THE BISHOP AND PRIEST:
On the epistemology and psychology of true contradictions

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I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest.
- Dr. Jekyll

1. Introduction

Dialetheic logicians from Australia are busy pressing the case that some contradictions are true. The contradictions in question form a distinct class of logical construct characterized by conceptual limits, such as the limit of what can be expressed, known, or conceived. A contradiction from this class is called a *dialetheia*, and *dialetheism* is the view that this class is not empty. Perhaps the central candidate for such a true contradiction is from Graham Priest's *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (2002; pp. 60-70 – stand-alone page references are to this). There, Priest reworks Bishop George Berkeley's famous "master argument" for idealism into an argument resulting in a dialetheia. Priest's reworking also can be viewed as an argument for dialetheism. The argument is: The reworked Berkeleian argument *is* a sound deduction of a contradiction, hence the very thing needed is produced. No existence proof works as well as a constructive one.

Priest's reworked argument, like the original, concerns conceiving unconceived things. The conclusion of the reworked version is that something that is not conceived...
is also conceived. Berkeley's original version did not embrace the contradiction, as Priest wants to do, but instead followed the contradiction via a *reductio* to the conclusion that everything was conceived, and hence to idealism (at least this is a plausible interpretation of Berkeley's strategy). For philosophers, the Priest-Berkeley arguments present a difficult dilemma: either embrace true contradictions (and a logic that allows for them -- a paraconsistent logic based on dialetheia), or reject true contradictions and embrace the conclusion that everything is conceived (somehow). Standard approaches to this dilemma are to simply ignore it. Classical logic, with its law of noncontradiction, is still the "industry standard," yet virtually no one thinks that everything is conceived. This same attitude can be seen in treatments of the logical and mathematical paradoxes, too: they are thought by many to be merely side problems. One of the central virtues of Priest's book is that it has become an important motivating force in a noticeable attitude shift: there is new respect emerging for the power of the paradoxes, and, at least in some quarters, dialethic logic is becoming respectable. Hence, ignoring the above dilemma may be yielding to facing up to the dilemma.

Respect for the paradoxes and true contradictions, however, is limited by a central aspect of human psychology: understanding *why* something is true makes it a lot easier to live with the fact that it is true. Respect for a theory can be purchased by that theory's internal coherence and functional power (e.g., predictive power), but without a deep understanding of why that theory is true, any respect the theory may engender is always grudging, even if it is rather solid. There are important areas of human inquiry where deep, satisfying understanding of a phenomenon cannot be got (parts of quantum mechanics seem like good candidates, also consciousness appears to be one, see Dietrich and Hardcastle, 2004). This paper purports to show that dialetheism is not one such area. If philosophers could psychologically understand *how* a contradiction could be true, beyond just saying that the contradiction follows validly from true premises, then perhaps that some contradictions are true would be more tolerable. That contradictions are always false is deeply intuitive. I don't propose to make the truth of the relevant contradictions (the dialetheias) intuitive. But I do propose to explain how dialetheias can be understood or seen to be true, and from there how they can be true. Knowing this
should make the admittedly rather disturbing fact that they are true somewhat easier to take.

The path to such an explanation requires adding some technical machinery to Priest's reworked argument which implements a crucial epistemic capacity. This capacity is the key to seeing how dialetheias are true. Finally, we end with a re-construction of Priest's argument that both works (concludes in a dialetheia) and makes sense, psychologically.  

In section 2, I will present Priest's reworked Berkeleian argument. Section 3 introduces the crucial epistemic capacity and discusses some psychology behind it (some cognitive science, specifically). Section 4 concludes.

2. The Priest-Berkeley Argument

This part is not an exercise in Berkeley or Priest exegesis. My goal is to present Priest's reworked Berkeleian argument. It is useful to present Berkeley's original argument from his *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (1713).

*Phil.* . . . 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.

*Hyl.* 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.

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

*Hyl.* No, that were a contradiction.

*Phil.* Is it not as great a contradiction to talk of *conceiving* a thing which is *unconceived*?

*Hyl.* It is.
Phil. The, tree or house therefore which you think of is conceived by you?

Hyl. How should it be otherwise?

Phil. And what is conceived is surely in the mind?

Hyl. Without question, that which is conceived is in the mind.

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

Hyl. That was I own 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. But now I plainly see that all I can do is to frame ideas in my own mind. I may indeed conceive in my own thoughts the idea of a tree, or a house, or a mountain, but that is all. And this is far from proving that I can conceive them existing out of the minds of all Spirits.

Here, now, are the technical definitions required to understand Priest's reworked version (2002, pp. 60 – 64).

Let $T$ be a propositional operator meaning "It is conceived that." $T(p)$ thus means "it is conceived that $p$," where $p$ can be any proposition whatsoever. Conceived, for now, just means thought of, or brought before one's mind.

Let $\tau$ be a predicate meaning "is conceived." Thus $\tau x$ means that $x$ is conceived. The relation between $T$ and $\tau$ will be discussed below.

Let $c$ be an arbitrary unconceived thing. We aren't stipulating that there are any, though. The reworked argument is supposed show that $c$ is both not conceived and conceived, so of course, we will need to show that $c$ exists, at some point. Toward that end, we will need an axiom that allows us to pick out an arbitrary thing satisfying a
certain predicate. We will use an indefinite description operator, \( \varepsilon \), for this. Our axiom needs to say something like "if anything satisfies \( \varphi(x) \), then an \( x \) that is \( \varphi \) is one of them." Using \( \varepsilon x \varphi(x) \) to capture "an arbitrary \( x \) that is \( \varphi \)," the axiom, thus, should be:

\[
\exists x \varphi(x) \to \varphi(\varepsilon x \varphi(x)).
\]

Call this the \( \varepsilon \) axiom. If we let \( \varphi \) be \( \neg \tau \), we get:

\[
\exists x \neg \tau(x) \to \neg \tau(\varepsilon x \neg \tau(x)),
\]

which says, "if there are any unconceived things, an arbitrary one of them is unconceived," which seems unobjectionable. Since \( c \) is our arbitrary unconceived thing, we can identify \( c \) with \( \varepsilon x \neg \tau(x) \), which gives us: "if there are any unconceived things, then \( c \) is one of them." Or, "if there are any unconceived things, then an arbitrarily chosen one of them, \( c \), is not conceived." Thus:

\[
\exists x \neg \tau(x) \to \neg \tau(c).
\]

Following Priest, Berkeley's thesis will be "everything is conceived" (p. 60). Assuming this is false, we get the denial of Berkeley's thesis: something is not conceived:

\[
\exists x \neg \tau x.
\]

Berkeley's thesis is not a summary of Berkeley's idealism. Berkeley held that there could be no mind-independent things. The thesis states only that there aren't any such things. We will only need the denial of this latter claim, namely, that something is not conceived. The denial of Berkeley's thesis is a premise. For now, its truth rests on the fact that, intuitively, Berkeley's thesis seems false – not everything is conceived.
Next, we need that $T$ satisfies a prefixing principle, which it clearly seems to do. Thus, if $\alpha$ entails $\beta$ then conceiving that $\alpha$ (that $\alpha$ is true) entails conceiving that $\beta$ (that $\beta$ is true) (p. 64).

If $\models \alpha \rightarrow \beta$ then $\models T\alpha \rightarrow T\beta$.

Of course, this principle requires idealizing the conceiving agent: the agent must conceive of all the logical consequences of what it conceives. Priest claims that in the context of reworking Berkeley's argument this is permissible because Hylas does conceive of the relevant consequences of what he conceives. I agree.

