Science et Esprit, 63/2 (2011) 149-161

BERKELEY'S REJECTION OF DIVINE ANALOGY

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In *Alciphron* IV Berkeley raises the question of whether claims about God's wisdom and existence should be understood literally (i.e., in the same sense as human wisdom and existence) or analogically (i.e., in a way similar, but not identical to how we speak about human beings). Berkeley answers the question by reframing it in a way that recalls his comment in the *Principles*: "it is evident," he says, "that God is known as certainly and immediately as any other mind or spirit whatsoever" (PHK 147).[1] As commentators have noted, though, our knowledge of other minds as the causes of patterned experiences hardly seems to provide us with a justification for modeling the nature and attributes of other minds on our own.[2] For that, we would already need to know that other minds are like ours in the relevant respects (e.g., wise, knowing), and that is precisely what an appeal to analogy is unable to provide. When we further ask how we can use analogy to speak about God, the issue only becomes more complicated, for at least with other finite minds, we do not have to consider the possibility that God's infinity so changes the situation that no comparison could be appropriate.

What appears in *Alciphron* IV as a narrowly theological point about divine predication thus opens up a much broader question about the propriety of predicating anything of any mind. To say, for example, that we know that "God is wise," we would presumably have to know what it means to say that "Cicero is wise" or even "I am wise." However, since wisdom is not the object of immediate experience, it cannot be justifiably predicated of someone unless we know what such a predication would mean. Indeed, the same applies to predications

1. Citations to Berkeley's works are as follows: *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* [PHK section] and *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* [DHP page], from *The Works of George Berkeley* [W], ed. A. A. LUCE and T. E. JESSOP (9 vols.; London: Thomas Nelson, 1948-57), vol. 2; *Alciphron* [Alc dialogue and section] in W, vol. 3; and *Notebooks* [NB entry], *De Motu* [DM] (Luce trans.), and *Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained* [TVV section] are from Berkeley's *Philosophical Works*, ed. Michael. R. AYERS (Rutland VT, Charles E. Tuttle, 1992).

2. See Paul S. OLSCAMP, *The Moral Philosophy of George Berkeley*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970, 206-207; and Geneviève BRYKMAN, *Berkeley et le voile des mots*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1993, pp. 378-380.

regarding sensible objects: to say that a cherry is red is to say something of the cherry. But as is well known, for Berkeley, the subject of the predication (the cherry) cannot be thought apart from its predicates (DHP 249). Likewise, neither can spirits be thought apart from their activities, nor can minds be abstracted from their existence (PHK 98).[3] So if we want to say (without relying solely on faith) that God is wise or even that he exists, we already have to be familiar with God as the *proper* object of our predication.

This seeming circularity is the challenge Berkeley faces in *Alciphron* IV. It is a challenge that seems to be resolvable only by appealing to two equally undesirable strategies.[4] On the one hand, if God's attributes (e.g., wisdom) are so different from our own that no real comparison can be made, then claims about God and human beings are equivocal (or simply "metaphorical"), and we must be agnostic regarding his existence. On the other hand, if we can speak about God in ways with which we are familiar (i.e., univocally, literally) by considering God as an infinite version of finite minds, then we have undermined his transcendence by anthropomorphizing him. To avoid the difficulties associated with both metaphorical and literal accounts of God, some of Berkeley's contemporaries suggest that we appeal to analogy as a middle strategy.

As I will suggest, however, Berkeley rejects this proposed resolution, because it incorrectly assumes that divine and human minds can be known apart from their effects and can thus be compared to one another as if they were objects abstracted from their activities. For Berkeley, minds cannot be known apart from their effects, so to say that divine or human minds are wise is to refer to nothing other than their effects. In *this* sense, predications about God are justified, in that the divine mind is known literally in the same way as human minds are known. We therefore do not need to appeal to any supposed *analogy* between divine wisdom and human wisdom, for what is meant by wisdom in both cases is literally the same, namely, the ability to order one's works effectively (Alc. I.16; IV.22). Similarly, to speak about God's knowledge, power, or even existence is the same thing as to speak about human wisdom, knowledge, power, or existence, because such attributes are intelligible only in terms of their effects (PHK 32, 57, 72, 148; DHP 220). The difference between divine and human attributes (e.g., wisdom) thus lies not in determining how the divine and human minds differ but in discerning how the *effects* of divine (i.e., infinite) activity differ from the *effects* of human (finite) minds.

