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# The Synthesis of Empiricism and Innatism in Berkeley's Doctrine of Notions

James Hill

**Abstract:** This essay argues that Berkeley's doctrine of notions is an account of concept-formation that offers a middle-way between empiricism and innatism, something which Berkeley himself asserts at *Siris* 308. First, the widespread assumption that Berkeley accepts Locke's conceptual empiricism is questioned, with particular attention given to Berkeley's views on innatism and ideas of reflection. Then, it is shown that Berkeley's doctrine of notions comes very close to the refined form of innatism to be found in Descartes' later writings and in Leibniz. Finally, it is argued that Berkeley denies a principle common to both empiricism and innatism, namely, that all conceptual knowledge amounts to the perception of ideas. By denying this—at least in the case of the concepts of self, causation, substance, and virtue—Berkeley is able to provide a synthesis of conceptual empiricism and innatism.

In *Siris*, Berkeley offers us a characteristically succinct reflection on his doctrine of notions:

[Aristotle] held that the mind of man was a *tabula rasa*, and that there were no innate ideas. Plato, on the contrary, held original ideas in the mind; that is, notions which never were or can be in the sense, such as being, beauty, goodness, likeness, parity. Some, perhaps, may think the truth to be this: that there are properly no *ideas*, or passive objects, in the mind but what were derived from sense: but that there are also besides these her own acts or operations; such are *notions*. (*Siris* 308)<sup>2</sup>

I wish to use this statement as a guide in interpreting Berkeley's doctrine of notions. When Berkeley writes, "Some, perhaps, may think the truth to be this," I understand him to be expressing his own view that we may reconcile empiricism and innatism—two traditions represented in this passage by Aristotle and Plato—by treating innate notions as "acts or operations" of the mind.

Writers on Berkeley sometimes treat his doctrine of notions as so evasive and enigmatic that it hardly qualifies as a doctrine at all. One commentator has said of Berkeley's overall view of spirit that it is "extraordinarily sketchy."<sup>3</sup> My aim here is to show that, despite the relatively meager sources, the doctrine of notions, particularly as it is represented in the final editions of the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues* of 1734 (where the term "notion" is first used in its technical sense), offers us an interesting middle way between empiricists and innatists. It also provides an understanding of concept-formation that is novel in Berkeley's time and which allows him to avoid certain problems with Locke's empiricist and Descartes' innatist accounts. In particular, Berkeley gives us a more satisfactory account of how we acquire the concept of the self, and then of how we

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<sup>2</sup> *Works* 5: 143. Here and elsewhere the reference is to *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 volumes (London: Thomas Nelson, 1948-57).

<sup>3</sup> A.C. Grayling, *Berkeley: The Central Arguments* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986), 155.

acquire other concepts such as causation and substance, which he thinks are based on our knowledge of the self.

### I. Empiricism and Innatism

First let me describe how we might understand the early-modern dispute between empiricism and innatism. At this time the word “empiricism” was not used to describe the philosophical doctrine that we now use it to refer to. But a certain kind of empiricism, though it went without a title, was in fact a familiar position widely subscribed to. It was defended by the Scholastics, and it continued to be defended, with various modifications, by such moderns as Gassendi, Hobbes and Locke. All these philosophers expounded versions of what now often goes under the name “conceptual empiricism.”

Conceptual empiricism is usefully summed up in the Thomist maxim: *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*.<sup>4</sup> This maxim says at least three things. Most obviously, it says that the mind is a blank sheet or *tabula rasa* at its inception, containing no innate content. Secondly it says that all the objects of thought, including our most abstract intellectual concepts, are derived from the content of sense experience. Thirdly it says—or at least implies—that we cannot think without the aid of images: that is, without perceptual or quasi-perceptual mental objects. For the Scholastics the *nihil est in intellectu* principle was supplemented by a theory of abstraction. This attempted to explain how the material of intellectual thought was derived from the raw data of sensory experience. Our minds “draw out” from the images of sense concepts of more general significance. But these concepts remain images, however lacking in detail and particularity. Locke followed the scholastics in appealing to abstract ideas to explain certain central intellectual concepts.

Conceptual empiricism is to be contrasted with innatism. This holds that the concepts central to intellectual reflection cannot be derived from the content of sense experience, but are rather internal to the mind itself. Cartesian innatism, with which we are primarily interested here, says that the mind can find in itself preformed conceptions of self, substance, thought, God, as well as *res extensa* and its different modes. Cartesian innatism went hand in hand with the doctrine of pure intellect, a faculty that was said to be able to survey innate concepts and perceive their nature and their relations. Crucially, pure intellect has access to concepts that are neither images nor derived from imagery, and it is therefore not an abstractive faculty.

It is important, in the present context, to be aware that the term “notion” played a special role in the expression of innatist doctrine. Descartes used the terms *notio/notione* in Latin (and *notion* in French) to describe mental contents underived from sense. In fact he came to distinguish systematically between sense-based images (*imagines*) and notions (*notiones*). This division is apparent in the *Replies to Objections*<sup>5</sup> and is most clearly

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<sup>4</sup> Berkeley explicitly mentions this principle at *Notebooks* (NB) 779 (*Works* 1: 94) calling it an “axiom of the Schoolemen.”

<sup>5</sup> See for example the discussion of the “primary notions” of geometry and metaphysics at AT VII 156-7; CSM 2: 111 (*Replies* II), or the distinction between preconceived opinions and notions at

developed in his *Principles of Philosophy* [PP].<sup>6</sup> Here the term *notio* is used to describe non-sensual ideas that have a special epistemic status. Descartes links his use of the term to its etymology: *notiones* are the simplest constituents of knowledge that are *per se nota*—“known through themselves,” or “self-evident” as the phrase is rendered in what is now the standard English translation.<sup>7</sup> The fact that notions are not derived from sense, makes them natural candidates for being innate contents of the mind. That is not to say that all notions are *necessarily* innate—some may for example be assembled from innate simples, and not be themselves preformed in the mind. But the non-imagistic character of innate concepts is, no doubt, the reason that Locke entitled the First Book of his *Essay* “Of Innate Notions,”<sup>8</sup> and why in the course of that book he targets what he describes not only as “innate Notions,” but also “primary Notions,” “Notions naturally imprinted,” “original Notions,” “common Notions,” etc.<sup>9</sup>

## II. A Synthesis

Now let us return to the passage from *Siris* that we quoted at the beginning. It has a number of interesting features. For example, when Berkeley positions his own theory of notions as offering a middle way between Aristotle and Plato, he clearly intends it as a middle way between conceptual empiricism and innatism. Berkeley alludes to the maxim “*nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*” in saying of Aristotle “there are properly no *ideas*, or passive objects, in the mind but what were derived from sense.” And the phrase “original ideas in the mind,” as well as the Cartesian term “notion,” indicates that although explicit mention is made of Plato, a broad tradition of innatism is being referred to of which Descartes is the contemporary spokesman.

The reconciliation that Berkeley describes in this passage is I think best described as a synthesis. By this I mean two things. First, Berkeley interprets both empiricism and innatism to be saying something that is important and true. He tells us that conceptual empiricism represents a significant truth about ideas or the “passive objects” of

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AT IXA 202-206; CSM 2: 269-71 (*Replies V*). Here and elsewhere I use AT to refer to *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. by C. Adam and P. Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1964-76) with volume number and page; and I use CSM to refer to *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: CUP, 1985) with volume and page.

<sup>6</sup> In the first book of the *Principles of Philosophy* the term *notio-notiones* is used in sections 10, 13, 47, 49, 50, 52, 54, 63, and 75. In all these different contexts the term is used to refer to non-sensory content that is known to the pure intellect. Notions are variously modified as “common,” “innate” and “primary”: the common notions refer to axioms, or self-evident first principles, whereas the primary, or simple notions most often refer to concepts, like substance, thought, extension. Notions in this latter sense are related to the simple natures of the Descartes’ *Regulae*—see L.J. Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 89-90. See also Alan Hart, “Descartes’ ‘Notions,’” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 31 (1970), 114-22.

<sup>7</sup> See PP I, 10: AT VIII A 8; CSM 1: 196.

<sup>8</sup> The title of the First Book of Locke’s *Essay* sometimes goes unnoticed because it only appears on the page of contents, and not in the text proper. See John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 15. Hereafter E.

<sup>9</sup> These phrases occur for example at E I.ii.1, 48, E I.ii.5, 49-5, and E I.iii.16, 77, as well as elsewhere in the First Book of the *Essay*. The term “notion” is also, of course, to be found in a looser sense, in both Locke and Berkeley, referring to an opinion or intellectual idea.

knowledge. They do indeed all come to us via sense. But he also says that innatism expresses something significant about our operations with these objects. These operations constitute a conceptual grasp that cannot be derived from sense and which Berkeley therefore thinks cannot be incorporated into an empiricist perspective. This is a synthesis also because the two competing positions are brought together by the denial of the very assumption that makes their opposition possible. This assumption, which we will discuss below, is that concepts are all necessarily perceptions, or what Berkeley here calls “passive objects.”<sup>10</sup>

We might also note a second feature of this passage: Berkeley *equates* notions with our mental operations. It is not that notions are something in addition to mental operations which somehow represent them to the mind. Rather, Berkeley says of the mind’s own acts and operations: “such are notions.” This implies that the very process of operating may involve knowledge of what we are doing. It suggests that our operations may be *per se nota* or known through themselves. This, I believe, is an abiding feature of Berkeley’s doctrine of notions which, right from the first edition of the *Principles*, treats our grasp of our own active self as one that is internal to our exercise of mental operations.

