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## Seeing Cherries Typically:

**Margaret Atherton and George Pappas' Thoughts  
on Berkeley and Common Sense Realism**



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by

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I see this *cherry*, I see it, I taste it: and I am sure *nothing* cannot be seen, or felt, or tasted: it is therefore *real*. Take away the sensations of softness, moisture, redness, tartness, and you take away the cherry. Since it is not a being distinct from sensations; a *cherry*, I say, is nothing but a congeries of sensible impressions, or ideas perceived by various senses: which ideas are united into one thing (or have one name given them) by the mind; because they are observed to attend each other. (3DIII, 249)<sup>1</sup>

It is on the face of it a conundrum that George Berkeley has been called “the champion of common sense”. (Ferrier, 301) Berkeley, after all, denies the existence of the external world claiming that the world is made up of nothing more than *ideas* and *spirits*. But what could be more commonsensical than to say that a real cherry exists outside of the mind in the external world? Yet Berkeley would deny this! For him a real cherry can be nothing more than “a congeries of sensible impressions” or “a collection of ideas” existing in the mind of a perceiver. (PHK, 1) Nonetheless, interpreters such as A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop have attempted to commit Berkeley to as much common sense as is possible given his overall philosophy. More specifically interpreters have attempted to commit Berkeley to some form of *common sense realism* (CSR) regarding the ordinary existence of physical (i.e. sensible) objects. This project is certainly motivated by Berkeley’s own frequent appeals to common sense when he is criticizing the views of his rivals. Consider, for example, Berkeley’s criticisms against the idea of *material substance* in the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. Philonous asks Hylas to “consider whether it be like a philosopher, or even like a man of *common sense*, to pretend to believe you know not what, and you know not why.” (3DII, 218) And later, “I wish both our opinions were fairly stated and submitted to the judgment of men who had plain *common sense*...” (3DIII, 237) Better yet when Berkeley defends his *esse est percipi* principle, Philonous says, “I am content, Hylas, to *appeal to the common sense* of the world for the truth of my notion.” (3DIII, 234) [Emphases added.] But how far one can see

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<sup>1</sup> All references to George Berkeley will be made to Luce and Jessop’s *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne: An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (NTV, section number). *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (PHK, section number). *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (3DX, page number).

Berkeley as endorsing CSR (or common sense generally) while still maintaining consistency with his overall philosophy is a matter of some dispute.

George Pappas and Margaret Atherton have each offered their own interpretation of Berkeley's philosophy in terms of common sense in general and CSR specifically.<sup>2</sup> They both agree that Berkeley's philosophy is consistent with some parts of CSR but certainly not all of it given Berkeley's starkly non-commonsensual *immaterialism*. They disagree however in exactly which parts of CSR, in fact, are consistent with Berkeley's philosophy in terms of the reality, nature, and perception of ordinary physical objects. We will see that Pappas posits ten minimally necessary claims for CSR and then argues that Berkeley can only be committed to seven of these claims. Pappas argues that each of the ten claims is necessary (though insufficient) for CSR, so the fact that Berkeley's philosophy is inconsistent with three of them shows that his philosophy is *not* committed to CSR. And although Atherton agrees that Berkeley's philosophy cannot be seen as completely consistent with CSR, she takes issue with Pappas' characterization of the CSR claims that he does commit to Berkeley's philosophy. Specifically, Atherton takes issue with Pappas' (and other philosophers') reliance on their being a "typically perceived" set of sensible qualities for a physical object that is defined in terms of the viewing conditions and conditions of the viewer. Atherton argues that Berkeley consistently refers to ideas as "fleeting and changing" as opposed to stable; therefore, there can be no stable set of "typically perceived" sensible qualities for a physical object to have (or to be). Atherton then argues for an alternative interpretation of Berkeley's philosophy in terms of the "expectations" we form when we do perceive a physical object and the subsequent confirmation (or disconfirmation) of those "expectations". She argues that this alternative account maintains the common sense reality of physical objects for Berkeley while still

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is limited to an explication of the views expressed in just two articles: Pappas' Berkeley and Common Sense Realism (1991) and Atherton's "The books are in the study as before": Berkeley's claims about real physical objects (2008).

defying our common sense notions in terms of the nature and perception of physical objects. The aim of this paper is to evaluate these two competing interpretations. We will see that both interpretations hinge on proposed solutions to the classical *problem of error* that is generally attributed to CSR. And in the end I think that Atherton has the stronger hand in this regard. Lastly, we will consider a question Atherton raises in terms of our respective roles when compared to God in the creation of sensible objects. Do we as finite perceivers *discover* or do we *create* Berkeley's physical objects? Atherton is agnostic on this point; however, I will offer an argument in favor of our being said to *create* physical objects (in some sense) based on Atherton's alternative interpretation.

