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Editor's Note

The Karlsruhe Conference: Highlights, Prospects

Stephen H. Daniel

In August scholars from throughout Europe and North America met at the University of Karlsruhe in southern Germany to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the publication of Berkeley's *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709). Organized by Wolfgang Breidert and Bertil Belfrage and sponsored by the International Berkeley Society, the conference revealed how after three centuries Berkeley's work continues to generate a variety of interpretations.

At the end of our meeting I was asked to summarize a few of the points that emerged from our discussions. Here are my comments:

It would be presumptuous on my part to pass judgment on the value of our deliberations over the past four days. As with all events such as this, we probably won't know for some time (if ever) what the effects of our conversations will be. Certainly, the work done here is most immediately felt in our having been forced to think more about topics and problems in the preparation of our papers, in our struggles to understand the papers of others, and in having to reconcile our own prejudiced (and of course, informed and "considered") views with those of others.

As Wolfgang Breidert will tell you, however, administrators here at the University (and no doubt, elsewhere) are interested in how we would justify our spending this week talking about Berkeley. We will also be asked by colleagues and other Berkeley scholars who are not here how the conference went—which can be understood generally as a question about what we have learned from one another and how what we have learned compares with what has come out of similar conferences.

It is not enough to say that we discussed various features of Berkeley's thought (especially those raised in the *New Theory of Vision*), for there is nothing distinctive about that. What is distinctive, however, is the fact that we have thought about these issues within the shared context of *these* papers. And within that context, I think we can discern a theme that runs through most, if not all, of our papers.

Not surprisingly, that theme is quite broad: it is Berkeley's effort to explain exact what the objects of our experience are. At first glance, it seems that we can describe such objects simply (or at least) as the things we see or touch. But as we have heard, the things we see and touch may be "referred to" ideally or by means of imagination sometimes in purely heuristic ways in order to promote our achievement of practical ends or to enhance our apprehension of the value-laden character of even the most seemingly neutral relations of perception (e.g., regarding distance). The apprehension of the interrelatedness

of ideas can be understood either from the standpoint of the mind that perceives them—in which case we tend to think of Berkeley in idealist terms—or from the standpoint of the significatory or semiotic character of the ideas themselves—in which case we think of Berkeley in phenomenalist terms. Or to put this contrast differently: we can think of Berkeley's project as an effort either to reconcile the heterogeneity of our experiences or to show how associations between ideas (especially between ideas of sight and touch) express links between signs and the things they signify without collapsing them into one another.

This recognition of the immediate and unavoidable differentiation of objects constitutes the possibility of our experience of both time and motion, and it indicates why attempts to gloss over the discontinuous nature of our ideas (e.g., in Euclidean geometry) fail. Even the possibility of interruptions in the continuity, unity, or harmony of our experience (e.g., in the case of shadows) reaffirms the coherence and intelligibility of the world. It does so by highlighting how irreducibly heterogeneous elements and radically different strategies of explanation complement one another in Berkeley's thought. Even though his science of vision and metaphysics of objects and their causes encompass different domains, they are nonetheless united by the pragmatic and theologically-contextualized assumption that all things should be recognized as expressing value.

Indeed, the failure to see sensible ideas as fore-*shadowing* the afterlife is a symptom of the myopic and truncated experience of those who cannot or will not see how objects in nature are works of a divine art intended to promote human perfection and pleasure. We experience such pleasure whenever we recognize how our perceptions are always *of* objects with which we are engaged. This recognition of the inherent intentionality of thinking constantly reminds us of our dialogic engagement with an other who ties together everything we experience. So just as all the varieties of color (i.e., the immediate objects of vision) are contained in solar light, so all objects in experience are united in a God to whom we are inextricably linked.

Perceiving or "imaging" a world can thus simultaneously be the imagination of its unity, the moral affirmation of God's comprehension of all things. Such an affirmation guides Berkeley's arguments demonstrating how visual and tactile objects of sense can be coordinated. It also can guide our efforts to understand his philosophy as a totality rather than as a series of discrete examinations of indirectly associated topics.

Is Geometry about Tangible Extension?

Richard Brook

In his *New Theory of Vision* (NTV)¹ Berkeley makes some comments about geometry that even he admits appear odd. He first writes what appears obvious—that “the constant use of the eyes, both in the practical and speculative parts of that science”—induces us to think that geometry is about visible extension. He further comments regarding those who note

the extraordinary clearness and evidence of geometry, that in this science the reasonings are free from those inconveniences which attend the use of arbitrary signs, the very ideas themselves being copied out and exposed to view upon paper. (NTV 150)

Certainly in the 17th and 18th century geometry was considered a model for clear thinking.² But Berkeley’s controversial point in NTV is that the common view is mistaken: both practical and speculative geometry are in truth about tangible extension. Visual diagrams—for example, constructions with straight edge and compass—are, as he says, “not even the likeness of figures which make the subject of the demonstration” (NTV 150). If there are geometric facts, they are learned by touch. Diagrams, Berkeley believes, are arbitrary signs of tactile information in the same way as written or spoken words are arbitrary signs of meanings. He writes:

visible figures are of the same use in geometry that words are. And the one may be as well accounted the object of that science as the other; neither of them being otherwise concerned therein then as they represent or suggest to the mind the particular tangible figures connected with them. (NTV152)

By speculative geometry I take Berkeley here to mean Euclidean or classical geometry; and by practical geometry, geometry as applied, for example, in measurement. This paper takes issue with his claim that both kinds of geometry are ultimately about (in the sense of referring to) tangible extension; but my main interest is Berkeley’s view of speculative geometry, particularly the question of how we should view the Euclidean postulates. More precisely, my thesis is that the visible lines, angles, and circles in geometrical diagrams are in fact the objects of classical geometry. They are thus not *merely* signs of geometrical properties that are in truth ascertained by touch.

Although Berkeley does argue (I think correctly) that the ability to do geometry (e.g., to describe lines and circles with straight edge and compass) requires tactile experience—thus a “disembodied” being possessed only of sight would lack such ability (NTV 153)—

¹ George Berkeley, *New Theory of Vision* (NTV) (1732 edition, ed. Colin Murray Turbayne, Bobbs-Merrill, 1963).

² See Berkeley’s comments in *The Analyst*, sec. 2, ed. A. A. Luce, in *Works*, vol. 4, eds. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1951).

I propose that that claim is consistent with thinking classical geometry to be about the idealization of visible diagrams. Moreover, I will argue that Berkeley could have taken the basic terms of geometry such as “point,” “line,” etc. (as idealizations) to refer strictly to nothing at all.

* * *

What then is Berkeley’s argument for the view that tangible but not visible extension is the object of geometry? In NTV 151 he refers us back to sections 59–61 that demonstrate, he writes:

that visible extensions in themselves are little regarded, and have no settled determinate greatness, and that men measure altogether, by the application of tangible extension to tangible extension. All which makes it evident that visible extension and figures are not the object of geometry.

But do those sections make that case? Below I consider the relative roles of touch and sight in elementary measurement. However, my main concern is with speculative geometry, for example, the postulates of Euclidean or classical geometry. Do sections 59, 60, and 61 show that the postulates, and consequently, the theorems, refer at bottom to what we learn through haptic experience?

Berkeley contends in NTV 59 that since the things we discover through touch rather than sight can hurt or help us, our main concern is with those tangible ideas signified by visual signs. Even if the reasoning were valid—and the fact that very bright lights can cause pain is perhaps a counter example to the premise—the argument by itself is certainly consistent with thinking visible extension is the object of classical geometry, in the sense that its postulates and theorems do refer, in his words “to the very ideas themselves being copied out and exposed to view upon paper” (NTV 150).

NTV 60 and 61 make the point that we judge the magnitude of an object not by its visible, but rather its tangible magnitude. We judge a man to be six feet tall, though visually he appears smaller and larger as we approach him. Contact by touch, on the other hand, provides us with the measure of an object invariant with respect to its visual appearance. The contact need not be by means of bodily contact, but indirect, for example, by laying a measuring rod along the edge of a table. As another example Berkeley notes that a “visible inch” is not a “determinate magnitude,” since as we approach or move away from the ruler it will have more or less visible extension, or as he says, “more or less [visible] points discerned in it” (NTV 61). For practical purposes then, Berkeley would say that visual estimates of size by themselves are useless. Concluding NTV 61, Berkeley writes:

Whenever we say an object is great or small, of this or that determinate measure, I say it must be meant of the tangible, and not the visible extension, which, though immediately perceived, is nevertheless little taken notice of.

I note two important points about NTV 61. First, though undoubtedly impractical, it doesn't seem impossible to have a non-contact metric; we pick a particular distance from an object and judge its height with a ruler in terms of how it visually appears from that distance. By convention we might take that to be its standard height. More convenient obviously is to take the spatial distance between object and measuring rod to be zero—for example, when we make the measuring rod coincident with the side of the object. Second, and important for some of my later discussion about classical geometry, Berkeley accepts in NTV that extension, whether visible or tangible, is composed of sensible minima. In NTV 61 his concern is *minima visibilia*. However, in NTV 54 he writes:

Each of these magnitudes [visual and tangible] are greater or lesser, according as they contain in them more or fewer points, they being made up of points or minimums . . . There is a *minimum tangible*, and a *minimum visible*, beyond which sense cannot perceive.

There are certainly problems here. For example, you can't count, in an ordinary sense, the number of minima in a bit of extension. That requires recognizing boundaries between minima and therefore perceiving something less than a minimum. Moreover, thinking of sensible extension as non-continuous (i.e., composed of minima) raises the question whether the fundamental terms of classical geometry (e.g., point, line, plane, circle, etc.) refer at all to sensible extension. Again I address that below.

Of more significance here is the fact that nothing in Berkeley's remarks (which are about measurement) show that speculative geometry—by which again I mean classical Euclidean geometry (the kind we in the U.S. usually learn in tenth grade)—is, as Thomas Reid (echoing Berkeley) claimed, about the properties of tangible extension. Reid writes the following:

Those figures and that extension which are the immediate objects of sight, are not the figures and the extension about which common geometry is employed; that the geometrician, while he looks at his diagram, and demonstrates a proposition, hath a figure presented to his eye, which is only a sign and representative of a tangible figure ... and that these two figures have different properties, so that what he demonstrates of the one, is not true of the other.³

According to Eduard Slowick, from whom I took the above quote, Reid (again following Berkeley) characterizes the geometry of physical objects—as opposed to a “geometry of visibles”—as Euclidean and revealed to touch; it gives the real as opposed to the apparent magnitude of a body.

However, it seems to me there are strong arguments that vision is essentially, not just peripherally involved in both practical and speculative geometry. Take elementary measurement: for example, determining the length of an object by laying a ruler

³ See Edward Slowik, “Conventionalism in Reid's Geometry of Visibles,” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, Part A, 34 #3 (Sept. 2003), 470.

successively along its edge. The judgment of congruence between the ruler and part of the edge seems clearly made by sight. Berkeley is correct that measurement gives a number invariant with respect to changing visual estimates of size as I approach an object. And that's certainly useful. But again it's by sight that we ascertain the congruence between a portion of the ruler and a doorway's edge *when* they are spatially contiguous.

