

## *Berkeley's Theory of Common Sense*

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**Abstract:** This essay situates Berkeley's views on common sense within the context of eighteenth-century debates about the nature of common sense. It argues that in his *Notebooks*, Berkeley develops a theory according to which to possess common sense is to use the faculties of the mind properly, and that Berkeley's approach to common sense can be understood as a response to John Toland's epistemology of religion. It concludes with a discussion of consequences of this analysis for our understanding of Berkeley's later works, his methods, and his overarching philosophical aims.

In *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (PHK) and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (DHP), Berkeley argues that matter does not exist (PHK 9),<sup>1</sup> that spirit is the only substance (PHK 6), and that physical objects are not causes but signs (PHK 66). If these claims initially shock readers' philosophical sensibilities, the effort required to come to terms with them will seem familiar enough. One must take pains to work one's way into a perspective from which they can be seen as not only consistent but mutually supporting or even inevitable. Yet Berkeley seems firmly to deny that effort is required, for he repeatedly insists that his philosophy agrees with common sense: immaterialism is difficult to accept not because it is abstruse, but because readers come to it corrupted by modern philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Learning to accept immaterialism is not like an initiation into an esoteric system of thought, but, as Berkeley claims in the preface to the *Three Dialogues*, like a long journey home (DHP 2:168).

Berkeley's appraisal of his philosophy has provoked strong and dismissive responses. When Samuel Johnson kicked a stone to refute Berkeley,<sup>3</sup> he also expressed the view that Berkeley was deeply wrong to consider his philosophy commonsensical. Near contemporaries like David Hume, who considered immaterialism a variety of skepticism,<sup>4</sup> and Thomas Reid, who considered Berkeley's view of his own philosophy amusing and ridiculous,<sup>5</sup> agreed; and this attitude has persisted. Dismissal remains a common response not only among Berkeley scholars but among recent philosophers working on common sense.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, eds. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop (9 vols.; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1948-57), 2:45.

<sup>2</sup> DHP 2:168; DHP 2:172; DHP 2:234; DHP 2:244; DHP 2:259; DHP 2:262.

<sup>3</sup> *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. ed. Lawrence Fitzroy Powell (6 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-50), 1:471.

<sup>4</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. T.L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.16.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. Derek Brookes (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 439: "It is pleasant, to observe the fruitless pains which Bishop Berkeley took to shew that his system of the non-existence of the material world did not contradict the sentiments of the vulgar but only those of the philosophers."

<sup>6</sup> Among philosophers writing on Berkeley, Bennett and Yandell have been among the most dismissive, and Rescher and Lemos have made similar appraisals. See Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 2:177; David Yandell, "Berkeley on

More charitable commentators are inclined to treat Berkeley's views on common sense as a puzzle to be solved either by showing how immaterialism can be seen as intuitive or, failing that, by domesticating Berkeley's views on common sense and minimizing his commitment to its philosophical significance.<sup>7</sup> These approaches have the virtue of making Berkeley's thought more intelligible to contemporary readers who find it odd that Berkeley considered immaterialism obvious. However, they presuppose that contemporary readers already understand what Berkeley means when he claims that a philosophical view is commonsensical, and so they neglect the context in which Berkeley developed his views on common sense.<sup>8</sup>

As a general rule, the kind of interpretive puzzles that Berkeley's views on common sense present should call for historical diagnosis. Philosophical analysis should be coordinated with historical analysis so as to determine the extent to which the problems Berkeley's views on immaterialism and common sense seem to raise are artifacts of our ignorance or of historically contingent ways of framing the issues involved. In this particular case, that is of the claim that a commonsensical belief should be widely held or intuitively true, contextualization might well seem unnecessary. Of course some contextualization may be required. It may be necessary to consider whether Berkeley or his contemporaries would have considered his views intuitive for reasons that are no longer compelling.<sup>9</sup> Yet it would be paradoxical to suggest that Berkeley should have had a *theory* of the nature of something as apparently pre-theoretical as common sense. I suggest that scholars have yet to consider Berkeley's place in the history of views about

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Common Sense and the Privacy of Ideas," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12 (1995): 411-23; Nicholas Rescher, *Common Sense: A New Look at an Old Philosophical Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005), 209; and Noah Lemos, *Common Sense: A Contemporary Defense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>7</sup> George Pappas [*Berkeley's Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 213-34; and "Adversary Metaphysics," *Philosophy Research Archives* 9 (1983), 571-86] argues that, for Berkeley, "common sense" is a term that modifies beliefs or propositions, that the principal commitments of immaterialism are more intuitive than one might otherwise have suspected, and that compatibility with common sense is not an especially significant theoretical virtue for Berkeley. David Kline criticizes many of the details of Pappas' earlier articulation of his interpretation but adopts the same kind of approach; see Kline, "Berkeley's Theory of Common Sense," *International Studies in Philosophy* 19 (1987), 21-31. John R. Roberts [*A Metaphysics for the Mob* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 124-45] suggests that although the principal commitments of immaterialism are not intuitive for 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophers, they would have been intuitive for many of Berkeley's contemporaries. Seth Bordner ["Berkeley's 'Defense' of 'Common Sense'," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 49 (2011), 315-38] argues that Berkeley does not aim to prove that immaterialism is a common sense philosophical position but to show that immaterialism "vindicates" common sense.

<sup>8</sup> Here, then, the principle of charity is "stultifying" in Gary Hatfield's sense of the word. See Hatfield, "The Workings of the Intellect: Mind and Psychology," in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind: The Logic of Ideas and Faculty Psychology in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Patricia Easton (Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing, 1997), 38. Developing "charitable" readings of Berkeley on common sense forecloses the possibility that attention to his views could illuminate the historical origins of contemporary conceptions of common sense.

<sup>9</sup> Some recent commentators (e.g., Bordner, Roberts) have noted that Berkeley's contemporaries could have thought of his views as commonsensical or intuitive.

the nature of common sense because it has been assumed that, in this respect, “common sense” has no history.<sup>10</sup>

In this essay, I suggest that this assumption is associated with a theory of the nature of common sense that Berkeley did not share, and I present a new interpretation of Berkeley’s views on common sense that foregrounds the context in which he developed them.

In the first section of this essay, I situate Berkeley’s views from the *Notebooks* in the context of debates about the nature of common sense at the turn of the eighteenth century, specifically, debates between John Locke, John Toland, and Edward Stillingfleet. Drawing on this context, I argue, in the first part of the second section, that Berkeley developed his own distinctive theory of common sense in response to Locke’s views on the nature of certainty and I argue that, in his *Notebooks*, Berkeley holds that to possess common sense is to properly use one’s mind. Then, in the second part of section two, I show how Berkeley’s views on common sense were designed to challenge Toland’s epistemology of religion.

