GOD, WORLD AND ARCHETYPES:
A VOLUNTARIST INTERPRETATION OF BERKELEY'S PHILOSOPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I seek to contribute to our growing understanding of the constructive side of Berkeley's thought by focusing on those theologically-motivated metaphysical tendencies in his works that point to the significance of the divine will. Through systematically investigating topics like the role God's will plays in creating and maintaining the world as well as his relationship to nature and its laws, I will try to show that the voluntarist inclinations are not accidental or incidental but form an essential and coherent aspect of his philosophy. I aim to substantiate that God's absolutely free volitional activity is so fundamental in his thought that voluntarism can be seen as what informs and motivates his quite idiosyncratic views about various crucial issues, such as the divine nature, the physical world, the laws of nature, the role of science or the divine archetypes.

Since voluntarism is primarily a view about the divine nature, emphasising the conceptual and metaphysical priority of God's will over his intellect, first—in chapter 2—I turn to Berkeley's theological views, trying to show that his standpoint on the divine attributes and the proper language we are to use to characterize God is best interpreted as voluntarist. Granted that Berkeley indeed speaks about the divine psychology, especially about the first person of the Trinity, like a theological voluntarist it is still essential to ask whether his theology is reflected in his views on the created world, the laws of nature and how science should be conducted. Accordingly, I will investigate—in chapter 3—Berkeley's positive views on the physical world, and argue that his philosophy of nature, emphasizing the contingency of the laws of nature, goes further in a characteristically voluntarist vein than is minimally required or trivially implied by his immaterialist metaphysics. The last stage of my interpretation—chapter 4—concerns the highly controversial issue as to the role the divine archetypes fulfil in Berkeley's system. My chief objective in this part is to show that Berkeley's take on archetypes, despite all the interpretations suggesting the contrary opinion, not only fits with a voluntarist interpretation of his philosophy, but in fact reveals his deep commitment to anti-intellectualism.

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INTRODUCTION

Hoc volo, sic iubeo: sit pro ratione voluntas
Juvenal

It is widely held by historians of philosophy that George Berkeley occupies an important place in the canon of early modern thinkers primarily, if not entirely, due to his criticism of Locke's theory of perception and to his denial of material substance. However, his positive conception of the physical world and its theological underpinning received much less scholarly attention, let alone appreciation.[1] Until quite recently, when interpreters were willing to discuss the positive side of his philosophy, they were almost exclusively concerned with his scarce philosophy of mind.[2] In the hope of showing in this dissertation that there is much more to Berkeley's positive philosophy in its own right, I seek to contribute to our growing understanding of the constructive side of his thought by focusing not on the perhaps more familiar questions concerning his epistemology or theory of mind but on those theologically-motivated metaphysical tendencies in his works that point to the significance of the divine will. Through systematically investigating topics like the role God's will plays in creating and maintaining the world as well as his relationship to nature and its laws, I will try to show that the voluntarist inclinations are not accidental or incidental but form an essential and coherent aspect of Berkeley's philosophy. I aim to substantiate the significance of a voluntarist reading by pointing out that he did not merely endorse the widely accepted doctrine that God's will

[1] John Foster (1985, for instance) might be cited as a notable exception, but his interest is more philosophical than strictly historical or scholarly. Of course, many other interpreters seek to change this situation in various ways, see, for instance, the works of Winkler, especially his book (Winkler 1989), but also the *Cambridge Companion* edited by him (Winkler 2005), Stoneham 2002 or Roberts 2007. While Roberts 2007 is concentrating on Berkeley's 'mental realism' referring to his philosophy of spirits (see also Roberts 2013), I will say more on Berkeley's constructive theory of the physical world and its relation to God. Pearce 2017a (especially chapter 9.) also provides a new approach to Berkeley's physical world, but not through the lens of his theological commitments, but of his philosophy of language.

[2] And even with respect to this limited area of investigation they either claim to have found an inconsistent system full of elementary flaws or restrict themselves to the task of proving its logical consistency with Berkeley's critical philosophy (see for instance Turbayne 1982 and 1991 or Atherton 1991). Of course, this tendency has also been changing a bit, as more and more start devoting their attention to Berkeley's constructive ideas concerning, for example, consciousness or self-knowledge, see Bettcher 2008 or Winkler 2011b.

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plays some role in creating and sustaining the world. Rather God's absolutely free volitional activity is so fundamental in his thought that voluntarism can be seen as what informs and motivates his quite idiosyncratic views about various crucial issues, such as the divine nature, the physical world, the laws of nature, the role of science or the divine archetypes.[3]

No one has provided a comprehensive voluntarist interpretation of Berkeley's philosophy yet; in fact, the term is used only sporadically in the literature on him. This lack of interest is even more striking once we notice how much attention has been payed to the problem of voluntarism, however defined, in other early modern philosophers. Rightly so, I have to add, as the tension between intellectualist and voluntarist theological inclinations was clearly in the background, if not at the forefront, of early modern philosophy, not only in France but also in England and Ireland—not to mention the controversies reaching through borders, like the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. The spirited exchange between Malebranche and Arnauld is another famous example of the many debates spurred by these opposing theological assumptions. On the other side of the channel, Hobbes, Boyle, Newton, Locke or, to mention a few lesser-known names, King or Law also entertained various and diverse voluntarist considerations, in sharp contrast to the intellectualism defended most keenly by Shaftesbury and the Cambridge Platonists. Despite the general disinterest in Berkeley's contribution to this important aspect of his intellectual milieu, some parts of my interpretation—for instance, with regard to the archetypes or the divine language theory—owe a lot to such groundbreaking interpretations as Winkler (1989), Frankel (2012, 2016) or Pearce (2017a). Nonetheless, even when I am in agreement with previous commentators, I will concentrate on bringing Berkeley's overlooked voluntaristic assumptions to the fore.

Since voluntarism is primarily a view about the divine nature, first—in chapter 2—I turn to Berkeley's theological views, trying to show that his standpoint on the divine attributes and the proper language we are to use to characterize God is best interpreted

[3] As I will mention in passing, seeing Berkeley as a voluntarist might shed some new light on the emergence of the unprecedented idea of immaterialism, as well. Though I will have no space to go into any details and complexities, I believe his moral theory can also be fruitfully interpreted from a voluntarist point of view.

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as voluntarist. Granted that Berkeley indeed speaks about the divine psychology, especially about the first person of the Trinity, like a theological voluntarist it is still essential to ask whether his theology is reflected in his views on the created world, the laws of nature and how science should be conducted. Accordingly, I will investigate—in chapter 3—Berkeley's positive views on the physical world and argue that Berkeley's philosophy of nature goes further in a characteristically voluntarist vein than is minimally required or trivially implied by his idealist or, as he prefers to call it, immaterialist metaphysics.[4] The stakes are high at this point because, as I assume, one's views on natural philosophy often reveal one's commitment to voluntarism more conspicuously and perspicuously than the abstract and potentially dangerous theological formulations.[5] The last stage of my interpretation—chapter 4—concerns the highly controversial issue as to the role the divine archetypes fulfil in Berkeley's system. My chief objective in this part is to show that Berkeley's take on archetypes, despite all the interpretations suggesting the contrary opinion, not only fits with a voluntarist interpretation of his philosophy, but in fact reveals his deep commitment to anti-intellectualism.

In this introductory chapter, first (1.1) I will be discussing some preliminary methodological issues that arise with regard an historical enterprise like this, which wants

[4] Presumably, Berkeley himself coined the term 'immaterialism' and introduced it in the *Notebooks*—calling his philosophy "immaterial hypothesis" (*Notebooks* 19, see also 71)—and publicly for the first time in the *Third Dialogue* (254, for instance). The term 'idealism', invented by Christian Wolff a few years later, was first used to refer to Berkeley's philosophy by Christoph Matthaeus Pfaff in 1725 (see Reid 2014, 119, Bracken 1959, 19-21). In what follows, I will prefer the term 'immaterialism' not only because Berkeley himself endorsed it, but also because it regards the denial of the mind-independent existence of physical objects as the core thesis of Berkeley's philosophy. Idealism, by contrast, suggests an even more controversial and harder-to-define position, according to which the denial of the material substance rests on a broadly Cartesian or Lockean epistemology, holding that the mind has direct and hence indubitable access only to its mental contents or ideas (a theory of perception which, by the way, can be developed in the direction of a merely epistemological, as opposed to ontological, idealism). As such, it also suggests a strong reductionism, according to which the perceptual objects are simply reduced to mental entities, while in Berkeley we find a crucial distinction between the essentially active mind and the absolutely passive objects of perception. Furthermore, some connotations of idealism might make us overlook Berkeley's commitment to realism about perception, that is, his unwavering belief in what later came to be known and discarded as the "myth of the given". Berkeley never argued, like Kant or other later idealists, that the world we perceive is a construction of our minds in any significant sense.

[5] To put it simply, my suspicion is that it is easier to express your thoughts freely and genuinely when the theological implications of them are not as apparent (like in case of natural philosophy) as it is in a directly theological context. Furthermore, speaking about God in voluntaristic terms, for instance about the mysterious ways in which he works, can simply be the reflection of a pious attitude and not one's considered theological views.

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to give a coherent and not *prima facie* implausible interpretation of a philosopher who lived and worked circa three hundred years ago. Then, I will try to motivate the search for a new general framework for interpreting Berkeley by (1.2) showing that both the standard and the hitherto proposed alternative interpretations fail to capture and do justice to Berkeley's complex philosophy. In order to make room for the proposed interpretation specifically (1.3) I will be pointing to some of the most important potential advantages the voluntarist interpretation has over the other readings. The last three sections of this chapter attempts (1.4) to define theological voluntarism and (1.5) to delineate how it relates to empiricism, rationalism, occasionalism and immaterialism, and, finally, (1.6) to determine in what sense and to what extent I will be trying to prove that Berkeley was a voluntarist.

I.1. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

First of all, it will be useful to briefly set out the methods I apply throughout this work. In short, it can be regarded as a historical, contextual or scholarly undertaking with an eye on the best rational reconstruction of Berkeley's views. By 'historical, contextual or scholarly' I mean that my primary aim is to offer an interpretation of the 'real' Berkeley and his texts while making clear his place in the context of early modern philosophy by investigating, on the one hand, the lines of thought and thinkers that might have had an influence on him and, on the other, his peculiar and novel contribution to the issues raised by his predecessors. But in trying to determine his views in a historically accurate way, I will not restrain myself from viewing his thoughts in the best possible and most charitable light. It sometimes means that I have to fill the gaps in argumentation or referring to considerations not explicitly appealed to in the texts in question in order to avoid attributing some *clearly* incoherent or unreasonable view to Berkeley. However, whenever I do like this, I will be attentive to Berkeley's own words and try to never lose sight of the spirit of his system and the intellectual climate of the age he is so dependent upon. As I assume, the natural limit to the application of the *principle of charity* is the requirement of not ascribing an assumption to a philosopher which, despite making her thought in question more plausible from our point of view, is *clearly* inconsistent with her other tenets and so anachronistic that it cuts her off entirely from the historical context.

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I also need the make some preliminary statements with regard to the scope of texts I will involve in my interpretation—most of all because it is especially controversial in Berkeley's case. The controversy is over two issues. One is to use or not to use the *Notebooks* (also called *Philosophical Commentaries*) as evidence of Berkeley's actual views. This work was not intended to be published and contains various signs whose meanings are still not completely clear (Belfrage 1987). Nonetheless, I will refer to the *Notebooks* quite regularly, but mostly when it supports or clarifies a position that can be found at least implicitly in his published works or letters too. So, since they might not always reflect his fully considered position, I will try to avoid resting my interpretation solely on unpublished statements, especially not on ones which contradict Berkeley's published views, but, as we will see, in some cases these early formulations express his underlying assumptions and commitments most clearly and overtly.

The other issue is whether one should use the entire (published) *oeuvre* of Berkeley, including the traditionally neglected late works, like the *Alciphron* or the *Siris*. These works (not to mention the sermons, essays, letter and other non-philosophical writings I will also quite often refer to) pose a problem to interpreters because they, as commonly assumed, either seem to be inconsistent with or have nothing philosophically relevant to add to the early works—which, namely, the *Theory of vision*, the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues*, are considered to be the most important works of Berkeley.[6] Of course, the possibility that Berkeley changed his views, whether knowingly or not, should not be dismissed at the outset, but at least with regard to his voluntarist tendencies, as I will argue, he was surprisingly consistent throughout his life. In fact, in more general terms, it is reasonable to think that, if Berkeley really changed his mind in his later works, the differences have quite little to do with the substance of his central thesis or the most important intuitions of the early works. In my view, this shift is mainly in respect of the mode of presentation, terminology and focus of attention. For instance, these late works aim at practical purposes more overtly and, instead of attacking Locke and his conception of matter and perception on theoretical grounds, engage more directly with traditional theological issues such as the divine attributes or the relationship between the persons of

[6] For a great summary of the interpretative debates in Berkeley scholarship, see Daniel 2010.

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the Trinity. With Berkeley's intention to historically contextualize his ideas, it is indisputable that in these works he does not appear as the peculiar or extravagant modern philosopher of the early works, who invented modern idealism and argued for it only on logical grounds. Rather, these works suggest that their author is a more old-fashioned thinker, who articulates his views in a less individualistic and definitive way, invoking a lot of ideas in a dialectical form from the various traditions he holds in high esteem.[7] However, these sources often illuminate exactly those crucial points in Berkeley's positive philosophy which are not fully developed in the early works.

I.2. THE FAILURE OF THE CURRENT INTERPRETATIVE SCHEMES

In the past few decades it has become a sort of truism that the traditional historiographical categories of empiricism and rationalism, delineating opposing groups of philosophers in early modernity, are so schematic, general and idealized that they miss many of the interesting subtleties of the views the philosophers actually advocated.[8] Berkeley can be cited very naturally to drive this point home, since the general framework through which his philosophy should be approached is almost as controversial as the details of his argumentation. Simply put, it is still hotly debated whether Berkeley was an 'empiricist', a 'rationalist', both or something else. In this section I will give a brief review and criticism of the most important old and new trends of interpreting Berkeley in the secondary literature, indicating that we might need to adopt new approaches to make some progress in understanding Berkeley's positive philosophy.

[7] While this retrospective tendency starts with the *De Motu*, which represents an intermediary stage in Berkeley's *oeuvre* (see Storrie 2012), his last important work, the *Siris*, can be seen as the culmination of this approach. The *Siris* poses a particular interpretative problem, however, since it is written from a mainly Platonist perspective, and Berkeley rarely, if ever, makes clear his own positions. However, given his sympathy with Platonism, in most cases, we can pretty safely regard the views he discusses as legitimate formulations of his thought. And, as we will see, despite the Platonic way of speaking, *Siris* makes some of Berkeley's voluntarist commitments the most conspicuous.

[8] In my view, these accusations are rarely justified in the serious works of historians of philosophy, who normally use these categories only to indicate a difference *in degree* or in style of philosophizing rather than a strict, unbridgeable difference of kind. But a further complication is generated by the unclarity as to whether historians using categories like 'empiricism' are referring to what a certain philosopher (e.g. Locke) representing his camp actually held or rather to an idealized prototype in which the empiricist components are kept clear and unmixed.

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It cannot be doubted that the empiricist interpretation of Berkeley gets a lot of things right.[9] Even more radically than Locke, Berkeley argued for the importance of perceptual experience, going so far as to claim that sensory experience provides us knowledge with the same degree of certainty as demonstration or intuition (*Notebooks* 539, 547).[10] Moreover, Berkeley develops this view as opposed to Descartes' cogito-argument (*Three Dialogues* 230) and starts off part one of the *Principles* as if he was a true and faithful Lockean insofar as he categorizes components of human knowledge in a remarkably similar way. In fact, famously paving the way for the supposedly even more coherent empiricism of Hume, Berkeley is often credited with more consistency than Locke, as he criticizes the latter's theory of abstraction and concept of material substance as *empirically* unjustifiable.[11]

While the empiricist reading of Berkeley is still dominant in the textbooks, the interpretation which points out the rationalistic elements in his philosophy has a long pedigree, too. Especially since Luce's influential work in the thirties it has been claimed from time to time that Berkeley's philosophy shows signs not only of generally Cartesian but uniquely occasionalist doctrines. Many early and later readers of Berkeley interpreted him simply as an occasionalist or a "Malebranchist in good faith". For instance, Loeb—much to the puzzlement of scholars like Ayers—explicitly stated that due to his occasionalism Berkeley belongs not to the empiricist camp, but to the continental metaphysical tradition, and that Berkeley's philosophy is a "trivial variant" of Malebranche's, "an occasionalist metaphysics in which God is the sole cause, except that certain volitions of created minds (when directed at their own limbs) are causally efficacious" (Loeb 1981, 229). To reflect this latter qualification, Berkeley's view is sometimes described as *semi*-occasionalist (like La Forge or on some reading Descartes),

[9] The classic proponents of this interpretive tradition are Warnock 1953, Urmson 1982. More recently defended by Ayers 2005.

[10] In cases when I do not refer to the volume and page number of the *Works of George Berkeley* edited by Luce and Jessop, I cite Berkeley's works by their conventionally used abbreviated title and the relevant entry or section number. For the abbreviations, see the Bibliography.

