



Berkeley's pantheistic discourse

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1. Introduction

On at least nine occasions George Berkeley refers to St. Paul's remark that in God "we live, and move, and have our being" (*Acts* 17:28). Although Berkeley cites the passage many more times than any other scriptural passage, he never explicitly discusses why it is so important to him for understanding how God is immediately present to us as the cause of our ideas and the providential guide for our actions.¹ That fact is particularly surprising, especially when we consider how the remark is a favorite of Malebranche, Spinoza, and other occasionally heterodox contemporaries of Berkeley who draw attention to the relationship between God and finite minds.² Few scholars, therefore, have considered why the Stoic description of a God "in whom we move and have our being" often appears when Berkeley discusses how God reveals himself to us through the language of nature.³

Indeed, the linguistic context of such discussions is typically overlooked entirely because Berkeley usually does not make a point of highlighting it. On the one occasion when he explains the Pauline remark, he says that "nothing can be more evident to anyone that is capable of the least reflexion, than the existence of God, or a spirit 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."⁴ Because this reference to the "variety of ideas" merely hints at the linguistic character of experience, Berkeley is often understood to mean simply that in producing our sensations, God is intimately present to our minds and we are absolutely and entirely dependent on him. In *Alciphron* 4.12 and 4.14, Berkeley expands on this by noting that we know that God is intimately present to us because our experience of nature is intricately articulated in terms of ideas that are organized as a language. For most interpreters not much more need be said because Berkeley's point seems simple enough: through the language of nature we know that God is intimately present to us.

The problem with this simple understanding is that it does not explain what it means to say either that God is *present* to our minds, or that he

produces sensations *in us*, or that we *depend* on him, for it does not explain how our minds are initially differentiated from and related to God as another mind or self. Indeed, it does not explain what it would mean to say that God is a discrete mind or self who communicates ideas to us by means of the language of nature. Nor does it explain how finite minds are *given* as targets of God's communicative activity or how their existence as minds is independent of that communication.

Since Berkeley himself does not provide much in the way of such explanations, these concerns usually are either not considered in Berkeley scholarship or are dismissed as topics about which he says little or nothing. Because his appropriation of Paul's comment occasionally occurs in the context of comments on Malebranche's doctrine that we know all things in God, some commentators think of it as an opportunity to interpret Berkeley by contrast to Malebranche.⁵ But such an interpretive strategy never provides an explanation of the ontological status of finite minds *vis-à-vis* God or what it would even mean to say that God is a mind, and it certainly does not address such questions in terms of a divine discourse. Instead of focusing on how Berkeley's appeal to Paul's comment highlights the discursive nature of God's presence, this strategy usually involves shifting attention to other ways in which Malebranche and Berkeley differ.

My purpose in retrieving the context of Berkeley's Pauline reference is to highlight how both Berkeley and Malebranche invoke a view of God that is quite different from the way in which Berkeley is typically understood. Instead of interpreting Berkeley's vocabulary and intentions in Cartesian or Lockean terms, I suggest that his comments make more sense when understood in terms of views developed by other late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century thinkers who cite Paul's remark to describe a non-Cartesian, non-Lockean notion of God. In that distinctly unconventional view (with which Berkeley was certainly familiar), God is not a subject or self but rather the discursive domain in terms of which we are initially able to speak about minds, ideas, and their relations. In that view, God is the semantic matrix of reality, the place or space in which all things (including minds and ideas) have identities and are originally differentiated.

Like more conventional readings, this alternate view acknowledges that, for Berkeley, divine and finite minds are distinct, and nature is the *language* by which God communicates ideas of sense. But unlike conventional interpretations, it insists that we explain what it means to say that God and finite minds can be related linguistically. That is, it invites us to consider how God's communication of ideas to minds other than his own is itself intelligible in the first place. And this is what requires that we appeal to the view developed

by contemporaries of Berkeley – and subsequently ignored by historians of modern philosophy – that God is the space of discourse.

2. God as space

As is evident in most current scholarship, Berkeley can certainly be interpreted as saying that God is a determinate subject who employs (rather than embodies) language. As I have suggested, the problem with this view is that it does not explain how divine subjectivity is itself initially intelligible. Because Berkeley does not address the issue of even created subjectivity in any thoroughgoing way, the question of what he means by calling God an infinite spirit is hardly ever mentioned today.

