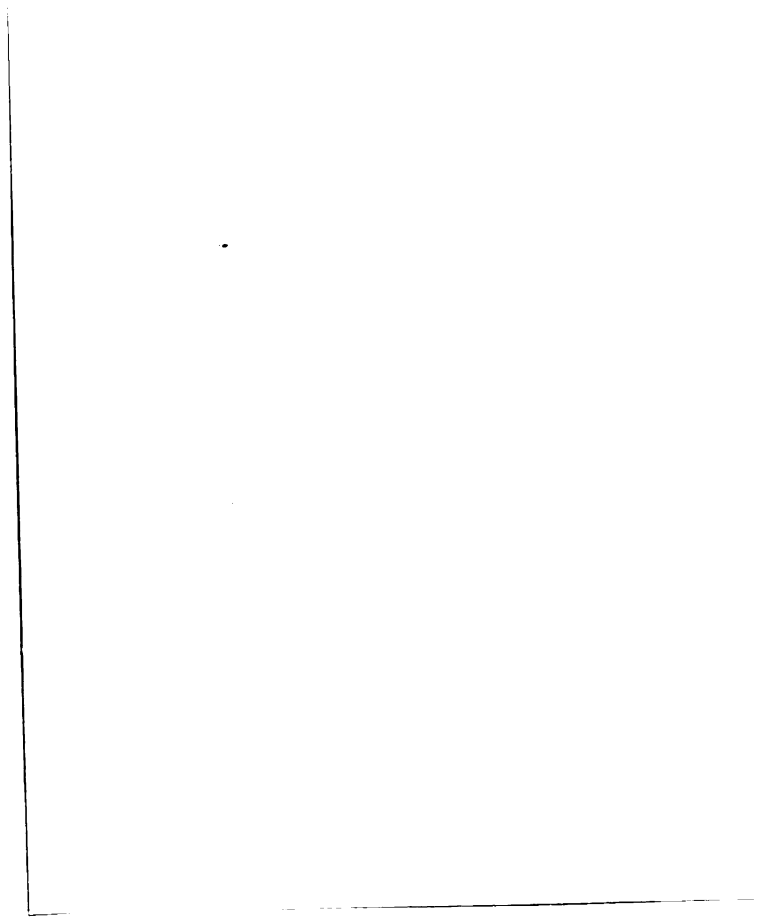

ABSTRACT

A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF REALITY IN THE LIGHT OF BERKELEY'S IMMATERIALISM

by Waheed Ali Farooqi

The purpose of this dissertation is to present the basis for a brief picture of the universe which can be termed Spiritual Monism. The world is here considered as a great chain of spiritual beings in which each spirit affects and in turn is affected by the other, and each of which represents the being of God from its own particular point of view. The members of this spiritual community, though variegated and full of distinctions, are held to be constituted of a stuff which goes into the making of our own inner life or soul.

The foundations of this spiritualism has been laid on the mysticism of Islam and post-Kantian idealism in general, and Berkeley's immaterialism and spiritualism in particular. It has been shown that in spite of Berkeley's most revolutionary doctrine of immaterialism, the inherent driving force of spiritualism has not got itself adequately stated in him. Immaterialism, Berkeley did not realize, is only the first stage in any true system of idealism or

spiritualism. But though Berkeley did not make proper use of, or develop, his immaterial hypothesis, it is perfectly possible to construct, by a process of sifting and elimination, a system of spiritualism on lines which are quite compatible with a fully realistic view of the physical world.

Berkeley, it is contended, most effectually proved the truth that objects of the physical world are ideas, but it was most misleading on his part to claim that these ideas are therefore in the mind, or that their being consists in their being perceived. This is tantamount to a denial of the objective world, and Berkeley was rightly accused of solipsism. The cardinal principle of his system that "esse is percipi" is shown to rest on certain ambiguities of language and certain paralogisms of reason which when cleared up deprives it of all its argumentative force. All genuine knowledge presupposes an antecedent reality with a mind-independent character in some sense, though it cannot be demonstrated due to our ego-centric predicament.

Further, while Berkeley planned to drive matter out of the universe, to say that the ideas are 'passive', 'inert' and 'senseless', was still to cling to the doctrine of matter in a different form which was no real improvement on materialism. If the principle that like causes have like effects has any validity, how can it come to pass that Nature which is caused by a Supreme Active Spirit be passive, inert or senseless? This is the type of contradiction, it is explained, which was also committed by two eminent

philosophers viz. Plotinus and Fichte, who otherwise come closest to a doctrine of Spiritual Monism. The physical world in both their systems is considered as an emanation or creation of God but it behaves as if it were not. It does not, for instance, seek the 'Divine likeness', but moves in quite an opposite direction. Their doctrines have, therefore, been discussed in some detail and attacked not by way of refutation but by way of demonstrating the truth of Spiritual Monism held by the author. The Kantian distinction between phenomenon and noumenon as two entirely different and closed systems has also been rejected on the same grounds.

But the proof demonstrating the falsity of the principles of "esse is percipi" and the inert and passive nature of ideas in Berkeley's earlier works does not mean that the universe in Berkeley's system is not a spiritual order or that it is not dependent for its existence upon God. For his earlier doctrine of immaterialism studied in conjunction with his latest work the Siris proves that the pervading intellectual outcome of his life as a whole was a philosophy of Spiritual Monism. In the Siris Berkeley comes to adopt the doctrines:

a) that the universe is causally dependent upon God.

b) that fire, being a divine manifestation, possesses "an occult universal force," which actuates and animates the whole world, and serves as an instrumental cause in the production of effects.

c) that the world is animated and possessed of life and consciousness.

d) that there are no chasms in nature but a continuous scale of beings.

e) that reason being superior to sense can alone lead us to the knowledge of ultimate reality.

It is argued that if Berkeley had in fact attempted to reconcile the epistemological position of his earlier works with the ontological position of the Siris, he would have come in effect to adopt the type of Spiritual Monism enunciated here, and also professed by some great mystics of Islam viz. Jelaluddin Rumi and Ibnul Arabi.

A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF REALITY IN THE LIGHT OF BERKELEY'S IMMATERIALISM

By

Waheed Ali Farooqi

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Philosophy

1966

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is the pleasant privilege of the author to express his profound sense of appreciation to Professors Craig A. Staudenbaur and John F. A. Taylor whose critical remarks, suggestions and insights have proved most invaluable in the writing of this dissertation. I should be derelict if I did not also acknowledge my indebtedness to Professors William J. Callaghan, George C. Kerner and Gerald J. Massey who not only afforded me the opportunity of pursuing graduate study at the Michigan State University, but made my stay in the United States most pleasant. I am also grateful to my kind friends Professors Herbert Hendry and Charles McCracken for their constant suggestions and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

In our references to Berkeley's works we have made use of the nine volume definitive edition of The Works of George Berkeley, edited by Professors Luce and Jessop and published by Thomas Nelson and Sons (1948-1957). Works referred to by section numbers are: The Principles of Human Knowledge (abbreviated PHK), Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision (abbreviated NTV) and the Siris. The Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous (abbreviated TD) will be referred to by page numbers in volume II of the Works. References to the Philosophical Commentaries (abbreviated PC) will employ the entry numbers established by Professor Luce. Berkeley's spelling, punctuation, and emphasis will be adhered to in all quotations.

INTRODUCTION

In the present study we propose to present the basis for a brief picture of the universe which can be termed Spiritual Monism. The universe is here considered as a system of spirits which is a manifestation of God, in which each spirit affects and in turn is affected by the other, and each of which represents the being of God from its own particular point of view. The members of this spiritual community, from an ontological point of view, are held to be constituted of a stuff which goes into the making of our own inner life or soul. In constructing this system we have laid our foundations on the mysticism of Islam and post-Kantian idealism in general, and Berkeley's immaterialism and spiritualism in particular. We have shown in detail that in spite of Berkeley's most revolutionary doctrine of immaterialism the inherent driving force of idealism and spiritualism has not got itself adequately stated in him. He did not work out his system as comprehensively and as fully as other philosophers have done, and although he recognized the central importance of mind and spirit in his system he could not explore the many interesting speculative problems which it involved, or think out in full the far reaching implications of his

insight. As a result many spaces are left blank and some of the lines he has drawn (e.g., between 'ideas' and 'spirits') can hardly stand. This, we feel, was perhaps due, not to any lack of philosophical capacity on his part, but to his desire to devote his attention to practical affairs of life, and an absence of sufficiently keen interest in any except a limited number of philosophical problems. Aware that he was to inaugurate a revolution in the current modes of metaphysical thinking, and mindful that the "mighty sect of men" was to oppose him, the single problem of the existence or nonexistence of matter assumed for him a size disporportionate to the Herculean task which his immaterial thesis was called upon to resolve. Upon the existence or nonexistence of abstract matter, he thought, there lay at stake the consistency of human reason with itself, and our only warrant for the objectivity of ideals which human reason sets for itself. Immaterialism, Berkeley did not realize, is only the first stage in any true system of idealism or spiritualism, though the former meant for him the latter. The Berkeleyan system therefore resulted in what may in Kantian phraseology be termed 'dogmatic idealism.' The substitution of God for matter as the operating cause that gives rise to presentations in finite minds was, in truth, no improvement on materialism.

Berkeley's version of immaterialism, however, has the great merit of showing clearly, if only unintentionally, just where the most formidable problems lie. And though

Berkeley did not make proper use of, or develop, his immaterial hypothesis, it is perfectly possible to develop from this a system of spiritualism on lines which are quite compatible with a fully realistic view of the physical world. The enterprise seems to us not only possible, but if carried out, of great significance for philosophy, and it is this which we undertake to construct briefly in the present dissertation. We commit ourselves to a thorough-going spiritualism which affirms that reality can be explained in terms of ideas and conscious beings, all of which are causally dependent for their existence on God. A system of Spiritual Monism worked out on these lines, we believe, is not found elsewhere.

The penetrating and sometimes crossing thoughts of a philosopher can be improved and generalised by elimination and harmonised in so far as they may lead us to a truth which, though one and eternal, is not always consistently presented. But since it is pregnant with a further meaning, after a careful scrutiny and sorting, what is greatest and truest may be gathered as the seed thoughts of further philosophical fruit. A philosopher may err while the principle embodied in his thinking may still remain unshaken; particular arguments may be wrong, while the principle itself has immortal and increasing vitality.

We, therefore, agree with the realistic critics of Berkeley that the subjectivism of his system cannot be maintained. The cardinal principle of his system that

"esse is percipi," we have held, rests upon certain ambiguities of language and certain paralogisms of reason which when detected and cleared up deprive it of all its argumentative force. In a typical Berkeleyan strain Professor Stace tells us that the belief in unexperienced entities ought not to be entertained any more than the belief that there is a unicorn on Mars ought to be entertained.[1] Professor Stace fails to notice that knowing does not make its object. For what depends on our perceiving an object is not its existence but only the possibility of our knowing it to exist. It is no more than a tautology that we can only experience an object which is experienced.

All genuine knowledge, we have maintained, presupposes an antecedent reality, with a mind-independent character in some sense. To deny this principle is to strike at the very roots of knowledge and intelligence. For unless the content of knowledge is acknowledged as having an existence independent of being perceived, the peculiar significance of knowledge is inevitably lost. All this, we have maintained, is indisputable, although it cannot be demonstrated due to our ego-centric predicament.

---

[1] W. T. Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," Mind, Vol. XLIII, No. 170 (April, 1934), pp. 145-155.

Now if what we experience is in any degree public and not private, independently real and not subjective, then sense-data are not in the mind but objective occurrences which are an integral part of the physical world, and which appear within the spatio-temporal continuum. Even sounds, colours, odours, etc., which Berkeley and most of his predecessors held to be mind-dependent we have argued to be independent. Nature both in its primary and secondary qualities is not only a means to an intellectual end, but is also in some respects an end in itself. And even when it is a means, it is in its first and most direct intent a means either to the end of nature itself, or to the overall divine plan, rather than an end to human perception. The nightingale pours out its beautiful songs not only for us but it sings for itself also. The rose that blushes unseen is not lost and the sweetness shed on the desert air is not wasted. Berkeley's concept of nature as divine language fails to cover all the facets of the phenomenal world.[2] No system of philosophy can be built on the straining of a metaphor.

Thus while nobody can refute Berkeley's fundamental thesis that the universe is constituted of spirits and

---

[2]Berkeley considered the physical world as a language through which God speaks to his creatures. Our visible ideas, he says, "are the language whereby the governing spirit on whom we depend, informs us what tangible ideas he is about to imprint on us, in case we excite this or that motion in our own bodies" (PHK, Sec. 44).

their ideas[3] (and it is largely upon this that we propose to construct the edifice of our spiritual monism) we hold without falling into any 'manifest repugnancy' that physical objects not as such, but by the intermediacy of our ideas and mental experiences, find their way to the mind.

This then is the minimum, but with the bare statement of this minimum the problem has only begun. The real issue is to discover the nature and ontological status of these "independent" "ideas" and "spirits," and to determine what that independence really means. We have argued that physical objects, though existing independently of us, resemble feeling or sentient beings in their ultimate nature, and are really mental or physical in character. So while rejecting the first part of Berkeley's thesis that "esse is percipi," we admit the second part that all "esse is percipere." The same objects which have the characteristics we ascribe to tables, stones, etc., also feel, experience and have psychical qualities. The "ideas" or physical objects, according to Berkeley, are mental only in the sense that they are dependent on a mind for their existence and not in the sense that they are themselves spiritual in their own nature and being. But in contradistinction to this Berkeleyan thesis we have maintained that ultimately,

---

[3]All refutations of immaterialism are always one or another form of Samuel Johnson's refutation, who kicking a large stone said, "I disprove it thus." Johnson missed Berkeley's real point, and we do not find that any of the many refutations since his time, differ in principle from his.

pericpere applies to physical objects, that they are really conscious, perceiving things, much akin to the human soul, and that despite all appearances to the contrary, their existence is a conscious perceiving existence. Professor Moore recognizes that idealism in this larger sense, namely the metaphysical assertion that the universe is spiritual is irrefutable:

> Modern Idealism, if it asserts any general conclusion about the universe at all, asserts that it is spiritual. There are two points about this assertion to which I wish to call attention. These points are that, whatever be its exact meaning, it is certainly meant to assert (1) that the universe is very different indeed from what it seems, and (2) that it has quite a large number of properties which it does not seem to have. Chairs and tables and mountains seem to be very different from us; but, when the whole universe is declared to be spiritual, it is certainly meant to assert that they are far more like us than we think. The idealist means to assert that they are in some sense neither lifeless nor unconscious, as they certainly seem to be; and I do not think his language is so grossly deceptive, but that we may assume him to believe that they really are very different indeed from what they seem. And secondly when he declares that they are spiritual, he means to include in that term quite a large number of different properties. When the whole universe is declared to be spiritual, it is meant not only that it is in some sense conscious, but that it has what we recognise in ourselves as the higher forms of consciousness. That it is intelligent; that it is purposeful; that it is not mechanical; all these different things are commonly asserted of it. In general, it may be said, this phrase 'reality is spiritual' excites and expresses the belief that the whole universe possesses all the qualities the possession of which is held to make us so superior to things which seem to be inanimate: at least, if it does not possess exactly those which we possess, it possesses not one only, but several others, which, by the same ethical standard, would be judged equal to or better than our own. When we say it is spiritual we mean to say that it

> has quite a number of excellent qualities, different from any which we commonly attribute either to stars or planets or to cups and saucers. . . . For my own part I wish it to be clearly understood that I do not suppose that anything I shall say has the smallest tendency to prove that reality is not spiritual: I do not believe it possible to refute a single one of the many important propositions contained in the assertion that it is so.[4]

We likewise regard the activity of our own minds, so to speak, as a pulse of a single cosmic activity which manifests itself in all that exists. The same arguments which lead to interpret the body and behavior of a man, as manifesting a spirit, would lead us to recognize spirits in the higher animals too. And if in the higher animals why not in the lower? And if in the lower animals why not in plants? For, like animals, plants are organisms of individualized structure, and their reaction to their environment exhibit, like those of animals, the purposive character which we sum up in the term "adaptation." And lastly if we follow the thread of continuity downward, can we stop at what we usually call the inorganic or so-called inanimate? It is therefore a mistake to ascribe any sense of momentous contrast between human experience and the experience of physical objects. Leibniz' doctrine of the active perceiving monads represents to some extent the nature of such a spiritualism. Leibniz, however, could not divine Berkeley's penetrating insight that matter does not exist.

---

[4] G. E. Moore, Philosophical Studies (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1922), pp. 1-3.

In such a system of reality nothing is lifeless or soulless; it is ordered in an ascending hierarchy from the lowest and most rudimentary kind of spirits up to the highest. The universe, we maintain is a great Chain of Being and there are innumerable realms of these "ideas" and "spirits." The panorama of spiritual existence is variegated and full of distinctions and there are degrees of perfection and reality. Our view, therefore, unlike other systems of spiritualism is also not open to the criticism voiced by Aristotle or L. T. Hobhouse that "where everything is spiritual, the spiritual loses all distinctive significance." Each spirit is constantly active and perceiving. But perceiving implies objects; therefore, each spirit has a world of objects of its own which in themselves are spirits of a different order.

Berkeley, we know, relied on the inert nature of his "ideas" due to a so-called indubitable immediacy and a dogmatic device of definitional certainty. "Our ideas," he asserts, "are visibly inactive, there is nothing of power or agency included in them."[5] "A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in so far as it is impossible for an idea to do anything or strictly speaking, to be the cause of anything." Berkeley here unquestionably sets out from the Cartesian dualism of conscious life and unthinking

---

[5] PHK, Sec. 25.

extended bodies. He, however, did not realize that Descartes himself failed to give any satisfactory explanation of the dualism of res cogitans and res extensa. For when he comes to give an explanation of the interaction of body and mind, he flagrantly violates his own rule about suspending judgment until he saw the truth clearly and distinctly:

> Quite apart from the fact that he had no evidence at all that the pineal gland was the locus of interaction, the problem is to see how any organ could be the locus of something which is not extended. How could the mind, which is immaterial, cause changes in body which by definition moves on contact? How could body, which causes changes only on contact, cause changes in something it cannot touch? It would seem that no answer to these questions is possible in Cartesian terms.[6]

It was becoming more and more evident to Locke as well, that the two heterogeneous quiddities of body and mind would never fulfill the requirement of explaining one another which had been implied in the assertion of their mutual relation. Locke was, therefore, on the verge of bridging this dualism when he declared that he did not see any reason why physical objects should not be endowed by God with the power to think.[7] He, however, confused these objects with matter. Now Berkeley instead of breaking the impasse in accordance with the dictates of reason thought it fit to resolve it by sheer violence. The two antithetical Cartesian substances were reduced to one not by showing any

---

[6]W. T. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1952), p. 684.

[7]Essay, IV, 3, 6.

sort of kinship through an ontological analysis of the two, but by a summary relegation of the one to the other to the rank of dependent existence. The world of nature which is caused by a Supreme Active Spirit, we are told, exists only as an inert and passive being. But if the principle that like causes have like effects has any truth, can nature be ever inert and passive? In the Three Dialogues he asks: "how can that which is unthinking be a cause of thought?" As a corollary we ask Berkeley the further question: "how that which is active and thinking be the cause of that which is passive and inert?"

> How can you get the effect out of the cause if it is not implicitly contained in the cause in the first place. Either the cause must provide for the effect or not. If it does then we no longer have simply inert, passive and senseless things but things which are potentially minds.[8]

This is a type of contradiction in metaphysical speculation which was also committed by two eminent philosophers viz., Plotinus and Fichte, whom we otherwise consider to have come closest to our Spiritual Monism. Their doctrines have, therefore, been discussed in some detail and attacked not by way of refutation but in constructing our own thesis. We have shown that the physical world in both these systems is considered as an emanation or creation of God but it behaves as if it were not. It does not, for

---

[8] F. W. McConnel, "Berkeley and Scepticism" (New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy, edited by W. E. Steinkraus; New York: Holt Rinehart, Winston Inc., 1966), p. 54.

instance, seek the "Divine likeness," but moves in quite an opposite direction. We maintain that a philosophy which considered the physical world and its laws as something distinct or opposite from God "is a vain chimera introduced by those heathens who had not just notions of the omnipresence and infinite perfection of God."[9] It is on these grounds that we have also rejected the Kantian distinction between phenomenon and the noumenon as two entirely different and closed systems.

Further, we have held that an "idea" can be like nothing but an idea--that the physical world instead of being passive, inert and senseless, as something sui generis distinct from our ideas and consciousness, bears a close semblance to our thoughts and to spirits. There is a real correspondence, correlation, analogy and conformity between the subject and the object. Mind and nature stand in relation of mutual implication. As mind is organic to the world so the world is organic to the mind, since at heart they are both one and the same.

Were its course not regular, Berkeley tells us, nature could never be understood. But what directs our mind to the discovery of this regular course? His metaphor of language again fails him. Sheer observation of the order of our ideas as we perceive them, would never discover to us nature or her regular course. Unless there is

---

[9] PHK, Sec. 150.

a close conformity between the principles of nature and the principles of our own mind we can never be concerned with bringing the manifold of non-conforming items within the order of our own presentations.[10]

The Spiritualism of the Siris

But although Berkeley's reach far exceeded his grasp, we propose to show, his reach was very great. For in the Siris he drops his earlier epistemological thesis practically out of sight when he mounts from a recipe of tar-water as a panacea of all human ills to the vision of God as the pervading spirit manifesting Himself in all Nature.[11] The net result of the Siris is to transform the

---

[10] George P. Adams, "Berkeley and Kant" (California University Publications in Philosophy, Vol. 29), pp. 189-206.

[11] In our study we have purposely avoided entering into any controversy regarding the "unity" or "development" in Berkeley's thought, this having no direct relevance to the construction of our spiritualistic doctrine. Professor Luce has challenged the view of some of Berkeley's critics that his philosophy underwent any significant change in his later works, particularly the Siris. So far as we are concerned we have only brought into the fore what appeared to us as the points of similarities and differences between Siris and his earlier works, and left to the reader to judge for himself whether it amounts to a change of doctrine. It requires a long and detailed study to weigh up the pros and cons of the dispute. Our main purpose here is rather to effect, by a process of sifting and elimination, a reconciliation between the two phases of Berkeley's thought and to show that through this device a true system of Spiritual Monism can be built. Those interested in the controversy may see A. A. Luce's articles on "The Unity of Berkeleyan Philosophy" in Mind, Vol. XIVI, Nos. 181-82, January and April, 1937. J. Wild criticized Luce's opinion in the issue of Mind for October, 1937 (Vol. XIVI, No. 184). In January, 1940, and April, 1943, Professor Luce contributed further articles in defense of his views.

theory of the universe in terms of 'ideas' into a theory of the universe in terms of 'mind,' 'spirit,' or what Kant would call 'experience.' The addition of the Siris to Berkeley's philosophical writings proves that Berkeley's thought, rough-hewn though in many respects it may be, is nonetheless in its essentials a significant expression of the driving force of all spiritualism. We maintain that if Berkeley had in fact attempted to reconcile the epistemological position of his earlier works with the ontological position of the Siris, he would have come in effect to adopt the type of Spiritual Monism enunciated by us and professed by some of the great mystics of Islam viz., Jelaluddin Rumi and Ibnul Arabi. In such a system we are not obliged to worship an unknown or unknowable God. The same Eternal and Intelligent Spirit that we find manifested in our own inner life we see in visible phenomena. God plays here the role of a Cosmic Donor without whose existence, our own existence and the existence of the external world cannot consistently be conceived. In the Principles and the Three Dialogues knowledge of God, based as it was on the 'esse is percipi' principle, was purely inferential. God was introduced as a mere dues ex machina in the entire system. A genuine proof of the existence of God, however, must be much more direct and plausible. It must be of such a nature as to enable us to perceive the undeniable and evident necessity of divine existence with a

degree of certainty which belongs to no other concept in the universe. God is, therefore, conceived as a Necessary Being in our system of Spiritual Monism, which also coincides with Berkeley's notion of God in the Siris.

