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Response to Critics of My *George Berkeley and Early Modern Philosophy*[1]

Stephen H. Daniel

Two reviews of my book have appeared so far in print. The first (by Manuel Fasko) was published in 2021 in *Berkeley Studies*. There Fasko claims that my central interpretation of Berkeley's view of mind is controversial, but he says little about it and focuses instead on Berkeley's Irishness and relations. The second review appeared in 2022 in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, where Peter West correctly notes that, according to my reading of Berkeley, mind is not a thing but rather the active principle by which ideas are identified. West thinks this is an unusual interpretation that he does not examine further, but he agrees with me that others (e.g., the Stoics) have adopted similar views.

Let me summarize the central claim of the book. For Berkeley, mind is the activity whereby objects are differentiated and related to one another. The existence of mind does not precede the existence of objects of mind nor does it exist independently of such objects. Instead, it is the active identification of things as particular perceptions or ideas. In turn, those acts of differentiation retroactively are identified as particular activities that constitute the specific minds that make those distinctions. In this way, the mind is not a *thing* or idea that makes such identifications but the activity by which such identifications are made. As Berkeley says, "what I think on whatever it may be, I call idea; but thought itself, or thinking, is no idea; it is an act, i.e., volition, i.e., as contradistinguished to effects; the Will" (NB 808). Like Arnauld and Spinoza, he thus suggests that the creation of finite minds occurs in the identification of *thoughts* (i.e., finite acts of perceiving) which themselves are differentiated only subsequently (and thus derivatively) in terms of their objects or ideas. Accordingly, minds and their ideas cannot exist apart from one another. So, like Bayle—and I suspect, Leibniz, John Toland, and Jonathan Edwards—Berkeley retains the concept of substance without endorsing the Cartesian view that spiritual substance is conceivable apart from willing or understanding or the Lockean view that we do not know its essential property.

At a February 22, 2024 session of the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association sponsored by the International Berkeley Society, Patrick Connolly invited Keota Fields, Alberto Luis López, Sam Ben-Meir, and Melissa Frankel to comment on my book. Here are their remarks and my replies.

Keota Fields: "Berkeley's Active Minds and Passive Ideas"

Steve's book, and much of his work over the past twenty–five years, defends a rich and compelling interpretation of Berkeley's theory of mind. Since Berkeley thinks that reality consists of nothing but minds and ideas, grasping his metaphysics requires understanding what Berkeley thinks minds are. That turns out to be a difficult task, since Berkeley says both that a mind is a "simple, undivided, active being" (PHK 27) and that ideas are "entirely passive" (PHK 139). So strict is the separation of active minds and passive ideas that Berkeley insists we cannot have ideas of minds. An idea cannot "be the resemblance or pattern of [i.e., represent] any active being" (PHK 25). Nevertheless, the existence of an idea entirely depends on its being perceived by some mind (PHK 3). Yet this dependence is not to be understood on the model of a mode inhering in a substance (PHK 49). Berkeley issues that restriction despite repeatedly using of the phrase "spiritual substance" to denote the mind (cf. PHK 36, 89, 139; DHP 232–234). The urge to throw up one's hands in defeat is irresistible.

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[1] New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

By his own telling, Berkeley's complete theory of mind is buried somewhere in Italy (Letter to Johnson dated Nov. 25, 1729: *Works* 2: 282). One imagines it hidden in a vast government facility next to the Arc of the Covenant. Adventurous and determined scholars must therefore piece together his view from fragments and clues. The fragments and clues on which Steve draws include passages in Berkeley's published works and his unpublished *Notebooks*. The latter source is controversial because many scholars think they contradict Berkeley's published claims. Specifically, Berkeley's view of the mind in his *Notebooks* sometimes looks like a Humean bundle theory (NB 579–81, 587, 614, 637, 643), which he disavows in his published works (DHP 233–34; see also NB 847–49).

The critical response to Steve's interpretation often puts a heavy emphasis on his use of controversial sources. I am not concerned with that controversy, however, since according to Steve, Berkeley's unpublished comments are consistent with his published works. For present purposes, I accept Steve's assertion of consistency and move on to what I think are more urgent matters.

As Steve reads Berkeley, a mind is a substance in virtue of causing its ideas to be differentiated (i.e., sorted) and organized in certain ways. Minds are individuated by the collection of ideas that minds holistically sort and organize (295). This activity is holistic in the sense that a mind sorts and organizes an entire collection of thoughts at any given moment. Each thought is sorted and organized only in relation to all others. The cause of a holistic act of sorting and organizing is the mind, or what Berkeley refers to as an individual principle. (I pass over the question of whether or how a mind persists over time.)

> **Steve:** since time cannot be abstracted from the succession of ideas (PHK 98), the persistence of any finite spirit "over time" is irrelevant.

Ideas, then, are just the ways in which a mind sorts and organizes its contents. In response to the question whether the content of a Berkeleyan idea is an act or an object, Steve appeals to Arnauld's claim that, since mental activity is necessarily representational, the content of an idea is that which is represented by the mental activity that constitutes that idea. (I have defended such a reading myself.[2]) But a mind is not identical to any one of its ideas any more than a whole is identical to one of its many parts. Nor is a mind identical to the sum of its parts (i.e., a bundle) since a different arrangement of those very parts constitutes a different mind—that is, a different holistic activity of sorting and organizing. An idea is thus a partial activity of being sorted and ordered at the same time as other such partial activities, and by the same cause. In Steve's words, "No idea can have an identity apart from the activity by means of which it is identified, and no particular mental substance can be identified apart from the ideas it identifies" (303). I find much to like about Steve's reading. Nevertheless, it raises several questions.

Those questions were first raised in a classic paper on Berkeley's theory of mind by Robert McKim.[3] McKim's focus is how to understand immediately perceived ideas of sense on any proposed solution to the problem of active minds and passive ideas in Berkeley's texts. McKim rules out as implausible any solution that takes ideas to be passive objects due to the implication that wholly active minds turn out to have passive parts. Steve and I agree with McKim there.

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[2] See Keota Fields, *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011).

[3] McKim, "Berkeley's Active Mind," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 71 (1989), 335–43.

> **Steve:** of course, ideas are passive objects, but that is not due to the fact that active minds are in some sense passive. It is due to how the active identification of an object is different from the object that is so identified.

Yet McKim also lays out four challenges for any solution that takes immediately perceived ideas of sense to be mental activities.

One problem is to explain what Berkeley means by the passivity of ideas. Steve reads Berkeley in the way McKim and others have.[4] Steve concedes that for Berkeley, "perception has both an active and a passive aspect" (2021, 123). The content of an idea—what it is an idea of—is "altogether passive" (DHP 197) in the sense that it is "not in our power to determine" (2021, 122). For an idea to be passive is for the perceiving mind not to be the cause of that idea. It is for the mind to involuntarily become consciously aware of some content.

> **Steve:** Even though we actively identify sense perceptions in terms of comparisons and contrasts, we are not responsible for having those perceptions, only for what those perceptions mean to us. This is how perception can be both passive and active. That does not mean that the *mind* is passive, only that *perception* can be understood as both passive and active. McKim seems to overlook how mind and perception are different in this way.

Nevertheless, according to Steve, conscious awareness of an idea as of this or that sort is an activity of the perceiving mind. That idea cannot exist otherwise than as *being sorted and organized* by the perceiving mind. These passive and active aspects of perception are inseparable for Steve's Berkeley.

Another problem is to explain blind agency—or rather, Berkeley's denial thereof. Steve explains this—crucially—by arguing that ideas are inseparable from the mental activity (i.e., willings) of the perceiver. [I say crucially because this very inseparability is the feature that I think causes the most problems for Steve's reading (see below). Incidentally, I find McKim's solution—that *some* but not *all* agency is blind—unconvincing.]

A third problem is Berkeley's claim that error is impossible for immediately perceived ideas of sense. Steve's reading has serious difficulties with this challenge, to be discussed soon. A fourth problem that McKim cites is Berkeley's *esse* is *percipi* principle, which implies that passivity (rather than activity) is the essence of an idea. Again, Steve handles this problem by claiming that passive ideas are inseparable from the mental activity of the perceiver (again, in line with McKim's own suggested solution).

My worry for Steve's interpretation is that there is no obvious way to explain immediate sense perception. Berkeley thinks that immediate sense perception is what would be perceived had a sense faculty (vision, for instance) "been first conferred on us" (DHP 204). He illustrates that claim with his various discussions of the Molyneux patient, who is natively blind but achieves sight in adulthood. The question is what exactly does the Molyneux patient see the instant sight is conferred on him? Berkeley's answer is that at first sight the Molyneux patient perceives a *diversity* and *variety* of light and colors—for example, some of those sensations are blue, others are yellow, red, green, and so forth (although he needn't have the concepts 'blue', 'yellow', etc., to perceive those sensations). As Berkeley puts it:

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[4] See Genevieve Migley, "Berkeley's Actively Passive Mind," in *Re-examining Berkeley's Philosophy*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 153–171; and John R. Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley.* Oxford University Press. 2007.

> The proper, immediate object of Vision is Light, in all its modes and variations, various colors in kind, in degree, in quantity; some lively, others faint, more of some and less of others; various in their bounds or limits; various in their order or situation. A blind man, when first made to see, might perceive these objects, in which there is an endless variety. . . . Nor would their quantities, limits, or order suggest to him geometrical figures, or extension, or situation. (TVV 44)

What the Molyneux man does *not* immediately perceive by sight, according to Berkeley, are distance, constant size, or constant shape (cf. NTV 2, 41, 52-53, 105, 132).

In addition to immediately perceiving different sorts of visual sensations (i.e., sensations of different color), the Molyneux man also immediately perceives those sensations in a unified order. "There crowd into his Mind," Berkeley says, "the Ideas which compose the visible Man, in company with all the other Ideas of Sight perceiv'd at the same time" (NTV 110). This comment suggests the Molyneux man's visual sensations are immediately perceived by him in a concatenated pattern.

> **Steve**: unlike Keota, I don't see where Berkeley is saying that the Molyneux man immediately sees patterns. Indeed, the fact that a blind man given sight "might" perceive objects due to ideas that "crowd into his mind" hardly suggests that such sensations are "immediately perceived by him in a concatenated pattern." Some further (creative) discrimination is also possible, and it is this activity that defines both the object being identified and the mind making the identification.

Suppose that sensations *a, b,* and *c* are immediately perceived. Sensations *a* and *b* are immediately perceived next to each other, but *a* and *c* are immediately perceived not next to each other. Such concatenation is a manner in which ideas of sense are immediately perceived to be organized. Thus, according to Berkeley, the Molyneux man immediately perceives an already sorted and organized scene of light and colors. The sorting and organizing is "given" to the Molyneux man at first sight (to borrow a phrase from Sellars). It is not the result of his own mental activity.

In that case, the perceiving mind is not doing the sorting or ordering of immediately perceived ideas of sense. Rather, ideas are sensed by us as sorted and ordered involuntarily, without any activity on our part. The mind simply experiences the following: the difference in color between a blue sensation and a yellow sensation; the difference in modality between a visual sensation and a tangible sensation; the difference in time between successive sensations; and the difference in position of concatenated sensations. The mind does not impose these differences onto immediately perceived sensations by its own activity.

> **Steve:** since the perceiving of distinct sensations cannot occur apart from *a mind*'s perceiving such distinctions, the "sorting and organizing" of such sensations is nothing other than the identification of that mind.

Yet on Steve's interpretation, perception *just is* the activity of sorting and organizing ideas. Here is Steve:

> a congeries of perceptions for Berkeley is not a collection of activities that have been differentiated prior to their being collected together; rather, it is the simple activity of perceiving, imagining, or willing in terms of which objects (i.e., ideas) are identified and related. (304)

Since Steve seems committed to claiming that for Berkeley, the perceiving mind *must* do the sorting and organizing of its ideas to perceive them, and that such activity is inseparable from the very existence and passivity of an idea, it seems this must also be the case for immediately perceived ideas of sense. But these claims imply a vicious solipsism with respect to immediately perceived ideas of sense. For they imply that the perceiving mind creates simple ideas of sense as well as the patterns in which they appear out of whole cloth. Even conceding that this activity is all done involuntarily on Steve's reading, an involuntary solipsism is still solipsism. Yet Berkeley denies that his metaphysics has solipsistic implications (as opposed to idealistic implications, PHK 34; DHP 235).