Perhaps Berkeley would want to say that the judgment of congruence of ruler and edge is ultimately made by touch, the visible appearance of congruence being an arbitrary sign for that determination. Or, put another way, the apparently visual determination of congruence is a sign of what would be the case if we ascertained by touch the match between a ruler and an object's edge. But this choice has serious problems. As in other areas, touch is not always decisive for what we take to be the case. And in the above example of measuring the edge of an object, it's not even clear what it means to determine equal measure or congruence by touch. How is that done? In elementary measurement we might indeed speak of a contact perspective: that is, the ruler is laid alongside of an object's edge. But the judgment that a section of the edge is three ruler inches is made by sight.⁴

Furthermore, there are elementary examples where sight makes finer tuned judgments than touch—for example, distinguishing between objects that have elliptical boundaries. Some pairs of object judged correctly by sight to be respectively spherical and oval, will be judged by touch to have identical curvature. If Berkeley were right, the difference noted by sight should signify a tactually recognized difference.

One objection to the above discussion is that Berkeley's "heterogeneity" thesis—that the immediate (proper) objects of touch are distinct from the immediate objects of sight—rules out assuming that the object whose congruence with the ruler I determine by sight is numerically identical to the object whose congruence with the ruler is (somehow) determined by touch. But even to make sense of the Molyneux example as support for the heterogeneity thesis (NTV 132), Berkeley assumes that the *same two* objects that a congenitally blind subject by touch distinguishes as globe and cube can't by him, when he gains sight, be immediately (visually) distinguished as globe and cube. Without the assumption that objects can be re-identified over time by different senses, the example doesn't get off the ground. We assume that it's the *same* cube that the Molyneux man previously identified by touch that he later, after association between visual and tactile data, now can identify by sight. By allowing this assumption of object re-identification, we can then rightly note that we sometimes make finer discriminations between objects by sight than we make by touch. Therefore it's false that discriminations between objects apparently made by sight are simply signs of discriminations between *those same* objects

⁴ See Roy Sorenson, *Seeing Dark Things: The Philosophy of Shadows* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 123-24. NTV assumes, at least for the sake of presenting the argument against geometrical optics as a sufficient account of seeing distance, that we perceive by sight what we touch, although the proper objects of sight are wholly different from the proper objects of touch. However, without the assumption of a correlation between sight and touch, I think there is no coherent notion of measurement. I discuss this below in relation to the heterogeneity thesis.

that would be made by touch.⁵

Now it is true that even the congenitally blind can and do learn (and even teach) theoretical and applied geometry. Perhaps the most famous example is Nicolas Saunderson (1682-1739), third appointee to the Lucasian chair of Mathematics at Cambridge in 1711. Blinded by smallpox at the age of one, he taught Euclidean geometry as well as optics and algebra. And today there are a variety of creative methods for teaching elementary (Euclidean) geometry to blind high school students.⁶

A related interesting question is whether a blind person without the assistance of a sighted person would discover—as opposed to being taught—the postulates of Euclidean geometry. We can think of this as a variant thought experiment to Berkeley's conjecture in NTV 153 noted above about whether a being endowed only with sight could do geometry. Berkeley's answer to this question was no. Neither constructions with straight edge and compass nor superposition would be possible or even comprehensible for such a being. With respect to whether the blind could discover the Euclidean postulates, Diderot remarks about Saunderson:

Now, it is obvious that however acute the blind man may be, the phenomena of light and colour are completely unknown to him. He will understand the axioms, because he refers them to palpable objects, but he will not understand why geometry should prefer them to other axioms, for to do so he would have to compare the axioms with the phenomena which for him is an impossibility.⁷

One way to read the passage is that Saunderson, not being able to see constructions made, for example, with straight edge and compass, will not take the axioms (postulates) of classical geometry to be self-evident. As I will later argue, those postulates won't have the intuitive power that Berkeley himself notes in *Analyst* 2. Assuming this reading, I think Diderot is correct. Take just the first postulate in one of its historically interesting versions, that no two straight lines enclose a space. Its intuitive self-evidence certainly appears to be given by sight. As Berkeley notes:

when the postulata cannot be refused, nor the axioms denied; when the distinct contemplation and comparison of figures, their properties are derived, by a perpetual well-connected chain of consequences, the objects being still kept in view, and the

⁵ With Berkeley I wouldn't give too much importance to the word *same*. He often thinks it's a matter of convention whether we judge things to be numerically identical. But that convention or assumption I think is needed to make sense of the Molyneux case.

⁶ See, for example, Patrick Roth and Lori Petrucci, "From Dots to Shapes," an auditory haptic game platform for teaching geometry to blind pupils, Thierry Pun Computer Science Department CUI, University of Geneva, Switzerland. I thank Gaylen Kapperman (Coordinator of Programs in Vision, Department of Teacher Education, Northern Illinois University) for helpful discussions on teaching geometry to blind students. It is his view that blind students, though taught the Euclidean postulates, don't take them as self-evident.

⁷ Denis Diderot, "Letter on the Blind, for the Benefit of Those Who See" (1749), trans. M. J. Morgan, in M. J. Morgan, *Molyneux's Question: Vision, Touch and the Philosophy of Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 31–58.

attention ever fixed upon them; there is acquired a habit of reasoning, close and exact and methodical: which habit strengthens and sharpens the mind, and being transferred to other subjects is of general use in the inquiry after truth. (*Analyst* 2)

The passage raises two related questions: (1) What did Berkeley think the “postulata” that “can’t be refused” were ultimately about? And (2) what “objects” does Berkeley think are “held in view” as a demonstration goes through? For Berkeley, at least in *The New Theory*, the common sense (but he believes incorrect) answer to both questions is the visible lines in the diagram. And I think he would agree that the intuitive certainty that in a plane no two-sided polygon exists appears *at first glance* to be grasped by sight.⁸ It’s this visual apprehension that Diderot suggests is forbidden to Saunderson. Yet, as I read NTV 150 and 151 Berkeley must take the intuitive certainty (not necessarily the truth) of the postulate to be in fact revealed to touch,⁹ since his other choice would be that classical geometry refers to properties of the diagrams, a position he rejects.

Though not decisive, I note that my brief research into how Euclid is taught to blind students supports what I take to be Diderot’s point. Two considerations seem particularly relevant. First, teaching plane geometry to congenitally blind students is evidently extremely difficult. Second, although the postulates are taught obviously by means of haptic, and even auditory experience, that experience doesn’t reveal them as self-evident.¹⁰ Of course, self-evident doesn’t mean true; and as applied to the physical world, where light rays, or longitudes on a globe stand in for straight lines, they are arguably false. The point I am making is they appear to sight, as Berkeley himself notes, as self-evident—that is, they have the *property* of being self-evident. If what we see is simply a guide to properties of an underlying tactile reality, then those properties should appear self-evident to touch.

In any case, Berkeley’s view that extension, whether visible or tangible, is composed of minima rules out incommensurable line segments, and therefore (as he often remarks in the *Notebooks*), classical geometry is false for sensible extension. No drawn circle could be Euclidean since its circumference and diameter would be commensurable (a ratio of two whole numbers). That is how Berkeley can observe rather boastfully that he as opposed to others can square the circle (NB 249-50, 458, 511).

One possibility for preserving Euclidean geometry, based on remarks Berkeley makes in *De Motu* (DM), is that he could have taken all of classical geometry to be a useful fiction (even though he did not). In DM 39 he writes:

⁸ One referee objected that a two-sided polygon is not conceivable much less visualizable. But it is certainly conceivable, depending of course on what that term means. Euclid’s first postulate (viz., a straight line can be drawn between any two points) is not an analytic truth.

⁹ Douglas Jesseph quotes the passage to illustrate that, as opposed to what Berkeley writes in the *Notebooks*, in *The Analyst* he accepts or at least is more comfortable with classical geometry. See Douglas Jesseph, *Berkeley’s Philosophy of Mathematics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 84-85.

¹⁰ I gathered this to be the case from conversations with Gaylen Kapperman.

And just as geometers for the sake of their art make use of many devices which they themselves cannot describe nor find in the nature of things, even so the mechanician makes use of certain abstract and general terms, imagining in bodies force, action, attraction, sollicitation, etc. which are of first utility for theories and formulations, as also for computations about motion, even if in the truth of things, and in bodies actually existing, they would be looked for in vain, just like geometers' *fictions made by mathematical abstraction*. (DM 39, my emphasis)

Berkeley, I believe, could have taken all of Euclidean geometry to be fictional, just as he undoubtedly assumed the perfectly spherical balls and frictionless planes in Galileo's experiments on falling bodies¹¹ or mass points in Newton's *Principia*. In the same way, the terms "point," "line," and "plane" in geometry would be referentially empty, as is the phrase "mass point" in dynamics.

Of course, one might agree that Berkeley should have considered Euclidean geometry a useful fiction and still think that its postulates are idealizations of what we experience through touch rather than sight. Take as an example, the famous fifth postulate in its modern version (John Playfair, 1745) that in a plane containing both a line and external point, there is exactly one line through the point parallel to the first line. That there is at least one line can be "demonstrated" using straight edge and compass. The use of these tools undoubtedly requires a sense of touch, but, in addition, the intuitive power (again not necessarily the truth) of the second part of the postulate—that there is only one such line—should, if Berkeley is correct, be gained from tactile experience. Remember that Berkeley takes the properties we claim to see in the diagram to be arbitrary signs for what's in truth revealed to touch. Yet direct touching seems unlikely to be fine-grained enough to give that result. Indirect touching, for example, tracing the boundaries of objects with a pencil or compass point, might work, but at present I know of no experiments with congenitally unsighted persons that test this. In any case, Berkeley's theory of vision appears to imply (using a thought experiment more realistic than his speculation about a purely sighted being) that a community of rational never-sighted persons unaided by those with vision would create Euclidean geometry as an idealization of their tactile and kinesthetic experience.¹² Again, this is simply because if (1) some postulates of classical geometry appear by sight to *have the property* of being self-evident, (2) geometry is not about the diagrams, and (3) properties we think possessed by the diagrams are in truth revealed to touch, then the blind community should find the postulates to be self-evident. However, I don't think such a community would likely find the classical postulates to be self-evident (though I don't know).¹³

¹¹ Galileo Galilei, *Dialogue on Two New Sciences* (1638), trans. Henry Crew and Alfonso de Salvio (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1991), 169-72.

¹² In his short story "The Country of the Blind," H. G. Wells suggests what such community would be like. See his *Country of the Blind and Other Selected Stories* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2007), 342-48.

¹³ I have walked around the house with my eyes closed, running my fingers along edges, and it doesn't seem to me obvious that, for example, there's only one of what I would call a straight line between two of what I would call points. Admittedly, this is not a decisive experiment. Being sighted doesn't help.