Finally, we need an axiom that Priest calls the conception schema. It relates $T$ and $\tau$, and is quite a powerful axiom. The conception schema says that if it is conceived that $x$ is $\varphi$ then $x$ is conceived. The conception schema thus allows us to move from conceiving a proposition (conceiving that $p$) to conceiving the denotation or referent of the proposition (conceiving of $x$). The general conception schema is:

$$T\varphi(x) \rightarrow \tau x.$$ 

At the general level, this axiom seems plausible: if I conceive that Tolkien was a writer, I conceive of Tolkien. So, for now, let's accept it.

If we do accept this axiom, then are there any restrictions to instantiating it? Not according to Priest. So, we are free to use an instantiation of the conception schema with $x$ bound to $c$ and $\varphi$ bound to $\neg \tau$. Our version will thus be:

$$T \neg \tau(c) \rightarrow \tau c.$$
This instantiation of the conception schema allows us to move from conceiving that an unconceptualized thing is unconceptualized to conceiving an unconceptualized thing. Its role in the reworked Berkeleian argument is, therefore, central.

Now, with all of this in place, here is Priest's reworked, dialethic Berkeleian argument.

1. $\exists x \rightarrow \neg \tau x \rightarrow \neg \tau c$  An application of $\varepsilon$ axiom
2. $T \exists x \rightarrow \neg \tau x \rightarrow T \neg \tau c$  1, Prefixing Principle
3. $T \exists x \neg \tau x$  Premise
4. $T \neg \tau c$  2, 3 M.P.
5. $T \neg \tau c \rightarrow \tau c$  Conception Schema with $\varphi$ bound to $\neg \tau$
6. $\tau c$  4, 5 M.P.
7. $\exists x \rightarrow \tau x$  Premise (the denial of Berkeley's thesis.)
8. $\neg \tau c$  7, 1 M.P.
9. $\tau c \land \neg \tau c$  6, 8 Conj.

Priest sums up this argument nicely: "that there are unconceptualized things, and that this is itself conceived, together entail a contradiction (p. 65)." Since the premises appear to be true and the axioms unobjectionable, the entailed contradiction is true . . . it is a dialetheia.  

3. Points of view

The crucial epistemic capacity needed is the ability to adopt different points of view. Points of view are required for any robust cognition, and a fortiori for human cognition. Unfortunately, not much is known about their epistemic function or functioning. I begin with some background on the mind relevant to Priest's Berkeleian argument.
3.1. Concepts, mental representations, and properties

The Priest-Berkeley argument, as well as the central arguments in this paper, crucially turn on concepts and conceiving; hence the nature of the mind is centrally involved. We can conceive of all manner of things – round-squares, for example. It is only in virtue of conceiving round squares that we can know that they cannot exist. To conceive of something is to form a concept of it, which is used for classifying objects as instances of that type. On the best science available, cognitive science, concepts are mental representations, hence conceiving is activating a certain sort of mental representation (see, e.g., Murphy, 2002). I want to remain as neutral as possible about representing in order to avoid a slew of difficult semantical and epistemological issues that are tangential to the project here, so I will say merely that mental representations represent elements of an agent's external environment, its internal states (both physical and mental (broadly construed)), and any abstractions the agent thinks about. On the standard, cognitive science view, concepts are capable of representing instances from each of the three categories.

A couple of things differentiate concepts from other kinds of mental representations. One is the semantic richness of the information concepts contain. This is due partly to the fact that concepts summarize and integrate large amounts of information from lower-level representations, and partly to the various cognitive processes for which conceptual information is available: recognition (categorization), inferencing, problem solving, and planning, for example. Concepts provide the agent with what we might call "cognitive representations" -- representations that are available for cognitive operations such as those mentioned just above. Another difference is that concepts, many of them at least, are introspectively accessible. Most other kinds of representations, especially lower-level ones, are not.
In trying to understand Priest's reworked argument, especially, the Conception Schema, we must answer this question: Assuming one has a concept of one's favorite mechanical pencil, does one's concept represent the pencil itself, directly, or does the concept represent the pencil by representing features or properties of the pencil? Again, turning to cognitive science for guidance, the best answer is that concepts represent what they do by representing properties of relevant things. This is what I will assume.

Cognitive scientists rely on intuitive notions of properties, however. Philosophers, of course, can provide all manner of complexities to such intuitions, which complexities are embodied in starkly differing theories about the nature of properties. It would be best to avoid as many of these complexities as possible. So, I will just assume that there are properties, I will remain neutral about whether they are particulars or universals, and I will be rather generous about what counts as a property -- being the number 2 will be a property in good standing. Also, I will assume that some properties pick out certain things in the world and some do not. Such identifying properties are context-dependent. My iMac has the property of being an iMac, but that doesn't pick it out. Being my iMac is what picks it out in this context – it is what picked it out for the reader.

3.2. From concepts intensionally construed to points of view

Priest claims that for the Conception Schema to work, conceiving needs to be construed extensionally, i.e., \( x = y \rightarrow \tau x \iff \tau y \), and not intensionally, i.e., \( x = y \land \tau x \leftrightarrow \tau y \) (pp. 65-66, 68-69). Extensional conceiving, as is well-known, allows for a cognitive agent to conceive of something without even believing that that thing exists. Some agent conceives of Peter Parker without even believing that Peter Parker exists, because Spiderman is Peter Parker, and the agent is conceiving of Spiderman. Priest's case for construing conceiving extensionally rests on his wanting to avoid quantifying into intensional contexts (p. 66). The expression '\( \exists x \neg \tau x \)' does exactly
that, if $\tau$ is interpreted intensionally. He reasonably wants to avoid such quantifying simply because it is problematic. Extensional conceiving allows him to do this.

Cognitive scientists, however, construe concepts intensionally. This is because they study *agent-centered* conceiving (though not explicitly stated, this is obvious by looking at the research: see, e.g., Murphy, 2002). All their research on conceiving, concepts, and categorization is from the agent's perspective. They want to know how concepts function within the conscious, intentional, mental life of a human being, from that human being's perspective. Also, for cognitive scientists, concepts are intrinsically epistemic. So, cognitive scientists finely individuate concepts: *any* semantical difference accessible by the agent in its concepts makes a cognitive difference, and so constitutes a conceptual difference. The mere fact that an agent can distinguish concept $C$ from concept $D$ is a sufficient condition for there being two different concepts in an agent's mind. For a cognitive agent, the definitional implication, $x = y \rightarrow \tau x \leftrightarrow \tau y$, is completely misleading, because from the agent's perspective, from inside of its head, "$x" and "$y" function as designating names: they function as two different routes to knowing what $x$ is. Hence, there are two different concepts at work. This is readily apparent if the fact that $x = y$ is a discovery. From an agent-centered perspective, it would be better to write the implication as $x = x \rightarrow \tau x \leftrightarrow \tau x$, for, though seemingly vacuous, this highlights the fact that to make $\tau x \leftrightarrow \tau y$ true requires that there be only one concept active, and hence, there can be no conceptual distinction between $x$ and $y$, not even the name or designator. So, from an agent's perspective, concepts are sliced quite thinly. Far more thinly than they are when construed extensionally. It is this fine individuation that is central to understanding concepts from a cognitive science perspective.

The cognitive science approach to concepts is quite different from, for example, wanting to know how human hearts function. Humans don't even have to believe they have hearts, much less what they do, to have a working one. But having, using, and manipulating concepts, in humans at least, frequently requires believing that one has them, consciously manipulating them (and believing that), and thinking about what it
means that one has the concepts one does. Consider inference. The inferences a cognitive agent makes depend on the concepts, construed intensionally, available to the agent. This is because the relevant concepts are deployed by the agent, and, as noted above, slight semantic differences in concepts emerge as cognitive differences, e.g., as differences about which inferences the agent regards as licensed, even if, from an external perspective, the concepts refer to the same referent. Moreover, when a cognitive agent considers or reconsider the inferences it makes, it has to introspectively examine the relevant concepts. Explaining all of this requires taking the agent's perspective in individuating concepts, and that in turn requires construing concepts intensionally.

