

How Berkeley Redefines Substance A Reply to My Critics

Stephen H. Daniel

Abstract: In several essays I have argued that Berkeley maintains the same basic notion of spiritual substance throughout his life. Because that notion is not the traditional (Aristotelian, Cartesian, or Lockean) doctrine of substance, critics (e.g., John Roberts, Tom Stoneham, Talia Mae Bettcher, Margaret Atherton, Walter Ott, Marc Hight) claim that on my reading Berkeley either endorses a Humean notion of substance or has no recognizable theory of substance at all. In this essay I point out how my interpretation does not assume that Berkeley adopts a bundle theory of mind, but instead redefines what it means for a simple substance to be the principle by which ideas are perceived.

Over the past decade I have argued that Berkeley adopts a consistent notion of spiritual substance throughout his life that is neither a Humean bundle of ideas nor a Cartesian or Lockean substance.¹ I have proposed that what he says in his *Notebooks*—for example, that “the very existence of ideas constitutes the soul” (NB 577) and “mind is a congeries of perceptions. Take away perceptions and you take away the mind” (NB 580)—does not at all contradict his published accounts of the “active, indivisible substances” in which ideas exist (PHK 89, 91, 141; DHP 231, 233).² In his published works when he says that the mind is a substance, he means that the mind is the activity whereby the objects we perceive are differentiated and associated. In this sense, minds are nothing like ideas but are rather the principles in terms of which ideas are identified as those ideas.

This shifts the focus of how to understand Berkeley’s doctrine of substance away from thinking of it as a thing that can be conceptualized to its being the cause by which something can be conceptualized in the first place. So rather than describing ideas as modes of spiritual substance (à la Descartes) or treating mental substances as bundles of ideas (à la Hume), I argue that Berkeley thinks of substance not as a thing at all but as the principle of differentiation and association of objects. No idea can have an identity apart from the activity by which it is identified, and no particular mental substance can be identified apart from the ideas it identifies.

This reading of Berkeley has been difficult to understand for some commentators who contend that, by referring to the mind as a “substance,” Berkeley certainly cannot have meant anything other than the traditional notion of something that does not depend on

¹ See Stephen H. Daniel, “Berkeley, Suárez, and the *Esse-Existere* Distinction,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000), 621-36; “Berkeley’s Christian Neoplatonism, Archetypes, and Divine Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39 (2001), 239-58; “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion of Spiritual Substance,” in *New Interpretations of Berkeley’s Thought*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2008), 203-30.

² Because of errors in *The Works of George Berkeley*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson, 1948–57), quotations are from corrected texts in George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, ed. Michael R. Ayers (London: J. M. Dent, 1992): NB = *Notebooks* (entry); PHK = *Principles of Human Knowledge* (section); DHP = *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Luce-Jessop vol. 2 pagination noted in the margins of the Ayers edition).

anything else and that persists through change.³ So they have rejected my interpretation in favor of a strategy that requires that we think that he adopts various views in his writings but ultimately does not provide us with much of a doctrine of mind.

To make that case, they have often appealed to the canard of the “black list hypothesis,” A. A. Luce’s claim that the + signs in Berkeley’s *Notebooks* indicate views about which Berkeley had doubts or subsequently rejected. Because a good part of my interpretation of Berkeley’s treatment of spiritual substance depends on comments marked with the + sign, I have had to show how the black list hypothesis is unwarranted and needs to be consigned to the dustbin of philosophical historiography.⁴

But because interpreters still use Luce’s position as the “standard reading” of the + sign, I think it is important to indicate how my account of Berkeley stands up to their challenges.⁵ In particular, I want to respond to objections raised by John Roberts, Tom Stoneham, and Talia Mae Bettcher. Others have alluded in passing to my views. For example, Margaret Atherton notes that, “Some [citing me as one] have been unhappy with Berkeley’s claim that mind is a substance and have put forward interpretations in which he does not endorse this view.”⁶ As I have insisted in numerous places, that is not my view. I do not object to Berkeley’s claim that mind is a substance; I object only to the view that in appealing to the term “substance,” he must be understood to be endorsing an Aristotelian, Cartesian or Lockean notion of substance—as if they are the only possible senses in which the concept of substance can be developed.

