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Species, Ideas and Idealism:
The Scholastic and Cartesian Background of Berkeley's Master Argument

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

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August, 2000
ABSTRACT

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This dissertation situates Berkeley's "master argument" for idealism (PHK I, 23 and DHP I, 200) in the context of Descartes' theory of ideas, and seeks to show that within that context the argument is convincing. In addition, the dissertation argues that Descartes' theory of ideas was not representationalist, as is often supposed, but a kind of direct realism; Cartesian ideas render intelligible individuals directly present to the intellect. In this respect Cartesian idea theory is very similar to a theory of species expounded by Antonio Rubio and other Jesuit philosophers at the turn of the seventeenth century; Jesuit writings of this period include several interesting anticipations of Cartesian doctrine. Finally, the dissertation discusses the relationship between Berkeley's master argument and the semantic paradoxes of Berry, Koenig and Richard, and suggests that all these arguments commit a fallacy of vicious circularity, related to but distinct from the fallacy signaled by Bertrand Russell.
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Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Mark Kulstad for services above and beyond the call of duty as a dissertation advisor. I was impressed by his kindness when I first met him at an academic conference in 1991, shortly after completing my doctorate in the history of science. I had no idea then that in five years' time he would be serving as the advisor of my second doctoral dissertation. His enthusiastic support for my attempt to synthesize the history of Scholastic and early modern cognitive philosophy with the study of logical paradox has been a great encouragement at every stage of this project. He read many drafts, and identified a number of passages in which my thinking needed clarification or amendment. I hope that in my academic career I can be worthy of some measure of the esteem in which Mark is held by all his former students.

I also owe a great debt of thanks to the other members of my committee, Richard Grandy and Albert Van Helden. When I was living in the Washington, D.C area and was considering where to do my graduate work in philosophy, a philosopher I knew there advised me to study with Richard Grandy, whom he considered the very model of an analytic philosopher. Seven years' acquaintance and five courses with him have shown me the truth of that judgment: he has taught me much of what I know about the analytic tradition. I came to know Al Van Helden, a fellow historian of science, only in the last year or so of my stay in Houston, but I wish I had met him much earlier. I had the pleasure of working with him on a project for the reform of the undergraduate curriculum, a job that provided me with a great deal of valuable experience. I am very grateful to him for that opportunity.
I have delivered parts of the third chapter as papers at the Southwestern Philosophical Society, the Gulf Coast Conference in Early Modern Philosophy, the International Berkeley Society, and the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association. I have received valuable comments from (among others) Tom Lennon, Greg Brown, Margaret Atherton, and Lawrence Carlin. I am indebted to John Carriero and Paul Hoffman for comments on my account of intentional representation in Descartes and the Scholastics. I have had valuable discussions with Rupert Read and James Garson on vicious circularity.

I wish to thank my fellow graduate students for many stimulating conversations, and for help in coping with graduate student life (it is no easier the second time around). I single out for special mention Tim Dunn, Curtis Haaga and Chris Hamlin. I also wish to thank my friend Rod Nevitt for helping to make my stay in Houston a happy one. Finally, I am deeply grateful to my family for their constant love and encouragement, and especially to my wife Donna, to whom I owe more than I can say.
Introduction

Descartes is often taken to be the father of modern representationalism, the view that (borrowing a phrase of Margaret Wilson’s) "the mind apprehend[s] things by means of thoughts or ideas distinct from the things". Rejecting the direct realism of the Scholastics, he held (so the story goes) that the direct objects of perception are ideas in the mind, rather than external, mind-independent entities. Richard Rorty’s Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature is typical of this view.¹

¹ Wilson 1982, 104. In most of what follows, I will be using a different definition of 'representationalism', given below.
² In this dissertation I use the following, fairly common convention for quotation marks: single quotes, as in ‘red’, indicate that the quoted expression is mentioned, not used, so that the five-character expression ‘red’ refers not to a color but to the three-letter word (more precisely, to the type of which the occurrence of ‘red’ that appear on this page are tokens) within the single quotes. Double quotes, e.g. “objective reality”, are used for all other, oratio obliqua purposes, e.g. to report the words of other authors or to call attention to the fact that a given word or phrase is being used in an unusual or dubious sense (in which case the double quotes “x” serve more or less as an abbreviation for the phrase ‘what some call ‘x’’). The only exception to this rule is that, in deference to established usage, I report double quotes as single quotes. For example, if an author writes In the Jesuit writers ‘representations’ were not simply proxies for external objects; rather, they were the objects themselves. then unless I quote these words, as above, in a block, I will report them as “[i]n the Jesuit writers ‘representations’ were not simply proxies for external objects; rather, they were the objects themselves”.
³ See also Anthony Kenny 1967, 114: “But for Descartes, the res cogitata that exists in my mind when I think of the sun is not the sun itself, but some proxy for the sun”. Similarly Étienne Gilson 1975, 203-204 claims that the Cartesian idea, as a representative of its object, prevents the mind from enjoying a direct vision of reality, and that this requires Descartes to seek a proof of the external world. For St. Thomas, on the other hand, the concept of an individual is nothing but the individual qua thought about: “le concept de pierre, par exemple, n’exhbe aucune réalité distincte qui serait celle de sa représentation, car il n’est rien d’autre que mon concept même de la pierre, ou, si l’on veut, la pierre en tant que présentée dans la pensée dont elle est l’objet” (Gilson 1975, 204-205). Gilson is somewhat idiosyncratic, however, in claiming that for Aquinas the
[According to Aristotle and Aquinas] knowledge is not the possession of accurate representations of an object but rather the subject’s becoming identical with the object. . . whereas in the Cartesian model, the intellect inspects entities modeled on retinal images. The substantial forms of froghness and starness get right into the Aristotelian intellect, and are there in just the same way they are in frogs and stars — not in the way in which frogs and stars are reflected in mirrors. In Descartes’ conception — the one which became the basis for “modern” epistemology — it is representations which are in the “mind”.

Rorty claims that it was this representationalism that motivated the doubts of the First Meditation.

... [S]kepticism in the manner of Descartes’ First Meditations was a perfectly definite, precise, “professional” question: How do we know that anything which is mental represents anything which is not mental? How do we know whether what the Eye of the Mind sees is a mirror (even a distorted mirror — an enchanted glass) or a veil? ... (Rorty 1979, 45, 50.)

The failure of the Third and Sixth Meditations to overcome these doubts is sometimes held to be the seed of modern skepticism in Berkeley and Hume. Only thirty-two years after Berkeley’s death, Thomas Reid wrote

... however absurd [Berkeley’s] doctrine may appear to the unlearned, who consider the existence of the objects of sense as the most evident of all truths, and

*individual* is in the intellect; Aquinas is usually thought to have affirmed that only the form of the individual is present in the intellect. See note 6 below. Cf. also Pasnau 1997, 116: for Aquinas a thing is cognized singularly “only through the senses”.

*Rorty 1979. 45. Cf. p. 12, where Descartes is said to have viewed the mind as “a great mirror, containing various representations, some accurate, some not”.*
what no man in his senses can doubt, the philosophers who had been accustomed to consider ideas as the immediate objects of all thought, had no title to view this doctrine of Berkeley in so unfavourable a light. They were taught by Des Cartes, and by all that came after him, that the existence of the objects of sense is not self-evident, but requires to be proved by arguments; and, although Des Cartes, and many others, had laboured to find arguments for this purpose, there did not appear to be that force and clearness in them which might have been expected in a matter of such importance. . . . Thus we see that the new philosophy had been making gradual approaches towards Berkeley's opinion; and, whatever others might do, the philosophers had no title to look upon it as absurd, or unworthy of fair examination . . (Reid 1983, 166-167).

The views on the relationship between Scholasticism, Descartes and Berkeley represented in these quotations will be challenged in this dissertation. Certain Jesuits of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries held a theory of species that defies the dichotomy between direct realism and representationalism, and there is considerable evidence that this view – which I call the 'dual presence theory' of perception, was the basis of Descartes' theory of ideas. I shall argue that Cartesian idea theory was on the one hand a direct realism, in the sense that ideas served as the means by which the mind knows the external world directly, and on the other hand a representationalism, in that ideas represent their objects: they make them present-again ('re-present') in the mind. The direct realist strain in Cartesian idea theory helps explain its parallelism between vision and intellection, and also its doctrine – crucial for the ontological argument of the Fifth Meditation – that things have whatever properties they are clearly and distinctly
perceived to have. However, in the master argument (Principles I, 23 and Dialogues I, 200), Berkeley discovered a way of turning Cartesianism's parallel between vision and intellection and its doctrine of the veracity of clear and distinct ideas against the (equally Cartesian) doctrine of the existence of a mind-independent physical world. *Pace* Reid, Berkeley's central argument against matter was based not on representationalism, but on just those elements of Cartesian idea theory that seemed to explain the mind's access to the external world.

Chapter 1 describes the Jesuit dual presence theory in some detail. Its central doctrine is that in being known things are literally – though not actually – present in the mind (the distinction between "literal" and "actual" presence will become clear later). Virtually all Scholastic philosophers admitted an "intentional", "objective" existence in addition to actual existence. But the Jesuits studied here held that individuals as well as their forms can acquire being in the intellect, while orthodox Thomists⁵ held that only the object's form, not the object itself, acquires intentional or objective being. Since forms without matter are universal, Thomists had difficulty in explaining how we perceive individuals (cf. Pasnau 1997, 113ff.)⁶ Jesuit dual presence theory did not have this

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⁵ Eschweiler 1928 distinguishes between a "liberal, Jesuit" Aristotelianism-Thomism and a "conservative, Dominican" Thomism. Cf. Stephen Menn's "liberal Jesuit" and "conservative Dominican" varieties of realism in his "Suárez, Nominalism, and Modes" (typescript, 1999)

⁶ Eschweiler 1928, 277-278 explains the Thomist position on the intellectual perception of individuals thus: "... [according to St. Thomas] die vollkommende geistige Erfassung dieses singulären So-Daseins, ist dem menschlichen Intellekt unerreichbar. Denn dadurch, dass ihm die Zuordnung der Sinneistätigkeit eigentümlich ist, sind ihm Grenzen nach oben und nach unten gesteckt. Die als singuläre Wesen substistierenden geistigen Dinge, z. B. die Engel, Person, kann er nur analog aus der sinnlichen erfahrbarer Welt erkennen; die materiellen Einzeldinge hinwiederum erkennt er in ihrer Singulärität nur durch die Sammlung akzidenteller Bestimmungen, nicht aber aus ihrem konstitutiven So-Daseinsgrunde (der ratio intima proprietarum). Allein der göttliche Verstand erkennt
problem. Thomists also held that only actually existing objects could be “intuitively” or directly known, while the Jesuits argued that it is possible to have direct perceptions of non-existent objects. So Jesuit dual presence theory was a distinctive position within the larger Scholastic framework.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) For convenience I will often use the term ‘Jesuit dual presence theory’, but I do not mean to suggest that early modern Jesuit thought concerning perception was a monolith. It may be that the Jesuits whose works I have consulted (Francisco Toletus, Francisco Suarez, Antonio Rubio, Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza, the Coimbrans (or "Conimbricenses"), and Roderigo de Arriaga) form just one of several schools of thought in the Jesuits of the period (see n. 41 below for an example of a Polish Jesuit of the period, Smiglecius, who seems to disagree with the dual presence theory). I chose these figures either because Descartes mentions them in his correspondence (see chapter 1, note 33 below) or because they are referenced by other Scholastics of the period as authorities. Among these Jesuits, at least, there was a fairly well-defined set of philosophical commitments that distinguishes them especially from the conservative Thomists, who tended to be members of the rival Dominican order. If the views of these Jesuit authors is (as I suspect) representative of the Jesuits in general, this may be due in part to the famous De auxilis controversy of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which pitted Jesuits such as Molina and Suarez against Dominicans such as Bañez on questions of predestination and the relationship between divine grace and human free will in the economy of salvation. The acrimonious dispute (which was finally silenced by order of the Pope) might easily contributed to a hardening of positions on both sides, across a range of philosophical issues. But much more research is
In order to understand how the Jesuit dual presence theory could reconcile the seemingly incompatible doctrines of direct realism and representationalism it is necessary to understand the way in which the Jesuits and Descartes understood the term 'representation', and to define the terms 'direct realism' and 'representationalism'.

'Representation' meant literally 're-presentation', a second presence of the represented object, so that one and the same object could enjoy an extramental physical existence and an intramental "objective" or intentional existence. By 'direct realism' I will mean the view that in at least some perceptions — whether of the senses or the intellect — the object directly and immediately perceived is outside the mind, that it is identical with something that exists independently of the mind. Opposed to direct realism is the view I will call the 'proxy theory' or 'veil-of-perception theory'; on this view, the direct objects of perception are within the mind and cannot be outside the mind (i.e. they would not exist in any sense were there no minds). It will be important to distinguish the veil-of-perception or proxy theory from the claim that the direct objects of perception are within the mind. This latter view is what I will call 'representationalism'. Thus, the proxy theory (the claim that the direct objects of perception are never outside the mind) entails representationalism, but not vice-versa, unless it is assumed that no individual can be simultaneously outside the mind and inside the mind — and it is precisely this assumption necessary to settle this question.

Throughout the dissertation I will be using 'perception' as Descartes did, to refer to intellectual apprehension as well as sense perception. Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation there is no difference between conceiving of an object as having property P and intellectually perceiving it as having property P. This raises the question of whether, for Descartes, intellectual perception is veridical, so that perceiving an object as P entails that the object really has P. I discuss this below, in chapter 2, section 2.

The distinction I am drawing between representationalism and proxy theories is unusual; in discussions of the history of theories of perception, at least, they are
that the dual presence theory rejects. On the dual presence theory representationalism and direct realism are consistent with each other.

It is worth stressing that the dual presence theory is consistent with the view that nothing exists outside the mind, for the mere fact that something has intramental “objective” existence is no evidence that it also has extramental existence (the Scholastic dual presence theorists explicitly held that non-existents as well as existents can be directly perceived). However, the dual presence theory does afford a way of understanding how direct realism might be true, for it offers an explanation of how it can be that directly-perceived objects in the mind can simultaneously be outside the mind as well. A proxy theory forecloses this possibility by assuming that the direct objects of perception are within the mind. It is in this sense that the dual presence theory reconciles representationalism and direct realism.

In chapter 2 I argue that Descartes made the dual presence theory the basis of his theory of intellectual perception. The representationalist and direct realist elements of dual presence theory enable him to talk about ideas sometimes as direct objects of perception, sometimes as means by which we directly perceive external objects. In his famous cosmological argument for God’s existence, Descartes uses the dual presence theory to argue that at least one of the objects of our thought, namely the divine essence, has not only intramental “objective” existence but extramental existence as well. He argues that (1) since (as the dual presence theory assumes) our objective idea of the supremely perfect being is just that being itself, present in the mind, the idea of God is (like God himself) infinitely perfect; (2) the fact that this divine nature is in the human

commonly conflated. See, for example, Pasnau 1997, 220.
mind – i.e. has “objective” existence – requires a proportionate cause; (3) in order to be proportionate to an infinitely perfect effect, the cause must itself be infinitely perfect (i.e. it must be the divine nature); (4) nothing that does not exist can be a cause; therefore (5) the divine nature (God) exists.

The cosmological argument for God's existence is the basis of Descartes’ claim, in the Sixth Meditation, that some of our clear and distinct ideas of extended bodies (viz., those that are accompanied by an impression of their being caused ‘from outside’) are representations of mind-independent objects. On the dual presence theory of perception, such representations are not merely like mind-independent objects; they are those objects (in an alternate, “objective” mode of existence). Thus, his cosmological argument is the kernel of a more general demonstration that any number of our ideas – not just that of God, but those of many extended bodies as well – have mind-independent existence. The mind, in Descartes’ view, is in direct contact with a variety of non-mental objects. Direct realism is not merely a possible or plausible view; it is true, and demonstrably true.  

Descartes' attempt to demonstrate direct realism was anticipated by the seventeenth-century Jesuit Roderigo de Arriaga, who tried to prove that some of our ideas must be caused by the objects they represent. I describe his argument in section 4 of chapter 1. In both Arriaga and Descartes, the dual presence theory serves as the basis for an argument that attempts to show that certain ideas must be caused by the entities they represent and therefore (since causes must have real, extramental existence) must exist outside the mind.

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10 This is what Berkeley will deny (cf. chapter 3). Berkeley agrees with the claim that God is independent of the human mind, but for Berkeley this does entail direct realism, for in his view God is not an object of intellectual perception; the divine essence is
The hypothesis that Cartesian idea theory was a version of Jesuit dual presence theory helps explain the Cartesian parallelism between conceiving and seeing. As Ian Hacking has observed,

Descartes is unabashed in comparing thought to vision: ‘Truly we shall learn to employ our mental intuition from comparing it with the way we employ our eyes’ (Rule IX). . . . This dead concept of mental vision is very hard for us to understand. The thought is not that ideas are like images. On the contrary, the most elevated ratiocination has objects, such as God or the will, of which we can in principle form no image. Complicated geometrical arguments have objects of which we are in fact unable to form good images. Even so, our model for understanding such concepts is vision. . . . Thus we must conceive ideas as the objects of mental vision (aside from a qualification to the effect that there are for example tactile images as well as visual ones). For abstract reasoning vision is the sole model . . . (Hacking 1975, 31).

But if Descartes' idea theory is based on dual presence theory, then Cartesian ideas are not only "objects of mental vision", they are, in many cases, extramental objects of mental vision, for whenever they represent extramental objects they are simply those objects themselves, as present in the mind. I argue for this claim in chapter 2, section 1.

The dual presence theory of perception enabled Descartes to construct a proof, via the cosmological argument, of the existence of mind-independent objects. Ironically, Cartesianism later provided George Berkeley with the materials for an argument that grasped not by an idea, but by a 'notion'.
mind-independent objects are inconceivable. In chapter 3 I contend that Berkeley’s “master argument” against the conceivability of of “matter” (for Berkeley, ‘matter’ means anything that exists independently of the mind), uses principles derived from Cartesian idea theory to show that we cannot even conceive of things as mind-independent.

Berkeley’s relationship to the Cartesian tradition has often been seen differently. I have already quoted Thomas Reid to the effect that Berkeley’s skepticism about mind-independent corporeal objects was the direct consequence of a veil-of-perception or proxy theory that entered modern philosophy with Descartes. But Reid’s view overlooks several things. First, his claim that philosophy had been gradually approaching idealism is contradicted by the fact that Berkeley’s views were considered startling and outrageous. Second, a proxy theory cannot explain Berkeley’s view that the extrametal existence of things is inconceivable. Proxy theories assume that the proxy relation between external object and mental representation is an intelligible one, which would not

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11 There is a sense in which Berkeley can be called a ‘direct realist’, for he held that ideas do not constitute a veil between the mind and its objects. Berkeley takes pains to stress this aspect of his doctrine, since in this respect his doctrine agrees with common sense. Even so, Berkeley’s doctrine, with its denial of any contact between the mind’s ideas and an extrametal world, is not a ‘direct realism’ in any ordinary sense of the term.

12 This is not to say that they should have been unexpected. As I shall argue in chapter 3, Berkeley’s views seem to be implicit in Cartesian idea theory. But the implication was not generally recognized. In a letter to Berkeley quoted in Luce 1968, p. 58, Berkeley’s aristocratic friend Sir John Percival wrote, shortly after the 1713 publication of the Dialogues (which seems to have gained for Berkeley a more respectful hearing than the Principles published two years earlier), that “what seemed shocking at first is become so familiar that others envy you the discovery, and make it their own”. It is noteworthy that at least one of Berkeley’s contemporaries, the clergyman Arthur Collier, came to some very similar anti-materialist conclusions in his Clavis universalis (1713). Collier agrees with Berkeley that matter is not simply non-existent, but inconceivable. Luce (1968, 58) speculates that Collier, though he does not mention Berkeley, probably read both the New Theory of Vision and the Principles before publishing his own work.
be the case if things could not be conceived to be mind-independent. Finally, the skepticism of Descartes' First Meditation does not require a "representationalist" or proxy theory, because according to the dual presence theory it is possible to have direct cognitions of non-existent objects.

The master argument has received scant respect from twentieth-century historians of philosophy. As Ian Hacking has observed, it is "widely regarded as the most preposterous argument ever to achieve lasting fame among philosophers" (Hacking 1975, 41).\textsuperscript{13} I hope to show that the argument is anything but preposterous, once it is viewed put in the context of the Cartesian theory of ideas. Rather, as Hacking (one of the few who have expressed admiration for the proof) has himself maintained, the argument "very impressive" and "[w]ithin the conceptual scheme in which it is formulated, ... cogent (not incontestable, of course, but cogent)" (ibid.). Unfortunately Hacking did not adequately explain what he meant by 'the conceptual scheme' of Berkeley's argument,\textsuperscript{14} nor did he give a detailed response to the many criticisms that have been leveled against it. This dissertation attempts to fill that gap. Not only do I put the argument into its Cartesian context, I show that it is related to the semantic paradoxes discovered by set theoreticians at the turn of the twentieth century (especially those of Koenig, Berry and Richard), and that a fully convincing resolution of the paradox that Berkeley presents us

\textsuperscript{13} Although Hacking's description of the Berkeleyan argument contains no page reference to any text of Berkeley's, it is clear it is the master argument that he has in mind.

\textsuperscript{14} He may have thought he had, for he prefaces his discussion of the master argument with an explanation of Berkeley's views on abstraction, in the Introduction of the Principles, and the Cartesian theory of ideas as reflected in the Port Royal Logic and Descartes' Regulae (which Hacking 1975, 30-31 asserts "left its imprint on the Logic", inasmuch as the community at Port Royal owned a manuscript copy of the work). But Hacking never really shows how this background is supposed to elucidate the logic of the
with in his argument will likely require a resolution of the semantic paradoxes as well. There are many ideas about how to resolve these paradoxes (in sections 4, 5 and 6 of chapter 3 I add my own two cents’ worth) but no resolution has yet received widespread and lasting acceptance. In the master argument Berkeley detected a paradox lurking in all attempts to talk globally about relations of reference and intention. He deserves credit for having discovered this problem almost two centuries before the mathematicians did.

A final note. In the first and second chapters I will be stressing Descartes’ debt to the Jesuits, but I do not mean to deny the obvious fact that many of the essential elements of Cartesian philosophy are directly opposed to both the spirit and the substance of Scholasticism. This is especially true for the Scholastic doctrine that all knowledge is ultimately derived from sense experience. For Descartes, on the contrary, all clear and distinct simple ideas (including that of extension) are innate;\textsuperscript{15,16} none are derived from sense experience. (It is doubtful whether Descartes would have granted that even the primary qualities of bodies, shape, size, location and motion, are faithfully represented in sense perception.\textsuperscript{17,18}) Although Descartes was a direct realist with regard to intellectual

\textsuperscript{15} For Descartes’ distinction between simple and complex ideas, see chapter 2, section 2. \textsuperscript{16} Robert McRae claimed that for Descartes the idea of extension is derived from the senses, but Margaret Wilson has argued persuasively to the contrary. See Wilson 1982, 169 and 240n.7. Incidentally, the text of Wilson 240n.7 erroneously cites AT III, 666 in support of the claim that for Descartes extension is an innate idea; the correct reference is AT III, 665 (CST III, 218).

\textsuperscript{17} Cf., for example, his claim in the Second Meditation (AT VII, 29-31) that when the mind’s perception of the shape (\textit{figura}) and extension (\textit{magnitudo}, which is later (AT VII, 43) defined as \textit{extensionem in longum, latum, \& profundum}) of a piece of wax is drawn from the senses, it is “imperfect” and “confused”. See also his claim in the Third Meditation that the visual idea of the sun misrepresents it as being very small, while the non-sensible, astronomical idea of the sun represents it (accurately) as being very large (AT VII, 39).

\textsuperscript{18} In this connection, it is interesting to note that Descartes’ signature contribution to
perception (he held a theory of intellectual perception in which the objects of intellectual perception are numerically identical to mind-independent objects), there is little evidence that he was in any sense a direct realist with regard to sense perception.¹⁹

¹⁹ Mathematics was analytic geometry, in which figures in sensible extension are shown to be equivalent to algebraic formulas; this discovery may have gone far toward convincing him that mere sensible representations of extension do not reveal its true nature. The synthetic method of geometry, which relies on axioms and postulates drawn from intuition of sensible extension, was to be replaced by an ars analytica. For a study of the philosophical significance of Descartes’ work in algebra, see Gaukroger 1992. Pace O’Neil 1974, Yolton 1975 and Cook 1987 (I discuss their views in chapter 2, section 1). One might think that for Descartes extension and its modes, at least, are known directly in sense perception, but since sensible extension is always modified by a certain size, shape, location and state of motion, and since our perceptions of these modes are always subject to error (Descartes notes that we often misjudge bodies’ size, shape, etc.), it is doubtful that even extension and its modes are presented directly to the mind. (Whether they are represented faithfully by a distinct image in the mind is a separate question.)
Chapter One

The Theory of Perception in Jesuit Scholasticism

1. The “Dual Presence Theory” of Perception in Descartes’ Seventeenth-Century Scholastic Sources

The distinguishing characteristic of the “dual presence theory” described in the introduction is the view that cognitive representations are identical to what they represent — not just similar or alike in form, but identical.\(^{20}\) They are the object’s “intramental” way of being present, a presence parallel to and distinct from whatever extramental presence it may have out in the world. A clear expression of this view is found in the works of the Spanish Jesuit Antonio Rubio (1548-1615), to whom we will turn in a moment. Rubio’s views were closely related to those of his Jesuit contemporaries, the most prominent of whom, perhaps, was Francisco Suarez (1548-1617). In his commentary on Aristotle’s De anima, Suarez draws the following distinction — which will be fundamental both for Rubio and for Descartes — between the “formal concept”, the act of cognition, and the “objective concept”, the object of cognition.\(^ {21}\)

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\(^{20}\) It is problematic whether this identity should be called ‘numerical’. I have not yet found any Scholastic texts that address the question. Traditionally identity is understood as either formal and numerical, and since for a dual presence theorist the identity between an object and its idea or species is not merely formal, it might well be called ‘numerical’. On the other hand, the claim that they are numerically identical might be taken to imply that the idea and its object are existentially identical, which is not the case. I will simply describe the dual presence theory’s doctrine as ‘the identity of object and representation’, and will leave open the question of whether this identity is to be understood as numerical. The important thing to remember is that for the dual presence theorist, the identity between object and representation is not merely formal, as it seems to have been for orthodox Thomists. For an illuminating discussion of St. Thomas’ views on this question, that includes a critical review of some neo-Thomist claims for the Thomistic theory of knowledge, see Robert Pasnau’s appendix “The Identity of Knower and Known (Aquinas)” in Pasnau 1997 (p.295ff.). See also ibid., 105-116.

\(^{21}\) All translations in this dissertation are my own, unless otherwise noted. References to
In the first place we take as a given the well-known distinction between formal concept and objective concept. ‘Formal concept’ means the act itself, or (equivalently) the mental word (verbum) by which the intellect conceives a thing or a common aspect (communem rationem). It is called ‘concept’ because it is like an offspring of the mind;\textsuperscript{22} it is called ‘formal’ both because it formally represents the cognized thing to the mind and because it is in fact the intrinsic and formal terminus of mental cognition (conceptionis mentalis). In this it differs from what I would call the objective concept. ‘Objective concept’ means the thing or aspect (ratio) which is properly and immediately cognized or represented through the formal concept. For example, when we conceive of a man, the act that we fashion in the mind for conceiving the man is called the formal concept, and the man that is cognized and represented by that act is called the objective concept. [He is called a] ‘concept’ by an extrinsic denomination\textsuperscript{23} from the

\textsuperscript{22} Suarez was not alone in applying the sexual reproduction simile to cognition. Antonio Rubio speaks of the cognitive potency as impregnated by the impressed species, comparing the latter to semen (Rubio 1620, 331).

\textsuperscript{23} The term ‘extrinsic denomination’ in Suarez is discussed at length in Doyle 1984. The seventeenth-century Dominican John of St. Thomas deals with the topic in his Cursus philosophicus, part II, q. 2 a. 1 “Quid sit ens rationis in communi et quotuple”. The gist of the notion seems to have been that an extrinsic denomination is a predication in which the property (or “form”) signified by the predicate is not a property of the subject of the predication, but rather of some other thing to which the subject has a relation. As John of St. Thomas says,
formal concept, through which its object is said to be conceived. Thus [the
concept] is rightly called ‘objective’. For it is a “concept” not in the sense of a
form that intrinsically terminates the cognition (conceptionem), but rather in the
sense of an object; it is the matter with which the formal concept is concerned,
and to which the mind directs its attention. For this reason Averroes calls it the
‘intellectual intention’; others call it ‘the objective aspect’ (ratio objectiva).

\[\ldots\text{in se [denominatio extrinsecà] est forma realis, sed non realiter existit in eo, quod denominat. Unde ratione non existentiae sumitur ut ens rationis, ratione autem praeeexistentei in alio, a quo respicit rem denominatam, dicitur denominare ante operationem intellectus. (John of St. Thomas, 1985, 55)}\]

Consider the sentence ‘the wall is seen’. The predicate ‘seen’ is an extrinsic
denomination of the wall, if the predicate ‘seen’ is taken not as signifying a property of
the wall, but as signifying the act of looking at the wall, for this act is (obviously) not a
property of the thing (the wall) denoted by the subject (‘the wall’) of the predication, but
of the person to which the wall has a relation (the relation “x sees y”). In an “intrinsic
denomination”, by contrast, the property signified by the predicate is understood as
belonging to the thing denoted by the subject of the predication, not just to some other
thing to which that denotatum is related. Thus, taking an example from the theological
debates of the early modern period, we might say that while for Christian theologians the
term ‘just’ is predicated of Christ intrinsically, there could be disagreement over whether
in the term ‘just’ is predicated extrinsically or intrinsically of Peter, who is supposed to
be justified by participation in the merits of Christ. The disagreement would concern
whether the justice to which the clause refers was really a property of Peter or a property
of Christ, to whom Peter is related (by baptism, faith, etc.). Similarly, there might be
disagreement over whether in the sentence ‘the wall is seen’ the property to which the
predicate ‘seen’ really refers belongs to the wall or only to someone who sees it. As we
shall see (section 3 of this chapter) Descartes’ critic Caterus takes the latter view (esse
objectivum is an extrinsic denomination), and Descartes the former. Suarez’s claim that
‘concept’ designates the object extrinsically seems to indicate that he might have sided
with Caterus in this dispute. Passages from Rubio below will suggest that he, Rubio, on
the other hand, would have sided with Descartes.

\[24\text{Supponenda imprimis est vulgaris distinctio conceptus formalis et objectivi; conceptus formalis dicitur actus ipse, seu (quod idem est) verbum quo intellectus rem aliquam seu communem rationem concipit; qui dicitur conceptus, quia est veluti proles mentis; formalis autem appellatur, vel quia formaliter repraesentat menti rem cognitam, vel quia revera est intrinsecus et formalis terminus conceptionis mentalis, in quo differt a conceptu objectivo, ut ita dicam. Conceptus objectivus dicitur res illa, vel ratio, quae proprie et immediate per conceptum formalem cognoscitur seu repraesentatur; ut, verbi gratia, cum hominem concipimus, ille actus, quem in mente efficimus ad concipiendum}\]
Suarez calls the object a concept, but he does not mean that the objects of cognition have no existence outside the mind, for in almost the same breath he says that in conceiving of a man, we conceive of the man himself, not a mental entity that merely resembles or represents the man.

Since Suarez uses ‘objective concept’ to denote the extramental object, we may wonder why does he not simply use a term such as ‘object’ (objeictum) or ‘thing’ (res) instead of the potentially misleading ‘objective concept’. He clearly realizes that calling the object a concept tends to suggest that the mind’s objects have no extramental existence; that is why he goes to the trouble of emphasizing that the objects of cognition are extramental entities such as men rather than mere figments of the mind. So why not just avoid the problem in the first place by avoiding the term ‘objective concept’ and using ‘object’ or ‘thing’ instead? This question was posed by Jacobus Revius, best known today as one of the earliest enemies of Cartesianism at the University of Leiden.26

hominem, vocatur conceptus formalis; homo autem cognitus et repraesentatus illo actu dicitur conceptus objectivus, conceptus quidem per denominationem extrinsecam a conceptu formalis, per quem objectum ejus concipi dicitur, et ideo recte dicitur objectivus, quia non est conceptus ut forma intrinsece terminans conceptionem, sed ut objectum et materia circa quam versatur formalis conceptio, et ad quam mentis acies directe tendit, propter quod ab aliquibus, ex Averroe, intentio intellecta appelatur; et ubi alii dicitur ratio objectiva. (Disputationes metaphysica 2, 1, 1; Suarez 1856-1877, v. 26, 64-65. The term ‘ratio’, like its Greek counterpart ‘logos’, is notoriously difficult to translate. The root idea seems to be that of an essence or pattern discoverable by the mind but not apparent to mere sense observation.

Hans Seigried (1967, 14) seems to be mistaken when he claims that Suarez, like Ockham, rejected a “representing form”. The passage we have quoted indicates that Suarez regarded the formal concept as a form that represents the object. What Suarez may have rejected (though this is far from clear) was the notion of Toletus and Rubio that a mental entity, the species, is numerically identical with the object qua in objective being. His claim that ‘concept’ denounces the object only extrinsically might be taken to support such a claim.

Revius (1586-1658) was a poet, theologian, and rector or dean of a college at the University of Leiden during the 1640s. For references on his opposition to Descartes see
...[Suarez] calls the object itself a ‘concept’. And why? Because it is related to a concept! As if a father were to be called ‘son’, because he is related to his son. and a husband were to be called ‘wife’, because he is related to her! If the object of the mind deserves to be called an objective concept, why not also label the object of the will an ‘objective volition’? So let us beware of this absurd phrase and not use it. Let a concept be a concept, and an object an object; these two terms should not be confused with each other.\textsuperscript{27}

The only good reason for using a second term that co-denotes with ‘object’ would seem to be to connote some special aspect or state of the object that the term ‘object’ itself does not imply. Now there is a state of objects that a philosopher of mind would find it useful to connote, namely the state of being known. Although he is not as clear as he might be, it seems likely that Suarez has something like this in mind when he distinguishes the term ‘objective concept’ (conceptus objectivus) from ‘object’ (res). The terms ‘objective concept of Peter’ and ‘Peter’ denote the same object, but the former carries the connotation that Peter is known by some mind: the objective concept of Peter is Peter \textit{qua} known.

If this is indeed what Suarez had in mind, then, \textit{pace} Revius, ‘objective concept’ cannot simply be eliminated in favor of ‘object’ wherever it occurs, for in intentional and modal contexts co-denoting terms cannot in general be substituted for one another \textit{salva}

\begin{flushright}
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veritate. The sentence ‘there would be no sun if there were no minds’ seems false, but the sentence ‘there would be no sun qua known if there were no minds’ is true, since if there were no minds the sun could not be known. So if the term ‘objective idea’ means object qua known, Revius is wrong to think that wherever ‘objective idea’ occurs it can simply be eliminated and replaced by the term ‘object’.

Nevertheless, we can sympathize with Revius’ frustration. Granted that Suarez needed a term other than ‘object’ to refer to the object qua known, why on earth did he choose the term ‘objective concept’? Anyone could have foreseen that this would lead to a confusion between extramental and intramental entities. Suarez’s choice of terms is all the more puzzling given the fact that in the passage quoted above, Suarez says that the object is called a ‘concept’ only by an “extrinsic denomination from the formal concept”, where ‘formal concept’ is the act of mind by which the object is conceived. Although the meaning of the Scholastic term ‘extrinsic denomination’ is not completely understood, Suarez (at least) is clear that no extrinsic denomination is a sufficient foundation for a real relation (where a relation is “real” if and only if it exists independently of its being conceived to exist). But if the object is called a ‘concept’ only by an extrinsic denomination from the formal concept, and if extrinsic denomination by itself is never sufficient for a real relation, then (it seems to follow) the relation ‘x has a formal concept of the object y’ is not a real relation between the individuals x and y. In

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28 The phrase ‘the sun qua known’ can be considered as synonymous with the definite description ‘the thing that is identical to the sun and is known’, understood de dicto rather than de re.

29 This misled Timothy Cronin (1966, 78ff) into thinking that Suarezian concepts are numerically distinct representatives of their objects. Even Norman J. Wells (1990, 41n.30) seems to have been misled on this point.

30 See note 23.
other words, it seems that for Suarez nothing real "happens" to a thing just because someone happens to think of it. This makes Suarez's use of the term 'objective concept' stranger than even Revius thought. At least the relations Revius mentions, those of father to son and of husband to wife, are (according to traditional Scholastic philosophy) real relations. If, as Revius says, it is silly to call a father a son simply in virtue of his real relation to his own son, it is even sillier to call an object a concept in virtue of its non-real relation to a concept.

Why then did Suarez use the term 'objective concept' to mean object qua known? I think the most probable explanation (supported by Suarez's remark that the distinction between formal and objective concepts is vulgaris, "common") is that the term was already current in late Scholastic circles, and that Suarez simply wished to show how it ought be understood on his principles. We must then ask, where did this strange term 'objective concept' come from, and how did it come to be used for 'object qua known'? What conception of knowledge would make it reasonable to think of the object qua known as in some sense a concept, an entity existing in the mind?

Complete answers to these questions cannot yet be given, but important clues can be found in the following (rather lengthy) passage from the "Treatise on Sensible Objects and Species" by Suarez's contemporary and Jesuit confrere Antonio Rubio.33

31 Doyle 1984, 156.
32 Cf. Caterus' claim, against Descartes, that objective being is merely an extrinsic denomination of the object, a circumlocution for a statement about the mind.
33 Rubio ('Ruvio', 'Ruvius', b. 1548 Ruedo (Spain), d. 1615) was a prominent figure in early seventeenth-century Scholasticism. He taught from 1577 to 1603 in the University of Mexico (the first institution of higher learning in the Western Hemisphere); in 1603 he returned to Spain and was appointed professor of philosophy at the prestigious Complutensian University at Alcala de Heneres near Madrid (in spite of the fact that the fledgling Jesuit order was excluded from many university posts, due to fear of
... a sensible species can be considered in two ways: (1) in relation to the subject [i.e. the mind] insofar as it is an accident and something intentional, and (2) in relation to the object that it represents, insofar as it is its similitude (Aristotle posits this distinction in *On Memory*, ch. 1). Now if the species is considered in the first way it can form only an accidental unity [with the mind]; this is as it were a third thing distinct from either. But if it is considered in the second way, under its character as a representation, to the potency, of the object, then it is judged to be, as it were, the object itself, not of course in real being (*esse rei*), but in represented being, and in this way it is so united\textsuperscript{34} to the potency that no third thing is produced from them, but the potency itself in a certain way becomes the object [emphasis added]. For having in itself the likeness of the object, it is said in a certain way to have within it the object itself [emphasis added], since it has it as represented, and in the same respect it is said to be the object itself, just as the species itself is called the object, as represented [emphasis added]. And thus the object is said to be within the intellect or sense through its similitude. In this respect the intellect or sense itself actually (*in actu primo*) becomes the

\textsuperscript{34} The theme of the "intimate union" of the cognitive faculty and the object is discussed by many Scholastic writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; for a Thomist view see Cajetan, *De anima* III, text 5, and his commentary on the *Summa Theologiae* I.Iae q.
intelligible thing itself [emphasis added] in the order of represented intentional being. St. Thomas, in accordance with the thinking of Aristotle, expressly teaches this at many places in his works, especially toward the end of Summa contra gentiles book II, ch. 98, where he writes “according to Aristotle, the intellect in act is the object in act.” And in this vein the Commentator [Averroes] says truly that a greater unity is formed from the intellect and the intelligible than from matter and form. For matter does not become form, nor does form become matter, but from them a third thing comes to be, really distinct from each. Yet from the sense and the sensible, or from the intellect and the intelligible, so great a unity is formed that the sense itself becomes, after a fashion, the sensible itself, and the intellect becomes the intelligible – not of course in real being (esse rei), but in intelligible or intentional being, that is, according to the just-explained mode of intentional representation, and in relation to the sensory or intellectual act. The sense faculty, having become the sensible itself (or the intellect, having become the intelligible itself), is the unique and per se principle of sensation.

This view is unjustly rejected by modern thinkers who consider the union of the species and the cognitive potency only according to their perfections [entitates].

14 a. 1).