That cognitive scientists construe conceiving differently from Priest is not directly relevant to Priest's reworked Berkeleian argument. But focusing as it does on the agent, suggests something rather useful notion for my purposes. The agent-centered perspective is mobile, and this is important. The agent is not at any one fixed spot. Rather, the agent is an invariant across multiple points of view. A point of view, as I use the term here, is a "location" occupiable by a cognitive agent.

An agent is an epistemic entity -- a cognizer with its own conscious experiences and introspective, reasonably robust, cognitive access to them which it avails itself of from time to time. There is something it is like to be an agent, and an agent, from time to time, cogitates on what it is like to be it. An agent also cogitates on what it is like to be other agents -- or to be nothing at all. I restrict the term "agent" to those with human-level intelligence.

"Location" is written in scare-quotes to flag the fact that the location can be either a space-time location (which we may or may not be able to get to physically), or something more abstract. Here, we will only need one limited version of the more abstract kind of location. The way to think about this latter type is to imagine some agent thinking about something, and then to imagine stepping into the position, cognitively speaking, of that very agent. For example, if Fodor is thinking about the language of thought, we can imagine being him thinking about the language of thought. So, for us, a
location is an abstraction of some other agent, at a time, thinking about something. The abstraction, as it were, produces a "cognitive agent variable" which another agent can occupy.

The notion of a point of view is a common one, coming from the fact that we change points of view. We can walk around our car, for example. Or look inside our computer. We can change points of view without moving. For example, we can imagine how our house looks from the air or how our solar system looks from the Oort Cloud. We can also change points of view when considering all manner of abstractions. Deriving the march of the transfinite ordinals is a good example; this exercise requires changing points of view. Or, though we classify a certain action as morally wrong, we can often understand the point of view of someone who classifies it as morally right – even morally mandatory. Indeed, forming abstractions themselves, especially in a hierarchical mode, is a kind of point of view change. And since forming abstractions is crucial to human-level intelligence, so then is changing points of view (see, e.g., Cheney and Seyfarth, 1990, who argue that points of view and changes from one to another are essential for primate intelligence and that increased ability to adopt another's point of view varies directly with intelligence). Nevertheless, points of view and their changes are a source of deep philosophical puzzlement (see, e.g., Nagel, 1979, 1986). Still, points of view and point of view change hold the key to understanding how a contradiction can be true.

Points of view, as used here, are, in a way, part of the metalanguage: linguistic items get their truth value relative to them. But, as we will see, they are also part of the object language, since they participate fully in propositions as operators. This ambiguity is crucial to and indicative of points of view: they are unusual constructs. More specifically, when applied to a proposition from the set of suitable propositions, a point of view produces an interpretation of that proposition which renders it true from that point of view (i.e., true for the relevant agent at that location). Derivatively, a point of view indexes predicates: the predicate is true of the relevant object from the given
point of view (the object is an intentional object, and does not need to be external to the agent; it needn't even exist).

3.3. Hylas's and Philonous's points of view

When Hylas says "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," he is picturing in his mind's eye a tree or house unconceived from his point of view. We may suppose that he's imagining a tree that is not perceived or conceived of by anyone. The relevant tree is represented in Hylas's mind as having the property of being unconceived.

Then, Philonous says, in effect, "Hylas, the tree which you think of as unconceived is conceived by you, since in thinking of it, you are conceiving it." In saying this, Philonous is pointing out that from his, Philonous's, point of view, which comprehends both Hylas and what Hylas is conceiving as unconceived, the tree is conceived by Hylas. Indeed, Philonous's argument to Hylas is simply getting Hylas to adopt Philonous's point of view. Hylas comes to understand that in conceiving of the unconceived tree, he, Hylas, is conceiving of the tree.

Call Hylas's point of view that comprehends the tree alone and unconceived, \( H \). Call Philonous's point of view that comprehends the tree and Hylas conceiving of the tree, \( P \). Priest's reworked argument, in formal mode, can now be labeled with these two points of view.
(I)

1. $\exists x \neg \tau x \rightarrow \neg \tau c$  \hspace{1cm} An application of $\mathcal{E}$ axiom

2. $\mathcal{T} \exists x \neg \tau x \rightarrow \mathcal{T} \neg \tau c$  \hspace{1cm} 1, Prefixing Principle

3. $\mathcal{T} \exists x \neg \tau x$  \hspace{1cm} Premise

4. $\mathcal{T} \neg \tau c$  \hspace{1cm} 2, 3 M.P.

5. $\mathcal{T} \neg \tau c \rightarrow \tau c$  \hspace{1cm} Conception Schema with $\varphi$ bound to $\neg \tau$

6. $\tau c$  \hspace{1cm} 4, 5 M.P.

$P$

7. $\exists x \neg \tau x$  \hspace{1cm} Premise (the denial of Berkeley's thesis.)

8. $\neg \tau c$

$H$

9. $\tau c \land \neg \tau c$  \hspace{1cm} 6, 8 Conj.
(Since both Hylas and Philonous accept premise 1, we can stipulate that it is from both points of view.) That lines 2 – 6 are from point of view $P$ is due to the use of the propositional operator, $\Gamma$. The relevant propositions are conceived, and the Conception Schema (assume it works) allows the conceiving of one of the propositions ($\neg \tau c$) to transition inside of the proposition so that the denotation of the proposition is itself conceived. The conclusion, $\tau c$, is the result, since from point of view $P$, $c$ is conceived. The same is true, with appropriate changes, for lines 7 – 8. From point of view $H$, $c$ is not conceived, since there is something not conceived, and if there is, that thing is $c$.

What now of the conclusion, $\tau c \land \neg \tau c$? One might be tempted to say that it cannot validly be drawn since the differing points of view establish different contexts, so $\tau c$ and $\neg \tau c$ are true in different contexts and hence cannot be conjoined, at least they cannot be conjoined independently of their contexts, which wouldn't result in the wanted contradiction. The details of this are important.

Consider a simple instance of this objection. If everyone in the southern hemisphere hates chocolate and everyone in the northern hemisphere (plus the equator) loves chocolate then chocolate is both loved and hated. But this is in no way a dialetheism, and chocolate has not become some epistemically unusual, but good-tasting stuff, because the loving and hating of chocolate, being a relation between chocolate and chocolate eaters, is not exclusively or solely a property of the chocolate. That relations between a given thing and other things differ is not cause for dialetheic celebration; this is just an ordinary fact about the world. The same objection can be applied now to the Berkeleian argument chunked up into two points of view. Conceiving is itself a relation between a conceiver and something conceived. This fact is strongly highlighted with the introduction of points of view. Our arbitrary unconceived thing, $c$ (if there are any), is conceived of from $P$ and unconceived from $H$. This fact seems uninteresting.

Formally, there are two ways to represent this situation. In (I) above, $P$ and $H$ apply to whole propositions (e.g., 2-6 can be construed as the conjunction of the
individual propositions). If \( V \) is an arbitrary point of view and \( prop \) is an arbitrary proposition, then \( V[\text{prop}] \) is the (meta)proposition that \( prop \) is true from (or at) point of view \( V \). \( V \), as stated above, is a location occupiable by any suitable cognitive agent. Which agent is irrelevant, but some agent or other is required (the cognitive agent can also be construed abstractly). So when \( V \) is occupied by an agent, \( V[\text{prop}] \) denotes a cognitive agent at a location actively cogitating on the proposition in question (\( prop \)) in the appropriate way, namely, thinking that it is true. Hence, \( V[\text{prop}] \) can also usefully be understood or read as meaning \( prop \) is true for the agent at \( V \).\(^{16}\) We can now write: \( P[\tau_c] \land H[\neg \tau_c] \), which doesn't seem contradictory, since the two conjuncts don't appear to be each other's negation.

