Resisting Phenomenalism

From Bodily Experience to Mind-Independence

[penultimate draft, final version published in Alsmith, Adrian J. T. & Serino, Andrea (eds.) (2022). *The Routledge Handbook of Bodily Awareness*. London, Routledge.]

Abstract: Can one refute Berkeleyan phenomenalism by arguing that sensory object seems mind-independent, and that, according to Berkeley, experience is to be taken at face value? Relying on Mackie's recent discussion of the issue, the I argue, first, that phenomenalism cannot be straightforwardly refuted by relying on perceptual or bodily experience of mind-independence together with the truthfulness of experience. However, I maintain, second that phenomenalism can be *indirectly* refuted by appealing to the bodily experience of resistance. Such experience presents us with the causal activity of the resisting physical object. If experience is truthful, as the phenomenalist has it, physical objects are causally active. But then their effects no longer depend on our perceiving them, on pain of overdetermination.

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Consider the following objection to Berkeleyan phenomenalism—the view that there is nothing but minds, mind-dependent sensory objects, and collections thereof:

P1 Some ordinary perceptual experiences present us with their sensory objects as existing mind-independently.

P2 What ordinary experiences present is the case.

C1 Some sensory objects exist mind-independently.

P1 is often assumed to be an obvious feature of the phenomenology of perception: the colors we see, the sounds we hear, are presented to us as existing independently from our seeing or hearing them. P2 is granted by the Berkeleyan phenomenalist: it echoes one key motivation for phenomenalism, namely, to avoid divorcing appearance from reality. This alleged refutation of Berkeleyan phenomenalism is straightforward: the phenomenalist professes to take appearances at face value but fails to do so when it comes to appearances of mind-independence.

The only option for the phenomenalist is to reject P1. As it happens, this is what Berkeley does:

> As for our senses, by them we have the knowledge only of our sensations, ideas, or those things that are immediately perceived by sense, call them what you will: but they do not inform us that things exist without the mind, or unperceived, like to those which are perceived. (*Principles*, §18; see also *Three Dialogues*, 201)

Such a rejection of the perceptual appearance of mind-independence may sound surprising to contemporary ears, but as we shall see, there are good reasons to think that Berkeley is right in claiming that perception does not present us with the mind-independence of its objects. I shall argue, however, that there is another kind of experience, the experience of resistance to our bodily efforts, which presents us with a variety of mind-independence that is fatal to Berkeleyan phenomenalism.

In §1 and §2 I argue that neither independence from all minds, nor independence from the perceiver's mind is presented in perception, so that Berkeley's phenomenalism is immune to the objection from the perceptual experience of mind-independence. In §3 and § 4 I argue, however, that Berkeley's phenomenalism lays itself open to a cognate objection premised on the experience of resistance to bodily efforts.

1. Rescuing Berkeley (1): no absolute mind-independence in perception

Mackie (2020) has recently offered a detailed criticism of P1 so as to rescue Berkeley from the above objection (although Mackie is not herself a phenomenalist). Mackie argues that to rebut Berkeley along the line of our initial objection would require to show that perceptual objects are presented as existing independently from *all* minds ("absolute mind-independence" in Mackie's terminology)—which is clearly not the case. I agree with Mackie that this is the reason why the perceptual objection fails to refute *one version* of Berkeleyan phenomenalism. I shall however argue in this section that there is another, fairly standard, reading of Berkeleyan phenomenalism which is still threatened by the weaker claim that perceptual objects are presented as independent from the *perceiver's mind* ("particular mind-independence" in Mackie's terminology).

