Berkeley, God and the Succession of Ideas

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Abstract

Our thesis asks the question, for Berkeley does there exist a succession of ideas in the mind of God? Presented are five chapters. First, we consider Berkeley's definition(s) of the term, *God.* We contend that two distinct and opposing definitions of God emerge. Second, in the context of both definitions of God we assess Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and his definition of the term, *notion.* By way of this analysis we argue that Berkeley himself maintains that only one of his two definitions of God is comprehensible and applicable to his metaphysics. Third, we turn to Berkeley's definition(s) of the term *idea* as interpreted through the one comprehensible definition of God that Berkeley posits. The distinction that Berkeley makes between archetypal and ectypal ideas will be considered in this light. Fourth, in relation to our analyses of God, notions and ideas, we consider Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect with respect to action, or the agency of finite spirits, humans. And fifth, we discuss the interpretations of various commentators with respect to the topics and questions that arise throughout the course of our investigation. Finally, we offer concluding remarks in answer to our original question. Does there exist for Berkeley a succession of ideas in the mind of God?

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Preamble

George Berkeley in his *Early Notebooks* poses to himself the abbreviated question, "Whether succession of ideas in the divine intellect?"[1] He rephrases, "...whether if succession of ideas in the Eternal Mind..."[2] We see that the young thinker is trying to understand God. He is mulling over in his mind how the term *God* is to be defined. Berkeley is at this time in his early twenties, a student at Trinity College in Dublin with the ambition of becoming a cleric. He will eventually achieve the title, Bishop of Cloyne. Imagine Berkeley sitting in his little room, studying by candlelight, jotting down notes as he ponders the immensity of God. He stares through a hazy window into a misty Irish night and wonders whether or not there exists a succession of ideas in His mind. At this time Berkeley considers a succession of ideas in the mind of God to be a possibility, but he is not sure. He tries to understand, or to conceive of such a God. But in his mind he neither confirms nor denies the proposition. For he also tries to understand, or to comprehend a God in whose mind there does not exist a succession of ideas. No final philosophical opinion has been determined. For student Berkeley is yet in the process of developing his great system of

1 Also referred to as *Commonplace Book*, or *Philosophical Commentaries* (published 1871), Notebook B, entry 3. Everyman edition of Berkeley's writings titled *Philosophical Works Including the Works on Vision*, edited by Michael R. Ayers, 1975. The *Early Notebooks* are dated 1705. All further references to Berkeley's writings will be from the Everyman edition. In *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (published 1710) Berkeley numbers his paragraphs. References will be to the *Principles*. Pagination followed in *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (published 1713) is the Luce & Jessop standardization. References will be to the *Dialogues*. Berkeley also numbers his paragraphs in *The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained* (published 1733). All *italics* are Berkeley's unless otherwise noted. All uses of [square brackets] are our own.

2 *Early Notebooks*, Notebook B, entry 92.

immaterialist metaphysics, and he is uncertain as to how God is to be defined, conceived, comprehended or understood.

It is perhaps curious that even in his mature published works of metaphysics Berkeley does not offer a simple, direct or explicit response to his own question. Is it possible that Berkeley had yet to establish a final opinion with respect to his definition of God? Or might he simply have decided, for whatever motivation, not to explain his definition of God in so many words? We cannot be certain. But perhaps an answer to Berkeley's original question can be inferred. If we consider the nature of the question itself it is apparent that there can be three possible responses. Either it *is* the case that there exists a succession of ideas in the mind of God, it *is not* the case, or it *both* is and is not the case in some manner of speaking, which manner of speaking will require explanation. Through an analysis of Berkeley's principal philosophical works we propose to search for an implicit answer to his own question. We shall ask, for Berkeley does there exist a succession of ideas in the mind of God?

Before we begin, a few words on the subject of interpreting Berkeley's *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* will be required. In these conversations the character of Philonous represents Berkeley himself while the character of Hylas represents all possible opponents to Berkeley, frequently though not necessarily always either John Locke, or the Scholastics. Philonous explains to Hylas Berkeley's system of philosophy, and the opinions expressed by Philonous are those of Berkeley. There are many times though where Hylas expresses the opinion of Berkeley while Philonous simply agrees, or leads the conversation along. At other times Hylas expresses views that Philonous does not agree with, though he may or may not explicitly disagree. Thus, caution will always be required, and a full awareness of context will always be very important when interpreting the *Dialogues*. Special care is required when

philosophical explanations are spoken by Hylas rather than by Philonous.

Our method shall be as follows. Presented will be five chapters. Four will involve our own consideration and analysis of the system of metaphysics that Berkeley propounds. One will discuss various commentators found to be relevant to our discussion. First, we shall consider Berkeley's definition(s) of the term, *God.* And we will contend that two distinct and opposing definitions of God are suggested. Second, in the context of both definitions of God we will assess Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and his definition of the term, *notion.* By way of this analysis we shall argue that Berkeley maintains that only one of his two definitions of God is conceivable or comprehensible and therefore applicable to his metaphysics. Third, we will turn to Berkeley's definition(s) of the term *idea* as interpreted through the one conceivable and comprehensible definition of God that Berkeley does posit. The distinction that Berkeley makes between archetypal and ectypal ideas will be discussed and interpreted in this light. Fourth, in relation to our analyses of God, notions and ideas, we shall consider Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect. We will do so with respect to both *Natural* events and with respect to *action*, or the agency of finite spirits, humans. And fifth, we will discuss the interpretations of various commentators on topics and questions that arise throughout the course of our investigation. This will serve to elaborate our own position with respect to the system of metaphysics that Berkeley offers. Finally, we shall turn to concluding remarks addressed to our original question. For Berkeley, does there exist a succession of ideas in the mind of God?

Chapter One:
Definition(s) of the Term *God*

I: The Unchanging God

Berkeley asks whether or not there exists a succession of ideas in the mind of God. Before answering we must begin by defining our terms. We shall first ask how Berkeley defines the term, *God*. Later we will consider his definition of the term, *idea.* It will be discovered that numerous and varying references to God are to be found throughout Berkeley's works. Often they are brief and incomplete. When understood in their collective entirety these references reveal two distinct and opposing definitions of God. One definition supposes a God that changes, the other alludes to a God that does not. Thus, the two are contradictory to one another. The definition of a changing God is supposed by Berkeley when he thinks and writes as a philosopher, while the definition of an unchanging God may at best be said to be suggested for theological purposes only. Or at least, so we shall argue.

Many of the passages that Berkeley offers with respect to his definition(s) of God refer to a God that changes. A very small number of passages refer to a God that does not change. There are numerous passages that are ambiguous and that may refer to one definition of God or to the other, or perhaps even to both. And there are also passages wherein Berkeley defines God in a manner that is consistent with either definition. We shall begin with these, for they are the

simplest and the least relevant philosophically.

Berkeley at all times has the Christian God in mind. Love, mercy, forgiveness and so forth are qualities applicable to Him irrespective of context. For Berkeley God is defined as, "...infinitely wise, good and perfect..."[3] God is, "...*wise and good*..."[4] And God is also defined as an, "...*all-wise Spirit*..."[5] We observe too that Berkeley mentions often the scriptural *Pauline Doctrine*. This is derived from the words of the Apostle Paul. Berkeley writes, "...the infinite mind of God, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*."[6] Many such passages exist scattered throughout Berkeley's writings. And as noted, these descriptions may be said to apply to a God by either definition, to a God whether defined as changing or not. We turn next to what we consider to be ambiguous definitions.

It is to be observed that God is described as, "...an *omnipresent eternal Mind,* which knows and comprehends all things..."[7] Berkeley also defines God as, "an unextended incorporeal Spirit which is omniscient, omnipotent etc."[8] We see that Berkeley has deployed the all-encompassing terms *omnipresent*, *omniscient* and *omnipotent*. It will be discovered that it is quite common for Berkeley to do so. In our second chapter we shall return to these terms with considerable care and seek to fully demonstrate the manner in which they are ambiguous. Briefly, with respect to the terms *omniscient* and *omnipresent*, they may be taken or understood in two distinct and opposing senses. One sense applies to the definition of a God that changes, the other to the definition of a God that does not. And the two are mutually exclusive. The difference will depend upon the application of the qualifying term, *eternal.* Is God defined as

3 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 146.
4 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 107.
5 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 151.
6 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 236. In the *Bible* the Pauline Doctrine is found at Acts 17:28.
7 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 231.
8 *Early Notebooks*, Notebook A, entry 838.

eternal in the sense that He always exists outside of time and therefore never changes, or is God defined as eternal in the sense that He always exists inside of time and therefore always changes? This is in fact our fundamental question. Does God never change or does He always change? Or perhaps, does God both never change and always change in some manner of speaking, which manner of speaking will require an explanation that can be understood? We will discover that a different analysis applies to the term *omnipotent.* Let us now turn to the definition of an unchanging God.

Berkeley, it is to be noted, places the words in the mouth of Hylas and not Philonous when he writes in support of God being unchanging that, "...all change argues imperfection."[9] In the opinion of Hylas, it would be considered an "imperfection" in God if He were to "change". But Berkeley offers his readers no explanation as to why this is the case. No argument to the effect that a changing God must be considered as imperfect is presented anywhere in his principal works. The definition therefore appears to be a purely theological utterance put forth by Hylas. It is based solely upon faith. Berkeley however, as we are about to observe, does present arguments and metaphysical explanations in support of a God that by definition changes. We turn now to these.

II: The Changing God

We have suggested that Berkeley speaks of a God that by definition changes, a God that by definition always changes. And further, though this is a definition of God that Berkeley may appear to reject for theological reasons, he nonetheless supports this definition by way of philosophical argumentation. Typically the argument is expressed as follows:

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9 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254. The context of this passage is very important to our interpretation of Berkeley and we will return to it later in this chapter and consider it in much greater detail.

> It is evident that the things I perceive are my own ideas, and that no idea can exist unless it be in a mind. Nor is it less plain that these ideas or things by me perceived, either themselves or their archetypes, exist independently of my mind, since I know myself not to be their author, it being out of my power to determine at pleasure, what particular ideas I shall be affected with upon opening my eyes or ears. They must therefore exist in some other mind, whose will it is they should be exhibited to me.[10]

For Berkeley, we do not create our own ideas of sense, therefore we are entitled to posit the existence of a being capable of creating them for us, and this being is God. We must ask ourselves whether an unchanging God could for Berkeley freely choose to exercise the "power" of His "will" to "author" our ideas.

Here is another example of the same argument:

> We perceive a continual succession of ideas, some are anew excited, others are changed or totally disappear. There is therefore some cause of these ideas wherein they depend, and which produces and changes them. That this cause cannot be any quality or idea or combination of ideas, is clear from the preceding section. It must therefore be a substance; but it has been shewn that there is no corporeal or material substance: it remains therefore that the cause of ideas is an incorporeal active substance or spirit.[11]

We see that in order to explain the fact that we experience ideas of sense, Berkeley posits "an incorporeal active substance or spirit". He also suggests that the "continual succession of ideas" that we perceive, some of which are "anew excited" while "others are changed or totally disappear" are all *produced* and *changed* by the "active substance" that is God. We must ask ourselves whether an unchanging God could for Berkeley be capable of such impressive metaphysical accomplishments.

There exists a large number of other passages composed by Berkeley wherein God is defined as being *active*. In the *Dialogues* Hylas asks, "...is not

10 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 214.
11 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 26.

God an agent, a being purely active?" Philonous responds, "I acknowledge it."[12] Thus, we observe that God is defined as being "purely active". Philonous also asks, "Is it [God] not also active?" Hylas responds, "Without doubt: Otherwise, how could we attribute powers to it [God]?"[13] Philonous does not disagree, indicating that Hylas has expressed Berkeley's position. We cannot attribute "powers" to an inactive God. Berkeley also states of any Spirit, "A Spirit is one simple, undivided, active being..."[14] We see again that God is defined as being "active". Berkeley adds that God, "...is an impassive, indivisible, purely active being."[15] We observe once more that God is defined not only as being active, but that He is defined as being "purely" or only active. Further, God is not passive, for He is "impassive". God is *activity* itself.

Finally, there exists also a number of passages wherein Berkeley defines God as being a *principle.* He writes that God is, "...that active principle..."[16] Thus, God is to be understood both as being active and as being a "principle". God is a principle that is active, He is an active principle. And Berkeley also explains that *any* spirit, whether finite or infinite, is an, "...active principle of motion and change of ideas."[17] Importantly, we observe for a second time Berkeley defining both God and finite spirits with the same terms. Let us therefore consider this passage and definition carefully.

Berkeley explains that *all* spirits, not only God but finite spirits too, are to be defined as an *active principle of motion and change of ideas*. What is it about God and about finite spirits that is the same in the context of this definition? How do finite spirits and God share in their definitions insofar as

12 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 231.
13 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 239.
14 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.
15 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 213. We shall return to the suggestion that God is *impassive* in our Concluding Remarks and contend that this aspect of Berkeley's definition of God is problematic.
16 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 66.
17 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.

they are defined as active principles of motion and change of ideas? Finite spirits of course, *change*. And they do so in two ways. Finite spirits change both insofar as they passively perceive (motion and change of) ideas (of sense), and insofar as they are capable of actively causing (motion and change of) ideas (of imagination). Finite spirits perceive the changes that take place in themselves, while some of these changes they themselves cause. Ideas of both sense and imagination in the minds of finite spirits change permanently, they are always fleeting. For Berkeley, it may be the case that finite spirits are said to be active principles of motion and change of ideas because they exist as beings that not only passively perceive ideas, but as beings that are also capable of themselves *actively* producing changes of ideas. Berkeley often asks his readers to look inward upon themselves in order to obtain a greater understanding of God.[18] It is possible to suggest that what is the same about finite spirits and God in the context of the definition in question is the proposition that both God and finite spirits, because they exist as active principles of motion and change of ideas, themselves *change* insofar as they perceive the changes of ideas taking place in/as themselves that they themselves instigate, or cause. What else might Berkeley mean? Would Berkeley define God as an active principle of motion and *change* of ideas, if He were unchanging? We do not believe so. What *does* Berkeley contend to be the same with respect to both finite spirits and God by the description, an active principle of motion and change of ideas, if not the proposition that God changes, as finite spirits do? Perhaps this is the better question.

Let us now pose another question. Might there be a difference between an *active* and a "static" principle of motion and change of ideas? Our question is

18 Berkeley asks his readers to compare themselves to God when seeking to understand Him. We suspect that we place more trust in this request of the readers than most readers do when interpreting Berkeley. We shall have occasion to cite passages wherein Berkeley makes this specific plea to his readers later in our thesis.

perhaps somewhat concocted, but one possible answer is this. Finite spirits are defined as *active* principles of motion and change of ideas, rather than as static principles of motion and change of ideas, because they *instigate* change. If so, because God and finite spirits share in this same definition, it may be the case that the infinite active principle that is God is not static and unchanging, but rather active and changing, just as finite spirits are. For Berkeley, one might argue that the active principle (not the static principle) that is God, changes insofar as He instigates change. God must Himself be defined as changing, if He is said to be causing change Himself.

Now, it may be argued that Spinoza, whom Berkeley considers to be an atheist[19], and a number of other thinkers, including certain Scholastics, the "Schoolmen" whom Berkeley at times scoffs at, ridicules and rejects[20], define God as being active *and* unchanging. Thus, it might be suggested that Spinoza and the Schoolmen define God as being a *static* rather than as being an active principle insofar as God Himself never changes, but instead eternally sustains existence in one colossal unchanging extemporal act(ivity). Does Berkeley agree with "those great masters of abstraction" whom he mocks, on such an all-important question as their definitions of God, and himself define God in the same manner as they do? Does Berkeley define God in the same manner as Spinoza, whom he considers to be an atheist? We do not believe so. Berkeley's definition of God *must* be different from that of those illustrious Schoolmen, and it *must* be different from that of Spinoza. In fact, Berkeley will soon explain

19 We shall return to this with text shortly, and later as well.

20 In the *Principles*, Introduction, paragraph 17. Berkeley writes, "It were an endless, as well as an useless thing, to trace the Schoolmen, those great masters of abstraction, through all the manifold inextricable labyrinths of error and dispute, which their doctrine of abstract natures and notions seems to have led them into." Notice Berkeley's deployment of the words *abstract natures and notions*. We shall argue that for Berkeley, because we can arrive at no abstract notion (there are no such things for Berkeley) of an unchanging God by abstracting from our notion of a God that does change, we cannot suppose an unchanging God to exist. The terminology is meaningless jargon, mere empty sounds.

to us that we cannot conceive or comprehend a God by such a definition as that of the Schoolmen or that of Spinoza, within the context of his own system of metaphysics.

Berkeley wants words to be chosen, defined and understood as carefully as is reasonably possible[21]. Our belief is that Berkeley will answer *no* to the question of whether or not God is active and unchanging when we are speaking of the *substance* of God, and *yes* only when we are speaking of His *definition.* We are aware of the philosophical expression, "the only thing permanent is change". With respect to the purely active principle that is the God of Berkeley, one might suggest that He is unchanging in the sense that He is always a substance of pure activity, or always a purely active principle. Or, the fact that God is always a substance of pure activity, or always a purely active principle, does never change. But this is not to suggest that God Himself as *substance* never changes, it is rather to suggest that God Himself as substance is always changing. It is only the definition of God (in this case as pure activity, or as an active principle) that does not change. Otherwise, Berkeley would be defining God in the same manner as do Spinoza and the Schoolmen. For Berkeley, the fact that God exists as an active as opposed to a static principle of motion and change of ideas never changes. But there is no other sense in which God is unchanging. For God is defined by Berkeley as an active principle as opposed to a static principle of motion and change of ideas. The contention that God for Berkeley is active and unchanging except in the purely definitional sense, appears therefore to misunderstand the manner in which Berkeley defines the term *substance.* There is nothing static in the universe of George Berkeley. All

21 The subject of Berkeley's "Philosophy of Language" is vast, and certainly relevant to our present thesis, though beyond its current scope. Many passages in Berkeley anticipate logical positivistic thinking. Our own reading of Berkeley involves looking for precise definitions of technical terms that can be defined and deployed consistently, or made to fit unequivocally- terms such as *God*, *finite spirit*, *idea* and in particular the term, *notion*. We argue that this is possible only if philosophy and theology are clearly distinguished in Berkeley's thought.

is flux. The opposite is arguably the case for Spinoza, and for the Schoolmen, who do define God as active and unchanging.

We shall now assess a number of other texts addressing philosophical questions that serve to support our contention that the God of Berkeley must be understood as changing. We have observed that Philonous states, "Those things which you say are present to God, without doubt He perceives."[22] And Hylas responds, "Certainly; otherwise they could not be to Him an occasion of acting."[23] Philonous does not disagree, indicating that Hylas has expressed Berkeley's position. Thus, Berkeley is committed to the proposition that because finite spirits freely choose to change by exercising their powers of imagination and will, and because God "perceives" the changes that finite spirits produce in themselves, He Himself is *changing* insofar as the contents of His perceptions change. And further, Berkeley is committed to the proposition that God changes insofar as each volitional change created freely in itself by a finite spirit represents for Him "an occasion of acting". The God of Berkeley acts upon specific temporal occasions, some of which occasions exist as self-induced changes in finite spirits that He Himself perceives. If this were not the case then God could not be defined as omniscient in any sense, for He would not perceive the occasions upon which He is required to place ideas of sense into the minds of finite spirits in accordance with the *Laws of Nature* that He establishes, and would thereby be reduced to the status of a mechanism, or blind agent. But Berkeley writes of God that, "He is no blind agent..."[24] If God "is no blind agent" then He sees or is experiencing the changes that finite spirits produce in themselves, and is therefore Himself changing. God perceives our changing volitions, He hears our changing prayers, and then and

22 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 220.
23 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 220.
24 *Early Notebooks*, Notebook A, Entry 812.

only then does He, or could He possibly, act in response to and upon those specific temporal occasions. Therefore, the God of Berkeley changes in time, He is not both active and unchanging. God is not Pavarotti holding the same note from all eternity.

Berkeley also writes, "If therefore it were possible for bodies to exist without the mind, yet to hold they do so, must needs be a very precarious opinion; since it is to suppose, without any reason at all, that God has created innumerable beings that are entirely useless, and serve to no manner of purpose."[25] Berkeley further observes with respect to the Schoolmen, "...that they should suppose an innumerable multitude of created beings, which they acknowledge are not capable of producing any one effect in Nature, and which therefore are made to no manner of purpose, since God might have done everything as well without them... must yet be a very unaccountable and extravagant supposition."[26] This argument is directed specifically against the existence of material objects, but the same principle will apply to the supposition of eternally sustained ideas. If God were to eternally sustain in His own mind all fleeting ideas of sense that He places into the minds of finite spirits upon the relevant temporal occasions, then these eternally sustained ideas would be "entirely useless, and serve to no manner of purpose" except when required as fleeting ideas to be presented to the minds of those finite spirits. The God of Berkeley would not waste His energy on such "entirely useless" pursuits that would "serve to no manner of purpose". The ideas that God places into the minds of finite spirits are only required as fleeting upon the relevant temporal occasions. It would therefore be superfluous, inefficient and unnecessary for God to sustain those ideas from eternity. The God of Berkeley does not act in vain, therefore He changes.

25 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 19.
26 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 53.

Another argument is this. If God were to eternally sustain all ideas of sense that finite spirits experience fleetingly, then the possibility of human freedom would become problematic, for the entirety of our lives would exist from eternity in God as unchanging. We observe however that Berkeley writes, "That atheistical principles have taken deeper root, and are farther spread than most people are apt to imagine, will be plain to whoever considers that pantheism, materialism, fatalism, are nothing but atheism a little disguised..."[27] Fatalism is precisely the result if our lives cannot be changed or affected by free decisions, and this will be the case if our entire lives already exist in God from eternity waiting to be played out from our perspectives but already and always having been eternally played out from the perspective of God. This is precisely the philosophical opinion of the atheist Spinoza. But Berkeley is no atheist, therefore he is no fatalist, therefore his God changes. Further to this, if God is defined as unchanging, then He can have no knowledge of what points in their lives any of His created finite spirits are, for if He did have such knowledge then He would by definition be changing insofar as He would be perceiving the changes that are taking place in those finite spirits. Thus God, if defined as unchanging, would not be omniscient in any sense, He would be worse than both deaf and blind. He, or more properly expressed, *It*, would simply be an inert mechanism.