> **Steve**: I don't think my position involves a vicious solipsism. It simply means that whatever patterns of ordering we voluntarily adopt should aspire to imitate the divine sequencing that God has ordained. As Berkeley says near the end of PHK, we can "enlarge our view" to acknowledge our place in the world and to appreciate how we are linked with "the whole system of beings" (153). But as long as we think solely as finite beings, we will never approximate the divine ordination of *all* things.

It will not do to distinguish between an idea and its content. Since contents are perceived, they must be ideas for Berkeley. But ideas are activities of sorting and organizing, as described above.

One obvious solution is that God does the sorting and organizing of ideas in immediate sense perception. Moreover, it seems necessary that it was ever thus, since Berkeley thinks that the activity of sorting requires comparison (NB 378, cf. NB 51). To identify an idea as this or that sort, there must be some already perceived standard of comparison. The target idea will either resemble that standard or not. But such a standard cannot be encountered when a sense modality is "first conferred" on a mind. Nor could that standard be innate for Berkeley. We are left to conclude that God does the sorting and organizing in accordance with a divinely instituted universal standard.

> **Steve**: not surprisingly, I don't think that God sorts or organizes our ideas; we do. That is why—to anticipate the next sentence—I don't think that this view is correct.

I think this is correct, but I doubt that it helps Steve. Even supposing that immediately perceived ideas of sensation are divine activities of sorting and organizing, they are not the perceiving mind's activity. (Nor could they be, since the perceiving mind does not have a standard of comparison at its disposal when a sense modality is "first conferred" upon it. This is another problem for Steve's reading: How could the Molyneux man compare his visual sensations for blueness or yellowness without having resembling visual ideas of imagination or memory as standards for comparison? Absent any such standard given to him from outside, the perceiving mind really is making it all up in his head.)

> **Steve:** the having of visual sensations (e.g., blue, yellow) is simply the having of sensations that *we* differentiate from, and associate with, one another. We do not have to have a standard for comparing them.

Since divine activities are not the perceiving mind's activity, immediately perceived ideas of sense turn out to be separable from the perceiving mind, contrary to Steve's reading. But given the separability of divinely sorted and organized sensations from the perceiving mind, those sensations should not be perceptible by that mind at all on Steve's reading. That is a big problem.

> **Steve:** as I have pointed out above, our ideas of sense (which are passive) are certainly distinct from our minds (which are active); but such ideas are not "separable" from our minds, for our minds are the very principles by which the contents of ideas are distinguished from one another. Also, God's "ideas" (i.e., how objects are *infinitely* related to all other objects) are not our ideas (which are related only *finitely* to other ideas), but that does not mean that we cannot perceive such distinctions. We simply fail to see how they are "linked with the whole system of beings" (PHK 153).

Another problem, discussed by McKim and cited above, is that Berkeley claims that perceiving minds cannot err with respect to the contents of immediately perceived ideas of sense (NB 693, 816, 740, 794; DHP 238). These comments strengthen the pernicious threat of solipsism for Steve's interpretation. If the perceiving mind creates immediately perceived ideas of sense from whole cloth AND she cannot err in doing so, then not only is the perceiving mind trapped in a world of her own making, unable to know anything outside her consciousness; but she enjoys the strongest possible epistemic warrant for her troubles. Those are the kinds of mischaracterizations that Berkeley scholars, Steve very much included, have long fought against.

> **Steve**: this seems to suggest that I have no obvious way to explain immediate sense perception. But for Berkeley, the immediate sense perception *of a particular thing* consists in comparing and contrasting it with other things. That is why the sensation of a particular thing identifies it as what it is and (retroactively and derivatively) identifies its being perceived as a function of such differentiation. That is how the immediate perception of some particular thing always occurs in its being actively framed in the context of other things. I thus disagree with Keota that "ideas are sensed by us as sorted and ordered involuntarily, without any activity on our part"; for as Berkeley says in NB 841, "It seems to me that will and understanding, volitions and ideas, cannot be severed, that either cannot be possibly without the other." That is why someone blind from birth who subsequently gets the ability to see would have to choose how to order the ideas that crowd into his or her mind (TVV 110). And therein lies his freedom.

Having raised a dust and complained I cannot see, I owe it to Steve to at least sketch a path forward that explains immediate sense perception and maintains much of his account; although his inseparability principle must be discarded. In addition to much of what Steve argues (and relying on roughly the same body of textual evidence), I model that picture on Newton's third law of motion, which says that entities exert opposing forces on each other whenever they interact.

[In Sophia Petrillo's voice (a character in the "Golden Girls" TV sitcom)] Picture it: The beginning of time! God creates finite wholly active minds. Let's call one of those finite minds Sophia. Left on its own, Sophia's mind pushes in a variety of "directions" all at once, so to speak. Yet Sophia's activity is *undirected* (a phrase I borrow knowingly from McKim, 1989, 339). Consequently, she perceives nothing. Knowing that Sophia needs guidance, her mind's activity is limited by God's mind pushing in opposite directions with greater force. Sophia's mental activity yields to divine activity in a variety of ways all at once, in a unified system of limits imposed by God. That unified system directs the activity of Sophia's mind, like training wheels constraining and regulating Sophia's activity. Sophia experiences such collisions between her activity and God's activity involuntarily as sensations (cf. PHK 33; 56-57).

Put more generally, immediately perceived ideas of sense are a finite mind's activity experiencing limits of various kinds as it collides with divine activity of greater resistance and force. The impact of a "collision" between finite activity and divine activity is a limit on the former. That delimited activity is a sensation, and its sort and order in a network of other sensations is determined by God. In immediate perception, God actively determines the manner of delimitation by directing a finite mind's activity (somewhat like guardrails directing traffic). Thus, immediate sense perception is not blind, although the perceiving mind is not doing the directing. Yet without a finite mind's activity, there would be nothing for the divine mind to delimit and direct. It is in that sense that the existence of a sensory idea depends on its being perceived by the perceiver.

> **Steve:** if Sophia's mind is directed by God, then she is not free. What does it mean to say that God imposes "a unified system of limits" that directs her mind? And where does Berkeley say anything that supports this "collision" theory?

Why can my picture explain immediate sense perception where Steve's picture cannot? Because while I can agree with Steve that minds are activities of sorting and organizing ideas, I need not define ideas as inseparable from the sorting and organizing of the perceiving mind. An idea is a mind's *directed* (or controlled) activity of sorting and organizing.

> **Steve:** Berkeley explicitly says that "thought itself, or thinking, is no idea" (NB 808) and "there is nothing of power, causality, or agency included" in an idea (TVV 11).

The required control may emanate voluntarily from within that mind or involuntarily from without. My reading does not require that sorting and organizing on the perceiving mind's part constitute the perceived idea. I only need to suppose that the will to sort and organize is being directed, regulated, and constrained by an opposing activity.

On this picture, a sensation is not an inert passive object. Rather, a sensation is a limit created by a collision of activities. But God wants Sophia to gain knowledge and to flourish. For that reason, God organizes the limits on Sophia's activities in such a way that, if Sophia willingly follows a divinely established order (which we refer to as a system of natural laws—PHK 62; DHP 230-231), she can organize her own mental activities to acquire knowledge and to learn which activities promote her well–being and which inhibit it. The result is epistemically and normatively rich mediate perception. (Notably, this is consistent with Steve's own teleological interpretation of God's knowledge of pain.)

(On my reading, immediately perceived ideas of sense are not representations. Rather, the perceiving mind directly perceives external phenomena—divinely imposed limits—by means of its own involuntarily controlled activity. However, mediate perceptions, as well as ideas of imagination and memory, are representations.)

Notice that there is no passive faculty on this picture, that is, no faculty to receive an idea on Descartes' model of a wax receiving an impression from a stamp. When Berkeley speaks of receiving an idea on my reading, he refers to a mental activity encountering an overwhelming opposing force—a counteractivity that constrains, guides, and trains a finite mind's activity for that mind's benefit.

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Chapter 14 of Steve Daniel's book *George Berkeley and Early Modern Philosophy* is titled "Berkeley on God." As the name indicates, it discusses the figure of God according to Daniel's interpretation. The chapter illustrates an exceptional understanding of Berkeley's work and goals and therefore has many virtues. For example, I find particularly stimulating both Daniel's conception of God as an identifier, differentiator, and harmonizer of ideas, and its counterpart in the finite minds as principles of differentiation and association of (particular) ideas, so I look forward to reading more on this topic in the future. Related to this, is notable the idea of a less substantial God. Daniel does not deny the standard interpretation of God as substance or substantial mind, but he highlights—I think based on the *Notebooks*—a more willful and purely active God, and from it he explores His function within Berkeley's philosophy. The chapter also offers a novel *a priori* argument for the existence of God, not very common among scholars because they usually work on Berkeley's *a posteriori* arguments. In all honesty, I confess that I found the chapter confusing at times. It is not always easy to understand it on its own given that some of the ideas it raises are explained in previous chapters, specifically in chapters 5, 8, 9, 15, 16, and 18, as Daniel points out. This is not Daniel's problem, let alone a fault of his, but it forces the readers to read many other chapters if they want to fill in the gaps and properly grasp his proposal. In the same vein, I sometimes found difficult to follow Daniel's argumentation because, in my view, it is not always clear when Berkeley speaks and when Daniel speaks. Perhaps this is so because at times I found a symbiosis, more than a distance, between Steve the scholar and his object of study (Berkeley and his conception of God).

Having said that, in what follows I set out to address a few of many comments and questions that arose during my reading of this exciting chapter. Steve discusses at the beginning of his chapter the different goals of *a posteriori* and *a priori* arguments and explores another possibility of knowing Berkeley's God. I say another because he does not want to focus on *a posteriori* arguments such as the passivity, continuity, or divine language, given that in his opinion these arguments both "support a view of God that is eminently accessible and persuasive for finite minds" (220) and "supports belief only in a God who is finite." Daniel also finds problematic these arguments because for him they treat God "as an object of thought whose identity as an object would have to have been caused by something else" (219), which implies to make Him a passive idea, something inadmissible to Berkeley. Therefore, Daniel stresses the necessity of working on an *a priori* argument, since for him it is the only way to avoid treating God as an object and therefore as an idea, and at the same time is the way to show how Berkeley emphasizes the infinity of God. I have here a first question to Daniel, does he think it is possible for someone to analyze X and try to understand X without taking distance from it, that is, without seeing X as an object of study, or in his terms as an "object of thought"? Is there any other way to conceptualize something (a thing, a being, a spirit) in order to try to understand it than turning it into an object of study, or an object of thought? I think to clarify this point is important to better understand Daniel's initial argumentation.

> **Steve:** Alberto correctly notes that I characterize God as the identifier, differentiator, and harmonizer of all ideas, and I characterize finite minds as differentiating and harmonizing principles of particular ideas. But given my claim that, for Berkeley, *a posteriori* arguments support belief only in a finite God, he asks whether there a way to think of something without thinking of it as an object? I answer that when we think of God or minds, we think of the activity by means of which objects are identified. That is, every object (or "idea") is the object of some particular activity (or as Berkeley notes on several occasions, "thoughts"). God, however, is not *an* act of thinking or *a* thought, but is thinking itself. We can certainly identify such activity as the activity by which some object or idea is conceptualized (and without which the idea cannot exist); but *we* cannot imagine the thinking of an object existing independently of the object. Of course, this in no way affects the existence of God, since he is the existence of all things in an infinite integration of ideas which we as finite beings could never experience. That is, as long as we think in terms of our finitude, we will never commit ourselves to endorsing how whatever happens in our lives is exactly what God eternally wills for us.

Coming back to the chapter, to support his goal of working on an *a priori* argument, Daniel asserts that Berkeley invokes *a posteriori* arguments when he does not want to prove explicitly the existence of an infinite God (indeed, he claims that these arguments support only a finite God). On the other hand, he argues that when Berkeley aims to prove demonstratively that an infinite God exists, he invokes an *a priori* argument in which the proposition "God exists" is a self–evident truth that relies on the "bare existence" of a sensible world. This bare existence does not refer to the world we perceive but to the "pure possibility of the existence of any world" (220). This apparently Leibnizian approach is based on Daniel's conception of Berkeley's God, which is essential because it constitutes a unifying thread in the chapter. Summarizing the manifold characterizations of God, I can say that for Daniel God is the mind that identifies, differentiates, and associates our ideas and the minds that have those ideas (219, 226, 227–28).