[11] For more on the allegedly empiricist traits of Berkeley, including nominalism and imagism, see Ayers 2005. According to the traditional picture, Hume is more successful in maintaining empiricism insofar as he does away with the notion of the perceptually inaccessible mental substances as well. See, for instance, Grayling 1986, 28.

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expressing that its scope is limited to the physical realm.[12] While it is unclear to me whether occasionalism *as such* has anything to do with epistemological 'rationalism', that is, the view that the concepts our knowledge is based on come not from experience or sensation but from *a priori* intellection, Malebranche's other peculiar doctrine, according to which we intellectually grasp the essences of things in the mind of God, is clearly relevant to rationalism. As many interpret Berkeley, he agrees with Malebranche that we see things in God in the sense that we perceive the divine ideas themselves.[13] With regard to Berkeley's philosophy of mind, in turn, the direct influence of Descartes is underlined, as both argued that the mind is an immaterial substance, whose essence is revealed through its uninterrupted mental activity—thinking or perception—and has nothing in common with the objects it perceives.[14]

One of the most remarkable issues with which the empiricist interpretation cannot appropriately deal with is the notoriously vexed question of innatism. It is quite surprising, nonetheless true, that Berkeley endorses on various—published (*Alciphron* I.14-15; *Siris* 308-309; *Sermon X: On The Will Of God*, Works 7.130) and unpublished (*Notebooks* 649)—occasions that there are innate, universally true ideas, notions and dispositions in our minds.[15] Another problem for the empiricist reading springs from

[12] Sukjae Lee in his entry on "Occasionalism" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Lee 2016) claims that "[t]he extent of George Berkeley's occasionalism is […] a matter of some controversy. But there is general agreement among interpreters that Berkeley was an occasionalist with regard to the causal powers of physical objects." See also Lee 2012 and 2018.

[13] As Berkeley himself realized, their shared love for St. Paul's saying that 'In Him we live and move and have our being' also links him to Malebranche, nicely expressing the central—both epistemic and causal—role of God in their philosophies. However, just as he distances himself from Malebranche's understanding of 'seeing all things in God' in the *Three Dialogues*, so too Berkeley warns us in the *Notebooks* that St. Paul's words can be interpreted in radically different ways: "Spinosa (vid:Pref.oper:Posthum) will Have God to be Omnium Rerum Causa immanens & to countenance this produces that of St. Paul, in him we live etc. Now this of St. Paul may be explain'd by my Doctrine as well as Spinosa's or Locke's or Hobbs' or Raphson's etc." (*Notebooks* 827) Indeed, Locke is also sympathetic to this statement of the "inspired philosopher St. Paul" (*Essay* II.xii.26).

[14] See McCracken 1988, 609 or Atherton 2010, 116. Berkeley himself was not particularly impressed by the consistency of Descartes' philosophy of mind, claiming in one of his letters to Molyneux that he is of the "opinion that Descartes flounders often in his Meditations and is not always consistent with himself". He mentions, for instance, that in this work, unlike in the *Principles*, Descartes differentiates the soul from thinking (see also *Notebooks* 795). His verdict is simply that "[…] it would take up too much time to observe to you all the like blunders that appeared to me when I formerly read that Treatise [i.e. the *Meditations*]" (*Works* 8.26).

[15] See for instance Hill 2010.

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Berkeley's firm conviction that, just like our very own souls, God's mind, despite its absolutely fundamental role in his philosophy, cannot be known through sensory perceptions, falling within the competence of pure intellect, not even mentioned by Locke in his *Essay*. But neither of these issues is decisive. It can be argued that for Berkeley, just like for Descartes or Leibniz, innatism, after all, boils down to a so thin and qualified view about certain faculties and disposition every human being possesses that is equally acceptable to the likes of Locke and Hume. Similarly, Berkeley's approach to the concept of pure intellect is strikingly undecided, vacillating between repudiation, endorsement and re-interpretation. What is clear, though, that it has relevance only with regard to spiritual matters, but not the essences of physical things, the eternal truths or the laws of nature, as the Cartesians generally thought.[16] For sure, Berkeley believed that we know a lot of things about our souls and God, while straightforwardly excluded the possibility of gaining any kind of *perceptual* knowledge of spirits. This original view, however, rendered not only the empiricist, but also the rationalist or, as Bracken (1974) suggested, the 'Irish Cartesian' characterization of Berkeley untenable, because it implies the emphatic refusal of having any sort of mental object or idea of the self, abstracted from the various activities of the soul. According to the Cartesian substance-mode ontology rejected straightforwardly by Berkeley (*Principles* 49), the substance can be comprehended and objectified as a distinct subject of its various modes, and the mind can turn its mental perception toward itself. Since it is related directly to Berkeley's voluntarism, in section 1.5. and, in more detail, in chapter 3 I will discuss the reasons why I see the specifically occasionalist reading of Berkeley's philosophy of nature, and the oft-emphasized analogies with Malebranche, unhelpful or even misleading. And, in 2.5, I will contrast their views on God's essence and the working of the divine mind.

A new trend in the interpretations emphasizes the (Neo-)Platonic elements in Berkeley's thought.[17] In the *Siris*, Berkeley indeed classifies himself as a Platonic idealist agreeing with those philosophers who denigrate the senses and "making all corporeal

[16] For Berkeley, the pure intellect refers merely to *a priori* reasoning or non-sensory knowledge concerning the relations between our ideas, the operations of the mind and spiritual entities, like virtue or God. See *Notebooks* 531, 810, *Three Dialogues* 193-194, *De Motu* 53.

[17] For the most able defences of this line of interpretation, see Daniel 2001 and Roberts 2018.

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things to be dependent upon Soul or Mind, think this to exist in the first place and primary sense, and the being of bodies to be altogether derived from and presuppose that of Mind" (*Siris* 263). Moreover, this interpretation promises to avoid some problems so acute for the empiricist reading, such as those concerning innatism and pure intellect. However, insofar as it puts too much, if not exclusive, weight on the later works, especially the *Siris*, it changes the order or priority of the works of Berkeley, assuming that the later works provide the tools we need to understand his early philosophy. While I also think that the later works offer significant insights into his way of thinking and, hence, a complete interpretation cannot ignore them, this reversed priority is hardly satisfying.

More importantly, as I will try to show that the Platonist reading gives an unacceptable answer to the question of what role archetypes play in Berkeley's philosophy. It is not only that Berkeley was clearly not a Platonist with regard to abstract and universal entities, but also that, as I will argue in chapter 4, he understood divine archetypes as referring primarily to the particular volitions of God or, more precisely, to their intentional contents rather than intellectual objects of a distinct and independent divine intellect—as we can find it in ancient and early modern Christian Neoplatonists, such as Malebranche. Of course, some proponents of this interpretation do not pretend to give a comprehensive reading of Berkeley's philosophy, so might not feel themselves disturbed by this intellectualistic implication of Platonism, but that would hardly count as a Platonist reading which is not committed to a *two-world theory* in one way or another. Actually, it is commonly attributed to Berkeley by taking the archetypes to be ideas located in the intellect of God and serving as originals for those ideas which constitute the world of our ordinary experience. Nonetheless, I will seek to show, duplicating the world and placing the *real* world into the divine mind—in addition to having no compelling textual evidence—contradicts Berkeley's whole project of defending common sense and defeating the sort of skepticism the Lockean representative realism entails.

From this dissertation's point of view, what is particularly conspicuous in all of these interpretations, whether traditional, i.e. empiricist or rationalist, or alternative, i.e. Platonist, is the disinterest in applying a voluntarist framework to Berkeley's philosophy.

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Among the very rare explicit allusions to voluntarism in the literature, the case of Ayers is the most telling.[18] In an article dealing with the classification of Berkeley, in order dismiss the rationalist or, more precisely, Malebranchean occasionalist reading of Berkeley, Ayers basically argues that voluntarism is innocuous and uninteresting implication of Berkeley's idealism. While I take the view that the voluntarist reading is uninformative in its own right to be the default position in the literature, others might argue for this conclusion differently, claiming that, due to the traditionally assumed connection between empiricism and voluntarism,[19] everything that could be interesting in the voluntarist interpretation is already covered by the empiricist account of Berkeley's immaterialism.[20] Before defining voluntarism and discussing its intricate relationship with empiricism, rationalism and occasionalism, I want to show what general considerations count in favour of and motivate the proposed voluntarist interpretation of Berkeley.

I.3. WHY VOLUNTARISM?

In light of the various shortcomings of the interpretations proposed so far, it seems to make sense to look for other possibilities. Of course, only if we did not give up on the possibility of providing a coherent reading of Berkeley or, at least, of finding a guiding principle for interpreting his thought revealing his fundamental convictions as well as his relationship to other early modern philosophers. But what could serve as a motivation for proposing a voluntarist reading of Berkeley, specifically? I suggest, firstly, that it fares better in interpreting Berkeley's philosophy *in general* than the other interpretative schemes, as it is broad and inclusive enough to accommodate and unite the different ('empiricist', 'rationalist', 'Platonist') strands in Berkeley's thought as well as his entire

[18] Redding in his book on continental idealism mentions Berkeley's voluntarism as "central to his spiritual realism" (Redding 2009, 19), but tells nothing about what exactly he means by it. In specifically moral context, voluntarism is attributed to Berkeley by Clark (1985, 244) and Darwall (2005). Schmaltz (2013, 118) also claims that Berkeley "can be considered to be voluntarists insofar as [he] emphasize[s] that the obligatory force of moral laws derives from the divine will." Reflecting the complexity of his view, however, he claims that Berkeley's "voluntarism is tinged with rationalism."

[19] For a recent defence of the thesis first proposed by Michael Foster (Foster 1934) concerning the close connection of voluntarism and empiricism, see Henry 2009.

[20] For Ayers, *this* reduction makes no sense, because, on his account, Berkeley was a voluntarist (though only in a trivial sense), unlike other empiricists like Locke. I will return to Ayer's idiosyncratic approach in section 5 of this chapter.

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life-work, taking his works from the different periods of his life as equally relevant.[21] One might argue that a voluntarist reading putting emphasis on the divine and, by extension, human will is able to combine 'empiricism' concerning the physical world with 'rationalism' concerning the mind, while being sensitive to explanatory devices and issues traditionally associated with Platonism, such as the importance of theological and spiritual matters.[22] In other words, on the voluntarist reading, Berkeley pursues important lines of thought of both the Cartesian and the Lockean projects without committing himself to either rationalism or empiricism. This way, I believe, we can transcend or dissolve the old puzzle regarding Berkeley's notoriously troublesome classification. And, though with regard to the two-world theory his Platonism is downplayed by this interpretation, some important insights of that reading can also be incorporated in the same narrative.

On the other hand, some of Berkeley's 'intellectualist' views related to the rationalist or Platonist reading, like endorsing divine archetypes, innatism or the question of pure intellect, might be reinterpreted, contrary to all appearances, as doctrines ultimately related to the execution of the *will*. Indeed, only a voluntarist reading can do justice to the general importance of the will in Berkeley's philosophy, including his claim that reality, as opposed to the figments of our imagination, depends first and foremost on what God *wills* us to perceive. It is not only the occasionalist position that the world is radically dependent on the divine will, as it is God himself who is continuously and directly producing our perceptions, but even the concepts of causality, agency and activity can be cashed out only in terms of volition. Though I will not say much about it, we will see in passing (mostly, in chapter 2) that the voluntarist interpretation fits perfectly well Berkeley's philosophy of mind, which emphasizes the volitional activity when it comes

[21] I assume that, other things being equal, one interpretation is better if it can take more into consideration of a philosopher's *oeuvre*.

[22] By 'explanatory devices' I have such Neoplatonist models of explanation in mind as the so-called 'double act' model, which is reflected in Berkeley's philosophy in various ways. For instance, his philosophy of mind emphasizes the volitional activity as the essential act of the soul—whether human or divine—necessarily accompanied by the secondary act of knowing the intentional object (in the human case, perceiving the idea) this activity is directed upon. I could also mention the interrelationship between self-knowledge and godlikeness and other issues in philosophy of mind, such as the emphasis put on the soul's activity and self-determination. Of course, insofar as the Cartesians rehabilitated many important Platonic insights (mostly due to their Augustinian heritage), rationalism and Platonism have a lot in common.

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to the nature and knowability of our minds, as opposed to the understanding's purely intellectual considerations.[23] With regard to theory of action, Berkeley often remarks that intellectual considerations have no power over our volitions and actions. They might raise passions in us that can affect our will, but have no direct motivational force (see Bartha 2017). It might also be telling that Berkeley finds the similarity between God and the creatures made in his image primarily lying in their benevolent volitions, rather than in their merely intellectual capacities.[24] The proposed voluntarist reading is also more unifying in the sense that, by integrating them into the same framework, it naturally connects the seemingly separate topics and issues Berkeley deals with, like natural philosophy, theology and, possibly, his ethics, theory of action or self, etc.[25]

In addition to these general considerations, the voluntarist interpretation can bear more specific fruits too. As is well-known, it is absolutely fundamental to Berkeley to emphasize the theological foundation and aim of his philosophy, and through a voluntarist lens we can appreciate not only the rarely discussed but elaborate and interesting theological views and divine psychology Berkeley advanced (discussed in chapter 2) but also its far-reaching implications for his natural philosophy (discussed in chapter 3). As I will discuss in chapter 4, the highly controversial issue of divine archetypes might also be interpreted more charitably and naturally in a voluntarist framework than on the Platonist reading. While keeping some Platonic flavors of speaking about an asymmetric dependence relation between our ideas and God's volitional activities embedding his archetypal knowledge of our perceptions, on the proposed voluntarist reading, archetypes fit neatly Berkeley's commitment to the commonsensical belief in being directly acquainted with reality. Crucially, it makes those

[23] In fact, for Berkeley the volitions delineate what we ordinarily regard as the scope of our minds. Though everything we perceive is mind-dependent, the physical objects constituted by our veridical perceptions are rightly said to be outside of our minds in the sense that their existence, and hence our perceptions of them, is outside of our volitional control and willed by another being, most notably by God, who embeds everything in himself through his unlimited will. We will see this view most clearly expressed in the *Notebooks*, where Berkeley identifies both the human and the divine mind with the will.

[24] Interestingly, it is even true for 'rationalist' voluntarists like Descartes (see the fourth of his *Meditations*).

[25] Concentrating on Berkeley's philosophy of nature and theology, I will not be able to devote the amount of attention to all of these topics they would deserve.

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sorts of interpretations that emphasize the role of divine volitions (for instance, Winkler 1989, Frankel 2016) less *ad hoc*, fitting it into a broader voluntarist framework. As the voluntarist interpretation does not countenance the existence of anything abstract or inherently universal even in the mind of God, this reading also underlines Berkeley's nominalism or anti-abstractionism, sometimes taken as another empiricist hallmark (Ayers 2005).[26]

While the traditional interpretations rarely address it, Berkeley's vehement and unwavering critique of the deists is also understandable as motivated by voluntarist inclinations, explaining its overarching importance in his works. The misconceptions of the deists are not only emphatically discussed in the later writings but, while do not come up in the texts themselves, also mentioned in the titles of Berkeley's early works, suggesting its fundamental relevance to his early project as well. On the narrative I am offering for consideration, Berkeley thought that restricting our understanding of God and his ordinary activities to rational and universal principles—theoretical considerations which promises to be comprehensible by human reason—naturally leads to the denial of the continuous and irreducible divine presence and activity. This approach equally applies to the central tenets of revealed religion, which, like in the case of miracles or the doctrine of trinity, often go beyond our intellectual capacities. On this reading, deism is presented as the most extreme form of intellectualism or anti-voluntarism. Just as the medieval voluntarist thought that limiting the scope of what God can do by human reasoning (based on the then fashionable Aristotelian principles) is an intolerable threat to orthodox Christianity, so regarded Berkeley the deists' (and others') excessively intellectualist approach to religion as dangerous in ethical and, as we will see, deeply misguided in theological and philosophical terms.

Moreover, offering a voluntarist approach to Berkeley's positive philosophy might also refine our understanding of the motivations for his unprecedented attack on the concept of a mind-independent world. His immaterialism is not based merely on epistemological concerns motivated by the Cartesian and Lockean representative theory

[26] The probably most famous voluntarist of all time, William of Ockham, for instance, is widely regarded as a nominalist and empiricist. Historians often associate nominalism and realism about universals with voluntarism and intellectualism, respectively. See, for instance, Oakley 1961.

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of perception, but also on a series of attacks on the coherence and meaningfulness of the various concepts of matter, which—in addition to a rigorous empiricist's repugnance for concepts which cannot be spelled out in perceptual terms—is largely motivated by the assumption of an omnipotent God. In line with medieval voluntarists such as William of Ockham, Berkeley emphasizes that an omnipotent first cause, God, is able to will and produce anything that is logically possible, including our perceptions without any secondary or material cause involved in the process. Since God's existence and continuous volitional activity are clearly sufficient to bring about all our experiences—regardless of one's theory of perception—we would need what we do not have, namely very good reasons to introduce any secondary and subordinate causes, such as material substances, into our ontology. Furthermore, I find it pretty remarkable that Berkeley resists the temptation to call upon God's intellectual nature which, following the standard intellectualist argument based on the simplicity of divine actions, could render the most obscure and vacuous concept of an absolutely useless matter (extrinsically) impossible. For Berkeley, this concept of matter is neither intrinsically nor extrinsically—or, in other words, neither logically nor metaphysically—impossible, but simply completely unjustifiable. In II.6, I will briefly discuss how his voluntarist approach is different from the more intellectualist line of thought Collier follows to reach the same metaphysical conclusion.

