

BERKELEY'S DOCTRINE OF MIND AND THE "BLACK LIST HYPOTHESIS": A DIALOGUE

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ABSTRACT: Clues about what Berkeley was planning to say about mind in his now-lost second volume of the *Principles* seem to abound in his *Notebooks*. However, commentators have been reluctant to use his unpublished entries to explicate his remarks about spiritual substances in the *Principles* and *Dialogues* for three reasons. First, it has proven difficult to reconcile the seemingly Humean bundle theory of the self in the *Notebooks* with Berkeley's published characterization of spirits as "active beings or principles." Second, the fact that Berkeley did not publish his *Notebooks* insights on mind has led some to claim that he later rejected his early views. Third, many of the *Notebooks* entries on mind have a '+' sign next to them, which has been understood for decades to comprise a Black List of views about which Berkeley had doubts or subsequently rejected. In my dialogue, I describe how Berkeley's "congeries" account of mind (1) differs from Hume's bundle theory in a way that complements Berkeley's published remarks and (2) undercuts the claim that he later rejected his early views. Most importantly, (3) I show how a careful analysis of the British Library manuscript of the *Notebooks* refutes the Black List hypothesis.

Scene: British Library, London, outside the Manuscripts Reading Room; June, mid-morning.

DION: Theages, because you have been such a gracious host while I have been visiting, I hesitate to raise a point about Berkeley's philosophy about which I suspect we differ substantially.

THEAGES: Even though I am puzzled sometimes about things you say about Berkeley, I always find your interpretations intriguing. So, my friend, tell me what is on your mind.

DION: Well, it has to do with some of the work we have been doing here at the Library. As you know, many of the ideas Berkeley develops

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in his *New Theory of Vision*, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, and *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* are anticipated in his *Notebooks*.¹ But some *Notebooks* entries seem to conflict so much with his published views that it is difficult to imagine that both his unpublished and published remarks characterize the same thing. For example, in entries that sound a lot like Hume’s bundle theory of the self, he writes, “the very existence of ideas constitutes the soul” (NB 577) and “mind is a congeries of perceptions. Take away perceptions and you take away the mind” (NB 580). That description sounds quite different from Berkeley’s published accounts of the “active, indivisible substances” in which ideas exist (PHK 89, 91, 141; DHP 231, 233). It is no wonder that commentators choose to ignore the *Notebook* entries on mind altogether, rather than try to explain how they are compatible with his published remarks.²

THEAGES: But, Dion, why would you assume they are compatible in the first place? Why not simply say that Berkeley changed his mind between his *Notebooks* and his published works? You seem to be suggesting that obvious contradictions in his writings are only apparent. But why think that his considered view is captured in early, unpublished remarks, when in his *Principles* and *Dialogues* he flat out contradicts claims such as those you cite? To claim that a philosopher’s unpublished comments are more representative of his true views than his published ones just seems bizarre—unless, of course, you think that Berkeley systematically misled his readers in his published writings in order to avoid saying in public what he really believed.³

DION: Hold on, Theages; I am not claiming that Berkeley’s private jottings express his secret ideas regarding the soul, because I

¹ See Robert McKim, “Berkeley’s Notebooks,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 63–93, esp. 63. Because of errors in *The Works of George Berkeley*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson, 1948–57), quotations are from corrected texts in George Berkeley, *Philosophical Works*, ed. Michael R. Ayers (London: J. M. Dent, 1992): NB = *Notebooks* (entry); PHK = *Principles of Human Knowledge* (section); DHP = *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Luce-Jessop vol. 2 pagination noted in the margins of the Ayers edition); and TVV = *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (section).

² See Walter Ott, “Descartes and Berkeley on Mind: The Fourth Distinction,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006): 437–50; and Margaret Atherton, “Berkeley’s Last Word on Spirit,” in *Essays on the Concept of Mind in Early-Modern Philosophy*, ed. Petr Glombiček and James Hill (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 115–30.

³ Cf. David Berman, “Berkeley’s Life and Works,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13–33, esp. 22–33.

reject the view that his public doctrines are different from his private beliefs.⁴ It is just that I do not think we need to say that Berkeley changed his positions in fundamental ways. We thus do not have to decide which statements he truly endorses, because I assume they all represent his considered view. His remarks that the “mind is a congeries of perceptions” and “the very existence of ideas constitutes the soul” do not lead me to think that he anticipates Hume’s theory that the self is simply a collection or bundle of ideas. Nor am I tempted to think that in saying “take away perceptions and you take away the mind; put the perceptions and you put the mind” (NB 580), Berkeley equates the acts of the mind with their objects.⁵ I say this because “perception” can mean either an act of mind or the object of that act; and when understood as activity, it (along with imagination and will) defines exactly what he means for a mind to be a spiritual substance. I therefore do not believe that NB 577–81 suggest that Berkeley ever developed a Humean bundle theory; instead, I think he always maintained a theory of spiritual substance. It is just that his theory of spiritual substance—unlike that of Descartes—is not one that allows the mind or soul to be considered either conceptually distinct from its activities or even (as Walter Ott has suggested) a “thin particular” substratum distinct from its activities.⁶ Admittedly, for Berkeley, mental activities are “entirely distinct” from their ideas, just as the act of perceiving an object is distinguishable from the object itself. But that does not mean that we can identify those activities, or the substance they are activities of, apart from their specific objects.