Berkeley we contend is of the opinion that pantheism, or Spinozism, is the result of a God defined as both active and yet unchanging[28]. Berkeley specifically labels Spinoza, whose God is unchanging and active in the sense that He eternally sustains everything[29], as an atheist. In the *Dialogues* Philonous refers to, "...those wild imaginations of Vanini, Hobbes and Spinoza;

27 *The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*, paragraph 6.
28 We shall return to this subject in our final chapter when considering Hegel's analysis of Berkeley.
29 We shall also return to this.

in a word the whole system of atheism..."[30] Based upon all of these texts and arguments it seems clear that the God of Berkeley should not be interpreted as being both active and unchanging. Rather, the God of Berkeley is in a state of perpetual change. The only thing permanent in the God of Berkeley *is* change. The substance of God is for Berkeley, *Time* itself.

Thus, Berkeley presents the definition of a God that can change, does change, must change and can only change. Now, we have also been witness to Berkeley, by way of Hylas, preaching the existence of a "perfect" unchanging God. And we have pointed out that no philosophical argument is provided in support of such a proposition. Nonetheless, we see that Berkeley places into his discussion two distinct definitions of the term, *God*. And further, we observe that the definitions are incompatible. For Berkeley, God cannot properly be defined as both active and unchanging. For He cannot be defined as active definitionally insofar as His definition never changes, nor can He be defined as unchanging substantially insofar as He is an active (not a static) principle or substance that is permanently in a process of change. Therefore, the God of Berkeley cannot be defined as both active and unchanging in any one sense, or in any one unequivocal manner of speaking. God permanently changes substantially, though in a trite sense He never changes definitionally. We have also argued that the God of Berkeley cannot be both active and unchanging insofar as He changes when He perceives the changing thoughts and volitions of finite spirits, insofar as He acts upon the occasions of those volitions, insofar as He cannot be presumed to create in vain, and insofar as finite spirits are free and responsible for their actions rather than it being the case that their lives are determined fatalistically in the Spinozistic/pantheistic sense wherein from the perspective of God their lives are eternally unchanging and always fully played

30 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 213. Lucilio Vanini (1585-1619) was an Italian "free-thinker" executed for atheism and blasphemy in France.

out before they even begin. Thus, if God does not perceive change and thereby change Himself, then finite spirits possess knowledge that God Himself does not. A God by this definition is not omniscient, but the changing God of Berkeley most certainly is.

III: Berkeley Steps into the Confessional

What does Berkeley himself have to say with respect to this apparent conflict between a changing and an unchanging God? It will be found that his response is to plead guilty as charged and to fully admit to his sins. Consider the words of Hylas from the *Dialogues.* We have already cited the last portion of this passage:

> Well, but as to this decree of God's, for making things perceptible: what say you, Philonous, is it not plain, God did either execute that decree from all eternity, or at some certain time begin to will what he had not actually willed before, but only designed to will. If the former, then there could be no Creation or beginning of existence in finite things. If the latter, then we acknowledge something new to befall the Deity; which implies a sort of change: and all change argues imperfection.[31]

This will require unpacking. And because the passage is spoken by Hylas and not Philonous, we must be especially careful when interpreting it. For the words will express the opinions of Berkeley only to the extent that Philonous agrees with them. And it will be discovered that Philonous has both agreements and disagreements with the opinions and suggestions that Hylas introduces into the conversation.

Hylas is speculating upon a definition of the term *God* and suggests first something to the following effect. With respect to finite things, in other words with respect to ideas of sense that God creates and places into the minds of

31 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254. We shall return to this passage in our Concluding Remarks and argue further that the passage is to be interpreted as an either/or.

finite spirits, God either creates them from all eternity or He creates them at certain points in time. Hylas also suggests that by the latter definition such a God has nonetheless planned, or designed "from all eternity" everything that He will eventually create. Hylas continues by pointing out that by the former definition there is no "Creation" in the sense of things beginning, while by the latter definition God has changed and is therefore to be considered as imperfect. We see then that Hylas, who represents purported Christians such as John Locke and the Scholastics, poses very interesting questions and problems that will require from Philonous, in other words from Berkeley, proper answers and explanations.

Let us recapitulate. If God is said to create our ideas of sense from all eternity then there cannot be said to have been an act of creation or a beginning to the existence of those ideas. However, if God creates ideas of sense and places them into the minds of finite spirits "at some certain time" then it must be admitted that God has changed insofar as to create a succession of ideas in time is to change. And if God changes He is deemed to be imperfect. Hylas also suggests that a changing God would nonetheless know from eternity all that He will eventually create. Thus, two questions have been raised. First, if God does change does He know from eternity what changes He will eventually make? And second, does God change or does He not?

Philonous, or shall we say Berkeley, begins his responses, "Is it not evident, this objection concludes equally against a Creation in any sense..."[32] Berkeley suggests that the contention that God cannot change or act is an objection to "any" God that creates, not only to the specific type of creating God defined by Hylas. The changing God of Hylas is defined as eternally knowing everything that He has "designed to will" and when He has designed

32 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254.

to will it. He is defined as extemporally omniscient. But Berkeley is suggesting when he refers to “Creation in any sense” that there is another type of changing God by definition. The other type of changing God by definition is one not extemporally omniscient. Once again, it must be observed and emphatically stressed that it is Hylas who raises the theory of creation in time by an extemporally omniscient God while it is Philonous who suggests the possibility of creation in time in *any* sense, creation in time in a different sense than the sense defined by Hylas, creation in time in the sense that God is not extemporally omniscient. This is the definition of a God that exists in time and that at least some of the time must wait for certain occasions to take place before knowing or determining what He will do next, or how He will respond. We shall contend that these occasions are brought into being by the free volitions of finite spirits. And we will turn to this in considerable detail in our fourth chapter on Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect. The definition of a changing God not extemporally omniscient would not have been intimated by Philonous as an alternative to the definition alluded to by Hylas if Berkeley did not want the possibility to be brought into the conversation.

Philonous continues, “None of which can we conceive, otherwise than as performed in time, and having a beginning.”[33] We see that Berkeley contends that we cannot “conceive” of creation except as taking place “in time”. Creation requires that things/ideas have “a beginning”. It would appear that for Berkeley no metaphysical system that places God outside of time can be conceived. For only a God that creates *in* time is conceivable to ourselves as finite spirits. This passage we will contend is extremely important. In Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge something that is not conceivable is something that cannot possibly exist. We shall return to this more extensively in our second chapter.

33 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254.

Philonous next admits with reference to the unchanging God that, "God is a being of transcendent and unlimited perfection: his nature therefore is incomprehensible to finite spirits."[34] Berkeley makes it quite clear in this passage that a perfect God, an unchanging God that does not create in time, is "incomprehensible to finite spirits". Thus, we are capable neither of conceiving nor of comprehending an unchanging God. For Berkeley, only a changing God is conceivable or comprehensible. We cannot conceive or comprehend Creation except as taking place in time.

With this in mind Philonous continues, "It is not therefore to be expected, that any man, whether *materialist* or *immaterialist*, should have exactly just notions of the Deity, his attributes, and ways of operation."[35] Berkeley contends that we cannot have "exactly just notions of the Deity". But the point is this. For Berkeley the word *notion* is an important technical term, and if something is inconceivable and incomprehensible then we can have absolutely no notion of it whatsoever and therefore cannot consider its existence to be possible. The so-called words are nothing more than empty sounds without conceptual referent. When Berkeley speaks as a philosopher, only a changing God may be said to exist because we can have a notion of no other God. The postulation of an inconceivable and incomprehensible, unchanging and therefore "perfect" God represents for Berkeley a theologically based proposition that is completely inconsistent with his own philosophical principles.

After Hylas expresses further concerns, Philonous appears somewhat flustered when he attempts to defend himself by uttering:

> What would you have! do I not acknowledge a twofold state of things, the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal? The former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God. Is not this agreeable to the common notions of

34 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254.
35 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254.

divines?[36]

The answer to both of these questions we presume is *yes*. But the problem that Berkeley has already pointed out is that "divines" aside, this is not agreeable to the "common notions" of philosophers. For as we have seen, God cannot both create in time and not change. This is a contradiction in terms and such a definition is therefore unworkable. The divines in the opinion of Berkeley, believe the impossible. For only a God that creates in time is conceivable or comprehensible to finite spirits. We can have notions of no other God. For philosophical purposes therefore, no other God may be said to exist. The unchanging God is entirely incompatible with Berkeley's immaterialist metaphysical construct. Berkeley does "acknowledge a twofold state of things" but he also makes it perfectly clear that only one of those two states is conceivable or comprehensible to finite spirits. The other is simply a tenet of divines who define God as unchanging through faith that He cannot be considered to be perfect unless He is so defined. But this is absolutely not the position of Berkeley himself.

Further to our argument Berkeley opines that:

> Whenever the course of Nature is interrupted by a miracle, men are ready to own the presence of a superior agent. But when we see things go on in the ordinary course, they do not excite in us any reflection; their order and concatenation, though it be an argument of the greatest wisdom, power, and goodness in their Creator, is yet so constant and familiar to us, that we do not think them the immediate effects of a *free spirit*: especially since inconstancy and mutability in acting, though it be an imperfection, is looked on as a mark of *freedom*.[37]

We observe that Berkeley risks being defrocked for heresy by fully confessing to his blasphemies. First, Berkeley points out that we often only recognize the

36 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254. We shall return to this passage in our Concluding Remarks and argue that it is non-committal.

37 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 57.

immediate effects of a changing God when miracles take place, and that during normal times we generally take no such notice of God. However, Berkeley believes that at all times we should recognize, or define God as immediately effecting and changing. God effects and changes all of the time, even though we sometimes only acknowledge that He does so when miracles take place. At the end of this claim Berkeley in his own italics defines God as a "*free spirit*". As already cited he then continues, "especially since inconstancy and mutability in acting, though it be an *imperfection* [our italics], is looked on as a mark of *freedom*." What are we to make of this passage? Let us attempt to rephrase. *God's capacity to change is necessary for Him if He is to be defined as a free spirit*, *though this capacity represents an imperfection.* It may be possible to argue from this passage that Berkeley is suggesting that unless God is defined as changing miracles are not possible. Miracles require inconstancy and mutability in God, though this characteristic is considered to be an imperfection. This question aside, Berkeley appears to contend that if God by definition does not change, then He *is* to be considered as imperfect, since He in fact *does* possess inconstancy and mutability in acting. Berkeley maintains that the only God we can conceive or comprehend, the only God that we can have a notion of, *is* imperfect from any theological perspective that defines Him as unchanging. But as far as Berkeley is concerned, so be it. No other God can be conceived or comprehended. Unless God is defined as imperfect from the theological perspective of Hylas, He cannot be defined as a "*free spirit*" that is capable of change from any possible metaphysical perspective. The unchanging God cannot be said to possess freedom. But the changing God is free, He is a free spirit. And unfortunately for the divines for whom Hylas speaks, He must therefore be considered as imperfect from the inconceivable, incomprehensible theological perspective that defines Him as unchanging.

Why does Berkeley present two definitions of God? Why does Philonous speak of a twofold state of things, one conceivable and comprehensible, and one inconceivable and incomprehensible, in his conversation with Hylas? The answer to these questions is apparent. Berkeley wants to carefully[38] argue in favour of a changing God and against those who would contend that God is unchanging. He suggests that a God that never changes is both inconceivable and incomprehensible while a God that always changes is both conceivable and comprehensible. As a result of this, when interpreting Berkeley's metaphysical system our methodology demands that the changing God, the only God that can be conceived or comprehended, must be supposed. Any method that attempts to interpret Berkeley through the supposition of what he himself considers to be an inconceivable and incomprehensible God can be expected to lead only to philosophical muddles and quandaries beyond resolution, beyond reason, and beyond our capacity to understand. In order to make all of this more evident, we shall now turn to Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge, and to a more careful analysis of the technical term *notion* as it appears throughout his system of thought.

38 We shall return to this question in considerable detail in our Concluding Remarks.

Chapter Two:
Theory of Knowledge

I: Definition of the Term *Notion*

In our first chapter we assessed Berkeley's definition(s) of the term *God* and argued that two opposing definitions emerge. Further, we observed that one of the two definitions alludes to an unchanging God that is in the words of Philonous both inconceivable and incomprehensible. It was also noted that for Berkeley we cannot have a notion of an unchanging God, though we can have a notion of a God that changes. We then suggested that based upon Berkeley's definition of the term *notion*, an unchanging God is to be considered as both non-existent and impossible. It is only the conceivable, comprehensible and changing God that may be said to exist, at least for philosophical purposes. In this our second chapter we shall undertake an extensive analysis of Berkeley's definition of the term *notion*. But before we begin this assignment, we ought first consider more completely the terminology, *finite spirit*. For it is within finite spirits that notions take place and are to be found.

We as finite spirits are similar to God in many respects, and as we know, Berkeley often invites his readers to reflect upon their own natures in order to arrive at a better understanding of the nature of God. In defining finite spirits Berkeley informs us that, "...there is something which knows or perceives... and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering... this active

being is what I call *mind*, *spirit*, *soul* or *myself*."[39] Further to this Berkeley writes, "A spirit is one simple, undivided, active being; as it perceives ideas it is called the *understanding*, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called the *will*."[40] We see that Berkeley defines a finite spirit as a "*mind*", a "*spirit*", a "*soul*" or a "*self*" that is capable of "willing", "imagining" and "remembering". Berkeley further suggests that finite spirits are "simple", "undivided", "active", and that they are in possession of both an "*understanding*" and a "*will*". Berkeley also informs us that finite spirits perceive ideas in their *understanding* while they produce and operate about them in their *will*. We shall ask the following questions. What understanding can we as finite spirits have of God? Or, what understanding of God are we as finite spirits capable of achieving? And, what is the nature of this understanding?

First a distinction must be made. The term *notion* for Berkeley may be considered from two different perspectives. One is ontological while the other is epistemological. If we are asking about the ontological status of notions then we are asking one question, but if we are inquiring into the epistemological status of notions then we are asking another question entirely. The first deals with what a notion *is*, the second with what a notion *contains*. With respect to the ontological status of notions, or what a notion is, there may be some who would suggest that Berkeley is not completely clear, though we do not place ourselves in that number. As to what notions contain, there is little to dispute.

As we noted in our first chapter, Berkeley contends that we can have a notion of a changing God that creates in time. It will be discovered that we can also have a notion of ourselves as finite spirits. However, strictly speaking we cannot frame in our minds any such ideas, nor do we perceive any such ideas

39 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 2.
40 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.

through our senses. Berkeley does state that we cannot have a notion at all, "...where there is not so much as the most inadequate or faint idea pretended to..."[41] But the term *idea* here must be understood in some distinct sense other than its normal technical meaning in Berkeley's system of metaphysics. Notions are not ideas by the same definition that visions and sounds are. We shall return to this question momentarily. Berkeley also suggests, "...that to have an idea which shall be like that active principle of motion and change of ideas, is absolutely impossible."[42] But Berkeley does contend that, "...we have some notion of soul, spirit, and the operations of the mind, such as willing, loving, hating, in as much as we know or understand the meaning of those words."[43] Notions we observe, involve our capacity to "understand". Further according to Berkeley, "We may be said to have some knowledge or notion of our own minds... whereof in a strict sense we have not ideas..."[44] Berkeley also explains, "We may not I think strictly be said to have an idea of an active being, or of an action, although we may be said to have a notion of them. I have some knowledge or notion of my mind, and its acts about ideas, inasmuch as I know or understand what is meant by those words..."[45] All of this, it must be admitted, is arguably somewhat vague.

Concerning what a notion contains, we have suggested that there is little to dispute. In other words with respect to the epistemological status of notions, Berkeley as we shall soon observe, is easily understood. Something may be said to exist if we can have a notion of it. But if we can have no notion of something, then not only may it not be said to exist, at least as a logical possibility, but in fact the presumed words themselves are meaningless insofar

41 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 223.
42 *Principles*, paragraph 27.
43 *Principles*, paragraph 27.
44 *Principles*, paragraph 89.
45 *Principles*, paragraph 142.

as they are without a conceptual referent. We quite literally do not know what we are talking about when enunciating sounds that do not occasion an understanding. Recall that finite spirits can have a notion of a God that changes, but that they cannot have a notion of a God that is unchanging. The changing God is for ourselves as finite spirits both conceivable and comprehensible, He is conceptualizable in some sense. In a word His existence is understandable, at least logically. Or, we can have a notion of Him in our understanding. But the unchanging God cannot be understood, we cannot have a notion of Him in our understanding, He is for Berkeley both inconceivable and incomprehensible. His definition contains a contradiction insofar as it attempts to define Him as unchanging in a substantial as opposed to in a purely definitional sense. Insofar as Berkeley's philosophical principles are concerned, the unchanging God is by definition impossible.

Now, it is certainly the case that Berkeley is obliged first to demonstrate the ontological status of notions if he hopes to contend that they possess any true epistemological value or weight. In answer to this requirement Berkeley writes, "...ideas, sensations, notions, which are imprinted on our minds, either by sense or reflexion..."[46] We see that notions are "imprinted" on our minds by "reflexion". Notions are not outwardly sensed, in other words they are not sensed through our five outward senses. Notions are not ideas in this sense, but they may be considered to be ideas in a distinct sense. And that is, inwardly as opposed to outwardly. By willing to contrast and compare ideas in our imagination through the use of memory we occasion the imprinting on our minds of notions. And thus, it may be possible to suggest that for Berkeley notions are ideas internally sensed. When the mind deploys its will to contrast and compare ideas in its imagination through the use of memory, it may be said

46 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 74.

to internally sense or to occasion the imprinting upon itself of notions. And these imprintings, or notions, which may also be defined as internally sensed ideas, take place or exist in the understanding. Notions are understood, or perhaps more accurately put, notions are *understandings*. Notions exist neither in the will nor in the imagination, rather they take place in the understanding as a result of the will imagining in a manner sufficient to occasion them.

Referring to our knowledge of God, Berkeley states, "I perceive Him not by sense, yet I have a notion of Him, or know Him by reflexion and reasoning."[47] In other words, "reflexion and reasoning" may occasion a notion of God to be imprinted on our minds, or to be internally sensed, or understood. Berkeley also writes, "...I would fain to know how anything can be present to us, which is neither perceivable by sense nor reflexion..."[48] Thus, notions are perceived as a result of "reflexion", they are internally sensed as a result of reflexion. Berkeley will argue that reason demands certain explanations, and will infer the existence of God on the basis of necessary explanatory power, and verify his inference by asking if we can have such a notion, "...in as much as we know or understand the meaning of these words."[49] As we have observed, Berkeley contends that because we do not create our own ideas of sense we require another explanation for their existence in our minds, and that explanation is God. We can have a notion of God by a certain definition for Berkeley, because there are specific observations for which reason demands God as an explanation, and there is a referent, namely God, that we as finite spirits do in some manner of speaking understand, conceive or comprehend. Added to the use of transcendental reason, this understanding involves meditating or reflecting upon our own limited powers as finite spirits and then

47 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 232.
48 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 58.
49 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.

magnifying these powers as best we can in order to approach an understanding of the tremendous power that God must possess. In this manner too is our notion of God occasioned, induced, imprinted, perceived, or internally sensed. To this effect Berkeley writes, "...the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections..."[50] We "obtain", perceive, or internally sense, a notion of God by reflecting upon ourselves.

With our analysis thus far we have learned something of Berkeley's definition of the term, *notion.* We have commenced to examining the definition of the term as it relates to God, and this of course is our principal question, of which considerably more will be said. And our analysis to this point has in particular considered notions with respect to their ontological status, in other words with respect to what they are. We shall turn next to passages wherein the term *notion* is deployed in a variety of contexts referring to what a notion contains rather than to what a notion is. This we have referred to as its epistemological status.

There exists an enormous number of passages wherein the term *notion* appears to be more or less synonymous with the term *theory.* We cannot begin to cite them all, but a few examples will suffice. Philonous asks Hylas, "Do you mean the principles and theorems of sciences? But these you know are universal intellectual notions..."[51] Thus, a notion might contain, "the principles and theorems of sciences", in other words a theory. Next, Hylas in reference to Malebranche asks Philonous with respect to his own position, "...do you not think it looks very like a notion entertained by some eminent moderns, *of seeing all things in God?*"[52] Thus, a notion might contain the theory of seeing

50 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 231.
51 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 173.
52 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 213.

all things in God. Then with a twinkle in his eyes Hylas marvels, "What doubts, what hypotheses, what labyrinths of amusement, what fields of disputation, what an ocean of false learning, may be avoided by that single notion of *Immaterialism?*"[53] Or, that single metaphysical theory of immaterialism. Finally, with respect to the contention that the human soul is perishable, Berkeley writes in the *Principles*, "...this notion has been greedily embraced and cherished by the worst part of mankind..."[54] Again, we see that the terms *notion* and *theory* are deployed interchangeably. Notions may contain theories.

