

A TREATISE
CONCERNING
THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

WHEREIN THE CHIEF CAUSES OF ERROR AND DIFFICULTY IN THE SCIENCES, WITH THE GROUNDS OF SCEPTICISM, ATHEISM, AND IRRELIGION, ARE INQUIRED INTO.

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THE PREFACE.

WHAT I here make public has, after a long and scrupulous inquiry¹, seemed to me evidently true and not unuseful to be known—particularly to those who are tainted with Scepticism, or want a demonstration of the existence and immateriality of God, or the natural immortality of the soul. Whether it be so or no I am content the reader should impartially examine; since I do not think myself any farther concerned for the success of what I have written than as it is agreeable to truth. But, to the end this may not suffer, I make it my request that the reader suspend his judgment till he has once at least read the whole through with that degree of attention and thought which the subject-matter shall seem to deserve. For, as there are some passages that, taken by themselves, are very liable (nor could it be remedied) to gross misinterpretation, and to be charged with most absurd consequences, which, nevertheless, upon an entire perusal will appear not to follow from them; so likewise, though the whole should be read over, yet, if this be done transiently, it is very probable my sense may be mistaken; but to a thinking reader, I flatter myself it will be throughout clear and obvious. As for the characters of novelty and singularity² which some of the following notions may seem to bear, it is, I hope, needless to make any apology on that account. He must surely be either very weak, or very little acquainted with the sciences, who shall reject a truth that is capable of demonstration³, for no other reason but because it is newly known², and contrary to the prejudices

¹ In his Common-place Book Berkeley seems to refer his speculations to his boyhood. The theory of the sensible world propounded in the following Treatise was obviously conceived by him before the publication of the *New Theory of Vision*, which was a first instalment of it.

² Cf. Locke, in the ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ of his *Essay*. As regards the ‘novelty’ of the chief principles of the following treatise, viz. the *negation* of Abstract Entities (absolute or unperceived Matter, absolute Space, absolute Time, absolute Substance, and absolute Cause); and the *affirmation* of Mind, as the Synthesis, Substance, and Cause of all ideas or objects—the best preceding philosophy, ancient and modern, was a dim anticipation of it.

³ Cf. sect. 6, 22, 24, &c., in illustration of the demonstrative character of Berkeley’s distinctive doctrine.

of mankind. Thus much I thought fit to premise, in order to prevent, if possible, the hasty censures of a sort of men who are too apt to condemn an opinion before they rightly comprehend it⁴.

⁴ Berkeley's one request to his reader, here and throughout his writings, is, to take pains to understand his meaning. This especially requires us to avoid confounding his *sense*-ideas with mere fancies or chimeras—arbitrary creations of the individual mind. The history of this doctrine has been a history of its misinterpretation.

OF THE
PRINCIPLES
OF
HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

1. IT is evident to any one who takes a survey of the *objects*¹ [⁸] of human knowledge, that they are either ideas actually imprinted on the senses; or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind; or, lastly, ideas formed by help of memory and imagination—either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways. By sight I have the ideas of light and colours, with their several degrees and variations. By touch I perceive hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance, and of all these more and less either as to quantity or degree. Smelling furnishes me with odours; the palate with tastes; and hearing conveys sounds to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition. And as several of these are observed to ac-

* This threefold division of the *objects* or *phenomena* of which we are conscious—viz. (a) *Sense-ideas* or *presentations*; (b) the ideas of the ‘passions and operations’ of mind, by some called *internal presentations*; (c) *representations*, which may be more or less elaborated—nearly corresponds to Locke’s simple ideas of sense and reflection, and his complex ideas. The two first are Hume’s ‘impressions,’ and the last his ‘ideas.’ But Berkeley raises a question which Locke did not conceive, viz. Do any of the three classes of objects or ideas of which we are conscious exist independently of a conscious mind; or, if not, do any represent or suggest what exists thus absolutely? Are they, or at any rate do they stand for, ‘things in themselves’—substances from which all perception or consciousness may be abstracted? Can we, in short, find in perception, by any analysis, Mind and Matter existing in a *mutually independent* duality? This treatise is an answer to this question. Cf. sect. 86, 89.

company each other, they come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one thing². Thus, for example, a certain colour, taste, smell, figure and consistence having been observed to go together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name *apple*; other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things—which as they are pleasing or disagreeable excite the passions of love, hatred, joy, grief, and so forth.

2. But, besides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise something³ which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering, about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call *mind, spirit, soul, or myself*. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or, which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived—for the existence of an idea consists in being perceived⁴.

3. That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind⁵, is what everybody will allow. And to me it is no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or

² This is the synthetic or constructive function of names, according to Berkeley. He here and elsewhere distinguishes between sensible *things* properly so called, and the *simple ideas* or objects of sense, of which 'things' are composed. Cf. sect. 33, 38.

³ This 'something' is the Ego or conscious subject, which the object-world implies, through which it is united and becomes intelligible, and by which it is causally regulated. But Berkeley does not affirm of the Ego, any more than of the world of ideas, that it exists *absolutely*, i. e. independently of being conscious—that the *percipient* is independent of ideas, any more than that these last are independent of a percipient.—For Berkeley's notion of Self, as distinguished from his ideas, cf. sect. 7, where he speaks of the Self or Ego as the only 'substance'; and sect. 27, 125—140. Though he affirms, in this section and elsewhere, that Self and its ideas are 'entirely distinct' from one another, he denies that they are distinct *substances*. The Dualism of Berkeley—*spirits* and *ideas*—does not *underlie* perception, but is, so to speak, co-extensive with it. It is resolvable into the distinction between the Ego, as *permanent* or *identical*, and the phenomena of which each Ego is conscious, in sense or otherwise, as *changing*—with whatever is implied in this, which, however, he does not try to analyse.

⁴ i. e. by a percipient—but not necessarily by *me*. Cf. sect. 48. An idea must now be, or have been, or hereafter become, part of the experience of a mind, in order to its present, past, or future actual existence. Cf. sect. 6.

⁵ 'without the mind,' i.e. unperceived and unimagined.

combined together (that is, whatever objects⁶ they compose), cannot exist otherwise than in a mind⁷ perceiving them.—I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this by any one that shall attend to what is meant by the term *exist* when applied to sensible things. The table I write on I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed—meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it⁸. There was an odour, that is, it was smelt; there was a sound, that is, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that is to me perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them. [⁹]

4. ⁹It is indeed an opinion¹⁰ strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects,

⁶ Here 'objects'—sensible things. This is the popular meaning of the term object, as distinguished from its more extensive or philosophical meaning. Cf. *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, sect. 9—11.

⁷ 'in a mind,' i. e. as phenomena of which a mind is conscious. The main problem of the book is, To determine whether those objects or ideas which constitute what are commonly called real or sensible things are independent of a conscious mind, in a way that thoughts and passions and fancies are not—whether, in short, the presented world of the senses is non-egoistic, in another manner than the presented world of our own feelings, or than the representative world of imagination; and, if so, what that manner may be. What should we mean when we say that sense-ideas—in other words, objects of sense—are 'external?' Is it that they exist independently of a percipient mind; or merely of my mind, they being my medium of intercourse with other minds, and of other minds with me? Berkeley's solution, here given by anticipation, is that sense-ideas, like all other objects of consciousness, cannot exist actually, otherwise than in a mind perceiving them (i. e. as objects immediately present to an intelligence). He afterwards enumerates marks by which real or sensible are distinguishable from merely imaginary objects. See sect. 29—33.

⁸ This is part of Berkeley's interpretation of our belief in the *distinct* and *permanent* existence of sensible things. It is a belief that they are conditionally presentable in sense—'permanent possibilities of sensation,' as Mr. J. S. Mill would say. See *Examination of Hamilton's Philosophy*, pp. 220—33, third edition.

⁹ Sect. 4—24 contain Berkeley's *proof* of his doctrine, contained in sect. 3, about sensible ideas and things.