THEAGES: But how can you say that Berkeley never adopted the so-called bundle theory of the self? It is obvious that he did: just look at the text.

DION: Many commentators—I take it, including you—think of the bundle theory along Humean lines. That would mean that Berkeley equated perceptions-as-objects with the mind. But in NB

⁴ I thus disagree with Colin M. Turbayne, “Berkeley’s Two Concepts of Mind,” in *Berkeley: Principles of Human Knowledge, Text and Critical Essays*, ed. Colin M. Turbayne (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 145–60; and 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 Press, 1995), 89–105.

⁵ Cf. Charles McCracken, “Berkeley’s Notion of Spirit,” *History of European Ideas* 7 (1986): 597–602, esp. 598; and Talia Mae Bettcher, *Berkeley’s Philosophy of Spirit* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 2, 107.

⁶ Cf. Ott, “Descartes and Berkeley,” 445–49; and McCracken, “Berkeley’s Notion,” 601.

577–82, he consistently maintains that the mind is a congeries of perceptions. There I take him to mean that the mind is a *specific* congeries of activities, because that is exactly what NB 578 says: “consciousness, perception, existence of ideas seem to be all one.” If by “perceptions” he meant objects of consciousness, we would have a Humean bundle. But that is not what a congeries means for Berkeley, and it is not what NB 578 says. Instead, there and at NB 577, we see Berkeley describing the soul as “the very existence of ideas,” because determinate ideas are unintelligible apart from such activity. Similarly, Berkeley’s nominalism requires that a particular substance cannot be conceived apart from its particular activities, and those activities in turn cannot be considered apart from their objects. So Berkeley invokes the “congeries” vocabulary precisely to counter the view that a spiritual substance exists continuously as some substratum that underlies or holds together the distinctive complex of acts that specify its objects. Accordingly, he writes,

on account of my doctrine the identity of finite substances must consist in something else than continued existence, or relation to determined time and place of beginning to exist, the existence of our ideas thoughts (which being combined make all substances) being frequently interrupted, and they having divers beginnings and endings. (NB 194)

His point is that a finite mind consists in a specific combination of those activities that identify and associate objects, and it is due to those activities that objects and even the mind itself are said to exist in spatiotemporal (i.e., “continued”) terms. A finite mind is thus not a bundle of ideas whose identities and existence are independent of specific mental activities; for if that were the case, there would be no difference between the act by which an object comes into being and the object itself. The fact that Berkeley was aware of this potential confusion is probably the reason he substitutes ‘thoughts’ for ‘ideas’ when he says that the combination of thoughts make up finite substances, for a spiritual substance is not defined by its ideas (understood as objects) but by the combination of activities (i.e., thoughts) by which those ideas exist. My response to you, then, is that Berkeley *never* adopted the bundle theory of the self because, obviously, the texts say otherwise.

THEAGES: But NB 194 is from Notebook B—a different world than that found in Notebook A. Do you really think that Berkeley’s early

musings should be accorded the same credence as his later, more developed thoughts?

DION: I think that we should not assume that Berkeley changed his view between Notebook B and Notebook A unless we cannot provide an explanation that reconciles them.

THEAGES: Still, it seems like you are putting your own spin on these texts and doing so in ways that violate obvious standards for reading. Do you not allow for straightforward readings that avoid the contortions you put these texts through?

DION: As I have indicated, my method for analyzing Berkeley's texts is to assume that he knew what he wanted to say and said it in his own words, without being constrained by how others use those words, especially when those others hold views with which he disagrees. For example, I suspect he had Descartes or Locke in mind when he wrote, "say you the mind is not the perceptions, but that thing which perceives. I answer, you are abused by the words *that* and *thing*; these are vague, empty words without a meaning" (NB 581)—for he did not think of substance as some (knowable or unknowable) thing that can be conceived apart from its activity. As is obvious from his published work as well, he is not at all reluctant to appropriate the vocabulary of substance, even as he dispenses with the traditional understanding of substance as an independent substratum that unifies activities over time.