The notion that the physical world can be reduced without remainder to the nature of experience and consciousness also to some extent plays a part in the philosophies of Husserl, Russell and Whitehead, but none of them developed their systems in a way that either directly leads to the establishment of a Necessary Being or maintains the thoroughgoing spiritual nature of the universe. We do not, therefore, consider their systems as satisfactory explanation about the nature of reality. In their analysis of the ontological status of sense-data the concept of phenomenal things has been so watered down in Russell and Whitehead as to become as innocuous as it is useless, and has become compatible with almost any concept of the elementary constituents of the universe, short of brute material entities. While Whitehead went on to construct a philosophy on the false principle of "esse is percipi,"[12] Russell presented a phenomenalism in which there is neither any place for, nor necessity of God.[13] We on the contrary have maintained

---

[12]See W. M. Urban's article "Elements of Unintelligibility in Whitehead's Philosophy," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 35, No. 23, pp. 617-637.

[13]Bertrand Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926), pp. 107-34.

that the notion of Necessary Being as an Infinite Spirit is the cardinal principle of all thought and is logically entailed by the very definition of finite spirits as possible beings.

Finally it will be seen that in our system of Spiritual Monism not only is the principle of '*esse* is *percipi*' and the doctrine of matter overthrown but a whole host of other philosophical difficulties are cleared out of the way. We get rid of the metaphysical dualism of Descartes and with it the mind-body problem conceived in terms of the interaction of two heterogeneous substances. The Kantian dualism of a world of facts as distinct from a world of values has also been demolished. Again, in epistemology, the separation of subject and objects has been avoided as if they belonged to different worlds, and as if the subject knows only its own mental states. The principle of Occam's razor is strongly in our favor. If the notion of matter is something which is given neither by sensation nor by reason, that is the best possible reason for not assuming its existence; and if we can account for the facts of existence in terms of 'ideas' there is a good ground for effecting an analysis which reduces the constituents of the universe exclusively to 'ideas' or 'spirits,' all as manifestations of one Infinite Spirit.

CHAPTER I

BERKELEY'S REVOLUTIONARY DOCTRINE OF IMMATERIALISM

The final aim of all speculative philosophy from Thales down to our own times has largely remained one and the same--viz., to find the One in the many, to discover unity among all multiplicity, a single principle which can explain the whence and whither of all things. One such brilliant attempt was made by an eighteenth century Irish philosopher, Bishop Berkeley, who by his most revolutionary doctrine of immaterialism paved the way to a true system of Spiritual Monism. Professor Fraser has truly remarked of the new conception of matter presented by Berkeley that "its consequences justify us in regarding it as one of the conceptions that marks epochs, and become springs of spiritual progress."[1] By destroying the theory of matter he aimed to solve at a stroke the countless insoluble enigmas and contradictions and an incredible number of disputes and puzzling questions which, since the times of Aristotle, had been a thorn in the side of the divines, as well as philosophers.

---

[1]A. C. Fraser, Selections from Berkeley (London: At the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1899), p. xiii.

Matter in Aristotle's system, we know, was synonymous with a potentiality to change. By itself it was an absolute blankness and formlessness. But how, it may be asked, can such a matter be conceived as existing? All existence must be determinate, must have some form, whereas matter, by definition, was said to be formless. Such a paradoxical principle which can neither be perceived nor conceived baffles the human intellect. Such a 'potentiality' cannot be conceived since it is the absolute zero of all that makes thought and knowledge possible.

In modern philosophy Descartes' preparatory skepticism no doubt did not suffer the existence of matter to pass unchallenged, but he ended by accepting its existence as true, conceiving the veracity of the Deity involved in our apparently intuitive belief in it. With Malebranche matter had no duty to perform and thus was quite a superfluous supposition, but he nonetheless accepted it, supposing that Revelation testified to its existence. Thus both Descartes and Malebranche believed in matter, but the belief was destitute of meaning for Malebranche. Locke too, largely on the credit of Aristotle's logic, believed in matter as "the supposed, but unknown support of those qualities we find existing. . . ."[2] Matter, in Locke's view, turns out in the last analysis to be an unknown X which we assume to exist because we cannot imagine the

---

[2] Essay, II, 13, 2.

qualities that we directly observe as existing without something in which to inhere. But nothing can be said of its nature--it is a "something I know not what."

It was reserved for Berkeley to deny the existence of matter as a senseless and baseless hypothesis. In so doing he not only simplified speculation by dropping a fictitious entity but saved philosophy from skepticism resulting in the contradictions and confusions between the doubts of reason and the beliefs of sense. Berkeley takes issue with Locke by arguing that if matter is only an unknown X, of whose existence we know and can know nothing, we must conclude that it does not exist. Throughout our whole experience of the physical world, we apprehend nothing but sensible ideas. Berkeley's great originality lies in the fact that he saw possible a consistent explanation of the physical world by granting only ordered sensations and 'ideas'; for if we consider any of the qualities we usually ascribe to physical objects, these turn out to be nothing but ideas. An object is only the sum-total of all perceived qualities, viewed in combination with each other as they are presented to us in experience.

> As several of these qualities are observed to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one <u>thing</u>. Thus, for example a certain colour, taste, smell, figure, and consistence having been observed to go together, are accounted as one distinct thing, signified by the name apple; other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things.[3]

---

[3] <u>PHK</u>, Sec. 1.

Berkeley maintains that his theory of ideas makes no difference to the reality of the sensible world. All that he gets rid of is Locke's material substance, which is not an object of sense and which will therefore not be missed by any ordinary man. Thus while a material substance unrevealed in a living perception of concrete phenomena seemed to Berkeley meaningless and unreal, he found in abundance concrete sights and touches and sounds and tastes and odors--ideas or phenomena presented according to natural laws. In the Philosophical Commentaries he supplies us with a living test of his argument: Ask a man, never tainted with the jargon of philosophers, what he means by corporeal substance or the substances of a body, he shall always answer bulk, solidity and such like sensible qualities.[4]

> I do not argue against the existence of any one thing that we can apprehend, either by sense or reflexion. That the things I see with mine eyes and touch with my hands do exist, really exist, I make not the least question. The only thing whose existence we deny, is that which philosophers call matter or corporeal substance. And in doing of this, there is no damage done to the rest of mankind, who, I dare say, will never miss it. The atheist indeed will want the colour of an empty name to support his impiety; and the philosophers may possibly find, they have lost a great handle for trifling and disputation.[5]

Matter, Berkeley asserts, is not given to us by any of the external senses, for all they show us are sensible qualities and ideas. It is not given by the intellect,

---

[4] PC, #517 A.

[5] PHK, Sec. 35.

which is utterly unable to frame any such notion. It is a fiction, a false creation, which, when closely pressed, turns out to be a non-entity. There is no such thing, because there is no evidence of it--we have no true notion, no imagination of it, and even the spurious notion is a contradiction.

> I say in the first place that I do not deny the existence of material substance, merely because I have no notion of it, but because the notion of it is inconsistent, or in other words, because it is repugnant that there should be a notion of it. Many things, for ought I know, may exist, whereof neither I nor any other man hath or can have any idea or notion whatsoever. But then those things must be possible, that is, nothing inconsistent must be included in their definition. I say secondly, that although we believe things to exist which we do not perceive; yet we may not believe that any particular thing exists, without some reason for such belief: but I have no reason for believing the existence of matter. I have no immediate intuition thereof: neither can I immediately from my sensations, ideas, notions, actions or passions, infer an unthinking, unperceiving, inactive substance, either by probable deduction, or necessary consequence.[6]

The doctrine of material substance as substratum also involves itself in a paradox--that of infinite regression. Matter, it is sometimes alleged, is requisite to support such properties as extension and motion. But if an analysis is made as to what 'material substratum' or 'supporting' really means it will be found that no definite meaning can be given to such phrases. If it is asserted that it is spread under sensible qualities or accidents,

---

[6] TD, pp. 232-233.

it must be spread under extension. In this case it must itself be extended, and, as a consequence, we find ourselves involved in an infinite regress.

To the plea that all mankind must necessarily believe in material things, Berkeley answers that, on the contrary, all mankind believe in the things which are the immediate objects of perception, i.e., in ideas and not some imaginary substratum of which we know or can know nothing. When Hylas (the skeptic) accuses Philonous (the spokesman of Berkeley) of leaving nothing but empty forms of things, the outside only of which strikes the senses, Philonous asserts that what Hylas calls "empty forms" are indeed the very things themselves.[7]

The doctrine of immaterialism, Berkeley affirms, is also in no way incompatible with the explanations given by the Corpuscular philosophy. Physics deals with bodies, and nowhere does he deny their existence. He only denies a mysterious and occult entity called "matter." Science may still deal with the state of physical things, and everything it has to say of them can be said with far greater facility and simplicity by an explanation of empirical relations of one idea to the other organized in terms of co-existence and succession, rather than reducing everything to matter in motion.

---

[7] TD, p. 244.

Thus Berkeley's arguments against matter are invincible. He exploded all the different hypotheses by which the existence of matter had been vindicated. The full-blooded matter of Descartes, who had exclaimed "give me matter and motion and I will give you a world," crumbles down at his hand. Our ideas are not merely the only objects of knowledge but the only existing things.

Berkeley no doubt planned to drive matter out of the universe to build up a system of philosophy where minds and their ideas could be considered as the only reality, but he could not unfortunately perform this task as easily and as effectually as he imagined he could. In the first place the spell of Cartesian dualism, where bodies were defined as completely passive and inert, was so thorough-going that he could not conceive the ontological nature of his 'ideas' in terms other than established by Descartes. The result was that Berkeley drove matter out the front door only to allow it to re-enter the back door. To say that the 'ideas' are passive, inert and senseless is still to cling to the notion of matter in a different form and is no real improvement on materialism. Secondly while Berkeley no doubt pointed out a very important truth that the objects of the external world are ideas and that we never apprehend in the physical world more than what we can perceive or conceive, it was most misleading on his part to claim that these ideas are therefore in the mind, and that their being

consists in being perceived. This is tantamount to a denial of the objective world, and Berkeley was rightly accused of solipsism.

Since matter in any form can have no place in a true system of spiritual monism we propose to show that the 'ideas' instead of being inert, passive and senseless are all ensouled, conscious and spiritual entities. Further, such a doctrine of spiritual monism is also compatible with a fully realistic view of the external world. The 'ideas,' in truth, are objective occurrences which take place within the spatio-temporal continuum and form an integral part of the physical world. They have an existence independent from all perception. We therefore first endeavour to prove the extent of the paradox which Berkeley's identification of the _esse_ of physical things with their _percipi_ involves.

CHAPTER II

A REFUTATION OF BERKELEY'S PRINCIPLE "*ESSE* IS *PERCIPI*"

The cornerstone of Berkeleyan philosophy consists in his doctrine, "*esse* is *percipi*." In the *Principles of Human Knowledge* and the *Three Dialogues* he clearly lays down that "to be is to be perceived" for sensible things. Existence consists in perceiving and being perceived. That which is not perceived, or does not perceive, does not exist. Take away the perceiving mind and you take away the sensible world. "Some truths there are," he says, "so near and obvious to the human mind that a man need only to open his eyes to see them. 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."[1] Berkeley thinks that the principle is self-evident to any one who cares to attend to what is *meant* by the term "exist" when applied to sensible things. "The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out

---

[1] *PHK*, Sec. 6.

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.[2] 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."[3] What we call things (a cherry for instance) are only bundles of sensations of light, colour, heat or cold, extension and figure, and is it possible, asks Berkeley, to separate even in thought, any one of these from perception? Berkeley does not maintain, as many other philosophers have done, that we cannot know with certainty whether objects exist

---

[2]Berkeley held the view of posse-percipi in his earlier writings. Entries 98 and 185a of The Philosophical Commentaries, confirm this view. He, however, later thought that the doctrine of posse-percipi was not consistent with the "esse is percipi" principle, since at least God always perceives the sensible world. Therefore when Hylas in the Third Dialogues grants that "the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, but not in being actually perceived" (p. 234), Philonous accuses Hylas of playing with words: "And what is perceivable but an idea? And can an idea exist without being actually perceived" [italics mine]. Again, in the Principles (p. 74) Berkeley says that ideas exist only in a mind perceiving them; "and this is true not only of the ideas we are acquainted with at present, but likewise of all possible ideas whatsoever." Therefore Professor Luce's view that Berkeley's theory of perception has room for the "perceivable" as well as the "perceived" is untenable. See Luce, Berkeley's Immaterialism (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1950), p. 46.

[3]PHK, Sec. 3.

when they are not perceived; he rather claims to demonstrate that they do not and cannot exist when not perceived--to say that they do, he contends, is self-contradictory. He was in fact clearly convinced that when we are speaking of sensible objects, to exist means to be perceived.

Berkeley appeals to us to look into our own thoughts and try whether we can conceive possible (and which is in no way repugnant to good sense and reason) any mixture or combination of qualities, or any sensible object whatsoever to exist without the mind.[4] Such an easy trial can make us see that to contend for the existence of any object unperceived by a mind is a downright contradiction.[5]

"But say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them . . . but what is all this . . . more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose: it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind but it doth not shew that you can conceive it possible, the objects of your thoughts may exist without the mind: to make out this, it is necessary that

---

[4] TD, p. 200.

[5] PHK, Sec. 22.

you conceive them existing unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy."[6] A man forgetting to take notice of his own self has been in consequence deluded to believe that he has found bodies wholly divorced from all perception, although all the while they were present in his own mind. Consider what we are thinking of when we think of a tree, for instance, in the forest without an observer: we are thinking how the tree would look to an observer if he were present, of the colour and the shape he would see, and the solidity he would feel. "The corporeal is thus by nature a menti objectum, essentially tied to mind."[7] Wood, stone, water, fire, cherry, etc. are things immediately perceived as congeries of sensible impressions, or ideas perceived by various senses: which ideas are united into one thing (or have one name given them) by the mind; because they are observed to attend to each other.[8] And ideas, it is obvious, cannot exist without a mind.[9] "It is very obvious upon the least inquiry into our own thoughts, to know whether it is possible for us to understand what is meant, by the absolute existence of sensible objects in themselves, or without the mind. To me it is

---

[6] PHK, Sec. 23.

[7] T. E. Jessop, Berkeley--Philosophical Writings (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1952), p. xiv.

[8] TD, p. 249.

[9] TD, p. 230.

evident those words mark out either a direct contradiction, or else nothing at all."[10] In support of his thesis Berkeley appeals to the common sense of mankind. "Ask the gardener why he thinks yonder cherry tree exists in the garden, and he shall tell you, because he sees and feels it; in a word, because he perceives it by his senses. Ask him, why he thinks an orange tree not to be there, and he shall tell you, because he does not perceive it."[11] It would thus be a contradiction to suppose that we see what is at the same time unseen--that we are conscious phenomenally of that which is unphenomenal--that we are conceiving what is unconceivable. We cannot detach phenomena from perception; apart from this they cease to be phenomenal. "It is indeed true by definition that if an idea exists it must be perceived and vice versa."[12]

We have now before us a concise account of Berkeley's principle, "_esse_ is _percipi_," which permeates the pages of the _Principles_ and the _Three Dialogues_. Berkeley is considered to be one of the clearest of the great philosophers but a thorough examination of his doctrine of "_esse_ is _percipi_" will show that despite all his arguments the "_esse_ is _percipi_" principle involves a good many fallacies.

---

[10] _PHK_, Sec. 24.

[11] _TD_, p. 234.

[12] D. W. Hamlyn, _Sensation and Perception_ (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 106.

We therefore undertake to show that it is wrong to assume that what makes any piece of fact real can be nothing but its presence as an inseparable aspect of a sentient experience. According to us, things known may continue to exist unaltered when they are not known; things may pass in and out of the cognitive relation without prejudice to their reality; and the existence of a thing is not correlated with or dependent upon the fact that anybody experiences it, perceives it, conceives it, or is in any way aware of it.[13]

Firstly, it may be noted that in spite of the vigorous eloquence with which Berkeley denounced the tendency of the philosophers to substitute words for thoughts, it is an irony that he should himself be a victim of this great fault. Berkeley may be charged with having confused two entirely different usages for the word "idea." Had he not all his life been so sincere a philosopher as he really was, his opponents might have accused him of deliberate sophistry and exploitation of the words "idea" by a fallacy of equivocation. In the Philosophical Commentaries and the Principles he emphatically asserts that the chief thing that he pretends to do is to remove the mist or veil of words since it is this that has occasioned all confusion and has ruined the schoolmen and mathematicians, the lawyers and divines. It is the abuse of language, he complains,

---

[13]See G. E. Moore, Philosophical Studies (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922), pp. 1-30.

which has played a chief part in rendering speculation intricate and perplexed and occasioned innumerable errors and difficulties in almost all parts of knowledge.[14] "We need only draw the curtain of words, to behold the fairest tree of knowledge, whose fruit is excellent, and within the reach of our hands."[15] But in spite of all his professions of clarity and correct usage of language Berkeley exploited the use of the word "idea." In ordinary English the familiar and established colloquial meaning of the word "idea" is something akin to the nature of "thought" or a "state of mind." But Berkeley makes a radical departure from this conventional use by using the word "idea" for things. "In common talk," Berkeley himself admits, "the objects of our senses are not termed ideas but things,"[16] for nobody uses the word "idea" in the common usage of the word. If such is the case, it may be asked "whether it be not ridiculously absurd to misapply names contrary to the common use of language?"[17] "Has every one a liberty to change the proper signification annexed to a common name in any language? For example, suppose a traveller should tell you, that in a certain country men might pass unhurt through the fire; and, upon explaining himself, you found

---

[14] PHK, "Introduction," Sec. 6.

[15] PHK, Sec. 24.

[16] TD, p. 251.

[17] TD, p. 239.

he meant by the word *fire* that which others call *water*: or if he should assert that there are trees which walk upon two legs, meaning men by the term *trees*. Would you think this reasonable?"[18] "Common custom is the standard of propriety in language. And for any man to affect speaking improperly, is to pervert the use of speech, and can never serve to better purpose, than to protract and multiply disputes."[19] Does it not therefore sound "very harsh to say we eat and drink ideas and are clothed with ideas."[20] Giving an excuse for not using the word "thing" and using the word "idea" instead, in its non-conventional sense, Berkeley tells us that he does so for two reasons: "first, because the term *thing*, in contradistinction to *idea*, is generally supposed to denote somewhat existing without the mind: secondly, because *thing* hath a more comprehensive signification than *idea*, including spirits or thinking things as well as ideas. Since therefore the objects of sense exist only in the mind, and are withal thoughtless and inactive, I chose to mark them by the word *idea*, which implies those properties."[21] It may be admitted that Berkeley is fully conscious of the heterogeneous nature of mind and sensible objects and makes a sharp distinction

---

[18] *TD*, p. 216.

[19] *TD*, p. 216.

[20] *PHK*, Sec. 38.

[21] *PHK*, Sec. 39.

between the two. In his famous article "The Refutation of Idealism,"[22] Professor G. E. Moore asserts that much of the confusion in Berkeley's system has been generated by his losing sight of an important distinction between the thing apprehended and the act of apprehension. Moore holds that every sensation has two elements or constituents, viz., (1) consciousness in respect of which all sensations are alike, (2) the object of sensation in respect of which one sensation differs from another. By the term "consciousness" he explains that he means the "knowing" or "being aware of," or experiencing something; a sensation being really a case of knowing or being aware of or experiencing something. Using the sensation of blue as example, Professor Moore tells us that the sensation of blue admittedly differs from the sensation of green, but that both are nevertheless sensations. Therefore they have something in common which he proposes to call "awareness." If any one tells us that to say "Blue exists," is the same thing as to say that "Both blue and consciousness exist," he makes a mistake and a self-contradictory mistake. Just because the *esse* of blue is something distinct from the *esse* of the *percipi* of blue, there is no logical difficulty in supposing blue to exist without consciousness of blue. Professor Moore believes that blue and the *percipi* of blue are as distinct as "green" and "sweet." Blue, he thinks, is the "content"

---

[22] Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

of the sensation of blue, while the "sensation" of blue is a case of "being aware" of blue, and this awareness is not merely "something distinct and unique, utterly different from blue: it also has a perfectly distinct and unique relation to blue . . . This relation is just that which we mean in every case by 'knowing' . . . the relation of a sensation to its object is certainly the same as that of any instance of experience to its object . . . the awareness is and must be in all cases of such a nature that its object, when we are aware of it, is precisely what it would be, if we were not aware."[23]

Views somewhat identical to G. E. Moore were also expressed by Lord Bertrand Russell in his refutation of Berkeleyan idealism.[24] But surprisingly enough both Moore and Russell have completely misunderstood Berkeley. Berkeley makes a clear distinction between consciousness and awareness on the one hand, and the object of consciousness on the other. The radical qualitative difference between the corporeal and the mental is one of his most frequently recurring themes. "Spirit and ideas," he tells us, "are things so wholly different, that when we say, they exist, they are known, or the like, these words must not be thought to signify anything common to both natures.

---

[23]Moore, op. cit., pp. 1-30.

[24]Bertrand Russell, The Problems of Philosophy (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), pp. 37-45.

There is nothing alike or common in them,[25] but the name. The former are active, indivisible substances: the latter are inert, fleeting, dependent beings."[26] The "ideas" in Berkeley are, therefore, neither mental entities nor do they partake of the nature of the mind. They are neither modes nor attributes nor properties of the mind, as Russell wrongly surmised. They belong to a different genus. While resolutely maintaining that a sensible object is so related to the perception of it as to be dependent for its very existence upon that relationship, Berkeley was far from intending to suggest that the object and the perception of it is one and the same. The ideas are not like, as with Fichte and Descartes, modifications of the mind to which they are presented. They are only perception--dependent presentations. As early as his Philosophical Commentaries he makes a clear distinction between percipi and the percipere[27] and repeatedly emphasized this differentiation in the Principles and the Three Dialogues. This was indeed his one major point of difference with Malebranche who following Descartes had described sensations as modifications de l'ame.[28] In calling things ideas Berkeley did not mean

---

[25] PHK, Sec. 142.

[26] PHK, Sec. 89.

[27] E.g., "Bodies exist without the mind, i.e., are not the Mind, but distinct from it. This I allow, the Mind, being altogether different therefrom" (PC, #863).

[28] Recherche, Vol. I, Bk. I, Ch. I, p. 21.

that they are mental or form any part of the ego. According to Russell when we speak of "bearing a person in mind," or when we say that "some business we had to arrange went clean out of our mind," we do not mean to imply that the person or the business is in our minds, but that the thought of them is in our minds"[29] [italics mine]. Here also Russell fails to see a distinction Berkeley so clearly makes between the ideas of sense and the ideas of imagination. The so-called "thought of a person" and "the business" are simply the ideas of imagination in the Berkeleyan terminology.

Nor have the Berkeleyan "ideas" anything to do with the "ideas" of Locke, who thought of mind as some sort of receptacle or an empty cabinet into which ideas are put. "When I speak of objects as existing in the mind, or imprinted on the senses, I would not be understood in the gross literal sense, as when bodies are said to exist in a place, or a seal to make an impression upon wax. My meaning is only that the mind comprehends or perceives them."[30]

Thus in all fairness to Berkeley it may be asserted that he never confused the object of apprehension with the act of apprehension. He, however, uses a terminology different from Moore and Russell. What Moore and Russell call "consciousness" or "awareness," Berkeley calls operation

---

[29] Russell, op. cit., p. 40.

