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Notion of substance in Bishop Berkeley

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THE NOTION OF SUBSTANCE
IN BISHOP BERKELEY

CLAUDE O. ARNOLD, B.A.

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
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C. G. A.
ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is Berkeley's doctrine of substance. The doctrine which is studied is drawn chiefly from those of his works in which it is most clearly set forth; A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, and the Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous. Berkeley's own statements are examined, and some attention is given to the sources of his thought, as they appear in the writings of Rene Descartes, Nicholas Malebranche, and John Locke.

Berkeley himself is more concerned with proving that it is possible to know substances, than with discussing their nature; consequently, his arguments on this point are examined at length. Reality, he says, is known directly, and not "by way of" anything; and by reality, he means the ideas of sense which of themselves compose the whole perceivable universe, the finite soul (or self) and God. The ideas, we perceive; not so God and the soul; of these, we have "notions", that is, knowledge. We know that they must exist and what their nature must be, even though we do not sense them, because the ideas, which we do sense, require a cause and something which perceives them. These can only be self-subsistent, conscious spiritual beings: the one we call God, the other the soul. But the spiritual mind can know only spiritual objects; therefore it cannot have a "notion" of anything outside it that is material.
This recognition that only the spiritual is accessible to spirit conditions Berkeley's denial of matter: if, as Locke would say, the mind knows ideas directly and not things, then it can never penetrate to whatever is "behind" its ideas; hence an extramental, material world is completely unknowable. Matter can be assigned no intelligible properties, for these would be ideal and immaterial; it cannot "support" qualities which exist only as ideas in the mind. "Material substance" is thus a meaningless phrase, and because whatever being it stands for cannot be conceived clearly and distinctly, it can have no place in philosophy. To keep matter and an extramental world of material substances is only to maintain -- for no reason -- that the mind cannot know reality.

The speculative materials from which Berkeley constructed his system, other thinkers fashioned; but the design of it was all his own. His "ideas of sense", collections of which compose perceivable things (and whose esse therefore is percipi) come from Locke; his conception of God as the source of our knowledge of Nature is similar to Malebranche's vision; and his conception of spiritual substance, and his method of arguing from thought to extramental reality is Cartesian. Using the principles which these thinkers taught him, he seeks to determine the true nature of reality, and to rid philosophy of the uncriticised survivals of the older realism which, in the systems of his contemporaries, produced nothing but scepticism; reuniting, at the same time, an estranged philosophy and common sense.
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I

INTRODUCTION

The history of modern philosophy is largely a record of thinkers who have in some way either supported or opposed the doctrines of Idealism; and in the development of modern Idealism, few names have been accounted more significant than that of Bishop Berkeley. While his own system as a whole has been generally either ignored or misinterpreted, his influence, though consequently indirect, has been great. No history of modern thought would be complete without taking account of it; for it was its founder's merit to have seen clearly the major issues raised by the New Philosophy, and to have formulated them in such unequivocal terms that subsequent thinkers have had to consider the problems, whether or not they agree with — or were even aware of — Berkeley's position concerning them. As Charles P. Krauth wrote:

Berkeley's position in the history of philosophy is a commanding one. By direct or indirect influence, by development or opposition, he has borne part in all the speculative thinking since his day. The removal of Berkeley would take away an essential link in the chain of modern philosophy. Without Berkeley...we should not have had Hume, without Hume we should not have had Kant, without Kant the gigantic structure of the speculation which ends in the school of Hegel would not have been reared, and without this progressive line of thinkers we should not have had the noble antagonism of witnesses to other forms of thought, essential to the highest development of intellectual man. Without Berkeley we should neither have had the developed philosophy of Germany, nor the developed "Common Sense" of Scotland.¹

The estimate of Berkeley's importance given in these lines is no less true now, than when it was written eighty years ago; and it will be the object of this study to examine in detail the doctrine from which this importance chiefly derives, his doctrine of substance, with necessary emphasis being placed on the denial of Matter.

Our concern will be with the philosopher, therefore, and not with the patriot, the man of letters, or the cleric — although it will be necessary, in judging his system, to recall the name of another bishop who was also a philosopher. Consequently, there are really only two events in his biography which it is pertinent to consider, both of which, while they are connected with learning, are certainly no more than dispositive causes with regard to his philosophical development. These are the fact of his education at Trinity College, Dublin, and his "American sojourn" as the result of the so-called "Bermuda project".

In the sketch of Trinity College as it was when Berkeley first saw it in the year 1700, which Professor Luce (who is himself a Fellow) gives in the second chapter of his Life, it may be possible to detect the loving hand of the "old boy" at work; in any event, the atmosphere of the place, as it is here described, would appear to be highly congenial to such an independent and adventurous spirit as Berkeley's. With domestic peace restored and the Government looking with favour upon her endeavours, Trinity's second century of existence had begun auspiciously:

Learned societies sprang up within the walls of the university and without; scientific study was encouraged; research was beginning; received opinions were challenged; the awake-
ning had come to Dublin, the enlightenment to her college. The scene was set for a daring philosophy and the denial of matter.\(^2\)

That membership in "learned societies" aided in his intellectual growth, there is no reason to doubt; but what is more important is the character of the formal instruction he received:

The philosophy course which Berkeley read was distinctly modernist, as can be seen from his Commentaries and other early writings. No doubt there were scholastic survivals..., but most of the authors read were contemporary or up to date... Locke's Essay was on the course...within two years of its publication, years before it received general recognition in England.\(^3\)

Descartes, Malebranche and Locke, with Aristotle, Epicurus and probably Plato, all helped to form him; and Locke and Malebranche brought him to the threshold of the New Principle.\(^4\) To the "progressive scholarship" of Dublin, therefore, Berkeley owed his formation; and the fact deserves to be mentioned, on account especially of the tender age at which "ye immaterial hypothesis" must have been conceived,\(^5\) even if only as briefly as had been done here.

The details of the slightly grandiose "Bermuda project" for "planting ARTS and LEARNING in America" (as it is described in the title of the ubiquitous "VERSES"), and of the "American sojourn" which it occasioned, are in themselves of no interest here; but the

\(^2\)A. A. Luce, Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne (London: Nelson, 1949), 31-32. [Hereafter cited as Life.]

\(^3\)Ibid., 39.

\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Ibid., 37. Professor Luce indicates here that Berkeley was not yet twenty when he had "learned to doubt the existence of matter".
results which almost three years of enforced "liberty and leisure" in the "distant retreat" of Rhode Island produced in Berkeley's speculative life are of no little significance. The activity which filled Berkeley's life between the publication of the Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous (1713) and his embarkation for America (1729) prevented him from engaging in much prolonged philosophical study; and although he did make "a considerable progress" in writing the promised Second Part of the Principles of Human Knowledge, the only work of any philosophical importance he actually produced during this period was the Latin essay, De Motu (1721). The "Bermuda project" itself was the product of his interest in social questions; and since, as he early confided to his patron, Lord Percival, he proposed to "spend the rest of his days" in his New World seminary, educating the sons of colonists and aborigines alike "in religion and useful learning", had that project been successful, he would probably have written little else to delight lovers of English prose, and perplex students of English philosophy. The project, however, was not successful. Berkeley "did" nothing in America; as Professor Luce remarks, "there was nothing he could do, save write"; but what he wrote there was Alciphron, in his own lifetime the most celebrated of his works.

6 Cf. Alciphron, I, 1.
8 Life, 97.
9 Ibid., 125.
In another respect, too, what was a frustration to philanthropy was a benefit to philosophy; for the time he spent in waiting upon the good pleasure of Sir Robert Walpole's government enabled Berkeley to cultivate the friendship of the Reverend Samuel Johnson of Connecticut, whom Professor Luce calls "one of the pioneers and architects of American education", and Professor Jessop, "the father of American philosophy". Berkeley's influence on American intellectual life came through Johnson; and the correspondence between them, begun in America, and continued until Berkeley's death, has left us "an important contribution to philosophy" in the form of two letters from Johnson which contain "the earliest known criticism of any length and weight of Berkeley's theory"; and the future Bishop's two replies which are important both as explications of his doctrine and as indications of how Berkeley regarded his earliest speculations some twenty years after they were made public.

The "American sojourn", therefore, may be said to have brought Berkeley "back" to philosophy; for by the time its impetus was spent, the works of his "middle" period had been produced.

But here it will be well to leave the matter. This paper does not purport to be a biography, but to be an exposition of a doctrine;

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10 Ibid., 129. 11 Works, II, 267.
12 Life, 128. 13 Life, 129.
14 Works, II, 267.
15 Besides Alciphron, there is The Theory of Vision Vindicated (1733), The Analyst (1734), the Defense of Free-Thinking in Mathematics (1735), and the new editions of the Principles and the Dialogues (published together, 1734).
and the foregoing material has been included only because, unlike much of the other information referring to his personal history, it seems to bear a direct relation to his philosophical development.

It seems difficult to appreciate much of the significance of Berkeley's system without considering the background of ideas which influenced it. The mechanical approach to physical reality, on which the thought alike of Descartes and Locke was based, and which received its definitive modern formulation in the physics of Newton, was popularly conceded in Berkeley's day to have found the key to the secrets of Nature; and Sir Isaac himself had come to be looked upon almost as a second Moses, delivering the tables of the Law to a new generation of the Chosen.16 This sanguine view Berkeley did not share; of what value could any pretended "explanation" of the universe be, he asked, if it produced nothing but scepticism and atheism? Why should it be entertained, if not even the imagination of its partisans could be summoned to witness for it, while the common sense of the whole of mankind gave testimony against it? He wrote in the Preface to the Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous:

Upon the common principles of philosophers, we are not assured of the existence of things from their being perceived. And we are taught to distinguish their real nature from that which falls under our senses. Hence arise scepticism and paradoxes. It is not enough that we see and feel, that we taste and smell a thing. Its true nature, its absolute external entity, is still concealed. For, though it be the fiction of our own brain, we have made it inaccessible to all our faculties. Sense is fallacious, reason defective. We spend our lives in doubting of those things which

---

other men evidently know, and believing those things which they
laugh at, and despise. 17

Hence the paradox: "the illiterate bulk of mankind" enjoys "a greater
calm and serenity of mind, a greater clearness and evidence of knowl-
edge, and [is] less disturbed with doubts and difficulties" than the
philosophers, 18 hence too the early and oft-repeated "Mem: To be etern-
ally banishing Metaphysics &c & recalling Men to Common Sense". 19

Metaphysicians had allowed their science to become corrupt by retaining
"uncriticised survivals" from the past -- of which a glaring example
was Matter -- by interpreting too literally an essentially symbolic
physics, and by applying its findings to metaphysical problems.

To the reform -- certainly not in practice to the "banish-
ment" -- of this "arid metaphysics of the schools" 20 Berkeley devoted
his energies, intermittently, for nearly fifty years: "recalling Men
to Common Sense", and "giving hints to thinking men", 21 both in ex-
pounding the notions of his own system, and in reviving the "hoary
maxims" of antiquity. 22 The statement in which Professor Luce char-
acterizes the Philosophical Commentaries can be applied to the mature
system which grew out of these preliminary studies: "All turns on his

17 Works, II, 167.
19 Philosophical Commentaries, entry 751, in Works, I, 91. [Hereafter cited as Phil. Comm.]
20 Note to Phil. Comm., 751, in Works, I, 135.
21 Letter to Johnson, ibid., II, 281.
22 Siris, 350.
view that you can have a true philosophy of the world without the traditional Greek notion of material substance. Around this "view", then, all his studies in natural and speculative philosophy were organized: from the far-reaching investigations of the Philosophical Commentaries, the public prelude to the immaterialism in the New Theory of Vision, the full exposition of the New Principle in the Principles of Human Knowledge, through its popularized restatement in the Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous, and its various more-or-less particular applications (to physics in De Motu, mathematics in The Analyst, apologetics in Alciphron) to the Sirs, that remarkable treatise on metaphysics and medicine, in which the study of Greek philosophy is recommended to cure scepticism, fatalism and atheism — the intellectual maladies arising from Mechanism, against which the virtues even of tar-water are powerless.

It was to meet the challenge of a contemporary problem that "Bishop Berkeley destroyed the world" (as Sydney Smith of Edinburgh once remarked, with more wit than accuracy); but even if a world that has been "destroyed" is "rebuilt", what results is not the same world; and if Berkeley is not allowed to have answered that problem -- which relates specifically to our knowledge of the thing-in-itself -- for the ages, what he did say appears to have brought a new

23Works, I, 5.
24Sirs, 331.
25"Bishop Berkeley destroyed the world in one volume octavo, and nothing remained after his time but mind, which experienced a similar fate from the hand of Mr. Hume in 1737." Quoted in Berkeley, Principles, ed. Krauth, 13.
emphasis into philosophy, as may be seen from the following statement by Friedrich Schlegel:

The view taken of the notion of substance properly determines whether a system be idealistic or not, for in true idealism this notion is completely set aside and annihilated.\footnote{26 Quoted in \textit{Principles}, ed. Krauth, 67.}

If "the view taken of the notion of substance" has become a valid standard for judging the idealism of a system, then Berkeley, by his denial of material substance, can be regarded as having contributed significantly towards its establishment.

Now we are concerned here with Berkeley's doctrine of substance, with his affirmation of spirit no less than with his denial of matter; and since it is on the basis of this doctrine that his historical importance seems chiefly founded, it is upon this that emphasis will be placed. Such subsidiary problems as whether Berkeley himself can be called an idealist; how far his criticism of the Newtonians parallels the theories of such modern philosophers of science as Sir James Jeans; and whether or not Berkeley ever formally abandoned the esse is percipi of his youth, while they are of historical and critical interest, and deserve to be considered in passing, can not be treated at length, since to examine any one of them adequately would extend this essay far beyond the limits assigned to it.

Limitations of space also require that another question of great importance in any consideration of Berkeley's philosophy as a whole be of secondary interest here, and that is the development of his epistemology. This question is intimately bound up with the...
last of the "problems" listed above, for when such of his modern interpreters as G. Dawes Hicks and John Wild contend that Berkeley gave up the esse percipi principle of his immaterialism, they are really maintaining that esse percipi, as it is stated in the Principles and the Dialogues, is in some way incompatible with the somewhat Platonic account of cognition given in the Seventh Dialogue of Alciphron, and in the later sections of the Siris. Now a whole body of critical literature has grown up in the last thirty years, in support and condemnation of the view that Berkeley abandoned the doctrine which made him famous, and since both schools present their opinions with much interpretive skill and insight (each writer, like the Devil, citing "scripture" to prove his point), if any profitable conclusion were to be drawn, a detailed analysis of this mass of criticism would have to be made in the light of Berkeley's works, and the whole evaluated in terms of the contents of Plato's dialogues. All this, while admittedly of great historical and philosophical interest, is not relevant to the subject of these researches: for what Berkeley actually wrote is our concern, and not what that writing can be interpreted to imply. "Tacit admissions", therefore, "significant omissions", and "changes of emphasis" are of minor concern.

With the delimitation of our subject-matter thus accomplished, one fact becomes apparent: of Berkeley's works, only two contain sufficient pertinent material to be of direct utility to us. Consequently, the present inquiry into Berkeley's doctrine of substance will necessarily centre around a detailed analysis of A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710), and Three
Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous (1713). The first work, styled "Part One", is, as Professor Jessop informs us, the only completed portion of a projected longer study which was to treat of Metaphysics, Ethics, Natural Philosophy and Mathematics, as reformed and purified on the basis of two general principles: namely, that the perceived world is the real world, and is real only in so far as it is perceived (which implies the non-existence of material substance); and that words and signs of quantity do not stand for abstract general ideas, which, like matter, do not in fact exist.\(^27\) "Part One", together with the accompanying "Introduction" to all the projected "Parts", was designed to establish those principles; and since the first of them, that the intelligible existence of things is their real existence, signified to Berkeley the very converse of "the doctrine of matter or corporeal substance", it is not surprising to find considerable space devoted to the destruction of this "main pillar and support" of scepticism and atheism.\(^28\) Consequently, for the subject of these researches, the Principles, "systematic fragment" though it be (so Professor Campbell Fraser described it\(^29\)), takes on the character of a source-book of absolutely primary importance — an importance reflected in this considered judgment by Professor Luce:

Berkeley's gift to the world was, and is, the immaterialism, and he placed it entire in one casket, the Principles. He published a preparatory study and several sequels, but he published no substitute for the Principles.... I have read all Berkeley's other writings carefully, critically, and ad hoc; I recognize

\(^{27}\) Works, II, 5-6.
\(^{28}\) Cf. Principles, 92.
their value, but I am convinced that they add nothing to the essential argument of the Principles, and take nothing from it. Master the Principles, and you have mastered Berkeley's materialism. 30

However, though it does not replace the Principles, the Three Dialogues, which Berkeley published three years afterwards, does in some respects supplement it. "The new work was written because the Principles had failed not only to win converts but even to provoke discussion." Berkeley therefore set out to write as it were "a semi-popular introduction" to his immaterialism, which is chiefly important for us, as regards "the expansion of points" which, in its more scholarly predecessor, it had been possible to "take for granted." 31

Professor Jessop classes it with the Principles, calling them "Berkeley's two chief philosophical works" 32; and the prominence of their role in Berkeley's system will be reflected in their use in this study.

Obviously, the other works are not without importance; if the esse percipi is given its only "complete" statement in the Principles and Dialogues (and an examination of the works will show this to be the case), there are aspects of the doctrine of substance, especially on its spiritual side, which receive significant elaboration in the subsequent writings. This, Professor Luce would seem to acknowledge in a passage excised from the foregoing quotation from Berkeley's Immaterialism, in which he advises "the mature student" to read the

32 Ibid., v.
other works. Because of this, then, the other works will be con-
sulted for their clarifications; but the doctrine of substance dis-
cussed in this paper will be that which is set forth explicitly
in the Principles and Dialogues, and not that which is said to
lurk in the "hoary maxims" of Siris, and the condemnations of Deism
in Alciphron.

The edition of Berkeley's Works which has been used, is that
prepared by A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop; but as it was impossible to
consult the lately-published fifth volume of this set, the Siris, which
it contains, has been read in the edition of A. C. Fraser (1901).

Although the labours of Professors Luce and Jessop seem
likely to supply the lack before long, there does not yet exist, at
the time of writing, a complete and definitive edition of Berkeley's
works. [For Luce's criticism of Fraser, see the former's Life of
Berkeley, 16-18.] However, a comparison of the text of the available
volumes of the new edition with the corresponding portions of
Fraser's does not reveal any significant variations; and for this
reason, it seems convenient to indicate citations from the works by
title and section number only, so that either edition may be con-
sulted. It has been necessary to make two exceptions to this rule:
in the case of the Dialogues, and of the Philosophical Commentaries.
The first, although written in the same form as Alciphron, is not
divided into numbered sections as is the latter work; and specific
reference to volume and page, in the new edition, is thus made
necessary. The Philosophical Commentaries is a pair of notebooks
bound together in what has since been discovered to be the wrong
order, which Professor Campbell Fraser found among the Berkeley
papers (which have since been added to the collection of the British
Museum) and published for the first time in his 1871 edition of the
Works, as the Commonplace Book of Occasional Metaphysical Thoughts.
As Professor Luce has re-edited it, the Commentaries differs rad-
cially with regard to the arrangement of its contents from the Common-
place Book of Fraser's editions, and uses a slightly different system
of entry-numbers from that employed by O. A. Johnston in his edition
of 1930 (which does, however, give the notebooks in their proper
order). Reference to the Commentaries, therefore, is made by
title and entry-number to the text as given in Luce's editio diplomatica of 19thh, and reprinted in volume one of the new edition of the
Works.
With these preliminaries disposed of, the subject of this paper may be stated as falling into two main divisions. The first and chief of these is the study of Berkeley's doctrine of substance, and the second, an attempt to place that doctrine in its historical setting, which will involve an examination of the external influences which, through development or reaction, guided Berkeley in the elaboration of his system.
II

THE DOCTRINE OF SUBSTANCE

In the discussion of Berkeley's works in the preceding chapter, we have already noted the incompleteness of his thought. "Berkeley lived an active, many-sided life, was much in the public eye, and wrote on many things besides philosophy."\(^1\) He simply could not, or would not, devote the time to philosophy required to work out a complete system of metaphysics; and for this reason, our discussion of his doctrine of substance must of necessity be incomplete.

The problem of substance is properly of metaphysical concern, yet when Berkeley considers it, it is generally in an epistemological setting; this is to be expected, for our principal sources, the Principles and the Dialogues, deal primarily with his theory of knowledge. One of his chief aims in writing these works, as he makes clear in the "Preface" to each, was to banish "scepticism" — by which term he meant "doubt or denial of the 'reality' of the immediate objects of sense."\(^2\) The question he proposes to answer, therefore, is not "What is substance?", but "Are the 'immediate objects of sense' substances, and if they are not, what does this imply?" He wishes to determine, not the nature, but the "knowability", of substance.

Thus, in the Berkeleian philosophy as it has come down to us,

\(^1\) Luce, Berkeley's Immaterialism, I.