On the other hand, we can think of points of view as indexing predicates. If \( \text{Pred} \) is any predicate, then \( \text{Pred}_\nu x \) is the proposition that \( x \) has the property picked out by \( \text{Pred} \) for the agent at \( \nu \). Again, \( \nu \) is a viewpoint any suitable cognitive agent can occupy. Though no particular agent is required, some agent or other is required. Given this, we can subscript the 'conceives' predicate \( \tau \) with the relevant points of view. For an arbitrary point of view, \( \nu \), \( \tau_\nu x \) is "\( x \) is conceived from \( \nu \". For points of view \( P \) and \( H \), we can write \( \tau_P c \land \neg \tau_H c \), which, again, appears to be not contradictory, since the relevant predicates with indexes are not identical.

It looks like introducing points of view dissolves the dialetheism, rather than explaining it. One might conclude that with the introduction of points of view, we can see how one might mistakenly conclude that dialetheias are true.

But this is hasty. Points of view are complex, and not much is known about their complexity either logically or psychologically. Still, some things are known. Most importantly for our purposes, points of view can be related to each other in various ways, and one way is via embedding relations: point of view \( V^* \) might include point of view \( V \). Given these embedding relations, two points of view might exist at the same level: points
of view $V^*$ and $U^*$ might both immediately contain $V$ (i.e., $V$ is the next level in from $V^*$ and from $U^*$), but $V^*$ and $U^*$ might differ in significant ways – for example, they themselves might be contradictory or lead to contradictions.

Consider $V$ and $\nu$, again. Suppose $V[\text{prop}]$. Given another point of view $V^*$, if $V^*[\neg \text{prop}]$, then this might well contradict $V[\text{prop}]$ depending on the relation between $V$ and $V^*$. If, for example, $V$ is embedded in $V^*$, then a contradiction does ensue, as we will see below. Similarly for $\nu$. Suppose $\text{Pred}_{\nu} x$. Again, $\neg \text{Pred}_{\nu^*} x$, using some other point of view $\nu^*$, might well contradict $\text{Pred}_{\nu} x$ depending on the relation between $\nu$ and $\nu^*$. We will delve deeply into these matters shortly.

Given these observations, while step 9 in (I) above appears not to be contradictory, we need to be wary that perhaps this is merely an appearance. Perhaps step 9 is contradictory after all.

### 3.4. Points of view versus possible worlds

It is useful at this juncture, to contrast points of view with possible worlds. First, as just discussed, points of view and possible worlds have different accessibility relations. When dealing with possible worlds, accessibility relations represent relative possibility. But when working with points of view, accessibility relations represent potential clashes of information: one point of view can correct another one (I might think that Euclid's fifth axiom is derivable from the other four, and you might know the truth about this, and correct me); two points of view can clash radically but not necessarily in a way that allows for correction (two people might differ on how they view abortion, perhaps, or two people might differ on the merits of philosophy or on the desirability of skunk cabbage as an ice cream flavor). Another difference is that when dealing with possible worlds, one usually wants to know the quantity of worlds in which a proposition is true (one, some, all, none). But when working with points of view, one is not interested in the quantity question (at least not in the same way as in possible worlds), rather one is
interested in which points of view clash with each other and how. As mentioned above, frequently, issues about clashing take the form of which points of view are embedded within other points of view, or which points of view preclude others or render other points of view illegitimate.

Yet another difference is that points of view provide locations where a proposition is true, but points of view are more than locations. A proposition true in possible world, $w$, is construed as objectively true in $w$. No one needs to perceive or conceive it, other than the philosopher thinking of $w$ and the relevant proposition, and that philosopher need not be part of $w$ at all, and usually isn't. Points of view work differently. If $V[\text{prop}]$ is true, then $\text{prop}$ is not only true for the relevant cognitive agent (the one at $V$), but $\text{prop}$ is also construed as true by the agent – that is, $\text{prop}$ is subjectively true at $V$ and for $V$. This in turn implies, that from another, suitable point of view, $V^*$, $V[\text{prop}]$ implies that $\text{prop}$ is conceived, and that the relevant constituents referred to by $\text{prop}$ are conceived as well (we will return to this point in the next section). And finally, possible worlds are usually defined as maximally consistent sets of propositions, which means they are closed under implication. This kind of closure fails for points of view: if $V[\text{prop}_1]$ is true, and $\text{prop}_1$ implies $\text{prop}_2$, we do not necessarily have $V[\text{prop}_2]$. This can be summed up by saying that points of view are inherently epistemic, while possible worlds are inherently metaphysical.

Before we can answer the question about whether or not step 9 in (I), above, is really a contradiction, or hides one, we must clear up a problem with Hylas's point of view and his claim that his imagined tree is unconceived.
3.5. The view from nowhere and the viewless point of view

Consider again, the tree unconceived from Hylas's point of view. Philonous's argument is not that there is another point of view from which the tree is conceived, but rather that Hylas has made a mistake - there are no points of view from which the tree is unconceived.

But Hylas has not made a mistake. When he imagines a tree existing unconceived he is adopting a modified version of the view from nowhere with respect to the tree; he is conceiving of the tree sub specie aeternitatis, and from that perspective, imagining the tree to be unconceived. It is the attendant imagining that makes Hylas's viewpoint a cousin of the view from nowhere. I dub this cousin the view of no one.

The view from nowhere is Nagel's characterization of objectivity, or a path to objectivity. Nagel introduces the view from nowhere thusly:

Since a kind of intersubjective agreement characterizes even what is most subjective, the transition to a more objective viewpoint is not accomplished merely through intersubjective agreement. Nor does it proceed by an increase of imaginative scope that provides access to many subjective points of view other than one's own. Its essential character . . . is externality or detachment. The attempt is made to view the world not from a place within it, or from the vantage point of a special type of life and awareness, but from nowhere in particular and no form of life in particular at all. The object is to discount for the features of our pre-reflective outlook that make things appear to us as they do, and thereby to reach an understanding of things as they really are. We flee the subjective under the pressure of an assumption that everything must be something not to any point of view, but in itself. To grasp this by detaching more and more from our own point of view is the unreachable ideal at which the pursuit of objectivity aims. (1979, p. 208)
The view from nowhere is achieved via repeated acts of removing oneself from one's subjective world. Eventually, one vanishes altogether. As Nagel explains:

To acquire a more objective understanding of some aspect of life of the world, we step back from our initial view of it and form a new conception which as that view and its relation to the world as its object. In other words, we place ourselves in the world that is to be understood. The old view then comes to be regarded as an appearance, more subjective than the new view, and correctable or confirmable by reference to it. The process can be repeated, yielding a still more objective conception. (1986, p. 4)

Because it is a rendering of the objective, the view from nowhere cannot be used here. The introduction of points of view as foci of different epistemologies renders all but meaningless the notion of objectivity. The key sentence, which I regard as part of the definition of the view from nowhere, is In other words, we place ourselves in the world that is to be understood. Hylas's point of view is not constructed by placing himself in a wider, more detached, external point of view. In fact, just the opposite. He removes himself, and everyone else, from view, utterly. The view of no one is centerless; no self can be identified. There isn't a point of view in the view of no one. This, it shares with the view from nowhere. But the view of no one lacks the claim to objectivity that the view from nowhere has, since more subjective versions of oneself are not included in it. There's an intentional, manipulative aspect to the view of no one which the view from nowhere lacks. To construct the view of no one, one goes to the view from nowhere, then demands that everyone leave, including one's more subjective selves, thus emptying out all perceivers, all cognizers.

One can follow Hylas to his view of no one by imagining a universe with no conceivers in it at all. And this imagining, one can clearly do. For example, one can imagine our universe bereft of any intelligent life. A stronger intuition pump can be built by imagining our universe with no life in it whatsoever. This gets rid of the tree. Replace it with a rock. Now, it is easy to imagine this rock existing unconceived in the
universe, for not only are there no conceivers, there is no life. (According to current theories, life was a chance occurrence in our universe. Perhaps it was likely, even very likely, but that doesn't make it not due to chance. So, all one has to do is imagine that that chance never materialized.)