No doubt, not everyone assumes that I deny that Berkeley believes that the mind is a substance. Genevieve Migely, for example, recognizes that in my view, Berkeley’s doctrine of mind emphasizes how spiritual substance is defined in terms of the activities of perceiving and willing, not in terms of the things perceived or willed.⁷ But other commentators continue to think with Atherton that, for me, Berkeleian minds are not

³ See Marc A. Hight and Walter Ott, “The New Berkeley,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 34 (2004), 1–18, 24; Talia Mae Bettcher, *Berkeley’s Philosophy of Spirit* (London: Continuum, 2007), 26, 102; Talia Mae Bettcher, “Berkeley’s Theory of Mind: Some New Models,” *Philosophy Compass* 6 (2011), 691–92.

⁴ See Stephen H. Daniel, “Berkeley’s Doctrine of Mind and the ‘Black List Hypothesis’: A Dialogue,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 51 (2013), 24–41.

⁵ Cf. John R. Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7; Walter Ott, “The Cartesian Context of Berkeley’s Attack on Abstraction,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004), 409–10; Patrick Fleming, “Berkeley’s Immaterialist Account of Action,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006), 420; Marc A. Hight, *Idea and Ontology* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 166–67; and John R. Roberts, “‘Strange Impotence of Men’: Immaterialism, Anaemic Agents, and Immanent Causation,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18 (2010), 411–14, 430.

⁶ Margaret Atherton, “Berkeley’s Last Word on Spirit,” in *Essays on the Concept of Mind in Early-Modern Philosophy*, eds. Petr Glombiček and James Hill (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 127.

⁷ Genevieve Migely, “Berkeley’s Actively Passive Mind,” in *Reexamining Berkeley’s Philosophy*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 164–65, 170.

“real” (read: Cartesian or Lockean) substances, because I do not endorse the view that Berkeley adopts a “traditional” concept of substance.

This way of misinterpreting my account appears in most references to my work by way of allusions—usually without much comment—to a surprisingly influential article by Marc Hight and Walter Ott that linked me to Robert Muehlmann’s bundle-theory interpretation of Berkeley’s doctrine of mind.⁸ Even though Hight and Ott acknowledge that my position differs from Muehlmann’s, they conclude that, since I (like Muehlmann) accept Berkeley’s claim that the mind is a congeries, I must not believe that he has a doctrine of substance. However, as I have repeatedly noted, a congeries of perceptions for Berkeley is not a *collection* of activities that have been differentiated prior to their being collected together; rather, it is the *simple* activity of perceiving, imagining, or willing in terms of which objects (i.e., ideas) are identified and related. In this sense, a congeries is a spiritual substance, the indivisible thinking, active principle and undifferentiated cause in terms of which the differentiation and association of ideas occur.

I. The Bundle Theory: John Roberts

To see how difficult it has been for some to read Berkeley this way (i.e., given our familiarity with Hume), we need only turn to John Roberts’ *Metaphysics for the Mob*. There Roberts notes that Hume’s characterization of the self as a bundle of perceptions

has had a very unusual—one might even say ironic—impact on Berkeley scholarship in particular. It has helped a number of contemporary commentators to the conclusion that, all things considered, it is preferable that we not take Berkeley’s description of spirits as “simple substances” too seriously. Instead, they recommend that we read him as holding some sort of bundle account of spirits. Clearly, this move will be especially attractive to anyone in the grip of the *esse is percipi* caricature because now, since spirits consist of perceptions, the *esse* of spirits is *percipi*. (6)

Roberts follows this by observing that my interpretation is one of three strategies for attributing a bundle theory of spirits to Berkeley. The first is that of Muehlmann, who adopts a “fairly straightforward Humean view of spirits” that simply adds volitions to ideas (6). The second strategy, which Roberts associates with me, “sees in Berkeley’s work some Suárezian influences that lead to an account of minds as bundles of ‘particular and determinate apprehensions’ of ideas” (6-7). The third strategy (attributed to Ian Tipton) ends up treating minds “as collections in something like the way a herd is a collection” (7). Roberts concludes that each strategy endorses a bundle theory of spirit which he aims to show fails.