[30] TD, p. 250.

of spirit,[31] and what they name as objects, he names as "ideas." The difference is, therefore, one of terminology. Professor Stocks has well presented Berkeley's case in the following lines:

> The confusion (or perhaps rather fusion) of apprehension and apprehended is no unconscious equivocation in Berkeley, whatever it may be in his readers: it was a deliberate and fully conscious article of his belief. He does not doubt, but emphatically asserts, that perception involves a perceiver as well as a perceived, and he does not characterize these two orders of being in the same terms but in terms of diametrical opposition like the Body and Mind of Descartes. By "in mind," as he explains in answer to the 5th objection (p. 49), he means presence to consciousness as perceived object: otherwise he would be involved in the absurdity of treating mind as extended and coloured.[32]

If such is the explicit exposition of the term "idea," it may be argued, why should there be any ambiguity, and "if it is ambiguous to us we must not blame Berkeley. . . . Why should we take wrong inference from the mistake in tactics."[33] No doubt, it may also readily be agreed that

---

[31] "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 help of memory and imagination. . . ."[italics mine] (PHK, Sec.1). The grand Mistake is that we think we have Ideas of the Operations of our Minds (PC, #176a).

[32] J. L. Stocks, "What Did Berkeley Mean By Esse Is Percipi?", Mind, 45 (July, 1936), pp. 310-323.

[33] A. A. Luce, "Berkeley's Existence In The Mind," Mind, 50 (July, 1941), pp. 258-267.

in all philosophical discourse we are sometimes compelled to introduce terms which do not form part of the vocabulary of the common man. Indeed it would be too severe a restriction on philosophers that they should never introduce new forms or modes of speech. Our own natural language, it is obvious, sadly falls short of conveying all the intentions and meanings of the philosophers. But we have not the slightest dispute with Berkeley on this score. We shall, however, vehemently protest if any philosopher, after assigning a unique meaning to a given term, attempts to prove his argument by appealing to the common-sense interpretation of the same term. Such was the plight of the word "idea" in the Berkeleyan vocabulary. For when on a number of occasions[34] he tells us that "whatever is immediately perceived is an idea: and can any idea exist out of the mind?" he is evidently trying to prove his point by appealing to the common-sense connotation of the word. If not, all his assertions would be no more than a sheer begging of the question. For he has nowhere proved earlier that an "idea" in his signification of the term can never be outside the mind, as he claims to have.[35]

As a consequence of the abuse of the word "idea," Berkeley was led to a very fallacious conclusion. Things

---

[34] TD, pp. 202, 230 and 234.

[35] TD, p. 234.

immediately perceived, he says, are ideas; and ideas cannot exist without the mind; their existence therefore consists in being perceived.[36] The argument consists of a syllogism in Barbara, whose middle term "idea" is ambiguous. The syllogism appears as if it is valid, for each of the premises are materially true. But we cannot detect the falsity of the conclusion until we notice that the middle term "idea" is used in the major premise to denote a mental process, i.e., an idea of imagination or reason, while in the minor premise it is used to denote a thing.

In his classic paper on "The Ego-Centric Predicament,"[37] Professor R. B. Perry tells us that the type of argument that I can assert the existence of a book in the closet, or a tree in the park, etc., only when I know them, and that it is impossible to find anything that is not known, is a predicament rather than a discovery. It refers to a difficulty of procedure rather than to a character of things. It is impossible to eliminate the knower without interrupting observation. Thus to prove the dependence of objects by Mills' method of difference is impossible. We can bring a dog into the presence of a cat and observe that he growls, and take him away and note that the growling ceases, and thereupon infer with some probability that the dog's

---

[36] TD, p. 230.

[37] R. B. Perry, "The Ego-Centric Predicament," Journal of Philosophy, VII (1910), pp. 5-14.

growling depended upon his being in the presence of the cat. Or substituting a chair and a book for the cat, we can introduce the dog to their presence, and by the same method of difference infer that his behaviour is not affected by and hence not dependent upon his being in the presence of those objects. Here the method of agreement is supported by the method of difference. But in the case of the "esse is percipi" principle the method of agreement is unsupported by the method of difference. Here the situation is analogous to the one in which we find the stars always present along with human affairs. Now if we refute the astrologer's claim that human affairs depend upon the presence of the stars, we cannot do it by removing the stars from the heavens and taking note of what then happens. So far as the method of difference is concerned, Perry asserts we are, to be sure, in a predicament. For obviously no instance that does not possess the characteristic of being known by mind could be known by us. But the use of the method of agreement without negative cases is a fallacy. No doubt, we cannot look at a thing before we see it, but to assert that therefore knowing is a condition of the being of that thing is fallacious. Berkeley is only entitled to assert that nothing can be thought of as existing apart from a thinking mind. Just as we see things by our eyes, so we can think of things only by directing our thoughts upon them. So much, certainly, may be affirmed without fear of

contradiction. But it is quite another thing to say that physical things cannot exist apart from a thinking mind. The argument would be somewhat analogous to the assertion that because we need microscopes to see bacteria, these bacteria cannot live without microscopes. Thus the sheer fact that in order to be known things enter into a cognitive relationship with my mind does not in any way make them dependent upon my mind. The relation of knowing may be altogether unimportant to the fact of their existence.

Further, the argument that since all those things which I have seen so far are mind-dependent, therefore, everything is mind-dependent, is an inductive inference based on incomplete enumeration. I have no right to deny a priori the existence of anything which is independent of mind. Some critics of Berkeley, however, assume that it is very unlikely that Berkeley tried to prove his contention by any such inductive argument.[38] They feel that, according to Berkeley, the issue is not that probably no idea is supposed to exist unperceived, but that it is logically absurd to suppose an idea which exists unperceived. The form of the argument: "I suppose (perceive) that there is an idea X which exists unperceived," Berkeley would have thought as an instance of reductio ad absurdum. In support of this they refer to Entry 472 of the Philosophical

---

[38]Marc-Wogau Konrad, "Berkeley's Sensationalism and the Esse est Percipi - Principle," Theoria, XXIII (1957), pp. 12-36.

Commentaries which reads as follows:

> You ask me whether the books are in the study now w^n no one is there to see them. I answer yes. You ask me are we not in the wrong of imagining things to exist w^n they are not actually perceived by the senses. I answer no. The existence of our ideas consists in being perceived, imagined thought on whenever they are imagined or thought on they do exist. Whenever they are mentioned or discoursed of they are imagined & thought on therefore you can at no time ask me whether they exist or no, but by reason of yt very question they must necessarily exist.

Here Berkeley was obviously persuaded by the Cartesian argument that to doubt is indirectly to affirm; that the very premise I do not think implies that I think that I do not think, and Berkeley consequently concluded that (a) to question about something implies that this something is perceived and (b) that to suppose something about anything implies to perceive that something. It is contended that Berkeley used the word 'perceiving' in a very wide sense which comprises different kinds of apprehension. But it may be objected that in the case of a proposition which may be doubted the truth of that proposition does not generally follow from its doubt. As Hamlyn pointed out, even Descartes cannot rely on this assumption, "since he has to show, not that I cannot be in doubt about something, but that I cannot suppose something to be false. From the fact that when I am thinking I cannot be in doubt that I am, it does not follow that it is necessarily true that I think."[39] Berkeley, therefore, cannot draw any

---

[39]D. W. Hamlyn, Sensation and Perception (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 63.

support from the Cartesian methodology. As regards his second premise it may be objected that the supposition of something X, having such and such qualities does not imply that X is immediately perceived, but only that X is pointed to by a description.

Berkeley wants to prove that there can be no idea X, which is unperceived at any time. However, if we clearly understand what the relationship involved is, no such conclusion follows. The relation in which X stands to me is not being known by me all the time. The idea X may be perceived by me at some particular time t, in my life, but there is no contradiction involved in supposing this idea existing unperceived long before I came to know of it, or to think of it in any way whatever. For the greater part of its existence it might have gone through unperceived or unknown.

Berkeley translates expressions containing the word "esse" sometimes as "being" (as in Principles, Sec. 6), but most often as "existence" and the difference in translation corresponds to a difference in respect to the particular meaning that Berkeley wishes to convey. If esse is taken in the sense of essentia, then the principle is considered as an analytic statement the truth of which follows from the very definition of the term. According to this interpretation the "esse is percipi" principle means that the property of being perceived necessarily

belongs to an idea, in virtue of its definition, i.e., the expression *esse* is identical to *percipi*. The set of Entries 577-581 in the *Philosophical Commentaries*, as also some of his writings in the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues* support this view. Besides, the following two entries in the *Philosophical Commentaries* also uphold this interpretation:

> Let it not be said that I take away Existence. I only declare the meaning of the Word so far as I can comprehend it.[40]
>
> I am persuaded would Men but examine wt they mean by the Word Existence they would agree with me.[41]

In the *Principles* (Sec. 3) Berkeley expresses the view that an intuitive knowledge of the "*esse* is *percipi*" axiom can be obtained "by any one that shall attend to what is *meant* by the term *exists* when applied to sensible things." In the *Dialogues* too, Philonous defining the *meaning* of sensible things tells us that "sensible things are those which are immediately perceived by sense."[42] It may now be observed that Berkeley's argument is based upon a wholly unwarranted transition from the definition of sensible things "as those objects which *can* be perceived immediately by sense" to the definition: "sensible things are those only which *are* immediately perceived by sense."

---

[40] *PC*, # 593.

[41] *PC*, # 604.

[42] *TD*, p. 175.

Marc Wogau Konrad has symbolized[43] Berkeley's principle of "esse is percipi" as follows:

(1) (x) (x exists ⊃ x is perceived)

But he has also pointed out that an analysis of Section 40 of the Principles, wherein Berkeley asserts that "what I see, hear and feel does exist . . . I no more doubt than I do of my own being," and other like expressions, wherein Berkeley makes the same claim for ideas of memory, imagination and so on,[44] entitles us to formulate what can be termed as an "extended sensationalistic thesis":

(2) (x) (x is perceived ⊃ x exists)

Now conjoining (2) with premise (1) we may reformulate Berkeley's principle as follows:

(x) (x exists ≡ x is perceived)

This formulation leads us to the conclusion that the word "exist" can be used to signify "is perceived" and that the two words are precisely synonymous; that they are no more than different names for one and the same thing. If such is the case, Berkeley's principle results in the bare tautology that "whatever is experienced is experienced."

However, it is sometimes contended that Berkeley considered his principle as synthetic and wished to demonstrate it. In the Philosophical Commentaries Berkeley states:

---

[43] Konrad, op. cit., pp. 18-25. (While symbolizing Berkeley's principle Mr. Konrad is referring only to the ideas of sense as the universe of discourse.)

[44] PHK, Sec. 23.

> Newton begs his Principle, I Demonstrate mine.[45]
>
> I shall Demonstrate all my doctrines.[46]

But at the time Berkeley made these entries he thought that the _esse_ of everything was _percipi_, and that the term "to exist" was synonymous with "to be perceived."[47] But looking to the difficulties involved in replacing the term "to exist" with "to be perceived," he seems to have abandoned this idea. Berkeley could not concede to such a replacement for he had then to show that the _esse_ of unperceived things was a contradiction. In that case he was also logically compelled to deny the existence of minds or souls which are unperceived. He therefore asserts that the _esse_ of minds or souls is not _percipi_ but _percipere_, and abandoned his earlier plan of demonstrating his principle. In Entry 858 of the _Philosophical Commentaries_ he declares:

> I must not pretend to promise much of Demonstration, I must cancel all passages that look like that sort of Pride, that raising of Expectation in my Readers.

It is therefore obvious that the "_esse_ is _percipi_" principle can neither be an analytic principle which is true by virtue of its own definition, nor a synthetic statement capable of logical demonstration.

---

[45] _PC_, # 407.

[46] _PC_, # 586.

[47] Haskel Fain, "More on the _Esse_ is _Percipi_ Principle," _Theoria_, 25 (1959), pp. 74-75.

Berkeley was no doubt conscious of the fact that the *esse* of a sensible thing implies more than its mere perception by individual minds, and it is only in this sense that he is sometimes called a realist. "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,"[48] for there is the omnipresent and eternal mind of God, which perceives, knows or comprehends all things. Thus physical objects have a greater permanence than they could have if they depended for their existence on being perceived by me or by any particular finite mind; they exist all the time as "ideas" in the mind of God, the Infinite Spirit. Things, we are told, have a twofold existence--the one ectypal or natural the other archetypal and eternal. But it is not difficult to see that this view too involves a number of difficulties. If *esse* is *percipi* and if God keeps physical objects in existence by constantly perceiving them, and if these objects exist really and completely as archetypes in His mind, then our own perceptions are quite redundant for purposes of the existence of those things.[49] In fact the

---

[48] *PHK*, Sec. 48.

[49] G. A. Johnston, *The Development of Berkeley's Philosophy* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1923), pp. 189-192.

very argument that when objects are not perceived by finite minds they must exist as "ideas" in the mind of God is unwarranted. The nature of "ideas" is defined such that in order to be perceived they are either to be produced, excited or imprinted on our minds, and our own minds have to be quite passive in the entire process. But can the same be said of the Divine Mind? Who excites or imprints ideas in the Divine Mind? Again, are the archetypal ideas, too, passive and inert?

Furthermore, we are told that "God knows or hath ideas, but his ideas are not conveyed to Him by sense as ours are."[50] But if God's ideas and his mode of perception are so radically different from ours, what force is left in Berkeley's argument (for proving the constancy of the physical world) that when an idea is not perceived by me or any other sentient creature, it is being perceived by God? If the divine Mind, as Berkeley truly asserts, is not qualitatively and sensuously limited after the fashion of human minds, is Berkeley justified in passing from human perception to divine perception? In the Ideas Husserl states "even an inanimate and non-personal consciousness is conceivable, i.e., a stream of experience, in which the intentional empirical unities, body, soul, empirical ego-subject do not take shape, in which all the empirical concepts,

---

[50] TD, p. 241.

and therefore also that of experience in the psychological sense (as experience of a person, an animal ego), have nothing to support them, and at any rate no validity."[51] Thus all inferences based on equating God's attributes and qualities with man's are fallacious, and the fallacy of reasoning may be termed as an anthropomorphic fallacy.

Moreover, since the ideas in my mind are not the same as ideas in the divine mind there is for each idea of mine a duplicate present in the divine mind. But does it not once more lead us to the type of theory much akin to Locke who held that our ideas barely represented the archetypes, and which Berkeley so vehemently refutes? Thus, unless we have a proper explanation of the relation itself, from a metaphysical point of view it is indifferent whether we say that this relation can be traced to some divine being or to some object lying without.

The archetypal and ectypal distinction of ideas leads to still greater complications. If the archetypal existence of things is the only true existence, the conclusion that ectypal existence cannot be anything but relative and illusory cannot be resisted, and the Kantian distinction between phenomena and the thing-in-itself retains its full force. Can we then assign any value to Berkeley's exhortation that we should put absolute trust in the veracity of

---

[51] Husserl, Ideas, translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Colliers, 1962), p. 153.

our sense-perception which acquaints us with nothing more than ectypal reality? In the Principles (Sec. 101) he tells us that the stock of arguments that the sceptics produce "to deprecate our faculties, and make mankind appear ignorant and low, are drawn principally from this head, to wit, that we are under an invincible blindness as to the true and real nature of things. . . . But it is evident from what has been shewn, that all this complaint is groundless, and that we are influenced by false principles to that degree as to mistrust our senses, and think we know nothing of those things which we perfectly comprehend." But if the archetypal reality is the only true reality Berkeley's theory of knowledge is inconsistent and untenable.

But if our ectypal ideas do somewhat partake of the nature of God's archetypal ideas Berkeley is landed in a sort of terminus which was at the root of his strong aversion to the doctrine of Malebranche that "we see all things in God." Berkeley disavowed all community with the French Father and maintained that "upon the whole there are no principles more fundamentally opposite than his and mine."[52] Malebranche believed that since man could not be a light unto himself we are, in a measure at least, conscious of the Universal Reason, of the very archetypal ideas of the sensible world, ever present in the mind of God, in whom all finite spirits live and have their beings. The

---

[52] TD, p. 214.

intelligible corporeal world in God is, on the one hand, the archetype of the actual corporeal world created by God, and on the other hand, the archetype of those ideas which God has communicated to us of this actual corporeal world. Instead of supposing numerically different ideas, existing in each finite sentient spirit, as Berkeley was logically obliged to do, Malebranche found the same divine archetypal ideas, revealed in the common perceptions of men who, on occasion of sense, rise into an apprehension of the Intelligible World, which the sensible only faintly sketches. And since our finite minds do participate in the life and activity of God, our acts of perception, in spite of their individual peculiarities, cannot be supposed to be broken up into a multiplicity of realms of experience--into as many such realms as there are perceiving minds. In one respect Malebranche is nearer to the Spinozism which Berkeley shunned due to his own staunch conviction of the freedom of man and his consequent moral responsibility. Berkeley's main argument against Malebranche's position was that since our ideas are altogether passive and inert, they cannot form any part of the essence of God who is purely active being. But in that case are not God's own archetypal ideas, ex hypothesi, no less passive and inert than the ideas which we perceive?[53]

---

[53] G. D. Hicks, Berkeley (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1932), p. 156.

Again, Berkeley could not even give an adequate explanation of the difficulty which he himself raised concerning the self-identity of perceived things. Can the permanent dependence of the physical world on the Infinite Spirit account for the continued objective existence of things? Are human spirits so related to the Infinite Spirit that the objects presented to the senses of one man are numerically the same presented to another, or to the same man at different times? The question as formulated by Hylas is this: "The same idea which is in my mind cannot be in yours, or in any other mind. Doth it not, therefore, follow from your principles, that no two can see the same thing."[54] No doubt so far as the quality of objects are concerned, things may produce varying experiences in different observers, as also at different times to single observer, but it is commonly admitted that the thing itself in spite of its varying appearances is one and the same. Berkeley appears greatly embarrassed by the difficulty and wishes to emphasize that the difficulty is more verbal than real and has simply been occasioned by the ambiguity of the word "same."

> Words are of arbitrary imposition; and since men are used to apply the word "same" where no distinction or variety is perceived, and I do not pretend to alter their perceptions, it follows that as men have said before, several saw the same thing, so they may upon like occasion still continue to use

---

[54] TD, p. 247.

> the same phrase, without any deviation either from propriety of language, or the truth of things. But if the term same is used in the acceptation of philosophers, who pretend to an abstract notion of identity, then according to their sundry definitions of this notion (for it is not yet agreed wherein that philosophic identity consists), it may or may not be possible for diverse persons to perceive the same thing. But whether philosophers shall think to call a thing the <u>same</u> or no, is, I conceive, of small importance . . . , some regarding the uniformness of what was perceived, might call it the <u>same</u> thing: others especially regarding the diversity of persons who perceived, might choose the denomination of <u>different</u> things. But who sees not that all the dispute is about a word?[55]

In this cavalier way Berkeley dismisses the problem. But a little reflection will show that the dispute is not merely about a word but about meaning and import, for the word "same" is not equivalent to "similar." When we use the word <u>same</u> we not only mean qualitative similarity but also numerical identity. As Reid pointed out, when ten men look at the sun or moon, they all see the same individual object.[56] Each man's moon is not only similar to the others but also objectively identical. On Berkeley's premises we have as many physical worlds as there are percipient beings in existence, multiplied too by the perception of the same thing by the same person at different times. And despite all the resources at our disposal we cannot, without danger of abstraction, have any true knowledge of other minds including the mind of God, nor can we know anything of how things

---

[55] <u>TD</u>, pp. 247-248.

[56] See Reid's <u>Works</u>, edited by Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh, 1852), p. 284.

are being represented in those minds otherwise than as actually presented to us, or that any finite person except ourselves, is cognizant of the identical cosmos.

Now, if the sameness of the world is destroyed, what becomes of physics? Berkeley we know, considered it impossible to dismiss the discoveries of Newton and his followers as chimeras. But what is there for the laws of physics to hold true of, if there is really no objective world to deal with? In the De Motu Berkeley tried to resolve this difficulty, but due to the overall subjectivity of the "ideas" no systematic doctrine of physics could be derived out of them. Everybody thus lives in a world of his own and because of the lack of any real and intelligible relation among different perceptions, communication between men is virtually impossible. It was indeed the reductio ad absurdum of the empiricism of Locke.

Berkeley might perhaps have replied that while no two persons perceive a numerically identical object, God causes similarity of presentations in each one of our minds, and we perceive the result of a numerically identical act of God. Communication between finite minds "depends wholly on the will of the Creator, . . .[57] who is intimately present to our minds, producing in them all that variety of ideas or sensations, which continually affect us, on whom we have an absolute and entire dependence, in short

---

[57] PHK, Sec. 147.

in whom we live, and move, and have our being."[58] But even this assumption is not free from difficulties. The question may be raised: "Do the same things really persist, or is God continually in a process of creating similar things to replace those annihilated earlier." In the Principles Berkeley speaks approvingly of the scholastic doctrine of continuous creation, where God is said to cause a constant succession of similar impressions which affect our minds.[59] But perhaps not being fully satisfied with this explanation of permanence he advances a theory of absolute permanence as existence in the mind of God.[60] Things, as we discussed earlier, have a twofold existence--the one ectypal which was created in time and relative to human minds and the other archetypal which existed from eternity in the mind of God. "When things are said to begin or end their existence, we do not mean this with regard to God, but his creatures. All objects are eternally known by God, or which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in His mind: but when things, before imperceptible to creatures, are, by a decree of God, perceptible to them, then they are said to begin a relative existence, with respect to created minds."[61] Now we have already seen the

---

[58] PHK, Sec. 149.

[59] PHK, Sec. 46.

[60] PHK, Sec. 48.

[61] TD, p. 252.

inconsistencies which Berkeley could not resolve on the basis of his principle in maintaining this archetypal and ectypal distinction of reality, but even if this explanation is admitted, it may be recalled that the dependence of sensible objects (as enunciated in the "esse is percipi" principle) had all along been maintained on the basis of their being perceived by individual percipient minds. Presence in my experience of any object was considered a sufficient guarantee for the existence of things. The argument advanced in Section 23 of the Principles confirms it beyond doubt that the objects of our thought cannot be considered to exist without a mind simply because they cannot be conceived as existing unconceived or unthought of by me. In his article "Mind Dependence in Berkeley,"[62] Professor Luce contends that some philosophers have wrongly surmised from the writings of Berkeley that his world is mind-dependent. According to him, in Berkeley's system, the idea of sense is dependent on the divine mind, and the idea of imagination is dependent on the human mind; except in the weak and watery sense of the term "depend," the idea of sense does not depend on the human mind, and even that dependence on it which is to be conceded is confined to such ideas as are actually being at the moment sensed. Luce thinks that the

---

[62] A. A. Luce, "Mind Dependence In Berkeley," Hermathena (1941), 57, pp. 117-127.

sensible world for Berkeley consists of two unequal parts, or groups of ideas: (1) the works of nature, and (2) those things in whose production human agents are concerned. Ideas of the former group are not, according to Berkeley, dependent on the human mind; those of the latter group, in so far as they are works of man (and that is not very far), are dependent on human mind. Thus if the world depends for its cause, as Berkeley says it does, immediately on the mind of God, then, Luce concludes, it cannot depend even mediately on the mind of man, such dependence must be of a secondary character, not to be confused with the world's unshared dependence upon God. But it appears that in his explanation of the term "depend," Professor Luce seems to have ignored a number of important aspects of Berkeley's thesis "esse is percipi." When Berkeley replies to his self-raised objection concerning imagining of trees in a park or books in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them, he never took support of the argument that the tree and the book existed nevertheless due to God's constant comprehension of them. He rather argued that at the time of conceiving them unthought or unconceived our own mind was conceiving them all the while, "and the mind taking no notice of itself, is deluded to think it can and doth conceive bodies existing unthought of or without the mind,"[63] which according to him is a manifest repugnancy. In contradistinction to this

---

[63] PHK, Sec. 23.

there is for Berkeley no such repugnancy involved in imagining objects unperceived by God. Referring to God's perception he simply tells us that it may not be concluded that objects have no existence except only while they are perceived by us, since there may be some other spirit that perceives them, though we do not. The word "may" simply expresses a possibility and not a logical necessity. Berkeley, it may be agreed, was not a skeptic so far as the reality of the sensible world is concerned.[64] But by his Lockean analysis of human understanding he found that the sensible world exists independently of human minds, since he knew himself not to be its author, it being out of his power to determine at pleasure, what particular ideas he shall be affected with upon opening his eyes or ears.[65] Now having once proved that the objects of sense are no more than ideas, it was not possible for Berkeley to conceive them as existing unperceived.[66] He therefore concluded that there must be a God to perceive the entire sensible world. "An infinite mind," he says, "should be necessarily inferred from the bare existence of the sensible world."[67] Men commonly believe, he declares, "that

---

[64] TD, p. 212.