But for some of his contemporaries who appeal explicitly to the Pauline passage – particularly Henry More, the mathematician Joseph Raphson, John Toland, and Jonathan Edwards – God is essentially communicative, signifiatory, and linguistic. In their view, to speak about God as a particular subject or a spiritual substance or mind is to think about God derivatively. They maintain that to think that God's identity is intelligible is already to invoke a more fundamental principle, namely, the discursive space that defines intelligibility itself. According to them, this space of intelligibility is much more appropriately called God than a subject whose identity depends on differentiation within that space.

As Berkeley cautions in the *Principles* and *De Motu*, though, even to raise the prospect of such a space runs the risk of its being confused with two other ways of speaking about “pure or absolute” space. In the first of these alternatives, absolute space is understood as the indeterminate void left if we imagine removing all bodies and minds from the universe. This void-space has no positive attributes other than dimensionality or pure extensionality. Because extension is unintelligible apart from the differentiation of bodies in motion and the description of the resistance they encounter, such a notion of space seems to be “mere nothing.”⁶ To apply such a notion to God would be amazingly wrong-headed.

The second alternative, however, links absolute space directly to God. It suggests (in Berkeley's words) “either that real space is God, or else that there is something beside God which is eternal, uncreated, infinite, indivisible, immutable. Both which may justly be thought pernicious and absurd notions.”⁷ To think of space as a thing in which all other things are located would be to assume yet another space in which that space is intelligible. The first “absolute space” would thus not really be absolute and thus could not

be God. Besides, as Spinoza had observed, if there were such a thing that is really distinct from God, then neither it nor God would be truly infinite.

Berkeley's solution is to assume that God is not a thing at all (other than in a derivative sense) but rather that in terms of which and in which all things live, move, and have their being. He acknowledges that the second alternative for understanding absolute space is closely related to his own doctrine, so he sets out to show clearly how it differs from his own position. "It must be admitted," he remarks, "that in this matter we are in the grip of serious prejudices, and to win free we must exert the whole force of our minds."⁸

Of course, for Berkeley, much rides on this effort because it is at the heart of his claim that all things have their identities or are intelligible in virtue of a language. Even to think of God as the totality of all things would rely on such a discourse. So Berkeley recognizes that in order to show that God is immediately present in all that we are and do, he has to dispel the prejudice that God is a distinct being or self who communicates in terms of that discourse. In effect, he will argue that as long as we are stained by a Cartesian or Lockean model of divine subjectivity, we are unable to see ourselves as intimately united to one another and to the things around us.

Despite its flaws the second notion of absolute space thus suggests a way to avoid a derivative portrait of God. But it does so, Berkeley claims, only by seeming to make God extended.⁹ In Berkeley's view, Spinoza, More, Hobbes, Locke, and Raphson make this mistake when they interpret space in physical terms and then attribute divine characteristics to it. Indeed, there are places where Hobbes, Locke, and Spinoza seem to describe God extensionally.¹⁰ But in the case of More and Raphson, the matter is complicated by the fact that Berkeley, along with Toland and Edwards, interprets their views materialistically without acknowledging how they might also be interpreted in a way consistent with his own ideas.

Admittedly, Berkeley would have been reluctant to endorse the self-styled "pantheistic" views of his fellow Irishman Toland, especially after having been warned by Peter Browne (Provost of Trinity College Dublin) and William King (Archbishop of Dublin) about the Tolandian implications of his own early doctrine on infinity.¹¹ For in a paper "Of Infinities" delivered to the Dublin Philosophical Society in November 1707 – five months after being appointed a fellow at Trinity College – Berkeley agrees with Locke that our *idea* of infinity is simply an idea of an endless progression of finite spaces, not the totality of space or abstract extension itself. He concludes that the most we can say about the idea of infinite extension is that it identifies a certain inspired feeling in religious believers.¹² This, Browne and King objected, suggests that the claim "God is infinite" either lacks cognitive meaning or it makes God extended. A third option – one in which God is understood as the

space of intelligibility in which all beings (including a God understood as a subject who communicates with other subjects) – is simply unimaginable for Browne and King, and it would have been obvious to Berkeley that to defend such a view would have associated him even more directly with Toland. He therefore decides that prudence dictates that he “use utmost caution not to give the least handle of offense to the Church or Church-men” and that a “humble implicit faith” be his response to religious revelations.¹³