Not surprisingly, Roberts does not discuss how my appeal to Suárez reveals the distinctly non-Humean way in which the term *perceptions* can refer not only to the objects of mind but also how the mind’s acts are reflexively identified in virtue of the products of its

⁸ See Hight and Ott, “New Berkeley,” 2, 11-18, 24.

activity. The point that I have made in several venues (and which Roberts is not alone in missing) is that a mental substance is defined by its activity of perceiving and willing, and that activity is specified as this or that particular mind by acts of perception and willing that are themselves distinguished only by their objects. That is why Berkeley insists that if you take away ideas, you take away the only means you have to identify the activities of perceiving and willing by which those objects are identified. So it comes as no surprise that Berkeley says:

Consult, ransack your understanding; what find you there besides several perceptions or thoughts? What mean you by the word *mind*? You must mean something that you perceive or that you do not perceive. A thing not perceived is a contradiction.” (NB 579)

That is, in having a perception or thought, we are aware of the thing perceived—and that means that we are aware of a particular object that is distinguished from and associated with other objects in very specific ways. The awareness of this thing as *differentiated from and associated with* other things is exactly what it means to be aware of the mind. That is why Berkeley remarks, “Say you the mind is not the perceptions, but that thing which perceives. I answer you are abused by the words *that* and *thing*: these are vague empty words without a meaning” (NB 581). In other words, there is no mental thing *apart from* the activity of perceiving and willing; but that does not mean that the mind is no thing. Instead, as Berkeley notes in the *Principles*, the words *soul*, *spirit*, *substance* “do mean or signify a real thing. . . . a soul or spirit is an active being, whose existence consists, not in being perceived, but in perceiving ideas and thinking” (PHK 139). Since it is impossible to perceive something without perceiving some particular thing, we can be sure of the existence of the mind precisely as a thing, not because we perceive the mind but rather because we perceive its effects in the fact that we perceive one thing as differentiated from and associated with others.

It is a mistake, then, to think of the mind as a collection or bundle of ideas or volitions, because that would require us to have assumed already that ideas or volitions are differentiated and associated without having explained how that differentiation and association occurs. My analysis of mind in Berkeley is intended to do just that, because it focuses on how the activity by which ideas are differentiated and associated is unavoidably simple—which is exactly what Berkeley means in his published work in claiming that minds are simple, indivisible substances (PHK 89, 141).

I suspect that Roberts might have seen that were it not for two things that stand in his way: first, he can’t get past the fact that my account draws heavily on + entries in the *Notebooks* (which the “standard reading” rejects); and second (following Hight and Ott), he thinks that by associating me with Muehlmann, he avoids the possibility that my Suárezian interpretation differs (as it certainly does) from Muehlmann’s Humean interpretation (7, 99, 103-104).

In reply to Roberts, then: I don’t think that acts of mind are identical with their objects, even though the word *perceptions* can refer to either. Berkeley never adopted a Humean

bundle theory of the mind; he always maintained a theory of spiritual substance, just not one that allows the mind to be conceptually distinct from its activities. The mind is a *specific* congeries of activities, which for Berkeley means that “consciousness, perception, existence of ideas seem to be all one” (NB 578). For as Suárez suggests, the mind is the consciousness (and thus the existence) of those ideas.⁹ That is what allows Berkeley to say “the very existence of ideas constitutes the soul” (NB 577), for ideas become *these specific ideas* by means of the simple activity of being identified as those ideas. In this way, spirit is not related to its ideas as one thing that just happens to be different from other determinately identifiable things (i.e., ideas). Rather, as the active principle of principle of differentiation and association, spirit cannot be differentiated from or associated with its ideas, because it is that in terms of which things are identified as things in the first place. As Berkeley puts it in the *Dialogues*, “It is therefore evident there can be no *substratum* of those [sensible] qualities but spirit, in which they exist, not by way of mode or property, but as a thing perceived in that which perceives it” (D 237). To refer to the activity of spirit is not to refer to some substratum that underlies or holds together a distinctive complex of acts that come to identify objects of mind. Rather, it is to refer to the knowing or perceiving of objects precisely as those objects: that is what it means for spirit to be a substance or support of ideas (PHK 7, 135; DHP 234).