Though I do not think it is possible fully to understand Berkeley’s views on the relationship between immaterialism and common sense without appealing to Berkeley’s later works,<sup>11</sup> I argue that Berkeley’s account from the *Notebooks* provides enough evidence to suggest that it would be fruitful to reframe the problems that typically arise in understanding this relationship. Instead of holding that a person possesses common sense in virtue of believing a certain set of propositions or accepting a certain view of the world, Berkeley should be read as holding that a view is commonsensical only if it is the kind of view that would be accepted by those who properly use their minds. I conclude,

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<sup>10</sup> Hatfield suggests that at least some historians of philosophy fail to adopt an “historically-oriented philosophical methodology” because they read texts in the history of philosophy primarily to solve current philosophical problems and not to understand them on their own terms. See Gary Hatfield, “The History of Philosophy as Philosophy,” in *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy*, eds. Tom Sorrell and G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 91. Though I do not deny that some scholars have neglected Berkeley’s views on common sense because their treatments are primarily motivated by contemporary philosophical concerns, I propose here that this neglect is better understood as a failure to recognize that contextual sensitivity is required. Desmond Clarke’s introduction to *Berkeley: Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, ix-xxxvi) is a clear illustration of this tendency. Berkeley’s claim that immaterialism is commonsensical is, for Clarke (ix-x), the paradox at the core of Berkeley’s philosophy, and Clarke claims that it can be resolved only through historical analysis. However, Clarke does not mean that historical analysis is required to understand what Berkeley meant by calling immaterialism commonsensical; rather, he means that historical analysis should reveal why Berkeley would have presented his philosophy as intuitive. On the basis of a consideration of the culture and politics of eighteenth-century Ireland, Clarke suggests that Berkeley presented immaterialism as plausible for much the same reason that Swift presented his proposal that the children of the poor should be eaten as “modest”: the *Principles* is to English metaphysics and epistemology as *A Modest Proposal* is to English social and political philosophy.

<sup>11</sup> A complete treatment of Berkeley’s views on common sense would require an analysis of *Alciphron* since it is there that Berkeley defines “common sense” (*Alc*, 6.12, 3:241) and further develops his conception of the nature of common sense.

in the third section, by examining the implications of this analysis focusing on implications for readings of the *Principles* and *Dialogues* and for an appreciation of Berkeley's place in the history of early modern philosophy.

### I. Berkeley, Toland, and Stillingfleet on Common Sense

Berkeley's *Notebooks* are epigrammatic, often enigmatic, records of sophisticated internal dialogues with Locke and with Locke's admirers and critics. It is well established that Berkeley engaged directly with many of the issues at stake in debates between Stillingfleet, Toland and Locke in the *Notebooks*.<sup>12</sup> He refers to satisfying "the Stillingfleetians" in entry 700, and entry 720 is usually thought to refer disparagingly to Toland. Toland is one of the "proud men" who call matters of scripture which are above reason "blind, popish, implicit, [and] irrational."<sup>13</sup> This hypothesis is plausible since the principal aim of Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious*, was to undermine the political authority of the clergy through an attack on religious mysteries, an aim which, naturally, "set the whole clergy against him."<sup>14</sup> What has gone unrecognized is that Berkeley

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<sup>12</sup> The central issue in the debate between Locke and Stillingfleet is the status of the doctrine of the Trinity. Specifically, Stillingfleet worried that Locke's theory of knowledge "discarded substance out of the reasonable parts of the world" leaving no basis for the doctrine, and so the debate concerned many of the most fundamental principles of Locke's metaphysics and epistemology. See Edward Stillingfleet, *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Henry Mortlock, 1697), 234. Toland is a party to this debate since Stillingfleet's *Vindication* is principally a response to *Christianity not Mysterious* (hereafter: CNM). Stillingfleet does not address Locke directly until the tenth and last chapter. Kenneth Pearce has pointed out to me that Stillingfleet's expression of frustration with Locke's views on substance became a slogan in the debate, and that the slogan is repeated in the *Notebooks* 512: "I ought not to be accus'd of discarding Substance out of the reasonable World," and in a slightly modified form in the *Principles* where Berkeley answers the objection that immaterialism implies that "all that is real and substantial in nature is banished out of the world" (PHK 34). Keota Fields [*Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 170] points out that section 17 of the *Principles* is copied from one of Locke's letters to Stillingfleet. It is clear that Berkeley followed this debate closely, and Bracken goes so far as to suggest that Berkeley's chief motivation for publishing the *Principles* and *Dialogues* was to defend an orthodox view on the immortality of the soul in light of the "unsatisfactory status that the soul's immortality had been left in, particularly by the Locke-Stillingfleet controversy." See Harry M. Bracken, "Berkeley on the Immortality of the Soul," *Modern Schoolman* 37 (1959/1960), 197. In the *Notebooks*, Berkeley also engages with Locke and Stillingfleet over the meaning of terms such as "substance" (NB 700) and "Trinity" (NB 584).

<sup>13</sup> "When I say I will reject all Propositions wherein I know not fully & adequately & clearly so far as knowable the Thing meant thereby. This is not to be extended to propositions in the Scripture. I speak of Matters of Reason & Philosophy not Revelation. In this I think an Humble Implicit faith becomes us just (where we cannot comprehend & Understand the proposition) such as a popish peasant gives to propositions he hears at Mass in Latin. This proud men may call blind, popish, implicit, irrational. For my part I think it more irrational to pretend to dispute at cavil & ridicule holy mysteries i.e. propositions about things out of our reach that are altogether above our knowlege out of our reach. W<sup>n</sup> I shall come to plenary knowlege of the meaning of any Text then I shall yield an explicit belief" (NB 720). David Berman suggests that Berkeley alludes to Toland in this passage. See *The Irish Enlightenment and Counterenlightenment*, ed. David Berman (3 vols.; Bristol: Thoemmes, 2002), 1: xiii-xiv.

<sup>14</sup> See Justin Champion, *Republican Learning: John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696-1722* (Vancouver: Manchester University Press, 2003), 69. A religious mystery is an article of

considered Toland one of the men who “with a supercilious Pride disdain the common informations of sense” (NB 747-48).<sup>15</sup> This is significant because, from Berkeley’s perspective, it is disdain of the senses that leads to skepticism and Berkeley composed the *Principles* and *Dialogues* in order to combat skepticism and atheism.<sup>16</sup> Although Toland was notorious for his attack on mysteries, I suggest that Berkeley was no less provoked by Toland’s insinuation that those whose faith exceeds their knowledge lack common sense (which Berkeley intimately associates with Toland’s disdain for the senses).

According to Toland, everyone knows that human beings possess certain faculties or capacities: a faculty for forming ideas or perceptions, a faculty of affirming and denying the agreement or disagreement between perceptions or ideas, and a faculty of loving what seems good and hating what seems evil. “The right use of these faculties,” he explains, “is what we call Common Sense or reason in general.”<sup>17</sup>

Many of Berkeley’s contemporaries used the term “common sense” in a manner that presupposes a definition in terms of the functioning or the use of the mind.<sup>18</sup> It is

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faith that is above reason. An article of faith is a religious doctrine typically included in the list of those that one must accept in order to be considered a believer, and a doctrine is above reason if it is incomprehensible without special revelation or enlightenment or comprehensible only through analogies, parables, or metaphors. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, then, because it is often, though not always, considered to be an article of faith and because the claim that God is both three and one is usually considered to be incomprehensible.