> **Steve:** as I say in the book (28–29), "the mind" is not some thing *that* differentiates ideas but is simply the differentiation and association of all ideas. The same goes for God and us.

Thus, in the first part of the chapter after focusing on the three *a posteriori* arguments mentioned above, explaining their respective goals, and refuting some commentators who assert Berkeley's failure in demonstrating God's infinity (Winkler, Jesseph, Flage, and Rickless), Daniel begins to provide his own argument. He claims that *a posteriori* arguments provide "a persuasive (but not demonstrative) reason" to believe in an infinite

God, among other grounds because "the only way for us to perceive things as truly linked with the whole system of beings is for us *not* to perceive them from our perspective" (223). This means that a direct and demonstrative argument of the existence of an infinite God—which must be *a priori*—cannot be based on our experiences as finite perceivers but on how God comprehends everything; or in Daniel's words, "how our experiences of finite things are intelligible simply by virtue of their being perceived by a God who comprehends all things together as one integrated unity" (223). In sum, Daniel wants to show "how Berkeley provides an argument that *demonstrates* that God exists without basing such a demonstration on our experiences of individual things in the world" (226). These assertions intrigue me. I am not sure if Berkeley would agree with Daniel's statement that our own perspective and experience is erroneous, incorrect, or just a partial way of knowing the world as a totally. Isn't this precisely what Berkeley suggests in places like NTV 147, PHK 153, 155, DHP 231, among others? Daniel himself provides examples that seem to contradict his own assertion.

> **Steve:** what Berkeley encourages us to recognize in these passages is how our experiences can be transformed by thinking of them from a more comprehensive perspective. In that way, we would be called to replace our own particular interests with a commitment to pursue the infinite will of God.

The second and third sections of the chapter contain the core of Daniel's proposal. They offer his *a priori* argument under the premise that without first knowing that God exists we cannot make sense of saying that other things exist as a totality. I am sympathetic with this project, but my impression is that Steve begins at the end. Instead of developing his proof and then showing its achievements, he explains from the very beginning what an infinite God means ("the activity whereby all actual *and* potential things are differentiated and identified relative to one another" 226) and why is necessary to accept his argument, since otherwise, if we lack *a prior* sense of God's comprehensiveness, "we cannot develop an integrated way of thinking about how all actual, possible, and impossible acts of perception are intelligible" (228). If I understand this correctly, it seems to me that Daniel falls into a kind of reasoning in which S is true because S must be true. If that is correct, I have two comments on this essential part of the argument:

(i) Daniel considers for his argument primarily *Principles* (PHK 72, 147, 148, 156, etc.) and to a lesser degree *Alciphron* (IV, 5); perhaps this is why he provides an argument in terms of cause and effect. This is something he says when he argues that we think about God as "the cause of the orderly and uniform sequences of ideas that characterize the comprehension of all things in relation to one another" (227). I wonder if when someone thinks about God as the cause of something it is because that person is already thinking of, or contemplating, effects; and what are the effects in Daniel's argument but what we experience of the world? As far as I can see, Daniel provides all along an *a posteriori* argument, one from effects (what we experience, see, perceive, learn, etc.) to the cause (God). He even cites Berkeley's letter to Percival (September 6, 1710) in support of his proposal of seeing God as "the cause of the orderly and uniform ideas" (227). On the other hand, for Daniel this "shifts the discussion away from explaining how our often disconnected ideas can be reconciled with one another to noting how all things … express God's infinitely comprehensive integration of what we experience" (227). In my reading of the chapter, I did not see how this shifts the discussion of the validity of *a posteriori* arguments for demonstrating God's infinity nor how this actually supports Daniel's *a priori* argument. In relation to this, although I can think about God as the cause, as the unifier of the differentiated ideas, I always do so from the particular things or ideas I experience, so I am still on the plane of an *a posteriori* argument. I think clarifying this point is crucial to the argument.

> **Steve:** again, I am not recommending that we ignore Berkeley's *a posteriori* strategies for invoking God's existence. Indeed, I think that as long as we think of our own finite ways of organizing the world—in which we are always relating finite things to other finite things—we can still only approximate the kind of union with God that might endear us to him. So, as long as we fail to give ourselves over entirely to God's will, we will continue to think of ourselves as distinct from him.

(ii) I wonder why if Daniel proposes an *a priori* argument he uses primarily *Principles* and *Dialogues* and does not take advantage, for instance, of Berkeley's sermon *On the Will of God*. He only mentions it once in note 29, but in my opinion some sentences contained in that sermon would benefit him, as in the case of "But neither is the use of our reason, the only natural means, for discovering the will of God, the same being also suggested by a natural conscience, and inward feeling implanted in the soul of every man, previous to all deductions of reason" (130).

> **Steve:** indeed, we need to think of whatever happens in the world as expressions of God's will, and we need to will those events not as our own wills but as expressions of God's will. That is what I mean by saying that our goal is not for us to reconcile *our* disconnected ideas but to acknowledge how our ideas are always already reconciled in God. In short, it means giving up our individuality to become one with God's will.

Daniel states that "the key" for understanding his interpretation of Berkeley's God lies "not in modeling the divine mind on a finite mind and just removing the finite mind's limitations," nor "in thinking of God as the ultimate justification for the existence of the sensible world, for that would focus our concerns on the world of our experience rather than the perfections … 'properly' ascribed to God" (228). However, Berkeley himself uses both paths for demonstrating God's existence. On the one hand, in *Alciphron* III.iv.20–21 and to a lesser extent in *Dialogues* 231, he uses analogy to understand how God's attributes differ from those of humans. On the other hand, in PHK 147, *The Christian Idea of God*, *De Motu* §§25, 32, 34, 69, and his letter to Johnson (November 25, 1729), Berkeley conceives God as the upholder of the natural world. In both cases, he sets out to provide solid and demonstrative (and not only persuasive) arguments for God's existence. I would like to know how Daniel harmonizes this with his proposal.

> **Steve:** again, when demonstrating the existence of a finite cause of all *we* experience, analogy might seem to work; but it won't work in demonstrating an infinite cause.

My last comment is related to the infinity of God, a central theme of this chapter. From definitions like God is the "willful perceiving of the totality of all distinctions" (228) and the "activity" of the "differentiation and integration of all actual and possible things" (230); and from exhortations such as "we need to think of God as the creator of the total unity of all there is" (232) and the fact that we should "think of the things we experience in terms of an infinite God" (234); and from statements like "in perceiving even a few ideas as signs, I become aware of how all things point beyond themselves in infinite ways (235)—Daniel attempts to offer a demonstration of an infinite God. However, I did not find entirely satisfactory Steve's explanation of this topic. In fact, what he accomplishes in the second and third parts of the chapter is to provide an explanation of what God is insofar as he provides some features that define God but not a "demonstrative argument," much less a proof of the God's infinity. I wonder if Steve might have gained something useful from Berkeley's 1707 conference *Of Infinites*, specially from the critique of Raphson's *De Spatio Reali seu Ente Infinito*. I mention this because perhaps the problem of space, infinite, and God might have given him a clue, albeit indirect, to achieve the idea of infinity.

> **Steve**: I think Berkeley is disappointed in Raphson's account of the infinite because it starts with the finite and endlessly duplicates it to get to the infinite. That seems perfectly reasonable for finite beings like us. But for Berkeley, we cannot reason ourselves into oneness with God. Instead, we need to imagine what it would be like not to think sequentially or even rationally but holistically and eternally. Only then could we appreciate what it would be like not to experience the world from the fallen perspective of creatures combining good and evil.

In my opinion, the best way to honor a book and its author is to discuss the arguments it contains and attempt to refute them. Steve Daniel's book is a rigorous and profound study that should be widely read and discussed because it provides, among other virtues, provocative ideas and novel interpretations. This is what one expects when reading an original interpretation, as is the case with the stimulating book *George Berkeley and Early Modern Philosophy*.

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One of the claims, or perhaps *the* fundamental claim of Daniel's book is that Berkeley's conception of substance was radically different from Descartes' or Locke's. Substance is not some independent thing that underlies or supports ideas; rather, it is the differentiation and association of the complex totality of those ideas. Mind is not an object that engages in activities (such as volition) but is nothing other than its activity. For Descartes, to say that I think is to say that I am a substance that thinks, that I exist as a thinking thing, a *res cogitans*, and "since the mind is a thinking thing, there is in addition to thinking a substance that does the thinking." It is true, of course, that Berkeley refers to the mind as a substance; but Daniel argues that Berkeley means something quite different from Descartes.

Daniel's interpretation of Berkeley comes with far reaching implications. And although he does not mention it, if Daniel is right then we could see Berkeley as anticipating Fichte who likewise regards the I as a kind of pure activity. (Daniel's Berkeley sounds very much like the Fichte who writes in *The Foundations of Natural Right*: "In order not to suggest the idea of a substratum that contains within itself this power of acting, I do not even want to call the I an acting something.") This is notable because Fichte famously regarded his philosophy as diametrically opposed to that of Spinoza: in fact, for Fichte, there are ultimately only two philosophies from which to choose, namely, his own and Spinoza's.

> **Steve:** as the differentiation and association of the totality of ideas, Berkeley's concept of substance is really different from that of Descartes or Locke. For Descartes, substance is the thing that thinks; whereas for Berkeley (like Fichte), substance is not a thing but rather the activity of thinking. Sam thinks this is really unlike Spinoza—or at least unlike what Fichte thought characterizes Spinoza—and perhaps even what Berkeley thought characterizes Spinoza.

I mention this in passing because one of the most provocative features of Daniel's remarkably provocative book is that he is explicitly moving Berkeley away from Descartes and Locke and closer to Spinoza—a philosopher to whom Berkeley has, more often than not, been viewed as utterly opposed. And one can of course refer to Berkeley's own statements where he regards Spinoza as chief among his atheistic, philosophical enemies.

In drawing Berkeley closer to Spinoza, Daniel underscores how Berkeley characterizes mental substances as nothing other than "one simple, undivided active being," the active principle of motion and change of ideas that identifies a determinate sequence of activities. We should not regard mental substances as things that engage in activities such as willing: mind itself has no identity or nature other than the activity of differentiating and relating objects of experience—which also means that mind is entirely unlike anything we experience. Berkeley refuses to talk about its nature because it has no identity—rather, it is the reason why things have natures and identities. It is absurd for us to enquire into the "being" or "what" of the mind or soul and to seek this anywhere except in its activity.

> **Steve:** Sam seems to think that I am saying that mind is "entirely unlike anything we experience." Of course, I am not claiming that, for we certainly are aware of our own activity of identifying and differentiating ideas; so, it would be more accurate to say that we are aware of minds (i.e., mental activity), even though we have no ideas of minds. This is not to say that minds have no identities; it is rather to say that their identities consist in being the specific activity of differentiating things from one another.

This bringing together of Berkley and Spinoza is one of the fascinating features of Daniel's reading of Berkeley: it is highly unusual and is part of Daniel's unconventional interpretation of Berkeley. The most direct engagements with Spinoza's work can be found in Berkeley's *Notebooks*. In Berkeley's comments on Spinoza, he notes how the substance of a spirit is not a thing or it but rather a verb—to act, to cause, to will. "Spinoza will have God be *omnium rerum causa immanens*" (NB 827). God cannot be considered an *it* because the will that there be things cannot itself be a thing. In this sense, the God in whom we live and move and have our being is the immanent and not the transitive cause of all things. As Daniel points out, there are numerous occasions when Berkeley refers to St. Paul's remark that in God "we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). God is not a thing at all, for Berkeley (save only in a derivative sense), but rather, that in terms of which and in which all things have their being and determination.

God is immediately present in reality as the legibility or visibility of the system, the space in which everything is identified and differentiated. Daniel does not say outright that the Bishop of Cloyne was a pantheist, but he does suggest in his chapter entitled "Berkeley's Pantheistic Discourse" that Berkeley came closer to pantheism than is generally recognized—closer than Berkeley himself seems to have been comfortable with. He even goes so far as to suggest that Berkeley may have conveniently "lost" his manuscript when he saw where it was leading philosophically (144), so as not to cause offense.