[65] TD, p. 214.

[66] PHK, Sec. 4.

[67] TD, p. 212.

all things are known or perceived by God, because they believe the being of a God, whereas I on the other side, immediately and necessarily conclude the being of God, because all sensible things must be perceived by him."[68]

However, Berkeley is quite explicit on the issue of dependence when he tries to show that his doctrine is also in conformity with the Mosaic account of creation. His assertion that you will not be able to prove any contradiction between Moses and my notions, unless you first show, there was no other order of finite created spirits in being before men.[69] The existence of the sensible world, according to Berkeley's own admission here, could be questioned unless there were some finite spirits present to perceive it. There is, therefore, no substance in Professor Luce's contention that Berkeley treated the notion of dependence on finite spirits in "a weak and watery sense" of the term "depend." Dependence of the physical world on an Infinite Mind was simply necessitated due to a defect incidental to limited human comprehension. In fact, the very existence of God could not be proved but because of this limitation.

Berkeley's great error, as we pointed out earlier, lies in his misuse of the word "idea" which unwittingly led him to believe that the ideas were either in the mind or dependent upon the mind. No doubt the objects known are something of the nature of "sensations" and ideas, but to

---

[68] TD, p. 212.

[69] TD, p. 252.

infer from this that they are, therefore, mind dependent is a fallacious conclusion. Undoubtedly whenever we attempt to know 'blue' it appears in our mind in the form of a subjective sensation, but it has also an objective content. If the "ideas" are not a state, mode or attribute of the subject then there is no sense in speaking of them as mind-dependent. Berkeley's argument that since objects on scrutiny are found as something akin to the nature of sensations and "ideas," they are therefore dependent upon a mind, makes use of this fundamental ambiguity.

The fallacy in the "esse is percipi" principle can also be traced to Locke's arguments concerning the mind-dependence of secondary qualities which Berkeley inherited in a highly uncritical manner and which he rushed to apply also to primary qualities. Descartes and Locke together with the majority of Corpuscular physicists of the day had made a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Some qualities, it was held, are inseparable from the body, whatever changes it may undergo. A grain of wheat, for instance, has solidity, extension, figure and mobility. If it is divided, each part retains these qualities. "These I call original or primary qualities of body, which I think we may observe to produce simple ideas in us, viz., solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number."[70]

---

[70] Essay, Sec. II, 8, 9.

Besides these primary qualities there are also secondary qualities. The latter "are nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities."[71] Such are colours, sounds, tastes, and odours. Now the great difference between primary and secondary qualities lies in that while the former are resemblances of bodies, and their patterns do really exist in bodies themselves, the ideas produced in us by the secondary qualities have no resemblance of them at all. "In truth they can be representative of nothing that exists out of our mind."[72] There is in bodies a power to cause us to have these ideas, but the ideas are totally unlike their causes. Our idea of, say, red does not resemble the rose considered in itself. What corresponds in the rose to our idea of red is its power to produce in us the idea of red through the action of imperceptible particles on our eyes. The particles which cause the idea of colour are not, however, actually coloured. Locke therefore concluded that the secondary qualities are essentially relative to the individual perceiver and not the absolute properties of things. They exist only within the perceiving subject, in the way that he perceives. Locke's reason for this conclusion was that while our perception of secondary

---

[71] Essay, Sec. II, 8, 10.

[72] Descartes, Principles, Part I, Principles 70, 71.

qualities varies with circumstances, the ideas of primary qualities are not so variable. Descartes criterion, however, was not so much permanence but the possibility of mathematical treatment. In his list of clear and distinct ideas, mathematical ideas had come to be most important. As a matter of fact it was easier for the Corpuscular physicists, as well as Descartes and Locke, to get ahead in the reduction of Nature to a system of mathematical equations by supposing that nothing existed outside the human mind that was not so reducible. But how could the world of 'physical matter,' it was felt, "be reduced to exact mathematical formulae by anybody so long as his geometrical concentrations was distracted by the supposition that physical nature is full of colours and sounds and feelings and final causes as well as mathematical units and relations?"[73] Thus Newton by his experiments on rarefaction and reflection conceived to have definitely overthrown the theory that colours are qualities of objects.

Now Berkeley questions the validity of this distinction between primary and secondary qualities and declares that the so-called primary qualities are nothing more than secondary, i.e., they too are dependent upon a perceiving mind. Berkeley contends that all those arguments adduced

---

[73]E. A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1932), p. 305.

to prove the relative character of primary qualities can with equal force be advanced to prove the mind-dependent character of primary qualities, and no extra-perceptual status can be granted to them. Boyle had anticipated Berkeley when he asserted that the primary qualities were no more real than secondary; since man with his senses is part of the universe, all qualities are equally real.

> If we should conceive all the rest of the universe to be annihilated save one such body, suppose a metal, or a stone, it were hard to show that there is physically anything more in it than matter, and the accident we have already named (the primary qualities) . . . But now we are to consider, that there are de facto in the world certain sensible and rational beings that we call men; and the body of man having several external parts, as the eye, the ear, etc., each of a distinct and peculiar texture, whereby it is capable of receiving impressions from the bodies about it, and upon that account it is called an organ of sense; we must consider, I say, that these sensories may be wrought upon by the figure, shape, motion, and texture of bodies without them after several ways, some of those external bodies being fitted to affect the eye, others the ear, others the nostrils, etc. And to these operations of the objects on the sensories, the mind of man, which upon the account of its union with the body perceives them, gives distinct names, calling the one light or colour, the other sound, the other odour, etc.[74]

Berkeley's main argument was that the primary qualities are inseparably united with the secondary. I cannot, for example, separate my idea of figure from my idea of colour; where the figure is, there the colour is also. Is it possible by any abstraction of thought, he asks, to think

---

[74] The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle (Birch edition, 6 Vols., London, 1672, Vol. III, 22), p. 35; quoted in Burtt, Ibid., p. 181.

of a body as of irregular shape and moving at twenty miles an hour, and yet as being neither red, green, blue, nor any colour whatsoever?

Now we may agree with Berkeley that the primary and secondary qualities are inseparable and it is logically impossible that there could be things that had the primary qualities without having secondary qualities. But from this Berkeley has no warrant to conclude that the primary qualities must also be mind-dependent, for "the argument could be equally used to try to prove that both sets of properties are objective properties, of independent physical objects."[75]

Further, Berkeley seems to think that the relativity of qualities "plainly shew it to be impossible that any colour or extension at all, or other sensible quality whatsoever, should exist . . . without the mind, or in truth that there should be any such thing as an outward object."[76] But if it is a fact that it is possible to distinguish how things look or seem from how they actually are, then secondary qualities must also be in the objects:

> For here too, however variously things may look or seem, we can often discover and decide how they really are. If a piece of paper looks red in a strong red light and green in a green one, and if it looks white when held near a plain glass window

---

[75] D. M. Armstrong, Berkeley's Philosophical Writings (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd.), p. 13.

[76] PHK, Sec. 14-15.

> at mid-day, then undoubtedly that piece of paper is white. . . . If I say 'It is white' and you at the same time say of the same piece of paper 'It is red,' at least one of us must be mistaken.[77]

In like manner there is no reason to believe that if a particular thing looks to me large in one circumstance, and small in another circumstance, or of one shape at one time, and another shape at another time, extension and figure are dependent upon the mind. If, of course, we assume that given the objectivity of qualities things must necessarily appear the same to all people, or to one person at all times and in all circumstances, it follows that if they do not so appear, they are not objective. But there appears to be no cogent reason for making this assumption.

Berkeley himself is fully aware that the relativity of perception does not disprove the existence of qualities unperceived, for he says: ". . . it must be confessed this method of arguing (from the relativity of perception) does 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."[78] His objections to the belief in independent qualities are therefore of a negative character. Most of his arguments center around the theory of relative perceptions but he is guilty of gross inconsistency in proving the relativity of distance,

---

[77] G. J. Warnock, Berkeley (London: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 99.

[78] PHK, Sec. 15.

size, etc., since he presupposes a great variety of knowledge of objects of the physical world, e.g., things, sense organs, etc., whose independence he then proceeds to deny.

But even if it may be difficult to decide what particular properties or qualities a physical object possesses it can be no argument against assuming its independent existence. Two observers may have conflicting perceptions of the shape and size of a particular object, but they almost invariably agree in perceptions as to time sequence and its position in space. No doubt there may be cases of illusions of touch as well as sight, but if our experience is a coherent one, physical things do possess objective qualities. And this externality is quite compatible with the different appearances of things when observed from different points of view, for even photographic plates give different views of the same shape snapped from different angles in space.

Now what is true of primary qualities is equally true of secondary qualities. When we observe the object from the most favourable position, for instance proximity, the object gives us quite a veritable account of its secondary qualities, which can firmly be established by repeated tests and experiments. The best reason why a thing appears coloured to us is because it is really coloured. But from this we are in no way compelled to infer that the object must be coloured even in the dark, for colour is only a property which objects acquire only when effected causally by light. We would even be prone to ascribe

beauty to unperceived physical objects. If we establish the objectivity of colour and shape, there is every reason to believe that even beauty has an existence independent of all perceptions. There is, no doubt, a subjective element in beauty (and we maintain the organic unity of the subjective and the objective) but it in no way mitigates the objective character of its existence. Even in a work of art the artist has to be both a spectator and a creator of beauty. This, however, is the specialized field of aesthetics and does not fall within the scope of our study. Lastly it may be observed that it is quite possible that physical objects may possess innumerable other qualities besides the primary and the secondary, and it may be quite difficult to give a complete analysis of the nature of things. Reality is a complex affair. The primary, secondary and tertiary qualities characterize nature so far as she is subject to physical, mathematical or aesthetical treatment, but she may still harbour a number of other qualities. And though it is important in philosophy to seek definiteness, the onus operandi rests all the more on Berkeley who denies all external character to these qualities.

We agree with Berkeley that the objects of the external world are of the nature of ideas, and that we never apprehend in the physical world more than what we can perceive. His great error lies in the false conclusion that, therefore, their essence is to be perceived--that they are

fully mind-dependent in the sense that they only exist in and by being perceived. For it is one thing to say that things are only ideal entities, resembling our ideas and spirits, and quite another to say that they are, therefore, dependent upon the mind. Berkeley had been led to this hasty inference in consequence of having taken too limited a view of the great problem which he could only partially solve. The phenomena alike severally and in aggregate are, no doubt, a hierarchy of "ideas," but how has Berkeley proved that these "ideas" like spiritual stuffs are not things existing independently of being perceived? The reason why a thing appears almost exactly the same to so many individuals' minds proves that things, though "ideas," exist all the time objectively in the external world. The phenomena present to us one identical world of homogeneous objects and all our social and ethical relations are based on this supposition. Fichte has given a very lucid account of this insight in the following lines:

> Our consciousness of a reality external to ourselves is thus not rooted in the operation of supposed external objects, which indeed exist for us, and we for them, only in so far as we already know of them; nor is it an empty vision evoked by our own imagination and thought, the products of which must, like itself, be mere empty pictures; it is rather the necessary faith in our own freedom and power, in our own real activity, and in the definite laws of human action, which lies at the root of our consciousness of a reality external to ourselves. . . . We are compelled to believe that we act, and that we ought to act in a certain manner. We are compelled to assume a certain sphere of this action: this sphere is the real, actually present world, such as we find it--and

> the world is absolutely nothing more than this sphere, and cannot in any way extend beyond it. From this necessity of action proceeds the consciousness of the actual world and not the reverse way; the consciousness of the actual world is derived from the necessity of action. We act not because we know but we know because we are called upon to act: the practical reason is the root of all reason.

Had Berkeley used the word sense-data or sensibilia instead of "ideas" and "sensations," this ambiguity of mind-dependence could have been avoided. Consciousness, ideas or sensations are words which are immediately apt to suggest our private consciousness and sensations in their internal signification only. A consciousness or sensation which is objective or external was foreign to the thinking of the early eighteenth century philosophers and could not at least be visualized by Berkeley in his youthful days, brought up as he was in a Cartesian tradition. So in spite of his marvelous analysis of the nature of things we see and touch, and the rest of the phenomenal world, Berkeley could not help but concluding that the things we perceive were passive, inert and powerless and could not exist independent of any mind whatsoever. The followers of Descartes, we know, thought of mind and body as diametrically opposed substances and the possibility of any intercourse between the two seemed impossible to them. The two substances--active mind and

---

[79] J. G. Fichte, The Vocation of Man, translated by R. K. Chisholm (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956), p. 98.

passive and inert body--were thought as mutually exclusive of each other. Locke too had maintained this radical qualitative difference between the corporeal and the mental and maintained the passive and inert nature of physical things.[80] It was this Cartesian doctrine which led Malebranche to go to the extreme in asserting that things of the physical world, because extended, could not become an immediate object of our perception, and being in themselves powerless and unintelligent could not be the active cause of our perception of their existence.[81] Berkeley too could not overcome this Cartesian dualism till the latter part of his life when he penned the Siris. And though Berkeley might have his own particular reasons in proving the mind-dependence of sensible things, given the Cartesian thesis, there was no alternative left for him but to come to this conclusion. In the Dialogues he asks "whether all your ideas are not perfectly passive and inert, including nothing of action in them."[82] And though he was on occasions willing to allow the absolute and objective existence of "ideas," he was precluded from any such conclusions in view of his problems "how can that which is unthinking be

---

[80] "How any thought should produce a motion in body, is as remote from the nature of our ideas, as how any body should produce any thought in the mind." (See Locke's Essay, IV, iii, 28.)

[81] Traité de l'Esprit de l'Homme, Ch. XVI, p. 242.

[82] TD, p. 217.

a cause of thought."[83] But once these sensible objects are considered as active, animated and thinking, they may, on Berkeley's own supposition, be the cause of our ideas.[84] Berkeley sincerely felt that no philosopher could explain how "ideas" could operate on a spirit. He, however, did not realise that, while enunciating his own theory of imagination, he had himself allowed the possibility of such operation. Imagination, he says, is part of our spirit and soul,[85] and the ideas formed by imagination have an entire dependence on our will[86] [italics mine]. But my imagination can only represent those particular things which I have already perceived.[87] "For nothing enters the imagination which from the nature of things cannot be perceived by sense, since indeed the imagination is nothing else than the faculty which represents sensible things."[88] But can we form any idea of imagination from the given material of the ideas of sense without assuming the existence of some sort of interaction between the two? There is therefore no ground for Berkeley's question "how a being utterly

---

[83] TD, p. 216.

[84] TD, p. 216.

[85] PHK, Sec. 2.

[86] TD, p. 235.

[87] PHK, "Introduction," Sec. 10.

[88] De Motu, p. 45.

destitute of these faculties should be able to produce ideas or in any sort to affect an intelligence."[89]

Thus, once it is seen that the so-called matter is active, alive and thinking, all Berkeley's difficulties are resolved and the objective existence of the external world also guaranteed. We have every reason to believe that all our sensations and ideas have been derived from the multiplicity of beings whose existence is to some extent analogous to our own ideas, sensations and inner life. It is these entities which, subordinate to the supreme creator, serve as a cause of limited and inferior nature, in the production of our ideas.[90] This was an insight which Berkeley could not gain till late in his life when he started writing down the Siris. The difficulties of the "esse is percipi" principle had, however, begun to make themselves manifest even as early as his Principles when he feels that:

> It will be demanded to what purpose serves that curious organisation of plants, and the admirable mechanism in the parts of animals; might not vegetables grow, and shoot forth leaves and blossoms, and animals perform all their motions, as well without as with all that variety of internal parts so elegantly contrived and put together, which being ideas have nothing powerful or operative in them, nor have any necessary connection with the effects ascribed to them? . . . In short, it will be asked, how upon our principles any tolerable account can be given, or any final cause assigned of an innumerable multitude of bodies and machines framed with

---

[89] TD, p. 242.

[90] TD, p. 217.

> the most exquisite art, which in the common philosophy have every apposite uses assigned them, and serve to explain abundance of phenomena.[91]

Berkeley is compelled to acknowledge at least the possibility of some difficulties relating to the administration of providence, and uses by it assigned to the several parts of Nature, which he cannot solve on the basis of the "esse is percipi" principle.[92] But no such difficulty is involved in the system of spiritualism which Berkeley undertakes to expound in the Siris. For the curious organisation of plants, and the admirable mechanism in the parts of animals is, according to that view, nothing but an organisation of spirits wherein vegetables do grow and shoot forth leaves and blossoms, and animals perform all their motions with superb elegance in all their internal and external parts, which being all various kinds of spirits have powerful and dramatically operative principles and elaborate connections inherent in them, and which all bespeak the glory of God. There is then no sense left in the question as to what end God should take those roundabout methods of effecting things by instruments and machines which might have been effected by the mere command of his will, without all that apparatus.[93] For this Universal system of spirits

---

[91] PHK, Sec. 60.

[92] PHK, Sec. 61.

[93] PHK, Sec. 61.

is simply the manifestation of God Himself, in which each spirit affects and in turn is affected by the other, and each represents the being of God from its own particular point of view. The members of this spiritual community are, from an ontological point of view, constituted of a stuff which goes in the making of our own inner life or soul. The so-called things of the external world instead of being thoughtless, passive and inert are, on the contrary, charged with a principle of efficacy and activity analogous to that of our own ego. That in the Siris Berkeley himself is in fundamental agreement with this thesis, we propose to show in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE CAUSAL DEPENDENCE OF PHENOMENA AND THE SPIRITUALISM OF THE SIRIS

No critic of Berkeley can disregard the important fact that Berkeley's revolutionary analysis about the nature of the physical world and his thesis of "esse is percipi," though new and most influential in the history of subsequent thought, was practically given to the world by the age of twenty-five. It was a pioneer work on a line of thought and just because of its novelty was liable to all the inconsistencies and fallacies which we had the occasion to point out in the last chapter. In a letter written in 1729 to Johnson Berkeley apologizes for the defects and inconsistencies of his earlier works. He was swayed by those ideas, he confesses, because he was very young when he wrote them. "I do not therefore pretend that my books can teach truth. All I hope for is that they may be an occasion to inquisitive men to discover truth, by consulting their own minds, and looking into their own thoughts."[1] Where truth is the chief passion it is not

---

[1]Letter to Johnson, The Works of George Berkeley, Vol. II, p. 18.

contented with a little ardor in the early time of life; active, perhaps, to pursue, but not so fit to weigh and revise. "He that would make a real progress in knowledge must dedicate his age as well as youth, the later growth as well as first fruits, at the altar of Truth."[2] But notwithstanding the modest estimation of his works, so opposed to his earlier optimism when he wrote them, he is still convinced that what he has to say is fundamentally true, though the argument he advanced for that truth may be faulty. Thus our previous exposition proving the falsity of the "_esse_ is _percipi_" principle does not mean that the universe in Berkeley's system is not a spiritual order or that it is not dependent for its existence upon God.[3] Because nine years before his death he bequeathed to the world a very thought-provoking treatise entitled the _Siris_ containing a system of philosophy which proves beyond all shadow of doubt that the pervading intellectual outcome of his life as a whole was a philosophy of Eternal Spirit--a true and deep Reality concealed but revealed in the variegated panorama of the sensible world.

The _Siris_ gives us a theory of concatenation of a divine light in all things. The "ideas" are no more to be

---

[2] _Siris_, Sec. 367.

[3] "One and the same mind is the universal principle of order and harmony throughout the world, containing and connecting all its parts, and giving unity to the system" (_Siris_, Sec. 287).

considered here as "marks" or "signs" together making up the language of the 'Author of Nature', rather they constitute the very being of Nature. All things center in the unity of Mind which substantiates all and causes all. This is the "One" of Egyptians and Greeks; to all created beings the source of unity and identity, of harmony and order, existence and stability. Though Berkeley still proves that the physical world in virtue of its specific characteristics is spiritual in character and entails a Mind, yet he now no more holds objects as dependent on any mind in the sense that they exist by being perceived. They are rather causally dependent on God who also experiences the Universe. No doubt something which is causally dependent for its existence on a mind experiencing it, might be both experienced and known by that mind, but its existence may still not be dependent on the knowing of it. Such a view is quite compatible with a fully realistic view of the world--for physical objects shall then be as independent of our minds as any realist would desire and yet shall be causally dependent for their existence on a divine mind. Berkeley too in his earlier works, we know, had attempted to make the existence of physical objects dependent on the divine mind through his "_esse_ is _percipi_" axiom and we noted how the argument had fallen to the ground. God was conceived there as, so to speak, intervening at odd moments to prevent physical objects from disappearing by looking at them when there was no human being to do so. In the _Siris_, however,

physical objects although are still conceived as dependent on God all the time without interruption, a fresh argument is introduced in favour of their dependence. Objects are considered as not merely created by God but it is logically impossible for them to exist even for one moment without His power.

> God is in heaven but that His power, or a force derived from Him, doth actuate and pervade the universe.[4]

The title Siris is derived from the Greek word 'seiris' meaning a cord or chain. It is mentioned as "a chain of philosophical reflexions and inquiries concerning the virtues of tar water, and diverse other subjects connected together and arising one from another." Berkeley's trial of the remedy when small-pox pervailed at Cloyne, and its apparent efficacy in various diseases led him to further reflection about the principle of causation in nature and the ultimate physical and metaphysical principles of the Siris.

From the philosophical point of view Siris presents both a metaphysics and a theory of knowledge. During the sixteen years which preceded the publication of the Siris Berkeley lived a sedentary life steeped in books pertaining to Greek and Oriental philosophy, first in Rhode Island and afterwards in his secluded diocese of Cloyne. More than

---

[4] Siris, Sec. 167.

thirty years had now elapsed since he had first evolved the meaning of the words, 'Reality' and 'External Existence.' But as his studies proceeded it seemed to him that he discerned in the history of Greek speculation a development at least vaguely resembling that of his own youth, from a sensuous to a more purely rational way of thought, from idea to 'notion,' from epistemology to ontology.[5] Books, especially Plato and the neo-Platonists were now his most favorite companions:

> Ficinus, with his affinity for Neo-Platonism, and for Hermic and Oriental lore, his endeavors to harmonize Plato and Aristotle and his aspirations to reunion with God through a contemplative life, seems to have attracted Berkeley strongly in his later days. Berkeley appears to have studied Plotinus and other Neoplatonists largely through Ficinus, who may have led him to recognize the community of some of their doctrines with his own early philosophy.[6]

In the Siris Berkeley makes no secret of his great indebtedness to Plato and the neo-Platonists and tells us that "the greatest men had ever a high esteem of Plato whose writings are a touchstone of a hasty and shallow mind."[7] He interprets the words of classic philosophers of antiquity, especially Plato whose name is not even mentioned in the Principles, and whose "lofty strain" he ridicules in the

---

[5]John Wild, George Berkeley (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), p. 426.

[6]A. C. Fraser, Berkeley's Complete Works, Vol. 3 (London, 1901), p. 217.

[7]Siris, Sec. 332.

Philosophical Commentaries. In his earlier works he had expressed a general contempt for the past history of human speculation whose principles he thought "introduced all that doubtfulness and uncertainty, those absurdities and contradictions into the several sects of philosophy."[8]

> I do not pin my faith on the sleeve of any great man . . . I do not adhere to any opinion because it is an old one.[9]

In vain, wrote the young author, do we consult the writings of learned men, and trace the dark footstep of antiquity. Berkeley at that time appeared to dream of a new beginning. In contrast to that spirit of independence the tone and tenor of the Siris is most modest and hesitant. He no longer appears as one who has discovered a new and obvious truth.