¹⁰ He does not mean to say that this opinion can be held *intelligently* by those to whom he here attributes it. Cf. sect. 54, 56.

have an existence, natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding. But, with how great an assurance and acquiescence soever this principle may be entertained in the world, yet whoever shall find in his heart to call it in question may, if I mistake not, perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction. For, what are the forementioned objects but the things we perceive by sense? and what do we perceive besides our own ideas or sensations? and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these, or any combination of them, should exist unperceived¹¹? [¹⁰]

5. If we thoroughly examine this tenet it will, perhaps, be found at bottom to depend on the doctrine of *abstract ideas*. For can there be a nicer strain of abstraction than to distinguish the existence of sensible objects from their being perceived, so as to conceive [¹¹] them existing unperceived? Light and colours, heat and cold, extension and figures—in a word the things we see and feel—what are they but so many sensations, notions¹², ideas, or impressions on the sense? and is it possible to separate, even in thought, any of these from perception? For my part, I might as easily divide a thing from itself. I may, indeed, divide in my thoughts, or conceive apart from each other, those things which, perhaps, I never perceived by sense so divided. Thus, I imagine the trunk of a human body without the limbs, or conceive the smell of a rose without thinking on the rose itself. So far, I will not deny, I can abstract—if that may properly be called *abstraction* which extends only to the conceiving separately such objects as it is possible may really exist or be actually perceived asunder. But my conceiving or imagining power does not extend beyond the possibility of real existence or perception. [¹²] Hence,

¹¹ That all the objects of which we are actually percipient are ideas or sensations (in Berkeley's meaning of the words) *during the percipient act*, inasmuch as they are then objects-perceived,—whatever besides and in other circumstances they may be,—is self-evident. They are *at least ideas*, i. e. perceived-objects, *while a mind is in the act of being sensibly percipient of them*. Whether they ever exist otherwise; or whether, if not, they represent what is existing otherwise, are two questions which Berkeley proceeds to answer in the negative. He argues that their *uncognised* existence is not merely unproved but involves a contradiction in terms, or, at least, can mean nothing.

¹² The term *notion*, elsewhere either restricted to minds or applied to concepts, seems to be here applied to the immediate object-world of the senses. Locke uses it with similar looseness.

as it is impossible for me to see or feel anything without an actual sensation of that thing, so is it impossible for me to conceive in my thoughts any sensible thing or object distinct¹³ from the sensation or perception of it. [¹⁴In truth, the object and the sensation are the same thing¹⁵, and cannot therefore be abstracted from each other.]

6. Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz. that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind, that their *being* is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit—it being perfectly unintelligible, and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit. [¹⁶To be convinced of which, the reader need only reflect, and try to separate in his own thoughts the *being* of a sensible thing from its *being perceived*.] [¹³]

7. From what has been said it is evident there is not any other Substance than *Spirit*, or that which perceives¹⁷. [¹⁴] But, for the fuller demonstration of this point, let it be considered the sensible

¹³ i. e. existing distinct from perception.

¹⁴ This sentence is omitted in the second edition.

¹⁵ With Berkeley 'object,' 'idea,' or 'sensation,' with reference to our sense-experience, signify what is assumed to be numerically the same, and which cannot therefore be distinguished from itself by abstraction. An absolute negation of meaning, or else a contradiction in terms—which are virtually equivalent—alone remain, when an attempt is made to disentangle 'sensible things' from a perception of them.

¹⁶ In the first edition, instead of this sentence, we have the following: 'To make this appear with all the light and evidence of an Axiom, it seems sufficient if I can but awaken the reflexion of the reader, that he may take an impartial view of his own meaning, and turn his thoughts upon the subject itself, free and disengaged from all embarrass of words and prepossession in favour of received mistakes.'

¹⁷ Berkeley thus holds a *duality* of 'things' (viz. spirits and ideas), and a *unity* of 'substance.' Moreover, he does not say that this 'substance' may exist unpercipient of any ideas, whilst ideas or objects necessarily depend on being perceived. On the contrary he goes on to say that 'there can be no *unthinking* substance or substratum' of ideas. And elsewhere he argues that a mind must be always conscious. Cf. sect. 98, and also sect. 139, where he appears to hold that the very existence of a spirit or substance consists in perceiving ideas or being conscious—that its *esse* is *percipere*.

qualities are colour, figure, motion, smell, taste, &c., *i.e.* the ideas perceived by sense. Now, for an idea to exist in an unperceiving thing is a manifest contradiction, for to have an idea is all one as to perceive; that therefore wherein colour, figure, &c. exist must perceive them; hence it is clear there can be no unthinking substance or *substratum* of those ideas.

8. But, say you, though the ideas themselves do not exist without the mind¹⁸, yet there may be things like them, whereof they are copies or resemblances, which things exist without the mind in an unthinking substance¹⁹. I answer, an idea can be like nothing but an idea; [¹⁵] a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure. If we look but never so little into our thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness except only between our ideas. Again, I ask whether those supposed originals or external things, of which our ideas are the pictures or representations, be themselves perceptible or no? If they are, then they are ideas and we have gained our point; but if you say they are not, I appeal to any one whether it be sense to assert a colour is like something which is invisible; hard or soft, like something which is intangible; and so of the rest. [¹⁶]

9. Some there are who make a distinction betwixt *primary* and *secondary* qualities²⁰. [¹⁷] By the former they mean extension, figure, motion, rest, solidity or impenetrability, and number; by the latter they denote all other sensible qualities, as colours, sounds, tastes, and so forth. The ideas we have of these they acknowledge not to be the resemblances of anything existing without the mind, or unperceived, but they will have our ideas of the primary qualities to be patterns or images of things which exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance which they call Matter. [¹⁸] By Matter, therefore, we are to understand an inert, senseless substance, in which extension, figure, and motion do actually subsist. But it is evident, from what we have already shewn, that extension, figure, and motion are only [¹⁹] ideas existing in the mind, and that an idea can be like nothing but

¹⁸ As Sir W. Hamilton (e.g. Reid's *Works*, pp. 883, &c.) seems to say the immediate objects or ideas of sense do.

¹⁹ As some who hold a representative perception say.

²⁰ Here again he refers to Locke, whose notion of material substance is charged with being self-contradictory. See *Essay*, B. II. ch. 8.

another idea, and that consequently neither they nor their archetypes can exist in an unperceiving substance. Hence, it is plain that the very notion of what is called *Matter* or *corporeal substance*, involves a contradiction in it. [²⁰] [²¹Insomuch that I should not think it necessary to spend more time in exposing its absurdity. But, because the tenet of the existence of Matter seems to have taken so deep a root in the minds of philosophers, and draws after it so many ill consequences, I choose rather to be thought prolix and tedious than omit anything that might conduce to the full discovery and extirpation of that prejudice.]

10. They who assert that figure, motion, and the rest of the primary or original²² qualities do exist without the mind in unthinking substances, do at the same time acknowledge that colours, sounds, heat, cold, and suchlike secondary qualities, do not—which they tell us are sensations existing in the mind alone, that depend on and are occasioned by the different size, texture, and motion of the minute particles of matter²³. This they take for an undoubted truth, which they can demonstrate beyond all exception. Now, if it be certain that those original qualities are inseparably united with the other sensible qualities, and not, even in thought, capable of being abstracted from them, it plainly follows that they exist only in the mind. But I desire any one to reflect and try whether he can, by any abstraction of thought, conceive the extension and motion of a body without all other sensible qualities. [²¹] For my own part, I see evidently that it is not in my power to frame an idea of a body extended and moving, but I must withal give it some colour or other sensible quality which is acknowledged to exist only in the mind. [²²] In short, extension, figure, and motion, abstracted from all other qualities, are inconceivable. Where therefore the other sensible qualities are, there must these be also, to wit, in the mind and nowhere else²⁴.

²¹ What follows to the end of the section is omitted in the second edition.

²² Sometimes called *objective* qualities—which are supposed to exist without a mind or unperceived, and in an unperceiving substance. Cf. *First Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, pp. 279, &c.

²³ Cf. sect. 10. See Locke's *Essay*, B. II. ch. 8, § 18; ch. 23, § 11; B. IV. ch. 3, § 24—26.

²⁴ 'in the mind, and nowhere else'—i. e. perceived or conceived, and in no other manner. Cf. *Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, p. 346.

11. Again, *great* and *small*, *swift* and *slow*, are allowed to exist nowhere without the mind, being entirely relative, and changing as the frame or position of the organs of sense varies. The extension therefore which exists without the mind is neither great nor small, the motion neither swift nor slow, that is, they are nothing at all. [²³] But, say you, they are extension in general, and motion in general: thus we see how much the tenet of extended moveable substances existing without the mind²⁵ depends on that strange doctrine of *abstract ideas*. And here I cannot but remark how nearly the vague and indeterminate description of Matter or corporeal substance, which the modern philosophers are run into by their own principles, resembles that antiquated and so-much ridiculed notion of *materia prima*, to be met with in Aristotle and his followers. Without extension solidity cannot be conceived; since therefore it has been shewn that extension²⁶ exists not in an unthinking substance, the same must also be true of solidity.

12. That number is entirely the creature of the mind²⁷, even though the other qualities be allowed to exist without, will be evident to whoever considers that the same thing bears a different denomination of number as the mind views it with different respects. Thus, the same extension is one, or three, or thirty-six, according as the mind considers it with reference to a yard, a foot, or an inch. Number is so visibly relative, and dependent on men's understanding, that it is strange to think how any one should give it an absolute existence without the mind. We say one book, one page, one line, &c.; all these are equally units, though

²⁵ 'without the mind'—without a mind, or in an absolute negation of all intelligence, Divine or finite.