> **Steve:** Berkeley is not suggesting that we move in the direction of pantheism (in the way that people often understand pantheism—that is, as suggesting that God is all things). For Berkeley, God is not the total *collection* of all things but rather the principle whereby all things are differentiated and related. So, I think he was less

> worried about where *Principles II* was heading—which I think was in the direction that Spinoza was suggesting (but not in the way Spinoza's critics misinterpreted him, that is, in a way that made God a thing) but instead in a way that Berkeley could have agreed with Spinoza—that is, as the activity whereby all things are infinitely related.

As Daniel points out, "To think of God is … not to think of a thing that exists and about which one can predicate characteristics. Rather, it is to acknowledge the presence of meaning in the activity of thinking itself. That is the sense of God in which we live and move and have our being" (248). It is perhaps fair to say that Daniel is moving Berkeley's God away from traditional theism and closer to the so-called God of the philosophers. In fact, that much can be taken for granted in bringing to the fore the pantheistic strains in Berkeley's thought (Spinoza's God is quintessentially the God of the philosophers). But this precisely raises a host of intricate, difficult but fascinating questions. Just how close can we bring Berkeley and Spinoza? Where precisely are the fault lines as it were? Supposing we adopt Daniel's understanding of Berkeley, where precisely do their philosophies become irreconcilable?

When it comes to Spinoza and Berkley on minds and ideas one of the fundamental and perhaps irreconcilable differences is this: for Berkeley, minds and ideas are two radically different things (although, as Daniel underscores, truly speaking the mind is not a thing at all). The essential difference is that ideas are passive whereas are minds are active (indeed, they are pure activity). For Spinoza, on the other hand, they are one and the same: the mind, he says, does not have ideas, but rather is an idea—a complex idea corresponding to a complex body, i.e., the human body. The mind is an idea or modification of Substance conceived under the attribute of Thought. The body is not a different thing, but simply a different way of regarding the same thing, now conceived under the attribute of Extension. As Daniel observes, Berkeley repeatedly insists that minds are not like ideas but are rather the means by which ideas and objects are cognized. And as Richard Mason puts it, in terms of the divine intellect, its function for Spinoza "is not to think unthought thoughts, in the way that Berkeley's God perceives unperceived percepts."[5]

In making the Spinoza–Berkeley connection Daniel draws on both Bergson and Peirce, two thinkers who (according to Daniel) single out Spinoza and Berkeley as "kindred spirits." This is certainly a remarkable and exciting strategy, but also one that seems rather fraught with a host of new difficulties. I must admit that I do not, on the face of it, see Bergson and Peirce (but especially Bergson) as the allies that Daniel seems to think they are.

Let's start with Bergson. Daniel points out that for Bergson these two thinkers are notable because of their identification or clarification of the nature of things. My immediate difficulty is that in reading Bergson's essay "Philosophical Intuition" in the *Creative Mind*, I simply do not see Bergson as contending that Spinoza and Berkeley are "kindred spirits." In fact, Bergson says explicitly that he is not going to discuss Spinoza[6] and indeed makes only a few passing remarks before going into more depth on Berkeley. And even with respect to Berkeley, his primary interest seems to consist in using Berkeley's thought as a way of illustrating Bergson's thesis that "in the very places where the philosopher"—that is, any philosopher worthy of the name—"seems to be repeating things already said, he is thinking them in his own way" (132). And that is precisely what he proceeds to demonstrate with his analysis of Berkeley. I simply fail to see that Bergson is intent on doing what Daniel claims he is doing. But let's put that aside.

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[5] Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 240.

[6] See Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 133.

I would also note that in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson has much to say of Spinoza, but does not invoke Berkeley at all as far as I am aware. He does say, rightly I think, that Thought and Extension are "placed in the same rank … two translations of one and the same original."[7] Bergson adds that in addition to these two "translations," there is also "an infinity of others into languages we know not" (351)—clearly endorsing the view that God possesses attributes beyond Thought and Extension in which we must participate (even if we are not aware of it), which means that there is much more to us than we are aware. In the *Short Treatise* (I.1.1.n d), Spinoza maintains that "We find in ourselves something which openly indicates to us not only that there are more, but also that there are infinite perfect attributes," and these unknown attributes "tell us that they are though they so far do not tell us what they are." As Deleuze puts it, "the very fact of our existence shows us that existence is not exhausted by the attributes we know."[8]

Let us take Daniel's reading for granted then. Generally, Spinoza's substance monism has been viewed as presenting a problem in terms of explaining the reality of differentiation and multiplicity (modes or things). This is reflected, for example, in Hegel's famous charge against Spinoza of acosmism (the denial of the reality of finite things). Spinoza, I think it is fair to say, never intended to deny the reality of finite things. But one can easily be dissatisfied with his explanation for the world of finite modes. The chief attraction of Spinozism consisted in his monism—that is, in his steadfast attempt to overcome Cartesian dualism altogether, to view the mental and physical (i.e., Thought and Extension) as two aspects of the single infinite and divine totality.[9] The fundamental problem for Spinoza's metaphysics was to account for the transition from the infinite to the finite. (As an aside, both Hegel and Schelling treat this problem of the origin of finitude from the infinite, from the undifferentiated Absolute to the world of multiplicity, as the fundamental problem of philosophy.)

In the *Ethics*, this transition is explained in terms of the relationship of logical implication, illustrated in the example of a triangle: the nature of a triangle is such that the sum of its interior angles will necessarily equal 180 degrees: "all things have necessarily flowed … by the same necessity and in the same way as from the nature of a triangle it follows, from eternity to eternity, that its three right angles are equal to two right angles" (E Ip17cor2n). In other words, the connection between infinite substance and individual finite things is a purely geometrical necessity. But Spinoza does not explain this connection, he only asserts that it takes place. Understanding this relationship between causally related finite things and the Absolute, God, Substance, *Natura Naturans*, etc. is the problem for every form of strict ontological (or substance) monism.

We should also underscore, I think, that Berkeley recognized fairly early on—by 1708, if Geneviève Brykman is correct[10]—that there were significant points at which his and

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[7] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 350.

[8] Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 119.

[9] Recall Hegel's statement that to be a philosopher one must first be a Spinozist; that is, one must begin by dissolving the world of multiplicity into the undifferentiated absolute.

[10] See Brykman, "Berkeley, Spinoza and Radical Enlightenment," in *George Berkeley: Religion and Science in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Silvia Parigi (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 178.

Spinoza's views aligned. That was probably a very distressing revelation for Berkeley, since he regarded Spinoza as a declared enemy of religion. Nevertheless, he was (according to Brykman) in agreement with Spinoza's ontological monism—the metaphysical claim that only one infinite substance exists, with finite beings as its modifications or effects. As I understand Daniel, he seems to hold a similar view of Berkeley. And to be sure, for Berkeley (as for Spinoza) the theory was motivated by the same endeavor of overcoming the problems left unresolved by Cartesian dualism.

> **Steve:** Berkeley does *not* think that finite beings are modifications or effects of one infinite substance (PHK 49)—at least, not in the way that Brykman proposes.

Now, it is notable that in Daniel's reading, "the vexing questions of how the variety of finite minds or ideas follows from infinite thought, or how finite bodies follow from infinite extension, are solved, for Bergson by recognizing how, like substance itself, the attributes of substance… are not things at all but rather ways of conceiving (i.e., realizing) objects as minds, ideas, and bodies" (135). Accordingly, to say that Thought and Extension are infinite means that it is the "undetermined principle" by which a mind, idea, or body—that is, modification of substance—is identified and differentiated in relation to all other minds, ideas, or bodies. The intelligibility of substance consists in being the immanent principle of the potential relatedness of all things. As such, it already contains within itself the differentiation of modes, that critics of Spinoza (or substance monism) find difficult to explain and justify.

Let's consider more closely this statement on 135: The "vexing question" that Daniel is referring to is indeed nothing less than what Schelling calls the "Riddle of the World," and in Hegel's *Science of Logic* it is identified as the fundamental problem of philosophy itself (that is, how does the infinite go forth from itself and become finite). Daniel suggests that the vexing question is resolved by first recognizing that Thought and Extension are not things. Indeed, they are not *things*. But where are they ever regarded as such? (That would be to reduce them to modes of Substance). Spinoza treats them as two of Substance's essential attributes. And as Daniel rightly emphasizes, Substance is not a thing or an "it" either. We can put aside for the moment the other "vexing question" of whether Thought and Extension are the only attributes of Substance—though Spinoza says God possesses infinite attributes each of which expresses infinite essence—or merely those attributes of which we are aware, those which we have access to (and we've noted this is indeed Bergson's understanding). But when Daniel refers to them as "ways of conceiving," he is indeed introducing yet another vexing question: What is meant by ways of conceiving? It is ambiguous, and Spinoza has been interpreted in both ways: as saying that Thought and Extension are merely our ways of conceiving, grasping Substance (a kind of proto–Kantian reading of Spinoza). Or are they real attributes pertaining to the divine essence? Now, it seems clear to me at any rate that Spinoza regarded attributes in the second sense: as real, and not merely as forms of human knowing. Daniel's interpretation of Berkeley would seem to support the same hypothesis (i.e., that they really pertain to the divine essence). But it is a point on which perhaps he could provide further clarification.

Turning to Peirce, the association of Spinoza and Berkeley is based on Peirce's *Lectures on Pragmatism* (1903). Peirce associates Berkeley and Spinoza because (according to Daniel) they anticipate pragmatism's emphasis on "describing bodies in terms of their effects rather than their causes" (136). Peirce repeatedly praised Spinoza's "pragmaticism," ranking him with other proto–pragmaticists such as Berkeley and Kant.

> Now, in Peirce's terms "firstness" refers to the pure givenness of anything in its indeterminacy. Secondness refers to something determinate and involves haecceity (thisness); [and thirdness refers to the relatedness of things to one another]. Together these three ontological principles provide a framework in which an explanation of existence is possible inasmuch as they provide the framework for explanation itself. These three aspects of reality are basic (each is irreducible to the others) and ubiquitous. Peirce considers and ultimately rejects all metaphysical systems that fail to recognize the reality of all three categories.
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> Now, as Daniel acknowledges, Peirce recognizes that Spinoza and Berkeley differ in their descriptions of how individuals are differentiated: "Spinoza emphasizes the modal determination (secondness and thirdness) of things, whereas Berkeley emphasizes God's immediacy in the identification of ideas in relation to one another (firstness and thirdness)" (136). We may note the immediate difficulty facing Peirce's claim that Spinoza was a proto–pragmaticist, insofar as pragmaticism (i.e., Peirce's notion of pragmatism) insists upon the truth of what he called extreme scholastic realism, which accepts the reality not only of seconds (existent individuals), but also thirds (relations, laws) and firsts (mere possibles). Spinoza's ontology clearly includes secondness (i.e., modes or Berkeley's ideas) and thirdness, but it is difficult to reconcile Spinozism with firstness. As Spinoza states: "Things (*res*) could have been produced by God in no other way and in no other order than they have been produced" (E I P33)—and "there is nothing in things [*rebus*] on account of which they can be called contingent" (E I P33s1).
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> Daniel's Peircean link between Berkeley and Spinoza would be that much stronger if there were a way of reconciling Spinozism with firstness. Shannon Dea suggests that such a reconciliation would shed new light on the most fundamental aspects of Spinozism—tantamount to removing the greatest obstacle in regarding Spinoza as a pragmaticist, that is, his necessitarianism, or strict determinism.[11] It is noteworthy that Peirce never claimed of Kant (as he did of both, and only, Berkeley and Spinoza) that he came close to founding pragmatism. But I would just emphasize that Peirce's interpretation of Spinoza—at least one that would allow for firstness—is nothing short of extraordinary and utterly out of the mainstream reading of Spinoza. That is not a criticism, but merely an observation; and it is quite difficult not to read him as a thoroughgoing necessitarian. The *Ethics* was of course presented in the geometric mode, using Euclid as a model. Now, Peirce claimed that Euclid himself knew the limits of Euclidean geometry better than his demonstrations reveal (e.g., that the sum of the angles of a triangle drawn upon a sphere is greater than the sum of two right angles.) On Peirce's view, Euclid's demonstrations only scratch the surface of a way of thinking that was already (for Euclid himself) non–Euclidean. Likewise, Spinoza's geometrical method obscures his "post–determinism"—perhaps even a "nascent tychism"—in the same way that Euclid's proofs obscured the non–Euclidean nature of his thought. Dea claims that Peirce was right to read Spinoza in this way, for evidence of firstness teaches us something important and true of Spinozism—namely, that he was a possibilist, which apparently is not to deny that he was at the same time a determinist. He recognized necessity as real but was also a possibilist who regarded possibility as real and extending beyond actuality.