35 I translate entitas as ‘perfection’ in accordance with the following passage from Descartes: “per realitatem objectivam ideae intelligo entitatem [emphasis added] rei representatae per ideam, quatenus est in idea; eodemque modo duci potest perfectio [emphasis added] objectiva, vel artificium objectivum, etc.” (Second Replies, AT VII, 160; CSM II 113). The term perfectio seems to have been a philosophical term of art in the early seventeenth century applying to virtually any essential or accidental property a thing might have, with the probable exception of “negative” properties such as not being at least six feet tall or not having musical ability.
and thus, as it were, materially.\footnote{Cf. Descartes' use of the term 'idea taken materially' in the Preface to the \textit{Meditations} (CSM II 7, AT VII \textit{8}) to refer to ideas as real modes of the attribute of thought.} It must be admitted that when considered in this fashion they form only an accidental unity. But considered in representative or represented intentional sensible being (\textit{esse sensibile, & intentionale representativo, aut representato})\footnote{The terms 'representative being' and 'represented being' apply, respectively, to the species and the object.} their unity is greater than that of matter and form, for from them no third thing comes to be, but rather one is said to become the other, namely the sense potency is said to become the sensible, or the intellect the intelligible. \ldots \footnote{\ldots species sensibilis duplicem considerationem habet, priorem quidem in ordine ad subiectum quatenus accidentis, quoddam intentionale est, posteriorem vero in ordine ad obiectum, quod repraesentat, in quantum similitudo eius est. Quam distinctionem posuit Aristoteles in \textit{lib. de Memoria, & Reminiscencia} ca. 1. Si igitur consideretur species modo priori modo non potest cum potentia efficere, nisi unum accidentale, quod quasi tertium est ab utroque distinctum, si vero consideretur modo posteriori sub ratione qua repraesentat potentiae obiectum, quasi obiectum ipsum esse censetur, non quidem in esse rei, sed in esse repraesentati, \& hoc modo sic unitur potentiae, ut non efficiatur ex utroque aliquid tertium; sed ipsamet potentia quodam modo fiat obiectum, nam habens in se similitudinem eius, quodammodo dicitur habere ipsum in se, cum repraesentatum habeat, \& sub eadem ratione dicitur esse ipsummet obiectum, sicut species ipsa vocatur obiectum, ut representatum. Et sic obiectum dicitur esse intra intellectum, vel sensum per suam similitudinem, ratione cuius intellectus ipse, vel sensus in actu primo, fit res ipsa intelligibilis secundum esse intentionale repreaesentatum. \textit{Ita docet expresse D. Thom. multis suae doctrinae loci ex mente Aristotel. praesertim. 2. lib. contra gent. capit. 98. non longe a fine his verbis, }\textit{Intellectus in actu est intellectum in actu secundum doctrinam Aristotel.} \textit{Et in hoc sensu verum dixit Comment. quod ex intellectu, \& intelligibili fit magis unum, quam ex materia, \& forma, nam neque materia fit forma, nec forma fit materia, sed ex utroque fit tertium a qualibet realiter distinctum; ex sensu vero, \& sensibili, aut ex intellectu, \& intelligibili ita fit unum, ut sensus ipse quodam modo fiat ipsummet sensibile, \& intellectus fiat intelligibile, non quidem in esse rei, sed in esse intelligibili, aut intentionalis, hoc est, secundum modum repreaesentationis intentionalis exposition & in ordine quidem ad operationem sensatium aut intellectivam, cuius sensus factus sensibile ipsum, aut intellectus intelligibile, unum principium per se est sensationis. Immerito ergo a recentioribus hic sensus reicitur solum considerantibus unionem speciei cum potentia secundum entitates earum, \& ideo quasi materialiter, quo pacto unum tantum accidentale ex his fieri posse dicendum est, consideratis vero in esse}.
Although Rubio himself does not use the term ‘objective concept’ to refer to the object of thought, it is easy to see how others of like mind – Suarez, perhaps – could have. Rubio says that the object itself is in the intellect; it is even said to be the species (or thought) itself. If the object *qua* known is a denizen of the mind, it is easy to see why it not only *can* but *ought* to be called a ‘concept’, since that is the term customarily used for mental contents.

When Rubio criticizes the view of “modern thinkers” for whom species and cognitive potency are united only as an accidental perfection in a (faculty of a) substance, he is urging that there is another important way of considering the union of species and faculty, namely, a union as object – which may be a substance, e.g. Peter or Paul – with the cognitive faculty of a substance. Since no substance can inform a potency as one of the potency’s perfections or accidents, this union must be understood differently – as a union between a thing and its presence. The union of a thing and its presence is even closer than that between matter and form, for the Peter’s matter can be successively inhabited by different forms (when Peter dies, the matter of his body ceases to be inhabited by his soul, and becomes something substantially different, namely a corpse), and the same form can be present in many matters (humanity is equally present in Peter and Paul), but without Peter there is no presence of Peter, and without his presence (in the mind or in the world) there is no Peter (whether in the mind or in the world).

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sensibili, & intentionalis repraesentativo, aut repraesentato magis unum fit, quam ex materia, & forma, quia non fit ex doubus tertium, sed unum potius dicitur fieri, videlicet sensus sensibile, aut intellectus intelligibile . . .” (Rubio 1620, 333-334).
Rubio was not the first Jesuit of the period to hold that the species *qua*
representative is identical to the external object. In his *De anima* commentary, Francisco
Toletus (1532-1596) wrote,

A species can be considered in two ways: (1) as an inhering accident and (2) as
representing the object, being in a certain way the object itself, though under
another mode of being, as a species of color is color, under a more immaterial
mode of being. 39

Toletus’ distinction for intentional species is clearly parallel to Suarez’s distinction
between formal concept and objective concept. The formal concept or act of cognition is
an “inhering accident” (in Toletus’ terms) of the mind, and has real being there, while
Suarez’s “objective concept” clearly corresponds to Toletus’ species considered as “the
object itself, under another mode of being”. Another prominent Jesuit philosopher of the
period, Gabriel Vazquez, wrote

... truth is, primarily, a correspondence between the thing itself, as it exists
externally, and the objective concept (not the formal concept), and thus is a
conformity of the thing *with itself under a diverse mode* [emphasis added]. 40

39 *De anima* ii q 12; Toletus 1985, 76v-77r. This remark is made in the course of a
presentation of a view of Cajetan and others regarding the problem of the “agent sense”
(the problem of whether the senses are active in perception or purely passive). This
makes it somewhat unclear whether Toletus is presenting this remark about species as his
own view or that of Cajetan et al. I take it as representing his own view.
40 “... veritatem primarie esse convenientiam conceptus, non formalis, sed objectivi cum
re ipsa, prout est extra, ita ut sit conformatio eiusdem rei cum seipsa sub diverso modo.”
Vasquez, *Disputatio* 76, cap. 1, as quoted in Dalbiez 1929, 469. Dalbiez 1929, 468-469
also gives an interesting quote of Suarez’s summary of the views of the medieval
Scholastic philosopher Durandus of Saint Pourçain to the effect that the objective concept
is a tertium quid between the formal concept and the object *qua* external, although (to
judge by Suarez’s report of his views) Durandus also seems to have held that the
objective concept and the external object are the same thing in two different ontic modes.
which shows that for Vasquez too, there is an identity between the thing (not just the form of the thing) existing outside the mind and the intramental representation, so that the object under its intramental mode of existence just is the objective concept – though of course under a different existential mode. 41

The “other mode of being” spoken of by Vasquez, Toletus and Rubio, the mode which would seem – on their principles – to be proper to Suarez’s “objective concept”, is what in Descartes’ writings goes by the name of “objective being”; it is an alternative way of “being there” or being present, parallel to and distinct from real or “formal” being. The latter is the arena of the world; the former is the arena of the mind. When the object is present in both the world and the mind, it is said to be “re”-present or “represented”, since its presence in the world is held to be primary. The object as it is present in the mind is then said to be a “representation” of that same object, as it is present in the world. In modern usage, of course, a “representation” is usually thought of as an object or state of affairs that, in being known, somehow calls to mind the object or state of affairs represented. The representation and the thing represented are thought of as numerically distinct entities, so that the awareness of something via a representation is always indirect. But for Rubio and Toletus, to represent something was to make the very same thing present in some new place or under some new form; it was not to depict or

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41 The views of Rubio, Toletus, Vasquez et al. seem not to have been universal among the Jesuits of the period. The Polish Jesuit Martinus Smiglecius (1564 – 1618), author of a textbook on logic, seems to have thought of concept and object as distinct entities: “Respondeo, objectum neque ut res neque ut objectum esse idem cum conceptu, quia conceptus est similitudo objecti. Objectum vero est res ipsa & essentia, cuius similitudo est conceptus: numquam autem res est idem quod sua similitudo (Logica I, 21, as quoted in Roncaglia 1995, 46).
symbolize by means of a numerically distinct object or event. This might have sounded somewhat less odd to the contemporaries of Rubio and Toletus than it does to us, if the history of English usage is any indication; two of the four archaic senses of the English verb ‘represent’ recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* are “to bring into presence, especially, to present (oneself or another) to or before a person”; “to bring (one) to some privilege or state”.42 Furthermore, something like Rubio’s sense of ‘representation’ seems to have been involved in the Scholastic theology of the Eucharist as a ‘representation’ of Christ’s body and blood. According to Aquinas, for example, the Eucharistic bread, though a *representatio* of Christ’s body, is identical with it – this identity is not merely formal (for that would only mean that the substance of the Eucharistic bread was *essentially like* the substance of Christ’s body, which would seem to mean only that it is a body with the form of humanity). The representation of Christ in the Eucharist was literally a re-presentation, a making present “again” of the very same individual that is represented. (In what follows I will occasionally use the hyphenated forms ‘re-present’ and ‘re-presentation’ in place of ‘represent’ and ‘representation’, as a reminder that in reading the Scholastics we must be on our guard against interpreting the words in a modern sense, as signifying a mere likeness.)43

As noted in the introduction, I refer to this model of cognition – which seems to have been widely accepted by Jesuit philosophers of this period – as ‘the dual presence theory of perception’.44 I use the term ‘perception’ rather than ‘conception’ (on the one

43 O’Neil 1974, 104n.24 notes that ‘representation’ in Descartes probably does not mean what it would mean in any naïve picture theory.
44 The dual presence theory’s central tenet, that individuals (and not just their forms) are present to the human mind, seems to go back at least as far as the early fourteenth
hand) or ‘sense perception’ (on the other hand) because for seventeenth-century
Scholastics, as well as for Descartes, the term ‘perception’ usually includes both. One
remarkable feature of the dual presence theory of perception is that it combines important
elements of what have often been regarded as two opposing positions, direct realism and
representationalism. Since on this theory the object’s representation is quite literally a
making-present-again of the object that already exists outside the mind, one and the same
object, e.g. the sun, is simultaneously inside the mind and outside it.\textsuperscript{45} The mind

\textsuperscript{45}Since the object’s presence in the mind just is the mind’s cognition of the object, one
might well be tempted to conclude that the object \textit{qua} known is identical to the act of
cognition, the species. But this would seem to make the mind and its acts redundant,
inasmuch as cognitive acts are reduced to their objects. No Scholastic philosopher was
prepared to go so far. Rubio is clear that in seeing an object the visual faculty does not
becomes the object in \textit{real} being, but only in intentional being. However, he is also quite
positive that visual faculty becomes the object itself, and thus he might well \textit{seem}
committed to the claim that the terms ‘the species of Peter’, ‘the formal concept of Peter’
therefore has direct access to external objects; we perceive things in themselves, not
cognitive entities that merely resemble those things. Yet, at the same time, the theory
requires that external things be “represented” in the mind. Hence the theory might well
be called a “direct representationalism”.

It cannot be stressed too much that the dual presence theory posits a genuine
“bilocation” of objects. This is how it manages to combine direct realism with
representationalism. On the dual presence theory, the phrase ‘Peter is in my mind’ is not
merely a circumlocution or metaphor for ‘I am thinking of Peter’, but is supposed to be
an explanation of what it means to be thinking of Peter. To make sure the point is clear,
let us consider the following example. Suppose it were possible for a single coin to be
simultaneously in my pocket and on the table. One and the same coin would then have
two modes of location, a location on the table and a location in my pocket. If I put my
hand in my pocket and touch the coin, then I am simultaneously touching the coin on the
table. I am not touching the coin _qua_ on the table; to do that, I would have to take my
hand out of my pocket and put it on the table. But since the coin on the table and the coin
in my pocket are (by hypothesis) identical, I can touch the coin on the table while
keeping my hand in my pocket. In the same way, for the dual presence theory, when I
see the sun, one and the same sun has one mode of existence (real) in the sky, and another
mode of existence (objective) in my mind. Just as in the bilocation analogy I can touch
the coin that is on the table merely by touching that same coin in my pocket, I can

and ‘the objective concept of Peter’ all denote Peter – though they _connote_ him not in the
real being he has (or had) in the world but only in the intentional being he has in the
mind. The Suarezian terms ‘the formal concept of Peter’ and ‘the objective concept of
Peter’ would then differ, on Rubio’s principles, only in that the latter connotes the object
_qua_ cognized, while the former connotes the objective concept _qua_ real accident of the
perceive the sun (and not just a likeness of it) by perceiving the sun in my mind. It is the sun itself that is perceived, by being itself contained in the mind, under the mode of objective being. This is the direct realist aspect of the dual presence theory.

The representationalist side of the theory comes to the fore if, using the difference in the ontic modes of objective being and actual being, we distinguish between an "immediate" object of perception and a "mediate" object. When I put my hand in my pocket and feel the coin there, I am not touching the coin qua on the table, since my hand is not on the table. I am touching the coin on the table (since it is numerically identical with the coin in my pocket), but only by means of the coin in my pocket. There is a clear asymmetry here; I am not touching the coin in my pocket by means of touching the coin on the table (though I might do so, by taking my hand out of my pocket and putting it on the table). Although I am touching the coin on the table only mediately, I am touching it, and not merely a copy of it. In the same way, the sun in my mind is the immediate object of my perception, while the sun in the sky is only a mediate object; I mediately see the sun in the sky only by immediately seeing the sun in my mind. This is the representationalist element in the dual presence theory, and it is perfectly consistent with the direct realist element, once the odd notion of ontic "bilocation" is accepted.

Although virtually all Scholastic philosophers agreed that, in order for something to be an object of awareness, it must be represented in the soul, there was disagreement about the meaning of 'representation'. The dual presence theory, in which representation is conceived as an identity-of-essence-with-difference-in-existence, represents a

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46 Even Ockham, who denied the existence of species, agreed that objects were represented in the soul; he simply held that the bare act of awareness was sufficient to
distinctive position that was not universally accepted. John Yolton seems to have had something like the dual presence theory in mind when he writes of a "wildly impossible view, but one in the background (sometimes quite explicitly) in many discussions", according to which "the object itself is literally present to or in the mind" (Yolton 1984, 38). Unfortunately Yolton does not give any further details about this view, nor does he identify the early modern discussions in which it is "in the background (sometimes quite explicitly)". He does however contrast it with three other possible views on objective being: (1) what he calls the 'Scholastic' view (what I have called the 'orthodox Thomist' view), according to which the form of the object exists in corporeal as well as in incorporeal substances, (2) the view that the object is present in the mind by proxy – what I have called the 'proxy' or 'veil-of-perception' view, and (3) the view that to be in the understanding is simply to be understood – according to which all talk of presence in the mind is mere metaphor, so that ideas are identical to mental acts or formal concepts. The second of these views, the veil-of-perception theory, is quite clearly not what Rubio etc. had in mind; they nowhere deny the mind's direct access to extant mental reality. The third view, that mental presence is a mere metaphor, seems to have been held by Arnauld and certainly by C. S. Peirce (see ch. 3, n. 193 below), and it may even have been held by Suarez (recall his claim that the objective concept is called a 'concept' only by an "extrinsic denomination" from the formal concept) – though that is far from clear. But the passages cited above strongly indicate that it was not held by Rubio (nor by Toletus and Vasquez). Nor did they hold the first view, which Yolton calls 'the Scholastic view', which was in fact characteristic only of conservative Thomism. Rubio nowhere implies represent the object, without the addition of any distinct entity (See Seigfried 1967, 14).
that only the form of the object is received by the mind. Since neither of these three “plausible” views about representation fits the texts I have cited above, it seems best to conclude that they taught the “wildly impossible” view that the mind literally becomes the object it knows. But as I have tried to explain, there is in fact nothing impossible about the claim that things have a literal presence in the mind, as long as ‘literal’ is not taken to mean ‘actual’. Objects are literally present in the mind, for the dual presence theory, because the term ‘presence’ expresses a univocal genus comprising two species, actual presence and objective presence. As long the two species are kept distinct, the ‘literal presence’ of Peter in my mind does not entail that Peter has actual existence whenever I think of him.

At any rate, wildly impossible or not, the dual presence theory seems to have been the kernel of several Jesuit treatments of perception around the turn of the seventeenth century. It is clearly evident in the De anima commentary of Rubio. Rubio was known to Descartes, and I will argue below (chapter 2, section 1), there is good reason to think that the dual presence theory of cognition was in its essentials the basis for Descartes’ own view of the relationship between ideas and the world.

2. Intuitions of Non-existent Objects and Arriaga’s Proof of the Extramental Provenance of Concepts

Everyone has heard of the “Cartesian doubt”, the suspension of judgement about the truth of our ideas. Even after the cogito has established the existence of the self, Descartes continues to doubt the existence of all things other than the self. At the

47 Some of the results of the present section first appeared in chs. 2 and 3 of Clemenson 1991.
beginning of the Third Meditation, before proving the existence of God in the
cosmological argument, he writes

\[
\ldots \text{I previously accepted as wholly certain and evident many things which I}
\text{afterwards realized were doubtful. What were these? The earth, the sky, stars,}
\text{and everything else which I apprehended with the senses. But what was it about}
\text{them that I perceived clearly? Just that the ideas, or thoughts, of such things}
\text{appeared before my mind. Yet even now I am not denying that these ideas occur}
\text{within me. But there was something else which I used to assert, and which}
\text{through habitual belief I thought I perceived clearly, although I did not in fact do}
\text{so. This was that there were things outside me which were the sources of my}
\text{ideas and which resembled them in all respects. (AT VII 35, CSM II 24-25) }
\]

It is often thought that Descartes' doubt about whether our ideas of bodies represent
external objects is based on his commitment to a proxy theory of perception (see
introduction). But many Scholastics, including seventeenth-century Jesuits such as
Suarez and Rubio, who did not hold a proxy theory, were also open to the possibility that
at least some of our ideas of bodies do not represent externally existing objects.\(^{48,49}\)

\(^{48}\) This conflicts with Étienne Gilson's claim that direct realism is inconsistent with the
attempt to prove the existence of extramental objects. "As soon as one accepts the idea
of immediate realism, there can, by definition, no longer be any question of
demonstrating or proving the existence of the outside world. . . . The immediate realist is
not, therefore, someone who regards the existence of the outside world as doubtful; he is
not even a person who, without doubting its existence, feels the need to prove it. He is
simply someone who sees the real as directly given, but who is searching for the best way
of making us see that for us as much as for him it is really something given." Gilson

\(^{49}\) Gilson is not the only one who takes direct realism to be equivalent to the claim that
the objects of direct perception must exist outside the mind. Conversely, the fact that we
have immediate awareness of things (such as apparent colors) that have no being aside
from their being perceived has often been seen as posing an insuperable problem for
This led one of the more daring Jesuit thinkers of the period, Roderigo de Arriaga, to charge his fellow Scholastics with having failed to prove a priori that any of our concepts come from outside the mind. He tries (unsuccessfully, it must be said) to provide such a proof, and his argument anticipates Descartes’ cosmological argument in several respects. Like Descartes, Arriaga seeks to prove the extramental origin of our ideas from their content alone. This should lead us to modify Étienne Gilson’s judgement that “jamais, avant Descartes, on a reconnu à l’esse objectivum de l’idée une réalité suffisante pour porter le poids d’une preuve de son objet par le principe de causalité”, a judgement endorsed by Roland Dalbiez (1929, 470): “Descartes utilise l’esse objectivum comme point d’application du principe de causalité, de façon à aboutir à l’existence du monde extérieur. Ce réalisme par inférence est étranger à la scolastique” [emphasis added]. The gap between seventeenth-century Scholasticism and Cartesianism was not as wide on this point as Gilson and Dalbiez suggest.

I begin by presenting the views of Suarez and Rubio on the question of whether objects directly perceived by the senses must have extramental existence. In keeping with what seems to have been the majority Scholastic opinion ever since the fourteenth-

direct realism. J. J. Valberg 1992 portrays the direct perception of non-existents as the “puzzle of experience”, a puzzle that has no solution satisfactory to the direct realist. Butchvarov 1998 agrees that this is the problem for direct realists, but holds that the problem can be solved, by granting with Meinong that in some mind-independent sense there are things that do not exist, viz., the objects presented in illusion, hallucination, etc. Dalbiez goes on to say, however, “N’aurait-il [Descartes’ cosmological argument] pourtant pas été préparé par les théories de certains scholastiques sur la perception sensible? Nous inclinons à le croire” (ibid.). The findings presented in this section will show that his guess was correct.
century, Suarez argues in his *De anima* commentary that by his absolute power God can cause us to things that are not there.\(^{51}\)

By [God's] absolute power it can happen that an absent thing can be known through the external senses. This is proved as follows. God is able to cause the species of an absent thing to be conserved in the eye, in which case the eye will see by means of that species . . . That God can do this is obvious, since he is able to take the place of the efficient cause, and the object is required only as an efficient cause of the species. To clarify this point, let us imagine that God brings it about that Peter's existence in Rome causes a species [of Peter] to be impressed in a nearby mirror; the species is then reflected from the mirror to the eye. The eye would then see Peter existing in Rome; consequently, it would be seeing something that was absent. Now, whatever God can accomplish by means of a mirror, he can accomplish without a mirror; indeed, he can accomplish it even without Peter.\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) *De anima* d.6 q.5 (Suarez 1978, 516-28). See Tachau 1988 for an extensive discussion of fourteenth-century views on this topic. Bishop Tempier's condemnations of 1277, directed against the Latin Averroists (who were perceived as placing undue limits on God's power), seem to have played an important role in encouraging the view that God can cause visions of non-existent.

... it is quite possible for a non-existing thing to be represented [by a species], nor is there always a real relation\(^{53}\) between the representing thing and what it represents. Rather, the representing thing as such is a res absoluta, suited for having a relation\(^{54}\) to the represented thing, should the represented thing exist.\(^{55}\)

Indeed, Suarez held, visions and other sense intuitions of non-existent objects can occur even without divine intervention.

... it is not necessary for the object to be present in the manner in which it is seen [i.e., it need not be as the sense reports it to be], but only in the manner in which it is capable of impressing a species [on the sense power]. When the neck of a dove appears to be multi-colored, it is not necessary that the colors be really present to the eye; it is enough that the rays of light act on the neck of the dove in such a way that it is rendered apt for causing the species of these colors. When this happens the exterior sense indeed perceives, in some fashion, an absent thing, namely, the color, for the color is not present. What is present is something else

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\(^{53}\)For Suarez on real relation, see his *Disputationes metaphysicae*; cf. Disputations 47 (*De relationibus realibus creatis*) and 54 (*De ente rationis*), Section 3 ("An recte dividatur ens rationis in negationem, privationem et relationem").

\(^{54}\)i.e. a real relation.

\(^{55}\)... res non existens optime potest repraesentari, neque semper inter repraesentans et repraesentatum est relatio realis, sed res repraesentans ut sic est res absoluta, apta ut referatur, si res repraesentata existat." *De anima* III c.2 sec.28 (Suarez 1978, 328) The "real relation" here is probably efficient causality.
[the dove’s neck *qua* modified by the incident light], capable of causing the
[colors’] species.\textsuperscript{56}

Rubio held the same doctrine, with only minor variations. In his *De anima* treatise he
writes,

Speaking universally, a primary cause can through itself conserve every effect
that is produced purely efficiently by a secondary cause, just as it can produce
[that effect]. But species depend on the object only as on an efficient cause—just
as the luminous depends on light [lumen]. Therefore God can supply the
productive activity [efficientiam] of the object, by which they were being
conserved.\textsuperscript{57}

God can produce from himself alone the species of any object, and in any potency
which is suited [versatur] to it. For it is obvious that he has produced them from
the beginning in the intellect of angels, and also that his infinite power eminently
contains every object as well as its [the created object’s] objective power, and its

\textsuperscript{56}Secundum est, quod ad sentiendum non est necesse obiectum esse praesens eo modo
quo videtur, sed eo tantum modo quo sit aptum ad causandam speciem, ut quando collum
columbae apparat diversorum colorum, non est necesse quod illi colores sint realiter
praesentes oculis, sed satis est quod radii luci tali modo afficiant collum illud, ut sit
aptum ad causandas species talium colorum; et isto modo iam quodammodo sensus
percipit id quod est absens. Percipit enim illum colorem, qui vere non est praesens, sed

\textsuperscript{57}Universaliter loquendo, omnem effectum pure efficienter productum a causa
secunda, potest conservare per se prima, sicut potest producere, sed species non
dependent ab objecto plusquam efficienter, sicut a luminoso lumen: ergo potest Deus
supplere efficientiam objecti, a quo conservabare[n?]tur." De anima II c.6, q.13 (Ed. 1620
p.380).
power of producing species. And by the same argument he can conserve a species that he has produced without the object. 58

As authorities for this opinion Rubio cites Molina and "Suarius" (Suarez?), 59 and he claims that this view is "now almost universal among modern writers." 60 And indeed, the belief that non-existent can be the objects of direct sense perception, or intuition, seems to have been very widespread among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jesuits; I have yet to find one who denies it. 61 However, the view was not universal among seventeenth-century Scholastics. The Dominican John of St. Thomas vigorously rejected it, arguing (incorrectly, I think) that it leads to a veil-of-perception theory. 62 63 His

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58 "Deus potest ex se solo producere speciem cuiuscumque objecti, et in quocumque potentia, quae versatur circa illud: cum constet eas produxisse in intellectu Angeli a principio; atque etiam cum infinita virtus eius eminenter continent objectum quocumque, atque etiam virtutem eius [objecti] objectivam, ac productivam specierum. Et eadem ratione potest speciem a se productam sine objecto conservare, sine illo in eadem potentia." De anima II, c.6, q.13 (1620, p.380)

59 Rubio refers to Molina's commentary on the Prima Pars of St. Thomas' Summa theologiae (q.55., art.2, disp.2, memb.5) and Suarez's commentary on the same (v.3, disp.53, sect.4 and disp.55, sect.2). See Ruvio, De anima c.6, q.13 (1620 ed. p.378).

60 "... est iam fere communis inter recentiores." De anima (1620) p.378.

61 See Clemenson 1991 for an examination of some other Jesuits on this question.
62 For Suarez, Rubio, the Coimbrans, and other Jesuits (Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza, Arriaga) on intuitions of non-existent objects, see Clemenson 1991, ch. 2. Earlier Scholastics such as Ockham and Aureol (and many other in the fourteenth-century) had argued for intuitions of non-existent. For references, see op. cit., 49-62. Gilson (1937, 78-82) and Pegis (1944, 465-480; 1948, 452-463) held that Ockham's position entailed skepticism; this view was combatted by Boehner (1949, 443-456; 1958).
63 Like John of St. Thomas, Timothy Cronin thinks that Suarez held a proxy theory. He quotes Suarez's claim that we can have intuitions of non-existent objects and comments "to know [an object] is to terminate objectively in the [object], not indeed in the sensible existing [object], but in the spiritual representative entity which flows from the intellect alone" (Cronin 1966, 83). But according to the dual presence theory common to Suarez and the other Jesuits discussed here, it is not true that the species "flows from the intellect alone" or that it prevents the cognitive faculty from "terminating objectively in" existing
opposition to the Jesuits on this point is further evidence that there were significant differences between Jesuit perception theory and orthodox Thomism.

Some think that an absent thing can be seen, as long as it is represented as present. This is the opinion of Fr. Suarez (De anima iii,3,n.4) and of the Coimbrans (De anima ii, ch.6, q.3, a.1). . . . Nevertheless, the opposite opinion must be held. . . . [The reason is that] experience is the foundation on which all our knowledge is based, and the means through which, as through induction, [the rest of our knowledge] comes to us. Therefore it cannot be ultimately resolved in anything but the object itself, as really existing in itself. For if it were resolved in anything other than the thing itself, e.g., in an image or an idolum or some other intermediary, one would have to compare that intermediary or idolum with the thing itself (i.e., the object) of which it is an image, in order to determine whether it [the image] is true [to the external object]—and there will always remain this difficulty of comparing the intermediary with the object of which it is the representation. Thus it is necessary, in order to have certainty and evidence in our experience, that we arrive at a cognition which of its very nature attains to things in themselves. And this is external sensation. From its very nature as a fundamental and empirical [experimentalis] form of cognition, external sensation requires the existence and presence of its object.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{64}. . . est aliquorum sententia posse rem absentem videri divinitus, dummodo repraesentetur ut praesens, Ita P. Suarez 3. de Anima cap. 13 n.4, Conimbic. 2. de Anima cap. 16 q.3 art.1. . . . Nihilominus oppositum tenendum est. . . . Cum autem experientia sit ultimum, in quod resolvitur nostra cognitio, et per quam tamquam per inductionem introducitur in nobis, non potest ultimate resolvī cognitio nisi in ipsum objectum, ut est
John of St. Thomas incorrectly charges Suarez et al. with holding a proxy theory of perception. He argues that sense cognition cannot be certain unless it presents things in themselves, and it cannot present things in themselves if it presents a mere image or intermediary. But to see or otherwise sense a non-existent the senses would have to terminate in mere appearances rather than things in themselves. The weak point in John’s argument is his assumption that direct awareness of a non-existent object requires that the object must be represented by something essentially (as opposed to existentially) distinct from itself. John seems to think that in order to have a direct perception of a non-existent one would need to have an immediate object in the mind that is distinct from the extramental object. But this is just what the dual presence theory denies. As Rubio says,

... it is not a necessary element in the definition of “intuitive cognition” that it terminate in a thing that is present in real being; it is enough that it terminate in the thing as having a “being-present” that is represented to the sense faculty. The thing has this represented existence through an internal terminus, through which the object is represented, [meaning that] it is actually and expressly known. ... [the object] can terminate the cognition through a presence that is as it were extrinsic, which it has in the expressed species of that same cognition.\(^{65}\)

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realiter in se, quia si in aliquod aliud praeter rem ipsum resolveretur, ut in imaginem vel idolum aut medium aliquod, restaret adhuc istud medium vel idolum conferre cum ipsa re seu objecto, cuius est, ut constaret, an esset verum necne. Unde semper restaret eadem difficulas conferendi istud medium cum objecto, cuius est repraesentativum. Quare necesse fuit ad habendam certitudinem et evidentiam experimentalem devenire ad cognitionem, quae ex propria sua ratione tenderet ad res in seipsas, et haec est cognitio sensus exterioris, atque adeo ex ipsa propria ratione cognitionis ultimae et experimentalis exigit obiectum esse praesens et nullo modo absens.” *Cursus* p.4, q.6, a.1 (John of St. Thomas 1948, III 171-173).

\(^{65}\) “... non est tamen necessarium ad rationem intuitivae notitiae, quod terminetur ad rem
It is noteworthy that both the Jesuits and Descartes were charged by their critics with a proxy theory, a doctrine that leads directly to skepticism. John seems to assume that anyone who holds that non-existents can be directly perceived is committed to a proxy theory. But the dual presence theory shows that this is not the case.

One of the strengths of the dual presence theory is its ability to accept perceptions of non-existents without introducing ad hoc distinctions between acts of sensation and acts of imagination.\textsuperscript{66} I mentioned in passing (note 49 above) Butchvarov's view that there are pink elephants and other objects of illusion and hallucination. Since John of St. Thomas does not accept intuitions of non-existents, he is forced to explain hallucinations, illusions, etc. as acts of imagination gone awry, which are then mistaken (by the intellect or the sensus communis) for acts of sensation.

\textbf{\ldots} it can easily happen that some other thing takes the place of what one thinks one senses, so that the sense faculty really terminates in this other thing. In this way the interior judgment is deceived, mistaking this other thing for what it \textit{thinks

\footnotesize{secundum esse reale praeamentem, sed satis est terminari ad eam, ut habentem esse praeens repraesentatum potentiae, quod habet per speciem expressam tanquam per rationem intrinsecam terminantem a qua repraesentatur objectum ut actu, et expresse cognitum \ldots potest per praeentiam quasi extrinsecam, quam habet in species expressa eiusdem cognitionis eam terminare \ldots" (Rubio 1620, 381).}

\textsuperscript{66} On the other hand, it might be objected that the doctrine of the intuition of non-existents destroys the raison d'être of the intuition concept, in that intuitions no longer guarantee the presence of their objects. After all, direct realism (at least as we have been discussing it here) is not so much an epistemological tenet as a metaphysical one. It is first and foremost a claim about the relation between cognitive acts and their objects, not a claim about the criteria for certainty (in fact, direct realism seems to have little value for epistemology, for even if we grant that every intuition presents an existent object, we will still have the problem of deciding which cognitions are intuitions). The Scholastics' concern with cognition was almost always metaphysical; epistemological questions entered modern philosophy through a separate tradition: the Renaissance revival of ancient skepticism. Descartes combines the two traditions; part of his achievement is to use the Scholastics' tools in metaphysics of cognition to help answer the skeptical doubt.
is being seen. But even in that case the sense faculty terminates directly in the thing it knows. Similarly, the imagination by its vehemence can sometimes cause a person to be deceived or deluded, thinking that he truly sees or senses something that is in fact not present. But in that case he neither sees nor senses, but only imagines that he sees or senses. We are speaking therefore of the case in which the exterior sense faculty elicits an act [of sensation] in the true and proper sense. And in this case we say that the physical presence of the exterior object to which the sense is carried, and in which the act of sense is immediately terminated, is absolutely required. It is not enough that the species be in the sense faculty representing something as present; to terminate the act, the object itself must be present.  

According to John, it can seem like we are having a visual experience when we really aren’t. It is not just that we are mistaken about the extramental existence of what we seem to see; we are mistaken about our own subjective state. John literally seems to think that when we seem to see a straight stick as bent we are using a different cognitive faculty than when we see it as straight. But this seems a desperate move; it is surely more natural to admit that sometimes our sensations report things incorrectly. The non-veridical perception of a straight stick immersed in water, in which the stick seems to be

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67 "... bene stat, quod loco alicuius objecti supponatur aliud, in quod feratur sensus et decipiatur interius judicium putans esse alterum, tamen sensus externus directe fertur in illud externum, quod sibi supponitur. Similiter potest aliquando ex vehementia imaginationis aliquid decipi aut deludi, putans se vere videre aut sentire exterius rem aliquam, quam tamen non habet praesentem. Sed tunc nec videt nec sentit exterius, sed imaginatur sentire aut videre. Loquimur ergo, quando sensus exterior vere et proprie elicit actum; et de hoc dicimus especialiter postulare, quod obiectum exterius, in quod fertur, sit praesens physic, in quod talis actus immediate terminetur, nec sufficit, quod species sit in sensu representaunt aliqut ut praesens, sed requiritur, quod ipsum
bent, seems as much an act of vision as the veridical perception of the same stick when it has pulled out of the water. In contrast, imagining a friend's face usually seems quite different from seeing it. John of St. Thomas is also committed to the view that not even God can cause a sensation of a non-existent object.

Some think it is possible for an absent thing to be sensed, as long as it is represented as present. This is the opinion of Fr. Suarez (De anima iii.3,n.4) and of the Coimbrans (De anima ii, ch.6, q.3, a.1) . . . Nevertheless, the opposite opinion must be held: it is impossible for any thing that is physically and really absent to be known immediately and in itself by an external sense faculty. . . . Against the arguments on behalf of the opposing opinion, I reply that, [although] in the absence of the object, God can conserve the sensible species through a mode of some real entity, just as he can conserve it in the air or outside of any subject (for in this the species depends, as far as its existence is concerned, on the emitting object or the sustaining subject, and God can supply the causality of existence by himself), God cannot make up for the rest of what is missing, in such a way that a cognition of the absent object would be elicited from the species in the external sense. The reason for this is that the cognition, by its very nature, must terminate in the object qua externally existing. An impressed species deposited in the sense faculty does not suffice for this—just as an angel, although he possesses an innate species, cannot know future contingents or our inmost thoughts, because such objects are not present to him in the requisite condition. 68

68 " . . . est aliquorum sententia posse rem absentem videri divinitus, dummodo representetur ut praesens, Ita P. Suarez 3. de Anima cap. 13 n.4, Conimbic. 2. de Anima
It is a very strong restriction on the divine omnipotence to say that God cannot cause us to see a non-existent object, for it does not seem to follow from the definition of sensation that we can sense only existent objects. By admitting intuitions of non-existent, Rubio, Suarez et al. were spared this embarrassment.69

Finally, John’s refusal to admit intuitions of non-existent led him to the implausible view that the colors in the rainbow really exist at a definite location in the sky. Since these colors are seen, they must be real, and if they are real then, like every other corporeal entity, they must have a definite location. He grants that in a certain sense the rainbow’s colors can be called ‘apparent’ in the sense that they are transitory and unstable, for they result merely from light, and are therefore not as stable and fixed as

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69 There may have been theological motives for John’s differences with Suarez et al. on this matter. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Jesuits were locked in bitter dispute with the Dominicans over the nature of divine grace, human freedom, and foreknowledge (it came to be known as the *De auxiliiis* controversy). The Jesuit view, championed by Suarez and Luis de Molina, stressed human freedom. It seemed to require that God have a direct knowledge (intuition) of future events, for if his knowledge were abstractive, this would seem to imply some sort of predetermination of future acts. At the same time, the Jesuits rejected Aquinas’ view that the future is now present or existent to God. Thus, God must have an intuition of non-existent, in order to have an infallible knowledge of future contingents that does not contradict their contingency. If God can have intuitions of non-existent, then it might seem at least metaphysically possible for humans to have them too. However, the possibility that the Jesuit-Dominican controversy on divine foreknowledge was related to a controversy over
colors that result from the "mixture of the elements" that compose a solid body. But in a more fundamental sense,

... the colors of the rainbow are real, because the colors of the rainbow have the essence and form of color, which results from light, the true cause of the colors (for the colors are generated out of a participation in it [light]). Thus the sense faculty does not err in judging them to be colors. Moreover it is certain that real [not apparent, in the second sense] color is the object of vision. This is the opinion of St. Thomas, [Commentaria in libros Meteorologicorum] lect.6 dub.3. 70

John gives a complicated, vague and implausible account of how light is reflected between a cloud's "vaporous or diaphanous" regions and its "dense or opaque" regions.

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intuitions of non-existents, though fascinating, is not yet verified.

70 In this footnote I quote the whole passage, which makes clear the sense in which John thinks colors in the rainbow can be called "apparent". "Quaesitio tertio, an hi colores sint veri vel apparentes. Respondetur, quod colorem esse verum, potest duplicatur accipi: Uno modo, quod ly verus sit idem, quod naturalis seu permanens in subjecto perfecte in eo habens esse, et ly apparens sit idem, quod per modum transitus et imperfecte existens. Alio modo ly verus potest sumi, prout dicit essentiam ipsam coloris, sive perfecte sive imperfecte existat. Dico ergo, quod primo modo colores iridis non sunt veri, sed apparentes, prout ly verum opponitur apparenti, quia solum ex modificatione lucis ibi apparent, non ex mixtione primarum qualitatum. Secundo vero modo colores iridis sunt veri, quia colores iridis habent essentiam et formam coloris, quae resultat ex lumine, quae est vera causa colorum, quia ex eius participatione colores fiunt, unde et sensus non fallit in coloribus dijudicans eos esse colores. Constat autem, quod color secundum veritatem est objectum visus. Ita sentit D. Thomas lect. 6. dub.3." Cursus philosophicus, Tractatus de Meteoris 4, ch.1; John of St. Thomas 1948 II, 860). Note: the preceding passage contains the letter-string 'ly', which may be unfamiliar to some readers of Latin. Presumably derived from the medieval French definite article or demonstrative pronoun, it came into vogue in late Scholastic texts as a primitive form of quotation mark: certain words closely following 'ly' were to be taken as mentioned, not used (context was supposed to make clear to the reader which words, precisely, were to be thus understood). For example, the sentence "quod colorem esse verum, potest duplicatur accipi: uno modo, quod ly verus sit idem, quod naturalis seu permanens in subjecto perfecto in eo habens esse" may be translated "that color is real may be taken in two ways: in one way, 'real' means 'natural', i.e. 'perduring in a completed subject having being in itself'".
and then refracted to produce color. Dual presence theorists in contrast are not committed to the view that whatever is seen is real. Suarez (as we have seen) explains the apparent colors on the feathers of a bird by saying that “the exterior sense . . . perceives, in some fashion, an absent thing” (see note 54, above). Such a view is easily extended to the rainbow; its colors need have no real existence at all, even if they are direct objects of vision (Rubio had a different explanation of the rainbow, however, which we will discuss in section 3).72

The dual presence theory was able to accommodate a much wider range of perceptual error than that of the Thomist John of St. Thomas, without the need to grant (with Butchvarov – see note 49) that there are pink elephants, etc. outside the mind. It was an attractive theory and was, as I will argue in the next chapter, appropriated by Descartes. It enabled him to combine direct realism and representationalism into his notion of ideas, in such a way that he could consistently doubt the existence of a host of extramental entities (e.g., colors, cold, etc.) without severing the mind’s direct contact with the outside world.