I've argued elsewhere that even assuming Berkeley correctly identifies the origins of our apparently visual experience of space—that it results from an arbitrary but universal association of proper (immediate) visual sense data with immediate kinesthetic and tactile sense data—there could be new visual experiences, for example, of outness or spatial extension.¹⁴ These experiences can be properly ascribed to sight rather than thought of as simply reading tactile *significata* through visual signs, analogous (Berkeley thought) to reading through script to underlying meaning. True, I might imagine tracing my finger around the boundary of a drawn triangle, and to that extent my vision is informed by tactile experience. And it may well be true that like Berkeley's purely sighted being, I couldn't even "see" that triangle without experiences gained through touch. As Berkeley points out, I certainly couldn't describe a line or a circle with a straight edge or compass. But it can be true as well that classical geometry is about properties (idealized) of the diagrams in Euclid's treatise.¹⁵

I'll close by briefly considering Margaret Atherton's recent discussion of some of the passages in NTV dealt with here.¹⁶ In a kind of summary of her view Atherton comments, "If, as Berkeley has argued, the proper subject matter of geometry does not include what we see, then the geometric theory of vision is trying to solve a false or non-existent problem" (206). Although the argument may be valid, we can accept the conclusion and reject the premise. That premise is that the proper subject of geometry is not what we see. My view is that "the very ideas themselves being copied out and exposed to view upon paper" (NTV 150)—idealized by being subject for Berkeley to the Euclidean formalism—are in fact the proper subject matter of classical geometry; while it remains true that geometrical optics fails to account sufficiently for how we see distance. And that I think is Atherton's major point.

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¹⁴ See R. Brook, "Berkeley's Theory of Vision: Transparency and Signification," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 11 (2003), 691-99.

¹⁵ D. M. Armstrong appears to accept the inference that if a sense of touch is required to understand classical geometry then the latter is about tangible extension. See his *Berkeley's Theory of Vision* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960), 58-59. That assumes, as I would not, that correlations between immediate (proper) visual and tactile experience can't change the phenomenal character of visual experience.

¹⁶ Margaret Atherton, *Berkeley's Revolution in Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 201-207.

Fictions in Berkeley: From Epistemology to Morality

Sébastien Charles

In the classical era, imagination garnered poor press: fooling the senses, perverting judgment, subverting reason, skewing social relations, and generally providing wrong ideas about the way things are; it was a faculty of which to beware. Occasionally it was recognized as not being entirely without value—Descartes, for example, insisted on its great usefulness as a figurational function in simplifying the work of the understanding in geometry. The traditional tendency in philosophy, though, was to denigrate imagination for its misleading nature and negative effects and to dwell on its limits as a faculty bound to the body. Indeed, its first function is to represent to the mind things previously perceived by the senses as images in their likeness. But as imagination has neither the same vividness nor the same order as sensation, it is potentially misleading, since in fact images look only approximately the same as their models. Above all, however, imagination was reproached to be potentially misleading for its second function, the creation of images or entire fictions bearing no relation whatsoever to reality, which made it dangerously capable of nourishing all manner of superstition and fantasy.

Within such a context, Berkeley's conception of the imagination hardly seems original at first glance. But as I will propose, in its creative guidance of reason, imagination plays an important and distinctive role in Berkeley's scientific, moral, and religious discussions. Rather than focusing solely on the representational character of imagination, then, I suggest that we attend also to the way in which Berkeley appeals to the imaginative aspects of reason itself. In this way, we can better appreciate the educational presuppositions of human freedom.

* * *

In the *Principles* [PHK], he refers to the usual two sides of the imagination, active and passive, as well as its necessary connection with perception:

It is evident to anyone who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly ideas formed by help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways.¹⁷

Berkeley presents imagination as being both the faculty that compounds ideas and the faculty that represents them, with such representations being only approximate likenesses or copies of perceived objects having no other source than experience itself, even if the

¹⁷ *The Works of George Berkeley* [W], ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Nelson, 1948-57), 2: 41.

productions of imagination may exceed the norms of that source. Nothing too original there.¹⁸ Likewise, in borrowing the example of comparing the difference between the liveliness of one's sensible perception of the sun at noon versus the weaker and imagination of the sun at night, in PHK 26 Berkeley merely adopts the classical conception of imagination that Locke had conjured in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

For I ask anyone whether he be not invincibly conscious to himself of a different perception when he looks on the sun by day and thinks of it by night; when he actually tastes wormwood, or smells a rose, or only thinks on that savour or odour? We as plainly find the difference there is between any idea revived in our mind by our own memory, and actually coming into our minds by our senses, as we do between two distinct ideas.¹⁹

Being representational by nature, imagination would then seem to be quite limited on at least three accounts: first, it cannot go beyond what is furnished by the senses,²⁰ such that the number of its possible ideas is restricted (compared to the number producible by God),²¹ and the loss of a sense (e.g., blindness) should only accentuate this limitation; second, it is limited in that its ideas must respect the requirements of logical coherence (no square circles, for example); and third, it cannot distinctly represent the thing in question—to use Bergson's example, even though one might well have a seemingly neat and precise image of the Parisian Pantheon in one's mind, one could still not count its columns. This is exactly how Berkeley responds to Molyneux (who had questioned him on this point) in a too-often ignored letter of 8 December 1709 that plainly shows how, relying on his reading of Descartes' *Meditations*, Berkeley links imagination inherently to representation. Answering Molyneux's first question about imagination as a representational faculty, Berkeley shows that

the ideas laid up in the imagination need not be images, strictly speaking, of what they represent. . . . When you recollect in your thoughts the idea of any house or city, for instance, 'tis certain that idea do's very rudely resemble the thing it represents, and not in each circumstance accurately correspond with it.²²

Regarding Molyneux's second question (viz., concerning Descartes' attempt in the sixth Meditation to demonstrate the imagination's limits by referring to the impossibility of

¹⁸ See Berkeley, *Notebooks* [N] 582, in *Philosophical Works*, ed. M. R. Ayers (Rutland, Vt : Charles E. Tuttle, 1992) : "The having ideas is not the same thing with perception. A man may have ideas when he only imagines, but then this imagination presupposeth perception."

¹⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* IV.2.14 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 342.

²⁰ See PHK 5, in W 1: 43. "For my part, I might as easily divide a thing from itself. I may indeed divide in my thoughts or conceive apart from each other those things which, perhaps, I never perceived by sense so divided. Thus I imagine the trunk of a human body without the limbs, or conceive the smell of a rose without thinking on the rose itself."

²¹ Berkeley, N 641: "We find in our own minds a great Number of different Ideas. We may Imagine in God a Greater Number. i.e. that Our's in Number or the Number of ours is inconsiderable in respect thereof."

²² Berkeley to Molyneux (8 Dec 1709), in W 8: 25.

distinguishing the mental representation of a chiliagon from that of a myriagon), Berkeley agrees that the two ideas are indistinguishable. He argues, however, that we can speak about things of which we have no precise mental image, not (as Descartes claims) because the understanding has adequate ideas of them, but because (or at least insofar as) we can talk about things for which have words:

We may very well, and in my opinion often do, reason without ideas, but only the words used, being used for the most parts as letters in algebra, which, tho they denote particular quantities, yet every step do not suggest them to our thoughts, and for all that we may reason or perform operations intirly about them. Numbers we can frame no notion of beyond a certain degree, and yet we can reason as well about a thousand as about five, the truth on't is numbers are nothing but names. Hence you may reason about a chiliagon with regard to the number of its sides and angles, tho the idea you have of it be not different from that of a figure of 999 sides. (W 8: 25-26)

If imagination is indeed a representational faculty (as it is for Descartes and Locke), there are limits to such representation. A given sensible quality may be imaginatively abstracted from a given perceived object—for example, one may imagine the color red without thinking of a cherry, but imagination cannot identify a general abstract idea of a quality of the sensible world.²³ In this latter respect, the Berkeleian concept of imagination differs from that of Descartes and Locke; but in terms of its representational character, it is more or less traditional. For Berkeley, imagination plays a supplementary role to the understanding, notably in mathematics where it abets the work of reason,²⁴ but reason has the final say in all matters that go beyond perception (as with the possibility of an absolute space without body—a question he tackles in *De Motu*).²⁵ Like other modern thinkers, Berkeley notes that imaginary ideas are differentiated from sensible ideas based on their liveliness and coherence. As though to confirm how the immaterialist position on this point is by no means original, Philonous explains to Hylas in their third dialogue that

the ideas formed by the imagination are faint and indistinct; they have besides an entire dependence on the will. But the ideas perceived by sense, that is, real things, are more vivid and clear, and, being imprinted on the mind by a spirit distinct from

²³ PHK 5, W 2: 43: “For can there be a nicer strain of abstraction than to distinguish the existence of sensible objects from their being perceived, so as to conceive them existing unperceived? Light and colours, heat and cold, extension and figures, in a word the things we see and feel, what are they but so many sensations, notions, ideas or impressions on the sense; and is it possible to separate, even in thought, any of these from perception? For my part I might as easily divide a thing from itself. I may indeed divide in my thoughts or conceive apart from each other those things which, perhaps, I never perceived by sense so divided. Thus I imagine the trunk of a human body without the limbs, or conceive the smell of a rose without thinking on the rose itself. So far I will not deny I can abstract, if that may properly be called abstraction, which extends only to the conceiving separately such objects, as it is possible may really exist or be actually perceived asunder. But my conceiving or imagining power does not extend beyond the possibility of real existence or perception. Hence, as it is impossible for me to see or feel anything without an actual sensation of that thing, so is it impossible for me to conceive in my thoughts any sensible thing or object distinct from the sensation or perception of it.”

²⁴ See Berkeley, *Analyst*, qu. 54, in W 4: 101.

²⁵ See Berkeley, *De Motu* 53, in W 4: 45.

us, have not a like dependence on our will. There is therefore no danger of confounding these with the foregoing: and there is as little of confounding them with the visions of a dream, which are dim, irregular, and confused. And though they should happen to be never so lively and natural, yet by their not being connected, and of a piece with the preceding and subsequent transactions of our lives, they might easily be distinguished from realities. In short, by whatever method you distinguish *things* from *chimeras* on your own scheme, the same, it is evident, will hold also upon mine.²⁶

But in making all imaginary ideas dependent upon prior perceptions, immaterialism confers quite a special duty on the imagination, on two different levels. First, if to be is to perceive or to be perceived—if a thing's existing rests on the fact of its being a mental perception or production—then the ideas produced by the imagination, insofar they are being perceived (by the mind), have a unique ontological status and are not merely reducible to fictions. On this point Berkeley is quite conscious of the novelty of his position, as evidenced in two successive remarks in his *Notebooks*:

You ask me whether the books are in the study now when no one is there to see them. I answer yes. You ask me, are we not in the wrong for imagining things to exist when they are not actually perceived by the senses. I answer no. The existence of our ideas consists in being perceived, imagined, thought on; whenever they are imagined or thought on, they do exist. Whenever they are mentioned or discoursed of, they are imagined and thought on; therefore you can at no time ask me whether they exist or no, but by reason of that very question they must necessarily exist. But say you then a chimaera does exist. I answer it doth in one sense, i.e. it is imagined. But it must be well noted that existence is vulgarly restrained to actual perception, and that I use the word existence in a larger sense than ordinary. (NB 472-73)

Second, if imagining presupposes some perception having preceded it, then material substance, which is never sense-perceptible, can never produce any image in the mind.²⁷ It is within this analytical framework that one must understand Berkeley's famous argument in the *Principles* which concludes that matter, being unimaginable, does not exist. Staying with the representative function of the imagination: the difference between materialism and immaterialism does not rest on the nature of the difference between sensible and imaginary ideas, but on the question of knowing to what ideas of things perceived outside the mind could refer. The materialist thinks that ideas refer to material objects, the existences of which are taken to be absolute, independent of all perception. Of course, Berkeley rejects this view because (for him) objects exist only insofar as they are perceived—that is, only where a mind thinks or imagines them (PHK 33):

²⁶ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas et Philonous* [DHP], in W 2: 235.