There are also numerous texts wherein the term *notion* is synonymous with the term *definition.* Once more, a small number of examples will be sufficient. Philonous explains that, "In reading a book, what I immediately perceive are the letters, but mediately, or by means of these, are suggested to my mind the notions of God, virtue, truth, &c."[55] Thus, a notion may contain a definition, in fact a definition of God. In another passage Philonous asks Hylas with respect to material substance, "But what is there positive in your abstracted notion of its existence?"[56] In other words, "abstracted" definition. Hylas responds, "...I do not find I have any positive notion or meaning at all... I know not what is meant by its *existence*, or how it exists..."[57] Hylas concedes that if we have no notion, or understandable definition of matter, then we cannot know what is "meant by its *existence*". A parallel analysis we contend applies to what can be meant by the term *God* or by His existence, for Hylas presents no legitimate reason to give God a special exemption from the standard that applies to matter. Philonous reiterates, "When therefore you speak of the existence of Matter, you have not any notion in your mind?"[58] In other words,

53 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 259.
54 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 141.
55 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 174.
56 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 222.
57 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 222.
58 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 222.

no definition of matter exists in the mind of Hylas. Indeed Hylas admits, "None at all."[59] Thus, we see that a notion may contain a definition, but only a definition that is understandable, conceivable or comprehensible.

Deploying the term *notion* slightly differently, Philonous states, "...if we suppose a man born blind was on a sudden made to see, he... would not then... have any notion of distance annexed to the things he saw..."[60] Here the term *notion* might be replaced by a variety of others such as *perception*, *awareness*, *understanding*, or *sense.* We see that with respect to what notions contain Berkeley deploys the term in a variety of ways, and that context is important in determining his precise intent. Let us now turn our attention to several somewhat lengthy passages from the *Dialogues.*

Philonous argues:

> It is to me a sufficient reason not to believe the existence of anything, if I see no reason for believing it. But not to insist on reasons for believing, you will not so much as let me know what it is you would have me believe, since you say you have no manner of notion of it. After all, let me entreat you to consider whether it be like a philosopher, or even like a man of common sense, to pretend to believe you know not what, and you know not why.[61]

We observe that for Berkeley if we have no notion of something then we do not have a sufficient reason to believe in it, or to "pretend" that it exists. Further, this is not only a philosophical requirement, but a requirement of "common sense". Thus, if we have no notion of an unchanging God, then we have no reason to suppose that He exists. Belief in an unchanging God is to "pretend to believe you know not what, and you know not why". It is to flout common sense.

Philonous also explains:

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59 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 222.
60 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 202.
61 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 218.

> That from a cause, effect, operation, sign, or other circumstance, there may reasonably be inferred the existence of a thing not immediately perceived, and that it were absurd for any man to argue against the existence of that thing, from his having no direct and positive notion of it, I freely own. But where there is nothing of all this; where neither reason nor revelation induce us to believe the existence of a thing; where we have not even a relative notion of it; where an abstraction is made from perceiving and being perceived, from spirit and idea: lastly, where there is not so much as the most inadequate or faint idea pretended to: I will not indeed thence conclude against the reality of any notion, or existence of anything: but my inference shall be, that you mean nothing at all: that you employ words to no manner of purpose, without any design or signification whatsoever. And I leave it to you to consider how mere jargon should be treated.[62]

In the initial sentence Berkeley makes two claims. First, there are times when something "not immediately perceived" "may be reasonably inferred to exist", this being the case if there are factors such as "cause, effect" and others that lead to the inference being required as an explanation for the observation. In effect, Berkeley is maintaining the validity of what are termed *transcendental* arguments. And second, Berkeley states that it is absurd to argue against the existence of something simply because we have "no direct and positive notion of it". We see that there are defined two types, or classifications of notions, those that are direct and positive, and those that Berkeley will in the second sentence define as relative. And further, those that are defined as relative, those that are brought about by way of transcendental argument, are nonetheless sufficient grounds for supposing the existence of something. But Berkeley's position is that if we cannot have even a relative notion of something (brought about by way of transcendental argument), or if an "abstraction is made from perceiving and being perceived", or "from spirit and idea", then not only must we conclude that such a thing does not exist, but we should infer that our words

62 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 223.

are without meaning. We can have no notion of an unchanging God insofar as there is no transcendental argument that leads to such a conclusion, and further because this would involve precisely an abstraction from our notion of a changing God. Just as we cannot abstract from our particular ideas of sense to arrive at an abstract idea or notion of matter, we cannot abstract from our notion of a changing God to arrive at a notion of one not changing. Of importance is what Berkeley states next. His suggestion is that if we cannot have even a relative notion of something (by way of transcendental argument), then not only must we conclude that it does not exist, but we should state that we do not know what we are talking about when enunciating such sounds. The presumed words are in reality but meaningless "jargon", they have no referent, no concepts associated with them that can be understood. We cannot speak intelligibly of an unchanging God. The verbal sounds are without meaning, they are deployed "to no manner of purpose, without any design or signification whatsoever".

In the following passage Hylas begins to complain. He admonishes:

> You admit nevertheless that there is spiritual substance, although you have no idea of it; while you deny there can be such a thing as material substance, because you have no notion or idea of it. Is this fair dealing? To act consistently, you must either admit matter or reject spirit. What say you to this?

Philonous defends:

> I say in the first place, that I do not deny the existence of material substance, merely because I have no notion of it, but because the notion of it is inconsistent, or in other words, because it is repugnant that there should be a notion of it. Many things, for aught I know, may exist... But then those things must be possible, that is, nothing inconsistent must be included in their definition.[63]

We see that Berkeley denies the existence of matter on the grounds that any

63 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, pages 232/3.

notion of it would be “inconsistent” or “repugnant”. While our notion of spirit is neither. Therefore, we cannot properly speaking be said to have any notion of matter at all. We can have a notion only of things that may possibly be said to exist. We can have a notion only of those things that do not contain an inconsistency, in other words a logical contradiction, within their definition. The supposition of the existence of spirits contains within itself no logical contradiction and therefore we can have such a notion, but the supposition of the existence of matter contains a logical contradiction, therefore no such notion is possible and no such entity may be supposed to exist. The words are meaningless jargon without a referent. We can have a notion of a unicorn, but not of a door that is both open and closed at the same time. What conclusion is to be drawn from the contention that we can have no notion of an unchanging God? Non-existence, meaninglessness.

Finally, Philonous questions:

> But how can any idea or sensation exist in, or be produced by, anything but a mind or spirit? This indeed is inconceivable; and to assert that which is inconceivable, is to talk nonsense: is it not?[64]

In our first chapter we observed Berkeley admit to us that an unchanging God is inconceivable. We now witness Berkeley informing us that “to assert that which is inconceivable, is to talk nonsense”. Thus, as far as Berkeley is concerned to make mention of an unchanging God “...is to talk nonsense: is it not?” Certainly therefore, any attempt to interpret the metaphysics of George Berkeley through the supposition of an unchanging God would be nonsensical and in reality nothing but a complete misinterpretation of the texts.

II: Definition(s) of the Term *Eternal*

We observed in our first chapter Berkeley's uses of the all-encompassing

64 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 215.

terms, *omnipresent*, *omnipotent* and *omniscient* when defining God. And we contended that two of these terms, *omnipresent* and *omniscient*, are ambiguous insofar as they can be understood in two distinct senses. One sense suggests that God exists eternally outside of time and therefore never changes, the other sense suggests that God exists eternally inside of time and therefore always changes. Further, we suggested that the term *omnipotent* is ambiguous in a different manner. Let us now consider these distinctions more carefully in light of what we have learned with respect to Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and his definition of the term *notion.*

First, God is omnipotent. He is said to be all-powerful. There is no power but God. Or, insofar as God is One there exists one power. Now, we know that Berkeley posits the existence of finite spirits that possess a free will. And we have already observed Berkeley inform us that, "...there is something which knows or perceives... and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering..."[65] Berkeley adds, "A spirit is one simple, undivided, active being..."[66] This definition begs a question that Berkeley will be required to answer immediately. If finite spirits have a will that is capable of operating, must not this be understood as a power? Berkeley states that finite spirits have the power to frame ideas in their own imaginations, and even to act as efficient causes in the world. He writes, "...philosophers amuse themselves in vain, when they inquire for any natural efficient cause, distinct from a *mind* or *spirit."*[67] In what sense then can God be said to be omnipotent? Berkeley could answer that any power finite spirits possess they do so as a result of the Will of God, which Will could at any time rescind that power by annihilating that finite spirit. But one might simply respond by asking, is God omnipotent or is He not? If God

65 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 2.
66 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.
67 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 107.

creates and gives power to finite spirits then to that precise extent He must be understood as not omnipotent, irrespective of whether He could theoretically Will to terminate all of the various finite spirits that He has created. And this giving of power is necessary if finite spirits are to be considered as moral agents. If a finite spirit does not have the power to make its own free decisions, then it cannot be held morally responsible. But God does hold finite spirits morally responsible, therefore they do have the power of decision and moral responsibility, therefore God is not omnipotent. We see that propounding an omnipotent God may lead to difficulties, depending upon the exact definition of the term. The proposition that One power exists is a definition of God that Berkeley does not wish to maintain. For if the freedom, power and moral responsibility of finite spirits are to be acknowledged in any meaningful sense, then God cannot be understood as being all-powerful, or omnipotent in the sense of being the only power that exists. There exists powers other than the power of God, though these other powers it must be admitted were created or given by Him, and could theoretically be taken back. Therefore, there is a sense in which the God of Berkeley is omnipotent and a sense in which He is not.

Second, God is omnipresent. God is said to be everywhere, He sees all things, He is aware of or is present to all things. Now, as we have suggested, the term *omnipresent* is ambiguous and can be understood or defined in two distinct senses. First, God can be said to be present to all things or omnipresent now and always. By this definition God is present to everything *now,* and He will always be present to everything during every *now,* while He has and will always have both a past to which He is no longer present, and a future to which He is not yet present. Or, God can be said to be present to all things or omnipresent eternally in the greater sense of the term. In other words extemporally, or from outside of time. By this definition God has neither a past nor a future. He is eternal,

immediate and immutable presence to Himself. We have contended that God for Berkeley always changes. We have also noticed that Hylas, speaking strictly as a theologian, places into the discussion an unchanging God. Thus, theologically Hylas may not wish to define his perfect God as capable of changing, though philosophically Philonous realizes and fully explains that he must. Therefore, it is in the greater sense that Berkeley deploys the term *omnipresent* when Hylas is speaking as a theologian, but when Philonous is speaking as a philosopher Berkeley is deploying the term in the lesser sense. Otherwise, according to Berkeley's own words Philonous would be talking nonsense, just like Hylas is. God cannot have His cake and eat it too. For we have a contradiction in terms. An eternally omnipresent God in the greater sense, existing outside of time or extemporally, is by definition no God at all for He can be neither conceived nor comprehended. This is Philonous' precisely expressed position on the matter. Berkeley we have contended, resolves the theological difficulties of Hylas by philosophically defining the ambiguous term *omnipresent* in the more limited sense, suggesting that God is omnipresent now and always but not eternally in the greater sense, not extemporally. The greater definition may be required if God is to be defined as unchanging and therefore perfect. Yet the theory of an unchanging God, whether perfect or not, is according to Berkeley both inconceivable and incomprehensible. He cannot be understood to exist. We can have no such notion, therefore the alleged term is meaningless jargon and we should not be talking such nonsense when pretending to speak metaphysically.

Third, God is omniscient or all-knowing. God knows or is aware of all things. Now, as was the case with the term *omnipresent*, the term *omniscient* may be defined or understood in two distinct senses. And this depends upon the application of the qualifying term, *eternal.* God can be said to be omniscient now and always, in other words temporally, or God can be said to be omniscient

extemporally. By the former definition, as we suggested in our first chapter, we are committed to the proposition that God cannot know what free choices finite spirits will make, or what volitions they will create, until they make or create them. But by the latter definition, God knows exactly what is to come throughout eternity. He has somehow known from all eternity what specific and supposedly free choices finite spirits will make tomorrow, and He has from all eternity created the necessary and appropriate ideas of sense that will be required when tomorrow comes, and further He has also arranged from eternity the mechanism that will allow for the finite spirits to experience the appropriate ideas at the appropriate points in time tomorrow. But this is not the changing God that Berkeley along with Philonous posits philosophically. This is instead the inconceivable and incomprehensible, unchanging though admittedly perfect God that Hylas alludes to theologically. Philonous is propounding the former definition, that of a God omniscient now and always but not extemporally. It is Hylas who suggests the theory or possibility of a temporally omnipresent and extemporally omniscient God that knows from eternity all that He shall eventually design or will, and it is Philonous who suggests the existence of a temporally omniscient God to be a possibility with respect to a God not extemporally omnipresent. If presence and knowledge are one and the same for God, then God must be either both extemporally omnipresent and extemporally omniscient, which according to our analysis is impossible, or both temporally omnipresent and temporally omniscient, which is possible. He cannot be one of each, He cannot be temporally omnipresent and extemporally omniscient as Hylas suggests. Hence, the alternative made reference to by Philonous.

We have argued based upon Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and his definition of the term *notion*, that only a changing God may be said to exist. God may be defined as being omnipresent *in* time, but not outside of time. A

God defined as existing outside of time, a God that is unchanging, a God that is extemporally omnipresent, is both inconceivable and incomprehensible. He cannot be understood. The presumed words refer to no concept that our mind can understand and are therefore without meaning, we can have no such notion. We have further argued that the changing God of Berkeley is not extemporally omniscient. Thus, when interpreting the system of metaphysics that Berkeley advances we must do so with the temporally omnipresent and temporally omniscient God supposed. Any attempt to interpret the metaphysics of Berkeley through an inconceivable and incomprehensible God, as Berkeley himself emphatically maintains, can be expected to lead only to nonsense.

Our original question asked whether or not there exists a succession of ideas in the mind of God. We began by defining the term, *God*. We have now looked at Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and defined the term, *notion*, in order to account for the two conflicting definitions of God that Berkeley refers to. And we have determined the definition that will be applicable to any and all further analysis of Berkeley's system of metaphysics. In our third chapter we shall in this context, or with this methodology in effect, turn to the definition(s) offered by Berkeley for the term, *idea.*

Chapter Three:
Definition(s) of the Term *Idea*

I: Ectypal Ideas

Our initial question asked whether or not there exists for Berkeley a succession of ideas in the mind of God. And our investigation has revealed that two distinct definitions of the term *God* appear. Next, an inquiry into Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and his definition of the term *notion* clarified the distinction between the two definitions of God that Berkeley suggests. Only a God that changes, only a God that only changes, is a God that Berkeley supposes to exist, or even to be possible. Otherwise we are talking nonsense. Thus, we suggested that any further analysis of the metaphysics of Berkeley, in this case an analysis of the term *idea,* must be conducted with the changing God supposed. No interpretations of Berkeley's system of metaphysics may be considered tenable if developed through the supposition of an inconceivable and incomprehensible God of whom we cannot have a notion. We have yet to carefully and fully consider the term *idea* as it functions in Berkeley's system of thought. Therefore, we shall now turn to this question. And we will discover immediately that a distinction is to be made. For as has been observed in certain passages already cited, Berkeley refers to two types of ideas, and these are named *ectypal* and *archetypal*. We shall begin with the simplest, those the easiest to understand, our own ideas of sense.

An *ectypal* idea is an idea perceived or sensed by a finite spirit. For example a vision, or a sound. Berkeley famously writes of objects that, “There *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.”[68] According to the workings of Berkeley's system of metaphysics, ideas of sense, or ectypal ideas, are placed directly into our minds by God. What we see, touch, taste, smell and hear are simply ectypal ideas that have no existence distinct from their appearance in our minds, and their existence in some manner of speaking in the mind of God. The question with respect to archetypal ideas will be, in what manner of speaking do our ectypal ideas exist in the mind of God? Ectypal ideas are fleeting, they come and go. And our physical, or corporeal lives are composed of them. This is not difficult to understand, and the definition of ectypal ideas that Berkeley offers seems clear enough. All changing visions, scents, touches, tastes and sounds are ectypal ideas when present to the minds of finite spirits. But as we shall soon observe, Berkeley also speaks of these same ideas as being perceived by God as archetypal ideas. And this is perhaps a more difficult notion to understand.

II: Archetypal Ideas

Berkeley makes many references to *archetypes* or to *archetypal ideas* throughout his works. And the precise definition that Berkeley intends is open to debate. Often the texts are obscure and vague. At times they may even seem self-contradictory, or incompatible with one another. But it will be found that this difficulty can be overcome if the proper definition of God is supposed. We shall first consider a sampling of texts. Berkeley states, “If he [anyone] can conceive it possible either for his ideas or their archetypes to exist without

68 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 3.

being perceived, then I give up the cause...”[69] This suggests that archetypal ideas refer in some sense to our own ectypal ideas, and that they are “perceived”. Berkeley further informs us, “...there may be some other spirit that perceives them [ectypal ideas that would appear if a finite spirit were there to experience them], though we do not...”[70] This passage refers specifically to the concern that Berkeley wishes to address over what happens to objects if we turn our eyes away from them. We are familiar with the question, if a tree falls in the forest and there is nobody there to hear it, does it still make a sound? Berkeley requires an answer to this question. But the passage might also be interpreted as suggesting that God perceives what are ectypal ideas for finite spirits as archetypal ideas for Himself. For Berkeley is referring to one and the same idea which both we and some other spirit, namely God, may perceive. Berkeley also writes, “...all sensible qualities are alike sensations, and are alike real... and... their archetypes can exist only in some other *mind*...”[71] We see that ectypal ideas exist in the minds of finite spirits while their archetypes are said to exist in some other mind, which is the mind of God. And to confirm, Berkeley opines that, “There is therefore some other Mind wherein they [archetypes] exist...”[72] We observe that for Berkeley archetypal ideas exist as perceived in the mind of God and that they are archetypes *of* ectypal ideas that are perceived by finite spirits. Our concern is the precise nature of the relation specified here by the preposition, *of*. There is also the suggestion that what is ectypal for finite spirits is archetypal for God, which would suggest that the relation between the two may actually be one of identity. But based upon these texts and many others that are similar, it might be possible to argue that a precise definition of archetypal ideas remains somewhat elusive. As was the case with Berkeley's

69 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 45.
70 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 48.
71 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 99.
72 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, pages 230/1.

definition(s) of God, the reader must piece together his various references to archetypal ideas in order to arrive at some kind of a working definition of the term. Caution will therefore be required as we continue.

In a text that we have already considered, Philonous reminds Hylas, "...did I not acknowledge a twofold state of things, the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal? The former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God."[73] What is Berkeley suggesting? He is distinguishing between two types of ideas that exist. Natural or ectypal ideas are those that God places into finite spirits and are created "in time", while archetypal ideas exist eternally or "from everlasting" in the mind of God. We know by now however that for Berkeley it is meaningless, or nonsensical to speak of a God that is not permanently changing. God is both inconceivable and incomprehensible otherwise. Nothing like an idea can exist in God from everlasting because God is permanently changing, He is an *active* principle of motion and *change of ideas* (not a static principle of anything). Thus, archetypal ideas if they do exist, cannot be said to be unchanging despite what Berkeley may be misinterpreted[74] as supposing in this and a small number of other passages. Berkeley's twofold state of things is but a concession to Hylas when he purports to speak as a theologian, but Philonous makes it clear that only one of those two states can be conceived or comprehended. To accept the common notions of divines as being philosophically decisive or even relevant would be to misunderstand Berkeley completely. The text under consideration must be understood in its proper context or it cannot be understood at all. And the proper context is that of a God that permanently changes, for no God is conceivable or comprehensible otherwise. For Berkeley we can have no notion of a God other than a God that is permanently changing. No other God can be

73 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 244.
74 We shall return to this subject in detail in our Concluding Remarks.

meant, no other God can be said to exist or considered to be logically possible. Or we are talking nonsense.

Further to this Philonous states:

> When things are said to begin or end their existence, we do not mean this with regard to God, but His creatures. All objects are eternally known by God, or, which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in His mind; but when things, before imperceptible to creatures, are, by a decree of God, perceptible to them, they are said to begin a relative existence, with respect to created minds.[75]

This passage suggests that all ectypal ideas, as known to finite spirits, exist eternally in God and are known to Him as archetypal. Thus, archetypal ideas are ectypal ideas insofar as they are sensed by finite spirits, or ectypal ideas are archetypal insofar as they are perceived by God. But this passage also suggests that ectypal ideas come to be in time due to the activity of God, while these same ideas as archetypal exist eternally. This is self-contradictory, and we see that Berkeley is once again speaking of a twofold state of things, one of which states is both inconceivable and incomprehensible. The reader is asked to bear with us as we go over this argument once more. Recall the only definition of God that is conceivable or comprehensible, the only God of whom we can have a notion. A God of permanent change. Thus, there can be no unchanging archetypal ideas permanently stationed within Him. The purported theology of Hylas is conflicting with the metaphysics of Philonous. For both of Berkeley's distinct and opposing definitions of God are referred to in this passage. If God cannot change then there can be no ectypal ideas provided to finite spirits in time. For if God is placing ectypal ideas into finite spirits in time then God is defined as changing insofar as He is aware of the changes that are taking place in the minds of the finite spirits that He is affecting. And if God is an active

75 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, pages 251/2. We shall return to this passage in our Concluding Remarks and argue that the passage is non-committal in an important sense.

principle of motion and change of ideas (rather than a static principle of motion and change of ideas), and thereby permanently changing, then archetypal ideas cannot be understood as permanent or steadfast, fixed or constant. We observe as our methodology has suggested, that a changing God that experiences changing ideas is required if we are to avoid talking nonsense, and if the distinction between archetypal and ectypal ideas is capable of being meant. Given Berkeley's contention that the definition of God as unchanging is inconceivable and incomprehensible, with no possible notion connected with Him, and that He is therefore non-existent from any possible philosophical or metaphysical perspective as a result, this should come as no surprise. It remains to be determined therefore, only the precise nature of the relationship that exists between what can only be comprehended, conceived or understood as changing archetypal ideas and changing ectypal ideas.