Transformation of the Theory of Ideas

Berkeley's earlier doctrine of perception was already in a process of development when he for the first time introduced the conception of 'notions' in the subsequent edition of the Principles. And though the principle was never thoroughly worked out, it shows the direction in which Berkeley's mind was moving. In the third edition of the Alciphron too, published in 1752, we find a remarkable omission of the three sections on abstract ideas in the

---

[8] PHK, "Introduction," Sec. 4.

[9] Philosophical Commentaries, # 465.

seventh dialogue which contain a defence of his early phenomenalist nominalism, now out of harmony with Platonic realism and the supersensible philosophy of the Siris. In the Siris Berkeley accuses Aristotle and his followers of having made a monstrous representation of Platonic ideas and believes that if Plato's writings are studied with care the prejudice that lies against him would soon wear off.[10] He gives a neo-Platonic interpretation of Plato's world of Forms and tells us that according to Pythagoras and Plato "the most refined intellect exerted to its utmost reach, can only seize some inperfect glimpses of the Divine ideas, abstracted from all things corporeal, sensible and imaginable."[11] Thus the ideas of the Siris are neither like the ideas of sense whose esse is percipi--inert, inactive objects of perception, nor are they "figments of the mind, nor mere mixed modes, nor yet abstract ideas in the modern sense. They are the most real beings, intellectual and unchangeable, and therefore more real than the fleeting, transient objects of sense, which wanting stability, cannot be subjects of science, much less of intellectual knowledge."[12] Pythagoras and Plato, Berkeley asserts, treated these ideas "in a mysterious manner, concealing rather than exposing

---

[10] Siris, Sec. 338.

[11] Siris, Sec. 337.

[12] Siris, Sec. 335.

them to vulgar eyes; so far were they from thinking that those abstract[13] things, although the most real, were the fittest to influence common minds, or become principles of knowledge, not to say duty and virtue, to the generality of mankind."[14] In the Siris Berkeley, though not willing to accept the Lockean "abstract ideas," reinstates them in their Socratic and Platonic interpretation. The Platonic 'idea' we know is firstly abiding being in the change of phenomena; secondly the object of knowledge in the change of opinions; thirdly the true end in the change of desires. Berkeley now grants abstract ideas in all the above three senses of Plato. In the Principles it had been part of a general case against abstraction that no space could be taken as real except that which is perceived by sense. But now in the Siris it is maintained, although without further elaboration, that space is neither an intellectual notion nor yet perceived by any of our senses; and then it is suggested that like Plato's doctrine in the Timaeus, it may be the result of spurious reasoning and a kind of waking dream.[15] In his earlier writings Berkeley had not taken the word 'idea' in the sense of Plato or the schoolmen, but in that of Descartes and Locke, particularly the latter.

---

[13] Italics mine.

[14] Siris, Sec. 337.

[15] Siris, Sec. 318.

He had always regarded the objects of the mind when it thinks in the sense of an image or phantasm, and had with great ingenuity shown that there is no such image when we think of space, time, and eternity. He finds difficulty in the mind forming an idea, in this sense, as a product of abstraction and generalization. He acknowledges that it requires some pains and skill to form the general idea of a triangle, "for it must be neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once. In effect it is somewhat imperfect that cannot exist; an idea wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together."[16] Berkeley therefore remarked that after reiterated efforts and pangs of thought to apprehend the general idea of a triangle he found it altogether incomprehensible. "The idea of man that I framed to myself, must be either of a white or a black or a tawney, or a straight, or a crooked, a tall, or a low, or a middle-sized man."[17] Thus Berkeley is obviously using the word 'idea' here in the sense of an image. By idea, he says, "I mean any sensible or imaginable thing."[18] He therefore rejected, as we think he ought, abstract ideas in the sense of images of qualities. Hume

---

[16] PHK, "Introduction," Sec. 13.

[17] Ibid., p. 29.

[18] PC, # 775.

considered this theory as Berkeley's "one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries . . . made of late years in the republic of letters."[19]

Some critics have, however, doubted whether Locke at all meant by abstract ideas what Berkeley took them to be.[20]

> Interpreting the term idea as signifying the content of sense-perception or imagination, Berkeley supposed Locke's idea to imply that the common features of the members of a class were presented in the form of an image, apart from all particularising circumstances with which these are presented in experience. Locke's idea, however, cannot be understood in this narrow sense. It includes in its denotation the 'notions' which Berkeley was subsequently obliged to introduce, as well as that which is capable of being presented in sense perception and reproduced in imagination. Nor does Locke claim to be able even to think of as separated, elements which are inseparable in experience. All that his theory of abstraction requires is that we should be able to single out, and consider apart from its context, the content which is to be generalized. But such partial consideration does not, as he points out, imply that we think of this content as separated, or as capable of separation, from all others. A partial consideration is not separating. A man may consider light in the sun without its heat, or mobility in body without its extension, without thinking of their separation. One is only a partial consideration, terminating in one only; and other is a consideration, of both, as existing separately (Essay II, 13. 13). . . . The generality which we ascribe to certain ideas is, in fact, nothing but the capacity they are put into by the understanding of signifying or representing many particulars. (Essay III, 3, 2.)[21]

---

[19] Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, I, 1, 7.

[20] J. Gibson, Locke's Theory of Knowledge (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 68-69.

[21] Ibid.

No doubt Locke here conceived of these abstract ideas as much akin to Aristotle's. Aristotle taught that for the purposes of investigation it is expedient to close our eyes now to this aspect, now to that aspect, of things; we do well always to concentrate our attention upon some one aspect, and for the moment give heed to it alone. He however acknowledged that this mental isolation of one side of things is apt to engender the illusion of its separate existence but the artifice which leads to this illusion, he thought, is in a sense harmless, and indeed helpful to research. "Every object is best viewed when that which is not separate is posited in separation just as is done by the arithmetician and the geometer."[22] Aristotle, however, made a clear distinction between phantasm (image) and noema (notion). An abstract idea is not a phantasm, an exercise of the mere reproductive, recalling or imagining power of the mind; but a notion, the product of the discursive powers which perceive the relation of part to the whole. Having seen a cherry I can ever afterwards imagine the cherry--this is the phantasm of Aristotle. But I can also exercise another mental operation regarding it;--I can consider its redness and not its shape or size and have an abstract notion about which I can reason and pronounce judgment. The product of the discursive powers is the noema of Aristotle. Locke, however, confused the "general idea" with this "abstract

---

[22]Aristotle, Metaphysics XIII, 10, 1087A.

idea" under the phrase "abstract general idea." These two evidently differ. While an abstract idea is an idea of an attribute, a general idea is an idea of objects possessing a common attribute or attributes. We cannot form, in the sense of likeness, a general idea. An image, as Berkeley clearly saw, must always be singular, whereas a general idea, the idea of a class, must embrace an indefinite number of individuals, all that possess the quality or qualities which bring the object into a class. There can be no phantasm formed of the individuals in the class, which may be innumerable, nor of the attributes, which are abstract. In the Principles Berkeley had told of what is involved in abstraction:

> And here it must be acknowledged that a man may consider a figure merely as triangular without attending to the particular qualities of the angles or relations of the sides. So far he may abstract; but this will never prove that he can frame an abstract general inconsistent idea (in the sense of an image) of a triangle. In like manner we may consider Peter so far forth as a man, so far forth as animal, without framing the forementioned abstract idea (image), either of man or animal; inasmuch as all that is perceived is not considered.[23]

Now it may be observed that when in the Siris Berkeley reinstates the abstract ideas in the Platonic sense he allows those in a sense in which neither Aristotle nor Locke would be willing to accept. Aristotle, we know,

---

[23] The Works of George Berkeley Vol. II (Introduction), p. 35.

in his polemic against Plato's doctrine of ideas, had denied any transcendent metaphysical entities, separate and subsisting apart from the things of sense. And Locke in his harsh criticism against innate ideas asserted that our knowledge does not depend upon deduction from simple general principles given before birth but upon the examination and comparison of ideas derived from experience. By attending to the ideas which we have, e.g., of a straight line, a plain surface, a triangle--ideas which were in the first instance derived from sense perception--we can pass on to discover by intuition necessary relations between them, and so extend our knowledge. Thus Locke too, not unlike Aristotle, conceived that the ideas which thought analyzes were not of any transcendental origin, but were given to us in sense experience. But in the Siris Berkeley tells us:

> The mind, her acts and faculties, furnish a new and distinct class of objects from the contemplation whereof arise certain other notions, principles and virtues, so remote from, and even so repugnant to the first prejudices which surprise the sense of mankind that they may well be excluded from vulgar speech and books, as abstract from sensible matters, and more fit for the speculation of truth, the labour and aim of a few, than for the practice of the world, or the subjects of experimental or mechanical inquiry.[24]

---

[24] Siris, Sec. 297.

The Place of Intellect and Sensation in the Siris

But this world of Platonic Forms, Berkeley maintains in the Siris, is the world of intellect. And if the world of intellect is the only true reality, then the world of sense must be no more than a mere appearance. And this in effect is one of the basic theses of the Siris. The youthful author of the Philosophical Commentaries glorified the senses and the indubitable knowldege they provide. Mind seemed for him almost to resolve into empirical data of sense, and abstract intellectual necessities were disparaged:

> Pure intellect I understand not.[25] We must with the Mob place certainty in the senses.[26] Mind is a congeries of perceptions. Take away perceptions and you take away the mind. Put the perceptions and you put the mind.[27]

In the Principles Berkeley had remarked:

> . . . no sooner do we depart from sense and instinct to follow the light of a superior principle, to reason, meditate, and reflect on the nature of things, but a thousand scruples spring up in our minds. . . .[28]
>
> That what I see, hear and feel doth exist, that is to say, is perceived by me, I no more doubt than I do of my own being.[29]

---

[25] PC, # 810.

[26] PC, # 740.

[27] PC, # 580.

[28] PHK, "Introduction," Sec. 1.

[29] PHK, Sec. 40.

In the Three Dialogues too, he strictly adhered to the doctrine of the veracity of sense perception and ridicules those philosophers who disagree with his "esse is percipi" principle.

> 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.[30]

One of the reasons why he dissociated himself from Malebranche and considered his own philosophy very remote from his was Malebranche's contention "that we are deceived by our senses, and know not the real natures or the true forms or figures of extended being; of all which I hold the direct contrary."[31]

In direct contrast to this, in the Siris we find an emphatic recognition that it is reason alone which being superior to sense leads us to a true knowledge of a hyperphenomenal reality. Berkeley now affirms almost without qualification that apprehension is the work of the understanding, not of the senses. "We know a thing when we understand it; and we understand it when we can interpret or tell what it signifies. Strictly, the sense knows nothing."[32] Indeed sensible appearances often "render the aftertask of

---

[30] TD, p. 167.

[31] TD, p. 214.

[32] Siris, Sec. 253.

of thought more difficult."[33] No doubt even in his earlier works Berkeley believed that knowledge is possible only for a judging self and that judgment is the essential aspect of knowledge. In the New Theory of Vision, we were told that distance is not immediately perceived, it is judged. And this element of judgment is involved in all perception. But while in the New Theory of Vision Berkeley held that sense perception includes judgment, in the Siris the element of judgment is excluded from sense. "Sense," he now tells us, "at first besets and overbears the mind. The sensible appearances are all in all: our reasonings are employed about them: our desires terminate in them: we look no farther for realities and causes; till intellect begins to dawn and cast a ray on the shadowy scene. We then perceive the true principle of unity, identity and existence. Those things which before seemed to constitute the whole of being, upon taking an intellectual view of things prove to be but fleeting phantoms."[34] Through the dusk of our gross atmosphere in this life of sense the sharpest eye cannot see clearly. "It cannot be denied that, with respect to the Universe of things, we in this mortal state are like men educated in Plato's cave, looking on shadows with our backs turned to the light."[35] Thus, says

---

[33] Siris, Sec. 264.

[34] Siris, Sec. 294.

[35] Siris, Sec. 263.

J. D. Hicks, "so far as a theory of knowledge is concerned, the whole drift of Berkeley's later reflection was towards a dislodgment of sense-perception from the place it occupied in empirical theory, and in conjunction therewith, towards recognition of the essential function of conceptual thought in cognitive apprehension generally."[36] There is a complete transformation of the "*esse* is *percipi*" principle. The *percipi* which was before boldly asserted to be the *esse* of ideas is now in strict truth not *esse* at all. For being is not to be found in the senses and their "ever fluent and changing objects," but rather in "a form or species that is neither generated nor destroyed, unchangeable, invisible and altogether imperceptible to sense. . . ."[37] The objects presented in sense are in the *Siris* called phenomena instead of "ideas" or "sensations." All phenomena are in truth considered as appearances in the soul or mind.[38] They are gross and fleeting,[39] always becoming but *never existing*.[40] They exist only in the mind, *a fact which does not prove their reality*, but rather how far removed they are from reality. In one respect Berkeley here appears to have even

---

[36] J. D. Hicks, *Berkeley* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1932), p. 210.

[37] *Siris*, Sec. 306.

[38] *Siris*, Sec. 251.

[39] *Siris*, Sec. 303.

[40] *Siris*, Sec. 304.

anticipated the problems which lead directly to the inquiry undertaken by Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason, and though he did not attempt to work out what Kant tried afterwards in his transcendental philosophy, nor did he ever formulate a systematic doctrine of the synthetic unity of apperception, yet from an epistemological point of view he may be said to be one of the forerunners of the Kantian thesis of the transcendental clue to the discovery of pure concepts of understanding:

> The perceptions of sense are gross; but even in the sense there is a difference. Though harmony and proportion are not objects of sense yet the eye and the ear are organs which offer to the mind such materials by means whereof she may apprehend both the one and the other. By experiments of sense we become acquainted with the lower faculties of the soul; and from them, whether by a gradual evolution or ascent, we arrive at the highest. Sense supplies images to memory. These become subjects for fancy to work upon. Reason considers and judges of the imaginations. In this scale, each lower faculty is a step that leads to one above it.[41]

> As understanding perceiveth not, that is, doth not hear, or see, or feel, so sense knoweth not: and although the mind may use both sense and fancy, as means whereby to arrive at knowledge, yet sense, or soul so far forth as sensitive, knoweth nothing. For as it is rightly observed in the Theatetus of Plato, science consists not in the passive perceptions, but in the reasoning upon them. . . .[42]

---

[41] Siris, Sec. 303.

[42] Siris, Sec. 305.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTRINE OF PLOTINUS AND BERKELEY'S IMMATERIALISM

The Siris shows Berkeley's intimate knowledge of the Enneads, and it was really through the eyes of Plotinus that Berkeley tended to interpret Plato, as well as the whole history of Greek speculation. Berkeley's dissatisfaction with the speculative Absolute to which his reasoning had led him in the Three Dialogues now enabled him to appreciate the logical necessity underlying the mystical apex of Greek speculation, viz., Plotinus' conception of the 'One.' In his earlier works 'idea' for Berkeley meant that which is immediately perceived, and since nobody perceives God, there could be no such thing as an 'idea' of God discoverable by any mind, though he could be known inferentially. An infinite mind, he had asserted in the Dialogues, should be necessarily inferred[1] from the bare existence of the sensible world.[2]

> Is there no difference between saying there is a God, therefore he perceives all things: and saying, sensible things do really exist: and if they really exist, they are necessarily perceived

---

[1] My italics.

[2] TD, p. 212.

> by an infinite mind: therefore there is an infinite mind, or God.[3]

But in the Siris the argument for the existence of God is no longer based on the sheer existence of the sensible world. Sensible objects, he says, are always flowing; they are fleeting phantoms and no true knowledge can be based on things so impermanent.[4] In the light of his studies of Plotinus the whole proof of the existence of God has been turned upside down:

> The supreme Being, saith Plotinus, as He excludes all diversity, is ever alike present. And we are then present to Him when recollected and abstracted from the world and sensible objects, . . .[5]

In sympathy with the doctrine of Plotinus which was later developed in full by the Persian philosopher Avicenna, the Siris throughout stipulates the conception of God as a Necessary Being. Plotinus and Avicenna thought that as it is impossible to think of a contradiction, so it is unthinkable that a Necessary Being should not exist. God is not a terminus of a process of ratiocination and is neither postulated to avoid an infinite regress nor to guarantee the continued existence of the physical world. The whole difficulty in such considerations as that of Berkeley in the Dialogues, Plotinus would say, is that we first take for granted the existence of things, and the phenomenal

---

[3] TD, p. 212.

[4] Siris, Sec. 349.

[5] Siris, Sec. 358.

order, and then when we have made them all secure, bring God into it. And then when we have brought Him in, we begin to ask whence and how he came--as if he were a new arrival; we have been wondering as if He had suddenly emerged from some abyss or dropped down from the clouds.[6]

The notion of the One belongs pre-eminently to Parmenides, but it is with the systematic exposition of Plotinus that Berkeley seems to have been most impressed. Plotinus might have borrowed this notion of the One from Parmenides, but he borrows also from the sixth book of the Republic, for Plotinus also identifies the One with the Good of Plato. Plotinus' direct source, however, was probably Philo (30 B.C. to 40 A.C.) because it was Philo who for the first time affected a minor revolution in Greek thought that established itself as point de départ in philosophy.[7] By placing the Platonic Ideas in the divine mind, Philo had interpreted Plato in a sense which many scholars, both ancient and modern, have refused to allow. And here Plotinus agreed with Philo. Plotinus, however, rejected Philo's account of Creation, where God is depicted as setting out at a certain moment of time to shape things according to a pattern out of pre-existent matter.

---

[6]Enneads, VI, 8, 11.

[7]Elmer O'Brien, The Essential Plotinus (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 15.

Plotinus distinguishes three most important transcendent realities or "hypostases," viz., the One, Intelligence, and Soul. The One according to Plotinus, transcends the numerical series and is the measure of it. It is statically the unity by which all number is intelligible and dynamically, the unity whence and whither all multiplicity moves. The One is a hypostasis. Transcending essence it transcends being as well, because being implies essence.[8] Aristotle, says Plotinus, was wrong in saying that being and the One are always interchangeable, for in reality being is always subordinated to the One, which is the principle of being. It transcends thought, because thought supposes being and essence[9] and because it implies the duality of the knower and the known.[10] As a matter of fact no positive property or form can be attributed to the One, for these are the terms that can be applied only to subordinate hypostases. The One is so transcendent that whatever we say of it merely limits it; hence we cannot attribute to it beauty or goodness or thought or will, for all such attributes are limitations and really imperfections. We cannot say what it is, but only what it is not. It is higher than beauty, truth, goodness, consciousness and will, for all of these depend

---

[8] Enneads, V, 5, 6.

[9] Enneads, I, 7, 1.

[10] Enneads, III, 9, 1.

upon the One.[11] No designation can be applied to what no sound can convey, what cannot be known on any hearing. Only the contemplative knows it; and even he, should he seek a form, would know it not.[12]

The question may now be posed why does not this One remain unique? Why does it not remain shut up in itself? Plotinus' answer is that the Supreme Reality, perfect in all respects, must include in it the highest degree of productivity, and "like a living being that has achieved maturity it produces likeness--unconsciously, involuntarily, as a spring discharges a stream of extra water or as a light diffuses its ray. The One is, however, like an infinite spring from which the stream flows without exhausting its infinite source; or like a sun from which light radiates without loss to the sun. Here the cause does not pass over or lose itself in its effects; the effect is non-essential so far as God is concerned. The world depends upon God, but He does not depend upon it. According to Plotinus, God did not create the world, for creation implies

---

[11] Enneads, V, 5, 6.

[12] "In Meister Eckhart, the devout mystic, there is a similar distinction between God, the Knowable Creator, and the original ground, beyond being and knowledge which he calls 'the Godhead' and which he also characterizes by predilection as the Nothing, or 'unnatured nature,' not only unknown or unknowable to man, but unknown also to itself. The Godhead, as he says in the extremity of his paradox, dwells in the nothing of nothing which was before nothing, and it is apprehended only in the Knowledge that is not Knowing" (Ueberweg's History of Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 474, English translation).

consciousness and will; the Universe is rather an emanation from God. It is an axiom with Plotinus that every being tends necessarily to produce an image of itself and the second and third transcendental principles are accordingly to be viewed as manifestations of the power of the first and second respectively--Plotinus traces the idea of this causal series to Plato himself, for whom, he says, the Demiurge is Intellect, which is produced by the Good beyond mind and being, and in its turn produces Soul.[13] But each of these derived beings seeks to remain as close as possible to the source from which it received the fullness of its reality, and almost as soon as it begins its procession, it turns backwards in order to contemplate its source. Retroversion or the act of thinking backward gives birth (an eternal and non-temporal birth, of course) to the second hypostasis, which is at once Being, Mind, and the Intelligible World.[14] It is intelligence as well as intelligible, thought and object of thought forming an indissoluble unity. As intelligible it is the Platonic world of Ideas which is both the informing content of the divine Intellect and is also generated by it in its act of retroversion in contemplation upon the One. But the Intelligible World in Plotinus, though at once divine intellect and the world

---

[13] Enneads, V, 1, 8.

[14] Emile Brehier, The Hellenistic & Roman Age, translated by Wade Baskin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 186-87.

of Forms, is not like the One--a reality which transcends human comprehension. And this leads to an important distinction between the Intelligible World and Plato's world of Forms. The ideas in the Intelligible World are not abstract, inert and lifeless universals--"an abstract diagram of the sensible world"[15]--but a veritable world of highest vitality and variety in which every individual is present in all the distinctness of its particular perfection, all alive, and intelligent. Such is the meaning of Plotinus' well known principle that the intelligibles are not outside the intelligence.[16] Further, even this multiplicity, Plotinus thought, should not be unduly exaggerated, for in the systematic unity of the intelligible world each being contains every other being and everything is contained by everything. It is a society of intellects or rational minds, each of which contemplates all others as it contemplates itself. Everything there, including forms of inanimate things and irrational animals, is alive and intelligent simply because it <u>is</u> the divine intellect.

It is clear that Plotinus needed an emanation in order that the first cause should remain unchanged. A question may now be raised, how if the One is not intelligence, can it produce intelligence? The answer is that by turning

---

[15] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 188.

[16] A. H. Armstrong, <u>The Real Meaning of Plotinus's Intelligible World</u> (Oxford: Blackfriars, 1949), p. 6.

towards itself the One has vision. It is this vision that constitutes Intelligence; but in contrast to the One Intelligence is divisible. Intelligence has in itself consciousness of the power to produce and to define Being out of itself by means of the power it derives from the One. The One is not any of the things which Intelligence contains. It is the source from which all of them have been derived. That is why they are 'beings,' for they are already determined and each of them has a kind of determination. A being cannot be something indeterminate, but must have definition and stability.[17] The Intelligence must have begotten from its birth the whole world of being, all the beauty of Ideas, and the intelligible deities.

Now as the One produces the Intelligible world, so the Intelligible World produces a third hypostasis which is the Soul. The Soul is at different distances from the Nous: first there is the universal soul, next the world-soul, and finally the soul of man. To question 'how is there any plurality of souls?" the answer is 'because there is plurality in Nous.' Though the soul forms a nature distinct from Intelligence, yet it does not become completely separate from Intelligence. As the soul stems from Intelligence, she is herself an intellectual existence. The manifestation of this intellectual power is discursive reason. The soul thus

---

[17] Enneads, V, 1.

is the hypostasis that proceeds from Intelligence, and its reason is actualized when it contemplates intelligence.[18]

For Plotinus man himself is essentially intellect[19] and human intelligence in turn is the closest approximation to this Intelligence.[20] In withdrawing into his intelligence, man withdraws into the Intelligence of which he is the emanated effulgence.[21] Thus in its procession the soul has its superior part remain in the upper world; for if it detached itself from the superior part, it would no longer be present everywhere but only at that place where its procession ends. And though each succeeding activity of the soul is weaker than the preceding one, nonetheless each activity is contemplation;[22] <u>for that which is begotten must always remain of the same kind with its generating principle, though it is weaker and of low rank</u>.[23] One contemplation begets another contemplation. There is no boundary for contemplation or its objects. Below discursive thought and sensation is nature. Nature is a soul begotten by a superior soul that possesses a more potent life and contains its contemplation silently within itself without

---

[18] <u>Enneads</u>, V, 1.