3. See also W 2: 84n, and NB 652, 842. Cf. Stephen H. Daniel, "Edwards, Berkeley, and Ramist Logic," *Idealistic Studies*, 31 (2001), pp. 58-68.

4. James O'Higgins, "Browne and King, Collins and Berkeley: Agnosticism or Anthropomorphism?" *Journal of Theological Studies*, 27 (1976), pp. 88-112.

1. King and Browne

Berkeley's preference for a literal rather than an analogical explanation of divine predication is based on his response to the challenge raised by Anthony Collins against accounts by William King and Peter Browne. As Berkeley notes, Collins shows that King and Browne had so separated God's wisdom, knowledge, and goodness from "anything that we can form a notion of or conceive" that they made God "an unknown subject of attributes absolutely unknown" (*Alc* IV.17).[5] In Berkeley's view, King's and Browne's well-intentioned though inappropriate appeal to analogy undermines the facts "that knowledge and wisdom do, in the proper sense of the words, belong to God, and that we have some notion, though infinitely inadequate, of those divine attributes" (TVV 6). Our understanding of God's knowledge and wisdom is inadequate, not because God's attributes (along with his nature or essence) are beyond our comprehension, but because we do not comprehend the infinite harmony of the things in our experience. By focusing on the effects of divine activity rather than on their causes, Berkeley hopes to counteract the "untoward defences and explanations of our faith" by King and Browne that removes God from our experience in ways that play into the hands of atheists and agnostics.

For example, in *On the Origin of Evil* (1702) and especially *Divine Predestination* (1709), King had argued that because we do not know how the effects of God's actions are related to his powers, we cannot say that such a relation is like that between human abilities and effects.[6] That is why any supposed analogical predication of attributes regarding God's nature has to be metaphorical, not literal. Nonetheless, we can assume that this causal relation is similar to what we see in our own productions because of the apparent order in their effects:

> the descriptions which we frame to our selves of God, or of the divine attributes, are not taken from any direct or immediate perceptions that we have of him or them; but from some observations that we have of his works, and from the consideration of those qualifications, that we conceive would enable us to perform the like. Thus observing great order, convenience, and harmony in all the several parts of the world, and perceiving that every thing is adapted and tends to the preservation and advantage of the whole; we are apt to consider, that we could not contrive and settle things in so excellent and proper a manner without great

5. Cf. Anthony Collins, *A Vindication of the Divine Attributes*, London, A. Baldwin, 1710, pp. 12-22; and Id., *A Discourse on Free-Thinking*, London, [n.p.], 1713, pp. 51-52. Also cf. T. E. Jessop, "Editor's Introduction," W 3: 14.

6. See William King, *Divine Predestination and Fore-knowledge, consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will: A Sermon Preach'd at Christ-Church, Dublin; May 15, 1709* [DP], London, J. Baker, 1709, p. 5. This sermon (5th ed.) was added to the second edition of William Law's English translation of King's *Essay on the Origin of Evil* published on 1 January 1732.

> wisdom; and thence conclude, that God who has thus concerted and settled matters, must have wisdom; and having then ascribed to him wisdom, because we see the effects and result of it in his works, we proceed and conclude, that he has likewise foresight and understanding, because if we were to do what we see he has done, we could not expect to perform it, without the exercise of these faculties. (DP 5)[7]

Our ascribing wisdom or foreknowledge to God is not based on knowing that God is, in fact, wise or knowledgeable. Rather, it is based on our assumption that if *we* were to do what God has done, then we would have to be wise and knowledgeable to a much greater degree: "because we do not know what his faculties are in themselves, we give them the names of those powers, that we find would be necessary to us in order to produce such effects, and call them wisdom, understanding, and fore-knowledge" (DP 5). But this does not allow us to conclude that God's creation of the purposive order of things is anything like our efforts to produce effects, for to draw that conclusion we would have to know how God produces his effects. We are sure, though, that however God does it, his creative activity is unlike ours. That is what gives King the confidence to say that God's faculties "are of a nature altogether different from ours, and that we have no direct and proper notion or conception of them" (DP 5). For to have a direct and proper notion of God's faculties would mean that we already know aspects of the nature of God independently of having to think of his effective behavior in terms that parallel our own.