THEAGES: But, Dion, if Berkeley had not wanted his readers to think of a spiritual substance in the traditional way (i.e., as that which does not depend on anything else and which persists throughout change), he would not have called minds substances.⁷ Instead, he would have chosen (as he in fact did, at least briefly) a word like 'congeries'. But since a congeries depends on its constituents to exist and does not have an internal principle of unity, it cannot be the kind of "indivisible substance" (PHK 89, 91) or "simple, uncompounded substance" (PHK 141) that Berkeley's published work describes.

DION: If a congeries is understood as a collection of activities that have been differentiated prior to their being collected together, then you would be right in saying that a congeries cannot be a

⁷ Cf. Marc A. Hight and Walter Ott, "The New Berkeley," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 34 (2004): 1–24, esp. 1–18, 24; and Talia Mae Bettcher, "Berkeley's Theory of Mind: Some New Models," *Philosophy Compass* 6 (2011): 689–98, esp. 691–92.

substance. But as I am indicating, for Berkeley, a mind is always understood in terms of its activity of perceiving, imagining, or willing its objects. As the "thinking, active principle" (DHP 233) that identifies and relates ideas as its objects, a spiritual substance is thus indivisible because it is the undifferentiated cause or principle in terms of which the differentiation and association of ideas occur in the first place.

THEAGES: But if the mind is simply an undifferentiated principle or cause of ideas, then what makes two minds different?

DION: Simple: they have different ideas. Of course, this is not to say that they are their ideas. Rather, because minds cannot be conceived other than as the causes of specific effects (PHK 27, 145; DHP 233, 240; TVV 11), they likewise cannot be differentiated other than by their effects.

THEAGES: So if I had different ideas, I would have a different mind? Are you saying that if God were to cause me to have the idea of a red flower rather than a blue one, I would have a different mind? This seems to rule out any possibility of freedom, in that it suggests that I could not have had other ideas and still have the same mind. Indeed, if I am defined by my ideas, then I cannot see how you can say that the same mind continues to exist over time.

DION: Here you are raising two objections: first, about the freedom of the mind; second, about the continuity or unity of the mind over time. Because both issues have puzzled commentators for decades—and because they are not central to my point—I will just gesture toward answers to each. First, a spiritual substance does not exist apart from, or is even logically prior to, its perceiving, imagining, or willing ideas. My activity of perceiving, imagining, and willing defines who I am, and that activity must be based ultimately on God's will. No doubt, this raises problems about how we can be free and still be creations of God; but those who appeal to the "traditional" account of substance to interpret Berkeley's notion of mind face those problems as well. Second, to ask what unites a spiritual substance over time is already to have misunderstood Berkeley's treatment of time. For him, time cannot be abstracted from the succession of ideas in our minds (PHK 97–98, DHP 254). We do not perceive, imagine, or will in time; rather, in perceiving, imagining, and willing, we identify and relate the objects of our experience as occurring "before" and "after." In this way, a spiritual

substance can be said to be the principle by which temporal distinctions are made. It makes no sense to characterize it as the “continuous” substratum that underlies or supports its activities, for that would imply that those activities and their objects are intelligible apart from the principle by which they identified and related.

THEAGES: Perhaps I am having trouble understanding your account of Berkeley’s notion of mind because it simply does not square with the Cartesian or Lockean view of spiritual substance with which I am more familiar. I just do not see why you think your account of mind could have been a view he adopted. After all, do any of his contemporaries even hint at such a notion?

DION: Consider, for example, Bayle’s 1704 remark: “spiritual substance, its faculty of thinking, and the thought it has at each moment are only one thing. . . . Thus the creative act that brings about the substance of minds and their capacity for thought necessarily brings about their actual thought.”⁸ When Bayle says that the mind is a substance, or when Leibniz refers to the mind as a substance, neither of them is saying that there is something other than the integrated, unified complex of activities by which its objects are identified.⁹ And that is exactly what is going on as well when Berkeley refers in his published works to the mind as a spiritual substance. My point is that I do not think of reading the views of Descartes, Locke, or Hume into Berkeley’s texts as straightforward readings—especially when they suggest that he changed his fundamental ideas in the space of a few lines or even a few months. If that is the “standard method” of analyzing texts, then I prefer the principle of charity over it.

THEAGES: That clarifies things. I now realize that we disagree about Berkeley’s concept(s) of mind and his theory of perception. I think that, as late as in the Manuscript Introduction (summer 1708), he argued from the Passivity Thesis—the view that the

⁸ Pierre Bayle, *Response to Questions of a Provincial*, Part II (1704), repr. in *Oeuvres Diverses*, 4 vols. (The Hague: 1727–31), vol. 3, 789a. Also see Todd Ryan, *Pierre Bayle’s Cartesian Metaphysics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 85; and Todd Ryan, “Bayle and Occasionalism: The Argument from Continuous Creation,” in *Pierre Bayle (1647–1706)*, ed. Wiep van Bunge and Hans Bots (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 35–50.