<sup>15</sup> I return to these passages several times below, and so include them in full here. “It is a strange thing & deserves our attention, that the more time & pains men have consum’d in the study of Philosophy by so much the more they look upon themselves to be ignorant & weak Creatures, they discover flaws & imperfections in their Faculties w<sup>ch</sup> Other Men never spy out. They find themselves under a Necessity of admitting many inconsistent irreconcilable opinions for true. There is nothing they touch with their hand or behold with their eyes but has its dark sides much larger & more numerous than w<sup>t</sup> is perceiv’d. & at length turn scepticks at least in most things etc. I imagine all this proceeds from etc Exord: Introd:” (NB 747).

“These men with a supercilious Pride disdain the common single informations of sense. They grasp at Knowledge by sheaves & bundles (‘tis well if catching at two much at once they hold nothing but emptyness & air). They in y<sup>e</sup> depths of their understanding Contemplate Abstract Ideas. etc Introduction” (NB 748).

<sup>16</sup> There are many paths that lead from materialism, through skepticism, to atheism for Berkeley. To mention just one: materialists claim that unthinking mind-independent objects exist, but they cannot know this, since the objects of knowledge are ideas, and though ideas might represent physical objects they cannot be identical to them. So materialists must doubt the existence of all physical objects, even their own bodies, and so materialism leads to skepticism (PHK 88). Skepticism leads to atheism since those who doubt the existence of something as clearly obvious as the existence of the world will naturally be “tempted to entertain suspicions concerning the most important truths, which they had hitherto held sacred and unquestionable” and will eventually become atheists (DHP 2:172). See the title page of the *Three Dialogues* for a concise statement of Berkeley’s philosophical aims and motivations (DHP 2:147).

<sup>17</sup> John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (London: Sam Buckley, 1696), 9.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, see Anthony Collins: “What our *Casulist* hath said, or any one can say to disprove this, I refer to any *Reader* indued but with common sense to Judge” [*An answer to Dr. Scot’s cases against dissenters concerning forms of prayer and the fallacy of the story of Commin, plainly discovered* (A. Baldwin: London, 1700), 18]. Or Edward Stillingfleet: “It is very absurd to demand of

somewhat unusual, then, for Toland to define “common sense” as the proper use of all of the faculties of the mind and not as a separate faculty, like reason. Although Toland’s definition may be somewhat idiosyncratic, it was conspicuous as a subject of controversy. In his debate with Locke, Stillingfleet refers to it in his defense of Christian mysteries, specifically, in his defense of a distinction between faith and reason.

In the *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, responding to Toland and Locke among others, Stillingfleet claims that it is reasonable to assent to doctrines, such as the Trinity, that are not certain.

We differ not with them about the right use of the Faculties which God hath given us, of right Understanding such matters as are offer’d to our Assent. For it is to no purpose to require them to believe, who cannot use the Faculties which are necessary in order to it.<sup>19</sup>

Stillingfleet, like Toland, claims that the principal points of faith must agree with common sense: they must be such as to be believed by those who use their minds in the right way. One of the aims of the *Vindication* is to show that to assent to uncertain propositions is not to misuse the mind. Although Stillingfleet does not adopt Toland’s account of the proper use of the mind, he criticizes it at a crucial juncture in what was meant to serve as a reply to *Christianity not Mysterious*, and seems to accept Toland’s approach to defining common sense in terms of the proper use of the faculties.

This exchange sets the context in which Berkeley’s own account of common sense should be understood.<sup>20</sup> Since Berkeley engaged with Toland and Stillingfleet in his

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us the *Absolute Certainty* of our *Faith* in such things, wherein we never pretend to a *Certainty* of *Faith*; but of common Sense and Reason proceeding according to the *Rule of Scripture*” [*A discourse concerning the nature and grounds of the certainty of faith in answer to J. S., his Catholick letters* (London: Henry Mortlock, 1688), 30]. Thomas Reid defines “common sense” as a state of sanity or mental health, and, more specifically, as the God-given capacity for judgment, and he argues that the term may be used synonymously with “reason” in contexts in which one judges (by “reason”) that a proposition is self-evidently true or false (*Intellectual Powers*, 422). Reid is anxious to prove that his view of the nature of common sense is the standard or common view and not the mistaken “philosophical” understanding of common sense that he attributes to Locke. It is significant that Reid, who was very well acquainted with Berkeley’s works, considers Berkeley to be among those philosophers who share his view of the nature of common sense, and put “as much stress upon common sense as any philosopher that has come after him” (*Intellectual Powers*, 342). As I mentioned above, Reid also believed that it was absurd for Berkeley to think that immaterialism is commonsensical, and I suggest that an evaluation of this claim would require a comparative analysis of Reid’s and Berkeley’s views of the nature of the mind. This, however, is beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>19</sup> Stillingfleet, *Vindication*, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, I agree with Fourny-Etchegaray, who claims that Berkeley’s views on common sense were developed in response to debates between Stillingfleet and Toland (Claire Fourny-Etchegaray, “Note sur les rapports entre raison et sens commun chez Stillingfleet et Berkeley,” in *Berkeley’s Alciphron: English Text and Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Geneviève Brykman, Laurent Jaffro, and Claire Schwartz [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009], 353-55). Fourny-Etchegaray does not, however, treat Berkeley’s discussion of common sense in the *Notebooks* against the backdrop of this context.

*Notebooks*, specifically with the debate between Locke and Stillingfleet which prominently includes Stillingfleet's *Vindication*, it is good practice to see whether entries in the *Notebooks* should be interpreted in light of this debate. Since it has been established that Berkeley engages with issues central to this debate at precisely the point where he first announces that he is a "common sense" philosopher, his response to Toland should be seen as structurally similar to Stillingfleet's. He endorses Toland's approach to defining "common sense" in terms of the proper use of the mind, but, like Stillingfleet, he rejects many of the details of Toland's account of how the faculties of the mind should be used. And like Stillingfleet, Berkeley is motivated to do so because of the dangerous consequences of Toland's views on common sense.

In *Christianity not Mysterious*, Toland insists that he can hold nothing as an article of his religion unless it is certain, and suggests that this religious epistemology is commonsensical.<sup>21</sup> Since common sense is the proper use of the cognitive faculties, those who apportion their belief according to rules other than those that Toland allows are not using their minds as they ought.