Certain texts stand out as being especially important. Philonous asks, "How then is it possible, that things perpetually fleeting and variable as our ideas, should be copies or images of anything fixed and constant?"[76] The answer is that it is not possible. As Berkeley contends, ideas can be like only other ideas. Therefore, the ideas in God, in other words archetypal ideas which He perceives, are "things perpetually fleeting and variable" just as are the ideas that exist in finite spirits. This is possible only in a God that changes. Archetypal ideas cannot be static, eternal and unchanging, for if they were then they would not be ideas at all. They would in fact be absolutely nothing.

> The same line of reasoning is presented in this brief exchange:
>
> Philonous: Ideas then are sensible, and their archetypes or originals insensible[?].
>
> Hylas: Right. [Hylas is wrong.]

76 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 205.

> Philonous: But how can that which is sensible be like that which is insensible? Can a real thing in itself *invisible* be like a *colour*; or a real thing which is not *audible*, be like a *sound*? In a word, can anything be like a sensation or idea, but another sensation or idea?[77]

The answer is *no*. Thus, archetypes which we know are perceived are also sensed as well as fleeting. God perceives, or senses the fleeting archetypal ideas that He creates.

Philonous also observes with respect to objections to his metaphysics that might accuse him of some form of representationalism, "But those and the like objections vanish, if we do not maintain the being of absolute external originals, but place the reality of things in ideas, fleeting indeed, and changeable..."[78] We see that Berkeley denies the existence of "absolute external originals" to our fleeting and changing ideas. Thus, when put in proper context, that of the God of permanent change, this passage demonstrates that archetypal ideas and ectypal ideas are one and the same. For if they were not then there *would be* archetypal ideas existing as absolute external originals to our ectypal ideas. God from His perspective creates and perceives archetypal ideas that we as finite spirits from our own perspectives perceive, or sense as ectypal. But the two are numerically one and the same idea. Berkeley also writes that, "...ideas or things by me perceived, either themselves or their archetypes, exist independently of my mind..."[79] Thus, we see that our own ectypal ideas "exist independently" of our minds as archetypal. But the two are in reality one and the same, the only distinctions to be made therefore are those of perspective and authorship. Finally, in a passage cited earlier Berkeley explains in reference to ectypal ideas that, "They must therefore exist in some other mind, whose will it is they should be exhibited to me."[80] Ectypal ideas which are fleeting "exist in

77 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 206.
78 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 258.
79 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 213.
80 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 214.

some other mind", which is the mind of God, and God wills that "they should be exhibited to" finite spirits.

Let us recapitulate. To suggest that ectypes are copies of archetypes would be to suggest that Berkeley himself holds a representationalist theory of perception, but we know that this is not the case. Berkeley insists upon direct realism, this is essential to his doctrine of immaterialism, and therefore the only consistent interpretation of archetypes as opposed to ectypes is to contend that they are one and the same. Any idea is archetypal insofar as it is created and perceived by God, and ectypal insofar as it is perceived or sensed in the mind of a finite spirit. We have also observed that for Berkeley an idea can be like nothing but another idea. Therefore, if ectypal ideas are fleeting so too are their archetypes. Any passage that suggests that archetypal ideas are eternal and unchanging reaches for an inconceivable and incomprehensible God of whom we cannot have a notion. Such a definition must therefore be dismissed as nonsense, it must be recognized as originating purely in theological speculations such as those of Hylas, but as having no application to Berkeley's metaphysics.

We have offered our analysis of the terms *God*, *notion* and *idea* as presented by Berkeley. Having completed the preliminary task of defining our terms, we shall in our next chapter investigate Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect in light of what we have learned thus far. This will give us a greater understanding of the workings of the system of metaphysics that Berkeley advances. Our methodology has now been demonstrated. We shall suppose only the God of permanent change when conducting our analysis, otherwise we would have no idea nor even have the faintest notion of what we are talking about. Our words would be both inconceivable and incomprehensible, simply jargon, they would be nonsense, for there would be no notions associated with

them, no definitions or theories that the mind is able to understand. As Berkeley admonishes, "...let me entreat you to consider whether it be like a philosopher, or even like a man of common sense, to pretend to believe you know not what..."[81] But this for Berkeley is precisely what thinkers such as Hylas unwittingly accomplish when they define God as unchanging *substantially* as opposed to in a purely definitional sense. Berkeley as a concession to theologians acknowledges a twofold state of things, but he also explains that only one of those two states of things is conceivable, comprehensible, understandable or even logically possible. The other is mere jargon, complete and utter nonsense. No philosopher nor any person of common sense should pretend to believe it. Only mistaken theologians, confused in their faith, entertain such repugnant beliefs. But they do not know what they are saying when they purport to talk about them. They are speaking in gibberish. For there are no notions to be associated with the empty sounds that they carelessly enunciate.

81 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 218.

Chapter Four:
Theory of Cause and Effect

I: The Natural World

We have considered Berkeley's definition(s) of the term *God*, his Theory of Knowledge and definition of the term *notion*, and his distinction between archetypal and ectypal ideas. We turn now to Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect. Our particular concern will be human agency, the actions of finite spirits. But before turning to this analysis it will be useful to consider cause and effect in Berkeley's system of metaphysics as it applies to the *Natural* world distinct from the actions of finite spirits. Of this Berkeley writes, "Now the set rules or established methods, wherein the mind we depend on excites in us the ideas of sense, are called the *Laws of Nature*: and these we learn by experience, which teaches us that such and such ideas are attended with such and such other ideas, in the ordinary course of things."[82]

What we refer to as the *Natural* world is for Berkeley nothing other than successions of ectypal ideas in the minds of finite spirits, which successions of ideas are archetypal from the perspective of God. This is fundamental to the doctrine of immaterialism that Berkeley advocates. We know that all ideas are completely passive. Berkeley explains that, "...one idea cannot be the cause of another..."[83] And further, "...the connexion of ideas does not imply the relation

82 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 30.
83 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 64.

of *cause* and *effect*...”[84] Thus, one idea of sense does not “cause” the next. All of our ideas of sense are “effects” while God is the only cause. Berkeley also writes, “All our ideas, sensations, or the things which we perceive... are visibly inactive, there is nothing of power or agency included in them. So that one idea or object of thought cannot produce, or make any alteration in another.”[85] Also, “...it is impossible for an idea to do anything, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of anything...”[86] Berkeley further suggests that, “...ideas have nothing powerful or operative within them, nor have any necessary connexion with the effects ascribed to them...”[87] And finally, “...for it has been made evident, that solidity, bulk, figure, motion and the like, have no *activity* or *efficacy* in them, so as to be capable of producing any one effect in Nature.”[88]

Let us entertain an example. Consider one billiard ball striking the next and thereby causing it to move. For Berkeley there are no billiard balls out there in the world, they exist simply and only as passive ideas in the minds of finite spirits, and in the mind of God. Berkeley notes that it is impossible, “...that there should be any such thing as an outward object.”[89] A materialist that believes in the existence of mind-independent outward objects might argue that the first billiard ball hits the second and that this causes a transference of motion as its effect. But for Berkeley, an immaterialist, all events are simply individual effects created and placed successively into our minds by God. There is no internal relationship between events in the sense that one causes the next or is the effect of the prior. Events are not causes. All events are effects, God is the only cause. We have been speaking with respect to what takes place in *Nature* when finite spirits are not involved, where God is the only causal agent.

84 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 65.
85 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 25.
86 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 25.
87 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 60.
88 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 61.
89 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 15.

There are however for Berkeley, entirely free and responsible finite spirits that are capable of performing as active spiritual causes themselves.

II: The Spiritual World

Let us now consider the volitions of finite spirits. Berkeley writes:

> For it is evident that in affecting other persons, the will of man hath no other object, than barely the motion of the limbs of his body; but that such a motion should be attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the Creator... who... maintains that intercourse between spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other.[90]

In this passage Berkeley offers some explanation as to how finite spirits are able to communicate with one another. We see that this communication begins when finite spirits will or create a volition to move their bodies. When Berkeley mentions limbs he refers not solely to our arms and legs. Berkeley then suggests that such volitions result in motions. Motions here are to be understood as certain changes, those with respect to what we understand to be our bodies, that take place within the successions of ideas that correspond to our volitions. For example, a person wills or creates the volition to reach for a glass of beer and then lo and behold appropriate visions, touches, tastes and other associated ideas are sensed. Actions therefore amount essentially to a specific sort of wish, namely a volition, come true. Berkeley next explains that corresponding ideas of sense are also placed by God into the minds of other finite spirits thereby establishing the communication between them.

What exactly is Berkeley proposing? Imagine two old friends sitting together on a bench discussing this very question. The first finite spirit wills to speak, then both they and the second finite spirit are presented by God with corresponding ideas of sense, thereby bringing about the communication

90 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 147.

between the two and allowing them to discuss the question. The activity of willing on the part of the first finite spirit is the occasion upon which God wills to place into the minds of both finite spirits their own respective ideas of sense corresponding to the volitions of the first finite spirit. God recreates or rethinks the world in reaction to, or upon the occasions of the volitions. The new ideas that God creates and places into the minds of finite spirits are archetypal from His perspective, and ectypal from theirs. All ideas are fleeting.

This metaphysical notion is not difficult to conceive, comprehend or understand if we suppose the changing God, if we suppose the only God that we can have a notion of. In our example finite spirits are actively creating successions of volitions, and God is affected by these volitions in succession. He then responds to the volitions successively by placing corresponding ideas of sense into their minds. But insoluble metaphysical conundrums will arise if we pretend to suppose an unchanging, inconceivable and incomprehensible God in order to explain the possibility of our having conversations. Let us now return to the texts and investigate Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect more carefully, and do so with a view to naming the Theory.

Hylas suggests that, “Whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same exists in the object that occasions it.”[91] Now, Hylas is of course wrong from Berkeley's perspective, and Philonous will point this out. But what is to be observed is that the term *occasions* appears to be deployed synonymously with the term *causes.* In this passage, an occasion is precisely a cause. Hylas also errs when suggesting that, “...it plainly follows, that it is immediately some contiguous substance, which operating on the eye occasions a perception of colours...”[92] The term *occasions* in this text is more or less equivalent to the term *causes*. No doubt to his delight Hylas correctly suggests

91 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 176.
92 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 186.

that, “The deducing therefore of causes or occasions from effects and appearances, which alone are perceived by sense, entirely relates to reason.”[93] We see that the terms *causes* and *occasions* appear to be used interchangeably. And Philonous chastises, “You make certain traces in the brain to be the causes or occasions of our ideas. Pray tell me whether by the *brain* you mean any sensible thing... I would fain know whether you think it reasonable to suppose, that one idea or thing existing in the mind, occasions all other ideas.”[94] Of course the answer is *no*, but again the terms *causes* and *occasions* appear to be more or less synonymous. There are also instructive examples to be found in the *Principles*. Berkeley writes that it is wrong to contend that sensations, “...are occasioned by the different size, texture and motion of the minute particles of matter.”[95] Berkeley also argues that the belief in matter, “...has occasioned numberless controversies and disputes in philosophy, and not a few of far greater moment in religion.”[96] Further, “...if real fire be very different from the idea of fire, so also is the real pain that it occasions, very different from the idea of the same pain...”[97] Occasions are causes, causes are occasions.

Berkeley also writes of occasions as if they were points in time. For example, “To explain the *phenomena*, is all one as to shew, why upon such and such occasions we are affected with such and such ideas.”[98] Berkeley further defines the term *occasion* when he writes, “...on the part of an *all-sufficient spirit*, what can there be that should make us believe, or even suspect, he is *directed* by an inert occasion to excite ideas in our minds[?].”[99] In other words, God does not respond to our volitions because “he is *directed* by an inert

93 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, page 175.
94 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 209.
95 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 10.
96 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 21.
97 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 41.
98 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 50.
99 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 74.

occasion" such as matter or corporeal substance, but solely upon the occasions of our creating the volitions. It is that simple.

The following passage is of particular interest. Berkeley writes using his own italics, "...let us examine what is meant by *occasion*... either the agent which produces any effect, or else something that is observed to accompany, or go before it, in the ordinary course of things."[100] Here Berkeley presents with considerable exactitude his definition(s) of the technical term *occasion*. What is meant by the term *occasion* in Berkeley's system of metaphysics? Berkeley we observe, offers two answers. First, an occasion refers to "the agent which produces any effect". God and finite spirits alike are agents that produce effects. Finite spirits produce/occasion effects through use of their imaginations. Here the term *occasion* is being used synonymously with the term *cause*. Second, an occasion refers to "something that is observed to accompany... in the ordinary course of things". Philosophers may observe *constant conjunction* and speak of one event as causing or occasioning the next. This use of the term *occasion*, it is to be observed, is less strict and not precisely equivalent to a cause unless understood in the intended context. For though one idea may be said to occasion the next, the term here is not being used entirely synonymously with the term *cause*. Only the constant conjunctions of ideas is referred to in this second definition. In the first usage the term *cause* is absolutely synonymous with the term *occasion.* And it is this definition that explicates Berkeley's terminology most exactly.

Philonous further explains, "You acknowledge then God alone to be the cause of our ideas, and that He causes them at the presence of those occasions."[101] What Berkeley writes next is very important. Philonous states,

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100 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 69.
101 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 220.

"Those things which you say are present to God, without doubt He perceives."[102] Hylas responds, "Certainly; otherwise they could not be to Him an occasion of acting."[103] Philonous does not disagree. Thus, God does perceive His own changing successions of ideas that exist as all changing states of *Nature.* Otherwise, one might suggest that He would not know what to do next. Each idea created by God occasions the next in the series of constant conjunctions or *Laws of Nature* that are learned through observation and experience.

We are now prepared to ask, what is taking place when God responds to the volitions of finite spirits? What exactly is Berkeley's explanation of human agency, or of human actions? What is his Theory of Cause and Effect in the spiritual world, the world where finite spirits interplay with each other and with God. A thoughtful analysis of the following passage, admittedly somewhat confusedly worded and certainly not displaying Berkeley at his most eloquent, will nonetheless prove to be productive:

> Philonous: In plucking this flower, I am active, because I do it by the motion of my hand, which was consequent upon my volition; so likewise in applying it to my nose... I act too in drawing the air through my nose; because my breathing so rather than otherwise, is the effect of my volition. But neither can this be called *smelling*: for, if it were, I should smell every time I breathed in that manner?
> Hylas: True.
> Philonous: Smelling then is somewhat consequent to all this?
> Hylas: It is.
> Philonous: But I do not find my will concerned any farther. Whatever more there is, as that I perceive such a particular smell or any smell at all, this is independent of my will, and therein I am altogether passive. Do you find it otherwise with you, Hylas?
> Hylas: No, the very same.
> Philonous: Then, as to seeing, is it not in your power to open your eyes, or keep them shut; to turn them this or that way?

102 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 220.
103 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 220.

> Hylas: Without doubt.
> Philonous: But doth it in like manner depend on your will, that in looking on this flower, you perceive *white* rather than any other colour? Or directing your open eyes towards yonder part of the heaven, can you avoid seeing the sun? Or is light or darkness the effect of your volition?
> Hylas: No, certainly.
> Philonous: You are then in these respects altogether passive?
> Hylas: I am.[104]

What is being suggested here? Something similar to what we suggested in our example of two old friends sitting on a bench discussing this very question. An action on the part of a finite spirit is a volition that occasions or is accompanied immediately by corresponding ideas of sense that are placed directly into the mind of that finite spirit by God. Finite spirits are active with respect to the volition and passive with respect to the resulting ideas of sense that the volition occasions. And likewise, God may be said to passively[105] receive the volitions of finite spirits, for it is finite spirits and not Him that creates them. Finite spirits create a volition, or a willing to act, but the changing ideas of sense that come about upon all occasions of their willing are not of their own doing, they are rather God's responses which follow the *Laws of Nature* that He has established and maintains.

We see then, that for Berkeley the volition of a finite spirit may be termed the cause of, or the occasion for God to place appropriate and corresponding ideas of sense into its mind. And so long as understood in this precise context, the Theory of Cause and Effect that Berkeley espouses may properly be termed his own version of *Occasionalism.* There would seem to be no other reasonable name for Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect given the vast numbers of

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104 *Dialogues*, Dialogue One, pages 196/7.

105 We shall return to this question in greater detail in our Concluding Remarks. For we have already observed that Berkeley defines God as being “impassive”. Thus, Berkeley appears to be contradicting himself.

passages, some quoted herein and some not, wherein Berkeley deploys and explains the terminology *occasion* in the context of Cause and Effect.

With this we have completed our analysis of Berkeley's system of metaphysics. We have contended that Berkeley offers two definitions of God, but that only one of those definitions is conceivable or comprehensible. Based upon Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge, only a changing God may be said to exist because we can have a notion of no other God. Berkeley's definitions of the term *idea,* and his Theory of Cause and Effect were in their respective turns considered through this supposition. We shall now turn to the consideration of relevant secondary sources before concluding.

Chapter Five:
Analysis of other Commentators

I: Hegel

Having completed our direct analysis of Berkeley, we turn now to the consideration of a variety of secondary sources that we find to be relevant to our discussion. We shall begin with a very important historical figure whose interpretation of Berkeley is arguably similar to and corroborating of our own, and then turn to the consideration of more recent commentators. Our choices with respect to recent commentators are based upon the desire to offer a variety of opinions on questions in Berkeley scholarship that are related to our own interpretation, with some being in agreement and others in disagreement with ourselves. We shall concern ourselves more with the conclusions that these commentators draw than with the passages in Berkeley that lead them to draw those conclusions. Our purpose is to compare our own conclusions to those of others, rather than to compare the manner in which all possible conclusions are arrived at. In the final analysis we are all reading the same texts. The problem exists in offering an interpretation that allows for all of them, or at least for as many of them as possible, to be rendered internally consistent with one another.

In his voluminous *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel teaches us that, “The philosophy of Malebranche is in point of matter entirely identical with that of Spinoza, but it has another, a more religious and theological

form...”[106] In the opinion of Hegel, Malebranche lapses into Spinozism. Berkeley will be pleased with this opinion for he himself expresses concerns with respect to Malebranche and does all that he can to distance himself from the system of metaphysics that Malebranche advances. Philonous explains:

> I shall not therefore be surprised, if some men imagine that I run into the enthusiasm of Malebranche, though in truth I am very remote from it. He builds on the most abstract general ideas, which I entirely disclaim. He asserts an absolute external world, which I deny. He maintains that we are deceived by our senses, and know not the real natures or true forms and figures of extended beings; all of which I hold the direct contrary. So that upon the whole there are no Principles more fundamentally opposite than his and mine.[107]

And Berkeley also makes it abundantly clear that he has no interest in being accused of lapsing into Spinozism himself. Recall that Philonous refers to, “...those wild imaginations of Vanini, Hobbes and Spinoza; in a word the whole system of atheism...”[108]

But Berkeley's jubilation will be short lived. For Hegel also teaches us that, “Berkeley advocated an idealism which came very near to that of Malebranche.”[109] In the opinion of Hegel, Berkeley too lapses into Spinozism. This is a remarkable comment, and one that must be very disconcerting to the Bishop insofar as he fully disagrees with the principles of Malebranche and furthermore believes Spinoza to be an atheist. It is interesting to observe that Hegel disagrees with standard opinion when he interprets Malebranche as an idealist rather than as a dualist. But for our own purposes we must ask the following question. What is Hegel's reason for contending that Berkeley lapses into Spinozism? Hegel explains to us that, “The catechism says: “God is

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106 *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, translated by E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, Volume Three, page 290. Further references will be to the *Lectures*.

107 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 214.

108 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 213.

109 *Lectures*, page 364.

omnipresent," and if this omnipresence be developed Spinozism is arrived at; and yet theologians then proceed to speak against the system of identity, and cry out about Pantheism."[110] Let us consider this statement with care.

Hegel refers to the "catechism", in other words to the general doctrines and definitions of Christianity. And he suggests that the catechism defines God as "omnipresent". This is one of the all-encompassing terms that we have examined, and we have suggested that the term *omnipresent* may be understood in two distinct senses. One sense posits an unchanging God that exists outside of time, the other sense posits a changing God that exists inside of time. Hegel next opines that a "developed" definition of the term *omnipresence* entails Spinozism. What does Hegel intend when he speaks of a developed definition of the term? And what might an *un*developed definition of the term suggest? One possible answer is this. When Hegel speaks of a developed definition he speaks of the term *omnipresence* in the extemporal sense, in the sense that God exists outside of time and never changes. An undeveloped definition would therefore apply to the term *omnipresence* in the temporal sense, in the sense that God exists inside of time and always changes. Now, Hegel is of course no Spinozist, nor is he an atheist, thus his own God must be supposed to be omnipresent in the undeveloped sense. In order to address this question let us assess Hegel's commentary on the subject of Spinoza's definition of the term *God* and compare this assessment to the only conceivable and comprehensible definition of God offered by Berkeley.