\(^2\) Professor Jessop's note to Works, II, 57.
we can say that the problem of substance is treated as a problem of knowledge, and "solved" on epistemological grounds. As far as we can be concerned, the final argument against matter, and for spirit, as substantial entities, must be that the latter is knowable, while the former is not. Thus, Berkeley writes of matter in section 20 of the Principles, that:

If there were external bodies, it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we have now.

On the same basis, he refutes a form of "Hume's objection" when, in the third Dialogue, Idilous insists to Hylas that:

I know or am conscious of my own being; and that I myself am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking active principle that perceives, knows, wills, and operates about ideas.3

As might be imagined from the foregoing, Berkeley's first concern in his early works is to establish the exact nature of the objects of human knowledge; and this, in turn, may be said to discover to him the nature of substance.4 If, therefore, the following account of Berkeley's doctrine of substance appears to concern itself rather extensively with aspects of his theory of knowledge, it is only because that theory bulks large in Berkeley's own treatment of the question. It seems necessary to take cognizance of this fact here, for in this study, Berkeley's own method of exposition will be followed, an acquaintance with his writings having bred the conviction that his is the most logical and most coherent approach to that basal doctrine of his system, the doctrine of substance.

3 Works, II, 233.
Therefore, this present chapter will be divided into four sections, based on the four groups into which sections 1 to 7 of "Part One" of the Principles naturally separate themselves. They concern, in Professor Luce's terms, "the perceived object", "the perceiving subject", "the meaning of 'existence'", and the conclusion implicit in these, that substance is spiritual. These first seven sections have been allowed to exercise this organizing function, because they contain a full yet admirably concise statement of the principle on which in reality the whole of his teaching depends; that to be is to be perceived or to perceive; in relation to which, the contents of the remaining sections of the Principles -- and indeed, if Professor Luce's view may be recalled, of all his other works -- can be seen as explaining, amplifying, and applying the basic doctrine, but as contributing no more than probable reasonings to support it.

With these preliminary conclusions stated, it will be possible to discuss the first of the sections mentioned above.

1. The Perceived Object

In the whole corpus of Berkeley's writings, there is probably no single passage more important in the development of his doctrine of substance, than the first section of The Principles of Human Knowledge. It conveys notions about the nature and objects of the knowing process which occupy just as central a position in the system of immaterialism, as does the validity of the experimental

\[ \text{Vide supra, 12.} \]
For the Sage of Koenigsberg, that truth in any form should be unattainable — that knowledge in so basic a question as the existence of the external world should be impossible — was "a scandal to philosophy and to human reason in general". For the Bishop of Cloyne, however, the possibility that the objects of knowledge might not be within the mind at all, would probably appear less as a "scandal" than as an opinion unworthy of serious consideration. One has but to read his works; in none of them does he even mention that there might be a problem connected with what it is exactly that man knows, or that any competent philosopher (since the metaphysical Age of Innocence) had ever provided an answer to it differing from that of Locke and Descartes. As will appear in the course of this study, it was the answer which these last-named thinkers did provide (and which, in its essentials, Berkeley accepted without question).


8 Cf. for example, his treatment of the reasons for the supposed universal belief in matter, Principles, 56, 73. There seems to be nothing in the Siris which indicates a modification of the view.
which makes Berkeleyanism a tenable philosophical position; and since both that answer, and Berkeley's interpretation of it, are stated succinctly in section 1 of the Principles, it will not be out of place to quote that paragraph in full:

It is evident to any one who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or lastly ideas formed by the help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways. By sight I have the ideas of light and colours with their several degrees and variations. By touch I perceive, for example, hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance, and of all these more or less either as to quantity or degree. Smelling furnishes me with odours; the palate with tastes, and hearing conveys sounds to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition. And as several of these are observed to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one thing. Thus, for example, a certain colour, taste, smell, figure and consistence having been observed to go together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name apple. Other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a house, and the like sensible things; which, as they are pleasing or disagreeable, excite the passions of love, hatred, joy, grief, and so forth.9

Setting aside any consideration of its obviously Lockean over-tones, it will be a sufficient commentary on this passage, for the purpose of this study, to determine what Berkeley means by "idea"; since this would appear to be a key to his theory of knowledge, and thus of great significance in his doctrine of substance. It will be helpful, therefore, in a negative way, in discovering the exact significance he attaches to this word, to contrast it with "idea" in the Platonic tradition of innatism, with the "concept" in the Aristotelian tradition of realism, and with the term as it is used in given here, on the locus of the objects of intellectual knowledge, which are discussed there at length.

9 Principles, 1.
For the matter under discussion, a comparison of Berkeley's use of the term "idea", and the value given to it in his theory of knowledge, with the usages and "evaluations" of Plato and the Aristotelians will prove especially significant. First of all, to compare aspects of Berkeley's theory of knowledge (as it is found in the Principles and the Dialogues) with Plato's, will throw considerable light on the relation of Berkeley's early thought to that of his mature, "Platonic" period, in which the Siris was written; and will serve, in part at least, to indicate whether the Platonism of the Siris logically requires the abandonment of the Immaterialism of the Principles. Secondly, Aristotle was the classical defender of Realism, who elaborated a philosophy which offers a coherent explanation of the world of common sense; and in so doing established a tradition which gave metaphysical currency to such notions as Substance and Accident, Matter and Form, and the Abstractionist Theory of knowledge, all of which Berkeley, as himself a defender of common sense and realism, felt obliged to prove in some way misleading. The reason for this, as the content and character of Berkeley's criticisms would indicate, will not be found in the philosophy of Aristotle himself, nor in the system his Scholastic interpreters built upon it, but rather in the interpretation put upon this Aristotelian Scholasticism by modern philosophers -- Descartes and Locke, in particular -- who had allowed fragments of it to survive into their systems. In this second comparison, therefore, the traditional Aristotelian doctrines will be sketched briefly, in order primarily to clarify the
positions which exercised a direct influence upon Berkeley.

With so much said, it is possible to turn now to the comparisons themselves.

Plato held that man's senses inform him of a fleeting shadow world, in which he recognizes what "a real and prolonged effort of steady thinking" reveals to be imperfect copies of the several constituents of the world of essences (or Forms, or Ideas) which the soul contemplated before it was for sin imprisoned in a body. The Ideas, among which are included the archetypal essences of homogeneous things, are in some way innate, and the reception of data from the senses is the occasion of awakening the mind to knowledge by way of reminiscence. A thing is named according as it imitates, or participates in — to give both of the metaphors Plato employs — the Idea in the world of essences.


11 Meno, 81-86; Phaedo, 73-84; Phaedrus, 246-250; in The Dialogues of Plato, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937), I, 350-366, 458-469, 252-254. That the mythical presentation of the early dialogues in general symbolizes doctrines which Plato approached in other ways in the later works seems to be the opinion of Sir David Ross (Plato's Theory of Ideas), who comments in particular: "We come to the conclusion, then, that there is no real evidence that there was a later theory of Ideas in which Plato denied the existence of Ideas which he had earlier recognized. It may be added that...the fullest list of types of Idea to be found anywhere in Plato is in one of his latest writings, the Seventh Letter." (175) Cf. ibid., 139-141.

12 That the discussion of knowledge in the Theaetetus need not be interpreted to mean that Plato ever abandoned his theory of Anamnesis, or that to know is to remember (which necessarily implies that the objects of knowledge — the Forms, or Ideas — are innate) is the opinion of Francis Cornford, in his Plato's Theory of Knowledge, 2, 28, 129. Cf. Sir D. Ross, op. cit., 35, 103, and J. A. Stewart, Plato's Doctrine of Ideas, 68, 192-197.


14 Cratylus, 389, 422b-423; in Dialogues, II, 179, 211-213.
An examination of the Berkeleian "idea" against this Platonic background reveals, first of all, that the illustrations given in the quoted section of the Principles involving the senses, and the further observation that, when several "ideas" accompany each other regularly, they are "marked by one name, and so...reputed as one thing", suggest a psychological, and nominalistic use of the word which attributes to it a "value" not, in any traditional sense, an "intellectual" or cognitive one. As Berkeley tells us in the Philosophical Commentaries, whose pithy statements seem to reflect his mature thought in this particular, "By idea I mean any sensible or imaginable thing",\(^\text{15}\) and further, "All ideas come from without, they are all particular".\(^\text{16}\)

Consequently, on this point, the Berkeleian "idea" can be seen to differ, not only from the Platonic Idea, or Form, or Essence, but from the Aristotelian concept as well; for it is sensual and particular, not intellectual and universal, and is strictly speaking not concerned with "homogeneous things", but with the sensibilia of which "things" are composed.\(^\text{17}\)

In two other -- and equally important -- respects, however, Berkeley seems at first sight to be antagonistic, specifically to

\(^{15}\)Phil. Comm., 775.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., 318.

\(^{17}\)If intelligible universals -- Forms, and essences rendered present to the understanding in concepts -- could be "placed" at all in Berkeley's analysis of "the perceptual situation" (in Professor Luce's phrase), they would necessarily be connected with "notions" -- as Berkeley came to denominate the objects "perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind", which will be studied in the next section -- and with the "names" which are applied to ensembles of perceptions.
the Platonic spirit: first, he says that "All ideas come from without" -- that is, they can in no sense be regarded as innate -- and, second, "with the Mob", he places "certainty in the senses". But in the first, the antagonism is only apparent: here, Berkeley means by "idea" what in Plato is signified by "impression", "phenomenon", or "appearance" (the last term replaces "idea" in the *Siris*), and since Plato never held these to be innate, the two philosophers are seen to be in agreement on this aspect, at least, of their "externality". In the case of the second, Berkeley's early view of where "certainty" was to be found did not persist into his mature thought (as is evident from *Alciphron*, and to a far greater degree, from the *Siris*).

*Phil. Comm.,* 740.

*This seems to be self-evident. In his enumeration of the objects of knowledge, Berkeley speaks of the first among these as "ideas actually imprinted on the senses" (Principles, 1), as we shall presently discover, he identifies collections of these "ideas" -- that is, of the data provided by the senses -- with "real things" (ibid., 33), or the several constituents of the physical cosmos. That Plato acknowledged the reality of this cosmos, there can be no doubt. Simple perception of it may not constitute knowledge (cf. *Theaetetus*, 184a-184b); the Forms may be more truly real than the phenomena of which it is composed (cf. Republic, V, 476b-478b); but the very fact that he chose to devote a large part of at least one dialogue -- the "first part" of the *Parmenides* -- to a discussion of the relation between the Forms and the particular beings which participate in them, would indicate that he was not unwilling for the philosopher to accord some consideration to the finite and the mutable. In connection with Socrates' statement (Phaedo, 74a) that when one begins to understand a finite, sensible thing, the first fact to be discovered about it is that it is an imperfect "version" of something which implies perfection, A. E. Taylor remarks that the doctrine of Forms "implies a 'realistic' metaphysic; from the point of view of 'nominalism', 'terminalism', or 'conceptualism', the whole doctrine is nonsense." Op. cit., 188n.

* Cf. Socrates' discussion of the senses, in Republic, VI, 507, which centres around his comparison of the role of the Form of the Good (as the source of being and intelligibility) in knowing, with that of the sun (as the source of light) in seeing. The Dialogues of Plato, I, 766-767. Cf. *Theaetetus*, 156-157.
However, as this rejection of "sensism" required no change to be made in his doctrine of substance — a fact which will become apparent in due course — it is not necessary to consider the point further.

In section 335 of Siris, Berkeley records this distinction between his own and Plato's usage: "In Plato's style," he comments, "the term *idea* doth not merely signify an inert inactive object of the understanding, but is used as synonymous with ... cause and principle." This serves to remind us that Plato's ideas are archetypes; and in the Dialogues, Berkeley acknowledges "a two-fold state of things, the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal", adding that "the former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God." Again, in the second of his two letters on philosophical questions to the Reverend Samuel Johnson, Berkeley writes that he has "no objection against calling the ideas in the mind of God archetypes of ours"; thus, if one wishes to regard the Platonic Forms as Divine Ideas (as Professor Jessop seems to suggest is possible), one might say that the Berkeleian "idea" is related to the Platonic Idea or Form, as is an ectype to its archetype. What the Bishop's own opinion on this matter might be, however, it is impossible to say; for we have just

22 Works, II, 254.
23 Ibid., 292.
24 Ibid., 268. But "if Plato's ideas were independent of God [as seem probable; vide Timaeus, 30-31; cf. Taylor, op. cit., 112; Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, 111; Ross, op. cit., 231-233], Berkeley would condemn them as 'unknown'." A. A. Luce, "The Unity of the Berkeleian Philosophy (II.)", Mind, XLVI (1937), 187.
quoted the only references to "archetypes" which appear in his published writings, and he never treats in detail of such problems as creation, God's knowledge, or how much of Plato's metaphysic he is actually willing to accept. Nevertheless, in purely Platonic terms, there seems to be no reason why the Demiurge could not cause in us temporal, particular and transient "ideas" in imitation of eternal, universal and immutable Forms.

The archetypal value attached by Plato, and in a modified sense, by Berkeley, to the term "idea", will serve quite well to bring the first of our comparisons to a close, and to make the transition to the second. Although he held (albeit with reservations) for the classical signification of "archetype", which implied a necessary relation to Mind, both as "thinker" to "contain" and as "creator" to make real, there was yet another, modern interpretation put upon the word, which implied no such necessary relation, and which Berkeley never would accept — an interpretation connected with the representational theory of knowledge, as taught by two of the foremost thinkers of his own day, Descartes and John Locke. Now, there is a text from Aristotle, cited by one of his medieval commentators, which, in its Scholastic setting, throws a good deal of light on this representational theory of knowledge, and serves to bring it into an historical and interpretative perspective; for which reason it seems appropriate to consider it here.

The text, which states the relation that obtains among thoughts, words, and things, is drawn from the second book of the Organon, Perihermenias, and is given in the following translation:
"Voces sunt signa intellectuum et intellectus sunt rerum similitudines." Here, the differences of relationship are stressed by the use of a distinct term to signify each, signa and similitudines.

The word or name is an arbitrary and conventional sign, a truth to which the diversity of languages bears witness. The concept or "thought" or "idea", on the contrary, is a likeness, an intellectual representation, expressing the very nature or essence of that of which it is the likeness. Its whole function being to express, it can never be known directly, but only reflexively, and by the formation of another concept. It is, in other words, always purely a means, and never (directly) an object, of knowledge. Between things and thoughts, there intervenes the celebrated process of abstraction, in which the

25 Cf. S. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, q.13, a.1. The text appears to join two phrases separated in the original, which the translation in the Oxford edition of Aristotle's Works renders thus: "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolise, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images...". "De Interpretatione", I, 103a3-8, in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 140.

26 On the functions here assigned to the concept, see J. Martin, Les Degres du Savoir (5th edition. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946), Annexe I, "A propos du concept", especially pp. 779-791. Aristotle's doctrine is stated by him in broad outline only; the precise details of what the concept must be, and what knowing implies, have been elaborated by other thinkers, notably S. Thomas Aquinas, and his seventeenth century follower, John of S. Thomas. Nevertheless, it can be pointed out that the knower and the known are said to be identical in the act of cognition, the mind becoming the thing known (De Anima, II, 5, b30a10-20; 4, b29b30-31) while yet remaining itself (ibid., b29a15-18); and that the mind knows itself and its thinking processes only concomitantly (Metaphysics, XII, 7, 107b35-37). The objects of knowledge, however, are the same "universal natures" which make things to be what they are (ibid., VII, 6, 1031b6, 1032a5).

27 Ibid., XII, 9, 107b35-37.
intellect reads in, or draws out of, the phantasm, composed of sense data, the intelligibility, or form, of the thing.28

It has already been noted that the Berkeleyan "idea" possesses non-intellectual (that is to say, sensual and particular) qualities which serve to set it off from universals in both the Platonic and Aristotelian sense; but the most obvious way in which the Berkeleyan "idea" differs from the Aristotelian concept is, that it is an object, and not a means of knowledge.29 This fact is stated many times, and often emphatically, in Berkeley's writings, but nowhere more explicitly than in a passage in the Dialogues, in which the Lover of Mind replies affirmatively to Hylas' question, "Is it not your opinion that by our senses we perceive only the ideas existing in our own minds?"30 In maintaining this view, however, Berkeley was only assenting to a common philosophical opinion of his day. Descartes, for example, taught that "thought" was the equivalent of "conscious-

28 "To the thinking soul images serve as if they were contents of perceptions". De Anima, III, 7, 431a4-6. "The faculty of thinking then thinks the forms in the images". Ibid., 431b2. Cf. "When the mind is actively aware of anything it is necessarily aware of it along with an image; for images are like sensuous contents except in that they contain no matter." Ibid., 432a7-9. Basic Works of Aristotle, 59a4 and 59b5. Cf. 429b21, where it is said that intelligibility is proportioned to immateriality, a fact which implies abstraction. 29 It is, as we shall see, a means of knowledge in so far as through its agency the mind is able to form "notions" of (or more simply, is able to know) non-sensible reality; i.e., spirits and relations. But it is not, in the sense of Descartes and Locke, an image of a thing existing in material reality outside the mind which is known by means of the idea-image. Cf. Principes, 8. When it is asserted, in this paper, that the Berkeleyan "idea" is not a means of knowledge, it is in this latter sense only that the statement should be interpreted.

30 Works, II, 247.
ness", and that the term "idea" (which he defined as the form of a thought) could thus refer to any object of consciousness whatever, whether a universal essence, a volition, passion, memory image, or sense-datum. "Ideas" did have a representative function, possessing an objective reality in the mind, but in themselves they were things that were thought, revealing, first and foremost, not things existing in re, but thought itself.

Now all ideas, considered in themselves, are equally true, but as images of things, only those are true — or possess objective reality — which are clear and distinct. Among the "most constant" of these true ideas are those which concern figures and numbers.

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32 Ibid., Définition 2.
34 "Entre mes pensées quelques-unes sont comme les images des choses, et c'est à celles-là seules que convient proprement le nom d'idées". Troisième Méditation, Oeuvres, IX, 29. Again, he speaks of a thing, the cause or original of several ideas, "dans lequel [i.e., dans l'original, la chose] toute la réalité ou perfection, soit contenue formellement et en effet, qui se rencontre seulement objectivement ou par représentation dans ces idées.... Les idées sont en moi comme des tableaux, ou des images...." Ibid., 33.
37 Réponses aux deuxièmes objections, Définition 2.
38 Troisième Méditation, Oeuvres, VII, 37; cf. Principes, I, 17.
arithmetic and geometry, but even the principles and demonstrations of mathematics may be doubted, if it is possible that an all-powerful God might have created us in such a way that we are always deceived in everything. It is only after this possibility is discounted, and the existence of an absolutely perfect (and hence veracious) God is demonstrated — by means of the cogito, the innate idea of a perfect Being, and the principle of causality — that the truth of our clear and distinct ideas is confirmed.

Thus, in the Cartesian system, "thoughts" or "ideas" may be likenesses or "images" of things, but the ideas are themselves things, the direct and immediate objects of knowledge. Yet as we have just seen, truth is made to consist in the agreement of the idea with its ideatum (in Spinoza's terminology). At this point, an obvious objection — that we do not in fact know the ideatum at all — presents itself; Descartes, despite his invocation of the prin-

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40 Ibid.
41 Principes, I, 5.
42 Ibid., 7, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18.
43 Ibid., 28-30.
44 The objective being which an idea possesses may be inferior to the formal or eminent (or actual) being of the thing of which the idea is only a reflection, but it is real being none the less — "tout ce qui est vrai est quelque chose" (Cinquième Méditation, Oeuvres, VII, 65); cf. "La vérité consiste en l'être, et la fausseté au non-être seulement" ("Lettre à Clerselier", 23 avril 1649; ibid., V, 356). Indeed, the whole of Descartes' metaphysic is based on the doctrine that ideas, as real things, require a cause of their being (Réponses aux deuxièmes objections, Axioms III-V), a fact which makes it possible to bridge the gap between the mind and exterior reality.
45 Troisième Méditation, Oeuvres, VII, 37; cf. Cinquième Méditation, ibid., 56.
ciple of causality, really met it with the help of God;\(^6\) but when
John Locke expressed what was essentially the same view in his \textit{Essay},
as it were, he did not pray, and human strength was not sufficient to
the task.\(^7\) At the beginning of his discussion "of knowledge in

\(^6\) Whatever one may think of the validity of his reasoning, on
his own terms Descartes does not argue in a circle here; for him, the
evidence of the cogito is not subject to doubt (\textit{Deuxi\'
\`eme M\'editation}, ibid., \textit{24-25}); neither is the universal rule of evidence (\textit{Trois-
\`emes M\'editation}, ibid., \textit{35, 36}), nor the principle of causality
(which is immediately deducible from the fact of existence of.
\textit{Reponses aux deuxi\'
\`emes objections}}, Axiom I). These are the elements
of which the proof for the existence of God is composed (e.g., in
\textit{Principes}, I, 17-18); and in the existence of a God who is the cause
of being, and thus of truth, Descartes finds his deliverance from
doubt (\textit{Cinqui\'
\`eme M\'editation}, \textit{Oeuvres}, VII, 70-71). The guarantee of
Divine Veracity is thus required to establish, not the initial evidence
of first principles (which are per se nota), but rather the certitude
of that evidence when it is remembered (\textit{cf. Principes}, I, 5). Without
that guarantee, the cogito would become a mere prejudice, unless
it were thought out every time it was recalled (\textit{Sur les cinqu\'
\`emes objections}}, \textit{Oeuvres}, IX, 205). Without that guarantee, certain knowl-
dge at any given moment would always be limited to whatever first
principles (and perhaps the immediate deductions from them) could be
known as self-evident at that moment (\textit{cf. Principes}, I, 13); and for
this reason, the Divine Veracity is the basis upon which not only the
proof for the existence of the external world, but the whole Cartesian
metaphysic is built. \textit{Vide Professor Gilson's "Commentaire historique"
in his edition of the \textit{Discours de la M\'ethode}}, \textit{360-361}; \textit{cf. E.
Br\'edier, op. cit., II, 81-83}. It is manifest, however, that without
the certitude of the cogito, and the principle of causality, Descartes
could not even begin to philosophise.

