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## 786TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH, 1935.

AT 4.30 P.M.

AVARY H. FORBES, Esq., M.A., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the following elections:—As Associates: Edward J. G. Titterington, M.B.E., M.A., Rev. E. E. Ralph, Capt. H. Lechmere Clift, M.B., Ch.B., J. F. Smith, Esq., Ernest H. Channon, Esq., W. Leonard Bedwell, Esq., B.Sc., Ph.D., and W. H. Drury Yule, Esq.; and Captain G. S. Dobbie, M.C., as Missionary Associate.

The CHAIRMAN then called on Mr. W. N. Delevingne to read Dr. E. McCrady's paper on "Berkeley's Idealistic Philosophy and its Influence in Modern Thought," the author being unable to attend.

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### BERKELEY'S IDEALISTIC PHILOSOPHY AND ITS INFLUENCE IN MODERN THOUGHT.

By EDWARD MCCRADY, D.D., Professor of Philosophy, University  
of Mississippi, U.S.A.

THE essence of Berkeleyan Idealism may be summarised in the statement—*Consciousness is Reality*. To catch the true meaning of Berkeley, we must not translate his famous dictum "*esse est percipi*" too literally. When he affirms that "to be is *to be perceived*," he means only that "to be is *to be experienced*" (in some way) in consciousness. He does not mean that Being is confined to the data of what is technically termed "Perception," as distinguished, for example, from the data of "Conception," "Sensation," or "Feeling." He means that Being is synonymous with the content of *any* and *every* state of consciousness. Whatever is "real" to consciousness, is what we mean by a "reality" to consciousness. As consciousness and its content, therefore, are one, we say, in general, that "Consciousness is Reality."

It is indeed true that because there are different modes of conscious experience (*e.g.*, Feeling, Sensation, Perception, Conception, etc.), there are, of necessity, different "orders" of Reality, and as it is necessary for us to distinguish these diverse orders of Reality it becomes further necessary for us to use such terms as Being in contrast to Existence; Noumena in contrast to Phenomena; Potential entity *v.* Actual entity; Substance *v.* Accident; Spirit *v.* Matter, etc. All these experiences being "real" to consciousness possess some kind of "reality"; but because they are but so many differentiations of such consciousness (so many modes of its fundamental Being) we denote Consciousness itself as the *Supreme Reality*, capitalising the latter word to distinguish it from all lower or subordinate forms of Reality.

It is very important that this interpretation of the word "Reality" be clearly understood, as it is the answer of Berkeleyan Idealism to all forms of Realism, old or new, which are vainly proffered to the world as substitutes therefor. Paradoxical as it may appear to the uninitiated, there is no true Realism apart from Idealism. A reality which is not "real" to *some* consciousness is not a "reality" at all. The expression is nothing more or less than a contradiction in terms, and the men who to-day are seeking to justify such an assumption are pursuing a "will-o'-the-wisp." Yet, unfortunately, we have volumes of solemn scientific and philosophical literature wasted on this attempt to think the unthinkable, and *realise* the *un-real*. But more of this anon.

Consciousness is a unity-in-difference—*i.e.*, a "polarity," or, better still, being dynamic, a "*polarisis*." This has been recognised by many writers. Herbert Spencer long ago defined it as a unity of "*differentiation and integration*." So also Hegel takes the same view, and since (as just stated) Consciousness is Reality, he further explains Reality on this *Principle of Contradiction*. Now, while it is quite true that Berkeley has left no explicit statement on this point, and it would be too much to affirm that he clearly understood all that was involved in the problem, yet, nevertheless, there can be no doubt that he took his ground on what happens to be the real truth of the situation. He asserts, in effect, that Consciousness is a bi-polar experience—that we are simultaneously aware of two antithetical (polar) experiences—a positive and a negative datum—in every act of

thought. The data of the positive pole of experience are what he calls *Ideas*, while the data of the negative pole he designates *Notions*. The data of the positive pole are formal, objective, and, for the most part, clearly defined, as contrasted with the data of the negative pole which are formless, subjective and undefined. Moreover, the former he affirms to be "static," while the latter have the peculiarity of being "dynamic" in character. In general, we may say that he intends to affirm that Consciousness (which is Reality) presents us with two modes or differentiations—viz., *Phenomena* and *Noumena*. The Phenomenal World is the world of "Ideas"; the Noumenal World is the world of "Notions." We have a genuine experience of both these realms, but as differentiations of Consciousness—and, consequently, as "orders" of Reality—they are wholly antithetical. We may briefly contrast these two orders of experience as follows :

<i>NOTIONS (Feelings).</i>	<i>IDEAS (Cognitions).</i>
Sensations	Percepts or "Objects" Images or Memories.
Emotions (Urges)	Instincts
Will	
Ego	Representations (Concepts)
Soul	
Life	
Power ( <i>i.e.</i> , <i>Potential Energy</i> )	<i>Actual Energy</i>
Spirit	Matter
Cause	Effect

The one sphere (*Notions*) constitutes our Intuitions, Feelings, Apprehensions or immediate experiences of Reality; the other (*Ideas*) constitutes our Objectifications, Representations, or Symbolisations of the Reality so "felt" or "intuited." The one is the sphere of "Gnosis" or pure spiritual experience; the other is the sphere of "Cognition" or "formal," "representational" experience.