Hegel quotes Buhle, a commentator with whom he is in agreement. The annotation in round brackets is Hegel's own. He informs us that Buhle writes, ""Individual things are derived from God in an eternal and infinite manner" (*i.e.* once and for all), "and not in a transitory, finite and evanescent manner... in

110 *Lectures*, page 292.

their eternal existence they endure unchangeable... they exist side by side in one utterly indivisible, infinite Thing...””[111] This passage represents a developed definition of the term *omnipresence* with respect to God. Let us consider it carefully. First, “Individual things”, in other words ideas of sense or ectypal ideas for Berkeley, “are derived from God”, in other words created by God, “in an eternal and infinite manner”. Hegel then clarifies, “(once and for all)”. In other words, not as occasions are presented in time but in one extemporal act (if such a possibility is even conceivable or comprehensible). These “Individual things”, or ectypal ideas for Berkeley, are not created in a “transitory, finite and evanescent manner”. Rather, “in their eternal existence they endure unchangeable”. Further, “Individual things”, or ectypal ideas for Berkeley, “exist side by side in one utterly indivisible, infinite Thing”. Clearly, this purported metaphysic refers not to Berkeley's changing God, but to the inconceivable and incomprehensible, logically impossible and therefore non-existent, though admittedly perfect and unchanging God that Berkeley rejects as nonsense. Hegel is of the opinion that Berkeley lapses into Spinozism if he defines God in the same manner as Spinoza, and Hegel also defines the God that he attributes to Spinoza. But Berkeley most certainly does not advocate such a God, though Hylas does make mention of Him. And further, Berkeley has no interest in presenting a system of thought that he deems to be atheistic. According to Buhle, thus according to Hegel, the God of Spinoza is a mere “Thing”. Berkeley himself would wholeheartedly agree with this assessment of the nonsense spoken by Spinoza insofar as he considers him to be an atheist. And Berkeley would surely point out to Hegel that he, Berkeley, does not define God in this manner, but in fact in precisely the opposite manner. Interestingly, Berkeley defines God much in the manner that Hegel himself

111 *Lectures*, page 275. Reference given by Hegel is, “Buhle (Gresch. d. neuren Phil. Vol. III. Section 2, pp. 525-528)...” Buhle is often cited by Hegel, including in his analysis of Berkeley.

does, at least insofar as He is always changing, always for Hegel in a process of *becoming*. Individual things for both Berkeley and Hegel are fleeting ideas, or if one prefers, bundles of fleeting ideas collated by the mind. There is nothing permanent in them. They go as quickly as they come. For Berkeley all is flux, while for Spinoza there is no flux at all. For Hegel, developed omnipresence refers to a God without flux, thus undeveloped omnipresence refers to a God of permanent change, or pure flux. Berkeley advocates the latter and contends the logical impossibility of the former. So too it might be argued, does Hegel in his own system of thought.

We have cited Hegel continuing, "...and yet theologians then proceed to speak against the system of identity, and cry out about Pantheism." What are we to make of this statement? The text appears to suggest that "theologians" deny "Pantheism" despite the fact that their definition of God as omnipresent in the developed sense entails precisely Spinozism. Hegel places Berkeley into this category insofar as he defines God as omnipresent in the developed sense. The suggestion is that if Berkeley defines God as extemporal then his system of metaphysics lapses into Spinozism. And Berkeley would not disagree. Thus, Hegel is supposing the greater definition of the ambiguous term *omnipresence* when he accuses Berkeley of Spinozism. And this is the definition of the term *omnipresence* that is consistent with Hylas' theological definition of God that Philonous claims is nonsense. This definition does not apply to the changing God, the God omnipresent in the undeveloped or temporal sense. It does not apply in the only sense that Berkeley considers to be conceivable or comprehensible. Is Hegel therefore, to be accused of misinterpreting Berkeley? No. For Hegel is speaking of theologians such as Hylas when offering his analysis thus far. But he will also speak of philosophers such as Philonous and conduct an entirely distinct analysis.

We will discover that as Hegel proceeds to analyse Berkeley's system of immaterialist metaphysics he does so while supposing the definition of a God that changes. This is not something that Hegel does when teaching Spinoza. Hegel analyses Berkeley through the supposition of a God whose omnipresence is undeveloped. He begins to treat Berkeley as a philosopher rather than as a theologian. Hegel does not waste time or energy attempting to argue that the *philosophy* of Berkeley leads to Spinozism. He has already taken care of that when he referred to the theologians who cry out about pantheism. Hegel fully recognizes the philosophical thought of Berkeley as an advancement upon Spinozism that finds its place in the unfolding dialectic leading to his own metaphysics of Absolute Idealism. And Berkeley is considered by Hegel in this historical role. To give an example, Hegel takes Berkeley's side against Locke, and considers him to represent a dialectical advancement upon Locke, on the important question of *primary* versus *secondary* qualities of objects. Hegel writes of Berkeley:

> ...the manifold sensuous conceptions and feelings [ideas of sense for Berkeley] can only exist in the mind. Locke distinguished extension and movement... as qualities which pertain to the objects themselves. But Berkeley very pertinently points out inconsistency here from the point of view that great and small, quick and slow, hold good as something relative; thus were extension and movement to be inherent or implicit, they could not be either large or small, quick or slow; that is, they could not be...[112]

We have noted that Hegel, just as Berkeley, defines an object such as a grain of salt as simply a bundle of separate fleeting ideas of sense collated in and by the mind in some manner of speaking.[113] Berkeley is no materialist, neither is Hegel.

Hegel later contends that Hume is intentionally an exposition of Berkeley

112 *Lectures*, page 365.
113 See “Sense Certainty” in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

minus God. He writes that, "...his skepticism has the idealism of Berkeley as its object."[114] Hegel compares Hume to Berkeley, recognizes Berkeley as an idealist, and does not ever suggest that Hume is attempting to refute anything resembling a Spinozistic system of thought. For Hegel, Hume is attempting to refute what is an advancement upon Locke. And throughout Hegel's entire analysis of Berkeley as a philosopher his assessments are directed toward Berkeley's system of immaterialist metaphysics that contains within it a changing God. All of Hegel's opinions are offered while supposing the changing philosophical God that Berkeley posits, a God that may be said to be omnipresent now and always, but not extemporally. A God of undeveloped omnipresence. And Hegel's commentaries on Berkeley as a philosopher would make little sense if they were assumed to be directed toward the theologically motivated God of Hylas that Philonous rejects as nonsense. Hegel is not addressing Spinozism or anything similar to it, such as Malebranche, when he addresses specifically Berkeley's immaterialist metaphysics. Hegel levels his accusations only when considering Berkeley as a theologian, and he says so specifically. Furthermore, Berkeley would not be slotted by Hegel into his grand philosophical scheme, placed historically between Locke and Hume in the development of British empiricism, if he could not be interpreted as offering something distinct from and more advanced than the earlier Continental rationalism of Spinoza. We see that Hegel in his full analysis of Berkeley may be argued to have interpreted Berkeley through two distinct definitions of God. One God is omnipresent by the greater, or developed definition. This is the unchanging theologically motivated God of Hylas. For Berkeley this is the inconceivable and incomprehensible, impossible and non-existent God that is to be found in the atheistic system of Spinoza. And it is the God that in the opinion

114 *Lectures*, page 370.

of Hegel leads Berkeley into Spinozism. The other God that Hegel supposes is the conceivable and comprehensible God of Philonous, the omnipresent God by the lesser, or undeveloped definition of the term, *omnipresence.* This God does not entail Spinozism.

Let us recapitulate. It is to be observed that in the opinion of Hegel, one sense of the term *omnipresent* insofar as it relates to God leads Berkeley in the direction of Malebranche and Spinoza while the other sense does not. In the analysis of Hegel, Hylas posits a definition of the term *God* that leads to Spinozism while Philonous rejects this same definition. Hegel suggests that Berkeley lapses into Spinozism due to his defining God as omnipresent in the developed sense, but then proceeds to assess the thinking of Berkeley while supposing a God defined as omnipresent in the undeveloped sense. Hegel thus offers entirely different interpretations of Berkeley that depend upon different definitions of God. And the different definitions involve referring to or implying the two distinct possible uses of the ambiguous term *omnipresent* as it applies to God. For Hegel, if we suppose when assessing Berkeley an unchanging God we will arrive at Spinozism, but if we suppose a changing God we will not.

II: God

We have contended that Berkeley writes both as a theologian and as a philosopher. Our opinion is not uncommon. Charles J. McCracken writes that, “Defending Christian belief was of paramount importance to Berkeley in all his intellectual labors...”[115] Patrick Fleming speaks of, “...Berkeley's express intention to defend common sense and the Christian religion... As a Christian,

115 “What Does Berkeley's God See in the Quad”, *Archiv fur Geschichte Philosophie*, Volume 61-3, 1979, pages 280-292.

he must make sense of moral responsibility and the problem of evil."[116] And Sukjae Lee notes that, "...when considering his views on the activity of spirit, there are two central components of Berkeley's project we need to bear in mind, namely, his broadly idealistic metaphysics and his theological commitment of providing a plausible theodicy..."[117] While these commentators do not go so far as to express our own position, that being that Berkeley when speaking as a philosopher contradicts Berkeley when speaking as a theologian, it should perhaps not be surprising that Berkeley offers in the opinions of certain commentators definitions of God that are of distinct purposes. For whether his definitions are deemed to be self-contradictory or not, implicit in the opinions of all of these commentators is the suggestion that Berkeley is serving two masters at once, theology on the one hand and philosophy on the other.

Daniel E. Flage poses the question, "Since omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence are often considered the principal attributes of the Judeo-Christian God, why do Berkeley's principal descriptions of God make no allusions to omnipotence while he later freely ascribes omnipotence to God?"[118] Flage leaves out the term *omnipresence* in his description, though it is one of the all-encompassing terms that Berkeley deploys when he defines God. But Flage asks an interesting question, one that addresses directly our own contentions. Flage will, "...argue that his [Berkeley's] reluctance to ascribe omnipotence to God is the reluctance of a careful philosopher, that his willingness to do so is that of a religionist, and that his account of language explains why he can talk in two different voices."[119] Flage suggests that when Berkeley is speaking religiously he is speaking emotively, but that when he is

116 "Berkeley's Immaterialist Account of Action", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 44-3, 2006, page 416.
117 "Berkeley on the Activity of Spirits", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 20-3, 2012, page 539.
118 "Is Berkeley's God Omnipotent?", *The Review of Metaphysics*, Volume 71-4, 2018, page 703.
119 *Ibid.*, page 704.

speaking philosophically he is speaking cognitively. His position is that any apparent contradictions between Berkeley's distinct definitions of God is explained away by the two modes of speaking that Berkeley employs. We have argued that Berkeley does not define God as being the only power, for he defines finite spirits as having power, though it must be observed that either of the Gods hypothesized by Hylas, whether unchanging or changing and extemporally omniscient, *would be* the only power that existed. Thus, we have expressed agreement with Flage to this point, in a manner of speaking. However, we read Berkeley as contradicting himself when taken literally throughout, while Flage is not prepared to take Berkeley literally at least some of the time, which in our opinion is a dangerous approach to interpreting any philosopher. Our belief is that if contradictions appear, another approach is required. This approach involves dismissing certain passages as being problematic and offering an explanation as to why Berkeley offers such problematic passages, rather than suggesting that Berkeley speaks in two different modes, one philosophical and cognitive, the other theological and emotional.

Flage will, "...distinguish between philosophical and religious uses of "omnipotent," and argue that Berkeley holds that philosophical uses are problematic while religious uses are not."[120] We have expressed agreement with the first portion of this statement and disagreement with the second. We readily accept the worry of Hylas that a changing God is problematic to his theology of perfection in God. But we have not argued that Philonous' religious uses of the term are not problematic when speaking philosophically. On the contrary, we have argued that religious uses are highly problematic to any possible interpretation of Berkeley's system of philosophy. We have also contended that

120 *Ibid.*

Berkeley himself makes this clear. Fatal problems will result if we try to explain Berkeley's metaphysics through the theologically motivated definition of the unchanging God that is put forth by Hylas. This God is both inconceivable and incomprehensible for philosophical purposes, for we can have no notion of Him. It is for Berkeley nonsense to even speak of Him. Flage contends that the uses of the term *omnipotent* in both the *Principles* and the *Dialogues* are religious uses. We do not completely deny this. But we have argued that the uses of this term, and the uses of the other all-encompassing terms, must also be understood as philosophical. And each sense we have argued is therefore problematic for the other. Further, we have suggested that Berkeley is explicitly aware of this problem. Certainly the philosophical uses of the term *omnipotent* that Philonous presents creates problems for theologians such as Hylas. But we have added our own further contention that religious uses of the term are likewise problematic if applied to Berkeley's philosophy. The theologically motivated God of Hylas is inapplicable to the system of metaphysics that Berkeley expounds. Flage, as we shall soon demonstrate, does not agree with this contention, for by his own admission he interprets Berkeley cognitively through the emotional God. He reads Berkeley's philosophy through his theology. He reads one mode of speaking through the other.

Flage writes of the term *eternal* as it appears in the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*[121] that it, "...is ambiguous between existing outside of time and existing at all times."[122] Here we observe that Flage is himself being somewhat ambiguous. What does he mean by "existing at all times"? He cannot mean existing *outside* of time, for if he did then he would simply be repeating himself and his words would be redundant. Of course, if God exists then He always

121 Flage describes this as, "...the basic doctrinal statement of the Churches of England and Ireland." Berkeley it is contended develops his theological or religionist definition of God based therefrom.

122 "Is Berkeley's God Omnipotent?", *The Review of Metaphysics*, Volume 71-4, 2018, page 707.

exists and this trite claim cannot be Flage's intent either. Thus, Flage can only mean by "existing at all times", existing *inside* of time. Otherwise, his statement would serve no purpose, for once again, it would be either redundant or trite. Flage we believe offers a very interesting opinion, and if true one that speaks directly to the heart of our entire discussion. Flage is insightful to suggest that the term *eternal* when applied to God can be taken in two distinct and opposing senses. We have ourselves maintained this exact position. As we noted in our second chapter, God can be said to exist eternally in the sense that He always exists outside of time and therefore never changes, or God can be said to exist eternally in the sense that He always exists inside of time and therefore always changes. This we have contended is the clear distinction between the two definitions of God that Berkeley entertains. Emotionalism is not needed, only cognitive thinking is.

Flage deviates completely from our own interpretation when he writes that, "...there is, presumably, no succession of ideas within God."[123] We have argued that such a presumption would be incorrect. Or that it applies only in the context of an inconceivable and incomprehensible, nonsensical and unchanging "religionist" God. For if all ectypal ideas exist eternally in God then so too do our volitions that occasion them. This extemporally omnipresent God does not change and we have therefore in the final analysis, as Hegel suggests, something very much resembling if not identical to Spinozism. The definition of a God that *does* change has been ignored by Flage. It has been placed subservient, or secondary to the unchanging God as final arbiter even when the metaphysics of Philonous and not solely the theology of Hylas is at issue. In other words, Flage presumes the emotive mode of defining God even when interpreting the God that he argues Berkeley refers to cognitively. However, we

123 *Ibid.*

have argued that the metaphysics of Berkeley can only be understood by supposing at all times the definition of a God that changes, the God of the cognitive mode of expression. We agree with Flage's opinion that Philonous' philosophical God is not compatible with the theological God of Hylas. But we have stressed further that the theological God of Hylas is in the equivalent sense not compatible with the philosophical God of Philonous. Flage rejects this half of our position. For by presuming that God does not experience a succession of ideas Flage is supposing the unchanging emotionally motivated God. He is suggesting that Hylas' theology causes no problems for Philonous' philosophy, and he is committing himself to the proposition that Berkeley's system of metaphysics is to be interpreted and can be understood through the supposition of a theologically motivated definition of an unchanging God, through the emotively motivated rather than through the cognitively motivated definition. We however have contended that this methodology is not at all proper. It is by our interpretation a complete mistake. For the unchanging God is stated to be both inconceivable and incomprehensible, and to make mention Him is to talk nonsense. We can have no notion of Him. He cannot be meant, He cannot be said to exist, and He therefore has no application to the system of metaphysics that Berkeley expounds.

Flage continues, “Berkeley was hesitant to discuss the power of God.”[124] This is because, “To claim God is powerful, but not omnipotent, would raise questions regarding Berkeley's theological orthodoxy. So, perhaps, he attempted to sidestep the issue by remaining mute regarding the power of God.”[125] Now, we accept the claim that Berkeley's “theological orthodoxy” is rendered problematic if he does not ascribe full omnipotence to God, for Berkeley himself has made this claim. But whether Berkeley is to be accused of

124 *Ibid*.
125 *Ibid.*, page 708.

attempting to “sidestep” is another question, for in the terminology of Flage, Berkeley is most certainly theologically *unorthodox* given his time period, and to this he fully confesses. Flage next writes that, “...if Berkeley held that God is omnipotent, Berkeley might be committed to the claim that all powers are actually contained in God. This raises problems.”[126] Agreed, Berkeley himself makes it clear that he realizes this to be the case. Flage observes that according to Berkeley humans have the power to imagine and to choose, thus not all power exists in God. He holds that in this sense the God of Berkeley is not omnipotent. We have agreed with this reading of Berkeley. Flage then points out that, “Spinoza's God is properly omnipotent.”[127] This we believe is correct, at least from the perspective of how Berkeley himself reads Spinoza. Flage also notes that Berkeley considered Spinoza to be an atheist, which he most certainly explicitly did, and asks what could Berkeley therefore do? Clearly then, Flage recognizes that Berkeley offers two distinct and opposing definitions of God, not simply a God defined emotively and a God defined cognitively. Flage has suggested that there exists a philosophical as opposed to a theological definition in a purely cognitive sense. But despite his mentioning the God of Spinoza that Berkeley wishes to avoid and his ascertaining precisely the reason why Berkeley wishes to avoid it, Flage does not suggest as an explanation what we ourselves consider to be Berkeley's principal concern. And that is the need to avoid the philosophical positing of an inconceivable, incomprehensible and nonsensical God. One that leads, as Flage accurately points out, to Spinozism. Flage presumes instead an alternative theory having to do with Berkeley's “account of language” while erroneously interpreting Berkeley's metaphysics through the presumption or supposition of an unchanging, inconceivable and incomprehensible, nonsensical and Spinozistic

126 *Ibid.*, page 709.
127 *Ibid*., page 710.

God of whom for Berkeley we cannot have a notion. Flage reads Berkeley's cognitive definition of God through the emotive definition, and in our view misunderstands Berkeley's intent and entire system of thought as a result.

Flage adds that, "...while a philosopher might eschew a word such as "omnipotent" due to its cognitive imprecision, the religionist might adopt it to invoke a sense of veneration for the divine."[128] We have no difficulty with the second half of this statement. For it is our expressed contention that Berkeley is at certain times *deliberately* non-committal or vague so as to attempt to walk the tightrope that exists between his opposing definitions of God for the specific purpose of not offending theologians while at the same time explaining to philosophers and to men of common sense which definition of God is applicable to themselves when they are assessing and interpreting his purely metaphysical thought uninfected by theological dogma and artificial religious constraints. Here we agree with Flage. Though if Berkeley is sidestepping we observe that he does so as a theologian but most certainly not as a philosopher. Berkeley argues that there is nothing cognitively precise, nor even anything emotionally imprecise, if we can have no notion of what we are talking about. There is for Berkeley no possible God by the emotive definition. Flage opines that in order to defend himself against theologians Berkeley need only suggest that they use terms less cognitively precisely than philosophers do. And we have conceded that Berkeley does most certainly wish to appease theologians. But we shall leave it to the theologians themselves to ponder this question. For Berkeley's more serious, and only true concern is the possibility of defending himself against the objections of philosophers who are not talking nonsense. And these objections Berkeley has no intention whatsoever of sidestepping. As Flage suggests, philosophers who object will accuse Berkeley of being a

128 *Ibid*., page 714.

pantheist and of lapsing into Spinozism if his God is the only power. We have observed Hegel making a similar objection. However, Berkeley offers another God, a changing God, as one of the two definitions of God that he attempts to formulate. But only one of the two definitions can actually be formulated, cognitively or emotionally. And Berkeley makes evident to his readers that this is his intent and methodology. His system of metaphysics we have argued depends upon it. For Berkeley we can have no notion of an unchanging God. To speak of an unchanging God is to talk Spinozistic nonsense. Yet this is precisely the God that Flage supposes and admittedly presumes when he interprets Berkeley's system of metaphysics despite his contention that this God is emotional but not cognitive.

Flage also writes that, "...Berkeley's use of "almighty" and "omnipotent" in these sections is philosophically superfluous; they are words directed at a religious audience."[129] Our own response, and that of Berkeley too we have contended, is sometimes both *yes* and *no*. It depends upon how the ambiguous term *eternal*, as correctly pointed out by Flage, is to be defined. Flage adds, "As a careful philosopher, Berkeley found no grounds for attributing omnipotence to God, since the meaning of the word "omnipotence" is ambiguous and obscure."[130] In our own expressed opinion we are not in full agreement. To be sure, we have no doubt but that Berkeley chooses his words carefully. However, the fact that he finds this God to be inconceivable, incomprehensible and nonsensical, and the fact that he can have no notion of Him is, we believe, Berkeley's deeper motivation. The term *omnipotence* is not necessarily ambiguous and obscure. It is as such only if partially but not completely defined. The ambiguity can be resolved easily enough. Berkeley recognizes that the theological definition of God alluded to by Hylas is problematic in that it

129 *Ibid.*, page 717.
130 *Ibid.*, page 721.

does not function philosophically. He also recognizes that a God that does function philosophically is a God that is not conducive to Hylas' theological requirements. Thus, Berkeley cannot resolve the ambiguity without divorcing himself from either his own philosophy or from Hylas' theology. He therefore acknowledges two definitions of God, a twofold state of things. And once more, by way of an analysis of his Theory of Knowledge, and his definition of the term *notion,* Berkeley clearly explains this to his readers and demonstrates the direction that philosophers, and even men of common sense for that matter, are to take if they wish to pursue his metaphysics. We are in agreement with Flage in his implicit assertion that theologians need perhaps not be so nit-picky as philosophers, for if they were so nit-picky then they would be philosophers and not theologians.

Now, Flage it is to be observed offers his analysis only with respect to the term *omnipotence.* We have contended that a parallel analysis applies to the terms *omniscience* and *omnipresence.* When Berkeley deploys these all-encompassing terms to define God, the usages may be considered to be theological in one sense, that is in the sense of Hylas, and philosophical in another, that is in the sense of Philonous, and thus of Berkeley himself. This depends upon how the ambiguity of the term *eternal* is to be resolved into clear and distinct formulations. All that is required is that the ambiguity be properly clarified. Flage suggests that the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* leaves the term ambiguously defined. We shall have to rely upon the religionists to explain to us if and why this is the case. But Berkeley we have contended refuses to follow suit. Our expressed position is that when Berkeley expounds as a philosopher he deliberately writes into his system of metaphysics and his Theory of Knowledge a clear and absolute rejection of the theologically motivated God alluded to by Hylas. Berkeley's most imperative intent may well

be as Flage argues, to dodge Spinozism as a philosopher. Thus, the God that is described as nonsensical, inconceivable and incomprehensible, impossible and non-existent, and that furthermore leads to pantheism and Spinozism, is not to be supposed when interpreting the system of metaphysics that Berkeley explains. We can have no notion whatsoever of such a God, therefore He is an impossibility, and according to Berkeley himself we should not be talking such nonsense when considering his system of metaphysics.