\(^7\) Descartes, Locke and Berkeley all concur in making use of
the principle of causality to explain the fact of knowledge, but
there is in Locke's reasoning on this point an 'obvious inconsistency'
upon which Berkeley does not hesitate to seize. Descartes argued
thus: There is a real distinction between soul and body, and their
principal attributes, thought and extension, are mutually exclusive
(\textit{Principes}, I, 53-54, 60). All objects of knowledge, or ideas, are
innate -- not only those of universal laws and the like, but even
those of sensation: "Et, enfin, je tiens que toutes celles [les idées]
qui n'enveloppent aucune affirmation ou négation nous sont innataes;
car les organes des sens ne nous rapportent rien qui soit tel que
l'idée qui se réveille en nous à leur occasion, et ainsi cette idée
a du être en nous auparavant." ("Lettre à Mersenne", 22 juillet 1641,
\textit{Oeuvres}, III, 218; \textit{cf. Notae in programma quoddam}, ibid., VIII, pt. 2,
358-359). In so far as our ideas are true, they come from God (\textit{cf.\textendash\textemdash})
general", Locke wrote:

Since the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them.  

In an earlier discussion of "our simple ideas", however, Locke had

Discours, IV, 38. Now, arguing from the mind to exterior reality, metaphysically speaking, a thing is true in so far as it is (vide the texts cited in note 64) nothing cannot be the cause of something, yet everything that is is caused (Réponses aux deuxièmes objections, Axioms I, III); a cause must have at least as much perfection (or being) as the effect of which it is the cause (ibid., Axiom V; cf. "Lettre au P. Sulpicius", 22 février 1638, Œuvres, I, 560-561). These principles could account for the presence (and for the representational value) of clear and distinct ideas in the mind without making it necessary to explain the apparently inexplicable interaction of soul and body (which Descartes nevertheless sought to do).

Locke denied the possibility of innate knowledge (Essay concerning Human Understanding, Bk. I), saying that ideas can come to us only from sensation or reflection (ibid., II, i, 2). Bodies produce sensations in the brain by the motion of insensible particles, and this causes in the mind the ideas of the primary and secondary qualities in things (ibid., viii, 11-13); but how this can be, it is impossible to say, "there being no conceivable connexion between any impulse of any sort of body, and any perception of a colour or a smell which we find in our minds" (ibid., IV, iii, 28). It is possible, however, that since substance is in itself unknowable (ibid., I, iv, 18), "finite spirits" or "thinking substances" may not necessarily be immaterial ("First Letter to the Bishop of Worcester"; quoted in Essay (London: Wm. Tegg & Co., 1853), liii).

This last suggestion, Berkeley could condemn on two counts: first, if the soul (or "thinking substance") is not immaterial, then it is not immortal (Principles of Human Knowledge, 111); second, if it is material, then it is sensible, and the objects of sensation are ideas; hence, it is an idea which knows ideas. This argument is similar to the one he brings against Locke's notion that impressions in the brain are the cause of ideas in the mind: if the brain is a sensible thing, then it is only an "idea or thing existing in the mind [which] occasions all other ideas"; if it is not "that brain which is perceivable by sense", but another which is imagined, that imagined brain is still in the mind as an idea, and the philosopher talks "of ideas imprinted in an idea, causing that same idea, which is absurd." (Second Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous, Works, II, 209). It is thus impossible, Berkeley finds, to account for the origin of our ideas in corporeal things.

Note 64: Essay concerning Human Understanding, IV, 1, 1.
already concluded that some of these were "resemblances" of qualities existing in bodies without the mind. Thus, although "it is evident that the mind knows not things immediately, but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them", still "our knowledge...is real only so far as there is a conformity between our ideas and the reality of things." In other words, "to make our knowledge real, it is requisite that the ideas answer their archetypes."

This, then, was the modern interpretation of the term "archetype" that Berkeley never would accept: that "ideas", considered as real, "objective" beings within the mind, could be copies of original archetypes, or real things, existing without the mind. On such a view, he held, "are we involved all in scepticism", and against this (in his opinion) weak link in the chain of Locke's reasoning he directed the hammer-blows of his logic. In the Principles, immediately after giving the outline of his system, Berkeley raises, as the first possible objection to it, the question of the representational value of ideas; but his answer is unequivocal:

An idea can be like nothing but an idea; a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure. If we look but ever so little into our thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness except only between our ideas. Again, I ask whether those supposed originals or external things, of which our ideas are the pictures or representations, be themselves perceivable or no? If they are, then they are ideas, and we have gained our point; but if you say they are not, I appeal

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{II, viii, 15.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{IV, iv, 3.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{sect. 8.}\]
\[\text{Principles, 87.}\]
to anyone whether it be sense, to assert a colour is like some-
thing which is invisible; hard or soft, like something which is
intangible; and so of the rest.\footnote{Principles, 8.}

Then, to make sure that he has indeed "gained his point", he proceeds
to examine some of the primary qualities individually: figure, motion,
extension and number. He shows that although Locke, for example,
speaks of these primary qualities as really existing in things them-
selves (as he does in his \textit{Essay, II, viii, 9}), the result of allowing
an idea which is itself an object of knowledge to intervene between
the mind and exterior reality, is actually to make the primary quali-
ties as much dependent on our perception of them, and hence as sub-
jective, as are the secondary qualities with which they are insepar-
ably united. He concludes his analysis thus:

In short, let anyone consider those arguments, which are thought
manifestly to prove that colours and tastes exist only in the
mind, and he shall find they may with equal force, be brought to
prove the same thing of extension, figure, and motion. Though
it must be confessed this method of arguing doth not so much
prove that there is no extension or colour in an outward object,
as that we do not know, by sense which is the true extension or
colour of the object.\footnote{Ibid., 15.}

The burden of proof for the Immaterialism may rest with the
New Principle, that \textit{esse is percipi}, as the last sentence of this
section (which is omitted here) indicates; but Berkeley has stated
what he considers to be a highly convincing argument in favour of
his system; and it is on the basis of his own convinced opinion in
this matter that he writes to Johnson:

\footnote{Principles, 8.}
\footnote{Ibid., 15.}
I have no objection against calling the ideas in the mind of God archetypes of ours. But I object against those archetypes by philosophers supposed to be real things, and to have an absolute rational existence distinct from their being perceived by any mind whatsoever; it being the opinion of all materialists that an ideal existence in the Divine Mind is one thing, and the real existence of material things another.\(^55\)

Ideas clearly possess no representational value for Berkeley, as far as knowledge of an exterior and material world is concerned; but he still regards them as objects of knowledge. How this must be interpreted, against the Cartesian background which has here been sketched, is indicated by Frederick Woodbridge, who compares Berkeley's use of "idea" with Locke's, and after noting the similarity of their definitions of the term,\(^56\) remarks as follows:

Although they both speak...about ideas in the same way and assign to them the same position as the only immediate objects of the mind, it seems impossible to conclude that they were speaking about the same thing. They used the same term, but what that term identified as the immediate object of the mind was not the same. With Locke the ideas are not the things which make up the system of nature; with Berkeley they are. With Locke they are what we have come to call subjective and psychological; with Berkeley they are not. With Locke they are mental counterparts of impressions on the brain; with Berkeley they are not. With Locke they are the means of knowing, representing what is known by them; with Berkeley they are the materials of knowledge and in no sense representations of something known by their means.\(^57\)

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\(^{55}\) Works, II, 292.

\(^{56}\) Locke writes that he uses the term "idea" "to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking". Essay, I, i, 8. It has already been observed that Berkeley wrote in his Commentaries that "by idea I mean any sensible or imaginable thing." Entry 775.

\(^{57}\) Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, "Berkeley's Realism", in Studies in the History of Ideas, edited by the Department of Philosophy of Columbia University (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), I, 209-210. Woodbridge undoubtedly does state an extreme position in calling the Berkeleyan and Lockeian "ideas" different "things"; but the place "idea" occupies in the hierarchy of being as each thinker conceives it, is certainly vastly different in each case. Indeed,
Since so much of Berkeley's positive teaching on the question has already been suggested, both in this last passage and what has gone before it, it will perhaps be convenient to summarize the points which our negative description of "ideas" has revealed, before proceeding to a more documented consideration of what Berkeley said "ideas" were. The following "negative characteristics" may therefore be listed:

1. The Berkeleyan "idea" is not "intellectual"; it is not universal, but sensual and particular.

2. It is not innate.

3. Berkeley restricts the use of the term "archetype" to its traditional signification of a creative idea in a divine mind, and makes no place for the Platonic Idea, regarded as a self-subsistent cause and principle which is external to any mind.

4. His ideas are not ectypes, in the sense of being copies of archetypes, or external bodies, really existing without the mind. They may be considered, however, as ectypes of the Divine Ideas.

5. They have no "representative" function in the Cartesian or Lockean sense of the word, since all that they may be said to "represent" is an aspect of reality -- spiritual and non-sensible -- totally unlike themselves, which nevertheless is known only by means of them.

6. It might be observed -- although the fact was not alluded to in the foregoing analysis -- that they are not the product of

that is all the present writer understood the phrase "it seems impossible to conclude that they were speaking about the same thing" to signify.
abstraction. It was not thought necessary to deal with Aristotle's theory of abstraction, because, although Berkeley displays considerable familiarity with Aristotle's writings in the Siris, he nowhere takes any account of the latter's teaching on abstraction, and presumably saw no place for it in his epistemology. How he regarded the Lockean abstraction, will be discussed in its proper place; but it is pertinent to recall, at this point, that in Aristotelianism, while abstraction is an absolutely essential feature of all intellectual knowledge, it is a "pre-conscious prerequisite" of knowledge, which renders fully conscious awareness above the sense-level -- i.e., understanding -- possible, but which, as a process, is not itself known directly. For Locke, however, whose theory is the only one Berkeley considers, abstraction is not a necessary condition of understanding, but a convenience in reasoning about what has been understood already, with a view to extending the comprehensiveness of that understanding. It appears to be a matter of the conscious "framing" general ideas, which are intellectual "inventions and creatures" (Essay, III, iii, 11) the mind "thinks it may have use of, either in contemplation or discourse" (ibid., II, xxxii, 7). Furthermore, while Aristotle held that in abstraction, the very nature or intelligibility of the thing -- all that for him is most truly substantial in it -- is known directly, through being presented to the understanding in the concept, for Locke, the real essences of things are forever hidden from us, and our knowledge is of nominal essences of the mind's own framing only (ibid., III, vi, 9, 20-21.)

58 It must be remembered that for Descartes, while an idea can, but need not necessarily be an image, it never consists in the corporeal phantasm or cerebral modification on which the image depends. Cf. Réponses aux deuxièmes objections, Définition 2; Oeuvres, VII, 160-161.
the most fundamental note of the positive definition which follows. 60

For an examination of the Principles does yield what may be called a positive definition of "idea". It can be said, first of all, that Berkeley clearly distinguishes ideas of sense from those of imagination; but since the latter are copies or elaborations of the former, the immediate object of our concern is rather the ideas of sense. The distinction is set forth in section 33 of the Principles, where Berkeley writes:

The ideas imprinted on the senses by the Author of Nature are called real things; and those excited in the imagination being less regular, vivid and constant, are more properly termed ideas, or images of things, which they copy and represent.

The ideas of sense, then, are perceived passively, being impressed upon the senses in sensation:

When in broad day-light I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so likewise as to the hearing and other senses, the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. 61

It seems important to observe at this point, even if only parenthetically, that Berkeley protects himself against the charge of subjectivism and relativity in knowledge by stressing the passive character of perception, and by drawing the conclusion, as he does in the section just quoted, that since I am conscious of not being

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60 Berkeley calls attention to the fact himself, when Philonous remarks in the Dialogues that "My reason for using it [the word idea] was, because a necessary relation to the mind is understood to be implied by that term; and it is now commonly used by philosophers, to denote the immediate objects of the understanding." Works, II, 235-236. Cf. Principles, 39.

61 Principles, 29.
the author of my own perceptions, and since it cannot be comprehended (even by the materialists with "their external bodies") "in what manner body can act upon spirit, or how it is possible it should imprint any idea[s] in the mind", there must therefore be "some other will or spirit that produces them"; which conclusion establishes to Berkeley's satisfaction the activity of "the Author of Nature" as the only possible source of the ideas of sense.

Now the ideas of sense are characterized by stability:

The ideas of sense are more strong, lively, and distinct than those of the imagination; they have likewise a steadiness, order, and coherence, and are not excited at random, as those which are the effects of human wills often are, but in a regular train or series....

This "regular train or series", this "admirable connexion" among the ideas of sense, is called the Law of Nature, of which (as it were) the provisions "we learn by experience, which teaches us that such and such ideas are attended with such and such other ideas, in the ordinary course of things." It would seem that here, Berkeley has laid the very foundation of a realistic theory of knowledge; he has provided the mind with objects of cognition which have an absolute value independent of the finite mind, which the finite mind can in no way alter in the act of perception, and which would continue to exist as archetypes in the mind of God, even if there were no finite spirits to perceive them as ectypes. They have likewise objective relations; but these are to be accepted, it should be noted, not on account of the intrinsic and necessary constitution

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63 Principles, 30.
64 Ibid.
of things, or on the capacity of the mind to know being, but on the
authority of God. Thus, the mind knows:

That to obtain such or such ends, such or such means are condu-
cive, all of which we know, not by discovering any necessary
connexion between our ideas, but only by the observation of the
settled laws of Nature, without which we should be all in
uncertainty and confusion, and a grown man no more know how to
manage himself in the affairs of life, than an infant just born.

Thus, although he has based it on no more secure a philosoph-
ical foundation than faith in the habitual beneficent action of the
Creator, Berkeley must at least be credited with having escaped sub-
jectivism, and with having found an objective guarantee for the
validity of our ideas. Admittedly, he limits knowledge of sensible
reality to the states and elements of consciousness (although he
does not call them that); and this is the mark of "subjective
idealism", according to Webster's New International Dictionary.
But he is persuaded that beyond the sensible reality of which he is
conscious, there can exist nothing or no one save God, and the
finite spirits He has created. For Berkeley, as we shall presently
see, man's senses bring him into contact, not with a "universe of
Nature" (in the common acceptation of that phrase), but with Him Who
is, and Who is known none the less surely for being perceived "dark-
ly", by means of ideas of sense which are totally "unrepresentative"
of Himself.

65 That these "settled laws of Nature" are only the rules
according to which God, for no other reason than His solicitude for
the infirmities and limitations of His creatures, has always chosen
to act in the past in performing the works of Nature, but to which
"habit" alone (if one may use the word) has bound Him, is shown in
Principles, 32, 60-66, and especially, 107.
66 Ibid., 31.
With the "externality" of the ideas of sense established, and their stability, it is now time to state probably the most significant characteristic of these ideas of sense: that is, their identification with real things — not as means by which we know real things, but as real things themselves. It will be recalled that Berkeley says in section 33 of the Principles, "the ideas imprinted on the senses by the Author of Nature are called real things." Here, reference may be made again to all that was said about the non-representative character of these ideas. They are the very materials of knowledge, constitute the stuff of reality, and come to us with a constancy, vividness, and regularity which to the mind are totally objective, external and imposed. The characteristics of the ideas of sense, as Berkeley outlines them in this section of the Principles, are capital to the understanding of his system. Their importance cannot be over-stressed, for whatever the mental activity to which they may be subjected, through the operation of imagination and reason — phases of his doctrine which will be considered later — they lie at the very heart of his theory of knowledge, and, as has been sufficiently remarked, protect and

67 On "externality", see Principles, 90.

68 At the end of the Third Dialogue, Berkeley, speaking in the person of Philemon, puts the issue clearly in these terms: "My endeavours tend only to unite and place in a clearer light that truth, which was before shared between the vulgar and the philosophers: the former being of opinion, that those things they immediately perceive are the real things; and the latter, that the things immediately perceived, are ideas which exist only in the mind. Which two notions put together, do in effect constitute the substance of what I advance." Works, II, 262.
safeguard it from the usual charges of reducing objective reality to a subjective unreality, with which idealism is so often reproached.

In the development of his explanation of the ideas of sense, Berkeley, as has been seen, frequently compares them with ideas which are "formed by the help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing" those objects of knowledge originally perceived by sensation or reflexion. While it is obvious that the ideas of memory and imagination can have existence only in the mind itself, Berkeley is careful lest the reader mistake him to mean that the ideas of sense have a different kind of existence without the mind. Thus, despite their privileged character as the most objective, constant and real of the ideas, he insists that they too can have no existence save in a mind perceiving them.

The ideas of sense are allowed to have more reality in them, that is, to be more strong, orderly, and coherent than the creatures of the mind; but this is no argument that they exist without the mind. They are also less dependent on the spirit, or thinking substance which perceives them, in that they are excited by the will of another and more powerful spirit; yet they are still ideas, and certainly no idea, whether faint or strong, can exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it.

Still another quality of the ideas of sense of which Berkeley makes much, and which is of importance in the contemporary setting of his immaterialism, is their inactivity. In section 25 of the Principles he states:

All our ideas, sensations, or the things which we perceive, by whatsoever names they may be distinguished, are visibly inactive, there is nothing of power or agency included in them.

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69 Principles, 1.
70 Ibid., 33.
So that one idea or object of thought cannot produce, or make any alteration in another. To be satisfied of the truth of this, there is nothing else requisite but a bare observation of our ideas. For since they and every part of them exist only in the mind, it follows that there is nothing in them but what is perceived. But whoever shall attend to his ideas, whether of sense or reflection, will not perceive in them any power or activity; there is therefore no such thing contained in them. A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it, insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do any thing, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of any thing; neither can it be the resemblance or pattern of any active being, as is evident from Sect. 8.

By urging the passivity of the ideas of sense, Berkeley seeks to demonstrate that any fruitfulness or growth in knowledge which results from reflection upon them — in the order of memory, imagination and reason — is to be attributed not to any power inherent in the ideas, but to the power of spirit, of the mind itself. For, as they were produced by the Infinite Spirit, so they are perceived by our finite spirit, and all activity in either case is from spirit. It is well to remember that for Berkeley, the only activity of which we can have any experience, is the power the mind has to excite ideas in itself at pleasure, and that "when we talk of unthinking agents, or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition which doth very properly denominate the mind active, we only amuse ourselves with words."71

This charge of indulging in verbal gymnastics, he levels against the Newtonians in particular, whose explanation of the physical universe in terms of matter and motion he finds not only false in itself, but (as has been observed) the very basis of scepticism. So, after having established to his own satisfaction the activity of spirit,

71 Principles, 28.
and the passivity of idea, he concludes his argument in these words:

"Hence it plainly follows that extension, figure and motion, cannot be the cause of our sensations. To say, therefore, that these are the effects of powers resulting from the configuration, number, motion, and size of corpuscles, must certainly be false."

There is one final characteristic of the Berkeleyan "idea" which must be mentioned before this section is concluded; and that is one which is never considered explicitly, and as such, in Berkeley's writings, but which was surely (because of his concern with demonstrating the capacity of the mind to know reality) one of the most precious of its features in his judgment; namely, that the "ideas" and the reality they compose are totally intelligible. The steadiness, order, coherence, and objectivity with which the "ideas" are presented constitute the Laws of Nature. The "ideal" reality which these laws govern exists, or is rendered present to intelligent creatures, for the sole purpose of being understood by them; the "ideas" are the very words, and the Laws of Nature thus the "grammar", of the Divine Language in which the Author of Nature is constantly speaking to man. Therefore, Berkeley would seem to have a right to claim that his conception of sensible or perceivable reality ascribes to it a degree of intelligibility greater than has ever been done in any other philosophy, ancient or modern. As he says in section 6 of the Principles:

Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this

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72 Principles, 25.
73 Ibid., 30-32, 36.
important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and
furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose
the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a
mind, that their being is to be perceived or known....