²⁷ Berkeley, PHK 37, in W 2: 56. "It will be urged that thus much at least is true, to wit, that we take away all corporeal substances. To this my answer is, that if the word substance be taken in the vulgar sense, for a combination of sensible qualities, such as extension, solidity, weight, and the like; this we cannot be accused of taking away. But if it be taken in a philosophic sense, for the support of accidents or qualities without the mind: then indeed I acknowledge that we take it away, if one may be said to take away that which never had any existence, not even in the imagination." The same idea is found in NB 517.

But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. [...] This therefore is nothing to the purpose: it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind; but it doth not shew that you can conceive it possible the objects of your thought may exist without the mind: to make out this, it is necessary that you conceive them existing unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy. When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas. (PHK 23; also DHP 200, 235)

Yet at this level there is still only a difference of degrees between Berkeley's position and that of Descartes and Locke. The real difference involves Berkeley's notion of the active side of the imagination: what makes its role essential for him is its creative power, not its representational one. He gives two important examples of this. In the first place, it is imagination, and not only reason, that Berkeley presents as the faculty by which humans are distinct as a species from other species of animal: the decisive difference is that humans can go beyond mere perception and join together ideas lacking any apparent causal connection, as with a horse and a horn joined together to make a unicorn, a being with no existence outside the mind.²⁸ More broadly—and bearing witness to the richness of our interior lives—human beings are characterized above all by our prodigious capacity to associate and combine ideas far surpassing how they are found at the sensory level. Second, as the creative faculty that reveals genuine ontological freedom and a quasi-infinite capacity for invention,²⁹ imagination, even more so than reason, brings us closer to God:

Why may we not conceive it possible for God to create things out of nothing. Certainly we ourselves create in some wise whenever we imagine. (NB 830)

If the human will is where Descartes found traces of the divine, Berkeley also assigns this role to the imagination, that faculty in which is witnessed our liberty by the strange fact that we are not reduced, as animals are, to forming ideas only of that which is perceived. In its freedom to depart from the spatial and temporal present, the human imagination is the faculty of forecasting and anticipating, and thus the source of both the happiness and the misery of human beings, since they are permanently subject to those imaginary ills and delights to which they imagine themselves subject. This permanent capacity for imagination, for projection into the future and recall of the past, constitutes a veritable mystery, as Berkeley recognizes, since the possibility of imagining is the possibility of effecting a rupture with the causal order of the physical world:

²⁸ NB 753: "Qu: whether Composition of Ideas be not that faculty which chiefly serves to discriminate us from Brutes. I question whether a Brute does or can imagine a Blue Horse or Chimera." On Berkeley's conception of animals, see Sébastien Charles, "The Animal according to Berkeley," in S. Parigi (ed.), *George Berkeley: Religion and Science in the Age of Enlightenment* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), forthcoming.

²⁹ See Berkeley, *Querist* 307, in W 6: 130: "Whether the total sum of all other powers, be it of enjoyment or action, which belong to man, or to all mankind together, is not in truth a very narrow and limited quantity? But whether fancy is not boundless?"

Mem: to enquire diligently into that strange mistery, viz., How it is that I can cast about, think of this or that man, place, action when nothing appears to introduce them into my thoughts when they have no perceivable connexion with the ideas suggested by my senses at the present. (NB 599)

This human capacity of imagining to our liking things that are totally disconnected from reality is an important element in favor of human freedom, something which we can feel but not prove, since, as Berkeley remarks in the last dialogue of *Alciphron*, its existence is impossible to prove demonstratively.³⁰ The question is always what ought to be done with such liberty—and therein lies the great problem posed by imagination as a creative faculty. How is one to reckon with the fictions that one continuously produces and which make up a world of which oneself is the only master? How is the power of the imagination to be put, not in the service of the senses, which are forever trying to endear themselves to it, but in the service of reason?³¹

As such questions make clear, the Berkeleian conception of the imagination also necessarily raises questions of morality and education. Taking the tripartite division of the Platonic soul as his inspiration, Berkeley insists that the imagination must be put in the service of reason rather than of the senses, and that all manner of natural pleasure must be subordinated to those of a higher order:

As our parts open and display by gentle degrees, we rise from the gratifications of sense to relish those of the mind. In the scale of pleasure, the lowest are sensual delights, which are succeeded by the more enlarged views and gay portraitures of a lively imagination; and these give way to the sublime pleasures of reason, which discover the causes and designs, the frame, connexion, and symmetry of things, and fills the mind with the contemplation of intellectual beauty, order, and truth.³²

But what are the pleasures of the imagination? To hear Berkeley put it, they are primarily those mental images that artists make use of, whether in order to suggest and captivate, as poets and rhetoricians deploy them, or to plan and create, as they are used by sculptors and architects.³³ And in addition to having such pleasures of its own, imagination is also the only faculty to intensify the pleasures of the senses and reason, and to create further pleasures not inscribed in human nature (e.g., the love of money or glory). These latter are surely unnatural, since they do not correspond to either the desires of the body, which are easy enough to satisfy, or those of reason. Inversely, natural pleasures furnished by

³⁰ Berkeley, *Alciphron* VII. 18, in W 3: 314. “It is no less evident that man is a free agent: and though, by abstracted reasonings, you should puzzle me, and seem to prove the contrary, yet, so long as I am conscious of my own actions, this inward evidence of plain fact will bear me up against all your reasonings, however subtle and refined.”

³¹ See Berkeley, *Querist* 309, in W 6: 131: “Whether the *ignis fatuus* of fancy does not kindle immoderate desires, and lead men into endless pursuits and wild labyrinths?”

³² See Berkeley, “Public Schools and Universities,” in W 7: 209.

³³ See Berkeley to Alexander Pope, 22 October 1717, in W 8: 107, as well as the first of his *Guardian* essays devoted to the pineal gland, in W 7: 185-87.

imagination can be condemned no more than can those of the senses, at least so long as the superiority of those furnished by the mind is acknowledged.³⁴

This is why imagination has a significant role to play in science and philosophy, since it can provide audiences with images that help them better grasp the issues in question. Plato is the paradigmatic example of a philosopher who unites the creativity of the imagination with the vivacity of the intellect through his use of myths that steer readers toward truths they might otherwise never have grasped if the treatise had not been a dialogue rich in imagery.³⁵ Imagination is also important to theology, for theologians as well can express and reveal Christian tenets with imagery and thereby convince those who would never have been convinced by reason, for images have the power to raise emotions where words would have had no meaning³⁶—a phenomenon not unlike that captured in Berkeley's so-called theory of emotive meaning. Yet Berkeley is also quite aware of the need for vigilance when it comes to religious imagery because of the idolatry to which emotions can lead. In Berkeley's eyes, such idolatry is the first step toward the kind of fanaticism and superstition of which Catholics have so often been guilty.³⁷ In turn, as Berkeley cautions periodically in the *Alciphron*, this raises further delicate issues regarding inspiration and prophesy.

It is on this latter point that Berkeley's opposition to the free thinkers plays itself out. The free thinkers take issue with the religious imagination as part of their larger atheistic struggle against Christian prejudices, the greatest of these certainly being the existence of God. They argue that because the senses reveal nothing of such a divinity, the notion of God must be a fiction of the imagination.³⁸ But Berkeley counters that such claims are themselves based on prejudice: his immaterialist position holds that the one substance his adversaries retain, matter, is vulnerable to the same form of argumentation, it too being not only imperceptible, but even unimaginable. To those free thinkers for whom believers are enthusiasts, fanatics, and idolaters with overly lively imaginations, Berkeley responds that theirs are the overactive imaginations, since it is they who imagine that they know of a material substance that they can neither perceive, nor imagine, nor conceive; they are thus hardly in a position to argue their case.³⁹ Indeed, he reproaches them for tying the imaginary to the sensible too closely—that is, for being excessively imaginative in this context—and for separating the imaginary too greatly from the rational—the consequence, he suggests, of an impoverishment of the imagination.

It is particularly in the second of Berkeley's essays of the *Guardian*, devoted to the pineal gland, that he advances his arguments on the unruliness of the imagination of the free thinker. In this amusing work of fiction, Berkeley takes malicious pleasure in describing the mind of the free thinker in detail, dwelling especially on his imagination. The free

³⁴ See *Alciphron* II.14 and 16, in W 3: 85-86, 89; and Berkeley, "Short-Sightedness," in W 7: 211.

³⁵ See *Alciphron* VII.13-14, in W 3: 306-7. On the power of Plato's imagination, see also Berkeley, *Siris* § 360.

³⁶ For example, see what the evocation of Jesus Christ on the cross produces in Sermon IV, in W 7: 51.

³⁷ See Berkeley, "Letter on the Roman Controversy to John James," June 1741, in W 7: 152.

³⁸ See *Alciphron*'s discourse in favor of atheism in *Alciphron* I.9, W 3: 44, in which he makes the notion of God nothing but a fiction of the imagination.

³⁹ See Berkeley, *Alciphron*, V.30, in W 3: 209.

thinker's imagination, he claims, is surely more encompassing than his skimpy understanding; but due to the free thinker's having remained too remote and superficial, and having not taken the proper time to study the Christian religion seriously, he is prejudiced against the Christian religion and full of deformed images of it. In the fifth dialogue of the *Alciphron* Berkeley extends this analysis of the free thinker's imagination with a consideration of the case of Lysicles, whose unbridled imagination leads him to see an inquisitor behind every churchman and the tools of political domination behind all Christian dogma (here recalling the radical libertine theses of the famous clandestine *Traité des trois imposteurs*).⁴⁰ In both the *Guardian* and *Alciphron* discussions, Berkeley presents the imagination of the free thinker as something perturbed, full of prejudices and systematic deformations of all things religious—where believers are imagined as fanatics, priests as those who thirst after power and material wealth, the Church as criminal—with the inevitable consequence that the free thinker's judgments about anything religious are perverted and his mind narrowed by his inability to find any room for religion.