III: Notions

When treating of notions in our direct analysis of Berkeley we suggested that two questions must be asked. One question concerns the ontological status of notions and asks what notions are. The other concerns the epistemological status of notions and asks what notions contain. An investigation of the secondary literature will reveal that while there is debate over the first question there is little to none over the second. Our own position with respect to the epistemological status of notions appears to be more or less universally accepted. There is a certain amount of disagreement over what notions are, but little to none over what they contain. Further, we have discovered little to no disagreement among commentators as to how our notions are arrived at. The principle question then appears to be that of their ontological status.

With respect to how notions are arrived at, Sukjae Lee suggests that we can have a notion of a God that is active since our notion of God is based upon observing ourselves and expanding our own powers. Lee writes, "...I have a sense of this activity [God creating ideas] and hence a "notion"- in Berkeley's technical sense of the term- of God, because I experience an analogous activity or power in myself..."[131] A notion of an unchanging God cannot be arrived at by

131 "Berkeley on the Activity of Spirits", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Volume 20-3, 2012, pages 539-576.

expanding theoretically our own powers to change. An opinion similar to this is expressed by Jeffrey K. McDonough who writes with respect to notions, "...Berkeley maintains that notions draw their capacity for representing active beings from the fact that they are derived from reflection on our own active natures."[132] We have opined in full agreement with these interpretations.

With respect to what notions contain, Daniel E. Flage contends that for Berkeley we can have a notion only of the possible. In other words, if something is both inconceivable and incomprehensible then we can have no notion of the nonsense we are talking. We have agreed. Flage writes in reference to Berkeley's "metaphysical criteria of possibility and impossibility" that, "...I shall show that Berkeley accepted the principle that there is a *y* that conceives that there is an *x* that is φ if and only if there is an x that is possibly φ."[133] In other words, there is a finite spirit that conceives, or has a notion of a God that creates both in time and from eternity, if and only if it is possible that such a God exists. And further, "...Berkeley accepted the principle that if there is not a *y* such that *y* is a consistent description of an *x* as φ, then it is impossible that there is an *x* that is possibly φ."[134] And finally, "...Berkeley accepted the principle that there is a *y* such that *y* is a consistent description of an *x* as φ if and only if is is possible that there is an *x* that is φ."[135] In short, Flage argues that for Berkeley we can have a notion only of the logically possible, the conceivable, or the comprehensible. But we cannot have a notion of the impossible, the inconceivable, the incomprehensible, or what Berkeley often refers to as a repugnancy, and as nonsense. On this question our position is equivalent to that of Flage. But as we have observed, Flage does not agree with

132 "Berkeley, Human Agency and Divine Concurrentism", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 36-4, pages 567-590.
133 *Berkeley's Doctrine of Notions*, Croom Helm, 1987, Introduction, page 7.
134 *Ibid*.
135 *Ibid.*

our contention that Berkeley argues that it is a contradiction in terms to define God as both creating in time and from extemporal eternity. For Flage, we *can* have a notion of a God that does not change despite the fact that Berkeley states that such a definition of God is both inconceivable and incomprehensible. Flage supposes this God when interpreting Berkeley's metaphysics insofar as he presumes that there is no succession of ideas in the mind of God. We have contended that this is an error.

IV: Archetypal Ideas

We shall now turn to the question of *archetypal ideas*, or *archetypes*. It will be discovered that there are no less than three possible interpretations of Berkeley's terminology. The first that we shall discuss interprets archetypal ideas through the supposition of a God that is unchanging, the supposition of a God that Berkeley contends is inconceivable and incomprehensible, nonsensical and impossible, non-existent. We will then consider commentators who define archetypal ideas as powers in God rather than as actual ideas in God. Finally, we will assess commentators whom in agreement with our own position argue that archetypal ideas are changing ideas in a changing God, and further that archetypal ideas in God are numerically identical to ectypal ideas in finite spirits, the differences being those of perspective and authorship only.

Daniel E. Flage writes, “Assuming divine ideas are composed of ideas of sensation, your visual rose... will consist of a certain train of visual ideas that could be traced through the highly complex ordered series of divine ideas of the same rose, the archetype.”[136] Flage notes, “Ideas [in God] do not properly succeed each other... they are ordered in such a way as to correspond to those ideas we successively perceive.”[137] Flage we observe is once more supposing

136 “Berkeley's Archetypes”, *Hermathena*, Number 171, Winter 2001, page 11.
137 *Ibid.*

the unchanging God when he offers his analysis of Berkeley's metaphysics. In support of his reading Flage contends that Berkeley does not want to hold that ectypal ideas are copies of archetypes for this leads to a representationalist theory of perception. This is certainly an accusation that Berkeley wishes to avoid. Flage then points out that Berkeley does not posit a mind-independent entity that is represented by ideas in his system of thought. And this is certainly true. But we do not agree with the conclusion that Flage draws. Flage believes that, "...insofar as archetypes are construed as ideas in the mind of God, they are composed of ordered sequences of all ideas of sensation that could be perceived in perceiving an object."[138] Once more we see that the interpretation of Flage is consistent with a God that does not change, consistent with the God of Spinoza rather than the God of Berkeley. In the interpretation of Flage, for Berkeley all of God's ideas exist eternally, or extemporally. Flage supposes a God with an astronomical or infinite number of ideas in His mind existing eternally and immutably. Archetypal ideas by this reading are never excited anew or created in time, they are eternal. God experiences all of them always rather than any of them individually and in succession. This sounds very much like the perfect and unchanging theological God of Hylas that Philonous when speaking as a philosopher rejects completely. Berkeley has no philosophical interest in any definition of God that is inconceivable and incomprehensible, a nonsensical God of whom we cannot have a notion. Berkeley himself would contend that Flage has no idea what he is talking about in the sense that there is no conceivable referent to the term *God* as he deploys it. Flage is speaking jargon.

Let us consider the following text wherein Flage explains more concisely the basis of his own position. He writes:

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138 *Ibid.*, page 20.

> As an eternal being, God is outside of time. This suggests that... divine creation is atemporal. So, Hylas' allusions to "when" creation occurred is, at best, misleading. Second, the suggestion that even ectypes are created "in time" is misleading. Berkeleian time is *nothing but* a succession of ideas in a finite mind. Hylas' Dilemma seems to require an absolute time relative to which creation occurs.[139]

We see that Flage begins by confessing that he is interpreting Berkeley through the definition of an unchanging God. He is defining the term *eternal* in the greater, developed or extemporal sense. Flage opines that "divine creation is atemporal". Yet we know by Philonous' own admission that this sort of creation is both incomprehensible and inconceivable. We can have no such notions, and to talk this way is to talk nonsense. Only temporal creation, or creation in time, is understood by Berkeley to be possible. Flage then correctly points out the problem with the definition of God that he supposes. That is, He cannot create in time. This God cannot create at all as far as Berkeley is concerned. The allusion as Flage notes is at best "misleading". For this God cannot change. Thus even ectypes, which Berkeley explicitly explains are created in time, cannot according to Flage be created in time. That would be misleading. Berkeley speaks of a twofold state of things, only one of which is possible, but Flage rejects the wrong one.

Further, Flage we contend is simply wrong with respect to Berkeley's Theory of Time. Time is not only the product of a succession of ideas in the minds of finite spirits. It is considerably more. Flage points out that to solve "Hylas' Dilemma" Berkeley must posit an "absolute time relative to which creation occurs". This is correct. But what Flage fails to acknowledge is that this is precisely what Berkeley does posit when he defines God as a substance of permanent change. For Berkeley there clearly *is* an absolute time relative to which creation occurs. This is necessarily the case with respect to the changing

139 *Ibid.*, page 24.

God that Berkeley repeatedly defines with words such as an, "...active principle of motion and change of ideas."[140] This is a God that is always in a process of changing. But this God Flage does not suppose when assessing Berkeley's system of metaphysics. He prefers instead the God that is inconceivable, incomprehensible, nonsensical, impossible and non-existent, the God that he himself properly recognizes leads Berkeley into Spinozism. Flage is correct to suggest that we cannot for Berkeley strictly speaking have an *idea* of time, but he is quite wrong to suggest that we cannot have a *notion* of time. For we can have a notion of a changing God. And time for the changing God is not simply and only adduced through successions of ectypal ideas in the minds of finite spirits. Time is for the changing God His very essence, the principle according to Berkeley of His entire existence. He is defined by it and cannot exist without it. In a manner of speaking, God for Berkeley is *Time* itself. And God is Substance, thus Substance is Time.[141]

Finally Flage writes that, "...if creation is identified with ectypical creation, rather than archetypical creation, the Mosaic account cannot be taken at face value."[142] This question is for Moses, the religionists and the theologians to decide. But according to Berkeley, as far as philosophers and persons of common sense are concerned this is only to part the waters. It is true that Berkeley places such concerns into the mouth of Hylas. But Philonous, and thus Berkeley himself, maintains the inconceivability, the incomprehensibility, and the impossibility of a nonsensical unchanging God. This is not for Berkeley the route to the promised land, it leads only to an uninhabitable desert.

We now turn our attention briefly to Dale Jacquette, his analysis of

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140 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.

141 Problematic with respect to this question is *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 98 wherein Berkeley states that we have no notion of time whatsoever. We shall return to this in our Concluding Remarks.

142 "Berkeley's Archetypes", *Hermathena*, Number 171, Winter 2001, page 26.

microscopes, and the problem of the continuity of objects. Jacquette observes that one and the same object will have a different appearance to the naked eye than it will when seen under a microscope. But this, it must be observed, depends entirely upon how we define the terminology, *same object*. Jacquette contends that Berkeley has the problem of arguing that the two would not be the same object. It is true that Berkeley is committed to the suggestion that the two are different objects of sense insofar as they exist as numerically distinct ectypal ideas, but we do not ourselves see this as a problem for Berkeley, nor does Berkeley consider this to be a serious problem for himself. Jacquette writes, "The apparent conflict in Berkeley's two microscope arguments is resolved by appeal to God's infinite mind as the repository of all ideas constituting identical sensible things, including those that constitute it as distinct objects for finite minds experiencing it by the naked eye and under the microscope."[143] In other words, while we see two objects in the sense that we see one vision, or one ectypal idea with the naked eye and another through the microscope, there is in reality only one object in the mind of God that both ectypal ideas participate in. Hence it is alleged that the problem of continuity disappears and that Berkeley is off the hook. Jacquette also writes, "Berkeley in this way means to emphasize a feature of his idealism that may otherwise be disregarded... the role of God as an infinite mind in which sensible things have an existence outside of particular finite mind[s]..."[144] The suggestion is that while we may speak of different objects, in other words numerically distinct ectypal ideas when experienced by finite spirits, both different objects inhere in the one archetypal idea in the mind of God, which is their "repository". Jacquette clarifies, "Sensible objects have an *eternal* [our italics] *archetypal*

143 "Reconciling Berkeley's Microscopes in God's Infinite Mind", *Religious Studies*, Volume 29-4, 1993, page 456.
144 *Ibid.*

existence in God's infinite mind, but only a relative ectypal natural existence in finite minds, sharing at most in a proper subset of the complete set of ideas that constitute the object in God's mind."[145] We see that Jacquette alludes to Berkeley's twofold state of things but that he misunderstands it, for he does not interpret one of those two states as being inconceivable, incomprehensible, nonsensical and impossible. Thus, the opinion of Jacquette sounds very much like the opinion of Flage with which we have disagreed. For this is to define archetypal ideas as unchanging, and as existing in God eternally. We see that Jacquette then, as is the case with Flage, is supposing the definition of an unchanging, inconceivable, incomprehensible, nonsensical and impossible God when offering his analysis of Berkeley's definition of archetypal ideas. Archetypes are defined by Jacquette as vast organized compactions of eternal and unchanging ideas in the mind of God. We disagree, for this is the static and extemporal God of Spinoza, but not the dynamic and temporal God of Berkeley.

We turn now to several interpretations of archetypal ideas that consider them not to be ideas at all, but rather powers. Fred Ablondi asks, "...what, if any, archetypes are there for our ideas?"[146] A good question that might be rephrased as, what archetypal ideas are there for ectypal ideas? Ablondi continues, "...it is not clear from Berkeley's writings just how God's ideas-which are what Berkeleyean archetypes are... are related to our ideas."[147] We have contended that Berkeley is plenty clear enough. Ablondi also writes that, "...to say God's idea of the book is an archetype is to say that God wills that if a person were to enter the room, they would have a visual experience of a certain

145 *Ibid.*, page 458.
146 "Berkeley, Archetypes, and Errors", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 2005, Volume 43, page 493.
147 *Ibid.*, page 494.

kind."[148] We would argue that this suggestion refers to the *Laws of Nature*, but not to archetypes. For Ablondi God's ideas or His archetypes are, "...non-pictorial logical constructs..."[149] Archetypes for Ablondi, "...do not exist as pictures of some sort in God's imagination but... as a power... the power to produce a sensation in a finite mind when the appropriate conditions obtain."[150] Once more, Ablondi seems by our reading of Berkeley to be referring not to archetypal ideas but to the *Laws of Nature* that God establishes and maintains.

Of course we disagree with Ablondi entirely. We have contended that God does have the power to create archetypal ideas by imagining them, and that He does have the power to cause finite spirits to experience these same imagined ideas as ectypal. But the archetypal ideas themselves are not the powers in God, they are the product of His choosing to exercise those powers. In other words, God has the power to imagine, and ideas whether specified as archetypal or ectypal exist as a result of His deciding to exercise that power. Now, the unchanging theological God, we have contended, has no power of any kind. The unchanging God cannot imagine anything for that would be to create in time, which would be to change. We see then that Ablondi, perhaps unwittingly, is interpreting Berkeley's definition of archetypal ideas through the supposition of a changing God, for only such a God has powers. This we have contended is the proper methodology. But we have argued that the ideas are not the powers themselves, they are rather the results of the exercisings of those powers. Just as our own ideas of imagination are not powers themselves but instead the products of our exercising our power to imagine them.

Stephen H. Daniel writes that, "To explain how God and other minds can have the "same" ideas, we cannot begin with the assumption that God

148 *Ibid.*, page 499.
149 *Ibid.*
150 *Ibid*., page 501.

communicates ideas *to* minds that somehow exist prior to or independent of the communication."[151] We have agreed. Daniel writes further that, "...archetypes cannot be remote, absolute essences that exist eternally in the mind of God and serve as the bases for knowledge. Rather, they must be the specific, determinate ways in which God's power is expressed and through which God's providence is made accessible to us..."[152] Once more we observe an interpretation that supposes a changing God, one that exercises His power. Daniel contends that archetypal ideas are, "...ways in which God's power is expressed..."[153] With this we have agreed. But Daniel then continues, "As long as bodies are not mistaken for modifications of an independently existing matter, they can be understood as archetypes of our ideas- that is, as powers in God that are not themselves ideas but which exist even when no finite mind perceives the ideas they cause."[154] We have disagreed. Finally Daniel concludes, "When God produces ideas in our minds, he does not have a prior *idea* of what it is that he communicates, nor does he need to have such an idea- if by "idea" we mean a determinate object of perception."[155] Now, we have in fact expressed full agreement with this specific opinion. God has no "prior" idea. But we disagree insofar as this does not entail the proposition that archetypal ideas are powers instead of ideas. It is only to suggest that they do not exist in God's mind in advance of their appearances in the minds of finite spirits. Our contention is that God perceives them along with finite spirits as He imagines them in time, which is His principle. We can have a notion of no other God, nor of any other metaphysic, with respect to Berkeley.

Melissa Frankel suggests that if archetypes are ideas in God to which our

151 "Berkeley's Christian Neoplatonism, Archetypes and Divine Ideas", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 39-2, April 2001, page 240.
152 *Ibid*., page 251.
153 *Ibid*.
154 *Ibid*.
155 *Ibid.*, page 252.

ectypal ideas conform, or resemble, then we have a representationalist Theory of Perception. But Berkeley wants to avoid scepticism by being committed to a direct realist Theory of Perception. Agreed. Frankel will argue, "...that the term "archetype" for Berkeley, is not meant to refer to divine *ideas*, but rather, to divine *powers.*"[156] As noted, an unchanging God has not the power to imagine ideas in time. We see then that Frankel, insofar as an unchanging God has not sufficient power and is therefore inconceivable and so forth, interprets archetypal ideas through the supposition of a changing God, though she nonetheless defines them as powers rather than as ideas. Frankel continues, "What I will suggest... is that a consideration of Berkeley's likeness principle, that ideas can only resemble other ideas- will reveal some deep problems with *any* kind of view on which ectypal ideas are meant to convey to us knowledge of divine archetypes via the resemblance of the one to the other."[157] This argument speaks to Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and we certainly accept it. But Frankel also suggests that if our ideas are fleeting then they cannot be like divine ideas. However, this proposition will only be true if divine ideas are not fleeting. We though, have contended that they are. To support her argument Frankel quotes Berkeley who writes, "...that we are affected with ideas from without is evident; and it is no less evident that there must be (I will not say archetypes, but) powers without the mind, corresponding to those ideas."[158] It must be pointed out that the quoted words are spoken by Hylas and not by Philonous. Suggesting therefore that the words represent the opinion of Berkeley is questionable. For they do not unless Philonous agrees at least implicitly, which he does not. But even if Philonous were to agree, the passage would remain unclear. For it suggests only that there are powers in God that

156 "Berkeley on the "Twofold State of Things"", *International Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, Volume 80, 2016, page 45.
157 *Ibid.*, page 48.
158 *Ibid.*, page 56. Berkeley quote is from *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 239.

correspond to ectypal ideas, which goes without saying. Yes, God has the power to place ectypal ideas into the minds of finite spirits. Frankel also writes that, "...God wills from all time (or outside of time) that a given finite mind perceive a particular idea at a particular time."[159] In our reading such a God exists for Spinoza but not for Berkeley, for He is inconceivable and incomprehensible, nonsensical and impossible. Atheism is for Berkeley the only conclusion to be derived from this definition. Hegel agrees.

Charles J. McCracken notes that for Berkeley things exist when we do not perceive them insofar as they are "comprehended by", "exist in", or are "contained in" the mind of God. He continues by observing that, "...nowhere does he [Berkeley] make definite the sense in which such expressions are to be understood."[160] In what sense do things, in other words ideas of sense, exist in the mind of God when finite spirits do not perceive them? In what sense do archetypal ideas exist in the mind of God? McCracken responds, "There must at least be in God the *power* to produce in me the idea of the tree."[161] We see that by contending that God has the power to produce an idea of a tree in time, the commentator is supposing the changing God, whether deliberately or not (this only stands to reason, we can have a notion of no other God). McCracken continues, "It [the archetype] exists not as a sensible object or group of qualities in God's mind but as the divine decree that determines what any perceiver endowed with the proper faculties would perceive were he present at any point in space and time."[162] A divine decree is not an idea, it is more or less equivalent to a power.

Why do certain commentators suggest that archetypal ideas are not ideas?

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159 *Ibid*., page 58.
160 "What Does Berkeley's God See in the Quad?", *Archiv fur Geschichte Philosophie*, Volume 63-3, 1979, page 280.
161 *Ibid.*, page 284.
162 *Ibid*., page 289.

It should be pointed out that in no passage does Berkeley offer the terminology *archetypal power* or *archetypal decree.* Though he does speak of archetypes in connection with both the powers and the decrees of God. The reason why there are those who do not define archetypal ideas as ideas may have to do with uncertainty over which definition of God is to be supposed. If one wishes to suppose the unchanging God, then one might be tempted to define archetypal ideas as unchanging. But the problem with this approach is the fact that for Berkeley an unchanging God is inconceivable. The alternative definition is therefore not tenable. Thus, what is being offered in response to alleged problems are impossible solutions to problems that do not actually exist in the first place. One problem alleged by this group of commentators is raised by the question, how can a changing and fleeting ectypal idea be like an unchanging and permanent archetypal idea? Of course it cannot be, but the point is that there are no unchanging and permanent archetypal ideas in the first place. Another problem alleged by these commentators is the concern that Berkeley cannot avoid representationalism if our fleeting ideas are in some manner or definition copies of those that exist eternally in God. True, but moot. Ectypal ideas are not copies of archetypal ideas, they are rather one and the same.

To recapitulate, archetypal ideas it is supposed are unchanging, and they are therefore redefined as powers or decrees rather than ideas so as to avoid a violation of Berkeley's likeness principle, or to prevent Berkeley from falling into an unwanted representationalist Theory of Perception. But even if defined as powers or decrees rather than as ideas, the question of archetypes, however they are to be defined, is still not resolved. If God is to exercise power or to establish decrees then He must change according to the only conceivable and comprehensible definition of God that Berkeley advocates. We have no notion of a unchanging God. Suggesting powers or decrees rather than ideas therefore

offers no solution to the alleged but in reality non-existent problems that this group of commentators purport to ascertain. Finally, Berkeley explains that, "...everything we see, hear, feel, or any wise perceive by sense, being [is] a sign or effect of the Power of God..."[163] What are ectypal ideas from the perspective of finite spirits are archetypal ideas from the perspective of God, thus archetypal ideas are not powers but rather a "sign or effect" of God exercising His powers. Similarly, an idea imagined or a volition created in the mind of a finite spirit is archetypal from its perspective and ectypal from the perspective of God, thus a "sign or effect" of the power of the finite spirit but not the actual power itself.