Three years prior to Berkeley's encounter with Browne and King, Toland had indicated the way out of the dilemma Berkeley faced. In his *Letters to Serena* (1704) Toland had criticized Raphson for describing space as abstract extension or “extension in general” and for portraying God as empty space. In terms strikingly similar to those used by Berkeley in *De Motu*, Toland notes that such a description portrays God as “a new kind of nothing endowed with the property of a being,” and this he dismisses as tantamount to atheism.¹⁴

However, in *On Real Space or Infinite Being* (1697) Raphson distinguishes between two meanings of the word *pantheism*. In one sense, it can refer to the belief that God is nothing more than the totality of physical objects. Proponents of such a position are what he calls “panhylists” (and even atheists) because they believe that there is nothing superior to extended, material nature. They are (rightly) the targets of Toland's critical remarks in *Serena*.

But shortly after the publication of *Serena*, Toland refers to himself in *Socinianism Truly Stated* (1705) as a pantheist in Raphson's second sense of the word. In that sense, “pantheists” are (in Raphson's terms) those who believe in “a certain universal substance, material as well as intelligent, that fashions all things that exist out of its own essence.”¹⁵ That substance, in More's words (cited by Raphson), is that “which will necessarily be, though there were nothing else in the world: which therefore must be the holy essence of God.”¹⁶ No one, More says, can “dis-imagine” this “subtle extension,” because God is “antecedent to all matter, forasmuch as no matter nor any being else can be conceived to be but in this. In this are all things necessarily apprehended *to live and move and have their being*.”¹⁷ All determinate things, whether bodily or spiritual (including notions of God as a particular substance), depend on this “extended, incorporeal substance” for their identity and existence. As More says:

This distinct space cannot but be something, and yet not corporeal, because neither impenetrable nor tangible; it must of necessity be a substance incorporeal necessarily and eternally existing of itself: which the clearer idea of a Being absolutely perfect will more punctually inform us to be the self-subsisting God.¹⁸

This “Divine Amplitude” cannot be mediated by any other idea because all other ideas are intelligible in terms of it. Since the distinction between that which is material and that which is immaterial is intelligible only in terms of this space, God is not materially extended. As the all-encompassing, all-penetrating first cause, he is the discursive “substance” of the world.

This use of the word *substance* to refer to the topic of a discussion – as, for example, when we ask, what is the substance of your objection? – is precisely what Berkeley has in mind when he applies the term to God and finite minds. It is in this sense that God is an immaterial substance and is immaterially “extended” in and as communicative differentiation. Because the objects that comprise the world are the signs whereby “the mover and author of nature constantly explaineth himself to the eyes of men,” they inscribe the language of reality.¹⁹

For Berkeley we can thus sense ideas only if there is some place in which they can be differentiated from one another. To say that that place is one’s mind is true enough, but it does not explain how minds or ideas originally come to be and are themselves differentiated. That is where recognizing God as the space in which the identity and differentiation of minds and ideas occur helps us out. In fact, it is because the mind’s very identity depends on its place in that divine space that God is said to be immediately present to the mind.

The same thing applies to our ideas. Their identities and differences cannot be explained solely in terms how *we* arrange our ideas, for that merely begs the question about why we identify and arrange ideas as we do. Any attempt to explain the activities of mind or why we have ideas at all has to appeal to other ideas, which means that no explanation for the existence or nature of ideas is possible unless we refer to the semantic conditions for their identification.

For Berkeley, this is where God comes in – specifically, as the legibility of all things, the space in which every thing is identified and differentiated. Berkeley does not assume that minds or ideas are simply brute facts of reality and that their identities and differences are ontologically grounded and epistemologically self-evident. Instead, he enquires into what would allow us to speak about minds or ideas in the first place, and he is struck by how obvious the answer is: “to an unbiassed and attentive mind, nothing can be more plainly legible than the intimate presence of an *all-wise Spirit*, who fashions, regulates, and sustains the whole system of beings.”²⁰ God is immediately present in reality as the *legibility* or visibility of the system. He is not revealed *through* the system, as if it were a veil distinct from and hiding God. Rather, as the Word, he *is* the communication of the system of beings, the world *as revealed*.