As I explained at the beginning of this section, the possibility that the objects of perception are non-existent leads naturally to the question of how we can ever be justified in claiming that our perceptions have an extramental origin. It is often thought that Descartes was the first modern thinker to pose this problem. Certainly Descartes’ solution to the problem, the cosmological argument for God’s existence, has seemed completely novel to virtually all commentators. We will now see that insofar as the cosmological argument was intended as a proof that something exists independently of

71 John of St. Thomas 1948, II, 859.
the mind, it was in some respects anticipated by a Jesuit philosopher and theologian
Roderigo de Arriaga, who shared the standard Jesuit view on intuitions of non-existent.
This will serve as an additional piece of evidence that Descartes’ theory of ideas was
rooted in concepts he inherited from his Jesuit teachers.

The Jesuit Roderigo de Arriaga (1592 -1667) was from 1626 to 1641 a lecturer
and professor of theology at the University of Prague, and seems to have enjoyed a
European reputation as an acute and original thinker. He was a friend of the famous
Jesuit mathematician Gregory of St. Vincent, and he receives a separate entry in Pierre
Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*. Bayle portryas him as something of a rebel and freethinker, at least
by seventeenth-century Jesuit standards.

He published many books, in which he shows great subtlety of mind . . . He
departed from the universal opinion of the School on several matters of physics,
e.g., the composition of the continuum, rarefaction, etc.—that is why he
undertook to defend those who innovate in philosophy. It is a pity that such a
clear and penetrating intellect did not have more acquaintance with the true
principles [of philosophy], for he could have advanced them very far.  

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72 See ch. 1, section 2.
73 He was, it seems, even the subject of a little Latin rhyme, *adire ad Pragam et audire
Arriagam* (“go to Prague and hear Arriaga”). There was also reportedly a saying current
in the seventeenth century that Bohemia possessed two things of outstanding value:
74 Gregory mentions him gratefully in the preface to the *Problema austriacum* for having
saved the manuscript of the work from destruction when Saxon troops pillaged the
75 Baille 1820, 438.
Arriaga was so avant-garde that the Jesuit authorities at one point prohibited instructors from using his works in their courses.\textsuperscript{76} His reputation as an innovator is supported by the argument I am about to describe. Arriaga attempts to show how we can know that our representations of the external world are not simply the product of our own minds. Descartes too, of course, devoted much thought to this question. Descartes' answer ultimately depends on his cosmological argument for the existence of God, in which he tries to show that one idea at least, that of God, cannot possibly be the product of our own minds. He does this by showing that the human mind can neither formally nor eminently contain all the \textit{realitas}, or formal content, of the thing we call 'God'.

Similarly, Arriaga tries to demonstrate that our ideas of ordinary sensible objects cannot be the product of our own minds, by showing that the human mind can neither formally nor eminently contain the formal content (which Arriaga refers to as \textit{formalitas}) of sensible things. Furthermore, Arriaga published his argument in 1632, five years before the appearance of Descartes' first publication, the \textit{Discourse on Method}, so he certainly was not influenced by Descartes. Arriaga begins by demolishing (at great length) a standard Scholastic proof of the external origin of sense impressions:

Some recent authors . . . say that a cognition is an expressed representation and image of the object, and an image must originate in the object . . . [That a cognition is an expressed representation and image of the object] is proved as follows. An image is commonly defined as something expressed for the purpose of [\textit{ad}] representing, but a cognition is something expressed for the purpose of [\textit{ad}] representing an object; therefore it is the object's image. [That an image

\textsuperscript{76} Fabrat 1971, 220-225. The ban was later lifted.
must originate in the object] is proved as follows. ‘Image’ is commonly taken to
mean something produced by that of which it is an image (for this reason the
eternal Father is not the image of the Son, but the Son is the image of the Father,
because the Father is not produced by the Son, but the Son by the Father).

(Arriaga 1632, 696b)

The argument that Arriaga criticizes obviously equivocates on the word ‘image’. At the
beginning of the argument, ‘image’ is defined merely as a representation, and on that
basis cognitions are proved to be images. But then ‘image’ is re-defined as a
representation that originates from what it represents. The argument that Arriaga is
critiquing never bothers to prove that cognitions are images in this second sense. Arriaga
notes the fallacy, though he labels it a vicious circularity rather than an equivocation. His
opponents, he says, define an image as a likeness produced by that of which it is a
likeness, but they have no independent proof that the intentional species is an image.

Here is an obvious circle, and a begging of the question: for they “prove” that a
cognition must originate from an object by the fact that it is an image of the
object, yet they have no proof that it is an image, other than that the cognition
must proceed from the object.

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77 “Aliqui recentiores accurate rem examinare cupientes, dicunt, cognitionem esse
repraesentationem expressam, et imaginem objecti: atque imago debet oriri ab objecto.
Consequentia videtur bona. Maior probatur, quia communis definitio imaginis ea est, ut
sit expressa ad repraesentandum, sed cognitio est expressa ad repraesentandum objectum,
 Ergo est imago illius. Minorem etiam probant ex communi acceptione imaginis, quod
scilicet debeat produci ab imaginato, ideo enim Pater aeternus non est imago Filii, sic
vero e contrario Filius est imago Patris, quia Pater non producitur a Filio, sic vero Filius a
Patre.”

78 “Ecce ergo manifestum circumst, et petitionem principii: probant enim, cognitionem
debere oriri ab objecto, quia est imago illius; eam autem esse imaginem, non aliter
probant, quam quia petit procedere ab objecto.” Arriaga 1632, 697a.
He presses the point further. Experience, he says, does not tell us that sense impressions originate outside the mind. Nor can we infer that they originate outside the mind from the simple fact that we have them, for since God knows creatures, he has intentional representations of them, yet these representations do not enter his mind from outside.

By experience we know only that in a cognition an object is manifested to us.

From this we can infer only that the cognition is a representation of the object.

But that, in addition, the cognition is also an image of the object, is not experienced, nor can it be inferred from the mere fact that cognition is a representation—just as it cannot be inferred in the case of divine cognition.

(Arriaga 1632, 697b)\(^79\)

Arriaga’s claim that experience warrants only the claim that we are “appeared to”, not the claim that these appearances represent extramental objects, bears comparison with the passage from Descartes’ Third Meditation quoted at the beginning of this section (I include a bit more of the context here):

But I previously admitted as wholly certain and evident many things that I afterward realized were dubious. What were these? The earth, the sky, stars, and everything else that I apprehend by the senses. Even now I do not deny that those idea are in me. But there was something else I used to claim, and which, out of a habit of credulousness, I even used to think that I clearly perceived, but which in fact I did not perceive: namely that there were certain things outside me, from

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\(^79\) “... nos tantum experimur, per cognitionem nobis manifestari objectum, unde solum possumus inferre, cognitionem esse representaetionem illius; verum eam cognitionem ultra hoc habere etiam esse imaginem objeci, neque experimur, nec ex eo, quod sit representaetatio, potest inferri, ut non infertur in cognitione divina, neque est alius caput unde id persuadeatur.” (sect. 157)
which those ideas proceeded and which were entirely similar to them. And in this I was mistaken—or if I was right, it was certainly not on account of any perception of mine. (AT VII, 35)

The similarity is obvious, and significant. Arriaga and Descartes are proceeding from a common starting point, and driving toward similar conclusions. The common starting point is not, however the proxy theory that John of St. Thomas attributed to the Jesuits and that many modern philosophers have attributed to Descartes. Rather, it is the dual presence theory’s doctrine that non-existent objects can be directly perceived.

After demolishing the traditional Scholastic proofs for the external origin of sense impressions, Arriaga tries to construct a proof of his own. The characteristics of physical objects—their colors, shapes, etc.—are represented to the mind whenever they are known. Now these characteristics are not of necessity (necessario) contained in the mind; there is nothing in the essence of mind that would lead us to expect that it contains (whether in real being or objective being) characteristics such as white or the other colors. Yet they are there (in objective being). So they must have been produced in the mind by some cause outside the mind, and this cause can only be the object whose characteristics are represented in the cognition.

As yet I have found scarcely any a priori ground (rationem) [for the claim that cognitions require species originating outside the mind]. The following one occurs to me (mihi occurit), for what it is worth. Although a cognition’s properties (predicatis) are not physically similar to those of its object, it unfolds (explicat) and represents all of them. A potency (for example, our intellect) does not at first contain in itself the characteristics (formalitates) of the object, and for
that reason the object is as it were hidden from it. Thus, in order for the intellect to produce a cognition that expresses (dicentem) all the characteristics (formalitates) of the object, it seems necessary for the intellect to be helped by the object itself, or by a substitute in which these characteristics are contained as in a seed. And this is the impressed species. That a cognition represents and manifests to the intellect the characteristics and properties (predicata) of the object (whether few or many, depending on the cognition and the species), is so certain that it needs no proof. And it is clear that the intellect does not of necessity contain these characteristics, for the intellect does not contain white, or color, or the elements [i.e., air, earth, water, fire], etc. Therefore the intellect cannot, from itself alone, express these characteristics (eas dicere formalitates). Therefore it must be aided by the object itself, in order to manifest them through a cognition. (Arriaga 1632, 699a)\textsuperscript{80}

Compare Descartes’ argument for the external origin of the idea of God.

... so far it has only been from a blind impulse, and not by any certain judgement, that I have believed in the existence of things other than myself that

\textsuperscript{80} “Species requiri ad cognitionem, efficaciter videtur ostendi a posteriori experientiis Sect. 1. adductis. A priori autem vix ullam invenio rationem. Ea mihi occurrit (valeat quantum possit) quia licet cognitio non sit similis physice obiecto in praedicatis illius, omnia tamen illa explicat ac repraesentat; cumque potentia, v.g. intellectus noster, inprimis non contineat in se eas formalitates obiecti, et aliunde obiectum sit illi quasi occultum, videtur necessarium, ut possit intellectus producere cognitionem, dicentem omnes formalitates obiecti, eum iuvari vel ab obiecto ipso, vel ab aliquo substituto, in quo quasi in semine haec formalitates contincantur: hoc autem est species impressa. Quod cognitio repraesentet et manifestet intellectui formalitates et praedicata obiecti, vel plura, vel pauciora, prout fuerit cognitio et species, est certius, quam probatione indiget. Quod vero intellectus non necessario eas formalitates contineat probatur clare: nam intellectus non continet albedinem, colorem, elementa, etc. ergo intellectus non potest ex se solo eas dicere formalitates; ergo eget concursu ipsius obiecti, ut possit per
send ideas or images of themselves to me through the sense organs, or in whatever other way you will. But now another way occurs to me (mihi occurit) for inquiring whether some of the things whose ideas are inside me exist outside me. . . . if we grant that something is found in the idea which was not in its cause, it [the idea] will have this from nothing (a nihilò). But however imperfect the mode of being by which a thing is objectively in the intellect, it is certainly not a complete nothing (plane nihil), and so it cannot come from nothing. . . . if some objective reality from my ideas is so great that I am certain it is neither formally nor eminently in me, and that therefore I myself cannot be the cause of its idea, it follows necessarily from this that I am not alone in the world, but that another thing exists too, which is the cause of this idea. But if no such idea is found in me, I have no argument at all that will render me certain of the existence of something different from myself. For I have examined all very diligently, and I have not been able to find any other [that works]. (AT VII, 39-42)

There is an obvious and important difference between the two proofs: for Descartes, the idea that cannot be caused by the mind is the idea of God, while for Arriaga it is the ideas of physical things. Nevertheless, both are claiming to find an idea in the mind that, in virtue of what it represents, requires an extramental cause. This attempt to argue from ideas to the world was something new, and it struck Descartes' critic Caterus as outlandish. In his view, ideas, considered in their representative capacity, require no cause at all.

cognitionem eas manifestare." (sect. 168)
What cause, I ask you, does an idea require? Or rather, what is an idea? It is the thing itself that is thought about, insofar as it is objectively in the intellect. But what does it mean to be objectively in the intellect? As I learned it, it means to terminate the act of the intellect in the mode of an object. But this is clearly an extrinsic denomination; it is nothing in the thing (nihil rei) . . . What cause am I to seek for what is not in act, for what is a mere name (nuda determinatio)—i.e., nothing? . . . He [Descartes] goes on: “but however imperfect the mode of being by which a thing is objectively in the intellect, it is certainly not a complete nothing, and so it cannot come from nothing”. This is an equivocation. If “nothing” means a being that is not in act, then [this mode of being] is entirely nothing (for it is not in act), and so [this mode of being] is from nothing, that is, it has no cause. If on the other hand “nothing” is supposed to mean something fashioned by the mind (which is commonly called an ens rationis), then [this mode of being] is not nothing, but something real that is distinctly conceived. Nevertheless, though it can be conceived, it cannot have any cause, for it is only conceived, and is not in act. (First Objection, AT VII, 93-94)

We do not know much about Caterus’ philosophical background, whether he was closer to orthodox Thomists such as John of St. Thomas or to the more liberal Jesuits such as Rubio and Arriaga (see note 86 below). But it is clear that with regard to the philosophy of perception Arriaga and Descartes have a great deal more in common than either has with Caterus.

Arriaga next considers the objection that, just as God’s mind contains representations of things that do not produce those representations, so representations in
the human mind need not be caused by what they represent. He replies that God
eminently contains the objects of his cognition, while the human mind does not.

... divine cognition does not require the help of its object, because since God
contains in himself in a more eminent way all the perfections of creatures, and so
can produce them of himself, he does not need to be helped by anything external,
in order to express and manifest them through cognition. But since our intellect
does not contain them (as is known per se) it needs (though God does not) to be
helped by the object, if it is to express these characteristics (ad explicandas eas
formalitates). (Arriaga 1632, 699a-699b)\textsuperscript{81}

Just as Descartes will say that it is evident per se (by the “natural light”) that the human
mind cannot formally or eminently contain all the realitas, the infinity of intelligibility,
that goes to make up the intelligible (though incomprehensible) object we call “God”, so
Arriaga takes it as evident that the human mind does not formally or eminently contain
the characteristics that belong to the things we call “physical objects”.

The similarities between Arriaga's argument and Descartes' cosmological
argument can be summarized as follows.

- Both arguments begin with a claim that they are solving a problem no one has solved
  before.
- Both aim to show not merely that there are things independent of the mind, but that
  our cognitions are caused by mind-independent things.

\textsuperscript{81} “Melius ergo ad rem praesentem respondeo, cognitionem divinam non indigere obiecti
adiutorio: quia, cum Deus contineat in se omnes creaturarum perfectiones eminenteri
modo, ideoque possit eas producere etiam solus, non est necessarium ad hoc, ut per
cognitionem, eas exprimat et manifestet, eum ab alio extrinseco iuvari; cum autem
intellectus eas non contineat (ut est per se notum) oportuit ut hic iuvaretur ab obiecto, non
• Both claim that experience cannot reveal that our cognitions are caused by something outside, and demolish the standard arguments for this common sense belief.

• Both claim to provide a proof of the external origin of cognition that is based solely on what can be discerned from ideas considered solely as representative entities in the mind.  

• Both are replete with talk of “images”, where the term is taken to mean something that is caused by what it represents.

• The concepts of “formal” and “eminent” containment are essential to both.

• Both are based on a claim that there are certain objects (Arriaga: physical qualities; Descartes: God) whose ideas the human soul neither formally nor eminently contains.

Of course the important differences between the two arguments must not be overlooked. For one thing, Arriaga’s argument is comparatively undeveloped. He fails to show that the extramental causes of our ideas (assuming for the moment that these really do exist) are as our ideas represent them to be. Even assuming that a cognition of white must be caused by something outside the mind, since the mind does not contain it formally or eminently, it is not clear that this something is itself white. Perhaps Arriaga would reply that the white-in-objective-being must originate somewhere, and that this origin can only be the external cause of the cognition. But (to stay within the categories of Scholastic philosophy) such a response overlooks the possibility that the external cause, whatever it

vero Deus, ad explicandas eas formalitates.” (sect. 169)

82 The attitudes of both exemplify what Husserl would later call the ‘epoche’, the suspension of judgement as to the extramental existence of the objects of consciousness (Husserl 1962, 98-100). For a study of some similarities between Husserl and the late Scholastics, see Vanni Rovighi, “Una fonte remota della teoria husserliana dell’intenzionalità, Studia di filosofia medioevale. Milano: Pubblicazioni “Vita e Pensiero” della Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Vol. 2, pp. 283-398.
is, eminently contains white, while not being actually or formally white. So even if Arriaga has given a reason to believe in an external world, he has given no reason to think that that world is as we perceive it. Descartes' cosmological argument for God's existence is clearly superior in this respect, for if the idea of an infinitely perfect being must be caused by something outside the mind that itself possesses infinite perfection either formally or eminently, then the existence of an infinitely perfect being is proved.

Another gap in Arriaga's argument is its failure adequately to address the possibility that, independently of any causal influence from outside itself, the mind does contain (either formally or eminently) objects such as the color white. Since the mind has a higher degree of reality than any merely physical quality or substance, it alone may suffice to cause our ideas of physical entities. Again, the cosmological argument is superior. Descartes readily grants that the human mind is sufficient to cause such ideas.

As for ideas of corporeal things, there is nothing in them that is so great that it seems unable to have proceeded from myself; for if I make a careful examination ... I find that what I clearly and distinctly perceive in them amounts to very little, sc., magnitude (i.e., extension in length, breadth and height), shape (which arises from the termination of that extension), place (which diverse shapes (figurata) hold in relation to each other) and motion (i.e., change of place), to which can be added substance, duration and number. As for the rest—light and color, sounds, odors, tastes, heat and cold, and the other tactile qualities — I think of these only in a very confused and obscure way, to the point that I do not even know whether they are true or false, i.e., whether the ideas I have of these are ideas of things or of non-things (non rerum). (AT VII, 43)
The very things that Arriaga takes to be clearly non-mental, the four physical elements with their basic tactile qualities of heat, cold, dry and wet, together with the colors, etc., are for Descartes so lacking in intelligibility that he doubts whether they even merit the name ‘thing’ (res). Their degree of thing-hood (realitas, “reality”) is so low that there is no difficulty in believing them to be eminently contained, and thus caused, by the human mind.

Considering both the similarities and the dissimilarities just listed, one might conjecture that Descartes knew of Arriaga’s argument, noted all the defects we have just discussed, and worked out a new and improved argument for the external origin of one of our ideas, that of God. It is a tempting hypothesis. The logic immanent to Arriaga’s proof would naturally lead Descartes to search for an object which, unlike physical objects, was so perfect that its “reality” or degree of perfection could not possibly be thought of as originating in the human mind. The obvious choice is the infinitely perfect essence of God. In addition, there are some tantalizing textual similarities. Descartes and Arriaga each says that his proof occurred to him (mihī occurrīt) only after exhausting all other routes toward the solution. Each considers and rejects the possibility that the human soul could “eminently” (eminenter) contain all that is represented in its ideas. Each spends considerable time demolishing the grounds for the common sense belief that our ideas of external physical objects are “images” (imagīnes), effects of what they represent. And Descartes’ notion of realitas seems similar to Arriaga’s formalitas, the formal content of the object of cognition. And then there is the fact that the first edition of Arriaga’s Cursus philosophicus was printed at Antwerp in 1632. At that time Descartes was living nearby, in Holland, where Arriaga seems to have been well-
known. DesCartes was not a hermit; there would have been ample opportunity in the early- to mid-1630s for him to have heard of Arriaga, and to have obtained a copy of the work.

But however tempting it is to see a Jesuit connection here, the scenario I have described is certainly false, if we are to believe DesCartes. In a letter to Mersenne dated 30 November 1640, DesCartes says that he has not read the Scholastics for twenty years, since his days at La Flèche. Though this might mean only that since then he had not studied them extensively or diligently, as we may assume he did at La Flèche, the remark seems to foreclose the possibility of any direct influence of Arriaga on DesCartes. And even apart from this letter, there is reason to doubt any direct connection to Arriaga. The Cursus philosophicus is a very work, and the argument I have just described is a very small and insignificant part of it; it has nothing like the importance in Arriaga's philosophy that the cosmological argument has in DesCartes' though. It seems very unlikely that DesCartes would have pored over Arriaga's book long enough to discover the passages I have quoted.

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83 Martin Schook (b. 1614, Utrecht) mentions Arriaga (together with Zabarella, Fonseca, Goclenius, Keckermann, Burgursdij and others) in his Collegium logicum (1658) and recommends his readers to study him "sedulously" (Dibon 1954, 185). In addition, he cites Arriaga in his 1661 Tractatus philosophicus de Nihilo (Dibon 1954, 186). (For more information on the state of philosophy in the Netherlands in this period see Dibon, L'enseignement philosophique dans les universités néerlandaises à l'époque pré-Cartésienne (1575-1630) (Leiden, 1954.).
84 See Cohen 1920, 471-482, 491 ff.
85 It is too far-fetched to imagine that DesCartes deliberately deceived Mersenne on this point. Of course, it is possible that DesCartes read Arriaga sometime in the early- to mid-1630s and later forgot that he had done so, but it seems unlikely (though not impossible – DesCartes was not especially good at acknowledging his intellectual debts. Cf. his treatment of Isaac Beeckman, which I discuss toward the end of chapter 2, section 1). Slightly more likely is the hypothesis that DesCartes learned of the argument indirectly or by hear-say.
The similarities between the two arguments should instead be taken to confirm the more modest point that Arriaga and Descartes were part of a common conceptual framework or tradition, a tradition (unlike the Thomist tradition of John of St. Thomas and, perhaps, Caterus\footnote{Little is known about Caterus’ education and intellectual background – too little to know whether he ought to be considered a Thomist. He matriculated at Louvain in 1620 and may have been acquainted with Jansenius, the controversial theologian and author of \textit{Augustinus}. See Verbeek 1995, 21-25, 29-30.}) in which the existence of the objects of cognition could not be taken for granted, and in which causes for cognitions must be sought outside the soul – provided the soul could not have been the source of the “reality” of those cognitions. In short, Arriaga’s argument testifies to the close relationship between Descartes’ concept of “idea” and the philosophy of intentional species developed by the early seventeenth-century Jesuits. A full five years before Descartes’ first publication of the cosmological argument we see a Jesuit Scholastic using the principle of causality and \textit{esse objectivum} as the basis for a proof that these ideas must have an extrametual origin. At the beginning of this section we saw that Gilson regarded this feature of the cosmological argument as a crucial innovation; we now see that it was anticipated by the Jesuits, from whom (I believe) Descartes derived his dual presence theory of ideas.\footnote{Little is known about Caterus’ education and intellectual background – too little to know whether he ought to be considered a Thomist. He matriculated at Louvain in 1620 and may have been acquainted with Jansenius, the controversial theologian and author of \textit{Augustinus}. See Verbeek 1995, 21-25, 29-30.}

3. Rubio on Objective Intension and Extension, Clear and Distinct Representation, and \textit{Esse Objectivum} as an Intrinsic Denomination

To conclude this chapter’s survey of the Jesuit dual presence theory of perception I will examine three more aspects of the theory that seem to anticipate Cartesian doctrine, namely the notions of \textit{realitas objectiva}, clear and distinct representation, and \textit{esse objectivum} as an intrinsic denomination.

\textit{a. Objective Intension and Extension}
Descartes' notion of *realitas objectiva*, objective reality, and his constantly repeated phrase 'clear and distinct' are foreshadowed by Antonio Rubio's treatment of *intensio objectiva, entitas*, and *claritas ac distinctio* in Questions VIII and IX of his "Treatise on Sensible Objects and Species".\(^8\) Question IX, "Whether A Species Impressed by an Object with Divisible Intension Is Divisible in its Intension" (*An species impressa ab objecto divisibili secundum intensionem sit etiam divisibilis secundum intensionem*), includes a discussion of the conditions under which ideas represent their objects clearly and distinctly (*clare et distincte*), and briefly discusses how the infinite *intensio objectiva* of God's perfect essence is represented by a finite species in the human mind.

Scholastic philosophy analyzed qualities in terms of extension and intension.\(^9\) According to Rubio, a quality's 'extension' is a collective predicate that applies to all the parts informed by the quality.

[The term] 'extension' signifies the diverse parts of an [an object's] being [*entitas*]. It is not found in a single part of the subject, but, necessarily, in various parts . . .\(^9\)

A quality's intension is its perfection, intensity or strength at a given part of the subject: "The intension of a form is its perfection with respect to one and the same part". Rubio

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\(^8\) See Wells 1990, 39 n.14 for a related criticism of Gilson.

\(^9\) 'Intension' here is not to be confused with 'intension' as it is used in twentieth-century philosophy, sc., as a semantic property, supposed by some philosophers to belong to predicates, distinct from the predicate's extension (the set of objects that satisfy the predicate). Scholastic philosophers from the fourteenth century on used 'intension' to designate the intensity or perfection of a quality or attribute.

\(^9\) See Maier 1951, 3-109 for an in-depth discussion of the medieval Scholastic literature on intension and extension.

\(^9\) "*extensio enim diversas partes entitatis eius dicit, nec in una repeitur, in eadem..."
considers not only qualities, but also “entities” (*entitates*), to have intension (Rubio seems to have understood a thing’s “entity” to be the collection of all the essential or accidental properties that make it what it is; more on this below). Like extension, intension was thought to have degrees, and therefore to be divisible. For example an intense, bright white might be said to have seven or eight degrees of whiteness; a dull, grey white might have only one or two.

Question IX concerns the intension not of qualities or objects *qua* actual, but of the intentional species that represent them — that is, the qualities or objects *qua* represented. Rubio claims that any physical quality having *x* degrees of intension must be represented by a species having *x* degrees of intension. Thus a given quality or object can have an actual intension, insofar as it is actual, and also an objective intension, insofar as it is re-presented (present “again”) in a species. However, there are certain qualities that have no divisible intension: number, size and shape (*numerus*, *magnitudo*, *formae*).

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subjiciendi parte: sed necessario in diversis. . . .” Rubio 1620, 343.

91 That is, sensible qualities *qua* in physical or real being, as distinct from sensible qualities *qua* in intentional or objective being (i.e., the intentional species).

92 The species has an actual intension of its own, independent of the objective intension that is identical to the intension of the object. Its actual intension is nothing other than the clarity and distinctness with which it represents the object. “Both the species itself and the cognition formally represent the object with more or less clarity and distinctness, and therefore [are] more or less [of a] representational perfection. Their intension consists in this [representational perfection]. [The representation] must of necessity be formal, since no image is a virtual representation. On the contrary, [being a representation] is [an image’s] formal perfection.” (“. . . species ipsa in se, atque etiam cognitio formaliter repraesentat objectum secundum maiorem vel minorem claritatem, ac distinctionem, et ideo maior perfectio, vel minor repraesentandi, in qua consistit intensio earum: necessario debet esse formalis: cum non detur in imagine repraesentatio virtualis, sed repraesentatio ipsa sit perfectio formalis eius.” Rubio 1620, 350-51)

93 Rubio sometimes says that they have no “latitude” of intension; sometimes he simply says that they have no intension.
These qualities differ only in extension, not in intension; according to Rubio a thing cannot be more or less twelve, or an acre, or spherical. For this reason it might be thought that the objective intension of these qualities would be indivisible as well. But in Rubio's view this is not the case. A given object — say, a whiteness with 4 degrees of intension — can be objectively or intentionally present with more or less clarity and distinctness, so that these 4 degrees of whiteness can be re-presented with 2, 3, 4, etc. degrees of clarity and distinctness. This means that there are two possible ways for an intension to be divisible in objective being — either in its "entity" (i.e. inasmuch as it is the sort of thing — e.g. whiteness — that can be more or less intense) or in the clarity and distinctness with which it is objectively or intentionally present. Objective intensions that are, from the standpoint of their "entity", indivisible (e.g., the intension of being twelve or being spherical) can still be divisible from the standpoint of the clarity and distinctness with which they are objectively or intentionally present. This second mode of divisibility amounts to an intensity with which things are objectively present. Unlike actual being, objective being comes in "more" and "less". The more clearly and distinctly a thing is re-presented, the more "objectively present" it is. For example, a collection of twelve bowling pins can be objectively present in my visual faculty so

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94 Note that these are three of the four qualities classically recognized as "primary" by the mechanical philosophers. The fourth, motion, is absent because for the Scholastics a motion's intension is speed: a motion is more or less perfect according to its speed. This reflects the Aristotelian definition of motion as the act of a being in being in potency, insofar as it is in potency (Physics III, 1, 201a10), ridiculed by Descartes in Le Monde ch. 7 (AT XI, 39; CSM I, 93-94).

95 In one sense a thing can be more or less spherical, sc., in the degree to which its shape approximates a perfect sphere. But apparently what Rubio has in mind by shape is not a set of perfect geometrical figures (like the Platonic solids), to which any shape of a real thing is merely an approximation, but rather the real, physical boundaries of things. A thing cannot possess more or less perfectly the shape that it actually has, any more than it
weakly— with so little clarity and distinctness— that I cannot distinguish it from a
collection of eleven bowling pins. Or a certain degree of whiteness can be objectively
present with so little clarity and distinctness that I see it as grey (Rubio seems to think
that the degree to which a thing can be objectively present is bounded by the intension—
so that an infinite intension such as God’s perfection can have infinite objective
presence).

And so we have granted to species two divisibilities with respect to intension, or
two modes of intensive divisibility . . .: the first is divisibility by reason of the
several degrees or degree-parts of the object’s intension, which [this first
divisibility] can represent; the second is by reason of the greater or lesser
perfection with which [this second divisibility] can represent that same degree, or
those same degrees, of the object’s intension— or [with which] indeed, [it can
represent] that same entity having intension not in itself, but only in relation to the
species.96

Rubio’s reference to an “entity having intension not in itself but only in relation to the
species” is intended to cover qualities lacking degrees of intension, such as size, number
and shape, and also objects other than sensible qualities, such as intelligible essences, for
(as we shall soon see) he applies these categories to a discussion of the infinite perfection
of the divine essence, and how the human intellect can represent it.

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96 “Duas itaque divisibilitates secundum intensionem concedimus his speciebus, vel
duos modos divisibilitatis intensivae . . .: prior divisibilitas est ratione plurium graduum;
vel gradualium partium intensionis objecti, quas potest praesentare; posterior ratione
majoris, vel minoris perfectionis secundum quam potest praesentare eundum, vel
eosdem gradus intensionis objecti, vel certe eandem entitatem nullam intensionem in se
habentem, sed solum respectu speciei.” (Rubio 1620, 349-350).
Rubio calls these two kinds of intensive divisibility ‘formal’ and ‘virtual’, respectively. The first is the divisibility of the object’s intension as re-presented in the species; the second is the divisibility of that “strength” with which that intension is objectively present. Since the degree to which an intension is objectively present is extrinsic to its essence, unlike the degree to which an intension is (say) white, which is part and parcel of what it is, Rubio calls this divisibility “virtual”.

As for the first argument against my position, we must reject its minor premise, sc., that both modes of intensive divisibility [formal and virtual] are impossible. And since the [possibility of] the former is impugned on the grounds that there are many objects having no intension in themselves, we must distinguish two kinds of [divisibility in] objective intension, formal and virtual: formal [divisibility of objective intension] is possessed by those qualities that are objects of the senses by an accumulation (additionem) of degrees. Virtual [divisibility of objective intension] is an essential or entitative perfection which an object has in itself from its own nature, however indivisible [this perfection may be], insofar as [this perfection] can be more or less clearly and distinctly perceived by the [cognitive] potency that concerns it. If I am not mistaken, this [virtual objective intensity] should be posited even in the divine essence . . .

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97 Rubio’s use of the term ‘formal’ *intensio objectiva* to signify the divisibility of the object’s intension qua re-presented can be confusing, since ‘formal’ is often equivalent to ‘actual’. But in late Scholastic usage the term ‘formal’ is often equivalent to ‘in the strict sense’ (cf. Suarez’s ‘formal concept’ and ‘objective concept’).

98 “Ad primum argumentum pro negativa parte propositum, neganda est minor, quod impossibilis sit uterque ille modus divisibilitatis intensivae. Et cum impugnatur posterior ex eo, quod plura sunt obiecta nullam intentionem in se habentia, distinguendum est de intensione objectiva. Nam duplex est, formalis una, et virtualis altera: formalis est, quam habent qualitates ipsae, quae sunt obiecta sensuum per additionem graduum. Virtualis
Rubio regards the perfection of the divine essence or “entity” as having an intension, though its perfect simplicity and indivisibility mean that, like size, number and shape, it does not come in degrees: a thing cannot be “more” or “less” God any more than it can be “more” or “less” twelve. But insofar as this perfection, though indivisible in itself, can have varying degrees of objective presence – varying degrees of clarity and distinctness – in finite minds, it is divisible (cf. Descartes’ distinction between the simplicity of God’s nature in itself and its complexity *quoad nos*, chapter 2, note 166 below).

[a virtual divisibility of objective intension is to be posited in the divine essence] because it can be seen more or less clearly and distinctly by the blessed, whose essential beatitude is more or less perfect in proportion to this intension. [The divisibility of the objective intension] is virtual in the object, but formal in the act of intellect [the objective concept] of the one who beholds [the divine essence]. From this it is understood *a priori* why the divine essence cannot be comprehended by any created intellect, for that virtual [divisibility of the] objective intension is actually infinite, just as [God’s] entity is actually infinite in itself. Therefore it cannot all be seen by a created intellect, and this means it cannot be comprehended, since to comprehend an object is to cognize it to the degree that it can be cognized.99

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99 *... cum possit magis, et minus clare ac distincte videri a beatis, quorum beatitudo essentialis magis, et minus perfecta est ratione huius intensionis; virtualis quiedem in objecto, formalis vero in actu intellectus illud videntis. Et ex ea intelligitur a priori, propter quam non potest comprehendi divina essentia ab aliquo intellectu creato, quia intensio illa virtualis obiectiva est actu infinita, sicut entitas eius actu infinita est in se:*
Since the perfection of the divine essence is indivisibly infinite, this perfection—considered in itself—can be objectively present in any degree from zero (if it is not objectively present at all) up to infinity. But since the human mind is finite, it cannot bestow infinite objective presence on anything, not even if that thing, considered in itself, is of such a nature that (were the human mind’s capacity infinite) it could have infinite objective presence. Rubio has given an elegant and plausible explanation of how it is that the human mind can have an idea of the divine nature, yet fail to comprehend it.

Although Descartes might have disagreed with the claim that the divine essence is seen more or less clearly and distinctly by different minds (in *Meditations* III he says that the idea of God is the clearest and most distinct we have but if, as Rubio claims, there is variation in the degree of clarity and distinctness then it might be that someone’s idea of God could be so obscure and confused that for that person the idea of a triangle (for example) is clearer and more distinct than the idea of God), Rubio’s explanation of the incomprehensibility of the divine essence may help explain Descartes well-known distinction between having an idea of the divine essence and comprehending it. (Note, however, that Rubio speaks of the human mind’s having a non-comprehensive vision of God only after death, in the Beatific Vision, while for Descartes the human mind has this non-comprehensive vision or “idea” even in this life.)

Prior to the discussion of objective intension in Question IX, Rubio treats objective *extension*, in Question VIII. This is a topic of which nothing, he says, is found in older writers (“nihil de divisibilitate specierum reperietur apud antiquiores, sed a solis

ergo non potest secundum totam videri ab intelectu creato, et proinde nec ab eo comprehendi, cum comprehensio sit cognitio objecti, quantum cogniscibilie est.” (Rubio 1620, 350).
recentioribus disputari caepit” Rubio 1620, 334). Objective extension is the divisibility of the species’ representativity or intentionality, so that a species has objective extension if there is a one-to-one correspondence between the parts of the species and the parts of the object. Species without objective extension would represent their objects in such a way that each part of the species would represent the entirety of the object.

the title of this section (quaestio) asks “Apart from the divisibility or extension that sensible species have from their subject,¹⁰¹ do they have another relative to their object (in ordine ad objectum)?” Because of this [relationship to the object], the latter is called ‘objective extension’. . . as the subject [e.g. the medium] in which the species is received has parts of extension, so does the object it represents. Therefore just as it is coextended with its subject, so that each part of the species is in a part of the subject, and not the whole species in one part of the subject, it seems necessary that it is also coextended with the object in its manner of representing the object, and since the object is divisible and extended, the species will represent it in such a way that the whole represents the whole, and the part represents a part, and consequently the indivisible parts of the species will represent the indivisible parts of the object. And so just as a subjective extension is attributed to the species from its relation to the extended subject, so by the same

¹⁰⁰ AT VII, 37.
¹⁰¹ In speaking of the extension that species get from the subject in which they inhere, Rubio has in mind a species in the medium, not a species in the soul (for the soul has no extension). For example, a species of red is emitted by a rose into the medium between the rose and the eye, and as an accident of that medium the species is an accident with place and extension.
reasoning an objective extension ought to be attributed to it from its relation to the extended object.\textsuperscript{102}

Rubio reports Toletus as rejecting objective extension in his \textit{De anima}, book II, q. 34 (Rubio 1620, 335), but he himself affirms it and gives arguments for his position.

We might naively suppose that what Rubio means here is that, say, the left-hand side of an image or species in the retina represents a corresponding side (sc. the right-hand side) of the external object. But this is not what he has in mind. The one-to-one correspondence between the parts of the species and the parts of the object is not between the external object and the species qua \textit{actual}, i.e. the species in the subject (e.g. the medium or the retina), but between the external object – the object qua actual – and the species qua \textit{intentional}.

\ldots it is necessary that in the whole subject and each of its parts there are as many parts of the objective extension as there are parts of the object, from which that same objective extension is received, otherwise it would be impossible to

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\textsuperscript{102} "\ldots quaerit titulus quaestionis, an praeter hanc divisibilitatem extensionis subjectivam aliam divisibilitatem extensionis habeat species in ordine ad objectum, quae ideo appeletur extensio objectiva. \ldots sicut subjectum in quo recipitur: habet partes extensionis, ita objectum, quod representat: ergo sicut coextenditur subjecto, ita ut quaelibet pars speciei sit in parte suiecti, \& non tota in aliqua parte, videtur necessarium, quod coextendatur etiam objecto in modo representandi illud, \& cum objectum sit divisibile, \& extensum, species ipsa modo divisibili illud repraesentabit, ita ut tota repraesentat totum, \& pars partem, \& consequenter indivisibilia speciei individibilia eiusdem objectis \& ita sicut tribuitur speciei extensio subjectiva ex ordine ad subjectum extensum: pari ratione tribuenda ei sit extensio objectiva in ordine ad objectum extensum." (Rubio 1620, 335). It may help clarify Rubio's meaning somewhat to consider an optical image, in which there is clearly a spatial ordering of the parts of the object represented. For example, in a pinhole camera (a device that was known and commented on in this period), the light, entering through a tiny hole, projects an image on the back of the camera in such a way that objects outside the camera are represented in the spatial relationships they really have (except that they are upside-down and reversed left-to-right).\end{flushleft}
perceive the entire object and all its parts from every part of the subject [in which the species is contained’], which contradicts experience.\footnote{\ldots nescesse est ut in toto subiecto, & quealibet eius parte tot reperiantur partes obiectivae extensionis specierum, quot sunt partes eiusdem obiecti, in ordine ad quod eadem extension objecitiva accipitur, alioqui non posset percipi ex qualibet parte subiecti totum objectum, & omnes partes, quod repugnat experientiae.} Now the species qua intentional (or representational) just is the object’s representation in the mind. So the correspondence that Rubio is talking about here is a correspondence between the object qua actual and the object’s represented. Since, on the dual presence theory, the object’s representation is identical to the object qua actual, it is not surprising that Rubio would hold that there must be a one-to-one correspondence between the parts of the one and the parts of the other. The two are distinguished only in mode of existence, not in essence or “entity”. The objective extension of the species turns out to be nothing other than the object’s extension in the mode of objective being, just as the objective intension of the species is the object’s intension under the mode of objective being.

Just as in Rubio a species’ intensity objectiva and extension objectiva are simply its object’s intension and extension in objective being, so in Descartes and idea’s realitas objectiva or “objective reality” is simply its object’s “reality” – by which Descartes means its degree of thing-hood (res-alitas), perfection, or “intricacy”\footnote{Reply to Second Objections, AT VII 161, CSM II 113-114 and Reply to Third Objections, AT VII 185, CSM II 130; Principles of Philosophy Pt. 1, no. 17, AT VIIA 11, CSM I 198-199. Cf. Dicker 1993, 97.} – in objective being. When Rubio speaks of a thing as being comprehended when it is known “to the degree in which it can be known” (quantum cognoscibile est; cf. n. 99 above), he is
referring to the degree of entitative perfection, taken as equivalent to its degree of
intelligibility. Descartes' *realitas objectiva* seems very closely related.