For King, then, the reason we cannot predicate attributes of God literally is not due to the fact that God's effects are vastly more extensive and intricate than anything a human being can do. Instead, it is because we do not know how the effects of God's activity are related to God's nature and faculties. We do know that the consistent, convenient *effects* of divine faculties and powers are similar to effects that we associate with our own abilities (DP 5). But even if we acknowledge that the perceived intentionality of nature is analogous to the known intentionality of the effects of our actions, we cannot conclude that the causes of those effects are similar. And that means that claims about God's wisdom or knowledge – like claims about God's eyes, hands, mercy, and love

7. Cf. BERKELEY, PHK 146-47: "if we attentively consider the constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty, and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the whole, but above all the never-enough-admired laws of pain and pleasure, and the instincts or natural inclinations, appetites, and passions of animals; I say if we consider all these things, and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the attributes One, Eternal, Infinitely Wise, Good, and Perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid Spirit, 'who works all in all,' and 'by whom all things consist.' Hence, it is evident that God is known as certainly and immediately as any other mind or spirit whatsoever distinct from ourselves."

– are not "properly and literally" true (DP 7). Regarding wisdom and knowledge, we must conclude:

> that those things, which we call by these names, when attributed to God, are of so very different a nature from what they are in us, and so superior to all that we can conceive, that in reality there is no more likeliness between them, than between our hand and God's power: nor can we draw consequences from the real nature of one to that of the other. . . . Understanding and will, when ascribed to [God], are not to be taken strictly or properly, nor are we to think that they are in him after the same manner or in the same sense that we find them in our selves; but on the contrary, we are to interpret them only by way of analogy and comparison. (DP 7-8)

No predication can thus provide a "proper" description of God's nature. We can speak about God "by way of analogy and comparison" – *as if* he is like us – but a truer account requires us to acknowledge that we cannot literally say of God that he is wise or knowledgeable (or perhaps, even that he exists) in any sense that we normally recognize.

This conclusion surprises Berkeley. In a letter to John Percival on 1 March 1710, he notes that King's position makes divine predications no more than figurative comparisons, and that if we were to extend that line of thought, we would be unable to argue rationally for God's existence, because (he says) there is no argument for the existence of God "which does not prove him at the same time to be an understanding, wise and benevolent Being, in the strict, literal, and proper meaning of those words."[8] Considered apart from the attributes in terms of which he can be thought, God understood in his nature or essence is merely an unknown abstraction.

This view leads Browne and Berkeley to conclude that King's position opens the door to agnosticism.[9] No doubt, by insisting that divine predicates refer to God understood in terms of faculties or powers (e.g., knowledge, will), King distances God from his effects. But King claims that we are *sure* that God's faculties and powers "have effects like unto those that do proceed from wisdom, understanding, and fore-knowledge in us" (DP 6). This claim can hardly be justified, however, using King's strategy, because for King analogy provides only a metaphorical description of God that is not literally true but only an exhortation for us to live in accord with divine commands.

Browne, on the other hand, attempts to justify the analogy between divine and human attributes by noting how human beings are, by their very nature and existence, connected to God. In his *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of*

8. See Benjamin RAND, *Berkeley and Percival: The Correspondence of George Berkeley and Sir John Percival*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1914, p. 73.

9. See O'HIGGINS, "Browne and King," 90-91; BRYKMAN, *Berkeley*, 376; David BERMAN, *George Berkeley: Idealism and the Man*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 140; and Talia Mae BETTCHER, *Berkeley's Philosophy of Spirit*, London, Continuum, 2007, p. 57.

Human Understanding (1728), he argues that because of this "direct and real" (although unknown) correspondence between God's nature and human nature, analogical predications about God's attributes are more than simply metaphors.[10] Instead, they indicate "some resemblance, or correspondent reality and proportion" to a perfection in God (*PEL* 107). As he remarks:

> As we are made in some measure after the *image of God*, especially in our spiritual part, this serves to render all the analogy rationally built on such conceptions and notions, *real* and *just* with respect to him and his attributes. . . . Analogy is founded in the *very nature* of the things on both sides of the comparison: and the correspondency or resemblance is certainly *real*, tho' we don't know the exact *nature*, or *manner*, or *degree* of it. (PEL 139-40, 142)

Analogical predication is thus justified because it depends on the ontological relation between God and his creatures. Where human characteristics do not involve the senses or include any inherent imperfections – as in the case of knowledge, wisdom, goodness – they are appropriate indicators of divine characteristics. But this does not mean that divine predications are modeled on human traits; rather, the presence of non-sensual, perfect attributes in human beings is a constant reminder of our divine calling to transcend our imperfections.