²⁶ Extension is thus the fundamental characteristic of the material world. Both geometrical and physical solidity, as well as motion, are said to imply extension. But Berkeley's analysis rather resolves extension into a locomotive experience in sense, which visual sensations of colour may symbolize.

²⁷ 'the creature of the mind,' i. e. dependent on being conceived by a mind. Cf. *Siris*, sect. 288. This dependence is here illustrated by the relation of *number* to the point of view of the individual mind; as the dependence of the other primary qualities was illustrated by their relations to the organization of the percipient. In this, the preceding, and the following sections, Berkeley argues the inconsistency of the *absoluteness* attributed to the primary qualities, with their acknowledged dependence on our organization, and on our intellectual point of view.

some contain several of the others. And in each instance, it is plain, the unit relates to some particular combination of ideas arbitrarily [²⁴] put together by the mind²⁸.

13. Unity I know some²⁹ will have to be a simple or uncompounded idea, accompanying all other ideas into the mind. That I have any such idea answering the word *unity* I do not find; and if I had, methinks I could not miss finding it: on the contrary, it should be the most familiar to my understanding, since it is said to accompany all other ideas, and to be perceived by all the ways of sensation and reflexion. [²⁵] To say no more, it is an *abstract idea*.

14. I shall farther add, that, after the same manner as modern philosophers prove³⁰ certain sensible qualities to have no existence in Matter, or without the mind, the same thing may be likewise proved of all other sensible qualities whatsoever. Thus, for instance, it is said that heat and cold are affections only of the mind, and not at all patterns of real beings, existing in the corporeal substances which excite them, for that the same body which appears cold to one hand seems warm to another. [²⁶] Now, why may we not as well argue that figure and extension are not patterns or resemblances of qualities existing in Matter, because to the same eye at different stations, or eyes of a different texture at the same station, they appear various, and cannot therefore be the images of anything settled and determinate without the mind? Again, it is proved that sweetness is not really in the sapid thing, because the thing remaining unaltered the sweetness is changed into bitter, as in case of a fever or otherwise vitiated palate. Is it not as reasonable to say that motion is not without the mind, since if the succession of ideas in the mind become swifter the motion, it is acknowledged, shall appear slower without³¹ any alteration in any external object?

15. In short, let any one consider those arguments which are thought manifestly to prove that colours and tastes exist only in the mind, and he shall find they may with equal force be

²⁸ Cf. *New Theory of Vision*, sect. 107—110.

²⁹ e.g. Locke, *Essay*, B. II. ch. 7, § 7; ch. 16, § 1.

³⁰ 'certain sensible qualities'—'colours, tastes, &c.'—in first edition.

³¹ 'without any alteration in any external object'—'without any external alteration'—in first edition.

brought to prove the same thing of extension, figure, and motion³². Though it must be confessed this method of arguing does not so much prove that there is no extension or colour in an outward object³³, as that we do not know by sense which is the true extension or colour of the object. But the arguments foregoing plainly shew it to be impossible that any colour or extension at all, or other sensible quality whatsoever, should exist in an unthinking subject without the mind, or in truth, that there should be any such thing as an outward object.

16. But let us examine a little the received opinion.—It is said extension is a mode or accident of Matter, and that Matter is the *substratum* that supports it. Now I desire that you would explain to me what is meant by Matter's supporting extension. Say you, I have no idea of Matter and therefore cannot explain it. I answer, though you have no positive, yet, if you have any meaning at all, you must at least have a relative idea of Matter; though you know not what it is, yet you must be supposed to know what relation it bears to accidents, and what is meant by its supporting them. It is evident ‘support’ cannot here be taken in its usual or literal sense—as when we say that pillars support a building; in what sense therefore must it be taken? [³⁴For my part, I am not able to discover any sense at all that can be applicable to it.]

17. If we inquire into what the most accurate philosophers declare themselves to mean by *material substance*, we shall find them acknowledge they have no other meaning annexed to those sounds but the idea of Being in general, together with the relative notion of its supporting accidents.^[35] The general idea of Being appeareth to me the most abstract and incomprehensible of all other; and as for its supporting accidents, this, as we have just now observed, cannot be understood in the common sense of those words; it must therefore be taken in some other sense, but what that is they do not explain. So that when I consider

³² Cf. *First Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, pp. 278—285.

³³ ‘an outward object,’ i. e. an object abstracted from all intelligence—an *absolute* object, which is alleged to be a contradiction, all objectivity implying a relation to *an* intelligence, and the qualities in question relation to an *embodied* intelligence, with its organic variations.

³⁴ This sentence is omitted in the second edition.

the two parts or branches which make the signification of the words *material substance*, I am convinced there is no distinct meaning annexed to them. But why should we trouble ourselves any farther, in discussing this material *substratum* or support of figure and motion, and other sensible qualities? Does it not suppose they have an existence without the mind? And is not this a direct repugnancy, and altogether inconceivable?

18. But, though it were possible that solid, figured, moveable substances may exist without the mind, corresponding to the ideas we have of bodies, yet how is it possible for us to know this? Either we must know it by sense or by reason³⁵.—As for our senses, by them we have the knowledge only of our sensations, ideas, or those things that are immediately perceived by sense, call them what you will: but they do not inform us that things exist without the mind, or unperceived, like to those which are perceived.^[28] This the materialists^[29] themselves acknowledge.—It remains therefore that if we have any knowledge at all of external things, it must be by reason, inferring their existence from what is immediately perceived by sense. But (³⁶I do not see) what reason can induce us to believe the existence of bodies without the mind, from what we perceive, since the very patrons of Matter themselves do not pretend there is any necessary connexion betwixt them and our ideas? I say it is granted on all hands (and what happens in dreams, frensies, and the like, puts it beyond dispute) that it is possible we might be affected with all^[30] the ideas we have now, though there were no bodies existing without resembling them³⁷. Hence, it is evident the supposition of external bodies³⁸ is not necessary for the producing our ideas; since it is granted they are produced

³⁵ 'reason,' i. e. reasoning, or inference from our immediate *sense*-experience—our sensations or ideas of sense. It is argued, in this and the next section, that the absolute existence of Matter cannot be proved, either by the senses, or by reasoning from our sense-perceptions.

³⁶ Omitted in the second edition, and the sentence converted into a question.

³⁷ But the ideas or objects of which we are cognizant in dreams, &c. differ in important characteristics from the ideas or objects of which we are conscious in sense. Cf. sect. 29—33. The former are not in harmony with what may be called the universal and well-ordered dream of real life.

³⁸ 'external bodies,' i. e. bodies that exist absolutely or unperceived—independently of any sense-experience.

sometimes, and might possibly be produced always in the same order, we see them in at present, without their concurrence.

19. But, though we might possibly have all our sensations without them, yet perhaps it may be thought easier to conceive and explain the manner of their production, by supposing external bodies in their likeness rather than otherwise; and so it might be at least probable there are such things as bodies that excite their ideas in our minds. But neither can this be said; for, though we give the materialists [31] their external bodies, they by their own confession are never the nearer knowing how our ideas are produced; since they own themselves unable to comprehend in what manner body can act upon spirit, or how it is possible it should imprint any idea in the mind³⁹. Hence it is evident the production⁴⁰ of ideas or sensations in our minds, can be no reason why we should suppose Matter or corporeal substances⁴¹, since that is acknowledged to remain equally inexplicable with or without this supposition. 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. [32]

20. In short, if there were external bodies⁴², it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we have now. Suppose—what no one can deny possible—an intelligence without the help of external bodies⁴², to be affected with the same train of sensations or ideas that you are, imprinted in the same order and with like vividness in his mind⁴³. I ask whether that intelligence hath not all the reason to believe the

³⁹ i. e. they cannot shew how the unintelligible or contradictory hypothesis of Absolute Matter accounts for our having the sense-experience we have had, are conscious of having, or expect to have; or which we suppose other conscious minds to be having, to have had, or to be about to have.

⁴⁰ 'the production,' &c., i. e. the fact that we and others actually have sense-perceptions.

⁴¹ 'Matter,' in an intelligible meaning of the term, he not only allows to exist, but maintains its existence to be intuitively evident.

⁴² i. e. bodies existing without being perceived or conceived by any knowing substance.

⁴³ i. e. to have all our sense-experience.

existence of corporeal substances, represented by his ideas, and exciting them in his mind, that you can possibly have for believing the same thing? [33] Of this there can be no question—which one consideration were enough to make any reasonable person suspect the strength of whatever arguments he may think himself to have, for the existence of bodies without the mind.