In Berkeley's view, imagination has an important place in the service of religion, not only so that pastors can produce an emotional effect on their audiences during sermons, and make them change their behavior and model themselves on Christ, but also so that philosophy can provide itself the weapons it needs to prove the superior plausibility of Christian religion over free thought. Thus, on the difficult question of the immortality of the soul, Berkeley thinks it possible to provide a similar image that would assist reason by showing, if not the total certainty, at least the strong probability of such immortality. Rather than viewing it as a prejudice transmitted through education, or as the fruit of a sprawling imagination—as the free thinkers do, in claiming that nature's course makes the credibility of such a thing impossible, and that empiricism must surely deny its possibility given the great unlikelihood of an existence deprived of body, and thus, of any sensations—Berkeley moves instead to establish the genuine plausibility of the immortality of the soul by using reason and the imagination as tools. At the demonstrative level, he leans most heavily on two arguments: universal consent—the quasi-unanimous agreement of ancient and modern philosophers on the issue—and the desire of each man for immortality—a natural desire that is, like all natural desire, proportionate to a precise end.

If reason grants plausibility to such a hypothesis, imagination can portray it still more captivately, notably by means of the analogical reasoning developed in Berkeley's famous *Guardian* essay entitled "The Future State." In his account, someone deaf and blind from birth who, as an adult, loses his three remaining senses at the very moment that he acquires the other two (sight and hearing), would perceive a harmonious concert unfolding in a superb landscape. In like manner, at that very moment of being deprived of all corporeal sensation with the body's death, our souls will be furnished with perceptions of a new kind. Our new perceptions might only be "some distant representation, some

⁴⁰ See *The Treatise of the Three Impostors and the Problem of Enlightenment*, trans. Abraham Anderson (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 3-18.

faint and glimmering idea of the ecstatic state of the soul in that article in which she emerges from this sepulchre of flesh into Life and Immortality.”⁴¹

The imagination can therefore alternately serve or disserve reason depending on which notions it helps represent. If the imagination is perturbed, it is above all because reason is as well, and to Berkeley such disruptions are due largely to two failures of education. First, among the likes of Lysicles in *Alciphron*, the pleasures of the senses had been exalted to the detriment of those of reason, and this privileges any fictions that satisfy the former, thereby leading people away from philosophy, theology, and more broadly any authentic moral life. Second, for those like Alciphron, the aristocratic education championed by contemporaries such as Shaftesbury merely diverts the individual inward in a personal struggle of philosophic asceticism, neglecting consideration of the essentially collective dimension of education.

In sum, for Berkeley, the free thinkers fail to appreciate the significant role of imagination in not only how we represent the world but also why we do so. In this way they are at fault both by default or excess. In seeking to rid themselves of Christian prejudices and replace them with others they find more plausible, and in preferring topical discussions over the lessons of tradition and the aridity of university studies, they resolutely wish themselves to be skeptically modern, as if modernity were necessarily the mark of truth. By contrast, Berkeley wants to preserve the gains made by Greek philosophy and the Christian religion, and thus opens up a space for both a representative and a creative, constitutive function for imagination in reasoning. In this sense, he stands in the eighteenth century as one of the last heirs of Christian humanism, having as his aim the further reconciliation of faith with reason that free thinkers had dismissed as out of date.

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⁴¹ Berkeley, “The Future State,” in W 7: 184.

Review

Marc A. Hight. *Idea and Ontology: An Essay in Early Modern Metaphysics of Ideas*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. xiv + 278 pp.

Marc A. Hight has given us a well-researched, well-written, analytically rigorous and thought-provoking book about the development of idea ontology in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The book covers a great deal of material, some in significant depth, some not. The figures discussed include Descartes, Malebranche, Arnauld, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, and Hume. Some might think it a tall order for anyone to grapple with the central works of these figures on a subject as fundamental as the nature of ideas. And while reading the book, I must admit to having had this thought a few times. Seventeen pages on Descartes' theory of ideas, covering the development of his ontology of ideas, the distinction between formal reality and objective reality, the nature of mental representation, the contagion theory of causation, the doctrine of innate ideas as ungrounded dispositions, and the interactionism/occasionalism controversy? Wow. And yet Hight has done his homework. He knows the figures and the relevant interpretive controversies well, he focuses on many of the passages that are relevant to the book's central thesis, and in the end offers us a compelling narrative as an alternative to what he identifies as "the traditional view of what transpired in the early modern period" (2).

The "traditional" view, as Hight understands it, is that the famous empiricist trio (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) de-ontologized ideas, ideas that their rationalist predecessors (Descartes, Malebranche, Arnauld, and Leibniz) had ontologized by fitting them into the late scholastic substance-mode metaphysics (either, in Malebranchian vein, as substances, or, in Arnauldian vein, as modes). They did this, so the story goes, because they found it impossible to reconcile the theory of ideas as substances or as modes with their theories of knowledge and mental representation. The resulting conflict between late scholastic metaphysics and early modern epistemology led to the wholesale abandonment of the former. For Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, ideas are no longer *things* that mediate between our minds and the world we perceive: ideas are, at best, ways of perceiving a world that is directly apprehended.

Hight calls this view "the early modern tale" (2).¹ He takes the tale to have had an influence far beyond the history of ideas. Metaphysical investigations, he tells us, "have been replaced by discussions of language, confident assertions that epistemology alone is

¹ Hight omits extensive discussion of Spinoza because, as he sees it, Spinoza "is not considered a vital figure in "the early modern tale," and there is plenty of evidence that Spinoza took ideas to be modes (even if not modes of finite substances, but rather modes of infinite substance, namely God) (7). Hight is right about this, but something similar could be said of Descartes and Leibniz. As I see it, the book might have been improved if it had been recast as a more complete investigation into the development of idea ontology in the early modern period. Given Spinoza's influence in his own time, and given that he has much to tell us about the ontology of ideas, surely he deserves his own chapter, alongside those devoted to Descartes and Leibniz.

first philosophy, and pronouncements that ontology is dead” (1). For Hight, the tale is false, and the importance of counteracting it derives in large part from the fact that its influence has been pernicious. As he sees it, “the problems of ontology are inescapable,” and this is “just as true now as it was for the early moderns” (266). Hight accepts the part of the early modern tale that emphasizes the tension between early modern metaphysics and early modern epistemology as applied to ideas. But, on his view, the early moderns tried with varying degrees of success to eliminate the tension without abandoning the classical substance-mode ontology, and in doing so offered us examples of some of their very best philosophical work. Hight concludes that to deny “the spectacular metaphysical speculations of the early moderns is to rob us today of what they did best” (267).

Given how much there is to be said about the views of each of the relevant historical figures, it comes as something of an initial surprise that the book devotes as much space as it does to the views of Berkeley in particular. Whereas each of Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, and Hume gets his own chapter (and Malebranche and Arnauld are given one to share), Hight graces Berkeley with *three* chapters covering *almost half* of the 230 pages devoted to the study of particular figures. This decision is a boon for Berkeley fans (of whom I am one), but it does give the book a decidedly unusual tilt. For many scholars of the early modern period, Berkeley is a transitional figure at best, an intellectual way-station from one giant (Locke) to another (Hume). Hight is right, I think, both that this way of reading Berkeley is uncharitable and that there is a great deal to be learned from the way in which Berkeley in particular attempted to reconcile the metaphysics of (human) ideas with the epistemology of perception and representation. But he could have achieved this aim without delving, as he does, into Berkeley’s theory of divine ideas (chapter 7), abstract ideas (chapter 8.1-4), or perceptual heterogeneity (chapter 8.5-10). Chapters 7 and 8 are based in significant part on Hight’s previously published work, but, even granting the intellectual significance of this work, one wonders whether it might not have been better *for the book* if Hight had removed those chapters and had included them in a separate monograph dedicated to Berkeley alone instead.

The bulk of my review focuses on the part of Hight’s book that is devoted to Berkeley, specifically on chapters 6 and 7. But before discussing Berkeley, I want to raise one important question about the book’s main thrust. Is the early modern tale in fact the “traditional” or standard picture of the development of idea ontology in the early modern period? Hight takes for granted that it is, but his evidence for this claim is pretty thin. Hight takes John Yolton, Richard Watson, and Thomas Lennon to be the main purveyors of the early modern tale. These are three influential commentators, but if the early modern tale were the traditional view that Hight takes it to be, one would expect there to be more published purveyors of it. But, so far as I can tell, Hight does not refer to any other purveyors. I suspect that the main reason for this is that Yolton, Watson, and Lennon are actually a distinct minority among early modern scholars. The reason why Yolton’s work made such a splash was that it *went against the grain* to suggest that any of the early moderns had de-ontologized ideas. Yolton was worried that the epistemic “veil of perception” problem (to the effect that the existence of perceived intermediary objects between perceivers and external world objects conduces to external world skepticism) would lead us all to think less of the early moderns. And his clever

suggestion was to rehabilitate at least some of the early moderns by finding reasons to think that they were not committed to ideas as intermediaries. But this went against the standard view, according to which the *moderns* of the 18th century reacted to the “veil of perception” problem that had bedeviled the *early moderns* of the 17th century (notably Descartes and Locke) either by turning the objects of sense into collections of ideas (Berkeley, Hume, and, in a way, Kant) or by adopting some form of direct realism (Reid). If I am right that the purveyors of the early modern tale are really few and far between, then Hight’s book is best read as a well-reasoned rejection of an influential minority position on the relevant issues.

Let me now turn to Hight’s interpretation of Berkeley’s views on idea ontology. Hight’s main claim is that Berkeley tried “to save the philosophy of ideas *within* the ontology of substance and mode” (244). He did this (i) by “stretch[ing]” the ontology “to make room for a new category *within* it” (8, 138), a category that Hight calls “quasi-substance” (8), and (ii) by slotting ideas into this new category.² In contradistinction to the early modern tale, Hight insists that “Berkeley did not abandon ontology with respect to ideas, [but rather] modified and improved it” (138).

In order to understand Hight’s notion of quasi-substance, it is important to understand his conception of traditional substance-mode ontology. According to Hight, all the early moderns accepted a “core” conception of substance (18) and a “core” conception of mode (21). According to the core conception of substance, a substance possesses two characteristics: endurance and independence (14). For Hight, an entity endures (i.e., qualifies as a “thing”) when it “survives and underlies change without itself changing or is able to have contrary properties at different times without sacrificing its identity” (12). As Hight sees it, independence is a genus of which there are various species, most notably simplicity, causal independence, ontological independence, and volitional independence (14, 141). An entity is simple if it has no parts (and thus does not depend for its existence on the existence of any parts); it is causally independent if “it requires no external cause for its being” (18); it is ontologically independent if its existence does not require the existence of something else (14); and it is volitionally independent if it exists whether or not one wills it to exist (158). Hight argues that all of the early moderns took endurance and independence to be defining marks of substance, some hewing to one, others hewing to another conception of independence.³

² Hight writes that “Berkeley stretches the ontology such that it becomes decidedly less rigid and exclusive” (11 n.1), and that “Berkeley implicitly denies that the substance/mode ontology is exclusive or exhaustive” (141). But these sentences mischaracterize Hight’s own thesis. As Hight conceives it, Berkeley’s version of the substance-mode ontology is no less *exclusive* than the traditional version: for Berkeley, as for his predecessors and contemporaries, no substance can be a mode, and no mode can be a substance. Berkeley’s main innovation, on Hight’s view, consists in abandoning the *exhaustiveness*, but not the *exclusiveness*, of the traditional ontology.