Ideas are themselves, in turn, divided into two distinct classes, viz. : (a) Those which appear and disappear with every act of

the Will; and (b) those which appear and disappear independently of volition. The former being self evidently under the control of the Will, are experienced immediately as the *effects* or *creations* of the Will. Since the Will is intuitively experienced in the very act of producing these phenomena, it is directly experienced as the *cause* of which they (the phenomena) are the *effects*. Here, then, we have the explanation of our notions of Causality. It is this simple, direct, self-evident experience of our own a-phenomenal Wills in the very act of producing this class of phenomena (*i.e.*, the particular group of Ideas designated above)—an experience incessantly repeated at almost every moment of our lives—that constitutes the whole source of our conceptions of Cause and Effect. The Phenomenal is produced by the A-phenomenal; for Conscious Will or Ego is directly experienced in the very act of *creating* its own little phenomenal world.

What, then, must be said with regard to that other and very much larger world of Ideas—the phenomena of Sense-perception—which are altogether beyond our Wills to control; which appear and disappear in complete independence of volition; nay, more, which actually seem to be thrust upon our consciousness, oftentimes, in defiance of our volitions? The answer is obvious. They must be the effects of *similar causes*—that is, of Wills *other* than our own. In short, they must be the effects of *other* Wills, Selves, or Egos, acting upon us *ab extra*. Since within the sphere of our daily experience, we see certain Ideas or Phenomena actually arising from Conscious Will as their Cause or Creator, we naturally and logically conclude that all other Ideas or Phenomena are to be attributed to a like cause, or a number of such causes, *without* or *external* to ourselves. To quote our great philosopher: “I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as often as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy; and by the same power it is obliterated and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of ideas doth very properly denominate the mind active. This much is certain and grounded on experience: but when we talk of unthinking agents, or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse ourselves with words. But whatever power I have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by Sense have not a like dependence on my Will.

When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so likewise to the hearing and other senses, *the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my Will. There is therefore some other Will or Spirit that produces them.*"—(*Prin. of Human Knowledge*, Part I., Sect. 28, 29.)

Now it will readily be seen from this (and other like passages might easily be adduced) that Berkeley makes no claim of having any direct experience of spirits other than his own. Every man, he contends, is self-conscious—*i.e.*, directly intuits his own Ego—but no man directly intuits the Soul of another.

Nevertheless, he logically and unavoidably infers the existence of such other Selves from the numberless phenomena which appear and disappear independently of his own volition. These events can be accounted for in no other way.

But let us be sure that we understand the full significance of this statement. We say that these phenomena can be accounted for in no other way. But why need they be accounted for at all? Why do we ever deem it necessary to seek a *cause* for these or any other appearances? Why do we not take such things at their face value, simply as events, and eliminate the notion of a cause altogether? Why not, as Auguste Comte suggested, strike the word from the vocabulary of science? The answer is that the actual experience of our own Wills in the very act of "causing" or "creating" that particular group of ideas which we call our own, will not allow us to ignore the question of causality, for it inevitably suggests that the appearance and disappearance of all other ideas (phenomena) must have a similar origin; and (we may here add) that inasmuch as the only cause we know anything about is Will, it follows that this is also the only thing *meant* by the word; so that if we are compelled to assume a cause for any other phenomena, we are likewise compelled to regard such cause as identical in nature with what we also refer to as "Will." Since we know no other cause than Will, all that we can *mean* by the word is Will. Either, then, we must deny with Comte, and in defiance of actual experience, that there is any Substantial Agent or Cause of the phenomena of nature; or else, if we assume a cause at all, must conceive it to be of the nature of Self-conscious Will. We may sum up the whole matter by saying that *Will and Cause*

are but two names for the same experience ; whence it follows that to substitute anything else as the creative principle of the phenomena of nature is simultaneously to change the very meaning of the word ("Cause") and to ignore the self-evident facts of experience.

Accordingly, Berkeley attributes the origin of all phenomena to the acts of an All-Supreme Spirit Who as an "Over-ruling Providence" works ever in and through the lesser agencies of created spirits for the accomplishment of His own peculiar and immutable designs. For "though there be some things," says he, "which convince us *human* agents are concerned in producing them, yet it is evident to every one that those things which are called the Works of Nature—that is the far greater part of the ideas or sensations perceived by us—are not produced by, or dependent upon, the Wills of men. *There is*, therefore, some other Spirit that causes them ; since it is repugnant that they should subsist by themselves. . . . But, if we attentively consider the constant regularity, order, concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty, and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of the creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the whole ; but above all the never-enough-admired laws of pain and pleasure, and the instincts of natural inclinations, appetites, and passions of animals—I say if we consider all these things, and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the attributes One, Eternal, Infinitely Wise, Good and Perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid Spirit, "Who works all in all" and "by Whom all things consist."

Hence, it is evident that God is known as certainly and immediately as any other Mind or Spirit whatsoever distinct from ourselves. We may even assert that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men ; because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable than those ascribed to human agents. There is not any one mark that denotes a man, or effect produced by him, which does not more strongly evince the being of *that Spirit who is the Author of Nature.*"—(*Id.*, Sect. 146, 147.)