[19] <u>Enneads</u>, I, 4, 14.

[20] <u>Enneads</u>, VI, 2, 22.

[21] <u>Enneads</u>, VI, 7, 13.

[22] <u>Enneads</u>, III, 8.

[23] <u>Enneads</u>, III, 8, 5 [italics mine].

inclining towards that which is higher or lower. If one desires to attribute some sort of cognition or sensation to nature, these resemble ordinary cognition and sensation only as the cognition and sensation of a man who is asleep resemble those of a man who is awake. For nature remains at rest while contemplating its object which was born in it because it abides within and with itself and because it is an object of contemplation itself, a silent, if weak, contemplation. Thus, not only all rational beings but also irrational animals, trees, plants as also the earth that begets them aspire to contemplation and are directed towards that end. And the soul is not only thinking--for in that case it would not differ from Nous--but also ordering and governing that which comes after it. But the soul organizes only because it contemplates. Thus in Plotinus the Universe is envisioned as a living being. There exists a life, as it were, of huge extension, a totality in which the several parts differ from each other, all making a self-continuous whole.[24]

Every atom is not merely an atom, but also a universe in miniature, every individual intelligence is a depiction of the universal mind--the so-called intelligible universe.[25] Matter, too, must participate of the nature of the good.

---

[24] Enneads, IV, 4, 8.

[25] Enneads, V, 2, 2.

For that which gives existence as it were by grace could not stop before coming to it.[26] Only in this way can we explain the beauty to be found in the sensible world. The world is beautiful since it is an image of God. By reason of the inability of matter to participate fully in the real and positive qualities of existence it follows that the perfection of the material universe is inferior to that of the Universal Soul, and still more to that of the Intelligible Universe. Nevertheless it has that degree of perfection which is appropriate to the nature of an image or a copy.[27] And since the Universe as an organized being (nature) lives in and by the Universal Soul, it follows that the life of the world considered as a totality, is essentially divine and impassive.[28] But though the soul animates things, "she was begotten in her indivisibility and omnipresence. It is through her power that this world of plurality and vareity is contained within the bounds of unity."[29]

And since nature is a living organism sympathetic throughout, individual parts of the universe have a quasi-sensitivity, and respond to impressions from without. There

---

[26] Enneads, IV, 8, 6.

[27] Enneads, II, 9, 8.

[28] Enneads, II, 3, 9 and V, 1, 2.

[29] Enneads, V, 1.

is a vital nexus in virtue of which every minutest or remotest part of the universe is intimately correlated and sympathetically united to the rest.

> All intwines into a unity: and there is something wonderful in the agreement holding among these various things of varied source, even of sources frankly opposite; the secret lies in a variety within a unity.[30]

Berkeley as we have seen denies the existence of matter outright. Matter has no place in his metaphysical system. Plotinus, however, could not break with the old Greek tradition, particularly with that of Plato and Aristotle. But whereas Aristotle defines matter in terms of form, and always makes it something relative to it, Plotinus makes it an absolute notion. And whereas Aristotle considers matter as indeterminate only with respect to form (e.g., bronze with respect to the formed statue), Plotinus recognizes only completely indeterminate, rather indeterminable, matter. In the sense of indeterminateness, matter, according to Plotinus, is infinite. Its nature is to be the recipient of forms. In itself it is no thing nor spirit, nor life nor form, nor reason, nor limit, nor a power, but falling outside all these things it cannot rightly be said to have being, but should rather be called not-being.[31] By its absolute want of all form, that is, of all proper being, matter is at the opposite extreme to things

---

[30] Enneads, IV, 4, 38.

[31] Enneads, III, 6, 7.

intelligible, and in its own nature ugly and evil. Since it is the opposite of absolute good, it follows that it must be absolute evil. Plotinus expounds two hypotheses, without taking sides, about the nature and origin of matter. "Either matter has always existed . . . or else its creation is a necessary consequence of antecedent causes."[32] In the first case it is a principle distinct from the realities which emanate progressively from the One, and it may set itself against these realities. In the second case, it is the last term in the procession of realities, that is to say, the sterile stage in which the productive force which has proceeded from the One at last dies out, as at a distance from the candle light wanes.

If we examine Plotinus's theory of the divine hypostases and his views on the nature of matter, it may be observed that if the sensible world is an emanation from the Intelligible World, Plotinus' hypostasis of the soul is redundant. For according to him there must be in the Intelligible World exemplars of everything that is there in the world of sense. The Intelligible World cannot be denied the perfection for being as full as the world of sense. Each level of reality, we are told, is as full as the other, except that the lower contains a totality of things in a weaker form than the one above it. But if Intelligence too is endowed with life, the question arises, "why does not the sense world

---

[32] Enneads, IV, 8, 6.

proceed directly from the Intelligible world without the mediating hypostasis of the Soul?" Secondly Plotinus did not, like Locke, restrict his notion of matter to "something he knows not what," but gave it a definite transcendental status. Though termed not-being it is nonetheless analogous to the Nothing of the modern existentialists which by itself commands the status of an Absolute. "Matter once allowed," writes Berkeley in the Philosophical Commentaries, "I defy any man to prove that God is not matter."[33] Plotinus considers matter as opposed to the Good (as darkness, obscure depth, irrationality are opposed to light and to reason), as exhibiting harmful activity, seeking to arrogate to itself the form which dwells not in it, to attach to form its own absence of form, to the proportioned being its own excess and lack of measure, doing its best through its agitation to impair the work of reason. It is considered to have existed like a thorn alongside with the One. If the creation of matter is, it may be argued, a necessary consequence of antecedent causes then the nature of matter cannot be so antithetic to the nature of divine existence, no matter what number of the stages of emanations and processions it may traverse. If the One is the supreme Good, then, by the law of the transitivity of identical processions,[34]

---

[33] PC, # 625.

[34] Enneads, III, 8, 5.

even the last of the emanations must contain that goodness, however faint or dim the adumbration be. The One being the source of all Being, no power of opposition can be granted to matter. But if matter is a diametrically opposed principle then it tends to be a more positive entity, a real not-being. Much akin to the system of the Persian dualists, it is a principle of Evil, an Ahriman, destroyer of the order of Ormuzd. As a result the One of Plotinus fails to give a satisfactory explanation of the nature of Existence and in spite of all his emphasis on unity Plotinus' system ends in a dualism of what might summarily be called Matter and Spirit.

When in the Siris Berkeley seems to be enamoured of the philosophy of Plotinus he did not fully visualize these facets of the Plotinian system. The refutation of the concept of matter, as we saw in our first chapter, was the avowed mission of Berkeley's life. "It is a very extraordinary instance of the force of prejudice, and much to be lamented," says Berkeley "that the mind of man retains so great a fondness against all the evidence of reason, for a stupid, thoughtless somewhat, by the interposition whereof it would as it were, screen itself from the providence of God, and remove him farther off from the affairs of the world."[35]

---

[35] PHK, Sec. 75.

CHAPTER V

THE SPIRITUALISM OF THE SIRIS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIGHT

An attempt toward bridging the Plotinian dualism of matter and spirit was made by the Persian philosopher Shahabuddin Suhurwardi Maqtul (1153-1191) by substituting Light for the One of Plotinus. As Berkeley devotes some seventy-eight sections of the Siris to the theory of fire or light, so Suhurwardi in his Hikmatul-Ishraq gives a positive exposition of his thought beginning with a chapter on light. The essence of light, says Suhurwardi, needs no definition because it is the most obvious of all things. Its nature is to manifest itself; it is being, as its absence, darkness, is nothingness. All reality consists of degrees of light and darkness. Suhurwardi calls the Absolute Reality--the infinite and limitless divine essence--the Light of lights. The whole universe, the 18000 worlds of light and darkness which Suhurwardi mentions in Bustan al Qulub, are degrees of irradiation and effusion of the Primordial Light which shines everywhere while remaining immutable and forever the same. "The immense panorama of diversity which we call the Universe is, therefore, a vast shadow of the infinite variety in intensity of direct or

indirect illuminations of rays of the Primary Light.[1] All beings, according to Suhurwardi, are the illumination of the Supreme Light which leaves its viceregent in each domain, the sun in the heavens, fire among the elements, and the divine light in the human soul. The soul of man is essentially composed of light; that is why man becomes joyous at the sight of the light of the sun or fire and fears darkness. Jewels like rubies make man happy because of the light within them[2] which is akin to the soul of man. All the causes of the Universe return ultimately to light; all motion in the world, whether it be of heavens or of the elements are ultimately nothing but the illuminations of the Light of lights. Suhurwardi, however, made a clear distinction between his own system and that of the Magians and Manicheans which, like the system of Plotinus, involve dualism and run counter to his own principle of unity of Light.

In the old Persian religion light and darkness--Ahura Mazda and Ahriman--were considered two primeval but rival causes of all existence. The early Persians (like Berkeley in the Siris) also identified light with fire and raised it to the place of highest distinction in their faith.

---

[1] Iqbal, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia (London: Luzac & Co., 1908), p. 135.

[2] In the Siris Berkeley tells us that the pure invisible fire or ether doth permeate all bodies, even the hardest and most solid, as the diamond (Siris, Sec. 200).

> Ahura Mazda is eternal light, his very nature is light. He lives in the everlasting lights of the highest heaven. Light in its various manifestations, whether as the fire of the hearth on earth, or the fiery substance in the bowels of the earth, or as the genial glow of the sun in the azure vault of heaven, or the silvery sheen of the crescent moon in the sky, or the flickering brilliancy of the stars in the firmament, or even in the form of the life-giving energy distributed in the entire creation, is emblematic of Mazda. No wonder, then, if the Prophet of Ancient Iran made fire the consecrated symbol of his religion, a symbol which in point of sublimity, grandeur, and purity, or in its being the nearest earthly image of the heavenly lord, is unequalled by any of its kind in the world.[3]

On the other hand Ahriman, the principle of Darkness was considered as the source of all Evil, hail and hurricane, cyclone and thunderstorm, plague and pestilence, famine and drought. It is this which infects the bodies of mortals with disease and decay, death and destruction. Now, a constant war is being waged between these forces of Good and Evil. This opposition, they thought, permeates the entire universe and will last up to the end of time when light or righteousness shall ultimately triumph and darkness be made to disappear. Thus in Zoroastrianism, as in the system of Plotinus, Evil remains as real a factor as Good, as independent and as active. The Zoroastrian divines were confronted with the problem how Mazda, the father of Goodness, can be made responsible for the existence of evil in the world. Thus it was this principle of evil that compelled

---

[3]M. N. Dhalla, History of Zoroastrianism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 62.

the Persians to believe in the principle of Darkness and led Plotinus to posit the existence of matter.

It was, however, Heraclitus who was the first in the history of Greek speculation to give a systematic exposition of the Fire philosophy. Heraclitus declared the world to be an everliving Fire, and fire to be the essence of all things. All comes from fire and to fire all returns. "All things are an exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods." It is the universal nourishing stuff, which in its eternal circulation permeates all parts of the cosmos. It is this fire which individuates itself in the variegated phenomena of the cosmos assuming a definite and a particular being in each existence. Fire, however, represented to Heraclitus not merely the sensible fire but a living and rational principle. It is a vehicle for soul and mind, or rather soul and mind themselves. He regarded it as the source of world's intelligence, as the conscious regulative principle of all existence. The more fire there is, the more life, the more movement. Through breath human beings take inside this outer fire. But the Heraclitian doctrine of Fire is fundamentally different from the Zoroastrian principle of Fire.[4] Heraclitus enunciates a hylozoistic pantheism in so far as the divine essence by the necessity of its nature is constantly

---

[4]See Zeller's Pre-Socratic Philosophy, pp. 115-116.

passing over into the changing forms of the finite, and the finite abides in the undivided unity of the divine, and thus, as in Suhurwardi, maintains the fundamental unity of all existence. The Persian doctrine, as we saw, has two diametrically opposed principles of good and evil, light and darkness.

> Heraclitus chided Hesoid, who made one day good and another bad, for not knowing that the nature of every day is one and the same.[5]

Heraclitus was thus among the few philosophers who showed for the first time that the opposites were neither original nor permanent, but spring forth from the fundamental unity of Divine Essence, which in the process of its manifestation assumes these so-called opposite forms. Whereas for Zoroaster, the forces of Ahriman neutralize the efforts of Ormuzd, for Heraclitus strife is a necessary condition and father of all existence. Heraclitus clearly saw that evil is the necessary counterpart of good and both together go in forming the harmony of this world. The opposites are combined in the self-same one, just as honey is both sweet and bitter. Heraclitus regarded it as proven, as a fundamental law in the natural as well as in the spiritual world, that contraries were not mutually exclusive.

---

[5]Joseph Katz, Philosophy in the West (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), p. 12.

It is, therefore, obvious that even if Heraclitus was acquainted with the religious doctrine of Zoroaster (so often claimed by the Persians), there are no signs of its having exercised any influence on his cosmology. In conformity with his own doctrine he abolished all plurality from existence, for in the last analysis they are nothing but the various manifestations of the primeval Fire. Heraclitus was thus "the first to build bridges, which have never since been destroyed, between the natural and spiritual life."[6]

In the Siris Berkeley enunciates this ancient doctrine of Fire. In a letter to Thomas Prior[7] Berkeley tells us that he had "of a long time entertained an opinion agreeable to the sentiments of many ancient philosophers, that Fire may be regarded as the Animal Spirit of this visible world . . . that this same light or fire was the immediate instrumental[8] or physical cause of sense and motion, and consequently of life and health to animals."[9]

---

[6] T. Gomperz, Greek Thinkers, Vol. I, p. 62.

[7] The Works of George Berkeley, Vol. V, p. 176.

[8] My Italics.

[9] In the Siris Berkeley talks of Fire not only in the physical but also in the metaphysical sense. In the Alciphron (VI, 14), Berkeley had for the first time mentioned Fire in the physical sense and had ridiculed the free thinkers like Hermann Boerhaave of Lyden for entertaining a theory which resolved the soul chemically into fire. But in the Siris he approves of such explanation when he considers fire as "the general source of life, spirit, and strength, and therefore of health to all animals, who

He reports the philosophy of Heraclitus, the Stoics, the Pythagoreans and the Platonists who, according to him, all emphasized the unity of existence through their doctrine of Fire.

---

constantly receive its illapses clothed in air, through the lungs and pores of the body. The same spirit, imprisoned in food and medicines, is conveyed into the stomach, the bowels, the lacteals, circulated and secreted by the several ducts, and distributed throughout the system. In the Siris Berkeley not only approves of such an explanation, but fuses the physical with the metaphysical fire.

> Such are the bright and lively signatures of a Divine Mind operating and displaying itself in Fire and light throughout the world, that, as Aristotle observes in his book De Mundo, all things seem full of divinities, whose apparitions on all sides strike and dazzle our eyes. (Siris, Sec. 173).
>
> It must be owned there are many passages in Holy Scripture that would make one think the supreme Being was in a peculiar manner present and manifest in the element of fire. Not to insist that God is more than once said to be a consuming fire which might be understood in a metaphorical sense; the divine apparitions were by fire, in the bush, at Mount Sinai, on the tabernacle, in the cloven tongues. God is represented in the inspired writings as descending in fire, as attended by fire, or with fire going before Him. Celestial things, as angels, chariots, and such like phenomena, are invested with fire, light and splendour. Ezekiel in his vision beheld fire and brightness, lamps, burning coals of fire, and flashes of lightning. In a vision of Daniel, the throne of God appeared like a fiery flame, and His wheels like a burning fire. (Siris, Sec. 186).

Thus while in the Alciphron Berkeley was fain to bestow fire any metaphysical status, in the Siris he links it with divine existence. Professor Luce is, therefore, wrong in assuming that in the Siris Berkeley builds a cosmology which simply falls on the side of science and has nothing to do with metaphysics (The Works of George Berkeley, Vol. V, pp. 10-11). Luce fails to understand why Berkeley dismisses the theory in 1732, and embraces it long afterwards. The answer is obvious. The theory did not at that time fit in with his earlier thesis of inert and passive ideas.

> Aggreably thereto an aetherial substance or fire was supposed by Heraclitus to be the seed of the generation of all things, or that from which all things drew their original. The Stoics also taught that all substance was originally fire, and should return to fire; that an active subtle fire was diffused or expanded throughout the whole universe, the several parts whereof were produced, sustained, and held together, by its force. And it was the opinion of the Pythagoreans, as Laertius informs us, that heat or fire was the principle of life, animating the whole system, and penetrating all elements. The Platonists, too, as well as the Pythagoreans, held fire to be the immediate natural agent, or animal spirit, to cherish, to warm, to heat, to enlighten, to vegitate, to produce the digestions, circulations, secretions, and organical motions, in all living bodies, vegetable or animal, being effects of that animal, which, as it actuates the macrocosm, so it animates the microcosm.[10]

Berkeley therefore throughout emphasizes in the Siris this divine nature of fire and, unlike Zoroaster, considers it as the one fundamental principle of all reality and existence.

> A notion of something divine in fire, animating the whole world and ordering its several parts, was a tenet of very general extent being embraced in the most distant time and places, even among the Chinese themselves, who make tien ether, or heaven, the sovereign principle or cause of all things, and teach that the celestial virtue, by them called li, when joined to corporeal substance, doth fashion, distinguish, and specificate all natural beings.[11]

---

[10] Siris, Sec. 166.

[11] Siris, Sec. 180.

CHAPTER VI

THE PANPSYCHISM OF THE SIRIS AND POST-KANTIAN IDEALISM

In the Siris Berkeley agrees with the ancient doctrine that the entire universe is animated and alive. Here the 'ideas' are not those of Locke or, like the sensuous ideas of the Principles and the Dialogues, inert, inactive objects of perception. They rather reflect the spirit of Plato, a spirit extracted from a thing of sense so commonplace as tar. We are transported from Locke to Plato and find revived the ancient conceptions of Active Intelligence and constant animation of the universe:

> Such is the mutual relation, connexion, motion and sympathy of the parts of this world, that they seem as it were animated and held together by one Soul.[1]

Berkeley here is in sympathy with the Hermaic, the Egyptian and other Greek sages who believed that all things partake of life.

> There is according to these philosophers a life infused throughout all things . . . an intellectual and artificial fire, an inward principle, animal spirit, or natural life, producing and forming within as art doth without, regulating, moderating, and reconciling the various motions, qualities, and

---

[1] Siris, Sec. 273.

> facts of this mundane system. By virtue of this life the great masses are held together in their orderly courses, as well as the minutest particles governed in their natural motions, according to the several laws of attraction, gravity, electricity, magnetism and the rest. It is this gives instincts, teaches the spider her web, and the bee her honey. This it is that directs the roots of plants to draw forth juices from the earth, and the leaves and cortical vessels to separate and attract such particles of air, and elementary fire, as suit their respective natures.[2]

Berkeley rejects the Aristotelian view that elements are not alive. For it is more difficult to prove that blood and animal spirit are more alive in man than water and fire in the world.[3]

Thus, had Berkeley been a subjective idealist to the last, and had he not been aroused from his dogmatic slumbers, he would not have taken such great pains to show that behind the ideas (which form his phenomenal world) there is a spirit that moves, and a mind or providence that presides, and that Intelligence is the only summary explanation of the Universe. In the Principles and the Dialogues the ideas had been inert and passive entities present in the human mind and implanted by God in our consciousness. What would be the point now in asserting in Siris the spiritual nature of these ideas. In the Siris Berkeley comes quite close to Schelling's conception of the Absolute in his

---

[2] Siris, Sec. 277.

[3] Siris, Sec. 280.

interpretation of the conception that there is a mind that governs this mundane world. The tiniest particle appears spiritualized in such a system. Berkeley's contemporary Leibniz was systematically propounding this metaphysical spiritualism on the continent. Descartes, we know, had drawn a sharp line between consciousness and unconsciousness on the one side and self-consiousness on the other. But for Leibniz, mind could not be regarded as identical with self-consciousness alone; self-consciousness must not be taken as entirely exclusive of mere consciousness or unconsciousness. The difference between mind and body, therefore, becomes for him a difference not of kind but of degree. A true doctrine of substance, Leibniz maintains makes matter by itself an abstraction; for matter is really confused perception which is potentially clear and distinct perception--apperception or mind. In the smallest particle of so-called matter there is a world of creatures, living beings, animals, entelechies, souls. Each portion of matter may be conceived as a garden full of plants or a pond full of fishes. But each branch of every plant, each member of every animal, each drop of its liquid parts, is also some such garden or pond. Thus there is nothing fallow, nothing sterile, nothing dead.[4] There is only one reality that pervades the Universe. Body is confused soul;

---

[4] Monadology, Sections 65-69.

soul is clear and distinct body. Thus the absoluteness of the distinction between matter and mind that Descartes had insisted upon is removed. If the essence of matter is extension then it has no point of contact with the mental life. Spinoza tried to avoid this dualism by referring both thought and extension to a single substance, God. But this involves self-contradiction. It means asserting that the same substance is extended and unextended. But when, instead, we characterize matter as force, which is synonymous to our own conscious life, a means of connection will appear, and Malebranche's fundamental difficulty--how the unextended soul is capable of cognizing the extended body--has been resolved.

According to Fichte, however, Consciousness becomes the manifestation--the self-revelation-of the Absolute, and this only. The varied forms into which it is broken up, are only more or less perfect modes of this Existence, and the idea of the world as an infinite assemblage of concrete beings, unconscious, is another phase of the same infinite and absolute Being. But in no case, and from no point of view, is consciousness a purely subjective and empty train of fancies; it contains nothing which does not rest upon and image forth a higher reality; and thus idealism assumes the form of a sublime and perfected Realism.

> The Divine Life in itself is absolute self-comprehending unity, without change or variableness . . . , it becomes a self-developing existence, gradually and eternally unfolding

> itself, and constantly progressing onward in the ever-flowing stream of time. The living cannot be manifested in the dead, for the two are altogether opposed to each other; and hence, as Absolute Being alone is life, so the only true and peculiar manifestation of that being is Living Existence.[5]

But surprisingly enough even Fichte did not remain true to his principle to the last. As Plotinus postulated Matter as a force divergent and opposite from the One, the source of all Evil, so did Fichte consider the physical world--a manifestation of Divine Life--as dead, a rigid self inclosed system. His entire cosmology reduces itself to a bundle of self-contradictions when he declares:

> We should not be blinded or led astray by a philosophy assuming the name of natural,[6] which pretends to excel all former philosophy by striving to elevate Nature into absolute being, and into the place of God. In all ages, the theoretical errors as well as the moral corruptions of humanity have arisen from falsely bestowing the name of life on that which in itself possesses neither absolute nor finite being, and seeking for life and its enjoyments in that which in itself is dead.[7]

If Nature "proceeds from the self-manifestation of the Absolute" and "has its foundation in God," and if "it is designed not merely to be useful or profitable to man, but also to be his fitting companion bearing the impress of his higher dignity, and reflecting it in radiant character

---

[5]Fichte, The Nature of the Scholar Lecture II, Sections 5-10 [italics mine].

[6]Schelling's Philosophy of Nature is here referred to.

[7]Fichte, op. cit., Sec. 5 [italics mine].

on every side,"[8] how does it come to pass that in the process of its manifestation in time it becomes not only inert and passive but becomes the greatest hindrance and obstruction to the free and spiritual development of human life, always confining and threatening it.[9] True to his own system of firm adherence to the idealistic philosophy, viz., determination to accept nothing, whether as fact, law or notion, which is not only deducible from the Absolute but bears its own stamp--a systematic unity is demanded out of which the multiplicity of experience may be deduced under a single all embracing Whole. Fichte posits the non-ego, which is in every respect the negative of ego. All limitation is negation--this is fundamental for Fichte as for Spinoza--but it is not explained why there should be limitation at all. If the Ego is the only reality and the non-ego is posited by and through the Ego itself, then the non-ego must be only relative and illusory. The so-called antithesis cannot be so opposed to the thesis as to exclude the thesis itself. This dualism we know, is the legacy of Plato's anti-thesis between the clear world of Ideas and the dark world of sense, and Kant's anti-thesis between the world of phenomena and noumena. For Kant the two worlds had essentially been opposite--the world of sense was the world of determinism, pleasure and inclination, and the

---

[8]Fichte, op. cit., Sec. 10.