George Pappas presents ten minimally necessary claims (or theses) for CSR divided into four types: two are *existential*, two are *metaphysical*, four are *perceptual*, and two are *epistemic*. However, Pappas argues that Berkeley's philosophy is consistent with only seven (1)-(7) of these necessary (though insufficient) claims for CSR: (Pappas, 30-40)<sup>3</sup>

- (1) There are ordinary non-theoretical macro physical objects. (*Existential Part 1*)
- (2) Each macro physical object has those non-relational sensible qualities it is typically perceived to have. (*Metaphysical Part 1*)
- (3) Ordinary macro physical objects and some of their non-relational sensible qualities are typically immediately perceived. (*Perceptual Part 1*)
- (4) Ordinary macro physical objects are typically publicly perceivable. (*Perceptual Part 2*)<sup>4</sup>
- (5) When such objects and their non-relational sensible qualities are immediately perceived they are typically perceived as they are. (*Perceptual Part 3*)

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<sup>3</sup> For clarity I have renumbered Pappas' ten claims for CSR so that they are clearly divided into those that Pappas feels are *consistent* with CSR (1)-(7) and those that he feels are *inconsistent* with CSR (i)-(iii). In parentheses I have indicated Pappas' numbering scheme which is divided into the four types each with various parts (or claims).

<sup>4</sup> Pappas acknowledges that this is a problematic claim for Berkeley and discusses at length several criticisms raised by George Pitcher. Briefly put, Pappas attacks "the assumption that if two people do not immediately perceive the same constituents of a physical object...then they do not immediately perceive the same object." He argues by analogy, "Thus suppose two generals on the reviewing stand, each immediately seeing different groups of soldiers in the passing formation. They each immediately see different constituents of the passing division, and yet each immediately sees the division." (Pappas, 37)

- (6) Human cognizers typically gain immediate, non-inferential perceptual knowledge of macro physical objects and of some of their non-relational sensible qualities. (*Epistemic Part 1*)
- (7) Human cognizers typically gain certain perceptual knowledge of macro physical objects and of their non-relational sensible qualities. (*Epistemic Part 2*)

Significantly, Pappas considers three of these claims (2, 3, 5) “naïve” in the sense that they are initially commonsensical but they appear to need serious revision when considered under “reflective” commonsense. (*Pappas*, 28-29) Pappas feels that part of the temptation to construe Berkeley as consistent with CSR (or common sense generally) comes from these seven claims that Berkeley does or would accept, and particularly from those that are “naïve”. (*Pappas*, 40-41) However, Pappas argues that Berkeley’s philosophy is *not* consistent with CSR since his philosophy is inconsistent with three (i)-(iii) of the ten minimally necessary claims he posits for CSR:

- (i) Ordinary macro physical objects and some of their non-relational qualities would exist even if there were no perceivers or perceptions, and such objects and non-relational qualities would be unaffected by perceivers and perceptions, were there to be such. (*Existential Part 2*)
- (ii) No macro physical object has *sensa* (phenomenal individuals) as constituents. (*Metaphysical Part 2*)
- (iii) It is false that, in every perceptual experience, at least one *sensum* (phenomenal individual) is immediately perceived. (*Perceptual Part 4*)

Claim (i) simply violates Berkeley’s *esse est percipi* principle (and by extension his doctrine against *abstraction*) since it implies that physical objects may exist with or without being perceived. – Claim (ii) violates Berkeley’s aforementioned thesis that physical objects simply are “collections of ideas” (since Pappas explicitly defines the term “*sensa*” as equivalent to Berkeley’s “sensible ideas”). (*Pappas*, 39) – Claim (iii) goes against Berkeley’s rejection of *indirect realism* such as that espoused by the *representational realist*. For Berkeley every perceptual (i.e. sensible) experience must include at least one sensible idea since a physical object just is a collection of sensible ideas. – Pappas points out that various commentators have argued that Berkeley is either inconsistent, or even deceitful, since as we have seen Berkeley eagerly appeals to common sense on

the one hand and seemingly rejects it on the other with his *immaterialism*. However, Pappas concludes that “the error which commentators who charge Berkeley with either deceit or inconsistency make is that of thinking that a proper defense of common sense requires that one embrace every common sense dictum.” (*Pappas*, 40-41)