Now with this brief outline of Berkeley's general position before us, we are in a position to consider some of the many misinterpretations which have been placed upon his views. First of all, the charge that Berkeley was a Solipsist may be dismissed

at once, for no one really acquainted with his writings, or understanding the purpose which he had in view, would bring such an accusation against him. His own repeated statements concerning the reality or other Selves existing independently of his own Ego, as well as of One Supreme Spirit, the Maker and Creator of all things, "in Whom we live, move, and have our being"—to say nothing of a number of other statements regarding the existence of a genuine phenomenal world lying beyond the range of his *personal* perception—all these things completely shatter such a supposition. Fortunately, there are few, if any, real students of his philosophy that entertain such an opinion, and—we may further add—it is very questionable if there has ever been a real Solipsist in the history of philosophy, although some writers, through carelessness of expression, have occasionally laid themselves open to the charge. As has been well said, Solipsism "represents only an hypothetical position"—a theoretical possibility. Berkeley, then, was no Solipsist but was as emphatic in his belief in the reality of a world existing independently of his *personal* consciousness as the most radical of present-day Realists. What he denied was not the existence of a "real" world beyond the limits of his personal experience but the reality of any world which, though being independent of his *individual* consciousness, was, simultaneously, assumed to be independent of *all* consciousness—a world whose being did not consist in its being perceived by any consciousness whatsoever. That is to say, if by Realism you mean belief in the reality of a world of *Spiritual Agencies* (together with "things" or "objects" whose very being consists in their being perceived by such Spiritual Agents) existing independently of one's *individual* consciousness; Berkeley was a genuine Realist. But if, on the other hand, you mean by Realism that doctrine which affirms that there are "things" and "objects" whose being does not consist in their being perceived or experienced by *any* consciousness whatever, and which, therefore, exist independently not merely of one's *individual* consciousness, but independently of the consciousness of *any* Spirit, created or Divine, then Berkeley was not a Realist; and, for the very good reason that such "things" or "objects" contradict all that we mean, or can mean, when we use these words. For it is self-evident that the words we use are only "signs" or "symbols" for certain "ideas" or other "experiences" present to



our consciousness, and have no meaning apart from these *mental* experiences; so that a word (so called) which, by hypothesis, is said to refer to something different *in kind* from *any and every mental experience*, has no meaning at all—it is not a *word*, but a *meaningless sound*. Self-evident as is this fact, it seems to have completely escaped the observation of Berkeley's critics. That a naïve Realism should have existed in his day, and even since his time, should still exist among those who have never heard, or never understood, this central principle of the Idealism which he taught, should occasion no surprise; but that sober philosophical minds should be misled, at this late day, into all the ramifications and hair-splitting subtleties of Neo-Realism, Critical Realism, and other similar attempts to minimize or distort this fundamental and self-evident fact, is indeed amazing.

For, after all is said and done—after all the epistemological cobwebs have been brushed away—we find ourselves back again at the very point from which the whole discussion originated; face to face with precisely the same issue with which Berkeley was confronted; with no refutation of his original argument to advance, and with practically nothing of importance accomplished.

That the New Realism is nothing more than a re-statement, in somewhat more refined and technical language, of the naïve Realism with which Berkeley was concerned, and, consequently, is infected with the same essential error, is obvious from the admissions of its own exponents. As one of the authors of the New Realism has himself expressed it, this interpretation goes back “to that primordial common sense which believes in a world *that exists independently of the knowing of it*,” though one which “*can* be directly presented in consciousness. . . . In short, the New Realism is, broadly speaking, *a return to that naïve or natural realism*” (italics ours). Now had the writer been content to affirm that he believed in a world that exists independently of the consciousness of *any one individual mind*, he would be only reiterating the statement of Berkeley, and there would be no occasion for comment one way or another. But, as is well known, this is not his meaning, for the whole point of the New Realism is to be found in its direct opposition to this Berkeleyan principle. In short, the very essence of the argument consists in the assumption that “things” though they *may* appear to consciousness (*i.e.*, to *any* consciousness) from

time to time, are not dependent upon such a relation, but can, and do, exist oftentimes in complete independence of *any* mind, human or divine. In a word, the advocates of the New Realism flatly contradict the fundamental tenet of Berkeley that the *being* of a thing consists wholly in its *being perceived* or *experienced*—*i.e.*, being a datum of *some* consciousness. They assert that “things” which are not data of *any* consciousness whatever do actually exist. Now we would like to ask right here What is the meaning of the word “thing” as applied to that which has never been experienced by any consciousness whatever? What can any word *mean* to me which, by hypothesis, refers to a something never experienced by my mind or any mind? Words are only symbols which we employ to denote our *mental experiences*, and it is self-evident that they can have no meaning apart from these *mental* experiences. When a word refers to a specific datum of consciousness, we say that we “understand” it—know its *meaning*. But when it is said to refer to a something different from any kind of mental experience whatever—different from any and all data of consciousness (*i.e.*, different from any kind of mental reality), the statement is meaningless. This word “thing,” therefore, either refers to some mental experience, and so has meaning; or else it refers to no mental experience, and consequently has no meaning whatever. In short, a “thing” which, by hypothesis, is different in kind from any mental experience we have ever had is necessarily different from any thing that you or I *mean* by the word. Hence, there is no man living—not excepting the most sophisticated Realist—who knows anything whatever about the *non-mental* “things,” “objects,” “existence,” etc., which he so learnedly discusses. Such a man is simply using words without meaning.