In Hylas's mind's eye, he has removed himself the picture, along with everyone else, which is precisely what the view of no one guarantees, since that is how it is constructed. From this austere, centerless, pointless, point of view, the rock (or tree) is indeed unconceived.19

So, it is Philonous who has made a mistake; it is the mistake of everyone who claims to be in charge of an objective point of view. And he has duped Hylas into making the mistake with him. Hylas, instead of saying "That was I own an oversight," should have said "No so fast, Philo, old boy. From your point of view, the rock is indeed conceived. We need only imagine that you conceive of me conceiving of my lifeless universe and said rock – you conceive of me conceiving of the rock. But it doesn't follow from this that the rock is "in reality" conceived. There is no such unique reality. To assume that there is is to beg the question against me. Your point of view includes mine, but that doesn't make it more real or more correct. From my no-one, centerless viewpoint, the rock is indeed unconceived. Viewed by no one, it is relatively easy to imagine unconceived things. And they are, in fact, unconceived from that point of view."

We can sum all this up by saying: we should take points of view seriously. Once we do, we can begin to reformulate (I) so that we get both the sought for dialetheia and an explanation of why it is true.

3.6. Points of view: Three principles

From one point of view, one can conceive or comprehend what's going on at another point of view. If Jones sees a dog, I can see that Jones sees a dog, and I can see that Jones fears that dog. We do this sort of thing all the time. This is quite an important property about points of view. Not only are there different points of view about a certain
thing (I don't think the dog is a reason to be fearful), but points of view can subsume other points of view, and in doing that, one can comprehend from point of view 2 what is going on at point of view 1. This property is best understood from the inside out (or the bottom up): a given point of view can be comprehended from another, more inclusive point of view. This property recurses: points of view in principle form an infinite hierarchy (but only in principle, of course). We see, then, points of view can have a nesting doll structure. Hence, our first principle – called the Nesting Dolls Principle:

**Nesting Dolls Principle**: Given a point of view, there exist other, more inclusive, points of view which comprehend it. More specifically, the more inclusive ("outer") point of view comprehends that it (the inner point of view) comprehends what it does. The more inclusive point of view cannot, in virtue of being a different point of view, comprehend what the inner point of view comprehends.

The nesting dolls principle partly describes what is going on between Hylas and Philonous. From Hylas's point of view, there is something unconceived (our arbitrary unconceived thing). But Philonous's point of view is more inclusive and wider than Hylas's point of view. And it is the fact that Philonous's point of view is the outer, comprehending point of view that makes Philonous conclude what he concludes, namely, that Hylas is mistaken when he claims to conceive of something unconceived.

As I stated above in section 3.4, points of view are not possible worlds. They are instead subjective, epistemic contexts in which a given proposition is construed as true for a cognitive agent in that context. And, being true for an agent requires that the agent conceive that the proposition is true as well as conceive of the relevant objects referred to by the proposition. Being able to do this is a crucial part of what it means to be a cognitive agent, after all. But, and this is crucial, that the agent is conceiving the relevant proposition to be true, as well as that the agent is conceiving the referents of the proposition, is only true from another, containing point of view that satisfies the nesting dolls principle. Hence, we have principle two, the Conception Principle.
Conception Principle: Let $Fa$ be a proposition. Let $\tau_x$ mean, "$x$ is conceived from $\nu$." Let 'V' and 'v' denote the same point of view (though one is used to evaluate propositions and one indexes predicates). Then, if $V$ is a point of view from which $Fa$ is construed as true ($V[Fa]$), then there exists a more inclusive point of view, $V^*$, such that $V[Fa] \rightarrow V^*[\tau,a]$.

The Conception Principle uses the Nesting Dolls principle. It says that if a proposition is true at or from $V$, then there is another, containing point of view, $V^*$, from where it is true that the agent at $\nu$ conceives of $a$. The Conception Principle is our version of Priest's Conception Schema (p. 62). It differs substantially from his, though. Priest's Conception Schema relates the propositional operator, $T$, and the predicate, $\tau$. My Conception Principle relates seeing that a proposition is true from a certain point of view, and conceiving of the object the proposition is about. The Conception Principle is crucial to my notion of a point of view, since it is fundamental to that notion that an agent can be at a point of view thinking about something, and from another, containing point of view, be seen thereby to conceive of that thing.

With this principle in hand, we are almost in a position to reformulate Priest's Berkeleian argument. We need one other principle – it is the point-of-view version of the $\varepsilon$-axiom introduced in section 2. If, from a point of view, $H$, there is something that is not conceived, then from that point of view, $d$ (which is $\varepsilon x \neg \tau_x$) is it. We thus have our third principle:

$$H[\exists x \neg \tau x] \rightarrow H[\neg \tau d].$$
3.7. A new version of the Priest-Berkeleian dialetheia argument

Let $H$ and $P$ be the points of view of Hylas and Philonous, respectively (though, of course, any cognitive agent can occupy the relevant location), and stipulate that $P$ includes $H$ in accordance with the Nesting Doll Principle. Then:

1. $H[\exists x \neg \tau x]$
   From Hylas's point of view, the view of no one, there is something not conceived.

2. $H[\exists x \neg \tau x] \rightarrow H[\neg \tau d]$
   The point of view $\varepsilon$-axiom

3. $H[\neg \tau d]$
   1, 2 M.P.

4. $H[\neg \tau d] \rightarrow \exists V^* V^*[\tau_{Hd}]$
   the Conception Principle

5. $\exists V^* V^*[\tau_{Hd}]$
   3, 4, M.P.

6. $P[\tau_{Hd}]$
   The point of view $P$ is a legal substitution instance in 5.\(^{21}\)

7. $P[\tau_{Hd}] \land H[\neg \tau d]$
   3, 6 Conj.

$P[\tau_{Hd}] \land H[\neg \tau d]$ might not appear contradictory. But it is. It says that from Philonous's point of view, $d$ is conceived by Hylas (or $d$ is conceived from Hylas's point of view), but from Hylas's point of view, $d$ is not conceived by anybody, not even Hylas. ($H$, recall, is the view of no one. This is why the proposition true from $H$, $\neg \tau d$, has an unsubscripted predicate. $d$ is thus unconceived by everyone.) If the situation is as Philonous sees it, then the situation cannot be as Hylas's sees it. And vice versa. $\tau_{Hd}$ implies that someone conceives of $d$, i.e., there exists a point of view from where $d$ is conceived: $\exists x \tau x d$. $\neg \tau d$ implies that no one does, i.e., for all points of view, $d$ is
unconceived from those locations: $\forall x \neg \tau_X d$. (I call these two logical implications existential and universal point of view generalization, respectively.) Prima facie, then, this situation is contradictory – i.e., it appears as if one and only one point of view can be true.

However, this is far from showing that both are true, in spite of being contradictory – that they are, indeed, dialethic. Instead, it seems as if one has be correct and the other wrong. Of course, it is the situation from Philonous's point of view that seems correct; the situation from Hylas's seems incorrect. But this is wrong. Note that from a point of view that comprehends what is going on from both viewpoints $P$ and $H$ (say the reader's point of view), $P[\tau_H d] \land H[\neg \tau d]$ does indeed appear to accurately describe the situation: from $H$ (i.e., the view of no one), $d$ is not conceived – by anyone, but from $P$, $d$ is conceived, since from $P$ can one see that Hylas conceives of $d$. The reader's point of view is unique. He, she, or it enters serially into the two relevant points of view, $P$ and then $H$ (the order doesn't matter), and then from a third, separate, unifying point view, views the truths learned from the first and second. It is the reader, combining the information from both points of view in its head simultaneously that establishes the dialetheia.

