

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

BERKELEY'S CONCEPTION OF OBJECTIVITY IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD

ACCORDING to the *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ideas of sensation are ultimately distinguished from ideas of the imagination in that the former, unlike the latter, have objective existence in the mind of God, who in perceiving them determines their character and maintains them in existence. Thus the doctrine that *esse est percipi* is conceived to be compatible with the general belief in the continued existence of objects in the physical order. Yet while Berkeley was entirely explicit on this point, he failed to consider adequately the problem which is immediately raised in regard to the nature of the relation which obtains between ideas of sensation as they appear to the finite mind and these ideas (if they can be said to be the same) as they exist objectively in the mind of God.

There are two alternatives open to Berkeley in defining this relation: (1) the idea present to the finite mind may be conceived to be identical with that existing in the mind of God, or (2) the idea in the finite mind may be regarded as differing, at least numerically, from that in the divine mind. On the first alternative, which assumes a numerical identity, the finite mind in perceiving physical objects would directly apprehend the ideas as they are sustained in existence in the divine mind. Perception would be the immediate apprehension of a real order which in its true nature appears directly in experience, and in perceiving the finite mind would know things as God knows them. There would thus be no distinction between appearance and reality, between the object as presented and the object as it exists apart from its being known by finite minds. Now, if in perceiving the mind directly apprehends the ultimately real object rather than some intermediating repre-