Of course, what is said about the New Realism applies with even greater force to Critical Realism, since, unlike the former, *this* latter theory denies the possibility of such “entities” ever coming within the sphere of experience under any circumstances. There are, of course, epistemological problems which still further distinguish the two theories, but with these we are not at present concerned. It is only the fundamental fallacy common to both that we need here consider. The obvious difficulty of discussing any kind of “object” or “entity” which has never, and can never, be experienced in consciousness—which is simultaneously alleged to be *known* and *unknown*—is so plain a contradiction

that it does not deserve serious consideration.\* Nor is there any relief for the hard-pressed advocate of the theory in the much advertised *doctrine of essences*. For if this is intended to signify anything different from the pure "notion" of Reality advocated by Berkeley on the one hand, or the mere "implication" view of Kant on the other, it simply resolves into an ingenious but futile attempt to straddle a contradiction. Happily we are not alone in these opinions, as recent criticism is full of such charges. "Critical Realism," say Gamertsfelder and Evans, "is an ingenious theory. It represents, however, more the desire to present an epistemology which will give a logical explanation of error than a concern to interpret knowledge as it appears to us on observation or introspection. If the datum is purely a logical subsistent, then it is really a fiction of the imagination, interesting but not verifiably true. If the essence is a storehouse of concrete experience, then it is the datum *Mind*, presented in *personal Idealism*. One wonders how we may be sure that the essence truly represents the objective reality, or even how we can be certain that the external object is actually there. If the assurance is to come by arbitrary postulation, why not be a New Realist and let the datum be the objective real, or an *Idealist* and call it mental content? The notion of essence seems to raise more problems than it solves"—(*Fundamentals of Philosophy*, p. 250). Says another writer, "Its difficulties are immense. . . . There are sharp differences between his (Drake's) form of the doctrine and that of Santayana, which the critics have not failed to notice; Santayana and Strong now seem to be practically alone in their position, while Sellars is as active in his opposition to it as any other critic. . . . The position as a whole has gradually been recognized as lacking in true originality. . . . Recent studies of current philosophical movements have shown a marked tendency to ignore it entirely. . . . In addition, the group has completely lost solidarity; they are divided not

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\* We are fully aware that it is the "existence," and not the "nature" of the "object" that is assumed to be known. But that is the very point. Existence itself implies *mental* contingency, for the word itself is only a name which we have given to a *certain experience of our minds—i.e.*, a certain *mental* fact or datum. It has no meaning whatever apart from this *mental* fact or experience—hence an existence which is alleged to be *non-mental* is a contradiction in terms—it is an existence different from all that is meant by the word.

only upon the doctrine of essence, or the nature of data, but also upon the monistic or dualistic nature of knowledge. It is probably an accurate statement that at present Santayana, Drake, Lovejoy, and Sellars represent four distinct types of theory. And some observers believe that under the withering fire of criticism even the doctrine of essence is about to be renounced by its advocates.

The situation is similar in Neo-Realism. Marvin, Pitkin, and Holt have abandoned the field. Spaulding has written little lately, and is known recently chiefly for his adherence to the doctrine of Emergent Evolution rather than for any further development of Neo-Realism. Perry's recent writing has been in the fields of history and the theory of value, though he has retained the most positively neo-realistic attitude. Montague has veered away from the others—or they have veered from him, as may be preferred—on the point of the type of the realities to be accepted. He thinks that "if Neo-Realism is to mean an ontological equalitarianism in which existential status is to be accorded to every content of perceptual experience, whether veridical or illusory, then such a theory is not Realism at all. . . . I would rather be an Idealist, at least a Kantian Idealist, than swallow any such a mess. . . . Once more . . . I am left without a party."—(Victor E. Harlow, *Bibliographic and Genetic Study of American Realism*, pp. 100–103.)

Without entering into further details, the above should be sufficient to show how hopeless is the attempt to discover a valid foundation for any form of Realism which denies this axiom of Berkeleyan Idealism. Manifestly the "ontological object," so called, is either an actual datum of conscious experience or it is not. If it is an actual datum of experience, then, like the epistemological object, it is a *datum of consciousness—a mental fact*. If it be not a datum of our own consciousness, it may, nevertheless, exist as a datum of some other consciousness; but if we assume that it is an "existence" present to no consciousness whatever, then it follows as the night the day it is an "existence" different in kind from all that we mean by the word "existence"; for all that *any* word can refer to (and be intelligible) is some kind of mental fact or experience. We cannot repeat it too often, a word is simply a symbol for some "idea" or other mental experience, and a word which by hypothesis refers to no "idea" or mental experience whatever is a word which has no meaning. The *meaning* of a word is

simply the *mental datum* to which it refers—the particular *mental experience* it was intended to symbolize or represent. We can never *mean* by any word, therefore, more than what is present to consciousness—hence more than some *mental fact*. A *non-mental* entity, thing, or object, is simply a contradiction in terms.