I.4. THE DEFINITIONS OF THEOLOGICAL VOLUNTARISM

Since it is used in various pretty distinct senses and contexts in philosophical discussions, it is high time I determined more precisely what I mean by voluntarism. Though, as I suggested earlier, it can be applied to various aspects of Berkeley's philosophy, in what follows, I am interested almost exclusively in the *theological* aspects of voluntarism as well as in its implications for philosophy of nature.[27] So, in contrast to some quite widespread

[27] Accordingly, I will not be able to do justice to the overarching importance of the will in his philosophy, including his theory of mind and action, etc., and hence to establish the all-round voluntarist interpretation of Berkeley I adumbrated in the previous section. Rather I will restrict myself to show that his theology and his corresponding understanding of the created world is fruitfully interpreted in a voluntarist framework. In fact, because I will focus on theological voluntarism in relation to the *physical* laws of nature, I more often phrase my statements in corresponding terms. Nonetheless, I hope, these could be easily generalized to broader claims that are quite seamlessly, if not perfectly, applicable to the

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usage in the literature, I do not limit voluntarism to the divine command theory or some other forms of ethical or, for that matter, physical voluntarism, but see it as what constitutes the theological *basis* of those very important and far-reaching ramifications in the moral and the physical world. Before proposing my definition of voluntarism, to avoid some possible as well as actual misunderstandings, I will discuss a few definitions that are often associated with it.

The probably simplest definition of theological voluntarism would say that 'Everything depends on the *will* of God', but it equivocates in at least two respects. First, between two understandings of dependence: causal and metaphysical/conceptual. While many theologians and philosophers with intellectualist inclinations agreed that everything is caused by God's will, but not independently of some metaphysical or conceptual necessities he has to stick to when creating and maintaining the world. As such, accepting this statement is compatible with his will being determined by his intellect necessarily. Also, a widely accepted intellectualist view, like Malebranche's, can satisfy this definition, holding that while the *existence* of all things depend on God's will, their *nature* or the *content* of (some of) the laws governing them is independent of divine decisions—being determined, for instance, by the immutable essences of things, eternal truths or, extrinsically, by other intellectual considerations and principles God's will has to respect, such as the essential rationality or simplicity of his ways. On this worldview, once God has decided to create (and maintain) the world, at least some laws can be regarded as (hypothetically and extrinsically) necessary, as his intellectual nature is such that he could not have brought about (and maintain) the world with different ones. In other words, the content of the laws of nature do not depend on the divine will, as God cannot freely determine and, subsequently, change the laws despite the fact he could have decided not to create the world, and can destroy, or at least stop creating, it anytime he wishes.

Moreover, the scope of *everything* can extend only to *what is outside* God, that is, the created world, but not what is pertinent to his intellect, such as the eternal truths. These truths are not only commonly seen as uncreated and hence independent of God's will

moral implications of theological voluntarism. For a great discussion of theological voluntarism as an ethical theory, see Adams 2004. For a short excursus on Berkeley's moral voluntarism, see footnote 47.

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but also as laws determining the way the divine actions are to be executed. The endorsement of *eternal laws* or, in more familiar terms, necessary truths, of course, plays an important role in deciding whether one is a voluntarist or an intellectualist,[28] but even the seemingly voluntarist claim that 'there are no necessary truths' or that 'every truth is contingent on God's *will*' can be mitigated, *á la* Descartes, by emphasizing the immutability of the will or, *á la* Malebranche, by having God's intellectually-guided nature render the application of his will and hence its effects, such as the laws of nature, *extrinsically* necessary.[29] On the other hand, mathematical or logical truths might be exception to this rule, as most voluntarists—the moderate ones, as I call them—will readily acknowledge that God cannot make logical contradictions true. This, they will tell us, does not count as limitation of the divine omnipotence, because logical impossibilities have no positive reality to which God's power would not extend.

Others might try to define voluntarism as the view that 'God can do everything', but this is one (albeit rather imprecise) way of claiming that God is omnipotent, which is of course a Christian dogma accepted by the intellectualists as well.[30] It is undeniable that intellectualists tend to emphasize it less often than voluntarists, in fact, historically speaking, voluntarism sprang from considerations about the implications of divine omnipotence. Also, intellectualists are more inclined to constrain and limit the scope of divine omnipotence not only by logical necessities—'God can will and consequently do everything that is *logically possible*'—but to reduce it to the proposition that 'God can realize everything he wills, but cannot will everything' or that 'God can will and consequently do everything that he *has a (sufficient) reason to will*'. On this account, God's omnipotence—what Geach calls 'almightiness'—lies in the fact that God is able to

[28] See for instance Osler 1994, 10-1. Actually, most commentators use the term 'voluntarism' this way, for example, when discussing Malebranche's 'intellectualist' criticism of Descartes' infamous 'voluntarist' doctrine of the divine creation of eternal truths.

[29] To be clear, as the previous footnote indicates, many see Malebranche's intellectualism more conspicuous, insofar as he clearly endorses the existence of some *intrinsically* or absolutely necessary eternal truths as well, for instance about mathematics or morality. Leibniz might be cited here, too, as someone who entertains both the intrinsic (or, in his terminology, metaphysical) and extrinsic (or moral) necessity of some truths. He put big emphasis also on differentiating absolute from hypothetical necessity. See for instance his fifth letter to Clarke, summarizing these important distinctions (Leibniz 1989, 696).

[30] For a classic discussion of omnipotence, see Geach 1973.

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execute or realize any of his volitions, indeed, once he wants something, it is necessary that it take place accordingly. But, according to intellectualism, it cannot mean that he can actually will anything he can do logically speaking, because he can really will only what his intellect demands or at least offers compelling and sufficient reasons for. So, even if in a logical sense the divine power (or, as the medieval philosophers liked to put it, his absolute power) is limited only by contradictions, metaphysically speaking, it can never be the case that God actually wills something without his intellect having determined, justified and, for some early modern intellectualists, necessitated it. By interpreting it as a necessary compliance with internal reasons but nothing outside his mind, the divine freedom can be easily maintained by an intellectualist.[31] On the other hand, as mentioned above, moderate voluntarists while denying any intellectual determination think that God cannot override logical truths, or actualize logically impossible states of affairs. In this sense, even a voluntarist cannot maintain that, without any qualification, God can do literally everything.

Being aware of the diverse complexities haunting the historians, Rossiter offered another definition worth discussing at this point to uncover what I take to be a common misconstruction of the debate. This approach might also explain why Berkeley's voluntarism has gone virtually unobserved and conflated with Malebranche's intellectualist occasionalism. In his dissertation, Rossiter tied voluntarism to the denial of intrinsic (or, as he calls it, metaphysical) necessity obtaining in creation and to the view that the moral or physical laws are determined by God's decisions, not by the essences of things. With regard to morality but in terms equally applicable to the physical laws, he claims that the "dividing point [between the voluntarist and the intellectualist] is properly

[31] The voluntarist conception of freedom, on the other hand, is closer to the libertarian definition, according to which an act is free only when the agent could have done otherwise. In this sense, the intellectualist God is not free, as he cannot actually create the world in any other way than the eternal truths or other determining reasons dictate. As I mentioned earlier, he might still be free to create or not to create the world, since an intellectualist is not automatically a necessitarian as well. Necessitarianism is the view that nothing is contingent, or that every truth is a necessary truth—including that the world has been created. It was accepted by Collins and Spinoza and, on certain interpretations, by Leibniz as well (see Lin 2012 and Griffin 2012). While Malebranche did not see himself as a necessitarian, according to Lennon (1998, 346-7), he also had a strong inclination towards this view, as he faces the dilemma that either every truth is necessary or there are truths that are independent of God's *will*. In any event, neither sounds as a voluntarist position.

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captured in the impious hypothesis that the moral laws of nature would hold even if, *per impossibile*, God didn't exist. […] the intellectualist holds that moral laws of nature would still obtain if human beings and the world existed just as they do, but God did not exist; the voluntarist, on the other hand, denies that this would be true." (Rossiter 2014, 3.) According to the voluntarist, but not the intellectualist, "the laws of nature, either moral or physical, would not obtain in the counterfactual situation that God did not exist but the world did exist." (Rossiter 2014, 28.)

Though this definition captures some complexities concerning the implications of voluntarism, it reduces the intellectualist position to what I call (natural) essentialism, holding that, merely supervening on the physical essences the laws of nature are intrinsically and, perhaps, absolutely necessary.[32] Some early modern philosophers—Grotius might be one of them—indeed endorsed the view that the laws of nature would be the same even if God did not exist, because the essences of things themselves fully determine them. Of course, physical objects exist only because God created them, but putting that aside, God is irrelevant to the content of the laws of nature. As we will see, some like Malebranche, however, emphatically denied this sort of essentialism, without committing himself to voluntarism as I understand it. Rossiter's approach hence masks a crucial divide between two sorts of intellectualism, imputing voluntarism to everyone who denies that the physical essences are solely responsible for the laws of nature. On Rossiter's account, Locke is a (moderate) voluntarist who thinks that the laws of nature are determined by God's perfect nature. This view, on my reading, however, constitutes the standard, most widely endorsed case of intellectualism, illustrated most straightforwardly by Malebranche, according to which while God acts in nature freely insofar as being undetermined by the essences of the material bodies, he is determined necessarily by the perfections of his intellectual nature. If you think that the content of the laws of nature is determined—even if, as Rossiter adds, only hypothetically—either by physical essences *or* by God's intellect, leaving, at best, only the role of execution to his will, then you cannot be a voluntarist. In fact, maybe only the latter position deserves the label 'intellectualist', as the former denies not only the more-than-instrumental

[32] I will return to these concepts in III.4, discussing the modal status of the Berkeleyan laws of nature.

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involvement of God's will in the physical world, but also stays silent about the relevance of his intellect. Aquinas, Malebranche or Leibniz would never take this 'naturalist' view as a true description of their own. The Cambridge Platonists, such More or Cudworth, might accept it, but only insofar as the "plastick nature" or the spirit of nature, on which the laws of nature are directly grounded, is the "transcript" or "mute copy" of the divine wisdom and its eternal ideas in the created world (see, for instance, More, *A Collection* xv-xvi).

So, to put it in simpler and, hopefully, more distinctive terms, I define voluntarism as a theological position on divine psychology stating that the divine will does not follow necessarily the dictates of reason. In this sense—expressed in more positive, indeed more ambitious, terms—the divine will is said to be indifferent, free and unconstrained.[33] God can will and act arbitrarily, not being determined by anything in or outside him or by anything that is independent of his will. In other words, God has the authority or power, *arbitrium*, to actually do any way he wants and does not need any additional reason or justification to do so.[34] The most important dividing line between an intellectualist and a voluntarist is then whether God's act of creation and subsequent volitional activity in

[33] If, for whatever reason, we do not want to speak in terms of divine faculties, we might try to cash out the disagreement in terms of the the distinction between God's absolute power (*potentia absoluta*) and his ordained or ordinary power (*potentia ordinata*). The medieval intellectualists would argue that, at least after creation, God actually restricts himself to his ordained power, and we can ignore his absolute power with regard to physical or metaphysical issues as a merely logical possibility. The distinction, however, might be applied to the—on my understanding, more decisive—pre-creation situation as well. For the intellectualists, unlike the voluntarists, it seems to be true that, even before creation, God's absolute power is only a logical possibility, covering those possibilities that God as an omnipotent being could realize, whereas taking his intellectual nature into account God can actually use only his ordained power to realize what is metaphysically possible.

[34] As I indicated earlier, the Leibnizian view that a non-trivial sufficient reason is necessary for divine actions and decisions is a quite clear sign of one's intellectualism. Though otherwise adopting a typically intellectualist moral fitness theory, Samuel Clarke nicely represents the (moderate) voluntarist position with his response to Leibniz in their famous correspondence: "This is very true that nothing is without a sufficient reason why it is, and why it is thus rather than otherwise […] But this sufficient reason is oft-times no other than the mere will of God" (*Leibniz-Clarke* 1956, 20-21). This voluntarist idea is nicely expressed also by Locke, who regularly attributes the otherwise unaccountable phenomena to God's good pleasure (see for instance *Essay* IV.iii.6, IV.iii.29). Intellectualists like Leibniz made it clear that, if there is such a thing at all, the divine good pleasure is always ruled by God's wisdom (see Leibniz 1989, 352). For Leibniz, "to say [with the voluntarists that] *stat pro ratione voluntas,* my will takes the place of reason, is the motto of a tyrant." (*Meditation on the Common Concept of Justice*, Leibniz 1988, 46.) Cf. the motto I have chosen for my thesis: "Hoc volo, sic iubeo: sit pro ratione voluntas" (I will this, I command this: let my will take the place of reason). See Juvenal, *Satirae* VI, 223.

nature is constrained by his intellectual nature and/or determined by any necessary truths known by his intellect *or* rather God is absolutely free to act, creating not only the physical world but also the content of the laws of nature as he wishes, if you like, arbitrarily. If God necessarily chooses to create and maintain a certain possible world with a certain set of laws, rendering it the only metaphysically possible world, due to *its* intrinsic intellectual virtues (due to its metaphysical goodness, yielding, for instance, the maximum happiness of mankind) or, in addition, due to *his* inevitable preference for the rationality or simplicity of its actualization (reflecting God's glory the most) is hardly a view any voluntarist would endorse.[35] In light of this understanding of voluntarism, we can differentiate weak, strong and extremely strong versions, depending on what sort of priority one ascribes to the divine will over the intellect.

Weak voluntarism would simply imply non-intellectualism, the denial of the view that the intellect determines or has priority in some other sense over the will. Weak voluntarism means either that neither of these faculties plays a dominant role, and the will is on equal footing with the intellect, or—taking into consideration the often-endorsed theological view of divine simplicity—one might argue that the intellect and will amount to the very same function of the utterly simple activity of God. So, according to weak voluntarism, God's volitions have no special status in comparison to his

[35] In the *Theodicy* Leibniz claims that "there is an infinitude of possible worlds among which God must needs have chosen the best" (Leibniz 1951, 128-9). The Cambridge Platonist Henry More also thinks that God has to create the best possible world (*Divine Dialogues* II, 24-25). Rossiter notes that this commitment in itself might not entail intellectualism, because it is possible that "different sets of physical laws of nature could equally yield the best of all possible worlds." (Rossiter 2014, 22.) In this case, "God could choose to make the best of all possible worlds but still freely choose the set of laws that govern the natural world from a range of options" with the divine will "determining the content of the physical laws of nature." Another possibility is to say that there is no specific best possible world God has to actualize. As Emily Thomas summarized his view, the early eighteenth century philosopher Edmund Law "put forward an unusual argument for voluntarism, arguing that there is no such thing as a 'best possible world' - a morally superlative world with no equal, or better - and this entails voluntarism" (Thomas 2017, 207). As he argues, there is no possible world than which we cannot think of a slightly better one. Also, there can be more equally best possible worlds. Of course, these options raised by Law cannot be accepted by intellectualists like Leibniz, as in the absence of *the* best possible world God would have no sufficient reason to create anything at all. Indeed, excluding the first qualification mentioned by Rossiter, Leibniz thinks that the laws are built into the very concept of the possible worlds. So, if there is a best one, it comes with the those fully determinate laws which make the world the best. Maybe, for More or Malebranche, the idea of one or more best possible worlds governed by different laws makes sense, but then God makes his decision based on some additional consideration, like, as Rossiter mentions, in More's case, the teleological efficacy of the laws, or, in Malebranche's case, the simplicity or generality of the laws, as the ones reflecting God's intellectual nature the best.

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intellectual capacities, and the divine faculties work together, as it were, democratically or as an indivisible unit. Nonetheless, in an epistemic sense, the will can be seen as prior with regard to our understanding of the divine nature and activity. For instance, when asking why a certain law holds in reality, we can just point to his mere decision, to his will, which is not determined by his intellect or any rational consideration.

Strong voluntarism might be defined as the opposite of intellectualism, in the sense that the will determines the intellect, or that the will is the factor in God that has priority over the intellect and that really matters in theological and philosophical (including physical or moral) terms. In order to avoid some tricky issues concerning the relation of God to time, I have to add that the priority or primacy is to be understood not temporally, but rather conceptually or metaphysically. The essence of God can be comprehended through focusing on his undetermined power to will and act arbitrarily, which is considered to be more fundamental to our concept of God than his intellectual capacities. But this concept is not merely to reflect the limitations of our epistemic capabilities, but is believed to properly correspond to what constitutes, metaphysically speaking, God's most fundamental aspect. The volitional aspect of God is seen as more basic and relevant to how we should conceptualize his nature, the act of creation and his relationship with the physical world as well as to our understanding of the laws of nature than his intellectual and perceptual capacities.[36] On a radical understanding of the priority of the will, a strong voluntarist might deny the existence of a divine intellect that contains anything that God does not will to realize, implying that God does not entertain unwilled, i.e. unactualized possibilities in his mind.[37] If not qualified, for instance, in the way

[36] These roundabout attempts of spelling out the priority of the will is needed because, on the strong voluntarist understanding of God, the divine will is not necessarily prior *conceptually* to the contents of the intellect in every sense of the word. For instance, as we will see, it should be compatible with strong voluntarism that intentionality (a sense of representation of what the particular volitions are directed upon) is required for the execution of the volitions. Even if these representations are construed as ideational objects in the mind of God, they do not necessarily determine or limit the choices the divine will can realize. But they need not to be ideas in a sense that they could be metaphysically pre-given to the divine will in a separate intellectual sphere. Indeed, construed as mere intentional objects of the volitions, the contents of the divine intellect do not have their own metaphysical reality, depending on the volition for their intentional "in-existence". As such, the volitions can be regarded as prior even conceptually, as the archetypes make sense only as the intentional objects thereof. I will return to this important, though quite delicate, issue later on, for instance in 2.5 and 4.4.