⁹ See G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, II.23.2, ed. and trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 218.

mind is nothing other than a congeries of passively received ideas.¹⁰ This position I hardly consider a theory of perception at all, because in it there is no mental *act* in passively perceiving or becoming conscious of ideas. I take it, though, that in your account, Berkeley always thought that perceiving entails a mental act and thus never adopted an exclusively passive view of mind. My view is that over time he moved past the Passivity Thesis, whereas you think he never changed his basic ideas because he never endorsed such a thesis.

DION: I am willing to acknowledge that, as Berkeley came to understand Cartesian and Lockean views better, he realized that his fundamental insights about minds and ideas would be misunderstood by followers of Descartes and Locke; so in the *Notebooks* he reframed and qualified his expressions. But I think that he always recognized that the essential character of mind was its activity, even in the passive reception of ideas.¹¹ He could maintain this view by thinking that the mind’s activity consists in the identification and differentiation of ideas in perceptions that are not of its own making: therein lies its passivity. Such a view is a theory of perception modeled less on the doctrines of Descartes or Locke than on those of Arnauld, in which every perception (i.e., activity of mind) necessarily represents an object as an idea.¹² In that view, the “objective reality” or content of the idea is certainly different from the act by which it is perceived, but it is still a product of a mind actively determining this or that specific thing.

THEAGES: Okay, even if *I* were to grant you that it is possible to explain mind along the lines you describe—that is, both as the “spiritual substance” or principle that “supports” (i.e., differentiates

¹⁰ See Bertil Belfrage, “Berkeley’s Four Concepts of the Soul (1707–1709),” in *Reexamining Berkeley’s Philosophy*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 172–87, esp. 177–81.

¹¹ For similar interpretations, see Robert McKim, “Berkeley’s Active Mind,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 71 (1989): 335–43, esp. 336–38; Genevieve Migely, “Berkeley’s Actively Passive Mind,” in *Reexamining Berkeley’s Philosophy*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 153–71; and Stephen H. Daniel, “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion of Mind,” in *New Interpretations of Berkeley’s Thought*, ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2007), 203–30, esp. 206–24.

¹² See Antoine Arnauld, *On True and False Ideas*, trans. Elmar J. Kremer (Lewiston, ME: Edwin Mellon Press, 1990), 19–21. Cf. Keota Fields, *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 4–6.

and relates) ideas and as a congeries of perceptions¹³—I do not think you will get many historians of early modern philosophy to accept your interpretation. After all, the *Notebook* entries you cite (with the notable exception of NB 578) are marked with the ‘+’ sign, which has traditionally been taken as a marker of entries that do not represent Berkeley’s considered view. If we accept this “Black List” hypothesis, then we do not need to treat your reading of his doctrine of mind as anything other than a view he considered briefly and subsequently rejected.

DION: Precisely: that is why it is important to show that the Black List hypothesis is groundless.

THEAGES: But even if you were able to show that, is not such an analysis of marginal manuscript notations of interest only to a very small audience? I mean, what difference should it make for most readers trying to understand Berkeley’s notion of mind that he marks some entries with a ‘+’? What is wrong with simply ignoring those entries or treating them as views he chose not to endorse in his published work? That is, why cannot the rest of us defer to specialists who have looked carefully at the manuscript to guide us in deciding how to interpret the ‘+’? After all, only a few people will ever come here to the Library to look at the *Notebooks* manuscript.

DION: If Berkeley had spelled out his doctrine of mind in a published work—as he said he did in the now-lost second part of the *Principles*—we could ignore the *Notebooks*. But as many commentators have pointed out, his extant publications do not give us much information about what a mind is for him. To use his scattered published remarks to exclude insights that can be obtained from his unpublished remarks seems to be a blatant example of arguing in a circle: we cannot trust the ‘+’ entries because they conflict with our understanding of his published remarks, and we are justified in interpreting the published remarks as we do because they provide a basis for rejecting the ‘+’ entries.

THEAGES: So if you are right, we cannot get a good sense of Berkeley’s doctrine of mind unless we first dispense with the Black List hypothesis. If we were to do that, we could treat all of his *Notebooks* entries as complementary to what he says in his published

¹³ Cf. Daniel, “Berkeley’s Stoic Notion,” 211–19.

works, and that would allow us to draw on those entries to understand his doctrines better. Now that sounds like a project of interest to many more readers than the small group of scholars I initially imagined. It certainly is in keeping with what is done with other early modern thinkers. I mean, think how much better we understand Leibniz's thought by drawing on his non-published writings (especially his correspondence). I cannot imagine why we would deny ourselves the opportunity to consider new interpretations of Berkeley's thought because they are based on texts considered as black-listed by competing interpretations. Given that, it makes me ask: how did this whole Black List thing happen?