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[11] See Shannon Dea, "Firstness, Evolution and the Absolute in Peirce's Spinoza," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44 (2008), 603–628; and Dea, "Peirce and Spinoza's Pragmaticist Metaphysics," *Cognitio* 15 (2014), 25–35.

Briefly put, the claim is that substance and (finite) modes constitute two opposite ends of a continuum. Substance is not a thing: it is utterly unlimited, pure possibility. As Daniel observes: "To assume that the principle of determination is determined would be to assume that substance (God) has a determinate identity and that would require a further principle of determination" (137). In Peirce's terms, substance *qua* substance (*natura naturans*) is first, whereas substance qua finite modes (*natura naturata*) is second. The infinite modes (e.g., motion and rest) that mediate between substance and individual things represent thirdness. As Daniel reiterates, for Spinoza, substance is the activity, the pure potency–in–act (in Berkeley's terms, the active principle) by means of which its modes are differentiated. That does not turn substance into some kind of substrate of properties or subject to which activities are ascribed: apart from its activity of differentiating things as modes under different attributes it cannot be understood as this or that thing at all, because such identification would itself depend on yet another differentiating activity and so on, *ad infinitum*.

> **Steve:** in a sense, then, I don't think that Berkeley and Spinoza are as different as Sam suggests. Just like Berkeley, Spinoza thinks that bodies and minds are radically different, with minds being the activities by which bodies are identified and differentiated, and with bodies being the contents of those differentiations. But one cannot be identified without the other—and that is what I suggest is at the heart of Bergson's cryptic mentions of Berkeley and his more extensive remarks on Spinoza, as well as Peirce's allusions to Berkeley.

Before I close, I want to briefly return to the question of scholastic realism, which was a salient feature of Peirce's pragmaticism. Can we regard Spinoza as scholastic realist? And what of Berkeley? Without getting into the details here, it may indeed be possible to regard Spinoza as a scholastic realist. Peirce acknowledges the reality of two kinds of generals: *possibilia* and laws. As we have noted above, contrary to the usual understanding of Spinoza as a strict determinist (and nominalist), a pragmaticist reading of Spinoza reveals his ontology as containing real possibility in addition to real laws. What Peirce rejects was the crude Platonism (what he called Platonic nominalism) which regards the Forms as simply another class of existing individuals. The Forms are real, but they do not exist—reality (or actuality) has a broader scope than existence. There is a space, in other words, for commonalities, generals, kinds, etc. that are not themselves entities.

This has bearing on Berkeley's neo–Platonism and notion of divine ideas. To begin with, he chastises Aristotle's "monstrous representation of the Platonic Ideas" (*Siris* 338). In the Platonism which Berkeley appears to endorse,

> order, virtue, law, goodness and wisdom are not creatures of the soul of man but innate and originally existent therein, not as an accident in a substance but as light to enlighten and as guide to govern. In Plato's style, the term *idea* doth not merely signify an inert, inactive object of the understanding, but is used as synonymous with … cause and principle. (*Siris* 335)

According to Plato, "goodness, beauty, virtue … are not figments of the mind … nor yet abstract ideas … but the most real beings, intellectual and unchangeable" (*Siris* 335). We can certainly agree with Bergson, when he calls Berkeley's thought "a strange sort of 'nominalism' … which ended by raising a number of general ideas to the dignity of eternal essences, immanent in the divine Intelligence!" (94).

I will close with one more passing remark regarding the pantheistic interpretation of Berkeley about which there is much more to be said. It is, on a spontaneous level, an attractive reading to me. But let us consider for a moment Daniel's observation that "God is not a subject or self" (238). This is intriguing (and perhaps appealing), and it is certainly consistent with Spinoza, for whom God is surely not a subject. But is it consistent with *Alciphron*, where God (at least on the face of it) is indeed proven to exist and in the same way that we know that other persons exist? Is not the linguistic understanding of nature meant to suggest that God is also the ultimate Person?

> **Steve:** to say we know that other persons exist means that there are other activities of perceiving (PHK 148, Alc VII.8, VII.19; Daniel, 164, 188).

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Steve's 2021 book, *George Berkeley and Early Modern Philosophy*, is interpretively bold, forcefully argued, and a fun read. Many of you here will already be familiar with Steve's views on Berkeley. In this book he elaborates an interpretation of Berkeley—especially Berkeley's conception of mind—that is continuous with his previous work; indeed, it contains in it some previously published material, that many of you may have read. So, I won't talk in too much depth about the book as a whole, except to give an outline in broad strokes, before making a few remarks on some of the details.

The main thrust of the book is to argue for a reading of Berkeley's views on mind on which those views are to be sharply distinguished from those of Descartes and Locke, and indeed, any other philosopher in the period who adheres to something like the traditional substance–mode ontology, that is, an ontology on which the relationship of modes to substances is as that of predicates to subjects. (For ease of discussion, I'll call this the "traditional conception" of substance.) Specifically, Steve rejects a reading of Berkeley on which minds are mental substances to which we can attribute faculties or modes of perception. He leans heavily on a number of remarks from the *Notebooks*, in which Berkeley seems to argue against the traditional substance–mode ontology for minds, as, for instance, such famous passages as NB 580 and 581: "Mind is a congeries of Perceptions. Take away Perceptions & you take away the Mind put the Perceptions & you put the mind" and "Say you the Mind is not the Perceptions. but that thing perceives. I answer you are abus'd by the words that & thing these are vague empty words without a meaning." Rather than seeing these passages as being the musings of a young Berkeley who had not yet developed his mature views, as many commentators do, Steve sees them as continuous with the rest of Berkeley's corpus; he holds that throughout Berkeley's life and texts, one can find a consistent view of minds that coheres with these passages from the *Notebooks*.

Some commentators have seen Steve as attributing to Berkeley a bundle theory of minds, due to his reliance on these passages from the *Notebooks*, and his insistence that Berkeley abandons the traditional substance–mode ontology. Such commentators find Steve's reading strained, especially because a bundle theory does not fit easily with texts from the rest of the corpus. If you are at all tempted in this direction, you will find Appendix 2 to this book very helpful. This is where Steve responds to a number of critics to try to clarify his view in light of such criticisms. Steve argues that on his view, Berkeley is *not* committed to a bundle theory—that Berkeley does think that minds are substances; it is just that they are not substances in the traditional sense. What characterizes the traditional conception of mental substance, per Steve, is a distinction between minds and their activities; but there is another way of understanding mental substances, that can be traced to the Stoics, and to the medieval logician Ramus, that does not see the activities of minds as distinct or distinguishable from the minds themselves. It is this Stoic–Ramist conception of minds, Steve argues, that Berkeley can be seen as consistently endorsing throughout his works. So, on Steve's reading of Berkeley, minds are not congeries of perceptions in some passive sense; instead, minds are congeries of perceptions in the sense that they are *activities* of perceiving, or rather, as he often puts it, the "*principles* of activity."

What I want to do in what follows is make two kinds of comments. First, I would like to probe just a little at the main thesis of the book—the positive account of minds as active principles. In particular, since activity is bound up with agency, I want to look at the implications of the view for Berkeley's account of human freedom, something that Steve touches on a number of times in his book, but especially in Chapter 10, on Berkeley and Malebranche on human freedom. This will also require a bit of a discussion of how Steve accommodates Berkeley's remarks, in various places, that there is something passive in perception. Second, I want to briefly consider Steve's view that we can read Berkeley as rejecting a traditional conception of substance, but as nonetheless drawing on a different conception of substance, one that others in the period, e.g., Bayle, also draw on. To do this, I will look briefly at some of the details of Steve's readings of Descartes and Bayle, and I will suggest that Berkeley's relationship to both of these figures is slightly more vexed than Steve seems willing to admit. This, I think, raises the question of whether Steve's Berkeley stands as far outside of the tradition as he is characterized here. These are quite disparate kinds of remarks, and so, I would invite Steve to talk about both, or either, as he deems it helpful to do so.

On Passivity and Freedom. Let me start, then, with the main thesis of the text: that minds are principles of activity. If you haven't read Steve's work, you may be wondering how this reading squares with Berkeley's insistence, at a variety of points (see, e.g., among other places, NB 286, NB 377, NB 301; *Principles* 28-29; his 1730 correspondence with Johnson), that we can distinguish perception and volition, and that finite minds are passive with respect to perception. Steve's general strategy with respect to such passages is to argue that, whenever there is perception, there is also volition, and indeed, that perception cannot truly be separated from volition.[12] Specifically, each perception is a perception of some thing as that thing, and as distinguished from other things. But, Steve argues, identification, individuation, and distinction are volitional acts or acts of judgment: to perceive something as a thing is precisely to actively identify and individuate it. And without this kind of activity, we do not perceive at all. Thus, for instance, Steve writes that "To say … that perception is the passive reception of ideas still allows us to say that in identifying ideas as specific ideas, the mind is active in perceiving. For apart from perceiving specific ideas, the mind does not perceive at all" (91).

This view—that the activity of perception involves identification and individuation—plays an important role in Steve's account of Berkeley's conception of freedom and agency and, correspondingly, sin. On the traditional reading of Berkeley, there is a question about human agency, namely, whether Berkeley thinks that finite minds (or perhaps finite volitions) can be the causes of the motions of human bodies. The trouble arises in part from the fact that our bodies are constituted of sensory ideas. Since finite minds are passive with respect to such ideas (again, on the traditional reading), it follows that we are not their cause, but that God is their cause. This leads at least some commentators to suggest that Berkeley may be an occasionalist with respect to bodily motion. Steve's strategy here is interesting. He appeals to his reading of Berkeley's views on perception to explain how he sees Berkeley as rescuing human freedom of action: finite minds are agents precisely in so far as they identify and individuate the movements of their own limbs when perceiving. In a characteristic passage, Steve writes: "God's ultimate role in agent causality does not undermine our ability to move our bodies, for in willing that our limbs be ordered as objects of experience relative to other objects, we cause those objects to exist precisely as our objects (i.e., as constituted in the relations we will" (197). What's tricky, in my view, is that it's unclear how this strategy aligns with some of the texts, including texts on the distinction between perception and imagination (which is tied up with the question of the passivity of perception), and on freedom and sin.

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[12] There is some question here as to whether Steve attributes to Berkeley a view on which perception can be *conceptually* separated from volition—he certainly seems to sometimes speak of them independently of one another—and whether this kind of conceptual distinction might be inconsistent with Berkeley's anti–abstractionism, given Steve's view that Berkeley rejects conceptual distinctions for other things. But perhaps we can leave this to the side.

> **Steve:** Melissa focuses on how my account of mind (especially regarding the passivity of perception) affects Berkeley's concept of freedom, and Berkeley's concept of substance. Specifically, she wonders about how I distinguish between volition and perception in Berkeley. So let me clarify this: by "volition" I mean the activity by which a thing is identified and differentiated from other things. In this sense, the volition *that* there be an object is itself not individuated until after an object has been identified and differentiated. Only then can we talk (in derivative terms) about the specific volition by means of which an object is identified. By "perception" I *can* mean the object of the volition. But the object is itself specified as that object in virtue of the retroactively specified activity of a particular volition (which can also be designated as *a* perception). We thus will that something be what it is in recognizing that it be related to other things in certain ways. We choose *that* there be such a designation because prior to the designation, there is no particular volition that specifies the object. This is what Berkeley has in mind in saying, "We see no variety or difference betwixt the Volitions, only between their effects. Tis one will, one act distinguished by the effects. This will, this Act is the Spirit, operative Principle, Soul etc." (NB 788). The difference between us and God thus consists only in how we identify and distinguish objects finitely and God thinks of all objects in their infinite relatedness. We cannot say that we are determined to make the choices "we" make, because there is no individual self prior to those choices. In this sense, we are the products of certain finite choices having been made. Of course, God does not determine what those choices are; and in this sense, we are free.