[37] One of Spinoza's remarks in the *Ethics* might provide an interesting parallel. As I mentioned earlier, Spinoza advocates necessitarianism, famously claiming that "things could have been produced by God in

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Berkeley seems to do—emphasizing that, insofar as he knows what he is doing, God is not a blind agent after all—this view might lead to an even more extreme form of voluntarism.

As I define it, the *extremely strong version of voluntarism* does not merely downplay the importance of the intellect but entirely excludes it from divine psychology, claiming that, in addition to being undetermined, the will is ungoverned and unspecified by the intellect in any way. This can take the infamous form that, insofar as God's actions are not limited by any rationality at all, he is not even bound by logical possibilities and necessities, and can make literally everything, including contradictions, true or change the past, etc.[38] Apart from this counterintuitive implication, the extremely strong version might also entail the absolute arbitrariness or whimsicality of the divine actions, and possibly even the denial of the basic intelligibility of God's nature. As such, the extremely strong form of voluntarism seems to be incompatible with the denial of blind agency thesis, according to which one cannot will and consequently do anything on purpose without knowing what she wants to do. Although the doctrine was endorsed by most philosophers in the period, it is important to stress that it is not an exclusively intellectualist view, since less radical voluntarists, weak or strong ones alike, could consistently maintain that the will is not blind because it is not different from the intellect, or because an idea or some other

no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced" (Ip33). This view can be taken as a radical version of intellectualism, according to which everything happens in a necessary and rational order in accordance with God's perfect nature, despite Spinoza's criticism of the anthropomorphic concept of the divinity leading him to deny anything like our faculties of intellect and will to God and the commonly accepted belief that God, just like human beings, acts according to reasons. Spinoza argues that his necessitarianism shows the real omnipotence of God, because his God can do *and*, in fact, does everything that "he actually understands", while others (probably referring to the voluntarists and Descartes, who, as he puts it in Ip33s2, "subjects all things to a certain indifferent will of God, and makes all things depend on his good pleasure") think that God does not and cannot do so, "for they think that in that way they would thus destroy God's power" (Ip17). On the radical understanding of the priority of the will I just raised, however, voluntarism seems to amount to the same conclusion, namely, that God creates everything that he actually conceives—but, as I will suggest in 4.5, not everything that is logically or metaphysically possible.

[38] While this extreme view, regularly attributed to the likes of Peter Damian or Descartes, is clearly not something the majority of voluntarists would be willing to endorse, it is all too often equated with voluntarism as such. It is not a contemporary distortion of the debate, though, as it was often raised as an objection to voluntarism by early modern intellectualists, too. The third Earl of Shaftesbury for instance claimed in his *Characteristicks* that grounding the distinction between right and wrong in the arbitrary divine will entails the belief that "if each part of a contradiction were affirmed for truth by the Supreme Power, they would consequently become true." (Shaftesbury 1999, 181.)

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sort of cognition provided by the intellect specifies its operations and activities through constituting the intentional object its volition is directed on.[39]

I.5. THE RELATION OF VOLUNTARISM TO EMPIRICISM, RATIONALISM, OCCASIONALISM AND IMMATERIALISM

Another closely connected point is the question of how empiricism and rationalism relate to voluntarism and intellectualism, respectively. Rationalism is often taken as a natural ally of intellectualism. God is restrained in his creation by certain necessary truths and immutable essences or by his nature's intellectual inclinations (e.g. for simplicity) that, at least in principle, can be discovered by human reason as well, being capable of the same sort of reasoning as God. Voluntarism, on the other hand, is ordinarily married with a more empirical approach to nature. Since God created the world purely by his arbitrary and indifferent will undetermined and unnecessitated by any rational considerations, there are no essences and underlying structures in nature to be grasped by reason explaining why our experiences are necessarily such as they are. Consequently, there is no other way of figuring out how nature works than the pretty fallible empiricist way of observation, experience and induction.[40] While, in my opinion, these connections are important to have in mind when evaluating one's take on the nature of God as well as the world he created, the question is a bit more complicated. Should it be impossible for a voluntarist to predict God's will based on mere reasoning? It is not merely that second-

[39] So, despite this commonly raised criticism, with the exception of few, if any, extremely strong voluntarists, the majority of them never thought that God acts randomly and capriciously, or that his nature is utterly unintelligible. Actually, God might even have general reasons for his actions. The point is simply that he is not determined by these, and hence we cannot even hope to find principles irresistible for God, which, as a consequence, are necessarily and universally implemented in nature. So, a voluntarist might say, as Berkeley did, that God acts according to general laws with a purpose in his mind, namely our benefit, but he does not have to act according to strictly universal laws and could freely, and, at any time, do otherwise, since there are neither intellectual standards to measure and evaluate his actions nor requirements to determine and limit his decisions.

[40] Of course, as many pointed out (see, for instance, Curley 1984, 573-4), experimenting was important for rationalists like Descartes or Malebranche too. Nonetheless, even if the hypotheses explaining the particular phenomena we can come up are to be confirmed by experiments, the rationalists firmly believed that the general principles of physics, the unobservable laws of nature, should be derived from *a priori* reasoning alone. In other words, the Cartesian laws of nature are not generalizations of our experiences but (potentially) empirically testable hypotheses of how things have to be, even in counterfactual situations. See also Curley 2015.

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guessing God's free decisions might be available to (the not extremely strong) voluntarists as well, as they might appeal to experience-based generalizations as premises of deductive reasoning about the divine agent's aims and anticipated actions in the future. But if the divine will is really immutable, as Descartes argued, it raises our hopes to understand *a priori* the aims and functioning of the divine will and hence the physical laws with even greater confidence. Especially in the case of moral laws, many voluntarists suggested that God endowed us with intellectual capacities which, if used properly, can reveal *a priori* those considerations along which God freely determined what is right and wrong. So, a voluntarist might occasionally avail herself of rationalist argumentations after all. And, on the other hand, even if we have to rely on experience, because we cannot base our scientific theories on our knowledge of God's reasons, we might still think that God acts according to some, to us unknown, reasons necessarily. So, this sort of empiricism—sometimes referred to as *epistemological* voluntarism—is compatible with an intellectualist view about theological matters.[41]

At this point, it is worth discussing Ayers approach to voluntarism in more detail. Being similar to Rossiter's understanding discussed above, it provides us with a great opportunity to clarify the relation of voluntarism to occasionalism and immaterialism. But, as I mentioned earlier, it is relevant to our purposes also because Ayers is one of the very few scholars who at least touch upon the issue of voluntarism with respect to Berkeley. Focusing on the question whether the laws of nature are grounded in God's continuous activity or in the essences of things, he writes that, according to Descartes's voluntarism,

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[41] With regard to a certain quite specific problem concerning the communication of motion, the intellectualist Malebranche rather untypically claims in a letter to Leibniz (*Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, OCM XVII-1 55) that "because we cannot comprehend the designs of the creator nor understand all the relations that they have to his attributes, whether or not he conserves an absolute quantity of motion in the universe *seems to depend* on a purely arbitrary volition of God, which, consequently, we can know only through some sort of revelation, such as that which experience gives us" (translation from Downing 2005b, 222, emphasis added). As I mentioned earlier, Locke might be an even better example of this attitude, who by referring to God's good pleasure might just want to admit (in fact, much more frequently, extensively and emphatically than Malebranche) that our knowledge of the workings of his mind and the laws he established in nature is severely limited.

> the laws that govern how bodies move and push or knock one another about should not be thought to flow from the intrinsic, geometrical nature of matter, but to be the general rules of the harmony according to which God maintains matter in being. (Ayers 2005, 41)[42]

On this understanding, voluntarism is even more palpable in Malebranche—who, according to Ayers, "adopted a rigorous voluntarism"—with his view that God directly causes the physical events in the created world, because physical things can have no causal power at all, which could ground the laws of nature. On this reading, voluntarism is simply an inevitable consequence of the occasionalist theory of (physical) causation. And what is more relevant to Berkeley is that, on this account, immaterialism also *trivially* implies voluntarism—if there are no material objects and physical objects are reduced to bundles of inert perceptions, it is obvious that the laws of nature cannot flow from their natures or be grounded in their causal activities. Consequently, as Ayers is eager to emphasize, interpreting Berkeley as a voluntarist—according to whom, "[t]he laws of nature are explained voluntaristically, as arbitrary constant conjunctions"—is correct, but hardly adds any relevant to our understanding of Berkeley's immaterialist philosophy. He made his view crystal clear.

> To suggest that Berkeley was a voluntarist first and an immaterialist second is surely to get things in the wrong order. Berkeley could not but be a voluntarist just because, if God directly causes ideas of sense, then obviously he has to be directly responsible for the regularities between them. (Ayers 2005, 56)

On Ayers' interpretation, the key to Berkeley's philosophy is that he denied the existence of matter (or, alternatively, reduced them to bundles of *passive* ideas), which entails the denial of physical causation, which in turn can be held consistently only in a voluntarist framework, claiming that the laws of nature reflect not the essential properties of physical

[42] This approach aptly shows how confusingly terms like voluntarism and rationalism are used in the literature. In his article, Ayers does not refer to intellectualism by name, but argues that, according to the empiricists, such as Locke and Hobbes, unlike the *voluntarist* Cartesians, the "natures are prior to laws" (Ayers 2005, 47). Muddying the waters even more, this view is sometimes called, notably by Ayers as well, metaphysical rationalism or mechanism. Elsewhere mechanism is defined as the view that "the laws of physics can be explained, in principle if not by us, by being deduced from the attributes possessed essentially by all bodies *qua* bodies, i.e., from the nature or essence of the uniform substance, matter, of which all bodies are composed" (Ayers 1981, 210). To differentiate these issues from theological intellectualism and voluntarism as I understand them, I prefer Ott's much more helpful distinction between bottom-up and top-down models to describe what Ayers calls the mechanist or rationalist and the voluntarist view, respectively (see Ott 2009, 5-10). I also refer to the former view as (natural) essentialism, implying the intrinsic necessity of the laws of nature.

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objects, but God's direct and regular activity in nature.[43] In other words, this interpretation holds that whoever denies the existence of matter and asserts that God creates our perceptions directly, cannot say else but that the physical world possesses no essences or natures, and that God's will accounts for the patterns of our perceptions, grounding the laws of nature. Criticizing the Cartesian reading of Berkeley, Ayers wants to show that what is peculiar to Berkeley is the immaterialist thesis, and his voluntarism only superficially connects him to the rationalists, such as Malebranche and Descartes. To put it simply, Berkeley's voluntarism is an uninteresting consequence of his basically empiricist immaterialism.

However, through digging a bit deeper into the relationship voluntarism has with the occasionalist theory of causation and immaterialism we can realize that there is much more to Berkeley's view on the natural world and to voluntarism in general than merely the denial of physical causation and the claim that the laws of nature do not flow from the physical objects, but are grounded directly in God's actions and decisions. Even this statement should be qualified, as voluntarism does not deny necessarily the causal role of physical objects—let alone the existence of material objects—as long as they do not limit the freedom of the divine will. That neither immaterialism nor occasionalism is a *necessary condition* for voluntarism is trivial from the cases of all voluntarists besides Berkeley and the occasionalists, who did not deny the existence or causal power of matter, like (controversially again) Descartes, Gassendi or Newton.[44] Simply put, there are theories of causation other than occasionalism that are perfectly consistent with voluntarism. Concurrentism, for instance, holds that physical things do possess causal powers, but those are not enough in and by themselves to explain the physical interactions and, consequently, the laws of nature. Hence, God's continuous causal activity is inevitably needed in nature. But even if the occasionalist theory of causation is the most natural

[43] Of course, one might consider a Humean possibility, which would deny genuine physical causation and the essentialist picture of the material world without positing God or anything behind the scenes as the 'real' cause or explanation of the phenomena.

[44] Actually, some like Henry 2009 might want to argue that occasionalism is even incompatible with voluntarism, imposing severe restrictions on what God can do. For discussions concerning the question whether occasionalism or concurrentism is the more suitable partner for (Descartes') voluntarism, see also Schmaltz 2003, Della Rocca 1999, Clarke 2000.

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accompaniment of voluntarism, the essence of voluntarism is rather, as I suggested earlier, to be grasped as the thesis that God's *will* and causal activity is absolutely free, that is, not determined by any pre-given conditions, such as eternal truths or other necessary reasons grasped by the divine intellect—in the same manner as it is not constrained by the essences or causal powers of the physical objects.

So, while I do not deny that Berkeleyan immaterialism entails a theory of causation similar to occasionalism, it is not true either that immaterialism or occasionalism is a *sufficient condition* for voluntarism properly understood. The denial that the immaterialism entails voluntarism is based on a perfectly consistent view that can be labelled as 'intellectualist immaterialism'.[45] Clearly, even if you deny the existence of material objects, you might still think that God's volitions are determined by his intellect, yielding, for instance, that God organizes our ideas in patterns of seemingly causal relationships necessarily determined according to eternal truths or some other intellectual factor of his nature. It seems obvious to me that an immaterialist can hold that the created world constituted by our perceptions reflects or mirrors some archetypal possible world God was determined to create by some necessarily motivating intellectual reason.[46] Of course, if someone does not want to take the necessitarians' line, it is God's free decision to create a world in which, say, we can never perceive a vacuum or discover that our ideas follow one another not in the simplest possible way, but, on the supposition he decides to create the world at all, he has no other realizable choice than bringing about our perceptions in line with these restrictions. Even if we bracket Leibniz or Collier as possible real-life advocates of this sort of intellectualism, the theoretical compatibility of this view with immaterialism clearly proves that voluntarism cannot be seen, as Ayers

[45] Malebranche's case, I will argue in more detail in section 2.5 and chapter 3, nicely illustrates the option that an occasionalist—and, *a fortiori*, an immaterialist—can be an intellectualist. Leibniz might be taken as a real-world example for immaterialist intellectualism, since at some stage of his philosophical development he maintained both that bodies have only phenomenal existence and the laws of nature are dependent on the bodies' essential features and their relations established by God according to intellectually binding rules like the principle of sufficient reason. But, in III.5, I will present Collier as an even more straightforward proponent of intellectualist immaterialism.

[46] Berkeley himself seemed to realize that immaterialism does not entail any particular view on the status of the laws of nature, claiming that his disagreement with Dr. Arbuthnot, his "first proselyte", about the necessity of the laws of nature has nothing to do with immaterialism. To be quoted in footnote 227 in III.4.

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proposes, merely as a trivial corollary of the denial of physical causality, which is, of course, unavoidable on an immaterialist account of reality.

I.6. IS BERKELEY A VOLUNTARIST?