Toland's account of religious knowledge infuriated Berkeley and, like Stillingfleet, Berkeley sought justification for belief in indemonstrable propositions. As Berkeley saw it, the pride of freethinkers like Toland is a twofold narrowness: on the one hand freethinkers disdain those religious mysteries which are above "knowledge" (as they define it); on the other hand they disdain the principles of knowledge, the "common informations of sense." In the next section of the paper, I argue that Berkeley, in the *Notebooks*, developed an epistemology designed to humble the pride of freethinkers and that he did so, in part, by challenging the view that one can be certain only of those things that one has judged to be certain.

## II. Certainty and Common Sense in Berkeley's *Notebooks*

Many passages from the second half of Berkeley's *Notebook A* explore the relationship between certainty, knowledge, and demonstration.<sup>22</sup> In this section, I argue that Berkeley, in the course of these reflections, develops a novel account of the nature of common sense or the proper use of the faculties of the mind in response to Toland's epistemology of religion. In part A, I show that this early and somewhat limited account of the nature of common sense derives from what Berkeley refers to as his "doctrine of certainty" which he develops as a response to Locke's doctrine of certainty by ideas; a doctrine which Berkeley claims "comes to nothing" (NB 729).<sup>23</sup> I explain why Locke's view, by Berkeley's lights, comes to nothing, focusing on his account of perceptions of the identity

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<sup>21</sup> Toland recognizes that indemonstrable, "self-evident" propositions are also certain, but he derives his account of what it means to grasp indemonstrable propositions from Locke, specifically from Locke's account of intuition. I discuss Berkeley's response to Locke's account of intuitive knowledge in the following section.

<sup>22</sup> NB 718 ff. and especially NB 718-50. Winkler treats these passages at length but for different purposes [Kenneth Winkler, *Berkeley: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 76-102].

<sup>23</sup> The account is early and limited because Berkeley develops the view considerably in a later work, *Alciphron*. See section three below.

and existence of objects. Berkeley rejects Locke's account of certainty and replaces it with his own according to which simple perception constitutes certainty. This account of certainty becomes central to Berkeley's early conception of common sense, and, in part B, I explain how his view of common sense can be understood as a reply to Toland.

a. *Perception, Certainty, and Common Sense*

According to Locke, knowledge is nothing but the perception of agreement or disagreement between two ideas (*Essay* 4.1.2).<sup>24</sup> Since every perception of agreement or disagreement yields certainty (*Essay* 4.2.1), one is certain just in case one knows. Knowledge, then, requires an act of the mind, a perception of an agreement or disagreement between ideas, or between ideas and the real essences of which they are supposedly copies or representations. This means that certainty requires judgment: an act of affirmation or negation. Once such a judgment has been made, the mind forms a mental proposition, and it is this proposition which is then an item of knowledge known to be true (*Essay* 4.5.2-5).

A mental proposition, according to Locke, is formed when "the ideas in our understanding are, without the use of words, put together, or separated by the mind, perceiving or judging of their agreement or disagreement" (*Essay* 4.5.5). So for each meaningful verbal proposition, like "The apple is red," there is, or at least can be, a corresponding mental proposition, which seems to be a mental object with a propositional structure wherein, for instance, an idea of an apple stands to an (abstract) idea of redness in a relation of agreement.

One of the reasons that Locke introduces mental propositions is to provide a two-part account of the truth conditions for utterances. A verbal proposition is said to be verbally or nominally true whenever the words are joined in a manner that corresponds to the structure of the mental proposition it is intended to express. Verbal propositions are *really* true, when they are "verbally" or "nominally" true, *and* it is known that the ideas that constitute the mental proposition are "capable of having a real existence in nature" (*Essay* 4.5.8). So people are really certain when they affirm a mental proposition that is really true.

Berkeley argues, however, that real truth in Locke's sense cannot always depend on the existence of mental propositions. Locke's account cannot apply to verbal propositions of the form "An x is an x" (e.g. "A man is a man") since mental propositions of this form would be "nonsensical," by which Berkeley means empty or insignificant (NB 592).

Locke says all our knowledge is about Particulars. if so, pray w<sup>t</sup> is the following ratiocination but a jumble of words: Omnis Homo est animal, omne animal vivit, ergo omnis Homo vivit. It amounts (if you annex particular Ideas to the Words

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<sup>24</sup> John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). ed. Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

animal & vivit) to no more than this. Omnis Homo est Homo, omnis Homo est Homo, ergo omnis Homo est Homo. A mere Sport & trifling with sounds. (NB 668)

Homo est Homo etc comes at last to Petrus est Petrus etc Now if these identical Propositions are sought after in the Mind they will not be found. There are no identical mental Propositions tis all about sounds & terms. (NB 728)

The second passage continues a line of thought from the first. “Homo est animal” becomes “Homo est homo,” and ultimately “Petrus est Petrus,” when one annexes particular ideas to one’s words because the only idea of a particular animal that could agree with the idea of a particular man, Peter, would be the idea of that man itself, the idea of Peter. Part of Berkeley’s problem concerns the meaning of general terms, an issue that Berkeley does not resolve until the *Principles*. Both “homo” and “animal” are general terms, each of which refers indifferently to any member of a set of particular ideas, so “Homo est animal” is meaningful because it tells us that the ideas to which “homo” refers comprise a subset of the ideas to which “animal” refers.

However, Berkeley also suggests, in the *Notebooks*, that the propositions “Homo est Homo” and “Petrus est Petrus” (the propositions to which all of the statements in the syllogism from NB 668 supposedly reduce) are meaningless, and this is a problem that is not solved by Berkeley’s theory of general terms. The theory may seem to address it, since Berkeley offers the theory as an alternative to the doctrine of abstract ideas, and one reason why “Homo est Homo” could be considered meaningless is because there can be no such thing as an abstract idea of man in general in Locke’s sense.<sup>25</sup> This cannot be Berkeley’s primary point, however, for one could have a particular idea of Petrus, and yet Berkeley says that “Petrus est Petrus” is also “all about sounds & terms.” The point, rather, is that there can be no mental proposition expressed by strings of words like “Petrus est Petrus” or “A man is a man” because identification does not require an act of judgment.<sup>26</sup>

If knowledge consists in the perception of agreement and disagreement between ideas as Locke thinks that it does, and if propositions like “A man is a man” are nonsensical for the reasons outlined above, then (strictly speaking) whether ideas are what they are would be unknowable, and knowledge and certainty would only apply to perceptions of relations and coexistence (the other varieties of Lockean knowledge). But this pared

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<sup>25</sup> I have in mind Berkeley’s well-known remarks concerning triangles at section 14 of the introduction to the *Principles*. Berkeley develops his theory of general terms in section 16 of the introduction to the *Principles*.