### III. Doubts about Conceptual Empiricism

We are used to seeing Berkeley’s philosophy assimilated to the empiricist tradition. He is usually treated as one of three British Empiricists, standing between Locke and Hume. Sometimes it is also claimed that Berkeley radicalizes Locke’s empiricism just as Hume further radicalizes Berkeley’s own. The empiricist reading of his philosophy is, of course, by no means universal. A number of commentators, including Harry Bracken,<sup>11</sup> Louis Loeb,<sup>12</sup> Stephen Daniel,<sup>13</sup> and Costica Bradatan<sup>14</sup> have highlighted non-empiricist themes even in his early philosophy. These commentators have tended to focus on Berkeley’s references to archetypes when explaining his divergence from empiricism; so while the reading of Berkeley that I am concerned to expound here is allied to these interpretations, it does have a rather different focus by concentrating on the doctrine of notions.

In a moment I wish to look at some textual reasons for resisting the categorization of Berkeley as a conceptual empiricist, many of which have been already been pointed to by the commentators we have mentioned. But first let us say something more about conceptual empiricism in Locke: Locke would after all be the paradigm of empiricism for Berkeley, since the philosophy of his *Essay* was the statement of empiricism that

<sup>10</sup> I discuss this assumption in my section 5 below.

<sup>11</sup> Harry M. Bracken, *Berkeley* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

<sup>12</sup> Louis Loeb, *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1981).

<sup>13</sup> Stephen H. Daniel, “Berkeley’s Christian Neoplatonism, Archetypes and Divine Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39 (2001): 239-58. Daniel argues for an innatist reading of Berkeley from the *Notebooks* onwards in his more recent “How Berkeley’s Works Are Interpreted” in *George Berkeley: Religion and Science in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Silvia Parigi (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 8-10.

<sup>14</sup> Costica Bradatan, *The Other Bishop Berkeley: An Exercise in Reenchantment* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

Berkeley was best acquainted with (although he also had a good knowledge of Hobbes' conceptual empiricism, and he would no doubt have also been familiar with Gassendi's objections to the *Meditations*). Locke's conceptual empiricism involved, in particular, three important parts of his philosophy in the *Essay*. The first of these is Locke's theory of abstraction which enabled him to explain how we arrive at certain general concepts from the *concreta* of sense. Berkeley's opposition to the doctrine of abstraction needs no commentary here as it is explicitly stated in many places, most extensively in the Introduction to the *Principles*.<sup>15</sup> Instead I wish to focus on Berkeley's attitude to two further theses that were essential to Locke's conceptual empiricism: these are his doctrine of reflection and his rejection of innate ideas. Berkeley's view of these two parts of Locke's empiricism is somewhat harder to discern.

Let us start with Berkeley's view of the anti-innatism in the First Book of the *Essay*, where Locke treats the mind, at its beginning, as a *tabula rasa*.<sup>16</sup> Many commentators assume that Berkeley followed Locke in rejecting innate notions, or innate ideas (as they are now almost always termed), and that he also endorsed the *tabula rasa* doctrine which came with this rejection. But it is very hard to find a passage where Berkeley actually says this, or indeed one where he shows any sympathy for the thrust of Locke's anti-innatist polemic. On the contrary, there is textual evidence that Berkeley was not satisfied with the conclusions of the First Book of the *Essay*. A lack of enthusiasm is suggested, for example, in the *Notebooks* where he opines that Locke's mistake was not to begin his *Essay* with the Third Book on language.<sup>17</sup> And a few pages before this remark he had made a considerably more explicit statement on the issue: "There are innate ideas i.e. Ideas created with us."<sup>18</sup> The *Notebooks* are probably not, however, a source of a single, stable doctrine, at least when it comes to spirit. At one stage Berkeley seems to have gone through a radical empiricist phase, when he was inclined, like Hume later, to treat the mind as merely a "congeries of perceptions."<sup>19</sup> He also felt able to invoke the *Nihil est in intellectu* axiom in one remark.<sup>20</sup>

Let us pass to a later phase of Berkeley's philosophy: in the first dialogue of *Alciphron* we find a discussion of what is "natural to the mind of man"—a phrase that conjures up (no doubt intentionally) innatist doctrine.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, we can read the sections in question as a systematic critique of Locke's central arguments against innatism. Euphranor, Berkeley's spokesman in the dialogues, contends that the notion of God is natural to us, while also allowing that it is not originally present in our minds nor universal to all

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<sup>15</sup> See Bracken, *Berkeley*, 40f. for a lucid statement of the role of Berkeley's anti-abstractionism in his rejection of conceptual empiricism.

<sup>16</sup> Locke uses the scholastic "*tabula rasa*" in the abridgement of the *Essay* that he published and circulated among his friends, but in the *Essay* itself he prefers "white Paper, void of all Characters" [See "Extrait d'un Livre Anglois...", *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique*, ed. J. Le Clerc (Amsterdam, 1688), vol. 8, 49-142: 49; and E II.i.2, 104].

<sup>17</sup> NB 717 (*Works* 1: 87).

<sup>18</sup> NB 649 (*Works* 1: 79).

<sup>19</sup> NB 580 (*Works* 1: 72). The suggestion that Berkeley went through a "Humean" phase has, however, been recently questioned by Daniel in his "How Berkeley's Works Are Interpreted."

<sup>20</sup> NB 779 (*Works* 1: 94).

<sup>21</sup> Alc. I, 14-15 (*Works* 3: 55-60)

minds. The conception of being “natural to the mind of man,” therefore, avoids Locke’s criticisms of innate ideas that emphasize the absence of these ideas in the minds of children, madmen, “Ideots,” and in certain geographically-remote communities. In *Siris*, Berkeley returns more explicitly to the innatist debate, openly disparaging those moderns who have “*attempted to explode*” innate ideas.<sup>22</sup> Here, again, he makes it clear that innatism need not say that content is actually present in the mind from birth, but can instead point to its universal *potential* to be there.<sup>23</sup> This last point is also emphasized in an explicitly innatist passage of the sermon “Thy Will be Done in Earth as it is in Heaven,” where Berkeley says that notions are “natural or innate” as universal dispositions or tendencies.<sup>24</sup>

None of the passages we have mentioned so far occur in what is often thought to be the classic period of Berkeley’s philosophical career which begins in 1709 with the publication of his *Essay on Vision* and extends to 1721 with *De motu*. But it is in this period that Berkeley shows a willingness to talk of the concept of the self—and indeed our knowledge of the spiritual sphere in general—in terms of pure intellect. In the *Notebooks* Berkeley had stated baldly “Pure Intellect I understand not,”<sup>25</sup> but in a letter of 1711 to Le Clerc in Latin, his view has evidently softened. He is now willing to accept a distinction between imagination and pure intellect, at least on the condition that pure intellect is allowed to comprehend only spiritual things that are known by reflection on the mind itself.<sup>26</sup> In the *Three Dialogues*, Philonous carefully distinguishes between the doctrine of pure intellect and that of abstract ideas, and he again makes room for the role of pure intellect in the spiritual sphere:

Since I cannot frame abstract ideas at all, it is plain, I cannot frame them by the help of *pure intellect*, whatsoever faculty you [Hylas] understand by those words. Besides, not to inquire into the nature of pure intellect and its spiritual objects, as *virtue, reason, God*, or the like; thus much seems manifest, that sensible things are only to be perceived by sense, or represented by the imagination.<sup>27</sup>

In *De motu*, Berkeley’s most explicit endorsement of pure intellect is made: “Pure intellect [*purus intellectus*],” he writes, “is concerned only with spiritual and inextended things, such as minds, their states, passions, virtues, and such like.”<sup>28</sup> *De motu* was Berkeley’s first publication after the loss of his manuscript of the Second Part of the *Principles* which was to deal with our knowledge of spirits, as well as with moral concepts. This loss seems to have occurred in southern Italy in 1716, some five years before *De motu* was published, and perhaps two or three years before it was written. It is

<sup>22</sup> *Siris* 309 (*Works* 5: 143). The italics are mine.

<sup>23</sup> See especially *Siris* 314 (*Works* 5: 145) where Berkeley says that “first notions” lie dormant in the mind until aroused by reflection.

<sup>24</sup> See *Works* 7: 130.

<sup>25</sup> NB 810 (*Works* 1: 97).

<sup>26</sup> “...etiamsi admittatur distinctio illa, tamen intellectus purus mihi videtur versari tantum circa res spirituales, quae cognoscuntur per reflexionem in ipsam animam...” (*Works* 8, 49-50).

<sup>27</sup> DHP (*Works* 2: 193-4).

<sup>28</sup> DM 53; see George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works, including the Works on Vision*, ed. Michael R. Ayers (London: J. M. Dent, 1992), 269. Hereafter PW.

likely, then, that what Berkeley says in the passage of *De motu* we have just quoted gives us a strong hint of the theory that had been developed in the missing manuscript. By accepting the pure intellect, Berkeley is rejecting conceptual empiricism: he is endorsing a faculty that has access to mental content underived from the images of sense, and it strongly suggests that he has sympathy with Cartesian innatism.<sup>29</sup>

Let me turn, now, to the third and final component of Locke's conceptual empiricism: his doctrine of ideas of reflection. Locke, when he introduced reflection as a second "fountain" of ideas, proposed that we understand it by analogy with sense experience, telling us that reflection "might properly enough be call'd internal Sense."<sup>30</sup> Locke says the mind "turns its *view* inward upon it self, and *observes* its own Actions,"<sup>31</sup> and he talks of our "*looking* immediately into our selves."<sup>32</sup> For Locke reflection is quasi-sensory perception. This is why it constitutes an important part of his defense of conceptual empiricism. Locke's theory of reflection broadens our understanding of sense to include internal perception, the hope clearly being that we can then allow for the knowledge that the mind has of its own activities without being tempted to join the Cartesians in abandoning conceptual empiricism.<sup>33</sup>

Berkeley is, again, never quite explicit about his view of Locke's ideas of reflection. Daniel Flage has suggested—I think with some reason—that he does wish to maintain at least some ideas of reflection, perhaps of the feelings that individuate our different emotions.<sup>34</sup> This is why Berkeley writes as if there are ideas of reflection in several places in the *Principles*, one of which is, of course, the very first section of the main text.<sup>35</sup> But it is clear that, when it comes to the mind's own nature and its operations, Berkeley treats Locke's sensory model as a fundamentally wrongheaded approach. Berkeley is particularly critical of the view that an "idea"—which for him refers to a passive object of the mind—can represent an active mental power.<sup>36</sup> This thought about passivity is backed-up by a more general Cartesian skepticism towards the presentation of

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<sup>29</sup> It is true that Malebranche, who was no innatist, also makes use of the pure intellect for his doctrine of "seeing all things in God." Malebranche's pure intellect is, nevertheless, no less in conflict with empiricism than Descartes'. One should also add that, since Berkeley did not subscribe to the vision in God thesis, it makes much more sense to link his pure intellect to Descartes and his innatist followers.