Mackie's chief worry is that people endorsing P1 focus on what she calls *particular* mind-independence, that is, the idea that any perceptual experience presents us with its objects as independent *from this particular experience*. But—Mackie stresses—showing that sensory objects are independent from a given experience is not enough to refute Berkeley, for this—she claims—is granted by Berkeley. One has to show that sensory objects are independent

from *any* mind, which includes all human minds as well as God's mind. This is what Mackie calls *absolute* independence. Hence, P1 should be disambiguated as follows:

> P1' Some ordinary perceptual experiences present us with their sensory objects as existing independently from these very experiences. (particular independence)
>
> P1'' Some ordinary perceptual experiences present us with their sensory objects as existing independently from all perceptual experiences of all perceivers. (absolute independence)

Mackie seems willing to grant that P1' may be true, but stresses that it does not threaten Berkeleyan phenomenalism: to rebut Berkeley, one has to argue that sensory objects are independent from all minds, not just one. So Berkeley's objector needs P1''. But she convincingly argues that P1'' is false: absolute mind-independence is very unlikely to figure in the content of perception. Thus, Mackie concludes, the anti-Berkeleyan argument from appearance of independence either misses its target, or is incorrect.

I agree with Mackie that absolute mind-independence cannot be perceived and that the anti-Berkeleyan argument from the *perceptual* experience of mind-independence fails. However, I do not think that the unperceivability of absolute mind-independence suffices to rebut the argument. Mackie overestimates the importance of the particular/absolute independence distinction in the context of Berkeley's phenomenalism. Her rescue of Berkeley relies on the assumption that Berkeley maintains that the very same sensory objects that I now see may also be seen by others, including God. The table I see (which is a bundle of sensory qualities) still exists in God's mind when I close my eyes. This is indeed one important reading of Berkeley. However, there is another interpretation, of a more subjective strand: when I close my eyes, the table I see does cease to exist (because it is constituted of ideas which are only

in my mind) yet *another table, exactly like the one I saw*, continues to exist in God's mind. On that second interpretation of Berkeley, each idea depends for its existence on one and only one mind, and what survives the closing of our eyes is not the very idea we were contemplating—for this one ceases to be—, but rather a qualitatively identical one in God's mind.

In fact, Berkeley is undecided as to whether numerically the same idea can be in several minds. In the third Dialogue (256-257), while considering the question of whether the very same quality I now see exists in other minds —including God's mind—, he downplays the importance of the distinction between numerical and qualitative identity and seems happy with both readings of his view. Then in various places in the *Principles* and he the *Dialogues* he suggests that the ideas in God's mind are *archetypes* of which the ideas in our minds are copies or *ectypes* (see Taylor, 1985, for discussion), which suggests that the color I now see is exclusively dependent on my seeing it.

It follows that the appearance of *particular* mind-dependence, *pace* Mackie, would constitute a threat to one reading of Berkeleyan phenomenalism, namely the subjectivist reading according to which sensory objects are private:

> P1' Some ordinary perceptual experiences present us with their sensory objects as existing independently from these very experiences. (particular independence)
>
> P2 What ordinary experiences present is the case.
>
> C1' Some sensory objects exist independently from the experience directed at them.

2. Rescuing Berkeley (2): no particular mind-independence in perception

If we are to rescue Berkeley from the argument from the perceptual appearance of independence, we need to reject not just that we perceive things as independent from any experience (P1''), but, more challengingly, that we perceive things as independent from our perceiving them (P1'). Hume suggested an argument to that effect. He maintains that we cannot perceive that things continue to exist without perception, because "it supposes that the senses continue to operate, even after they have ceas'd all manner of operation." (*Treatise*, Bk 1, Part VI, sec. II). In the same way that we cannot see whether the light stays on when we close the fridge door, we cannot see whether sensory objects continue to exist when we close our eyes. This initially plausible argument fails on closer scrutiny: it relies on the false assumption that the only way to perceive the mind-independence of *x* is to perceive *x* when it is not perceived. It is however sufficient to perceive *x* as *possibly* existing unperceived. That is, if while seeing *x,* we have the impression that *x* would exist even if we were not perceiving it, then we are presented with *x*'s mind-independence.[i]

Do we have such impression of particular mind-independence in perception? I do not think so. I cannot offer a decisive argument, but I shall argue that endorsing P1' is more costly, and rejecting it is less costly, than it may seem.