The language of nature is thus not one of human making, for the very possibility for differentiating human discourse from everything else is itself based on a system of signs in terms of which epistemology and ontology are intelligible. Descartes and Locke simply assume that minds, ideas, things, and words are different without explaining how their initial differentiation is intelligible. By locating that differentiation within a language or system of signs, Berkeley provides the semiotic foundation for epistemology and ontology. That is why C. S. Peirce concludes that Berkeley rather than Descartes or Locke is the real father of modern philosophy.²¹

3. The subsistence of substance

This way of interpreting Berkeley's description of God as a spiritual substance is a departure from the typical historiographic practice of imposing on him Cartesian and Lockean presuppositions about the word *substance*. Certainly, in a derivative sense, God can be said to be a spirit or mind "in" whom ideas exist. So in a sense, God could be thought of as a being who "supports" ideas and who does not rely on anything else to subsist. But to think of God in such terms is to ignore how Berkeley's critique of the notion that a material substance – as a support of sensible qualities with an independent subsistence apart from those qualities – might just as easily be directed against a notion of spiritual substance understood along the same lines.²² It would likewise ignore his remarks about how the subsistence of minds apart from their having ideas is inconceivable.²³

What is needed here is a way to think about spiritual substance that allows us to explain how God and finite minds are differentiated. As Berkeley insists, to model such a discussion on how we speak about material substances inevitably will fail, for minds are not simply wispy bodies.²⁴ Indeed, they are not perceived as things at all. Rather, spiritual substances are the places in which perceptions are identified, differentiated, and structured in relations. But to retrieve this way of thinking about minds requires that we shift the context of the discussion of spiritual substances and the space in which they are discernible away from doctrines outlined by Descartes or Locke to those developed by More, Raphson, Toland, and Edwards.

To cite but one example: Edwards proposes a notion of God that retains the hermetic sensitivity to the immediacy and efficacy of signs and language. Berkeley draws attention to that immediacy in saying that God is eminently accessible to us in our every act and thought. To be aware of anything at all, he says, whether it be an *identifiable* God or minds and ideas, we always already find ourselves immediately in the space of God's presence. Or as Edwards puts it:

Space is this necessary, eternal, infinite and omnipresent being. We find that we can with ease conceive how all other beings should not be. We can remove them out of our minds, and place some other in the room of them; but space is the very thing we can never remove and conceive of its not being But I had as good speak plain: I have already said as much as that space is God.²⁵

God's essence cannot be an object of thought, because even to imagine him as a thing or "substance" with an essence is already to assume the semantic domain in which his identification is intelligible. Even to doubt that God exists is thus to affirm his existence as that space or domain in which the doubt is possible.

The kind of interpretive realignment suggested by this way of understanding Berkeley's position has repercussions as well for how we treat Malebranche's doctrine of seeing all things in God in light of Berkeley's critique. That doctrine is described in the section of Malebranche's *Search After Truth* that ends with St. Paul's *Acts* 17:28 passage; and it is central in understanding what it means to say that God is an incorporeal substance in whom finite minds, ideas, and bodies are differentiated.

From Berkeley's perspective, the problem with Malebranche's account is that it does not explain what it means for anything to be "in" the mind of God.²⁶ To adopt the view that ideas are differentiated from one another in the mind of God in virtue of "intelligible extension" seems, for Berkeley, to come close to saying that God is extended. As long as extension is not equated with matter and is instead understood to refer to a domain in which the distinction of things in the universe is originally intelligible, such a description does not seem to be a problem. That is why Berkeley says that God is not "coextended with the Universe" but is:

after the manner of a spirit, by thought and power, perceiving all things and actuating all things: He comprehends every created being in the immensity of his intellect, and the influence of his power reacheth to all real (or natural) effects: Insomuch that there is no created thing or part of the sensible world whatsoever which exists out of the Divine Mind.²⁷

In Berkeley's view, however, Malebranche's doctrine of seeing all things in God does not provide a syntax or semantics on which identifications or differentiations can be based. That is why Berkeley dismisses Malebranche's doctrine, noting that he can make little sense of the claim that we perceive or think things by uniting our minds with the "intelligible substance" of God. For as Berkeley points out, "it is evident that the things I perceive are my own ideas," not God's.²⁸