<sup>30</sup> E.II.i.4, 105.

<sup>31</sup> E.II.vi.1, 127 (my emphasis).

<sup>32</sup> E.II.vii.9, 131 (my emphasis).

<sup>33</sup> This intent is so fundamental to Locke's philosophical position that he states it in what is probably the very first sentence that he committed to paper towards his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. He begins Draft A with the words: "I imagin that all knowleg is founded on and ultimately derives its self from sense, or something analogous to it ..." Locke goes on to indicate that what is analogous to sense is "experience of the operations of our owne mindes." See *Drafts for the Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch and G.A.J. Rogers, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 1 and 7.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel E. Flage, "Berkeley's Ideas of Reflection," *The Berkeley Newsletter* 17 (2006), 7-13, where Flage talks of ideas of feeling that differentiate, say, being in love from being angry (10).

<sup>35</sup> For an enumeration of Berkeley's various references to ideas of reflection in the *Principles*, see Flage, "Berkeley's Ideas," 8.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, PHK 27 (*Works* 2: 27)

self-knowledge as a quasi-sensory affair. At PHK 136, he states that it is absurd to think that a sense could give us knowledge of our own soul,<sup>37</sup> and at PHK 142 he argues that the idea we might be able to perceive our soul by a sensory faculty is as contrary to reason as the idea that we might be able “to see a sound.”<sup>38</sup> Here Berkeley echoes Descartes’ statement in the *Discourse* that trying to use one’s imagination to understand the innate ideas of God and the soul is like “trying to use one’s eyes in order to hear sounds.”<sup>39</sup>

Berkeley’s opposition to the perceptual model for understanding the inner, spiritual sphere is also evident in a sometimes misunderstood remark in PHK 27 which I think is sometimes misunderstood. Berkeley writes:

Such is the nature of spirit or that which acts, that it cannot be of itself perceived, but only by the effects which it produceth.<sup>40</sup>

George Pitcher and Daniel Flage both read this as a positive statement about our knowledge of spirit, which asserts that such knowledge is always relative, that is, spirit is not known directly but only as that entity that produces certain effects.<sup>41</sup> But Berkeley is concerned here with the possibility of *perceiving* spirit—he says, after all, that spirit “cannot be of itself *perceived*.”<sup>42</sup> He allows, it is true, an indirect perception of spirit, but he makes it quite clear that if we seek to know spirit directly, perception cannot be of help. This is why, in the same section, Berkeley contrasts the indirect knowledge of spirit we gain by perception, with the *notion* of self that we all possess, and which is evidenced in our understanding of the word as well as in our understanding the words for the various mental operations such as willing, loving, hating. In the *Three Dialogues*, Berkeley tells us quite unequivocally that we have a direct and intimate knowledge of spirit:

I know what I mean by the terms I and myself; and I know this immediately, or intuitively, though I do not perceive it as I perceive a triangle, a colour, or a sound.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Works* 2: 102-4.

<sup>38</sup> *Works* 2: 106.

<sup>39</sup> *Discourse on Method*, Part IV (AT VI 129; CSM 1: 37).

<sup>40</sup> *Works* 2: 52.

<sup>41</sup> See George Pitcher, *Berkeley* (London: Routledge, 1977), 222; Flage leans on this passage more overtly when he, like Pitcher, asserts that Berkeley thinks we have only a relative notion of spirit—see Daniel E. Flage, *Berkeley’s Doctrine of Notions: A Reconstruction based on his Theory of Meaning* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 151 ff. Flage’s thesis that we have only a relative notion of spirit has been subjected to a detailed and (to my mind) persuasive critique by Talia Mae Bettcher in her “Berkeley on Substance” (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>42</sup> My emphasis. The context makes it clear that Berkeley is talking about the conception of spirit *per se*, not just other spirits, as some would have it. The general point, stated earlier in the section, is that “there can be no idea formed of a soul or spirit.”

<sup>43</sup> *Works* 2: 231. It has been suggested to me that this statement might still allow a peculiar kind of perception of the self—that is to say it might be read as saying “I do not perceive [the self] as I

Now, of course, Locke's theory of reflection was concerned with our perception of occurrent mental operations, and he nowhere suggested that we could perceive our soul itself, or the essence of our soul, by reflection. Apart from anything else, Locke was agnostic towards the nature of the soul and this showed itself in his refusal to exclude the possibility of "thinking matter." But it is precisely because Berkeley thought that we do have an understanding of the essence of the soul and because he thought that our mental operations were internal to this essence, that he was led to reject Locke's comparison of reflection with sense perception. The complete knowledge of spiritual substance that Berkeley wished to account for could not be explained by an internal sense.

So we have found evidence that Berkeley was at least unhappy with Locke's arguments against innatism, perhaps because he wished to defend innate notions in a somewhat different form than those that Locke attacked. We have also found that he rejected Locke's quasi-sensory model of reflection for explaining the knowledge we have of our own mental powers. The doctrine of notions seems to be relevant to both these critical moments in his engagement with Locke's empiricism. I wish to suggest not only that the doctrine of notions replaces Locke's empiricist internal sense of reflection, but that it also constitutes what Berkeley thought might be salvaged from innatism, as indicated in the passage from *Siris* that we quoted at the beginning.

#### IV. Berkeley and Innatism

Now the suggestion of any sort of kinship between Berkeley's notions and innatism may look willfully controversial. To help dispel this impression we must first distinguish between what might be called a crude and a refined version of innatism in Descartes' work. The crude version, which Descartes' opponents (such as Hyperaspistes and later Locke) tended to target, treated innate content as a collection of ideas somehow sitting in the mind from its inception. Most notoriously, perhaps, Descartes says in the *Meditations* that God stamps the idea of himself on our minds just as a craftsman stamps his mark on his handiwork.<sup>44</sup> However, in his replies to the empiricist objections of Gassendi and Hobbes, and then at greater length in the "Comments on a Certain Broadsheet," Descartes develops a theory that involves two important refinements to crude innatism. He points out that innate notions need not be actually existent in the mind *ab initio*, but merely have the potential to be there—something that we have found Berkeley asserting in several places, starting with *Alciphron*. Descartes then explains how this potentiality is realized when we become aware of our own nature as a "thinking thing." Such reflection, Descartes implies, gives us immediate access to concepts like "thought," "substance,"

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perceive a triangle, a colour or a sound, but I do still perceive it in another way." This reading would, I believe, be unsustainable in context. This is partly because the "other way" of perceiving spirit would be left quite unexplained, but also because Philonous, in the passage that follows this quote, simultaneously characterizes ideas as things perceived and denies that there is an *idea* of the self. Incidentally I know of no passage in Berkeley where he says we can have a direct *perception* of anything but an idea. One should also note at this point that "I," "myself," "mind," "soul" and "spirit" are synonyms for Berkeley (see PHK 2, *Works* 2: 42).

<sup>44</sup> CSM 2: 35; AT VII 51.

“cause,” “self” and so on. In “Comments on a Certain Broadsheet,” Descartes goes as far as to equate innate ideas with “the mind’s own faculty of thinking.”<sup>45</sup>

A similar refined version of innatism is also developed by Leibniz in his later writings, particularly in the *New Essays* and, more briefly, the *Monadology*.<sup>46</sup> Partly, no doubt, in response to Locke’s critique of crude innatism, Leibniz argues that the principle *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu* is a valid law that has one exception: our idea of the soul or intellect itself.<sup>47</sup> Once we allow that we have an idea of the intellect, or thinking self, which is not derived from sense, this gives us the key to many other concepts that can be gained from a reflective acquaintance with our own minds. Such reflection, Leibniz argues, shows us that the “soul includes being, substance, one, same, cause, perception, reasoning, and many other notions which the senses cannot provide.”<sup>48</sup>

The refined understanding of innate ideas has at least two advantages over its cruder predecessor. It is philosophically more satisfactory because the postulation of innate ideas is no longer *ad hoc* but is explained by the fact that we have a self-reflective faculty of thought. It is also ontologically more economical because it does not involve a secret treasure trove of ideas contained within the mind from the beginning, but only their potential to arise from reflection. But the refined view does come with one drawback, at least for Descartes. It does not seem compatible with the Cartesian view that our concept of geometrical space is innate. It is hard to see how our innate ideas of *res extensa* could be derived from mere reflection on the thinking self.<sup>49</sup>

Berkeley’s doctrine of notions is closely akin to the refined form of innatism. It shares with the innatists the conviction that the semantic content of certain concepts, including self, cause and substance, is not to be found in the data of sense, nor is it to be abstracted or constructed therefrom. It explains how our grasp of these concepts arises from our reflective acquaintance with the nature of the mind itself. In *De motu*, for example, Berkeley says that active cause is properly understood only when we “meditate” on “incorporeal things,” and that this concept belongs to first philosophy or metaphysics.<sup>50</sup> We might also notice how, in the context of Berkeley’s system, the difficulty we have just highlighted with the innateness of *res extensa* vanishes. For Berkeley there is simply no idea of abstract geometrical space that needs to be explained. It may therefore look as

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<sup>45</sup> AT VIII B 358; CSM 1: 303: “I have never written or taken the view that the mind requires innate ideas which are something distinct from its own faculty of thinking.” See also AT VII 189; CSM 2: 133 and AT VII 372-74; CSM 2: 256-57.