(i) The cost of endorsing P1'. Here are four reasons why experiencing particular mind-independence, although less demanding than experiencing absolute mind-independence, is still very demanding.

1. *Reflexivity*. For my perceptual experience to present its objects as independent *from itself,* it has to present itself to itself, to somehow figure in its own content[ii]. While some (e.g. neo-Brentanian) accounts of perception take this reflexivity to be essential to perception (and other mental states), the view that all perceptual experiences are self-conscious is a controversial one. To mention some chief difficulties: self-reference yields regress worries (see Textor, 2017, chap. 6, for recent discussion); self-reference seems in tension with the diaphaneity of perception stressed by Moore; self-reference is also arguably in tension with some kinds of perceptual experiences for which it not obvious that the perceiver is aware of her experience on top of her awareness of its objects: peripheral experience (e.g. of the pressure of the floor against our foot); absorption (e.g. in some piece of music); and the experiences of babies or nonhuman animals. Such difficulties have been discussed at length in the literature, but even if they are in the end surmountable, they show that P1' is more committal than may first appear.
2. *Modality*. P1' entails that we can perceive *modal* properties as such. This is again a controversial claim: how can perception, which one typically thinks of as causally related to the here and now, present us with some counterfactual situation? Such views are indeed not unprecedented (Gibson, 1986, famously argued that objects afford us some of their *possible* uses; see Nanay, 2011; Vetter, 2018 for recent works on the perception of modalities), but they remain controversial.
3. *Existence*. P1' entails that *existence* can be perceived: objects are seen *as existing* independently. This is also contentious. If existence is a first-order property, it is unclear, as Hume famously stressed, that we experience it as distinct from the existing object. ("The idea of existence […] is the very same with the idea of what we

conceive *to* be existent." *Treatise*, Bk 1, Part II, sec. VI). On the other hand, if existence is construed as a second-order, quantificational property, it is at least as dubious that we can perceive it. The reason for this is that existence construed in this way entails generality, and perceptual content appears to be singular: we do not see variables. If "Mary experiences the tree as existing" has the form "Mary experiences that there is at least and at most one *x* that is a tree", then it is unlikely that Mary will ever experience the tree as existing.

4. *Negation*. P1' entails that we experience *negative* properties, since sensory objects are allegedly presented to us as *not* depending on our perception. This is another contentious claim —albeit, once again, not unprecedented (see esp. Sorensen, 2008; Farennikova, 2013, Cavedon-Taylor, 2017).

Summing up, P1' entails that perceptual objects are presented as mind-independent—which entails all the controversial features above—in ordinary perception. For those who find some oddity in the idea that we may sometimes perceive reflexive or modal or existential or negative properties, the view that we are regularly perceptually presented with a property that is at once reflexive, modal, existential and negative is going to be a hard sell.

To reiterate, these considerations do not establish the falsity of P1', the claim that perceptual experiences present us with their objects as existing independently from themselves. But I take them to show that the agenda for defenders of P1' is an uphill one. In view of such difficulties, one is led to wonder whether dropping P1' would constitute such a big loss. The following four considerations suggest that it would not.

(ii) The innocuousness of rejecting P1'. First, the claim that objects are not presented as independent from our perceiving them does not entail that objects are presented as

depending on our perceiving them. Rather, the most plausible alternative here is that perceptual experience is *mute* with respect to the dependence/independence of its objects (Massin, 2017; 2019; Massin & De Vignemont, 2020; Mackie, 2020).

Second, the claim that objects are not presented as independent from our perceiving them is compatible with our believing that they exist independently of our perceiving them. Thus, while perception may be intrinsically mute with respect to the mind-independence of its object, it may regularly prompt beliefs to the effect that its objects are mind-independent. (Indeed Berkeley, as keen as he is on defending common sense, concedes that commonsense beliefs, contrary to appearances, often err on that very issue.)