In comments on a paper I presented at the 2012 APA Pacific Division meeting,¹⁰ Roberts notes that this way of thinking of substance makes Berkeley sound much more like Spinoza than is usually recognized, and with that I agree. That is why I have written elsewhere on how considering Berkeley in the context of Spinoza is not as implausible as it might first appear.¹¹ Of course, for Berkeley, minds and bodies are not Spinozistic modes; indeed, the whole vocabulary of modes is anathema to Berkeley. But instead of highlighting their differences, I think the juxtaposition of Berkeley and Spinoza only makes us reconsider our understanding of what Spinoza means by substance and mode and why Berkeley insists that the mind–idea relation should not be modeled on the Cartesian way of understanding substance and mode. In particular, it makes us reconsider how Berkeley’s doctrine of ideas forces us to address questions about God’s creation of finite minds, their nature, and freedom. Roberts believes that Berkeley says very little about these topics, but I propose that his views on these issues are all over the place, but only if you know what to look for. Specifically, that means reading Berkeley in the context of Malebranche and Puritan thinkers (e.g., Jonathan Edwards), for whom the creation of the corporeal world is unintelligible apart from the creation of finite minds.¹²

Contrary to Roberts’ claims, then, my reading is hardly “just imposed, without argument” or simply contrary to “the apparent aim of the text.” Instead, it invites us to frame the discussion of God’s creation of minds in the context of Berkeley’s entire philosophic enterprise. To assume that the creation of incorporeal spirits is nowhere to be seen in his

⁹ See my “Berkeley, Suárez, and the *Esse–Existere* Distinction,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000), 621-36.

¹⁰ “Berkeley on God’s Creation of Minds and Human Freedom.”

¹¹ See my “Berkeley and Spinoza,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 135 (2010), 123-34.

¹² See Daniel, “Stoic Notion,” 222-24.

account of corporeal objects is indefensible, considering how it is a hallmark of his immaterialist position that no corporeal object can exist or even be thought apart from minds. Indeed, as the active principles by which objects are identified and related, minds are everywhere where there are objects, because something's being known as this or that particular object depends on (i.e., consists in) its being perceived just as that object. In Berkeley's view, what would need explanation is how it could be otherwise—that is, how God's creation of minds could ever occur apart from his creation of the corporeal world. That is why it has been a central feature of my discussions to highlight Berkeley's account of the intrinsic relation of mind and ideas.

II. The Threat to Freedom: Tom Stoneham

In his comments at the same APA session, Tom Stoneham accurately notes that, in my account, when God creates a specific finite mind, he creates all of its perceptions, including volitions. From this, Stoneham concludes, that freedom and responsibility do not consist in “being able to perceive, imagine or will other than we do.” He finds this shocking, in that it suggests that “the existing views of Berkeley on action are all mistaken,” and that my view is a “radically different account from standard interpretations of Berkeley.” Obviously this fallacious appeal to authority highlights the importance of showing how my interpretation is not as novel or as inconsistent with Berkeley's texts as Stoneham implies.

First, I should point out that the view that I attribute to Berkeley is not as unusual among his contemporaries as it might initially seem. For example, even though he rejects Malebranche's occasionalism, he endorses the doctrine of consent that Malebranche—along with Jonathan Edwards and many Puritan thinkers—accept as crucial for reconciling human freedom and divine sovereignty.¹³

Second, I reject Stoneham's suggestion that God can do things *to* finite minds, because that would mean that a mind could be considered as a principle of activity that exists apart from its being the principle of the specific activities that identify it as that particular mind. This would violate Berkeley's nominalism by suggesting that a specific mind could be free not to be that specific mind. In Stoneham's account, minds can be individuated either by “exercising their active principles in different manners” or by having different (passively received) sense perceptions. God could thus create Adam without considering how Adam might exercise his power: that is, God can create a finite mind that he subsequently wills to perceive certain ideas. In this way, substances could be individuated, as Stoneham puts it, “by contingent and even relational properties (e.g., location in space and time).” But as Berkeley insists, space and time cannot be abstracted from the order and succession of our ideas (PHK 98). That is why the purported “missing premise” in my argument—namely, that “the identity of a finite mind depends upon its having exactly the perceptions it does and no others, and that had it had different perceptions, it would have been a different mind”—is not missing at all. Indeed, it is at the heart of my account of finite substances.