The role of the reader has, so far, been missing from our discussion. Points of view are locations, occupiable by agents, from where propositions are true. The same agent, serially, can occupy two different points of view (or more). When this happens, the information acquired from the first point of view can be combined with the information acquired from the second (agents, remember, are regarded first and foremost as epistemic entities). This information combination occurs at a new, third point of view because combining the information creates a third point of view.

This all needs elaboration. To do that, we need . . .
3.8. A fourth principle: The Reader

We begin by considering a well-established paradox. Cantor's Paradox will do.

The power set of any set, \( S \), is the set of all subsets of \( S \). Represent this set as "Power(\( S \))." The cardinality of any set, \( S \), is the number of elements in \( S \). Represent this number as "card(\( S \))". The cardinality of any given set with \( n \) members is given by \( 2^n \). Cantor proved, around 1891, that the cardinality of the power set of any set is always strictly greater than the cardinality of the set:

\[
\text{card(Power}(S)) > \text{card}(S).
\]

This theorem is typically referred to as Cantor's Theorem.

Now, consider the universal set, \( U \), the set of all sets. By Cantor's Theorem, we have:

\[
\text{card(Power}(U)) > \text{card}(U).
\]

But, it is clear from the definition of \( U \) that it is the largest set there is, larger than any other set, since it contains all other sets, including all of its own subsets as well as the set of those subsets (i.e., Power[\( U \)]). Hence,

\[
\text{card}(U) > \text{card(Power}(U)).
\]

This paradox was well-known to Cantor and almost all mathematicians at the beginning of the twentieth century. Mathematicians struggled with it, and eventually found away around it by axiomatizing set theory in the "right" way. This axiomatization rigorously defines the notion of a set in such a way that the universal set is not a set, but a class – it is too large to be a set. This is clearly a legalistic fix. Cantor's Paradox sits at the heart of set theory, and is only avoided by politely adhering to the rules of the game – the axiomatization.
A clash of points of views is responsible for Cantor's Paradox, though this is rarely noted. To generate Cantor's Paradox, one views the set of all sets from the point of view of the power set of $U$ (or from the point of view of Cantor's Theorem – that is, the location where $\text{Power}(U)$ is the focus), deriving $\text{card}(\text{Power}(U)) > \text{card}(U)$. Then one changes points of view, and occupies the point of view where $U$ is the main attraction, focusing on the definition of $U$, deriving $\text{card}(U) > \text{card}(\text{Power}(U))$. Moreover, there is no third point of view that resolves this paradox (the legalistic point of view of the axioms of modern set theory do not introduce new points of view, they change the subject; they do not resolve – i.e., explain away – the paradox as merely an apparent one, rather they make the universal set nonexistent).

There is, however, a third point of view on Cantor's paradox, namely the one inhabited by someone who understands the paradox. This is the point of view of someone who first adopts the point of view of the power set of $U$ and then the one of $U$, and then stands back and observes that these two points of view are irreconcilable. From this third point of view, Cantor's Paradox shines brilliantly in all its baffling glory.

But note, the relevant points of view on Cantor's paradox are not part of the depiction of the paradox; they can't be. The paradoxical proposition is:

(A) $\text{card}(\text{Power}(U)) > \text{card}(U) \land \text{card}(U) > \text{card}(\text{Power}(U))$,

not

(B) $\left[\text{card}(\text{Power}(U)) > \text{card}(U)\right] \land \left[\text{card}(U) > \text{card}(\text{Power}(U))\right]$,

where $\text{PU}^*$ and $U^*$ are the relevant points of view – the former, the view from (the location where an agent can focus on) the power set of $U$, and the latter, the view from (the location where an agent can focus on) $U$, itself. An important fact about dealing with points of view is that the reader inhabits a point of view also – a point of view that is always external to the ones that are the focus of attention and discussion. When the reader adopts the correct points of view on any paradoxical proposition, those points of
view drop out of view, since the reader is at them. To get the reader to adopt any specific point of view on any proposition requires not including the point of view he should inhabit. A proposition like (B) forces the reader to inhabit points of view outside $PU^*$ and $U^*$, since the reader is always external to the stated, explicitly represented points of view being considered, i.e., being viewed.

Given any viewed proposition, $V[prop]$, the reader can always enter or inhabit $V$, and then back out, taking with him, her, or it, the information gleaned by entertaining $prop$. When the reader enters $V$, she entertains $prop$; backing out, she can view and entertain $V[prop]$. When the reader backs out, she is at a point of view $R$. To see that (A) is true, the reader enters $PU^*$ and then $U^*$, views and entertains the relevant propositions, and thenbacks out, adopting $R$. To see that (B) is true, the reader inhabits $PU^{*2}$, from where he sees that $PU^*[\text{card}(\text{Power}(U)) > \text{card}(U)]$ is true, and then adopts $U^{*2}$, from where he sees that $U^*[\text{card}(U) > \text{card}(\text{Power}(U))]$ is true. Then he adopts $R$.

(Both $PU^{*2}$ and $U^{*2}$ are second-level points of view from where one views propositions from first-level points of view. I assume an iterated version of the nesting dolls principle, whereby given $V^n[prop1]$, one can adopt $V^{n+1}[prop2]$ where $prop2$ is $V^n[prop1]$.)

$R$ is not the same point of view in the two cases. It is the reader's point of view both times, and in each case, $R$ is established relative to the points of view at issue. But it is this relativism that makes the difference, for the points of view at issue differ between case (A) and case (B). It is this fact that explains why (B) doesn't appear paradoxical, and yet (A) does. (A) forces the reader to adopt the points of view $PU^*$ and $U^*$, and so see, and experience, the paradox.
The same is true of $P[\tau_Hd] \land H[\neg \tau d]$. As stated, the proposition forces the reader to inhabit points of view external to $P$ and $H$. But the reader can, and for a while must, inhabit $P$ and $H$. When that happens, $P$ and $H$ vanish. So, let's strip off these and look at what remains. To do that, first use simplification on $P[\tau_Hd] \land H[\neg \tau d]$ to get $P[\tau_Hd]$ and $H[\neg \tau d]$. Then, let the reader serially enter the relevant points of view, to get:

$$(C) \, \tau_Hd \text{ and } \neg \tau d,$$

from which, the reader can deduce (or see)

$$(D) \, \tau_Hd \land \neg \tau d.$$

In (C), the first proposition says that $d$ is conceived by Hylas (or from Hylas's point of view); the second says that $d$ is unconceived by everyone. (C) forces the reader to inhabit the points of view of $P$ and $H$ and hence be in an epistemic position to see and experience their contradictory, paradoxical nature, which is on display in (D).

I sum all this up in the following fourth, crucial, point of view principle. It allows the reader to inhabit the required points of view and then back out, as needed. This principle is actually a set of four principles, because, as can one tell from the previous discussion, several things have to be true in order for the reader to move around and draw the needed inferences as required.

**The Reader Principle:**

A) If proposition $P$ is true for the reader, then the reader inhabits a point of view, $R^P$, from which $P$ is (seen to be) true.$^{22}$

B) $R^P[P]$ is also a proposition.
C) Proposition $P$ is true for the reader if and only if proposition $R^P[P]$ is. 23

D) If proposition $P$ is true for the reader (from a point of view $R^P$), then so are the relevant logical consequences derivable from $P$. If $Q$ is also true (from another point of view, $R^Q$), then so are the relevant logical consequences. E.g., so is proposition $P \land Q$. The point of view inhabited to see this conjunction is $R^P \land Q$. $R^P \land Q$ is not the same point of view as either $R^P$ or $R^Q$. 24

The reader principle allows the reader to conclude both that $P[\tau_H d] \land H[\neg \tau d]$ is true, and $\tau_H d \land \neg \tau d$ is, too. The reader, inhabiting first $H$ and then $P$, comes away from those viewpoints with specific information, which from another point of view, can be synthesized into one truth. It is thus $\tau_H d \land \neg \tau d$ that is the fundamental contradiction: $d$ is conceived from Hylas's point of view, yet $d$ is unconceived by anyone. The first conjunct is true from Philonous's point of view, and the reader comes to see this by inhabiting that point of view. The second conjunct is seen to be true by inhabiting the view of no one, which is Hylas's point of view.