Third, the claim that objects are not presented as independent from our perceiving them is compatible with, e.g. visual objects appearing to be located at a certain distance from us. Berkeley may be responsible for some confusion here, since in his *Essay towards a new Theory of Vision* he rejects the claim that we directly see things at a distance and later relies on this result in his *Principles* (§43-44) to establish that visual objects depend on their being perceived. But the rejection of visual depth and the rejection of the mind-independence of visual objects are distinct and independent claims. Independence is one thing, distance is another. *x* may be and seem distant from *y* without *x* being and seeming independent from *y* (see Armstrong, 1960, 26 sqq. for detailed discussion).

Fourth, the claim that objects are not presented as independent from our perceiving them is compatible with objects appearing to have a constant color or shape, or hardness or location when we move around them. Perceptual constancies were not considered by Berkeley, who endorsed a conservative view of perceptual content. But even if one endorses a more liberal account of perceptual content, the claim that objects appear to have constant size, location

or color independently from our location, does not entail that such objects appear to exist independently from our seeing them (see Siegel, 2006 for a similar point).

These remarks not only suggest that rejecting P1', the perceptual appearance of particular mind-independence, is not absurd; they also undermine at least some of the motivation for P1'. Suppose that Mary's seeing of the tree does not present the tree as depending on her perception but does present the tree as distant from her, as independent in size and shape from her viewpoint; and that her perception goes along with the belief or certainty that the tree exists independently from her perception. Why should we be tempted to endorse, on top of this, the costly view that Mary's perception presents to her the tree as independent from her perception?

Let us sum up our results so far. There are two readings of Berkeleyan phenomenalism: the objectivist reading, according to which ideas can be in more than one mind; and the subjectivist reading, according to which any idea is in exactly one mind. The perceptual appearance of *absolute* mind-independence would threaten both versions of phenomenalism. But there is no such appearance, as Mackie rightly argues. The appearance of *particular* mind independence would threaten only the subjectivist reading of Berkeley. But there is no such appearance either, for the reasons just mentioned. It follows that one cannot rebut Berkeleyan phenomenalism, in either of its readings, by appealing to the *perceptual* presentation of mind-independence.

3. Resisting Berkeley (1): particular mind-independence in bodily experience

Numerous psychologists and philosophers have claimed across history that the experience of resistance of physical bodies to our muscular efforts presents us with their mind-independence (see Massin, 2017 for a list of references). In the two next sections I argue that it is possible to refute Berkeleyan phenomenalism on that basis: while perception does not present us with the mind-independence of its objects, the bodily experience of resistance does, and this raises an important problem for phenomenalism. This kind of objection is not unprecedented. Johnson famously sought to refute Berkeley by kicking a stone. This refutation is usually met with a derisive smile, but may well deserve more careful consideration (Massin, 2019). The following may be considered a broadly Johnsonian attempt at refuting phenomenalism.

Consider the following analogous objection to the one discussed so far:

> P3 Some ordinary experiences, namely experiences of a sensory object's resistance to our muscular effort, present us with that sensory object's mind-independence.
>
> P2 What ordinary experiences present is the case.
>
> C1 Some sensory objects exist mind-independently.

Instead of appealing to perception, the objection appeals to the bodily experience of muscular resistance. Here as well, P3 can be read as bearing on absolute independence (independence from any mind), or particular independence. I shall here focus on the particular reading. This entails that the foregoing objection, if correct, *only rebuts the subjectivist version of Berkeleyan phenomenalism according to which objects of experience are private*. (I do not

think that any experience, even the bodily experience of resistance, can give us access to the independence of its object from any mind: the objectivist reading of phenomenalism, I surmise, is immune to any objection from apparent mind-independence.)

Why should the experience of resistance to our effort, contrary to perceptual experience, succeed in presenting mind-independence? To answer this question, we have to make clear what resistance to muscular effort and its experiences are. I propose the following definition of muscular resistance to effort (see Massin, 2017 for details):

> ***Resistance***=df *x* resists *A*'s muscular effort iff *A* exerts a force on *x* in order to make *x* move or stay at rest, and *x* exerts in return some force that partly or fully counteracts the force that *A* exerts on *x*.