21. Were it necessary to add any farther proof against the existence of Matter⁴⁴, after what has been said, I could instance several of those errors and difficulties (not to mention impieties) which have sprung from that tenet. It has occasioned numberless controversies and disputes in philosophy, and not a few of far greater moment in religion. But I shall not enter into the detail of them in this place, as well because I think arguments *a posteriori* [34] are unnecessary for confirming what has been, if I mistake not, sufficiently demonstrated *a priori*, as because I shall hereafter find occasion to speak somewhat of them⁴⁵.

22. I am afraid I have given cause to think I am needlessly prolix in handling this subject. For, to what purpose is it to dilate on that which may be demonstrated with the utmost evidence in a line or two, to any one that is capable of the least reflection? It is but looking into your own thoughts, and so trying whether you can conceive it possible for a sound, or figure, or motion, or colour to exist without the mind or unperceived. This easy trial⁴⁶ may perhaps make you see that what you contend for is a downright contradiction. Insomuch that I am content to put the whole upon this issue:—If you can but conceive it possible for one extended moveable substance, or, in general, for any one idea, [35] or anything like an idea, to exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it⁴⁷, I shall readily give up the cause. And, as for all that compages of external bodies you contend for, I shall grant you its existence, though you cannot

⁴⁴ i. e. absolute or uncognised Matter—not interpretable sense-perceptions, the existence of which last Berkeley assumes.

⁴⁵ Cf. sect. 85—156.

⁴⁶ The appeal here and elsewhere is to reflection—directly upon our own experience and indirectly upon that of others.

⁴⁷ i. e. otherwise than as an idea—perceived or conceived—a presented or represented object.

either give me any reason why you believe it exists, or assign any use to it when it is supposed to exist. I say, the bare possibility of your opinions being true shall pass for an argument that it is so.

23. But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than for me to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while⁴⁸? This therefore is nothing to the purpose: it only shews you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind; but it does not shew that you can conceive it possible the objects of your thought may exist without the mind. To make out this, it is necessary that you conceive them existing unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy. [³⁶] When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies⁴⁹, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas⁵⁰. But the mind taking no notice of itself, is deluded to think it can and does conceive bodies existing unthought of or without the mind, though at the same time they are apprehended by or exist in itself⁵¹. [³⁷] A little attention will discover to any one the truth and evidence of what is here said, and make it unnecessary to insist on any other proofs against the existence of material substance.

24. [⁵²] Could men but forbear to amuse themselves with words,

⁴⁸ There seems to be a confusion of existence in *sense* with existence in *imagination*, in this section. To exist as an object in fancy is indeed to exist, but not as part of the universal system of sensible order; and it is the apparently interrupted existence of *this* system, on his doctrine, that Berkeley has to reconcile with the common belief, on which we all act.

⁴⁹ 'to conceive the existence of external bodies,' i.e. to conceive bodies that are neither perceived nor conceived—that are not ideas or objects at all, but which exist absolutely. To suppose what we conceive to be thus unconceived, when we are actually conceiving it, is, it is argued, to suppose a contradiction in terms. Such Being is absolutely unapproachable by intelligence.

⁵⁰ 'ideas'—i. e. ideas of imagination, not of sense.

⁵¹ A delusion which is at the root of those objections to metaphysics which overlook the subjective phase of all physics.

⁵² This sentence is omitted in the second edition.

we should, I believe, soon come to an agreement in this point.] It is very obvious, upon the least inquiry into our own thoughts, to know whether it be possible for us to understand what is meant by the *absolute existence of sensible objects in themselves, or without the mind*⁵³. To me it is evident those words mark out either a direct contradiction, or else nothing at all. [³⁸] And to convince others of this, I know no readier or fairer way than to entreat they would calmly attend to their own thoughts; and if by this attention the emptiness or repugnancy of those expressions does appear, surely nothing more is requisite for their conviction. It is on this therefore that I insist, to wit, that the absolute existence of unthinking things are words without a meaning, or which include a contradiction. This is what I repeat and inculcate, and earnestly recommend to the attentive thoughts of the reader.

✓ 25. All our ideas, sensations, notions⁵⁴, or the things which we perceive, by whatsoever names they may be distinguished, 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 another⁵⁵. To be satisfied of the truth of this, there is nothing else requisite but a bare observation of our ideas. For, since they and every part of them exist only in the mind, it follows that there is nothing in them but what is perceived: but whoever shall attend to his ideas, whether of sense or reflection, will not perceive in them any power or activity; there is, therefore, no such thing contained in them. A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it, insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do anything, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of anything: neither can it be the resemblance or pattern of any active being, as is evident from sect. 8. [³⁹]

53 'The absolute existence of sensible objects, i.e. in themselves or without a mind,' is the principle which Berkeley argues against as either *meaningless* or *contradictory*—not the existence of a material world or sensible order, regulated independently of our individual will, and to which our actions must conform if we are to avoid pain and secure pleasure.

54 Here again 'notion' applied to ideas or inactive things.

55 In this and the next section, Berkeley argues that there can be no *power* or causality proper, in the world of ideas or objects, uniformities of co-existence and succession alone being either immediately or mediately perceptible—the doctrine of Hume, Brown, Comte, and Mr. Mill.

Whence it plainly follows that extension, figure, and motion cannot be the cause of our sensations. To say, therefore, that these are the effects of powers resulting from the configuration, number, motion, and size of corpuscles, must certainly be false.

26. We perceive a continual succession of ideas, some are anew excited, others are changed or totally disappear. There is therefore some cause⁵⁶ of these ideas, whereon they depend⁵⁷, 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 substance⁵⁸; 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.

27. 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*. Hence there can be no *idea formed of a soul or spirit*; for all ideas whatever, being passive and inert, (vid. sect. 25,) they cannot represent unto us, by way of image or likeness, *that which acts*. A little attention will make it plain to any one that to have an idea which shall be like that active principle of motion and change of ideas is absolutely impossible. Such is the nature of *spirit*, or that which acts, that it cannot be of itself perceived, but only by the effects which it produceth⁵⁹. [40] If any man shall doubt of the truth of what is here delivered, let him but reflect and try if he can frame the idea of any power or active being; and whether he has ideas of two principal powers, marked by the names *will* and *understanding*, distinct from each other as well as from a third idea of

⁵⁶ Berkeley here assumes as granted the metaphysical and synthetical principle of causality—that every phenomenal change implies a cause—which cause, he goes on to shew, cannot be itself phenomenal.

⁵⁷ 'depend'—not for their very *existence*, which, according to Berkeley, depends upon their being perceived, but for the *changing forms* in which they exist relatively to one another.

⁵⁸ He here connects the metaphysical and synthetical principles of Cause and Substance—finding them united and realized in actively conscious Mind.

⁵⁹ In other words, it cannot be an object of perception, though its effects can. We are conscious of it as percipient only, not as perceived. Does this consciousness of being percipient imply consciousness of active will? For Berkeley's treatment of the objection that *mental* substances and causes are as unmeaning or contradictory as *material* substances or causes, see *Third Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, pp. 327—329.

Substance or Being in general, with a relative notion of its supporting or being the subject [⁴¹] of the aforesaid powers—which is signified by the name *soul* or *spirit*. This is what some hold; but, so far as I can see, the words *will*, [⁶⁰ *understanding*, *mind*,] *soul*, *spirit*, do not stand for different ideas, or, in truth, for any idea at all, but for something which is very different from ideas, and which, being an agent, cannot be like unto, or represented by, any idea whatsoever. [⁶¹ Though it must be owned at the same time that we have some *notion* of soul, spirit, and the operations of the mind⁶²; such as willing, loving, hating—inasmuch as we know or understand the meaning of these words.] [⁴²]

28. I find I can excite ideas⁶³ in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft 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. Thus 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 words⁶⁴.

29. But, whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by Sense have not a like dependence on my will⁶⁵. [⁴³] When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it

⁶⁰ Omitted in second edition.

⁶¹ This sentence is not contained in the first edition.

⁶² In sect. 1 he speaks of 'ideas' perceived by attending to the operations of the mind.'

⁶³ 'ideas,' i. e. of imagination.

⁶⁴ With Berkeley the object-world of ideas is partly distinguished from Self by its essential passivity. Every object is caused; nothing except a Self or Ego causes. Cause or power is with him of the essence of our notion of mind, to which we necessarily attribute power or activity—thus distinguishing our Self from the changing ideas of which we are conscious. Except figuratively, we never attribute action to ideas or objects. Cf. *Siris*, sect. 249, 250, 292—295.