What is the Berkeleian "idea", then? A descriptive defini-
tion, comprising both negative and positive characteristics, may be
stated thus: the Berkeleian "idea" is not "intellectual" and univer-
sal, but sensual and particular; is not innate, but comes from with-
out. The "ideas of sense" (to which the name "idea" properly belongs)
are not copies or images of anything like themselves outside the
mind, being objects of knowledge in an absolute sense; although they
may be looked upon as ectypes of archetypal ideas in God's mind.
They are means of knowledge only in so far as they direct the mind
to the non-sensible reality which they imply — spirits and relations.
They are not the product of abstraction, since the mind is totally
passive in their reception, and can perform no operations about them
save reasoning, imaging, and remembering. However, because of this
very passiveness on the part of the mind, the "ideas" are shown to
be objective and not subjective. Their objectivity is further argued
for, when Berkeley calls God their cause and source. Their stability and
order manifest the laws of Nature, and the truths implied in them
gives them an absolute value. They are real things, constituting the
very stuff of perceived reality; but despite their privileged charac-
ter, they exist only in the mind, and indeed they are most objective
and most real because neither they, nor anything like or "represented
by" them, can have any extramental existence. They are passive,
there being nothing "in" them but what is perceived to be there, and
can thus never be conceived as sources of activity; but for that very
reason, the universe which they compose is by nature totally and absolutely intelligible.

Such, then, are the objects of knowledge. Man knows the real world directly; but it is an ideal world, spiritual as is the mind to which it is rendered present in perception. Thus, although he starts from a position of Cartesian subjectivism, Berkeley is able, by his identification of "ideas" and "real things" (admittedly a singular and complete inversion), to affirm a doctrine analogous to that of Aristotelian realism; but in so doing, he has completely destroyed the validity of the traditional Aristotelian view of the reality perceivable by the senses, as an immense collection of self-subsistent beings, in various ways accidentally modified in themselves, and related to one another.

Not that this "invalidation" of the notion of substance, as applied to material things, was an innovation with Berkeley. If one may speak in the terms of Aristotelian realism, once a philosopher holds the mind to know ideas and not "that which 'is' primarily" (substances, or self-subsistent things), it is obvious that he must set up a frame of reference to interpret reality which is quite different from the one Aristotle used. Descartes did not do this, although we have seen what he conceived to be the objects of knowledge; with the result that his system, while aiming to ground realism more surely than had ever been done before, in fact produced a subjectivism from which there was no escape, save by making speculation an adventure in supernatural faith. In this matter of our knowledge

of the external world, Locke’s criticism of Descartes may be looked upon as having brought only a substitution of faith in reason for faith in God. Locke himself making a public confession of reason’s inability to know anything but appearances (by which, as we have seen, he meant the mind’s own ideas) with certainty. Now Berkeley, speaking through Philonous, confesses: “I am of a vulgar cast, simple enough to believe my senses, and leave things as I find them”; and he could therefore wonder, in a celebrated passage, if all these difficulties are not manufactured; if we have not "first raised a dust, and then complain, we cannot see"; if the seemingly total inadequacy of the mind to contact extramental reality, might not arise from a misconception, on the part of philosophers, of the nature of that reality.

To correct that long-standing misconception, and to describe the true nature of extramental reality, was the task Berkeley set himself; and this brings us to the second section of this chapter. It is universally agreed, says our Bishop, that there exist ideas (the nature of which, as objects of perception, has just been investigated); but it is obvious that objects of perception, as such, cannot constitute the sum-total of reality; there must also exist something else, something which perceives the objects as objects, and "exercises divers operations" about them: in a word, there must also exist a substance, a perceiving subject.

77. Works, II, 229.
2. The Perceiving Subject

Berkeley's doctrine concerning Mind, Spirit, or Soul, is set forth briefly at the beginning of the Principles, where, immediately after having stated what are the objects of knowledge, he considers what must be the nature of the subject:

But besides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise something which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call mind, spirit, soul or my self. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or, which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived; for the existence of an idea consists in being perceived.

The being and nature of the mind, or spirit, as it is here described, like the principle regarding ideas as the objects of knowledge, stands very much, in Berkeley's thought, in the character of a postulate. This view is supported by the judgment of C. R. Morris, who fails to find in Berkeley's writings anything approaching an adequate justification of the immediate knowledge the mind is said to have of itself. Thus, in his study, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, he writes:

79 Principles, 2.

80 In the Third Dialogue, Philonous says: "My own mind and my own ideas I have an immediate knowledge of". Works, II, 232. Berkeley considers knowledge of the soul to be "a 'knowledge without ideas,' an inner awareness of spiritual selfhood, a conscience." (Luce, note to Phil. Comm., 230; in Works, I, 117.) Cf. De Motu, 21: "percipientem, intelligentem, conscientia quaedam interna cognovimus." Works, IV, 16. Vide infra. Thus far, the soul's knowledge of itself is immediate, but knowledge of ourselves is intimately bound up with knowledge of our ideas; "We have an intuitive Knowledge of the Existence of other things besides our selves & even preecedaneous to the Knowledge [sic] of our own Existence. in that we must have Ideas or else we cannot think." Phil. Comm., 57. Thus far, it is mediate, or inferential. It must be remembered, however, that Berkeley regards all objects of knowledge as
He seems generally to assume in his writings that I have knowledge, immediate and infallible, of my mind and its own states; that nothing happens in my mind of which I am unaware, or such that I misapprehend or even incompletely apprehend it. However, he never really goes into the subject at all adequately, and he never attempts to answer the obvious objections.\footnote{Locke, Berkeley, Hume (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 100.}

It must be noted, however, that Berkeley does throw some light on the question when, in the Third Dialogue, Hylas charges Philonous with inconsistency in denying Matter, because he has no idea of it, while at the same time affirming soul or spirit, of which he admits he has no idea. To this objection, Philonous replies that his main reason for denying Matter is not, that he has no idea of it, but because the only ideas he can have of it is inconsistent, and contains within itself a contradiction. Further, he raises the question of possible beings, and says that, to be possible, it is required that there be nothing inconsistent or "repugnant" in their definitions -- which tells against Matter at once:

immediately present to the understanding: spirits, no less than "real things" or "ideas". The whole basis of his attack on the Cartesian and Lockean epistemologies was that they were "representational", and hence productive of "scepticism". When he says that he has "a notion" of God, he means that God, as the object of his knowledge, is just as immediately present to his mind, as is "the idea" of a tree. "Corporeal phenomena", as Professor Jessop remarks, "are not [i.e., for Berkeley] modes of any substance, but are wholly objects to a subject". Works, II, 12. The same must be true of the spiritual reality of which we have "notions", if the consistency of Berkeley's thought is to be maintained. In this connexion, the value of the "notion" is pragmatic, it is "a linguistic convenience" (as Professor Luce calls it); any other interpretation would make nonsense out of Berkeley's position. Now the present writer does not pretend to justify this interpretation, nor even to understand how it can explain the fact of knowledge at all; but it is advanced by many thinkers (among others, by the Bishop's present editors), and is certainly implied in all of Berkeley's statements on the question.
But I have no reason for believing the existence of matter. I have no immediate intuition thereof; neither can I mediate from my sensations, ideas, notions, actions, or passions, infer an unthinking, unperceiving, inactive substance, either by probable deduction, or necessary consequence. Whereas the being of my self, that is, my own soul, mind or thinking principle, I evidently know by reflexion. I have a notion of spirit, though I have not, strictly speaking, an idea of it. I do not perceive it as an idea or by means of an idea, but know it by reflexion.

By making the mind's knowledge of itself indirect, and had by way of reflexion, Berkeley has adopted the traditional philosophical solution of this problem. The Scholastic explanation is based on the Aristotelian principle, operatio sequitur esse: that if there is an activity observed, one may legitimately infer the existence of an agent. This, indeed, is the process rendered classic by Anaxagoras, when he declared the necessity of the Nous, or Mind, to explain the design, order, and harmony of the material universe, which he held could not have resulted from chaotic matter alone. Coming nearer to Berkeley, this is the reasoning employed by Descartes in the famous cogito ergo sum: he is conscious of an activity, and therefore argues to the existence of a being which is the author of it. 83

But Hylas is not content with this explanation; and in objecting that "in consequence of your own principles, it should follow that you are only a system of floating ideas, without any substance to support them", he virtually summarizes the position later maintained by Hume. How Philonous replies to this charge is all the more

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82Works, II, 233.
83Cf. Principes de la Philosophie, I, 11. Note Berkeley's further and admirably clear use of this method, to demonstrate that the origin of our ideas of sense must be in a Spirit. Works, II, 210.
84Ibid., 233.
interesting because Berkeley had himself once recorded it in language of which Hume's formulation reads almost like a paraphrase.  

In his reply, Philonous enlarges upon the process of reflection, in which he distinguishes consciousness of self, as an active, thinking, perceiving being, and the consciousness of the ideas with which this self or mind is occupied, and he says:

How often must I repeat, that I know or am conscious of my own being; and that I am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking active principle that perceives, knows, wills and operates about ideas. I know that I, one and the same self, perceive both colours and sounds; that a colour cannot perceive a sound, nor a sound a colour; that I am therefore one individual principle, distinct from colour and sound; and for the same reason, from all other sensible things and inert ideas.... Farther, I know what I mean, when I affirm that there is a spiritual substance or support of ideas, that is, that a spirit knows and perceives ideas.  

Uniting the principles which have so far been discussed, relating to our knowledge of ideas, and the knowledge the soul has of itself, a rather emphatic statement from the Commentaries indicates that by these two, Berkeley is confident of having established an absolutely firm foundation for his system; for, boasting that he has escaped from the pitfall of scepticism, he writes:

I am the farthest from Scepticism of any man. I know with an intuitive knowledge [sic] the existence of other things as well as my own Soul, this is not Locke nor scarce any other Thinking Philosopher will pretend to.  

85 Compare Hume's denomination of the mind as a "bundle or collection of different perceptions" (Treatise of Human Nature, I, vi) with entry 580 of the Philosophical Commentaries, which reads: "Mind is a congeries of Perceptions. Take away Perceptions & you take away the Mind put the Perceptions & you put the Mind." Works, I, 72.

86 Works, II, 233-234.

87 Philosophical Commentaries, 563.
Having observed how Berkeley establishes to his own satisfaction the certainty of the knowledge the soul has of itself by reflexion, we can follow him to a consideration of our knowledge of the existence of the other substantial components of reality, God, and other finite spirits.

Here, it might be remarked, in recognition of the internal consistency of his system, that the elements which Berkeley employs in his engenious demonstration of the existence of God, are those alone which he has established in the elaboration of his doctrine of ideas and of the soul. It will be recalled that in section 6 of the Principles, he declares that "some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them"; and then, drawing the logical conclusions of the premisses he has laid down, he proceeds:

Such I take this important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind, that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually per-

That Berkeley was fully cognizant of its ingenuity, and sought even (as it were) to "trade" upon the fact, may be inferred from this passage in the Dialogues: "that setting aside all help of astronomy and natural philosophy, all contemplation of the contrivance, order, and adjustment of things, an infinite mind should be necessarily inferred from the bare existence of the sensible world, is an advantage peculiar to them only who have made this easy reflexion: that the sensible world is that which we perceive by our several senses; and that nothing is perceived by the senses beside ideas; and that no idea or archetype of an idea can exist otherwise than in a mind. You may now, without any laborious search into the sciences, without any subtlety of reason, or tedious length of discourse, oppose and baffle the most strenuous advocate for atheism." Works, II, 212-213.
ceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit; it being perfectly unintelligible and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit.

Thus, in Berkeley's system, because the ideas of sense can be neither their own cause nor the cause of each other, since they are visibly passive and inert; because neither they, nor anything represented by them by way of image or likeness, can have any existence apart from a mind perceiving them; because the mind is conscious of exercising no causal activity about them, and is passive in their reception; and because the only known cause of anything is mind, its activity being revealed in the power of willing and imagining; it therefore follows that they must exist in, and be caused in our minds by "some eternal spirit". So the essence of Bishop Berkeley's "direct and immediate demonstration, from a most evident principle", lies in this: that the existence of our ideas of sense requires for their raison d'etre the existence of an eternal spirit, whom he calls God.

The first observation which must be made regarding this proof, Berkeley suggests himself when he says that these "idea-things" have three possible loci of inherence: my mind, the divine mind, and the minds of other created spirits. It might be contended that this third possible location, if admitted, would considerably weaken the proof for the existence of God, on condition that these other created

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89 *Principles*, 28.
spirits, the minds of other men, might be the cause of at least some of the ideas in my mind, and I, in turn, the cause of some in theirs. But this objection proves hardly to be worth considering, when it is pointed out that Berkeley's account of the communication between finite spirits (which will be dealt with shortly) makes us no less absolutely dependent upon God for our knowledge of other men, than for our knowledge of inanimate Nature. Hence, for me to produce even the awareness of myself in the mind of another would require a process akin to mental telepathy to effect. Furthermore, we know other minds by analogy with our own. There would thus appear to be no reason to suppose that they, any more than we, can originate ideas of sense; which on the contrary we receive quite passively.

Yet the ideas of sense must have a cause—a cause which can only be a spirit. There must therefore be a Spirit who causes these ideas in us, whose power is not limited as is that of finite spirits. Speaking as Philonous, Berkeley says:

Thus I prove it [this powerful being] to be spirit. From the effects I see produced, I conclude there are actions; and because actions, volitions; and because there are volitions, there must be a will. Again, the things I perceive must have an existence, they or their archetypes, out of my mind; but being ideas, neither they nor their archetypes can exist otherwise than in an understanding; there is therefore an understanding. But will and understanding constitute in the strictest sense a mind or spirit. The powerful cause therefore of my ideas, is in strict propriety of speech a spirit.

Not only the nature of what we perceive, but the very manner in which it is possible for us to perceive it, further argues for the

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90 Cf. Principles, 147.
91 Cf. ibid., 26.
92 Works, II, 240.
the existence of an intelligent (that is, spiritual or personal) Cause. The ideas of sense enjoy a "privileged character" in relation to those of the imagination, which we ourselves produce; they are presented to us with a steadiness, order and coherence quite unlike the entirely random character of the effects of human wills. They occur, in other words, "in a regular train or series, the admirable connexion whereof sufficiently testifies the wisdom and benevolence of its Author." Moreover, the information with which these ideas provide us also bears witness to their intelligent— and perhaps we may now plainly say, their divine— source; for Berkeley continues: "Now the set rules or established methods, wherein the mind we depend on excites in us the ideas of sense, are called the Laws of Nature". To these he attaches what must pass in his system for ultimate certitude regarding the basic principles by which the individual should order his life. Finally, Berkeley leaves no doubt as to the origin of our ideas of sense and of the laws of Nature (according to which the former are presented to our view) in a divine mind, when he says: "This constant uniform working... evidently displays the goodness and wisdom of that governing spirit whose will constitutes the Laws of Nature"; and again, when he begins the next section (33) of the Principles with: "The ideas imprinted on the senses by the Author of Nature are called real things..." The words of Philonous provide a fitting conclusion to his argument: "As sure therefore as the

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93 Principles, 30.
94 Ibid. Cf. sect. 31.
95 Ibid., 32.
sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent spirit who contains and supports it."^96

Secondly, it may be observed that this doctrine of God, and His role in human perception, provides Berkeley with a satisfactory answer to one objection against the esse percipi principle which, if allowed to go unchallenged, would weaken rather considerably its discoverer's claim to be reckoned a serious philosopher. That objection, which he discusses as the fourth argument which can be urged against his system, has passed under the name of Intermittency, and is given here in Berkeley's summary:

The objects of sense exist only when they are perceived: the trees therefore are in the garden, or the chairs in the parlour, no longer than while there is somebody by to perceive them. Upon shutting my eyes all the furniture in the room is reduced to nothing, and barely upon opening them it is again created.^97

Commenting upon this objection, Professor Luce remarks as follows:

The objector urges that the New Principle...carries with it the 'in and out' existence of the objects of sense, because it makes their existence depend on the vagaries of my attention. There they are in front of me; the next moment they are gone to nothing; then back they come again; they have been recreated. This objection is no mere extravagance of thought, and Berkeley is right to deal tenderly with it. Many careful thinkers, scientists among them, do hold that colours, sounds, tastes, etc., do actually pass in and out of existence, that they are momentary existences, generated by the sense organ, which appear de nihilo, and pass away. The matterist can fall back on matter. He points to it as the permanent behind these transient appearances. The immaterialist, not having this resource, must either accept intermittency and the doctrines which go with it, annihilation and perpetual re-creation, or he must give a new account.^98

^96 Works, II, 212.
^97 Principles, 45.
^98 Berkeley's Immaterlalism, 121.
As Professor Luce has indicated, Berkeley is careful to reject intermittency, and in this connexion, makes "one of his few explicit statements...on the all-important question of the perceivable."99 He says:

Wherever bodies are said to have no existence without the mind, I would not be understood to mean this or that particular mind, but all minds whatsoever. It does not therefore follow from the foregoing principles, that bodies are annihilated and created every moment, or exist not at all during the intervals between our perception of them.100

While even at this point he does not enlarge upon his rejection of this false interpretation, Berkeley would seem to have answered it clearly enough already when, in section 6, he explicitly includes "the mind of some eternal spirit" among the implicitly comprehensive "all minds whatsoever" specified above.

Connected with self-knowledge, and knowledge of God, is the manner in which we come to know other human minds, or created spirits. The existence of other men, he declares to be less evidently perceived than the existence of God, and justifies this bold statement in the act of indicating the way in which we know our fellow creatures. Our knowledge of the existence of God rests upon the "effects of Nature", which, as Berkeley has concluded, He alone has the power to impress upon us; and these "are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to human agents". He then continues:

There is not any one mark that denotes a man, or effect pro-

99 Ibid., 120.
100 Principles, 48.
duced by him, which doth not more strongly evince the being of that spirit who is the Author of Nature. For it is evident that in affecting other persons, the will of man hath no other object, than barely the motion of the limbs of his body; but that such a motion should be attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the Creator. He alone it is who upholding all things by the Word of his Power, maintains that intercourse between spirits whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other. And yet this pure and clear light which enlightens every one, is it self invisible. 101

What is most significant about this singular account of the communication of created spirits; what brings us up short, in the realization that it is "spirits" in the full and literal sense of the word, that Berkeley is discussing; and what therefore is most deserving of comment, is that, consistent with all that he has said concerning the ego and the non-ego, the nature and functions of the soul, and the character of perceived reality, Berkeley resorts here to a theory which almost exactly parallels one by which Scholastic thinkers explain the manner of communication of souls separated from their bodies after death. The separated soul, in this state, being deprived of the use of the bodily organs of sensation, is no longer capable of receiving data through them, and therefore has nothing from which to abstract intelligible species. It is thus impossible for it to gain any new knowledge in the natural way. If the soul is to progress in knowledge at all, God must be looked upon to provide directly such new intelligible species as the soul receives; and

101 Principles, 147.
in this way knowing, after death, takes on a partially miraculous
caracter. 102 From the point of view of Aristotelian realism, it
might be remarked here that, in his anxiety to banish the unintelligible
and atheistical from reality, Berkeley would seem, at least in this
particular, to have driven the natural out of Nature; and in his
care not to multiply being beyond necessity, he has not hesitated to
multiply miracles. In terms of his own realism, however, he has
simply stated the logical consequence of his doctrine of ideas and of
the divine causality in our knowledge of the sensible universe.

One other passage from the *Principles* might be cited to
clarify his meaning in this matter of man's knowledge of his fellows,
and to show the consistency of his teaching on how particular spirits
appear to us, with his opinions concerning the rest of perceivable
reality:

A human spirit or person is not perceived by sense, as not
being an idea; when therefore we see the colour, size, figure,
and motions of a man, we perceive only certain sensations or
ideas excited in our own minds: and these being exhibited to our
view in sundry distinct collections, serve to mark out unto us
the existence of finite and created spirits like our selves.
Hence it is plain, we do not see a man, if by man is meant that
which lives, moves, perceives, and thinks as we do; but only such
a certain collection of ideas, as directs us to think there is
a distinct principle of thought and motion like to our selves,
accompanying and represented by it. 103

This passage recalls the statement in the opening section of
the *Principles* already quoted, in which it is said that "as several of
these [ideas of sense] are observed to accompany each other, they come

102 Cf. S. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 89, especially
a. 1 ad 3, and a. 3.

103 *Principles*, 148.
to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one thing*. So does man know man by means of an ensemble of perceptions which habitually accompany each other; so, too, can man be said to know God:

In a strict sense, I do not see Alciphron, i.e., that individual thinking thing, but only such visible signs and tokens as suggest and infer the being of that invisible thinking principle or soul. Even so, in the selfsame manner, it seems to me that, though I cannot with the eyes of flesh behold the invisible God, yet I do in the strictest sense behold and perceive by all my senses such signs and tokens, such effects and operations, as suggest, indicate, and demonstrate an invisible God, as certainly, and with the same evidence, at least, as any other signs perceived by sense do suggest to me the existence of your soul, spirit, or thinking principle....