Melissa: Let me start with the distinction between ideas of sense and ideas of imagination. Berkeley notes, with respect to the imagination, that we have "power over [our] own thoughts" (*Principles* 29) that "it is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy … This making and unmaking of ideas doth very properly denominate the mind active" (*Principles* 28). On the other hand, "I find the ideas actually perceived by sense have not a like dependence on my will" (*Principles* 29). Now, Steve does recognize that there is something different between perception and imagination, for Berkeley, and that this difference has something to do with volition—he writes: "that we experience anything at all is not something we get to choose or will, and thus perception is passive in that it is not based on a specific decision that we make" (90). But in the chapter on freedom, Steve seems to hold that our agency in sensation (to "will our limbs to be ordered as objects of experience relative to other objects") is analogous to our agency with respect to imagination: "our ability to produce ideas of imagination … involves alignments of objects that are not dictated by God" (168). But this doesn't quite fit with the sharp distinction that Berkeley draws between imagination and perception—between the "power" we have in the first case and the lack of power we experience in the second case. Indeed, Steve seems to deny that Berkeley makes this sharp distinction—he writes that "ideas of imagination and perception are distinguished only by their vividness, clarity, and coherence, not by whether they are the effects of our will or God's will" (175).

> **Steve:** Melissa suggests that, for Berkeley, ideas of sense are passive and ideas of imagination are active. She adds that, for me, the fact that we make certain choices is not something we decide and thus is not something we freely choose. But I say this because it is only in the making of such choices that "we" become who we are. Again, my claim is that, for Berkeley, there is no individual self prior to choices having been made. I propose, then, that, for Berkeley, we are not determined by God to make the choices we make because there are no selves (as objects) for God to determine. There are only possibilities that a *finite* choice of some kind could be made. No such choice could ever reflect God's intention, because such a choice would never be anything other than finite, limited, and incomplete. But as Berkeley points out in PHK 153, we are free to "enlarge our view, so as to comprehend the various ends, connexions, and dependencies of things, on what occasions and in what proportions we are affected with pain and pleasure, the nature of human freedom, and the design to which we are put into the world." In this way, he concludes, "we shall be forced to acknowledge that those particular things, which considered in themselves appear to be *evil*, have the nature of *good*, when considered as linked to the whole system of beings." That is, we have the ability to define ourselves as expressions of God by relating ourselves to the infinite system of beings. We can thus challenge Melissa's "sharp distinction" between ideas of perception and imagination by characterizing actions whereby we identify our ideas only retroactively as intended by God. For example, while the act of killing in battle seems to be the same action as murder, they are different because of what we think we are doing in the grand scheme of things versus in our limited understanding of what we perceive.

Melissa: Moreover, I'm not sure how well the account of agency fits with Berkeley's discussion of sin. Steve sees Berkeley's account of sin as bearing some similarity to Malebranche's discussion of the same. This, to me, is one of the most interesting parts of the book, in a number of ways. First, because a number of commentators who see Berkeley's views as owing something to Malebranche's views focus on Malebranchean occasionalism; and as we have seen, Steve's Berkeley does not think that we are only occasional causes of our bodily motions. Second, because some commentators on Malebranche's account of freedom suggest that one of the interesting features of that account is the way in which it refocuses discussions of freedom on human volition rather than action / bodily motion; in a sense, Steve does see Berkeley's views of freedom as following Malebranche with respect to this focus, but due to his understanding of the relationship between perception and volition, this is compatible with thinking of actions as being free as well. But perhaps the most interesting part of the discussion is the way that Steve draws attention to Malebranche's account of sin as a kind of erroneous human consent to particular goods. On Malebranche's view, we are caused by God to be impelled towards the true Good, that is, God; but our sensations also represent particular goods to us, and we sin when we consent to those particular goods (rather than maintaining our movement towards the true Good). Steve's account of sin, for Berkeley, is one on which, similarly, sin is a matter of our failing to adequately enlarge our perceptions to perceive the full truth—as he puts it, of "failing to recognize how 'the whole creation is the workmanship of a wise and good agent' " (PHK 107) (170). This is a really interesting account, but what I find tricky is the way in which it seems to deviate from a fairly straightforward reading of the account of sin in the *Dialogues*[13] where Berkeley argues that sin "doth not consist in the outward physical action or motion, but in the internal deviation of the will from the laws of reason and religion. This is plain, in that the killing of an enemy in battle … is not thought sinful, though the outward act be the very same with that in the case of murder" (*Dialogues* 237). The idea that sin consists in a "deviation of the [finite] will" from God's will is very much to be in line with the Malebranchean conception of sin; and in this sense, I think Steve is offering some really interesting insight. But it is hard to see how this can also account for the fact that Berkeley is willing to say that it's the same action in the morally acceptable case (killing in battle) as it is in the sinful case (murder). Surely, on Steve's view, these would have to count as *different* actions, for Berkeley, because in the one case we are adequately characterizing the world, and in the other case we are failing to perceive the world properly; after all, agency, for Steve's Berkeley, is tied to perception in so far as we will "particular arrangements of experiences … [that] I identify as my own" (193).

> **Steve:** killing in battle vs. murder is distinguished by someone's intentions (which do not exist prior to the specific actions). That is, only in doing one thing rather than another do we subsequently specify the precise intention we have.

So, I would invite Steve to tell us a bit more about how his reading of Berkeley can accommodate these texts on the distinction between imagination and sensation, as well as the account of sin from the *Dialogues*. Having said this, let me now turn to my second set of remarks: on Steve's characterization of Berkeley as rejecting the traditional account of substance in favor of a Stoic–Ramist account.

On Berkeley and the 'traditional conception'. First, a minor complaint: sometimes, when Steve compares Berkeley's views to those of other philosophers in the period, his discussion of those philosophers is fairly minimal and is designed primarily to provide a jumping–off point for him to elaborate at greater length about Berkeley's view. You may find it a bit bizarre, perhaps, that I am pointing out that in a book that is about Berkeley, Steve talks about, well, Berkeley. But the reason that I remark on this aspect of the book is that, when reading the text, I often found that I was looking for a more in–depth discussion of these *other* philosophers' views in order to see how, precisely, the comparison to Berkeley is supposed to work. Two of the places that this emerged, for me, are the discussions of Descartes and Bayle: specifically, the characterization of Descartes's account of mental substance as precisely the traditional one that Berkeley rejects, and the characterization of Bayle as a contemporary of Berkeley's who endorses the same view of substance that Steve attributes to Berkeley. I want to suggest that there are some potential difficulties with both of these readings: both that Descartes may be less traditional, and Bayle more traditional, than Steve credits.

Let me start with Descartes. Steve consistently positions Descartes alongside Locke as philosophers who think of the substance–mode relationship along the lines of the subject–predicate relationship. But I wonder if this elides one of the important ways in which Descartes' conception of substance significantly differs from that of Locke's, namely, Descartes' view that substances have principal attributes that essentially characterize them. For Descartes, there is no real distinction between a principal attribute and its substance; considered in itself, a substance and its principal attribute are not really distinct at all. This is important because, while Descartes does understand *thoughts* as modifications of minds, he does not take *thought itself*, or rather, *thinking*, to be a modification of minds in the same way. Now, Steve does acknowledge this. But he notes that Descartes nonetheless makes a conceptual distinction between substances and their principal attributes, and that this conceptual distinction is sufficient to attribute to Descartes the traditional account of substances that Berkeley rejects.

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[13] I also think there are questions about how Steve's readings fit with texts on moral responsibility from *Alciphron* VII.19 (*Works* 3: 315), but I will set this aside.

I think the former half of this is quite right; it's the latter half of which I'm unsure. Steve marshals some texts from Descartes, including Descartes's responses to Hobbes's objections to the *Meditations*, in which Descartes writes that, "When I said 'that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect or reason,' what I meant by these terms was not mere faculties, but things endowed with the faculty of thought" (CSM 2: 123). This is very nice text for Steve, both because in it Descartes does seem to endorse the traditional conception of substances, and also because Berkeley also refers to Descartes's replies to Hobbes when discussing Descartes's conception of substance. In the *Notebooks*, for instance, Berkeley writes: "Descartes in answer to Object: 3. of Hobbs owns he is distinct from thought as a thing from its modus or manner" (NB 798). So, if we look at these texts from Descartes and Berkeley, not only does Descartes arguably endorse the view that Steve attributes to him, but also Berkeley recognizes Descartes's endorsement of that view.

On the other hand, there are a number of other texts that one can look at in which the story seems somewhat murkier—both texts from Descartes and also texts from Berkeley. To give a brief example, in *Principles of Philosophy* I.52, which Steve himself mentions, although Descartes seems to endorse the traditional conception when he writes that "if we perceive the presence of some attribute, we can infer that there must also be present an existing thing or substance to which it may be attributed" (CSM 1: 210), the matter is complicated when we look a bit earlier in the passage, where Descartes notes that we come to know substance only by way of knowing its attribute. This is because, for Descartes, the inference that we make is not to something over and above the attribute itself; rather, our knowledge of the attribute just is a way of knowing the substance. We see this also, for instance, in *Principles* I.63, which is another one of the places where Descartes argues for a conceptual distinction between substances and their principal attributes. There Descartes is clear that because "thought and extension can be regarded as constituting the natures of intelligent substance and corporeal substance; they must then be considered as *nothing else but thinking substance itself and extended substance itself*—that is, as mind and body" (CSM 1: 215, my italics).

> **Steve:** Descartes assumes that we can infer that there is a substance to which an attribute may be attributed, even though we come to know such a substance only by knowing its attribute. That is, what we *know* of substance is in terms of its attribute. But this is an epistemic point, not one that is ontological. That is why Descartes acknowledges that thought "can be regarded" as constituting the nature of intelligent substance and "must be considered" as thinking substance. But that is not the same thing as what a substance is.

Melissa: Berkeley, I think, recognizes that Descartes's account of substance is not straightforwardly traditional. In a 1709 letter to Molyneux, Berkeley writes that although "In Med. 3 and in the Answer to the 3: Objection of Hobbes" (that is, the sections Berkeley cites in the *Notebooks*) Descartes "plainly distinguisheth betwixt himself & Cogitation, betwixt an extended Substance & Extension, and nevertheless throughout his *Principles* he confounds those Things as do likewise his Followers" (*Works* 8, 27). Steve is aware of this letter, and indeed, quotes it in the chapter on Descartes: he writes, "in a letter to Samuel Molyneux (Dec 8, 1709), Berkeley criticizes Descartes for distinguishing "betwixt himself & cogitation" … for as far as Berkeley is concerned, there is no difference between his mind and his mental activity" (83). But this is slightly misleading, for two reasons. First, because Steve truncates the passage: he includes the references to the *Meditations* (again, the texts cited by Berkeley in the *Notebooks*), but omits the part of the letter where Berkeley notes that "throughout his *Principles* [Descartes] confounds those Things as do likewise his Followers." But this part of the passage is precisely where Berkeley seems to be recognizing that Descartes does not (or at least, does not consistently) distinguish between thinking and minds, but rather, understands that 'thought' is "nothing else but thinking substance itself" (CSM 1: 215.) Second, Steve suggests that what Berkeley is criticizing in Descartes is precisely the distinction between minds and cognition (that is, the standard conception). But it is just as reasonable (if not, perhaps, more reasonable) to read Berkeley in this letter as criticizing Descartes and his followers on the basis that they "confound those things," or on the basis that Descartes's views are internally inconsistent. Of course, if Berkeley is criticizing Descartes for "confounding" minds and their activities, this sits somewhat ill with Steve's contentions that, first, Berkeley sees Descartes as a proponent of the traditional conception of mental substance, and second, Berkeley himself rejects that traditional view.

Let me now very briefly turn to Bayle. The importance of Bayle to Steve's reading emerges in at least two places in the book: first, in the fact that Steve includes a chapter on Bayle at all (this is, I believe, one of the parts of the book that comes from previously unpublished material), and second, in the fact that in Appendix 1, Steve refers to Bayle's views on minds in response to a putative critic who argues that Steve's reading is implausible because none of Berkeley's "contemporaries even hint at such notion" of mental substance (294). Thus Bayle is meant to be an early modern exemplar of the Stoic–Ramist conception of mind that Berkeley, too, is purportedly drawing from. As Steve writes, "Berkeley learns [from Bayle] how to speak of substance not as something that can be abstracted from its attributes or modes but as something constituted only by properties or effects that are known to us (including its attributes or modes)" (189). Steve draws heavily on Bayle's criticisms of Locke's doctrine of substance, as well as on some remarks from the *Réponse aux Questions*—most prominently, Bayle's remark that "spiritual substance, its faculty of thinking, and the thought it has at each moment are only one thing" (quoted in Daniel 294). The problem is that, as Todd Ryan notes, in this passage, Bayle is not rejecting but is rather *endorsing* the Cartesian view of mental substances. What he is rejecting is "a real distinction between the faculties of a substance and the acts of those faculties" (85). Indeed, Ryan elsewhere points to a number of passages, as, for example, Bayle's Jupiter entry in the *Dictionnaire*, in which Bayle similarly endorses the Cartesian account, especially in his criticisms of the Lockean account of mental substance. So, I wonder if Berkeley's relationship to both Descartes and Bayle is more vexed than the way that Steve represents them to be.