⁶⁵ In this and the four following sections, Berkeley mentions *marks* by which *sense-phenomena* are found in experience to be distinguished from all the other ideas of which we are cognisant, and in consequence of which they are termed 'real,' 'external,' or properly 'objective'; while other phenomena (those of feeling and imagination) are called subjective or individual. The changes in the ideas or phenomena presented in the senses are found to be part of Universal External Order—*external*, inasmuch as it is independent of the will of the sense-percipient—the interpretation of which enables us to foresee (sect. 31) more or less of our future sense-experience; thus determining our pleasures and pains, and also informing us of the existence of other conscious minds.

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 as 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. [44]

30. The ideas of Sense are more strong, lively, and distinct than those of the imagination⁶⁶; they have likewise a steadiness, order, and coherence, and are not excited at random, as those which are the effects of human wills often are, but in a regular train or series—the admirable connexion whereof sufficiently testifies the wisdom and benevolence of its Author. 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*; [45] 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.

31. This gives us a sort of foresight which enables us to regulate our actions for the benefit of life. And without this we should be eternally at a loss; we could not know how to act anything that might procure us the least pleasure, or remove the least pain of sense. That food nourishes, sleep refreshes, and fire warms us; that to sow in the seed-time is the way to reap in the harvest; and in general that to obtain such or such ends, such or such means are conducive—all this we know, not by discovering any necessary⁶⁷ connexion between our ideas, but only by the observation of the settled laws of nature, without which we should be all in uncertainty and confusion, and a grown man no more know how to manage himself in the affairs of life than an infant just born. [46]

32. And yet this consistent uniform working, which so evidently displays the goodness and wisdom of that Governing Spirit whose Will constitutes the laws of nature, is so far from leading our thoughts to Him, that it rather sends them wandering after second causes. For, when we perceive certain ideas of Sense

⁶⁶ This mark—the superior strength, liveliness, and distinctness of our sense-ideas—was afterwards noted by Hume. See *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, sect. II.

⁶⁷ Berkeley insists throughout his writings on the *arbitrary* character of the laws of nature in general, and of those by which the phenomena of vision symbolize those of touch in particular.

constantly followed by other ideas, and we know this is not of our own doing, we forthwith attribute power and agency to the ideas themselves, and make one the cause of another, than which nothing can be more absurd and unintelligible. Thus, for example, having observed that when we perceive by sight a certain round luminous figure we at the same time perceive by touch the idea or sensation called heat, we do from thence conclude the sun to be the cause of heat. And in like manner perceiving the motion and collision of bodies to be attended with sound, we are inclined to think the latter the effect of the former⁶⁸. [47]

33. The ideas imprinted on the Senses by the Author of nature are called *real things*: and those excited in the imagination being less regular, vivid, and constant, are more properly⁶⁹ termed *ideas*, or *images of things*, which they copy and represent. But then our sensations, be they never so vivid and distinct, are nevertheless ideas, that is, they exist in the mind, or are perceived by it, as truly as the ideas of its own framing. The ideas of Sense are allowed to have more reality in them, that is, to be more strong, orderly, and coherent than the creatures of the mind; but this is no argument that they exist without the mind. They are also less dependent on the spirit, or thinking substance which perceives them, in that they are excited by the will of another and more powerful spirit; yet still they are ideas, and certainly no idea, whether faint or strong, can exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ So Schiller, in *Don Carlos*, Act III, where he represents the sceptics as failing to see the God who veils Himself in everlasting laws. Berkeley, like Hume, Brown, Comte, Mill, &c., eliminates all power or causality from the material world; but, unlike them, he recognises power or causality, properly so called, in conscious mind—in the Ego—distinguished from the ideas of which it is immediately cognisant as contemporaneous and successive. 'Physical causation,' or constant order in the co-existence and succession of phenomena, accordingly, is not causation proper, but the effect of it.

⁶⁹ In popular language 'idea' is applied exclusively to the representations and misrepresentations of fancy or thought, and not, as with Berkeley, to the 'real things' present in the senses. See Leibnitz, *De modo distinguendi Phenomena Realia ab Imaginariis*.

⁷⁰ In the thirty-one preceding sections, two relations should be carefully distinguished—that of conscious mind to the *sense-ideas* of which it is conscious, and which depend upon conscious mind for their very existence; and that of mind to the *changes* of such ideas or phenomena. The former relation—that of percipient and percept—is not the relation of cause and effect at all, but is *sui generis*. The latter and correlative relation, also involved in our consciousness, is alone causal, and is our only proper example of causality—the orderly relations of phenomena to one another being only results of causal energy—of in-

34. Before we proceed any farther it is necessary we spend some time in answering objections⁷¹ which may probably be made against the principles we have hitherto laid down. In doing of which, if I seem too prolix to those of quick apprehensions, I desire I may be excused, since all men do not equally apprehend things of this nature, and I am willing to be understood by every one.

First, then, it will be objected that by the foregoing principles all that is real and substantial in nature is banished out of the world, and instead thereof a chimerical scheme of *ideas* takes place. [⁴⁸] All things that exist exist only in the mind, that is, they are purely notional. What therefore becomes of the sun, moon, and stars? What must we think of houses, rivers, mountains, trees, stones; nay, even of our own bodies? Are all these but so many chimeras and illusions on the fancy? To all which, and whatever else of the same sort may be objected, I answer, that by the principles premised we are not deprived of any one thing in nature. Whatever we see, feel, hear, or any wise conceive or understand, remains as secure as ever, and is as real as ever. There is a *rerum natura*, and the distinction between realities and chimeras retains its full force. This is evident from sect. 29, 30, and 33, where we have shewn what is meant by *real things*, in opposition to *chimeras* or ideas of our own framing; but then they both equally exist in the mind, and in that sense⁷² are alike *ideas*.

35. I do not argue against the existence of any one thing that we can apprehend either by sense or reflection. That the things I see with my eyes and touch with my hands do exist, really exist, I make not the least question. The only thing whose existence we deny is that which *philosophers* call Matter or corporeal

tending volition—and not power or causality itself. Note also that while Berkeley regards all phenomena as dependent on *an* intelligence and *a* will, he regards the changes in *sense-phenomena* as emphatically independent, for all practical purposes, of the *will* of the finite sense-percipient.

⁷¹ Sect. 34—84 contain Berkeley's answers to supposed *objections* to the foregoing principles, concerning the true meaning of the terms 'Matter' and 'Mind,' 'Substance' and 'Cause'; and to his distinction between the presented realities of the material or sensible world, and the chimeras of imagination.

⁷² To be an 'idea' is, with Berkeley, to be the object of a conscious intelligence. But he does not define precisely the relation of ideas to minds conscious of them. 'Existence in the mind' is existence in *this relation*. His problem (which he determines in the negative) is, the possibility of the existence of sense-ideas—objects of sense-experience—*out of this relation*.

substance. And in doing of this there is no damage done to the rest of mankind, who, I dare say, will never miss it. The Atheist indeed will want the colour of an empty name to support his impiety; and the Philosophers may possibly find they have lost a great handle for trifling and disputation. [⁷³ But that is all the harm that I can see done.]

36. If any man thinks this detracts from the existence or reality of things, [⁴⁹] he is very far from understanding what hath been premised in the plainest terms I could think of. Take here an abstract of what has been said:—There are spiritual substances, minds, or human souls, which will or excite⁷⁴ ideas in themselves at pleasure; but these⁷⁴ are faint, weak, and unsteady in respect of others they perceive by sense—which, being impressed upon them according to certain rules or laws of nature, speak themselves the effects of a mind more powerful and wise than human spirits⁷⁵. These latter are said to have more *reality* in them than the former;—by which is meant that they are more affecting, orderly, and distinct, and that they are not fictions of the mind perceiving them⁷⁶. And in this sense the sun that I see by day is the real sun, and that which I imagine by night is the idea of the former. In the sense here given of *reality*, it is evident that every vegetable, star, mineral, and in general each part of the mundane system, is as much a *real being* by our principles as by any other. Whether others mean anything by the term *reality* different from what I do, I entreat them to look into their own thoughts and see⁷⁷.

37. It will be urged that thus much at least is true, to wit, that we take away all corporeal substances. To this my answer is, that if the word *substance* be taken in the vulgar sense—for a combination of sensible qualities, such as extension, solidity, weight, and the like—this we cannot be accused of taking away⁷⁸:

⁷³ Omitted in second edition.