The similarity in meaning between the English (and French) translations of
*realitas* (‘reality’, ‘réalité’) and *esse* (‘being’, ‘l’être’) has sometimes led to confusion
between *realitas objectiva* and *esse objectivum*, which has obscured the sense of
Descartes’ cosmological argument.\textsuperscript{105} Even those who, like Margaret Wilson, recognize a
distinction between the two (‘reality must not be confused with existence’, she says)
have trouble keeping them entirely straight. After describing Descartes’ view that the
idea of an infinitely perfect being must have an infinitely perfect cause, she objects:

> Are we obliged to suppose that this idea has an infinitely real cause? Well ‘where
can an effect derive its reality, if not from its cause?’ Yes, but why should we
suppose that objective reality to degree n is as much reality *überhaupt* as formal
reality to degree n? Isn’t objective existence something less than formal
existence? . . . Why should the imperfection of objective being relative to real
existence not mean that a cause with n degrees of formal reality — since it
possesses this reality in the comparatively perfect mode of actual existence —
bring about an idea with n + m degrees of objective reality?\textsuperscript{106}

Descartes would reply to this by asking where precisely the effect is supposed to get
these “m” extra degrees of reality that are not contained in the cause. Wilson seems to
think that it makes sense for some of the real being of the cause to be converted into

\textsuperscript{105} Such confusion seems to go back all the way to Hobbes, Arnauld and Malebranche.
Hobbes seems to take ‘reality’ as equivalent to ‘being’ in the Third Objections (AT VII
185, CSM II 130). It must be confessed that Descartes contributes to the problem: in the
Reply to the Second Set of Objections (AT VII, 165) he speaks of “various degrees of
reality or being”. Cf. chapter 2, section 1, n. 137.
objective reality in the effect. But from the Cartesian point of view, this is absurd. For if existence could be converted to reality, then when an individual lost actual existence it could have a portion of that actual existence converted into reality, so that it would have greater reality when not existing than when existing. It seems that by parity of reasoning the same would then have to be said for objective existence: when an individual lost objective existence it could have a portion of that objective existence converted into reality. But in that case, we would have to allow for the possibility that when an individual – for example, God – is thought about, it has more reality than when it is not thought about. This would raise the question of whether the infinite reality that we perceive in God is merely an artifact of our thinking about God – and this would have disastrous consequences for the cosmological argument. Wilson’s objection against the cosmological argument seems to be based on a failure to appreciate fully the distinction between being and reality in Descartes’ thought, a distinction that is foreshadowed in Rubio’s discussion of *intensio* and *extensio objectiva*.107

b. *Clear and Distinct Representation*

Rubio constantly repeats the phrase *clare et distantce* (and variations thereof) in the last half of Question IX’s discussion of representational perfection.

If an object having a certain intension is placed so distant from the sense potency that it is seen imperfectly or confusedly, and then the sense potency begins to

106 Wilson 1978, 137.
107 Nadler 1989, 162-165 criticizes Wilson’s notion of *realitas objectiva* on somewhat different grounds.
move and approach the object, then the closer the object is the more perfectly, i.e.
distinctly, and clearly the sense potency will see the object . . . 108

One and the same shape or size of an object will be seen more imperfectly and
confusedly, the further it is from the sense potency, and the closer it comes to the
potency, the more clearly and distinctly will it be seen. 109

[virtual objective intension is present even in things that have no degrees of
formal intension], inasmuch as their intension can still be seen more clearly and distinctly
. . . this is true even in things that cannot be intensified or weakened . . . for their entity
can be more or less clearly and distinctly perceived in the sense potency. 110

Although Rubio allows for degrees in clarity and distinctness of representation, he
never admits that a species can misrepresent its object – this is to be expected, for on the
dual presence theory, species are the objects themselves in objective or intentional being,
hence they represent themselves, and it is hard to see how a thing can misrepresent itself.
However, he thinks that since the species can represent its object with more or less clarity
and perfection, it can happen that by the time it reaches the sense faculty it is so weak,
unclear and indistinct (due to the distance between the object and the sense organ, or to
some other cause) that the cognitive faculty cannot “read” it correctly – somewhat like a

108 “. . . si ponatur obiectum alicuius intensionis in loco ita distantii a potentia ut
imperfecte aut confuse videatur, et tunc incipiat potentia moveri, et accedere ad ipsum,
quo propinquor sit, perfectius, hoc est, distinctius, atque clarius illud videt . . .” (Rubio
1620, 347 [section 104])

109 “Eadem figura, vel magnitudo objecti videtur imperfectius, magisque confuse, quo
plus distat a potentia, et quo magis ad eam accedit, videtur clarius, atque distinctius . . .”
(Rubio 1620, 347 [105])

110 “. . . in quantum secundum eandem intensionem adhuc possunt clarius, ac distinctius
videri . . . atque etiam in his, quae non suscipiunt intensionem, et remissionem, . . . in
quantum entitas earum magis, et minus clare, et distincte percipi in potentia.” (Rubio
1620, 350 [111])
book so old that its print has faded almost to illegibility. This is how he explains the rainbow: although there are no colors in the air, and hence no species of color (unlike Suarez, Rubio does not admit the existence of naturally-caused intuitions of non-existent; see section 2 above), the eye sees color because the species of colorless light is too unclear and indistinct to permit a proper act of vision.

... in the case of the rainbow the eye sees light that appears to it as red, or as some other color – not through a species of color, but through a species of light. Thus the eye sees by an act of vision which is identical to that by which the very same object [sc. the light, not the color] would be seen if there were no deception. This is proved as follows. The eye sees the apparent color, which is really light, through species that are not species of color; therefore these species must be species of light. This is evident, for inasmuch as the object is actually light, and [yet] color appears, the species through which it appears must be either of color or of light. The minor premise is proved [in two ways. First: the color] is not seen through a species of color, for the species is produced naturally by an object that really exists; and it is evident that a non-existent object cannot produce a species of itself. But there is no color present by which [a species] could be produced; therefore [the species] can only be produced by light, and it can represent only one thing: light. Secondly, it is proved by the fact that if the light which is seen in the rainbow under the appearance of color were close by, it would doubtless impress species of itself into the eye, through which it would be seen as light; therefore when it is far away it produces the same species in the same eye, however imperfect [those species may be], for every natural agent always
produces an effect of the same nature, an effect that is more or less perfect according to whether the agent is closer or farther away. But light is a natural agent with respect to [its] species. Therefore the species it produces at a greater distance is of the same nature as the species it produces when close by, though [that species] is much more imperfect, and represents the light less distinctly – and that is why [the species] produces a vision in which [light] appears as if it were a color.\textsuperscript{111}

According to Rubio, there is no color at all in the water vapor, only light. The light emits a species that becomes weaker and more indistinct with distance. At a sufficiently great distance, the species is so weak that it no longer enables the sense faculty to arrive at an accurate judgement concerning the object. But the act of vision – or as we might say, the apprehension – in which we see the color is, apart from its unclarity and indistinctness, exactly the same as an act of vision in which we see the colorless light ("Thus the eye

\textsuperscript{111}\. . . oculus videt lucem in iride apparentem sibi colorum rubeum, vel alterius speciei, non per speciem coloris, sed eiusdem lucis ea videat, et proinde visione eiusdem rationis cum ea, per quam sine deceptione videretur idem objectum. Quod sic probo: colorum illum apparentem, qui vere lux est, videt oculus per speciem, non coloris; ergo lucis. Evidens est consequentia, quia cum objectum sit vera lux, et appareat color, non potest dari alia species, per quam videatur, nisi lucis, vel coloris. Sed probatur minor, quod non videatur per speciem coloris primo, quia species producitur naturaliter ab objecto existente in rerum natura: cum evidens sit objectum non existens, non posse producere speciem sui, sed ibi non est color existens, a quo producatur; ergo non potest produci, nisi a luce, nec potest alii quid lucem representare. Secundo probatur, quia si lux, quae videtur in iride sub apparentia coloris prope esset, produceret absque dubio speciem sui in oculo, per quam videretur tanquam vera lux; ergo procul existens produceat eandem speciem sui in eodem oculo, quamvis imperfectam: quia omne agens naturale magis, et minus approximatum semper producit effectum eiusdem rationis, magis, aut minus perfectum, sed lux est naturale agens respectu speciei: ergo a maiori distantiad producet speciem eiusdem rationis, ac producet a minori; longe tamen imperfectiorem, minusque distincte se repraesentantem, per quam fiet visio eius, licet sub apparentia coloris." \textit{De anima} (Q. 16, "An dum sensus errant, operantur per speciem veri sensibilis, ac si non errarent, vel per aliam diversae rationis", Rubio 1620, 394).
sees by an act of vision which is identical to that by which the very same object [sc. the light, not the color] would be seen if there were no deception").

At first this may seem a bizarre account. In keeping with the dual presence theory, Rubio says that the light is represented in the “eye”, i.e. the visual faculty, not by a species of color, but by a species of (colorless) light. Yet the eye sees color, not light. How can this be? Isn’t a thing’s appearance determined entirely by its objective presence in the mind, i.e. by the idea or species by which it is present there?

It is tempting to resolve this paradox by saying that Rubio must have granted that, in some cases, misrepresentation is possible, after all. This is the view of Paul Hoffman (1996, 368), who takes the above passage as an explanation of how such misrepresentation is possible. But however tempting such a solution may be, it must be rejected. In the first place, Rubio is quite clear that sensible species never misrepresent their objects. Question XVI of the “Treatise on Sensible Objects and Species” (Rubio 1620, 393ff.) is entitled “An dum sensus errant, operantur per speciem veri sensibilis, ac si non errarent, vel per aliam diversae rationis”. After presenting his opponents’ arguments on behalf of the claim that in cases of sense error the impressed species misrepresents the object that emits it, he gives his own view:

... in illusions a sensation is generated by means of a species of the object as that object exists in the species, so that when in a rainbow the eye sees light that appears to it to be red, or some other color, it sees not by means of a species of color, but by means of that very light. Thus the eye sees by means of a visual act
of the same kind as that through which it would have seen the same object had there been no illusion.\textsuperscript{112}

(Note once again that for Rubio the object exists in the species, so that the species of light is light itself, which is exactly what we would expect from a dual presence theorist – compare Descartes’ claim in the Reply to Caterus that the idea of the sun – objectively considered – is the sun itself.) How then is sense error possible, if species never misrepresent their objects? The body of the quaeestio tries to answer this question by setting forth an odd distinction between representation and appearance, based on the view that the sense faculty not only apprehends, but in a way judges, the characteristics of its proper objects.

\ldots when to a jaundiced visual faculty all seems yellow, the faculty does not see by means of a species of yellow, but by means of a species of white, or of some other color. It intuits this color, and receives a species from it.\textsuperscript{113} But because of an indisposition of the sense organ what is really white appears yellow to the visual faculty (although the visual faculty has the species of white and operates by means of that species). And so the object that is sensed is white, and it is sensed

\textsuperscript{112} "\ldots in his deceptionibus fiat sensatio per speciem objecti, ut in se existentis, ita ut dum oculus videt lucem in iride apparentem sibi colorem rubeum, vel alterius speciei, non per speciem coloris, sed eiusdem lucis ea videat, et proinde visione eiusdem rationis cum ea, per quam sine deceptione videretur idem objectum." (Rubio 1620, 394).

\textsuperscript{113} Note the implications of this claim for the veracity of sensible species. Even in illusions, the sense faculty sees what is really there. The error comes not at the level of basic sensation, but at some higher level of interpretation (which we might call “perception”, but whose nature Rubio does not specify). In the vocabulary of twentieth-century philosophers of mind, Rubio is claiming that the propositional attitude ‘I see that’ is transparent, not opaque. Through much of the twentieth century philosophers distinguished between “sensation” (the presentation of “sense data”) and “perception” (which involved an interpretation – largely or wholly unconscious – of these data). Rubio’s notion of sense judgement is reminiscent of this twentieth-century notion of
by means of a species of white impressed on the sensorium, and the visual
faculty's operation is in truth a sensation of white, and yet it appears to the
indisposed sense faculty (which falsely "judges" it to be yellow, in that manner in
which it can judge) under the character of a yellow it does not have. The whole
cause of the false judgement is the indisposition of the organ, which causes a
color, that is truly white and is represented by its proper species, to appear to the
indisposed sense faculty as if it were yellow. The reason for this appearance is,
that a sense faculty that is indisposed, or that receives the species at a great
distance, or through a disturbed medium, receives it in such an imperfect state, or
so imperfectly,\textsuperscript{114} that the sense faculty cannot distinguish light from color or
sweetness from bitterness by means of the species, but mistakes one for the other,
and applies it to a subject that does not have it, but rather the other. No species of
the apparent object is necessary for such an illusion . . .\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{114} "perception" as an interpretation or judgement concerning raw sense data.
\textsuperscript{115} The distinction, which is hard to render compactly in English, is between the species'
being in an imperfect state (having traveled a long distance or through a disturbed
medium) and the sense faculty's receiving the species imperfectly (due to its
indisposition).

\textsuperscript{115} " . . . dum omnia apparent pallida visui ictericico, non videt ea per speciem palloris, sed
albedinis, vel alterius coloris, quem intuetur, et a quo speciem recipit, propter
indispositionem tamen organi, id quod vere album est, et cuius speciem habet, et per
quam operatur circa illud, appareat sibi pallidum. Itaque objectum, quod sentitur, album
est: et per speciem albedinis sensorio impressam sentitur, et operatio ipsa vere est
sensatio albedinis, sed sensui sic indisposito apparat sub ratione palloris, et ideo fals
iudicanti (eo modo, quo iudicare potest) esse pallorem, quem non habet, et tota causa
falsi iudicii est indispositio organi, quae facit, ut vera albedo per speciem propriam
repraesentata sensui indisposito, appareat ei, ac si esset pallor; et ratio huius apparentiae
est, quia sensus sic dispositus, vel ad magnam distantiam recipiens speciem, vel per
turbatum medium, adeo imperfectam, vel adeo imperfecte eam recipit, ut per eam non
distinguat lucem a colore, vel dulcedinem ab amaritudine, sed una pro altera recipiat,
eaquelle applicet subiecto eam non habenti, sed potius oppositam. Nec ad hanc
decceptionem est necessaria species obiecti apparentis . . ." (Rubio 1620, 396-397).
Rubio is saying here that error occurs not in the species emitted by the object, nor, strictly speaking, in the sensation that is produced by the sense faculty when informed by this species, but rather in a kind of judgement by which the sense faculty attributes an apparent color to the object truly represented in the species. The species, though still a faithful representation, is so weak and imperfect (i.e., has so little clarity and distinctness) that it cannot be "distinguished" by the sense faculty from a different kind of species, a species that would (if it were present to the mind) represent a merely apparent object. This lack of distinctness, not the presence of any misrepresenting species, is what (according to Rubio) accounts for the misleading "appearance", and hence the sense error.\footnote{Rubio's view on sense error seems to contradict the orthodox Thomist doctrine that the senses cannot err with respect to their proper objects (more precisely, the senses could not err as long as the sense organ was not diseased and there was no perturbation in the medium between the organ and the object) – see the discussion of John of St. Thomas in section 2 above. Although Rubio, unlike Descartes, was a direct realist with respect to sense perception, that did not prevent him from holding that the senses often "misjudge" the external world. But though the senses can misjudge the external world, the species in the sense faculty can never misrepresent its object. Note that the problem of sense error has been solved in three ways in the Scholastic authors discussed thus far: (1) non-existent colors are apprehended, i.e. represented by a species of those colors (Suarez, section 2 above); (2) non-existent colors are not apprehended, since (barring a miracle) only existent things are represented by species, but these colors are judged present by a faculty of sense judgement (Rubio); (3) non-existent colors are not sensed at all – they are neither apprehended (represented in a sensible species) nor judged present by the sense faculty, but are instead presented to the mind by a different faculty, sc. imagination}
this sense can say that the colors of the rainbow are "seen" and "appear", even though they are not represented by a species of color.

More research is needed to determine exactly what Rubio meant by the faculty of judgement that – in addition to the faculty of mere apprehension – he attributes to the senses.\footnote{117} It is interesting to note that Descartes appears to echo Rubio in his \textit{Rules for the Direction of the Mind}, in Regula XII. He is discussing the intellect's perception of "simple natures" – objects of which it has clear and distinct ideas, such as extension, motion and figure (AT X, 418; CSM I, 44). In order to explain why, on the one hand, truths about the simple natures are self-evident, while, on the other hand, we can be ignorant of this or that fact about them, Descartes attributes two "faculties" to the intellect, a faculty for apprehending and a faculty for judging:

\ldots these simple natures are all self-evident and never contain any falsity. This can easily be shown if we distinguish between the faculty by which our intellect intuits and knows things and the faculty by which it makes affirmative or negative judgements. For it can happen that we think we are ignorant of things we really know, as for example when we suspect that they contain something else which eludes us, something beyond what we intuit or reach in our thinking, even though we are mistaken in thinking this. For this reason, it is evident that we are mistaken if we ever judge that we lack complete knowledge of any one of these simple natures. For if we have even the slightest grasp of it in our mind pp which

\footnote{117 The doctrine of sense judgement can also be found in Aquinas. See Pasnau 1997, 138ff.}
we surely must have, on the assumption that we are making a judgement about it
– it must follow that we have complete knowledge of it. (AT X 420; CSM I 45).

As Rubio holds that it is impossible for the senses’ species to misrepresent their objects, so Descartes holds that it is impossible for the intellect’s clear and distinct ideas to misrepresent their objects, the simple natures (and complexes built up out of them). But in spite of the reliability of sense intuition, Rubio has to admit that the senses can err – colorless light can seem to the senses to be colored. In the same way, the infallibility of intellectual intuition regarding the Cartesian simple natures does not prevent Descartes from admitting that the intellect can mistakenly suspect that these simple natures contain mysterious, occult qualities, “something beyond what we intuit” (in Descartes’ phrase). Rubio and Descartes solve the problem of error for the senses and the intellect respectively not by admitting that species or ideas can misrepresent their objects – that would have been inconsistent with the dual presence theory – but by positing a faculty of judgement, in addition to a faculty of apprehension or intuition. It is the judgement that errs, not the intuition – sense judgement for Rubio, intellectual judgement for Descartes. This parallel is in keeping with the thesis of this chapter, that there are substantial links between Cartesian idea theory and the dual presence theory that the Scholastics formulated for perception in general – both sensible and intellectual.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{118} Rubio’s doctrine also may also bear some resemblance to Descartes’ claim that much of the misrepresentation and confusion found in our sense ideas is due to a failure of the mind to represent accurately the corporeal images (i.e., the patterns in animal spirits) on the surface of the pineal gland. The “misreading” of the weakened species in Rubio is similar to the “misreading” of the pineal gland in Descartes. Occasionally, even the terms Descartes uses to express the weakening and corruption of ideas echo those of Rubio. 

... [ideas or images] can easily decline from the perfection of the things from which they are taken, but they cannot contain anything greater or more perfect [than these things]. (AT VII, 42)
c. 'Objective Being' (Esse Objectivum) as an Intrinsic Denomination

Finally, I wish to note a possible antecedent to Descartes' view that esse objectivum is an intrinsic denomination. In the "First Objections" to the Meditations, Caterus had objected to Descartes' claim in the cosmological argument that 'objective being' is an intrinsic predicate or "denomination" (cf. chapter 1, n. 23 above) that expresses a genuine property of the thing known (and thus requires a real cause).

... what is it to exist objectively in the intellect? As I learned it, it is to terminate an intellectual act (ipsum actum intellectus) in the way objects do. This is clearly an extrinsic predication (denominatio) ... why look for a cause for what is not

But on the other hand, certain passage in Descartes may contradict Rubio's views on representation. In the Third Meditation (AT VII 44, CSM II 30) Descartes says that the idea of cold represents what is actually something negative — an absence of heat — as if it were something positive. One might take this as similar to Rubio's account of the rainbow, in which a color "appears" to the sense by being judged, not apprehended, to be present. But Descartes nowhere makes Rubio's distinction between sensory judgement and being represented in a species (he does however use Rubio's notion of clear and distinct representation). In fact he explicitly contrasts the "material" falsity of the idea of cold with the "formal" falsity of judgement (it might be said, however, that Rubio too, when he speaks of sensory 'judgement' has in mind something quite different from "judgement" in the usual sense, which is an act of the intellect). It is hard to avoid the conclusion that what Descartes has in mind is an idea that represents a non-existent object — much as Suarez held that, when we see iridescent colors on the neck of a pigeon, those colors are non-existent objects represented by their proper species. But regardless of whether Descartes' account of the idea of cold is closer to Rubio or to Suarez, it does not seem that he holds anything like the view that Hoffman attributes to Rubio, namely that ideas or species can misrepresent their objects. Either the idea of cold clearly and distinctly represents a non-actual, positive object (the chimerical positive quality thought to be opposed to heat), or it represents an actual, negative state of affairs (the lack of heat) so unclearly and indistinctly that the mind "misjudges" this negative entity to be positive. But since unclear and indistinct representation is not misrepresentation (for to misrepresent is to present with properties the object does not have, while to represent unclearly and indistinctly is to represent the object's properties in a weak and confused way), neither of these commits Descartes to the view that ideas can misrepresent their objects. See chapter 2, section 2 for further discussion of Descartes on representation.
actually there, for what is a mere [fictional] determination and nothing real? (AT VII, 92)

Descartes replied that although esse objectivum or ‘being known’ is certainly an extrinsic, improper predicate of things insofar as they have real existence outside the intellect, it is an intrinsic and proper predicate of things insofar as they are in the mind. When we speak of a thing as ‘objective’ in the proper sense, we are speaking not of things qua actual, but of things qua objective, i.e. ideas.

[Caterus] is referring to the thing itself as if it were located outside the intellect, and in this sense ‘objective being in the intellect’ is certainly an extraneous label; but I was speaking of the idea, which is never outside the intellect, and in this sense ‘objective being’ simply means being in the intellect in the way in which objects are normally there. . . . now this mode of being is of course much less perfect than that possessed by things which exist outside the intellect; but as I did explain, it is not therefore simply nothing. (AT 102-103; Cottingham 1988, 132-133)

Descartes’ claim seems reasonable. If I am thinking about the sun then the sun has objective being in my mind, which is a genuine fact about the sun. The sun’s objective being “intrinsically denominates” it. Although this mode of existence, being-thought-about, which the sun acquires in being thought about, is a lower-level, less real mode than actual existence, it is not nothing.119

Caterus’ opposition to Descartes on this point is often taken as representative of Scholasticism as a whole, but as we have seen that there was more than one Scholastic

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119 Norman J. Wells seems to take the phrase non nihil to apply to a possible, rather than
view on questions of intentionality and objective being. Descartes' view on objective 
being as an intrinsic denomination requiring a real cause may have a Scholastic precedent 
in a section from Rubio's De anima commentary. In Question 4 of the "Treatise on 
Sensible Objects and Species", Rubio asks whether species in the medium are material, 
like the objects they represent. Though he affirms as "more probable" the opinion that 
they are not, he also seems to hold that their mode of existence has some obscure relation 
to actual being.

... the being of sensible species is corporeal, not spiritual. But it is not natural 
corporeal being; it is a very degraded form of (valde degenerans a) natural being. 
Thus it is called intentional, and indeed it is a diminished being (esse quoddam 
diminutum), far inferior in comparison to the natural being of the object. For this 
reason it is not sensible, although it is the means by which the object is sensed.
The being of a species is proportionate to the uniting of the object with the [sense] 
power, but not in such a way as to be itself sensed as an object.¹²⁰

If the intentional being of bodies is corporeal, not spiritual, then it is reasonable to posit a 
real cause of that being. He reiterates this view a few pages later, in trying to explain 
away Aquinas' claim that intentionality is a "spiritual" mode of being (which would seem 
to indicate that it is a higher form of existence than merely natural, corporeal being).

¹²⁰ "Ad secundum respondeo, species sensibles habere esse corporeum, & non spirituale: 
sed non corporeum naturale: sed a naturali valde degenerans; & ideo vocatur intentionale, 
& revera est esse quoddam diminutum, & respectu esse naturalis objecti longe inferius; & 
propeterea non est sensibile, quamvis sit medium, ut sentiatur objectum: itaque esse 
speciei est proportionatum ad uniendum objectum potentiae, nontamen ut sentiatur 
tanquam objectum." Ruvio 1620, p. 326.
[Aristotle and St. Thomas] said that [species were] incorporeal or spiritual, or forms without matter, because they are diminished in their degree of material and corporeal being. Just as they have degenerated from natural material being, which is perfect in the scale [latitudinem] of corporeal being, so they are said to have less to do with matter and body, that is, they are said to be diminished, and to be the lowest corporeal and material [entities]. And thus they do not have sensible being, as does an object of the senses.\footnote{\textit{[Aristoteles & Divus Thomas] dixerunt [species] esse incorporeas, aut spirituales, vel formas sine materia, quia in gradu essendi materiali, \& corporeo diminutae sunt, \& sicut degenerant ab esse naturali materiali, quod intra latitudinem esse corporei perfectum est; ita dicuntur minus habere de materia, \& minus de corpore, hoc est, diminutum, atque infimum esse corporeum, \& materiale, et ideo nec habent esse sensibile sicut obiecta sensuum."} Rubio 1620, 328.}

In claiming that intentional being is a (very degraded) form of "natural", "corporeal" or "material" being (the terms are used as synonyms in this \textit{questio}), Rubio seems, like Descartes, to be granting that it must somehow be allowed a place in the actual world. The terms "degenerate" and "diminished" suggest a continuous scale (\textit{latitudinem}) extending from actual being down to intentional or objective being, so that even if the latter is far less real than actual being, it is, as Descartes said, "not nothing". That is why it requires a real cause, which makes it useful for Descartes' "causal" or cosmological proof of God's existence.

We shall see in chapter 3 that the seemingly innocent claim that objective being is a property of things, comparable to the other properties we can conceive things to have, furnished Berkeley with an important weapon against the concept of an external, mind-independent world. First however it will be necessary to examine in more detail the case...
for attributing to Descartes the dual presence theory that we have examined in this chapter.
Chapter Two

Intellectual Perception in Descartes

1. Intellectual Direct Realism and Representationalism in Descartes

The traditional view of Cartesian idea theory, exemplified by the Rorty quotes at the beginning of the introduction, holds that Cartesian ideas are best seen as a barrier blocking the mind's direct access to the external world. There are a great many passages in Descartes that seem at first sight to support this reading.

   By the word 'idea' I understand the form of any given thought, through the immediate perception of which I am conscious of that same thought. (Second Reply, AT VII, 160)\textsuperscript{122}

I have everywhere . . . shown that I take the word 'idea' to stand for everything that is immediately perceived by the mind. . . (Third Reply, AT VII, 181)

Of my thoughts some are, so to speak (\textit{quasi}), images of the things, and to these alone is the title 'idea' properly applied; examples are my thought of a man or of a chimera, of heaven, or an angel, or even of God. (\textit{Meditation} III, AT VII, 37)

A pre-eminent and most frequent error which can be encountered in these matters consists in the fact that I judge the ideas, which are in me, as similar to or in conformity with certain things placed outside me. For certainly if I considered these ideas only as certain modes of my own thought, they would be able to give me scarcely any material for error. (\textit{Meditation} III, AT VII, 37)

Nor indeed was it without reason, considering the ideas of all these qualities, which offered themselves to my thought and which alone I properly and

\textsuperscript{122} For a key to the system of Descartes references, see ch. 1, n. 21.
immediately sensed, that I supposed myself to sense certain things entirely diverse from my thought, namely the bodies from which those ideas proceeded.  

(*Meditation VI, AT VII, 75*)  

... I do not doubt that all have within themselves at least an implicit idea of God, that is, an aptitude to perceive it [the idea] explicitly (Letter to Hyperaspistes, August 1641, AT III, 430)  

For although the idea of God is imprinted on the human mind (*esprit*) in such a way that there is no one who does not have in himself the faculty of knowing him, this does not mean that there are not many people who have been able to pass their whole lives without distinctly representing this idea to themselves. (Letter to Clerselier 17 February 1645, AT IV, 187-188)

With regard to sense perception, the case for a veil-of-perception reading gains further support from Descartes’ physiology of sensation. For Descartes, external bodies act on the mind only by initiating motions in the medium that separates them from the sense organ; the effect in the sense organ provokes motions in the nerves that eventually cause patterns in the animal spirits on the surface of the pineal gland. Ultimately, the only thing about the physical world that makes any difference to sense perception is the pattern on the pineal gland. It seems to follow from this that when we say we see the sun, what we actually see is an image produced in our mind by (or perhaps “on the occasion of”) the disposition of the pineal gland (this harmonizes with Descartes’ view that colors, smells and the other “secondary” sensible qualities have no existence outside the mind – I discuss Descartes’ views on sense perception in more detail below).
In spite of the initial plausibility of the veil-of-perception reading, O’Neil 1974, Lennon 1974, Yolton 1975, 1984 (18-39) and Cook 1987 have contested it. Cook and Lennon limit themselves to attacking certain standard arguments in favor of the veil-of-perception reading. Cook deals with several arguments purporting to show that the only direct objects of sense perception are mental entities, while Lennon (pp. 51-52) – as we shall see in a moment – demolishes Anthony Kenny’s attempt to read the Reply to Caterus as contradicting direct realism (Kenny 1967, 241-242). Yolton and O’Neil go a bit further, and argue for the positive thesis that Descartes was—at least at certain stages of his mature intellectual life—a direct realist. According to Yolton and O’Neil Descartes was at times prepared to admit that in at least some cases the direct objects of human cognition are mind-independent entities, not proxies that have no existence outside the mind. Yolton 1975 appeals to Antoine Arnauld’s reading of a passage in Descartes’ letter of January 1646 to Clerselier (AT IX-1, 209), in which Descartes seems to equate having an idea of God with having a perception corresponding to the meaning of the word ‘God’. In his controversy with Malebranche over the nature of ideas Arnauld cited this passage as evidence that for Descartes ideas are not the objects we perceive, but are simply the perceptions themselves: “il est indubitable que le mot idée doit être pris pour perception, comme l’a pris M. Descartes dans cette démonstration de l’existence de Dieu.” O’Neil claims that Rule XII of the Regulae sufficiently establishes the young Descartes’ credentials as a direct realist.

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123 Nadler too seems to reject the representationalist reading: “[for Descartes] ideas qua images exhibit or present . . . an object to the mind by means of a content (although not themselves serving as the objects of the mind)” (Nadler 1989, 159).

124 As quoted in Yolton 1975, 152. Part of Yolton’s and Cook’s motivation seems to be their interest in rehabilitating Arnauld and Locke as direct realists, for Arnauld’s and
It is also quite clear [from Rule XII] that this mental *vision* [emphasis added] extends both to all those simple natures, and to the knowledge of the necessary connection between them, and finally to everything else which the understanding accurately experiences either *at first hand* [emphasis added] or in the imagination. . . . Our second conclusion is that in order to know these simple natures no pains need be taken, because they are *of themselves* [emphasis added] sufficiently well known.¹²⁶

In addition, there are passages in the later Cartesian corpus that seem to show that for Descartes the intellect, at least (though not the senses or imagination) perceives bodies themselves.

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¹²⁵ O'Neil 1974, 24. O'Neil thinks that Descartes began as a direct realist (in the *Regulae*), even holding something like a theory of intentional species (O'Neil 1974, 52-53), but ended as a "representationalist" or veil-of-perception theorist. Although I think that Descartes was, in the sense I describe in this chapter, a direct realist, it is not at all clear to me that O'Neil's quotations establish this. Furthermore, I think that the direct representationalist reading makes it possible to hold, *pace* O'Neil, that Descartes' position on direct realism remained substantially unchanged from the 1620s until his death.

I now know that bodies themselves (*ipsisamet corpora*) are properly (*proprie*) perceived not by the senses or by the imaginative faculty, but solely by the intellect ... (Second Meditation, AT VII, 34)\textsuperscript{127}

Finally, just as Descartes' claim that secondary qualities are subjective seems to suggest that he holds a veil-of-perception view, so his claim that primary qualities are objective might be taken as evidence that he is a direct realist. In watching a billiard ball roll across a table, I seem to perceive many qualities in the billiard ball that, on Descartes' view, are not really there—its colors, for example. But I also perceive some qualities that really are there: the ball's spherical shape, its rectilinear motion across the table, and its rolling motion. If the direct objects of perception were limited to mental entities, and did not extend to the world itself, then the shape and motion that Descartes wants to attribute to the billiard ball itself would at best be resemblances of qualities outside the mind, not the qualities themselves.

One way of dealing with the conflict between the direct realist and veil-of-perception strains in Descartes is to claim with Kenny (1967) that Descartes is inconsistent. Kenny quotes a great number of passages in which Descartes uses 'idea' in a variety of different ways, and concludes that in some passages Descartes is clearly a direct realist, while in others he is just as clearly a veil-of-perception or proxy theorist. Since direct realism and proxy theory are inconsistent, this would mean that Cartesian idea theory is fatally flawed. However, Kenny has misunderstood some key passages in the First Reply. When Descartes writes

\textsuperscript{127} Although this quote supports the claim that Descartes was a direct realist with regard to *intellectual* perception, it seems to count against the hypothesis that he is a direct realist when it comes to *sense* perception.
But if the question be, what the idea of the sun is, and the reply is given, that it is the object thought of in so far as that exists objectively in the understanding, he will not understand that it is the sun itself, in so far as that extrinsic attribute is in it; neither will objective existence in the understanding here signify that the mind’s operation is here determined in the mode due to an object, but that it is in the mind in the way in which objects are wont to be there. Hence the idea of the sun will be the sun itself existing in the mind, not indeed formally, as it exists in the sky, but objectively, i.e. in the way in which objects are wont to exist in the mind.  

Kenny understands this to imply that the idea of the sun has objective existence in the mind, and on this basis charges Descartes with holding, inconsistently, that both the idea of the sun and the sun itself are directly known (Kenny 1967, 242). But as Thomas Lennon has pointed out, the passage implies no such thing.

If Descartes indeed held that it is the idea of the sun which has objective existence in me, an extra entity would, as Kenny claims, be “spirited into existence”, for then – given that I am aware of what has objective existence in me – I would have to think of an idea of the sun in order to think of the sun. But Descartes does not hold this; what has objective existence is (the form of) the sun, not the idea of the sun. Kenny, led on by his representationalist understanding of objective existence, has misunderstood the marginal note to the Discourse on Method, which he quotes [Kenny 1967, 241]: “The noun ‘Idea’ is only a certain objective existence in the intellect.” What is thought of is not the idea of the sun,
but the form of the sun and *this* has objective existence. The idea, on the other hand, is the objective existence of the sun’s form, which is the form of my thought of the sun, and which as such has formal existence. (Lennon 1974, 51-52)

I would endorse almost all of Lennon’s critique here; the Cartesian passage quoted by Kenny certainly does not warrant the conclusion that for Descartes the only direct objects of perception are mental proxies for external objects.

Unfortunately this is not the only place in which Kenny has been misled by his predisposition to read Descartes as a veil-of-perception theorist. According to Kenny, Descartes himself admits, in the following passage from the Preface to the *Meditations*, that his usage of ‘idea’ is inconsistent:

\[\ldots\] there is an ambiguity here in the word ‘idea’. ‘Idea’ can be taken materially, as an operation of the intellect \ldots\ Alternately, it can be taken objectively, as the thing represented by that operation \ldots\ (*Meditations*, Preface, AT VII, 8; CSM II 7).

Kenny comments,

\[\ldots\] Descartes seems inconsistent in the manner in which he speaks of ideas. Sometimes \ldots an idea is an operation or act of the mind; at other times it is not so much an act of the mind as the *object* or content of such an act. This ambiguity was signalled by Descartes himself in the Preface to the *Meditations*. “In this term idea there is an equivocation: it may either be taken materially, as an act of understanding \ldots\ or objectively, as what is represented by this act.”\(^{129}\)

\(^{129}\) Kenny, in Doney 1968, 229. Nicholas Jolley, *The Light of the Soul*, p. 17 also appears to charge Descartes with ambiguity in connection with this passage. Vere Chappell (1986) too seems to think that Descartes fatally equivocates between ‘ideas’ as objects
But a brief examination of the context of this passage from the *Meditations* is sufficient to show that Descartes is not admitting to any equivocation in his own use of the term ‘idea’; he is charging his critics with equivocation. In the introduction to the paragraph containing the above passage, he writes,

In the *Discourse* I asked anyone who found anything worth criticizing in what I had written to be kind enough to point it out to me. In the case of my remarks concerning God and the soul, only two objections worth mentioning were put to me, which I shall now briefly answer . . . (AT VII, 7; CSM 7)

The second of these two objections, which he is about to answer, is that “from the fact that I have within me an idea of a thing more perfect than myself it does not follow that the idea itself is more perfect than me, still less that what is represented by the idea exists” (ibid.)

Thus, Descartes is here charging his critics, who formulated the object with which he is dealing, with having equivocated in *their* use of ‘idea’, when they say that the idea of a thing greater than the human mind need not be taken as itself greater than the human mind. So there is no textual justification for Kenny’s reading.

Instead of assuming with Kenny that Descartes was hopelessly confused, I suggest that the presence of both representationalist and direct realist strains in Cartesian idea theory is evidence that, with respect to *intellectual* perception,130 Descartes held a version of the dual presence theory advanced by Rubio and other Jesuit Scholastics in the

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130 Unlike Cook, I do not believe that Descartes was ever a direct realist with respect to sense perception – at least not with respect to what Locke called ‘secondary’ sense qualities (whether he believed in a direct perception of primary qualities is more difficult to determine – see Wilson 1993. I discuss the issue of direct realism with respect to sense
seventeenth century. I have mentioned in chapter 1 some of the advantages Descartes might have seen in the dual presence theory; for example (chapter 1, section 2) it would have enabled Descartes to doubt the extramental existence of directly perceived objects, without erecting the kind of barrier between the mind and the world that a veil-of-perception view would involve. There is also textual evidence that Descartes held a dual presence theory; many passages in his cosmological argument for God's existence and in his discussion with Caterus concerning that argument indicate a familiarity with the theory. Descartes says that one and the same thing, the sun, can have formal being and objective being, and that the "idea" of the sun is just the sun itself, as it exists in the mind:

... if anyone asks what happens (accidat) to the sun as a result of its being objectively in my intellect, the best answer is that nothing happens to it but [something denoted by] an extrinsic denomination, namely, that it terminates an operation of the intellect in the manner of an object. But if it was asked what the idea of the sun is, and the question was answered by saying that it is the thing known (cogitatam), as it is objectively in the intellect, no one would understand it [the idea] to be the sun itself as [objective being] is an extrinsic denomination in it. Nor will 'being in the intellect objectively' signify its [the sun's] termination of an operation in the manner of an object, but rather [its] being in the intellect in the manner in which its [the intellect's] objects are accustomed to be there. So

perception at somewhat greater length below.

131 This is not the only textual evidence. Descartes seems to have adopted this model early on in his philosophical development. In the Regulae, as McRae (1965, 180) notes, Descartes speaks of a single thing as having two aspects, actual existence and being an object of the understanding. These objects are called 'natures' and 'essences'.
that the idea of the sun is the sun itself existing in the intellect—not of course formally, as in the heavens, but objectively existing, i.e., in the manner in which objects are accustomed to be in the intellect. This mode of being is certainly far less perfect than that by which things exist outside the intellect, but that does not mean that it is nothing at all (plane nihil). (Reply to Caterus, AT VII, 102-103)

The phrase ‘my idea of the sun’ is evidently synonymous with ‘the sun qua objectively existing in my mind’, where the terms ‘the sun’ and ‘the sun itself’—in their strict sense—refer neither to the sun qua objectively existing, nor to the sun qua formally existing, but to a tertium quid, which need have neither actual or formal existence nor objective existence, though it can have either.\[132\] This tertium quid is the res, the thing in itself. It is crucial to understand that for Descartes the term res, ‘thing’, does not mean ‘existent’. It means (as Margaret Wilson has pointed out) something closer to ‘possible’, and very often, ‘possible individual’.\[133\] The best example of a Cartesian res is an individual that

\[132\] It is sometimes hard to tell whether Descartes is using ‘the sun’ or ‘the sun itself’ to mean the sun qua actual, or this tertium quid, the “bare” or “existentially-neutral” essence (“But if the question is about what the idea of the sun is, and we answer that it is the thing which is thought of, in so far as it has objective being in the intellect, no one will take this to be the sun itself with this extraneous label applied to it” Reply to Caterus, AT VII 102, AT VII 75). But even if he sometimes uses ‘the object itself’ to mean the object qua actual, this can be explained, I think, as a concession to unsophisticated, commonsense usage. We tend to think and speak of things in actual existence as the things “themselves” or “in themselves”. Nevertheless, Descartes is quite clear that (in the case of a clear and distinct idea) it is one and the same thing that has objective being in the mind and actual being in the world, so that one and the same “thing itself” has two existential modes (“... the idea of the sun is the sun itself existing in the intellect—not of course formally existing, as it does in the heavens, but objectively existing, i.e. in the way in which objects normally are in the intellect”, Reply to Caterus, ibid.). In the strict sense, then, the phrase ‘the sun itself’ ought to mean the sun neither as actual, nor as objective, but simply as capable of having either actual being or objective being.

\[133\] “... what represents res and what does not, depends on a concept of reality that is not equivalent to existence. For instance [Descartes] says ... in the Third Meditation that ‘although perhaps it is possible to imagine that such a being [as God] does not exist, it is
is neutral (so to speak) with respect to existence – whether actual existence (being in the world) or objective existence (being in the mind). His account of perception in the Reply to Caterus requires "thing itself" in the strict sense to mean something that can have either actual existence or existence in the mind.