We can add this step to get a complete, final version of the Priest-Berkeleian argument. Let $R$ be the point of view guaranteed by the Reader Principle. Then:
1. $H[\exists x \neg \tau x]$ From Hylas's point of view, the view of no one, there is something not conceived.

2. $H[\exists x \neg \tau x] \rightarrow H[\neg \tau d]$ The point of view $\varepsilon$-axiom.

3. $H[\neg \tau d]$ 1, 2 M.P.

4. $H[\neg \tau d] \rightarrow \exists V^* V^*[\tau_{Hd}]$ An instance of the Conception Principle.

5. $\exists V^* V^*[\tau_{Hd}]$ 3, 4, M.P.

6. $P[\tau_{Hd}]$ The point of view $P$ is a legal substitution instance in 5.

7. $P[\tau_{Hd}] \land H[\neg \tau d]$ 3, 6 Conj.

8. $\tau_{Hd} \land \neg \tau d$ 7, Simplification plus applications of the Reader Principle, plus Conjunction.

9. $\exists x \tau_{xd} \land \forall x \neg \tau_{xd}$ 8, Simplification plus Existential and Universal point of view generalization, respectively plus Conjunction.

10. $R[\exists x \tau_{xd} \land \forall x \neg \tau_{xd}]$ 9, The Reader Principle.

4. Conclusion: Some geography and final thoughts.

The goal of saving true contradictions might seem perverse. Why would someone want to save true contradictions? The fundamental reason is that there seem to be true contradictions in logic, mathematics, and philosophy (Priest, 2002). But isn't introducing
points of view to save them self-defeating -- points of view seem to introduce epistemic relativism? But my view is quite to the contrary. I claim that points of view are one of the central reasons for admitting true contradictions: the latter exist because the former do. And points of view exist fundamentally.

My view can be seen by considering the logical geography of the matter. Six cases exhaust the possibilities about the truth of \( \exists x \tau_X d \land \forall x \neg \tau_X d \) (I could have used \( \tau_H d \land \neg \tau d \), since this is the fundamental contradiction, but the former is more explicit).

1. \( \exists x \tau_X d \) is true, \( \forall x \neg \tau_X d \) isn't;
2. \( \forall x \neg \tau_X d \) is true, \( \exists x \tau_X d \) isn't;
3. Neither is true;
4. Both are true;
5. It is undeterminable which is true;
6. There is only relativized truth -- \( \exists x \tau_X d \) is true at \( P \), \( \forall x \neg \tau_X d \) is true at \( H \).

We can exclude case 1 for the reason our more feisty Hylas gave in section 3.5. To claim that \( \exists x \tau_X d \) is true but \( \forall x \neg \tau_X d \) is not requires assuming that there is some correct description of a single situation, and Philonous's point of view gives that description. But this is precisely what Hylas (our new Hylas) is denying. There is no single situation. So, 1 is out.

The same argument applies, mutatis mutandis, for Hylas's point of view \( H \) – the view of no one (this case may be easier to see, but probably for the wrong reasons: the reader is being beguiled by objectivity (so called)). So case 2 is out.

Case 3 is out because the two propositions are obviously not both false. (Of course, which one is not false depends on one's point of view.)
Case 4 is the case I want left standing.

Case 5 is out, too. It just isn't true that the truth value for $\exists x \tau \land \forall x \neg \tau$ is undeterminable. In order for that to be true, the truth values of $\exists x \tau$ and $\forall x \neg \tau$ would have to undeterminable, since $\land$ is a compositional, truth-functional operator. But $\exists x \tau$ and $\forall x \neg \tau$ clearly have some truth value or other – indeed, I assert that they are both true. (Others, with different points of view, will make different assertions.) I should also stress that we are here dealing with a two-valued logic; nowhere did we say that we were dealing with a three-valued logic. We are considering the notion that a single proposition might have both truth values: true and false.

This leaves case 6. Perhaps $\exists x \tau$ and $\forall x \neg \tau$ are both true, but truth is utterly relative (at least in alleged cases of dialetheias). This would be disastrous for those of us who are fans simultaneously of both dialetheism and Berkeley. We want $\exists x \tau \land \forall x \neg \tau$ to be true. In fact, it seems that we could be forced into a dilemma using a combination of case 6 and cases 1 and 5:

Either there is an objective description of the situation involving both Hylas and Philonous or not. If there is an objective description, then Philonous's must be it. Hence, $\exists x \tau$ is true, only (case 1). If there is no objective description, then the truth of $\exists x \tau \land \forall x \neg \tau$ is either undeterminable (case 5) or is only true relative to the relevant points of view (case 6). Either way, $\exists x \tau \land \forall x \neg \tau$ is not dialetheic, i.e., it is case 4 that is out.

But, in fact, it is case 6 that is out. The Reader Principle shows how and why both $\exists x \tau$ and $\forall x \neg \tau$ are true. It is not just that, from $P$, $d$ is conceived by Hylas, nor is it that from the view of no one, Hylas's point of view, $d$ is unconceived by everyone.
Rather, it is both of these. From a certain point of view, both are simultaneously true (or both can be seen to be true). Hence, the dilemma is unsound: there is no objective description, but this doesn't imply either case 5 or case 6. Therefore, it is case 4 that is left standing.

Have I made good on my promise to explain how a contradiction could be true? Yes, at least in this one case. From the view of no one, there is something unconceived by everyone. The view of no one allows Hylas to conceive of something completely unconceived. (That last sentence was not written from Hylas's point of view.) Philonous, from his point of view, observes Hylas, and notes that he (Hylas) is conceiving of the (to Philonous, alleged) unconceived thing. The reader, then, inhabits these points of view. From the first, there is something that is unconceived by everyone, from the second, that very thing is conceived – by Hylas. The reader then adopts a third point of view, unifying the information acquired from the first two: from one point of view, there is something unconceived by everyone, yet from another point of view, that very thing is conceived. The key is the view of no one, from which d is unconceived by everyone. From there, matters unfold pretty much as Philonous thinks they do. It is just that he's misunderstood where Hylas is coming from.²⁵
I have forced myself to contradict
myself in order to avoid
conforming to my own tastes.
- Duchamp

References


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1 There is an associated modal argument concerning conceiving the inconceivable; this won't be discussed. Also, Berkeley claimed to be primarily concerned with perceiving, but in his master argument, as elsewhere, he runs conceiving and perceiving together. In modern parlance, it is conceiving that should be focused on.

2 Of course, Berkeley's master argument as been roundly attacked, and defended (see Pappas, 2000 for such a defense; see Flage, 2005, for a good discussion of Berkeley). The attacks are not nearly as successful as is commonly believed. It's Priest's reworked version of Berkeley's arguments that makes the dilemma pointed. Baring error in the
arguments, only two options are available depending on whether one allows dialetheias or not. If not, that everything is conceived follows.

3 Brian McKeon has shown that the approach advocated here has wide application. He has systematically applied some of the principles used in this paper (extended considerably, while supplying some of his own) to many of the paradoxes discussed in Priest's 2002. See McKeon, 2006.