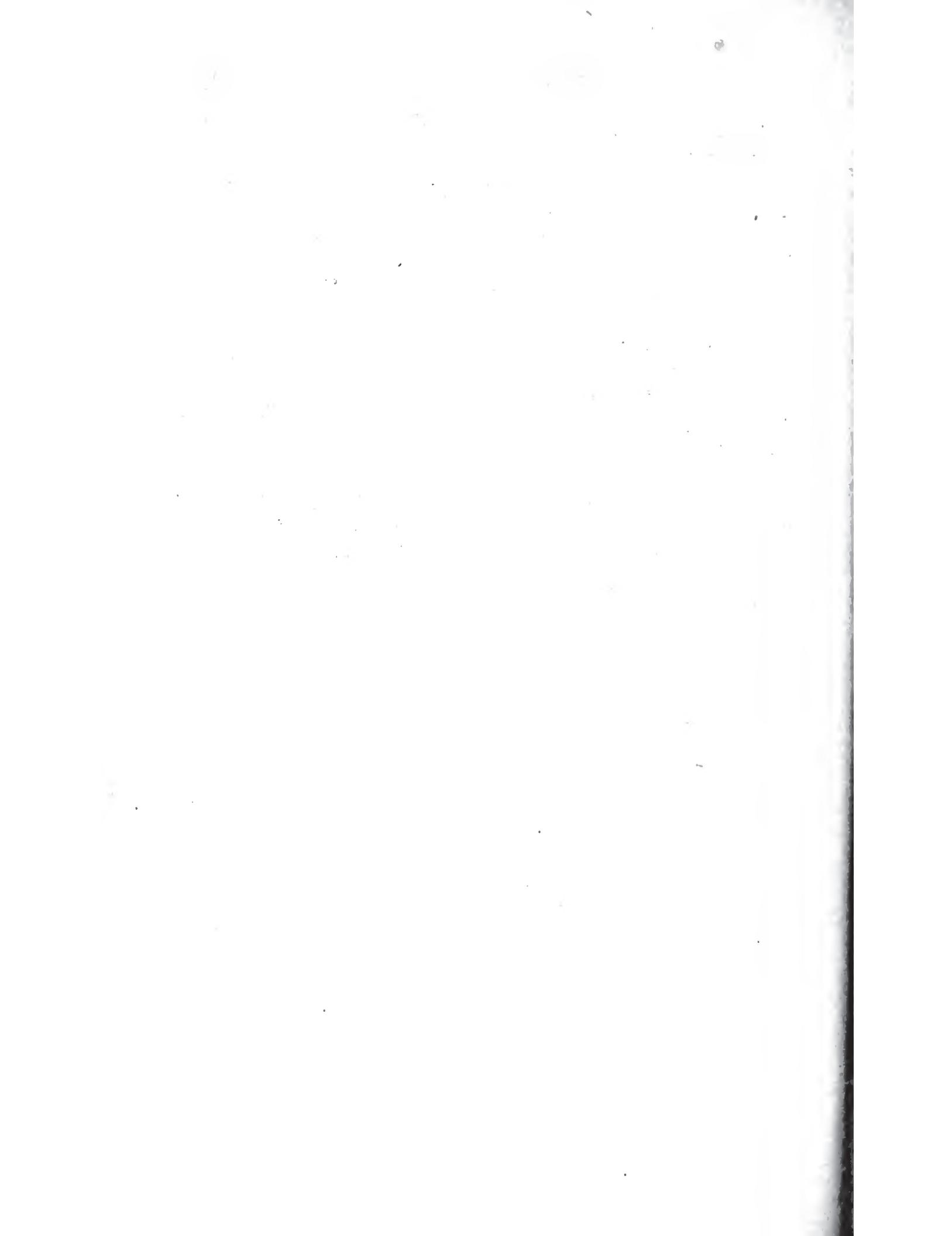
⁷⁴ i.e. of imagination. Cf. sect. 28—30.

⁷⁵ Cf. sect. 29.

⁷⁶ Cf. sect. 33. ‘Not fictions,’ i.e. they are presentative, and therefore cannot be misrepresentative in their character.

⁷⁷ The metaphysic of Berkeley is an endeavour to convert the word ‘real’ from being the symbol of an unintelligible abstraction into that of the conscious experience of a mind.

⁷⁸ With Berkeley *substances* are either (a) conscious minds, which are substances



139. But it will be objected that, if there is no idea signified by the terms *soul*, *spirit*, and *substance*, they are wholly insignificant, or have no meaning in them. I answer, those words do mean or signify a real thing—which is neither an idea nor like an idea, but that which perceives ideas, and wills, and reasons about them. What I am myself—that which I denote by the term *I*—is the same with what is meant by *soul* or *spiritual substance*. [²⁰ But if I should say that *I* was nothing, or that *I* was an idea or notion, nothing could be more evidently absurd than either of these propositions.] If it be said that this is only quarrelling at a word, and that, since the immediate significations of other names are by common consent called *ideas*, no reason can be assigned why that which is signified by the name *spirit* or *soul* may not partake in the same appellation, I answer, all the unthinking objects of the mind agree in that they are entirely passive, and their existence consists only in being perceived; whereas a soul or spirit is an active being, whose existence consists, not in being perceived, but in perceiving ideas and thinking²¹. It is therefore necessary, in order to prevent equivocation and confounding natures perfectly disagreeing and unlike, that we distinguish between *spirit* and *idea*. See sect. 27.

140. In a large sense indeed, we may be said to have an idea [²²or rather a notion] of *spirit*; that is, we understand the meaning of the word, otherwise we could not affirm or deny anything of it. Moreover, as we conceive the ideas that are in the minds of other spirits by means of our own, which we suppose to be resemblances of them; so we know other spirits by means of our own soul—which in that sense is the image or idea of them; it having a like respect to other spirits that blueness or heat by me perceived has to those ideas perceived by another²³.

²⁰ Omitted in second edition. Cf. sect. 142.

²¹ If the existence of a mind consists in perceiving, it follows that mind is as dependent on ideas (of some sort) as ideas are on mind.

²² Introduced in second edition, in which he professes to apply the term *notion* exclusively to our knowledge of the Ego, and to our knowledge of *relations* among our ideas. Sect. 142.

²³ We know *other* minds or Egos phenomenally, i. e. through phenomena, or by inference from them, but not as ideas or phenomena of which we ourselves are conscious. Cf. sect. 148. It is thus a phenomenal knowledge that we have of other finite minds—of Ego viewed empirically and in plurality. The real meaning of Ego in the plural number, dis-

141. [²⁴ The natural immortality of the soul [¹¹¹] is a necessary consequence of the foregoing doctrine. But before we attempt to prove this, it is fit that we explain the meaning of that tenet.] It must not be supposed that they who assert the natural immortality of the soul²⁵ are of opinion that it is absolutely incapable of annihilation even by the infinite power of the Creator who first gave it being, but only that it is not liable to be broken or dissolved by the ordinary laws of nature or motion. They indeed who hold the soul of man to be only a thin vital flame, or system of animal spirits, make it perishing and corruptible as the body; since there is nothing more easily dissipated than such a being, which it is naturally impossible should survive the ruin of the tabernacle wherein it is inclosed. And this notion has been greedily embraced and cherished by the worst part of mankind, as the most effectual antidote against all impressions of virtue and religion. [¹¹²] But it has been made evident that bodies, of what frame or texture soever, are barely passive ideas in the mind—which is more distant and heterogeneous from them than light is from darkness²⁶. We have shewn that the soul is invisible, incorporeal, unextended, and it is consequently incorruptible. Nothing can be plainer than that the motions, changes, decays, and dissolutions which we hourly see beset natural bodies (and which is what we mean by the *course of nature*) cannot possibly affect an active, simple, uncompounded substance: such a being therefore is indissoluble by the force of nature; that is to say, ‘the soul of man is naturally immortal²⁷.’

142. After what has been said, it is, I suppose, plain that our souls are not to be known in the same manner as senseless, inactive objects, or by way of *idea*. *Spirits* and *ideas* are things so wholly different, that when we say ‘they exist,’ ‘they are known,’

tinguished from the absolute or transcendental Ego, is a question which Berkeley has not discussed.

²⁴ Omitted in second edition.

²⁵ ‘the soul,’ i. e. the finite mind or empirical Ego.

²⁶ This is an emphatic assertion of the dualism of Berkeley—Minds or Egos being distinguished from their ideas or objects.