When pushing a heavy door to open it, we exert a force on the door with the aim of opening it. Because of its weight, inertia, the friction of the axes, air resistance… the door exerts in return resistive forces opposed to the one we exert on it. These resistive forces may fully counteract the force we exert on the door, in which case our effort to open the door would fail. Alternatively, resistive forces may only partly counteract the force we exert on the door, in which case we would manage to open the door, albeit with some difficulty.

Relatedly, *to experience* the resistance of an object is to experience an object as opposing some force to the force we exert on it in order to make it move.

> ***Experience of resistance*** =df *x* is experienced as resisting *A*'s muscular effort iff *A* feels that *x* exerts some force that partly or fully counteracts the force *A* exerts on *x* to make *x* move or stay at rest.

The experience of resistance is not a purely perceptual experience, for it does not primarily bear on external objects or sensory qualities. It bears on a complex episode which involves

the intentional exertion of force by the agent (for the force is exerted *in order to* reach some kinematic goal) and the exertion of resistive force by the objects on which the agent acts. Now, such an experience is (in part) a second-order experience, which targets the agent's *intentional* action. Under the assumption such second-order experiences of intentional agentivity are not perceptual, the experience of resistance is not entirely perceptual.

We are now in a position to understand in what sense experiencing the resistance of an object to our effort amounts to experiencing its mind-independence: in such experiences, we are presented with the object resisting the influence of our will: the object's behavior is not entirely determined by our striving. The motion of the object is also determined by its own forces, which we do not exert.

Let us come back to our main question: why does the experience of resistance succeed, where perception fails, at presenting us with the mind-independence of sensory objects? The reason why it is so is that the bodily experience of resistance has none of the controversial features that the alleged perceptual experience of mind-independence does:

1. *No reflexivity*. The bodily experience of resistance involves no reflexivity: it does not present us with the object as being independent from *that experience*. It presents us with the object's independence from *our striving*, that is, from our intentional force-exertion.
2. *No modality*. The mind-independence at stake is not a modal property which requires considering counterfactual possibilities. That the object's behavior is not entirely dependent our will is something that unfolds here and now, against our body: we experience that other forces act on the object. In other words, we experience this object as partly independent from our will without having to consider how it would

behave in other circumstances. Arguably, the experience of resistance enables us to anticipate how the object would behave were the resistive force to vanish —the door would accelerate even more. But it does not consist in such a modal experience.

3. *No existence*. As argued above, neither existence as thin first-order property nor existence as a second-order property are plausibly accessible through experience. By contrast, the kind of existence presented in the experience of resistance is not a flimsy existential property. It consists, I submit, in *causal existence*. To take up Alexander (1920: 8)'s famous dictum, to be or to exist is to have causal power; a view which traces back to Plato's *Sophist* (247 d-e) and is also dubbed the "Eleatic principle" (see Berto, 2012, for a recent defense). On that view, existence is indeed a first-order property, but is thicker than standardly thought, as it is characterized in causal terms and makes an experiential difference. As a result, the possibility of experiencing existence is tightly linked to the possibility of experiencing causality.
4. *No negation*. Finally, although the bodily experience of mind-independence may be *described* in negative terms —I experience that the wall is not entirely dependent upon my will—, its content is in fact positive. In that context, the property of not-depending-on-my-mind boils down to the property being-partly-dependent-on-something-else-other-than-my-mind. One may retort that "something else other than my mind" is a disguised negative property ("something that is not my mind"). But this argument overgeneralizes: the same could be said about any experiential distinction: if I see the apple as distinct from the cat, then I see the apple as non-identical with the cat. The view that the bodily experience of resistance presents objects as distinct from our mind raises no more and no fewer worries with respect to negative properties than the view that we can see or hear objects as distinct from each other.

