touch, then one ought to be able to add visible and tangible lines together. But this cannot be done; hence ideas of visible and tangible extension share nothing

in common. They are not the same sort of idea, despite the similarity in name. Berkeley confidently asserts this point:

A blue and a red line I can conceive added together into one sum and making one continued line: but to make in my thoughts one continued line of a visible and tangible line added together is, I find, a task far more difficult, and even insurmountable: and I leave it to the reflexion and experience of every particular person to determine for himself.<sup>20</sup>

Less an argument than a challenge, he thinks no opponent can perform this task.

Armstrong provides the obvious reply when he asks “Can I not pace out part of a distance, and then measure the remainder by the eye?”<sup>21</sup> Margaret Atherton challenges this example by questioning whether it is a genuine case of adding a tangible and visual line.<sup>22</sup> She rightly points out that what Armstrong is doing is measuring a tangible distance and *estimating* a visible distance. Hence Armstrong has not met the challenge, although we have still to determine whether Berkeley is correct.

To add two lines in this fashion, Atherton contends one would need an inconceivable measuring device whose units are neither visible nor tangible. This is meant to mirror Berkeley’s own reasoning earlier in the *New Theory*. He holds that we measure distance in terms of sense modality specific points, which he calls ‘minimum sensibles.’ The distance between two tangible locations is a certain number of tangible points; the distance between two visible places is a visible line consisting of visible points. Now the problem arises. “[B]ut if they are one tangible and the other visible, the distance between them doth neither consist of points perceivable by sight nor by touch, *i.e.* it is utterly inconceivable.”<sup>23</sup>

Why is a distance-measuring device that is neither visible nor tangible inconceivable? Atherton answers, “There is no unit of measurement that will allow you to get from a point that is visible to one that is tangible.”<sup>24</sup> We might challenge her by considering some unusual olfactory abilities. The world might be so constructed that each tangible and visible point is associated with a particular kind of smell such that by comparing the differences in smells one can measure distance. It seems reasonable to suppose then, that by smelling a point felt but not seen, and then a point seen but not felt, I could still accurately judge the distance between them. Now this case would not bother Atherton or Berkeley, for they would doubtless describe my measuring as being completely within the olfactory realm. I fixed one of the points visually and the other tactually, but the distance being measured is, as it were, between two olfactory points. Olfactory points presumably only provide *cues* to visible and tangible distances. Atherton’s point is thus not that there cannot be a measuring device that is neither visible nor tangible, but rather that there cannot be a measuring device that is *both* visible *and* tangible, to take us directly from a tangible point to a visible one.

Yet this is precisely what is at issue. One might attribute our inability to add visible and tangible lines to something other than their being radically distinct. Contingent psychological limitations in humans come to mind (we might be able to think "in" only a single sense modality at a time). Berkeley cannot expect his readers to be convinced of a conceptual truth on the basis of an empirical result. At best our alleged inability to add visible and tangible lines can only confirm an antecedently assumed hypothesis. Admittedly, this result is not what one would expect to be true, and being led to recognize its truth is a powerful psychological ploy. Berkeley uses this argument not as a careful reason for accepting the heterogeneity of ideas, but as a persuasive tool to convince his lay readers. We thus have yet to penetrate to the heart of what motivates Berkeley on this issue.

### *Heterogeneity and the nature of ideas*

To this point we have seen that Berkeley's explicit arguments in defense of perceptual heterogeneity seem to be more intuitive appeals than rigorous reasoning. Nonetheless I think that Berkeley understood where the work had to be done. For perceptual heterogeneity to be true, he needs to establish that the contents presented by ideas of different senses themselves are not merely distinct, but incommensurable. Incommensurability is implied by the *complete* distinctness of the ideas. He clearly thinks that they are incommensurable, but why? Pointing to differences in the intrinsic features of presented sensory content will not validate his thesis. Doing so does generate plausible and intuitive examples, but there *should* be more. And there is.

We have left unexamined an important element of perception: the things which *bear* content, namely the ideas themselves. If "internal" features of content cannot explain heterogeneity, perhaps extrinsic ones can. The story I want to tell is surprisingly simple. When discussing representation and content, Berkeley treats ideas like robust things literally external to, although nonetheless dependent upon, minds. This ontic view on ideas explains his commitment to perceptual heterogeneity. If sensory ideas are themselves things of distinct kinds, then asking someone to add a visible line with a tangible one is like asking someone to add pain (something mental) to a square (something material). The reason such acts cannot be performed is attributable to the (ontological) nature of the bearers of the content, and not to either limitations of the mind or intrinsic features of the presented content.