In the concluding section of the first chapter, I attempt to address briefly how Berkeley's theology and philosophy of nature fit the various definitions and understandings of voluntarism I just discussed—leaving the detailed textual and interpretative justification for the remaining few hundred pages.[47] Of course, it is not a question whether Berkeley

[47] As I mentioned earlier, I will exclusively deal with issues of divine nature and its implications for natural philosophy. Without being able to go into the details, there are some considerations that, I hope, can render the omission of the ethical side of Berkeley's voluntarism less fatal to my project. Firstly, maybe voluntarism can and should be examined a bit differently with respect to the physical and the ethical laws. As Berkeley himself realized in the *Passive Obedience* (XXXIII), ethical laws are laws in a more literal sense than the physical laws of nature, and we have moral responsibility or duty about acting upon them simply because they have been prescribed by God. One is rightly seen as a voluntarist, or an advocate of the divine command theory, if she thinks that, at least with regard their obligatory status, the moral laws are determined by God's will or command. But, as I just stressed, it is not true for the physical laws of nature: merely the fact that it is God who established them does not make them contingent on his will in the relevant sense, as it does not entail that God to decided freely about their content. But, as one might argue, whether God decides freely about the content of the moral values that are obligatory simply because God chose them does not seem to be as crucial to one's voluntarism as the parallel question about the content of the physical laws is. Indeed, while Berkeley clearly adopts the divine command theory, claiming that our moral obligations derive solely and directly from God's decrees, it is unclear in the *Passive Obedience* if he was a voluntarist with regard to moral values as well (supposing that he thought it makes any sense to draw a distinction between these two questions at all). However, as I want to suggest, one can be a voluntarist with regard to the physical world while being more inclined to take an intellectualist approach with regard to the ethical values, if not the moral obligation, without being *clearly* inconsistent. Secondly, and relatedly, Berkeley might have regarded the ethical precepts God made as a special case insofar as they constitute a natural law, which can be known merely by reasoning about the aims of an all-good but self-sufficient being. While it is clearly a more intellectualistic standpoint with regard to the epistemic side of the question than what we are used to in his philosophy of nature, the metaphysical side might still be interpreted in voluntarist terms. The idea is something like this: God creates us with a nature from which we can know what ethical rules he willed freely and even arbitrarily to be followed, and values to be appreciated, universally. It is noteworthy that other notable voluntarists such as Ockham and Locke also maintained that the natural laws of morality can be discovered through *a priori* reasoning. And, thirdly, even if we were to assume that for Berkeley, just like for Malebranche, God is *essentially* good, that is, has no choice but to act according to the 'Good' independent of his decisions, there is an interesting discrepancy to note between what it entails with regard to the physical and moral laws. It seems to me that while divine goodness enables us to deduce at least certain principles or rules for ethics, it tells us virtually nothing about the physical laws God implements, beyond the mere fact that there is an observable regularity in nature. But, fourthly, we might reconsider the nature of divine goodness Berkeley appeals to in the *Passive Obedience*. Although Berkeley clearly accepts and uses as a premise that god is infinitely good, he leaves it unclear where he gets this knowledge from. Everyone—voluntarist and intellectualist alike—accepted that God is good, but disagreed over the question how we know it, and whether divine goodness is an essential feature of the most perfect being that necessarily acts in accordance with the pre-given 'Good' or his goodness is merely a consequent of his decisions, volitions and actions. Berkeley in his other works seems to opt for the latter position. As we will see, we know God's goodness from experiencing how he acts in nature—

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was a voluntarist in the sense Ayers or Rossiter understands it, implying merely the denial of natural essentialism or the bottom-up understanding of the laws of nature, but it has not been discussed adequately whether his views satisfy the requirements of voluntarism construed in the way I defined it. In what follows, I will undertake this task in detail and try to prove that while, at first sight at least, he is a good candidate for both weak and strong voluntarism, ultimately comes the closest to endorsing the more robust version of the two. The strong voluntarist position I attribute to Berkeley consists of three simple theses: (i.) God's indifferent, arbitrary and free will enjoys metaphysical or conceptual, as opposed to temporal, priority over his intellectual functions; (ii.) nature is directly guided by, and its laws are grounded in, God's will, meaning not only that the physical things have no causal powers or essences which could ground the laws of nature (that is, natural essentialism is false), but also that (iii.) God creates and maintains the physical world in accordance with law-like patterns of the phenomena arbitrarily established by particular divine volitions. As a consequence, we might add (iv.): whatever we can know about the metaphysically contingent laws of nature we know through induction from our limited experiences.[48]

First, I will try to establish (i.) in chapter 2, showing that his voluntarist description of the divine psychology and operation in the world is not merely a sign of Berkeley's pious Christianity, but to be taken as his well-thought-out, genuinely endorsed and literally true theological standpoint. This will be particularly conspicuous if we contrast it with Malebranche's views on the intellectual nature of God. Since (ii.) is straightforward issue in case of immaterialism and, as we have seen, is more often discussed in the literature

namely, to our benefit and interests: to our good. God's goodness means simply that he is good to his creatures, loves them, but it is not the Goodness which is independent of human or divine minds, or something which would be true even if no minds ever existed. It might be noteworthy that, for Malebranche, Goodness is something independent even from God's volitions, constituting the highest order according to which God has to act. Is he essentially good without reference to creation and the finite spirits inhabiting the universe? Probably this question—answered by Malebranche with a big "yes"—makes no sense for Berkeley, who is properly interpreted as a voluntarist in ethical terms as well.

[48] Apart from having pointed out the deficiencies of some other definitions earlier, I have no space here to justify these criteria as necessary conditions of voluntarism *as such*. I hope at least that even if not everyone agrees with me that they are necessary—for instance, because Descartes might be regarded as a voluntarist who denies (iv.)—most historians of philosophy will accept not only that they are jointly sufficient, but also that they are individually necessary in Berkeley's case.

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under the rubric of 'Berkeley's semi-occasionalism', I will focus more on (iii.) and (iv.) in chapter 3. In fact, the emphasis placed exclusively on (ii.) led interpreters, like Ayers, fail to realize the important difference between what voluntarism and what occasionalism or immaterialism amount to concerning one's philosophy of nature. I will attempt to show that Berkeley's theological voluntarism with its strong emphasis on the arbitrariness and particularity of God's actions is unacceptable for an occasionalist like Malebranche not only with regard to divine psychology but also with regard to the status of the laws of nature. In this sense, Ayers is right: beyond their occasionalist theory of causation, there is not much relevant similarity between Berkeley's and Malebranche's philosophy of nature. But it is not, as he suggests, because Berkeley's voluntarism, allegedly shared by Malebranche, is an insignificant and innocuous entailment of his immaterialism. In fact, the ordinarily overlooked contrast between their understanding of the laws of nature is grounded on their fundamentally different theological outlooks.

On my interpretation of Berkeley's voluntarism, there are no (even merely extrinsically or hypothetically) necessary laws of nature, as neither are there any eternal truth nor other intellectual consideration that could constitute an irresistible reason for the divine will and determine God's actions (in *pre*-creational terms). But he also denies that the divine will is essentially immutable and consequently God cannot change the laws he established (in *post*-creational terms), allowing us to lay down the foundations of science without observation. Simply put, he does not speak about the relevance of any necessary truths to nature either from the pre-creational or the post-creational perspective. As a consequence, even though Berkeley might not be as radical a voluntarist in *pre*-creational terms as Descartes (since he does not think God could override logic), he is a more straightforward, if not more consistent, one when it comes to our scientific understanding of the created world, making it clear that, in doing physics, we cannot count on any necessary feature of God's nature, including the immutability his will.[49]

[49] If we consider the 'pre-creation' situation to be more relevant than the 'post-creation' status of laws of nature, Descartes can be seen as a voluntarist, because he thinks that God freely creates even what they called 'eternal truths', for instance the necessary truths of mathematics, regardless of the fact that, due to his immutability, his actions are limited and the laws of nature are extrinsically necessary from the post-creation point of view. As Descartes makes it clear in the *World* (AT 6:43/ CSM 1:132), the Cartesian laws of motion are necessary, because given God's immutable nature they are true in all possible worlds. As they are only extrinsically necessary, possible worlds should be interpreted as all *metaphysically* possible ones,

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Furthermore, as I will try to substantiate, Berkeley does not simply maintain a merely epistemological voluntarist standpoint, as he is committed to it through and through, if you like, metaphysically, from his theology to his views on nature and the proper scientific methodology.

As I suggested earlier, while the best possible world with or without any other additional intellectual consideration cannot determine and limit God's metaphysically possible choices, merely having possible worlds as entertained in God's mind independently and before the actual execution of his will does not necessarily count as unacceptable to a voluntarist. Berkeley's related concerns about the Platonic two-world theory, which will be of particular importance when I compare his views on archetypes to those of Malebranche in chapter 4, are primarily based on the worry that the archetypal ideas in the divine mind constitute a real, albeit purely intellectual, world different from the created world, i.e. the world God makes us perceive. Through denying that there are divine ideas in the mind of God, he seems to be committed to a more radical sort of voluntarism, according to which the divine archetypes are not ideas in the proper sense of the word, but merely the intentional contents of his volitions. As such, God's knowledge is dependent upon his volitions in line with conceptual and metaphysical priority of the will revealed most clearly by his Trinitarian divine psychology, to be discussed in 2.5.

On the other hand, Berkeley did not intend to advocate the version of voluntarism that I denominated *extremely strong*, as he does not want to deny that the intellect has some, if only derivative, role in the divine theory of action. For instance, he clearly rejects the possible consequence of this extreme view that God can perform logically impossible things or that his activity in nature is capricious and irregular. He also vehemently opposes the radical view that the divine nature is so different to ours that we can hardly say any intelligible and revealing of his mind and activity in nature. Moreover, it might be more confusing that Berkeley accepts the denial of blind agency doctrine and occasionally even endorses some form of the divine simplicity thesis. On my interpretation, however,

i.e. the ones God can create according to his nature, not as all logically possible ones, i.e. the ones God can create according to his omnipotence. See also AT 7:380/CSM 2:261, AT 1:152/CSM 3:25 and AT 4:118–19/CSM 3:235. Cf. Curley 1984.

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he goes further than what I defined as *weak* voluntarism and wants to free the will from any intellectualistic constraint, claiming that the intellectual functions of God are, in fact, secondary to his will. Thanks to attributing a moderate—that is, not *extremely* strong—sort of voluntarism to Berkeley, I can admit that there are also seemingly intellectualistic or non-voluntaristic passages in his writings, for instance concerning his denial of blind agency. As I hope to show, most of them spring from his desire to balance his position in a way that avoids the unpleasant entailments of the extremely strong version of voluntarism, but they do not necessarily exclude a still pretty strong formulation of voluntarism.

When I claim that Berkeley was a voluntarist, and his philosophy was in various ways deeply influenced by this theological mindset, I do not want to suggest that he was particularly self-conscious and explicit about this commitment. To speculate a bit, it might be so because, seeking to be as ecumenical and inclusive with regard to other theological views as possible, he was rarely keen to go into theological debates in the abstract. This concession, however, leaves some interpretive room to explain away those very few statements in his work which are phrased in terms not typical of more self-aware voluntarists. Nonetheless, since the debate between intellectualist and voluntarist theology and the corresponding understandings of nature was so influential and well-known in the period, it would be very surprising if Berkeley had not given any thought to these issues and developed his own position. To be sure, he did not describe himself as a 'voluntarist'. But he did not characterize himself as an 'idealist' or 'empiricist', either—he used only, and sporadically, the term 'immaterialism' to refer to his main metaphysical thesis. The label 'voluntarism' was not in use in the time of Berkeley, but, if my thesis is true, he would certainly have agreed with its basic assumptions delineated above. Of course, it is only the denomination that is new, the idea goes back much before the time of Berkeley, originating in the eleventh century. While I will not be able to substantiate the claim that the medieval voluntarists, like William of Ockham, had a direct influence on him, it seems quite possible that this tradition was mediated to Berkeley through the likes of Descartes, Gassendi, Boyle, Arnauld, Locke and Newton. Unfortunately, this long and fascinating story cannot be discussed properly in these pages. So, I turn directly to Berkeley's voluntarist theology.

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BERKELEY'S VOLUNTARIST THEOLOGY: DIVINE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES

As an obvious point of departure, I will first examine Berkeley's theology, his approach to the divine nature and attributes not only to see if his characterization of God qualifies as voluntarist but also to start addressing some other crucial questions related to it, like those concerning the God-world relationship and the manner in which the creation of the world is said to be dependent on the divine will. In this chapter I will, in a more or less chronological order, present and investigate Berkeley's views about the divine attributes and our knowledge of God's nature before contrasting them to Malebranche's intellectualist divine psychology. My chief aim is to show that—though, as a good voluntarist adopting a Lockean sort of humility, he did not speculate much about God's essence—Berkeley thought that the most revealing and fundamental character traits of God are connected to the creative activity of his unconstrained and indifferent will, with his intellect playing only secondary roles.

I will start by looking at the notion and characterization of God we find in the earliest layers of Berkeley's thought, focusing first (2.1) on the formative, but illuminating period of the *Notebooks*, touching upon a lot of crucial issues that will come up later as well, including his voluntarist understanding of creation and eternal truths. In contrast with Descartes' or Spinoza's abstract definitions of God, for Berkeley, God's essence, identified primarily with his pure will, can be grasped through our everyday experiences of his creative activity in the natural world. Then (in 2.2) I will try to establish that the views found in the *Notebooks* are essentially the same as what is hinted at in (the subsequent editions of) his first published work, the *Theory of Vision*, and developed more fully in the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues*. At this stage, God is often called "the author of nature", who arbitrarily but consistently produces and connects the ideas we perceive. This regular connection between perceptions is marvellous enough to make us infer not only the existence of a super-mind or, in fact, a super-will, but also the divine perfections of the Christian God. But these perfections are formulated not in the usual intellectualistic way, as attributes deducible from the concept of a perfect being meeting

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all the abstract standards of goodness and knowledge but construed simply as the various ways in which the divine will is executed. While God has (and occasionally actually exert his) overruling power, Berkeley emphasizes that his real power, goodness and wisdom are manifested in his regular actions in nature, in the manner God arbitrarily and freely wills to provide us with the constancy we need to understand the world around us.

In the *Three Dialogues* (discussed in 2.3) a new element is stressed, insofar as the human self-knowledge is presented as another crucial step in understanding the notion of God. Similarly, in the *Siris* and some sermons Berkeley appeals to the *imago Dei* tradition, making it clear again that our knowledge of God—*pace* Locke—is not based on the merely intellectual process of constructing a complex idea of a spirit who, in his impassive and purely active nature, shares none of the limits our faculties have. Instead, the Berkeleyan *active* reflection belongs primarily to the faculty of the will, as we form a notion of the essentially simple and active God by participating in the same kind of activities, for instance by acting benevolently. It suggests both a voluntarist characterization of God—as an entity whose main features are related to his will—and, on our part, the importance of volitional activity in coming to know him analogically. Then (in 2.4.) I turn to the fourth dialogue of the *Alciphron* (titled *'The Truth of Theism'*), which not only advances a new argument for the existence of God, but also delineates the way we are to speak about God. Berkeley's chief aim here is to criticize or, in fact, reinterpret the analogical theory, advocated by some important theologians of the time, according to which we can speak about God and his attributes merely analogically or metaphorically. Berkeley, however, argues that we can, and have to, apply the attributes to God literally. Though God's infinite nature cannot be comprehended in its entirety, Berkeley argues that the quantitative difference between our nature and God's does not prevent us from knowing him properly.

While more radical voluntarists often endorsed negative theology, rejecting any comprehensible positive description of God, this discussion confirms my contention that when, in the earlier works, Berkeley speaks about God's will and the various aspects of his of activity, he really means it. So, the voluntarist description of the divine nature he puts forward not merely as a pious way of speaking about God, reflecting a Lockean sort of humble epistemic position, but as a proper characterization of the divine essence.

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Nonetheless, as I will press it from time to time, Berkeley's approach to divine nature is pretty modest, insofar as he does not appeal to, nor pretend to prove, a robust concept of God, speculating about his essential properties, but rather grounds his minimalist concept on our limited observations of the divine effects in the physical world and on the, in a quantitative sense, inevitably inaccurate analogy with human capacities. While commentators like Grayling (1986, 183-203) often count the incapability of demonstrating in a fully robust sense all the attributes of the *Christian* God as a weakness of, or problem for, Berkeley's philosophy of religion, on the narrative I am offering in this dissertation, this is simply an implication of his voluntarist mindset.[50] It is a characteristically voluntarist move to say that we know enough about God through philosophy—for instance, to prove his existence and relevance to, as well as his continuous activity in, the world rendering his worship and all the traditional theology reasonable—but we cannot grasp his nature as an infinitely perfect being abstracted from how he actually relates to us and the world we experience.

Since, as I tried to show in the introduction, voluntarism is best defined in terms of the relationship between the divine faculties, in the last section (2.5.) I sum up the most important lessons of this chapter by contrasting both Berkeley's earlier and later views on divine psychology with Malebranche's intellectualist perfect being theology. Despite accepting that God is not a blind agent, and by re-interpreting the traditional understanding of divine simplicity, Berkeley makes it clear that, in sharp contrast to Malebranche, the divine will is not determined or governed necessarily by its intellect. Indeed, as I will attempt to show through examining the Trinitarian concept of God he puts forward in the *Siris*, Berkeley believes in an even stronger voluntarist view, according to which the will is the most essential and fundamental aspect of God's purely active nature.

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[50] For a more recent article arguing that Berkeley cannot hold on theoretical grounds that God is omnipotent, see Flage 2018.

II.1. DIVINE ATTRIBUTES IN THE *NOTEBOOKS*

Berkeley was an ordained in 1709, and, as is well known, became a bishop in the Anglican church in 1734. His religious commitment and motivation were rarely questioned, since not only his profession tied him to religion and (Anglican) Christianity in particular, but he also intended to reinforce both the natural and revealed religion through his novel philosophy.[51] It takes hardly more to notice this intention than to read the subtitles of his major works,[52] or the very last section of the *Principles*:

> 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. (*Principles* 156.)

From early on—as early as his *Notebooks*—Berkeley was keen to defend the traditional theological tenets of Christianity from all sorts of attack and deformation.[53] For instance, he vehemently criticized the philosophers who thought that God could be extended.

> The great danger of making extension exist without the mind. in yt if it does it must be acknowleg'd infinite immutable eternal etc. wch will be to make either God extended (wch I think dangerous) or an eternal, immutable, infinite, increate being beside God. (*Notebooks* 290)

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[51] Johnston made some interesting but pretty ungrounded assumptions that question the genuineness of Berkeley's religious motives. He claimed for instance that "it seems not improbable that, if Toland had never lived, Berkeley might have been the leader of free-thinking in the eighteenth century." (Johnston 1923, 337) Johnston appeals to entries like *Notebooks* 715-716 and 720, where Berkeley seems to exempt the propositions of faith from the rational and rigorous methods of investigation he follows in his philosophy *allegedly* in order not to upset the churchmen or schoolmen. For a discussion of Berkeley's relation to the free-thinkers, see Pearce 2018, Olscamp 1970.