I conclude that, while we do not perceive objects as existing independently from our perception of them, there is a clear and unproblematic sense in which we experience material objects as existing independently from our mind: those objects resist our bodily efforts to move them.

4. Resisting Berkeley (2): from will-independence to mind-independence

Recall the objection to Berkeleyan phenomenalism from the bodily experience of resistance:

> P3 Some ordinary experiences, namely experiences of a sensory object's resistance to our muscular effort, present us with that object's mind-independence.
>
> P2 What ordinary experiences present is the case.
>
> C1 Some sensory objects exist mind-independently.

P3 is true, or so I have just argued. P2 is granted by the phenomenalist. So, one may think, phenomenalism is refuted.

This refutation is inconclusive, however, because it equivocates between two kinds of mind-independence. P3 is about independence *from the will*; but the conclusion, if it is to refute phenomenalism, should be about independence *from perception*. More precisely, P3 means that the behavior of physical objects, as they are presented to us in bodily experience, does not entirely depend upon our will or our efforts. To refute phenomenalism, one needs to show that physical objects are independent from our perception for their existence. That bodies are causally independent from the will does not logically entail that they are existentially independent from perception. The only conclusion one is allowed to draw is that some objects are independent from our will. And this conclusion is compatible with phenomenalism. In fact,

Berkeley (*Three Dialogues*, 235) insists that ideas of perception, by contrast to ideas of imagination, are independent from our will.

At this stage, the prospects for a refutation of phenomenalism premised on experiences of mind-independence seem bleak: perceptual experiences of independence would refute Berkeley, but do not exist; bodily experiences of independence exist, but do not refute Berkeley. I shall now argue that there is a cognate kind of objection to Berkeleyan phenomenalism from the bodily experience of resistance that does succeed. Instead of trying to reach mind-independence directly from the experience of resistance, the refutation I propose first establishes that some objects have causal powers:

> P4 Some ordinary experiences, namely experiences of a sensory object's resistance to our muscular efforts, present us with some of that object's causal powers.
>
> P2 What ordinary experiences present is the case.
>
> C2 Some sensory objects have causal powers.

The reason to accept P4 should be clear by now. To have the impression that the object resists the force we exert on it entails having the impression that the object exerts some causal influence on us. The resisting object is presented to us as *causally active*.

C2 is not yet the anti-phenomenalist conclusion we are aiming at. However, it should be noted that Berkeley also rejects C2. Only minds are active, he insists (*Principles*, §61; *Three Dialogues*, 196): no sensory object has causal power. Furthermore, Berkeley maintains that forces are never experienced, and therefore are occult qualities or abstractions; so the idea that sensory objects exert forces is to be rejected on empiricist grounds according to him. The question is whether we can move from

C2 Some sensory objects have causal powers.

to

C1 Some sensory objects exist mind-independently.

Berkeley, who rejects both, never makes clear what the connection is between his rejection of the views that sensory objects have causal powers and that forces can be experienced, on the one hand, and his rejection of the view that sensory objects are mind-independent on the other. Berkeley aside, the question is of general interest, since C1 and C2 correspond to two chief criteria of reality. Although mind-independence and the possession of causal powers have historically been widely used as marks of the real (see former section on the causal view of existence), the question of their relation is rarely ever raised. I shall now argue that C2 entails C1: if some entities have causal powers, then some entities exist mind-independently.

Suppose with Berkeley that every billiard ball, as well as every motion and every change of motion of the billiard balls, existentially depend on their being perceived. Suppose also, *pace* Berkeley, that billiard balls have causal powers: they affect each others' behavior. On that proposal —i.e. phenomenalism + causal powers— all billiard balls and their motion depend on their being perceived, and the balls affect each others' motions. Here comes the problem. The acceleration of the red ball is per phenomenalism dependent on its being perceived. But that very change is also dependent on the force exerted by, say, the white ball. We thus get one event (the red ball's acceleration) which receives two explanations (its being perceived; the force exerted by the white ball). Such explanatory overdeterminations are bound to happen all over the billiard table. If regular explanatory overdetermination is to be rejected, phenomenalism is to be rejected too. The gist of the objection is that, once endowed with

causal powers, objects start banging against each other, thereby beginning a new, mind-independent life.