In conclusion, then, we affirm that there is no “ontological object” in the sense of some “unfelt,” “unexperienced,” “unknown and unknowable Reality”—a somewhat existing independently of *all* consciousness (and so different from all that we mean or can mean by “existence,” “Reality” or what not which in some utterly inexplicable manner “comes into our consciousness” from time to time. On the contrary, what we are endeavouring to signify by that word is a genuine mental experience—a “*feeling*” of a “dynamic presence” which we variously characterize as the experience of “Power,” “Energy,” “Will,” etc. ; and which though a “*feeling*” only, we persistently try to “*interpret*” or “*cognize*” in the form of “Ideas,” “Concepts” and other (objective) “Representations” of the imagination. In doing so, however, we are always aware that the “Representation” is a *symbol* only of the “Reality,” and not the Reality itself, just as the  $x$  and  $y$  of the mathematician are but *symbols* only of the quantities which they represent. If the “urge” of this “presence” were not antecedently “felt,” there would never be any attempt on our part to “cognize” or “understand” it. It is this very fact of something already present to consciousness—*felt*, but not *understood*—that prompts the act of cognition. It is a somewhat *already* present to the mind that we are trying to comprehend, not an absolute nothing. No one ever tries to “understand” what has never entered his consciousness. It is an immediate datum of consciousness, therefore, a real *entity*, *felt* but not *understood*, that we are seeking to explain, interpret, cognize. In short, the “Feeling” is a direct “*gnosis*” or intuition of the Reality ; while the Idea, Concept, etc., is only a “*cognition*,” representation or symbol thereof. Such an interpretation sweeps aside all the epistemological cobwebs of Realism and gives us a sane and logical (as well as idealistic) explanation of the mystery.

It would be interesting to trace the influence of Berkeleyan Idealism in yet other fields of present-day speculation, but space prohibits such an undertaking. No sketch would be complete,

however, which failed to make a brief allusion to the conquests of Idealism in the domain of recent physico-mathematical research. Fortunately, the complete revolution which has been wrought in this department of thought has been so cogently set forth in the works of Viscount Haldane, Eddington, Jeans, and many other writers, and has withal been so widely advertised in popular literature, that its discussion need not detain us here. It is a matter of some surprise, however, to find how slow has been the awakening in the sphere of the biological sciences. In this department, mechanistic interpretations have, until quite recently, been singularly dominant. Nevertheless, the swing of the pendulum in the direction of a Neo-Vitalism closely akin to that which has been so long and ably defended by Driesch and G. Wolff is now clearly discernible in the utterances of such noted authorities as William Patten, J. Arthur Thomson, J. S. Haldane, and others. Everywhere we look the evidence is the same. The day of the old Materialism is gone for ever.

With this hasty epitome of the situation before us, it only remains to address a few remarks to those of my fellow-Christians who, though honouring Berkeley as a man, and gladly acknowledging his sincerity of purpose as a loyal *Defensor Fidei*, are nevertheless just a little wary of his "fine-spun metaphysical argument." Be assured, there is nothing to fear in anything that he has written, for when properly interpreted, we discover in his philosophy nothing more than what is implicit in the orthodox Faith. Let it be understood once for all—Berkeley had not the most remote intention of denying the reality of an external world. On the contrary, he repeatedly asserts the existence of such a world. He never for one moment denied that there was a real *Substance* underlying the phenomena of nature. He only denied that there was, or there could be, any substance to such a phenomenal world *other than Conscious Will or Spirit*; and for any Christian Man to deny that proposition is to deny the plainest statements of Holy Writ. It is the Materialist with whom Berkeley is dealing, and he tells him that an underlying Substance there certainly is, but it is a *Spiritual* and not a *Corporeal* Reality. It is a SPIRIT, not just one more block of MATTER. In short, he argues that the underlying Substance which "creates," upholds or *gives existence to* the whole Universe of Matter—that "Reality" in whom "all things live, move, and have their being"—is nothing more or

less than a *Divine Spirit—God*. Matter is simply a product of this Divine Mind or Spirit, and has no existence whatever apart therefrom. As Christian men we should be the last persons in the world to find fault with such a proposition, for this is precisely what the Scriptures everywhere proclaim. "In the beginning God created (*i.e.*, gave existence to) the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i, 1). But who or what is God? Just another *material body* like the earth? No. God the creator of Matter—the Substance which gives it existence, is not Himself a *material* but an *Im-material Reality*. "*God is a Spirit*" (St. John iv, 24)—a *Conscious Mind* or *Intelligence*, and it is this same Divine Mind or Spirit Who through His *Reason* ("*Logos*") "*made the worlds*" (*i.e.*, all "*Matter*" and material things) and is even now (as "*Substance*") "*upholding* all things by the Word of His Power" (Heb. i, 1-4). In short, inasmuch as the Scriptures plainly assert that the entire material world, and all that therein is, is the creation of the Divine Mind, and has no existence apart from this Creative Mind, they as plainly assert that *all Matter is the product of Mind*, and can have no existence whatever apart therefrom; and this, after all, is Berkeleyan Idealism.

#### DISCUSSION.

MR. AVARY H. FORBES: The paper suffers from two disadvantages: (1) too much psychological learning and (2) absence of any explanation of Berkeley's argument.

From over forty years' experience of teaching (of both sexes and all ages), I have found that the greatest scholars are seldom the best teachers. Brilliant and learned teachers cannot stoop their intellects to the level of students and pupils, but expect them to grasp big problems and their solutions in the few words which sufficed for themselves to take them in.

Dr. McCrady, noticing our somewhat flamboyant sub-title—"Philosophical Society of Great Britain"—has taken the Victoria Institute for a body of expert metaphysicians familiar with all the up-to-date varieties of ontological and psychological postulates and speculations. Accordingly the doctor makes no attempt to reproduce Berkeley's great argument, but contents himself with defining the *conclusions* of the same. For instance, we have on the first page: "The essence of Berkeleyan idealism may be summed up

in the statement: consciousness is reality: *Esse est percipi*—“to be is to be experienced”; “being is synonymous with the content of any and every state of consciousness”; “Consciousness is reality”; “We denote consciousness itself as the *Supreme Reality*”; “A reality which is not real to *some* consciousness is not a ‘reality’ at all.” These definitions imply a full familiarity with the whole of Berkeley’s reasoning. But it is my experience that the vast majority of highly educated people have *no* such familiarity, and that it is very difficult even to get them to understand it; for some eminent philosopher has admitted that Berkeley “proved to demonstration what no man in his senses can believe.” The most whole-hearted Idealist can never wholly rid himself of the belief that there is a something underlying all the physical objects of nature, although he has no evidence of it whatever.