God is known in much the same way as men are; and yet there is a difference:

Whereas some one finite and narrow assemblage of ideas denotes a particular human mind, whithersoever we direct our view, we do at all times and in all places perceive manifest tokens of the divinity; every thing we see, hear, feel, or any wise perceive by sense, being a sign or effect of the Power of God; as is our perception of those very motions, which are produced by men.

Thus in Berkeley's view, the fact of our knowledge of other men is in itself an effect of the power of God, and points an index to His existence.

There remains to be considered, last of all, the means by which knowledge of spirits -- which is to say, of substances -- can take place: Berkeley's doctrine of notions. "A spirit", the Bishop comments,

104 Alciphron, IV, 5; in Works, III, 147.
105 Principles, 148.
is one simple, undivided, active being; as it perceives ideas, it is called the understanding, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called the will. Hence there can be no idea formed of a soul or spirit; for all ideas whatever, being passive and inert, vide Sect. 25, they cannot represent unto us, by way of image or likeness, that which acts.... Such is the nature of spirit or that which acts, that it cannot be of itself perceived, but only by the effects which it produceth.... Though it must be owned at the same time, that we have some notion of soul, spirit, and the operations of the mind, such as willing, loving, hating, in as much as we know or understand the meaning of those words. 106

Elsewhere, he adds these further precisions:

We comprehend our own existence by inward feeling or reflection, and that of other spirits by reason. We may be said to have some knowledge or notion of our own minds, of spirits and active beings, whereof in a strict sense we have not ideas. In like manner we know and have a notion of relations between things or ideas, which relations are distinct from the ideas or things related, inasmuch as the latter may be perceived by us without our perceiving the former. To me it seems that ideas, spirits and relations are all in their respective kinds, the object of human knowledge and the subject of discourse: and that the term idea would be improperly extended to signify every thing we know or have any notion of. 107

Knowledge of the mind and "ideas or things" is said to be "intuitive", immediate; 108 "ideas, spirits and relations" are classed together as "the object of human knowledge"; "to know" and "to have a notion of" are used as synonymous phrases. These are the reasons, it would appear, which have prompted Professor Luce to conclude that the notion, in Berkeley's system, is "neither a concept, nor a cognitive tertium quid, but simply a linguistic convenience denoting an active, spiritual object of apprehension,

106 Principles, 27.
107 Ibid., 89.
108 Phil. Comm., 563.
as distinct from a passive idea." The term itself was intro-
duced into his epistemology to designate "the mental as object"; to explain our knowledge of ourselves, other finite spirits, God, and relations — that is, non-sensible reality — of which it is impossible to have any ideas of sense. The existence of these objects of knowledge, the mind (as has been seen) infers, after working on certain groupings of the ideas of sense. Yet knowledge of them can be said to be immediate, because when it is had, there is nothing which interposes itself between the mind and the spirit (or relation) which is known. Any other interpretation of the function of "notions" in his system would seem to shackle Berkeley to the representational theory of knowledge which he so penetratingly condemned in Locke, and which he held himself to have escaped. We have notions, therefore, of the constituents of intelligible, non-sensible reality, "in as much as we know or understand the meaning" of the words which signify them to us.

In another connexion, too, it would appear that Thomas Reid, and such modern critics of Berkeley's immaterialism as A. D. Lindsay and Sydney C. Rome (not to mention Dr. G. A. John-

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112 Principles, 27. Cf. sects. 139-140, and especially 142.
ston, with whose opinions we are acquainted only at second hand) have
to some extent misconceived the value Berkeley attributed to the term
"notion", when they argue, as for example Sydney Rome does, that
"if there are some objects of sense which do not exist as sensations,
they could be known notionally"; and then go on to apply that
conclusion to Berkeley's denial of material substance. Matter,
Berkeley declared, was useless, meaningless, impossible, the
seat of "contradictions and repugnancies"; it was the closest
thing to non-entity -- to a complete absence of being -- that
could be brought before the mind by any "spurious or adulterine
method" of reasoning. It, and any supposed world it might com-
pose, were completely inconceivable and unknowable. He therefore
concluded -- and this, after all, is what his doctrine of immaterialism
means on its negative side -- that matter was unknowable because it
was impossible; could not be known, because it could not be --
because there simply was nothing to know. Whatever can be sensed,
and whatever is necessarily implied by the fact of sensation, Berkeley
will allow to be real; but he can find no place for a material world here;
and notional knowledge, though it shows us the intelligible, possible part
of non-sensible reality, can be of no help in establishing contact with
such supposed aspects of that reality as are plainly unintelligible
and impossible. For this reason, too, though he may seem to disparage

the value of sense-knowledge (upon which he places such reliance in the early works we are studying) in the Siris and ascribe to non-sensible objects of knowledge the greatest degree of reality, this can be no reason to suppose in him a changed attitude towards matter. This, he always insisted, could never be known by the senses; but neither could it be reasoned to from the existence of the objects of sense-knowledge. When the Siris denies to sensation the same value which the early works accord it, the way is not opened for knowledge of the unknowable. It is the reality of the non-sensible intelligible, not the non-sensical unknown (if we may echo a phrase of Professor Luce's) that he affirms; and to interpret his thought otherwise would seem to entail a manifest distortion of it. This appears to clarify, at least in so far as we need to examine it, the relationship which exists between his later philosophy, and all that is most "Berkeleian" in his early thought; and would seem to indicate that the so-called Platonism of the Siris is not incom-

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120 Cf. Siris, 264, 293-296, and 303 in particular. In connexion with this, it is well to note that in section 355 of Siris, Berkeley re-affirms the thought of section 1 of the Principles, with regard to the purely "artificial" composition of "things", when he says: "In things sensible and imaginable, as such, there seems to be no unity, nothing that can be called one, prior to all act [sic] of the mind; since they, being in themselves aggregates, consisting of parts or compounded of elements, are in effect many. Accordingly, it is remarked by Themistius, the learned interpreter of Aristotle, that to collect many notions into one, and to consider them as one, is the work of intellect, and not of sense or fancy." Note the differences in vocabulary: sensible things are no longer said frankly to be composed of "ideas", but rather of "parts" and "elements". However, if the whole of the perceivable universe is entirely analysable into collections of sense-data, or "ideas" -- as nowhere in Siris does Berkeley deny this to be so -- there is no reason to suppose that he has abandoned the early basis of his immaterialism, or that the "differences in vocabulary" to be found in his later writings are any more than just that. Cf. Luce, "The Unity of the Berkeleian Philosophy (II.)". 

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patible with the immaterialism of the Principles.

This view of the relation of Siris to the rest of Berkeley's philosophical output (which is also shared by A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop) is very well expressed by Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, who states the case as follows:

Siris is taken by Fraser to represent Berkeley's philosophy in its later development. It is certainly a later expression of it and a fuller exposition of it on the spiritual side. But I do not find that the position taken in the earlier writings is modified in any significant way. What we find is his own philosophy reflected against the philosophy of the past. In the earlier writings he has his contemporaries in mind and to them he is opposed. The Siris exhibits the men with whom he was sympathetic. It is this antagonism and this sympathy which should be joined together in any attempt to estimate him in the light of his own contemporary interests. From this point of view his philosophy appears as simple and clear as he contended. 122

In the preceding sections, the two fundamental principles of Berkeley's philosophy have been discussed: that objects exist which are known, and which philosophers call "ideas"; and that therefore, there must exist mind, spirit, soul or self which knows

Note 1: Mind, XLVI (1937), 187-188. Cf. also Siris, 316, where Plato is quoted to the effect that "sensible qualities...exist (though not originally) in the soul, and there only".

121 Sections 311, 312, 317 and 318 of Siris may be taken (among others) to confirm this view; for in them, Berkeley shows that even the classical defenders of matter held more reasonable views on the subject, than do the Mechanists against whom he is arguing.

122 "Berkeley's Realism", in Studies in the History of Ideas, I, 214. Professor Luce has answered critics of this position, and marshalled evidence for it, both internal and external, in three articles: "The Unity of the Berkeleian Philosophy" (in two sections: Mind, XLVI (1937), 44-52, 180-190), and "The Alleged Development of Berkeley's Philosophy" (Mind, LII (1943), 140-156).
these "ideal" objects. In the remaining sections of this chapter, the conclusions which he draws as the necessary consequences of these principles will be considered; both of them are concerned with the denial of matter; but the first relates specifically to the meaning of "existence".

3. The Meaning of "Existence"

We come now to consider what, in his own opinion seems likely to have been the most important, and what, in history, has become the most famous, phrase that Berkeley ever penned: esse is percipi. The doctrine which it summarizes -- that for perceivable things to be, they must be perceived -- was meant to oppose the doctrine that there are beings which enjoy a material existence independent of any mind; and, by one of those paradoxes which are not uncommon in the realm of speculation, Berkeley found its essential basis in the writings of "a late deservedly esteemed philosopher", John Locke, who was, after Newton, perhaps the foremost contemporary English exponent of the "absolute existence" of things. Locke had drawn a clear distinction between substance as it is in itself, and substance as it is known to us, and had expressed himself thus on the subject in his

\[123\] Cf. entry 491 of the Commentaries, which reads as follows: "Mem: Diligently to set forth how that many of the Ancient philosophers run into so great absurdities as even to deny the existence of motion and those other things they perceived actually by their senses. This sprung from their not knowing what existence was..., 'tis on the Discovering of the nature, meaning & import of Existence that I chiefly insist. This puts a wide difference betwixt the Sceptics & me. This I think wholly new. I am sure 'tis new to me." Cf. entry 279. [We have taken the liberty, here and elsewhere, of quoting the text of the Commentaries exactly as it is given in Professor Luce's edition.]

\[124\] Principles, "Introduction", 11.
It is the ordinary qualities observable in iron or a diamond, put together, that makes the true complex idea of those substances, which a smith or a jeweller commonly knows better than a philosopher; who, whatever substantial forms he may talk of, has no other idea of those substances than what is framed by a collection of those simple ideas which are to be found in them. Only we must take notice, that our complex ideas of substances, besides all these simple ideas they are made up of, have always the confused idea of something to which they belong, and in which they subsist; and therefore, when we speak of any sort of substance, we say it is a thing having such or such qualities; as, body is a thing which is extended, figured, and capable of motion; spirit, a thing capable of thinking; and so hardness, friability, and power to draw iron, we say, are qualities to be found in a loadstone. These and the like fashions of speaking, intimate that the substance is supposed always something besides the extension, figure, solidity, motion, thinking, or other observable ideas, though we do not know what it is.125

This, then, is Locke's description of external things as they are known by us; various collections of sensed qualities, to each of which we nevertheless add "the confused idea" of a substratum in which those qualities inhere, "because we cannot conceive how they should subsist alone, nor in one another."126 Yet he was not satisfied with this notion of substance, regarding it as obscure and vague, and remarking that we have no idea of what substance is, "but only a confused obscure one of what it does."127 He could even wonder "of what use [it is] in deciding questions in philosophy".128

In the light of these statements, it is interesting to read in

125 Essay concerning Human Understanding, II, xxiii, 3.
126 Ibid., sect. 4.
127 Ibid., xiii, 19.
section 11 of Berkeley's *Principles* what amounts to an echo of Locke's difficulty, and the approach to a solution of his problem; for here, it is shown that modern philosophers, in seeking to explain sensible phenomena in terms of the mechanical action of a material substance, are faced with the difficulty of holding for the separate existence of *prime matter*. "I cannot but remark", says Berkeley,

how nearly this vague and indeterminate description of matter or corporeal substance, which the modern philosophers are run into by their own principles, resembles that antiquated and much ridiculed notion of *materia prima*, to be met with in Aristotle and his followers.

Part of the solution Berkeley offers lies in pointing out an historical parallel; for the rest, he suggests a correction of Locke's doctrine, and turns to common sense:

There is a Philosopher who says we can get an idea of substance by no way of Sensation or Reflection. & seems to imagine that we want a sense proper for it. [So Locke, in his *Essay*, I, iv, 18.] Truly if we had a new sense it could only give us a new Idea. now I suppose he will not say substance according to him is an Idea. for my part I own I have no Idea can stand for substance in his or *y* Schoolmen's sense of that word. But take it in the common vulgar sense & then we see...

There, according to Berkeley, lies the answer: "substance...taken in the vulgar sense, for a combination of sensible qualities". Locke himself (as we have just seen) held that all that can really be known of a self-subsistent being are its accidental modifications; but he added to this "commonsense" notion of substance the "impossible" note of "unknown substratum", and in so doing, posed what Berkeley considers to be a false problem: he complains of being ignorant of the material substratum of sensible qualities, yet he has no real assurance that such a substratum

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129 *Phil. Comm.*, 724. 130 *Principles*, 37.
exists. From this problem, Berkeley sees but one escape: to show that, even if such a substratum could exist, we could neither know it, nor find any conceivable use for it. He proposes to demonstrate that Locke, on his own principles, has no reason to suppose the existence of a world of material substances: and to do this, he thinks it sufficient to examine the nature of the objects of sense:

It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects have an existence natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding. But with how great an assurance and acquiescence soever this principle may be entertained in the world; yet whoever shall find in his heart to call it in question, may, if I mistake not, perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction. For what are the forementioned objects but the things we perceive by sense, and what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations; and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these or any combination of them should exist unperceived? 131

Now Locke might have held that the objects of sense are ideas, and that sensible objects (at least in so far as our knowledge of them is concerned) are combinations of sensible qualities; but he would not have agreed with the conclusion which Berkeley drew from these premisses. By making the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, Locke could say that we know a thing only as a collection of simple ideas existing in the mind, 132 and still attribute to the things thus perceived an external, material existence. Now Berkeley early speaks of the primary and secondary qualities. "By the former", he tells us, modern philosophers mean extension, figure, motion, rest, solidity or impenetrability and number: by the latter they denote all other sensible qualities, as colours, sounds, tastes, and so forth." 133

131 Principles, 4.
133 Principles, 9.
These latter, according to the philosophers, are entirely subjective, and are not considered as resemblances of anything without the mind. This doctrine Berkeley accepts; but other thinkers err, according to him, when they insist that the ideas of primary qualities are "patterns or images of things which exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance which they call matter."¹³⁴

Berkeley's reduction of the ideas of the primary qualities to the status of those of the secondary, need not be considered at greater length here (although we shall return to it again). It is enough to recall his rejection of the supposed representative character of the ideas of sense, his subsequent identification of them with real things, and his account of their origin in a divine instrumentality. Once it is granted that we perceive perceptions, or the ideas of sense, and that collections of these constitute real things, it is logically impossible that our ideas should lead us to a knowledge of anything similar beyond themselves, for the reality they present is complete in itself. Such, at least, seems to be Berkeley's argument in section 13 of the Principles:

The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. There was an odour, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their esse is percipi, nor

¹³⁴Ibid.
is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.

This is Berkeley's definition of "existence", as predicated of real things, or the objects of sense; and when he draws the conclusion logically implied in it, he makes manifest the absurdity to which the philosophy of his own day had already reduced the use, in this connexion, of the traditional primary category of substance, which is at bottom the philosophical basis of the affirmation of an external, material world, possessing existence independent of the mind. Thus, he concludes section 7 of the Principles:

Now for an idea to exist in an unperceiving thing, is a manifest contradiction; for to have an idea is all one as to perceive: that therefore wherein colour, figure, and the like qualities exist, must perceive them; hence it is clear there can be no unthinking substance or substratum of those ideas.

The key to his teaching in this particular is to be found in his celebrated condemnation of "abstract general ideas", and the role they have hitherto been supposed to play in human knowledge. While it would take us too far afield to consider the whole of his attack on Lockean abstraction in all its particulars, this must be examined in so far as it bears upon his doctrine of substance.

In his condemnation of abstract ideas, Berkeley discusses the association of words, thoughts, and things. Now in the Aristotelian and Scholastic treatment of this question (to which allusion has been made in a previous section), the principle that "words are signs of thoughts and thoughts are similitudes of things" receives its meaning from the doctrine of abstraction; for it is held that the thought (or the content of a concept), produced as the result of abstraction, renders present to
the intellect the nature or essence, which makes the particular thing which is known, to be what it is. Hence, that thought has a universal significance: for whenever I know a man, be he actual or possible, living or dead, black or white, it is the same nature which is rendered present to my understanding in the concept. The word, therefore, which is an arbitrary symbol of the nature which is know in the concept, also has a universal significance, and can be applied to all the particular things which possess that nature. 135

This last, Berkeley refused to grant: but not, it would appear, because he failed to realize the function of the universal both in knowing and in naming, but rather because of the form he understood the universal "thoughts" to take, and the process by which he believed them to be produced.

Beginning with words, Berkeley points out that it is in a misunderstanding of the function of language in the knowing process, that the origin of all the errors flowing from the doctrine of abstract ideas is to be found:

The truth of this appears from other reasons, so also from the plain confession of the ablest patrons of abstract ideas, who acknowledge that they are made in order to naming; from which it is a clear consequence, that if there had been no such thing as speech or universal signs, there never had been any thought of abstraction. 136

Choosing Locke as the "ablest patron" of abstract ideas, 137 on the basis of whose statements the doctrine must be refuted,

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135 Cf. S. Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., I, q. 85, a. 2 in reference to the whole paragraph.


137 As is clear from the numerous references in the "Introduction" to the Principles to Locke's Essay.
Berkeley proceeds to examine more closely the way in which words have contributed to establish this error in "the thoughts of speculative men";

First then, 'tis thought that every name hath, or ought to have, one only precise and settled signification, which inclines men to think there are certain abstract, determinate ideas, which constitute the true and only immediate signification of each general name. And that it is by the mediation of these abstract ideas, that a general name comes to signify any particular thing. Whereas, in truth, there is no such thing as one precise and definite signification annexed to any general name, they all signifying indifferently a great number of particular ideas....

To this it will be objected, that every name that has a definition, is thereby restrained to one certain signification. For example, a triangle is defined to be a plane surface comprehended by three right lines; by which that name is limited to denote one certain idea and no other. To which I answer, that in the definition it is not said whether the surface be great or small, black or white, nor whether the sides are long or short, equal or unequal, nor with what angles they are inclined to each other; in all which there may be great variety, and consequently there is no one settled idea which limits the signification of the word triangle. 'Tis one thing for to keep a name constantly to the same definition, and another to make it stand everywhere for the same idea; the one is necessary, the other useless and impracticable.

From this account, it is apparent that Berkeley has no objection to nominal universals, and is arguing only against the supposed existence, in the mind, of universal "ideas": all of which has no bearing on his doctrine of substance. One thing only is of interest: and that is his account of how these presumed abstractions are said to be formed. His condemnation has had to be studied, simply because of this particular aspect of it; and it is only to place it in its setting, that Berkeley has been allowed to explain the terms of

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his condemnation at such length. Specifically, it is not his re-
jection of what he understood to be the product of abstraction,
but rather his rejection of the process of abstraction itself,
which links the thought of the "Introduction" to the Principles,
to the thought of the rest of that work, and which illuminates his
frequent references to the "supposed existence of material substance",
or to the distinguishing, in the objects of sense, a twofold existence
("the one intelligible, or in the mind, the other real and without the
mind"), as "nice strains of abstraction".

Seizing upon Locke's description of the abstract idea of tri-
angle as a pre-eminent example of all that he opposed as false and
misleading in modern philosophy, he takes it as a self-evident fact
that, if Locke's words are to be interpreted literally, not only has he
never had an abstract idea, but does not even have the power to conceive
one. To prove his point, he has only to appeal to his reader

to look a little into his own thoughts, and there try whether he
has, or can attain to have, an idea that shall correspond with
the description that is here given of the general idea of a tri-
angle, which is, neither oblique, nor rectangle, equilateral, equi-
angular, nor scalene, but all and none of these at once.

This is the reductio ad absurdum, "the killing blow". Obviously,
it is the "tacking together numberless inconsistencies" (as he puts it
in a delightfully characteristic passage in section 14 of the "Intro-
duction") that constitutes, in his view, "abstraction" as it has been
traditionally conceived; and it is this, which, having been allowed a

\[139\] Principles, 86.  \[140\] Cf. ibid., 5.
dominant role in so many previous discussions of knowledge, had intro-
duced a plainly irrational spirit into philosophy. This irrational
spirit, Berkeley set himself to oppose in all his philosophising;
especially, as we have seen in his affirmation of spiritual sub-
stance, and his denial of the material. That the same opposition is
manifested here, can be further seen from the way in which he states
his opinion concern the "true" abstraction which the mind is really
capable of performing:

For my self I find indeed I have a faculty of imagining, or
representing to my self the ideas of those particular things I
have perceived and of variously compounding and dividing them.
I can imagine a man with two heads or the upper parts of a man
joined to the body of a horse. I can consider the hand, the
eye, the nose, each by itself abstracted or separated from the
rest of the body.... To be plain, I own myself able to abstract
in one sense, as when I consider some particular parts or qualities
separated from others, with which though they are united in some
object, yet, it is possible they may really exist without them.
But I deny that I can abstract one from another, or conceive
separately, those qualities which it is impossible should exist
so separated; or that I can frame a general notion by abstracting
from particulars in the manner aforesaid. Which two last are the
proper acceptations of abstraction.143

By advancing this "improper" acceptation of "abstraction",
Berkeley knowingly chains it entirely to the imagination, and would
appear to limit the operations of abstraction which can be performed
about the human body (to elaborate upon the example he himself gives
above) to those which an anatomist might perform on his dissecting-
table. Whether this constitutes a valuable contribution to epistem-
ology, or whether it indicates a misunderstanding of the doctrines it
was meant to correct, it is not actually necessary to consider here.