[52] The subtitle of the *Principles of Human Knowledge* is: "Wherein the chief causes of error and difficulty in the Sciences, with the grounds of Scepticism, *Atheism, and Irreligion*, are inquired into". Similarly, the *Three Dialogues'* subtitle is as follows: "The design of which is plainly to demonstrate the reality and perfection of human knowledge, the incorporeal nature of the soul, and the immediate providence of a Deity: *in opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*. Also to open a method for rendering the Sciences more easy, useful, and compendious" (My emphases).

[53] He virtually starts his *Notebooks* by claiming that the "ffall of Adam, rise of Idolatry, rise of Epicurism & Hobbism dispute about divisibility of matter &c expounded by material substances" (entry 17). See also *Notebooks* 107, which is one of the first occasions when Berkeley emphasizes the importance of God (in a weirdly, and later clearly dismissed, Malebranchean manner): "Strange impotence of men. Man without God. Wretcheder than a stone or tree, he having onely the power to be miserable by his unperformed wills, these having no power at all."

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> Locke, More, Raphson etc seem to make God extended. 'tis nevertheless of great use to religion to take extension out of our idea of God & put a power in its place. it seems dangerous to suppose extension wch is manifestly inert in God. (*Notebooks* 298)[54]

These entries provide one of Berkeley's first definitions of God: an "eternal, immutable, infinite, increate being", who is not extended, but has (infinite) power. Activity is suggested as essential to God, since anything—extension in this case—that is "manifestly inert" cannot be in God. As we will see, this is spelled out later on as the view that God's purely active will cannot be affected by anything outside it. But God is not only impassible, but also claimed to be immutable, suggesting that the divine will cannot undergo any internal change either. It is worth pointing out, however, that immutability occurs rarely in Berkeley's subsequent characterizations of God. I take this as a sign that Berkeley realized that, as a voluntarist who openly embraces its implications for the physical world, he might not allowed to emphasize divine immutability, at least, not in a way Descartes did.[55] Without going into the details of the complex relation of voluntarism and divine immutability,[56] I just want to remind us that the claim that there is a feature of God's nature, i.e. his immutability, which might restrain the choices or decisions he is free to make subsequent to creation—overruling his absolutely unconstrained will and power—comes close to an intellectualist standpoint. As a consequence of emphasizing the relevance of divine immutability to the created world, God's absolute power, however unlimited it is from the pre-creation point of view, diminishes, as it were, to his ordained power, and we might find ourselves in the rather fortunate position of making scientific

[54] See also *Notebooks* 825: "Hobbs & Spinosa make God Extended. Locke also seems to do the same." It might be surprising why Locke is included in these lists, as he famously argued against the possibility of an eternal material being (*Essay* IV.13-17). But Berkeley has something else in mind, namely that Locke, just like Henry More, thought that the distinctive feature of matter is not extension but impenetrability or solidity (and divisibility) and souls are spatially located being able to move from one place to another (*Essay* II/XXIII/17-21). Accordingly, insofar as God is everywhere, he can be considered an infinitely extended, albeit immaterial (penetrable and indivisible), substance. As he puts it, "God, every one easily allows, fills eternity; and it is hard to find a reason why any one should doubt that He likewise fills immensity. His infinite being is certainly as boundless one way as another; and methinks it ascribes a little too much to matter to say, where there is no body, there is nothing" (*Essay* II/XV/3).

[55] Descartes emphasized divine immutability for two purposes. First, to prove that there are genuine laws of nature, that is, that the laws God established in nature are universally and necessarily true, as he could change or modify them only by violating his own nature. His second aim was to deduce the content of the laws of nature from God's immutable nature.

[56] For some of these, see Henry 2009, 84.

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demonstrations and *a priori* deductions concerning the created world.[57] As I will discuss it later in more detail, Berkeley claims even in the *Notebooks* (see entries 734-735) that we are not entitled to appeal to the immutability of God in order to discover any necessarily true features of the created world.[58]

The causal activity of God in nature is emphasized in the *Notebooks* all over the place, which is said to provide the "most suitable idea of the Divinity":

> One idea not the cause of another, one power not the cause of another. The cause of all natural things is onely God. Hence trifling to enquire after second Causes. This Doctrine gives a most suitable idea of the Divinity. (*Notebooks* 433.)

The very first definition of God we find in the *Notebooks* is also based on a demonstration of divine activity:

> Nothing corresponds to our primary ideas wthout but powers, hence a direct & brief demonstration of *an active powerfull being distinct from us on whom we depend.* etc. (*Notebooks* 41, emphasis added)

These entries not only underline the aspects of God Berkeley regards as the most important—a namely his activity, power, and our dependence on him—but also provide the core of Berkeley's famous passivity argument, which re-emerges from time to time in the published works and—based on hints from the *Notebooks*—goes like this:

1. Ideas, bodies, physical powers are, at best, "second causes", they do not really cause anything.

[57] See Osler 1994, 146-52, who argues on similar grounds that Descartes was an intellectualist after all.

[58] See the few other passages where Berkeley speaks about God's nature or his decrees as immutable, *Principles* 117, *Siris* 270, 342, 351, *Passive Obedience* III, XXXVIII, LIII. It is important to note that this concept of immutability, as one of the incommunicable attributes of God, is purely negative, suggesting that it enables us to understand and deduce very little as to God's positive nature or the content of his decrees. As he puts it in the *Siris*, immutability, just as "all these negative properties may belong to nothing. For, nothing hath no limits, cannot be moved, or changed, or divided, is neither created nor destroyed" (*Siris* 270). On my reading, Berkeley thinks that we are right to take God's precepts and decrees universally true, grounded in God's immutable decisions, but not because they are absolutely necessary or uncreated, i.e. would be true even if God never existed and willed them. In fact, as we will see soon, they are not even made extrinsically (and hypothetically) necessary by God's nature, since God made them true—and universally true for all the human kind—freely, and, as far as we know, he can change them anytime he decides so (without of course supposing any externally-induced change in God's nature). That is why, though immutability or, more precisely, impassibility is a divine perfection and the constancy of divine actions can be experienced in nature, we cannot base our scientific knowledge on the assumption that God acts or, in fact, has to act in the same way all the time. See also footnote 84.

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2. We know by our experience that minds cause ideas, e.g. the human minds cause their ideas of imagination.[59]
3. Only minds and ideas exist.[60]
4. From **i**, **ii** and **iii,** it follows that only minds can cause our ideas.
5. But *human* minds do not cause the sensible ideas, constituting the physical objects.[61]
6. From **iv** and **v,** it follows that there is another, i.e. not human mind, that is responsible for the production of the sensible ideas constituting the physical objects.[62]
7. And, by the commonly accepted definition, this non-human mind which causes the physical objects is called God.[63]

Though the argument might be easily rendered compatible with occasionalism (leaving premise 3 out), immaterialism also helps make sense of an otherwise puzzling Christian dogma. On analogy with how human minds can create ideas of imagination, Berkeley sees no problem with the doctrine that God created the world *ex nihilo*.[64]

> Why may we not conceive it possible for God to create things out of Nothing. certainly we our selves create in some wise whenever we imagine. (*Notebooks* 830.)

Traditionally, *ex nihilo* creation is contrasted with *ex materia* creation: God created the universe out of nothing and not out of a pre-given material source, like Hesiod's chaos or Plato's *khôra*. But for the immaterialist Berkeley the point is clearly not that God brought about the *material* world out of nothing, but that God creates the *perceptions* of the finite minds out of nothing, that is, without and not through matter. The question is whether there is any further meaning to creation being *ex nihilo* than denying its material

[59] *Notebooks* 830.

[60] *Notebooks* 429, 437, 476.

[61] *Notebooks* 98, 838 (quoted later).

[62] Of course, Berkeley did not entertain the Humean thought that there might be no cause of the phenomena to look for at all.

[63] The *locus classicus* of the argument is to be found in *Principles* 25-30, 146. For different formulations, see Bennett 1965 and Pearce 2017b, 459-60.

[64] Berkeley regards it as a great difficulty for the materialist account of creation, see *Third Dialogue* 256: "That a corporeal substance, which hath an absolute existence without the minds of spirits, should be produced out of nothing by the mere will of a spirit, hath been looked upon as a thing so contrary to all reason, so impossible and absurd, that not only the most celebrated among the ancients, but even divers modern and Christian philosophers have thought matter coeternal with the Deity." Cf. *Principles* 92.

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origin. It might be an equally plausible reading of this claim that God produces the world of perceptions literally from nothing pre-given.

Considering this interpretation, the role of the analogy with imagination gains new significance. Nonetheless, it is not absolutely clear whether, for Berkeley, imagination works really *ex nihilo* in this stronger sense, implying more than simply 'immaterially'. It is reasonable to think that previous sense perception is needed based on which the mind could put together its objects of imagination.[65] On the other hand, imagination does not require that its components be actually perceived ideas in the mind. Indeed, the need for previous experiences seems to mean nothing more than acknowledging that we cannot produce new ideas if we did not perceive similar ideas beforehand. In this sense, the ideas we imagine are ontologically new entities created *ex nihilo*.[66] In any event, this limitation clearly does not apply to God. While we might need to have previously perceived some similar ideas in order to imagine new complexes made out of them, he is certainly able to bring about any idea in us from literally nothing, for instance without an archetype he looks at so as to reproduce it. So, one might speculate that if *ex nihilo* creation is to mean something substantial in an immaterialist philosophy it should amount basically to the voluntarist view that there is not even something intellectual, like ideas in the mind of God, that conceptually, if not temporally, precedes and serves as eternal material for creation.[67] On this reading, *ex nihilo* is rather to be opposed to *ex deo* creation—if creating from God means creating from his intellect's divine ideas which forego, independent from, and, possibly, even determine his creative act.[68]

[65] See *Notebooks* 582: "The having ideas is not the same thing with perception. A man may have ideas when he only imagines, but then this imagination presupposeth perception." Cf. *Principles* 1, where Berkeley suggests that imagination is simply "compounding, dividing […] those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways", such as by sense or reflection.

[66] I will return to these issues in 4.4, arguing that imagination provides an illuminative analogy for divine cognitions.

[67] Historically speaking, it seems pretty fair to say that the doctrine was originally formulated against the Platonic conception of creation, which refers not only to pre-given matter but also eternal ideas God is reproducing when creating the world.

[68] The traditional intellectualist view is that God creates from his will *as well as* understanding. Following Aquinas, Malebranche claims in *Search* (LO 230) for instance that even God cannot create or will anything without divine ideas serving as its intentional objects.

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Interestingly, in the very next entry Berkeley interprets the *ex nihilo nihil fit* axiom—clearly introduced here as an objection to the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation—as actually referring to the truth that every idea is caused by a will.

> Ex nihilo nihil fit. this (saith Spinoza op:posth:p 464) & ye like are called veritates aeternae because nullam fidem habent extra mentem. to make this axiom have a positive signification, one should express it thus. Every Idea has a Cause i.e. is produced. by a Will. (*Notebooks* 831.)

If this means anything more than that all our perceptions are caused by God and, partially, by human minds, it might be taken as the voluntarist claim (made infamous by Descartes) to the effect that even the divine ideas are created by God himself, and there are no intrinsically necessary ideas or truths corresponding to them. By referring to Spinoza's claim that the *veritates aeternae* are called so because "nullam fidem habent extra mentem", he might want to say that eternal truths are restricted to purely logical truths which have no credit or reliability outside the mind, telling us nothing interesting about the created world.[69] In any event, this passage seems to reinforce, or at least allows for the possibility, that creating from nothing means that perceptions are generated by the divine will without the conceptual or metaphysical priority of ideas in his intellect. From which everything comes about is not a thing like an idea, indeed, an archetype of an idea, but simply the divine will causing *all* ideas. While the *ex nihilo* creation of the world of perceptions is true because it is generated neither from a pre-given matter nor divine ideas, the principle of *ex nihilo nihil fit* still holds, as creation is not groundless, being caused by the divine will.

Although the human and divine minds have something in common, which the ideas lack, namely the capacity of being active by causing ideas (even in some sense from nothing), Berkeley never questioned the traditional view that a huge, indeed infinite,

[69] Berkeley refers to *Opera Posthuma* (Spinoza 1677) page 464, which is Epistola XXVIII (see in Spinoza 1985, 196, as Letter 10, to Simon de Vries, 1663). In Curley's translation the alluded passage reads as follows: "You ask, next, whether also things or their affections are eternal truths. I say certainly. If you should ask why I do not call them eternal truths, I answer, to distinguish them (as everyone generally does) from those which do not explain any thing or affection of a thing, as, for example, *nothing comes from nothing*. These and similar Propositions, I say, are called absolutely eternal truths, by which they want to signify nothing but that such [propositions] have no place outside the mind place [*nullam fedem* (sic!) *habent extra mentem*], etc."

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distance separates us from God in terms of knowledge, power etc. As he puts it quite dramatically:

> We Imagine a great difference & distance in respect of Knowlege, power &c betwixt a Man & a Worm. the like distance † betwixt Man & God may be Imagin'd. or Infinitely greater. (*Notebooks* 640.)

One of these great differences is that God as a "superior spirit" cognizes in a much better way, "with the Utmost Clearness & distinction grasping" a lot of detail at once.

> Tis a perfection we may imagine in superior spirits that they can see a great deal at once with the Utmost Clearness & distinction whereas we can only see a point. (*Notebooks* 835.)

It is tempting to read this statement as an endorsement of the traditional doctrine that God knows everything eternally—not in a successive, point-like manner as humans know the restricted set of things they can grasp at all.[70] Another great difference with regard to God's knowledge is that it extends to all the ideas—even of our pain—without being passively affected by those sensations. In other words, God knows what pain is without feeling it.

> God May comprehend all Ideas even the Ideas wch are painfull & unpleasant without being in any degree pained thereby. Thus we our selves can imagine the pain of a burn etc without any misery or uneasiness at all. (*Notebooks* 675.)

This passage draws a parallel between how we can imagine the feeling of pain without attending to its uneasiness and God, whose *will* is not affected by anything, actually having the idea of pain that way. Indeed, that God is not determined by earlier or, in fact, any uneasiness shows that it is conceivable that minds, presumably even human minds, might act freely, being under no necessitating affection.

> That God & Blessed Spirits have Will is a manifest Argument against Lockes proofs that the will cannot be conceiv'd put into action without a Previous Uneasiness. (*Notebooks* 610.)

It is a common theme in early modern philosophy that the concepts of conceivability and possibility are spelled out in terms of what God can do or in fact does. Berkeley's view is that God can do everything that does not involve a contradiction.

[70] Cf. *Three Dialogues* 252: "All objects are eternally known by God", see also 253. It seems that Berkeley changed his mind with respect of God's knowledge. See *Notebooks* 14-15, where Berkeley held that "eternity is onely a train of innumerable ideas" and that the "swiftness of ideas compar'd with yt of motion shews the wisdom of God".

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> As though it were not impossible even for an infinite mind to reconcile contradictions. (*Notebooks* 129.)

So, Berkeley's God, unlike Descartes', cannot make contradictions true, and there are necessary truths in the broadly logical sense.[71] As the pretty elusive *Notebooks* 831 suggested before, the axiom *ex nihilo nihil fit* is an example of eternal truths, which, if interpreted as the claim that every effect, or "idea" for Berkeley, has a cause, seems to be a broadly logical or conceptual truth. While Berkeley might want to say that analytic statements like this are without any significance for our understanding of the created world, the denial of them entails a contradiction in terms, and hence is logically impossible. He explicitly endorses the obvious view that impossible states of affairs cannot exist[72] and be conceived of.[73] So, according to the contraposition of this view, what is conceivable of is possible.[74] On the other hand, he thinks that not everything that is possible (i.e. God can do) and, I assume, not even everything which is actual (i.e. God does) can be conceived by *us*.[75]

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[71] Cf. the Draft of the Introduction to the *Principles*, Works 2.125: "It is, I think, a receiv'd axiom that an impossibility cannot be conceiv'd. For what created intelligence will pretend to conceive, that which God cannot cause to be?" See also *Alciphron* VII.17: "EUPHRANOR. Tell me, Alciphron, do you think it implies a contradiction that God should make a creature free? / ALCIPHRON. I do not. / EUPHRANOR. It is then possible there may be such a thing? / ALCIPHRON. This I do not deny. / EUPHRANOR. You can therefore conceive and suppose such a free agent? / ALCIPHRON. Admitting that I can; what then? / EUPHRANOR. Certainly whatever is possible may be supposed: and whatever doth not imply a contradiction is possible to an infinite Power: therefore, if a rational agent implieth no contradiction, such a being may be supposed."

[72] See *Three Dialogues* 234: "I know that nothing inconsistent can exist"

[73] Apart from the quotation from the draft of the Introduction (quoted footnote 71), cf. *Notebooks* 663: "I have no Idea of a Volition or act of the mind neither has any other Intelligence for that were a contradiction", and *Principles* 5: "[…] my conceiving or imagining power does not extend beyond the possibility of real existence or perception […]".

[74] Accordingly, the notorious master argument (see *Principles* 22-3, *Three Dialogues* 200) is only to establish the more modest claim that an unperceived object (of perception) is *inconceivable*, instead of the more ambitious claim that it is *impossible*. As far as the argument goes, materialism might nonetheless be possible, but immaterialism cannot be disproved by successfully conceiving of an unperceived object of perception. Berkeley thus accepts the challenge that if an unperceived object were possible to be conceived of in a positive way, immaterialism would fail. Cf. Stoneham 2002, 134-139.