The "Reply to Caterus" comes up in almost every discussion of Descartes' idea theory, and the traditional view is that in spite of its Scholastic tone, the substance of Descartes' view owes very little to the Scholastics.\(^{134}\) This judgement is often supported by the observation that Caterus completely disagrees with Descartes, which (since Caterus is a Scholastic) shows (supposedly) that Descartes' view is in opposition to Scholasticism. But Caterus is only one Scholastic and there is no evidence that he was an adherent of the dual presence theory. That theory was not universal among seventeenth-century Scholastics. As we have seen (chapter 1, section 2), the seventeenth-century Thomist John of St. Thomas opposed many aspects of the dual presence theory, especially the view that an object can be present to the mind when it has no presence outside the mind.

Descartes' talk of the sun as both in the mind and in the sky agrees very well with the dual presence theory of Rubio et al. According to that theory the sun itself can be in either (or both or neither) of two existential states, actual existence and objective

\(^{134}\) See, for example, Gilson 1975, 203-204, esp. 204 n. 3. See also Alquié 1974, v. 2, p. 509n.
existence. Since the idea and the external object are existentially diverse\textsuperscript{135} manifestations of the same object, it is fitting in many contexts to emphasize the fact that they are distinct, and to speak of the idea as "resembling" the external object. Yet Descartes is clear that the sun in the mind is the very same thing as the sun up in the sky. Each is a manifestation or making-present of the one sun. The term ‘the sun’ must be taken, in its strict sense, as referring to something ontologically prior to and independent of both real and objective existence. The interpretation of Cartesian ideas in terms of Scholastic dual presence theory helps explain why Descartes seems at some times to be a direct realist and at other times to be a representationalist. If identity is taken as coextensive with existential identity, then it impossible to be a representationalist and a direct realist, without inconsistency. But if things can be identical yet existentially distinct, the two views are consistent. Recall the "bilocated coin" example of chapter 1, section 1. In "immediately" touching the coin in the pocket, one touches the coin on the table only "mediately", yet the object one touches immediately is numerically identical with the coin on the table. There is no numerically distinct proxy or stand-in that interferes with a direct contact with the coin on the table. Descartes' claim in the Third Reply that ideas are immediately perceived, and the implication that things out in the world are not, is consistent with saying that the objects represented by ideas are perceived directly.\textsuperscript{136} A dual presence reading need not posit any veil of perception blocking the mind's access to the world in order to accommodate such passages as the following:

\textsuperscript{135} We can say that two things are "existentially identical" iff they have the same kind of existence (i.e., neither have any being, both have objective being or both have real being).\textsuperscript{136} A similar account of mediate and immediate perception is found in Arnauld 1843, 204-205 (cf. Nadler 1989, 116), "... since every perception is essentially representative of something, and since it is in this respect called an idea, it can be essentially reflexive
I have everywhere . . . shown that I take the word 'idea' to stand for everything that is immediately perceived by the mind. . . (Third Reply; AT VII, 181)

However, it might seem at first sight that the direct realism of the dual presence theory would leave Descartes no room for doubt about the existence of the external world. Why, one might ask, would Descartes go to the trouble of constructing a proof of the existence of the corporeal world, if he thought that external bodies are directly present to us in perception?

In the first place, direct realism is consistent with skepticism about the external existence of the direct objects of perception. Even if one grants the possibility of cognitions whose objects are numerically identical with mind-independent bodies, there is still the problem of deciding which of our cognitions are of this type, for the fact of human error proves that not all cognitions have objects that are mind-independent. In the second place, there was clear precedent in Scholastic dual presence theory for direct cognitions of non-existents. As we saw in chapter 1, section 2, the Jesuit philosophers, who were undoubtedly direct realists, freely granted the possibility of intuitions of non-existent objects. Indeed, the "dual presence" variety of direct realism that I am attributing to Descartes is not only consistent with a certain sort of skepticism about an

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upon itself only if its immediate object is that idea, i.e., the objective reality [réalité objective] of the things which my mind is said to perceive. Thus, if I think of the sun, the objective reality of the sun, which is present to my mind, is the immediate object of that perception, and the possible or existing sun, which is outside my mind, is its mediate object, so to speak. So we see that, without having recourse to representative beings distinct from perception, it is very true in this sense that it is our ideas that we see immediately and which are the immediate object of our thought, not only with regard to material things, but generally with regard to all things, which does not rule out our also seeing, through those ideas, the object which contains formally what is only objectively in the idea, that is to say, for example, my conceiving the formal being of a square, which is objectively in the idea or perception that I have of a square."

external world, it can even be seen as fostering it. Since in the objective idea the object has a different ontic mode than it would have outside the mind, merely having an idea of an object is never sufficient proof that the thing actually exists. Hence the need for some other proof of an external world. For Descartes, the keystone of this proof is the cosmological argument for God’s existence. The cosmological argument can thus be seen as a natural response to a problem raised by the dual presence theory that Descartes inherited from the Jesuit Scholastics. This is confirmed by the fact that, as we saw in chapter 1, section 2, important parts of Descartes' cosmological proof were anticipated by the Jesuit philosopher Roderigo de Arriaga.

The dual presence theory easily accounts for passages such as the following, which Kenny 1967 (241-242) takes as proof that Cartesian ideas constitute a veil of perception, a second object over and above the one represented by the idea.

[Caterus] refers to the thing itself, which is as it were placed outside the understanding, and respecting which it is certainly an extrinsic attribute to be objectively in the understanding, and what I speak of is the idea, . . . in the case of which “objective existence” means precisely being in the understanding in the way in which objects are wont to be there. (AT VII, 102)

On a dual presence reading, all this passage means is that when we speak of an idea of the sun we are speaking of objective being as an existential mode of the sun itself, (not the sun qua actual). The sun itself acquires objective being intrinsically, not extrinsically. We need not take Descartes as saying that there are two things that acquire objective being, (1) the sun itself and (2) the idea of the sun.
In chapter 1, section 1, I mentioned that John Yolton has dismissed as "wildly impossible" the view that objects are literally present in the mind. It comes as no surprise then to find him arguing that Descartes never seriously entertained such a view, and indeed rejected it (Yolton 1984, 38). According to Yolton, Descartes' view that the formal reality of objects is not in the mind is sufficient to prove his opposition to what I have called the dual presence theory. But Yolton seems to take the claims "the formal reality of the object is not in the mind" and "the object has no real existence in the mind" as equivalent, and as we have seen, they are not equivalent for the dual presence theory. The claim that the object has no real existence in the mind is perfectly consistent with the dual presence theory of perception. Yolton evidently takes 'literal presence' as synonymous with 'real presence', but the dual presence theory does not.

Furthermore, Yolton's claim involves a misconception about Descartes' terms 'formal reality' and 'objective reality', a misconception that is worth noting, since it is all too common.\(^{137}\) He writes (1984, 31),

Formal reality is the actual reality any given kind of thing has. The formal reality of my desk is that it exists in space and time, is extended, is a substance. The formal reality of ideas is that they are modes of thought, exist in minds, are not caused by corporeal objects. Formal reality is being in its own kind. Ideas have an additional kind of reality. They represent objects; this representing function is their objective reality.

\(^{137}\) See above, chapter 1, section 3, for a related criticism of Margaret Wilson. Cf. also Garber 1992, 80ff., who seems to use 'objective reality', realitas objectiva, as equivalent to 'objective existence', esse objectivum.
Yolton seems to think of Cartesian formal reality is a set of propositions: the formal reality of a desk is *that* it exists in space and time, *that* it is extended, etc.; the formal reality of an idea is *that* it is a mode of thought, *that* it exists in a mind, etc. Objective reality, on the other hand, is not (he says) a set of propositions, but a "function". For Yolton formal reality is something like the set of facts about the object, or perhaps simply its real existence, while objective reality is an act (viz., the act of representing) performed by certain kinds of real beings, namely, ideas. But as I noted in chapter 1, section 3, Descartes' understanding of formal and objective reality was entirely different. In the Second Replies he explains that a thing's reality — whether formal or objective — is the degree of perfection, structure, or "design" (*artificiositas*; French *dessein*) it has. This has nothing to do with existence, whether real or objective. An intricate precision timepiece has far more reality, in the Cartesian sense, than a lump of mud — even if the mud exists and the timepiece does not. If the watch happens to exist in the world, then its reality will be "formal"; if it happens to be conceived by some mind, then its reality will be "objective". On the Cartesian view one and the same reality, or degree of structure/perfection/design, can be both formal and objective at the same time, or it can be either, or neither. In itself it has no relation to either kind of existence.

Clearly, Yolton's objection to the dual presence reading of Descartes is flawed in several respects. However, one might object to the dual presence reading of Descartes on different grounds. Descartes appears to think that we can have several distinct ideas of the same object, some of which misrepresent the object and some of which represent it correctly.
... even if [ideas] came from things diverse from myself, it would not follow from this that they must be similar to those things. Indeed, in many cases I seem to have detected a great discrepancy. For example, I find in myself two diverse ideas of the sun, one that is just as if it were drawn in (haustam) from the senses, and which is most to be reckoned among those that I judge to be adventitious, and another that is taken from the arguments of astronomy, that is, elicited from certain notions that are innate to me, or constructed by me in some other way, through which it is shown to be several times larger than the earth. Certainly both cannot be similar to the sun itself existing outside me, and reason persuades [me] that that idea is most (maxime) dissimilar to it, which seems to have emanated from it as directly as possible (quam proxime). (AT VII, 40)

If both the visual idea of the sun and the astronomical idea of it are identical to the sun in the sky, and if the sun in the sky is much larger than the earth, then how can we have these two very different ideas, one of which represents the sun as it is, the other of which misrepresents it as being much smaller than it really is? Shouldn't they both represent the sun as it is, if they are both identical to it?

But in this passage Descartes seems to be using the term ‘idea’ loosely, to include the visual sensation caused by the sun, which, unlike the astronomical or intellectual idea, is not identical to the sun itself. There is no evidence that Descartes ever held that sensory impressions, which are not clear and distinct ideas, are a mental presence of objects that can exist in themselves. On the contrary, for Descartes sensations are – like the feeling of pain to which he often compares them – “raw feels”; they re-present
nothing at all (cf. Malebranche on *sentiments*). For Descartes only *intellectual* perception is a window out onto the world of things in themselves. Sensation is at best a garbled corruption of what might have been a perception, had the mind’s union with the body not “confused” it – this perception would have been a perception of the pattern of “animal spirits” on the surface of the pineal gland. For some reason rooted in the unfathomable mystery of the soul-body union, the mind’s perception of the patterns and motions of these animal spirits give rise to the experiences we call colors, sounds, etc. For Descartes colors, sounds etc. are not re-presentations (i.e., objective presences) of things; they are subjective states, like an itch or a pain. They are the residue of the mind’s abortive attempt to re-present the surface of the pineal gland. Strictly speaking, then, the “raw feel” that we experience when seeing a color or hearing a sound is not an “idea” in the Cartesian sense. Thus, the fact that these experiences do not conform to the

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138 See Nadler 1989 and Wells 1984 on the question of the representational or non-representational character of “materially false” ideas in Descartes. Nadler says that materially false ideas such as sensations fail to represent “in an adequate fashion” (though he thinks that for Descartes they do still have “some minimal degree of representational content”). Perhaps we could go even further and say that for Descartes such “ideas” have no representational content at all, and are thus not ideas in the strict sense. On such a view, intelligibility is required for “reality” (the property of being a thing); since sense qualities are unintelligible, they are not things. They would be called ‘ideas’ because they are commonly taken to be representations, but they would be merely non-representational modes of the mind. This, I think, might be the underlying meaning of Descartes’ remark (quoted by Nadler) in the Reply to Arnauld’s Fourth Objections, “my only reason for calling the idea [of cold] materially false is that, owing to the fact that it is obscure and confused, I am unable to judge whether or not what it displays *[exhiber]* to me is something positive which exists outside of my sensation. And hence I may be led to judge that it is something positive though in fact it may merely be an absence” (AT VII 234, CSM II 164). Clearly Descartes’ considered view is that what we feel when we experience cold is nothing at all, but only an absence. For a different perspective on the representative character of materially false ideas, see Wilson 1978, 108-109. Cf. also chapter 1, section 3 above (esp. n. 118).
dual presence model of perception is no argument against my claim that this model is the key to understanding Cartesian ideas.\textsuperscript{139}

It seems impossible to reconcile Descartes' philosophical and physiological views on sensation with the claims of O'Neil 1974, Yolton 1975, 1984 and – especially – Cook 1987 that Descartes held a direct realist theory of sense perception.\textsuperscript{140} For Descartes, visual perception of the sun occurs when the sun transmits light (a disturbance in the subtle matter filling the interstices of bodies between the sun and the eye) to the eye, and the light forms a corporeal image on the retina; this image is nothing more than a displacement of the retina's material parts. This displacement in the retina causes further displacements in the "animal spirits" filling the optic nerve; these displacements are transmitted up the nerve to the brain, and eventually to the pineal gland. A corporeal image is formed there, which is simply a pattern in the animal spirits on the surface of the

\textsuperscript{139} Why does the mind's attempt to perceive the animal spirit patterns and motions on the surface of the pineal gland result in sensation rather than in a clear and distinct perception? Why do we not perceive these phenomena as they are, namely, as patterns in pure colorless, odorless, tasteless, silent extension? Descartes has no satisfactory explanation, but the problem would seem to be rooted in a perturbation in the mind due to its union with the body. Jean Laporte compares the corrupting influence of the body in Descartes to the Platonic notion (Timaeus) of the "erring cause":

L'union de l'âme et du corps joue chez Descartes le même rôle que la planomene aitia in Plato. Le « mélange » (quasi permixtio), en virtu de quoi l'âme devient autre qu'elle-même, est la source de ce « mélange » désordonné de pensées qui est la confusion, et qui se manifeste dans les diverses modalités—sensation, imagination, appétit, passion — irreductibles à l'entendement pur. (Laporte 1945, 245)

Laporte presents the confusion and obscurity inherent to sense perception as the natural corollary of the mind's union with the body. The mind-body union is a "con-fusion" (a "fusing-together") of two entirely distinct substances having nothing whatever in common, and this con-fusion in the metaphysical order leads (seemingly by a metaphysical necessity) to a confusion in the order of cognition: whatever thinking the mind does by means of the body will be confused and obscure. Cf. Sixth Meditation, AT VII 81, CSM II 56.

\textsuperscript{140} O'Neil (1974) recognizes this, and this is why he thinks that Descartes gradually
pineal gland. The mind, "considering" this corporeal image, sees the sun.\textsuperscript{141} It is hard to see how the consideration of the corporeal image in the pineal gland brings it about that the mind sees the sun, millions of miles away. Here we seem to have a genuine example of images serving as a veil-of-perception.

It is precisely Descartes' rejection of the traditional Scholastic account of sense perception that makes the dual presence theory so useful for his own account of intellectual perception. On the Scholastic view, the senses are the only bridge between the mind and the world. The intellect is linked to the world \textit{via} the senses; the agent intellect forms universal concepts by abstracting them from phantasms stored in the memory, and these phantasms are the traces on the \textit{phantasia} of expressed sensible species.\textsuperscript{142} Aquinas even went so far as to say that the human intellect cannot function without phantasms; there is no thought without images. Although not all Scholastics followed him on this point, there was broad agreement that the human intellect ultimately derived all its concepts by abstraction from sensible species that represent the sensible qualities of external bodies. On such a view, the mechanical philosophers' rejection of sensible species was bound to be seen as a destruction of the bridge between the human

\textsuperscript{141} In \textit{Notes Against a Certain Program} (AT VII, 358), Descartes is clear that "nothing reaches our mind from external objects through the organs beyond certain corporeal movements . . ." and that the sensible ideas of shape, color, etc. are innate. These ideas are "adventitious" only in the sense that their being formed in the mind at this or that time is occasioned by the action of external bodies on our sense organs. In the \textit{Optics} Descartes ridicules the Scholastic notion that sensible species can exist in the medium between the sense organ and the external sensible: "By this means, your mind will be delivered from all those little images flitting through the air, called 'intentional forms', which so exercise the imagination of the philosophers" (AT VI 85, CSM I, 153-154).

\textsuperscript{142} Of course the imaginative faculty is able to recombine stored images to form new images not derived from the sense faculties — e.g. the image of a chimera — but the fundamental elements out of which such images are constructed are always, for the
intellect and the external world. As Descartes himself observes in the first discourse of
the Optics, the mechanical philosophy's account of vision entails the rejection of
material, sensible species passing from the object of vision to the eye, and rejecting
sensible species goes hand in hand with the claim that there is nothing in external bodies
that resembles our sensations of color.

You may perhaps even be prepared to believe that in the bodies we call 'coloured'
the colours are nothing other than the various ways in which the bodies received
light and reflect it against our eyes. You have only to consider that the
differences a blind man notes between trees, rocks, water and similar things by
means of his stick do not seem any less to him than the differences between red,
yellow, green and all the other colours seem to us. And yet in all those bodies the
differences are nothing other than the various ways of moving the stick or of
resisting its movements. Hence you will have reason to conclude that there is no
need to suppose that something material passes from objects to our eyes to make
us see colours and light, or even that there is something in the objects which
resembles the ideas or sensations that we have of them. In just the same way,
when a blind man feels bodies, nothing has to issue from the bodies and pass
along his stick to his hand; and the resistance or movement of the bodies, which is
the sole cause of the sensations he has of them, is nothing like the ideas he forms
of them. By this means, your mind will be delivered from all those little images
flitting through the air, called 'intentional forms', which so exercise the
imagination of the philosophers. (CSM I 153-154, AT VI 85)

Scholastics, derived from sense experience.
The mechanical philosophy told the same story for all the other senses. There is nothing in external bodies resembling the sensations we label 'hot', 'cold', 'sweet', 'loud', etc. The Aristotelians' "proper sensibles" were mere artifacts of the mind. If the mechanical philosophy were right on this point, and if (as the Aristotelians had taught) all the mind's categories of proper, common, and per accidens sensibles were derived from the five senses, then they would be bound up with what (according to the new philosophy) are hopelessly confused and misleading ideas. What reason would there then be for thinking that any of our categories correspond to natural kinds?

Descartes, who felt it was his vocation\textsuperscript{143} to provide a firm metaphysical foundation for the mechanical philosophy of nature, had to show that even in the absence of the traditional link between the mind and the world the mind was not imprisoned within itself, that it was still capable of knowing things in themselves. His solution to this problem was to say that not all our ideas are derived from sense experience; some of our them are innate, and their veracity is guaranteed by the trustworthiness of God who gave them to us. It is the innate ideas of existence, time, number, and extension with its modes, not the ideas of sensation, that put the mind into direct contact with things in themselves. On the one hand, Descartes' rejection of the Scholastics' direct realism of \textit{sense} perception enabled him to skirt the issue of how to reconcile the physical and physiological details of sensation with the claim that our categories either are natural

\textsuperscript{143} Descartes seems to have taken very seriously the encouragement he received from the Papal nuncio to France, Cardinal Berulle, to develop his "first philosophy" for the good of the Church. In a famous letter to Mersenne (11 October 1638), Descartes complains that Galileo failed to consider first principles, and thus "built without foundations" (CSM III, 124, AT II, 380; Descartes felt it was his mission to provide the mechanical philosophy with a metaphysical foundation that would reveal its harmony with Christianity.
kinds or closely correspond to them. On the other hand, his appropriation of the
categories of Scholastic species theory to a new theory of direct *intellectual* perception
provided him with a metaphysical explanation of the claim that the mind has reliable
access to things in themselves, and hence to the claim that the categories of the human
mind (at least, those of which it has clear and distinct ideas) are natural kinds.\(^{144}\)

This explanation of the reliability of clear and distinct ideas is not to be confused
with a justification. As is well known, Descartes’ cosmological argument for the
existence of God is the key to his attempt to prove that the human intellect can prove the
existence of things outside itself; this is the sole *justification*, in the Cartesian system, for
a belief in the veracity of clear and distinct ideas. But even when we know with certainty
*that* our clear and distinct ideas must be true, it is still important to have a story about the
ideas themselves that explains their reliability. This is what the dual presence theory tells
us. The idea of God, or of a chiliagon, or of a triangle, cannot misrepresent its object
because it just is the object itself – though not (of course) in real being, but only in
objective being (cf. section 2 below and ch. 1 sect. 3 above).

For Descartes, God is known directly by the human mind – the idea of God is
God himself, present in the human intellect “in the manner in which objects are wont to
be there”. The human intellect does not comprehend God, that is, it cannot know all
there is to know about God at once – or even in any finite amount of time (cf. chapter 1,
section 3a). But its object, when it thinks of God, is no mere proxy of the divine essence;

\(^{144}\) Locke, Berkeley, and Hume reduced intellectual perception to imagination and to
memories of sense perception. In the absence of the Scholastic machinery for linking the
mind to the world through sense perception, this inevitably ended in Hume’s skepticism.
But (as I shall argue in chapter 3) the route to Berkeley’s *immaterialism*, and in
particular, to his view that we have no coherent concept of bodies as unconceived, did not
it is God himself. The finitude of the human intellect is no barrier to its containing God in objective being, for it is finite only in “formal being”, i.e. real existence. In objective being it is infinite, whenever it contemplates an infinite object (if the intellect were not capable of becoming objectively infinite it would be incapable of knowing infinity, as Malebranche stressed to Arnauld). The dual presence theory is the means by which Descartes understands what it is to know God, or any other mind-independent object. If the cosmological argument is the key to knowing that the intellect can know things outside itself, the dual presence theory is the key to knowing how it does so.

We have now dealt with two objections against the dual presence reading of Cartesian idea theory, (1) Yolton’s and (2) the objection based on the fact that sense “ideas” are not faithful representations of external objects. But there is a third objection, based on Michael J. Costa’s recent (1983) argument that objective ideas in Descartes are not immaterial images.145 Costa’s discussion is motivated by Descartes’ distinction in the Preface to the Meditations between ideas taken “materially” and objectively.

‘Idea’ can be taken materially, as an operation of the intellect, in which case it cannot be said to be more perfect than me. Alternatively, it can be taken objectively, as the thing represented by that operation; and this thing, even if it is not regarded as existing outside the intellect, can still, in virtue of its essence, be more perfect than myself. (CSM II, 7, AT VII 8)

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145 Kenny 1967, 234–35 also argues that Descartes sometimes affirms that ideas are not immaterial images. Unlike Kenny, however, Costa denies that Descartes ever makes the contradictory claim that ideas are immaterial images.
Costa thinks it strange that Descartes would call an object an ‘idea’ simply because it happens to be known by means of an idea (recall Revius’ frustration with Suarez’s use of ‘objective concept’ to refer to the object of a concept, ch. 1 section 1 above).

The nature of [objective ideas] is not so clear. Take, for example, the mental state of a perception of a tree. Descartes says that we can use the term “idea” to refer to the thing represented by the act of perception. That thing in this case seems to be the tree. But, surely, Descartes does not wish to claim that the tree is an idea, in any sense of “idea”. (Costa 1983, 540)

Costa realizes that the difficulty could be solved at once by “supposing that when Descartes talks about an idea in the objective sense he means a representative immaterial image” (Costa 1983, 540), but he rejects this solution, on the grounds that (1) in the above passage from the Preface it is the “material” idea, the act of thought, that is representative, not the objective idea and (2) we have objective ideas, but no images, of God, a chiliagon and our own mind. He concludes that the phrase ‘idea taken objectively’ refers to “the thing only insofar as it exists as an object of thought (as represented by the mental act)” (Costa 1983, 540). It is a useful term, he thinks, inasmuch as it allows us to speak of objects without implying that they exist, but it does not commit Descartes to belief in any kind of immaterial image. In other words, Costa – like Yolton and Cook – holds that for Descartes ideas are simply acts of perception.

They are not identical with the perceived object.

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146 Cf. CSM II 127, AT VII 181; CSM II 50-51, AT VII 72-73; CSM II 37, AT VII 53.
147 Costa holds that the only “images” in which Descartes believes are corporeal images in the imagination, which Costa identifies with brain states, patterns of animal spirits on the pineal gland (Costa 1983, 530-541).
It is certainly true that for Descartes the ideas of God, a chiliagon, etc. are not corporeal images. There is no picture in the imagination corresponding to these terms. But when Costa claims further that Cartesian ideas are simply acts of perception or modes of the mind – Suarez’s “formal concepts” – he throws out the baby with the bath water. Descartes regarded ideas as identical with the objects they represent, and thus as “like images of things”, tanquam rerum imagines. Costa’s first argument for his position is based on the claim that for Descartes ideas taken “materially” are representative and objective ideas are not. But this seems to be contradicted by Descartes’ remark in the Third Meditation that when ideas are taken as mere modes of thought, i.e. “materially”, they are all equally perfect. This implies that taken materially the idea of a cat is no more perfect than the idea of God, which appears to imply that qua modes of thought ideas are not representative:

In so far as the ideas are <considered> simply <as> modes of thought, there is no recognizable inequality among them: they all appear to come from within me in the same fashion. But in so far as different ideas <are considered as images which> represent different things, it is clear that they differ widely. (CSM II, 28-29; AT VII 40-41).

Not only does this passage suggest that “material ideas” are not representative, it also shows that for Descartes objective ideas are images. In the CSM text, diamond brackets signal places where the French edition of 1647 makes additions or modifications to the

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148 See Margaret Wilson 1982, 102ff. for an illuminating discussion of Descartes’ claim that ideas are “like images” (AT VII 37). She correctly states that in Descartes ‘image’ is not to be equated with ‘corporeal image’, and that Descartes’ point in calling them ‘images’ was to stress their representational character. (However, I disagree with Wilson on what Descartes understood by ‘representation’).
Latin edition of 1641. Although Descartes did not personally prepare the French
translation (it was made by Louis-Charles d’Albert, Duc de Luynes), he approved it -
Descartes’ biographer Adrien Baillet even claimed that Descartes used the preparation of
the French edition as an occasion for revising the original text (CSM II, 1-2). However
this may be, the French text is certainly a reliable guide to Descartes’ meaning in the
Meditations. The last sentence of the above quote contains, in the French edition, the
words ‘are considered as images which’ in the last sentence, which shows that he thinks
of certain ideas, at least, as images. Now the context of this passage is a discussion of the
idea of God. Descartes is clearly saying that the idea of God, taken objectively, is an
image of God – though not, of course, a corporeal image. It is an image precisely in the
sense I have explained above, namely, a “re”-presentation in objective being of the
represented object.

Costa’s second point concerns Descartes’ claims\textsuperscript{149} that we have no images of
God, a chiliagon, and our own soul. But a close reading reveals that in the cited passages
wherever Descartes uses the terms ‘imagination’ and ‘images’ he means corporeal
imagination and images of corporeal objects. The fact that Descartes uses such
abbreviations should not be taken to indicate a denial on his part of the claim that our
ideas of incorporeal God, chiliagons, angels, our own souls, etc. are non-corporeal
images, i.e. objective re-presentations of the represented objects. Furthermore, as Costa
himself notes, Descartes says that the only ideas, in the strict sense, are “as it were,
images of things”.

\textsuperscript{149} At CSM II 127, AT VII 181; CSM II 50-51, AT VII 71-73; CSM II 37, AT VII 53.
Of my thoughts some are, as it were, images of things (quasi rerum imagines), and to these alone is the title ‘idea’ properly applied; examples are my thought of a man or of a chimera, of heaven, or an angel, or (even) of God. (AT VII, 37)

Costa’s attempt to reconcile this passage with his claim that for Descartes ideas are not images is not very convincing.

... when Descartes says that “idea” is properly applied only to images of things, he is using the term “image” to make a distinction between different types of mental states. He is saying that there is a limited or proper sense of “idea” in which it denotes only certain mental states, such as conceptions, perceptions, and imaginings. Willings, fearings, desirings, etc. are not ideas in this limited or proper sense. (Costa 1983, 543)

If as Costa claims the term ‘image’ elsewhere refers solely to corporeal images, states of the pineal gland, then it is hard to see why in this passage Descartes would have suddenly chosen the term ‘image’ to refer to states that have no clear relationship to the corporeal imagination, sc. conceptions and willings.

The plain sense of Descartes’ passage – which seems fatal to Costa’s claim that ideas are not immaterial images – is that ideas in the strict sense are, or at least are like, immaterial images. The easiest way to explain this, without contradicting the passages in which Descartes distinguishes ideas from images, is to assume that when he says ideas are “quasi” images he means that they are immaterial, intelligible re-presentations, and that when he says that we have ideas, but not images, of God, angels, etc., he is using ‘image’ to refer to sensible images or “phantasms”. Costa’s argument that Cartesian ideas are simply acts of perception, and are not identical to their objects, cannot stand
against the weight of the evidence adduced in this chapter for the dual presence reading of Cartesian idea theory.

A final objection to the dual presence theory might be that it exaggerates the influence of Scholastic philosophy on Descartes. Roger Ariew has argued that Scholasticism exerted no great influence on the central themes of Descartes' thought.

... Descartes was not familiar with scholastic philosophy in the period of his greatest work, during 1637-40. When he finally formulated his mature works, he departed either dramatically or by degrees from a scholastic tradition he no longer knew very well. Of course, Descartes was taught Scholastic philosophy in his youth at La Flèche, but he abandoned his study of it for twenty years, roughly between 1620 and 1640, and he picked it up again only in 1640, to arm himself against the expected attacks of the Jesuits. (Ariew 1992, 77-78)

Ariew is partly right: Descartes' contempt for large sections of Scholasticism is obvious. He often ridicules Scholastic doctrine, and even says (in the Conversation with Burman) that Scholastic theology ought to be expunged. In addition (as Ariew notes), in a set of letters to Mersenne written in 1640-41 (outlining a project for writing a critical commentary on a standard philosophy textbook of the day), Descartes tells Mersenne that he has not read Scholastic philosophy for twenty years (roughly, when he was a student at La Flèche), and thinks very little of it.

However, the fact that Descartes claims to have read no Scholastic philosophy since La Flèche, and his contempt for large parts of it, is no proof that he was not deeply and lastingingly influenced by at least some of the doctrines he learned there.\footnote{Ariew himself notes (1992, 82 n.8) that it is hard to reconcile Descartes' ridicule of}
Descartes was not especially good at recognizing his intellectual debts. For example, it is now widely acknowledged that the Dutch mechanical philosopher Isaac Beeckman introduced Descartes to a great deal of current thought in physics and mathematics, and was the first important intellectual influence on Descartes since the Jesuits of La Flèche. He said as much himself in a letter to Beeckman of 23 April 1619:

If I should stop somewhere, as I hope I shall, I promise to see that my Mechanics or Geometry is put in order, and I will salute you as the promoter and prime author of my studies. For it was you alone who roused me from my state of

Scholasticism—in particular, philosophy as taught in Jesuit schools—with the fact that in a 1638 letter to an anonymous correspondent asking advice on the best school for his son he recommends La Flèche over universities in Holland (such as the University of Utrecht, where Regius may have been giving private lessons in Cartesian philosophy), saying that "there is no place on earth where philosophy is better taught than at La Flèche". As Ariew says, "it is one thing to recommend La Flèche as the best of a sorry lot, but another to recommend it over Utrecht, where one might be taught Cartesian philosophy". The Ratio studiorum ("plan of studies") of 1599 prescribed that "in the third year [the professor] will explain the second book of De generatione, the books De anima and the Metaphysics" (as quoted in Cronin 1966, 235-236). Rubio's commentary could have been used for the De anima section of the course; there is no way to tell (Cronin 1966, 32) speculates that either the Coimbrans or Toletus may have been used, but gives no reason for thinking that these rather than the commentaries of Suarez or Rubio were used; indeed, he does not indicate that he is aware of Rubio's De anima commentary). In any case the use of textbooks, rather than the original works of Aristotle, was probably the rule. In logic (studied in the first year of the three-year philosophy course) the professors were required to use the works of Fonseca or Toletus (Cronin 1966, 32). In a letter to Mersenne (30 September 1640) Descartes says that he remembers reading, "twenty years ago" (approximately the time of his stay at La Flèche) the Scholastic authors Rubio, Toletus and the Coimbrans. Arriew's (1992, 60) statement that the curriculum at La Flèche was "based primarily on Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas" is a bit incomplete. It is true that the Jesuit statutes of 1588 mandated that instruction in Jesuit houses of study and colleges follow Aristotle in philosophy and Aquinas in theology. But the textbooks in day-to-day use at the colleges did not always follow Aquinas. In fact the 1586 ratio studiorum required adherence only to Aristotle and "the true philosophy", though Thomas was given pride of place among Aristotle's interpreters (Rochemonteix 1889, iv, 8). As shown above, the foremost Thomist of the seventeenth century, John of St. Thomas, rejected the doctrine of the Coimbrans and Suarez on intuition of non-existents. See Garber 1994, 9-12.
indolence, and reawakened the learning which by then had almost disappeared
from my memory; and when my mind strayed from serious pursuits, it was you
who led it back to worthier things. Thus, if perhaps I should produce something
not wholly to be despised, you can rightly claim it all as your own; and I for my
part shall send it to you without fail, so that you may have the benefit of it, and
correct it into the bargain.\textsuperscript{153}

But after eleven years had passed, Descartes had entirely forgotten his debt to Beeckman.
On 17 October 1630 (some time after Descartes had become a star of Parisian intellectual
society) he wrote to his former friend that

I have never learned anything but idle fancies from your *Mathematical Physics* . .
. Have I ever been moved by your authority? Have I ever been convinced by your
arguments? Well, you said, I believed and accepted some of your views as soon
as I understood them. But, mark you, the fact that I believed them at once does
not show that I learnt them from you; I accepted them, rather, because I had
already arrived at the same views myself. . . . it occasionally happens that even
when the most incompetent person discusses philosophy, he says many things
which by sheer chance coincide with the truth.\textsuperscript{154}

This sort of treatment of a man whom he himself had once acknowledged as a mentor
should make us skeptical of Descartes’ protestations that he had not been much
influenced by Scholastic philosophy. It is also interesting to note that according to
Beeckman’s journals the young Descartes (aged 22-23) was still “involved with many
Jesuits and other studious and learned men” (AT X 52). Thus, about four years after

\textsuperscript{153} AT X 162-163; CSM III 4.
leaving La Flèche, Descartes continued to keep up his contacts with the “studious and learned” men of the Society of Jesus. In light of this prolonged intellectual contact with the Jesuit order, lasting from his eighth or ninth to at least his twenty-second year, and in light of the way in which he came in time to consider his scientific apprenticeship to Beeckman as utterly irrelevant to his intellectual development, it does not seem at all unreasonable to suppose that a number of Scholastic notions simply became second nature to him, so that he ceased to think of them as “Scholastic” any more. At some point they became for him simply a part of the “light of nature”.

There is also the possibility that Descartes was willing to use the Jesuit dual presence theory and its doctrine of the identity of idea and object without being completely convinced of them. As we've already noted, much of his interest in metaphysics and the theory of knowledge was directed toward laying a foundation for the mechanical philosophy of nature. In the Conversation with Burman Descartes says that philosophy is merely propaedeutic to the physical sciences, and that it is a mistake to spend much time on it.

A point to note is that one should not devote so much effort to the Meditations, or give them elaborate treatment in commentaries and the like. Still less should one do what some try to do, and dig more deeply into these questions than the author did; he has dealt with them quite deeply enough. It is sufficient to have grasped them once in a general way and then to remember the conclusion. Otherwise, they draw the mind too far away from physical and observable things, and make it unfit for them. Yet it is just these physical studies that it is most desirable to

154 AT I, 159; CSM III, 27.
pursue, since they would yield abundant benefits for life. The author did follow up metaphysical questions fairly thoroughly in the *Meditations*, and established their certainty against the skeptics, and so everyone does not have to tackle this job for himself, or need to spend the time and trouble meditating on these things. It is sufficient to know the first part of the *Principles*, since this includes those parts of metaphysics which need to be known for physics and so forth (AT 164; CSM III, 346).

One of the main threats to the mechanical philosophy was its link to skepticism and libertinage. Its rejection of the Scholastics' intentional species in favor of a corpuscular theory of light, sound, etc., in undermining the link between the mind and the external world, threatened not only the security of philosophical knowledge, but also the sacramental theology of the Catholic Church, which was based on Aristotelian metaphysics. To mitigate ecclesiastical opposition to the mechanical philosophy it was necessary for someone to show that it could be reconciled with both cognitive realism and the main points of sacramental theology. Descartes hoped to accomplish this, beginning in the *Discourse* and *Meditations* with proofs of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul and ending with a completely mechanistic account of the human body and the physical world. The metaphysical part of his project required Descartes to use some of the categories of Scholastic thought, among them the concept of intentional species—though confined now to the mental realm and re-named 'ideas'. The quasi-

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155 Although propagandists such as Robert Boyle would later succeed in making the mechanical philosophy religiously respectable, in the early seventeenth-century corpuscularians such as England’s Thomas Harriot and Thomas Hobbes were widely suspected of atheism. Atomism and corpuscularianism were popularly associated with the materialism of Democritus and Epicurus.
scholastic notion of ideas brought in its train the fully Scholastic notions of objective
being, objective reality, and eminent cause.

Descartes wrote with his Scholastic contemporaries in mind. We know from his
letters to Mersenne that he hoped the Jesuits might adopt his philosophy in their schools,
if only he could develop a suitable manual (which eventually saw light as the Principles).
His Meditations were dedicated to the theologians of the Sorbonne, and the work was
given a pious subtitle ("in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the
distinction between the human soul and the body"). Three of the seven sets of objections
eventually published with the Meditations were penned by Scholastic theologians, which
is evidence of Descartes' concern to address reservations from that quarter. Given that he
was speaking to an audience largely composed of Scholastic theologians and
philosophers, with the aim of convincing them that the mechanical philosophy was no
threat to the Catholic faith, it is not surprising that he was willing to use their
categories of thought whenever it was possible to do so without overt self-contradiction.
Whether or not Descartes was sincere in his use of Scholastic concepts and terms, the
evidence of the last few chapters argues against the view that these concepts had no
significant influence on his thought at the time of the Dialogues and Meditations.

Finally, the claim that Descartes' views on perception and representation
constituted a form of dual presence theory does not absolutely depend on establishing an
intellectual debt to Rubio, Toletus or any other Scholastic philosopher, for it is just
possible that he arrived at a dual presence theory independently. The fact that Rubio and

\[156\] As late as 1686, the "new philosophers" still felt the need to defend the mechanical
philosophy of nature against the charge of impiety. See Leibniz's Discourse on
Metaphysics, section 23 (Leibniz 1902, 39).
some other Jesuits held the same view may be nothing more than coincidence. The case for reading Descartes as a dual presence theorist could if necessary stand on the internal evidence already presented, and especially on its ability to resolve the debate between those who would read Descartes as a direct realist and those who would read him as a representationalist – though I think it is greatly strengthened by the fact that his earliest teachers and textbooks very probably exposed him to the dual presence theory.

Descartes’ acceptance of the dual presence doctrine that to be conceived by the intellect is to acquire the property of being literally (though non-actually) present to the mind provided him with the conceptual tools he needed for his cosmological argument (see chapter 1, sections 2 and 3). Since God’s existence is the fulcrum of his proof (Sixth Meditation) that bodies are mind-independent, the dual presence theory can be seen as the foundation of his realism. Ironically, it also makes his position vulnerable to George Berkeley’s master argument against the conceivability of matter. We shall examine this point in chapter 3, section 2. But first it is necessary to explore one more consequence of Descartes’ intellectual direct realism: the ontological argument.