<sup>46</sup> See G.W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 110-11; and G.W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Texts*, trans. and ed. R.S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 272 (*Monadology* §30).

<sup>47</sup> Leibniz, *New Essays*, 111.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* I do not mean to suggest that Leibniz influenced Berkeley in this respect.

<sup>49</sup> A point made by Michael Ayers in “Was Berkeley an Empiricist or a Rationalist,” *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 34-63, see 40. Generally, Ayers’ essay is a statement of the opposing interpretation to the one taken here, treating Berkeley as an empiricist.

<sup>50</sup> DM 71-72 (PW 275-76).

if Berkeley's theory of notions is actually a more consistent version of Descartes' refined form of innatism than Descartes' own.

Let us briefly consider two potential objections to our linking of Berkeley's doctrine of notions with the refined version of innatism. First, it might be said that Berkeley's position exhibits a closer resemblance to the crude version of innatism than to its refined cousin because notions are ever-present to the mind, which is always active. It hardly seems consistent of Berkeley to talk of notions of self, substance and causation as being *potentially* in the mind: if the mind by its very nature is active, they must always *actually* be there. To meet this objection we should point out that when Berkeley discusses innatist doctrine, particularly in the passages of *Alciphron* and the Sermon "Thy Will be Done in Earth as it is in Heaven" we have mentioned, he is primarily interested in the notion of God. The notion of God is not present to the mind from its beginning, but requires reason and reflection. Berkeley's account of this notion and some other notions (e.g., of other finite minds and moral concepts) is more in harmony, then, with the refined version of innatism. More importantly, though, Berkeley thought that all notions require a kind of (non-perceptual) attention to one's mental activities. In the course of explaining his master-argument, for example, Berkeley tells us that the mind is apt to "take no notice of itself,"<sup>51</sup> and this surely means that notions, though they are always potentially accessible to the mind, need not be the actual subject of awareness from the mind's beginning.

A second objection would seek to assimilate the doctrine of notions to the traditional empiricist reading by pointing to the undeniable fact that the content of Berkeley's notions is still gained from experience in the most general sense of the word.<sup>52</sup> Thus Anthony Grayling writes: "The signal point is that without experience as such we do not come by notions; so Berkeley's empiricism is unequivocal."<sup>53</sup> The trouble with this objection, however, is that the same may be said of the refined version of innatism that we have been discussing. That too says that innate concepts emerge in the course of experience as the thinking subject becomes aware of its own nature. Grayling's broad understanding of empiricism therefore risks bringing Descartes and Leibniz into the empiricist fold. At this point some might say that refined innatism and empiricism can no longer be usefully separated from one another, and that the distinction between innatists and empiricists has been effectively erased. But if we continue to use the term empiricism in the narrow sense of conceptual empiricism that we outlined above, then empiricism requires that intellectual concepts be derived from the content of *sense* experience or something analogous to it; and this is exactly what Berkeley denies is the case with the concepts of self, substance, causation, etc.

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<sup>51</sup> PHK 23 (*Works* 2: 50).

<sup>52</sup> In *De motu*, for example, Berkeley more than once writes of our experience of causal power. See, for example, DM 30 (PW 262): "A thinking, active thing is given which we experience as the principle of motion in ourselves."

<sup>53</sup> A. C. Grayling, "Berkeley's Argument for Immaterialism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, 166-89, quoting 173.

## V. Perception, Subject and Object

There remains one significant difference between Berkeley's doctrine of notions and the innatism of Descartes and Leibniz, and it is this difference that enables him to find the middle way between empiricism and innatism described at *Siris* 308. Although Descartes and Leibniz reject the empiricist model of self-knowledge, resisting any attempt to treat self-knowledge as involving images or a quasi-sensory faculty, they do still talk of a *perception* of the self and other ideas that are derived from selfhood. This is strikingly put in Descartes' Second Meditation, where the meditator describes his liberation from sensory perceptions and his coming on the pure idea of his self in the following way:

I thus realize that none of the things that the imagination enables me to grasp is at all relevant to this knowledge of myself which I possess, and that the mind must therefore be more carefully diverted from such things if it is to perceive its own nature as distinctly as possible [*ut suam ipsa naturam quam distinctissime percipiat*].<sup>54</sup>

Here Descartes shows that he is willing to treat self-knowledge as a *perception* of one's own nature. This, as we learn elsewhere, is a purely intellectual perception. Descartes, whether consciously or not, looks upon self-reflection as involving a split between perceiving subject and perceived object. Somehow the subject must stand back from itself and perceive itself as an object of the mind. The paradoxical character of such a mental act is palpable. If we treat self-knowledge as a form of perception, then however intellectual and non-sensory we make this mental act, it threatens to be self-defeating, as the self, *qua* perceiver, eludes its own perception. It is as if, to use Gilbert Ryle's analogy, one is trying to jump on the shadow of one's own head.<sup>55</sup>

Berkeley's doctrine of notions is alive to this threat. He says that we as active beings are aware of our operations through exercising them by "a kind of inner consciousness" (*conscientia quadam interna*).<sup>56</sup> There is no *perception* of the self as an object: rather our mental activities reveal our natures as active beings. They do this without there being an idea, or passive item, present to the mind as it becomes aware of its own self, its causal power, or its substancehood. This allows Berkeley to drop the problematic assumption, shared by empiricist and innatist alike (despite their differences), that the spiritual sphere is known by a peculiar *perception*. This means that we cannot talk of innate *ideas* in his connection, as we can in connection with Descartes and Leibniz. Berkeley's notions are not a special sub-division of ideas as in Descartes. "To have an idea is all one as to perceive," Berkeley states early in PHK,<sup>57</sup> and so in denying that we have an idea of spirit, he is rejecting the possibility of any form of perception of it.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> AT VII 28; CSM 2: 19.

<sup>55</sup> Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 187.

<sup>56</sup> DM 21 (PW 260). See also PHK 89 (*Works* 2: 80) where Berkeley talks of "inward feeling."

<sup>57</sup> PHK 7 (*Works* 2: 44).

<sup>58</sup> This also means that my talk above of innate *contents* in the case of Descartes and Leibniz is not strictly applicable to Berkeley's position.

We now see the full significance of the statement at PHK 27 that we have already had occasion to discuss:

Such is the nature of spirit or that which acts, that it cannot be of itself perceived, but only by the effects which it produceth.<sup>59</sup>

Here we may take Berkeley to be rejecting not just the sensory Lockean perceptual model for understanding reflection, but also the intellectual version of the perceptual model to be found in the Cartesian innatist tradition. Any attempt *to perceive* the thinking subject, whether by sense or intellect, can only reveal the thinking subject indirectly by our perceiving its effects, or ideas.

It is by denying the perceptual model of self-knowledge that Berkeley is then able to bring about the synthesis that I referred to earlier. Conceptual empiricism is valid for what we can perceive. Perceptions—that is mental objects, or ideas—are always either sensory, or derived from sense experience. None of this, however, gives us an understanding of self, causation, or substance. Nor, it seems, does it give us an understanding of moral and aesthetic concepts, for the list of notions in *Siris* includes “goodness” and “beauty,” and in the *Three Dialogues* and *De motu* Berkeley mentions “virtue” as belonging to the spiritual sphere. To explain our grasp of these concepts, Berkeley appeals to our exercise of spiritual powers, and it is here that empiricism is found to fall short. Our conceptual grasp of spirit, substance, causal power, and of value, is not derived from sense, but is internal to the exercise of our mental faculties.

This position, however sketchily it is portrayed in Berkeley’s writings, has the important philosophical advantage of being able to incorporate the insights of both sides of the debate about innatism. It also makes an interesting and significant break with the view—common to Locke and Descartes—that to have a concept is to have some kind of special object before the mind. Berkeley has, of course, already questioned such a view in his critique of abstract ideas, when he holds that it is not the presence of an abstract idea that enables us to grasp the general concept of triangle, but our active use of a particular triangle, when we allow it represent other triangles. This makes our mastery of the concept of triangle as much a result of our ability to operate with ideas as of our passive perception of them. The doctrine of notions may be seen as another, deeper, expression of Berkeley’s view that concepts are constituted by our mental activity.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> PHK 27 (*Works* 2: 52).

<sup>60</sup> This paper was written as a part of the grant project “Formal and Historical Approaches to Epistemology,” GAČR, no. P401/10/1504. I presented a version at the tercentenary conference on Berkeley’s *Principles* held at the University of Neuchâtel in Spring 2010. I am very grateful to all who contributed to the discussion on that occasion, as I am to the anonymous referees of this journal for their helpful comments.

## New Berkeley Correspondence: A Note

Marc A. Hight

In the course of conducting research for a volume that will eventually include as much of the available correspondence of Berkeley as possible, I have come across a number of previously unpublished Berkeley letters. I here reproduce several (but by no means all) of them with a few brief notes. I have modernized and standardized the English for ease of reading, but have otherwise left the texts unmodified. Although none of the letters reproduced here are of any pointed philosophical interest, they do help complete our understanding of Berkeley and provide a context for his reasoning about the world.

The first of these letters is from John Percival to Berkeley in the summer of 1717. Benjamin Rand overlooked the letter in his 1914 edition of the correspondence between the two men

<sup>1</sup> and A. A. Luce did not publish *any* letters addressed to Berkeley in the *Works* (with the exception of some from Samuel Johnson). This letter finds Berkeley in Italy for the second time, seeing the sights and serving as tutor to George Ashe, the son of the senior George Ashe, Bishop of Clogher. A copy of the letter appears in one of Percival's letterbooks (not in Percival's hand) in the British Library Additional Manuscripts 47028, folios 195 *verso* and 196.