<sup>26</sup> To be clear, the issue at hand is the identification of objects and should be distinguished from noticing objects or recognizing them. It is possible to see something without noticing it, and at any time there will be many objects in one’s visual field of which one is unaware. It is also possible to notice an object without knowing what it is, and so in that case as well, recognition might require additional mental activity. Still, it is not clear that there is any distinction to be drawn between seeing (and recognizing) a rock and seeing (and recognizing) that the rock is what it is and not some other thing. Locke offers a plausible account of the perception of self-identity. The problem is that it is meant to serve as an account of the certainty that ideas are what they are and not some other thing, and it does not seem as integral to perception or as immediate as it needs to be for this purpose.

down, minimalist account cannot stand, because then *all* certainty will prove to be nominal since one will be certain only of propositions not of things. For certainty about the relationship between two things requires the formation of a mental proposition the terms of which are ideas of those things, a proposition in which the ideas are perceived to agree or disagree, and this will be impossible if one cannot be certain the ideas in question are what they are. Berkeley reflects on this consequence when he writes:

It seems to me that we have no certainty about Ideas, but only about words. Tis improper to say I am certain I see, I feel etc.: there are no Mental propositions form'd answering to these Words & in simple perception tis allowed by all there is no affirmation or negation & consequently no certainty. (NB 731)

If, as Locke maintains, there is knowledge of real existence and identity, then there can be certainty about both propositions and objects in virtue of the fact that one can be certain of the truth of mental propositions concerning the identity and existence of objects. As previously mentioned, Berkeley denies that there are any mental propositions corresponding to strings of words such as “A man is a man,” and here he notes that similar considerations undermine the possibility of perceptual knowledge. Berkeley denies that there are mental propositions that correspond to statements such as “I see a tree.” Although I may have a visible idea of a tree when I utter the sentence “I see a tree,” I do not perceive any agreement or disagreement that would allow me to say that I have any kind of certainty about this idea, at least on Locke’s account. The same criticism applies, according to Berkeley, to tautological propositions expressing self-knowledge. He suggests, for instance, that Locke will have trouble accounting for the *cogito*: “Cogito ergo sum, Tautology, no mental Proposition. answering thereto” (NB 738).

This proposition is significant because it is one which not only Locke,<sup>27</sup> but many others would consider to be an indubitable item of knowledge. It is, for this reason, meant to serve as a straightforward *reductio* of Locke’s theory with the suppressed conclusion that, according to Locke, one cannot be said to be certain of one’s own existence. On my reading, Berkeley holds that no Lockean mental proposition corresponds to the words “Cogito ergo sum,” because in this case, as in the case of tautologies with terms like “Homo” and “Petrus,” one does not perceive an agreement or disagreement between two ideas. This is either because there can be no idea of soul without thought (NB 704), or because our idea of the soul is nothing other than an idea of a thinking, active thing.<sup>28</sup> The former suggestion is an application of what might be called Berkeley’s “containment” thesis: there can be no Lockean mental proposition corresponding to verbal propositions in which the idea expressed by the subject contains the idea expressed by the predicate. This thesis is not limited to proper containment and so it applies to “Homo est Homo” and “Petrus est Petrus,” but it also applies to a range of other propositions in which containment is proper, underlining the claim that even propositions concerning relations and coexistence cannot be really known on Locke’s account.

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<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, the opening of *Essay* 2.1.1.

<sup>28</sup> For present purposes, the issue of whether one can have an idea of the soul, according to Berkeley, has been bracketed, since Berkeley’s position on this issue does not seem directly relevant to determining his views on Locke’s doctrine of certainty.

There are four sorts of Propositions. Gold is a Metall, Gold is yellow; Gold is fixt, Gold is not a stone. Of w<sup>ch</sup> ye 1st 2nd & 3d are only Nominal & have no mental propositions answering them. (NB 793)

Also of non-coexistence as Gold is not blue. (NB 793a)

Here, Berkeley operates with a complex idea of gold compounded of many of its well-known qualities. For this reason, he claims that the first three propositions are nominal: on Locke's theory these propositions concern the nominal essence of the term *gold*.<sup>29</sup> They are *only* nominal, that is, purely verbal truths, because they do not express mental propositions, and I suggest that they do not express mental propositions because they fall afoul of the containment thesis. In each of the first three statements, the subject contains the predicate and this means that the statement "Gold is a metal," for instance, does not express a judgment in which the mind compares two ideas. The final two propositions, "Gold is not a stone" and "Gold is not blue," express mental propositions because the complex idea of gold does not contain the ideas "blue" or "stone." In both cases, two ideas are compared and are found to disagree. Here again, Berkeley's remarks are meant to undermine Locke's doctrine of certainty by ideas. Any account of certainty should show us that all five of the propositions considered are known, but Locke's account only succeeds for two of them.

Berkeley applies the containment thesis quite generally then, but for present purposes, I am interested in the extent to which it undermines Locke's account of the knowledge of the identity and existence of objects and in Berkeley's response. Locke feels that knowledge claims about the identity and existence of physical objects must be understood in terms of judgments that relations of existence and identity obtain. Concerning the existence of objects, he writes to Stillingfleet, that

the two ideas, that in [this case] are perceived to agree, and do thereby produce knowledge, are the idea of actual sensation (which is an action whereof I have a clear and distinct idea) and the idea of actual existence of something without me that causes that sensation. And what other certainty your lordship has by your senses of the existing of anything without you, but the perceived connexion of those two ideas, I would gladly know.<sup>30</sup> (WJL, 3:360)

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<sup>29</sup> It is not clear what Berkeley would say about the proposition "Gold is fixt" where this is a report of the discovery that gold is not a volatile element, though there seems to be no reason to think that he would deny that, in this case, a mental proposition is formed. Many thanks to Sam Rickless for drawing my attention to these passages from the *Notebooks*.

<sup>30</sup> This passage has not always been thought to express Locke's considered view of sensitive knowledge, but Newman has persuasively argued that it ought to be; see Lex Newman, "Locke on Sensitive Knowledge and the Veil of Perception – Four Misconceptions," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004), 280. As I have indicated, the problem with Lockean sensitive knowledge is that (1) Locke claims that knowledge always consists in the perception of an agreement or disagreement between ideas while also holding that (2) knowledge of the existence of objects is possible (which, it seems, cannot be explained in terms of an agreement between ideas). This has led some commentators (e.g., Yolton), to deny the first claim and defend an interpretation of Locke according to which he

Locke's challenge to Stillingfleet could be met in at least two ways. It could be met by proposing a different pair of ideas between which an agreement is perceived when one becomes certain that an object exists, or by proposing a new account of knowledge according to which one can perceive that an object exists without perceiving an agreement between ideas. Berkeley takes the latter approach with respect to both perception of identity and real existence. He suggests that certainty that something is what it is is not a matter of passing judgment on a proposition or comparing an idea with itself. The position presented in 731 (quoted above) is deeply mistaken: "certainty, real certainty, is of sensible Ideas *pro hic & nunc*. I may be certain without affirmation or negation" (NB 731a). That is to say, we must, with the mob, place certainty in the senses (NB 740). On Berkeley's account, an act of simple perception yields certainty about the existence and identity of ideas, so there is no act of judgment in perceptions of existence and identity, and thoughts about the identity of a thing or its existence do not possess a propositional structure. Instead of two ideas standing in a particular relation to one another (i.e., a relation that admits of being perceived and affirmed), there is only one idea, the existence of which is certain because it is perceived.