³ As Hight reads them, Descartes, Locke, Malebranche, and Arnauld take endurance and ontological independence to be sufficient for substancehood, while Leibniz (for fear that acceptance of these criteria will lead to the Spinozistic thesis that there is only one substance, namely God) characterizes substances as enduring, simple, and causally independent (12-20).

According to the core conception of mode, a mode possesses endurance, but not independence: “substances are *independent* things; modes are *dependent* things” (22). Hight highlights the endurance of modes. He claims that “there are two competing understandings of modes among the moderns.” According to the first “transcendental” understanding, modes are instances of universals; according to the second “immanent” understanding, modes are “more like particular individuals” (21-22). On either of these “understandings,” modes endure. In this, then, modes are like substances. Modes differ from substances in that the former, but not the latter, are dependent beings. In Hight’s words, “the independence criterion is paramount in separating modes from substances” (20).

According to Hight, Berkeley carves out a new ontological category, that of quasi-substance. Though they are neither substances nor modes, quasi-substances possess characteristics of both. On the one hand, quasi-substances “possess one feature usually reserved for substances, namely a kind of separation from other entities such that they are neither modes nor proper parts of other substances”; on the other hand, quasi-substances “possess the one feature most distinctive of modes: they are ontologically dependent on these distinct substances” (35). As Hight sees it, Berkeley’s main contribution to idea ontology—a contribution with considerable “philosophical payoff” (176)—is that ideas are quasi-substances in this sense.

Now right at the start we can begin by asking whether Hight’s conception of the traditional substance-mode ontology is in fact as traditional as he thinks it is. Hight rightly refers us to Aristotle’s *Categories* as the source of the traditional ontology. But Aristotle’s criteria for substancehood differ, at least at first blush, from the criteria Hight himself identifies as forming the “core” conception of substance. As Hight himself recognizes, Aristotle writes that “a substance—that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all—is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject” (12). Thus, Socrates is a (primary) substance in that (i) he (or better, the word “Socrates”) cannot be said of (i.e., predicated of) anything (unlike white, which can be predicated of a piece of chalk), and (ii) he is not in anything (unlike white, which is in the piece of chalk). These two criteria, of impredicability and lack of inherence respectively, are completely different from the criteria of endurance and independence.

So, as Hight represents it, the early modern “core” conception of substance is quite different from Aristotle’s, and therefore seems to be more novel than it is traditional. But Hight insists that the early moderns did look to some of Aristotle’s statements about substance for inspiration. Aristotle does suggest that substances, though not predicated of other things, are themselves subjects of predication. As Hight puts the point, a substance is a substratum, namely something “that receives and supports qualities” (12). Thus, a piece of chalk is a substance inasmuch as “white” can be predicated of it and whiteness inheres in it.

Hight *seems* to think that the “substratum” criterion reduces to, or at least entails, the endurance criterion. For he writes that a conception of substance as a support for qualities “is one of endurance—there must be some *thing* that persists to underlie, support, and

unify the qualities” (15). But there is confusion here, for there is no relation of entailment (or inter-entailment) between the two criteria. It is certainly possible for X to serve as a support for qualities without X’s being capable of surviving change. We can certainly imagine a series of numerically distinct supports for each of the different sets of qualities that *appear* to inhere in a single substance over time. And we can certainly imagine an enduring thing that does not itself serve as a support for qualities.

So the “substratum” criterion is a *third* criterion of substancehood, one that differs from both endurance and independence. Moreover, its reverse serves as a third criterion of modehood. For if a substance can be defined as something that functions as a support, then a mode can be defined as whatever it is that plays the role of being supported.

Thus far, though, the addition of a third criterion of substancehood merely complicates, but does not overturn, Hight’s conception of the relevant criteria. Amending Hight’s thesis, we could say that on the traditional conception a substance is an enduring and independent substratum, and a mode is an enduring entity that is supported by something on which it also depends (namely, a substratum). Is there anything wrong with this picture? I think there is.

According to the traditional substance-mode ontology, so Hight tells us, the substance/mode dichotomy is exhaustive: everything that is not a substance is a mode, and everything that is not a mode is a substance. But, as Hight himself notes, philosophers such as Descartes and Spinoza countenanced attributes, in addition to modes and substances. Descartes, for instance, tells us that thought is the attribute of mind and extension is the attribute of body. Are all attributes modes? Hight waffles on this point. On the one hand, Hight tells us that attributes “are subject to the same conceptual limits as modes,” for, like modes, attributes “depend on substances for their being.” Indeed, so Hight claims, attributes are “more *interdependent* with their substances, since they are essential to them” (21). Thus, it appears that an attribute is just one special kind of mode, namely an essential mode. On the other hand, Hight recognizes that “not all attributes are modes” (20-21).

These statements about attributes can’t all be true. This strongly suggests that something is awry with Hight’s conception of the traditional substance-mode ontology. The problem seems to be that attributes possess features that are characteristic of substances and also possess features that are characteristic of modes, without being either substances or modes. But if this is so, then the traditional substance-mode dichotomy, as encapsulated in the work of Descartes and others, is not exhaustive. What to do?

The answer, I believe, is to give up Hight’s understanding of the traditional conception of a mode. As Hight sees it, a mode is an enduring thing that is neither independent nor a substratum. Unfortunately, this characterization of a mode fits the Cartesian conception of an attribute more closely than it fits the Cartesian conception of a mode. And it is not merely true to say, as Hight does, that “not all attributes are modes.” What is true is more radical than this, namely that *no* attributes are modes. Hight assumes that the main difference between attributes and modes is that attributes are essential characteristics,

while modes are accidental characteristics, of substances. But this papers over the main difference, which concerns the very *nature* of these characteristics. Hight is right that attributes are essential properties of substances: according to Descartes, thought is essential to mind, and extension is essential to body. But modes are not merely inessential properties of substances: rather, as the etymology of the word “mode” suggests, modes are ways of possessing this or that attribute. Thus, willing and perceiving, which are modes of mental substance, are ways of thinking; and shape and size, which are modes of corporeal substance, are ways of being extended.

On this conception of the traditional substance-mode ontology, the characteristics Hight ascribes to modes are truer of attributes. Attributes are persistent characteristics that survive and underlie change. So attributes endure. Modes, by contrast, do not. This or that episode of willing or perceiving, this or that shape or size, is momentary, rather than persistent. Indeed, it is not even clear that modes are *things*. A mode is not a thing, but rather a way for a thing to be (or a way for a thing to possess this or that characteristic). But not all of the characteristics that Hight ascribes to modes are true of attributes. Hight’s modes are dependent beings; on the most common “core” conception, they are *ontologically* dependent beings. But Cartesian attributes, at least arguably, possess the same kind of ontological independence that substances have. Thought and extension are true and immutable natures that would exist even if there were no actual thinking things and no actual extended things. In this sense, thought exists independently of the mind of which it is the essence, and extension exists independently of the body of which it is the essence. The crucial difference between attributes and substances, it seems, is that substances, but not attributes, are substrata.

I conjecture therefore that Hight’s inability to classify attributes within the traditional substance-mode ontology derives at least in part from his inability to recognize the substratum criterion as separate from both the endurance and independence criteria. Once it becomes clear that there are three, rather than two, criteria, the way is open to a proper understanding of substances, modes, and attributes. Importantly, what becomes evident is that modes are ways of being, not things themselves.

Here is another, more *ad hominem*, way of reaching the same conclusion. Hight argues that in deciding whether ideas are more like substances or more like modes, “we can look to see whether a given philosopher takes perception to be a monadic property or dyadic relation. In dyadic relations the relata are distinct and usually (but not always) thought of as independent of one another. Hence the relata are thought of as substances. When taken to be monadic properties, ideas are treated as modes” (22). So, for Hight, whether a philosopher conceives of perception as dyadic or monadic reveals whether he or she thinks of ideas as more substance-like or more mode-like.

But there is confusion here too. If perception is monadic, then to see red (say) is not to be related to something by the relation of seeing: it is, perhaps, to see redly, but nothing more. Indeed, the best monadic account of perception I can think of is the adverbial one. But on such a monadic account, if ideas play any role in perception, then they are not Hightian modes. For, according to Hight, modes are *things* that could serve as the relata

of dyadic perceptual relations. To put the same point another way: the dyadic conception of perception is fully compatible with the view that ideas are Hightian modes. In the end, the best way to preserve the connection Hight sees between the dyadic conception of perception and the thought that ideas are more substance-like than mode-like is to abandon the claim that modes are *things* and instead embrace the view that modes are ways for things to be.

Hight may resist the claim that modes are not *things*, even were he to accept that modes do not endure. This is because Hight identifies a criterion of thinghood distinct from the criterion of endurance, namely Quine's famous dictum that to be is to be the value of a variable.⁴ A thing, in this sense, is "that over which one quantifies" (23). Using this criterion, it becomes clear that modes are things, for it is possible to quantify over them. But, as Hight himself recognizes, it is only in a very "minimal" sense that a Quinean thing is a thing (24). In this sense, even ways of being are things. (Think of that famous first line of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.") What I am suggesting is not that modes are not things *in Quine's sense*, but rather that modes are not things in the sense of persisting entities that underlie change.⁵

If this is right, then Hight's claim that there are two traditional conceptions of modes, namely as akin to universals and as akin to particulars, is inaccurate. An episode of willing (say, a volition to eat a doughnut) is a mode of thought, a way for a mind to think, but it is neither akin to a universal nor akin to a particular. For a mode is not a *thing* in the relevant sense.

Hight is right about one important feature of modes: they are indeed ontologically dependent, i.e., dependent for their existence, on the substances they modify. But this ontological dependence is not a rock-bottom feature of modes: the fact that modes are ontologically dependent derives from their very nature as modes. For modes are essentially *relative* entities: if X does not exist, then there could not be a way for X to be.

Let us then return to the question of the ontological status of ideas in Berkeley's metaphysics. Hight claims that Berkeley's ideas are neither substances nor modes. The fact that they are not substances, Hight says, derives from their ontological dependence. And this seems right. The fact that they are not modes, Hight says, derives, in the first instance, from the fact that they "possess... a kind of separation from other entities" (35). But what does this "separation" amount to? Hight writes (140):

Near the beginning of the *Principles*, in section 2, we are told that the mind is "a thing entirely distinct" from ideas. One main theme in his works is that the activity of the mind

⁴ See W. V. O. Quine, "On What There Is," in *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd ed., rev. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 15.

⁵ At one point, Hight claims that "we can have modes as well as modes of modes" (26). But if I am right that modes are ways for substances to be, then there could be no such thing as a mode of a mode, for there could be no such thing as a way for a way for a substance to be to be.

contrasts with the passivity of ideas. In light of this contrast, it is difficult to allow that he thinks modes are sufficiently distinct from minds to qualify as ideas.⁶

Hight seems to be arguing that, for Berkeley, the fact that ideas are passive while minds are active indicates that ideas are not modes. But this does not follow. Modes, whether conceived as Hight does or as ways of possessing attributes are surely passive, rather than active. So it is not at all clear why we should believe that Berkeley does not take ideas to be modes of mental substance.