Kew, 25 July 1717

Dear Sir

I am always extremely pleased to hear from you, and know by your own hand how you so, and where you are. This satisfaction I lately received from Naples dated 18 June whether you was [*sic*] lately returned from a tour through the most remote and unknown parts of Italy. The account you give me of that expedition is so delightful that I wonder our travelers into Italy have generally omitted to see those parts; and though I cannot accuse myself of wanting so much curiosity when I was at Rome, because I could not obtain leave even to see Naples which was then in French hands, yet I blame the tribe of governors who decline carrying young gentlemen into so fine a country as you have described.

Whatever design I might have formed of visiting you in Italy, I am now obliged by the expectation of another child to lay it aside, and I must rest satisfied for the present with the entertaining accounts you give me and I hope will continue to do of your own travels. But I often please myself with the resolution of going abroad again when it shall please God to give me a convenient opportunity.

We pass our time at Kew as we did the summer before, Miss Minshull and Daniel Dering, is with us, but Charles Dering left us some time ago and is now returned to Ireland. I don't design to go there this summer, I hear from thence that

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Rand, *Berkeley and Percival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914).

all our friends are well, but Mr. Savage is dead which I write you that you may tell Mr. Ashe, his brother-in-law Sir Ralph Gore succeeds him in the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Pray present my service to him and let him know I am very glad to find he is able to take tours of pleasure. I hope and don't doubt he will be perfectly established in his health when he returns.

My family are all well and much your humble servants, as is

Dear Sir,  
&c

Percival

I writ you a day or two before the Bishop of Derry went to Ireland and sent it to his house to be conveyed to you.

The second letter is from Berkeley to Robert Nelson, whom Berkeley elsewhere refers to as "Brother Nelson."<sup>2</sup> Fraser speculates—not unreasonably—that Nelson might be a relative of the Robert Nelson who authored *Festivals and Fasts* and the *Life of Bishop Bull*. We have, however, no additional evidence to my knowledge to confirm this speculation. The letter is located in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, catalogued 3D8/2 no. 3195.

From the Castle of Dublin, 15 Jan 1721

I return you many thanks for the kindness and obliging freedom of your letter. What will be my fate here I can't tell. His Grace<sup>3</sup> was pleased not long since to show me some countenance at table and send me some Florence wine, being in a good humour, and another time he asked for a plate and sent me a plouver which meat [he - *sic*] himself liked best, a favour (as I am told) he never imparted to any chaplain before. And were not this (think you) worth coming into Ireland for, or enough to countervail the trouble of a voyage out of England, and the extraordinary charge attending it? Besides, the Archbishop of Dublin hath been very kind to me and often invited me to dinner in consideration of the rank that I [sustained?] as chaplain to the great Lord Lieutenant; and my friendship with Dr. Needham<sup>4</sup> his old fellow collegiate. My Lord of Tuam carried me 5 or 6 weeks ago to the Lord Primate of Ireland, who made me this dry compliment, that I came over with my Lord Lieutenant and therefore it was in vain for him to promise me anything. But the greatest honour of all was a personable visit from the Archbishop of Tuam (as his Grace assured me that he did once in my absence) and I have the charity to believe so great a prelate, because he used me with a great deal of ceremony when I went to see him. These would be fine things to talk of in the vain world, if I were a mere novice and unacquainted with the

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<sup>2</sup> Letter to Nelson, 6 October 1721, published by Alexander Fraser in *Life and Letters of George Berkeley, D.D.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), 93.

<sup>3</sup> The reference is not perfectly clear, but most probably is to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Duke of Grafton, for whom Berkeley served as chaplain.

<sup>4</sup> The name is partially obscured and difficult to make out in the original. 'Needham' is my best guess.

impertinence of mankind. I wish the Duke or Ormond doth not show himself a courtier in the worst<sup>5</sup> sense of all, that after he hath leveled me with common clergymen he doth not leave me how he found me; and so much worse for coming into Ireland to seek a bill and departing the same country pastor as I came. But as I have no strong hopes of making my fortune here, so neither do I despair: who am

your affectionate humble servant  
George Berkeley

My service and kind love to your good wife.

The third letter is from Berkeley to William Wake, then Archbishop of Canterbury. Wake was known for his commitment to corresponding with the churches under his care, and the letter provides some evidence that Berkeley's Bermuda scheme was well thought of in at least some circles and had some support in the Anglican Church. I am indebted to David Raynor, who first informed me of the existence of the letter and to the excellent staff at the library at Christ Church College in Oxford, where the original is held. The letter is catalogued in the Wake correspondence as volume 24, item 86.

10 August 1725

May it please your Grace,

In obedience to your Grace's commands I take the liberty to inform you that Sir Robert Walpole is of opinion the petition relating to the lands formerly belonging to popish clergy in Saint Christopher's should be presented to the Lord Justices at their next meeting. Those lands contain somewhat more than seven hundred acres whereof five hundred and twenty or thereabouts are fit for sugar canes, the remainder are coarse and of small value. Three hundred pounds per annum is all that the Public can propose to make of the abovementioned lands but they would be a great matter in the endowment of our College. Your Grace's known concern for every thing that may promote the interests of Religion and Learning leaves me no room to doubt of your favor herein. I shall therefore add only that I am — with most profound respect My Lord

Your Grace's  
most dutiful  
& most obedient  
servant  
Geor: Berkeley

August the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1725

The next letter is from Berkeley to Isaac Gervais. Like his other letters to Gervais, this one suggests that the two men were reasonably good friends. Gervais would within a year of the date of this letter be named the Dean of Tuam. He was an occasional visitor to

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<sup>5</sup> Correcting the original, which says 'worse.'

Berkeley's residence in Cloyne. I discovered the letter by a fortuitous accident while doing research on the Samuel Johnson papers at the Butler Library at Columbia University. The letter is held at Columbia University in the Smith Manuscript collection, catalogued only by the names of the correspondents.

19 February 1741/2

Revd Sir:

We are glad to find the spring is likely to bring you to us with other good things. My wife with her thanks and service desires me to send you word that she is resolved not to suffer that choice instrument (which you will tell is the history of all Cloyne to escape her hands leaving you to make as good a purchase as you can, be it ten pounds, or rather than [fail] ten guinea. She is likewise much obliged for the four-stringed bass violin, of which you say you have three or four in view, and depends on your choosing that which has the best tone. I told you before that Mr. Prior in Bolton Street will pay for both instruments and take care to convey them to Corke. For want of other news I send you a scrap of a private letter I received this day from a man of quality in London.

There will be many [removes], but what and to give place to whom, we shall not know nor have the opposition agreed it, for you may be assured there are many expectants. When that is done the prince will come to court and not till then. The country party have plainly got a majority which will daily increase, and the Lords are falling off.

So far the words of my letter I leave you to make your own reflexions on this changeable scene of things, and at the same time assure that I am with unalterable regard

Revd sir  
your most  
faithful humble servant  
G. Cloyne

The final two letters are interesting in that they shed some light on Berkeley in the twilight of his career and life. Now well known for his espousal of tar-water and other causes in the service of the people of Ireland, it should not be unexpected to find people appealing to him for aid and assistance—of all sorts. I here reproduce two letters, one addressed to Bishop Berkeley followed by his reply. Apparently Dorothy Dubois (nee Annesley) was having difficulty with a local nobleman who pledged his love to her and wed her in secret (without witnesses), but then subsequently refused to recognize their state of matrimony. Berkeley supplies cautious but sage advice to the woman appropriate to the reigning ecclesiastical authority in the area and otherwise refuses to become embroiled in the delicate affair. The letters are copies in another hand and appear in the Annesley Papers located in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin, catalogued as Manuscript 987. Both letters are undated, but an unknown hand plausibly places the letter to Berkeley in 1752.

[1752]

My Lord

My mean abilities are very incapable of writing in a style proportioned to the great veneration I have for that exalted understanding and unparalleled goodness so conspicuous in your lordship. The first awes me into a silence, and bids me tremble at the bold attempt of exposing my demerits before so excellent a judge. But the latter encourages me to endeavour to express some part of that gratitude which actuates my soul. The sense I have of my own imperfections shall not prevent my paying a tribute of those acknowledgements so justly due from me to your lordship.

Mr. Dubois tells me he has acquainted your lordship with the sacred engagements we are under; and I hope my conduct will show I am no stranger to the duties I am really entered into.

The stability of my resolution can brave the frowns of fortune, and view the [text obscured] fortunes here but as preparations to more durable blessings than any to be found in this world. My notions would be ridiculed by the polite part of it, who for the generality make a little paltry wealth and grandeur the ultimate end of their wishes; but I am in search of happiness of a different nature and build my hopes on a more solid basis.

Now my lord I must enter on a subject that has given me more joy than I am well able to express: my husband is a Protestant! Wheres! wheres should I find words suitable to my obligations? And how thanks the kind author (under God) of his conversion? It is to you my lord I owe this happy change and to you great part of my acknowledgements are due. Some blessing more than ordinary attends it. Or why are my spirits so elated? And why my soul filled with more transport than that even you experienced. Indeed my lord it is not in my power to account for the surprising alteration I find in my breast. I readily accept of the pleasing task of perusing the Bible, as your lordship directs, nor shall my poor labor's want an interpreter (as far as my little judgment reaches) while heaven spares me to him; but I must entreat your lordship to give the dear convert a true light into that faith, whose greatest ornament is yourself. The obligations we are under to the best of men shall be stored in our breasts, and as your lordship was the means of uniting our prayers, you and yours shall be gratefully remembered in them.