DION: The Black List hypothesis regarding the '+' entries was a creation of A. A. Luce, who, in 1944, claimed that, of the 188 '+' entries, only 13 were positions that Berkeley later retained; 50 were definite rejections, and all the rest were either not true '+' signs or irrelevant to his argument.¹⁴ By 1963, Luce had decided that all the '+' signs indicated a mark of rejection or doubt,¹⁵ and other Berkeley scholars soon fell in line behind his lead. When Bertil Belfrage challenged the hypothesis and showed that many of the so-called questionable entries were consistent with published Berkeleian views, Luce backed off a bit in 1970, noting that he was simply "inclined" to think that the '+' was an obelus (i.e., a '-' or '÷' sign in ancient manuscripts to highlight doubtful words or remarks).¹⁶ Belfrage took Luce's concession as a recantation, but Luce continued to call the '+' "an elastic negative sign in the nature of a star or query."¹⁷ In the introduction to his widely used edition of Berkeley's *Philosophical Works* (1975, 1989), Michael Ayers acknowledged that the meaning of the '+' was controversial, but he opined that it was "difficult to believe" that the sign did not in general indicate entries that Berkeley either considered false, set

¹⁴ A. A. Luce, introduction to *Philosophical Commentaries, generally called the Commonplace Book*, by George Berkeley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1944), xiii–xxxvi, esp. xxv–xxvi. The *Notebooks* is now the preferred title of the work.

¹⁵ See A. A. Luce, *The Dialectic of Immaterialism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), 24, 56, 106.

¹⁶ A. A. Luce, "Another Look at Berkeley's Notebooks," *Hermathena* 110 (1970): 5–23, esp. 8.

¹⁷ See Luce's revised 1944 "Notes on the Entries" in George Berkeley, *Philosophical Commentaries*, ed. George H. Thomas (1976; repr., New York: Garland, 1989), 117–329, esp. 232–33.

the wrong tone, or were suspect “for some other reason.”¹⁸ In a 1987 essay, Belfrage offered what should have been the nail in the “Black List” coffin.¹⁹ But today the hypothesis reappears whenever someone needs to appeal to it, especially when it comes to supporting a more Cartesian-sounding interpretation of Berkeley’s theory of mind.²⁰ Perhaps as time passes, more scholars will come to see (as Robert McKim recently put it) that there is little to be said for this way of interpreting the ‘+’ mark.²¹

THEAGES: I am surprised by how intractable this position has turned out to be. As McKim notes, how we understand the ‘+’ sign “is not a trivial matter, because it has a bearing on how we ought to read many entries” (65)—including those entries on mind (NB 577–81).²² Other important ‘+’ entries address Berkeley’s views on time and duration, cause and effect, the relations of simple ideas, the role of names in signifying ideas, and Berkeley’s attitudes toward Bayle, Malebranche, the Scholastics, and Locke. So the status of the ‘+’ entries is hardly a minor historiographic point. Once we allow the entries to inform our understanding of Berkeley, we discover that they open up new ways to think of his views as challenges to the fundamental assumptions of some of his contemporaries.

DION: That is why the sooner we can put the misadventure of the Black List permanently behind us, the better. That would require showing how each of the ‘+’ entries is compatible with Berkeley’s other pronouncements—which is much more than we could accomplish here today. And even after showing how each ‘+’ entry is consistent with Berkeley’s published doctrines,

¹⁸ See Michael R. Ayers, introduction to *Philosophical Works*, by George Berkeley (London: J. M. Dent, 1992), ii–xxvi, esp. xxii–xxiv.

¹⁹ Bertil Belfrage, “A New Approach to Berkeley’s *Philosophical Notebooks*,” in *Essays on the Philosophy of George Berkeley*, ed. Ernest Sosa (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987), 217–30.

²⁰ Cf. Hight and Ott, “New Berkeley,” 1–24; Walter Ott, “The Cartesian Context of Berkeley’s Attack on Abstraction,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004): 407–24, esp. 409–10; Patrick Fleming, “Berkeley’s Immaterialist Account of Action,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006): 415–29, esp. 420; John R. Roberts, *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7; Marc A. Hight, *Idea and Ontology* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 166–67; and John R. Roberts, “‘Strange Impotence of Men’: Immaterialism, Anaemic Agents, and Immanent Causation,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18 (2010): 411–31, esp. 411–14, 430.