In all fairness, Malebranche does not say that our minds apprehend the essence of God when we perceive particular beings. Rather, he says, we see real things (as opposed to mere sensations) insofar as we know things in terms of their kinds. As finite minds, we do not *know* things as individuals but rather sense them in virtue of their being embodied. How even God could know individuals is, for Malebranche, a mystery, because nothing in the mind of God accounts for the possibility that individuality as such is intelligible.²⁹ However, when our minds are united with the *Word* of God, we embody or express his power, wisdom, and love and we actively participate in the designation of reality as intelligible. That is what it means for both finite and divine minds to *subsist* as opposed to *exist*.³⁰

As in the case of the *Acts* 17:28 passage, the distinction between subsistence and existence is of Stoic origin and, for Berkeley, serves the same Stoic end of highlighting the fact that incorporeal entities (e.g., expressions) *subsist* as the places or relations in terms of which bodies are said to *exist*.³¹ He points out that things (i.e., ideas) exist only to the extent that they are perceived by a mind that “contains and supports” them.³² To say that something *exists* means that it is thought as having a determinate identity by some mind. But since minds cannot be thought without making them determinate (and simultaneously determined) objects, it is therefore inappropriate to say that they *exist*. Rather, they *subsist*, which means that they are the particular patterns of association by means of which things in the world are identified as having meanings.

For Berkeley the being or existence of a thing is thus the activity (or mind) by which it is identified. For example, to say that a real tree is *comprehended* or “exists in” the infinite mind of God means that its “very being” consists in its being the object of mind. In order for any thing to exist, it must exist *as that thing*, which means that it must be identified ultimately as an idea in the mind of God (even if that means, as in the case of evil ideas, that God knows that thing *as* the idea of a finite mind). A Christian therefore not only recognizes how things come to be intelligible in terms of God’s creation of ideas in complexes that identify and differentiate finite minds but also is able to explain how the intelligibility of a thing reveals at the very same moment the “intimate presence” of God. That is why

to a Christian it cannot surely be shocking to say, the real tree existing without his mind is truly known and comprehended by (that is, *exists in*) the infinite mind of God. Probably he may not at first glance be aware of the direct and immediate proof there is of this, inasmuch as the very being of a tree, or any other sensible thing, implies a mind wherein it is. But the point itself he cannot deny.³³

What makes the tree sensible is the fact that it not only is perceived by sense but also is embedded in a network of sign relations that create the possibility that something makes sense. In discerning the sensibleness of experience, the Christian retrieves the sensibility of the fabric of the world by taking seriously the doctrine that Christ is the Word. It is in and through that Word that all things are linked in the orderly and intelligent discourse that reveals the immediate presence of God as the textuality of the world.³⁴

As with Malebranche, Berkeley's invocation of the *Word* of God is not therefore intended as a mere metaphor or homiletic gesture. It is an explicit indication that the existence of sensible ideas as objects of meaning consists in their intelligibility, which is the same as saying that they are objects of mind. Because mentality is evidenced in nothing other than "the constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things," the very existence of such inscriptions constitutes the discourse through which finite minds are differentiated and God is revealed as the differentiating activity of mind itself – that is, as revelation itself. Apart from this revelation, there is no meaning and no differentiation and interaction of finite minds. In saying that God is the *author* of nature, Berkeley thus intends to implicate God in his creation so closely that, for the Christian, the presence of God is as certain and immediate as our knowledge of any other mind. Since we know of the existence of other minds in virtue of their use of language (*Alciphron* IV.6), we know of God's existence in and through understanding nature as the language of God. As Berkeley says:

It is evident, that God is known as certainly and immediately as any other mind or spirit whatsoever, distinct from our selves. We may even assert, that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men; because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to human agents. There is not any one mark that denotes a man, or effect produced by him, which does not more strongly evince the being of that spirit who is the *Author of Nature* He alone it is who *upholding all things by the Word of his Power*, maintains that intercourse between spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other. And yet this pure and clear light which enlightens every one, is it self invisible.³⁵

We do not "see" the author of nature by trying to penetrate through his revelation, as if God is intelligible apart from the world and the world is intelligible apart from God. Rather, we see God *in* his revelation, in the sensibility and meaning of experience. All things are intelligible through his Word, and all minds are expressions of the syntactic alignments in terms of which relations

in nature are identified. Apart from the semantic structure that *subsists* as the prerequisite for the world, nothing *exists*.

Even to say that God exists or that God and his creatures can be comprehended under a general notion of reality would be misleading, because that would imply that God is part of a whole.³⁶ If we were to describe God as the mind or intellect of the universe, we would capture the sense of how he is immediately involved in the discrimination of objects and minds and their interactions. But to characterize God in this way might suggest that there is some aspect of the universe apart from its mentality or intelligibility; and that, Berkeley insists, is simply false.