This way of understanding analogy, though, seems to beg the question, because it does not explain how we can be sure that our analogous notions of God are "true and proper" without already assuming that we are made in God's image.[11] If the point of appealing to divine analogy is to learn how to speak properly about God regarding his attributes (and especially regarding his existence), then it seems inappropriate to say that divine attributes resemble human attributes to the extent that those human attributes are characteristically divine. We cannot know that our attributes are characteristic of God without appealing to the analogy, because in contrast to metaphor, where we use "a very remote and foreign idea to express something *already* supposed to be more exactly known; analogy conveys something correspondent and answerable, which could be now *no otherwise* usefully and really known without it" (PEL 141). The issue thus turns on how to justify the claim that our knowledge of God and his attributes is based on a "real though unknown" correspondence between divine and human minds. And that is exactly what Browne's account seems unable to provide.

10. See Peter BROWNE, *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* [PEL], London, William Innys, 1728, p. 404.

11. Cf. BRYKMAN, *Berkeley*, pp. 378-379; OLSCAMP, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 206.

II. Berkeley's Resolution

Browne's admission that we do not know how God's nature corresponds to ours is all that Berkeley needs to conclude that Browne is one of the "well-meaning but incautious" writers who misunderstand the appeal to analogy by suggesting that "we cannot frame any direct or proper notion, though never so inadequate, of knowledge or wisdom, as they are in the Deity" (Alc IV.21; TVV 6).[12] In place of such an agnostic stance, Berkeley proposes that an analogy provides a "true and proper" notion of a divine attribute (e.g., wisdom) only if it describes the attribute in terms of the classical sense of mathematical proportionality – that is, in terms of relations of known objects. This is the sense of analogy to which Cardinal Cajetan (Thomas di Vio) appeals when he describes "analogy properly speaking" (*analogia proprie facta*); and it is this sense of analogy that Berkeley adopts when he concludes that the difference between God and finite minds is not one of nature but of degree (Alc IV.21).

The key for understanding Berkeley's rejection of divine analogy thus lies in recognizing how remarks about God's attributes do not refer to anything other than what we experience (viz., the effects of God's activities). To the extent that we recognize the infinite harmony of all things, we perceive God's wisdom and power literally *in* his effects: in this way, we can say that "we see God" (PHK 148). To the extent that we recognize objects in our experience as related in only a finite number of ways, we likewise perceive wisdom and power in our effects.

King had attempted to draw an analogy between, on the one hand, God's nature and his effects, and on the other hand, human nature and our effects, but he failed because he insisted that the relation between a divine cause and its effects (regarding, for example, power or wisdom) is incomparable to the relation between a human cause and its effects. Browne had attempted to draw a similar analogy, but he failed because he insisted that, even though we know *that* human minds as causes depend on God, we do not know *how* divine and human minds are related.

By focusing solely on the *effects* of divine and human activity, Berkeley avoids both the anthropomorphic denial of God's transcendence and the agnosticism created by emphasizing the unknown relation between divine and human natures.[13] In this way he forestalls strategies (such as those developed by King and Browne) that would be "an end of all natural or rational religion" (*Alc* IV.18). In their place, he provides a way to speak "truly and properly"

12. Cf. David BERMAN, *Alciphron, or The Minute Philosopher: in Focus*, London, Routledge, 1993, pp. 2-3, 9; ID., "Cognitive theology and emotive mysteries in Berkeley's *Alciphron*," *ibid.*, p. 203; ID., *Berkeley*, p. 143; and ID., "Berkeley's Life and Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. Kenneth P. WINKLER, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 19-20.

13. See BRYKMAN, *Berkeley*, pp. 379-380.

about God by limiting statements about God's nature, attributes, and even existence to what we experience as effects.[14] This is not to say that, for Berkeley, God's nature, attributes, and existence are reduced to the ideas we experience, for that would conflate the effects (*natura naturata*) with the cause (*natura naturans*) – something that Berkeley repeatedly cautions against (DM 32-34, 41-42; TVV 11-12, 17-18).[15] Rather, he argues that we should limit our claims about what we know (even about God) to what we experience, all the while acknowledging that we experience ideas and bodies as ordered and in harmony (and thus expressive of the presence of mind as the principle of such order).