The whole significance of the attack on abstract ideas, and that in which it concerns his doctrine of substance, lies in his denial that what cannot exist separately in re, can be conceived as existing separately in thought; and in his insistence that what is impossible, or is by definition composed of "inconsistencies" or "repugnancies", can ever be the object of more than "spurious" knowledge. Thus, Berkeley's refusal to admit the validity of the process, or the reality of any product, of "abstraction", whether it be an idea of triangle which is at once all triangles and no triangle, or a perceivable universe conceived as existing unperceived, can be regarded as the characteristic reaction of a scandalised common sense, hastening to affirm the primacy and regulative function of the principle of identity in human knowledge. If man's primary, primordial certitude is limited to the knowledge that he has a mind which knows ideas (which is surely the lesson Berkeley learned from Descartes's and Locke's philosophies), then is it not legitimate to conclude that what cannot be thought, cannot exist? And if the sceptic objects that beyond thought, there may lie a reality which is none the less real for being unknowable, do not the words of the converted Hylas, spoken at the end of the Third Dialogue, constitute a fitting answer?

There is nothing we either desire or shun, but as it makes, or is apprehended to make some part of our happiness or misery. But what hath happiness or misery, joy or grief, pleasure or pain, to do with absolute existence, or with unknown entities, abstracted from all relation to us? It is evident, things regard us only as they are pleasing or displeasing; and they can please or displease, only so far forth as they are perceived. Farther therefore we are not concerned.144

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144 *Works*, II, 262.
If there is a world of matter, why need we ever be concerned with it? We can "sit down in a forlorn scepticism", bemoaning, on the basis of hardly more than groundless rumours, our fancied ignorance of "we know not what"; but we do so at the risk of wasting our lives in meaningless, profitless dreaming. We are free to choose; but he who accepts the given ideal reality at its face value, and rejects material substance as an obstacle to the attainment of truth which explains nothing and obscures much, will be found, in Berkeley's opinion, to have chosen wisely.

4. Substance Is Spiritual

In this investigation of Berkeley's notion of substance, there remains to be considered one last point: his affirmation that there can be only one "species" of substance, namely, spirit. It is apparent that this doctrine has been implied in everything that has gone before: for his account of the perceived object, the perceiving subject, the divine instrumentality which links the two, and his definition of existence, have all been elaborated purely in the realm of spirit, leaving matter excluded and useless from the point of view both of being and of knowing. Commenting on this, Professor Luce says:

Thus, quietly, methodically, and without naming matter Berkeley builds up his argument and makes the notion of immaterialism "steal unawares on the reader." He shows us, as it were, an air graph of the perceptual situation; here are its factors, the sensible object, the sentient subject, and God. If that be the full account, then there is no need for material substance, or room for it; matter's occupation's gone. 146

146 Berkeley's Immaterialism, 38.
As might be expected, the first time this view appears as an explicit statement, is in section 7 of the Principles when, after having set forth the terms of the proposition as just described, he draws the conclusion they require, and writes: "From what has been said, it follows, there is not any other substance than spirit, or that which perceives." Here, it would seem appropriate to follow Berkeley in his examination of the functions commonly assigned to matter by those who take it as a presupposition in their systems, and to see why he regards it, even on these principles, as an illogical and entirely unnecessary addition. The chief of these functions, and the first he undertakes to refute, is that of substratum of the primary qualities: extension, figure, motion, rest, solidity or impenetrability, and number. The Matterists, he says, will have our ideas of the primary qualities to be patterns or images of things which exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance which they call matter. By matter therefore we are to understand an inert, senseless substance, in which extension, figure, and motion, do actually subsist.

Now "they [the Matterists] take [it] for an undoubted truth" that secondary qualities exist only in the mind; but Berkeley points out that, in our perception of them, the primary qualities are inseparably united with the secondary; where the one group is, therefore, the other group must be also; and he resorts, by way of final demonstration, to a favourite appeal to personal reflection:

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147"Matterists": the term Professor Luce uses to designate "all thinkers who believe in the existence of matter, whatever their views on mind and spirit". Ibid., 25, note 1.

148Principles, 9.
But I desire any one to reflect and try, whether he can by
any abstraction of thought, conceive the extension and motion
of any body, without all the other sensible qualities....
Where therefore the other sensible qualities are, there must
these be also, to wit, in the mind and no where else. 149

Proceeding then to a discussion of the primary qualities
individually, he begins with extension and motion, and observes that
"great and small, swift and slow" are granted by his opponents as
existing only in the mind, "being entirely relative, and changing
as the frame or position of the organs of sense varies." Nevertheless,
they claim that there exist without the mind absolute exten-
sion, which "is neither great nor small"; and absolute motion
which "is neither swift nor slow". These are "extension in general"
and "motion in general", and he discusses them as manifest impos-
sibilities, already refuted in his denial of "that strange doctrine
of abstract ideas." Lastly, he concludes:

Without extension solidity cannot be conceived; since there-
fore it hath been shewn that extension exists not in an un-
thinking substance, the same must also be true of solidity. 150

In subsequent sections of the Principles, Berkeley similarly
disposes of the arguments in favour of matter founded upon number and
unity, showing the first to be "entirely the creature of the mind"
(in section 12), and the second to be avowedly an abstract idea
(in section 13).

Having thus demonstrated that only by means of invalid ab-
straction can the primary qualities be conceived apart, or separated
from the secondary; and having, by this reduction of the former to the

149 Ibid., 10.  150 Ibid., 11.
subjective status of the latter, deprived matter of anything to support, he next proceeds to inquire into the meaning of the word "support" itself. Quoting "the most accurate philosophers"\textsuperscript{151} as admitting that, by "material substance", they mean "the idea of being in general, together with the relative notion of its supporting accidents", he declares the phrase to be meaningless; for the idea of being in general appears to him "the most abstract and incomprehensible of all other;" and since "supporting accidents" cannot be taken in a literal sense, there is no way of knowing what the words mean. The phrase

must therefore be taken in some other sense [than the common one], but what that is they do not explain. So that when I consider the two parts or branches which make the signification of the words material substance, I am convinced there can be no distinct meaning annexed to them.\textsuperscript{152}

All that this expression can lead to in the way of explanation, is the supposition that sensible qualities can exist without the mind; which, as we have seen, is for Berkeley "a direct repugnancy, and altogether inconceivable."\textsuperscript{153}

But in a spirit of fairness to the upholders of the opposing doctrine, let us suppose, says Berkeley, that bodies, or material substances, do exist outside the mind. The question is, how can we know them. Either it must be by sense, or by reason. Now they cannot be known by the senses, for by these "we have the knowledge only

\textsuperscript{151} Chief amongst whom is Locke: \textit{vide Works}, II, 48, note 1.
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Principles}, 17.
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Ibid.}
of our sensations, ideas, or those things that are immediately perceived by sense", which "do not inform us that things exist without the mind, or unperceived, like to those which are perceived." This, he finds, "the materialists themselves acknowledge". Apparently, then, knowledge of the external world must be had by reason, which infers from what is perceived the existence of what is not perceived. But this inference is declared to be impossible, again on the principles of "the very patrons of matter themselves", who "do not pretend, there is any necessary connexion" between external things and our ideas. "Hence", he concludes,

it is evident the supposition of external bodies is not necessary for the producing our ideas: since it is granted that they are produced sometimes [as in dreams, phrenesies, and the like], and might possibly be produced always in the same order we see them in at present, without their concurrence. 155

Further, observing that body cannot act upon spirit, or imprint an idea in the mind, he remarks that if it were possible for bodies to exist without the mind,
yet to hold they do so, must needs be a very precarious opinion; since it is to suppose, without any reason at all, that God has created innumerable beings that are entirely useless, and serve to no manner of purpose. 156

Not only is there thus no reason for affirming the existence of matter, but those who have done so, have found themselves embroiled in numberless errors and difficulties, "not to mention impieties", which have been the bane of philosophy and religion. In philosophy, the supposition of a material world, of which we can know only

154 Principles, 18.  
155 Ibid.  
156 Ibid., 19.
appearances supposedly supported by a material substance of which we can know nothing, has been the mother of scepticism.\(^{157}\) In religion, the supposed eternity of a physical universe not visibly dependent on God has been the corner-stone of "every wretched sect of atheists".\(^{158}\)

From the foregoing, it might be objected that Berkeley's immaterialism, or his doctrine that substance is spiritual, rests on a negation; and that the only evidence for it, is the evidence against matter. It must be remembered, however, that the immaterialism elaborated in the first three sections of this chapter has been a doctrine of affirmation, not negation, and at each step in its development, spirit has been accepted, and matter rejected, because only in this way could the mind attain the intelligibility which it seeks in philosophizing.

If it were necessary to summarize the main steps in Berkeley's establishment of his doctrine of substance, or his immaterialism, it might be possible to reduce them to three: the first would concern (in Berkeley's terminology\(^{159}\)) the \textit{a priori} proofs, which appear in the first three principles of his philosophy, according to our division, in which the existence of spiritual substance alone is affirmed explicitly, and the existence of the world of material substances is denied implicitly. The second step (which might be regarded as the negative counterpart of the first) would include the

\(^{158}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 92.  
\(^{159}\) Cf. \textit{ibid.}, 21.
refutation of the arguments in favour of material substance, and
the objections against his own doctrine. Finally, as the third
step, there are the a posteriori proofs. These are the beneficial
consequences which Berkeley says can legitimately be expected to
follow from the acceptance of his immaterialism, and which he
claims will permit all things -- man, the perceivable universe, and
God -- to be known with as perfect a knowledge as may be had in this
life. This final step, Berkeley makes much of, adducing it as a
sort of counterproof or pragmatic test of the validity of his
system. 160

Accept reality as it is given, and do not frustrate reason

160 "By what we have premised, it is plain that very numerous
and important errors have taken their rise from those false principles,
which were impugned in the foregoing parts of this treatise. And the
opposites of those erroneous tenets at the same time appear to be most
fruitful principles, from whence do flow innumerable consequences highly
advantageous to true philosophy as well as to religion. Particularly,
matter or the absolute existence of corporeal objects, hath been shewn
to be that wherein the most avowed and pernicious enemies of all know-
ledge, whether human or divine, have ever placed their chief strength
and confidence. And surely, if by distinguishing the real existence of
unthinking things from their being perceived, and allowing them a sub-
sistence of their own out of the minds of spirits, no one thing is ex-
plained in Nature; but on the contrary a great many inexplicable difficul-
ties arise; if the supposition of matter is barely precarious, as not
being grounded on so much as one single reason; if its consequences can-
not endure the light of examination and free inquiry, but screen them-
selves under the dark and general pretence of infinitesimal incompre-

hensible; if withal the removal of this matter be not attended with the
least evil consequence, if it be not even missed in the world, but
every thing as well, may much easier conceived without it; if lastly,
both sceptics and atheists are for ever silenced upon supposing only
spirits and ideas, and this scheme of things is perfectly agreeable
both to reason and religion; methinks we may expect it should be
admitted and firmly embraced, though it were proposed only as an
hypothesis, and the existence of matter had been allowed possible,
which yet I think we have evidently demonstrated that it is not."  
Principles, 133.
by trying to account for the real in terms of the imaginary, or the known in terms of the unknowable. Let substance therefore be spiritual; and it becomes comprehensible how qualities perceivable by sense can be "supported" (they are perceived), how we come by our perceptions (they are presented to the finite spirit through the omnipotent agency of the infinite spirit), how we can know the real world (there exists no other universe save the one which we perceive), how we can know ourselves and prove the existence of God (the existence of perceptions demands the being of a perceiver and of a cause). In this way alone can justice be done to reality.

We can now summarise the findings of this chapter:

1. We know ideas, which are sensual and particular, and come to us originally against our will from without. But since an idea (that is, something which can be perceived) can only be like another idea (that is, something which can also, and in the same way, be perceived), it cannot represent to us directly anything beyond itself, or outside the mind. Therefore, if we are to avoid scepticism, we must abolish the traditional distinction between real and mental existence, and say that the perceived (or "ideal") world is the real world. We really have no reason not to do so; for the distinction has its origin in the "naive" common sense of the classical realist teaching (which modern philosophers believe to be false) that we know self-subsistent things. Thus, Berkeley seeks to accept the epistemological challenge of Descartes and Locke, and reunite an estranged philosophy and common sense. If the real world is "ideal", then it is

161 Once these ideas, or data of sense, are stored in the imagination and memory, we are of course free to remember about, and compound and divide them.
totally intelligible, since there is nothing "in" it but what is perceived to be there; for this reason, too, it is demonstrably incapable of any activity, since we perceive in it not motion, but things moved.

2. These considerations imply the following: Because there are objects of perception, there must be a subject to perceive them; this, together with inner consciousness and memory, reveals to me the existence of my mind, spirit, soul or self. Because that subject is conscious of not being the cause of those objects, and since they, being inactive, cannot be the cause of each other, some such cause must exist. The character of these objects indicates that the cause is possessed of intelligence and will, and is thus a spirit or a person; but His power is not limited as is that of finite spirits. These objects compose the "physical" cosmos, and they are regularly rendered present to, or withdrawn from, our minds according to the Laws of Nature, the harmonious working of which argues the wisdom and goodness of their Author. Thus Berkeley finds what he considers to be a cogent proof of the existence of God. Now these beings, the infinite spiritual cause and the finite percipient spirit, are not known directly by sense, but inferentially by reason, which concludes to the rational necessity of their existence from the presence of the "ideal" objects of perception. Spirits, even so, are known immediately, just as are the ideas of sense: when we know, or have a notion of "God" or "infinite cause", and "myself" or "finite perceiving spirit" (that is, when we understand the words which signify those beings), there is nothing which comes between the mind and its object. In the same way we
know by reason the existence of a third class of beings, other minds, or spirits like myself; whom we recognize by the effects God permits us to see produced, and by analogy with our own minds. These spiritual, active, self-subsistent beings compose the whole of extramental reality; and as "intra-mental", perceivable, or "ideal" reality is totally passive and intelligible, so extramental, percipient, or substantial reality is active and intelligent. This brings us to the arguments against matter:

3. Matter is intimately connected with the supposed extramental, "real", or substantial existence of things; but as we know ideas, it is entirely gratuitous to affirm any such extramental existence: since, if a substantial (but non-spiritual) reality were to exist "behind" our ideas, we could never possibly come to know it. Its nature being entirely inconceivable, a madman would be as likely to guess its true constitution as a philosopher. We have therefore no reason to entertain any opinion on the question, about which nothing really can be proved. The existence of sensible things does not

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162 We know God by analogy with our own minds, too, for Berkeley: "For all the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections." Third Dialogue, Works, II, 231-232. In Alciphron, IV, 20-21, he discusses the Scholastic teaching on the analogy of predication, which is implied in the words of Philemon just quoted, and which is explicitly accepted in the latter work. Cf. Works, III, 168-170.

163 Like the eternity of the world for mediaeval scholastic thinkers, the existence of an extramental, but unknowable, world would appear to be, for Berkeley, a subject on which reason cannot properly speak; since, as he points out, "if there were external bodies, it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we have now." (Principles, 20). If any positive conclusion were to be drawn, therefore, another authority would have to be consulted: the schoolmen could point to Faith (the fact of a
even imply material or substantial existence; for when we say that sensible things "exist", we mean only that collections of various habitually-related perceptions exist in our consciousness, so that for these "perceivable substances", to be is to be perceived. This is the only sense in which either "substance" or "existence" can be predicated of "things" in the world of sense. For perceptions to exist in an unperceiving subject (such as matter) is itself a contradiction; and so the world that we know cannot exist apart from a mind. A contrary opinion could only be formed by a process akin to the invalid kind of abstraction which Berkeley says has disfigured epistemology with an absurd theory of universals, and which has permitted philosophers to talk as if the prime matter of the Aristotelians (which is potentially all things, but actually nothing) could be conceived as existing separately. Matter is spoken of as having only two positive attributes proper to itself, and both of these — the bare fact of existence, but not as anything, and the notion of supporting sensible qualities, but in a completely temporal creation having been revealed) as having decided in favour of one of the two answers which reason can give; but in this case, as Berkeley shows in section 82 of the Principles, and contrary to the teaching of Malebranche, Revelation has said nothing.

164 Cf. Siris, 317. Aristotle says: "By matter I mean that which, not being a 'this' actually, is potentially a 'this'". Metaphysics, VIII, 1, 1042a27-28. Basle Works, 312. Again, "By matter I mean that which in itself is neither a particular thing nor a certain quantity nor assigned to any other of the categories by which being is determined." Ibid., VII, 3, 1029a19-22. Ibid., 785. Cf. "All things produced either by nature or by art have matter; for each of them is capable both of being and of not being, and this capacity is the matter in each". Ibid., 7, 1032a20-22. Ibid., 791.
equivocal sense — are for Berkeley "manifest repugnancies" or "abstractions". We can only conclude that matter is not only unknowable, but impossible. Hence, from the existence of the objects of perception, it is impossible to reason to the existence of matter. This is the reason why Berkeley, starting in each case with the same premises, rejects material substance, and yet accepts a universe of spirits.

4. Were further proof required, there is this to consider: Matter performs no function whatever. How it can produce ideas, no philosopher can say. There are no sensible qualities for it to support, for primary qualities are inseparably united (in our perception of them) with the secondary, and are thus just as "subjective" or "mental". Again, there is no reason for us to think otherwise: for if we know ideas, it is not for us to say which represent reality, and which do not, and which qualities therefore are in things, and which in us. Finally, belief in matter has led to scepticism (because it makes reality unknowable) and to atheism (because it seems to make God unnecessary in accounting for the existence of the world). In short, Matter being once expelled out of Nature, drags with it so many

165 The principle involved here enabled Berkeley to free himself from the early indecision which this entry (637) in the Commentaries manifests: "Say you there must be a thinking substance. Something unknown weh perceives & supports & ties together the Ideas. Say I, make it appear there is any need of it & you shall have it for me. I care not to take away any thing I can see the least reason to think should exist." (Italics mine). This last sentence seems to hold the key to all Berkeley's philosophising, especially as it concerns substance.
sceptical and impious notions, such an incredible number of disputes and puzzling questions, which have been thorns in the sides of divines, as well as philosophers, and made so much fruitless work for mankind; that if the arguments we have produced against it, are not found equal to demonstration (as to me they evidently seem) yet I am sure all friends to knowledge, peace, and religion, have reason to wish they were.166

The fruit of Berkeley's speculations seems to be this:

that a true and rational explanation of reality must be based on a true and intelligible notion of substance.

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166 Principles, 96.
The importance which Berkeley attaches to the so-called a posteriori proofs of his system seems to indicate that he found as much satisfaction in the beneficial consequences which were to flow from his immaterialism, as in the doctrine itself. For him, indeed, it was a means to an end: the destruction of scepticism and atheism, and towards the attainment of this goal, existing philosophies could give no direct help. He begins the "Preface" to his Dialogues between Sylas and Philonous with this comment:

Though it seems the general opinion of the world, no less than the design of Nature and Providence, that the end of speculation be practice, or the improvement and regulation of our lives and actions; yet those, who are most addicted to speculative studies, seem as generally of another mind. And, indeed, if we consider the pains that have been taken, to perplex the plainest things, that distrust of the senses, these doubts and scruples, these abstractions and refinements that occur in the very entrance of the sciences, it will not seem strange, that men of leisure and curiosity should lay themselves out in fruitless disquisitions. Upon the common principles of philosophers, we are not assured of the existence of things from their being perceived. And we are taught to distinguish their real nature from that which falls under our senses. Hence arise scepticism and paradoxes.

No less than with Descartes, the overthrow of scepticism in philosophy became with Berkeley a personal preoccupation which, in any

1 Vide supra, 81, and note 160.
2 Works, II, 167.
explanation of his reaction to the philosophy and science of his day, must be regarded as a determining factor. It will contribute, therefore, to an appreciation of the value of Berkeley's immaterialism, to review briefly some of the then-current theories in the physical and metaphysical disciplines, and to see how they influenced him in the formation of his doctrine, and led him, even though by way of reaction and denial, to its final conclusions.3

Perhaps because they were so important for his contemporaries, and so insignificant for him, we should speak first of the findings of the Mechanists: in particular, of Sir Isaac Newton and his followers.