I wish it were practicable that we might be married pursuant to the laws of the land. My interest requires that it should be kept secret from my father (the Earl of Anglesy), but notwithstanding this considerations I will gladly do what even your lordship pleases. I should esteem it the highest honor would you favour me with your advice, which I will carefully follow in every particular, and am with the profoundest respect,

My lord,

Your lordship's most obliged  
dutiful, and obedient servant  
Dorothy Dubois

[1752, no date]

Madam

The letter your ladyship hath been pleased to honour me with engages me in a difficult task, that of writing to a lady of so much taste as must make her a critic in spite of good nature. For my part I have just wit enough to know I am no match for your ladyship. This should make me decline writing; but I recollect that if I cannot say polite and witty things yet I may say some things that are true and agreeable.

The person on whom you have placed your affection is in my opinion much above the common level of those amongst whom fortunes had placed him. Had I known your ladyship I should never have advised the taking this step; but since it is taken, I advise by all means to make the best of it.

A lady of your quality and pretensions hath done the greatest honour and at the same time laid the greatest obligation possible on Mr. Dubois, who is fortunate enough to know his happiness, and while I doubt not endeavour to become it. He hath lived on a familiar foot in my family for some years, which gave me an opportunity of knowing him to be a sober, civil, well bred, and well natured man, and free from those gross vices that are too common amongst persons of his age and character. Whatever was done in relation to the sacred engagements you mention, was done in a private illegal manner. The next step must be to satisfy the law by a public legal marriage: the omission of this necessary step would be (as I apprehend) attended with far greater inconveniences than seemed for a good while to sit loose towards popery. He attended our family prayers, went sometimes to church, and heard the Scriptures, and other useful books often read in the family; by these means his prejudices have gradually worn away, and he is become a professed Protestant. I have given him the best reasons I could, and your ladyship gave him [what?] I take him at present to be a sincere [commitment?]. It is attachment to our holy religion and all things laudable will grow with his interest in your ladyship, and in proportion to the opportunity of knowing your merit and accomplishments, which will be to him a school of virtue and a guide to happiness. And that it may prove so I recommend you both to the good providence of Almighty God and remain,

Madam

your most obedient and most humble servant

G: Cloyne

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## Review

*Berkeley's Alciphron: English Text and Essays in Interpretation.*  
 Laurent Jaffro, Geneviève Brykman, Claire Schwartz, eds.  
 Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2010. 443 pp.

With *Alciphron* (1732), George Berkeley made a fresh and important contribution to the large body of writings against the *free-thinkers*. The recent publication by L. Jaffro, G. Brykman and C. Schwartz restores the genuine text of the second edition. Reproduced without the addition of any annotations or comments, the text of *Alciphron* is flanked, however, with a collection of critical articles that help frame the work from the comparative perspective within the lively debates characterizing the eighteenth century.

In *Alciphron* Berkeley adopts a very different strategy from the dialectical battles making up the *Boyle Lectures*, particularly those of Samuel Clarke. Well aware of the impasse to which the extreme rationalization of Christian belief leads—if God is deprived of all his anthropomorphic attributes, his value is reduced to a mere cause—Berkeley chose to change the focus of the discourse. He argues that the good believer should know that the divine attributes, though different in proportion, are similar in nature to those of human beings; but the believer also has to realize that Christianity is essential for its effects on individual and social morality. Only the belief in a remunerative God provides adequate motivation for human moral action, which otherwise would be left at the mercy of conflicting passions.

For Berkeley, practice is driven by theory, and free-thinkers are “wicked upon Principles” (62). Ironically referred to as “minute philosophers,” free-thinkers are characterized by their atheism—from which, in turn, free-thought cannot be separated (274). The essays appended to this edition of the *Alciphron* frame this core of theoretical atheism by showing us the negative effects of practical atheism. As Jaffro puts it, Berkeley is concerned with the “éducation des éducateurs” (277): the subtle reasoning of the free-thinkers produces upheavals in society; and even if they appear not to realize it, their speaking openly and without restraint of all things causes people to lose their bearings.

Brykman rightly states that Berkeley, in a sense, “discovers” the perlocutory use of language (411); and it seems that the Irish thinker, throughout the whole course of his dialogues, continually returns to the role of speech in practice. A metaphor perfectly exemplifies this attitude: free thought is not like *gunpowder* but like *Brandy* (84). If the former is expressly malevolent, the latter looks and tastes pleasant, is valued for its digestive properties and aroma, gives comfort at first sip, but finally reveals its terrible effects on society. So, although it appears in innocent guise, it is more dangerous than what, at the first sight, appears to embody evil. The greatest danger of atheism does not lie in its theoretical core but in its constitution as a way of education. That is why, as Taranto insists, the theories of those free-thinkers who act as moralists are treated more harshly and with more contempt—in particular, Mandeville and Shaftesbury (364).

No doubt, this emphasis is plausible, and it recurs in other essays in the collection. But another interesting aspect of the text lies in the discovery of an alleged theoretical proof of atheism. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the debate on the actual existence of a speculative atheism was as animated as it was confused. Apologists of Christianity clashed with one another—often falling into inconsistency—about the real sustainability of this kind of atheism. In *Alciphron*, though, Berkeley is clear about his stance: “though it has been often said, there is no such thing as a speculative atheist; yet we must allow, there are several atheists who pretend to speculation” (17). He then follows up with an account of the main features of this alleged atheism.

From a different standpoint, Berkeley positively claims to prove the truth of Christianity, starting from evidence rooted in *common sense*. As Fourny-Etchegaray suggests, this kind of common sense is not that of Shaftesbury (400), but rather that of a natural, ordinary man who lives in contact with the passage of the seasons, with manual work and intimate reflection. The character who most closely embodies this sort of common sense is Euphranor, a subtle but simple man who, after spending some time at university, understands that the highest degree of knowledge that can be taught is to be found in the fatigue of daily work in the fields. Thus he decides to devote himself passionately to managing his land. The characteristics and role of this character testify that Berkeley does not intend to linger long over theological discussions since, according to him, a proceeding of this kind only helps the well-known quibbles of the “minute philosophers.”

Berkeley thus aims to denounce the social perversions of atheism and, positively, to inspire the Christian faith in the common man. Nevertheless, even if he refrains almost entirely from giving a strict theological refutation of atheism, he does have in mind a specific argument used by atheists, and he tries to answer it. According to the *Alciphron*, this argument is proposed by the *great* Diagoras. As Lysicles tells it, Diagoras expounds in private a two-step demonstration “clear as daylight” of the inexistence of God (42). First, taking advantage of the uncertainties of the theologians, Diagoras concludes that God is bereft of all attributes. Second, he shows that a simple “cause” of this kind cannot be distinguished from the material universe (132). This is not to deny the existence of a God, and in fact Lysicles is careful not to move in this direction (133). Rather, it is to deny all the essential attributes of God (e.g., kindness, intelligence, omnipotence) and to reduce his nature to blind necessity. The target of eighteenth-century atheism is therefore the existence of a divine mind, a *Nous* provided with planning capability and power (134). If God were a mere first cause, what we call God would be an empty term.

Berkeley, weaving the dialogue, tries to reply to the theory of Diagoras while admitting that the problem of divine attributes is a real one; for when you dissolve those attributes as being incommensurable, you open the door wide to atheism. In this connection, Berchielli writes that “Berkeley points out that any concept that presupposes the inaccessibility of divine attributes is a dangerous weapon in the hands of freethinkers” (388). The only viable solution that can save religion is to “return to the original meaning of the term analogy as a similarity of relations. . . The corresponding terms have the same meaning, although their extension, when applied to God, is made proportional to its infinite nature” (389).

The characters of *Alciphron*, as Berkeley himself notes, may represent real people, even though several theories (e.g., priestcraft) are brought together under the single figure of the freethinker. Le Jallé concludes that “Berkeley intends to produce a summary of the general position of freethinkers” (299). Diagoras, however, represents the speculative atheist par excellence, the mind of the freethinker, embodied especially in the ways and philosophy of Anthony Collins. This identification, already advanced by David Berman, is echoed in several of the essays collected in this volume. Brykman (332), for example, examines the relation between Collins’ determinism and Diagoras’ atheism, while Taranto (362) focuses on their similarity on the question of divine attributes.

The articles of this collection largely converge on the central role that Berkeley assigned to moral pedagogy. Attesting to the liveliness of the debate, however, some readings on more specific points are rather different, particularly on the question of the *heteronomy* of morality. Whereas Bertini writes that “Berkeley portrays the man without fear and hope as the epitome of existential angst” (317), emphasizing the need for a motive that resides outside those same morals, Nurock argues that Berkeley’s analysis “does not endorse externalism but a particular form of internalism, where the moral sense and religious sense are closely linked in the conscience of the same moral subject” (330). The question is of real interest, but should not be dealt with too rigidly, for experience shows that both the advocates of free thought—or the movement’s involuntary founders—and their opponents were not actually aligned with either moral autonomy or moral heteronomy. The movement’s advocates, although they rejected the concept of moral motive on the basis of divine justice, or on the basis of a remunerative God, nevertheless based their morals on external assumptions, that is, pleasure and pain. By contrast, Berkeley admitted the existence of a moral sense—the meaning of which is far from that of Shaftesbury—and yet had to hypothesize a God who gives rewards or punishments in order to instill morality into the human soul.

The volume appears to be well put together: in the first part, the text of *Alciphron* is carefully restored; the decision to omit notes removes little from the comprehensibility of the text, and it is also fully consistent with the intention of the editors to propose a clear reproduction of the second edition (1732). The rich collection of sixteen essays that make up the second part are well-matched, and the thematic organization is particularly functional. The choice dictated by the policy of the series, to propose essays in different languages (English, French, German and Italian) while perhaps making for slightly harder reading, also mirrors the successful internationalization that George Berkeley studies have achieved.

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## Review

C. George Caffentzis. *Exciting the Industry of Mankind: George Berkeley's Philosophy of Money*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000. 462 pp.