²¹ McKim, “Berkeley’s Notebooks,” 65, 91.

²² The same point is made by Luce himself, *Dialectic*, 56, 82, and Thomas, *Philosophical Commentaries*, xviii.

we would be no closer to solving the question of exactly what the '+' sign means. However, it might at least prompt commentators to reconsider those entries in hopes of coming up with more comprehensive interpretations. It also might discourage scholars from appealing to the disingenuous—or as Belfrage puts it, "careless"—strategy of raising doubts about the legitimacy of an entry simply because it has the '+' sign.²³

THEAGES: Unfortunately, Dion, that genie is out of the bottle. I fear that from now on, whenever a '+' sign entry does not fit with someone's preferred interpretation, it will be characterized as questionable. Besides, why should we not assume that Berkeley occasionally jotted down ideas only to change his mind about them later? That seems to be case in numerous places where he draws a line through a word or phrase and replaces it with something else.

DION: But just because Berkeley draws a line through a word does not necessarily mean that he rejects the idea, for he occasionally makes comments like "this alter'd hereafter" (NB 615a) when referring to entries that are not marked with the '+' sign. Perhaps all it indicates is that he decided to change the way in which the idea is expressed. He could have realized that, in the mind of someone who did not share his intuitions, those remarks might mean something he does not intend. In those cases, we would not be justified in thinking that he rejects his initial insights. Instead, we could conclude that his revisions indicate his desire to express his ideas in terms that would not be misinterpreted by others.

THEAGES: Do you not allow, then, for the possibility that Berkeley ever changed his mind during the year or so when he was writing the *Notebooks*?

DION: Surely he changed his mind about how best to express his ideas. Indeed, each instance of those strikethrough marks is an indication of just such changes. But I see no reason to assume that the *Notebooks* chronicle changes in his fundamental insights or that the *Notebooks* show Berkeley toying with views that are rejected in his published works. And I certainly deny that the '+' sign is a mark of where such supposed changes occur.

²³ See Belfrage, "New Approach," 221.

- THEAGES: But wait, Dion; it now seems that you have conflated two issues: one having to do with Berkeley's strikethrough modifications of his manuscript, and the other having to do with his use of the '+' sign as an indicator of a changed position.
- DION: That is right: I have conflated the two issues, but on that score I am following the example set in Belfrage's exchanges with Luce. In his 1970 article, Luce noted that when Berkeley drew a vertical or horizontal cross-out line through the "S" in the margin of 42 entries in Notebook B (the earlier of the two notebooks), he did not necessarily mean that he rejected what he had written about Soul or Spirit.²⁴ I merely think the same thing when I see the '+', because differences in ink indicate that Berkeley had marked certain entries for some reason with a vertical line (|) and then "disposed" of them or checked them off with a horizontal line as he incorporated them into drafts of works such as the *New Theory of Vision*, *Principles I*, or the now-lost *Principles II* (which Berkeley says dealt with minds), thus resulting in the '+' sign.
- THEAGES: Oh, come on. Are you saying that the '+' is the result of two separate actions, the combination of a vertical line and a dash through it that later "checked" it off? That seems really hard to swallow.
- DION: No harder to swallow than the assumption that the 'S' or the '⊥' is the result of two separate actions. There are more than ninety instances where Berkeley drew vertical, horizontal, and angled lines through marginal letters, numbers, and even '+'s themselves, and everyone who has commented on those strikethrough lines treats them as two separate actions.²⁵ Regardless of what the letters stand for, all of them can be taken as a symbol that in some instances was subsequently modified. And if we allow that they were created by means of two acts, we can also allow for the same possibility regarding the '+' sign. I have seen nothing to suggest that Berkeley subsequently rejected the "check off" entries marked with the 'S' or '⊥'. Similarly, I see no reason to think that the '+' sign was not a horizontal or vertical line that Berkeley checked off as he

²⁴ Luce, "Another Look," 6.

²⁵ See Luce, "Another Look," 6; Thomas, *Philosophical Commentaries*, xvii; and Belfrage, "New Approach," 223. See also Bertil Belfrage, "George Berkeley's *Philosophical Commentaries*," in *Logik, Rätt och Moral*, ed. Sören Halldén et al. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1969), 19–34, esp. 21, 30.

incorporated these ideas into his subsequent texts. That would explain why the '+' signs appear more frequently in the earlier entries and disappear toward the end.²⁶ It might also explain why—even accounting for differences in ink-flow from a quill pen making vertical vs. horizontal strokes—there are entries where the horizontal lines seem to have been added later because they (and not the vertical lines) blot on the verso pages.²⁷

THEAGES: But what about the '+' marks that do not seem to be the result of two separate actions? Could *they* not be instances where '+' signals a view that Berkeley rejected or doubted?