III. Concluding Remarks

Berkeley's discussion of the question of divine predication exemplifies his emphasis on resisting the temptation to appeal to abstractions divorced from their sensible expression. In this sense, the issue brings his doctrines of mind, force, grace, and power together. He insists that our task in explaining each of these topics is not to discover some mysterious entity or nature that exists behind or beneath the patterns of regularity that we experience. Rather, if we simply focus our attention on the harmony or order of nature, we will discern the presence of God, mind, force, grace, and power – not as some independent cause or agent abstracted from its effects, but as the principle by which such organization is made intelligible. Just as there is no force "abstracted from body, motion, and outward sensible effects," so there is no mind (divine or human) abstracted from the activities that are expressed by their effects (Alc. VII.6-7; PHK 143).

To be sure, the causes, powers, and agents that produce objects of sense are different from their effects, even if they are necessarily inferred from those effects (TVV 11, 42). As the principle of the purposive harmony discerned in creation, God's wisdom is certainly different from creation; but outside such infinite and exquisite order, no God is intelligible. That is why Berkeley concludes, "To the absolute nature of outward causes or powers, we have nothing to say" (TVV 12), for we must limit our pronouncements about spirits (including God) only to what and how we can think. To allow for analogical divine predication would imply that there is some nature or essence other than what

14. As David Berman points out (*Alciphron in Focus*, p. 3), in the early editions of *Alciphron* Berkeley had followed Cajetan in saying that divine and human knowledge are "formally" as well as "properly" identical. But as Browne observes (*Divine Analogy*, pp. 389, 404-407, 476-478), what makes God's knowledge formally infinite (i.e., in terms of its essence) is not the same as what makes human knowledge formally finite, and in that sense they are different. This criticism seems to be the reason for Berkeley's dropping references to the "formal" notion of God's knowledge in the 1752 edition of *Alciphron*.

15. Cf. Stephen H. DANIEL, "Berkeley and Spinoza," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 135 (2010), forthcoming.

our admittedly inadequate experience provides. And that, Berkeley recognizes, would make all natural and rational religion impossible.

IV. Addendum on the Supposed "New Letter by Berkeley to Browne"

In 1969 David Berman and Jean-Paul Pittion (with the endorsement of A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop) announced the discovery of a letter supposedly by Berkeley to Browne in which the letter writer responds to Browne's criticism of Berkeley and others in *Things Divine and Supernatural Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (November 1732).[16] In several places, Berman has repeated his claim that Berkeley is the author of the letter, and other commentators have tentatively followed him on this.[17]

I have not appealed to points raised in the letter because I do not think that Berkeley is the author. Instead, I suspect that the author is John Jackson (1686–1763), controversial divine and friend of Samuel Clarke.[18] Pittion and Berman considered the possibility that Jackson might be the author, especially since he (like the letter writer) argues, in his *Answer* to Browne's *Things Divine and Supernatural*, that predications about God's attributes ought to be understood literally (PB 378). But Pittion and Berman ultimately decided that Jackson was not the author, primarily because they thought he believes it is possible to speak intelligibly about knowledge or power "considered merely as such" (i.e., apart from its effects) – something emphatically denied in the letter. In fact, they note, the letter writer challenges Browne on this central point: "Let your Lordship but explain one single power in the whole creation, independently of its effects, and by its internal nature, and I am a convert to *analogy*" (PB 392).

Admittedly, the claim that power should not be considered apart from its effects is a position that Berkeley defends. But unlike Pittion and Berman, I maintain that the same can be said of Jackson; for as he observes, "the idea of

16. See Jean-Paul PITTION and David BERMAN, "A New Letter by Berkeley to Browne on Divine Analogy," *Mind* 78 (1969), pp. 375-392. Hereafter: PB. Cf. Peter BROWNE, *Things Divine and Supernatural, Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human*, London, William Innys and Richard Manby, 1733 [actually Nov. 1732]; hereafter DA.

17. See BERMAN, *Alciphron in Focus*, pp. 2-3, 9; ID., *Berkeley*, p. 143; and ID., "Berkeley's Life," pp. 19-20. See also O'HIGGINS, "Browne and King," p. 108; E. G. KING, "Language, Berkeley, and God," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 1 (1970), p. 113; and BETTCHER, *Philosophy of Spirit*, pp. 64-65.