P4 Some ordinary experiences, namely experiences of a sensory object's resistance to our muscular effort, present us with (some of) that object's causal powers.

P2 What ordinary experiences present is the case.

C2 Some sensory objects have causal powers.

P5 If some objects have causal powers, then some other objects (e.g. accelerations) are dependent on these.

P6 If some objects depend on the causal powers of other objects, they do not depend on their being perceived.

C3 Some objects do not depend on their being perceived.

Let us defend our two new premises in turn. One could object to P5 that the having of causal powers does not entail the manifestation of these causal powers, so that the world may be full of causally empowered objects which never exert their powers. However, given the first step of the argument, which concludes that objects have causal power from the causal activity of those objects (i.e. their offering resistance to our efforts), such a possibility is precluded. For the experience of resistance presents the object as in fact being causally active. When opening a heavy door, we experience that our hand is partly impeded by the door's resistive force: we experience the door's causal influence on our hand. So the causal powers that we ascribe on the basis of the experience of resistance are not dormant, but active powers, in the sense of activated causal powers.

P6 is a ban on regular explanatory overdetermination. The standard motivation for it is that although explanatory overdetermination may coincidentally happen, it cannot happen as a rule. That is, it may exceptionally be the case that smoke (qua sensory object) is caused by fire (qua sensory object), and that the very same smoke is also brought into existence by our seeing it. But a theory that entails that this happens on a regular or even necessary basis should be rejected. This is what phenomenalism does, according to the objection, once active causal powers are accepted.

One may first hope to reject P6 by arguing that we have only *partial* explanations here. However both explanations at stake here are complete. First, physical explanation of changes of motion claim to be complete. For instance, in classical mechanics, the resultant force acting on a body provides, together with Newton's second law of motion, a full explanation of the body's ensuing acceleration. No additional help from the mind or anything else is required. Second, phenomenalism also claims that the existence of sensory objects is completely explained by their being perceived. Suppose Berkeley were to claim that the existence of objects such as accelerations is only partly dependent on their being perceived. The partial *independence* of these objects from their perception would then seem to be enough to turn him into a realist.

A second possible reply is this. Sider (2004) has argued that regular overdetermination, insofar as it consists in *dependent* overdetermination, is not problematic. For instance, that bodily motions are regularly and fully explained by prior mental states on the one hand, and by prior brain states on the other, may not be problematic so long as mental states fully depend on brain states (or the reverse, for that matter). Could the phenomenalist appeal to dependent overdetermination to reject P6? This seems problematic for the following reason. When

Johnson kicked the stone to refute Berkeley, his foot was repelled by the stone. There are two complete explanantia for his foot's rebound under phenomenalism + causal powers: (i) *the resistive force exerted by the stone* (together with other forces at play, the mass of the foot, and Newton's second law); (ii) *Johnson's perception of the foot's rebound*. The present line of reply is that at least one of these explanantia fully depends on the other. But this is not the case. If one endorses phenomenalism, the resistive force (i) may depend on *its* perception, but even under phenomenalism, the resistive force will not depend on the perception of its effects —that is, the perception of the rebound of Johnson's foot (ii). So (i) does not depend on (ii). But (ii) does not depend on (i) either under phenomenalism. A realist could indeed claim that the resistive force exerted by the stone caused the foot's rebound, which in turn caused Johnson's perception of the rebound, so that if causal explanation is transitive, the perception of the rebound is dependent on the resistive force. But, first, this dependence is clearly not the full dependence that is required for Sider's strategy to apply: the occurrence of rebound is not the only causal factor determining Johnson's perception of it. Second, and more importantly, such a story could not be accepted by a phenomenalist, for it relies on the idea that perception is determined by its objects, whereas the phenomenalist thinks the order of explanation goes in the other direction.