DION: Why would you even think that in the first place? Would you normally think in his correspondence, or even in his publications, that Berkeley is coy or duplicitous or not expressing his real views? Besides, how could anyone who has not examined the differences in ink on the manuscript (and thus be unaware of how the '+' is often not one sign but rather the result of two separate acts) dismiss those remarks when they can be interpreted as consistent with what Berkeley says in his published writings? I can see how Luce would not have thought of the horizontal and vertical lines as two separate acts, because during the time when he was developing the Black List hypothesis (World War II), he did not have access to the manuscript.²⁸ But as I showed you when we were in the Reading Room, the ink of the strike-outs (including the horizontal and vertical lines of the '+' signs) often differs. Why then would you continue to insist that the '+' indicates a questionable entry?

THEAGES: Because that is the way I have always thought of it, and such beliefs are hard to give up. As you know, I agree with Belfrage and others that Berkeley *did* change his mind on several issues (e.g., regarding spirits), especially during the time he was writing his *Notebooks*.²⁹ But as a result of this conversation, I might not be as inclined to tie those shifts in his positions

²⁶ Even Luce acknowledges that "in a few cases the '+' sign appears to be a 'tick-off', indicating that the matter had already been handled in the *Commentaries*, in the 'Of Infinities,' or in a draft of one or other of the published works" ("Another Look," 11). In fact, he says that the '+' at times seems to be a '1' with a line drawn through it (23), but he does not indicate what that might mean. See also Belfrage, "Berkeley's *Philosophical Commentaries*," 23.

²⁷ See NB 52, 83, 87, 95, 110, 111, 151, 152, 153, 154, 160, 200, 201, 202, 216, 221, 526.

²⁸ See Thomas, *Philosophical Commentaries*, xxx.

²⁹ See Belfrage, "New Approach," 221–26; Belfrage, "Berkeley's Four Concepts," 172–87; McCracken, "Berkeley's Notion of Spirit," 597–602; McCracken, "Berkeley's Cartesian

necessarily to the ‘+’ signs. That is, I will have to reconsider how to understand what is going on in the ‘+’-marked NB 484 (about the similarity of simple ideas) when Berkeley adds in verso, “this I do not altogether approve of” (NB 484a). Based on the points you have raised, I now am beginning to think that Luce exaggerates the significance of the verso comment when he claims that the NB 484a remark “almost speaks aloud and tells us the meaning of the plus sign on the recto opposite.”³⁰ I am also willing to concede that numerous other verso remarks (e.g., NB 378a, 615a) do not indicate changes in Berkeley’s views, and in only one other instance (NB 474a) is the verso remark associated with an entry with a plus mark. Even in NB 474a—where he clarifies what he means by saying that all things are *entia rationis* that exist only in the intellect—he does not change his position.

DION: Exactly. Just as Berkeley’s verso remarks indicate expansions, qualifications, and recommendations to make his recto insights more succinct, so also the ‘+’ entries sometimes indicate remarks that need further comment because they are susceptible to misinterpretation. For example, look at the ‘+’ entry that Luce fixes on, NB 484. There Berkeley notes that one idea may be like another idea and that “nothing can be like an idea but an idea”—surely standard Berkeleyian claims. Only the remark that ideas of color agree in their connection with another simple idea (*viz.*, extension) is potentially problematic, because Lockeans might see that as an endorsement of an abstract idea of extension. So instead of signaling a suspect doctrine, the ‘+’ simply indicates a view that needs further comment.

THEAGES: So which is it, Dion? Is the ‘+’ sign the result of two actions of marking an entry and then checking it off, or an indication of a remark that might be misunderstood and requires further elaboration and qualification? Just what *do* you think the ‘+’ means?

DION: Considering the various kinds of remarks with which it is associated, I think the ‘+’ could mean different things. In some

Concept of Mind: The Return through Malebranche and Locke to Descartes,” *The Monist* 71 (1988): 597–611; and Robert M. Adams, “Berkeley’s ‘Notion’ of Spiritual Substance,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 55 (1973): 47–69, esp. 63–68.

³⁰ Luce, “Another Look,” 12.

instances it designates a view that Berkeley genuinely held but came to recognize might be misunderstood. It could also mark a view that some readers would definitely misinterpret because they would assume that his use of certain words (e.g., 'power', 'innate') implies his appropriation of Scholastic, Cartesian, or Lockean meanings. And as I said, it could even be the result of two actions, especially where the inks of the horizontal and vertical lines differ. I am simply pointing out that we can come up with scenarios in which the '+' is not understood as a marker for a rejected or dubious claim.