18. Jackson became the rector of Rossington, Doncaster in 1710 and succeeded Clarke as Master of Wigston's Hospital in Leicester in 1729. In his early writings he defended Clarke's Arian views, and he later published works challenging Anthony Collins, Matthew Tindal, Andrew Baxter, and William Law. Cf. John NICHOLS, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (6 vols.; London, Nichols et. al., 1812), vol. 2, pp. 519-31. Also see Paul RUSSELL, "Wishart, Baxter, and Hume's *Letter from a Gentleman*," *Hume Studies*, 23 (1997), pp. 254-255, 271-272.

knowledge, power, etc. considered merely as such, or as effects of thinking and agency, is one univocal idea of them to whatever intelligent beings they are applied."[19] Pittion and Berman take this to mean that Jackson separates the idea of knowledge, power, etc. from its effects. In fact, in arguing that these attributes apply univocally to divine and human minds, this is exactly what Jackson denies:

> the effects and consequences of the operations of moral perfections, of justice, goodness, veracity, etc. in the divine and in the human nature, being of the same kind, the moral perfections themselves, whence they proceed, must be of the same kind likewise, tho the manner of producing them be ever so different. . . . And nothing can be more evident, than that the different manner of agency or producing an effect cannot make the powers which produce it different in kind. (*Answer* 32, 34)

In Jackson's view – which admittedly is like Berkeley's – the *idea* of knowledge, power, etc., when considered *as an idea* ("merely as such"), is intelligible only in terms of the effects of thinking and agency. Therefore, our ideas of those effects are the same regardless of whether they are caused by a finite or an infinite power.

This is exactly the point made by the letter writer, who notes that Browne's "*fundamental error*" is that of refusing to acknowledge that "God's wisdom" can be intelligible to us (PB 391-92). In his *Answer* to Browne, Jackson uses almost the same words: "This fundamental error runs thro' his whole book" (*Answer* 12). The letter writer argues that attributes (e.g., wisdom) are alike in kind for both God and human beings, "different only in comprehensiveness, degree, or manner of exertion" (PB 388). Likewise, Jackson writes: "human perfections are in degree, as well as in manner of existence, different from those of God, but not in kind: and finite and infinite may as well be of the same kind, as finite and finite of unequal degrees or proportions" (*Answer* 15; also 23, 26); and

> since it cannot be deny'd but that the effects of God's attributes, of his wisdom, knowledge, justice, goodness, veracity, and power are the *same* as those which human wisdom, knowledge, justice, goodness, veracity, and power produce; and excite one and the same idea of them with the other uniformly in us, it is sufficiently evident that they are of the *same kind*, and so are properly express'd and signify'd by the same words. (*Answer* 36)

To say (as Pittion and Berman do) that Jackson believes that wisdom or power can be considered apart from its effects is thus to misinterpret him simply to make a stronger case for Berkeley's authorship of the letter.

19. See John JACKSON, *Answer to a Book intitled Things Divine and Supernatural*, London, J. Noon, 1733, p. 22. Hereafter: *Answer*.

This bias permeates (and undermines) the entire effort to attribute the letter to Berkeley. Indeed, the argument that Berkeley is the author ignores evidence to the contrary and fabricates justifications in its favor. For example:

- Pittion and Berman point out that the anonymous source of the letter to the editor of *A Literary Journal* in Dublin in 1745 also sent another letter ("Essay on the Being and Attributes of God") in 1746. In the second cover letter, the source suggests that both letters are from the same author. Pittion and Berman reject that suggestion because the author of the second piece claims that we have "an idea of extension not solid and not moveable and of absolute duration" (PB 376). This is, of course, a claim that Berkeley would not have endorsed. But Pittion and Berman fail to note that this "Clarkean" view is one defended by Jackson –a fact that the source of the letters, no doubt, recognized.[20]
- The letter to Browne says there is no medium between literal and figurative knowledge of God's attributes. Pittion and Berman note that Berkeley had not made that distinction in *Alciphron*, "and it needed saying" (PB 377). All the more reason, they conclude, that this letter must be from Berkeley! Luce concurs, observing that the letter writer's claim that there is no medium between literal and metaphorical is itself too weak to stand alone. Therefore, according to Luce, it should be read as Berkeley's supplement to *Alciphron* IV, because it "fills a gap" created by his failure to build on the scholastic distinction of literal and metaphorical (PB 381). In this environment of enthusiasm, it is not surprising that Luce writes, "This new letter, as Professor Jessop remarked to me, is not quite like anything Berkeley published; and as an addition to the *corpus* of Berkeley's writings, it is all the more welcome on that account" (PB 385). This is scholarship run amok.
- Berkeley tells Samuel Johnson (4 April 1734) that he had not taken any "public" notice of Browne's *Divine Analogy* (which had been published in November 1732). From this Pittion and Berman conclude that the letter might still be by Berkeley because it would then be only a *private* comment. Indeed, they claim, Berkeley's careful distinction is intended to indicate how he had already composed a communication to Browne "which could only be our letter" (PB 378). But rather than justifying such a conclusion, Berkeley's remark just as easily can indicate that he had not written anything at all in response to Browne's criticisms.
- Undaunted, Pittion and Berman propose that the letter was written before April 1734 based on Berkeley's letter to Johnson. This, of course, simply