As it happens, Hight provides a number of reasons for thinking that Berkeley's ideas are not modes of minds. In one place, he writes that, for Berkeley, "God's ideas...being distinct relata in a two-place relation with the mind [implies] that they are neither modes nor proper parts of the divine mind" (181-182). But, interestingly, as I have argued, on Hight's conception of a mode as an enduring thing, the claim that ideas are relata of dyadic relations is perfectly *compatible* with the view that they are modes. Indeed, the best way to defend the claim that it is on the strength of their being relata of dyadic relations that ideas are not modes is to suppose that modes are not things, but rather, as I have argued, ways of possessing attributes.

Another reason Hight gives for thinking that Berkeley denies that ideas are modes is that, for Berkeley, ideas are "external" to the mind *in the sense of being volitionally independent of it* (158, 160). Now Hight is surely right that Berkeley's *ideas of sense* do not depend for their existence on the wills of the human minds that perceive them: even if I willed to not perceive a computer screen right now, I would still perceive it as I write. But the fact that *some* ideas are independent of our wills does not entail that *all* ideas are independent of our wills. And, indeed, as Hight himself recognizes, some of our ideas (namely, ideas of imagination) would not exist if we did not will them to exist. Should we then say that, for Berkeley, some ideas are modes by virtue of their volitional dependence while others, being volitionally independent, are not? Surely not. If there is anything we can say with confidence about Berkeley's conception of ideas, it is that *all* ideas, regardless of their relation to our *wills*, possess the same *ontological* status.

The best reason Hight cites for thinking that Berkeley's ideas are not modes is that, for Berkeley, whereas modes are predicable of the substances they modify, ideas are not predicable of minds (154—see *Principles* 49). Two features of this argument are particularly noteworthy, at least in relation to the rest of Hight's book. The first is that this argument relies on what I identified as the third criterion of modehood, one not mentioned by Hight, namely the view of modes as predicable of (or supported by) the substances they modify. The second is that if *this* is one of Berkeley's main reasons for thinking that ideas are not modes, then it is a reason that Berkeley's predecessors share! Indeed, Descartes no more accepts that ideas (such as redness and roundness) are predicable of minds than does Berkeley. It follows, then, that Berkeley's insistence that ideas differ from modes does not constitute the kind of philosophical innovation that Hight takes it to be.

⁶ By the last sentence of this passage, I take it that Hight means that it is difficult to allow that Berkeley thinks *ideas* are sufficiently distinct from minds to qualify as *modes*.

If there is any reason to suppose that Berkeley took ideas to be modes, it is that Berkeley took ideas to be ontologically dependent on the minds that perceive them. For, as Hight recognizes, “if ideas are modes, then Berkeley has an immediate and intuitive answer to the question of why he thinks ideas must be dependent on minds[:] the *esse* of ideas is *percipi* because ideas are literally modifications of the mind” (154). But, as we’ve seen, Hight denies that Berkeley’s ideas are modes. So he needs to explain *why* Berkeley “was so thoroughly convinced that ideas had to be such dependent beings” (154). Hight’s answer is that Berkeley, “like his predecessors, built [dependence] into the concept of an idea... Berkeley was, of course, right when he said that everyone agreed with this claim. It was not an assertion for which he thought he needed to argue. Instead, the dependence of ideas was a foundational premise he thought obviously true because, in part, *everyone* thought it was obviously true” (154-155). But it is worth noting that many of Berkeley’s predecessors thought it obviously true that ideas are ontologically dependent *precisely because they took ideas to be modes!* According to Hight, this sort of reasoning is unavailable to Berkeley, and hence it makes no sense to suppose that he took the dependence of ideas to be obvious in exactly the way his predecessors did.

Rather, it makes more sense to suppose that Berkeley took ideas to be dependent on minds because he had a particular theory of the *meaning* of existence-claims about ideas. At *Principles* 3, Berkeley writes that

it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense... cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this, by any one that shall attend to what is meant by the term *exist* when applied to sensible things. The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it.... There was an odour, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions.

Berkeley’s claim here is that there is something special about the meaning of existence-claims about *ideas*, such that their meaning is distinct from the meaning of existence-claims about *minds*. To say that such-and-such idea exists *is* to say that it is perceived. To say that such-and-such mind exists is to say no such thing. It is this fact about meaning, above all else, that grounds Berkeley’s thesis that the *esse* of an idea is *percipi*, and that therefore grounds his claim that ideas are ontologically dependent on the minds that perceive them.

What, then, is Berkeley’s conception of the ontological status of ideas? Hight is right that ideas are not substances, for the only substances in Berkeley’s ontology are minds, and ideas differ from minds in that the latter are active while the former are passive. And Hight is also right, I think, that Berkeley’s ideas are not modes. But the reasons Hight gives for this are not Berkeley’s. A mode is a way for a substance to be. In *this* sense of mode, which Hight does not recognize, ideas are not modes, for ideas, unlike modes, are relata of dyadic relations, and modes, unlike ideas, are predicable of minds. Berkeley’s inability to slot ideas within the classical substance-mode ontology, however, is not unique to him: it bedeviled his predecessors and contemporaries, and almost certainly

contributed to the eventual demise of classical Aristotelian metaphysics. There is little reason to suppose that it was Berkeley's design, explicit or implicit, to carve a new ontological category of quasi-substance (or quasi-mode) within the classical framework of substance and mode. What we can say, rather, is that Berkeley struggled to identify the ontological status of ideas *precisely because* the ontological categories with which he was familiar did not permit him to do so. It does not follow, of course, that Berkeley *de-ontologized* ideas. To the contrary, as Hight well documents, many of Berkeley's ideas, such as houses, mountains, and rivers, are surely *things*, things that *exist* and things that are *real*. But the true status of ideas in relation to substance-mode ontology, for Berkeley, remains a mystery.

Hight claims that thinking of Berkeleyan ideas as quasi-substances helps us understand otherwise puzzling aspects of Berkeley's philosophy, including his theory of divine ideas, his polemic against abstract ideas, and his defense of perceptual heterogeneity. Though Hight's discussion of each of these topics is rewarding and deserving of extensive commentary, for reasons of space I will focus attention only on the first.

Hight's main interpretive thesis on the topic of divine ideas is that "the sensory ideas perceived by finite minds are numerically identical to God's divine ideas" (178). If the numerical identity thesis, as I will call it, is true, then my sensory ideas are not private to me, for God perceives them just as I do.⁷ Hight does not clearly explain why discussion of this thesis is important to the main argument of the book, but it is of some considerable interest to Berkeley scholars nonetheless.

Hight's main reason for thinking that Berkeley endorsed the numerical identity thesis is that its negation would leave room for the kind of skepticism to which Berkeley was implacably opposed. He writes:

Berkeley cannot consistently allow [that the ideas we directly perceive are distinct from the divine ideas that constitute sensible reality] without serious risk of skepticism, since the ideas we perceive would then constitute an intermediary between the real world and our knowledge of it. (184)

The point remains that asserting numerical identity between our sensory ideas and God's ideas is epistemologically necessary from Berkeley's point of view to defeat skepticism. (188)

Hight's idea here is that if our ideas of sense were numerically distinct from God's ideas, then, although we would have epistemic access to *our* ideas, we would not have such access to *God's* ideas; and if the real world were constituted by God's ideas, then we would have no epistemic access to the real world. But if there is anything about which Berkeley is adamant, it is that we have such access. Indeed, it is partly because Berkeley takes materialists to be committed to the view that we have no such access that he is as committed as he is to the otherwise surprising doctrine of immaterialism.

⁷ Hight claims that it is "logically possible, but not required by Berkeley's system" that "the ideas had by two *finite* minds are therefore numerically identical as well" (209).

The problem with this line of reasoning is that the real world, as Berkeley sees it, is constituted by the ideas of finite minds. In *Principles* 36, Berkeley writes that things are more real to the extent that they are “more affecting, orderly, and distinct.” “The real sun,” he says, is “the sun that I see by day,” and “it is evident that every vegetable, star, mineral, and in general each part of the mundane system, is as much a *real being* by our principles as by any other.” The real world, then, is constituted by the objects that common sense tells us are perceived by finite minds, namely sun, stars, mountains, rivers, rocks, tables, animals, and so on. These objects are congeries of ideas of sense, ideas perceived by (and hence, by Berkeley’s lights, existing in) *finite* minds. As long as finite minds have epistemic access to their own ideas, then, even if God’s ideas are epistemically inaccessible to them, they still have epistemic access to the real world. The numerical identity thesis is therefore not needed to ward off the threat of real world skepticism.

It is true, as Hight emphasizes, that the falsity of the numerical identity thesis opens up the possibility that there is a part of “reality” (namely, the contents of the divine mind) to which finite minds have no epistemic access. This is a kind of skepticism, but it is not the kind of skepticism that worries Berkeley or any of his contemporaries. Because God is perfect, because his mind is infinite, because he works in mysterious ways, *it is to be expected*, both on philosophical and theological grounds, that his mind is beyond our ken. Berkeley claims to know (on the basis of proof) that God exists, but does not claim that he has any conception of what God is truly like. Like most of his fellow theists, Berkeley is suitably *modest* about the *extent* of the knowledge of God of which finite minds are capable. This is not the skepticism that haunts materialism: it is merely the contrary of epistemic arrogance.⁸

⁸ Hight writes: “Anything that separates us from the real nature of things produces skepticism. The claim is perhaps more obviously true for material substances, but it would nonetheless cause embarrassment if it turned out that the ideas we perceive are not in fact real things but only copies of them. Even if one were to suppose that our ideas were copies of God’s ideas, doubt could reemerge concerning the perfection of the copies. And Berkeley does not believe his system will allow for *any* doubt” (184-185). There is something right here, but also something wrong. It is true that “anything that separates us from the real nature of things produces skepticism.” But it is false that skepticism *of the relevant sort* follows from the claim that our ideas are no more than copies of God’s ideas. This is because the real nature of things is constituted by *our* ideas, not by *God’s* ideas.

Hight also points to a passage from the *Third Dialogue* in which Philonous remarks to Hylas: “It is your opinion, the ideas we perceive by our senses are not real things, but images, or copies of them. Our knowledge therefore is no farther real, than as our ideas are the true representations of those originals. But as these supposed originals are in themselves unknown, it is impossible to know how far our ideas resemble them; or whether they resemble them at all” (W2, 246). Commenting on this, Hight writes: “The explicit target here, of course, is material archetypes, but the point also applies perfectly well against immaterial archetypes. Any view that creates a numerical difference between the ideas that constitute genuine reality and the (sensory) ideas had by finite minds will engender skepticism” (185). But, again, although it is true that denying the numerical identity thesis opens up the possibility of skepticism *regarding the question of whether or how the ideas in finite minds resemble divine ideas*, the fact that the real world is constituted by the ideas in *finite* minds closes off the possibility of skepticism *about the real world*. And it is the latter kind of skepticism, not the former, to which Berkeley is opposed.