²⁷ Although minds are dependent on ideas, as well as ideas on minds, yet minds are not, by any abstract necessity, dependent on *sense*-ideas or physical organization. Hence, while pure materialism is, on Berkeley’s principles, a contradiction, the continued existence of a disembodied spirit involves no necessary absurdity.

or the like, these words must not be thought to signify anything common to both natures²⁸. There is nothing alike or common in them; and to expect that by any multiplication or enlargement of our faculties we may be enabled to know a spirit as we do a triangle²⁹, seems as absurd as if we should hope to see a sound. This is inculcated because I imagine it may be of moment towards clearing several important questions, and preventing some very dangerous errors concerning the nature of the soul. [³⁰We may not, I think, strictly be said to have an *idea* of an active being, or of an action³¹, 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 these words. What I know, that I have some notion of. I will not say that the terms *idea* and *notion* may not be used convertibly, if the world will have it so; but yet it conduceth to clearness and propriety that we distinguish things very different by different names. It is also to be remarked that, all relations including an act of the mind³², we cannot so properly be said to have an idea, but rather a notion of the relations and habitudes between things. But if, in the modern way, the word *idea* is extended to spirits, and relations, and acts, this is, after all, an affair of verbal concern.]

143. It will not be amiss to add, that the doctrine of *abstract ideas* has had no small share in rendering those sciences intricate and obscure which are particularly conversant about spiritual things. Men have imagined they could frame abstract notions

²⁸ The objective essence of matter, or the sense-given non-ego, is, with Berkeley, purely phenomenal or ideal; the essence of mind—the Ego—is substantial and causal. Sense-ideas or phenomena are at once dependent on mind, and symbolical of the intentions of mind. Mind and its ideas are, in short, at the opposite poles of existence—being related as subject knowing and object known, as cause and effects, as substance and phenomenon. But he does not say that these poles, thus opposed, are numerically distinguishable as things independent of each other.

²⁹ i. e. objectively—as an object or idea.

³⁰ What follows was introduced in the second edition, in which the term *notion* is defined, and assists to express Berkeley's duality in things.

³¹ Yet he speaks elsewhere (sect. 1, &c.) of ideas formed by attending to the 'operations' of the mind. He probably refers to the *effects* of the operations, holding that the effects, but not their cause, are ideal.

³² Here is the germ of Kantism. But Berkeley has not analysed that activity of mind which constitutes *relation*, as distinguished from the personal acting of *will*. Cf. remarkable passages in *Siris*, sect. 297, 308, &c.

of the powers and acts of the mind, and consider them prescinded as well from the mind or spirit itself, as from their respective objects and effects.^[113] Hence a great number of dark and ambiguous terms, presumed to stand for abstract notions, have been introduced into metaphysics and morality, and from these have grown infinite distractions and disputes amongst the learned.

144. But, nothing seems more to have contributed towards engaging men in controversies and mistakes with regard to the nature and operations of the mind, than the being used to speak of those things in terms borrowed from sensible ideas. For example, the will is termed the *motion* of the soul: this infuses a belief that the mind of man is as a ball in motion, impelled and determined by the objects of sense, as necessarily as that is by the stroke of a racket. Hence arise endless scruples and errors of dangerous consequence in morality. All which, I doubt not, may be cleared, and truth appear plain, uniform, and consistent, could but philosophers be prevailed on to [33] depart from some received prejudices and modes of speech, and] retire into themselves, and attentively consider their own meaning. [33] But the difficulties arising on this head demand a more particular disquisition than suits with the design of this treatise.]

145. From what has been said, it is plain that we cannot know the existence of other spirits otherwise than by their operations, or the ideas by them excited in us. I perceive several motions, changes, and combinations of ideas, that inform me there are certain particular agents, like myself, which accompany them and concur in their production.^[114] Hence, the knowledge I have of other spirits is not immediate, as is the knowledge of my ideas; but depending on the intervention of ideas, by me referred to agents or spirits distinct from myself, as effects or concomitant signs³⁴.

³³ Omitted in second edition.

³⁴ This is one of the most important sections in the book. It has been common (see Reid's *Essays*, VI. 5, &c.) to allege that, on Berkeley's principles, I have no reason to believe in the existence of *other* minds or wills—a plurality of Egos, or at any rate in other Egos than my own, and the Supreme or Absolute. I can design or intend; all the rest is God's—my volitions and His determine the phenomenal universe. Now, Berkeley holds that we have the same *sort* of reason to believe in the existence of other *human* minds that we have to believe in the existence of God, viz. the sense-symbolism which implies the existence of other finite minds, embodied like our own, as its only reasonable interpreta-

146. But, though there be some things 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 on, the wills of men. There is therefore some other Spirit that causes them; since it is repugnant that they should subsist by themselves. See sect. 29. But, if we attentively consider the constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of 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 or natural inclinations, appetites, and passions of animals—I say if we consider all these things, and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the attributes One, Eternal, Infinitely Wise, Good, and Perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid Spirit, ‘who works all in all,’ and ‘by whom all things consist.’

147. 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 agents³⁵. 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. For, it is evident that in affecting other persons the will of man has no other object than barely the motion of the limbs of his body; but that such a motion should be

tion. Cf. sect. 147, 148. Both are beliefs gathered from the *suggestions* of experience. This enables us to infer the existence not merely of other, and by us, at present, unperceived phenomena, in *our own* past or future experience; and phenomena in the present, past, or future experience of *other minds*; but also, as implied in the latter, the *existence* of other minds—other selves. His mode of looking at the universe leaves the evidence for the existence of other men as it was before (although our ideas and those of other men are with him not numerically identical, but only in a harmony of similarity); while his theory was believed by him to intensify the evidence of Divine Presence and Providence. See *Alciphron*, Dial. IV., and *Vindication of New Theory of Vision*, sect. 8, 38, &c.

³⁵ Cf. *Alciphron*, Dial. IV. 8—14; *Vindication of New Theory of Vision*, sect. 8.

attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the Creator. He alone it is who, 'upholding all things by the word of His power,' maintains that intercourse between spirits whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other³⁶. And yet this pure and clear light which enlightens every one is itself invisible [³⁷to the greatest part of mankind].

148. It seems to be a general pretence of the unthinking herd that they cannot *see* God. Could we but see Him, say they, as we see a man, we should believe that He is, and believing obey His commands. But alas, we need only open our eyes to see the Sovereign Lord of all things, with a more full and clear view than we do any one of our fellow-creatures. Not that I imagine we see God (as some will have it) by a direct and immediate view; or see corporeal things, not by themselves, but by seeing that which represents them in the essence of God, which doctrine is³⁸, I must confess, to me incomprehensible. [¹¹⁵] But I shall explain my meaning:—A human spirit or person is not perceived by sense, as not being an idea; when therefore we see the colour, size, figure, and motions of a man, we perceive only certain sensations or ideas excited in our own minds; and these being exhibited to our view in sundry distinct collections, serve to mark out unto us the existence of finite and created spirits like ourselves. Hence it is plain we do not see a man—if by *man* is meant that which lives, moves, perceives, and thinks as we do—but only such a certain collection of ideas as directs us to think there is a distinct principle of thought and motion, like to our-

³⁶ God so regulates the sense-given phenomena or ideas of which spirits are individually conscious, as that these phenomena, *while numerically different in each mind*, are nevertheless a practical medium of intercourse between minds. Egoism is seen not to be a necessary result of the fact that no one but myself can be conscious of my own experience, when we recognise that persons only are powers, and that *I* am not the cause of *all* the changes which my ideas or phenomena exhibit. Without being themselves conscious of my consciousness, we may infer that other persons or minds are at work to modify it. In short, our experience of power or volition, and of our own limited power, is essential to Berkeley's recognition of a plurality of minds or substances—to his escape from the unity of Absolute Egoism, and to his scientific recognition of *his* external world.

³⁷ Omitted in second edition.

³⁸ Malebranche, as understood by Berkeley. According to Malebranche we see material or sensible things in God, who transcends, and in transcending unites the substantial antithesis of Mind and Matter. See *Recherche*, liv. III. p. ii. ch. 6, &c.

selves, accompanying and represented by it. And after the same manner we see God ; all the difference is that, whereas some one finite and narrow assemblage of ideas denotes a particular human mind, whithersoever we direct our view, we do at all times and in all places perceive manifest tokens of the Divinity—everything we see, hear, feel, or anywise perceive by sense, being a sign or effect of the power of God ; as is our perception of those very motions which are produced by men³⁹.

149. It is therefore plain that nothing can be more evident to any one that is capable of the least reflection than the existence of God, or a Spirit who is intimately present to our minds, producing in them all that variety of ideas or sensations which continually affect us, on whom we have an absolute and entire dependence, in short ‘in whom we live, and move, and have our being.’ That the discovery of this great truth, which lies so near and obvious to the mind, should be attained to by the reason of so very few, is a sad instance of the stupidity and inattention of men, who, though they are surrounded with such clear manifestations of the Deity, are yet so little affected by them that they seem, as it were, blinded with excess of light.