4 There are, however, a number of questions one can raise about Priest's reworked argument. Some concern the role of de re and de dicto conceiving. For example, are there shifts between the two types from step 2 to step 5? Another concerns step 5, alone. If c is an arbitrary unconceived thing, then once it loses this crucial (and perhaps, essential) property in the move to the consequent in step 5, hasn't c itself ceased to exist? Another way to put this question is: "How can we guarantee that it is the same c from antecedent to consequent?" The two c's referred to in the antecedent and in the consequent of the Conception Schema are revealed to have completely opposite properties: the former is unconceived and the latter is conceived; what guarantees that c in the antecedent is the same c in the consequent? (Or, what guarantees that \( \varepsilon x \neg \tau(x) \) picks out the same unconceived thing in both the antecedent and consequent?) Finally, Priest is careful to restrict his use of "conceiving" to an extensional one. But doesn't this make step 7 false: isn't everything conceived when this notion is construed extensionally? (We will take up the difference between extensional and intensional construals of conceiving in the next section.) None of these questions will concern us here, however, mainly because the goal of this paper is to provide a psychological basis for dialetheism, not to engage in Priest exegesis. And anyway, at least some of these questions seem to be answered by the machinery introduced in section 3.

5 Jerry Fodor, the Don Quixote of cognitive science, denies this. He asserts that concepts are not used for categorization. See his (1998a) and his (1998b). But in this, he is wrong. See Geisy and Dietrich, (2001) and Dietrich, (2001).
Though cognitive science is the best science currently available for understanding concepts and conceiving, it is still a very young, even immature, science. Cognitive scientists do not possess a robust, deeply explanatory and predictive theory of concepts. Indeed, there is no agreed upon theory of concepts at all. I don't think any dire conclusions should be drawn from this, however. Many psychological theories which use concepts (construed as mental representations) are robust (again, see, e.g., Murphy, 2002). And, there is in fact one thing that most cognitive scientists do agree on: concepts are representations. Furthermore, theories of mental representation are steadily improving (see Dietrich, 2006). Though a few philosophers opine otherwise, mental representations are needed for all kinds of psychology, and concepts are what make cognitive psychology *cognitive*. For more on the necessity of mental representations and their roles in cognitive science, see Dietrich and Markman, 2003; 2000, and Markman and Dietrich, 2000a/b.

Such "cognitive representations" are far from being the only representations human minds, indeed, human nervous systems, traffic in. There are very low-level representations, many tied to specific perceptual modalities, which contain either nearly raw or lightly processed information. Between these and concepts are many kinds of pre- or sub-cognitive representations, most of which are not introspectively accessible. All of the pre- or sub-cognitive representations contain varying degrees of further processed information. Such information can be modular, or more integrative. See Dietrich (2006).

Cognitive scientists have the beginnings of a theory about how it appears to individual cognitive agents that they are conceiving of the thing itself. The process is called *psychological essentialism*: humans represent things as having essences which are then projected onto things in our worlds (see, Medin and Ortony, 1989). Psychological essentialism appears to be closely associated with another interesting psychological property: *the illusion of explanatory depth* (Rozenblit and Keil, 2002). Many of us think that we know how such things as zippers work, when, in fact, we do not. Because of
psychological essentialism, we tend to think things have essential properties. And because of the illusion of explanatory depth, we tend to think we know what those properties are and how they are related, even when we don't. We therefore tend to think that we know more than we actually do about even ordinary things.

9 It might be thought impossible for me to remain neutral on the particular/universal debate. I am using properties to analyze Priest's reworked Berkeleian argument, and to develop an explanation of how we can understand that a dialetheia is true. When using properties to achieve some other end, one usually talks as if they were universals. I will do so here. My use of properties will not turn on whether they are universals or particulars, and accordingly will not turn on how I talk about them. My own view is that no theory postulating a single ontology for properties can do justice to them or explain all that needs to be explained about them.

10 Concepts are intrinsically epistemic for almost all philosophers, too. Fodor, of course, is the lone exception. See Fodor, 1998a,b.

11 One does not have to know any cognitive science, obviously. One doesn't have to know that concepts are called "concepts," nor that they are mental representations.

12 Points of view are not studied much in cognitive science, unfortunately.

13 For a good discussion of points of view relevant to our discussion here, see Moore, 1997. Moore is driven to tentatively accept true contradictions, though that is not how he phrases it, which is probably why he winds up with the problems that he does.

14 I actually don't think the object language-meta language distinction can withstand much weight, especially in any logic outside of classical logic.
Points of view can also index propositional operators like $T$, "It is conceived that." $T_{V}(Fa)$ means "It is conceived that $Fa$ is true from point of view $V$." I do not use propositional operators in my reconstruction of Priest's Berkeleian argument. This is a significant difference between our two arguments.

This ambiguity is harmless. One way to see this is to say prop is true at $V$ whether or not any agent is at $V$. As soon as $V$ is occupied by some agent, the prop is true for the agent.

For more on the view from nowhere, see Nagel, 1979, the seminal work on the topic. Also, see his 1986.

This is true, but in a different way, of Nagel's view from nowhere. He introduces it as a contrast to subjectivity – the view from somewhere special – namely, you. But, according to Nagel, we can never achieve a pure view from nowhere, some subjectivity always remains. Furthermore, objectivity, on Nagel's view is not all there is to the world, to knowledge. Objective truth omits subjective truths. Still, objectivity is objective, according to Nagel, and this is what makes it unworkable for my project.

There is a wrinkle about the view from nowhere: it seems it cannot be achieved completely -- some subjective component always remains, as Nagel points out (1979, 1986). This subjective remainder is present in the view of no one, too (see also, McKeon, 2006). Alternatively, one could say that the view of no one is completely achievable because it is itself dialetheic: it is both the view of no one and someone. So as to not beg any questions, I will assume that the view of no one is not completely achievable because there is always a subjective remainder. (Of course, this doesn't help much, since the combination of subjective and objective points of view appears itself to be dialetheic, see Dietrich and Hardcastle, 2004, and Nagel 1979, 1986.) The fact that the view of no one is not completely achievable does not mean that it does not exist.
Actually, that the relevant proposition and propositional constituents are always conceived might be too strong to characterize everyday use cognition. To justify this assumption, we need only assume an idealization of the cognitive agent: it formulates propositions of what it believes to itself. This doesn't seem unreasonable, since everyone does this some of the time, and philosophers and psychologists do it most of the time (qua philosophers and psychologists).

I haven't argued for this in a formal context, but it is true. Here, I will rely on intuition.

The contrapositive might be thought to cause problems here. If the reader is at no point of view, then no proposition is true for him. Hylas claims that he is at no point of view – the view of no one. Therefore, \( \neg \tau \) cannot be true for him, since no proposition is. But this objection mangles points of view. From Hylas's point of view, he is not at a point of view, yet \( \neg \tau \) is true. This is ok, since \( \neg \tau \) isn't true for him at that point of view (the view of no one), it's true intrinsically. Which means that part A) of the reader principle isn't true for him at that point of view. This is ok, too, since the reader principle is true from certain points of view, like all propositions. Still, \( \neg \tau \) is true for Hylas from another point of view – Philonous's, for example. So, the reader needn't know that he, she, or it is at \( R^P \). Which isn't too surprising nor radical.

Another way to put this is to say that no reader is ever at no point of view. The view of no one, therefore, has readers at it (from a certain point of view). Here, referring back to note 19, we can say either that the view of no one has no readers at it, but is not completely achievable by actual, physical readers because of the subjective remainder of the reader, or that the view of no one is completely achievable, and both has and doesn’t have readers at it (depending on your point of view). Here, I opt for the first alternative.

Of course, this implies the reader can occupy an infinite hierarchy of points of view, which is impossible for any actual epistemic agent (or at least all known ones, since they are all finite). Therefore, there is a finite (indeed, small) limit on the recursion of part B).
I don't know this limit, but I suspect, that without memory aids, it is 7 plus or minus 2 (Miller, 1956).

24 Again, this assumes a logically idealistic agent.

25 I thank Thony Gillies, Brian McKeon, Charles Goodman, Zach Weber, David Chalmers, and students from my Dialetheism seminar for comments on previous drafts. Oddly, many of the comments flatly contradict each other.