[9]Fichte, op. cit., Sec. 10.

super-sensible world was the world of freedom, self-determination, duty and the Categorical Imperative. These moral and the intellectual worlds stand over against one another as though they belong to different universes. Between the world of sense and the world of morality stands the aesthetic world, or the system of relations we hold to the outward world through our ideas of the beautiful, the sublime. But while Kant, by throwing this bridge of aesthetic feeling over the chasm which separates the phenomenal from the noumenal world, established an outward communication between them, he did not attempt to reconcile, he rather maintained the impossibility of reconciling, their essential opposition. Fichte was, therefore, to some extent justified in his complaint that in Kant's system there are three Absolutes.

> In the Critique of Pure Reason sense-experience was for him the absolute (=x); and in regard to the ideas, the higher, intelligible world, he expressed himself in a most depreciatory fashion. From his earlier works, and from hints in the Critique itself, it may certainly be inferred that he would not have halted at that position; but I will engage to show that these hints are mere inconsequences of reasoning, for if his principles were consistently followed out, the super-sensible world must vanish entirely, and as the only noumenon there would remain that which is to be realized in experience . . . the loftier moral nature of the man corrected his philosophical error, and so appeared the Critique of Practical Reason. In it was manifested the categorical notion of the Ego as something in itself, which would never have appeared in the Critique of Pure Reason; we have thus a second absolute, a moral world (= z). But all the phenomena of human nature were not thereby explained. The relations of the beautiful, of the sublime, and of end in

> nature, which probably were neither theoretical nor moral notions, yet remained. Moreover, what is of much greater importance, the empirical world was now absorbed in the moral world, as a world in itself,--a just retribution, as it were, for the first victory of the empirical. There appeared, then, the Critique of Judgment, in the introduction to which--the most remarkable portion of that remarkable work--it was acknowledged that the super-sensible and the sensible worlds must have some common though undiscoverable root, which root is the third absolute (= y). I say a third, separate from the two preceding and independent, although giving unity to them; and in this I do Kant no wrong. For if this y is undiscoverable, it may contain the other two; but we cannot comprehend how it does so or deduce them from it. If, on the other hand, it is to be comprehended, it must be comprehended as absolute; and there remain as before, three Absolutes.[10]

It is in this reconciliation, in tracing this opposition to its source, in the establishment of the unity of the sensual to the super-sensual world, that Fichte's Wissenchaftslehre had followed out and attempted to merge this Kantian trinity into a Primeval Absolute. Scientific truth, according to Fichte, is that which, starting from one self-evident basis, infers every succeeding position, step by step, with demonstrative certainty.[11] If all forms of life and existence could be shown to be degrees and phases of the same infinite existence which lives in all of them, all externality, isolation and division would disappear from spiritual life. In this way

---

[10]Robert Adamson, Fichte (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1881), pp. 139-140.

[11]Preface to the Wissenchaftslehre.

not only the conscious life of the individual and humanity but the life of nature would be shown in a new light. But even Fichte, as we have seen, could not do full justice to that fundamental unity which his Wissenchaftslehre aimed to attain. The Ego we are told posits the non-ego, and the non-ego is opposed to the Ego. In the first place it is not clear why the absolute Ego posits itself at all, limiting its own activity, and secondly why in the process of this positing it gives rise to a contradictory principle. If, in accordance with the law of identity, $A = A$, then $\sim(A \neq A)$. Fichte tried to overcome the contradiction by his notion of the limit, which limit he termed as outward and external reality, by which the positive and the negative are united. The Ego, Fichte asserts, is at the same time subject and object; yet this unexplained limitation of the mind's activity implied the real existence of somewhat, altogether beyond the bounds of that consciousness, and the very point which Fichte aimed at, that of reducing Reality to one single principle, was by no means accomplished. If the fundamental reality of the subject and the object is basically the same, the object can never negate the subject. And nature as the product of the Ego can never be so antithetic as to be an obstacle to the Absolute.

As a matter of fact Fichte entrenched himself so closely within the circle of his individual consciousness that any scientific passage from thence to the physical world was almost impossible. The difference between those

operations of the mind which are purely rational or imaginative and those which connect us with the objective world could not be maintained. Consciousness, which he rightly made the basal reality, also testifies most clearly that while the notions involved in memory and judgment it depends simply on the subjective powers of our mind, our perceptions come entirely from a foreign source.

As Berkeley said:

> 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.[12]

Again, it might be objected that Fichte never showed on what grounds we are entitled to conclude that although the Ego and the non-ego mutually determine each other, and only exist as determined by each other, yet the former is a real existence, and the latter a nonentity. If the one reduces itself to nothing per se, what is the guarantee that the other may not come down to the same level and the entire system, as Jacobi pointed out, reduce itself to an absolute nihilism? That Fichte himself came to realize the force of these objections is evident from the fact that in his later writings he abandoned to a large extent his purely subjective thesis as well as the dualism of the Ego and the non-ego. He now came to posit one Absolute existence as the

---

[12] PHK, p. 53.

source both of the subject and the object, the self and the not-self, and attributed a real, although still a spiritual existence to the objective world. The vulgar notion of matter Fichte never for a moment readmitted. He still held to his original thesis that Mind is the sole existence, that the whole Universe is a spiritual system, and to speak of a dead, lifeless substance as the substratum of the so-called material properties is to violate the fundamental dictates of logic and science. The subject and the object are the manifestations of the same divine Idea.

> The dead inert mass, which only filled up space, has vanished:[13] and in its place there flows onward, with the rushing music of mighty waves, an endless stream of life and power and action, which issues from the original source of all life--from Thy Life, Infinite One, for all life is Thy Life. . . .[14]
>
> Thy Life, as alone the finite mind can conceive it, is self-forming, self-manifesting Will; this Life, clothed to the eye of the mortal with manifold sensible forms, flows through me and throughout the immeasurable universe of Nature. Here it streams as self-creating and self-forming matter through my veins and muscles and pours out its abundance into the tree, the plant, the grass. Creative life flows forth in one continuous stream drop on drop, through all forms, and into all places where my eye can follow it; it reveals itself to me in a different shape in each various corner of the Universe, as the same power by which in secret darkness my own frame was made.[15]

---

[13] Italics mine.

[14] Fichte, The Vocation of Man, translated by R. K. Chisholm (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956), p. 151.

[15] Fichte, op. cit., p. 151 [italics mine].

Fichte therefore not only upholds the unity of all existence but also now believes in the ancient doctrine of the animation of the Universe:

> Through that which to others seems a mere dead mass, my eye beholds this eternal life and movement in every vein of sensible and spiritual nature, and sees this life rising in ever increasing growth, and ever purifying itself to a more spiritual impression.[16]

The doctrine of identity Fichte did not live to develop in all its clearness, or to apply in detail to the laws and processes of nature in the world. It was his illustrious successor Schelling to whom largely goes the credit of perfecting this principle of identity. Starting from the Absolute or unconditional, as containing in itself the ego and the non-ego, the subject and the object, he furnishes us with a philosophy of the Absolute Itself--the natura naturans from which is derived all natura naturata. But the Absolute of Schelling is not, like that of Spinoza,[17] an infinite substance having the two opposite

---

[16] Fichte, op. cit., p. 152.

[17] Spinoza no doubt recognized that prior to all existence, a pure, immutable Ursein, a self-consisting something, must underlie all coming into being and passing away; and first in and through this, all that has existence; attains unity of existence. Only Spinoza did not see that this primeval Being must be conceived as the Ego (see Schelling's, Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie: 1795 S W. I, 3, p. 376.) Schelling was probably influenced not only by Spinoza but also by Goethe with whom he came in contact while at Jena. Unlike Berkeley and Fichte, Schelling made nature independent of all knowledge and experience and gave up the Fichtean idealism, which he regarded as subjective, for an ontological idealism. For the former, he said, the ego is everything; while for the latter everything is ego.

properties of thought and extension. It is rather an infinite, acting, producing, self-unfolding mind. Nature and mind, being and thought, are not two paralell aspects of the Absolute but different steps or stages or epochs in the evolution of Absolute mind. There is no irreconcilable conflict between the natural law and the moral law. Nature is the ego in process of becoming. We understand nature because it is analogous to our own spiritual life, because it is the manifestation of a dynamic Mind, because there is life and reason and purpose in it:

> With Leibniz, Schelling broadens the conception of spirit, mind, or reason, so as to include the unconscious instinctive, purposive force that manifests itself in inorganic and organic nature as well as in the highest self-consciousness of the philosopher, into which it evolves. . . . The absolute ground or source, or root, of all things is creative energy, absolute will or ego, the one all-pervading world spirit, in which everything dwells in potency and from which everything that is actual proceeds. The ideal and the real, thought and being, are identical in their root; the same creative energy that reveals itself in self-conscious mind operates unconsciously in sense-perception, in chemical processes, in crystallization, in electrical phenomena, and in gravity: there is life and reason in them all.[18]

But even Schelling conceived parts of nature as dead and unconscious, a view which, as we have seen, is quite opposed to the fundamental thesis of the Siris, that the world as a system of ideas can neither be dead,

---

[18]Frank Thilly, A History of Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1948), p. 451.

nor inanimate, nor unconscious. If we are consistent to our doctrine that the Universe is a manifestation of the One Absolute Being, we have to read back the nature of the latest consequent in the remotest antecedent. Only then is the one, in any true sense the cause of the other. This panpsychistic view of the Siris was supported by men like Lotze, Fechner, Hartmann and Wundt in the nineteenth century. Even the lowest forms of the so-called matter, they thought, are not dead, inert masses, but finely organized systems, full of life and action. There are various degrees of reality; the human mind represents the highest self-conscious stage in the scale of mental life; but this mental life is equally present even in less clearly conscious modes of existence, even in the so-called gross forms of matter. The division between the so-called organic and inorganic world is wholly arbitrary. In the Faust Goethe speaks of the earth spirit. The extent of psychical life is also the central problem of Fechner's Zend-Avesta. The same mental thread runs throughout the entire physical phenomena. The same forces act in inorganic as well as in organic bodies, only in the latter case they appear in extremely peculiar and intricate combinations. Do not all parts of the earth, Fechner asks--the liquid interior and the firm crust, the ocean and the atmosphere, comprehended into a great whole whose parts interact in manifold ways and get in harmony--really live a

universal life? "Ebb and flow, day and night, summer and winter, are they not life-rhythms, similar to those which the individual life experiences, or rather, do not animals and plants with their little rhythmical vital processes take part in the great life of the earth?" Is not the life of the earth mirrored in their sleep and waking, their bloom and withering, their origin and decay? "The organic and the inorganic form not two separate worlds, but a unitary whole in constant interaction. Does not the plant turn its buds and leaves to the light, does it not send its roots where it finds nourishment, and its tendrils where it finds support? Does it not close its petals at night or when it rains, and does it not open them in sunshine?" The same principle runs through all existence, and reality forms one single unitary being.

In the Siris Berkeley speculates about the anatomy and physiology of vegetables and writes that those who have examined the structure of trees and plants finds that like animals they breathe, feed, digest, perspire and generate.

> . . . that there are innumerable fine and curious parts in a vegetable body, and a wonderful similitude or analogy between the mechanism of plants and animals. And perhaps some will think it not unreasonable to suppose the mechanism of plants more curious than even that of animals, if we consider not only the several juices secreted by different parts of the same plant, but also the endless variety of juices drawn and formed out of the same soil by various species of vegetables. . . .[19]

---

[19] Siris, Sec. 31.

Giving an account of the character of the history of the cosmos Kant tells us:

> Even in the essential properties of the elements there could be traced the work of that completeness which they derive from their origin, inasmuch as their nature is but a consequence of the eternal Idea of the divine Intelligence.[20] The matter which appears to me merely passive and without form and arrangement has even in its simplest state an urge to fashion itself by a natural evolution into a more perfect constitution.[21]

Lotze thought that each single product of Nature expresses in the so-called corporeality one of those thoughts by which the living essence of the Highest is interpreted:

> These thoughts originating from the same original source, and therein combining the whole of an inexhaustible Idea, establish between the things whose moving-springs they are, an intimate connection of meaning and community of nature.[22]

Each individual in this system, for Lotze, is a living self-contained unity, and yet at the same time each has, in the mighty entirety of things the explaining background of its life and existence:

> Those who are staggered by the idea of a possible action and reaction between the soul and differently constituted content of matter, may now have their scruples removed by the perception that in fact two different beings do not here face one another but that the soul as an indivisible being and the body

---

[20] My italics.

[21] Kant, Allgemeine Naturgeschichte (General History of Nature) 4th edition (1755), p. 7.

[22] Lotze, Microcosmus, Vol. I, English translation, 1855, p. 13.

> as a combined plurality, form kindred and homogeneous terms of this relation. The soul acts not on the body so far as matter, but on the super-sensible beings which only afford us the phenomenal appearance of extended matter[23] by a definite form of combination; not as material and not with material instruments does the body exert its influence on the mind, but all attraction and repulsion, all pressure and impact are, even in that nature which to us seems utterly devoid of animation, even where they act from matter to matter, only the manifestation of intellectual action and reaction, which alone contains life and energy.[24]

Lotze, however, like Kant before him, bases the acceptance of this metaphysical idealism on practical or ethical grounds. According to Lotze it is an intolerable thought to suppose that a cold, material atomic mechanism could exist for the sole purpose of picturing, in the feeling soul, a beautiful illusion of colours and sounds. Such a universe would have neither meaning nor ethical worth. Hence the phenomenal world must be conceived as the manifestation of an ethically ordered spiritual world. Lotze's philosophy, therefore, remains typically Kantian in the chasm it makes between the world of facts as the sole object of knowledge, and the world of values, as resting on merely subjective conviction. But is this flight to ideal any better than an elaborate process of self-deception--a painful effort to shut our eyes to the features of what we know in our heart to be the real nature of existence?

---

[23] Italics mine.

[24] Microcosmus, Vol. I, p. 364.

The mind of man is not like Chinese boxes that can be put one inside the other--the one taking no account of the other. The utility of a belief and its validity, we know, are quite independent variables. All impulses to shape a fairer and nobler world must speedily wither away, unless they are sustained by some rational faith in the nature of Being. As Martineau eloquently puts it at the outset of his Study of Religion:

> Amid all the sickly talk about "ideals" which has become the commonplace of our age, it is well to remember that, so long as they are the mere self-painting of the yearning spirit, they have no more solidity or steadiness than air-bubbles, gay in the sunshine and broken by the passing wind. . . . The very gate of entrance to religion is the discovery that your gleaming ideal is the everlasting Real, no transient brush of a fancied angel's wing, but the abiding presence and the pursuance of the Soul of souls: short of this there is no object given you.[25]

Thus any theory which leaves us with an irreconcilable dualism between supposed conclusions of the intellect and the ethico-religious interpretaions of the world is essentially a surrender to scepticism and, therefore, an impossible resting place for the human mind. The Kantian distinction between knowledge and belief, and the restriction of knowledge to the world of sense-perception, as physical science conceives it, tends to suggest that the biological categories of life, the aesthetic perception of

---

[25]Martineau, Study of Religion, Vol. I, p. 13.

beauty and sublimity, and the implications of ethico-religious experiences of mankind, are no more than pious wishes, ideals and aspirations which have nothing to do with the objective nature of existence. We, therefore, with Bradley and Haldane, strongly maintain that "that which is highest to us is also in and to the universe most real."[26] "It is just in the world that is here and now, when fully comprehended and thought out that we shall find God, and in finding God shall find the Reality of that world in Him."[27]

It is also an essential part of Ward's pampsychism that whatever is real in Nature must be in its own character of the nature of mind, soul, spirit. His entire philosophical endeavour was aimed at establishing a spiritualistic system, a constitution of the world, "interpreted throughout and strictly in terms of Mind. At the outset, this world confronts us not as one Mind, nor even as the manifestation of One, but as an objective whole in which we discern many minds in mutual interaction. It is from this pluralistic standpoint that our experience has in fact developed, and it is here that we acquire the ideas that eventually lead us beyond it."[28] The plurality of spirits

---

[26]Bradley, Appearance & Reality (Second edition), p. 560.

[27]Haldane, The Pathway to Reality, p. 254.

[28]James Ward, The Realm of Ends (London: Cambridge University Press, 1920), Preface, p. v (Ward's italics).

that we find in the phenomenal world he supplements by a philosophical theory of God which transcends the framework within which spiritual pluralism moves. The universe he considers as a vast assemblage or society of minds in which everything is animated and possessed of consciousness. Nature is one in so far as it is permeated by intelligence, mind or spirituality. Development or the formation of higher organism consists in the clustering together of monads in various groups of greater or lesser complexity, and ultimately the monad with the superior power of perception becomes the dominant monad and thus the leading factor or soul of this organization.[29] Ward considers mind as an 'experient,' a perceiving and thinking subject. In every one of these modes of experients the "subject" is confronted with "objects," which on their side, are themselves experients or subjects, each aware of objects in its turn. Thus everything on this view is a mind, a "person."

But though Ward uses Leibniz's word 'monad' in his metaphysical spiritualism, he does not completely agree with Leibniz's description of their nature. For Leibniz each monad is cut off from its environment and its neighbors, so that there is no active interaction and communication between them. Unlike Leibniz his monads are all windows.

---

[29]Ward, op. cit., pp. 256-60.

We agree with Ward that even a superficial examination of the nature of reality can reveal the inescapable fact that no fact can be isolated from the rest of phenomena. It belongs to the totality of all existence and is conditioned by the Universal Mind or Consciousness. The monads, therefore, do not exist strong in solid singleness, like Lucretian atoms. The currents of divine life course through them; they are open to all the influences of the universe.

In his Appearance and Reality Bradley emphatically asserts that "to be real, or even barely to exist must be to fall within sentience. Sentient experience, in short, is reality, and what is not this is not real. . . . Feeling, thought, and volition . . . are all the material for existence.[30] Professor Taylor uses similar language in his Elements of Metaphysics. "We have already agreed that reality is exclusively composed of psychical fact."[31]

In his remarkable book The Value and Destiny of the Individual Professor Bosanquet adopts Keats' description of the world as the 'vale of soul-making' and that the moulding of individual souls is the typical business of the universe. As a matter of fact this was the program of work that Berkeley had himself but dimly visualized in his Philosophical

---

[30]Bradley, op. cit., p. 144.

[31]A. E. Taylor, Elements of Metaphysics (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1961), p. 347.

Commentaries when he jotted down such notes as the following:

> Consciousness, perception, existence of ideas, seem to be all one.[32]
>
> Nothing properly but Persons, i.e., conscious things, do exist.[33]

Such a view of reality has nothing to do with the thesis of "esse is percipi," for "to be of the nature of mind" and "to exist only as object for a mind," are two quite different things. There was something prophetic in Berkeley's remark when he declared, "My speculations have the same effect as visiting foreign countries: in the end I return where I was before, but my heart at ease, and enjoying life with new satisfaction."[34] The Siris, we know, upholds a theory of the universe as a system of 'spirits' or 'minds' all of whom are causally dependent upon God.

The thesis of the Siris was also anticipated, some six centuries before Berkeley, by the medieval philosophers of Islam viz. Avicenna, Ibnul Arabi and Jelaluddin Rumi. In the Risalah Fil Ishq (Treatise on Love), Avicenna[35] tells

---

[32] PC, # 578.

[33] PC, # 24.

[34] A. C. Fraser, Works of George Berkeley, Vol I (London, 1901), p. 92.

[35] Or Ibn Sina (980-1037). His fame chiefly rests on his two voluminous works, the Kitab al Shifa and the Qanun fil' Tibb. The first is an eighteen volume encyclopedia of natural sciences, mathematics, and metaphysics, and the second contains remarkable contributions in the fields of

us that God himself is the Lovable, Lover and the Beloved, and thus the origin and the end of the Cosmos. This love traverses the whole universe, manifesting itself in different ways at each stage of the ontological hierarchy.

In his well known Mathnawi Rumi[36] expresses the view:

> Day and night all particles of the Universe declare, "We hear, see and are intoxicated. To the unushered we appear as mute."

And again:

> Air earth, water and fire are busy in worship. To us they are dead but to God they are all alive.
>
> There is a secret in the melody of the flute that if divulged would upset the scheme of things.

In the following lines Rumi gives a positive aspect of this cosmic reality:

> If there be any lover in the world, O faithful, it is I.
> If there be any believer, non-believer, or Christian hermit, it is I.
> The wine-dregs, the cup-bearer, the minstrel, the harp, the music,
> The beloved, the candle the drink and the joy of the drunken,--It is I.

---

medicine and surgery which earned him the title of The Second Galen. Though usually known as a Persian philosopher, he is equally claimed by the Turks and the Arabs.

[36]Mualana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), greatest Sufi philosopher and mystic poet of the thirteenth century, was born at Balkh in the northern Persian province of Khorasan and later settled at Qonia, an old Roman province, whence he acquired his name Rumi or the Roman. For forty-three years Rumi was engaged in writing his world-renowned Mathnawi, which deals with the deep problems of life and existence and still survives in its pristine glory. Hardly any Persian poetry can match the Mathnawi in its originality and profundity.

Thus the essence of the starry heavens above and the moral law within is interpreted as one and the same. And it is only in this sense that the understanding prescribes its laws to nature. The nature of ultimate Reality is to be read in its manifestations. In the volume of God's works can be read His signs. And while we may neither know nor conceive completely the nature of the Power manifested through phenomena, the existence of that power is of all things the most certain.

Now this manifestation is also identical with the religious doctrine of Creation. In the Siris Berkeley writes:

> The Egyptians if we may credit the Hermaic writings, maintained God to be all things, not only actual but possible. He is styled by them, that which is made and that which is unmade. And therein it is said, 'Shall I praise thee for those things thou hast made manifest, or for the things thou hast hidden?' Therefore, in their sense, to manifest was to create, the things created having been before hidden in God.[37]

The Persian philosopher al-Ghazzali in contradistinction to the Plotinian doctrine of emanation also believed in a theory of Creation. In his well known book The Incoherence of the Philosophers he tells us that the doctrine of emanation not only fails to account for the multiplicity and composition of the Universe but does not even succeed in safeguarding the fundamental unity of the

---

[37] Siris, Sec. 325.

'One.' If it is logically necessary, he says, that from one only one proceeds, then all the beings in the world would be units, each of which would be the effect of some other unit above it, as it would be the cause of some other unit below it in a linear fashion. The emanationist argument, he feels, does great violence to the concept of God's unity, and thus nullifies the very purpose for which it was adopted. According to al-Ghazzali the origination of the world from the eternal will of God at a specific moment of time as chosen by Him involves no violation of the fundamental principles of logic. It is quite legitimate to believe, he argues, that God's will does not have any cause, or at least the cause does not lie outside His will but in itself. Similarly it is not logically necessary that an effect should follow a cause immediately, for it is not logically contradictory to hold the notion of a 'delayed effect.' It is possible to think that God's will is eternal and yet an object of that will has occurred at some period in time. Here a distinction should be made between the eternity of God's will and the eternity of the object of His will.

Ghazzali's Spanish mystic successor Ibnul Arabi (1165-1240), further explaining the nature of creation, declares that things of the phenomenal world were only potentialities in the bosom of the Absolute. They formed the content of the Divine Mind as Ideas of His future becoming. These intelligible realities were what he calls fixed prototypes of things. When potentialities become

actualities by God's Will, we have the so-called external world. The drama of existence is nothing but this ever renewed creation.