150. But you will say, Hath Nature no share in the production of natural things, and must they be all ascribed to the immediate and sole operation of God ? I answer, if by *Nature* is meant only the visible *series* of effects or sensations imprinted on our minds, according to certain fixed and general laws, then it is plain that Nature, taken in this sense, cannot produce anything at all⁴⁰. But, if by *Nature* is meant some being distinct from God, as well as from the laws of nature, and things perceived by sense, I must confess that word is to me an empty sound without any intelligible meaning annexed to it. Nature, in this acceptation, is a vain chimera, introduced by those heathens who had not just notions of the omnipresence and infinite perfection of God. But, it is more unaccountable that it should be received among Chris-

³⁹ Cf. *Alciphron*, Dial. IV. and *Vindication of New Theory of Vision*, sect. 8, 38, &c. The *eternal* existence of conscious Mind, and the *present* existence of other finite minds than my own, are both inferences, according to Berkeley. The former, however, follows from the assumption that *something* must be eternal, because something now exists ; seeing that this ‘something,’ as existing, must be a mind conscious of ideas or objects.

⁴⁰ Cf. sect. 25, 51—53, 60—66, &c.

tians, professing belief in the Holy Scriptures, which constantly ascribe those effects to the immediate hand of God that heathen philosophers are wont to impute to Nature. ‘The Lord He causeth the vapours to ascend; He maketh lightnings with rain; He bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.’ Jerem. x. 13. ‘He turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night.’ Amos v. 8. ‘He visiteth the earth, and maketh it soft with showers: He blesseth the springing thereof, and crowneth the year with His goodness; so that the pastures are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered over with corn.’ See Psal. lxv. But, notwithstanding that this is the constant language of Scripture, yet we have I know not what aversion from believing that God concerns Himself so nearly in our affairs. Fain would we suppose Him at a great distance off, and substitute some blind unthinking deputy in His stead, though (if we may believe Saint Paul) ‘He be not far from every one of us.’

151. It will, I doubt not, be objected, that the slow, gradual, and roundabout methods observed in the production of natural things do not seem to have for their cause the immediate hand of an Almighty Agent⁴¹. Besides, monsters, untimely births, fruits blasted in the blossom, rains falling in desert places, miseries incident to human life, and the like, are so many arguments that the whole frame of nature is not immediately actuated and superintended by a Spirit of infinite wisdom and goodness. But the answer to this objection is in a good measure plain from sect. 62; it being visible that the aforesaid methods of nature are absolutely necessary, in order to working by the most simple and general rules, and after a steady and consistent manner; which argues both the wisdom and goodness of God. [⁴² For, it doth hence follow that the finger of God is not so conspicuous to the resolved and careless sinner, which gives him an opportunity to harden in his impiety and grow ripe for vengeance. (Vid. sect. 57.)] Such is the artificial contrivance of this mighty machine of nature that, whilst its motions and various phenomena strike on our senses, the hand which actuates the whole is itself unperceivable to men of flesh and blood. ‘Verily’ (saith the prophet) ‘thou art a God that hidest thyself.’ Isaiah xlvi. 15. But, though

⁴¹ Cf. sect. 60—66.

⁴² Omitted in second edition.

the Lord conceal Himself from the eyes of the sensual and lazy, who will not be at the least expense of thought, yet to an unbiassed and attentive mind nothing can be more plainly legible than the intimate presence of an All-wise Spirit, who fashions, regulates, and sustains the whole system of beings⁴³. [⁴⁴Secondly.] It is clear, from what we have elsewhere observed, that the operating according to general and stated laws is so necessary for our guidance in the affairs of life, and letting us into the secret of nature, that without it all reach and compass of thought, all human sagacity and design, could serve to no manner of purpose; it were even impossible there should be any such faculties or powers in the mind. See sect. 31. Which one consideration abundantly outbalances whatever particular inconveniences may thence arise.

152. But, we should further consider that the very blemishes and defects of nature are not without their use, in that they make an agreeable sort of variety, and augment the beauty of the rest of the creation, as shades in a picture serve to set off the brighter and more enlightened parts. We would likewise do well to examine whether our taxing the waste of seeds and embryos, and accidental destruction of plants and animals, before they come to full maturity, as an imprudence in the Author of nature, be not the effect of prejudice contracted by our familiarity with impotent and saving mortals⁴⁵. In man indeed a thrifty management of those things which he cannot procure without much pains and industry may be esteemed wisdom. But, we must not imagine that the inexplicably fine machine of an animal or vegetable costs the great Creator any more pains or trouble in its production than a pebble does; nothing being more evident than that an Omnipotent Spirit can indifferently produce everything by a mere *fiat* or act of his will. Hence, it is plain that the splendid profusion of natural things should not be interpreted weakness or prodigality in the agent who produces them, but rather be looked on as an argument of the riches of his power.

153. As for the mixture of pain or uneasiness which is in the world pursuant to the general laws of nature, and the actions of

⁴³ So Pascal in the *Pensées*.

⁴⁴ Omitted in second edition.

⁴⁵ So Butler, in his *Analogy*. Also cf. sect. 60—66.

finite, imperfect spirits, this, in the state we are in at present, is indispensably necessary to our well-being. But our prospects are too narrow. We take, for instance, the idea of some one particular pain into our thoughts, and account it *evil*; whereas, if we enlarge our view, so as to comprehend the various ends, connexions, and dependencies of things, on what occasions and in what proportions we are affected with pain and pleasure, the nature of human freedom, and the design with which we are put into the world; we shall be forced to acknowledge that those particular things which, considered in themselves, appear to be evil, have the nature of good, when considered as linked with the whole system of beings⁴⁵.

154. From what has been said, it will be manifest to any considering person, that it is merely for want of attention and comprehensiveness of mind that there are any favourers of Atheism or the Manichean Heresy to be found. Little and unreflecting souls may indeed burlesque the works of Providence⁴⁶—[¹¹⁶] the beauty and order whereof they have not capacity, or will not be at the pains, to comprehend; but those who are masters of any justness and extent of thought, and are withal used to reflect, can never sufficiently admire the divine traces of Wisdom and Goodness that shine throughout the Economy of Nature. But what truth is there which glares so strongly on the mind that by an aversion of thought, a wilful shutting of the eyes, we may not escape seeing it, at least with a full and direct view? Is it therefore to be wondered at, if the generality of men, who are ever intent on business or pleasure, and little used to fix or open the eye of their mind, should not have all that conviction and evidence of the Being of God which might be expected in reasonable creatures?

155. We should rather wonder that men can be found so stupid as to neglect, than that neglecting they should be unconvinced of such an evident and momentous truth. And yet it is to be feared that too many of parts and leisure, who live in Christian

⁴⁵ So Butler, in his *Analogy*.

⁴⁶ A constant Divine Thought and Providence in the changes of the phenomenal world, rather than the original creation of finite minds and of their ideas or phenomena, is the conception which runs through Berkeley's philosophy, conspicuously in *Siris*.

countries, are, merely through a supine and dreadful negligence, sunk into [⁴⁷ a sort of Demy-] Atheism. [⁴⁸ They cannot say there is not a God, but neither are they convinced that there is. For what else can it be but some lurking infidelity, some secret misgivings of mind with regard to the existence and attributes of God, which permits sinners to grow and harden in impiety?] Since it is downright impossible that a soul pierced and enlightened with a thorough sense of the omnipresence, holiness, and justice of that Almighty Spirit should persist in a remorseless violation of His laws. We ought, therefore, earnestly to meditate and dwell on those important points; that so we may attain conviction without all scruple ‘that the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good; that He is with us and keepeth us in all places whither we go, and giveth us bread to eat and raiment to put on;’ that He is present and conscious to our innermost thoughts; in fine, that we have a most absolute and immediate dependence on Him. A clear view of which great truths cannot choose but fill our hearts with an awful circumspection and holy fear, which is the strongest incentive to *Virtue*, and the best guard against *Vice*.

156. For, after all, what deserves the first place in our studies is the consideration of GOD and our DUTY; which to promote, as it was the main drift and design of my labours, so shall I esteem them altogether useless and ineffectual if, by what I have said, I cannot inspire my readers with a pious sense of the Presence of God; and, having shewn the falseness or vanity of those barren speculations which make the chief employment of learned men, the better dispose them to reverence and embrace the salutary truths of the Gospel, which to know and to practise is the highest perfection of human nature.

⁴⁷ Omitted in second edition. Our alleged necessary ignorance of the *ultimate* cause and meaning of the Universe in which we find ourselves is, in the present day, a common objection to the assumption that its phenomena may be interpreted as significant of Supreme or Absolute Mind. As Hume or Comte would have it, the Universe is a *singular* effect or complement of phenomena, which we can interpret only so far as our secular wants and duties are concerned. They look to the physical or phenomenal, and not to the moral and spiritual evidence.

⁴⁸ Omitted in second edition.