We turn now to two commentators who interpret archetypal ideas as changing and fleeting ideas. Craig Lehman writes that, "...Berkeley does not think of the Divine-idea archetypes as *causes*... [they] are the by-products of God's willing that the sensible world appear to us. They constitute God's knowledge of the fact that He wills that the sensible world appear to us..."[164] We observe that Lehman does not define archetypal ideas as powers or decrees as other commentators have done. He contends that archetypes are not powers in God, but rather the "by-products" of God exercising those powers by willing that finite spirits perceive ectypal ideas. He further suggests that archetypal ideas "constitute God's knowledge" of ectypal ideas. God's knowledge may be understood as his awareness of the ectypal ideas that He imagines and places into the minds of finite spirits. Lehman clarifies his position when he writes that, "...as God wills that the sensible world appear to us, He has ideas of what He has wrought- the sensible world appears to Him."[165] This sounds very much like our own position. God's will causes both His and our ideas directly.

163 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 148.
164 "Will, Ideas and Perception in Berkeley's God", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 19-2, 1981, page 198.
165 *Ibid.*, page 199.

Archetypes are neither the causes nor the powers, they are the by-products. In other words, the same ideas that are ectypal from the perspectives of finite spirits, but considered from God's archetypal perspective. They are the result of God willing, or imagining both His ideas and ours.

Finally, let us turn our attention to the work of C.C.W. Taylor. Taylor writes that the distinction between ectypal and archetypal ideas that Berkeley offers, "...is best understood in the context of his rejection of Locke's representationalism."[166] Taylor contends that, "Nowhere... does Berkeley state or even suggest that he himself accepts that there are any archetypes of our sensory ideas, nor does he even indicate any reason for postulating them which he regards as a good reason."[167] This somewhat radical sounding contention advances well beyond our own position. Taylor adds that Berkeley, "...seems sometimes inclined to account for the existence of objects unperceived by spirits in terms of their actual perception by God and sometimes in terms of the ideas which finite spirits would experience if the appropriate conditions were realized."[168] We ourselves have agreed with this suggestion. Berkeley is at times vague with respect to the meaning of the term *archetypes*. But we do not reach to the position of Taylor who suggests that archetypal ideas may or may not exist in Berkeley's system of metaphysics.[169] The following passage from the *Dialogues* is quoted by Taylor. Philonous states:

> ...[ideas of sense] have an existence exterior to my mind, since I

166 "Berkeley on Archetypes", *Archiv fur Geschichte Philosophie*, 1985, Volume 67-1, page 65.
167 *Ibid*.
168 *Ibid*., page 71.
169 It is possible that Taylor is alluding to the question as to whether or not God continues to imagine in His own mind archetypal ideas when said ideas would not also exists as ectypal in the mind of a finite spirit. For example one might ask, does God continue to imagine in His own mind the room after we have turned out the lights, closed the door and left? A more general way to phrase this question is as follows. Are all archetypal ideas also ectypal, or are there archetypal ideas that are not also ectypal? This is a very interesting question, and we shall return to it in our Concluding Remarks. We also referred to this question briefly our third chapter when discussing the definition of archetypal ideas.

> find them by experience to be independent of it. There is therefore some other mind wherein they exist, during the intervals between the times of my perceiving them: as likewise they did before my birth, and would do after my supposed annihilation. And as the same is true, with regard to all other finite created spirits; it necessarily follows, there is an *omnipresent eternal Mind*, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules as he himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the *Laws of Nature*.[170]

Our own method of interpretation for such a text need not be unduly repeated. Two Gods may be implied, or the twofold state of things may be intimated, depending upon how we read the passage, but only one is conceivable, comprehensible or possible. How does Taylor interpret this text? He writes, "...a literal reading of the passage suggests, not that God's ideas are originals of which ideas in the minds of finite spirits are copies, but rather that ideas of sense in the minds of finite spirits are the very Divine ideas themselves."[171] We have agreed completely, the differences between ectypes and archetypes are those of perspective and authorship only. Taylor rephrases his position by suggesting that, "...we should read this passage as asserting not that God's ideas are archetypes of ours, but that in perception God gives us access to his ideas themselves."[172] Again, we have agreed precisely with the second half of this statement, our ideas are God's ideas. Taylor adds, "...while Berkeley rejects Malebranche's position, he [Berkeley] does not expressly reject the thesis that we are aware of God's ideas..."[173] Taylor then concludes that, "Berkeley's archetypal order of things is, then, the world of God's *imagination* [our italics]; the ectypal order is the sensory representation of that world which God

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170 "Berkeley on Archetypes", *Archiv fur Geschichte Philosophie*, 1985, Volume 67-1, page 69. Passage quoted is from *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, pages 230/1. We shall return to this passage in our Concluding Remarks and argue that the passage is somewhat ambiguous and non-committal.

171 *Ibid*.

172 *Ibid.*

173 *Ibid*., page 72.

produces in us."[174] We have expressed full agreement with the first half of this statement. But it is clear that Taylor needs to choose his words differently in the second half in order to avoid possible confusion. He should not suggest that the ectypal order is the "sensory representation" of the archetypal order, for his goal is to absolve Berkeley of representationalism, not to accuse him of it. Taylor should suggest something to the effect that the same idea is archetypal insofar as it is imagined and perceived by God and ectypal insofar as it exists in and is perceived by a finite spirit. No idea is being represented by another idea. It is one and the same idea but considered from a different perspective. In the view of Taylor, for Berkeley we as finite spirits live in the imaginary world of a changing God. This accurately reflects our own position. For Berkeley, as for the Apostle Paul, we live and move and have our being in God.

V: Cause and Effect

We shall restrict this section to the consideration of other commentators with respect to Berkeley's explanation of *action,* or the agency of finite spirits. There should be no dispute among Berkeley scholars with respect to God being the entire and immediate cause of all events in Nature, the events themselves being nothing but a series of effects related to one another only indirectly through their conjunctions. But there do exist differences of opinion with respect to which Theory of Action Berkeley is committed to. It will be recalled that we ourselves have described Berkeley as an *occasionalist* on this question. We have argued that the volitions of finite spirits are the occasions upon which God responds *in time* by creating, or imagining, corresponding ideas of sense and placing them into the minds of the finite spirits involved. Now, the theory of occasionalism takes a number of forms. What may be termed *global*

174 *Ibid*.

occasionalism places all power into the hands of God. An example of this is Malebranche, another example is Spinoza. For these thinkers, the will of God is the occasion for everything that eternally and permanently exists. Nothing new comes into being, and thus one might argue that there cannot be occasions in the first place by this theory and that the thinkers in question are in the final analysis to be deemed atheists rather than creationists, though Malebranche would of course be terrified by this accusation. What may be termed *local* occasionalism contends that there are powers other than God, and that there are particular domains of causation apart from God. We ourselves place Berkeley into this category. The freely chosen volitions of finite spirits are the occasions upon which God responds with the appropriate ideas of sense. Further, finite spirits themselves are also the sole occasion for any thought that is not a volition but simply an act of their imaginations. In these purely imaginative acts God plays no part whatsoever for Berkeley, except the role as an omniscient and passive observer. Let us now turn to the analysis of a variety of commentors who are grappling with these questions and distinctions.

C.C.W. Taylor opines, "It is, of course, absurd to suggest that finite spirits produce ideas in God, as a result of which he in turn produces sensory ideas in them..."[175] This statement seems questionable. We know that for Berkeley finite spirits create volitions and that God experiences them in some manner of speaking. Thus, while it may arguably be absurd to suggest that finite spirits produce *ideas* in God, it is necessary to acknowledge that God does experience our volitions. Therefore finite spirits do produce *something* in God, and whether or not one chooses to define the result of a volition in a finite spirit as an *idea* in God may be a question of terminology rather than an absurdity. Further, Berkeley observes that we can also freely imagine ideas in our own minds. One

175 "Berkeley on Archetypes", *Archiv fur Geschichte Philosophie*, 1985, Volume 67-1, page 75.

must presume that God is aware of them in some manner of speaking otherwise He would not hear our prayers. And if God did not in some manner of speaking experience our volitions, then how would He know what sorts of ideas of sense would properly correspond to them? The volitions and other thoughts of finite spirits may be termed archetypal from their perspectives and ectypal from the perspective of God just as ideas of sense are ectypal from the perspectives of finite spirits and archetypal from the perspective of God.

Jeffrey K. McDonough argues that Berkeley must be read as a *concurrentist* rather than an *occasionalist.* His position is that finite spirits have greater powers through a concurrentist reading of Berkeley that they would through an occasionalist reading. A finite spirit for McDonough wills and then God acts concurrently as opposed to occasionally. Finite spirits are said to have a legitimate role in the cause and effect relationship defined as concurrentism, but no legitimate role when the relationship is defined as occasionalism. But this opinion seems to be based upon a misunderstanding of what Berkeley intends when he so often speaks of occasions. McDonough writes, "...an occasionalist account of finite spirits would threaten to group human souls together with passive ideas and oppose them to God- the only genuinely active being in the world."[176] This statement we do not believe is accurate. God according to Berkeley is not the only genuinely active being in the world. As we have observed, all spirits are defined by Berkeley as an *active principle of motion and change of ideas*. Berkeley we once more recall writes, "...there is something which knows or perceives... and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering..."[177] Finite spirits for Berkeley have the power to frame their own ideas of imagination, and they have the power to

176 "Berkeley, Human Agency and Divine Concurrentism", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 36-4, 2008, page 577.

177 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 2.

create volitions with the legitimate expectancy that the *Laws of Nature* will be in effect. We have already cited Berkeley writing that, "...philosophers amuse themselves in vain, when they inquire for any natural efficient cause, distinct from a *mind* or *spirit."*[178] Thus, to suggest that finite spirits are not genuinely active in the context of occasionalism would be to deny what Berkeley repeatedly suggests. Any distinction between concurrentism and occasionalism appears therefore to be no real distinction at all. Whether one describes God as concurring with the volitions of finite spirits when they take place, or as responding to the volitions of finite spirits upon the occasion of their taking place is immaterial, pun intended. The net result is the same in either case. McDonough reasons that, "Berkeley's dualism [minds are active and ideas are passive] thus provides him with a powerful reason for preferring a concurrentist account of finite minds to an occasionalist account."[179] And, "...concurrentism allows Berkeley to treat created spirits- including ourselves- as genuine, active, secondary causes, rather than as the mere occasional causes of God's lone activity..."[180] But again, occasionalism does not prevent finite spirits and God from doing exactly what concurrentism allows for them and Him to do. If McDonough wishes to define our volitions as "genuine, active, secondary causes", this is fine. But to suggest that actions are the result of God concurring with these volitions, or that actions are the result of God responding upon the occasions of these volitions, is to suggest the same mechanism in either case. The difference is one of appellation only. It is to quibble over words. But if we are to so quibble we must ask, how many times does Berkeley deploy the term *concur* as opposed to the term *occasion* when explaining specifically his Theory of Cause and Effect? The answer is *none.* Though Berkeley does write that,

178 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 107.
179 Berkeley, Human Agency and Divine Concurrentism", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 36-4, 2008, page 577.
180 *Ibid*., page 579.

"...it is evident, that those things which under the notion of cause co-operating or *concurring* [our italics] to the production of effects, are altogether inexplicable, and run us into great absurdities, may be very naturally explained, and have a proper and obvious use assigned to them, when they are considered only as marks or signs [occasions] for our information."[181] We observe finally that McDonough, if his concurrentism is no different than some form of occasionalism as we contend, is correctly implying that Berkeley is to be read as a local rather than as a global occasionalist.

On this question Tom Stoneham observes that concurrentism, "...is inherently unstable, threatening to collapse into occasionalism or realism depending upon how we spell out the understanding of the joint action."[182] Stoneham argues that concurrentism is internally inconsistent because if God is deemed to be a sufficient cause then finite spirits are not required as part of the explanation for human agency and that this leads to or demonstrates occasionalism. Of course we disagree, for by eliminating any role on the part of finite spirits Stoneham implies global rather than local occasionalism. We read Berkeley as a local occasionalist insofar as finite spirits themselves are free, responsible and active occasions in and of themselves. Stoneham also argues that if finite spirits *are* sufficient causes then God is not required as part of the explanation for human agency. This theory he refers to as *realism*. Stoneham continues, "...if the human contribution is not necessary to the bringing about of the effect, then the position looks like a variation on occasionalism. But equally, if it [the human contribution] is sufficient, then we have a variant on realism."[183] This however, as is the case with McDonough, is to misunderstand what Berkeley intends when he deploys the term *occasion* repeatedly in the context

181 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 66.
182 "Action, Knowledge and Embodiment in Berkeley and Locke", *Philosophical Explorations*, 21-1, 2018, page 43.
183 *Ibid.*

of his Theory of Cause and Effect. According to Stoneham occasionalism is defined as a theory where "the human contribution is not necessary to the bringing about of the effect". But of course the human contribution is absolutely necessary to the bringing about of the effect by this theory. God does not generally create and place into the minds of finite spirits ideas of them continuing to stand when their volition is to sit down. Nor do we normally hear ourselves mouth the words *I would like a beer* if our volition is to ask for a glass of water. In order for God to place ideas of sitting down or ordering a beer into finite spirits as opposed to ideas of standing up or asking for water, it is necessary that the finite spirits have created the appropriate sorts of volitions to which such ideas would reasonably correspond in the normal course of events. Otherwise there would be no such thing as an occasion in the first place and God could not be trusted. God does not act at random, nor is He the fortunate perpetrator of a vast series of wild guesses. He observes and reacts in accordance with the *Laws of Nature* that He has established. We learn by experience what sorts of sensations we can legitimately expect to result if we create certain types of volitions and we are fully responsible for our actions as a result. Stoneham also suggests, "...that Berkeley was torn between two possible accounts of action, occasionalism and realism (the causal-volitional theory of action), and that each can be made consistent with his immaterialism..."[184] We have disagreed. The term *realism* as defined by Stoneham refers to the theory contending that when God created (past tense to be noted) the universe, the mechanism responsible for our volitions resulting in actions is in a manner of speaking built into the system itself. The results of the volitions of finite spirits will not therefore require God to act or respond specifically upon the occasion of each particular volition. But Berkeley we do not believe was torn between

184 *Ibid*., page 42.

such alternatives. His God uses no instruments, and there is nothing that happens automatically. Berkeley is a proponent of the doctrine of continued and sustained creation *ex nihilo*. And none of Berkeley's chosen words or arguments support an interpretation of realism in the sense defined by Stoneham.

Patrick Fleming suggests that opponents of Berkeley's theory of human agency argue, "All that man can do is impotently will that his arm move."[185] This statement if true, seems confused on the part of those who would advance it. First, the use of the term *impotently* is improper.[186] For if a man can will to move his arm then he has a certain potency. And second, given the workings of Berkeley's metaphysics the suggestion is arguably correct, therefore it is not at all clear why opponents of Berkeley's theory would make it. The comment is more likely to come from an advocate or *pro*ponent of Berkeley's theory. For we know that God creates all of our ideas of sense. Therefore, if we will to move our arm and then corresponding ideas of sense ensue, this is because God in some manner of speaking responded to our volition by creating and placing into ourselves the corresponding ideas of sense. We are not impotent if we can create a volition with the full and rational expectation that God will respond accordingly insofar as He has established the *Laws of Nature*. Fleming next states that, "...we should not understand God as performing discrete acts of the will that accompany an agent's willing... He sets down these laws at the moment

185 "Berkeley's Immaterialist Account of Action", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 44-3, 2006, page 416.

186 It should be noted that in his *Early Notebooks*, Notebook B, entry 107, Berkeley writes, "Strange impotence of men. Man without God. Wretcheder than a stone or tree, he having onely [sic] the power to be miserable by his unperformed wills, these having no power at all." We must not allow ourselves to be confused by this passage. First, anything written in the *Notebooks* is early speculation and not necessarily representative of Berkeley's eventual position. However, in this case Berkeley does contend that finite spirits do possess a certain power of their own, and that is the power to create a volition without the help of God. The "impotence" that Berkeley refers to is the fact that finite spirits do not create their own ideas of sense in response to those freely chosen volitions which they do themselves create. This is precisely our own reading of Berkeley's mature position.

of creation...”[187] We have adamantly disagreed with this for reasons that need not be repeated. Fleming also claims that, “...God plays a role analogous to that of matter and natural laws in the materialist system. Any account of agency must offer some mechanism to accompany the will to bring about the change in the world.”[188] No. Berkeley specifies that God need only will to act, the two are one and the same. God requires no instrument or “mechanism” distinct from Himself. His will alone is sufficient. Or rather, He alone is the mechanism. God need not place matter nor anything else between Himself and ourselves. All that God requires from a finite spirit is a volition, God then does the rest immediately and *ex nihilo* in His imagination, which is where finite spirits reside, where they live and move and have their being.

It will be found that P.A. Byrne mentions our own position when he writes that for Berkeley creation, “...is a series of deliberately produced ideas in the mind of God which other spirits perceive, or a series of resolves in God's mind with which we are confronted and in virtue of which we have the perceptual ideas that constitute our experience of the world. This particular ambiguity remains unresolved in Berkeley's philosophy...”[189] We do not see this as an unresolved ambiguity. The former we have argued is the case, the latter we have argued is not. Byrne also suggests that, “Creation is not an initial act, but an uninterrupted series of volitions.”[190] We have agreed, for this is the only interpretation compatible with a God that is permanently changing. Byrne further suggests that, “Continuous creation *ex nihilo* thus affirms the radical contingency of the world and its contents and their absolute dependence upon the will of God.”[191] Agreed. Only this reading is consistent with the existence of

187 *Ibid*.
188 *Ibid.*
189 “Berkeley, Scientific Realism and Creation”, *Religious Studies*, Volume 20-3, 1984, page 455.
190 *Ibid.*, page 458.
191 *Ibid.*, page 459.

a God that is permanently changing, a God of whom we can have a notion. Anything else is in Berkeley's own words, nonsense.

Finally, Sukjae Lee will propound our exact view in words that are similar to our own. He writes, "...our volitions to move our bodies are but occasions for God to cause their movement."[192] Lee rephrases more accurately, "...when we will to move our body parts... these volitions are but occasions for God to cause the relevant sensations in us."[193] This we have contended is exactly the Theory of Cause and Effect that Berkeley advocates. *Occasionalism* we have argued is the correct name for this theory. And more specifically, what is termed *local* as opposed to *global* occasionalism.

We began with the question, does there exist a succession of ideas in the mind of God? In order to address this question we first investigated Berkeley's definition(s) of the term *God* and we discovered that two distinct definitions are presented. Next we looked at Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and determined which of the two definitions of God is applicable to the metaphysical system that Berkeley advocates. We then considered his definition(s) of the term *idea* while supposing the one applicable God. Subsequent to this and given all that we had learned we conducted an assessment of Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect. Finally, in this our last chapter we have analysed a variety of secondary sources that are relevant to our discussion.

We are now in a position to conclude.

192 "Berkeley on the Activity of Spirits", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 20-3, 2012, page 539.
193 *Ibid.*, page 540.

Concluding Remarks

I: Interpreting Berkeley's Twofold State of Things

We have argued that the God of Berkeley permanently changes. In doing so, we have contended that certain passages wherein Berkeley may appear to suppose the existence of an unchanging God must not be interpreted in that manner. A vast number of passages wherein Berkeley offers his definition(s) of the term *God* suppose a God that changes, but there are also a small number of passages that at first glance may appear to suggest the opposite. Several of these passages we have already examined. Let us now return to these passages and reconsider them in light of what we have accomplished thus far.

The expression "a twofold state of things" is deployed by Berkeley exactly once throughout his principal philosophical works. In the *Dialogues* we read Philonous ask of Hylas:

> What would you have! do I not acknowledge a twofold state of things, the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal? The former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God. Is not this agreeable to the common notions of divines?[194]

We observe that Philonous does not necessarily make the claim that he himself posits, maintains, contends, believes in or argues for "a twofold state of things". His only claim is to "acknowledge" a twofold state, or perhaps to recognize it as a suggestion or theory. After defining this twofold state Philonous explains

194 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254.

that it is “agreeable to”, or reflects “the common notions of divines”. But Philonous does not appear to include himself in that number. Thus, based upon the wording of this passage a twofold state of things is acknowledged to exist as a tenet of divines, but it is not necessarily to be taken as a tenet of Berkeley's own system of metaphysics. We observe also that the distinction between the two states is made perfectly clear. What is termed the *ectypal* or natural state is created by God “in time”, while what is termed the *archetypal* and eternal state is said to have existed “from everlasting in the mind of God”. Thus, there is change taking place in the ectypal state, while there is no change taking place in an archetypal state. And it is divines of course, that specifically advocate the existence of an archetypal state of things. But whether or not Berkeley considers himself to be a divine in this context is another matter entirely. For Philonous makes no such obvious pronouncement. If *advocating* a twofold state of things had been Berkeley's intent, he could have had Philonous speak words considerably more exact in their meaning, he could have unequivocally included himself in that category. But the position of Berkeley is deliberately left somewhat vague. It is deliberately left open to interpretation.

In another passage that we have already considered, Philonous suggests:

> All objects are eternally known by God, or, which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in His mind; but when things, before imperceptible to creatures, are, by a decree of God, perceptible to them, they are said to begin a relative existence, with respect to created minds.[195]

Philonous refers first to an archetypal state, and then to the ectypal state of things. But notice the exact wording that Berkeley chooses. He states that objects that exist in one sense as archetypal “are said to” exist in another sense as ectypal. Once more we observe that Philonous is not making an emphatic pronouncement or commitment. He appears simply to be pointing out a

195 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, pages 251/2.

supposition or theory that is said to be the case by divines. Berkeley is again deliberately vague, and deliberately leaving himself open to interpretation.