In order to make my analysis plausible, I need to establish two claims. First, I need to demonstrate that Berkeley thought of ideas as entities in their own right external to the mind. Second, I need to indicate why *this*

view would lead him to heterogeneity when say an adjectival theory (of ideas) would not. I will take on each issue in turn.

### *The nature of Berkeleian ideas*

Ideas, Berkeley tells us, are "inert, fleeting, dependent beings, which subsist not by themselves, but are supported by, or exist in minds or spiritual substances."<sup>25</sup> From this characterization one might expect ideas to be adjectival on minds. They are "in the mind" and "dependent beings," so what else could they be? Since Berkeley appears to operate within the traditional ontology of substance and mode, ideas must be modes. Richard Watson is illustrative of this kind of thinking.

Berkeley is bound to the all-inclusive ontological type-distinction between substance and modification. He adheres to this pattern particularly in saying that ideas depend upon minds in that their being is being perceived by a mind. *Ideas*, for Berkeley, *must be mental modifications*.<sup>26</sup>

Yet Berkeley works rather hard to *deny* that ideas are modes. Near the beginning of the *Principles* we are told that the mind is "a thing entirely distinct" from ideas.<sup>27</sup> One main theme of all of his works is the activity of the mind in contradistinction to the passivity of ideas. In light of this it is difficult to allow that he thinks of modes as being sufficiently distinct from minds. Section 49 of the *Principles* apparently outright denies that ideas are modes. "I answer, those qualities are in the mind only as they are perceived by it, that is, not by way of *mode* or *attribute*, but only by way of *idea* . . ." <sup>28</sup> Again in section 89 he reaffirms the distinction between minds and ideas. "*Thing* or *being* is the most general name of all, it comprehends under it two kinds entirely distinct and heterogeneous, and which have nothing common but the name, to wit, *spirits* and *ideas*."<sup>29</sup> If they share nothing in common, it is difficult to see how ideas *could* be modes. As a result, we are left with a bit of a puzzle. Berkeley allegedly operates within the traditional ontology, but ideas are neither straightforwardly modes nor substances.

One of the more notorious elements of Berkeley's theory is that ideas are "in the mind." The superficial suggestion is that ideas are thus either somehow parts of the mind or states of the same. Yet Berkeley repudiates this claim, saying that ideas being "in" the mind means nothing more than that they are perceived by it. This is a relation of *dependence*; being "in the mind" only indicates that something requires the mind to exist. Now Berkeley's official view makes ideas decidedly dependent beings. Dependence, however, can take many forms, and his is a rather limited one. Nothing logically prevents Berkeleian ideas from being both external



(that is, not a mode of nor part of the mind) and mind-dependent, and I think he thought of them as both. It is, I think, a fairly well accepted fact that Berkeley consistently writes as if ideas were robust entities in their own right.<sup>30</sup> Ideas are the immediate objects of thought, and in application they are *things* outside the mind, just not material things. When Berkeley describes ideas, he leaves room for their being external. "The former [spirits] are *active, indivisible substances*: the latter [ideas] are *inert, fleeting, dependent beings*, which subsist not by themselves, but are supported by, or exist in minds of spiritual substances."<sup>31</sup> Here Berkeley explains what 'supported by' means in terms of existence "in" minds, which allows ideas to be "in" minds without their being *ontically* "in" minds.

If I am right, then when Berkeley says ideas exist only in the mind, he does not use the word 'in' with an ontic meaning. Instead, ideas function as entities somewhere between substance and mode. They are ontically dependent (like modes) but otherwise external (to the mind) and thing-like (thus resembling substances). This enables Berkeley to preserve the common sense distinction between the external world and our mental lives without creating a Lockean veil of perception.

When I speak of objects as existing in the mind or imprinted on the senses; I would not be understood in the gross literal sense, as when bodies are said to exist in a place, or a seal to make an impression upon wax. My meaning is only that the mind comprehends or perceives them; and that it is affected from without, or by some being distinct from itself.<sup>32</sup>

Ideas are perceived by the mind, yet affect it "from without" as distinct entities. Certainly when Berkeley says that ideas "affect" the mind this is meant in a metaphorical sense, since strictly speaking ideas are inert and only God has genuine causal power. Yet his meaning is clear. Berkeley bends the traditional ontic categories to make room for a hybrid: an entity that is substance-like except for its ontic dependence.