1. The World of the Newtonians

Matter with mathematically measurable properties, capable of motion in space and through time: this was the hypothetical basis on which Newton built his physics; but as Mary Shaw Kuypers

3 Normally, the influences which shape a man's thought are considered before the thought itself; but in this case, since a clear exposition of Berkeley's doctrine of substance seemed to require the statement only of the two great positive influences upon him: that we know ideas (an opinion which he shared with Descartes and Locke), and that the intelligible "substance" of perceivable things is no more than the sum of their qualities (which he found expounded in Locke's philosophy); those influences have been considered directly in connexion with those of Berkeley's own doctrines in which they are manifested. The influences we shall be concerned with in Chapter III, therefore, will be chiefly negative: the vast, mechanical and entirely "inhuman" universe of the Newtonians, which to him represented an expression of all that was most pernicious in modern thought; the body-mind problem which Descartes's attempts to refound the certitude of philosophy had produced, and which Berkeley attempted to solve; and finally, the partial answers to the body-mind problem which he found in the partial immaterialism of Nicholas Malebranche, and the empiricism of John Locke. Berkeley learned much from Descartes, Malebranche and Locke; but he was not afraid to differ from them in their main conclusions, and for this reason their systems become more meaningful in the light of his criticisms of them.
has pointed out, matter, space, and time, were popularly regarded as more than mere hypotheses:

Newton in the Principia operated with these concepts as methodological postulates, without considering their metaphysical status....

Nevertheless,

Newtonian science...was interpreted as a system of metaphysics, an exhaustive description of reality. Methodological concepts appeared in popular thought as independently existing realities.

This interpretation was shared with "the non-technical public" by "some of Newton's followers", and was apparently given at least verbal countenance by Sir Isaac himself. But whether it originated in Newton himself, or only in those who misread him, the authority of Newton did much to establish among philosophers, no less than among the commonality of men, a view of reality which, as Professor E. A. Burtt has stated,

saw in man a puny, irrelevant spectator (so far as a being wholly imprisoned in a dark room can be called such) of the vast mathematical system whose regular motions according to mechanical principles constituted the world of nature.... The world that people had thought themselves living in — a world rich with colour and sound,....speaking everywhere of purposive harmony and creative ideals — was crowded now into minute corners in the brains of scattered organic beings. The really important world outside was a world hard, cold, colourless, silent and dead; a world of quantity, a world of mathematically computable motions in mechanical regularity. The world of qualities as immediately perceived by man became just a curious and quite minor effect of that infinite machine beyond.

The implications of a mechanical universe did not disturb


5Ibid., 19.

6A figure strikingly reminiscent of Locke's famous description of the "understanding", in his Essay, II, xi, 17.

many of Berkeley's contemporaries; Dr. Cudworth, for example, could write that sensory qualities were a most wise contrivance thus to beautify and adorn the visible and material world, to add luster or embellishment to it, that it might have charms and relishes and allurements in it, to gratify our appetites; whereas otherwise really in itself, the whole corporeal world in its naked hue is nothing else but a heap of dust, or atoms, of several figures and magnitudes variously agitated up and down. 8

Now Berkeley had great admiration for the experimental method, 9 and for Newton as an experimental philosopher; 10 but the great difficulty with the Newtonian vision du monde was, as Berkeley realized, that it (at least in its popular formulation) pretended to explain the perceived, which existed only in the mind, in terms of the "real", which existed only in the imagination (if it could rightly be said to exist even there 11 ); and to him


9 He writes to Johnson: "The true use and end of Natural Philosophy is to explain the phenomena of nature, which is done by discovering the laws of nature, and reducing particular appearances to them. This is Sir Isaac Newton's method; and such method or design is not in the least inconsistent with the principles I lay down...." Works, II, 279. An even better indication of his attitude towards the experimental method is his constant appeal, in the Principles and Dialogues, to the test of personal experience.


11 Cf. Principles, 37. It is remarkable how closely Berkeley's criticisms of Newtonian physics parallel those of that modern "philosophising scientist", Sir James Jeans, and how much of what Berkeley regarded as the true nature and function of science is reproduced in the latter's description of it. Restating the thought of Principles, 66, Berkeley writes in Siris: "The mechanical philosopher...inquires properly concerning the rules and modes of operation alone, and not concerning the cause; forasmuch as nothing mechanical is or really can be
it was both "impious and unintelligible". Imagine matter stripped of its sensory qualities, and there is nothing left to imagine; endow it with purely mathematical properties, and you are dealing with meaningless abstractions. This, as we have seen, was the burden of his argument; and had Lewis Carroll lived two centuries earlier, and Berkeley not tried so carefully "to reign in Y Satirical nature," he might have concluded, with Sir James Jeans, that "it is only in Wonderland that a cat can be stripped of everything but a grin." Instead, he wrote in the Second Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous an impassioned description of the "glittering furniture" of the universe which ends in that great anathema sit,

a cause.... Though it be supposed the chief business of a natural philosopher to trace out causes from the effects, yet this is to be understood not of agents, but of principles; that is, of component parts, in one sense, or of laws or rules, in another. In strict truth, all agents are incorporeal; and as such are not properly of physical consideration.... Neither doth it seem, as is supposed by the greatest of mechanical philosophers, that the true way of proceeding in their science is, from known motions in nature to investigate the moving forces. Forasmuch as force is neither corporeal, nor belongs to any corporeal thing; nor yet to be discovered by experiments or mathematical reasonings, which reach no farther than discernible effects and motions in things passive and moved." Siris, 249, 247. Cf. De Motu, passim; Principles, 101-117; etc.

Leaving aside the doctrine of spiritual causality which is peculiar to himself, Berkeley's fundamental thesis — that science can be concerned only with "appearances", with a series of ideas of sense that are arbitrarily connected -- seems to be echoed by Sir James Jeans, when he says: "The study of physics has driven us to the positivist conception of physics. We can never understand what events are, but must limit ourselves to describing the pattern of events in mathematical terms;... these will never describe nature itself, but only our observations on nature.... Physics tries to discover the pattern of events which controls the phenomena we observe. But we can never know what this pattern means or how it originates...." Physics and Philosophy (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 15-16; cf. 190, 195-204. It is of course the fact that Berkeley enunciated what is essentially "the positivist conception of physics" that makes the parallel historically interesting.

What treatment then do those philosophers deserve, who would deprive these noble and delightful scenes of all reality? How should those principles be entertained, that lead us to think all the visible beauty of the creation a false imaginary glare? That abstraction should entail an impoverishment of the reality upon which it is made, has always been recognized as the price which the finite intellect must pay, in order to penetrate to the essential constitution of things. But that a species of "mathematical" or "scientific" abstraction should be permitted to destroy all that it seeks to explain, and to set up in its place an "essential reality" which is not only unknowable, but unreal, is to penetrate to nothing, while obscuring everything.

But Newton and his followers were not the only seventeenth century mechanists: another one of their number was René Descartes.

2. René Descartes

This is how Descartes defines substance:

Par substance nous ne pouvons entendre rien d'autre que la chose qui existe, de telle sorte qu'elle n'ait besoin de rien d'autre pour exister.... La substance qui n'a absolument besoin de rien pour exister ne peut être entendue que comme unique.16

Thus, strictly speaking, there can be conceived but one substance: God. However, in a wider (an analogical) sense, "substance" also applies to finite things. Thus he says that there are also created substances, realities which depend directly upon God and which are known to us as the immediate subjects of those attributes of which we can have real ideas.17 These substances can only be of two sorts, corporeal and thinking.18 To understand the importance of Descartes's statements, we must consider them at greater

15Works, II, 211. 16Principes de la Philosophie, I, 51; Oeuvres, IX, 47.
17Réponses aux deuxièmes objections, Définition 5.
18Principes, I, 52. 53.
length.

It is the cogito, first and foremost, which reveals to Descartes the existence of a substance: for it is with his own being that he begins, deducing from its reality his whole philosophy of God and Nature; and he calls himself a thing, "une chose qui pense". He can know with certainty the nature of substance, however, only by means of his doctrine of "clear and distinct ideas". "Nous ne connaissons par la substance immédiatement par elle-même, mais seulement parce qu'elle est le sujet de quelques actes...." One of these acts, the cogito discovers: consciousness or thinking. When he attempts to form a clear and distinct idea of the subject of the cogito, he finds that the very act of thinking (or doubting, or sensing, or willing) is the only thing which can be attributed to his nature without the danger of error. Hence he concludes:

Mais encore que tout attribut soit suffisant pour faire connaître la substance, il y en a toutefois un en chacune qui constitue sa nature ou son essence, et de qui tous les autres dépendent.... La pensée constitue la nature de la substance qui pense. Car... toutes les propriétés que nous trouvons en la chose qui pense ne sont que des façons différentes de penser.

The nature of the soul, or thinking substance, is thus thought itself; and the subject of the cogito is for Descartes a wholly spiritual being.

In the universe of bodies, the same principles operate: here, a mechanical physics using only the rigorous demonstrations of mathematics supplies Descartes with his knowledge of the physical cosmos.

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23. Cf. *Réponses aux deuxième objections*, Définition 6. Not even the name given the thinking substance is to suggest anything of the corporeal.
The only clear and distinct idea we can have of body is that it is extended; extension explains figure and motion, and motion explains all the phenomena of Nature:

C'est pourquoi il n'existe dans tout l'univers qu'une seule et même matière, et elle n'est connue que par son étendue. Et toutes les propriétés que nous percevons clairement en elle se reduisent à ce qu'elle est divisible et mobile en ses parties.... Toute modification ou la diversité de toutes ses formes dépend du mouvement. 24

Hence,

l'étendue en longueur, largeur et profondeur constitue la nature de la substance corporelle;...toute ce que d'ailleurs on peut attribuer au corps presuppose de l'étendue et n'est qu'une dépendance de ce qui est étendu. 25

Now, between a substance and its principal attribute — its essence or nature, in terms of which all its other attributes can be explained — Descartes makes only a logical distinction, 26 for according to his theory, a real distinction can exist only between two or more beings which can be conceived clearly and distinctly as existing, one without the other; obviously, this applies only to substances. 27 The various modes in which the principal attribute may realize itself are called modally distinct from the substance in which they inhere, however, since substance can be clearly and distinctly conceived without one of its modes (the soul need not always remember, for example), but we cannot

24 Principes, II, 23; Oeuvres, IX, 75.
25 Ibid., I, 53; Oeuvres, IX, 48.
26 Ibid., 62.
27 Ibid., 60.
conceive a mode at all, unless it be as the mode of a substance.28

From this he concludes:

Il est même plus aisé de connaître une substance qui pense ou une substance étendue que la substance toute seule, laissant à part si elle pense ou si elle est étendue, parce qu'il y a quelque difficulté à séparer la notion que nous avons de la substance de celle que nous avons de la pensée et de l'étendue; car elles ne diffèrent de la substance que par cela seul que nous considérons quelquefois la pensée et l'étendue sans faire réflexion sur la chose même qui pense ou qui est étendue.29

From this brief outline of Descartes's doctrines, it is possible to see a certain similarity between his approach to the notion of substance, and that which Berkeley was later to take. It has already been remarked of Berkeley, that he was more interested in determining the "knowability" of substance, than in setting forth its nature. In a certain sense, the same can be said of Descartes. The rationalist's treatment of the question is far fuller than Berkeley's; even so, when Descartes discusses the nature of the soul and the nature of the body, he is above all trying to discover what he can say about soul and body that will give him an absolutely certain knowledge of their existence. His clear and distinct ideas of the soul as thinking and of the body as extended enable him to affirm that these beings exist with at least as much perfection as his thoughts of them contain.30 His theory of distinctions and his notion of the principal attribute as nature or essence, enable him,
in knowing that attribute, or any manifestation of it, to affirm that he knows the thing; for he knows that which makes the thing to be what it is. Thus he provides himself with the means of escaping from the prison of his own mind; but at the same time, he lays down the foundation of the body-mind problem which has dominated philosophy to so great an extent since his time. On one hand, there is mind or spiritual substance, the nature of which is to be thinking; on the other, there is body or material substance, the nature of which is to be extended. By definition they are opposed and mutually exclusive; so much so that, according to his own theory of distinctions, the prime example of a real distinction is that which seems to exist between a man's soul and his body. That the human person should be one substance composed of the two, or that they should even act upon each other in any way at all, is thus inconceivable, even though it is an incontestable fact of experience. This, then, is the origin of the body-mind problem, to which Berkeley's denial of material substance may be looked upon as a solution.

Berkeley found his problem in the philosophy of Descartes; but he also found there various ideas which he used to work out his solution. He agrees that the mind knows ideas, but he does not use

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31 Ibid.  
32 As Descartes himself admits when he speaks of "l'obscurité en la notion que nous avons de leur union", and adds that it does not seem possible to him "que l'esprit humain soit capable de concevoir bien distinctement, et en même temps, la distinction d'entre l'aime et le corps et leur union." "Lettre à Elisabeth", 28 juin 1643; Oeuvres, III, 693.

33 Cf. Sixième Méditation, Oeuvres, VII, 81.
the term in as broad a sense as Descartes (restricting it to signify objects of sense only), and does not make ideas innate. He uses the rationalist's technique of reasoning from thought to extramental reality, however; and, in his denial of matter, argues that the mind, being spiritual, can only know that which possesses the same degree of immateriality as itself. If, therefore, matter and spirit are regarded as being by definition mutually exclusive, not only is any interaction between them inconceivable, but matter, if it were allowed to exist independently, could not possibly have any intelligible or immaterial attributes; hence it simply could not, as such, be known — no more inferred by reason than perceived by sense. If matter cannot be known, therefore, it cannot exist; at least, we must carry on our metaphysical speculations as though it did not.

In his affirmation of spirit, Berkeley also makes use of Cartesian principles. Descartes, he finds, "owes we know not a substance immediately by itself but by this alone that it is the subject of several acts." But, rationally conceived, the soul can have no faculties; or rather, it cannot be (or exist) distinct from them. In section 27 of the Principles he writes:

A spirit is one simple, undivided, active being: as it perceives ideas, it is called the understanding, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called the will.

Again, in the earlier Philosophical Commentaries, we read:

I must not say the Will & Understanding are all one but that they are both Abstract Ideas i.e. none at all. They not being evan rations different from the Spirit, Qua faculties, or active.  

35 Ibid., 871.
I must not mention the Understanding as a faculty or part of the Mind, I must include Understanding & Will etc. in the word Spirit by which I mean all that is active.\textsuperscript{36}

Thus, in his "proof for the soul", when Berkeley concludes to the necessity of Understanding and Will (from the presence of the willed and the understood), after the manner of Descartes he is really proving the existence of the mind, or the spiritual self.

At this point, however, Berkeley departs somewhat from the Cartesian position. "A soul or spirit is an active being, whose existence consists not in being perceived, but in perceiving ideas and thinking."\textsuperscript{37} Hence he agrees with Descartes that "it is a plain consequence that the soul always thinks".\textsuperscript{38} But thinking implies a thought; and for Berkeley, the mind is not the source of its own ideas:

I must not say that the Understanding differs not from the particular Ideas, or the Will from particular Volitions.\textsuperscript{39}

Tis most sure and certain that our Ideas are distinct from the Mind i.e. the Will, the Spirit.\textsuperscript{40}

Nevertheless,

Some Ideas or other I must have so long as I exist or Will. But no one Idea or sort of Ideas is essential.\textsuperscript{41}

Where the ideas come from originally, we have already seen; their existence enables Berkeley to argue to the existence of God. Here, too, he may be said to add a further qualification which serves (as it were) to establish the autonomy of his thought. Replying to the

\textsuperscript{36}Phil. Comm., 848. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{37}Principles, 137.
\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 96. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{39}Phil. Comm., 848.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 847. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 842.
fifth objection against his immaterialism, Berkeley says that the qualities we perceive "are in the mind only as they are perceived by it, that is, not by way of mode or attribute, but only by way of idea." Specifically, the objection states "that if extension and figure exist only in the mind, it follows that the mind is extended and figured; since extension is a mode or attribute, which (to speak with the Schools) is predicated of the subject in which it exists." The significance of Berkeley's answer is far wider, however, for because of it, we must say (as Professor Jessop does in his "Introduction" to the Principles) that the ideas of sense, or corporeal phenomena...are not modes of any substance, but are wholly objects to a subject; and that subject is God essentially, and each of us accidentally."

Thus, starting from Cartesian principles, Berkeley has forced his own (and quite different) passage out of the prison of the mind: the objects of knowledge are indeed ideas, but they are also real things, present to the mind, but not subjective modifications of it. Only the quite private and personal ideas of imagination and memory can now be called "subjective". Perhaps it is here that the basis of "Berkeley's realism" lies.

3. Nicholas Malebranche

Descartes, both by his notion of intelligibility, and by his theory of distinctions, made the substantial union and mutual

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42 Principles, 49. 43 Works, II, 12.
interaction of thinking soul and extended body impossible to understand, even though he accepted it as an undoubted truth of experience. Malebranche strove to safeguard all three -- the clear and distinct ideas, the radical "separability" implied in a real distinction, and the value of experience -- and proposed a solution of the Cartesian problem by interpreting the last in terms of the first two. This solution is stated at the beginning of the seventh of his Conversations on Metaphysics and Religion:

"Je vous soutiens que nous ne sommes nullement unis à notre corps, bien loin de l'être à lui plus étroitement qu'à toute autre chose.... Non, Ariste, à parler exactement et en rigueur, votre esprit n'est et ne peut être uni à votre corps; car il ne peut être uni qu'à ce qui peut agir en lui."

Man is therefore composed of two entirely separate and independent substances, and if they are "united", the only rational explanation of their "union" must be, that God has established certain general laws, according to which the accidental modification of one is the occasion (and no more) of a corresponding modification in the other.

He echoes Descartes's definition of substance, and drawing out its im-

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1. Entretiens sur la Métaphysique et sur la Religion, VII, i.
2. This principle, Descartes himself had already outlined. Vide supra, 30, note 47. Cf. "Même les idées des mouvements et des figures sont naturellement en nous; et à plus forte raison, les idées de douleur, des couleurs... nous doivent être naturelles, afin que notre esprit, à l'occasion de certains mouvements corporels, avec lesquels elles n'ont aucune ressemblance, se les puisse représenter." "Lettre à M....", Oeuvres, VIII, 358. Cf. "Lettre à Mersenne", 22 juillet 1641; Oeuvres, III, 418; Notes in programma quodam, ibid., VIII, pt. 2, 358-359. How literal an interpretation Malebranche puts upon the term "occasion" may be seen in De la Recherche de la Vérité, VI, 11, 3, where he says that when a man wills to move his arm, that willing is only the occasional, and not the true, cause of the motion in his arm. For Berkeley's comment, vide infra, 108.
applications, expresses himself thus:

Toutes les créatures ne sont unies qu'à Dieu d'une union immédiate. Elles ne dépendent essentiellement et directement que de lui. Comme elles sont toutes également impuissantes, elles ne dépendent point mutuellement les unes des autres. On peut dire qu'elles sont unies entre elles et qu'elles dépendent même les unes des autres... pourvu qu'on demeure d'accord que ce n'est qu'en conséquence des volontés immuables et toujours efficaces du Créateur,... il a voulu que j'assez certains sentiments, certains émotions, quand il y aurait dans mon cerveau certaines traces, certains ébranlements d'esprits; il a voulu, en un mot, et il veut sans cesse que les modalités de l'esprit et du corps fussent réciproques. Voilà l'union et la dépendance naturelle des deux parties dont nous sommes composés: ce n'est que la réciprocation mutuelle de nos modalités appuyée sur le fondament inébranlable des decrets divins. 46

This accounts for the apparent connexion between the world of spirits and the world of bodies: the God Who is at once the source of all being and of all activity in Nature, 47 is also the cause of knowledge in us. But He is more than that, says Father Malebranche: the Divine Substance is the very content of our knowledge.

God knows (or has ideas of) all created beings (else He could not have created them), and He knows them in knowing the infinite imitability of His perfections; He knows all true relations; He is truth itself. 48 Now, by means of perceptions which, though possibly similar, are totally peculiar to each one of us, we all see immutable, necessary, and eternal truths. These, as such, require an eternal, necessary and immutable being in which to exist. 49 Furthermore, as God is immense (though not locally extended) and

46 Entretiens, VII, xiii. 47As Descartes had taught: cf. Principes, I, 28.
48 Entretiens, VIII, xi. 49Ibid., sect. xii.
contains the world as eternity contains time, so by His presence He is intimately united to our souls. Hence, Malebranche concludes:

C'est en Dieu seule que nous voyons la vérité. C'est en lui seul que se trouve la lumière qui l'éclaire, lui et toutes les intelligences. Il est sage par sa propre sagesse, et nous ne le pouvons être que par l'union que nous avons avec lui. Ne disputons point de ces principes. Ils sont évidents, ce me semble, et le fondement de la certitude que nous trouvons dans les sciences.

Malebranche demonstrates the truth of this assertion in another way, arguing that by the senses we do not apprehend bodies existing outside of us. My soul is not extended; it does not fill the space between me and the fixed stars, nor does it stretch out to the houses at the horizon: "Il est donc nécessaire que notre âme voie les maisons et les étoiles où elles ne sont pas" -- that is, within itself.

Indeed, when we perceive bodies, we have only an idea of determinate extension; but extension in itself carries with it no notion of limitation, and so must be an infinite idea which can exist, like the necessary and eternal truths, only in an infinite mind. What we perceive, therefore, is intelligible extension, and that we see in the mind of God.