¹³ See Daniel, “Berkeley's Christian Neoplatonism,” 254-56; and Stephen H. Daniel, “Edwards, Berkeley, and Ramist Logic,” *Idealistic Studies* 31 (2001), 55-72.

Third, Stoneham suggests that the “obvious and common reading” of Berkeley’s remark that “I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure” (PHK 28) indicates that I can imagine things in the world differently, and that this shows that in creating my mind God does not determine my imaginings and volitions. Stoneham adds that we can conceive of a person as having a different height, or of a mind as having different ideas, by “making it general.” But, I argue, treating a mind or idea as a general placeholder for others does not make that mind or idea any less specific, and to think of it as possibly otherwise is to make it an abstraction, a *potential* principle of activity rather than an actual one. But in creating me, God specifies which of my alignments of things in the world are real or imaginative, and in this way God simultaneously creates all other objects and the minds that perceive them. Sin or error thus consists simply in my willing that the world be perceived contrary to its divine ordination.

Fourth, Stoneham claims that my interpretation contradicts Berkeley’s view that minds are ontologically distinct from ideas by implying that the sum total of my perceptions is what differentiates me from other minds. But Berkeley explicitly says, “I know that I am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking, active principle” (DHP 233). My answer: to say that minds and ideas are not the same is not to say that they are ontologically distinct. If by perceptions we mean ideas, then obviously I am not my ideas. If by perceptions we mean the acts in virtue of which those ideas are intelligible and exist, then my mind is the principle of differentiation that produces the totality of my perceptions. In that case, I am still not my own principle of differentiation or cause of my own existence.

Fifth, Stoneham challenges my “very unfamiliar reading” that we can *choose* to think of our ideas differently because such a view conflicts with Berkeley’s contemporaries. As I have already mentioned, Malebranche and the Puritans often make this point, noting that the difference between the saint and sinner lies not in having different ideas but in choosing to think of those ideas in terms of promoting God’s will or not. This is what I mean in referring to Berkeley’s “Stoic” (and seemingly deterministic) explanation of how God creates finite minds. I am not suggesting that Berkeley relies on aspects of Stoicism that appear in Lipsius, Grotius, Shaftesbury, Spinoza, Leibniz, or Locke to explain his doctrine of mind. Rather, my account highlights the way in which Berkeley’s doctrine of mind complements a Stoic account of freedom. My interpretation thus invites readers to expand their understanding of what “Berkeley’s intended audience would have found most natural” by expanding who they consider Berkeley’s audience to have been.

Sixth, Stoneham asks whether it isn’t more plausible (i.e., in keeping with the “standard reading”) to think that, by saying we “recreate and exalt the mind . . . by proper inferences” (PHK 109), Berkeley is talking about industry and social development rather than the metaphysics of mind and personal sanctity. My answer: when Berkeley writes that we should develop an appreciation of “the beauty, order, extent, and variety of natural things” (PHK 109), we recommend that we glorify God by recognizing that all thing in the world are ordered. In this way, his doctrine of self-awareness (and thus his metaphysics of mind) can be seen as one with his social thought.

III. The Challenge to Tradition: Talia Mae Bettcher

This attention to what it means for Berkeley to speak about consciousness of the self has been a primary interest of Talia Mae Bettcher, and it probably accounts for the fact that she has provided the most extensive critique of my work. In *Berkeley's Philosophy of Spirit* (2007), she too maintains that I reject spiritual substance (26, 102, 138). That would be true if, like others I have mentioned (especially Hight and Ott), we were locked into thinking that spiritual substance must be understood only in terms of the “traditional conception.” As I have argued, though, I don’t think that Berkeley endorses such a view. She says that I claim that “for Berkeley spirit is not a thing but the sheer existence of its ideas (and its very activity of willing and perceiving)” (138). In one sense, she is right, for I claim that, for Berkeley, minds are not things like ideas, but rather the existence of the ideas it wills and perceives to be as those ideas. That is, spirit is the activity of willing and perceiving whereby *those* ideas are said to exist. I do not claim that the mind’s activity of willing and perceiving is different from *its* ideas—as is implied by her claim that, for me, spirit is the existence of its ideas *and* its activity of willing and perceiving—for that would suggest (contrary to my interpretation) that it is possible to think of the mind apart from the activities by means of which its ideas are identified. She claims that, in saying that spirits are the existence of ideas, I allow spirits and ideas to have something in common (*viz.*, the idea itself). Again, in one sense she is right; but to see this as a criticism of my interpretation of Berkeley would require confusing the act of perceiving with the product of that act. Both are, no doubt, called perceptions, but I certainly do not think of them as the same, and I have not suggested that Berkeley does either.