It is thus absurd to imagine Berkeley without God, unless we first insist on thinking of God in derivative terms as a subject behind his discourse and then also refuse to consider how the language of nature might be something more than an intriguing metaphor.³⁷ In *Alciphron* Berkeley recommends that we do neither. In fact, he notes that our immersion in the constant linguistic exchange that constitutes our vision of the world reveals how God can be intimately involved in our smallest actions and decisions precisely because he is present in and as the creation of significance in the world we see: "I think it plain this optic language hath a necessary connexion with knowledge, wisdom, and goodness. It is equivalent to a constant creation, betokening an immediate act of power and providence."³⁸ Our personal interests and designs, like our identification as persons or subjects in the first place, are meaningful insofar as they are expressions of a divine communication. There is nothing wrong with saying that God is also a subject with personality traits such as concern for his creatures, as long as we recognize how such claims subordinate the divine discourse to human discourse. Such a subordination makes all pronouncements about God derivative. In making such pronouncements, then, we simply speak with the vulgar.

We can, however, think with the learned by considering the semantic conditions for being able to speak about a derivative notion of God; and that is what More, Raphson, Toland, and Edwards do by invoking a carefully qualified "pantheistic" space. Like them, Berkeley suggests that the elements and relations of nature can reveal the presence of God because they are the inscriptions of a discursive space that makes all identification and existence intelligible. That discursive space is not defined by what *we* say about God or by what God communicates to us, for no divine or human subjectivity aboriginally underlies discursive exchange or exists prior to its semantic instantiation.

This means that, for Berkeley, God is at once unthinkable and yet more evident than even ourselves. Because we do not notice the discourse in which we have our identities and by which we are able to think, we immediately fix

on the objects identified in that discourse. Only a mind freed from the impulse to interpret itself as an object is open to the possibility of thinking of God in a similar way. To think of God is thus not to think of a thing that exists and about which one can predicate characteristics. Rather, it is to acknowledge the presence of meaning in the activity of thinking itself. That is the sense of God in which we live and move and have our being.

4. Concluding remarks

Concerned that the notion of God described above points to a Spinozistic denial of God's transcendence, Berkeley insists that the intelligibility of the world consists literally in its being a communication of God. But the world is not a revelation *from* God *to* other minds, for that would imply that minds exist apart from the communication and that God could withdraw from his communication. Instead, as Malebranche claims, "God is the intelligible world or the place of minds," the locus of all intelligibility or mentality.³⁹ However, when Malebranche adds that the material world is the place of bodies, Berkeley quickly sees that this opens the door to those who might claim that the material world is somehow independent of God.

To avoid this, he recalls a concept of God similar to one developed by More and Raphson. But unlike More and Raphson – who, he says, equate God with empty Newtonian-Lockean space – Berkeley describes the space of God in terms of a language or discourse. Like Edwards, he assumes that nothing is intelligible apart from that discourse, even our subsequent discussions of God. That is why, Berkeley concludes:

what deserves the first place in our studies, is the consideration of *God*, and our *duty*; . . . as it was the main drift and design of my labours, so shall I esteem them altogether useless and ineffectual, if by what I have said I cannot inspire my readers with a pious sense of the presence of God.⁴⁰

Perfused by the consideration of God, Berkeley's philosophy aims not simply to emphasize God's place in thought but to inspire in us the belief that all thought takes place in God. That same idea recurs in our own century in Karl Barth's characterization of God as "Space Himself" and in Paul Tillich's talk of the "God above God."⁴¹ It is what Louis Althusser (quoting St. Paul's remark) refers to as the Word (*logos*) or "ideology" in virtue of which every thing is not only discernible but also (and more importantly for Berkeley) morally significant.⁴² Apart from *this* God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, there are no inclinations or activities – not even the activities of a discernible God.