THEAGES: Certainly you are not suggesting that, in interpreting Berkeley's remarks, we ignore how his contemporaries use the expressions to which he appeals? After all, by referring to Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Locke, and others, is Berkeley not recommending that we consider his views in the context of theirs, even when he disagrees with them?

DION: Of course, but my point is that when Berkeley adopts positions that are occasionally marked with the '+' sign—such as his endorsement of the concepts of innate ideas (NB 649) and bodies understood as powers (NB 282, 293a, 802)—he appropriates them for his own distinctive purposes.³¹ After all, does he not at times acknowledge that he uses words in unusual ways (e.g., PHK 38)? So why should we think that he would allow any of his contemporaries (e.g., Descartes, Malebranche, or Locke) to exercise exclusive control over how such expressions can be used? Rather than thinking that he changes his beliefs to make his vocabulary more consistent with that of others, we should allow him the prerogative to modify the meanings of terms to make them consistent with his own insights.

THEAGES: But here I fear you are running in a hermeneutic circle. If you say that the *Notebooks* should be interpreted in a way that makes them consistent, for example, with the *Principles*, then you first have to know how to interpret the *Principles*. That seems easy enough, but you rely a lot on the *Notebooks* to explain and clarify topics raised in the *Principles*. How can you do that without already assuming the legitimacy of the view you are trying to

³¹ See Robert McKim, "What *Is* God Doing in the Quad?" *Philosophy Research Archives* 13 (1987–88): 637–53, esp. 645–47; Stephen H. Daniel, "Berkeley's Semantic Treatment of Representation," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 25 (2008): 41–55, esp. 51; and Stephen H. Daniel, "How Berkeley's Works Are Interpreted," in *George Berkeley: Religion and Science in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Silvia Parigi (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 3–14, esp. 8–10.

discern? Indeed, when you say that we should allow Berkeley the freedom to develop his own meanings in the *Notebooks*, are you not opening up a Pandora's box in which every wacky interpretation could be justified simply by adjusting the meanings of the terms to accommodate his published works?

DION: I do not think so, because I still adhere to the principle that Berkeley's unpublished works are consistent with his published ones. Furthermore, where his unpublished remarks *seem* to conflict with his published ones, I think it is incumbent on the commentator to make every effort to show how Berkeley's published works might be interpreted as consistent with his unpublished ones. That is a tall order, but at least it avoids strategies—such as those that use Cartesian, Lockean, or Humean lenses to interpret Berkeley—that make Berkeley's texts (when taken together) sound indecisive, contradictory, or duplicitous. In sum, I simply refuse to adopt the ultimately unverifiable practice of assuming that seemingly irreconcilable texts are most properly handled by concluding that they are based on different doctrines.

THEAGES: All of us, though, are occasionally indecisive, contradictory, and duplicitous: why not allow even the Good Bishop to have such human frailties?

DION: Because, as a conscientious historian of philosophy, I make judgments only about the texts that are available to me. Such a stance does not give me the luxury of canonizing some of Berkeley's texts (because they fit my interpretations) and ignoring or marginalizing others. Instead, in keeping with my default strategy for reading any philosopher, I accept all of his comments (including those about mind marked with the '+') as expressing his "considered" views. In my account, then, the Black List hypothesis is unnecessary and misleading, and it is unfortunate that scholars are still being exposed to the kind of myopic scholarship it produces.

THEAGES: Let us say you have convinced me about the dubiousness of Luce's historiographic practices. And let us also assume that as the Old Guard of Berkeley commentators dies off, younger scholars will not continue to appeal to the Black List hypothesis. Still, I do not understand how you can justify your non-development thesis. For when you claim that your conclusions about how to interpret Berkeley are consistent with his "fundamental insights," are you not arguing in a circle as much as proponents of the Black List?

- DION: By referring to Berkeley’s “fundamental” insights, I do not mean to suggest that I am stepping outside the hermeneutic circle. I am indicating only that interpreting his texts does not *require* us to assume that the insights of his earliest surviving writings changed. This might sound circular, just as for me your set of presuppositions (including the “development thesis”) sounds like it commits the genetic fallacy or is, at least, a form of historicism. At this point, I do not see how either historiographic assumption can be proven from the texts: both are simply intuitions about how to do the history of philosophy.
- THEAGES: It is no wonder, then, that in attempting to understand Berkeley’s doctrine of mind, we are drawn into questions about the legitimacy of appealing to the *Notebooks* comments in general and the ‘+’ entries in particular. That, in turn, reveals something about how we differ in what kind of historians of philosophy we are. But I see that the showers outside have now let up. So rather than pursuing that heady topic, we probably should go out to look for a place to munch on lighter fare.