Why does Berkeley think that ideas are ontically dependent yet not mental modes? The answer, I think, lies partially in his contention that qualities are ideas. According to contemporary scholarship, Berkeley is rather notorious for his conflation of qualities and ideas. "Qualities, as hath been shewn, are nothing else but *sensations* or *ideas*, which exist only in a *mind* perceiving them; and this is true not only of the ideas we are acquainted with at present, but likewise of all possible ideas whatsoever."<sup>33</sup> It is important to note, however, that Berkeley is perfectly conscious of the distinction he denies. That is, he thinks he has reasons for supposing that qualities are nothing more than ideas. Thus, we ought not to accuse Berkeley of confusion, even if it turns out he is ultimately in error.

The most basic story, derived from his analysis of Locke, is plausible. Locke holds that ideas are some form of intermediaries that give us all the information present about the qualities of things. In light of this, Locke theorizes that qualities might as well be expressed in terms of the ideas they generate within perceivers (the primary and secondary quality thesis). For Locke, what it means to be a (secondary) quality essentially involves the ideas caused within us. Berkeley, however, who thinks he has good reasons to deny the existence of an independent material world, does not have to account for correspondence between the ideas and external things. As a result, if qualities can be explained essentially in terms of ideas, it is a short step to simply reducing qualities to ideas. Without a material world, what role could qualities play if distinct from ideas? Thus, we ought not find Berkeley's conflation initially unreasonable.

What matters for our purposes, however, is that the identification of idea and quality was more of a meeting than a reduction. That is, Berkeleian ideas have features reminiscent of material qualities. Berkeley does not merely turn qualities into ideas. And so Berkeley has Philonous tell Hylas: "I am not for changing things into ideas, but rather ideas into things. . . ." <sup>34</sup> In a materialist ontology, qualities are the "vehicles" which report about an independent, external reality. Skepticism arises because there is a purported gap between the vehicles and the reality they represent. On Berkeley's view, however, ideas/qualities *still* report a nominally independent, external reality, just not a material one, and this allows him to circumvent the skepticism. We are passive with respect to many of the ideas we perceive, having no control over them. Berkeley thinks that the world according to his immaterialist principles is just materialism without the matter. "Hence it is evident the supposition of external bodies is not necessary for the producing our ideas: since it is granted they are produced sometimes, and might possibly be produced always in the same order we see them in at present, without their concurrence." <sup>35</sup> His world is *just like* the material world; the order and arrangement of what we experience remains unchanged on his view. Since Berkeley does not deny that the world appears to be external to us, in an important sense *it really is external*. <sup>36</sup> Now here I mean 'external' in the weaker sense of "not created by the (i.e. our) mind," and not the sense Berkeley concerns himself to deny, namely that of 'independent of the mind.' Berkeley himself makes this clear: "And so may you suppose an external archetype on my principles; *external*, I mean, to your own mind; though indeed it must be supposed to exist in that mind which comprehends all things. . . ." <sup>37</sup> Ideas are things, and just as materialists assert for physical objects, these idea-things are ordered and stand in relations to one another and behave remarkably like physical objects – except that they are dependent on minds for their existence.

One additional remark needs to be made at this point. The emphasis placed here upon the externality of ideas does not imply that God is irrelevant to the perceptual process. Berkeley tells us that God preserves the continuity of the sensible world as archetypes, and furthermore that God is responsible for what causal influence ideas do possess. We are told that God arranges the order of ideas we perceive. Nonetheless, the core motivation for the heterogeneity thesis is not importantly dependent in any direct way on God.

Thus, Berkeley takes ideas to be 'quasi-substances:' dependent things that exist in two place relations with the mind (i.e. 'external' to the mind). The view is plausible given Berkeley's desire to simultaneously eliminate skepticism while conflating (not confusing) ideas and qualities. Once we accept his assertion that qualities must be ideas, his only escape from solipsism is to forcibly 'bend' the traditional ontology to allow for a category of substance that retains a measure of ontic dependence.

### *Perceptual heterogeneity*

Given that Berkeley treats ideas as external dependent things, why does this conception of ideas encourage him to endorse perceptual heterogeneity? If my thesis is to have any explanatory power, it must be the case that had Berkeley thought of ideas as, say, purely adjectival on minds, then that would have undercut his reasons for thinking that perception is heterogeneous.

In order to make this clear, I want to use Berkeley's third argument as a guide. He claims that visible and tangible lines are incommensurable and cannot be added together. Why would he think this? If ideas are modes of the mind, they share at least one thing in common: they both qualify (or are "in" in an ontic sense) the same mind. If touch and sight are radically incommensurable, then the content of those ideas can only be correlated, not shared. Recall that Berkeley's claim is rather strong: the two lines *cannot* be added together. Now the mind for Berkeley is an active unity.<sup>38</sup> Given this, what is the cognitive limit that explains why the mind, while simultaneously being modified by the ideas of tactual and visual lines, cannot add them together? Berkeley has no answer. If he had one, however, it would have to be something internal to the mind, which might deny its unity. That is, if he thought of ideas as adjectival on minds while thinking about perceptual heterogeneity, then he would be compelled to deny the fundamental unity of the mind in order to explain why the mind cannot add the lines together. I cannot see any other way out for him. Thus, perceptual heterogeneity is not compatible with an adjectival view of ideas, and had he a clear adjectival account in mind, it is

unlikely he would have been led to claim that our sensory ideas are of radically different kinds.