20. See John JACKSON, *A Dissertation on Matter and Spirit*, London, J. Noon, 1735, pp. 3-11, 32-36; and ID., *Several Letters to the Rev. Mr. Jackson from William Dudgeon . . . with Mr. Jackson's Answers*, London, John and Paul Knapton, 1737, pp. 8-10, 37. Jackson had been a defender of Samuel Clarke's ideas about God as early as 1714.

assumes the letter is by Berkeley in order to date it. Then, using that spurious dating strategy, they explain the letter writer's frequent (but generally un-Berkeleian) substitution of the word "conception" for "idea" and "notion" by pointing to Berkeley's obviously non-technical use of "conception" in the *Analyst* (PB 379). Of course, they fail to point out how Jackson's *Answer* often uses the string of "idea," "notion," and "conception" in exactly the same way as the letter writer.

- Pittion and Berman recognize that there is a notable tone of deference in the letter, which they attribute to the fact that, at the date they have assigned to the letter, Berkeley was not yet a bishop (PB 379). Of course, this assumes that the letter is by Berkeley and then tries to explain away any reasons for thinking otherwise – a strange way, indeed, to identify the author of an anonymous work.
- Luce acknowledges an initial doubt about Berkeley's authorship of the letter, especially considering how the author remarks, "I'll give up the hateful word *idea*" to court some consensus with Browne (PB 381). Luce is ultimately won over, however, by the personal tone of the letter, which he says proves that the letter is Berkeley's response to Browne (PB 383). This, of course, ignores how Browne directs his remarks against Berkeley "and others of his strain" (DA 384), among whom Jackson could have considered himself one.

No doubt, the author of the letter to Browne shares some of Berkeley's views regarding (1) how divine and human attributes differ in degree, not in kind, and (2) how we know God, impulse, power, and wisdom only in terms of effects. And perhaps this convergence of views might invite closer scrutiny of Jackson's works. But to say Berkeley shares some of Jackson's views is hardly a basis for concluding that he is the author of this letter, especially when there is evidence to the contrary.

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SUMMARY

Berkeley argues that claims about divine predication (e.g., God is wise or exists) should be understood literally rather than analogically, because like all spirits (i.e., causes), God is intelligible only in terms of the extent of his effects. By focusing on the harmony and order of nature, Berkeley thus unites his view of God with his doctrines of mind, force, grace, and power, and avoids challenges to religious claims that are raised by appeals to analogy. The essay concludes by showing how a letter, supposedly by Berkeley, to Peter Browne ("discovered" in 1969 by Berman and Pittion) is, in fact, by John Jackson (1686–1763), controversial theologian and friend of Samuel Clarke.

SOMMAIRE

Berkeley soutient que les allégations sur la prédication divine (par exemple, Dieu est sage ou Dieu existe) doivent être comprises littéralement plutôt que par analogie, parce que, comme tous les esprits (c'est-à-dire les causes), Dieu n'est intelligible qu'en fonction de l'étendue de ses effets. En se concentrant sur l'harmonie et l'ordre de la nature, Berkeley réconcilie ainsi sa conception de Dieu avec ses doctrines concernant l'esprit, la force, la grâce et la puissance, et évite les enjeux propres aux revendications religieuses qui découlent du recours à l'analogie. L'article se conclut en montrant comment une lettre attribuée à Berkeley et adressée à Peter Browne («découverte» en 1969 par Berman et Pittion) doit en fait être attribuée à John Jackson (1686-1763), un théologien controversé et ami de Samuel Clarke.