Suffice it to say that we need not take it at face value that advocates of CSR would accept any of the ten claims that Pappas proposes on their behalf. For instance, Pappas fails to elaborate on several technical concepts he introduces that seem wont for explanation such as “ordinary non-theoretical macro physical objects” and “non-relational sensible qualities”. Nonetheless, I think his point is well argued in that these are the types of claims we would attribute to the advocate of CSR, yet it seems clear that we would be hard pressed to find Berkeley accepting all claims of these types. However, I wish to limit my analysis to the three claims that Pappas considers “naïve” (2, 3, 5) insofar as they go to the heart of Berkeley’s common sense conceptions regarding the reality, nature, and perception of ordinary physical objects. They also form a self-contained argument with the conclusion expressed in (5) following from the premises expressed in (2) and (3).

- (2) Each macro physical object has those non-relational sensible qualities it is typically perceived to have. (*Metaphysical Part 1*)
- (3) Ordinary macro physical objects and some of their non-relational sensible qualities are typically immediately perceived. (*Perceptual Part 1*)
- (5) When such objects and their non-relational sensible qualities are immediately perceived they are typically perceived as they are. (*Perceptual Part 3*)

We begin with *metaphysical* claim (2) which is really the linchpin for the argument. Pappas calls this claim “naïve” since it essentially tells us that “macro physical objects such as chairs literally have sensible qualities such as color, surface texture, shape and the like.” (*Pappas*, 28) Certainly it seems commonsensical to say that a cherry *is* itself red, sweet, tart, etc. But we quickly see the naiveté of this claim if we ask the right questions. If the cherry *is* inherently red, what happens when it appears to be a different color say under special lighting? Does it cease to be a

cherry? – The next claim (3) is *perceptual* and Pappas states that it “identifies CSR as a species of direct realism”. (Pappas, 28) And as a matter of common sense it seems that we would ordinarily say that we perceive (see, taste, smell, etc.) sensible objects immediately and directly. Perhaps it is only when we come to science that we begin to believe that there is some *indirect* causal chain between a cherry and our being said to see it (for instance involving photons, optics, and neurotransmitters). – The last claim (5) is also *perceptual* and apparently follows from *metaphysical* claim (2) and *perceptual* claim (3). Although strictly speaking Pappas says only that (5) is a “corollary” of (2), it would seem that (3) is also necessary. (Pappas, 38) That is, if we accept that physical objects literally have their sensible qualities and we accept that we ordinarily perceive those qualities directly, then it follows that we directly perceive the sensible qualities that physical objects literally have. As a matter of common sense we would say that we see the cherry and its redness immediately and directly. The cherry and its redness are inseparable in this way. And as such the argument from premises (2) and (3) to the conclusion (5) appears valid.

Furthermore, Pappas sees claim (5) as raising the classical *problem of error* that has traditionally led to the charge that CSR as a whole is “naïve”. (Pappas, 29) For what can count as *misperceiving* a cherry on this picture? If we see the cherry immediately and directly how could we ever get it wrong? Yet it would seem to also follow from our common sense experience that we are sometimes mistaken in what we perceive. Pappas proffers a remedy for the *problem of error* by pointing out that “some recent CSRists have maintained that this problem is solvable, mainly by restricting CSR’s perceptual part to standard observation conditions and normal observers.” (Pappas, 29) And here we see the philosophical stress being put on the word “typically” used in each of these claims (2, 3, 5). Pappas states in a footnote that his “use of the word ‘typical’ would have to itself be spelled out in terms of standard conditions and normal observers.” (Pappas, 41) Yet Pappas puts the issue of CSR’s plausibility aside since he claims to be “trying merely to

identify the doctrine, not evaluate it". (Pappas, 29) That is, for his purposes he need only show that Berkeley would endorse (5) to show (in this case) that Berkeley endorses at least some part of CSR. However, can Pappas really have his cake and eat it too? That is, it would seem that unless we can find a place where Berkeley endorses this claim directly some evaluation is going to be necessary. Furthermore, it seems that the *problem of error* is going to be fundamental to this evaluation. And that would mean that the notion of "standard observation conditions and normal observers" would need to be spelled out, which Pappas explicitly fails to do.