Hight rightly points out that the numerical identity thesis, if true, would explain and underwrite the continuity of sensible objects: “the tree I see outside my window,” he writes, “is the ‘same’ tree as I saw five minutes ago, because its continuity is preserved in a divine world of ideas to which I have access” (205). But it should be noted that the continuity of sensible objects in Berkeley’s system does not *require* the truth of the numerical identity thesis. In order to explain and underwrite this continuity, Berkeley need only hypothesize that God continues to perceive our ideas after we have ceased perceiving them. God sees all things, including the things we see. This much is philosophically and theologically straightforward. So when I turn my head, the tree I was looking at does not disappear, but the reason need not be that the tree is numerically identical to an idea (or congeries of ideas) in God’s mind. In order to ensure continuity, it is sufficient that God perceive the tree after I have ceased perceiving it.

So Hight does not provide strong reasons for attributing the numerical identity thesis to Berkeley. Moreover, there are strong textual reasons for thinking that Berkeley adopted the contrary thesis instead. Hight recognizes that Berkeley sometimes uses the nomenclature of “divine archetypes” (185), a phrase that, along with the word “ectype” as applied to the ideas in finite minds, strongly suggests that the latter are *copies* of, and hence not numerically identical with, God’s ideas. One such passage appears in the *Third Dialogue*: “Again, the things I perceive must have an existence, *they or their archetypes*, out of my mind: but being ideas, *neither they nor their archetypes* can exist otherwise than in an understanding” (W2, 240—emphasis added). Another, more significant passage, appears in Berkeley’s correspondence with Samuel Johnson. There Berkeley writes:

I have no objection against calling the ideas in the mind of God archetypes of ours. But I object against those archetypes by philosophers supposed to be real things, and to have an absolute rational existence distinct from their being perceived by any mind whatsoever. (W2: 292-94)

Reacting to this passage, Hight writes (186):

I cannot explain why Berkeley refuses to straightforwardly admit to Johnson that God’s ideas are numerically identical to the ideas of sense had by finite minds (and hence refuses to deny that God’s ideas are strictly speaking archetypes in the sense of being originals of which we have copies), but the exchange is suitably odd as to convince me that something is amiss in the correspondence.

But there is really nothing amiss here. In his letter to Johnson Berkeley more than merely *refuses to admit* that the numerical identity thesis is *true*: he is quite clearly *willing to accept* that the numerical identity thesis is *false*. This is the point of his claim that he has “no objection” against calling divine ideas “archetypes” of ours. Further, Berkeley emphasizes that acceptance of *divine* archetypes is not akin to acceptance of *materialist* archetypes. The latter, says Berkeley, are supposed to constitute the real world and are supposed to be capable of existing unperceived. By contrast, Berkeley does *not* suppose that the divine archetypes constitute the real world—the real world is constituted by the

relevant ectypes, and does *not* suppose that the divine archetypes are capable of existing unperceived—the divine archetypes are *ideas*, and no idea can exist unperceived.

All told, Hight offers us an elegant and novel interpretation of Berkeley's ontology of ideas, situated in its proper historical context. The thesis that Berkeley's ideas are quasi-substances is interesting and thought-provoking, but in the end unconvincing. And the thesis that Berkeley's ideas of sense in finite minds are numerically identical to ideas in the mind of God is belied by the text. These are some of Hight's central ideas, but not by any means the only ones. The text of Hight's book is rich in content and I found myself in agreement with many of his claims and arguments, most notably his criticisms of proponents of the early modern tale, according to whom Berkeley played an important role in the de-ontologizing of ideas. Because of its overall depth and rigor, I strongly recommend the book for all who are interested in Berkeley's metaphysics and epistemology, as well as Berkeley's role in the historical development of the way of ideas more generally.

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News and Announcements

International Berkeley Conference at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland 6-9 April 2010

Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) deals with a broad spectrum of philosophical issues in metaphysics, philosophical theology, epistemology, theory of perception, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, etc. The Neuchâtel conference commemorates the tercentenary of the publication of Berkeley's *Principles*. Participants will discuss various aspects of Berkeley's philosophy, highlighting the *Principles*. The conference is sponsored by the International Berkeley Society and the Swiss FNRS. Scheduled speakers include:

- Timo Airaksinen (Helsinki): "Visual Language: A Kantian Analysis"
- Margaret Atherton (Wisconsin-Milwaukee): "The Nature of Berkeleianism: Lessons Learned from *PHK* 1-33"
- Bertil Belfrage (Lund): "Berkeley's Empiricist Concept of Thinking Substance"
- Laura Berchielli (Clermont-Ferrand): "Berkeley on Language in *New Theory of Vision and Principles*"
- Dominique Berlioz (Rennes-I): "*Percipere* and *Concipere*, Berkeley's Way to Abstraction and Knowledge"
- Talia Mae Bettcher (California State, Los Angeles): "Berkeley's Positive Notion of Substance"
- Martha Bolton (Rutgers): "'The Most Abstract and Incomprehensible Idea of All': Berkeley on Existence"
- Wolfgang Breidert (Karlsruhe): "God's Role in Berkeley's Philosophy"
- Richard Brook (Bloomsburg): "Berkeley and the Passivity of Ideas: A Look Again at *PHK* 25 and 26"
- Geneviève Brykman (Paris-X, Nanterre): "Berkeley et le scepticisme pyrrhonien"
- Sébastien Charles (Sherbrooke): "Activité et passivité de l'esprit selon Berkeley"
- Stephen Daniel (Texas A&M): "Berkeley's Appropriation of Bayle's Constitutive Skepticism"
- Georges Dicker (SUNY Brockport): "Berkeley's Challenge"
- Keota Fields (Massachusetts-Dartmouth): "Transcendental Arguments in Berkeley's Immaterialism"
- Richard Glauser (Neuchâtel): "Revisiting Berkeley on the Sameness of What We Perceive"
- Petr Glombicek (Prague): "Berkeley's Notion of Common Sense"
- Heta Aleksandra Gylling (Helsinki): "Prudentiality, Expediency and Afterlife"
- Jani Hakkarainen (Tampere): "Ideas Are Ideas: Of the Ontological Status of Berkeley's Ideas"
- Marc Hight (Hampden-Sydney, Virginia): "The Myth of Privacy"
- James Hill (Prague): "Berkeley's Notions: A Third Way between Empiricism and Innatism"
- Laurent Jaffro (Paris-I): "Berkeley on Assent and the Belief of Matter"
- Nancy Kendrick (Wheaton C, Mass.): "The Empty Amusement of Seeing: Berkeley on Causation and Explanation"

- George Pappas (Ohio State): "Berkeley and Epistemic Fallibilism"
- Silvia Parigi (Gaeta): "Berkeley and Boyle: Qualitative Corpuscularianism and the Laws of Nature"
- Ville Paukkonen: "Berkeley's Likeness Principle"
- Luc Peterschmitt (Lille): "Berkeley's Implicit Corpuscularianism in the *Principles of Human Knowledge*"
- Samuel Rickless (California, San Diego): "The Relation between Anti-Abstractionism and Idealism in Berkeley's Metaphysics"
- Katia Saporiti (Zurich): "A Bet with High Stakes: Reflections on Berkeley's Master Argument"
- Daniel Schulthess (Neuchâtel): "Berkeleyan Ideas and Profiles: An Inquiry in Perspective"
- Claire Schwartz (Aix-Marseille): "A New Scientific Methodology? Metaphysical Principles and Physical Laws in *De Motu*"
- Tom Stoneham (York): "Agency and Blind Agents"
- Reed Winegar (Pennsylvania): "Berkeley's Escape from the Labyrinth"

For further information, please contact the organizer: Richard.Glauser@unine.ch.

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Suisse

Colin and Ailsa Turbayne International Berkeley Essay Prize Competition

The late Professor and Mrs. Colin Turbayne established an International Berkeley Essay Prize competition in cooperation with the Philosophy Department at the University of Rochester.

The next deadline for submitting papers is November 1, 2010. Submitted papers should address some aspect of Berkeley's philosophy. Essays should be new and unpublished and should be written in English and not exceed 5,000 words in length. All references to Berkeley should be to Luce/Jessop, and a MLA or similar standard for notes should be followed. Submissions are blind reviewed and will be judged by members of a review board selected by the Department of Philosophy at the University of Rochester. The winner will be announced March 1, 2011 and will receive a prize of \$2,000. Copies of the winning essays are to be sent to the George Berkeley Library Study Center located in Berkeley's home in Whitehall, Newport, RI.

Submissions can be sent electronically to: phladmin@philosophy.rochester.edu or by post mail to: Chair, Department of Philosophy, University of Rochester, P.O. Box 270078, Lattimore 532, Rochester, NY 14627-0078.

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 300th anniversary of Berkeley's *Passive Obedience* (1712), we are now inviting distinguished scholars to give an account of Berkeley's moral and social philosophy. The bilingual English/French conference, sponsored by the International Berkeley Society, will take place at the University of Sherbrooke, Campus Longueuil (near Montréal), Canada. Anyone interested to participate in the conference should send an abstract to one of the organizers before June 1, 2011.

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^{ème} anniversaire de la publication de l'*Obéissance passive* (1712), nous invitons dès à présent des spécialistes de Berkeley à s'intéresser à sa philosophie morale ou sociale dans le cadre d'un colloque bilingue (français-anglais) bénéficiant du soutien de l'International Berkeley Society qui se tiendra au campus Longueuil de l'Université de Sherbrooke, près de Montréal. Tout chercheur souhaitant participer au colloque peut faire parvenir un résumé à l'un des organisateurs avant le 1^{er} juin 2011.

The conference is organized by Bertil Belfrage, Sébastien Charles and David Raynor. For further information, please contact:

Le colloque est organisé par Bertil Belfrage, Sébastien Charles et David Raynor. Pour plus d'informations, veuillez contacter:

Anglophone contributors: Bertil Belfrage, Villan, S-57162 Bodafors, Sweden
Intervenants anglophones: bertil.belfrage@kultur.lu.se

Francophone contributors: Sébastien Charles, 1595 Paton, Sherbrooke, Québec,
Intervenants francophones: J1J 1C3, Canada Sebastien.Charles@USherbrooke.ca

Invitation to participate in the
International Berkeley Conference
at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland,
2-5 September 2013 (tentative dates)

George Berkeley (1685-1753) published his classical *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* in 1713. To celebrate the 300th anniversary of this event, we are now inviting distinguished scholars to a conference focusing Berkeley's *Dialogues*. The conference takes place in Collegium Maius at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. The conference is sponsored by the International Berkeley Society. If you are interested in participating in the conference, please let us hear from you before the end of August 2012.

The conference is organized by Milowit Kuninski (Jagiellonian University, Poland) and Bertil Belfrage (Lund University, Sweden). For further information, please contact one of the organizers.

Milowit Kuninski m.kuninski@iphils.uj.edu.pl

Bertil Belfrage, bertil.belfrage@kultur.lu.se

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