I cannot agree with the lecturer that “the day of the old materialism is gone for ever.” A few scientists (who are also philosophers), backed up by certain psychical societies, are emphatic in welcoming the miraculous in nature, and the existence of a spirit world around us; but the vast majority of scientists, never having troubled themselves to master Idealism, are busied only with material things, and regard “matter,” and the laws that govern it, as the only thing that is immortal. Dr. McCrady himself says (page 113, line 10, *et seq.*) “that sober, philosophical minds should be misled, at this late day, into all the ramifications and hair-splitting subtleties of Neo-Realism, Critical Realism, etc. . . . is, indeed, amazing.”

I fully share that surprise; for when I first mastered Berkeley’s argument I felt confident that, the foundation being gone, the materialistic cult must sooner or later collapse; that, in fact, all that was required was a widespread knowledge of the argument for Idealism. But, on the contrary, the spread of Evolution, and the eager study of all the physical subjects to which that gave rise, has, in my opinion, given a tremendous impetus to materialism.

Berkeley, as Dr. McCrady reminds us, makes no claims to having any *direct* experience of spirits other than his own; “Every man directly intuits his own ego; but no man directly intuits the soul of another.”

This, to me, is Berkeley’s weak point; and I cannot help thinking that he is quite wrong. This is what Hume seized on, to argue



that no individual man is conscious of the existence of any being but himself: that all other persons, all other animals, may be nothing more than automata; that my knowledge of the minds and souls of other people, and of God Himself, is a mere matter of inference, and not of knowledge.

This reduction of Idealism to the hopeless scepticism of Hume has alienated the Evangelical world from Berkeley, and caused him to be boycotted or ignored by those who ought to have known better. For Berkeley, a pioneer missionary, a God-fearing man, was one of the noblest characters our country ever produced. To him, Pope (a Roman Catholic) attributed "every virtue under heaven." I contend that our spiritual nature *is* in direct contact with other spiritual beings, both good and bad, both human and divine. This is what I find in Scripture, and what can be proved by the experiences of life. To reason out these premises, however, would demand far more time than is now at my disposal.

We are indebted to Dr. McCrady for bringing this important subject before us.

The Rev. H. C. MORTON, B.A., Ph.D.: This paper is very fully in harmony with our title of Philosophical Society; but whilst I have read, and have also listened with much interest to, Professor McCrady's Paper and note the strong conviction which characterizes it, I cannot pretend to agree with it for even one single moment. Realism has always been regarded as the Biblical type of Philosophy; and the longer I consider Idealism, the more convinced I am that Biblical affinities are not to be sought there.

Professor McCrady's contention is that the world of existence consists in its being perceived by some consciousness, either mine or another's. Here are his words:

"Berkeley denied . . . the existence of . . . a world whose being did not consist in its being perceived by any consciousness whatever": and again in full keeping with this:—

"*Existence* is only a name which we have given to a *certain experience of our minds—i.e., a certain mental fact or datum*" (p. 115, note).

I want this position to be quite clear ; because as soon as it is clear it will be rejected unhesitatingly by all except one person in a million. The Idealist is continually guilty of passing without a vestige of proof from the proposition that " A thing exists in thought," which of course is true, to the proposition that " the thing exists *only* in thought," which is an absolutely different matter. That is a proposition drawn, not from our primary authority, consciousness, but from a long process of sophistication, and takes us all out of the world we know into a sort of Christian Science nightmare.

Five minutes is a very brief portion of that great objective reality called Time, but I think it may be possible to test this Subjective Idealism by three tests : 1, the existence of God ; 2, the universal consciousness of mankind ; 3, the statements of the Bible, to which the Professor appeals.

1. Idealism fails to give any place to the real external existence of God. It says that there is no existence outside thought, and thus makes God's existence depend upon the thought of God. I remember the statement in the classroom, " Having thus shown the genesis of the material world, next time I will proceed to generate God." But between God and the thought of God there is all the difference in the world.

2. Idealism is contrary to the universal experience of mankind. Always, and inescapably, that universal consciousness is a consciousness of the subject who thinks and of the object that is thought. Moreover, I myself, who think, am an existence quite apart from my thought about myself. Berkeley, if he were logical, would have taken the position Hume took, viz., that the only things which exist in the universe are mental states. He should have concluded that " Thought is the only Being," as Hegel affirmed. But Berkeley, having said that existence is only a name for a certain experience of our minds, went on quite illogically to admit the existence of both himself and of other minds or selves—as distinct from those mental experiences.

It is not admissible for the Idealist first to claim states of consciousness as the only real existence and then go on to deny the validity of those states of consciousness which are practically universal, which declare that I am a being on the one side, and that there is an external world of real spiritual beings and real material

things upon the other side, continually affecting me in a great variety of ways. The Idealist cannot first appeal to consciousness as the one reality and then refuse to accept the most universal affirmation of that consciousness.