For Berkeley, God is not a subject behind the text of his revelation but *is* the textuality of the revelation. As Barth says, God “cannot unveil Himself to us in any other way than by veiling Himself,” that is, by disclosing himself as disclosure itself.⁴³ Identification and differentiation are possible only in virtue of this divine activity of discrimination. There is nothing other than it, because the notion of an other is itself intelligible only in its terms. Indeed, as Edwards remarks, even nothingness is intelligible as the negation or absence of being only in virtue of this discursive space.⁴⁴ This space, as the post-moderns say, is thus the Other to otherness. The fact that certain seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers have such a doctrine indicates that so-called postmodern insights are not as novel as some might have us believe. The fact that Berkeley is reluctant to make such a doctrine more explicit – or more likely, is unable to make it more explicit – indicates just how much he is restricted by the Cartesian-Lockean vocabulary and syntax with which he works and on which commentators continue to rely.

Notes

1. See George Berkeley, *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* §§ 66, 149, in *The Works of George Berkeley*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (9 vols.; London: Thomas Nelson, 1948–1957), vol. 2; *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, in *Works* 2: 214, 236; *Guardian Essay* # 88 (“The Christian Idea of God”), in *Works* 7: 219; and *The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*, title page and § 2, in George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, ed. Michael R. Ayers (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1992), 231.
2. See Berkeley, *Philosophical Commentaries [PC]*, in Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, # 827; Berkeley, *Dialogues*, 214; and *Alciphron* 4.14, in *Works* 3: 159.
3. Among those who have noted Berkeley’s appeal to the *Acts* passage are Ian T. Ramsey, “Berkeley and the Possibility of an Empirical Metaphysics,” in *New Studies in Berkeley’s Philosophy*, ed. Warren E. Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 24; Michael Hooker, “Berkeley’s Argument from Design,” in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, ed. Colin M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 264; Geneviève Brykman, *Berkeley et le voile des mots* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1993), 19; and Denise Leduc-Fayette, “Qu’est que ‘parler aux yeux’? Berkeley et le ‘langage optique’,” *Revue philosophique de la France et l’Étranger* 187 (1997), 416. On the Stoic origin of the *Acts* passage, see *Sky Signs: Aratus’ Phaenomena*, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1983), 1; and Stuart Brown, “Platonic Idealism in Modern Philosophy from Malebranche to Berkeley,” in *The Cambridge Platonists in Philosophical Context: Politics, Metaphysics and Religion*, ed. G. A. J. Rogers, J. M. Vienne, and Y. C. Zarka (Boston: Kluwer, 1997), 198–199.
4. *Principles* § 149. See also § 66.
5. See T. E. Jessop, editor’s note, in Berkeley, *Principles*, § 66; and A. A. Luce, *The Dialectic of Immaterialism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 187.
6. Berkeley, *De Motu* § 53, in *Philosophical Works*, 222. Cf. *Principles* § 116; and Berkeley to Samuel Johnson, 24 March 1730, in *Works* 2: 292.
7. Berkeley, *Principles* § 117. Cf. Berkeley, *Siris* § 270–271, 289, in *Works*, vol. 5.