2. Intellectual Direct Realism and Descartes’ Ontological Argument

In the introduction I defined direct realism as the view that we can (and commonly do) perceive mind-independent individuals in themselves, without perceiving some distinct proxy that represents them. The Scholastics were direct: realists with regard to sense perception, and some (e.g. Suarez\textsuperscript{157}) were in addition intellectual direct realists, who held that (1) to conceive of something is to perceive it intellectually, so that conceiving is analogous to vision, and (2) we can (and often do) intellectually perceive

\textsuperscript{157} See Introduction, n. 6.
mind-independent individuals in themselves — so that, for example, when we think of the
sun, it is not some mental representation that is the object of our thought, but the
extramental body composed of hydrogen and helium. Descartes abandoned direct
realism for the senses, but held fast to intellectual direct realism.

An intellectual direct realist might conceivably adopt either of two opposing
views as to what happens when we conceive of an individual x as having a contingent
property P: (1) x acquires the property P in objective being (a property that in actual
existence it need not have), (2) a complex (which we can call ‘x-as-P’), whose nature it is
to have P, acquires objective being. On the second of these two views, when x is
conceived as P what acquires objective being is not just x, but a complex possible, x-as-P.
This complex has the property P in its nature (i.e. P is necessary to this complex) even
though P is not part of the nature of x.

Certain remarks that Descartes makes in defending the ontological argument
appear to commit him to the second of these two options, though the textual evidence is
admittedly somewhat confusing. In both the early work the Regulae and the much later
Reply to Caterus, Descartes distinguishes between simple natures, which “cannot be
divided by the mind into others which are more distinctly known” (AT X 418; CSM I
44). These simple natures can be absolutely simple, such as existence, unity, duration,

158 Descartes takes the meaning of ‘natures’ as self-evident. At present I am concerned
only with how Descartes’ ontological argument might have been used as a basis for
Berkeley’s master argument, and for this the vague intuitive notion of natures that
Berkeley or anyone else of his period or our own would have brought to Descartes’
 writings is sufficient. Note that option 2 is obviously closed to a direct realist who, like
John of St. Thomas, holds that there are no perceptions of non-existent, merely possible
individuals. It is not clear, however, that John or any of his Dominican confreres would
have admitted intellectual perceptions of individuals in the first place; in traditional
Thomist doctrine the proper object of the intellect is always universal. See chapter 1,
shape, and motion, or relatively simple, such as the natures of a triangle or a square. The simple natures can be composed to form complex natures, such as a triangle inscribed in a square.\(^{159}\) Furthermore – and this is of crucial importance – a clear and distinct idea of a simple nature is necessarily true.\(^{160}\) By this Descartes does not mean that the simple nature revealed in an idea must actually exist (a triangle’s interior angles would sum to two right angles even if no triangle existed); he means that whether the simple nature has actual existence or only objective existence it must have all the properties the idea represents it as having. We also learn, in the Reply to Caterus, that simple natures are immutable and necessary, so that all the properties represented in the idea of a simple nature belong to it necessarily.\(^{161}\)

What about complex natures? Are they, like simple natures, true and immutable, so that (1) a simple nature has whatever properties a clear and distinct idea represents it as having and (2) those properties are all necessary to it? At first, in the Reply to Caterus, Descartes seems to deny it.

We must notice a point about ideas which do not [objectively] contain true and immutable natures but merely ones which are invented and put together by the

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note 6.

\(^{159}\) Descartes distinguishes between natures as they are in themselves and as we know them. A nature such as that of a body may be simple in itself, but complex \textit{quaod nos} (\textit{Regulae}, Rule XII: AT X 418; CSM I 44), divided into the simple natures of “corporeal nature, extension and shape”. As far as Descartes is concerned, this does not compromise the formal truth of our ideas of bodies. Cf. Second Replies, AT VII 163, CSM II 115.

\(^{160}\) “... the intellect can never be deceived by any experience, provided that when the object is presented to it, it intuits it in a fashion exactly corresponding to the way in which it possesses the object, either within itself or in the imagination” (AT X 423, CSM I 47). Cf. the Reply to Caterus: “that which we clearly and distinctly understand to belong to the true and immutable nature, or essence, or form of something, can truly be asserted of that thing” (AT VII 115, CSM II 83).

\(^{161}\) Cf. AT VII 115-116, CSM II 83.
intellect. Such ideas can always be split up by the same intellect, not simply by an abstraction but by a clear and distinct intellectual operation, so that any ideas which the intellect cannot split up in this way were clearly not put together by the intellect. When, for example, I think of a winged horse or an actually existing lion, or a triangle inscribed in a square, I readily understand that I am also able to think of a horse without wings, or a lion which does not exist, or a triangle apart from a square, and so on; hence these things do not have true and immutable natures. (AT VII 117; CSM II 84)

And yet only a few sentences further on he says clearly that complex natures can be true and immutable.

... if I consider a triangle inscribed in a square, with a view not to attributing to the square properties that belong only to the triangle, or attributing to the triangle properties that belong to the square, but with a view to examining only the properties which arise out of the conjunction of the two, then the nature of this composite will be just as true and immutable as the nature of the triangle alone or the square alone. (AT VII 118; CSM II 84) 162

Rather than see Descartes as flatly contradicting himself within the space of a single paragraph, I think we should assume that when he says that ideas of complexes do not contain or represent true and immutable natures, he has in mind obscure and confused ideas, and when he later says that complex natures are true and immutable, he is speaking of natures as represented by ideas that are clear and distinct. If my idea of a triangle-

162 This seems irreconcilable with Margaret Wilson's claim (1982, 173) that for Descartes "an idea contains a true and immutable nature if and only if it cannot be analyzed into its parts...", i.e. if and only if the idea represents a simple nature. Kenny 1997, 191 avoids
inscribed-in-a-square is obscure and confused, I am liable to mistake the necessary
properties of the square for those of the triangle or the necessary properties of the triangle
for those of the complex nature; I will then be "attributing to the square properties that
belong only to the triangle, or attributing to the triangle properties that belong to the
square", as Descartes says in the passage just quoted. Indeed, mistaking a necessary
property of the complex nature for a necessary property of one of its components is a sure
sign that one's idea of the complex nature is obscure or confused. But this can never
happen as long my idea of the complex nature is clear and distinct. When Descartes

this mistake.

163 Lest the position I am attributing to Descartes seem to commit him either to
superessentialism, or to the view that whatever we conceive to be the case really is the
case (neither of which view he held), I feel it's worthwhile to repeat the following points.
Many of the properties necessary to a complex nature will not be necessary to the simpler
natures that compose it. In fact, mistaking a necessary property of the complex for a
necessary property of one of its components is evidence that one's idea of the complex
nature is obscure or confused. As long as P is not part of x's nature, x itself can be
conceived as lacking P, so the fact that I conceive of x as P is no guarantee that, should x
be actual, x would be P. Actual reality does not mirror my concepts; the mere fact that I
conceive of the moon as wood is no guarantee that the moon is actually made of wood.
On the other hand, it is a guarantee that the possible individual "the wooden moon" is
wood. Since a complex nature x-as-P includes P necessarily, it cannot be clearly and
distinctly conceived as lacking P. As we will see, this fact is all Descartes needs for his
version of the ontological argument.

164 In fact, for simple natures at least, not even an obscure and confused idea of a simple
nature can "misrepresent" it, if that is taken to mean representing something with
properties other than those of the nature itself. For Descartes, no idea, however confused,
represents its object as having properties it does not have; it merely presents them in so
dark and confused a way that they cannot form the basis for reliable judgement. This is
clear from the following text from the Regulae (Rule XII).

... these simple natures are all self-evident and never contain any falsity. This
can easily be shown if we distinguish between the faculty by which our intellect
intuits and knows things and the faculty by which it makes affirmative or negative
judgements. For it can happen that we are ignorant of things that we really know,
as for example when we suspect that they contain something else which eludes us,
something beyond what we intuit or reach in our thinking, even though we are
mistaken in thinking this. (AT X 420; CSM I 45)
contrasts "fictitious" ideas with those that represent true and immutable natures (as in the Fifth Meditation, AT VII 68, CSM II 47, and the Reply to Caterus, AT VII 117-118, CSM II 83-84), he does not mean to imply that all complex ideas are "fictitious" in that sense – he has in mind only those that are obscure and confused, hence materially false, such as the idea of a circle in which a rhombus can be inscribed (AT VII 67; CSM II 46). Otherwise he would never have said (in the passage just quoted: AT VII 118, CSM 84) that, provided our idea of the triangle inscribed in the square is clear and distinct, "the nature of this composite will be just as true and immutable as the nature of the triangle alone or the square alone". In fact, the notion that every complex idea is "fictitious", in the sense that it represents no true and immutable nature, would be disastrous for the certainty of complex geometrical objects. For Descartes says in the Regulae that even a relatively simple object such as the triangle has – strictly speaking – a complex nature.

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Note the resemblance of this doctrine and Rubio's remarks (chapter 1, section 3 above) on misrepresentation. Both, I think, are a consequence of the direct realist doctrine that when an object is perceived the object itself, not a proxy, is present to the mind.

Descartes goes on to conclude that if we know anything at all about a simple nature, we know – though of course only implicitly – everything there is to know about it.

For this reason, it is evident that we are mistaken if we ever judge that we lack complete knowledge of these simple natures. For if we have even the slightest grasp of it in our mind – which we surely must have, on the assumption that we are making a judgement about it – it must follow that we have complete knowledge of it. (AT X 420; CSM I 45)

It seems to follow from this that any nature that is in itself true and immutable – including complex natures – is self-evident and completely transparent to the intellect. If simple natures are completely transparent, and if a clear and distinct idea of a complex nature presents these simple natures accurately, then it is hard to see how we could know anything at all about a complex nature without implicitly knowing all there is to know about it. Descartes recognizes that we can perceive things without noticing all their features: "whenever I do choose to think of the first and supreme being, ... it is necessary that I attribute all perfections to him, even if I do not at that time enumerate them or attend to them individually [emphasis added]" (Fifth Meditation, AT VII 67; CSM II 47).
... it is not possible for us ever to understand anything beyond those simple natures and a certain mixture or compounding of one with another. Indeed it is often easier to attend at once to several mutually conjoined natures than to separate one of them from the others. For example, I can have knowledge of a triangle, even though it has never occurred to me that this knowledge involves knowledge also of the angle, the line, the number three, shape, extension, etc. But that does not preclude our saying that the nature of a triangle is composed of these other natures and that they are better known [implicitly] than the triangle, for it is just these natures that we understand to be present in it. Perhaps there are many additional natures implicitly contained in the triangle which escape our notice, such as the size of the angles being equal to two right angles, the innumerable relations between the sides and the angles, the size of its surface area, etc. (AT X 422; CSM I 46)\(^{165}\)

Even though the triangle's nature is complex, all its properties are necessary to it — so much so that Descartes can sometimes treat it as in effect a simple nature, as in the Reply to Catenus. The idea of a triangle, though complex, is "true and immutable". This is why we can have certain knowledge of its properties.

Descartes' position on the truth and immutability of complex natures is of crucial importance for his ontological argument for the existence of God, conceived as the

\(^{165}\) The final sentence in the last quotation is interesting for the light it sheds on Descartes' notion of a nature: each of the relational and non-relational facts about the triangle is said to be a nature, many of which (e.g. the size of its surface area) are no doubt complex, and presumably reducible to still simpler natures, though it is not clear whether Descartes thinks this process of reduction to simples will always terminate in irreducibly simple natures. Each one of these complex natures has all its properties necessarily, and as long as it is represented by a clear and distinct idea, each of its
supremely perfect being. Although the divine nature may be simple in itself, it is complex *quo ad nos*: the human mind can conceive of the divine nature only as a complex of simple natures such as existence, unity, power, etc.  

... I ask [readers] to examine the ideas of those natures which contain a combination of many attributes, such as the nature of mind, or of a square, or of any other figure, and above all the nature of God, or the supremely perfect being. And they should notice that whatever we perceive to be contained in these natures can be truly affirmed of them. (Second Replies, AT VII 163, CSM II 115)

Since a complex nature includes all its properties necessarily, it cannot be clearly and distinctly conceived as lacking any of them (although one can fail to notice that one of these properties is contained in that nature). In the case of the supremely perfect being, one of these properties (perfections) is "being the cause of one's own existence", which entails necessary existence, which in turn entails actual existence. Therefore God necessarily has the property of actual existence, and one cannot conceive him as lacking it (Fifth Meditation, AT VII 67, CSM II 46); the most one can do is think of something like God in all respects except existence. If complex natures were not true and

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necessary properties will be (at least implicitly) known to belong to it.

166 In the Replies to the Second Objections (AT VII 163, CSM II 115) Descartes speaks of God's nature, together with the natures of "a triangle, or a square, or of any other figure, as well as the nature of mind, [and] the nature of body" as complex (in keeping with his Reply to Caterus, he notes that "whatever we perceive to be contained in these complex natures can be truly affirmed of them"). I am fairly sure that Descartes would have affirmed with the theologians that the divine nature is simple in itself though complex *quo ad nos*. It is unclear whether for Descartes this simplicity would be known only by faith, or whether it is entailed by the infinite perfection of the divine nature. See note 156 above on the distinction between natures that are simple in themselves and ideas that are simple *quo ad nos*.

167 But unlike many other complex ideas, this one is not fictive or adventitious; God himself puts the idea of the divine nature into us, as a "seal" on his work (Third
immutable, hence necessarily possessing all properties clearly and distinctly perceived in
them, this demonstration would not work, for in that case the supremely perfect being
could lack existence even though it is one of the properties we clearly and distinctly
perceive it to have.

From the first, Descartes’ version of the ontological argument (like Anselm’s,
though for somewhat different reasons) was criticized for proving too much. Caterus
charged that Descartes’ principle “a complex nature has all its properties essentially”
would enable us to prove the existence of lions without bothering to go out and observe
them.

The complex “existing lion” includes both “lion” and “existence”, and it includes
them essentially, for if you take either element it will not be the same complex.
But now, has not God had clear and distinct knowledge of this composite from all
eternity? And does not the idea of this composite, as a composite, involve both
elements essentially? In other words, does not existence belong to the essence of
the composite “existing lion”? (AT VII 99-100: CSM II 72)

Descartes does not meet this criticism squarely. Instead, he shifts the discussion to the
case of a “supremely perfect body”. He tries to show that unlike the supremely perfect
being, this nature does not include its own existence, by noting that (1) “existence does
not arise out of the other bodily perfections because it can equally well be affirmed of
them” and (2) to exist necessarily means to create and maintain oneself in existence, but
the idea of a self-caused body is internally inconsistent, so that the idea of a necessarily
existent body is incoherent (AT VII 118; CSM II 84). This is unsatisfactory, since claim

Meditation).
1 is just as applicable to the divine perfections as to those of the supremely perfect body and claim 2 does not justify its assumption that the concept of self-caused body is internally inconsistent.\textsuperscript{168}

Although he cannot admit that if the ontological argument works then we can also prove the existence of existing lions, existing unicorns, etc., he never rejects the central claim that Caterus uses to derive these unwelcome conclusions: viz., that if we have a clear and distinct idea of a lion as existing, then the complex nature "existing lion" will necessarily have the property of existence. Instead, he seems (from his example of the supremely perfect body) to conclude that these complex natures are internally inconsistent. But I agree with Margaret Wilson (1982, 172ff.) that Descartes' attempt to use true and immutable natures as a bulwark against the kind of troublesome case that Caterus raises is a complete failure. To claim that the concept of an existing lion or an existing unicorn is inconsistent is to claim that being a lion or being a unicorn is somehow inconsistent with existence, i.e. that lions and unicorns are impossible – and this is absurd. Descartes has no convincing defense against the charge that, were the ontological argument valid, we would have to admit the existence of unicorns, golden mountains, etc.

The principles Descartes adopts in the ontological argument commit him to the view that whatever we clearly and distinctly conceive to belong to an existing thing actually does belong to it. Whenever I try to think of God as not existing, I am thinking

\textsuperscript{168} Spinoza saw nothing inconsistent in the idea of a necessarily existing extended substance, since in his view God is an extended substance (Ethics, Part II, Prop. II) and exists necessarily (Part I, Prop. XI), so if with Descartes we define 'body' as 'extended substance' Spinoza's view will be evidence that it is possible to conceive of a necessarily existent body (note however that Spinoza himself defined 'body' not as a substance but
of something other than God; whenever I try to think of a triangle-inscribed-in-a-square as not inscribed in a square, I am thinking of something other than that triangle. It is true that I can think of a different triangle as not being inscribed in a square – I can even think of a congruent triangle, of the same size as the inscribed triangle, as not inscribed in a square. But if the ontological argument is sound, it seems that this congruent triangle of which I am now thinking will not be the same triangle as the one that is inscribed. For if it were, then, by the same token, what would prevent me from claiming that a being that is infinitely perfect except for the fact that it does not exist is identical to the thing that I think about when I think of the supremely perfect being? But once we admit this, we have admitted that we can conceive of a non-existent God, and Descartes will not allow this. So it seems that Descartes is committed to saying that whenever we think of a triangle as inscribed in a square, we cannot conceive of it as not inscribed in a square.

The best we can do is to conceive of another triangle, like the first in all respects except that it is not inscribed in a square. Though Descartes certainly never acknowledged it, he seems driven to the conclusion that even such “contingent” properties as being inscribed in a square are essential to whatever triangles are conceived as being thus inscribed.\textsuperscript{169} Although the property of being inscribed is not essential to triangles as such, it does seem (from the ontological argument’s principles) to be essential to those triangles that happen

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\textsuperscript{169}The fact that we can conceive of triangles that are not inscribed in a square clearly indicates that the property of being inscribed in a square is not essential to triangularity as such, and Descartes recognized the distinction between accidental and essential properties. In his Reply to Arnauld he says that although the human mind has the property of being united to a body, this property is not essential to it (AT VII 219, CSM II 155). Later in the same Reply he says that he does not deny accidents (though in the sense he takes ‘accidents’ there, this is perhaps consistent with the claim that all properties, including “accidents”, are essential).
to be inscribed in squares – just as the property of actually existing is not essential to beings as such, but only to beings that are supremely perfect.

Applying this line of thought to objects in general yields the general principle that whenever we conceive of something with property P as having property Q, both P and Q will belong to the essence of what we conceive, even though Q may not be essentially related to P. This is reminiscent of “superessentialism”, the doctrine that every individual has all its properties essentially – even when there is no essential relation between the properties themselves. Perhaps the early modern philosopher most closely associated with superessentialism is Leibniz.\(^\text{170}\) In his controversy with Arnauld, Leibniz held that the complete concept of any individual, say Arnauld, includes all its properties, so that a married Arnauld would not have been identical to the actual Arnauld, who was unmarried. Although Descartes never explicitly embraced this extreme doctrine, his ontological argument seems to drive him in that direction. For if, whenever we conceive of an individual x as having property P, it is impossible to conceive of x as lacking P, the

\(^{170}\) Robert Sleigh has challenged the received view that Leibniz was a superessentialist, and instead claims that for Leibniz all a thing’s properties are what Sleigh calls ‘intrinsic’: a property P is intrinsic to an existent x iff x has P and P is such that for all y, if y lacked P then y would not be x (Sleigh 1990, 57). The view that all a thing’s properties are intrinsic Sleigh dubs ‘superintrinsicalness’. Sleigh distinguishes “intrinsic” from “essential” properties thus: a property P is essential to x iff x has P and it is metaphysically impossible that x exists and lacks P (ibid.). The distinction matters little here, however, for the ontological argument’s principles tend both to superessentialism and to superintrinsicalness. In view of the relationship I will discuss in chapter 3, section 3, between the ontological argument and Berkeley’s master argument it is perhaps significant that Leibniz had strong leanings toward phenomenalism; Robert Adams (1994, 224ff.) has discussed his relationship to Berkeley. Links between superessentialism and related doctrines, on the one hand, and Berkeley’s master argument, on the other, would be worth exploring. It is also worth noting that superessentialism has been thought by many to entail necessitarianism, and that necessitarianism is the conclusion of the first ‘master argument’, the \textit{kurieuvon logos} of Diodorus Cronus.
most natural explanation is that x holds all its properties essentially. It would not be surprising if Leibniz (and perhaps Spinoza before him) had noticed this superessentialist tendency in Descartes' thought and took it farther than he himself ever did.

At the end of the last section I claimed that the dual presence theoretic assumption that being conceived is a literal presence in the mind made Cartesianism vulnerable to Berkeley's master argument against the conceivability of matter — this is ironic, since as we have seen the dual presence theory is, in an important sense, a direct realism. In the present section we have seen that Descartes' intellectual realism, when applied to complex natures, leads to the principle that clear and distinct ideas of complex ideas are always true. In section 3 of the next chapter we shall see that this principle too makes Cartesianism easy prey for Berkeley's attack on the conceivability of matter.
Chapter Three

Berkeley’s Master Argument:
A Reconstruction based on Cartesian Idea Theory

0. Introduction

George Berkeley’s “master argument” against matter, at PHK I, 23 and DHP I, 200, has been a thorn in the side of Berkeley scholarship for years. 171 It seems at first sight to be trivially fallacious, and it has struck more than one commentator as a mere foible of the “good Bishop”, comparable to his famous enthusiasm for tarwater. Yet Berkeley himself thought so highly of this argument that he declared himself willing to let his whole case against matter stand or fall by it. In this chapter I will try to show that Berkeley’s high opinion of the argument makes perfect sense when viewed within the context of the Cartesian theory of ideas explored in the last chapter. Although Berkeley does not explicitly state that his argument is based on the Cartesian theory of ideas or on the Jesuit Scholastic conceptions of representation from which (I have argued) that theory is derived, we know that his own conception of ideas was shaped by the Cartesian tradition, both indirectly, via Locke, and directly, through the writings of Descartes and Malebranche. 172 Berkeley’s debt to Descartes and the Cartesian tradition (conceived as

171 I refer to Berkeley’s two principal works by the following system of abbreviations. ‘PHK’ stands for A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710, 1734). The Roman and Arabic numerals following ‘PHK’ indicate the part and section number (respectively). ‘DHP’ stands for Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous (1712, 1725, 1734). The Roman and Arabic numerals following ‘DHP’ refer (respectively) to the dialogue and to the page number of the Luce-Jessop edition (Berkeley 1948-57). Finally, I refer to entries in the notebooks (see note 174 below) by the abbreviation ‘PC’ (for Philosophical Commentaries, the title under which they have become known) followed by the standard entry number (e.g. ‘PC 56’). For the text of all these works I have consulted principally Berkeley 1975.

172 A. A. Luce describes the course of reading at Trinity College, Dublin where Berkeley was student and fellow from 1700 to 1724, as probably including Locke’s Essay and bits
including Malebranche) is extensive – equal, in the opinion of some commentators, to his
debt to Locke.\textsuperscript{173} Several of his notebook entries (PC 784, 785, 790) refer to the
\textit{Meditations}, and it is clear from PC 795, 798 that as early as 1707-1708 Berkeley had
read parts, at least, of the Objections and Replies.\textsuperscript{174} The notebooks make no reference to
the \textit{Regulae}, but a Latin edition of this work was published in Amsterdam in 1701 (the
Dutch translation of 1684 would probably have been useless to Berkeley), and it is not
unlikely that within a very few years of its publication it would have been available in the
library of Trinity College.\textsuperscript{175} In PC 811 Berkeley comments that Locke showed the
Cartesians what their own principles implied. In the master argument, I will argue,
Berkeley was trying to do the same, but in a far more radical way.

1. The Master Argument and the Standard Criticisms

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\textsuperscript{173} Luce writes of Berkeley that “Locke taught him, but Malebranche inspired him” (Luce
1968, 39).

\textsuperscript{174} In the first year of his fellowship at Trinity College, Dublin, 1707-1708, Berkeley
wrote the two notebooks that form the work later published (1871) under the title
\textit{Philosophical Commentaries}. These notebooks must be used with caution, since they
reflect Berkeley’s thought in process, not in finished form, but they are valuable aids in
tracing his intellectual development.

\textsuperscript{175} Publication history of the \textit{Regulae} is taken from CSM I, 7.
\end{flushleft}
The “master” argument\textsuperscript{176} for the inconceivability of unconceived sensible objects (or “matter” in the Berkeleian idiom) appears in \textit{Principles of Human Knowledge} I, 23 and \textit{Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous} I, 200, and is hinted at in \textit{Philosophical Commentaries} 347 and 472. The version at DHP I, 200 (Berkeley 1975, 158) is perhaps the best known.

PHILONOUS. But (to pass by all that hath been hitherto said, and reckon it for nothing, if you will have it so) I am content to put the whole upon this issue. If you can conceive it possible for any mixture or combination of qualities, or any sensible object whatever, to exist without the mind, then I will grant it actually to be so.

HYLAS. If it comes to that, the point will soon be decided. What more easy than to conceive a tree or house existing by itself, independent of, and unperceived by any mind whatsoever? I do at this present time conceive them existing after that manner.

PHILONOUS. How say you, Hylas, can you see a thing which is at the same time unseen?

HYLAS. No, that were a contradiction.

PHILONOUS. Is it not as great a contradiction to talk of \textit{conceiving} a thing which is \textit{unconceived}?

HYLAS. It is.

\textsuperscript{176} The term seems to have been coined by Andre Gallois (1974), in token of the over-riding importance Berkeley ascribed to the argument. The term ‘master argument’ (\textit{kurienon logos}) is traditionally associated with an argument ascribed to an ancient Greek philosopher, Diodorus Cronus, purporting to prove that all facts are necessary (cf. Vuillemin 1996).
PHILONOUS. The tree or house therefore which you think of, is conceived by you.

HYLAS. How should it be otherwise?

PHILONOUS. And what is conceived, is surely in the mind.

HYLAS. Without question, that which is conceived is surely in the mind.

PHILONOUS. How then came you to say, you conceived a house or tree existing independently and out of all minds, whatsoever?

HYLAS. That I own was an oversight; but stay, let me consider what led me into it.—It is a pleasant mistake enough. As I was thinking of a tree in a solitary place, where no one was present to see it, methought that was to conceive a tree as existing unperceived or unthought of, not considering that I myself conceived it all the while . . .

Berkeley considered this his best argument against matter, to the point that he was willing to stake his entire claim on it.

I am afraid I have given cause to think me needlessly prolix in handling this subject. For to what purpose is it to dilate on that which may be demonstrated with the utmost evidence in a line or two, to anyone what is capable of the least reflexion? . . . Insomuch that I am content to put the whole upon this issue; if you can but conceive it possible for one extended moveable substance, or in general, any one idea or anything like an idea, to exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it, I shall readily give up the cause . . . (PHK 22; Berkeley 1975, 83)
In the *Dialogues*, published three years later, Berkeley repeats his "dare": he is "content to put the whole upon this issue", so that if, after careful consideration, you are not convinced by this argument, you are entitled to reject Berkeley's entire philosophy.

To say that Berkeley found the argument compelling is putting it mildly. He considered it as the centerpiece of his attack on matter. Later generations of idealists, wittingly or unwittingly, have followed his lead; the early twentieth-century philosopher Ralph Barton Perry considered the master argument (together with the 'tulip argument' of DHP I, 195-196) to constitute the core of all idealism subsequent to Berkeley.177

A study of the later development of idealism will disclose that it relies mainly, if not entirely, on the Berkeleyan proofs - 'definition by initial predication' [Perry's name for the the "tulip argument" of DHP I, 195-196] and 'argument from the egocentric predicament' [Perry's term for the master argument]. Despite the fact that present day idealism prefers to attribute its authorship to Kant, some idealists expressly credit Berkeley himself with having established the cardinal principle. . . . But it is more usual to find Berkeley's proofs restated, with slight variations to match the shade of the particular idealism which the author represents. . . . It is doubtless true that idealism has had a long and eventful history since Berkeley . . . but to anyone who refuses to permit the issue to be confused, it must be apparent that the theory with which Berkeley startled the world in 1710 is essentially the same as that which flourished in the nineteenth century in the form given it by Fichte and Hegel. (Perry 1912, 132-134)

Evidence for the truth of Perry's judgement is provided by the following passages from
Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Bradley, all of whom employ reasoning similar to that of the master argument to show that nothing corporeal exists except insofar as it is perceived.

*Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions* [emphasis added], and since all ideas are deriv'd from something antecedently present to the mind; *it follows, that 'tis impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea* [emphasis added] of any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions. Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible: let us chance our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor *can conceive* [emphasis added] any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass. (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* 1.2.6, Hume 1978, 67-68).¹⁷⁸

We must give full credence to this paradoxical but correct proposition, that there is nothing in space save what is represented in it. *For space is itself nothing but representation, and whatever is in it must* [emphasis added] therefore be contained in the representation. Nothing whatsoever is in space, save in so far as it is actually represented in it. (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A374 n.a, Kant 1929, 349)

¹⁷⁷ A similar assessment of Berkeley is found in Dawes Hickes 1932, 285 (he attributes to Bergson a similar view of Berkeley’s importance.
¹⁷⁸ Cf. Hume 1978, 234: “We have no perfect idea of anything but a perception. A substance is entirely different from a perception. We have therefore no idea of a substance.”
Realism, which commends itself to the crude understanding by appearing to be founded on fact, starts precisely from an arbitrary assumption, and is in consequence an empty castle in the air, since it skips or denies the first fact of all, namely that all that we know lies within consciousness. For that the \textit{objective existence}^{179} of things is conditioned by a representer of them, and that consequently the objective world exists only \textit{as representation}, is no hypothesis, still less a peremptory pronouncement, or even a paradox put forward for the sake of debate or argument. On the contrary, it is the surest and simplest truth, and a knowledge of it is rendered more difficult only by the fact that it is indeed too simple, and that not everyone has sufficient power of reflection to go back to the first elements of his consciousness of things. There can never be an existence that is objective\textsuperscript{180} absolutely and in itself; such an existence, indeed, \textit{is positively inconceivable} [my emphasis]. For the objective\textsuperscript{181}, as such, always and essentially has its existence in the consciousness of a subject, and moreover by the subject's forms of representation, which belong to the subject and not to the object. That the \textit{objective world would exist} even if there existed no knowing being at all, naturally seems at the first onset to be sure and certain, because it can be thought in the abstract, without the contradiction that it carries within itself coming to light. But if we try to \textit{realize} this abstract thought, in other words, to reduce it to representations of perception, from which alone (like everything

\textsuperscript{179} Probably intended as an explicit reference to the Scholastic-Cartesian "objective being", \textit{esse objectivum}. Schopenhauer uses 'objective' here to refer to the state of being represented in a mind. See chapters 1-3 for discussion of \textit{esse objectivum} in Scholasticism and Cartesianism.

\textsuperscript{180} See preceding footnote.
abstract) it can have content and truth; and if accordingly we attempt to imagine *an objective world without a knowing subject*, then we become aware that what we are imagining at that moment is in truth the opposite of what we intended, namely, nothing but just the process in the intellect of a knowing being who perceives an objective world, that is to say, precisely what we had sought to exclude.¹⁸² (Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* vol. 2, ch. 1, “On the Fundamental View of Idealism”, Schopenhauer 1966, II, 4-5)

Feeling, thought, and volition (any groups under which we class psychical phenomena) are all the material of existence, and there is no other material, actual or even possible. This result in its general form seems evident at once; and, however serious a step we now seem to have taken, there would be no advantage at this point in discussing it at length. For the test in the main lies ready to hand. . . Find any piece of existence, take up anything that any one could in any sense assert to have being, and then judge if it does not consist in sentient experience. Try to discover any sense in which you can still continue to speak of it, when all perception and feeling have been removed; or point out any fragment of its matter, any aspect of its being, which is not derived from and is not still relative to

¹⁸¹ See preceding footnote.
¹⁸² In the same chapter, Schopenhauer mentions Berkeley as the first to discover that metaphysical realism is not simply false, but incoherent. Indeed, he regards this discovery – that is, the master argument (nowhere else does Berkeley claim that matter is inconceivable) – as the one thing of enduring value in Berkeley’s thought. “. . . Berkeley . . . arrived at idealism proper; in other words, at the knowledge that it is false and indeed absurd [italics mine] to attribute to it, as such, an existence outside all representation and independent of the knowing subject, and so to assume a matter positively and absolutely
this source. When the experiment is made strictly, I can myself conceive of nothing else than the experienced. Anything, in no sense felt or perceived, becomes to me quite unmeaning. And as I cannot try to think of it without realizing either that I am not thinking at all, or that I am thinking of it against my will as being experienced, I am driven to the conclusion that for me experience is the same as reality. The fact that falls elsewhere seems, in my mind, to be a mere word and a failure, or else an attempt at self-contradiction. It is a vicious abstraction whose existence is meaningless nonsense, and is therefore not possible. (Bradley, Appearance and Reality, ch. 14 “The General Nature of Reality (cont.)”, Bradley 1969, 127-28; 1908, 145-146).

In these four passages Berkeley’s master argument has indeed been “restated, with slight variations to match the shade of the particular idealism which the author represents” (to repeat Perry’s words), but the essential point is the same. Hume claims that since all we ever perceive is a perception (by which he means that whatever we perceive is perceived), we cannot conceive of anything that is not essentially similar to an “idea or an impression”. Kant argues that inasmuch as space is nothing but a certain way of being represented, it is inconceivable that space contains anything other than what is perceived to be there. Schopenhauer claims that although we seem to be able to conceive of things as unconceived, the actual attempt to do so is self-defeating (earlier in the same passage he praises Berkeley by name for having discovered this argument against the conceivability of mind-independent objects). Bradley says that because we cannot think of anything that is “in no sense felt or perceived”, such a thing is inconceivable; its ___

existing in itself. But this very correct and deep insight really constitutes the whole of
existence is "meaningless nonsense". Berkeley would have had no difficulty in recognizing these four arguments as echoes of his own.

For the past eighty years or so, however, philosophers have had little good to say about Berkeley's favorite argument. As Ian Hacking (one of the few who have treated it with respect) has observed, it is now "widely regarded as the most preposterous argument ever to achieve lasting fame among philosophers" (Hacking 1975, 41). It has been called "contemptible" (J. F. Thomson) and "not worthy of a moment's academic discussion" (J. O. Wisdom). This has made it hard for commentators to understand Berkeley's enthusiasm for the proof: "... why Berkeley found the master argument so compelling... is not at all easy to explain" (Winkler 1989, 185).

Berkeley's philosophy; in it he had exhausted himself." (Schopenhauer 1966, II, 4)

183 A similar argument appears in the late nineteenth-century Cambridge philosopher James Ward, who attempts to prove that the subject of individual experience is identical with the subject of universal experience (Ward was one of Bertrand Russell's teachers at Cambridge; cf. Russell 1946, 10, who describes him as a Kantian). "We can thus imagine the world without L or M, but we cannot conceive it apart from all subjects -- without conceiving it. But that is to bring it again into relation with subjects, or rather to leave it still as universal object. If it be true to say that apart from sight there is no color, apart from hearing no sound, and generally apart from sense no sensible world, it is every whit as true to say that apart from intelligence there is no intelligible world." (Ward 1899, 197). It is perhaps not out of place to note a certain resemblance between Ward's statement that "apart from sense [there is] no sensible world" and J. S. Mill's argument in Utilitarianism ch. 4 that, just as the only proof that a thing is sensible is that it has actually been sensed by someone, so the only proof that a thing is desirable is that it has actually been desired by someone (for an interesting analysis of this frequently criticized argument, see Everett W. Hall's "The 'Proof' of Utility in Bentham and Mill" in Mill: A Collection of Critical Essays ed. J. B. Schneewind (New York: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 146-178).

184 Other commentators who see little value in the master argument include Prior 1955, Mackie 1964, Tipton 1974, Pitcher 1977 and Winkler 1989. I should note that Hacking does not agree with the majority view; he claims that within the conceptual framework in which it was formulated "[the argument] seems to me cogent—not irrefutable, of course, but cogent." (1975, 41). Edo Pivcevic advances an argument somewhat similar to Berkeley's for the incoherence of metaphysical realism, though he does not mention Berkeley. See his The Concept of Reality (London: Duckworth, 1986), pp. 247-258.
Yet when we turn to the critics for an account of where Berkeley went wrong, we discover that they do not agree among themselves about where the fallacy lies. There seem to be no less than seven distinct refutations in the literature, some of them mutually incompatible.\textsuperscript{186} It will be useful to summarize them here (at the end of each summary, I include parenthetical references to a few works in which that criticism is stated or implied).\textsuperscript{187}

A. \textit{It confuses images with concepts}

Bernard Williams (1966) and Christopher Peacocke (1985) think Berkeley's view that all concepts are sense images led him to confuse the claim that we cannot imagine a thing to be unimagined with the claim that we cannot conceive a sensible thing to be un conceived.\textsuperscript{188} The latter claim is obviously false, according to Williams and Peacocke. (As for whether we can have an image of a thing as unimagined, Williams says no, Peacocke says yes. More on Williams' view below.) (Peacocke 1985; Williams 1966;

\textsuperscript{185} Thomson, 1968, 431; Wisdom, 1953, 8.
\textsuperscript{186} For a slightly different classification of standard criticisms (using five types instead of seven), see Lennon 1988, 233. In its essentials, Lennon's list is little different from my own; I have merely drawn two distinctions that he has not. The fact that there are so many different and mutually conflicting lines of attack on Berkeley's argument makes it unlikely that the argument is quite as trivial, contemptible, and easy to refute as many of its opponents claim.
\textsuperscript{187} In what follows I will occasionally speak of un conceived sensible things (bodies and their attributes), rather than more generally of un conceived things, because Berkeley intended his argument as a proof that one cannot conceive of an un conceived sensible thing. He explicitly rejects the claim that the same argument could be used against the concept of an un conceived spirit. Regardless of whether Berkeley was right about this, historical accuracy demands that the master argument be treated as applying only to the concept of an un conceived sensible thing.
\textsuperscript{188} Williams thinks that the argument is invalid even for the case of images (Nagel 1986, 93 agrees). Peacocke disagrees. We need not resolve this dispute, since on my reading the master argument does not rely on the claim that all concepts are images. Berkeley however was well aware that many philosophers did not share his view that concepts are
B. It assumes that sensible things are as they are conceived to be

According to this objection, the master argument tacitly assumes that conceiving of a sensible thing as having a given property entails that the thing actually has that property, so that (of course) it is impossible to conceive of a sensible thing as unconceived. But, the objection runs, the argument’s initial assumption is obviously false, since nothing is more common than conceiving of things as having properties they do not really have. (Winkler 1989, 184-185; Pitcher 1977, 113-115)

C. It assumes that if a sensible thing is conceived, it is conceived to be conceived

According to this criticism, the master argument relies on the assumption that whenever we conceive of a sensible thing as having some property, we conceive of it as being conceived. (The grounds for this assumption would presumably be a belief — common in the early modern period — that in every thought we are conscious of our own thinking.\textsuperscript{189}) From this it would follow that whenever we think of a sensible as

\textsuperscript{189}In the Second Replies, Descartes defines thought as “... everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately aware of it” (CSM II, 113; AT VII, 160) which shows that for Descartes we are immediately conscious of every thought we have. Other references to self-consciousness in Descartes include the Letter (to Arnauld?) 29 July 1648, AT V, 221-222, Meditation III, AT VII 49, CSM II 33-34, and Descartes’ Reply to the Fourth Set of Objections, AT VII 232, 246. Cf. Cook 1987, 187. See also Kenny 1967, 49: “... thought is defined precisely as ‘whatever takes place within ourselves so that we are conscious of it, in so far as it is an object of our consciousness.’... We might say that according to Descartes’ definition, if we wish to find whether a given verb $\phi$, which is applied to human beings, signifies a thought or not, we must ask ‘is it true that when I $\phi$ I know that I $\phi$’? Descartes therefore makes it true by definition that if I think, I know that I think.” Locke too held that all thinking is conscious. He writes in the Essay Concerning Human Understanding that consciousness is “the perception of what passes in a man’s own mind” (II, i, 9), and that consciousness “always accompanies thinking” (II, xxvii, 9). As Douglas Greenlee (1977, 44) has remarked, “Locke maintains that there
unconceived, we think of it as simultaneously conceived and unconceived, so that our concept of an unconceived tree is incoherent. The argument fails because its tacit assumption is false. It is possible to conceive of something without conceiving that it is conceived; the content of a thought can be "insulated" from the fact of having the thought. Kenneth Winkler has given a useful statement of this criticism.