In a 2011 article Bettcher provides a further analysis of my account.¹⁴ She observes that, like her, I argue that for Berkeley, a mind is not a Cartesian ego, Lockean spiritual substratum, Lockean self, or Humean bundle of perceptions. But she says that my “Stoic” view “implausibly removes Berkeley from this tradition altogether” and is “extreme” because it substitutes a perception–object ontology for a Cartesian substance–mode ontology in which a mind could be different from its actual thoughts (690). These objections are no problem for me, because they are based less on textual critique than on the expectation that philosophers of the period “just have to” buy into a certain tradition or ontology. As I see it, an interpretation might force a commentator out of her comfort zone, but that hardly seems like a good reason to reject the interpretation.

She also claims that in my account, Berkeley thinks of ideas as distinct from the activity of cognition by which they are cognized, because (for me) the mind is nothing other than that activity. This, she says, is what I propose distinguishes Berkeley from Descartes, for whom ideas are simply cognitions themselves (690). I agree with that characterization of how to distinguish the two thinkers, for in my view Descartes thinks that spirit is related to ideas as substance is to modes, whereas Berkeley thinks that spirit is related to ideas as the existence of those ideas is related to the ideas themselves. That is why I maintain that, for Berkeley, mind *is* the existence of ideas. This she finds troubling—I suspect because, in true Thomistic form, she is reluctant to define a thing in terms of its existence. By contrast, I (drawing again on Berkeley’s Suárezian background) do not hesitate to make

¹⁴ Bettcher, “Berkeley’s Theory of Mind,” 689-92.

that claim, because in my interpretation, to be a substance is to be the existence of the differentiation and association of specific ideas. So unlike Bettcher, I am not “perplexed” or find “peculiar” Berkeley’s remark that “Spirits and ideas are things so wholly different, that when we say, *they exist, they are known*, or the like, these words must not be thought to signify anything common to both natures” (PHK I 142; also PHK I 89). Unlike her, I don’t think that minds are intelligible apart from the activities in terms of which ideas are identified. When I claim, then, that spirits don’t really exist nor are they beings at all—a claim with which she takes issue—she fails to see that my point is simply that, for Berkeley, existence itself does not exist.¹⁵

All of this leads Bettcher to conclude that, despite my insistence that spiritual substance is “the unique, singular, divinely instituted principle or activity of differentiation and association by means of which ideas are identified and related,” for me (at least in her view), a Berkeleian mind cannot be all that different from Hume’s bundle theory (691).¹⁶ She acknowledges that I claim that Berkeley’s notion of mind differs from Hume’s, because for Hume ideas are already differentiated and for Berkeley they are differentiated by the mind. But that, she says, is “slightly misleading” because, for me, the mind itself is ultimately distinguished with reference to ideas themselves. So in her view, “there still *does* remain the worry about how all the particular acts are united into a single mind” (691). As I have noted, though, the unity of the mind consists simply in being the distinctive principle identified by the complex or “congeries” of ideas it differentiates and associates. Her mistake is that she assumes that, for me, ideas are differentiated by “particular” acts that themselves need to be united by a mind. My view, though, is that just as with ideas, acts are differentiated only in how they are related as a unified complex willed by God.