Constantine George Caffentzis looks at George Berkeley's *The Querist* from a new perspective. He does *not* take Berkeley's proposal for a national bank as a means of solving practical problems in everyday transactions but as "Berkeley's ingenious solution to the class problematic" (406). He does *not* accept Berkeley's statement in the "Advertisement" (added to the 1750 edition of *The Querist*) that the main objective of his book was "to feed the Hungry and clothe the Naked" Irish Catholics. On the contrary, Caffentzis argues, Berkeley wanted to develop a capitalist colonialism in Ireland. His real motive was to make himself and his Anglican colleagues richer at the expense of the poor Irish Catholics (4). This negative approach to Berkeley is a refreshing contrast to the exaggerated "To Berkeley, every Virtue under Heaven." Caffentzis points out that Berkeley accepted slavery, that his reason for baptizing slaves was to make them better slaves (p. 85), that he published degrading remarks about the mixture of Spanish and Tartar genes in the Irish natives (129-130), etc. Such things should not, of course, be swept under the carpet.

This book is the second of a three-volume work on Locke's, Berkeley's and Hume's philosophy of money. It includes valuable background information on the economic history before Berkeley published *The Querist* (15-104). When it comes to the interpretation of this work, a crucial point is what the author refers to as "Berkeley's second conceptual revolution" (241-79). The first was a dual ontology of ideas and spirits, the second was to include notions, prejudices, principles and other items in his philosophy. Once Berkeley put money into this conceptual machinery he created, according to Caffentzis, an inhuman capitalist system by which he intended to expropriate the means of subsistence from the poor native Irish Catholics. I fear that the main theses of this book are reserved for readers who share the author's political beliefs.

"I have philosophical and political-economic intentions in writing this book," Caffentzis declares in the Introduction. "I wish to show that the contemporary debates concerning Keynesian policies in the North America and Europe and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank policies in the Third World are by no means novel"; they "have their roots in the first experiments in capitalist colonialism in Ireland and the Americas centuries ago," and George Berkeley's *Querist* is a (perhaps the) paradigm case of these "first experiments." The author also intends to show that "texts like *The Querist* can be explained through an 'ampliative' approach in contrast to the positivist, structuralist and post-structuralist programs of the last scholarly generation" (10).

Following these intentions, the author starts with the information that the upper-class Anglo-Irish landowners refused to pay tithes to the Anglican Church in 1734 and assumes (without any supporting evidence) that Berkeley “desperately searched for a way out of this precarious socioeconomic situation for himself and his institution” (4-5), and that he wrote *The Querist* “as a response to the politico-economic dilemma the Anglo-Irish ruling class faced in the early eighteenth century” (3-11, 156, 407 *et passim*).

If Berkeley ever tackled the tithe problem, his solution was, according to Caffentzis, to rob poor Catholics and make rich Anglicans richer: “the burden of supporting the Anglican Church of Ireland fell on the tithes and rents paid by the Irish Catholic natives, who now were expected not only to work for the comfort of the Anglo gentry on this earth, but to finance their masters’ salvation in heaven!” (4). One of Berkeley’s steps to fulfill his plan was, according to Caffentzis, “the separation of people from their means of subsistence” (9). But the text of *The Querist* supports the very contrary view: that he wanted to *provide* the poor with means to subsist, that he developed a program for a Welfare State in which *all* citizens were supposed to have good living standards, that “wealth” was *not* confined to what was good for “the Anglo gentry,” etc. Caffentzis does not deny this, but his thesis is that Berkeley deliberately misleads his readers in *The Querist*: he says one thing but means the very contrary.

To prove this, Caffentzis develops what he calls “Berkeley’s Theory of Persuasion” (168-75). In terms of that theory, it is not accidental that *The Querist* consists exclusively of numbered questions. Caffentzis observes that seventy percent of these queries are “anti-interrogative questions” (“Is X not Y?” strongly suggests “Yes, X is Y!”), but he argues that it is a mistake to take them as declarative sentences presented “with the addition of a question mark and an interrogative word order” (157, 174). This is the traditional “transparency” reading of *The Querist*, but the queries should be understood as no more than “hints” (165-68). “Once the hint is accepted, the next point in the process of persuasion is repetition” (172). Besides hints and repetitions, the lack of a strict logical structure plays an important part in the process. “This mixture of levels and topics, this flow—interrupted to go back to previous points and switched ahead as if there was nothing to prove—creates a peculiar response in the reader as the queries accumulate. . . . The job of persuasion is actually put into effect through what might be called a ‘hypnotic trick’.” Caffentzis adds the circular argument that the fact that most scholars still use the “transparency” reading of the text “is a sure sign of the very success of Berkeley’s strategy” (174-75).

This account of Berkeley’s strategy is of crucial importance to the new perspective that Caffentzis introduces. It should be noted, however, that Berkeley himself took a “transparency” reading of his texts for granted. When he published “Queries Relating to a National Bank, Extracted from the *Querist*,” together with “A Plan or Sketch of Such Bank” in 1737, he opens the “Sketch” saying, “it should seem no difficult Matter to convert Queries into Propositions,” and then he repeats what he said in the queries—in a running text of declarative sentences. Similarly in *A Word to the Wise* (appended to the London and Glasgow editions of *The Querist* in 1750 and 1751 and reprinted in *A Miscellany* in 1752), Berkeley reformulates what he said in the first forty or fifty entries

of *The Querist* Part I (1735)—again in a running text of (mainly) declarative sentences. In *A Word to the Wise* moreover (that was addressed to the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland) Berkeley emphasizes that the native Irish Catholics were living in appalling conditions and calls for an Anglo-Catholic collaboration on improving their standard of living. Caffentzis ignores this work (though mentions it in passing on 416). Neither does he note Berkeley's proposal to the Anglican authorities "to admit Roman-Catholics into our College, without obliging them to attend Chapel-Duties, or Catechisms, or Divinity-Lectures" (Query 119).

In the "Conclusion" of his book, Caffentzis admits that a few earlier scholars were about to disclose what he regards as the true nature of *The Querist*: "Although commentators from Karl Marx to Jean-Joseph Goux have noted the conceptual affinity between Berkeley's theory of money and his 'idealist' philosophy, few have noted how the *Querist*'s form of money was over-determined by the class dynamics of early eighteenth-century Ireland" (405). Caffentzis completed this line of interpreting Berkeley by the assumption that he *might* have reacted to the tithe revolt, that he *might* have conspired against the poor Irish Catholics, and that he *might* have misled readers of *The Querist* by his "Theory of Persuasion." The conclusion is that "*The Querist* still speaks directly but quizzically to us" about the "native Irish" in the 1730s, about "their total expropriation (land, body, and soul) by the Anglo-Irish settler class." It serves as "a model of many parts of the planet that have been 'left out' of capitalist development. Berkeley was writing before the evolutionist paradigm of capitalist development was established; we, who are living after the crisis of this paradigm, can learn from and profitably reflect on the political and class constraints he confronted" (414). This is preaching to the converted, or making a personal confession of political faith. Perhaps it is unfair to use those criteria of scholarship that Caffentzis turns his back on (10), but, nonetheless, in the light of them, this is *not* an interpretation of *The Querist* or a scholarly examination of this work in the context of Ireland in George Berkeley's day.

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## Review

Talia Mae Bettcher. *Berkeley: A Guide for the Perplexed*.  
London: Continuum, 2008. xv + 207 pp.

In her new book, *Berkeley: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Talia Bettcher presents an insightful and cogent interpretation of Berkeley's metaphysics and epistemology. Bettcher focuses on Berkeley's two main works, *Principles of Human Knowledge* and *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, and bases her interpretations primarily on these works. The result is a coherent and original interpretation of Berkeley that concentrates on well known Berkeleyan themes and topics, but it has the unavoidable outcome of leaving other major works of Berkeley (e.g., *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*, and *Alciphron; or, the Minute Philosopher*) with a much shorter treatment and only scant remarks about *De Motu* and *Siris*. The author acknowledges this and further claims that "any responsible introduction really does need to take this kind of focus" (xi). Maybe so, but I cannot help thinking that even an introductory book on Berkeley, with just over 200 pages (including index and bibliography), could have included at least some discussion of Berkeley's other works to give the reader some understanding of the development of Berkeley's views and the relationship between the systematic interpretation offered by Bettcher and Berkeley's earlier and later views. Berkeley's *Philosophical Notebooks* in particular, although ridden with interpretative difficulties, would have deserved at least some attention, especially since the footnotes in Bettcher's book are not excessive by any means. On the other hand, the secondary literature is taken into an account admirably: the references to it are few but well chosen, which fits the purpose of the book nicely. Instead of mentioning all there is written about some particular interpretative question, Bettcher generally just mentions the ones that she is against or which resemble her own interpretation.

That being said, the first chapter, although short, succeeds in giving an accurate description of Berkeley's life and the philosophical and political climate of his day. The second chapter describes Berkeley's overall philosophical project including its origins and targets. Bettcher points out that Berkeley is motivated not only by anti-skepticism and deep religious feelings but also by practical, moral considerations, an important point which is all too often left unmentioned when interpreting Berkeley. By siding with common sense against philosophical perplexities, Berkeley aims to encourage men into virtuous action by proving the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The main forms of skepticism that undermine both religion and morality are identified as the denial of the real existence of sensible qualities, fueled by the new science of the day and the Lockean ignorance of the real essences of everyday items.