Margaret Atherton, on the other hand, presents an alternative interpretation that has the strength of offering a more clear-cut solution to the *problem of error* that avoids Pappas' talk of what is "typically" perceived for a physical object. And while other commentators have felt a need to commit Berkeley to common sense generally, she emphasizes the fact that more often than not Berkeley's appeals to common sense are *comparative* in nature. That is, Atherton sees Berkeley's appeals to common sense as primarily an attempt to show that his *immaterialism* is just as (if not more) commonsensical than the *materialism* of his rivals. In fact, Atherton stresses that "in support of a good theory, Berkeley was in general pretty willing to abandon common sense." (Atherton, 100) And it is in this spirit that she questions the general *consistency* of Pappas' seven CSR claims (1)-(7) with Berkeley's philosophy. Specifically, Atherton targets Pappas' reliance on there being "typically" perceived sensible qualities for a physical object, as well as a similar reliance on there being "enough" perceived sensible qualities for a physical object. (Atherton, 88-90)

Atherton begins by spelling out an interpretation of Berkeley that is at first consistent with Pappas' interpretation. She introduces the cherry passage and says,

An individual object is a cherry when the aggregate of sensible qualities presented are members of the collection of ideas that are cherries. So, any sensible object is just a collection of ideas that go together, comprising the qualities or ideas the object is perceived to have. Thus, we appear to be dealing with a recognizably commonsensical view of objects, that tells us that the nature of objects



lies entirely open to our senses...The qualities that are members of a particular physical object are the ones God created when He created agglomerations of sensible qualities. The agglomerations, it turns out, He preserves in existence by perceiving the entire collection, in His own distinctive way, of course. We can understand Berkeley to be claiming that a physical object just is a permanently existing aggregate of qualities. Therefore, Berkeley can boast, as he does in the *Philosophical Commentaries*, that 'The Books are in the Study as Before' (PC, 429). (Atherton, 87)

The cherry just is an aggregate of sensible qualities with nothing else added. It is a subset of the total aggregate "of ideas that are cherries". And as such, "Object perception is nothing more than perceiving the sensible qualities that are members of the collection constituting the object." (Atherton, 87) God ultimately accounts for the permanent existence of the total aggregate "of ideas that are cherries" since He perceives the entire collection "in His own distinctive way".<sup>5</sup> But for our finite minds something more is obviously going to be needed for a variety of reasons. Why does any particular aggregate of sensible qualities count as a cherry? What sensible qualities does the aggregate have to include? What happens if we find out later that we were wrong, and we misperceived something else *for* a real cherry? This last question introduces the *problem of error* for which Atherton then considers Pappas' interpretation.

We say that the qualities we mistakenly perceive are not the qualities belonging to the object. The object's qualities are the ones we perceive in ordinary circumstances, so long as we as perceivers are not somehow impaired. It is this way of ruling out sensible qualities that we perceive but are not members of the collection constituting the object to which interpreters of Berkeley appeal when they say that the collection includes the qualities we typically perceive. There is an assumption that with respect to the cherry, there is a set of qualities that we, or rather, standard or unimpaired perceivers, perceive in standard or normal circumstances. Deviations from this regular set are not typically perceived, and do not belong to the collection of qualities constituting the object. (Atherton, 89-90)

However, Atherton sees two ways in which the cherry passage is being supplemented by this interpretation in order to support the claim that "a physical object just is a permanently existing

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<sup>5</sup> Atherton is obviously side-stepping the problem with God's being said to *perceive* ideas against the traditional conception of God as "pure actuality" coming from Aristotle by way of St. Thomas Aquinas. Bishop Berkeley would have apparently been committed to the view that God is simple actuality without potentiality.