> **Steve:** Melissa points out that my understanding of Berkeley's use of "substance" seems to draw too sharp a distinction between him and Descartes and Bayle. No

> > doubt, Descartes does say that thought "can be considered" as nothing other than thinking substance. And Bayle says that the activity of spiritual substance is the same as substance itself. In both cases, the point I was making was that they (like Berkeley) highlight the impropriety of separating substance from activity. That is, rather than framing my discussion of Berkeley's relation to Descartes and Bayle as adversarial, I wanted to show how he clarified their insights by developing a philosophy unburdened by the vocabulary of substance, modes, and properties.
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> **Melissa**: These are not meant as criticisms of Steve's reading. It is more that Steve is making a bold claim about Berkeley's relationship to the tradition, and so it is a fair request, I think, that he provide us with more by the way of textual evidence about these other figures: both those he sees as within the tradition, and those he sees as outside of it. So, I would invite Steve to tell us a bit more about his readings of Descartes and Bayle, so that we can better see how the claim may be motivated. And with this, I come to the end of my present remarks.

Steve: Overall, I very much appreciate the care and time each of my commentators has taken in reading my texts. We might not agree on points of interpretation, but we certainly agree that the effort is well worth it.

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Review

Chris Townsend. *George Berkeley and Romanticism: Ghostly Language.*
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. x + 240 pages.
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Chris Townsend's book is on the British Romantic reception of Berkeley, and his introduction frames the book well by posing some of its representative questions, such as: How could the freethinking poet Percy Shelley, an atheist, be described by his wife, Mary Shelley, as "a disciple of the immaterialist philosophy of Berkeley?" (quoted 3). While that can be answered straightforwardly by noting that Shelley upheld a spiritually–seeking, neo–Platonic immaterialism denuded of deity, Townsend's method of delving deeper into the details of the curious appeal of Berkeley to four prominent English Romantic poets—Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley—is consistently handled and often persuasive. Townsend claims the English Romantics' core themes of the intuition of self and spirit, intimations of the divine, and nature as a symbolic mediator between self and God were received through Berkeley's philosophy, which inspired the Romantic Counter-Enlightenment.

The book is marred by solecisms throughout, and I can only mention a few in this review. One jarring instance confuses "literalist" with "most literal" in describing Wordsworthian imagination as "appearing, in the literalist sense possible, out of thin air" (155). The reader must sometimes contort through language errors to reach the author's meaning, which is unfortunate considering the importance of literary style to his thesis, namely, that Berkeley's mastery of style won over the English Romantics to his visionary theory of language. Townsend's assertion that Berkeley coined "materialism" and "materialist" is also incorrect (6, 35, 59). The *Oxford English Dictionary* credits the words to Ralph Cudworth and Henry More respectively. The author does not keep track of his own statements here, contradictorily claiming "materialism" as Berkeley's coinage (6, 59) and as More's (35). In another dictionary–usage error, Townsend suggests that the "gross" in the phrase "Less gross than bodily," from Coleridge's poem "This Lime-tree Bower My Prison" (1797), might mean "repugnant" (102). The sense of the word "gross" as "disgusting, repellent" is, as the *OED* attests, an Americanism dating from 1959.

The referencing system is also poorly handled. When the author gives a citation as "PHK" or "TD," readers are secure, but not all will know offhand that a quotation from "Works, vol. 2, 168" must be from DHP. From that 9–volume edition of Berkeley's works to the 21–volume Princeton *Collected Coleridge*, many readers will not readily remember, if they ever knew, which title corresponds to "Coleridge, Works, vol. VI" and which to "vol. XV." Using a short–title system, as is common in the humanities for good reason, would have rendered more informatively those last two as *Lay Sermons* and *Opus Maximum*. Nor does the author usually give dates, requisites in the history of ideas, of notebook entries, letters, and annotations.

Berkeley's foci on spirit and language form the unified channel connecting him with the English Romantics, summed up in the subtitle of the book taken from a line in Wordsworth's *Prelude*: "The ghostly language of the ancient earth" (quoted 8). Townsend observes that a little–discussed consequence of Berkeley's thesis of the universe being structured as God's language is that all acts of perception must therefore be acts of reading (44–45). The English Romantic poets, he adds, "who championed visual perception as an exercise in reading," made good use of this corollary of Berkeleianism (45). Townsend's broader motive is to include verse thinking as an important strand in intellectual history. Literary analysis of Berkeley is persuasively argued for, since his reflection on his own style followed his criticism of John Locke's comparatively crude demand that all words primarily represent ideas in the mind of the speaker, as if language were merely a rebus of sense objects along a sentential string. I note, however, that Locke did not require all ideas to be sensory, for he held inner reflection on those ideas to produce mental ideas.

Chapter 1, "Berkeley and the Language of Philosophy" (17–54), begins with the early–Enlightenment preoccupation with language as both veiling and revealing. Concerning philosophical language, this concern was well expressed in Berkeley's remark that "we have first raised the dust, and then complain we cannot see" (PHK 3, quoted 18). In this context, Townsend relates, British freethinkers supported their secular, supernatural–expunged Christianity with "Lockean arguments ... against the functionality of religious terms" that do not signify clear and distinct ideas (19). In an increasingly secular milieu, Berkeley felt the need to develop an improved theory of language. Townsend gives examples of Berkeley's early focus on linguistic style and flexibility as essential to truth in philosophy, as when Berkeley, in an early notebook entry, blames bad thinking on the "fault and scantiness of language" (NB 178, quoted 22).

In Townsend's reading of NTV, Berkeley's argument that the objects of vision "constitute an universal language of the Author of Nature" demonstrates the philosophical depth of a continued concern with linguistic style. For the philosopher's reflections on language show not merely a matter of taste or persuasion, but an engagement with the symbolic basis of an already linguistic and universal reality (22). Further, Berkeley's criticism of the Lockean theory that language is effectively the verbal communication and articulation of ideas from one mind to another, and so must always be clear and distinct, led Berkeley to show how language is often rhetorical and emotional and not always descriptive and correspondent. Supported by this outline at the end of the introduction to PHK, Townsend observes that Berkeley created a philosophically relevant "theory of style" to oppose atomistic views of language, countering that besides describing ideas, language also conveys modes of spirit, the one thing that is not an idea, and of which we acquire not ideas through direct experience but notions through inference (28–29). With his close attention to the effects of literary form and rhetoric, Townsend argues, honed through articles in Richard Steele's *Guardian* and his association with figures including Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope in London (1713–20), Berkeley created a theory of meaning developing through style that would influence the English romantics (30–36). In this light of literary concern, the rewriting of the monographic arguments of the PHK into the more concrete, dialogic setting of DHP seems less puzzling, as the famous "arguments for abstraction were no longer being conducted in the abstract" (35).

Berkeley's argument in *Alciphron* that the perceived world is God's perpetual communication through signs reappeared in English Romantic literature, Townsend holds, which described the "spiritual vision" of a divine or spirit–infused nature (39). The conception of the world as a complete system of signs interconnecting spirits is ambitiously demonstrated in both form and content by Berkeley's *Siris*, a work that, as Coleridge put it, is "announced as an Essay on Tar-water, which beginning with Tar ends with the Trinity, the *omne scibile* forming the interspace" (quoted 95).

Townsend analyses a couple of Berkeley's poems on tar-water, pointing out Pope's influence, and finding appeals to common sense and interconnectedness similar to those in *Siris*. Happily, Townsend turns from the quackery of the carcinogenic pine tar to the "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America" (1728), a poem of New World optimism that lay behind the naming of Berkeley, California, impressed Emerson and Thoreau, and is still anthologized today, for instance in *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (1999).

Chapter 2, on Blake, commences by noting a recent trend in reading Blake not as an idealist but as proposing an alternative, "visionary" materialism to the Lockean–Newtonian kind (57–58). Citing Blake's own slogan that "Corporeal Friends are Spiritual Enemies" (quoted 58), Townsend rightly dismisses these politically or fashionably materialist approaches to Blake that try to reveal him as a more sophisticated kind of materialist. The sort of sensuous realism and perceptual richness that a cohort of recent literary critics confusedly take as evidence of philosophical materialism in Blake can be understood better as akin to Berkeleian idealism (and "spiritism"), and this is Townsend's position.

Yet Blake's worldview was more deeply influenced by the mystical visions and cosmogony of the obscure and notoriously difficult Jakob Boehme, and, to a lesser degree, by the visionary Emanuel Swedenborg. It seems an oversight that neither of these idealist visionaries of spirit are mentioned in the chapter on Blake, and a consideration of their role in shaping Blake's visionary idealism, with Berkeley being an important adjunct, would have brought a more balanced sense of the proportion of Berkeley's influence on the poet. Although his study acknowledges no idealist sources for Blake other than Berkeley, Townsend steers a course between Kathleen Raine's (1979) extreme Berkeleian Blake view and Richard G. Martin's (1987) finding of an only marginal connection substantiated by Blake's late–career annotations (*c.*1820) to the last third of *Siris*.

Townsend's strategy is to show parallels between Berkeley and Blake and their outright criticisms of materialism. The author notes well that although there is no direct evidence of Berkeley influencing Blake's early and mid-career periods, the character Hyle in Blake's prophetic *Jerusalem* (completed 1820 but commenced in 1804) could well be named after Berkeley's Hylas, and Blake's book was finished around the same time he annotated *Siris*. Townsend is also right to point out that Blake's sense whereby "the world 'appears Without' but is, in fact, 'Within'" can be read as a conscious expression of Berkeley's doctrine of "outness," where the externality of perceptions is only apparent (64–65).

Townsend's discussion of how Berkeley and Blake differently conceived nature is helpful. Where Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley would agree with Berkeley's view of nature as a universal, divine language, this conception finds little resonance in Blake (66). Blake's nature, Townsend glosses, is a "manufactured … experience," along Lockean and Newtonian lines, that is "categorially opposed to spirit" (66). The illusion of matter as the total and underlying substance of phenomena, Blake held, occluded the reality of spirit. Whether or not Blake's warning against the "'Abstract Horror' of materialism" (72) was inspired by Berkeley's famous philosophical attacks on abstract ideas, the comparison intriguingly aligns the philosopher of anti-abstraction with "the poet of particularity" (76).

Prudently, Townsend aims to avoid the temptation to "flatten the differences" between Berkeley and Blake, talking more of parallels than "direct influence" (71). However, he is not always successful, and a wider view of the relevant history of ideas is lacking. At times, Townsend imputes to Blake a dependence on Berkeley that would more reasonably be acknowledged as an area of common ground. For instance, while Townsend claims rightly that Blake's use of the Pauline notion of the "spiritual body" is very different from "the rationalist distinction of mind and body," he hastily concludes that the notion therefore "owes much to Berkeleian immaterialism" (69). Yet Boehme, a far greater influence on Blake, fits better as Blake's fellow thinker of St Paul's "spiritual body" versus the "natural" or "physical body" with the German mystic writing of the "spiritual body" in several places, as when he wrote that, "the true real Body which is hidden in the Grossness is a spiritual Body."[30]

Chapter 3 turns to Coleridge. From 1796–98, Coleridge not only claimed to be a "Berkelian," he named his second son Berkeley. Sadly, the child died aged 8 months while Coleridge was studying for a year at Göttingen University. There, transcendental idealism was becoming the major philosophical influence on his thought. As Townsend notes, Coleridge's first son was named Hartley after David Hartley, the British associationist he would increasingly oppose, and his third son was Derwent, named after the river and lake in Cumbria, the changing significance of sons' names reflecting a rapidly evolving philosophical and poetic outlook (87). The standard understanding is that Berkeley's influence on Coleridge was strong but short-lived, ousted by German idealism and by the Platonism to which Coleridge adhered. Townsend's compelling argument, however, is that it was just Berkeley's subjective idealism that Coleridge dismissed, while the immaterialist philosopher's theory of nature as a divine, symbolic language continued its influence. Townsend therefore presents an account of Coleridge's 1790s Berkeleian stage followed by a history and discussion of the continuing influence on Coleridge of Berkeley's theory of nature as the symbolic language of God and on the Romantic poet–philosopher's ongoing use of the Berkeleian concept of "outness." Tracing Coleridge's coming to grips with Berkeley to a library borrowing in 1796, Townsend illustrates the background well by showing not only how members in Coleridge's circle such as Thomas Beddoes and Humphry Davy likely led him to Berkeley through references in their scientific writings, but also in an account from Davy of how self–experiments with nitrous oxide, which Coleridge joined, led him to proclaim he "lost all connection with external things," and that "Nothing exists but thoughts!—the universe is composed of impressions, ideas, pleasures and pains!" (quoted 91).