Further to this, we have already witnessed that Hylas argues:

> Well, but as to this decree of God's, for making things perceptible: what say you, Philonous, is it not plain, God did either execute that decree from all eternity, or at some certain time begin to will what he had not actually willed before, but only designed to will. If the former, then there could be no Creation or beginning of existence in finite things. If the latter, then we acknowledge something new to befall the Deity; which implies a sort of change: and all change argues imperfection.[196]

Hylas is speculating upon a definition of the term *God* and offers first something to the following effect. With respect to making things perceptible, God "either" creates from all eternity, "or" He creates at certain points in time. We observe that a twofold state of things is alluded to, but that it is alluded to as an either/or. There is no indication that both of the purported states are supposed to exist. On the contrary, Hylas appears to propose the opposite. He appears to be asking Philonous which of the two purported states of things is in reality the case and which is not. And we recall that Philonous proceeds to state that only the ectypal state of things is conceivable or comprehensible. He states further that we can have no notion of an archetypal state of things. Here Berkeley leaves nothing vague or open to interpretation.

The following passage from the *Dialogues* was also quoted. Philonous states:

> ...[ideas of sense] have an existence exterior to my mind, since I find them by experience to be independent of it. There is therefore some other mind wherein they exist, during the intervals between the times of my perceiving them: as likewise they did before my birth, and would do after my supposed annihilation.[197]

196 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 254.
197 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, pages 230/1.

Berkeley appears as if he may be suggesting that God sustains from eternity all ideas of sense that He places in time into the minds of finite spirits. Recall however, that in Chapter Five we observed that C.C.W. Taylor does not interpret this passage in that manner. Taylor concludes from his analysis of this passage that God's ideas and the ideas of finite spirits are one and the same, rather than the latter being copies of the former. We have expressed full agreement with this reading of Berkeley. But this passage might also be read to suggest that it is always the case that God sustains in time all objects "during the intervals between the times of my [finite spirits] perceiving them". For example, if we leave the room we will no longer experience visions of its contents until such time as we return to the room and have another look. During those intervals God maintains the existence of the contents of the room in His own mind. But this is not necessarily to suggest that He sustains all ideas from eternity. It is only to suggest that God maintains in time objects that are not currently present to the minds of finite spirits. Thus, not all archetypal ideas exist also as ectypal ideas. Once more Berkeley is vague and open to interpretation, as he is in three of the four passages that we have re-examined, but neither in this passage nor in any of the others does Berkeley clearly proclaim that his position is to the effect than an unchanging God, or an unchanging archetypal state of things, exists. With respect to the passage containing the either/or, we have already demonstrated in Chapter One that Berkeley goes on to proclaim the purported unchanging archetypal state to be both inconceivable and incomprehensible. He states further that we can have no notion of an unchanging archetypal state of things, thereby leaving in all of the passages that we have re-examined only the ectypal state of things as posited, maintained, contended, believed in or argued for. All references to a purported unchanging archetypal state of things are but allusions, unsupported theories, or

expressed as tenets of divines. But none of these references expresses the considered metaphysical position of Berkeley himself.

We must now consider a difficult passage that we have not analysed to this point, a passage that appears problematic both to our own interpretation, and furthermore a passage that appears problematic to any possible consistently rendered interpretation of Berkeley's system of metaphysics as a whole. In the *Dialogues*, Hylas expresses concern over the possibility of God experiencing pain and challenges Philonous on the subject. Philonous responds:

> But God, whom no external being can effect, who perceives nothing by sense as we do, whose will is absolute and independent, causing all things, and liable to be thwarted and resisted by nothing; it is evident, such a being as this can suffer nothing, nor be affected with any painful sensation, or indeed any sensation at all.[198]

Berkeley first states that "no external being can effect" God. This comment seems dubious insofar as Berkeley does not posit the existence of anything *external* to God in the first place. God is omnipresent, not semi-present. Recall that finite spirits exist *internal* to God, not external to Him. We observed much earlier Berkeley espousing the Pauline Doctrine when he wrote, "...the infinite mind of God, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*."[199] Thus, finite spirits live *in* God, not outside of or external to Him. While no external being can effect God (none exist), this is not to necessarily state that beings that exist internal to Him cannot affect Him. Berkeley continues by stating that God "perceives nothing by sense as we [finite spirits] do". Perhaps not, but this is not to suggest that God does not perceive in some manner of speaking. Recall that Philonous states, "Those things which you say are present to God, without doubt He perceives."[200] And Hylas responds, "Certainly; otherwise they could

198 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 241.
199 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Three, page 236.
200 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 220.

not be to Him an occasion of acting."[201] As we argued at the time, Philonous does not disagree, indicating that Hylas has expressed Berkeley's position. Thus, we contended that Berkeley is committed to the proposition that because finite spirits freely choose to change by exercising their powers of imagination and will, and because God perceives the changes that finite spirits produce in themselves (He is omniscient after all), He Himself is changing insofar as the contents of His perceptions change. While God "perceives nothing by sense as we do", He nonetheless "perceives" in some manner of speaking. Berkeley continues by suggesting that it is the "absolute and independent" will of God that causes "all things". But does not Berkeley also contend that finite spirits freely choose their own thoughts and volitions independently of God and that God holds finite spirits morally responsible as a result? Recall that Berkeley writes, "A [finite] spirit is one simple, undivided, active being; as it perceives ideas it is called the *understanding*, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called the *will*."[202] Clearly, Berkeley is of the opinion that finite spirits freely choose to produce certain "things" independently of the will of God (Berkeley could not separate God from sin otherwise). Berkeley states next that God cannot suffer. He then concludes the passage by stating that God cannot be "affected with... any sensation at all". Once more perhaps not, but again this is not to suggest that God cannot be affected by finite spirits in some manner of speaking, for as we have already noted, God does most certainly "perceive" the thoughts and volitions of finite spirits, whether they are referred to as sensations, perceptions, experiences or whatever, in God. We see therefore, that this entire passage is problematic not only to our own interpretation, but to any possible internally consistent interpretation of Berkeley. Thus, the passage is remarkably unphilosophical and confused. Why?

201 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 220.
202 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.

Might it be the case that Berkeley is eschewing his philosophical principles for a moment and speaking strictly as a theologian hoping to demonstrate that God does not feel pain? For if considered strictly through Berkeley's philosophical principles, God being omnipresent most certainly feels or perceives in some manner of speaking absolutely everything. Otherwise, He would experience neither our pleasures nor our pains, nor our happiness nor our sadness, nor our prayers of hope and salvation. We see that at times Berkeley contradicts himself, he wiggles, and this we contend is because he is trying to walk the tightrope that exists between his philosophy and his theology. The two must not be confused, for if they are then Berkeley will never be rendered coherent. All passages must be understood in context, or they will not be understood at all, they will lead only to meaninglessness. Berkeley as a philosopher absolutely must be distinguished from Berkeley as a theologian. Only the changing God, only the ectypal state of things exists for the former, while the "perfect" and unchanging God, and the unchanging archetypal state of things, exist if at all (and even here we do not believe that they do), only for the latter. There is no reconciling the two. And our contention has been to the effect that Berkeley himself admits this and makes it perfectly evident in his Theory of Knowledge wherein in our interpretation he argues that an unchanging God is by definition impossible. Berkeley makes it clear that he wishes to avoid having to state, "That we have first raised a dust, and then complain, we cannot see."[203] But we are doomed to choke eternally in this intellectual cloud unless we with exactitude ascertain Berkeley's precise metaphysical position in and of itself, completely devoid of any and all of the purely theological concessions and imprecisions that Berkeley is apt to make and commit from time to time. This theme has been present, or shall we say omnipresent, throughout our entire

203 *Principles*, Introduction, paragraph 2.

thesis.

Another problematic passage, one that we have already mentioned, is the following. Berkeley writes that God, "...is an impassive... being."[204] How are we to understand this? God is "impassive". We know that finite spirits are partly passive insofar as they perceive ideas of sense that are not of their own doing but are placed into their minds by God, and that finite spirits are partly impassive, or active, insofar as they freely create their own thoughts and volitions. But is not God fully aware of all of these thoughts and volitions that finite spirits create in themselves? We know that He is. Thus, the God of Berkeley *is passive* in this context. God *passively* experiences our thoughts, our prayers and our volitions to move our bodies, for He does not create them Himself, we do. As we suggested earlier, an idea imagined or a volition created in the mind of a finite spirit is archetypal from its own perspective and ectypal from the perspective of God, just as ideas of sense in the minds of finite spirits are ectypal from their own perspectives and archetypal from the perspective of God. Thus, Berkeley the philosopher is committed to the proposition that God is in part *passive*, irrespective of whether or not Berkeley the theologian wishes to admit it. And once again, we see that the philosopher must be distinguished from the theologian if we hope to extract a consistent system of metaphysics from Berkeley's writings. Along similar lines, Berkeley also defines God as being *pure activity*. But this too must be understood in context, for His being pure activity cannot mean that God does not passively experience the thoughts and volitions of finite spirits.

Yet another passage that may be somewhat confused on Berkeley's part is to be found in the *Principles* wherein Berkeley writes that, "Whenever I attempt

204 *Dialogues*, Dialogue Two, page 213. We referred to this concern earlier in Chapter Four that treats Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect.

to frame a simple idea of time... I have no notion of it at all..."[205] Berkeley, as we have repeatedly pointed out, defines any spirit as an *active principle of motion and change of ideas*. And we do for Berkeley have notions both of God and of ourselves as substances. We have contended that God is for Berkeley in the final analysis *Time* itself, and that finite spirits exist *in* time. Thus, we do have a notion of time for Berkeley. In fact, it is the most necessary, universal and primary notion that is possible. If this were not the case then we would not be able to understand the phrase *succession of ideas* in the first place, and we would have no notion whatsoever either of God or of ourselves.

II: The τό νύν

We now turn our attention to an interesting exchange of thoughts and opinions that we have not yet considered. In a letter addressed to Berkeley, Samuel Johnson writes:

> As for the... τό νύν [the present, the now] of the Platonists... I can't... understand the term τό νύν unless it be designed to adumbrate the divine omnisciency or the perfection of the divine knowledge... and in this sense it would imply that all things past, present and to come are always at every point of duration equally perfectly known or present to God's mind... as the things that are known to us are present to our minds at any point of our duration which we call *now*. So that with respect to His equally perfect knowledge of things past, present or to come, it is in effect always now with Him... that His eternity consists in... His knowing things past, present and to come... all at once or equally perfectly, as we know the things that are present to us *now*.[206]

We observe that Johnson explains to his friend, George Berkeley, his own understanding of the Greek terminology, τό νύν, that is put forth by the Platonists. There is nothing in the letter however, to indicate that Johnson

205 *Principles*, Part One, paragraph 98.
206 Letter to George Berkeley, Stratford, February 5, 1729/30.

attributes this doctrine or notion to Berkeley himself. In fact, Johnson confesses that he is not certain that he understands what the τό νύν of the Platonists refer to, therefore he is certainly not attributing the position to Berkeley. Johnson's uncertainty is the reason that he raises the subject in the first place. Thus, Johnson appears simply to be asking the esteemed philosopher about a terminology that he is not certain he himself understands. Johnson asks Berkeley if the τό νύν of the Platonists may be taken to suggest that God is to be defined as extemporally omniscient and extemporally omnipresent. Or, Johnson asks Berkeley if the expression τό νύν of the Platonists is to be interpreted as defining God as unchanging. Johnson's inquiry has to do with the thought of the Platonists, not with the thought of Berkeley except insofar as Berkeley understands the meaning of the terminology of the Platonists.

In response to Johnson, Berkeley writes:

> By the τό νύν I suppose to be implied that all things, past and to come, are actually present to the mind of God, and that there is in Him no change, variation, or succession. A succession of ideas I take to *constitute* Time, and not to be only the sensible measure thereof... But in these matters every man is to think for himself, and speak as he finds.[207]

We observe that Berkeley agrees with Johnson's supposition to the effect that the terminology τό νύν in his opinion "implies that all things, past and to come, are actually present to the mind of God, and that there is in Him no change, variation or succession". But in no manner of speaking does Berkeley suggest that this reflects his own definition of God, or that it exists as a tenet of his own system of metaphysics. On the contrary, Berkeley specifically refuses to commit himself when he states that "in these matters every man is to think for himself, and speak as he finds." We observe further that Berkeley defines "Time" as being "*constitute*[d]" by a "succession of ideas". Now, we have

207 Letter to Samuel Johnson, Rhode Island, March 24, 1730.

already noted that Berkeley defines God as an, "...active principle of motion and change of ideas."[208] A change of ideas is exactly a succession of ideas, thus Berkeley defines the terms *God* and *Time* in a very similar manner. We have already contended that the substance of God is for Berkeley nothing other than *Time* itself, thus the discussion between Johnson and Berkeley on the question of the meaning of the τό νύν seems very much to corroborate our contention.

Berkeley soon continues in the same paragraph, "We are confused and perplexed about time. (1) Supposing a succession in God. (2) Conceiving that we have an *abstract idea* of time."[209] The precise intent of Berkeley is perhaps unclear. Certainly for Berkeley, just as we can have no abstract idea of matter, or space, we can have no abstract idea of time. Thus, it may be said that we "are confused and perplexed about time" in this sense. But given that a changing God that creates in time and thus experiences a succession is conceivable and comprehensible to finite spirits, while an unchanging God that is said to create from eternity and thus not experience a succession is not, and given that finite spirits can have a notion of a changing God that creates in time but cannot have a notion of an unchanging God that does not, we must ask the following question. Why would supposing "a succession in God" be confusing and perplexing? Should not the opposite be the case? There is but one possible answer to these questions. Such a definition of God would be confusing and perplexing *only* to those theologians and philosophers whom for whatever reason(s) mistakenly believe in or suppose the opposite, that being the existence of an unchanging God wherein there exists no succession. Any theologian or philosopher who contends that God changes and thereby undergoes a succession will be neither confused nor perplexed about time in the context of Berkeley's words. Our position then, is to the effect that the correspondence

208 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 27.
209 Letter to Samuel Johnson, Rhode Island, March 24, 1730.

between Berkeley and Samuel Johnson on the subject of the τό νύν cannot be interpreted as suggesting that the God of Berkeley does not change, rather it can only be interpreted as suggesting the precise opposite.

III: Whether if Succession of Ideas?

We must now ask the following question. Why does Berkeley present by way of Philonous the expression, "a twofold state of things", and why does Berkeley allude to this twofold state in several other texts, if he considers one of those two states, an archetypal state, to be both non-existent and impossible to begin with? Perhaps we cannot be certain, but the answer to this question may be as follows. Berkeley wants to carefully argue in favour of a permanently changing God and against those who would contend that God is unchanging. But Berkeley is a product of his times living early in the 18th century when the collective memory of burnings at the stake for heresy is still a powerful social force. Further, his ambition is to become a cleric in the Anglican Church. Therefore, Berkeley wishes to express his philosophical position without offending what he contends to be mistaken philosophers and especially mistaken theologians whose faith he believes is in reality atheistic, materialistic, fatalistic, and one that commits them to pantheism. But he must tread lightly and as a result offers to theologians a concession of sorts while at the same time contending that it is nonsensical for philosophers, or even for men of common sense, to pretend to believe in what amounts to a logical impossibility.

For Berkeley only the ectypal state of things exists. What is termed *ectypal* from the perspective of finite spirits is termed by Berkeley as *archetypal* from the perspective of God, but the allusion to an unchanging archetypal state of things represents for Berkeley nothing more than a

theologically based tenet of divines that is fully inconsistent with his own philosophical principles. We can have no notion of an unchanging archetypal state of things, thus the expression is without meaning. God for Berkeley, cannot be defined as omniscient or omnipresent in the extemporal sense. In the final analysis our interpretation contends that the God of Berkeley exists *inside* of time rather than outside of time. Or, perhaps more accurately expressed, the substance of God is for Berkeley an active principle, and that active principle is *Time* itself.

A few words on the subject of *Fideism* will be helpful. Fideism contends that *reason* will always lead to contradictions and conundrums that can only be resolved by faith, specifically by faith in the inconceivable, or faith in the incomprehensible. We have argued that this is most certainly not the position of Berkeley. A proponent of fideism is committed to the proposition that human knowledge will always fall short, it will always be imperfect. But in his long-winded subtitle to the *Dialogues* Berkeley explains, "The design of which is plainly to demonstrate the reality and *perfection* [our italics] of human knowledge..."[210] Thus, Berkeley maintains the possibility of the "perfection of human knowledge". There are also to be discovered in the *Principles* several passages that support this epistemology. Berkeley writes, "The cause of this [scepticism] is thought to be the obscurity of things... it being of the nature of the infinite not to be comprehended by that which is finite."[211] He then continues, "But perhaps we may be too partial to ourselves in placing the fault originally in our faculties, and not rather in the wrong use we make of them."[212] In other words, the true nature of God is *not* incomprehensible to ourselves as

210 The subtitle continues, ", the incorporeal nature of the soul, and the immediate providence of a Deity: in opposition to Sceptics and Atheists. Also to open a method for rendering the sciences more easy, useful and compendious."

211 *Principles*, Introduction, paragraph 2.

212 *Principles*, Introduction, paragraph 3.

finite spirits. Any God that *is* incomprehensible to ourselves as finite spirits is a false God, a God that cannot by definition exist. Berkeley confirms, "We should believe that God has dealt more bountifully, with the sons of men, than to give them a strong desire for that knowledge, which He has placed quite out of their reach."[213] Thus, Berkeley's argument that fideism is untenable might run something like this. If *reason* reaches an end, then one is not entitled to say *therefore* at that point. Specifically, one is not entitled to say *therefore* faith. There can be no *therefore* at all if *reason* has reached its end. For if one says *therefore* and presumably concludes something, anything at all, then one is still engaged in a process of reasoning. Any object of "faith" that is posited post-reasoning, or beyond the access of reason, is for Berkeley thereby shown to be completely groundless. We can have no notion of such a thing by definition, thus we are speaking jargon, empty sounds without any conceptual referent. This is Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge and we must never overlook it. Berkeley we contend, cannot be understood otherwise. When Berkeley disqualifies matter on the grounds that such abstractions from particular ideas of sense are illegitimate, he disqualifies certain definitions of God as well. God cannot be abstractly stretched out into temporal infinity so as to encompass all time always. Time is His principle. It is to talk utter nonsense to suggest that in the minds of ourselves as finite spirits He can be intelligibly abstracted from Himself as temporal into an extemporal mode of being that renders Him unchanging and thereby "perfect", and further that we *can* have such a notion of God. And this certainly appears to rule out fideism as a position that Berkeley might propound. Reason reaches an endpoint, yes. But "faith" is not the result. Reason leads us to true notions of God and of the nature of things. No further jumps into incomprehensible and notion-less "faith" are for Berkeley necessary

213 *Principles*, Introduction, paragraph 3.

or even possible. The entire correct system of metaphysics is eminently realizable through reason and through reason alone. In the final analysis Berkeley as a philosopher rejects faith completely. We require faith in nothing since we can have a notion, in other words true knowledge, of everything, including God. Berkeley is a rationalist in this respect, one might even suggest that he is very much a Cartesian. Faith in any real sense for Berkeley applies only to revealed religion, to Scripture, but it does not apply to and is not needed with respect to philosophical questions. For reason alone, when properly exercised, leads to Truth. Berkeley has *faith* that Scripture when properly interpreted tells a true story, but this is where his faith ends. For Berkeley has *knowledge* of God that only *reason* can provide. Berkeley has and requires no faith in the existence of the God that he has knowledge of. And Berkeley most assuredly has no "faith" whatsoever in an incomprehensible, inconceivable, extemporal, unchanging and notion-less I know not what, nor why.

We may now recall our original question. Does there exist for Berkeley a succession of ideas in the mind of God? Yes. There is no other possible answer. The workings of Berkeley's system of metaphysics and his Theory of Knowledge demand a changing God wherein a succession of ideas does take place. To speak of an unchanging God wherein there does not exist a succession of ideas is to utter empty sounds without meaning. A God by this definition entails Spinozism, He is for Berkeley inconceivable, incomprehensible, nonsensical and impossible. The terminology is jargon that refers to nothing that the mind can understand. God creates the successions of ideas that finite spirits sense, and He perceives the successions of ideas that He creates. Ideas are ectypal from the perspective of finite spirits and archetypal from the perspective of God. Certain ideas God creates upon the occasions of the volitions of finite spirits, others simply in accordance with the *Laws of Nature*

that He has established. God exists in time, God *is* Time itself. He is the one infinite active substance, an active principle of motion and change of ideas. We can have a notion of no other God. All analysis of Berkeley's system of metaphysics must therefore suppose a God defined as a permanently changing substance for no other God may be said to exist. Berkeley does not believe in or have faith in the existence of an unchanging God, for he is above all else, a man of common sense.

Our current investigation into the philosophy of George Berkeley has considered a number of subjects within the entirety of his system of thought. But we have left others untouched. We have looked at Berkeley's definition(s) of the terms *God* and *finite spirit*, his Theory of Knowledge which includes his definition of the term *notion*, and we have considered his distinction between what are termed *archetypal* and *ectypal ideas*. We have also offered an interpretation of Berkeley's Theory of Cause and Effect with respect to the agency of finite spirits. But we have not considered his elaborate arguments for immaterialism, nor have we assessed Berkeley's reasons for attributing to God qualities such as love, wisdom, mercy and so forth. We have not analysed Berkeley's arguments for the immortality of the soul. There is an entire subject matter in Berkeley's Theory of Language. And there are to be sure, many other important questions in Berkeley studies that we have made no, or very limited mention of. Perhaps if all goes well, we shall have the opportunity to turn to these questions in the future. And we hope that the completion of this work will provide a foundation, or a starting point for those prospective future works, if time and circumstances should be so kind as to permit.

Let us now humbly invite Berkeley himself to have the final word. Our beloved, dare we say our worshipped philosopher writes that, “...a fair and ingenuous reader will collect the sense, from the scope and tenor and connexion

of a discourse, making allowances for those inaccurate modes of speech, which use has made inevitable."[214]

214 *Principles*, Part I, paragraph 52.

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