aggregate of qualities.” (Atherton, 88-90) First, consider that we can never perceive all the qualities that belong to a particular cherry for a variety of reasons. The cherry may be obscured so that we do not perceive all of it, or our attention level may vary so that we may notice some but not all of the cherry’s sensible qualities, nevertheless still judging that we are in fact seeing a cherry. But we clearly need “enough” of the total aggregate of the sensible qualities that make up cherries in order to be seeing (or otherwise perceiving) a cherry. This is all to say that amongst all the possible sensible qualities that make up a particular cherry: We can’t have all of them. We obviously need some of them. But not just any group of them will do. And yet they need not be exactly the same group (or subset) of sensible qualities every time. For instance we can judge something to be a cherry solely by sight, solely by taste, or by some combination of the senses. Second, as mentioned, not just any subset of the aggregate of sensible qualities will do. We may perceive innumerable sensible qualities that might belong to the aggregate (like redness or sweetness) but still not be seeing a cherry. Thus we need not only “enough” sensible qualities but we also need the most relevant (or let us say “typical”) sensible qualities of the cherry aggregate. And on this view the most relevant or “typical” sensible qualities are defined in terms of the viewing conditions and conditions of the viewer. That is, commentators of CSR assume that the subset of the aggregate of sensible qualities must be perceived by unimpaired individuals under normal conditions. (Atherton, 88-90) Atherton illustrates this point with Berkeley’s example of a straight oar appearing to be crooked when it is placed in water. (Atherton, 90, 95, 97) Both the “crooked” view and the “straight” view might be said to be parts of the total aggregate, although we would ordinarily count the crooked view as *atypical* since we would judge that the oar itself is straight. On this view we would say that the normal viewing conditions of the oar are being altered by its being placed in the water. Berkeley explains,

He is not mistaken with respect to the ideas he actually perceives; but in the inferences he makes from his present perceptions. Thus in the case of the oar, what he immediately perceives by sight is certainly crooked; and so far he is in the right. But if he thence conclude, that upon taking the oar out of the water he shall perceive the same crookedness; or that it would affect his touch, as crooked things are wont to do: in that he is mistaken. (*3DIII*, 238)

As Atherton describes this interpretation, “As long as we are seeing qualities that typically belong to a cherry, then we are seeing the cherry.” (*Atherton*, 88) This is directly analogous to Pappas’ minimally necessary perceptual claim (5) for CSR. And as we’ve seen Pappas believes that perceptual claim (5) is one that is *consistent* with Berkeley’s philosophy. It is this claim of *consistency* between Berkeley’s philosophy and perceptual claim (5) (and the others like it) that Atherton pointedly denies. She says,

To make the talk of qualities regularly or typically perceived workable, however, it has to be the case that our sensible ideas form a reasonably stable set, so that we can describe deviations from the stable set as atypical. This is just what Berkeley denies. Berkeley repeatedly characterises ideas as fleeting and changing...it is clear that Berkeley did not actually suppose we are regularly perceiving a standard collection of qualities. (*Atherton*, 90)

Atherton points out that Berkeley argues in *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* that “there is no one shape an object looks to be” since even minute changes in visual perspective can alter the apparent shape of an object. (*Atherton*, 90) One can look at a cherry on a tree from several yards away, on a dining room table from a few feet, in one’s hand at arm’s length, and even a few centimeters in front of one’s eye. As we make these changes in perspective a cherry will appear to have different shapes and sizes relative to the total visual field. In his *New Theory* Berkeley is arguing about our judgments of distance from the bare perceptual experience of size and shape, etc. Of course, in the end we may *judge* that the cherry is of a consistent shape and size, but that is not how the sensible qualities of the cherry are presented to us as bare visual phenomenon. Similarly, Atherton points out that Berkeley argues in his *Three Dialogues* that there are a wide variety of

color perceptions as well as flavors and aromas the cherry can present to us at any one time. Finally, Atherton points out that Berkeley rests his challenge to the *representational realist* on the “fleeting and changing” nature of sensible qualities as proof that they cannot represent a real mind-independent “material substance” that is both stable and unchanging. Thus, on Atherton’s view Pappas’ perceptual claim (5) for CSR is *not* consistent with Berkeley’s philosophy. (Atherton, 90)