The picture changes, however, if we attribute a quasi-substance conception of ideas to Berkeley. Recall that by 'quasi-substance' I mean that ideas are things external to but dependent on the mind. If ideas are quasi-substances, then the problem of adding the lines is shifted "outside" the mind. An idea would then be an external thing that the mind perceives in a two-place relation. We know the mind can perceive ideas from diverse senses at the same time since the mind can correlate sensations. What bars the mind from "sharing" the content of distinct sensory ideas is the very nature of the ideas themselves. I submit that Berkeley thought of ideas as sufficiently like substances that when one divides them into kinds, these kinds are basic. Thus, just as one cannot merge the mental with the material because they share no more fundamental features, one cannot merge the content of ideas of various sense modalities.

That Berkeley thinks of sensory ideas as divided into fundamental substantial kinds is discernible in the texts. When he describes the differences between the senses, he often explains what he means in terms of kinds. "But it will not hence follow that any visible figure is like unto, or of the same species with, its corresponding tangible figure. . . ."39 Why would Berkeley say that visible figure is not "of the same species" as tangible figure? After all, they are both figures. I have already ruled out the possibility that abstraction ultimately explains this move. So what else might explain why two bits of content must belong to separate species? I submit that the answer is that their vehicles belong to distinct ontological kinds. In short, the missing piece of the puzzle is that Berkeley took the differences between the contents of the various senses to be grounded on ontological differences in kind between the ideas. The reason these ontic discrepancies affect content is because Berkeley thinks of representation as by likeness. In effect, Berkeley is encoding content into the ontology of ideas. This blue idea cannot be added to this idea of extension because visual ideas are a distinct kind of being from tactual ones, and thus there can be no point of overlap in their content either, except by mere correlation.

So now we can go back and complete the arguments Berkeley provides. Why can the Molyneux Man not ever make the required matchups without some conjunction of the senses? He cannot because the nature of visual ideas (not their represented content, their *formal* nature) is incompatible with the nature of tactual ones. We might think of things along the following crude lines: we cannot add one electron to a line of protons and expect to get a determinate length. Why? Because with respect to position and extension, electrons are incommensurable with protons. We can stretch this analogy further. Touch is somewhat like the protons. We

have a good grasp of protons. They have a fixed location in space, a determinate extension, and we can manipulate them relatively easily. It is only through some crude form of translation that we can manipulate electrons and protons together. Electrons occupy a "space" in the world of protons, and we use that approximation to deal with them. Similarly, the world of touch is the familiar three-dimensional world in which we function, and we learn to translate what we see into this more familiar world, despite the presence of optical illusions and other pitfalls.

We can now complete the picture about why Berkeley endorsed perceptual heterogeneity. Believing ideas to be quasi-substances, he too closely connected the ontic status of ideas with their representative function. This led him to believe that differences in content presentation had to be reflected in the ontic nature of the ideas that bear that content. Given this as a starting point, heterogeneity is neither unexpected nor all that implausible.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Nick Jolley and Charles J. McCracken for their helpful insights during the development of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> 3D, II:245. All references to Berkeley are from A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, (eds.) *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* 9 vols. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1948-1957. Abbreviations using section numbers followed by the volume and page number in the Luce and Jessop edition will be used for convenience. The abbreviations are: NTV = *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*, 3D = *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, PHK = *Principles of Human Knowledge*.

<sup>3</sup> Berkeley generally restricts himself to the claim that visible and tangible objects are distinct and I shall limit myself to this as well, although it is sometimes important to remember that the thesis extends to all the senses.

<sup>4</sup> NTV 127, I: pp. 222-3.

<sup>5</sup> Armstrong, D. M. (1960). *Berkeley's Theory of Vision*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> George Pitcher makes a similar argument. Cf. Pitcher, George (1977). *Berkeley*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 25-28.

<sup>7</sup> 'Same' here is purposely vague. Its meaning depends on the theory of perception one uses.

<sup>8</sup> Armstrong, pp. 36-38.