Consequently, according to Berkeley, the senses operating independently of the faculty of judgment are reliable vehicles of certainty, and this requires a reconception of the limits of certainty and a new account of the cognitive state of being certain. Locke develops an account of habitual knowledge which allows him to say that a person can be said to know a proposition of which s/he retains the memory, but does not occurrently recall, so long as that proposition was previously known and the person in question remembers perceiving an agreement or disagreement between the relevant ideas (*Essay* 4.1.8). However, on Locke's account of the occurrent cognitive state of certainty, certainty is a state of awareness, for example, that things exist or are what they are. Perceiving an agreement between ideas and judging that it obtains are acts of which one is necessarily aware, at least while performing them.<sup>31</sup> It is possible, then, to perceive an object without knowing whether it exists, since in order to know that the object exists, one would need to perceive an agreement between ideas of actual sensation and actual existence. Assuming that it is possible to form these ideas in the first place, which is not clear, the ideas must be called up and examined.<sup>32</sup>

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does not restrict knowledge to the perception of agreements or disagreements between ideas. On such an interpretation, this response to Stillingfleet must be some kind of aberration, and, according to Yolton, Locke is distorting his account here under pressure from Stillingfleet. Newman suggests that this would be incredible since, "Stillingfleet's attacks [in the letter to which Locke is responding] are aimed at the between-ideas formulation of knowledge" ("Locke on Sensitive Knowledge," 280). I assume that Newman is right: there is no reason not to consider this passage an expression of Locke's considered view of sensitive knowledge.

<sup>31</sup> To be clear, I am not suggesting that, on Locke's account, when one occurrently knows that p one also knows that one knows that p (though this might be true). I suggest, rather, that the state of being certain that an object is what it is or exists involves, according to Locke, forming a judgment, and so occurrently knowing something is always a state of awareness that things are thus and so.

<sup>32</sup> This account derives from section 45 of Descartes *Principles of Philosophy* (AT, VIII.A.22). Locke claims that knowledge requires the clear and distinct perception of ideas throughout the *Essay*

For Berkeley, on the other hand, there are many things of which one can be unwittingly certain: knowing that an object exists just is to perceive that object. This is a metaphysical point since it concerns the proper characterization of certainty as a mental state, but it is also an epistemological point since it is part of an account of what it means to know. Skepticism threatens given a Lockean account of knowledge, since a survey of the contents of the mind discovers little that would count as certain knowledge for Locke. What little one finds will seem purely nominal or verbal (or at least so Berkeley thought), and yet there will remain many things of which one is completely certain all the while without realizing it. Lockeans, then, misuse their minds when they attempt to determine that a particular object exists by means of reason. Through an act of simple perception alone, one is certain that the object perceived exists and possesses all of the qualities it is perceived to possess. This same account can be applied to the other propositions considered above as well. “Cogito ergo sum” is certain from a simple perception of the idea of the self,<sup>33</sup> and “Gold is a metal” can be certainly known simply in virtue of the nature of the idea of gold entertained.<sup>34</sup>

#### b. *Common Sense and Toland’s Epistemology of Religion*

Many lines of thought in Berkeley’s *Notebooks* converge on the view that immediate perception yields certainty. I have focused on Berkeley’s reflections on certainty and judgment because they culminate in an amendment to Toland’s account of common sense. Shortly after Berkeley claims that we must place certainty in the senses he reviews some of the dangers of doing otherwise. He suggests that when philosophers neglect the “common single informations of sense,” they come to believe that every physical object “has its dark sides much larger & more numerous than w<sup>t</sup> is perceiv’d” and eventually become skeptics.

This passage refers, I suggest, to a central theme from Locke’s *Essay*, one that Toland adapts to his own purposes in *Christianity Not Mysterious*: that nothing lacks its dark side. After completing his account of the scope of human knowledge, Locke considers the scope of human ignorance, which he finds to be vast.

The meanest, and most obvious things that come in our way, have dark sides, that the quickest sight cannot penetrate into. The clearest, and most enlarged understandings of thinking Men, find themselves puzzled, and at a loss, in every particle of matter.  
(*Essay* 4.3.22)

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as, for instance, in his discussion of acquiring knowledge at 1.2.16; and his discussion of what it would mean to have a clear and distinct idea of space is the same as Descartes.

<sup>33</sup> Since I have bracketed questions concerning the possibility of forming an idea of the self, the result here is conditional: if there can be an idea of the self, then on Berkeley’s view one can be certain that the self exists in virtue of the fact that one thinks through a simple perception of that idea.

<sup>34</sup> This does not imply that a state of certainty is a passive state for Berkeley. Rather, it implies that the characterization of the state of certainty will crucially depend on Berkeley’s account of the nature of ideas. For instance, if, as Fields has persuasively argued, Berkeleian ideas are perceptual acts then the state of being certain will be active (Fields, *Objective Presence*, 53).

But Locke is not so much pessimistic as humble about human epistemic prospects. As he puts it, “[t]he candle that is set up in us shines bright enough for all our purposes” (*Essay* 1.1.5), so where understanding is unattainable, we should content ourselves with probability. Toland accepts Locke’s account of our knowledge of real essences, and the limitations on human knowledge it imposes, but feels that merely probable religious doctrines should not be believed. When he claims that Christianity is not “mysterious,” he does not contrast religion with natural philosophy or ordinary perception, but draws a parallel between them. Just as God in His goodness would not make physical and temporal well-being depend on responses to imperceptible aspects of the environment, He would not make spiritual, eternal well-being depend on dispositions toward doctrines beyond human ken (CNM 86-87). Toland, therefore, claims that he will believe nothing but what the highest evidence forces upon him. He will only accept what is certain, and by this he means only what is self-evident or demonstrable. He will accept the doctrines of Christianity on faith adding only that “faith is knowledge” (CNM 139).

Almost immediately after Berkeley writes in the *Notebooks* that men, like Toland, err when they neglect the senses, he declares for the first time that he is a common sense philosopher, writing that it is his intention to be “eternally banishing metaphysics and recalling men to common sense” (NB 751). Though he had already remarked on the coincidence between immaterialism and common sense in the *Notebooks*,<sup>35</sup> up until NB 751 it might have seemed that Berkeley was simply highlighting one of the many virtues of his position. NB 751, on the other hand, is a statement of Berkeley’s philosophical vocation. When Berkeley says that he intends to recall men to common sense, he means that he intends to recall them to the common single informations of sense.