In the *Principles* we are told that it is a manifest contradiction to conceive of the objects of our thought existing unconceived. But it is natural to read the closing words of this premiss [as saying that] it is a manifest contradiction to conceive of the objects of our thought as existing unconceived. And it is not a manifest contradiction. It is true that we conceive of the object, but it need not be unconceived in order for us to represent it as unconceived. Berkeley would perhaps reply that there cannot help but be a conflict between representing an object as unconceived and conceiving of it. If we attend to our conceiving of it, he might say, we will see that we do not in fact succeed in representing it as unconceived. But to establish this Berkeley needs to explain why we cannot

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is no having an idea without a consciousness of having the idea . . . presumably the consciousness that an idea is had is itself an idea, or involves one". Contrast Arnauld, who claims in the Fourth Objections (CSM II 150, AT VII 214) that "there may be many things in our mind of which the mind is not aware". It is interesting to note that in *Disputationes Metaphysicae* 25, 1. 39; 25, 910, Suarez states that every mental act includes a "virtual reflection", by which the act knows itself. This sounds like an endorsement of the view that all thought is self-conscious. However, Suarez is careful to distinguish "virtual reflection" from explicit, actual reflection. In the second case, the mental act becomes an object in its own right, an object of a "second intention" or second mental act. In this case, the mental act is said to be known *ut quod*, as the "what" that is known (i.e., as the object of the second intention). In the first case, by contrast, the mental act is said to be known *ut quo*, as that by which the object of the first intention is known. It is not entirely clear which of these two kinds of self-consciousness, virtual and implicit or actual and explicit, Descartes and Locke meant to affirm. Cf. Wells 1990, 45 n.51.
insulate the content of our thought — the proposition or state of affairs we entertain—from the fact of our entertaining it. (Winkler 1989, 184-185)

This criticism seems similar to G. E. Moore’s accusation that Berkeley confused the act of perceiving with the object perceived, for if in thinking of a thing we are always thinking that we think of it, we are confusing what it is to think about something with what it is to think about thinking about the thing. (Moore 1903; Winkler 1989, 184-185)

D. It commits a fallacy of composition

This frequently-cited critique is due to Arthur Prior. Prior thinks that Berkeley confuses its being veridically conceived that something is unconceived with something’s being veridically conceived as unconceived; Berkeley illicitly takes his trivial demonstration of the impossibility of the latter as demonstrating the impossibility of the former.

In other words, Prior sees the argument as an attempt to show that the open formula

(i) x is conceiving truly that there is something that is unconceived

is unsatisfiable (where "x conceives truly that p" means "p, and x conceives that p"), by confusing formula (i) with

(ii) There is something that x is conceiving truly to be unconceived

Although the open formula (ii) is indeed unsatisfiable (since nothing can be conceived truly to be unconceived), that is (says Prior) no proof that (i) is unsatisfiable, as Berkeley claims. Berkeley’s confusion of (i) and (ii) amounts to a confusion the order of the sentential operators “there is something that . . .” and “x is conceiving truly that . . .”. Prior compares this to Aristotle’s fallacy of composition, in which "He is able-to-write
when he is not writing" is confused with "He is able to write-when-he-is-not-writing". (Prior 1955)

E. It confuses pragmatic self-refutation with absolute self-refutation

Pragmatically self-refuting sentences are sentences that are self-defeating, in the sense that they entail of themselves that some pragmatic attribute, connected with their being asserted, conceived, believed, etc., is not present. Examples are sentences that cannot be asserted truly, because they entail that they are not asserted, e.g., "no sentence is asserted". Another type of pragmatic self-refutation is G. E. Moore's paradoxical sentence, "it is raining but I do not believe it" (it is self-defeating to believe this sentence, so that the sentence cannot be believed truly). If we broaden the notion of pragmatic self-refutation to include sentences expressing states of affairs that cannot be conceived truly, then it will include Berkeley's "the tree in the park is un conceived."

Pragmatic self-refutation must be distinguished from absolute self-refutation, which occurs when a sentence entails its own negation regardless of whether the state of affairs it expresses is conceived. For example, "some geometrical object is simultaneously square and circular" is an absolute self-refutation, since "being circular" entails "being not-square," independently of whether or not anyone happens to conceive the figure's being simultaneously square and circular.

According to the present objection, for a state of affairs to be inconceivable is for it to be expressed by a sentence that is absolutely self-refuting.¹⁹⁰ Since the master

¹⁹⁰ This assumption is not as evident as Mackie seems to think. It has often been thought that the sentences of arithmetic are true in some a priori sense, so that once one understands a false sentence of arithmetic (e.g. '4 is prime') one cannot coherently conceive that it is true. Now empirical sentences are falsified by observation, but how are false arithmetical sentences known to be false? In the early twentieth century it was
argument only proves that sentences such as “the tree in the park is unconceived” are pragmatically self-refuting, not that they are absolutely self-refuting, it fails to show that the states of affairs they express are inconceivable. Berkeley has proved only that no object can be conceived truly to be unconceived; he has not proved that no corporeal thing can be conceived to be unconceived. (Mackie 1964, 201-202)

F. It commits a fallacy of induction

This objection was originally stated by Ralph Barton Perry. Perry takes the master argument as an instance of the empirical method of investigating whether a given property P is essential to a certain kind K by searching for counterexamples. If there are no counterexamples, the empiricist takes the hypothesis ‘all Ks are essentially P’ to be well-founded. Applying this method to the case in which K is the set of all objects, and P is the property of being conceived, we see at once that this method will never turn up any counterexamples, since in order to examine an object we must think about it. According to Perry, Berkeley concludes from this that as empiricists we are obliged to consider the property of being conceived to be essential to all objects. And since a thing cannot be conceived to lack any of its essential properties (otherwise they would not be essential

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hoped that this could be explained by showing that all such sentences syntactically contradict the axioms of arithmetic – that is, the set consisting of that sentence and the axioms of arithmetic entails a sentence of form ‘p and not-p’. But in the 1930s it was discovered that for every finite consistent axiomatization of arithmetic in standard logic there is an arithmetic sentence (the negation of the Gödel sentence for that system) that, although it is false, is syntactically consistent with the axioms of arithmetic. This entails that either (1) there are sentences of arithmetic that are false, yet, even when fully understood, can be conceived to be true or (2) there are sentences of arithmetic that when fully understood cannot be conceived to be true, yet do not involve what Mackie calls ‘absolute contradictions’. If (pace Quine and perhaps Descartes, in the “hyperbolic doubt”) one holds fast to the principle that what is false in mathematics cannot be conceived to be true, then one must accept that there are mathematical states of affairs
properties), no object can be conceived to be unconceived.

Perry objects that the empirical method is self-defeating in this case and hence invalid. One cannot conclude anything about the world by running tests for the property "having been tested", for in such a case the fact of observation enters into the content of what was to be observed, and skews the results. Berkeley's method in the master argument is equivalent to "conclud[ing] that English is the only intelligible form of speech simply because whomsoever I understand speaks English ... my peculiar situation, as one acquainted only with a single language, is sufficient to discredit my results. If I should discover that I had been wearing blue glasses, I would at once discount the apparent blueness of everything that I had seen." (Perry 1912, 131). Perry calls our inability to perceive unperceived things the 'egocentric predicament'; its discovery is, he says, "one of the most important ... that philosophy has made" (Perry 1912, 129). It is the existence of this predicament, and not immaterialism, that Berkeley should have gleaned from his master argument.

G. It entails solipsism

This very common objection to the master argument consists in the claim that the argument can also be used to prove present-moment solipsism, which even Berkeley agrees is false. The attempt to conceive of a thing that is now unconceived by oneself will be subject to the same objections as the attempt to conceive of a thing that is (simply) unconceived. If the master argument were sound, I could prove that nothing and no one—not even God—exists apart from my presently thinking of it. It is true that Berkeley tries to address this problem by claiming that we have 'notions', not ideas, of that cannot be conceived to obtain, yet are not absolutely self-contradictory. If this can
God and other minds (DHP II, 223; III 232-3), but (according to the critics) this is desperately *ad hoc*; Berkeley never adequately clarifies the difference between notions and ideas, and even if he had, nothing would prevent someone from creating a new master argument with 'unconceived thing' replaced by 'thing of which no one has any notion' (Tipton 1974, 160-161; Pitcher 1977, 112-113; Winkler 1989, 185; Priest 1995, 71).

We can dispose of the last two criticisms, F and G, fairly quickly.

In criticism F, Perry assumes that Berkeley is making a kind of inductive or a *posteriori* argument: since we never have conceived (and never will conceive) of an unconceived thing, we can conclude that everything is conceived. But there is nothing in the texts of the *Principles* or the *Dialogues* to indicate that Berkeley intends to base his argument on induction. He is making an *a priori* argument that the very attempt to frame a coherent concept of a thing as unconceived is self-defeating and therefore unsuccessful. I will explain how such an *a priori* argument works, on Cartesian principles, in sections 2 and 3. Furthermore, even if the master argument did involve an induction, Perry’s critique would not invalidate it, for it begs the question. His examples of (1) the person who uses the fact that she understands only English to conclude that English is the only intelligible language and (2) the person wearing blue glasses who concludes that everything is blue are absurd precisely because we are able to conceive of intelligible languages other than English, and things that do not appear blue. But that we can conceive of things that are not conceived is precisely the point at issue. In assuming it, happen in mathematics, there is no reason to think it cannot happen elsewhere.
Perry has done nothing but assume that the master argument’s conclusion is false. This is of no help in showing where the argument’s fallacy lies.

As for criticism G, even if we are convinced that the master argument leads to an unacceptable conclusion, that does nothing to help us understand why the argument is invalid. Furthermore, it is not so clear that the argument really does entail an “unacceptable” conclusion. In the first place, solipsism might be true – after all, ‘solipsism’ seems to be just another name for a certain variety of monism, according to which your thoughts and mine are simply diverse modes of a single mind. When we put it that way, the master argument’s allegedly solipsist conclusion begins to sound like Spinozism, which has a more respectable ring than ‘solipsism’. In the second place, as Daniel E. Flage (1987) has recently shown, Berkeley’s doctrine of notions is not the desperately ad hoc maneuver it was once thought to be. It is firmly grounded in a long tradition (Flage notes related distinctions in Arnauld, Sergeant and Locke and (after Berkeley) Reid), and it may well be capable of doing the work that Berkeley intended. At any rate criticism G is clearly inadequate as a refutation of the master argument.

I will deal with criticisms A – E in the course in the next two sections. There I will try to show that when the argument is read in the context of the Cartesian doctrine of intellectual perception, these criticisms miss the mark: the master argument does not commit any of the fallacies commonly alleged. This does mean, of course, that the argument is sound, for its premises may be false, or it may commit some as yet undiscovered fallacy. In fact, as I shall argue (section 4), the argument is fallacious, in that it tacitly understands the predicate ‘conceived’ in such a way as to make the
definition of this predicate viciously circular. This fallacy is much more interesting than those with which the argument is customarily charged, for it reveals (I believe) an important relationship between the master argument and the semantic paradoxes (cf. sections 5 and 6, below).

A final point before considering how the master argument fits into the context of Cartesian idea theory. It is often overlooked that Berkeley is aware of his obligation to give some explanation of why most of us are under the impression that we can conceive of sensible things as unconceived. He grants that in a sense we can be said to have such a concept, in that we can fail to notice that the object we are conceiving is conceived.

But say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it: but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of anyone that may perceive them? (PHK I, 23)

It might seem that in granting that we can conceive of an unconceived object “by omission”, Berkeley has conceded the materialist’s main point, for as long as we can fail to notice a thing’s being conceived, why not say that we have a positive concept of it as unconceived? But for Berkeley there is an important difference between failing to conceive of something as lacking an attribute and conceiving of it as having that attribute. To support the claim that circles can be square or that sensible things can be unconceived, it would be necessary to have a positive, coherent concept of a square circle or an unconceived sensible thing. We have no positive, coherent concept of a square circle,
and Berkeley thinks he can show that there is no positive concept of an unconceived sensible thing. So the mere fact that we can ignore a certain attribute of what we conceive is no evidence that we have a concept of something lacking that attribute.¹⁹¹

2. The Dual Presence Theory and the Analogy Between Seeing and Conceiving

One of the central points of Jesuit and Cartesian thinking about perception is the notion that to be perceived or conceived is to be present in the mind, in a manner not merely analogous to, but univocal with, presence in the world.¹⁹² Berkeley himself often uses the phrases “within the mind” and “without the mind”, which suggests the dual presence model of being perceived, and in his late work *Siris* (sections 266, 269 and 310) he speaks of the mind as an arena containing the objects it knows. Although many would probably agree with C. S. Peirce that all such talk of mental presence is a mere

¹⁹¹ Berkeley’s claim that the “concept” of an unconceived sensible is purely negative, a concept by omission, assumes that the immediate objects of thought can have attributes that we fail to notice. It is interesting to note that this is a consequence of Cartesian idea theory’s direct realism (see chapter 2). If the immediate objects of conceiving are identical to things outside the mind, then, since external things have their properties independently of our noticing them, these immediate objects may have attributes that we do not notice. To exist in the mind is not necessarily ‘to be noticed’ (if it were, then we could not be said to have memories of things we are not recalling at the moment). The fact that the things we conceive can have properties that we fail to notice does not make them mind-independent, but it does give them a degree of independence from that part of awareness that consists in noticing things to have this or that property. Granting that the objects of the mind can have features the mind does not notice almost seems to re-introduce matter by the back door. Note however, that this does not affect the validity of the master argument. The master argument purports to reveal an internal inconsistency in (positively) conceiving of sensible things as unconceived; the claim that there are negative concepts of things as unconceived is meant to account for the common belief that we can conceive of unconceived things.

¹⁹² Recall that two of the distinguishing features of the Jesuit and Cartesian view of perception are (1) a strict parallel between presence in the world and presence in the mind and (2) the claim that the immediate object of the intuition (whether sensible or intellectual) of an individual is not the individual qua actually existent, but the individual essence, of which objective existence and actual existence are existential modes.
metaphor, it is more than a metaphor for Berkeley, Descartes and the Jesuits. They did not, of course regard presence in the mind as exactly like presence in the world, but they do seem to have thought of the two as generically identical: i.e. as two varieties of the same over-arching genus "being present".

Now to be present is always to be present in some way or another. A guest in my home must be present with properties other than just his or her presence; presence entails presence as being or doing something or other – watching TV, having dinner, etc. Furthermore, the property of being or doing something always involves the property of presence. If my guest is having dinner, his having dinner is not a fact separate from his being present; he is having dinner with me in virtue of his being present, and vice-versa. We can express this by saying that the guest is present "as" having dinner. It is essential to note that this is quite distinct from "the guest is present and having dinner", which expresses two facts about the guest – his presence and his having dinner – but does not express the relation between these facts, namely that the guest’s having dinner is the way in which he is present.

When "presence" refers to "presence in the (actual) world", "x is present as P" (where P is some state or property such as "having dinner") obviously entails "x is present and x is P". This is also the case whenever "presence" refers to presence in some part of the actual world (e.g., my home). But this is not necessarily the case when it is a question of some other kind of presence – for example, presence in the mind, or (to use an example from the semantics of modern modal logic) presence at some non-actual

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193 "... to say that an object is in the mind is only a metaphorical way of saying that it stands to the intellect in the relation of known to knower" (Collected Papers, VIII, 21, as quoted in Greenlee 1977, 45).
possible world. The fact that the Eiffel Tower is present in my mind as orange — i.e. that I am thinking of it as orange — certainly means that it is present in my mind, but does not mean that it is also orange. The fact that the moon is present in some possible world as made of cheese does not mean that it is made of cheese. So unless we restrict "presence" to "presence in the (actual) world", we cannot say that the presence of \( x \) as \( P \) entails that \( x \) is present and \( x \) is \( P \) (unless, that is, our clear and distinct ideas even of contingent complexes such as "orange Eiffel Tower" are always true; see chapter 2 section 2 and section 3 of the present chapter — however, we are not assuming that aspect of Cartesian doctrine at the moment).

Now although an individual \( x \) could be present "as" almost anything — as a Martian, or as green with purple spots, or as drunk and disorderly, etc., it seems on the face of it to be counter-intuitive — no matter what kind of "presence" we are talking about — to say that \( x \) can be present as absent. For example, if "presence" is interpreted as "presence in the actual world", it seems absurd to say that some individual could be present in the world in such a way as to be absent from it. Similarly, if "presence" is taken to mean "presence in the non-actual world \( w \)", it seems absurd to say that some individual could be present in \( w \) in such a way as to be absent from \( w \). We may take it, then, as prima facie impossible for anything to be present as absent, no matter what sort of presence we are talking about.

But why is such a state of affairs impossible? Not because it violates the ordinary law of non-contradiction. That law merely states that for all sentences \( p \), it is not the case that \( p \) and not-\( p \). This only gives "it is not the case that \( x \) is present and absent". But since it is in general not the case that "\( x \) is present as absent" entails "\( x \) is present and
absent”, the impossibility of “x is present and absent” is not sufficient to explain the impossibility of “x is present as absent”.

Perhaps then we ought to consider the impossibility of being present-as-absent as a primitive truth, quite distinct from the law of non-contradiction. If so, then nothing can be present in the mind as absent from the mind. But according to the Jesuit-Cartesian metaphysics of perception, to perceive x just is for x to be present in some mind. Thus, on this theory, being absent from all minds is equivalent to being unperceived. It then follows immediately, from the law “nothing can be present in the mind as absent from the mind” that nothing can be perceived as unperceived. And since “perception” here includes intellectual perception, i.e. conceiving,\(^1\)\(^9\)\(^4\) we conclude that nothing can be conceived as unconceived.

The dual presence theory’s notion that being conceived is a form of being present is closely allied to the strict analogy that Cartesiansism draws between conceiving of something and seeing it: to be present to the mind is like being present in the visual field (see introduction). It is noteworthy, then, that in the Dialogues version of the master argument Berkeley compares conceiving of a thing as unconceived and seeing it as unseen.

PHILONOUS. How say you, Hylas, can you see a thing which is at the same time unseen?

HYLAS. No, that were a contradiction.

\(^{194}\) I have already noted Descartes’ use of ‘perception’ to refer to conceiving. Locke’s usage is similar. See Greenlee 1977, 46. Locke used ‘perception’ to include “the act (and also the faculty) of thinking or having ideas, of whatever sort” (Essay II, ix, 1).
PHILONOUS. Is it not as great a contradiction to talk of conceiving a thing which is unconceived?

HYLAS. It is.

Critics of the argument have not fully appreciated the force of this comparison. Berkeley is partly to blame – he weakens the point by an unfortunate choice of words. When Philonous calls it a “contradiction” to talk of seeing a thing which is unseen, or conceiving a thing which is unconceived, it sounds as if he is making the trivial point that, just as nothing can be seen and unseen, nothing can be conceived and unconceived, since, for all P, nothing can be P and not-P (this impression is strengthened by the fact that ‘see’ is often – though by no means always – used as a “success” verb: ‘x is seen as P’ is often taken to entail that x actually is P). And as critics have pointed out, the mere fact that a thing cannot be conceived and unconceived is no evidence that it cannot be conceived as unconceived. (cf. criticisms B, C and E).

But in order for the visual comparison to be relevant to the case of conceiving a thing as unconceived, it must be taken to concern seeing things as unseen, rather than seeing things that are in fact unseen. Now if we stop to consider the matter, there does seem to be something wrong with the claim that we can see a thing as unseen, over and above the fact that a thing cannot be seen and unseen. The problem persists even when we use ‘see’ in a non-veridical sense, so that (for example) a thing that is in fact yellow can be “seen” as red. Look at some object in front of you and then ask yourself how that object would have to look in order to have the appearance of being unseen. As soon as

195 For the remainder of this discussion I will be using ‘see’ in this non-veridical sense, so that to see x as P does not entail that x is actually P. ‘Seeing’ in this sense is more or less equivalent to ‘having a visual sensation or imagination of’.
we seriously consider the possibility, it seems absurd. A yellow apple can look red (in a red light), an angry person can look pleased (to one who misinterprets her expression), but how can a thing look unseen? What sort of light should we put it in to make it look as if it were unseen? What sort of visual cues could be misinterpreted as indications that it is unseen? The fact is, in order to appear as if it were unseen, a thing would have to appear as if it were not appearing. But how could it appear not to appear, without vanishing from the visual field altogether? It seems therefore that nothing can be seen as unseen or appear as if it were not appearing. Appearances can mislead us in all sorts of ways, but there is one thing they cannot deceive us about, and that is that they are appearing to us. If this is true for the visual field, then why not admit the same for the ‘conceptual field’, the arena of objective being posited by the dual presence theory? This would yield the conclusion that nothing can be conceived as unconceived.\textsuperscript{196} 

On this view, we are able to conceive of properties such as “unseen”, “untouched” etc. only because over and above vision, taste, touch and the other faculties of sense and imagination stands the intellect, whose proper cognitive activity is called conceiving. It is only because we have an intellect distinct from the senses, imagination and sense memory that we are able to conceive of properties such as unseen, not-tasted, etc. to which the lower faculties are blind. But like every other cognitive faculty, the intellect has its own blindspot, sc., the property of being unconceived.\textsuperscript{197} And while the blindspots of the lower faculties can be compensated for by the intellect, there is no

\textsuperscript{196} Cf. the Wittgensteinian point that it is impossible to depict the fact that there is no rhinoceros in the room. Berkeley would agree with Wittgenstein that it is absurd to think that something can be depicted as absent (I am indebted to Donna Clemenson for this observation).

\textsuperscript{197} I borrow this term from Sorenson 1988.
higher faculty to compensate for the intellect’s blindspot. Just as it is impossible to see things as unseen, it is impossible to conceive of things as unconceived, and we seem to have no other, super-conceptual faculty by which we might present a thing to ourselves as unconceived. Cartesians may think we are doing so when we use phrases such as “unconceived tree”, but Berkeley will inform them that their view rests on the vulgar assumption that every grammatical noun phrase has a meaning. For Berkeley this is just one more pernicious effect of the doctrine of abstract ideas.\(^{198}\) If we reflect carefully, we will discover that there is nothing but a habit of speech behind our belief that we have ideas of bodies as unconceived.

I have argued that in the Cartesian context the impossibility of conceiving the unconceived is not due to any violation of the usual law of non-contradiction. That law states only that sentences of the form ‘p and not-p’ are always false, which only prohibits things from (1) appearing and (2) in fact not appearing. This law does not prohibit them from (1) appearing and (2) seeming not to appear. Whatever keeps us from seeing things

\(^{198}\) "It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects have an existence natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding. . . . If we thoroughly examine this tenet, it will, perhaps, be found at bottom to depend on the doctrine of abstract ideas. For can there be a nicer strain of abstraction than to distinguish the existence of sensible bodies from their being perceived, so as to conceive them existing unperceived?” (PHK 4-5; Berkeley 1975, 78). Lennox 1988 and Winkler 1989 think that the master argument rests on Berkeley’s rejection of abstract ideas (in spite of Berkeley’s clear assertions in both the Principles and the Dialogues that the argument assumes nothing that has “gone before” – which in the case of the Principles includes the attack on abstract ideas from which I have just quoted). On the contrary, none of readings of the master argument that I offer in this dissertation require the prior rejection of abstract ideas. For Berkeley the only role played in the master argument by the doctrine of the inadmissibility of abstract ideas is that of accounting for the widespread delusion that it is possible to conceive of corporeal things as unconceived; it is not used to prove that they are conceived.
as unseen is evidently quite distinct from whatever prompts us to accept the law of non-contradiction.

The impossibility of being seen as unseen or conceived as unconceived is comparable to the self-refuting character of pragmatic contradictions such as "I am not thinking". J. L. Mackie (cf. criticism E, above) takes this as evidence that Berkeley must have confused pragmatic contradiction with the standard 'p and not-p' variety of contradiction, because in Mackie's view the only way a state of affairs can be inconceivable is for it involve a standard contradiction. But the foregoing shows there is no need to attribute any such confusion to Berkeley. The model of being-conceived as presence makes it plausible that even pragmatically self-refuting contents are impossible, although they entail no "absolute" self-refutation of the form 'p and not-p'.

Bernard Williams (1966) has claimed that there is no convincing argument to show that we cannot see things as unseen – or as Williams puts it, that we cannot visualize things as unseen. But he considers only one argument, namely, (1) whenever we visualize an individual x we visualize ourselves as seeing x – that is, we always put ourselves as viewers into the scene of whatever we visualize; therefore (2) we cannot coherently visualize x as unseen (since this would require visualizing it as simultaneously seen and unseen). Let us call the premise of this argument, (point 1), the "reflexivity" assumption. Williams thinks that the argument is unsound, since the reflexivity assumption is obviously false. He argues at length that we do not usually visualize ourselves in the scene that we visualize. But his argument overlooks the sort of reasoning I have explained above, which does not rely on the reflexivity assumption, but instead views "I see this as unseen" as a pragmatic contradiction.
Williams is no doubt right to say that when I am at a play I can imagine a solitary character on stage as unseen by all the other characters in the play – and, for that matter, by myself and the rest of the audience as well. But it is clear that “imagination” in this sense includes conceiving – when we say that we imagine the actor to be unseen we mean that we conceive her as unseen, not that we see her as unseen. Williams’ case is completely irrelevant to the question of whether a thing can be seen as unseen. He should have asked himself, instead, whether it is possible for the actor on stage to be in my visual field in such a way as to appear to be absent from my visual field. The impossibility of such a state of affairs is manifest. Yet it seems that it cannot be explained by the ordinary law of non-contradiction. Nor is it explained by the highly questionable claim that whenever we see something we see ourselves as seeing it (the reflexivity assumption). Rather, it is explained (as I said above) by the fact that it is pragmatically self-refuting for a thing to be seen as unseen or conceived as unconceived. It is just this sort of absurdity that Berkeley wants to call our attention to in his analogy of seeing a thing as unseen.199

Reading the master argument as an analogy from visual experience, based on the view that being conceived is a form of presence, and conceiving a form of perception, makes it invulnerable to criticisms A – E (criticisms F and G have already been discussed in section 1). Criticism A is based on the claim that having a concept is not like having a visual perception. But in the master argument Berkeley is assuming only a parallel between vision and thought, of the same sort as Descartes assumed. Descartes did not reduce concepts to images, and neither (in the master argument) does Berkeley.

199 Williams’ view on visualizing things as unseen has been criticized on different
Criticism B supposes that Berkeley confused the real properties of things with the properties they are conceived to have. Criticism C claims that according to Berkeley every time we conceive of a thing we conceive it as conceived. Criticism D says that he confused the formula “x is conceiving truly that there is something that is unconceived” with the formula “there is something that x is conceiving truly to be unconceived”. When read as an analogy with visual perception, the argument obviously commits none of these fallacies. The presence model of conceiving does not require the assumption that things must be as they are conceived to be, nor does it assume that our act of conceiving is a part of every conceived content, nor does it confuse “it is veridically conceived that something is unconceived” with “something is veridically conceived as unconceived” (the notion of veridical conception has not been invoked anywhere in the preceding discussion).

Criticism E attacks Berkeley for confusing pragmatic self-refutation with absolute self-refutation: since certain contents (such as its raining and my believing that it is not raining) can be possible even though it is pragmatically self-refuting to believe them, assert them, etc., the fact that it is pragmatically self-refuting to conceive of a thing as unconceived does not prove that it is impossible for things to be unconceived. However, as I have already said above, there is no need to suppose that Berkeley confused pragmatic with absolute self-refutation; he has good reason to claim that pragmatic self-refutations involving conception prove that their contents cannot be coherently conceived.

To conclude: the dual presence theory of perception, which I have argued underlay the Cartesian theory of ideas, is vulnerable to the master argument because of grounds by Peacocke 1985.
the analogy it draws between conceiving and sense perception. For Descartes, as for the Jesuits discussed in chapter 1, to have an idea of an object is to apprehend it, so that the conceived object is present to the intellect in much the same way as the seen object is present to the visual faculty. But then just as it is impossible to visualize a thing as unvisualized, it is impossible to conceive of a thing as unconceived.

3. The Master Argument and the Cartesian Ontological Argument

There is another aspect of Cartesian idea theory that makes it vulnerable to Berkeley’s attack, namely the ontological argument’s assumption that if one conceives of x as P, then one also conceives of the complex nature x-as-P. This entails that P cannot be “subtracted from” the idea of x-as-P, for any entity that actually lacks P cannot be what is represented in the idea of x-as-P. I argued in chapter 2, section 2 above that this notion is bound up with the Cartesian ontological argument’s premise that even composite ideas, e.g. the idea of God or the idea of a triangle inscribed in a square, must be veridical, if they are clear and distinct. The reason Descartes cannot “add to or take from” and idea, even a fictive one, is that any composite idea, whether fictive or innate, is veridical. 200 The minute you try to subtract existence, say, from the idea of God, you have ceased to think of God; instead, you are thinking of some other thing that is more or less like God, except that it lacks the perfection of existence.

One of Berkeley’s notebook entries of 1707-1708 mentions this “no addition or subtraction” principle, and notes that it applies to all ideas, not just the idea of God:

“Quoth Descartes the Idea of God is not made by me for I can neither add to nor subtract

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200 The term ‘fictive idea’ here means simply ‘idea constructed by the mind’, not ‘fictitious idea’ in the sense in which that term is sometimes used by Descartes, namely, to denoted ideas that represent no “true and immutable nature” (see chapter 2, section 2).
from it. No more can he add to or take from any other Idea even of his own making” (PC 805). Even ideas of our making, such as that of a wooden elephant or an actually existing unicorn – or for that matter an unconceived tree – have all their properties necessarily; nothing can be added to or subtracted from them without their becoming a totally different object of thought – just as, for Descartes, one cannot think of actual existence as subtracted from the divine nature without ceasing to think of God. This means that all concepts that present their objects clearly and distinctly are true. To think of something as otherwise than it is is impossible; one can at best think of a closely similar “counterpart” (of course we often improperly apply the name of the original object to its counterpart, which accounts for the falsity of many of our sentences).

From this principle of the truth of all clear and distinct ideas it is easy to show that nothing can be conceived as unconceived. In order to conceive of Sherlock Holmes as unconceived, you must have an idea that represents the “true and immutable” complex nature (cf. Descartes’ Reply to Caterus, AT VII 118, CSM II 84; Second Reply AT VII 163, CSM II 115) of Holmes-as-unconceived. Since this nature is immutable, “being unconceived” belongs to it essentially. Thus it cannot be actually conceived. But this contradicts the hypothesis that Holmes-as-unconceived is conceived. Since the hypothesis has led to its own contradiction, it must be false. No one can conceive of an individual – Sherlock Holmes or anything else – as unconceived.

It is unclear whether this or the reading of section 2 ought to be considered the correct interpretation of the master argument. Perhaps they were not entirely distinct in Berkeley’s mind. At any rate, we now have not one but two routes from Cartesianism to the inconceivability of matter, both of which are rooted in aspects of Descartes’ theory of
ideas that have nothing to do with a proxy theory of perception. Furthermore, the "ontological argument" route to Berkeley's conclusion is just as invulnerable to the standard objections as the reading presented in section 2. The "ontological argument" reading does not require the self-consciousness assumption (criticism C) that whenever someone conceives of x as P, she conceives of x (or of x-as-P) as conceived, and the reader can easily check to see that criticisms A, and E do not apply to this reading of the argument either. Criticisms F and G have already been dealt with (section 1).

According to Criticism D, "Berkeley confuses its being veridically conceived that something is unconceived with something's being veridically conceived as unconceived; [he then] illicitly takes his trivial demonstration of the impossibility of the latter as demonstrating the impossibility of the former" (cf. section 1). This criticism seems at first to have some force if the master argument is based on the assumption of the truth of clear and distinct ideas (which I will call the 'veridicality assumption'), for if all clear and distinct ideas are true then 'to conceive' means to conceive veridically. However, on the veridicality assumption the claim that nothing can be veridically conceived as unconceived, which is conceded by this criticism, is equivalent to the claim that nothing can be conceived as unconceived. But if nothing can be conceived as unconceived, it seems idle to insist that it is still possible, after all, that something is unconceived (this is equivalent to Criticism D's claim that it can be veridically conceived that something is unconceived). I have never yet been able to conceive of a circle as having corners. I am sure that I never will. Am I still to hold out for the possibility that there are circles with corners? Once one has conceded that nothing can be conceived as P, one has very little grounds for claiming that something may yet be not-P.
Criticism B charged that the master argument overlooks the obvious fact that things need not be as they are conceived to be. It is true that on the "ontological argument" reading suggested here, the argument commits this "fallacy". But whether or not it really is a fallacy depends on the truth of the ontological argument's principle that all clear and distinct ideas are true. According to this principle, whenever I try to form a clear and distinct idea of some falsehood, e.g. "the Eiffel Tower is made of tuna", I do not succeed. The best I can do is to form a clear and distinct idea of a "counterpart", an individual that is not the Eiffel Tower, but only like it in all respects, except that it is made of tuna (cf. the discussion of superessentialism in chapter 2, section 2). Of course, we are free to reject the assumptions of the ontological argument, but it seems that anyone who accepts them must find the master argument compelling.

Berkeley rejected the ontological argument, but not because he rejected the fundamental principle that all clear and distinct ideas are true – he simply denied Descartes' claim that we have an idea of God: "Absurd to Argue the Existence of God from his Idea. we have no Idea of God. tis impossible!" (PC 782; Berkeley 1975, 327). According to Berkeley we have only a "notion" of God (and other minds), not an idea.201

The claim that clear and distinct ideas are always true may seem extravagant, but it is consistent with Berkeley's philosophy. Berkeley often seems to hold that what is present to our mind is a succession of discrete ideas (which he regards as Lockean

201 In Berkeley's view there are ideas of imaginable and sensible things only. Of all else – our own mind and its qualities, other human minds, angels and God – we have not ideas, but only notions. See Flage 1987. The notebook entry PC 845 also shows Berkeley's rejection of Cartesian ways of defining the term 'God': "My definition of ye word God I think Much clearer than that of Descartes and Spinoza viz. ens summe perfectum, & absolute Infinitum or ens infinitis attributis quorum unumquodque est
images). On this view, there is nothing in any of our ideas that persists from one moment to the next. Nor does any idea (sensible or imaginable object) cause another. Although Berkeley, speaking with the vulgar, often talks as if there were bodies that persist through time and have a succession of mutually inconsistent properties, his considered view seems to be that there is no single thing, i.e. no idea, common to the succession of sounds, smells, shaped colors, etc. that we perceive.\(^{202}\) It is hard to see how sounds, smells, shaped colors etc. could have any properties other than those they actually have.\(^{203}\) For Berkeley, ideas have no hidden depths, and cannot be other than they appear to be. They are “two-dimensional”, as Bergson noted.

infinitum.” Compare Locke’s claim that we have no positive idea of infinity (Essay II.xvii.14 ff.).

\(^{202}\) More precisely, this is the view of Berkeley in his twenties, when he wrote *A Treatise on the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (1713). At the age of fifty-nine, when he published *Siris: a Chain of Philosophical Reflections and Enquiries concerning the Virtues of Tar-Water* (1744), he seems to have moderated his early empiricism and phenomenalism a great deal. For an interesting discussion of the later work see Dawes Hicks 1968, 205-226. It may well be that in his later thought Berkeley renounced his early view that to conceive of something is to have a mental image of it. Even in earlier work the doctrine of notions – which seems to play a larger part in his thought in later (1734) revisions to the *Principles* – is in tension with Lockean imagism. According to one recent commentator (Flage 1987) one important class of Berkeleyan notions play a role analogous to definite descriptions. (For Berkeley on notions see Steinkraus 1966, esp. 156-157, where he quotes Bracken 1957, 201 to the effect that “the vast majority of Berkeley criticism stands only ignoring the doctrine of notions”, Warnock 1953, esp. p. 205, where he criticizes the doctrine as vague and useless, Luce 1945, 149, Adams 1973 and Flage 1987).

\(^{203}\) In my view this is sufficient to dissolve the famous “continuity problem” in Berkeley, i.e. the problem of whether (and in what sense) ordinary objects such as tables and chairs can be said to continue in existence when unperceived by all finite minds. For Berkeley (the young Berkeley, that is, not the Berkeley of *Siris*) the strictly correct answer is that there are no such objects, there are only discrete, instantaneous perceptions (see for example Berkeley’s discussion of the relationship between ideas of touch and vision, and microscopic images, at DHP III 245). However, since God gives us these discrete perceptions in a certain temporal order and in a certain mutual relationship, there is ground for our commonsense tendency to group these ideas together into diachronic complexes, and it is convenient to speak of these complexes as if they were single entities
What Berkeley's idealism signifies is that matter is co-extensive with our representation of it; that it has no interior, no underneath; that it hides nothing, contains nothing; that it possesses neither power nor virtuality of any kind; that it is spread out as mere surface and that it is no more than what is present to us at any given moment. The word 'idea' normally indicates an existence of this kind, I mean to say a completely realized existence, whose being is indistinguishable from its seeming, while the word 'thing' makes us think of a reality which would be at the same time a reservoir of possibilities; that is why Berkeley prefers to call bodies ideas rather than things. . . . Color being but color, resistance being only resistance, you will never find anything in common between resistance and color, you will never discover in visual data any element shared by the data of touch. If you claim to abstract from the data of either something which will be common to all, you will perceive in examining that something that you are dealing with a word . . . if an extension which would be at once visual and tactile is only a word, it is all the more so with an extension which would involve all the senses at once.

(DHP III 245). Once we have done so, and once we give names such as 'table' to these complexes, it is natural to think of these bodies as persisting even when no finite mind perceives them. Berkeley says, in effect, that if we insist on thinking of the world as composed of such diachronic complexes, then we can save the common sense intuition that they persist unperceived either (a) by saying that God perceives the table when no finite mind does (DHP II 212, III 231) or (b) by saying that talk of an existing unperceived table is equivalent to talk of what some finite mind would perceive were it present to the table (Berkeley has recourse so the second explanation in DHP III, 250-257, when explaining what the Book of Genesis means in speaking of the world as existing before the creation of sentient animals). The name 'continuity problem' derives from a discussion of this topic by Jonathan Bennett (Bennett 1971, 168ff.). For an ingenious attempt to provide a solution to the problem along different lines than I suggest here, see Winkler 1989, 204-236.
. . . there . . . is the refutation of the Cartesian theory of matter. (Bergson 1992, 116)

If ideas have no properties that are not manifest, then they cannot be false. So there seems good reason to hold that for Berkeley, as for Descartes, all that we perceive clearly and distinctly is true.

Still, one might object that it would have been foolish of Berkeley to model the master argument on the ontological argument, since, as Caterus pointed out to Descartes, once one accepts the validity of the ontological argument one seems to be committed to the existence of winged horses, golden mountain, etc., for actual existence is included in the concept of an actual winged horse or an actual golden mountain). I argued above (chapter 2, section 2) that Descartes' efforts to avoid these unwelcome consequences are not very convincing. Could Berkeley really have meant to base his master argument on a piece of reasoning that leads to such absurdities?

But within the Berkeleyan system these consequences are not absurd. In his philosophy, existence just is being perceived, and there is nothing absurd about the claim that winged horses are (intellectually) perceived, i.e. conceived. Of course such things have no "existence" in the narrow sense of having a stable place in the spatio-temporally ordered nexus of ideas that we call 'the world', but Berkeley never claimed that everything that is perceived exists in that sense. Furthermore, there is a perfectly easy way of avoiding these "absurd" consequences while upholding the validity of the ontological argument, and that is to deny the consistency of concepts such as that of an actually existing winged horse. This would follow from the assumption that every property that a thing actually has is essential to it, so that any possible individual that is
actually winged is not a horse. Such a view is not obviously inconsistent with Berkeley’s philosophy; indeed as I have just argued there are grounds for thinking that Berkeley may have held such a view.\footnote{As Flage 1987 notes (pp. 130-131), “there is no evidence that [Berkeley] provided any grounds for transworld identity”.

204 Two traditional objections against the ontological argument are (1) existence is not a property and (2) the concept of a supremely perfect being has not been proved consistent. It is noteworthy that no analogous objections can be brought against the master argument on the present reading. The analogy to the claim “existence is not a property” is “being conceived is not a property”, but if being conceived is not a property, then neither is being unconceived, and so it will be impossible to conceive of a thing as unconceived. The analogy to “the concept of a supremely perfect being has not been proved consistent” is “the concept of an unconceived being has not been proved consistent”, but this has no force against the master argument, since Berkeley obviously has no stake in the consistency of the concept of an unconceived being. He provisionally assumes the existence of such a concept only to show that this assumption entails a contradiction.

4. The Vicious Circle Fallacy

When the master argument is read in either of the two ways discussed in sections 2 and 3, it commits none of the fallacies with which it is usually charged (criticisms A – G, section 1).\footnote{In the case of the section 3 reading, the argument commits the “fallacy” charged in Criticism B, but on its own assumptions this is no longer a fallacy.} So unless the argument commits some other fallacy, one that has not yet been noticed by any of Berkeley’s commentators, we must grant that within the Cartesian
context the argument is sound. In particular, unless we can discover a new fallacy in
the argument we will have to grant (section 3) that Berkeley’s conclusion follows directly
from the application of the veridicality principle (the principle of the truth of clear and
distinct ideas) to the idea of an unconcepted object. This would mean that the master
argument would be cogent for any infallible conceiver, i.e. a conceiver all of whose clear
and distinct ideas are true. This is surprising; it would be an odd thing if every infallible
thinker must be an idealist.