But then what are we left with in terms of understanding Berkeley’s views on the reality, nature, and perception of physical objects? Atherton asks, “If ideas are indeed fleeting and changing, what is the collection of ideas that constitutes the object going to be like?” (Atherton, 90) Her answer includes a generalization from Berkeley’s views on *distance perception* in his *New Theory* to a view on *object perception*. (Atherton, 94-95) She argues that when we are presented with a certain subset of the total aggregate of sensible qualities that belong to a physical object, like a cherry, we come to *expect* or *predict* certain other sensible qualities in future circumstances. When I see the cherry, that is, when I perceive the “congeries of sensible impressions” comprising the cherry, I may come to *expect* additional sensible perceptions if certain circumstances come to pass. If I approach it, I expect that it will fill more of my visual field. If I touch it, I expect a certain smooth tactile sensation. If I taste it, I expect a certain flavor and tartness. And this is significant in that it provides a relatively straight-forward solution to the *problem of error*. (Atherton, 95) If these expectations turn out not to be the case, then I may be said to *misperceive*. If I approach the cherry, I might discover that what I thought was a real cherry is in fact a plastic imitation. Here the principle of unity which ties together the sensible qualities for a physical object are the relations of the subsets *within* the total aggregate. Ultimately, “What ties the entire collection together are relations of sign to signification.” (Atherton, 95) In this way Berkeley can be seen as maintaining the common sense *reality* of a cherry (as a thing that is red, sweet, smooth, tart, etc.) while still defying our common sense notions in terms of the *nature* and *perception* of the cherry. Its nature is

to be nothing more than a “collection of ideas” or sensible qualities, which is the uncommon view of the *subjective idealist* who denies the very existence of mind-independent physical objects. Its perception is equally strange since the “immediate perception” of the sensible ideas that comprise a cherry are seemingly a step removed from the “perception” (or “misperception”) of the cherry itself. As Atherton puts it, “What is important is what expectations have been developed and not what has been initially perceived.” (Atherton, 95) The “immediate perception” of the oar in water is crooked, and we say that the oar is straight when we *expect* that it will appear straight when removed from the water. The correct “perception” of the oar seems to come after the fact in the confirmation of our *expectations*. However, common sense would seem to dictate that our “perceiving” (or “misperceiving”) the oar is coexistent or simultaneous with our “immediate perception” of its sensible qualities. (Atherton, 95-96) Nonetheless, Atherton’s interpretation of Berkeley’s philosophy has the strength of offering a straight-forward solution to the *problem of error* especially when compared to what Pappas is willing to offer us. On both views Berkeley’s philosophy is only partly commonsensical in terms of the reality, nature, and perception of ordinary physical objects.

Atherton then raises a final question about object perception in terms of her alternative interpretation and common sense in general. Do we as finite perceivers *discover* or do we *create* Berkeley’s physical objects? She says,

I have proposed that according to Berkeley, the collections of ideas constituting objects are put together out of ideas that are related to one another by means of a representation relation. The question is, do perceivers discover or do they create the collections formed by the representation relation? Or, as Richard Glauser puts it in his admirable canvassing of the issue, ‘Are combinations that Berkeley calls physical objects made by finite minds or by God?’ We know that God is the cause of the sensible ideas we passively receive and we know that God is the Author of the Laws of Nature. But did God have to do anything else for there to be the physical objects we perceive? For, as Glauser points out, if Berkeley’s position is that physical objects are created by perceivers as they perceive, then Berkeley’s position is quite far removed from common sense. (Atherton, 97)

Atherton points to competing passages that would support either conclusion. On the one hand, it might be that God simply created sensible ideas that “occur in a regular and orderly manner” and left it at that. (*Atherton*, 98) In which case, when we develop expectations about physical objects we are actually *creating* physical objects (which is certainly not very commonsensical). On the other hand, Atherton thinks there are compelling reasons to think that for Berkeley God created “not just a syntax, in the form of regularities, but also a semantics”. (*Atherton*, 100) In which case, when we develop our expectations about physical objects we are *discovering* His meanings in the language of the Laws of Nature. (*Atherton*, 99-100) Atherton offers no decision on this issue claiming instead that, “It is quite likely that, in trying to decide Berkeley’s attitude towards the respective roles of God and man in the creation of objects, we are in a situation where the citing of [duelling] quotations will not be decisive.” (*Atherton*, 99) – However, I would like to argue that a decision can be made based on Berkeley’s philosophical commitments if we accept Atherton’s representation relation. Given that our *expectations* per se are non-sensible and that for Berkeley non-sensible ideas are strictly volitional, it would seem to follow that based on Atherton’s interpretation physical objects are based in part on the choices we make. And as such we must be said to *create* sensible objects from the orderly sensible ideas that God has given us. I will close by elaborating on this argument.