Consider a third possible reply. One might object to P6 that it conflates two levels of explanation: causal and metaphysical. While Johnson's foot's rebound *causally* depends on the resistive force exerted by the stone, it *ontologically* depends on its being perceived. From this claim, one could argue that there is either no overdetermination (if overdetermination occurs only when there are distinct explanations of the same kind) or that there is overdetermination but that it is unproblematic (if problematic overdetermination happens only when there are distinct explanations of the same kind). Distinguishing causal from

ontological dependence is a complex issue (see Schnieder, 2006, for useful clarification), but for the sake of the objection, let us grant that the distinction holds. The counter to the objection is that so long as *the very same thing* (the existence of the foot's rebound) *fully* depends —whether causally or ontologically— on distinct things (perception, the resistive force), the problem remains intact. The existence of the rebound receives two complete and independent explanations. That one explanation is causal while the other is not does nothing to remove the mystery: how do these two unrelated explanantia happen to systematically coincide? (Perhaps the idea is that the causal and the metaphysical explanations are both required to get a complete explanation of the rebound. This is possible, but brings us back to the first, already rejected, objection to P6.)

A last reply may be that the argument establishes only the mind-independence of the foot's *acceleration*, and not the mind-independence of a substance, such as the stone or the foot. In answer, note, first, that the mind-independence of accelerations, which are not minds, is enough to rebut immaterialism. Second, given Berkeley's own account of substances in terms of collections of sensory qualities (by contrast to substrates or underlying bearers of sensory qualities), if qualities causally generate each other, we may soon end up enough mind-independent qualities to constitute mind-independent bundles. Third, one may argue that mind-dependent object can only have mind-dependent properties, so that if a billiard ball or a foot has the property of accelerating, it must be mind-independent.[iii] For suppose a substance is made of only mind-dependent qualities, such as shape, colour and solidity (let us grant for the sake of the argument that these are mind-dependent qualities). How can such a bundle entirely constituted of entirely mind-dependent qualities undergo a mind-independent change such as an acceleration?

Conclusion

Phenomenalism cannot be straightforwardly refuted by relying on perceptual or bodily experience of mind-independence together with the truthfulness of experience. But it can be indirectly refuted by appealing to the bodily experience of resistance. Such experience presents us with the causal activity of the resisting physical object. If experience is truthful, as the phenomenalist has it, physical objects are causally active. But then their effects no longer depend on our perceiving them, on pain of overdetermination.

This refutation of phenomenalism from the bodily experience of resistance comes with two additional valuable upshots. First, it allows us to understand why Berkeley bundled his phenomenalism with two seemingly independent theses: the view that forces are occult qualities and the view that only minds are active. Although Berkeley seems not to have had a clear grasp of the relationship between these views, he may have obscurely felt that forces and physical causal powers would lead him to problematic cases of explanatory overdetermination.

Second, the argument allows us to relate two apparently rival and unrelated criteria of reality: (i) to be real is to be mind-independent; (ii) to be real is to be causally empowered. If the argument is correct, the view that some objects have causal powers entails under plausible assumptions the view that some objects are mind-independent.[iv]

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[i] I am here assuming a modal conception of independence, according to which *x* is existentially independent from *y* iff it is possible for *x* to exist without *y*. Although this conception of independence has been recently challenged (Simons, 1987; Fine, 1994; Lowe, 1998, chap. 6; Correia, 2005), it appears to be the notion of independence that both Berkeley and Hume are working with.

[ii] A point initially raised by Hume :

> Now if the senses presented our impressions as external to, and independent of, ourselves both the objects and ourselves must be obvious to our senses, otherwise they cou'd not be compar'd by these faculties. The difficulty, then, is how far we are *ourselves* the objects of our senses. (*Treatise*, 1.4.2)

[iii] I am grateful to a referee of this paper for this suggestion.

[iv] I am very grateful to three anonymous referees for their invaluable suggestions.