This is his amendment to Toland’s definition of common sense. At the most general level, Berkeley agrees with Toland. Only those who use their faculties as they ought to use them possess common sense, and the faculties must be employed in a particular way in order to pursue knowledge and certainty. Berkeley departs from Toland because he has a different conception of the proper use of the cognitive faculties, according to which the pursuit of Lockean knowledge, understood as the perception of agreements and disagreements between ideas, is distinct from the pursuit of certainty. In order to use the faculties of the mind properly, according to Berkeley, it is necessary first and foremost to understand the sense in which one is always already certain of all one sees, hears and feels.

Toland denied that his debt to Locke in *Christianity not Mysterious* was considerable,<sup>36</sup> but his definition of “knowledge” is (almost word for word) the same as Locke’s.<sup>37</sup> So to say that Christianity is reasonable in light of the claim that Christian faith is knowledge, is to say that the doctrines of saving faith can all be known in Locke’s sense. If, however,

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<sup>35</sup> For example, “I side in all things with the Mob” (NB 405).

<sup>36</sup> See Champion, *Republican Learning*, 79-80 for a discussion and appraisal of Toland’s disavowal.

<sup>37</sup> “[A]ll our Knowledge is, in effect, nothing else but the Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas in a greater or lesser Number, whereinsoever this Agreement or Disagreement may consist” (CNM 11).

there can be certainty without Lockean knowledge, as Berkeley claims, then Toland's method of testing doctrines for reasonableness is not sufficiently motivated, and the results Toland obtains through the application of his method are inconclusive. Berkeley retains the analogy between temporal and eternal well-being, but he denies that the objects of sensation have unknowable aspects. Berkeley is convinced that there are religious mysteries which must be accepted with a "humble and implicit faith" (NB 720), but he also proves that God has been much more generous with mankind than Toland allows, identifying a source of certainty that Toland had neglected. It is possible, according to Berkeley, that the knowledge of God and one's duty is as plain and easy as understanding the true nature of objects, a task that Toland, for his part, considers superhuman.

### III. Retrospect and Prospect

I have argued that Berkeley, in his *Notebooks*, adopts a view of the nature of common sense similar to Stillingfleet's and Toland's, according to which to possess common sense is to properly use the faculties of the mind, and I have focused on his account of the proper use of the senses. The senses, not the faculty of judgment, secure our certain knowledge of the existence and the identity of objects, so it is a misuse of the faculty of judgment to attempt to demonstrate, for instance, that physical objects exist.<sup>38</sup>

It might be helpful to refer to the kind of view I attribute to Berkeley as a psychological account of the nature of common sense, since, on this view, to say that someone possesses common sense is to praise them for being psychologically or spiritually healthy. This view is distinct from the other views typically ascribed to Berkeley: propositional accounts and perspectival accounts.

According to propositional accounts, the term "common sense" applies primarily to propositions. If a proposition possesses certain qualities, usually if it is either obviously true, widely held or both, then it is said to be "commonsensical." There are, then, infinitely many common-sense propositions, including banal propositions like "Water is wet" and more philosophically significant propositions such as "Physical objects exist." George Pappas, for instance, argues that Berkeley's claim that immaterialism is commonsensical should be taken comparatively, and he determines that Berkeley is right because immaterialism implies the truth of more of the common sense propositions at

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<sup>38</sup> To say that belief in materialism arises from the improper use of the cognitive faculties is not identical to the claim that the belief is false. For it is possible to use the mind properly and still form a false belief. For instance, I might believe that a stick submerged in water is bent and by this mean that if I were to remove it from the water, I would have the same visible idea. It was not because I used my faculties for purposes other than those for which they were intended that I formed this belief: I did not, for instance, attempt to use the faculty of judgment when I should have relied on the testimony of the senses only. The view that the quality of being bent is a mind-independent property of a mind-independent object, the stick, is both false *and* contrary to common sense, according to the argument in the preceding section, when it arises because of a misuse of the mind, which happens when it arises because of a conviction that the faculty of judgment is required for understanding the existence and identity of physical objects.

issue between materialists and immaterialists. Berkeley comes out ahead by a score of five and a half to seven.<sup>39</sup>

Perspectival accounts are similar to propositional accounts insofar as they focus, at least in part, on what a person believes, but the perspectivalist insists that a person possesses common sense only relative to a particular worldview. Suffice it to say for present purposes that a worldview would include not merely a set of beliefs but a system of beliefs about the nature of the world, personhood, and the relationship between persons and the world, that lead those who share the same “worldview” to agree about a broad range of claims both general and particular. On this approach, when one claims that a person possesses common sense one is usually complimenting that person for sharing one’s worldview, and so, for the perspectivalist, the propositional theorist is someone who privileges a particular perspective on the world as commonsensical (e.g. her own perspective or the perspective of the proverbial man in the street), perhaps naively. John Russell Roberts, a perspectivalist, argues that immaterialism will seem commonsensical only to those like Berkeley who accept a person-based metaphysics associated with a traditional Christian worldview.<sup>40</sup>

For both perspectivalist and propositionalist views of the nature of common sense, it is in virtue of believing a certain set of propositions or accepting a certain “worldview” that a person possesses common sense. On the psychological account however, the order of explanation between propositions, beliefs, or worldviews and the possession of common sense is reversed: a belief is considered commonsensical if it is accepted by someone who possesses common sense, which is to say that it is a belief acquired through a proper use of the cognitive faculties of the mind.

Most recent analyses of the relationship between immaterialism and common sense focus on the question of whether a propositional or a perspectival account is most likely to produce satisfactory answers to philosophical puzzles associated with Berkeley’s views,<sup>41</sup> but my narrow focus excluded many of Berkeley’s best-known discussions of the relationship between immaterialism and common sense, discussions on which most analyses of Berkeley’s view turn. The evidence for the interpretation I advance has, instead, been indirect: I do not find that there are any star texts which support the view I develop over others proposed or *vice versa*, and the passages on which I focus become suggestive only when read against a detailed historical and intellectual backdrop. Similar support can, however, be derived from similar treatments of Berkeley’s later works and

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<sup>39</sup> Pappas, *Berkeley’s Thought*, 232. This is an elaboration of an earlier propositional account (Pappas, “Adversary Metaphysics”) similar to Russell A. Lascola’s “Berkeley: Inconsistencies and Common Sense” [*Idealistic Studies* 14 (1984): 193-99] and to which Kline’s “Berkeley’s Theory” is a sympathetic response.

<sup>40</sup> Roberts, *Metaphysics for the Mob*, 142-43.

<sup>41</sup> Seth Bordner (“‘Defense’ of ‘Common Sense’,” 335-36) has recently argued that a revised propositional account—according to which Berkeley intends to vindicate a particularly significant subset of “common sense” philosophical beliefs, especially the claim that the world we perceive is the real world—is preferable to Roberts’ approach. The puzzles I have in mind include the question of why Berkeley should be interested in asserting that his metaphysics should agree with common sense, and why he rejects certain plausibly commonsensical (i.e. intuitive and commonly held) propositions.

so I will conclude by suggesting how this might be derived and explaining some of the reasons one might pursue the hypothesis that the view of common sense I attribute to Berkeley was one he developed throughout his philosophical career.