<sup>9</sup> James J. Gibson actually argues that this is the case. Cf. "Three Kinds of Distance that can be Seen, or How Bishop Berkeley Went Wrong." In Giovanni B. Flores D'Arcais (ed.) *Studies in Perception: Festschrift for Fabio Metzelli*. Milan: Martello-Giunti, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> See Warnock, G. J. (1983). *Berkeley*. University of Notre Dame Press, Chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> Lockean abstract ideas are those that are silent about certain characteristics. The abstract idea of man therefore omits detail about color, height, and so forth. I use Locke as an obvious example, but my point extends to any early modern doctrine of abstraction. See

Locke. John (1690/1975). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. (ed.) P. H. Nidditch Oxford: Clarendon Press, II.xi.9, III.iii.7. See also Bennett, Jonathan (1971). *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 21–25.

<sup>12</sup> Atherton tells us that there is a fourth, less explicit, argument concerning the perception of motion. As it concerns the Molyneux Man and does not add a new line of reasoning, I consider it with my analysis of the Molyneux Man. See Atherton, Margaret (1990). *Berkeley's Revolution in Vision*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 193.

<sup>13</sup> NTV 128, I:223.

<sup>14</sup> There are many possible alternate explanations. The most compelling involves recent advances in our understanding of how visual abilities develop. We now know that the pathways in the brain associated with proper vision form in the early months of infancy. Individuals who do not have sight during the first year of life do not properly develop those pathways in the brain. As a result, congenitally blind persons who have had their sight restored might not pass the Molyneux test on account of a deficiency in the structure of the brain, and not because the ideas are radically heterogeneous.

<sup>15</sup> Pitcher 57.

<sup>16</sup> NTV 129, I:223.

<sup>17</sup> NTV 130, I:223.

<sup>18</sup> In the case of perceiving shapes (like triangles), naturally Berkeley would have to flesh out this claim. Visual shapes are formed by the boundaries of colors or shades, tactual shapes by presumably tracing edges or surfaces. Nonetheless, the main point is preserved: nothing logically precludes an idea from having features that affect distinct sense modalities differently.

<sup>19</sup> Pitcher seems to disagree. Cf. Pitcher, 53–54. I agree with Atherton that Pitcher reads too much into this argument. Cf. Atherton, 188.

<sup>20</sup> NTV 131, I:224.

<sup>21</sup> Armstrong, 56.

<sup>22</sup> Atherton, 190.

<sup>23</sup> NTV 112, I:216.

<sup>24</sup> Atherton 163.

<sup>25</sup> PHK 89.

<sup>26</sup> Watson, Richard (1987). *The Breakdown of Cartesian Metaphysics*. Indianapolis: Hackett, p. 124. Original italics. Compare Phillip Cummins, who holds the same view on different grounds. Cummins, P. (1963). "Perceptual Relativity and Ideas in the Mind" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24, p. 210. There is a separate question, however, as to whether Berkeley can consistently deny that ideas are modes given his main arguments for immaterialism. Scholars have debated this point for some time. For a good start see Grave, S. A. (1968). "The Mind and Its Ideas: Some Problems in the Interpretation of Berkeley" in D. M. Armstrong and C. B. Martin, (eds.) *Locke and Berkeley: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 296–313.

<sup>27</sup> PHK 2.

<sup>28</sup> PHK 49.

<sup>29</sup> PHK 89.

<sup>30</sup> And so Kenneth Winkler argues that Berkeley "only rarely" strays from such a conception. Winkler, Kenneth (1989). *Berkeley: An Interpretation*. New York: Clarendon Press, pp. 3–4. Warnock agrees. Cf. Warnock, p. 142.

<sup>31</sup> PHK 89, II:79–80.

<sup>32</sup> 3D 250. Note Berkeley's use of the Cartesian example of the wax imprint, in turn borrowed from Aristotle. The continuity of thinking is striking.

<sup>33</sup> PHK 78.

<sup>34</sup> 3D 244.

<sup>35</sup> PHK 18.

<sup>36</sup> This reading of Berkeley is not new to me, although I think I have discovered reasons for accepting it that are stronger than those proposed before. A. A. Luce was one of the first to read Berkeley as a realist (others have followed, including A. C. Grayling and M. Atherton), noting that he "is talking about ideas that *are* stones, trees, and books." Luce, A. A. (1963). *The Dialectic of Immaterialism*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, p. 30.

<sup>37</sup> 3D 248.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. PHK 89, II:79–80, quoted earlier, where he describes spirits as active indivisible substances. Such references are replete throughout his writings.

<sup>39</sup> NTV 143, I:229. Berkeley often distinguishes between sensory ideas in terms of their being more or less "of a species." Cf. NTV 129, I:223, 140, I:228, and 142, I:228–9.