But if this is so -- and the impossibility of perceiving what cannot act upon the soul evidently confirms it -- then we cannot know by natural means whether bodies exist. All the

50 Ibid., sect. iv.  
51 Ibid., sect. xii.  
52 De la Recherche de la Vérité, I, xiv, 1. We think that they are without us when we perceive them only because "il n'est en la puissance de l'âme de les voir quand il lui plaît..." Ibid.  
53 Cf. Entretiens, II, i-vi.
beauties of the creation we perceive are intelligible, proportioned to our minds, and in no way related to extended matter. God might even destroy the material world and we should never know it.\textsuperscript{54}

But that such a world does exist, we are certain. Reason cannot prove it to us, but Faith can. In fact, it furnishes us with

\begin{quote}
une démonstration à laquelle il est impossible de résister....
La Foi m'apprend que Dieu a créé le ciel et la terre; elle m'apprend que l'Écriture est un livre divin. Et ce livre, ou son apparence, ne dit nettement et positivement qu'il y a mille et mille créatures. Donc voilà mes apparaences changées en réalités. Il y a des corps; cela est démontré en toute rigueur, la Foi supposée.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

Malebranche's position is certainly close to that of Berkeley, as is apparent even from this sketch. The vision of all things in God; the insistence that, as the known world is the world of intelligible extension, the existence of the "real", material, or extra-mental world can never be known by reason unaided; the fact that we commonly attribute external existence to the objects of sensation because these come to us against our will from without; these are some of the teachings which contain elements common to the systems of both philosophers, whose whole approach to the problem of knowledge which the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter had produced is indeed very much the same. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that when Berkeley's doctrine first became known, its author was supposed, like John Norris, to be a British disciple of the Oratorian. This supposition however, Berkeley denied both in his published works, and in private correspondence. In the letter to his patron, Lord Percival,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{54} Cf. \textit{ibid.}, I, v-vi. \hspace{5mm} \textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid.}, VI, viii.
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written after he had heard of this misinterpretation of his thought
by Samuel Clarke, he declares:

As to what is said of ranking me with Father Malebranche and Mr.
Morris, whose writings are thought to be too fine-spun to be of
any great use to mankind, I have this answer, that I think the
notions I embrace are not in the least agreeing with theirs, but
indeed plainly inconsistent with them in the main points, inasmuch
as I know few writers I take myself at bottom to differ more from
then from them.56

The main conclusion of Malebranche's system seems to be that,
although it has no right to do so (because it violates the principle,
nihil fecit frustra nature), matter exists; Berkeley argues that if it
has no right to exist, then it cannot exist. This difference is of
sufficient importance to justify Berkeley's claim to be no pro-
fessed follower of Malebranche, to whom, in fact, he holds himself
opposed on three major issues:

1. Our knowledge of the "real" world: Malebranche, as we have
seen, holds that the existence of an external creation has been revealed
in Holy Scripture, and that we can therefore believe by Faith in the
being of that which we cannot know by reason. This solution, Berkeley
rejects in toto, and declares

that no sort of writings whatsoever, sacred or profane, which use
those and the like words [timber and stone, mountains and rivers, etc.]
in the vulgar acceptation, or so as to have any meaning in them, are
in danger of having their truth called in question by our doctrine.
That all those things do really exist, that there are bodies, even
corporeal substances, when taken in the vulgar sense, has been shown
to be agreeable to our principles; and the difference betwixt things
and ideas, realities and chimeras, has been distinctly explained.
And I do not think, that either what philosophers call matter, or
the existence of objects without the mind, is anywhere mentioned in
Scripture.57

56 Quoted in Works, ed. Fraser, I, 354-355.
57 Principles, 82.
Twice in this passage, Berkeley refers to a "vulgar sense" which ordinary language, even that of Scripture, employs. In section 51 of the Principles, where he considers the objection that his doctrine will take us from this ordinary mode of speech, and that this procedure is bound to be met with ridicule, Berkeley enunciates his famous dictum that, in applying philosophical conclusions to life, "we ought to think with the learned, and speak with the vulgar." In defence of this principle, he appeals to a parallel case in which those who "are convinced of the truth of the Copernican system, do nevertheless say the sun rises, the sun sets, or come to the meridian"; adding further that "a little reflection...will make it manifest, that the common use of language would receive no manner of alteration or disturbance from the admission of our tenets." By this principle, Berkeley quite effectively destroys the scriptural basis for the belief in the existence of an external world, upon which Malebranche had built his realism.

2. The vision of all things in God: In the Second Dialogue, Hylas states Malebranche's position thus:

They conceive that the soul being immaterial, is incapable of being united with material things, so as to perceive them in themselves, but that she perceives them by her union with the substance of God, which being spiritual is therefore purely intelligible, or capable of being the immediate object of a spirit's thought. Besides, the divine essence contains in it perfections correspondent to each created being; and which are for that reason proper to exhibit or represent them to the mind.

Replying as Philonous, Berkeley objects that "our ideas, which are things altogether passive and inert", can neither be part of, nor repre-

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58 Principles, 51.  
59 Ibid.  
60 Works, II, 213.
sent "the essence or substance of God, who is an impassive, indivisible, purely active being"; furthermore, this hypothesis entails many difficulties, being liable "to all the absurdities of the common hypotheses, in making a created world exist otherwise than in the mind of a spirit."

But it has this fault peculiar to itself, "that it makes that material world serve to no purpose." If it is valid to reject other hypotheses in the sciences because they make Nature act in vain, a fortiori this argument should apply here, where the creation of the whole universe is made to be in vain.

In this rejection of Malebranche's doctrine, Berkeley can with justice deny that "ideas", as he conceives them, could exist in the mind of God: not so much because they are "passive" and He "active", but because they are sensuous and particular, whereas God knows singular things (in the traditional view which Malebranche accepts) in knowing His essence, "the likeness of things", which is the cause or active principle "of all the principles which enter into the composition of the thing" — that is, the form, which is the source of universality, and matter, the source of individuality. For the discrete and particular Berkeleian "ideas" to exist in the mind of God would be incompatible with His "indivisibility"; and as Malebranche obviously regards the ideas he sees in God as universals, Berkeley's criticism, which is based on his own definition of the term, would seem only to show that we cannot regard the world of sense as existing as we apprehend it in the divine mind.

\[61\] Works, II, 213-214.

\[62\] Cf. S. Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., I, q. 14, a. 11 corpus, and ad 1.
3. Occasionalism: According to Malebranche, God is the only possible cause of activity in the sensible (as well as in the unknown, material) world, the finite spirit having no power to move even the limbs of its own body. Berkeley amends this doctrine, saying: "We move our Legs ourselves; 'tis we that will their movement. Herein I differ from Malebranche." In so far as he denies that the "physical", "material" cosmos can have within it the source of its own activity, and restricts all causality to spirits, Berkeley (as Professor Jessop suggests) may be called an Occasionalist. But he takes great care in analysing the function of matter in the Occasionalist system. In the Principles, he shows that a completely unperceivable and undetermined substance, at the presence of which God causes ideas in our minds, is an absurdity: it cannot exist in the mind, so it can exist nowhere at all; as described, it is close to non-entity (since its only attributes -- existence in general, and some mysterious relation to mind -- Berkeley holds to be inconceivable); it cannot in any conceivable way be "present to" us; and can only be "present to" God as an idea in His mind; and he concludes that "with regard to us it is no occasion; it remains therefore that it must be, if at all, the occasion to God of exciting ideas in us." According to this, matter becomes, not a substance, but a divine idea. In the Second Dialogue

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64 Phil. Comm., 548.
65 Works, II, 154.
66 Principles, 67.
67 Ibid., 68-69.
68 Ibid., 71.
69 Ibid., 72.
70 Ibid., 71.
Berkeley gives the rest of his argument. After Hylas has stated the Occasionalist position, Philonous replies that in it as God, the sole cause of our ideas, implants them in us at the presence of "fixed and regular occasions," he must perceive those occasions; but, he adds, leaving aside all the difficulties inherent in this notion, I only ask whether the order and regularity observable in the series of our ideas, or the course of Nature, be not sufficiently accounted for by the wisdom and power of God; and whether it doth not derogate from those attributes, to suppose He is influenced, directed, or put in mind, when and what He is to act, by any unthinking substance.  

Furthermore, he concludes, how is it necessary to infer "the external or absolute existence of an unthinking substance, distinct from its being perceived," simply because one allows "that there are certain things perceived by the mind of God, which are to Him the occasion of producing ideas in us."  

4. John Locke

Locke's approach to the problem of substance was unlike that of Descartes and Malebranche, but in fact the extent and manner of his dependence on the traditional view of reality was not dissimilar to theirs. On this point, James Gibson comments:

It has been remarked more than once that while insisting that an enquiry into knowledge must precede the attempt to determine the nature of reality, Locke never succeeded in freeing himself from certain presuppositions as to the general nature of that which possesses real being. At the outset, in the very endeavour to abstract from considerations of a metaphysical character, he takes for granted the validity of the categories which were fundamental for the thought of his age, and their adequacy for the interpretation of reality. And these categories were, in truth, a direct inheri-

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71 Works, II, 220.  
72 Ibid.
stances from Scholasticism. In the course of his enquiry, difficulties and perplexities arose in the endeavour to reconcile these metaphysical conceptions with the new point of view of the experiential theory of knowledge. But even when he finds himself compelled to recognize their uselessness for the purpose of our knowledge, he does not question their ultimate validity. They are still regarded as representing the genuine nature of reality, though this is now declared to be beyond our comprehension. They are thus preserved from the destructive force of his criticism by being relegated to the region of the unknown, and to us unknowable....

Now we have seen that for Locke, we know ideas only; yet he accepts "as axiomatic that reality can consist of nothing but substances and their modifications". This notion led him into difficulties; but to appreciate them, we must outline some further details of his system.

Locke distinguished simple and complex ideas, the simple being given in external or internal sensation, and the complex being "voluntary combinations" of these simple ideas made by the mind. There are three sorts of complex ideas, those of Modes, of Substances, and of Relations. Now all the simple ideas of the primary and secondary qualities in things are real, because they have a foundation in Nature, being in us either "constant effects or else exact resemblances of something in the things themselves". Thus they are "conformable to their archetypes". Complex ideas of mixed modes and of relations are likewise real or true, because they represent nothing outside the mind, "being themselves archetypes", and so "there is nothing more required to those kinds of ideas to make them real, but that they be so framed that there be a possibility of existing conformable to them."
Concerning substances, however, he says:

All the ideas we have of particular, distinct sorts of substances, are nothing but several combinations of simple ideas co-existing in such, though unknown, cause of their union, as makes the whole subsist of itself. It is by such combinations of simple ideas, and nothing else, that we represent particular sorts of substances to ourselves. . . . 79

Ideas of substances can be called real only to the extent that they agree with the existence of things; 80 hence they are "unreal" and inadequate when they are "referred to a supposed real essence of each species of things", or are looked upon as "representations in the mind of things that do exist by ideas of those qualities that are discoverable in them." 81 There is included in our complex idea of a substance no idea of "something besides the figure, size and posture of the solid parts of that body [which] is its essence, something called 'substantial form'". 82 All the mind can do is to frame abstract general ideas of "nominal essences"; yet these are all that is required for the enlargement of knowledge. 83 Again, "those qualities and powers of substances whereof we make their complex ideas, are so many and various that no man's complex idea contains them all." 84 Neither do they contain any idea of "the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot exist sine re substante, 'without something to support them'". 85 Thus, we have no idea at all of abstract substances, or substance in itself, and we are as ignorant of spiritual substance as of material. 86

Further, because we know substances by an enumeration of their proper-

79 Essay, II, xxi, 6. 80 Ibid., xxx, 5.
81 Ibid., xxx, 6. 82 Ibid. 83 Of. ibid., III, iii, 20.
84 Ibid., II, xxx, 8. 85 Ibid., xiii, 2. 86 Ibid., sect. 5.
ties which we can never be sure is complete, and can never discover the
substantial form or nature from which those properties flow, we cannot
know that matter may not think,

it being, in respect to our notions, not much more remote from
our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd
to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to it
another substance with a faculty of thinking; since we know not
wherein thinking consists, nor to what sort of substances the Al-
mighty has been pleased to give that power which cannot be in any
created being but merely by the good pleasure and bounty of the
Creator.87

Much has been said in earlier sections of this paper concerning
Berkeley's criticisms of Locke's notions of the objects of knowledge
and the nature of substance. That need not be repeated here; but the
last quotation from the Essay concerning Human Understanding does serve
to remind us that Berkeley rejected Locke's notion of spiritual substance
in favour of Descartes's, when he came to elaborate his positive teaching,
and held with the rationalist that the substantial form of the soul
must be thought, since there is no distinction between the soul and
its faculties. His reason for doing this was that if Locke's con-
ception of Matter and Spirit (as in themselves unknowable) were true,
"Clippings of beards & parings of nails may Think" for ought any one
could tell, "Tho [Locke] seems positive of the Contrary."88 In other
words, Locke said that the mind cannot know substance; to which
Berkeley replied, that the "late deservedly esteemed philosopher" had
misconceived the nature both of knowledge and of substance. He was,
Berkeley could say, partially "right" in his analysis of each; for he
held that the objects of knowledge are ideas, and that all we know of

87 Essay, IV, iI, 6. 88 Phil. Comm., 718.
"substance" is a collection of sensible qualities; but he was also partially "wrong": for he spoke of ideas as "images of things", and supposed that "collections of qualities" needed something unknown, as it were to support them in being. Berkeley may thus be regarded as having sought to use Locke's principle, that we can know only appearances with certainty, in order to refound the objectivity of a philosophy which inconsistent theories concerning knowledge and the nature of reality had turned to subjectivity and scepticism.

Descartes, Malebranche and Locke all tried to discover a new way to arrive at a more perfect understanding of the reality of which Aristotle had given the classical description; yet -- perhaps because they were too much concerned with working out the details of the experiment -- they did not realize that the new approaches of the sort they envisaged could only lead to the formation of an entirely new concept of the real, and when applied to the old one, could only make it appear false and ludicrous. Berkeley was among the first modern thinkers to see that this was true, and to allow the "new way of ideas" to lead him where it would. He did not "destroy the world"; he abandoned a presupposition; and if, in that work of abandonment, he did not go far enough, his system is at least the result of an honest application of the principles which he learned from his contemporaries.
If COKLIBIOM froa the foregoing analysis, it la d e a r  that Berkeley was one of a group of thinkers who attempted in various ways to accommodate the traditional Aristotelian conception of reality to the new conception of philosophy to which the system of Descartes gave currency. He went further in this work of amendment than the thinkers by whom he was most influenced -- Locke and Malebranche -- but like them, he still retained much that was traditional in elaborating his thought. The Aristotelian universe was a universe of substances, of self-subsistent beings which could be known directly as such. Berkeley never once questions the validity of the category of substance as such, nor ever doubts that self-subsistent beings exist which can be known. He affirms the existence of the infinite creator God, and of the finite created spirit (or soul) on the basis of what might be called "personal variations" on the traditional proofs for these beings, and only denies the reality of an extramental, material world because the principles of the "new philosophy" appear to him to have made this "unknowable and unintelligible".

Berkeley's philosophy is at bottom an attempt to solve the problem of knowledge which Descartes had produced by his rigidly mathematical conceptions of mind and body (which, when defined, are
as mutually exclusive as "circle" and "square"), and by his doctrine that the objects of knowledge are ideas; that is, that the mind does not transcend itself in knowing. The Bishop comments that the objects of knowledge are by philosophers called "ideas"; but these are supposed to be "images of things" — an illogical and gratuitous assumption, based on an incomplete examination of the reasons for the "naive" commonsense notion that we know self-subsistent, material things which exist independent of us. If we know ideas, that is all we know; that these are "images", that they "represent" to us a reality existing outside our minds and "behind" them, are doctrines which are absolutely without foundation. Either we know things existing in re, or else we have no reason to suppose that such things exist; and philosophers, says Berkeley, have demonstrated that the first cannot be true. Yet they persist in saying that only when the mind's ideas are faithful copies of what is outside it, does it attain truth; from this, only the most complete and "forlorn" scepticism can result. Therefore, the supposed material world performs no conceivable function whatever, for material substances cannot possibly cause in us the immaterial, spiritual ideas we have of extended things. Hence, Berkeley teaches that on the principles which other philosophers have already laid down, a sufficient explanation of reality can be found in the mind which knows its own ideas, without calling in a useless, unknowable, impossible tertium quid, matter. The ideas -- the inert, completely known sense-impressions -- which the mind knows have an objective value, not as images of anything extramental, but as the real constituents of the per-
ceivable universe. The only "archetypes" they can possibly "answer to" would be the creative ideas in the mind of God; indeed, the only possible cause of these ideas is God; therefore God must cause them, and He must exist. This is Berkeley's "direct and immediate demonstration, from a most evident principle, of the being of a God."

Personal identity is a fact which consciousness of the ideas reveals, and which is necessary to explain perception, imagination and memory. Thus the finite spirit knows himself — and by analogy, his fellow-spirits — in knowing the ideas. Hence, these ideas lead us on a progress, not from thought to external, physical reality, but from mind to Mind; and the presuppositions of the philosophers, while they can make us certain of nothing that is non-mental, can be used to demonstrate the reality of the soul and the existence of God. By arguing in this fashion, Berkeley hopes at once to solve the Cartesian problem of our knowledge of extramental reality, and to liberate the philosopher from the scepticism inherent in Locke's notion of substance, destroying once and for all the great arguments in favour of atheism. Indeed, it is because of this concern to put scepticism to rout and to establish a rational basis for faith, that Bishop Berkeley reminds us of another philosophising prelate, St. Augustine of Hippo.

Berkeley's rejection of the representational theory of knowledge is complete. In the universe of spirits as he conceives it, radiant as it is with intelligibility and order, the materials of man's knowledge come directly from God; and all that man knows, either by this Divine

1 Works, II, 212.
"infusion" of the data of sense, or as a result of his own reasonings upon what he has been permitted to perceive, he knows directly, immediately, and without the intervention of any epistemological tertium quid. In this connexion, the word "notion" signifies "the mental as object", and cannot, apparently, be interpreted to have any psychological significance as a modification of the intellect. Indeed, Berkeley expressly denies that even the ideas of sense can be "modes" or "qualities" of the mind. "Notional" knowledge is thus "empty" knowledge; its objects are not "in" the mind at all;2 but this does not mean that the mind can "have a notion of" the material, extramental world. The mind knows a system of ideas which forms a complete reality in itself, outside of which it is both meaningless and impossible to look, unless it be to discover the perceiver, and the cause, of those ideas. All intelligibility is in the realm of the immaterial, the spiritual; whatever is beyond this can only be completely unintelligible — like the prime matter of Aristotle, which is pure potency, and in itself unknowable. For this reason, although immaterialism may have been partially inspired by Locke's empiricism, the abandonment of the empiricist's view of the value of sense-knowledge for that of the Platonist or the Cartesian would not appear to effect the validity of Berkeley's argument.

Berkeley was in many ways a man of his age and was much indebted to the thinkers who immediately preceded him; but as far as the main conclusions of his thought are concerned, the contemporary influences upon him were largely negative. The following points may be listed:

1. He greatly admired Newton as an experimental philosopher, and even made some use of his method; but he rejected the conclusions of Newtonian physics.

2. With Descartes, he held that the essence of a substance can be known in terms of its principal attribute; but he saw that the attribute which Descartes had assigned to material substance could not possibly belong to it. Both thinkers are concerned with proving that it is possible to know self-subsistent beings, and both argue that what cannot be understood (or "clearly and distinctly" thought) must be rejected from philosophy. Both agree in calling the objects of knowledge "ideas", but differ considerably in their definitions of the term.

3. Malebranche taught that we never know the material world at all save by faith; that there is no more connexion between a body and its soul than there is between two bodies or two souls; and that our knowledge comes directly from God, Who is the author of all the activity in Nature. Berkeley saw in all these doctrines proof that an exterior, material world cannot exist, and further modified Malebranche's Occasionalism to include the activity of finite spirits.

4. From Locke, he learnt that the mind knows "ideas" which are data of sense, and that collections of these ideas make up all that we can actually know of supposedly self-subsistent beings in the world of sense. But he rejected the representational theory of knowledge as found in both Locke and Descartes, and denied that "ideas" could ever be "images" of anything like themselves outside.
the mind, or that they could be caused in us by anything non-spiritual. He likewise rejected Locke's notion of substance of the substratum of perceivable qualities as productive of scepticism in our knowledge of spirits as well as bodies.

Berkeley may be said to have "solved" the problem of knowledge which the Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body had produced, by denying one of the terms of that dichotomy; in the same way, he may be said to have "solved" the problem of substance by showing that the empiricist or Lockean notion of substance was meaningless when applied either to matter or spirit, and that the rationalist or Cartesian conception of it was intelligible only when referred to spirits.
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VITA AUCTORIS


1934.Began schooling in Detroit.


1940. Came to Canada, and lived at family home in St. Catharines, Ontario, for two years. Attended private schools.

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