It seems quite obvious that expectations in Atherton’s sense are not sensations. Although there might be sensible ideas that accompany our expectations (like a physical craving for that cherry we see before us) what Atherton describes are really non-sensible *dispositions*. That is, in Berkeley’s ontology an expectation would have to be a non-sensible idea or (more likely) a collection of non-sensible ideas. Of course, these expectations are *about* sensible ideas but the ‘aboutness’ itself would have to be non-sensible. And for Berkeley non-sensible ideas are formed

by the imagination and as such are “strictly” volitional. (Atherton, 92) This is one way in which Berkeley distinguishes real objects from those we encounter in dreams.

The ideas formed by the imagination are faint and indistinct; they have besides an entire dependence on the will. But the ideas perceived by sense, that is, real things, are more vivid and clear, and being imprinted on me by a spirit distinct from us, have not a like dependence of our will. There is therefore no danger of confounding these with the foregoing: and there is as little of confounding them with the visions of a dream, which are dim, irregular, and confused. (3DIII, 235)

We see that another criterion for real sensible objects is the *regularity* of the sensible ideas from which they are comprised. For Berkeley sensible ideas are received passively being imprinted on our finite minds by the infinite mind of God. Therefore, it follows that on Atherton’s interpretation the perception of physical objects includes a volitional element that we (as finite perceivers) bring to our perceptions. And clearly, in this sense we can be said to *create* physical objects from the sensible ideas which God has created for us in a regular and orderly manner. – This seems straightforward enough, nonetheless, there is at least one prima facie objection. When I see a cherry I may (for instance) perceive its redness and smoothness amongst other sensible qualities. Given a good enough subset of the sensible qualities “that are cherries” I may *expect* that a particular cherry that I am looking at will be sweet if I were to taste it. In fact, I may strongly *expect* sweetness if I am seeing what looks to be a perfectly ripe cherry from a very short distance in good lighting, etc. *But then do I really have a choice in the matter?* That is, if I have little to no reason to doubt that I am looking at a ripe cherry can I choose to *expect* that it will not be sweet? It seems as though that this sort of *expectation* would be involuntary. So this would appear to be a case against an expectation being volitional, and therefore, non-sensible as Berkeley defines it. – Nonetheless, I think it is clear that Berkeley is committed to the view that our expectations are volitional. He certainly speaks as though it is a matter under our control in various passages.

We may, from the experience we have had of the train and succession of ideas in our minds, often make, I will not say uncertain conjectures, but sure and well-grounded predictions, concerning the ideas we shall be affected with, pursuant to a great train of actions, and be enabled to pass a right judgment of what would have appeared to us, in case we were placed in circumstances very different from those we are in at present. (*PHK*, 59)

In fact, in a passage that seems to anticipate Hume's skepticism regarding induction, Berkeley says,

By a diligent observation of the *phenomena* within our view, we may discover the general laws of nature, and from them deduce the other *phenomena*, I do not say *demonstrate*; for all deductions of that kind depend on a supposition that the Author of Nature always operates uniformly, and in a constant observance of those rules we take for principles: which we cannot evidently know. (*PHK*, 107)

One solution to the problem of having to say that *expectations* are always a matter of volition might come from a careful consideration of Berkeley's views on particular versus general ideas. Of course, Berkeley denies the existence of abstract ideas in the Lockean sense. His view is that every general idea is a particular idea that comes to represent other ideas of its kind. In this way, every instance of my perceiving a cherry is a particular and when I speak of cherries in general I must have some particular cherry in mind as a representative of all cherries. If each cherry is particular then each *expectation* that I come to have in Atherton's representation relation, is going to be particular to that cherry. After all, I cannot "depend on a supposition that the Author of Nature always operates uniformly". So maybe I must choose anew in each particular instance and as such there must be a choice in the matter. On the other hand, it may be that Berkeley has no good answer to this problem and others like it. The volitional criteria for non-sensible ideas may just turn out to be untenable in the end. On the face of it, it would seem that at least some of our dispositions are non-volitional. (David Hume certainly has something to say in this regard.) Nonetheless, I think Berkeley is committed to our having to play at least some part in the creation of sensible objects, because of his volitional criteria for non-sensible ideas. And here again we see that Berkeley departs from our common sense conceptions as to the nature and perception of ordinary physical objects.



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