No doubt, my strategy abandons the “traditional notion of substance in a fairly dramatic way,” because as Bettcher puts it, my interpretation departs from “a Cartesian account which refers the various activities of a mind to a single substance” (691). Indeed, my point is that, for Berkeley, minds are *not* like Aristotelian or Cartesian substances. But that does not mean that Berkeleian substances have no permanence, only that their permanence cannot be thought apart from how their activities are related to one another. Instead of describing substance as that which persists through change—as if time were distinct from the order of ideas—Berkeley describes persistence and change in terms of substance (i.e., in terms of the activity of differentiating and associating ideas). Because this way of thinking of spiritual substance is so different from that found in standard accounts of Descartes and Locke, it is no wonder that my interpretation of Berkeley’s doctrine does not engage that tradition.¹⁷

In short, instead of appealing to an Aristotelian tradition in which substance is understood as that which does not depend on anything else and of which accidents are predicated, I suggest that Berkeley appeals to another tradition, namely, that of Stoicism. In that

¹⁵ See Daniel, “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion,” 203.

¹⁶ Daniel, “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion,” 216.

¹⁷ In fact, I am now looking into how Berkeley’s strategy for interpreting substance reveals unnoticed features in the doctrines of other early modern thinkers.

tradition, spirits don't "exist" but rather "subsist" as the existence of ideas. Bettcher claims that I appear to be drawing on the "traditional" use of *subsistence* "according to which substances possess self-subsistence (that is, roughly, independence) whereas items such as accidents, modes, etc. do not," and she cites the *Port Royal Logic* in support of her claim (692). But Arnauld and Nicole's *Logic* does not distinguish subsistence and existence, and so (contrary to her attempt to associate me with that viewpoint) it adopts the very same strategy as the Aristotelian-Cartesian-Lockean presuppositions that I argue Berkeley challenges. My point is that, in fact, Berkeley appeals to a "traditional" (i.e., Stoic) distinction between subsistence and existence, one that describes substance in terms other than independence and predication. The tradition that I recommend we think of Berkeley in terms of, then, is *not* one typically associated with Descartes, Arnauld and Nicole, or Locke, because they do not place any importance on the distinction between subsistence and existence.

I thus resist the effort by Bettcher and others to legitimate their interpretations by claiming their views are consistent with "the tradition," because I maintain that there is another tradition that does not assume that substances *exist* and *are known* as things in ways that are like accidents, modes, or qualities. No doubt, in terms of the tradition that I associate Berkeley with, "spirits don't properly exist, aren't properly things" (692). What I reject, though, is the claim that the subsistence of spirits can't be considered (in this alternative tradition) as the existence of things. To say that spirits don't "properly" exist and aren't "properly" things gives the impression that, in my account, spirits are not things that exist. In a non-technical sense, that's silly: of course, they exist. But in saying that Berkeley's contemporaries would have understood him to be claiming that spirits are "proper" things that possess independence, she gets both me and Berkeley wrong.

Rather than appealing to Descartes or Locke to explicate Berkeley, I think of his account of spirit (as an integrated and complex unity of all of its acts) as more like a Leibnizian substance.¹⁸ It cannot be abstracted from its acts because it is nothing other than the principle of those acts. That principle is definitely different from and independent of any one of its acts and even of the accidental collection or bundle of those acts, because it identifies all of those acts and their objects in virtue of defining them in temporal, spatial, and thematic relations. So contrary to Bettcher's charge, in my account Berkeley's view of mind would not have seemed implausible to his contemporaries, for it would not have seemed implausible to anyone familiar with Leibniz.

Concluding Remarks

Bettcher admits that my account might be able to handle Berkeley's "cryptic" remarks about mind in his *Notebooks*, but it leads to "extreme" and "unpalatable" consequences because it "departs so wildly from the Aristotelian-Cartesian-Lockean traditions" (692). Like my other critics, she prefers the reading "commonly adopted by scholars," namely,

¹⁸ Cf. Stephen H. Daniel, "The Harmony of the Leibniz-Berkeley Juxtaposition," in *Leibniz and the English-Speaking World*, ed. Stuart Brown and Pauline Phemister (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 163-80.

that Berkeley's notes reflect changes in his thought. Instead, I have proposed an interpretation that accommodates all of Berkeley's texts, from his earliest writings to *Siris*, not by proposing that he changed his position on the nature of mind, but by indicating how his doctrine differs in significant respects from those of some of his contemporaries. Such an account, I conclude, is hardly so wild as to be branded "extreme" or "unpalatable"—unless, of course, we simply assume that the "standard" or "considered" interpretation must be correct. That is something I am unwilling to do.

Texas A&M University
sdaniel@tamu.edu