The third chapter discusses Berkeley's fundamental philosophical assumptions and offers an interpretation of the so-called Master argument. That Argument aims to show that it is impossible to conceive an everyday item existing unperceived. The problem is that, even if we grant that when we conceive of a thing that that thing is thereby conceived or

thought in the mind, it does not follow that one has failed to conceive of that thing *as* conceived without the mind: one seems to be able to “isolate” the content from thinking itself. Bettcher argues that Berkeley operates with both a new understanding of consciousness and with a new understanding of ideas, and that these should be taken into an account when trying to understand the Master Argument. On Bettcher’s reading, thinking for Berkeley always involves consciousness that one is thinking (“reflexivity of thought”), and the consciousness in question ought not to be confused with the reflection whereby one attends to one’s own mental states. The latter involves attending; the former (referred to by Bettcher as “essential consciousness”) happens every time one thinks. The objects of essential consciousness in turn are for Berkeley “thing-like” items that Bettcher calls “subjective-objects.” Bettcher considers there to be an important difference between the view defended by Berkeley and the previous view, defended by Locke and Descartes, according to which one is conscious of one’s own *mental states*. Subjective-objects are not states, acts or episodes of mind, in the sense that, although their existence consists in being perceived, they nevertheless possess certain thing-like features: for instance, an imaginary unicorn is pink and has a horn. Besides subjective-objects, all essential consciousness involves the awareness of the fact that these objects of consciousness belong to me: it is I myself who is thinking. Whenever one thinks, one is conscious of both the (subjective-) object of one’s thinking and oneself. Bettcher thus reformulates the worry about the Master Argument in these new terms: in order to conceive an everyday item to exist unperceived, “one must eliminate the self altogether (something which seems truly impossible to do)”. Since all conceiving involves both subjective-object and awareness of oneself, this is impossible. The question now is whether in conceiving an ordinary object to exist unconceived we are able to eliminate the conceiving self (54). If not, the object conceived as existing unconceived has been represented as conceived.

It is better to quote Bettcher herself on the matter:

The complaint that the self has not intruded into the content has no merit, since things are never represented *as* perceived in the content. Rather, the content is *only* ever represented as perceived insofar as there is a self-evident self perceiving it. Berkeley’s Master Argument would now hinge on the following assumption: An object is represented *as* perceived by the mind just in case there is an accompanying self. And if accepted for true, the argument then stands or falls on whether one is always conscious of oneself when one conceives of something else. (54)

I admit that I fail to see the solution of the Master Argument that follows from bringing the consciousness of self into every act of conceiving. Admittedly, it seems to follow by definition that one is always conscious of oneself in every conceiving. But how does it follow that one fails to conceive the object *as* unconceived? Just as it is possible to conceive an object *as* unconceived, it would seem to be possible to conceive an object as without the mind, although one always has to be conscious of oneself when doing this conceiving. Admittedly one would be conscious of oneself while conceiving it, but it has not been shown yet how this fact about conceiving the object “bleeds into the content” so that one cannot think of the thing *as* existing unconceived. Bettcher seems to be offering some additional reasons for this when she continues:

[N]o object can be perceived except *as* a subjective-object. Nor can one abstract certain aspects (such as color or sound) from their being perceived. For in abstractly thinking about color, one will nonetheless be aware of oneself as well. Since this is precisely what is involved in a thing being represented to the mind *as* perceived, it would appear that any attempted abstraction is of no use in escaping cognitive-closure [i.e. that all thought contents are subjective-objects, see p. 51] . (54)

It seems that the impossibility of conceiving an object as unconceived hinges on our inability to abstract the object from our own existence. But why is our own existence of any importance when wondering whether trees and houses can exist unperceived unless one already presupposes that their existence is dependent on oneself? It seems that one could similarly deny that aspects of perceived objects can be abstracted from their being perceived by stipulating that conceived objects exist only as they are conceived; but one doesn't seem to need any essential consciousness for that. No doubt, one can equate subject-objects, whose existence is to be perceived, and ordinary things such as trees and houses. But that would seem to be begging the question instead of showing that objects cannot be conceived as unconceived.

The second part of the book, which comprises chapters 4–6, discusses the questions of immediate versus mediate perception (chapter 4), the thesis that everyday items are collections of sensible things immediately perceived (chapter 5), and the claim that spirits are the only substances (chapter 6). Especially illuminating is the discussion of different versions of representational realism in chapter 4. Bettcher distinguishes between Strong Immediate Perception (perceiving something immediately without the use of a vehicle of perception at all, as in perceiving a performer on stage via screen) and Weak Immediate Perception (which allows for immediately perceiving something by means of some vehicle when the vehicle itself is not perceived immediately, as in perceiving something with the help of binoculars).

Here and elsewhere, Bettcher's point would have been clearer were it not for occasional misprints in the text that could easily have been corrected. For instance, when discussing the Pain/Pleasure Argument, reference is repeatedly made to premise (3) of the argument (apparently that heat and pain are not distinct). However, the argument is not explicitly presented with numbered premises. Also in the discussion of the thesis that everyday items are nothing but collections of sensible things that we immediately perceive, the pictures that are designed to clarify the discussion are found on the wrong page.

The third part of the book treats Berkeley's arguments for the existence of God and other spirits (chapter 7), divine perception (chapter 8), and the status of sciences in Berkeley's philosophy and their relation to common sense (chapter 9). Bettcher offers an interesting solution to the problem of how God (who is perfect) can perceive pain (which is an imperfection; Third Dialogue, 240)—from which it seems to follow that the ideas that we and God perceive are not the same. Bettcher argues that we can understand how God's perceptions resemble ours by analogy to our ideas of imagination: just as ideas of imagination may resemble the ideas received by sensation without involving any pain or pleasure, so God too may be understood to perceive the pains that human beings

perceive, but not by passively suffering them but only by actively causing them. They would thus be similar to our ideas of pain in the same way as imagined pains are similar to experienced pains, the difference being that imagined pains don't hurt. But it seems that we can think or imagine pains and pleasures without experiencing them (even if we must have experienced them at least once). This is not the case, however, with God, who is unable initially to perceive pains or pleasures in order to form imaginary pains and pleasures (which do not hurt or please) later on; so the analogy seems inadequate.

Bettcher ends her book with a short comparison between Berkeley and Hume. The discussion is interesting, since Bettcher only touches on the topic of activity and passivity that many commentators consider to be central to Berkeley's conception of the mind. Because of her emphasis on consciousness, though, the topic does not get much attention. She also attempts to explain Berkeley's view on mental causation by identifying the creation of an idea with merely perceiving it, thereby avoiding the need to suppose the existence of any individual volitions. But even though self-created ideas differ from those acquired through the senses in being less vivid and orderly and in lacking pleasure and pain, not all of our ideas of imagination seemingly are caused by us. For example, how in such an account would one distinguish ideas one intentionally creates from those that just pop into one's mind or which are due to memory? Moreover, Berkeley would seem to be committed to the view that the ideas we cause through imagination are created *ex nihilo* altogether mysteriously: we don't seem to have any account of how they come about. If this is the case, it seems inexplicable why we would want to call ourselves active when imagining instead of speaking of undergoing ideas of imagination. Some account of the *modus operandi* by which we create ideas of imagination would seem preferable to merely speaking of creating ideas by perceiving them.

Although Bettcher's book is meant as an introduction to Berkeley, I would be hesitant to use it as the only secondary literature on Berkeley when teaching an undergraduate course, or even recommending it as the very first commentary on Berkeley to start with. This is not due to the shortcomings of the book but because the book is somewhat difficult to approach without a fair amount of knowledge of Berkeley. However, for anyone familiar with both Berkeley's work and some of the secondary literature on it, this book will be rewarding in providing a novel and well argued interpretation of his thought. Indeed, I think the interpretations presented in it will have to be taken into an account in the prospective literature on Berkeley. Any serious student of Berkeley will find this book extremely interesting.

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# News and Announcements

## International Berkeley Conference

### Colloque international Berkeley

*Berkeley on Moral and Social Philosophy*  
*La philosophie morale et sociale de Berkeley*

Université de Sherbrooke – Campus Longueuil  
June 4-7, 2012 – 4-7 juin 2012

George Berkeley (1685-1753) contributed to a wide range of academic disciplines; from philosophy to mathematics and empirical psychology; from theology to political economy and monetary policy.

To celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berkeley's *Sermons on Passive Obedience* (1712), we are inviting distinguished scholars to give a diversified account of Berkeley's works with specific respect to his interest concerning moral, political, social, theological or economical issues. The bilingual conference will take place at the Université de Sherbrooke, Campus Longueuil (near Montréal), Canada. The conference is sponsored by the International Berkeley Society.

We herewith invite you either to read a paper, and it is import that we hear from you as soon as possible to arrange your place on the program. Let us hear from you before June 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 even if your plans are tentative so a preliminary program may be developed.

The conference is organized by Bertil Belfrage, Sébastien Charles and David Raynor. For further information, Anglophone speakers should contact Bertil Belfrage at [belfrage.research@telia.com](mailto:belfrage.research@telia.com); Villan, S-57162 Bodafors, Sweden.

George Berkeley (1685-1753) s'est investi dans un large spectre d'activités académiques, allant de la philosophie aux mathématiques et à la psychologie empirique, de la théologie à l'économie politique et à la politique monétaire.

Afin de célébrer le 300<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire de la publication de ses *Sermons sur l'obéissance passive* (1712), nous invitons dès à présent des spécialistes de Berkeley à présenter une vision plurielle de son œuvre touchant à des questions morales, politiques, sociales, théologiques ou encore économiques. Le colloque bilingue se tiendra au campus Longueuil de l'Université de Sherbrooke, près de Montréal. Ce colloque reçoit l'appui de la Société internationale Berkeley.

Nous vous invitons dès à présent à présenter une conférence et nous souhaitons recevoir très prochainement de vos nouvelles afin d'inclure votre nom au programme. Donnez-nous de vos nouvelles avant le 1<sup>er</sup> juin mais si vous n'êtes pas totalement sûr d'être des nôtres afin que nous puissions composer un programme préliminaire.

Le colloque est organisé par Bertil Belfrage, Sébastien Charles et David Raynor. Pour plus d'informations, veuillez contacter Sébastien Charles at [Sebastien.Charles@USherbrooke.ca](mailto:Sebastien.Charles@USherbrooke.ca); 1595 Paton, Sherbrooke, Québec J1J 1C3, Canada.

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