3. The Bible will not allow the Idealist to "get away with" the idea that existence is simply a state of somebody's mind. The Professor quotes Gen. i, 1; but read on

And the Earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Can anyone really claim for one moment that these existences, viz., the Earth, Darkness, the Spirit of God, and the Waters, all are just states of consciousness? Most surely here, as everywhere in the Bible, we have just what the Idealist denies, viz., God upon the one hand and the material external world upon the other. The Spirit of God did not move upon the face of one of God's thoughts. The Bible uses language which confirms the universal consciousness of mankind.

Idealism is a long process of sophistication, which robs us ultimately of everything that exists except what is philosophically called the Absolute. *Why* does it do this? *Cui bono*? For my part I hold to that "primordial common sense which believes in a world that exists independently of the knowing of it."

Mr. W. E. LESLIE wrote: I am glad that the Council has included a paper from the Idealistic standpoint, not only because it is desirable that various points of view should be represented but also because I believe it to be correct. The paper is somewhat technical. Perhaps the fact that it lays great stress on considerations which to many will appear to be purely verbal, is due to the author's assumption that the speculations of mathematical physicists are more widely known than is actually the case. While these speculations have had a strongly Idealistic tendency, the empirical atmosphere of the last century has produced a widespread feeling that purely verbal considerations belong to the bygone age of the Schoolmen. The word "Substance" toward the end of the paper is presumably used in a highly technical sense. A different expression might save misunderstandings.

## AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I confess to no little feeling of surprise in being called upon to reply to the two foregoing criticisms of my paper. I say the *two* foregoing criticisms, for I understand from the remarks of Mr. Leslie that he is in substantial agreement with my position. I do not mean to imply that the criticisms in question are at all new or strange to me. Indeed, forty years of teaching and lecturing on the subject of Idealism has made such objections a familiar experience, but I must confess I was not looking for criticisms of this kind from such a quarter.

The difficulty of replying to such objections is strikingly like that which a man encounters in attempting to explain the point of a joke to a friend devoid of humour, or to make plain the meaning of music to one who has no music in his soul. I do not say this in any unkind spirit, as I am quite sure these gentlemen mean well and are thoroughly convinced of the truth of their respective positions. Yet it remains a fact the essence of the argument lies in a series of propositions which should be *self-evident*. When, therefore, these basic propositions are quietly ignored by my critics and other premises, for which I am not responsible, substituted therefor, the conclusions deduced may be fascinatingly interesting, but they have nothing to do with my argument. What these gentlemen are overthrowing with such convincing logic is not my conception of Idealism, nor that entertained by Berkeley, but one of their own construction. It is needless to say that criticisms of that kind do not affect me in the least.

Furthermore, in carrying out this method of procedure, they have even gone so far (in a number of instances) as to credit me with opinions which I do not only disavow but which (as a careful review of my paper will testify) I had taken considerable pains to disavow in the very article under discussion. For example, Mr. Forbes urges, as against the views of Berkeley and myself, that even "the most whole-hearted Idealist can never wholly rid himself of the belief that there is something underlying all the physical objects of nature, although he has no evidence of it whatever"—as if either Berkeley or I ever denied the existence of such a "something." Why, if there is any one thing that I have laboriously

sought to establish in this very paper, it is the genuine reality of that "something." To quote only one of my many statements—"He (Berkeley) never for one moment denied that there was a real *Substance* underlying the phenomena of nature. He only denied that there was, or there could be, any substance to such a phenomenal world *other than conscious Will or Spirit*; and for any Christian man to deny that proposition is to deny the plainest statements of Holy Writ. It is the Materialist with whom Berkeley is dealing, and he tells him that an underlying Substance there certainly is, but it is a *Spiritual* and not a *Corporeal* Reality. It is a *Spirit*, not just one more block of *Matter*." (q.v.) See also all that follows and much that precedes this quotation. Surely I am not called upon to justify my argument to a critic who has not taken the trouble to acquaint himself with some of my most explicit statements.

In like manner, Dr. Morton asseverates that "Idealism fails to give any place to the real external existence of God." What Idealism is he talking about? Certainly not the Idealism I am here advocating nor that advocated by Berkeley. The statement already quoted (*supra*)—to say nothing of many other passages in my paper—abundantly refute such an assertion. Suffice it to say I do most emphatically assert the *objective, external, transcendental* relation of God to the world; but, in so doing, I also as emphatically assert His *immanence* in Nature—especially in the hearts and lives and bodies of men. ("Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is *in you*?"—I Cor. VI, 19. Also numberless other references to the Divine Spirit dwelling *within* us.) Nor is there any contradiction here. For God is neither *excluded* ("shut out of") the world that He has created nor, on the other hand, is he *imprisoned* helplessly within it. He is both immanent and transcendental, both within and without ("external to") his world. In short, God is all in all. "In Him we live, move, and have out being." Not only do I hold that as a religious conviction but my Idealism abundantly confirms that belief. And here I may add that if there is any question involved in Berkeley's language on this point at all, it relates to the "immanent" rather than the "external" Deity.