8. Berkeley, *De Motu* § 54, in *Philosophical Works*, 222.
9. See Berkeley, *PC* # 298, 825, 827.
10. See Thomas Hobbes, *English Works*, ed. William Molesworth (11 vols.; London: John Bohn, 1839–1845), 4: 306, controversy with Bishop Bramhall, where Hobbes refers to God as a “corporeal spirit”; John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II.23; and Spinoza to Oldenburg, Nov.–Dec. 1675 (letter # 73), in Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 332: “I maintain that God is the immanent cause, as they say, of all things, and not the transitive cause. All things, I say, are in God and move in God, and this I affirm with Paul and perhaps with all ancient philosophers.”
11. See David Berman, *George Berkeley: Idealism and the Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 14–16.
12. See Berkeley, “Of Infinities,” in *Works* 4: 235–236.
13. *PC* # 715, 720. Cf. Berman, *Berkeley*, 13.
14. See John Toland, *Letters to Serena* (London: Bernard Lintot, 1704), 219. Cf. Stephen H. Daniel, “Toland’s Semantic Pantheism,” in *John Toland’s “Christianity Not Mysterious”*: *Text, Associated Works and Critical Essays*, ed. Philip McGuinness, Alan Harrison and Richard Kearney (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1997), 306; and Brian P. Copenhaver, “Jewish Theologies of Space in the Scientific Revolution: Henry More, Joseph Raphson, Isaac Newton, and their Predecessors,” *Annals of Science* 37 (1980), 534–546.
15. Joseph Raphson, *De Spatio Reali seu Ente Infinito* (London: John Taylor, 1697), 8, 21, 74–80. Cf. A. A. Luce, *Berkeley and Malebranche: A Study of the Origins of Berkeley’s Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 49.
16. Henry More, *Divine Dialogues* (London: James Flesher, 1668), 125.
17. *Ibid.*, 106–107. Cf. Wallace E. Anderson (ed.), *Scientific and Philosophical Writings by Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 57n–58n; and Copenhaver, “Jewish Theologies,” 520–521.
18. Henry More, *An Appendix to the Foregoing Antidote against Atheism* (London: William Morden, 1662), 165. Cf. Anderson (ed.), *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, 61.
19. *Alciphron* 4.12, in *Works* 3: 157. Cf. Jonathan Dancy, *Berkeley: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 111–122.
20. *Ibid.*, § 151.
21. Cf. Charles S. Hardwick, “Berkeley and Peirce,” in *Graduate Studies: Texas Tech University*, ed. Kenneth L. Ketner et al. (Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1981), 81.
22. See *PC* # 512, 517; *Principles* §§ 49, 67–68; and *Dialogues*, 237. Cf. Robert G. Muehlmann, “The Substance of Berkeley’s Philosophy,” in *Berkeley’s Metaphysics: Structural, Interpretive, and Critical Essays*, ed. Robert G. Muehlmann (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 92, 98–99, 101n; and Daniel Garber, “Something-I-Know-Not-What: Berkeley on Locke on Substance,” in *Essays on the Philosophy of George Berkeley*, ed. Ernest Sosa (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987), 29.
23. See *PC* # 842. Also see Berkeley, *Principles* § 98 and MS addition, in *Works*, 2: 84n. Cf. Charles J. McCracken, “Berkeley on the Relation of Ideas to the Mind,” in *Minds, Ideas, and Objects: Essays on the Theory of Representation in Modern Philosophy*, ed. Phillip D. Cummins and Guenter Zoeller (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1992), 197.
24. See *PC* # 478a, 499a, 652, 658, 704, 791, 828, 829; *Principles*, §§ 27, 135, 139, 142; and *Dialogues*, in *Works* 2: 231–235.
25. Edwards, “Of Being,” in Jonathan Edwards, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, ed. Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 203. Cf. Stephen H.

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26. See Berkeley, *Principles* § 71.
 27. Berkeley, "Summary of the Author's Opinion," MS fragment, in David Berman, "Berkeley's Quad: The Question of Numerical Identity," *Idealistic Studies* 16 (1986), 41–42; and Bertil Belfrage, "A Summary of Berkeley's Metaphysics in a Hitherto Unpublished Berkeleian Manuscript," *Berkeley Newsletter* 3 (1979), 1.
 28. Berkeley, *Dialogues*, 214. Also see *ibid.*, 213–215; and *Alciphron*, 159. Cf. McCracken, *Malebranche*, 207; and Harry M. Bracken, "Berkeley and Malebranche on Ideas," *The Modern Schoolman* 41 (1963), 13–14.
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 30. See Nicholas Malebranche, *Search After Truth*, III.2.6, 235; also see 230–231. Cf. Cook, "Malebranchean Ideas," 531, 542; and Stephen H. Daniel, "Berkeley's Christian Neoplatonism, Archetypes, and Divine Ideas," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39 (2001), 244–251.
 31. See Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 22–23; Leduc-Fayette, "Langage optique," 414; and Stephen H. Daniel, "Berkeley, Suárez, and the *Esse-Existere* Distinction," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000), 621–636.
 32. See Berkeley, *Principles* § 90; and *Dialogues*, 212, 235–236.
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 35. Berkeley, *Principles* §§ 146–147.
 36. See Berkeley, *Siris* § 288, in *Works* 5: 134.
 37. Cf. Margaret Atherton, "Berkeley Without God," in *Berkeley's Metaphysics* (ed. Muehlmann), 236–247.
 38. Berkeley, *Alciphron* 4.14, in *Works* 3: 159.
 39. Nicholas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, III.2.6, in *The Search After Truth and The Elucidations of The Search After Truth*, translated by Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1980), 235.
 40. Berkeley, *Principles* § 156.
 41. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), II. 1: 470; Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 182–190; and Paul Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 46.
 42. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 171, where he quotes the *Acts* 17:28 passage.
 43. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I. 1: 188, 362, 371. Cf. Daniel, "Postmodern Concepts," 50–59.

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