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[30] Jakob Böhme, *Mysterium Magnum*, in *The Works of Jacob Behmen, the Teutonic Philosopher*. 4 vols. Arranged by William Law, M.A., trans. John Sparrow, John Ellistone, and Henry Blunden, ed. George Ward and Thomas Langcake (London, 1764–81), vol. 3: ch.16, §3.

Townsend argues that Berkeley primed Coleridge into a realistic kind of idealism for one who believed in the soul yet opposed the cruder Cartesian dualism of a "descending, & incarcerated Soul" (quoted 94). In a manuscript version of the poem "Religious Musings" (1796), Coleridge prophesied how "Corporal things" shall vanish "like a dream" (quoted 97). In the published version, Coleridge added a note to say that "this paragraph is only intelligible to those, who, like the Author, believe and feel the sublime system of Berkley" (quoted 96).

Trying to demonstrate a possibly pre-1796 Berkelian influence on Coleridge, Townsend takes a sentence from a 1795 lecture on religion that claims "we see our God everywhere—the universe in the most literal sense is his written language" (quoted 99). Yet a broader awareness of the history of ideas would have given the author balance here, as the locus classicus of this idea is Augustine's "great big book, the book of created nature," where "God made letters not of ink" but "set before your eyes all these things he has made."[31] Still, Townsend more successfully draws on Coleridge's 1821 notebook transcriptions from *Alc*, including passages arguing that "God speaks to your eyes" through the symbolic language of nature (quoted 104). This is well beyond the 1798 when Coleridge is often supposed to have "overthrown" Berkeley, and it is the Berkeleianism that Townsend persuasively argues remained relevant for Coleridge: not the subjective idealism, but the "picture of the universe as language" (107).

Coleridge's enthusiasm for Berkeley's sense of "outness" never waned, finding in the notion the feeling, rather than a deduction, of an object appearing as exterior to oneself. While for Berkeley, the feeling of "outness" explained why people tend to believe in an external, mind–independent world, for Coleridge the concept connected more straightforwardly with the sense of objective reality. Townsend goes too far in asserting that "outness in general is intimately connected with delusion or illusion for Coleridge" (114). Townsend arrives at that opinion via comments by Coleridge that explain how in dreams or in flights of fancy, an illusion of reality can be felt by being given a sense of outness. But this merely indicates that Coleridge distinguished objectivity from outness, not that he saw them as mutually exclusive. Thus, Coleridge, in a note that disproves Townsend's hasty reading, commended "the HEALTHFUL Outness of the Objective," in a contrast between the "the Subjective and the Objective, which visual sunshiny Outness in the latter gives" (notebook entry, November 1825).[32] Townsend soon finds a steadier footing, however, when he notes that Berkeley and Coleridge each referred to the sense of the vividness of any experience of outness as a measure of reality versus illusion (114).

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[31] Augustine, *Sermons III (51–94): On the New Testament*, tr. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New York City Press, 1991), sermon 68, §6.

In Chapter 4, on Wordsworth, the author argues that Berkeley's divine language of nature helped form "one of Romanticism's signal achievements: … nature poetics" (123). The chapter begins with the young Wordsworth transforming from a devotee of Godwinian reason into a broader, cloudier nature poet, in a change sometimes ascribed to his coming under Coleridge's influence in 1795. In Wordsworth's mid-1790s crisis of abstract reason, he broke from the calculating, utilitarian kind of detached reason represented by thinkers such as William Godwin and William Paley. The author finds in Wordsworth's rejection of utilitarian, abstract reason the same defects that Berkeley attacked in *Alc*, regarding the freethinkers (136). Townsend notes that this occurred during Coleridge's Berkeleian phase. The Berkeleian influx, through Coleridge, of nature as divine language the author proposes, especially in the view of nature as divine language, deeply shaped Wordsworth's sense of "the relation of mind and natural world" (125).

Seeing in the 1805 *Prelude* Berkeleian depictions of nature within a symbolic system, Townsend find both a debt as well as evidence that the poet "breaks free of Berkeley" to envision natural forms as anteceding the mind (125). Whether or not Berkeley ever held such a hold on Wordsworth that he needed to break free, Townsend does well in staying within the evidence that Wordsworth owned only the *Alc* and no other work of Berkeley's. Further evidence comes from Robert Southey, who, in a letter of 1829, commended "Berkeley's Minute Philosopher" as key to "the religious belief which Wordsworth and I hold," being "the only divine philosophy, the perfection of wisdom" (quoted 127). Townsend lays out reasons to take seriously the claim that *Alc* strongly influenced Wordsworth's nature poetry and its themes of the spiritual language of landscape and its ways of connecting people to each other and to God. The greatest connection lies, Townsend claims, between Berkeley's theory of the divine language of nature, as given in *Alc*, and "the religious tie between self and nature" in Book 13 (the final book) of the 1805 *Prelude* (127).

Townsend finds Berkeley's theory of language in Wordsworth's poetry (142). Wordsworth's principle of using "the real language of men," for instance, might well have been inspired by Berkeley's to "think with the learned, and speak with the vulgar" (quoted 137). As for phenomena as divine language, Wordsworth's lines in "Tintern Abbey" where "nature and the language of the sense … anchor … nurse … guide … my heart, and … moral being", are suggestive of Berkeley's view of God edifying humans through his symbolic language of nature (quoted 142). Yet more redolent of the spiritual language of nature spoken by God to humans are these lines from the *Prelude*: "and I would stand,/ Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are/ The ghostly language of the ancient earth" (quoted 144). The 1798 poems "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned" demand removing "barrier between self and nature" (147) caused by book–learning by returning to "a vernal wood," where "One impulse … May teach you more of man;/ Of moral evil and of good,/ Than all the sages can" (quoted 149). Townsend finds a similar attitude in *Siris*, bemoaning the ills of 'studious persons pent up in narrow holes … over their books" who should, "like the ancients, meditate and converse more in walks and gardens and open air" (quoted 147).

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[32] S. T. Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 5, ed. Kathleen Coburn and Anthony Harding (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), entry 5281.

Townsend reminds us that Wordsworth's poetry of nature not only illuminates the human mind that is sent into deep moods by beautiful or dramatic appearances; it also speaks a "ghostly language … a spiritual presence prior to human consciousness" (160–61). Throughout the chapter, the author shows Wordsworth pushing against Berkeley as much as he might be inspired by him, with the poet sometimes uniting mind and world but at other times emphasizing their disjuncture.

Chapter 5 moves from Wordsworth's ambivalent uses of Berkeley to the romantic Shelley, who the author claims used Berkeleianism on his way towards a view of the world fully existing beyond mind. Unlike Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, the atheist Shelley could not call nature the language of God. Townsend early on corrects Mary Shelley's characterization of her late husband as a "disciple" of Berkeley, yet rightly insists that the influence could still have been strong, especially concerning a commitment to immaterialism. Mary made that pronouncement when writing mainly of Shelley's essay "On Life," where he states his agreement with "those philosophers who assert that nothing exists but as it is perceived" (quoted 174). Shelley's atheism did not detract from his commitment to spirit.

In December 1811, the year his *Necessity of Atheism* pamphlet was published and led to his expulsion from Oxford University, Shelley was introduced to Berkeley by Southey. The first-generation Romantic enjoyed rounding off the philosophical formation of the radical young second–generation Romantic. In a couple of letters, Southey says he set Shelley on a course of Berkeley, fully expecting him to be converted to immaterialism (170). In July 1812, however, Shelley dismissed Berkeley's immaterialism in a letter to Godwin (father of his future second wife), which has caused some critics to doubt any subsequent deepening of appreciation of Berkeley by Shelley. Nonetheless, Shelley purchased Berkeley's *Works* in December 1812 and diary entries show that he was also reading Berkeley in 1817. Townsend argues that in "On Life," written in 1819, Shelley was "retracting his criticism that immaterialism offers only a negative argument" (176).

Shelley's work that receives the most analysis in the chapter is the sublime poem "Mont Blanc" (1816). The author finds a philosophical commitment in the poem to Berkeley's doctrine that to be is to be perceived, but this is qualified by Townsend's Shelley as an epistemological subjective idealism that nonetheless extends into an ultimate faith in ontological materialism (187).

A confused passage occurs when Townsend writes that "Shelley," to retain the constancy of objects when not perceived, "would invoke … the 'constant creation' argument: the mind is always … constructing the world around it, which is nothing other than its ideas; the regularity of the world is therefore a product of the fact that God is always bearing witness to his creation, or indeed is constantly creating the world anew through his omniscient gaze" (179). Yet, as Townsend is aware, Shelley, as an atheist, could not have thought this. Moreover, as the author quotes a couple of pages later, in the same argument, Shelley asserted the opposite, that "Mind… cannot create, it can only perceive" (quoted 180). For a good fifteen minutes or so, a careful reader would have to work through this and adjacent cited texts to decide whether he or she has correctly read the passage; the author has made a bizarre error in thought; or the author has mistakenly typed "Shelley" (or "he") instead of "Berkeley" and the error went uncorrected. Probably a fourth possibility might be the right one: a clause mentioning Berkeley was perhaps cut by the author without his going back to repair the sense.

Townsend's conclusion to the book is that the English Romantics gained from Berkeley a conviction in the importance of the pre-Enlightenment concept of spirit and its interconnections with nature interpreted as *natura naturans*, God himself, or noumenal reality (be that matter, body, or Platonic forms). Despite my serious misgivings about language errors and lapses of attention and editorial care throughout that spoil the book, with some lapses of thought and lacunae in the history of ideas that prevent this monograph from being authoritative, Townsend's core thesis is persuasively argued and evidenced. Researchers thinking about the literary reception of Berkeley will want to read this book, which will also be of interest to Berkeley scholars interested in how literary style and theory of language work within his philosophy.

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News and Announcements

2025 American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting: International Berkeley Society Sessions

Westin St. Francis Hotel
335 Powell Street
San Francisco, CA
April 15 – 20, 2025

"George Berkeley, Philosophy, and Theology"

i. Saturday, April 19, 6:00-8:00 pm: "Session One; Alberto Luis López (Independent Scholar) chair
    1. Marc Hight (Hampden-Sydney College): "Berkeley and Immaterialist Trinitarianism"
    2. John Bechl (Independent Scholar): "Taking Every Opportunity: Berkeley's Letter to Sir John James"
    3. Timothy Quandt (Sacramento City College): "Why Tar Water May Be the Cure for Fruits Blasted in the Blossom: Berkeley on Religious Mysteries and the Problem of Evil"

ii. Saturday, April 19, 8:00-10:00 pm": "Session Two; Marc Hight (Hampden-Sydney College),chair
    1. Richard Brook (Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania): "Berkeley, Samuel Johnson (Newport), and Divine Causality"
    2. Osman Nemli (Vassar College): "Perceiving Divine Perception in Berkeley's *Treatise*"
    3. Shenhao Li (Trinity College Dublin) and Takaharu Oda (Jiangsu University): "Truth is Constant and Uniform: Berkeley as a Forerunner of Confucian Pragmatism"

Organizer: Patrick Connolly, Johns Hopkins University

Turbayne Essay Prize

The deadline for submitting papers this year was ***November 1, 2024***. Guidelines for submission may be found here. Submitted papers should have addressed some aspect of Berkeley's philosophy. Essays should have been new and unpublished and should have been written in English and not exceed 5,000 words in length. All references to Berkeley should have been to Luce & Jessop, and an MLA or similar standard for notes should have been 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, 2025 and will receive a prize of $4,000. Copies of winning essays are to be sent to the George Berkeley Library Study Center located in Berkeley's home in Whitehall, Newport, RI.

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(2019 – 2024)

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