As before, my argument is primarily contextual. I suggest that when Berkeley's works are read in the light of texts that most provoked and inspired him, it becomes natural to expect that he should have held that restoring the minds of readers to spiritual health should be seen as a principal motivation for composing works of philosophy. Evidence drawn from works throughout Berkeley's career confirms this expectation, and I believe that Berkeley's psychological view of common sense should be seen as fundamental to his conception of the nature of philosophical therapy.

Malebranche's *Search after Truth* and Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* are widely recognized as two of the texts that inspired and influenced Berkeley's *Principles* and *Dialogues*. The therapeutic aims of the *Search* are explicit since the text is explicitly presented as a training manual for the will designed to teach its readers to use their freedom as much as possible.<sup>42</sup> Richard Yeo, John Marshall, and (most recently and extensively) Sorana Corneanu have developed analyses of the therapeutic aims of Locke's *Essay*.<sup>43</sup> Corneanu, for instance, has argued that an important aim of the *Essay* is to help its readers pursue truth by regulating their assent and that, for this reason, it should be seen as a contribution to the *cultura animi* philosophical tradition which "permeated the cultural space of early Modern Europe."<sup>44</sup> Philosophers working in this tradition devoted themselves to the study of the powers and weaknesses of the human mind and composed works of philosophy as regimens or cures designed to restore the mind and maintain its health.

In the preface of the *Dialogues*, Berkeley insists that he intends his philosophy to be useful.<sup>45</sup> By this, Berkeley clearly meant that immaterialism constitutes a bulwark against atheism and immorality but he also claims that the text will be useful because it will reduce its readers from paradoxes to common sense so that they will "come to think like other men" (DHP 168). I suggest that the proposed analysis of the *Notebooks* above suggests a way of explaining how we should understand Berkeley's claim that his works will teach us how to think, and also how his works should be situated, on the one hand, with respect to rationalist therapeutic texts like Descartes' *Meditations* and Malebranche's *Search*,<sup>46</sup> and on the other, with respect to texts within the *cultura animi*

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<sup>42</sup> Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth* (1674-75), ed. and trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.1.3.10.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Yeo, "John Locke and Polite Philosophy" in *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity*, eds. Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 254-75; John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion, and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 170; and Sorana Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Corneanu, *Regimens*, 46-47.

<sup>45</sup> Berkeley suggests that the *Dialogues* will refer speculation to practice and reduce its readers from paradoxes to common sense so that they will "come to think like other men" (DHP 168).

<sup>46</sup> I have in mind here Gary Hatfield's reading of the *Meditations*, according to which Descartes composed the meditations as a series of cognitive exercises modeled on the spiritual exercises of

tradition, including many of the most influential works by empiricist philosophers from Great Britain, Locke's *Essay* Francis Bacon's *Great Instauration*, and Robert Boyle's *Christian Virtuoso*. For Berkeley, as for many of his predecessors, the usefulness of a philosophical text must be gauged not only by the extent to which it contributes to knowledge and supports morality but by the extent to which it cultivates the faculties of its readers, a project thought to be of primarily ethical significance. The foregoing analysis suggests that it could be fruitful to consider whether Berkeley understood the early modern project of composing therapeutic philosophical texts as a way of restoring readers' minds to a state of health, framed in terms of restoring readers to common sense.

On the face of it, the prospects for this approach seem bright. In *Alciphron*, Euphranor endorses a therapeutic view of the aims of philosophy when he claims that philosophy is "medicine for the soul of man" and Crito suggests that the improved reason of thinking men should be understood as an exemplary state of spiritual health that one might hope to achieve through philosophy, a state of mind he calls "common sense" (*Alc*, 3.16.139; *Alc*, 6.12.241).

Many of Berkeley's works are designed to improve the minds of their readers. I have argued elsewhere that this is one of the principal aims of *Siris*,<sup>47</sup> and a *prima facie* case can be made for claiming that the *Principles* and *Dialogues* have a similar objective. The explicit aim of the *Three Dialogues* is to restore Hylas, and through Hylas the reader, to common sense through a comparison of materialism and immaterialism. Hylas agrees at the outset of the first dialogue to the more commonsensical position, and, at the end of the *Dialogues*, Philonous suggests that by embracing immaterialism, Hylas has been restored to common sense. In his concluding description of the trajectory of the *Dialogues*, Philonous claims that the principles "which at first view lead to *skepticism*, pursued to a certain point, bring men back to common sense" (DHP 262). These principles include those that Hylas (the Lockean materialist) and Philonous (the evangelist of immaterialism) share in common and which form the dialectical basis from which their conversation proceeds: the claim that the senses make no inferences and that sensible things are those which are immediately perceived by sense (DHP 174-75). In the third dialogue, Hylas loses confidence in the powers of the human mind and repeats the skeptical complaints Berkeley lists in the opening passages of the *Principles*: human beings devote their whole lives to knowledge but are doomed to frustration because of the weakness of the human mind (DHP 227-28; PHK 2). These complaints precede a diagnosis in the *Principles*. The skeptic who complains fails to appreciate that these expressions of inadequacy are actually evasions of responsibility: the fault lies not in our faculties but "in the wrong use we make of them" (PHK 3). These passages suggest that the chief difference between skeptics who lack common sense and immaterialists who possess common sense should be explained not only and not primarily in terms of the propositions that they endorse, but in terms of the way that they use their minds.

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Ignatius Loyola in order to retrain the mental faculties of his readers [Gary Hatfield, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Descartes and the Meditations* (London: Routledge, 2003)].

<sup>47</sup> "Berkeley's Two Panaceas," *Intellectual History Review* 21 (2011), 472-95.

Though it may well be that Berkeley's views about the nature of common sense developed in the time between the composition of the *Notebooks* and the publication of the *Dialogues*, I suggest that it would be fruitful nonetheless to examine whether the differences between the way skeptics and immaterialists use their minds in the *Dialogues* can be analyzed in terms of the account of the use of the senses and the faculty of judgment developed above. I believe it is worth asking whether, in the *Dialogues*, Berkeley attempts more directly to address the failure he notes in the *Principles*, by having Philonous teach Hylas how to think, that is, by enacting the therapeutic techniques Berkeley believed were required to cure skepticism and restore common sense.

One of the virtues of this approach to Berkeley's views on common sense, then, is that it raises questions like these, new questions which lead to new interpretive approaches to Berkeley's works. By pursuing these questions, we stand to illuminate the nature of Berkeley's philosophical system and his conception of the aims of philosophy. But we also stand to deepen our understanding of Berkeley's relationship to Malebranche and other rationalists who took the task of philosophy to involve retraining the faculties of the mind and to situate Berkeley's works, for the first time, within the *cultura animi* philosophical tradition.<sup>48</sup>

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