But perhaps we can escape this strange conclusion. In section 2 I explained how
Cartesianism’s conception of being conceived as a literal (though not actual) presence in
the mind makes it vulnerable to the master argument. In the course of this discussion I
noted that for the presence model, to be conceived is always to be conceived as having
some property or other, just as to be present in a place it is necessary to be present there
with some collection of properties. This suggests that what makes the section 2 and

206 Furthermore, the principle that all clear and distinct ideas are true is, as we have seen
(chapter 2, section 2), closely related to superessentialism, the claim that all an
individual’s properties (to be precise, its properties at each instant of time) are contained
in its essence. Indeed, superessentialism appears to entail the veracity of all our
concepts. For if every property P of an individual, call it ‘x’, is contained in its essence,
then whenever I conceive of something that lacks P at time t, I am not conceiving of x as
it is at time t. Thus whenever I conceive of x as having some property P at time t, x
really has P at time t (more precisely: x is such that, should x exist at time t, it would have
to have P at t).

The master argument seems therefore to be a demonstration that superessentialism
entails the inconceivability of the unconcepted. We are obliged to accept this
demonstration, unless we can show that the argument commits some fallacy as yet
undetected by the commentators. Abandoning the (to many) implausible doctrine of
superessentialism will not perhaps be thought much of a sacrifice, but is it really
plausible that this view (held by Leibniz) has been once and for all disproved by the
master argument? I suspect not. Instead, I think it likely that the argument commits
some fallacy not yet discovered by the commentators. But we have yet to discover what
that fallacy is. In this section I suggest that the argument is invalid because it uses a tacit
definition of ‘being conceived’ that is viciously circular.
section 3 readings of the master argument work, in the context of the dual presence model, is that being conceived has been tacitly understood as the property of being conceived as having some property. We can state this tacit definition more formally as follows: \( x \) has the property of being conceived if and only if there is a property \( P \) such that \( x \) is conceived to be \( P \). Using second-order quantification and a sentence operator \( T \) we can express this by symbolizing 'being conceived' as \( (\exists P)TPx \), where 'Tp' means 'it is conceived that \( p \)'. We can then symbolize the master argument, on the section 3 reading, as follows: 207

1. \( T \neg(\exists P)TPx \) assumption for reductio: '\( x \) is conceived as unconceived'

2. \( \neg(\exists P)TPx \) from 1, by "truth of clear and distinct ideas" principle

3. \( (\exists P)TPx \) from 1, by 2nd-order existential intro

4. \( \neg T \neg(\exists P)TPx \) reductio on subderivation 1-3

Unless there is a fallacy here, we have a dilemma: either the assumption '\( x \) is conceived as unconceived' must be false (as Berkeley thought) or the Cartesian principle 'all (clear and distinct) concepts are true', invoked at line 2, is invalid. 208

207 I have chosen the section 3 reading because on the section 2 reading the master argument really amounts to a mere calling of the reader's attention to a primitive axiom \( \neg(\forall P)\neg TPx \), the symbolic translation of "nothing can be (objectively) present as absent". This is simply taken as a logical law, of equal force with \( \neg(p \& \neg p) \). The symbolization of the section 3 reading allows for easier discussion of the vicious circle fallacy with which I charge the master argument. However, the argument is equally open to the vicious-circularity charge on the section 2 reading, for the intuitive plausibility of the law "nothing can be present as absent" rests on a viciously-circular notion of being present as "being present with some property", where 'some property' is understood to quantify over "being present with some property".

208 In the above argument the following expressions are to be taken as equivalent: '\( x \) is conceived to be \( P \)', 'it is conceived that \( x \) is \( P \)', '\( x \) is thought to be \( P \)'. They are merely stylistic variants. Further, the argument presupposes that '\( x \) is conceived' is equivalent to '\( x \) has the property of being conceived'. This is a consequence of the argument's assumption that 'conceived' is a property, which (I argue)
We can avoid the dilemma by challenging the 2nd-order existential introduction at line 3. This step assumes that the quantifier ‘(∃P)’ ranges over the characteristic expressed by ‘¬(∃P)TPx’ in line 1 – so that the characteristic to which ‘¬(∃P)TPx’ refers, i.e. the characteristic that there is no property that x is thought to have, is itself taken to be one of the “properties” that x is thought to have. Perhaps this would not be a problem, if the extension of the term ‘property’ (equivalently, the quantifier ‘(∃P)’) were defined independently of the definition of ‘¬(∃P)TPx’. But when the characteristic ¬(∃P)TPx is itself taken to be a property, the quantifier ‘(∃P)’ is stipulated – in effect, defined – to range over the characteristic ¬(∃P)TPx. Accordingly, we cannot claim to have defined ‘(∃P)’ until we understand the definition of the term ‘¬(∃P)TPx’. But to understand the definition of this term requires a definition of ‘(∃P)’. And this is what we were supposed to be defining. So we have come full circle, and the circle is vicious.

The viciousness of this circle does not appear (pace Bertrand Russell’s 2nd and 5th versions of the Vicious Circle Principle – see below) to consist simply in the fact that the referent of the definiendum ‘¬(∃P)TPx’, should it exist, would be contained in the range of the quantifier ‘(∃P)’. For if the range of the quantifier were defined independently of the definiendum ‘¬(∃P)TPx’ (e.g. by specifying a set of range-membership criteria that did not include the symbol-string ‘¬(∃P)TPx’), it would not matter whether the referent of ‘¬(∃P)TPx’ happened to belong to that range or not. If we subsequently learned that the referent of ‘¬(∃P)TPx’ did belong to the range of ‘(∃P)’, that would be a mere

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is viciously circular when (as in the above argument) ‘x is conceived’ is understood as equivalent to ‘there is some property that x is conceived to have’.
"coincidence" with respect to the definition of `(∃P)`. Whatever circularity is involved in such a case is not obviously vicious.

The viciousness of the circle in the master argument seems instead to consist in the fact that we have no definition of `∃P` (i.e. no definition of 'property') independent of the symbol-string `¬(∃P)TPx`. In the master argument as formalized above, `¬(∃P)TPx` is, it seems to me, being implicitly used at step 3 in an (unsuccessful) attempt to (partially) define `∃P`. For at that step the referent of `¬(∃P)TPx` is simply assumed to lie within the range of the quantifier `(∃P)`. We have no way of proving that it does, for we have been given no definition of `(∃P)` that would enable us to do so. But by instantiating `(∃P)` by the referent of `¬(∃P)TPx`, we have said, in effect, that whatever else `(∃P)` may mean, it is to be understood as ranging over the referent of `¬(∃P)TPx`.

Now we have no means of knowing what that referent is, apart from the definition of `¬(∃P)TPx`. Thus, since we lack any definition of `(∃P)` adequate to decide whether it ranges over the referent of `¬(∃P)TPx`, the move at line 3 is in effect an attempt to give a partial definition of `(∃P)` in terms of the definiendum `¬(∃P)TPx`. Yet `(∃P)` is being used in the attempt to define `¬(∃P)TPx`. It is this attempt to define A in terms of B and B in terms of A that creates a vicious circle. These considerations suggest a general principle of vicious circularity:\(^{209}\)

For all quantifiers Q, if the only definition of Q that determines whether it ranges over the referent of a symbol-string S contains S, then every definition of S that contains Q is viciously circular, and hence unsuccessful.

\(^{209}\) This principle is obviously not intended as a complete and explicit definition of vicious circularity, since it gives only a sufficient condition.
The problem with the master argument, as formalized above, is not that the quantifier ‘(∃P)’ ranges over the referent of the definiendum ‘¬(∃P)TPx’ (cf. some of the versions of Russell’s vicious circle principle, briefly discussed below), but that, since no definition of the quantifier has been supplied that is sufficient to determine whether the step at line 3 is licit, that step amounts to an assumption that it is licit, and this assumption is equivalent to a partial definition of the quantifier in terms of the definiendum. Since no other definition of the quantifier is at hand (at least, none that would enable us to determine whether the referent of the definiendum lies in the range of the quantifier), this violates our vicious circle principle. We conclude that the referent of ‘¬(∃P)TPx’ has not been successfully defined. The vicious circularity of the definition of ‘being unconceived’, ‘¬(∃P)TPx’, can be avoided only by refusing to treat it as a property that ‘(∃P)’ ranges over.

If this analysis is correct then in a sense Berkeley was right to claim that on Cartesian principles there is no concept of things as unconceived. For if to be unconceived, for some individual x, is for there to be no property that x is conceived to have, then the vicious circularity analysis seems to show that being unconceived is not a property – at least, it is not a “property” in the sense in which that word is used in the definition “to be unconceived, for some individual x, is for there to be no property that x is conceived to have”. This is reminiscent of Kant’s claim, in his famous critique of the ontological argument, that existence – which some might attempt to define in a viciously circular way as the property of having some property – is not a “real predicate” – or, as we might say nowadays, the predicate ‘exists’ refers to no property.210 It also recalls

\[210\] Critique of Pure Reason A592/B620 – A602/B630 (Kant 1929, 500-507).
Caterus' contention against Descartes (see chapter 1, section 3c above) that the predicate *esse objectivum*, ‘being perceived’, is not a genuine or “intrinsic” denomination of things – for Caterus, the claim that the sun is thought about is to be understood not as predicating a property of the sun, but only as predicating the property “is thinking about the sun” of some mind. Descartes, it will be remembered, could not accept Caterus’ view on *esse objectivum* because his cosmological argument for God’s existence required it to be an “intrinsic denomination”. His insistence that being conceived is a literal (though non-actual) property, which things can be conceived to lack, invites Berkeley’s anti-materialist proof, by admitting a notion of *esse objectivum* that is (implicitly) viciously circular.

The vicious circle principle given above differs from Bertrand Russell’s. Russell gave several version of this principle, which Charles Chihara (1973, 3-4) has summarized as follows (bracketed texts are my own interpolations):

1. Whatever involves *all* of a collection must not be one of the collection.
2. If, provided a certain collection had a total, it would have members only definable in terms of that total, then the said collection has no total [Russell adds: “when I say that a collection has no total, I mean that statements about all its members are nonsense”].
3. Given any set of objects such that, if we suppose the set to have a total, it will contain members which presuppose this total, then such a set cannot have a total. By saying that a set has “no total”, we mean, primarily, that no significant statement can be made about “all its members”.
4. No totality can contain members defined in terms of itself.
(5) Whatever [is referred to by an expression that] contains an apparent [i.e. bound] variable must not be a possible value of that variable.

Each of these versions is open to objection. Version 4 seems obviously wrong. The set of all giraffes clearly “has a total” (since it makes since to talk about all giraffes) and is thus a “totality”, yet it contains members defined in terms of itself, e.g. the tallest giraffe. As for version 1, if the term ‘involves’ means ‘defined in terms of’ then version 1 is wrong for the same reason as version 4, and if it does not, then it is hard to know what it does mean. The same goes for the term ‘presuppose’ in version 3. Version 5 might be correct – that is, it may be the case that a definition is always viciously circular if its definiendum is included in the range of a bound variable contained in the definiens – but, as I argued above, the “viciousness” of this circle – and hence the truth of version 5 – is not immediately obvious. Furthermore, there are many definitions in mathematics that violate version 5, e.g. the definition of the least upper bound of an arbitrary set of real numbers (though it would be rash to take this criticism as definitive, since it is not clear that mathematicians’ practice should be normative for logic).

Version 2 comes closest to the vicious circle principle I have suggested above, though even this is significantly different. If we drop the rather obscure distinction between collections and their totals, and simply assume that whenever we have succeeded in defining a set it makes sense to talk about all its members, then version 2 amounts to the claim that no individual or property can be successfully defined in terms of a set S that includes the individual or property to be defined, unless there is some alternative definition of that individual or property that does not refer to the set S (this ‘unless’ clause is meant to capture the force of Russell’s phrase ‘only definable’). Here
Russell seems to recognize that the mere fact that the definiendum happens to be included in a set S that is referred to in the definiens is not a sufficient reason for claiming that the definition is viciously circular; his stipulation that this definition must be the only one available seems to acknowledge the fact that the real question in all this is to determine when we have grounds for asserting that the definiendum exists (in the mathematical sense). Still, even version 2 is troublesome. In the first place, it is hard to apply, for it is unclear how we can ever know whether a given definiendum is definable only in terms of the set referred to in the given definiens (the principle I suggest above speaks not of definability, but of actually available definitions). In the second place, version 2 seems subject to the same objection I made against version 5: the mere fact that the definiendum can be defined only by reference to a set S that happens to contain it does not seem sufficient to show that the definition is viciously circular. What does seem sufficient is that the only available definition of the set S capable of deciding whether the definiendum’s referent is in S itself contains the definiendum; this is – in slightly reworded form – the condition I formulated above.

*Necessary* and sufficient conditions on vicious circularity are not yet available, but even in their absence it seems possible to formulate some sufficient conditions, such as the one I have offered, that escape some of the objections to Russell’s principle(s). The principle I have suggested seems sufficient not only to defeat the master argument, but also to reveal its central fallacy. In the next section I show how attention to issues of vicious circularity can resolve a related paradox, recently advanced by the Australian logician Graham Priest.

5. Priest’s “Repaired” Version of the Master Argument
In this section, I examine a formal language argument of Graham Priest's that is a close relative of both Berkeley's master argument and the semantic paradoxes. It will emerge that the only fully satisfactory way of defeating Priest's arguments is to use a vicious-circularity critique of the kind I have just used against the master argument.

Priest (1991; 1995, 75-76) grants that Berkeley's original argument is invalid, but he thinks it contains an important insight. Once repaired, the argument is, he thinks, a conclusive demonstration that realism is inconsistent. Yet, unlike Berkeley, Priest believes in the existence of unconceived objects. His point is that there are certain propositions that are true in spite of being inconsistent. Priest has developed "paraconsistent" or "dialethic" logics whose inference rules prohibit the \textit{ex contradictione quodlibet} deduction (p & \neg p) |- q; in these systems the truth of certain contradictory sentences does not entail the unacceptable conclusion that all contradictions are true. For Priest, Berkeley's master argument (in its repaired version) is useful not as a proof of the inconceivability of matter, but as a demonstration that realists should accept paraconsistent logic.

The "repaired" proof can be expressed formally in a domain of ordinal numbers by using a least-number operator '\(\mu\)' with an open formula 'Cx' whose extension is supposed to be the set of all ordinals x such that someone conceives of x.

\[\text{\textit{\footnotesize{211}}}\] Priest's understanding of the argument's original version is different from mine. See Priest 1995, 65-70.

\[\text{\textit{\footnotesize{212}}}\] Priest's original argument (which he calls 'the Core Argument') uses Hilbert's indefinite description operator \(\varepsilon\). He says that objections against the \(\varepsilon\)-operator can be overcome by replacing it with a definite description operator on a well-ordered domain. In order to present his argument its strongest form, I have used the operator '\(\mu\)' on the domain of the ordinals. This has the additional advantage of highlighting the resemblance of his paradox to König's paradox of the least undenoted ordinal. I have discussed the Core Argument in its original form elsewhere (Clemenson 1999).
1. (Ex)¬Cx  \hspace{1cm} \text{premise}
2. (Ex)¬Cx → ¬C(μx¬Cx)  \hspace{1cm} \text{Description Axiom}
3. ¬C(μx¬Cx)  \hspace{1cm} 1, 2 \text{ modus ponens}
4. C(μx¬Cx)  \hspace{1cm} \text{premise}

This is to be read as, "Since not every ordinal number is now conceived (line 1), and since the existence of a presently unconceived ordinal implies that the least presently unconceived ordinal is now unconceived (line 2), the least presently unconceived ordinal is now unconceived (line 3); but the least presently unconceived ordinal is now conceived (line 4)." The warrant for the premise at line 4 is the fact that in reading the argument you understand what is meant by the phrase 'the least presently unconceived ordinal'.\(^{213}\) The premises appear to be true, and the argument commits none of the usual fallacies. In particular, there is no quantification into intensional contexts, since 'conceived' has been defined extensionally.

Nevertheless, the argument is fallacious, and its fallacy is closely related to the one examined in the last section: the extensional definition of 'conceived' causes the extension of C and the denotation of μx¬Cx to be defined in a viciously circular.\(^{214}\) This becomes clear when we spell out the conditions Priest wants his interpretation of the formal language to satisfy.\(^{215}\) Adopting the usual convention that if the extension of ¬C

\(^{213}\) Recall that in the "repaired" master argument of the last subsection, the truth of line 3 seemed to depend on someone's actually understanding the argument. In this respect the argument of this section is similar to that of the last.

\(^{214}\) For the sake of notational convenience I am temporarily dropping the single quotes as indicators that enclosed expressions of the formal language are mentioned rather than used (cf. introduction, note 2). It will be sufficiently clear from the context whether a given expression is mentioned or used.

\(^{215}\) Throughout, I use 'interpretation' to refer to an ordered triple consisting of a set ('domain of discourse'), a function mapping constants and descriptions to elements of the
is empty the term \( \mu x \vdash C x \) refers to some default object (in this case, an arbitrary ordinal), the intended denotation of \( \mu x \vdash C x \) is defined by the sentence

A. (I) If every object in the domain is in the intended extension of \( C \) then \( \mu x \vdash C x \) denotes the default object and (II) if some object is not in the intended extension of \( C \) then for every object \( n \), \( \mu x \vdash C x \) denotes \( n \) if and only if (a) \( n \) is not in the intended extension of \( C \) and (b) for all \( m \), if \( m < n \) then \( m \) is in the intended extension of \( C \).\(^{216}\)

and the extension of \( C \) is defined by the condition

B. For every object \( n \) in the domain, \( n \) is in the extension of \( C \) if and only if there is a term \( t \) such that \( t \) denotes \( n \) in the intended interpretation and someone now understands \( t \) by means of the intended interpretation.

There would be nothing wrong with A if the extension of \( C \) were defined without relying on the definition of the denotation of \( \mu x \vdash C x \). Similarly, there would be nothing wrong with B, if the denotation of every term including \( \mu x \vdash C x \) were defined without relying on the definition of the extension of \( C \). But A and B together constitute a viciously circular set of conditions on the intended interpretation. The definition of the denotation of \( \mu x \vdash C x \) (expressed by A) assumes the definition of the extension of \( C \), while the definition of the extension of \( C \) (partially expressed by B) assumes the definition of a denotation for every term, including \( \mu x \vdash C x \) (otherwise it would be impossible to say with certainty of a particular ordinal that it is undenoted). As a result of this vicious circularity, it is impossible to know what interpretation is intended, and we must

\(^{216}\)
conclude that Priest has given us only the appearance of defining an interpretation. In particular, he has not succeeded in assigning an extension to $C$ and a denotation to $\mu x\neg Cx$. We might think he has succeeded, but only if we do not pay attention to the vicious circularity of the condition set \{A,B\}.

Priest's paradox is best regarded as a reductio ad absurdum of the assumption that his system has an interpretation that simultaneously satisfies the conditions A and B. The reductio can even be set out in a formal metalanguage. Let variables 'm' and 'n' range over the set of ordinals and let the variable 't' range over the set of object-language terms. We interpret constants and predicate letters as follows:

- 'a' denotes the object language term $\mu x\neg Cx$.
- The extension of 'D' is the set of ordered pairs of object-language terms and their denotata in the intended interpretation of the object language.
- The extension of 'E' is the set of ordinals in the intended extension of C.
- The extension of 'U' is the set of object-language terms that are now understood by means of the intended interpretation of the object language.

Sentences A and B are symbolized as

a. \((\forall n)En \rightarrow Da0) \& \{(\exists n)\neg En \rightarrow (\forall n)[Dan \leftrightarrow (\neg En \& (\forall m)(m < n \rightarrow Em))]\}

b. \((\forall n)[(\exists t)(Dt0 \& Ut) \rightarrow En]\\

These entail

\((\exists n)\neg En \rightarrow (\forall n)(Dan \rightarrow \neg Ua)\)

and hence

\((\exists n)\neg En \rightarrow (\neg (\exists n)Dan \lor \neg Ua)\)

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216 It can easily be shown that A entails the existence and uniqueness of the denotation of
which says that if some ordinal is undenoted then the term ‘\(\mu x \diamond Cx\)’ either fails to denote or is not now understood. In either case, there is no interpretation that is now applied to the formal language and that is now understood. For of course every interpretation assigns a denotation to \(\mu x \diamond Cx\), and if the term is not presently understood (after all this work trying to understand its intended interpretation!) that can only be because Priest has not in fact succeeded in defining an interpretation.

Remarks similar to the above apply to all arguments that use a description \(C\diamond x \diamond Cx\) where \(C\) is supposed to have as its extension the set of all (extensionally) conceived objects. This refutes some alternate versions of Priest’s paradox, which attempt to prove \(C\diamond x \diamond Cx\) in the object language instead of taking it as a premise (cf. Priest 1995, 1996).

The vicious circularity identified here does not come under the precise form of the principle formulated in the last section, because the definiendum does not include a quantifier. But that principle was only intended as one sufficient condition for vicious circularity, and several other closely related sufficient conditions might be given as well (I gave one toward the of section 4). A complete analysis of vicious circularity is out of the question here, but what I have said in this section and the last is sufficient, I hope, to show the sense in which the master argument and Priest’s paradox can be seen as instances of a common fallacy.

On the reading of the master argument advanced in section 3 and formalized in section 4, clear and distinct ideas are veridical. A veridical concept closely parallels a description: just as the description ‘the least prime greater than 20’ picks out something \(\mu x \diamond Cx\).
that is (a) prime, (b) greater than 20 and (c) less than or equal to all greater-than-20 primes, provided there are any primes greater than 20, so does the veridental concept of the least prime greater than 20. That is why nothing can be veridically conceived as unconceived, though (if we drop the Cartesian assumptions) things can be conceived as unconceived.

This parallel between veridical concepts and descriptions leads us to expect a parallel between the master argument (in its Cartesian context, in which concepts are stipulated to be veridical) and those semantic paradoxes, such the Koenig paradox of the least undenoted ordinal, that rely on descriptions. We might also expect that the vicious-circularity analysis of the master argument and Priest's paradox might apply to these also. I conclude with a brief discussion of this possibility.

6. A Brief Discussion of Semantic Paradox

I have argued that Priest's term $\mu x^- Cx$, which is intended as a formal translation of the English phrase 'an (extensionally) unconceived thing' has no meaning, because there is a vicious circularity latent in the conditions established for the meaning of (1) the term $\mu x^- Cx$ and (2) the predicate $C$. As Timothy Williamson has observed (1996, 331), Priest's paradox is essentially a variation on Koenig's paradox of the least undenoted ordinal. The Koenig paradox, in turn, is formally similar to several other so-called "semantic" paradoxes, especially those of Berry and Richard. This suggests the possibility that each of these paradoxes can be resolved along the lines of the vicious circularity analysis of sections 4 and 5. This section will discuss the prospects for such a resolution.
I can do no more than briefly touch on this topic here. The remarks in this section are intended primarily as additional support for my claim that the master argument is not the trivial sophism it is usually taken to be (by showing that the themes discussed in the last two sections are linked to a family of unsolved problems of twentieth-century logic and philosophy of mathematics) and as a departure point for further thought on the master argument and its relationship to semantic paradox.

a. The Paradoxes of König, Berry and Richard

Early twentieth-century research into the logic of sets uncovered a group of paradoxes that have since come to be called the “semantic” paradoxes. These paradoxes work by making explicit reference to the semantic relation of denotation. In this section I will suggest that three of these, the Richard, Berry and König paradoxes commit a fallacy of vicious circularity similar to that identified in sections 4 and 5.

Of the three, the Berry paradox is the most easily stated. There are finitely many English expressions that contain fewer than twenty words, and there are infinitely many natural numbers, so there must be natural numbers that are not denoted by any English expression containing fewer than twenty words. Since every non-empty set of natural numbers has a least element, there must be a least number not denoted by any English expression containing fewer than twenty words. But then this number is denoted by the phrase ‘the least number not denoted by any English expression containing fewer than twenty words’, which contains fewer than twenty words. Therefore one and the same number both is and is not denoted by an expression containing fewer than twenty words.

The paradox can be made even simpler by using an indefinite description (with semantics specified by the Axiom of Choice). Since there are numbers not denoted by
any English expression containing fewer than twenty words, the expression 'a number not denoted by any English expression containing fewer than twenty words' denotes such a number. Yet this expression contains fewer than twenty words. Again, one and the same number both is and is not denoted by an expression containing fewer than twenty words. In what follows I will refer to this simpler version of the paradox, and I will use the letter 'G' to abbreviate the phrase 'a number not denoted by any English expression containing fewer than twenty words'.

The König paradox of the least undenoted ordinal number is formally identical to Priest's paradox, with 'conceived' replaced by 'denoted'.

The Richard paradox is the most complex of the three semantic paradoxes being considered, and is a close relative of Cantor's diagonal argument. Let E be the set of numbers denoted by some term of a language such as "MathEnglish", the language formed by English supplemented by mathematical symbols. Since the terms of MathEnglish are countable, so is E. Let 'e_i' denote the i-th element of E on some enumeration, and let 'e_{ij}' denote the value of the j-th decimal place in the decimal expansion of e_i. Letting 'txPx' be the definite description 'the x such that Px', where

\[217\] There is a striking adumbration of the paradoxes of König and Priest in one of Descartes' discussions of the cosmological argument: "Now in my thought or intellect I can somehow come upon a perfection that is above me: thus I notice that, when I count, I cannot reach a largest number, and hence recognize that there is something in the process of counting which exceeds my powers. And I comprehend that from this alone it necessarily follows, not that an infinite number exists, nor indeed that it is a contradictory notion, as you say, but that I have the power of conceiving that there is a thinkable number which is larger than any number that I can ever think of [emphasis added], and hence that this power is something which I have received not from myself but from some other being which is more perfect than I am. It is irrelevant whether or not this concept of an indefinitely large number is called an 'idea'". ("Second Replies", AT VII, 139, CSM II, 100). The number larger than any number ever thought of is an element of the
'Px' is any open formula, and letting \( \text{mod}_{10} n \) denote the modulus with respect to 10 of the number \( n \), we can form the expression

\[
\text{tx}(\forall i)x_i = \text{mod}_{10}(e_i + 1)
\]

which will be abbreviated as \('H'\). \( H \) denotes a number between 0 and 1; call it \('r'\). Since \( r \) satisfies \( H \)'s characteristic predicate \( '(\forall i)x_i = \text{mod}_{10}(e_i + 1)' \), for all \( i \) the \( i \)th element of \( r \) is not equal to the \( i \)th digit of the decimal expansion of \( e_i \). Thus \( r \) is not equal to any number in the set \( E \) of all numbers denoted by a term of \( \text{MathEnglish} \). But we seem to have derived a contradiction, for \( r \) is denoted by \( H \), and \( H \) is a term of \( \text{MathEnglish} \).

b. \textit{Russellian and Tarski Resolutions of the Paradoxes}

We might try to defeat the first of these paradoxes, the \textit{Berry} paradox, by saying that \( G \)'s reference to \"any English expression\" should not be taken as referring to \( G \) itself.\textsuperscript{218} But while this may be a correct description of how we ordinarily understand the expression \( G \),\textsuperscript{219} it does not resolve the paradox. The following sentence is either true or false: \textit{'there are numbers not denoted by \textit{any} expression containing fewer than twenty words, including \textit{G}.} \textit{If it is false, then there are finitely many numbers, which is absurd. If it is true, then by the semantics of indefinite descriptions there must be some number that is denoted by the expression \( G \), \textit{a number not denoted by any English expression}
containing fewer than twenty words', where 'any English expression' includes reference to the expression G. So the paradox remains.

Since the paradox relies on the assumption that G denotes some number, we might try to resolve it by claiming that G has no precise denotation, on the grounds that the denotation relation is vague: for some ordered pairs (x, y), where x is an English expression and y is a number, it is neither true nor false that x denotes y. But then the paradox can be reformulated using the expression 'a number that is precisely not-denoted by any English expression containing fewer than twenty words'. The vagueness of the set of undenoted numbers does not entail the vagueness of the set of precisely undenoted numbers. Such higher order paradoxes might be combated by allowing an unlimited hierarchy of higher order vagueness in the denotation relation, but this seems an extravagant solution.

Alternatively, we might deny the existence of a denotation relation. But this too seems extravagant. It is obvious that the number two is denoted by 'two'.

Russell, who was the first to publish the Berry paradox, tried to resolve it by prohibiting "impredicative definitions". By 'impredicative definition' he seems to have meant any definition such that, should the definiendum exist, some expression such as 'all' or 'some' (i.e., expressed formally by a bound or "apparent" variable) in the definition would include a reference to the definiendum itself (see the five versions of Russell's vicious circle principle, section 4).

As I mentioned in section 4, Russell's solution has not been widely accepted, in part because he did not give a very clear definition of 'impredicative'. Further, he did not specify why impredicative definitions should be rejected, other than that they were
viciously circular, and since Russell’s “vicious circularity” is not easy to distinguish from impredicativity, his rejection of impredicativity on the grounds that it is viciously circular might itself be thought viciously circular. At any rate, his prohibition of impredicative definitions has seemed to many to be too strong, in that it has seemed to prohibit definitions widely accepted in mathematics.

A related solution to the paradoxes relies on Tarski’s distinction between object language and metalanguage. Tarski solved the paradox of the Liar for formal languages by stipulating that no formal language may include its own truth predicate. Similarly, the Berry, Koenig and Richard paradoxes can be given a “Tarskian” solution by stipulating that no language may include its own denotation predicate. Instead, for any language L the denotation relations between items in the world and terms of L will be specified in a metalanguage M that contains names of all expressions of L.

While Tarskian solutions of the semantic paradoxes are accepted for artificial languages – after all, we are free to make whatever semantic stipulations we like for them – their adequacy for natural languages has been questioned, on the grounds that natural languages seem to be “semantically complete”, i.e. they seem to be capable of expressing their own semantics. In fact Tarski himself (1934) held that natural languages are semantically complete, and therefore cannot be treated as object languages with respect to a metalanguage. He concluded that natural languages are hopelessly paradoxical.

The analysis of Graham Priest’s paradox in the preceding section suggests that the semantic paradoxes cannot be formalized in a straightforward way. One might naively try to formalize the König paradox in a countable language L equipped with Hilbert’s ε-
operator with semantics set by the axiom of choice. The domain of L would be the set of all ordinal numbers and the extension of a predicate letter C as the set of all ordinals denoted by some term of L. One would then derive a contradiction by what is essentially Priest’s argument:

\[(\exists x)\neg Cx \quad \text{premise}\]
\[(\exists x)\neg Cx \rightarrow \neg C\varepsilon x \neg Cx \quad \text{Hilbert axiom}\]
\[\neg C\varepsilon x \neg Cx \quad \text{modus ponens}\]
\[C\varepsilon x \neg Cx \quad \text{premise}\]

The first premise seems to be true because L is countable and the ordinals are not, and the last premise seems to be true because the semantics of \(\varepsilon\) have been set such that all \(\varepsilon\)-terms denote something.

This formal paradox can be resolved by an argument very similar to that given in the last chapter, which shows that the intended interpretation of the language L is ill-defined. It is impossible to determine the intended extension of C without first determining the intended denotation of \(\varepsilon x \neg Cx\), which is impossible to determine without first determining the intended extension of \(\neg C\), and hence of C.

Analogous arguments resolve naïve formulations of the Berry and Richard paradoxes as well. The case of the Berry paradox is almost exactly the same as that of the König paradox. In the case of the Richard paradox, the intended denotation of the term \(r\) cannot be determined without first determining the intended denotation of every term \(e_i\) in the term H – in particular, it will be necessary to determine the intended denotation of the term \(e_{1k}\), where \(k\) is the number that enumerates (on the enumeration of

\[220\] For details on the Hilbert operator, see Leisenring 1969.
(0,1) assumed in the paradox) $r$, the number in (0,1). But the intended denotation of $e_{kk}$ is the $k$th decimal digit of the number enumerated by $k$, namely $r$. So the intended denotation of $e_{kk}$ cannot be determined without first determining the intended denotation of $r$, and we have a vicious circle.

The fact that the straightforward formalizations of these paradoxes are so easily seen to involve a viciously circular semantics suggests that the same semantic fallacy vitiates the natural language arguments that these symbolic proofs were intended to formalize. If so, then it is false that the English predicate 'denoted' and the English term 'an undenoted ordinal' can simultaneously have well-defined semantic values. If 'denoted' has no well-defined semantic value then 'undenoted' and 'an undenoted ordinal' have none either. So applying the results of our formal language analysis to English leads to the conclusion that 'an undenoted ordinal' has no well-defined semantic value.

Now if 'an undenoted ordinal' has no well-defined semantic value, the Koenig paradox in its original form is dissolved. As long as we do not assume that 'an undenoted ordinal' has no semantic value, there seems at first to be no danger in assuming that the predicate 'denoted' does have a well-defined semantic value — since it was only our assumption that both 'denoted' and 'an undenoted ordinal' had well-defined semantic value that led to vicious circularity and hence to paradox (cf. the analysis of Priest's paradox in the preceding chapter).

But if 'denoted' has a well-defined extension, then so does 'undenoted', and the extension of 'undenoted' is obviously non-empty (since there are more ordinal numbers than are denoted by English terms). But then we can use the axiom of choice to define a
denotation for ‘an undenoted ordinal’, and once again we have a vicious circularity in the definitions of the semantic values of ‘denoted’ and ‘an undenoted ordinal’, in which case the semantic value of ‘denoted’ is not well-defined. The assumption that ‘denoted’ has a well-defined semantic value has led to the conclusion that it does not have a well-defined semantic value. We seem driven to the conclusion that not only ‘an undenoted ordinal’ but also ‘denoted’ has no well-defined semantic value, so that English is not semantically complete.

The claim that the English predicate ‘denoted’ has no well-defined extension might be taken to imply either that (1) the predicate ‘denoted’ has a well-defined extension, but it is not English (rather it is in a metalanguage of English, which we can call “English-1”), or that (2) the predicate ‘denoted’ is English, but it is vague.

Option (1) entails that English is not one language, but a potentially infinite hierarchy of languages arranged as object languages and metalanguages, since the denotation relations between the world and English-1 will have to be expressed in another language English-2, and so on. This is contrary to appearances (‘denoted’ looks like it belongs to the same language as ‘red’) and by invoking an infinite hierarchy it violates the principle of parsimony.

According to option (2) the extension of ‘denoted’ is vague. However, there is nothing vague about the fact that ‘two’ denotes the number two, so we must distinguish between objects that are clearly in the extension of ‘denoted’ and objects that are not. Among objects in the latter set, some will (presumably) be clearly not denoted and some will be borderline cases. So we must ask whether the set of borderline cases is itself precise or vague. But there seems no way of deciding the question. It is hard to conceive
of the set of borderline cases as having precise limits, but if the limits are vague then we
must ask whether the set of borderline cases of the borderline cases is vague. And so on,
until we are willing to say that at some level (itself vaguely defined?) the set of
"borderline of borderline of borderline ... cases" is precisely demarcated. The vagueness
option seems to leave us with either arbitrary claims about precise demarcations or an
infinite hierarchy of higher-order vagueness.

Neither of these two options seems very attractive. But perhaps there is a third
possibility. There has been renewed interest recently in the semantics of analogy and
metaphor.\textsuperscript{221} It may prove possible to extend these analyses of analogical predication to
such predicates and descriptions as 'denoted' and 'an undenoted ordinal', though I can do
no more than hint at the possibility of such a solution here. The term 'an undenoted
ordinal' is paradoxical only insofar as it is taken to involve an implicit self-reference; 'an
undenoted ordinal' is equivalent to 'an ordinal undenoted by every term' where the set of
terms referred to by 'every term' includes the term 'an ordinal undenoted by every term'
itself. The paradox vanishes when we make the self-reference explicit and then block it,
as in 'an ordinal undenoted by every term except this one'. It may be that although the
term 'an undenoted ordinal' has no well-defined semantic value in the usual sense (i.e. no
denotation fixed by the extension of its defining predicate 'undenoted'), it gains meaning
by analogy with its explicitly-self-referential counterpart. If we abbreviate the phrase 'an
ordinal undenoted by every term except this one' by the letter 's', we can express the
analogy as

\[ s : \text{an ordinal undenoted by every term except this one} \]

\textsuperscript{221} Witness the studies of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, for example.
:: 'an undenoted ordinal' : x

where x is whatever meaning the term 'an undenoted ordinal' has as a result of this analogy. Needless to say, these tentative remarks constitute nothing more than a suggestion for future research.

7. Conclusions

I think the results of sections 1-3 go far toward explaining why Berkeley had such a high opinion of his master argument. Within the context of the Jesuit-Cartesian direct realist theory of intellectual perception that I described in the first two chapters, the master argument begins to look like a convincing demonstration that the existence of objects outside the mind is not just uncertain (as a proxy theorist might have held), but inconceivable. And since for Cartesians the limits of the conceivable were usually taken to be the limits of the possible, Berkeley has good grounds (in the historical context) for his conclusion that nothing can exist outside the mind.

In sections 5 and 6 I have also hinted that the master argument has some prima facie plausibility even outside the intellectual context of Berkeley's own time. Although many seem to assume that we have a coherent concept of the meaning of every phrase we understand, merely understanding a phrase or sentence cannot be taken as proof that we have a coherent concept of its meaning. The fact that we seem to understand such phrases as 'square circle' and 'Euclidean triangle whose interior angles sum to three right angles' is no proof that we have a coherent concept of such things. In section 3 I noted that if we follow Berkeley's advice and compare conceiving of something as unconceived

222 In the Second Replies (AT VII 150-151, CSM II 107) Descartes explicitly links conceivability to possibility (if there is a possibility that is inconceivable, he says, it is unknowable to us and hence cannot enter into discussion).
with visualizing something as unseen (or, as I also suggested, with "believing something to be the object of no belief"), we immediately see that in each one there is a pragmatic self-contradiction involved. In each, the object of a certain propositional attitude contradicts its being the object of that attitude. While this creates no special problem in the case of vision or belief – the fact that I cannot coherently see or believe a certain content does not mean that I cannot coherently conceive it – it does create a problem in the case of conceiving, for there is no ‘higher court of appeal’ than conceiving. We can coherently conceive things that we cannot coherently see or believe, but if there are contents that are not coherently conceivable, we have come to the end of our cognitive rope. Such is the content “unconceived tree” (assuming for the moment that there is such a content). This content is not of the form ‘p and not-p’, and hence is ‘coherent’ in that sense. Yet the concept of a tree as unconceived is incoherent, for the same reason that the vision of a tree as unseen is incoherent.

Pace Winkler, Mackie et al., this line of argument does not ignore the distinction between cognitive act and cognitive content, or (equivalently) between propositional attitude and object of this attitude. On the contrary, it assumes this distinction, and then makes a general observation about it. The observation is this: for any propositional attitude T, including the propositional attitude ‘it is conceived that’, there are certain contents p such that – even though p is not of the form ‘q and not-q’ – the attitude Tp (though not necessarily the content p) is incoherent, because pragmatically self-refuting. For example, it is incoherent to believe that no one believes anything, even though the sentence ‘no one believes anything’ is not of the form ‘p and not-p’ and is in fact coherent (since we can conceive that no one believes anything). In the same way, it is
incoherent to conceive that the tree in the yard is unconcepted, even though 'the tree in
the yard is unconcepted' is not of the form 'p and not-p'.

In section 4 I offered my own resolution of the master argument. I claimed that
its basic fallacy is a vicious circularity in the definition of the predicate 'unconcepted'.
The real lesson of the argument -- a lesson unintended, I think, by Berkeley -- is that there
is no such thing as the property of being concepted or the property of being unconceived,
if by 'the property of being unconceived' we mean the property of there being no
property that a given individual is concepted to have. But this does not show that
everything is concepted, any more than the claim that existence is not a property shows
that nothing exists.

In section 5 I discussed a close relative of the master argument, Priest's paradox,
which is simply a philosophy-of-mind version of the familiar semantic paradoxes of
Koenig et al, reviewed in section 6. The fact that the semantic paradoxes have resisted
solution for over a century now is further evidence that their cousin, the master argument,
touches on problems that transcend the historical limits of early modern philosophy. It is
likely that a fully satisfactory solution of the semantic paradoxes will be necessary in
order finally to lay to rest the challenge to realism presented by Berkeley's master
argument. This solution may take the form of a refined version of Russell's Vicious
Circle Principle, or it may require an exploration of analogical predication, or both.
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