Again, assuming that Berkeley taught, as a central principle, that all our experience was limited to our "ideas," and their logical

combinations (*i.e.*, "thoughts"), Dr. Morton has again reasoned ingeniously (though by no means originally) to the conclusion that since the experience of "thought" alone can never carry with it the experience of a "Thinker" or "Subject" (?), the Idealism of Berkeley fails to establish the existence of God. Put in another form, since "existence," with Berkeley, is a property of "ideas" alone, it can never be predicted of a Subject or Thinker as distinct from his thought. All this *a la* Hume. Now the only trouble about this otherwise most interesting and ingenious theory is that *it is not true*. Berkeley does *not* limit existence to "ideas" but to mental experience in general, in which category he expressly includes the direct "notion" of Spirit. He distinctly asserts (*see Prin. of Knowledge*, Sect. 27, and elsewhere) that in addition to our ideas or thoughts, we have also "notions" of Will, Soul, Spirit, etc., and it is from this *direct experience* of the Spirit within that he reasons to the existence of other "Spirits" than his own, as well as to the existence of a Supreme Spirit—*i.e.*, God. Although I have devoted considerable space to the elucidation of that view of Berkeley, my critic does not seem to be aware of the fact. He prefers to answer my argument by ignoring my premises altogether, and substituting some of his own.

Yet this whole difficulty would have vanished, had he thought somewhat further on this point. The experience of the human Self or Spirit—unlike the experience of an "idea"—is synonymous with the experience of a *Self-conscious Being*—that is a Being (Existence) conscious of itself—hence (for that reason) "*self-existent*." *Chronologically*, there is no priority of the *consciousness* of such a Spirit to his *being* or *existence*. His consciousness and his existence, though logically distinct, are chronologically inseparable and co-existent, even as the three Persons of the Trinity, though logically distinct, are co-eternal. In a word, *Being cannot exist without Consciousness nor Consciousness without Being*, although it is only in the case of our direct experience of Spirit that this truth is fully revealed. Self-conscious Spirit is the only self-existent being there is—all other "orders of reality" (note what I have said on that subject) being dependent for their existence upon other "Selves" or Conscious Spirits. In short, the difference between the "being" of a Spirit, and the "being" of an "Idea" ("Thought")

is that the one is "*Being per se*" the other "*Being per aliud*"—an expression which we owe to Spinoza (Axioms I and II), but which, in its idealistic implications, has been chiefly developed by Hegel. Appreciation of this principle altogether removes the enigma which so perplexes Dr. Morton, and so makes his supposed objection inapplicable in this connection.

Much more might be said in reply to this and other similar objections. The truth is, however, that back of all this, lies the failure of my critics to appreciate the significance of that fundamental principle which is the *sine qua non* of all true Idealism—viz., that all that Science, Philosophy, Religion, or any other form of human inquiry is concerned with are the actual facts of human experience; and since all experience is *conscious* experience, all these facts are *data of consciousness—mental facts*. The very words we use, in all our discussions, refer to these *mental facts* or they refer to nothing at all—that is, are without meaning. To talk about "things," "entities," "realities," different in kind from *mental experiences*, then, is only to talk about "things," "entities," and "realities," different in kind from any that we mean by the words themselves. The word "Matter" is no exception to the rule. What we refer to in using it is a *mental experience*. Even Huxley admitted that "'Matter' and 'Force' are, so far as we can know, mere names for certain forms of consciousness." (*Lay Sermons: Descartes' Discourse*, p. 340.) Until our critics can invalidate that self-evident proposition, all further argument is useless; and, I may add, until they fully appreciate its meaning, together with the logical implications which it involves, they will never see what Berkeley is talking about.

Finally, let me say that I am not here interested in the defence of just any system of Idealism that may be suggested for discussion but only in that advocated by Berkeley. I heartily agree with my critics that there are many conceptions of Idealism that are logically indefensible. Those very conceptions which they are here attacking I include among the number. But inasmuch as they represent neither the view of Berkeley nor my own, I am not concerned in answering them. They have no bearing upon my argument.

I see nothing, therefore, in the above criticisms which call for further serious consideration. They are built partly upon mis-

interpretations of Berkeley's position—partly upon misunderstanding, and, to some extent, disregard of my own statements—and partly again upon a lack of familiarity with the great work that has been done by specialists in this department of philosophical research.

This last statement also suggests another matter to which I must briefly allude before closing—viz., the singular failure of many people to appreciate the tremendous revolution that has taken place in the world of Physics within the past few decades, resulting as it has in the complete repudiation of the old Materialism. I spoke briefly of this matter in my paper. From his comments on this statement of mine, in which he speaks of "a few scientists . . . backed up by certain psychical societies . . . welcoming the miraculous in nature," etc., it appears that Mr. Forbes has completely misunderstood to whom I was referring. Let me say at once, therefore, that I was not there alluding to the members of the S.P.R., or any other similar organisation, but to that long array of modern chemists, physicists, mathematicians, astronomers, etc., who, since the epoch-making discoveries relating to Radioactivity, the electrical constitution of matter, the doctrine of Relativity, etc., have completely changed their attitude toward the whole materialistic philosophy of the past. I am very far from insinuating that men like J. J. Thomson, Oliver Lodge, Einstein, de Sitter, Whitehead, Millikan, Jeans, Eddington, and hosts of other recognised authorities have all suddenly turned Berkeleyan Idealists overnight. Such a statement would be absurd. But I do venture to assert that they are all practically unanimous in the opinion that "the old Materialism is dead"; and this being the case, some kind of idealistic conception of the universe is the only logical alternative—an opinion which is now widely entertained. But, again, if this be true, it means also that every form of so-called "Realism" which, repudiating the axioms of Idealism, attempts to build anew on the foundations of the old Materialism is likewise doomed to perish.