[75] Cf. the *Principles* 81 making his *epistemological* voluntarism clear: "That there are a great variety of spirits of different orders and capacities, whose faculties, both in number and extent, are far exceeding those the Author of my being has bestowed on me, I see no reason to deny. *And for me to pretend to determine by my own few, stinted, narrow inlets of perception, what ideas the inexhaustible power of the Supreme Spirit may imprint upon them, were certainly the utmost folly and presumption.* Since there may be, for aught that I know, innumerable sorts of ideas or sensations, as different from one another, and from all that I have perceived, as colours are from sounds. But how ready soever I may be, to acknowledge the scantiness of my comprehension, with regard

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Returning to the characterization of God's nature more properly, Berkeley's background assumption behind passages such as *Notebooks* 610 and 675 is God's pure activity. His power, which is the other feature of God mentioned in *Notebooks* 640 as transcending ours infinitely, is not constrained by anything, like a painful sensation or a moment of uneasiness; nothing is beyond the scope of his voluntary control and activity.[76] Indeed, probably based on these considerations—interestingly deriving from considerations concerning God's knowledge—Berkeley reaches the conclusion that God is nothing else but a pure will.[77]

> The Spirit the Active thing that wch is Soul & God is the Will alone The Ideas are effects impotent things. (*Notebooks* 712.)

Of course, there is some puzzle here concerning God's nature, because He, as we have already seen, is also an all-*knowing* spirit, that is, comprehends or knows everything (though in some active way), and, correspondingly, he need to have an understanding as well as a will.

> The propertys of all things are in God i.e. there is in the Deity Understanding as well as Will. He is no Blind agent & in truth a blind Agent is a Contradiction. (*Notebooks* 812.)

As I mentioned earlier in the Introduction, the denial of blind agency was a commonly advocated principle in the period and is highly relevant to the puzzle about God, while being a purely active will, having also an understanding, which is said to be essentially passive in the case of human minds. I will return to this issue from time to time, and discuss the denial of blind agency in more detail in section 5 of this chapter (and return to it in 4.4. as well).

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to the endless variety of spirits and ideas, that might possibly exist […]" (emphasis added) Thus, I do not find it convincing that, as for instance Grayling (1986, 28-40) claims, for Berkeley, possibility is just the same as conceivability or, indeed, that possibility is an epistemic concept. He never claims with Malebranche—who, as we will see, was much more optimistic about our intellectual capacitates—that it is impossible, i.e. God "cannot will what cannot be conceived" (JS 111-12), clearly referring to our conceptual skills.

[76] Cf. *Three Dialogues* 240-1, *Siris* 289. I briefly discuss these passages in section 3.

[77] Suggesting a crucial point of similarity between humans and God, Berkeley regularly claims that every kind of soul is strictly speaking identical with its purely active will. With regard to the finite minds, see for instance *Notebooks* 788 and 829, quoted in section 5. It is not clear at all in what sense the human will can be free from any limitation. In any event, is Berkeley allowed to hold that the human mind is as active as he supposes? This is often discussed, and doubted, in the secondary literature. See, for instance, Migely 2007, Winkler 2011b, 246-249 or Stoneham 2006, 218-221.

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We might think that it is due to the great difference in knowledge and power that we cannot form an idea of God, on which, among other things, we may ground an *a priori* argument for his existence:

> Absurd to Argue the Existence of God from his Idea. we have no Idea of God. tis impossible! (*Notebooks* 782.)

But, as Berkeley makes it absolutely clear, it is impossible to perceive God or have any ideational knowledge of him not due to theological, but epistemological reasons—which suggests that it cannot be achieved even in the afterlife. He often emphasized both in the *Notebooks* and later on that an active being, like the will of God, cannot be represented by a passive thing, like an idea in the understanding.[78] It is based on a Lockean premise concerning the passivity of perception, which is explicitly endorsed by Berkeley:[79]

> No Perception according to Locke is active. Therefore no perception (i.e. no Idea) can be the image of or like unto that wch is altogether active & not at all passive i.e. the Will. (*Notebooks* 706.)

Of course, it does not mean we cannot infer the existence of God, but only that we cannot perceive his idea as a passive object of our understanding:

> I am certain there is a God, tho I do not perceive him have no intuition of him. this not difficult if we rightly understand wt is meant by certainty. (*Notebooks* 813.)

In fact, we can pretty easily demonstrate his being, though not from his idea *a priori*.[80] We have already seen a prototype of the passivity argument (*Notebooks* 433), according to another formulation:

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[78] As we have seen earlier (in *Notebooks* 712), sometimes not only God is regarded as a pure act, but the human will or mind, too. As a consequence, the human mind is said to be unknowable in a sense. (See *Notebooks* 701, 828, 847. I return to these passages in section 5.) Later Berkeley changed his mind and claimed that we know our minds immediately, but not the way in which we *perceive* ideas. See *Principles* 27, 89, 140, 142, *Third Dialogue* 231-234.

[79] Cf. *Notebooks* 286, 378, 643, 756, *First Dialogue* 196-197. I will return to this issue in section 5 and in 4.2. For Locke's statement that perception is essentially passive, see *Essay* II.IX.1.

[80] Cf. Berkeley's criticism of the ontological argument in the *Alciphron*: "[Alciphron speaking:] let me tell you I am not to be persuaded by metaphysical arguments; such, for instance, as are drawn from the idea of an all-perfect being. […] This sort of argument […] I have always found dry and jejune; and, as [it is] not suited to my way of thinking, [it] may perhaps puzzle, but never will convince me." (*Alciphron* IV.2.) Anticipating Hume, Berkeley seems to believe that "a matter of fact is not to be proved by notions, but by facts" (*Alciphron* IV.3).

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> Every sensation of mine wch happens in Consequence of the general, known Laws of nature & is from without i.e. independent of my Will demonstrates the Being of a God. i.e. of an unextended incorporeal Spirit wch is omniscient, omnipotent etc. (*Notebooks* 838.)

The core of the passivity argument is supplemented with a new element, making it similar to a familiar design argument, as it now claims that the sensations or sensible ideas of the finite minds are caused by God's will in generalized, law-like patterns. This formulation makes it even clearer that not only his being can be demonstrated from the passive nature of our experiences, but also God's nature can be inferred from the orderliness of our involuntary perceptions: an "unextended incorporeal Spirit wch is omniscient, omnipotent etc".[81] As it will be clearer later on (for instance in 4.3), with formulations like *Notebooks* 838, Berkeley suggests that the very same ideas which are in our minds (referred to as "sensations of mine") are also outside of them in another sense, coming "from without, i.e. independent of my will", willed and knowingly produced by God according to laws of nature he established.

Berkeley was pretty satisfied with this accessible notion of God, proudly asserting that:

> My Definition of ye Word God I think Much clearer than that of Descartes & Spinoza viz. ens summe perfectum, & absolute Infinitum or ens constans infinitis attributis quorum unumquodque est infinitum. (*Notebooks* 845.)

In my view, the reasons why Berkeley finds his notion of God "much clearer" than Descartes' or Spinoza's is that it is based on our *experience* of the results of God's causal activity in nature.[82] Any power or activity and, hence, God's essence cannot be directly perceived, and cannot be embraced in our minds as an idea, but his activity can be

[81] As is often pointed out, the part of the conclusion which concerns the *nature* of God is strictly speaking unjustified. Maybe it can be seen more sympathetically if we take Berkeley saying that our experience testifying God's existence and (infinitely powerful and intelligent) nature is limitless: everywhere we look at any time, we will see the potentially infinite effects produced by him (see, for instance, *Principles* 148). It seems that in Berkeley's eye having a sort of general validity without any (conceivable) counterexample is enough to justify an inductive proof. Many, like Olscamp (1970, 110-117), regard this sort of argument as a probable one. Probably Berkeley would protest against this, even though he was fairly aware of the inductive nature of this argument, considering to be necessary only that proof which infers the existence of an infinite mind "from the bare existence of the sensible world" (*Three Dialogues* 212, see also 232).

[82] Cf. Descartes, *Fifth Meditation,* AT 7:66/CSM 2:46: "Deum (hoc est ens summe perfectum)", Spinoza, *Ethics* Id6: "Per Deum intelligo ens absolute infinitum, hoc est, substantiam constantem infinitis attributis, quorum unumquodque aeternam, et infinitam essentiam exprimit" ("By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence")

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understood from the orderly effects we find in nature, i.e. in the normal course of our perceptions, and from the evident experience that these are not caused by us. Since the regular and highly complex natural phenomena cannot be caused by inert perceptions or matter, we conclude that the world is brought about by a Spirit whose will and knowledge surpass ours infinitely. Berkeley regarded the Cartesian and Spinozan account of God as abstract definitions, because these characterize God exclusively in terms of divine perfections and infinite attributes we clearly do not share with God and, without any experience of their effects, these incommunicable attributes *in themselves* are incomprehensible to us. That Spinoza (and others) included extension in God's definition might make it even more misguided and dangerous, but the very idea of understanding the divine nature through the *a priori* concept of the most perfect being has already been beyond help.

II.2. THE NOTION OF GOD IN HIS EARLY WORKS (*THEORY OF VISION*, *PRINCIPLES* AND *THREE DIALOGUES*)

Berkeley did not use the phrase "author of nature" in the *Notebooks*, but from the *Principles* onwards, including the later edition of his first published work, the *New Theory of Vision*, it became a common way of referring to God.[83] The phrase is telling: God is not simply the cause of our ideas constituting the physical world, but also an author, like a writer of a book, who had a message to communicate through the arbitrarily established connections between the ideas of the various sense modalities, or, as it is first advanced in the *New Theory of Vision*, between our *visual* perceptions and the tangible objects.

> [...] the proper objects of vision constitute an universal language of the Author of nature, [...] And the manner wherein they signify, and mark unto us the objects which are at a distance, is the same with that of languages and signs of human appointment, which do not suggest the things signified, by any likeness or identity of nature, but only by an habitual connexion, that experience has made us to observe between them. (*New Theory of Vision* 147.)

Ordinarily the connection between our sensory ideas is likened to the way in which human communities determine the connection between certain sounds or letters and the

[83] In his *Clavis Universalis* the immaterialist Collier also calls God the "great *author of nature*, who gives us such and such sensations, by such and such laws" (95, my emphasis), probably borrowing it from Malebranche, referring to "the powerful voice of the Author of Nature" (LO 11).

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meanings or concepts they stand for, that is, between language and thought—except for one thing, namely that the former, divinely ordered connection is universal. There is nothing in a given perception that necessarily links it to another perception (or the tangible thing itself), nonetheless they are "fixed and immutably the same in all times and places" due to God's appointment.[84]

> There is indeed this difference between the signification of tangible figures by visible figures, and of ideas by words: That whereas the latter is variable and uncertain, depending altogether on the arbitrary appointment of men, the former is fixed and immutably the same in all times and places. A visible square, for instance, suggests to the mind the same tangible figure in Europe that it does in America. (*Theory of Vision* 152.)

As the author of this "picture book", ordinarily referred to as nature, God expresses an important message or moral for us. Through the constant matching of various phenomena, he wants to show us how to regulate our lives in the most beneficial way. As Berkeley put it, it is by the information of this universal language "that we are principally guided in all the transactions and concerns of life" (*New Theory of Vision* 147). This information comes not from the self-standing created world, but from the author of nature himself.[85]

The emphasis put on the authorship of God does not mean, of course, that Berkeley stopped describing the deity also in the traditional (Anglican) Christian terms. In the *Principles*, he calls God a "Spirit infinitely wise, good, powerful" (72), or characterized as "one, eternal, infinitely wise, good, and perfect" (146), omnipresent, holy, and just (155),

[84] Cf. *New Theory of Vision* 49, 51, 64, 66, 140, 143, 159, and *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, for instance, 40. This might remind us of what I said about divine immutability in section 1 (footnote 58). Here I just want to point out that universality and immutability can be used in two senses. It either means a *necessary* true fact about the world or simply a state of affair which does not vary with any specific place or time. Eternality was understood in this dual sense, for instance, by Arnauld, distinguishing between the eternality of truths as conceived by humans in the sense of "not depending on a determined place and time" and their proper eternality in God (see Schmaltz 2017, 160). Based on how he uses the term 'immutable' with regard to the universality of the divine language, I suggest that the latter, less demanding, sense is what Berkeley has in mind when he (rarely) speaks about the eternal truths of reason or the immutable or universally true decrees of God.

[85] It might be relevant to note that in light of Berkeley's philosophy of language—according to which "the true use and end of words, which as often terminate in the will as in the understanding, being employed rather to excite influence, and direct action than to produce clear and distinct ideas" (*Samuel Johnson correspondence*, Letter IV, 2, Works 2.293)—nature construed as a divine language is not exhausted merely by communicating some pieces of information to cognize, but, which is probably more important to our survival and happiness, gives us guidance in the form of sensations, emotions, passions and appetites. So, the divine language's ultimate aim is to direct our volitions and not to provide us with cognitions.

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as well as "uncreated, [...] indivisible, immutable" (117). Emphasizing his immediate presence, Berkeley often described God in the well-known Pauline terms, according to which God is "*in whom we live, move, and have our being*" (66, 149).[86] God is said to be everywhere, because perceptions (can) occur everywhere—anywhere we look, we see, hear etc. ideas produced by God (148, 150).[87] Likewise, in the *Three Dialogues* we read that God "is an impassive, indivisible, purely active being" (213-4), a "being of transcendent and unlimited perfections" (254), a spirit "active and omnipotent" (257), "infinitely wise and provident" (258). Despite attributing all these traditional traits to God, it is important to note that—with regard to the old theological puzzle about *the eternal and impassive* God creating the world at a given time—Berkeley acknowledges that God's "nature [...] is incomprehensible to finite spirits" (254).

Two short remarks are in order here. Berkeley's various descriptions of God are pretty scarcely formulated in the usual "omni-attributes". The reason for this is not only, as Flage pointed out, that he more strictly follows the Anglican characterization of God than the more philosophical one,[88] but also his reluctance to speak about God in incomprehensible abstract attributes. This leads us to the second point I want to make. When Berkeley talks about the incomprehensible nature of God, which, as we will see later, he clearly endorsed (see for instance *Three Dialogues* 215, to be quoted soon), what he has in mind, on my reading, is not the utterly incomprehensible abstract description of Descartes or Spinoza, for instance, but that God's infinite, simple and purely active nature is not fully understandable *in itself*, and can be grasped only through the *effects* we perceive in nature.[89] In this sense it is true that we cannot form "exactly just notions of

[86] See also *Three Dialogues* 214 and 236 as well as *Theory of Vision Vindicated* 2, *Works* 2.219, *Alciphron* IV.14.

[87] See also *Three Dialogues* 212, 230-1.

[88] As an illustration, Flage quotes the First Article of the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, which is the most important doctrinal statement of the Churches of England and Ireland: "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible." (Flage 2014, 135.)

[89] Cf. Berkeley's cutting remark in the *Principles* 133, that the materialists "skreen themselves under the dark and general pretence of *infinites being incomprehensible*", nonetheless earlier (see Introduction 2) he seems to admit that it is "[…] the nature of infinite not to be comprehended by that which is finite". I will return to this issue in section 5 of this chapter.

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the Deity, his attributes, and ways of operation" (254). While our knowledge of God is far from being perfect, indeed severely limited, it provides an appropriate and genuine notion of him and his activity.

> When I say the being of a God, I do not mean an obscure general cause of things, whereof we have no conception, but God, in the strict and proper sense of the word. A being whose spirituality, omnipresence, providence, omniscience, infinite power and goodness, are as conspicuous as the existence of sensible things, of which (notwithstanding the fallacious pretences and affected scruples of scepticks) there is no more reason to doubt, than of our own being. (*Three Dialogues* 257.)

But, before discussing this issue further in the following sections, what I want to press now is that all of God's traditional attributes (like infinite wisdom or benevolence) can be seen as secondary to or dependent on his being the author of nature, referring primarily to his arbitrary and free volitional activity, which we experience in nature without limitation. Just as we saw in the *Notebooks*, the attributes of this "active principle, that supreme and wise spirit, *in whom we live, move, and have our being*" (*Principles* 66.) can be inferred not from the way a perfect being is or rather has to act but from the way in which he actually causes our perceptions, namely from their orderly, varied and useful manner.

> [...] there is a *mind* which affects me every moment with all the sensible impressions I perceive. And from the variety, order, and manner of these, *I conclude the Author of them to be wise, powerful, and good,* beyond comprehension. [...] (*Three Dialogues* 215.)

Divine goodness and wisdom are not to be construed as abstract standards fitting a perfect being, but refer to the manner in which God relates to us through continuously creating our world of perceptions (see also *Principles* 100). So, Berkeley does not take the divine attributes in terms of the essential features the intellectualists deduce *a priori* from God's nature, but as signs of his free decision to help us survive and navigate in the world by acting according to general rules we can make sense of. The way the same thought—to which I will return from time to time—is formulated in the *Principles* reveals even more clearly God's providential nature, manifested in the recognizable, albeit complex, ways he wills and creates our perceptions.