Now such a doctrine of Creation out of nothing is the denial that the world was merely shaped by God out of pre-existing material. In the Philosophical Commentaries Berkeley agrees with the theory of Creation out of nothing.

> Why may we not conceive it possible for God to create things out of Nothing. Certainly we ourselves create in some wise whenever we imagine.[38]

Thus God is a creator not an artificer; in Him is to be found the sole explanation of the existence of the world, as well as its detailed arrangements. In opposition to Plotinus' theory of emanation in which the derivation of the world from its ultimate principle was considered by the aid of plentiful and often gross physical analogies, and which still left us with a crude dualism, creation should expressly be understood as essentially an act of Will. The entire choir of heaven and the furniture of the earth is the result of the manifestation of this Will.

The universe therefore, is neither an illusion nor a Maya, as Schopenhauer or the Hindu sage Shankra thought. We cannot change the reality of things by giving them Latin and Sanskrit names. We cannot annul the multiplicity

---

[38] PC, # 830.

or the externality of the world by calling them illusions. The universe is a spiritual order and is not only real, but the best of all possible worlds. In the Siris Berkeley says:

> Such are the bright and lively signatures of a Divine Mind, operating and displaying itself in fire and light, throughout the world, that, as Aristotle observes in his book De Mundo, all things seem full of divinities, whose apparitions on all sides strike and dazzle our eyes.

It is this light or fire possessing "an occult universal nature, and inward invisible force, which actuates and animates the whole world," and serves as an instrument or secondary cause in the production of effects in the phenomenal world.

> There is no effect in nature, great, marvellous, or terrible, but proceeds from Fire, that diffused and active principle, which at the same time that it shakes the earth and heavens will enter, divide, and dissolve the smallest, closest and most compacted bodies.[39]

In his earlier philosophy Berkeley had denied outright the possibility of any instrumental or secondary causes. In the Philosophical Commentaries he had emphatically declared: "No sharing betwixt God and Nature or second Causes in my Doctrine." Berkeley considered as if it was inconsistent with the omnipotence of God that he should act through instruments:

---

[39] Siris, Sec. 158.

> Is it not common to all instruments, that they are applied to the doing of those things only which cannot be performed by the mere acts of our wills? Thus for instance, I never use an instrument to move my finger, because it is done by a volition. But I should use one, if I were to remove part of a rock, or tear up a tree by the roots.[40]

Secondly, the existence of instrumental causes could not be harmonized with his earlier doctrine of inert and passive ideas. Like Malebranche, Berkeley faced the problem how things lifeless and passive could operate on an active mind or spirit, and 'how can that which is inactive be a cause; or that which is unthinking be a cause of thought?' In the Siris, however, Berkeley entirely modifies the ontological status of these ideas or sensible things. We are transported from Locke to Plato, and find revived the ancient conception of the constant animation of the universe. He now approves the doctrine of the Egyptian and the Greek sages that there is a life infused throughout all things; that a Divine Agent doth by his virtue permeate and govern the elementary fire or light which serves as animal spirit to enliven and activate the whole mass, and all members of this visible world . . . We see all nature alive or in motion.

The great problem of the Principles and the Dialogues, therefore, how passive objects could operate, or be the cause of change in active mind is resolved in the Siris,

---

[40] TD, p. 218.

once the nature of the sensible world is seen in its true perspective. In such a system of Reality there can be not only no objection to the existence of instrumental or secondary causes but rather their existence becomes necessary. For "without instrumental or secondary causes, there could be no regular course of nature. And without a regular course, nature could never be understood."[41] Thus in contradistinction to the thesis of the Philosophical Commentaries and the Dialogues, the Siris maintains that subordinate to the supreme agent there is a cause of limited or inferior nature, which concurs in the production of our ideas. This "inferior instrumental cause is pure ether, fire, or the substance of light, which is applied and determined by an Infinite Mind in the macrocosm or universe, with unlimited power, and according to stated rules; as it is in the microcosm with limited power and skill by the human mind."[42] Nothing now hinders the physical world being an instrument subservient to the supreme agent in the production of our ideas. In the Siris a poetic justice is done to the world of sense which had lost its objectivity and externality at the hands of the "esse is percipi" principle. In things natural and physical we now recognize a provisional and instrumental reality, even while all

---

[41] Siris, Sec. 160.

[42] Siris, Sec. 154.

genuine reality may still reside in a supersensible and supernatural Being.

CHAPTER VII

REALMS OF BEING AND SPIRIT*

This objective world as a system of spiritual entities should not however be considered as a night in which all cows are black. For there are innumerable realms of these 'ideas' and 'spirits' and there can be no obliteration of the distinctions of their rank and value. In the Siris Berkeley presents us with the ancient notion of the gradation of existence, suggesting that "there is no chasm in nature, but a chain or Scale of beings, rising by gentle uninterrupted gradations from the lowest to the highest, each nature being informed and perfected by the participation of the higher."[1] The universe, according to this way of looking at it, consists of innumerable spheres of existences, connected with one another by intermediate links and differing in respect to the measure of reality to be ascribed to each. "There runs a chain throughout the whole system of beings. In this chain one link drags another. The meanest things are connected with the

---

*For this chapter I am greatly indebted to Professor A. O. Lovejoy from whose remarkable book, The Great Chain of Being, I have heavily drawn my material.

[1] Siris, Sec. 274.

highest."[2] That which forms the bond of connection, to speak metaphorically, between God and the world of sense is the pure invisible Fire, which pervades all things, and is present in all parts of the earth and the firmament.

The notion of Chain (whence the title Siris) in nature, connecting all phenomena and the variegated events of the universe with one another in a Cosmos or harmoniously ordered system, was not foreign to the ancient or the medieval world. From the times of the Greeks up to the eighteenth century, many philosophers, poets as well as men of science had a conception of Universe as a great Chain of Being, composed of an infinite number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the minutest existent to the Absolute, such that at the two extremes of the pole the difference sometimes appeared not one of degree but of kind. The principle usually rested at bottom upon a faith, implicit or explicit, that the universe is a rational order in the sense that there is nothing arbitrary, fortuitous, or haphazard in its constitution, that there are no sudden leaps in nature; infinitely various as things are, they form an absolutely harmonious and ordered cosmos. In the Platonic dialogues we have the occasional intimation that the Ideas as also their sensible counterparts are not equal in metaphysical rank or excellence. This embroynic

---

[2] Siris, Sec. 303

conception of gradation in Plato's dialogues was developed further by Aristotle in the course of his investigations in the field of biology when he arranged all animals in a single graded scala naturae according to their degree of perfection with man at the top of the scale and zoophytes at the bottom.

The metaphysical importance of the theory of gradation in existence was most emphasized by Plotinus and Proclus, and through the influence of Dionysius, a student of Proclus, it came to take on a prominant role in medieval thought.

Among the great philosophic systems of the seventeenth century, it is in Spinoza and Leibniz that the concept of gradation in existence is most conspicuous. "If there were a vacuum," writes Leibniz in the Monadology, "it is evident that there would be left sterile and fallow places in which, nevertheless, without prejudice to any other things, something might have been produced. But it is not consistent with wisdom, that any such places should be left."[3] The assumption that nature makes no leaps, Leibniz thought, can with absolute confidence be applied in all the sciences, from geometry to biology and psychology. If any one denied it, the world would contain hiatuses, which would overthrow the great principle of sufficient reason and compel us to

---

[3]See R. Latta Leibniz's Monadology (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 257.

have recourse to miracles or pure chance in the explanation of phenomena.

Locke too was quite explicit upon the problem, though he could not, like Leibniz, give us a detailed or systematic account of the theory of gradations in existence:

> In all the visible corporeal world we see no chasms or gaps. All quite down from us the descent is by easy steps, and a continued series that in each remove differ very little one from the other . . . ; and the animal and the vegetable kingdoms are so nearly joined, that if you will take the lowest of one of the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any great difference between them; and so on until we come to the lowest and the most unorganic parts of matter, we shall find everywhere that the several species are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees. And when we consider the infinite power and wisdom of the Maker, we have reason to think, that it is suitable to the magnificent harmony of the universe, and the great design and infinite goodness of the architect that the species of creatures should also, by gentle degrees, ascend upwards from us toward his infinite perfection, as we see they gradually descend from us downward.[4]

In his Critique of Pure Reason Kant recognized the notion of Chain as a guiding principle in the realms of biological and other sciences. Kant's conclusion concerning the famous law of the continuous scale of created beings is that while "neither observation, nor insight into the constitution of nature could ever establish it as an objective affirmation," nevertheless, the method of looking order in nature according to such a principle, and the maxim

---

[4]Essay Concerning Human Understanding, III, 6, 12.

of admitting such order (though it may be uncertain just where and how far) as existing in nature, certainly constitute a legitimate and excellent regulative principle of reason."[5] It points the way which leads towards a systematic unity of knowledge.

Similar opinions are expressed by poets and essayists like Milton, Addison, Herder and Schiller. In his Paradise Lost, Milton tells us that all things are composed

> One first matter all,
> Indu'd with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
> But more refined, more spirituous, and pure,
> As nearer to him placd, or nearer tending,
> Each in their several active spheres assign'd,
> Till body up to spirit work in bounds
> Proportioned to each kind . . .[6]
> . . . Flowers and their fruit,
> Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed,
> To vital spirits aspire, to animal
> To intellectual, give both life and sense,
> Fancy and understanding, whence the soul
> Reason receives.[7]

Like Milton, Berkeley also introduces the idea of scale not only in physical phenomena but also in the intellectual life of man. He makes an ascending order of human knowledge, starting with the sense presentative elements, passing through the representative phases of memory and imagination, and culminating in intuitive reason and faith:

---

[5] Critique of Pure Reason, Sections 654-668.

[6] Paradise Lost, V, pp. 472-479.

[7] Paradise Lost, V, pp. 482-487.

> By experiments of sense we become acquainted with the lower faculties of the soul; and from them, whether by a gradual evolution or ascent, we arrive at the highest. Sense supplies images to memory. These become subjects for fancy to work upon. Reason considers and judges of the imaginations. And these acts of reason become new objects to the understanding. In this scale, each lower faculty is a step that leads to one above it. And the uppermost naturally leads to the Deity, which is rather the object of intellectual knowledge than even of the discursive faculty, not to mention the sensitive. There runs a chain throughout the whole system of beings.[8]

In spite of the fact that the variegated panorama of existence including our things and thoughts, dreams and hallucinations, persons and events, truths, beauties, goodnesses, moral laws and tragedies are all manifestations of one Universal Reality there can be no obliteration of distinction of their rank, purpose or value. Spinoza has sometimes been accused of abstracting finite determinations and abolishing all distinctions when he includes good and evil, right and wrong, praise and blame, as well as beauty and ugliness, among human prejudices, abstractions of the imagination, due to man's incorrigible habit of judging every part according to its beneficial or harmful effects upon himself,[9] yet he nevertheless made it quite explicit that though God is the immanent cause of all things yet the divine nature is not equally manifested in everything.

---

[8] Siris, Sec. 303.

[9] Ethics, Book I (Appendix).

There are degrees of perfection and reality. 'A mouse no less than an angel is dependent on God, yet a mouse is not a kind of angel.' So again:

> The wicked, it is true, do in their fashion the will of God, but they are not, on that account, in any way comparable to the good. The more perfection a thing has, the more does it participate in deity, and the more it expresses God's perfection. Since, then the good have incomparably more perfection than the bad, their virtue cannot be likened to the virtue of the wicked, inasmuch as the wicked lack the love of God, which proceeds from the knowledge of God, and by reason of which alone we are, according to our human understanding, called the servants of God. The wicked, knowing not God, are but as instruments in the hands of a workman, serving unconsciously, and perishing in the using; the good on the other hand, serve consciously, and in serving become more perfect.[10]

In his Appearance and Reality Professor Bradley too asserts this vital truth that the standards of better and higher which we apply to Reality are themselves based on the nature of reality and dictated by it:

> The positive relation of every appearance as an adjective to Reality, and the presence of Reality among its appearances in different degrees with diverse values--this double truth we have found to be the centre of philosophy.[11]

In the Siris Berkeley affirms:

> As all parts in an animal are not eyes: and in a city, comedy, or picture, all ranks, characters, and colours are not equal and alike; even so excesses defects and contrary qualities conspire to the beauty and harmony of the world.[12]

---

[10] Letter (Ep), 32.

[11] Appearance and Reality, p. 551.

[12] Siris, Sec. 262.

Thus our sunset-hues, the starry heavens the thoughts of the philosopher, the songs of the nightingale, the desires of lovers, the pangs, sufferings and sorrows of mankind are all various realms of this spiritual reality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adamson, R. Fichte, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1881.

Adams, G. P. Idealism and the Modern Age. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919.

_____. "Berkeley and Kant," California University Publications in Philosophy, Vol. 29, pp. 189-206, 1957.

Affifi, A. E. The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din Ibnul Arabi. Lahore: Sh. Mohammad Ashraf, 1938.

Aristotle. Metaphysics. Trans. W. D. Ross. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948.

_____. History of Animals. Vol. I, Trans. R. Cresswell. London: G. Bell, 1887.

Armstrong, D. M. (ed.). Berkeley's Philosophical Writings. New York: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1965.

Armstrong, A. H. The Real Meaning of Plotinus' Intelligible World. Oxford: Blackfriars, 1949.

Avicenna. Commemoration Volume. Calcutta: Iran Society, 1956.

Bender, F. George Berkeley's Philosophy Re-examined. Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1946.

Bennett, J. "Substance, Reality and Primary Qualities," American Philosophical Quarterly, II (January, 1965), pp. 1-17.

Berkeley, George. The Works of George Berkeley, Vols. I-V, VIII and IX, (eds.). A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons (1948-1957).

Blau, Joseph L. Men and Movements in American Philosophy. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952.

Boer De' T. J. The History of Philosophy in Islam. Trans. E. R. Jones. London: Luzac & Co., Ltd., 1965.

Bosanquet, Bernard. The Value and Destiny of the Individual. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1913.

Bradley, F. H. Appearance and Reality. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1946.

Braybrooke, David. "Berkeley on the Numerical Identity of Ideas," Philosophical Review, 64 (1955), pp. 631-36.

Breheir, Emile. The Philosophy of Plotinus. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958.

_____. The Hellenistic & Roman Age. Trans. Wade Baskin. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Broad, C. D. "Berkeley's Denial of Material Substance," Philosophical Review, 63 (1954), pp. 155-181.

Brunton, J. A. "Berkeley and the External World," Philosophy 28 (1953), pp. 325-341.

Burtt, E. A. The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1932.

Calkins, M. W. The Persistent Problems of Philosophy. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925.

Carré, M. H. Phases of Thought in England. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1949.

Church, R. W. A Study in the Philosophy of Malebranche. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931.

Copleston, F. C. A History of Philosophy, Vol. V. Westminster: The Newton Press, 1964.

Corbin, Henry. Avicenna and the Visionary Recital. Trans. W R. Trasko. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1960.

Cunningham, G. W. The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy. New York: Century Company, 1933.

Dhalla, M. N. History of Zoroastrianism. New York: Oxford University Press, 1938.

Davie, D. A. "Berkeley's Style in Siris," Cambridge Journal (April, 1951), pp. 427-433.

Denard, W. V. & Furlong, E. J. "The Dating of the Editions of Berkeley's Siris and his first letter to Thomas Prior," Hermathena 86 (1955), pp. 66-76.

Descartes, Rene. The Meditations and Selections from the Principles of Descartes. Trans. John Veitch. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1905.

Everett, C. C. Fichte's Science of Knowledge. Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Co., 1884.

Ewing, A. C. Idealism: A Critical Survey. New York: The Humanities Press, 1933.

_____. The Idealist Tradition from Berkeley to Blanshard. Glencoe (Illinois): The Free Press, 1957.

Fichte, J. G. The Nature of the Scholar. Trans. W. Smith. London: John Chapman, 1845.

_____. The Vocation of Man. (ed.). R. M. Chisholm. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956.

Fraser, A. C. (ed.). Berkeley's Complete Works, Vols. I-III. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1901.

_____. Berkeley. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1881.

_____. Selections from Berkeley. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1899.

Ghazzali. Algazel's Metaphysics. Trans. J. T. Muckle. Toronto: St. Michael's College, 1933.

_____. Tahafut Al-Falasifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). Trans. S. A. Kamali. Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963.

Gibson, J. Locke's Theory of Knowledge. London: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

Goethe. Faust. Trans. A. Hayward. Boston: Ticknor, Reed & Fields, 1851.

Gomperz, T. Greek Thinkers. Vol. I. Trans. Laurie Magnus. London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1901.

Graham, W. Idealism. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1872.

Guthrie, W. K. C. A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. I. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1962.

Haldane, R. B. H. The Pathway to Reality. London: J. Murray, 1903.

Hamlyn, D. W. Sensation and Perception. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961.

Hartmann, Nicolai. Philosophy of the Unconscious. Trans. C. D. Ogden. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1931.

Haskel, Fain. "More on the Esse is Percipi Principle," Theoria, 25 (1959), pp. 65-81.

Hicks, G. D. Berkeley. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1932.

Hoffding, H. A History of Modern Philosophy, Vol. I. Trans. B. E. Meyer. New York: The Humanities Press, 1924.

Hone, J. M. & Rossi, M. M. Bishop Berkeley. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931.

Hoernle, R. F. A. Idealism as a Philosophical Doctrine. London: Hodder & Stonghton, 1924.

_____. Idealism as a Philosophy. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927.

Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1888.

Husserl. Ideas. Trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson. New York: Colliers, 1962.

Iqbal, M. The Development of Metaphysics in Persia. London: Luzac & Co., 1908.

Jessop, T. E. (ed.). Berkeley-Philosophical Writings. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1952.

Jones, W. T. A History of Western Philosophy. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1952.

_____. Contemporary Thought of Germany, Vol. I. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931.

Johnston, G. A. The Development of Berkeley's Philosophy. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1923.

Joseph, H. W. B. A Comparison of Kant's Idealism with that of Berkeley. London: Humphrey Milford, 1929.

Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. Trans. Norman K. Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.

_____. Critique of Judgment. Trans. J. H. Bernard. New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1951.

Kantonen, T. A. "Influence of Descartes on Berkeley," Philosophical Review, 43 (1934), pp. 483-500.

Katz, Joseph. Philosophy in the West. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965.

_____. The Philosophy of Plotinus. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950.

Konrad, Marc Wogau. "Berkeley's Sensationalism and the Esse est Percipi Principle," Theoria, XXIII (1957), pp. 12-36.

Krauth, Charles P. Berkeley's Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge with Prolegomena. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1874.

Lange, F. A. The History of Materialism. Trans. Ernest Chester Thomas. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.

Leibniz. The Monadology. Trans. R. Latta. London: Oxford University Press, 1898.

Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (ed.). Pringle-Pattison. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924.

Lotz, Hermann, Microcosmus, Vols. I & II, Trans. Elizabeth Hamilton. New York: Scribner & Welford, 1885.

Lovejoy, A. O. The Great Chain of Being. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936.

_____. The Reason, the Understanding, and Time. Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1961.

Luce, A. A. Berkeley's Immaterialism. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1950.

_____. "Mind Dependence in Berkeley," Hermathena, 57 (1941), pp. 117-127.

_____. "Berkeley's Existence in the Mind," Mind, 50 (July, 1941), pp. 258-267.

_____. Berkeley and Malebranche. New York: Oxford University Press, 1939.

_____. The Dialectic of Immaterialism. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1963.

_____. "The Unity of Berkeleyan Philosophy," Mind, Vol. XIVI, No. pp. 181-190.

Malebranche, Nicolas. Dialoques on Metaphysics. Trans. Morris Ginsburg. London: Goerge Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1923.

_____. De la Recherche de la Verite, etc., Vol. I, Book I, Ch. I. Paris: 1677-1679.

Martineau, James A. Study of Religion. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1888.

McCosh, James. Locke's Theory of Knowledge with a Notice of Berkeley. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884.

Milton, John. Paradise Lost. London: Peter and Galpin, 1866.

Moore, G. E. Philosophical Studies. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922.

Morris, C. R. Locke, Berkeley, Hume. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

Muirhead, J. M. (ed.). Contemporary British Philosophy. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1925.

Myhill, John. "Berkeley's De Motu An Anticipation of Mach," California University Publications in Philosophy, Vol. 29, 1957.

Nasr, S. H. An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964.

O'Brien, Elmer. The Essential Plotinus. New York: The New American Library, 1964.

O'Leary, DeLacy. Arabic Thought and Its Place In History. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1939.

Paulsen, F. Introduction to Philosophy. Trans. Frank Thilly. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1895.

Perry, R. B. Present Philosophical Tendencies. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921.

_____. Philosophy of the Recent Past. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1926.

_____. The New Realism. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925.

_____. "The Ego-Centric Predicament." Journal of Philosophy, VII (1910), pp. 5-14.

Plotinus. Enneads. Trans. Stephen MacKenna, Vols. I & II. Boston: Charles T. Branford Company.

Popkin, R. H. "The New Realism of George Berkeley," California University Publications in Philosophy, Vol. 29, 1957, pp. 1-19.

Pringle-Pattison, Seth. The Idea of God. New York: Oxford University Press, 1920.

Ritchie, A L. British Philosophers. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1950.

_____. "George Berkeley's Siris," Proceedings of the British Academy, 40 (1954), pp. 41-55.

Royce, Josiah. Lectures on Modern Idealism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919.

Rumi, Jelaluddin. Mathanawi (with Urdu Commentary). Lahore: Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1963.

_____. Mathanawi. Trans. R. A. Nicholson. Luzac & Co., 1925.

Russell, Bertrand. Our Knowledge of the External World. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926.

_____. The Problems of Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.

_____. Mysticism and Logic. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964.

Sillem, E. A. George Berkeley and the Proofs for the Existence of God. London: Longmans Green and Co., 1957.

Seth, Andrew. From Kant to Hegel. New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1882.

Seth, James. English Philosophers and Schools of Philosophy. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1912.

Sharif, M. M. (ed.). A History of Muslim Philosophy. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963.

Sinclair, May. A Defense of Idealism. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1917.

Spinoza, B. Ethics. Trans. A. H. Stirling. London: Oxford University Press, 1927.

Stace, W. T. "The Refutation of Realism," Mind, Vol. XLIII, No. 170 (April, 1934), pp. 145-155.

Steinkraus, W. E. (ed.). New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966.

Stocks, J. L. "What Did Berkeley Mean By Esse is Percipi?" Mind, (July, 1936), pp. 310-323.

Sullivan, C J. "Berkeley's Attack on Matter," California University Publications in Philosophy, Vol. 29, 1957, pp. 20-36.

Talbot, E. B. The Fundamental Principle of Fichte's Philosophy. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906.

Taylor, A. E. Elements of Metaphysics. London: Methuen & Company Ltd., 1903.

Thilly, Frank. A History of Philosophy. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1948.

Turbayne, C. M. (ed.). George Berkeley - A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957.

_____. "Kant's Refutation of Dogmatic Idealism," Philosophical Quarterly, 5, 20 (July, 1955), pp. 225-244.

Ueberweg. History of Philosophy. Trans. G. S. Morris. New York: Scertener, Armstrong & Scertener, Armstrong & Co., 1875.

Urban, W. M. Beyond Realism and Idealism. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1949.

_____. "Elements of Unintelligibility in Whitehead's Philosophy," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 35, No. 23, pp. 617-637.

Ward, James. The Realm of Ends. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1920.

Warnock, G. J. Berkeley. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953.

Wickens, J. M. (ed.). Avicenna Scientist & Philosopher. London: Luzac & Co., Ltd., 1952.

Wild, J. George Berkeley. Cambridge, Mass.: Russell & Russell, 1936.

_____. "The Unity of Berkeleyan Philosophy: A Reply to Mr. Luce," Mind, 46 (1937), pp. 454-464.

Yolton, J. W. John Locke and the Way of Ideas. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.

Zeller, E. A History of Greek Philosophy. Vol. II. Trans. S. F. Alleyne. London: Longmans Green and Co., 1881, pp. 1-116.