> The ideas of sense are more strong, lively, and distinct than those of the imagination; 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

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> established methods, wherein the mind we depend on excites in us the ideas of sense, are called the *Laws of Nature*: and these *we learn by experience*, which *teaches us that such and such ideas are attended with such and such other ideas, in the ordinary course of things*. (Principles 30, my emphasis)

In the next section, Berkeley quite dramatically, and in highly pragmatic terms, describes how essential God's direct supervision and providence are in our everyday lives.

> 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 any thing 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 necessary 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. (*Principles* 31, my emphasis)

In his *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, which he published about 20 years later than the original *New Theory of Vision* to explain and defend it, he explicitly refers to God's providence and care in producing our (visual) perceptions:[90]

> And as for those who shall be at the pains to examine and consider this subject, it is hoped they may be pleased to find, in an age wherein so many schemes of atheism are restored or invented, a new argument of a singular nature in proof of the *immediate care and providence of a God*, present to our minds, and directing our actions (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 8, my emphasis)

However, as Berkeley readily acknowledges, it is easy to get confused, and overlook this providential divine activity in the world, attributing the divine power and agency to the physical objects or perceptions themselves, which are at best secondary causes, or, in fact, no causes at all.

> 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 a wandering after second causes. For when we perceive certain ideas of sense constantly followed by other ideas, and we know this is not of our 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. (*Principles* 32.)

[90] The definition of God he provides at the beginning of this work also hints at the providential feature of God: "the notion of a *watchful*, active, intelligent, free Spirit, with whom we have to do, and in whom we live and move and have our being" (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 2, my emphasis).

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Apart from not realizing the "repugnancy there is, as well in supposing things like unto our ideas existing without, as in attributing to them power or activity" (*Principles* 57), there are other reasons for God not being immediately recognized as the only cause of our experiences. One of them is that God cannot be grasped *anthropocentrically*. Clearly, Berkeley cannot have any abstract idea represent God, i.e. an idea without any particular size, shape, etc., but he equally rejects the possibility that we could see God in a form of complex idea of certain body size, complexion, etc.

> [...] Secondly, because the supreme spirit which excites those ideas in our minds, is not marked out and limited to our view by any particular finite collection of sensible ideas, as human agents are by their size, complexion, limbs, and motions. (*Principles* 57.)

In fact, while God, through the visible effects of his causal activity, is everywhere, he himself is invisible to human eyes.[91]

> And yet this pure and clear light which enlightens every one, is it self invisible. (*Principles* 147, cf. 152.)

As we cannot see or perceive him directly or, *á la* Malebranche, his essence as representing the physical things, just like we cannot comprehend him as the 'most perfect being', we can come to know him only through his creative activity observable in the whole of nature. The magnificent order of the sensory ideas, experienced at all times and in all places, provides a particularly clear sign of the divine power:

> It seems to be a general pretence of the unthinking herd, that they cannot see GOD. [...] 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 is I must confess to me incomprehensible. [...] *whithersoever we direct our view, we do at all times and in all places perceive manifest tokens of the divinity: every thing we see, hear, feel, or any wise 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 men. (*Principles* 148.)

The last reason why we rarely recognize that God is the direct cause of our perceptions is that we ascribe the random or capricious events to a free agent more easily, but, as we have seen, God exhibits the most marvellous constancy and universality in creating our perceptions. According to Berkeley, however, it is a human psychological tendency to

[91] Cf. Berkeley's Essays in the *Guardian*, X: "The Christian Idea of God" (Works 2.219), where he writes that the "Lord is an invisible spirit, in whom we live, and move, and have our being."

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pay more attention to the incongruous events than to the ordinary course of action. But, in fact, not the miracles, i.e. the unexpected events, but the uniform working of God's ubiquitous activity testifies God's freedom and power the most.

> And thirdly, because his operations are regular and uniform. Whenever the course of Nature is interrupted by a miracle, men are ready to own the presence of a superior agent. But when we see things go on in the ordinary course, they do not excite in us any reflection; *their order and concatenation, though it be an argument of the greatest wisdom, power, and goodness in their Creator*, is yet so constant and familiar to us, that we do not think them the immediate effects of a free spirit: especially since inconstancy and mutability in acting, though it be an imperfection, is looked on as a mark of freedom. (*Principles* 57, my emphasis)

To be sure, Berkeley was a proponent of the revealed Christian religion and clearly opposed to those deists who wanted to get rid of everything from (natural) religion that cannot be explained rationally. Hence, he never doubted that the omnipotent God, "an almighty agent" (*Principles* 151), obviously can do and occasionally really performs miracles, intervening "in the ordinary course of things" (*Principles* 30), for instance suspending the laws of physics:[92]

> And it is no less visible, that a particular size, figure, motion and disposition of parts are necessary, though not absolutely to the producing any effect, yet to the producing it according to the standing mechanical Laws of Nature. Thus, for instance, it cannot be denied that God, or the intelligence which sustains and rules the ordinary course of things *might, if he were minded* to produce a miracle, cause all the motions on the dial plate of a watch, though no body had ever made the movements, and put them in it. (*Principles* 62, my emphasis)

So, unlike Malebranche with his Augustinian heritage, Berkeley does not want to explain away the significance of genuine miracles.[93] Indeed, as he realizes, the possibility of real miracles, like changing water into wine, "makes rather *for*, than *against*" his immaterialist

[92] For some considerations of miracles from a Berkeleyan idealist perspective, see Hight 2016. Berkeley discusses the importance of believing in miracles to religion in *Alciphron* VI.2. Of miracles, Berkeley writes, we have "proof of the same kind that we have or can have of any facts done a great way off, and a long time ago. We have authentic accounts transmitted down to us from eye-witnesses, whom we cannot conceive tempted to impose upon us by any human motive whatsoever […]" Elsewhere, he acknowledges even more explicitly "the want of Miracles in the present Age." (*Works* 7.119)

[93] Malebranche does not simply restrict the number of miracles (mostly to the ones performed by Christ, making creation worthy of being brought about by God), but instead of interpreting them as God's arbitrary or genuinely particular actions he understands miracles as law-like or at least pre-determined divine actions made necessary by some higher order non-physical laws, such as moral or metaphysical truths, he cannot ignore. See *Dialogues* 8.3 / JS 130-1, and *Elucidation* XV, LO 662-3, quoted in footnote 201-2.

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metaphysics (*Principles* 84). But since God causes everything in nature, miracles and ordinary events alike, his power, wisdom and goodness are attested to more conspicuously by the constant production of our perceptions than by chaotically bringing about unrelated and random events. It is not surprising even if we talk about a (not extremely strong) voluntarist's God, as the intellectually undetermined divine will might not necessarily be expressed by *ad hoc* interventions in nature, but by decrees ordered in a general fashion. For an omnipotent being, the latter is not a more challenging task than the former, but, from our point of view, the orderly effects of his power are, or at least should be, more impressing and revealing as to his nature.

> It may indeed on some occasions be necessary, that the Author of Nature display his *overruling power* in producing some appearance out of the ordinary series of things. Such exceptions from the general rules of Nature *are proper to surprise and awe men into an acknowledgement of the Divine Being*: but then they are to be used but seldom, otherwise there is a plain reason why they should fail of that effect. Besides, *God seems to choose the convincing our reason of his attributes by the works of Nature, which discover so much harmony and contrivance in their make, and are such plain indications of wisdom and beneficence in their Author*, rather than to astonish us into a belief of his being by anomalous and surprising events. (*Principles* 63, emphasis added)

It is important to note that, as *Principles* 57 suggests, God's freedom is not threatened at all by this constancy in action.[94] Indeed, the rarely used miracles can be useful to raise attention and "awe men into an acknowledgement of the Divine Being" through expressing his "overruling power",[95] but, in philosophical terms, it is harmony and predictability that convinces us of God's nature more clearly. Constancy shows not only his power in a more extensive manner but also his benevolence and wisdom in freely exercising his unlimited will.[96]

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[94] Accordingly, Berkeley regularly emphasized the freedom of God and his actions. See *Notebooks* 794, 884, *Theory of Vision Vindicated* 2 and *Passive Obedience* XIV. I will return to this issue in III.5.

[95] The overruling power of God is probably equivalent to the absolute power of the medieval theologians. Thus Berkeley, as a good voluntarist, makes it clear that God can actually exert all of his power even after creation.

[96] Though Berkeley's emphasis on the regularity of God's actions is often seen as part of his Malebranchean heritage, he seems to follow Locke just as closely. In contrast to Malebranche's view, note some striking parallels between Berkeley's views on order and God's overruling power, as expressed for instance in *Principles* 63, and a passage from Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* (Locke 1823, VII, 84–85). Just as Berkeley, in this passage Locke also maintains that (i.) the divine actions are constant; (ii.) speaks about this in order to be "magnifying the admirable contrivance of the divine wisdom"—constituting the footsteps God made visible for human reason so as to understand him; (iii.) acknowledges that God has an "overruling will" (or "overruling power", for Berkeley), which can make things work contrary to their

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As Berkeley tries to point out both in the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues*, the "constant uniform method of our sensations" allows us to infer God's power, goodness and wisdom as the best and only possible explanation of the phenomena.

> If we follow the light of reason, we shall, from the constant uniform method of our sensations, collect the goodness and wisdom of the spirit who excites them in our minds. But this is all that I can see reasonably concluded from thence. To me, I say, it is evident that the being of a spirit infinitely wise, good, and powerful is abundantly sufficient to explain all the appearances of Nature. But as for inert senseless matter, nothing that I perceive has any the least connexion with it, or leads to the thoughts of it. (*Principles* 72.)

Given that God is a "abundantly sufficient" explanation of all the phenomena, *and* that we do not have any other viable explanation (like the supposition of material substance which by itself can account for nothing we experience), it can be regarded as a necessary explanation as well. In fact, Berkeley argues that his immaterialism makes God's omnipresent existence and continuous activity as sure as the existence of the physical world or our ideas.

> As sure therefore as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent spirit who contains and supports it. (*Three Dialogues* 212, cf. 257, quoted above)

As he puts it in the *Principles*, our knowledge of God does not fall short to that of any other spirit, either, as "it is evident that God is known as certainly and immediately as any other mind or spirit whatsoever" (*Principles* 147).

Emphasizing the uninterrupted omnipresence and activity of God, Berkeley has no problem speaking with the scholastics (and with the Cartesians) about God as continuously creating and maintaining the world.[97] The Berkeleyan doctrine that, putting finite minds aside, God is the only, continuously active, cause in nature is also reinforced by another view shared by some Cartesians, like Malebranche as well:

> As to the opinion that there are no corporeal causes, this has been heretofore maintained by some of the Schoolmen, as it is of late by others among the modern philosophers, who though they allow matter to exist, yet will have God alone to be the immediate efficient cause of all things. (*Principles* 53.)

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natures; and (iv.) emphasizes that while there are genuine miracles, they have to be rare—otherwise would lose their force.

[97] See *Principles* 46. I will discuss the doctrine of continuous creation in 4.2.

The Cartesian occasionalists, who have predecessors in the medieval Muslim philosophy, thought that the passive matter cannot cause any effect on other bodies or the soul, so it is God who acts directly in the course of nature by bringing about the effect the mere material or spiritual *occasions* cannot. Berkeley was clearly, but not uncritically, motivated by this doctrine, adding that matter as secondary cause or mere occasion is an entirely useless and groundless assumption.[98]

> But then, that they should suppose an innumerable multitude of created beings, which they acknowledge are not capable of producing any one effect in Nature, and which therefore are made to no manner of purpose, since God might have done every thing as well without them; this I say, though we should allow it possible, must yet be a very unaccountable and extravagant supposition. (*Principles* 53.)

Arguing against the various alternative, such as the occasionalist, conceptions of matter in the *Second Dialogue*, Philonous regularly appeals to the "will of an omnipotent Spirit, […] who is himself above all limitation or prescription whatsoever" (*Three Dialogues* 219).

> How therefore can you suppose, that an all perfect Spirit, on whose will all things have an absolute and immediate dependence, should need an instrument in his operations, or not needing it make use of it? Thus it seems to me that you are obliged to own the use of a lifeless inactive instrument, to be incompatible with the infinite perfection of God; that is, by your own confession, to give up the point. (*Three Dialogues* 219.)

Given that God's mere will suffices to create anything and everything, indeed, he is a "spirit that immediately produces every effect by a fiat, or act of his will" (*Principles* 60), and his will "is no sooner exerted than executed, without the application of means" (*Three Dialogues* 219), Berkeley wonders

> to what end God should take those round about methods of effecting things by instruments and machines, which no one can deny might have been effected by the mere command of his will, without all that apparatus. (*Principles* 61.)

In characteristically voluntarist terms, Berkeley explicitly refers to God's "mere command of his will" or even his unlimited power, claiming in *Principles* 152 that "an omnipotent spirit can indifferently produce every thing by a mere fiat or act of his will".[99]

[98] For more on his views on causation in nature, see 4.1.

[99] As we will see in III.5, Collier also starts from the voluntarist premise concerning the sufficiency of the divine will, but adds an intellectualist twist to it, claiming, as Berkeley himself suggests in *Three Dialogues* 219 against Malebranche *ad hominem*, that such concepts of matter as the occasionalist one are incompatible with the divine nature and hence (extrinsically) impossible.

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So, even when we just enumerate the passages where the divine characteristics are discussed in the early published works of Berkeley, the divine will seems to stand out. It is not only that Berkeley mainly emphasizes the creative activity of the author of nature and our ideas, "the spirit who excites them in our minds" (*Principles* 72), holding it to be unlimited both in terms of power and scope, but at times he even seems to go so far as to identify God's essence with his powerful will. For example, the oft-mentioned passivity or independence argument for God's existence concludes—from the involuntariness of our sense perceptions—that "[t]here is therefore some other *will* or spirit that produces them" (*Principles* 29, my emphasis). Also, in the *Third dialogue* Berkeley argues that from the actions perceived in nature we can conclude that there is a powerful being or spirit, indeed a will, who volitionally acts:

> I assert as well as you, that since we are affected from without, we must allow powers to be without in a being distinct from ourselves. So far we are agreed. But then we differ as to the kind of this powerful being. I will have it to be spirit, you matter, or I know not what (I may add too, you know not what) third nature. Thus I prove it to be spirit. *From the effects I see produced, I conclude there are actions; and because actions, volitions; and because there are volitions, there must be a will.* (*Three Dialogues* 240.)

The continuation maintains, however, that this will is not without an understanding.

> Again, the things I perceive must have an existence, they or their archetypes, out of my mind: but being ideas, neither they nor their archetypes can exist otherwise than in an understanding: there is therefore an understanding. But will and understanding constitute in the strictest sense a mind or spirit. The powerful cause therefore of my ideas, is in strict propriety of speech a spirit. (*Three Dialogues* 240.)

Though, as we have seen (and will see later) God is not a blind agent, with respect of God's essence, his understanding seems to be a secondary to his will insofar as it can be deduced from the primarily emphasized causal aspect of the divine spirit, who is essentially "the *powerful cause* […] of my ideas" (emphasis added). Interestingly, immediately afterwards (still in *Three Dialogues* 240), Philonous has to defend the attribution of understanding or perception to God. He dispels the objection that pain cannot be perceived by God by appealing to the active, i.e. volitionally unlimited, aspect of the divine comprehension. The divine thoughts, unlike human sensations and perceptions, are active because they are embedded in and dependent on volitions. As I pointed out earlier, Berkeley made the same thought more straightforwardly in his *Notebooks*, claiming that the spirit, be it human or divine, is the will in strict or primary

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sense. In God's case, the undeniable creative and communicating activity makes it more pressing and obvious that God with his intellect cannot be conceived of as a passive receiver, or receptable, of ideas, but only as an intelligent agent acting through his limitless will.[100]

II.3. SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND GOD IN THE *THREE DIALOGUES,* SOME *SERMONS* AND THE *SIRIS*

According to Berkeley, our knowledge of God's nature has two important features. The first is that it is based on experience, first and foremost on observations of the divine effects in nature. But, as we will see, the nature of God is understandable in a more intimate way through exercising our will, which is analogous, if not perfectly similar to, God's activity, manifesting the same kind of casual power. The second important point of our knowledge of God is that it is genuine, i.e. to be taken literally. The two are essentially related. It can be taken literally precisely because it is grounded on something as readily accessible as our experiences of the physical world and of our own souls' activity. I have already said something about how the effects of a divine will experienced in nature allows us to gain some insight into his nature, and I will discuss the *literality*-thesis in the next chapter. Now I'm interested in the role self-knowledge plays in understanding God.

The *locus classicus* of this tenet is to be found in the *Three Dialogues,* where Berkeley claims that we have a notion or active image of God.[101] We are told that we can form this notion based on the analogy with the capacities of our souls by "heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections":

> […] taking the word idea in a large sense, my soul may be said to furnish me with an idea, that is, an image, or likeness of God, though indeed extremely inadequate. For all the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections. I have therefore, though not an inactive idea, yet in my self some sort of an active thinking image of the Deity. And though I perceive Him not by sense, yet I have a notion of Him, or know Him by reflexion and reasoning. My own mind and my

[100] Cf. *Notebooks* 286 and *Three Dialogues* 196-197. In what follows, I will speculate a lot more about divine cognitions, especially in section 5 of this chapter and chapter 4.

[101] See also *Principles* 140, claiming that "we know other spirits by means of our own soul, which in that sense is the image or idea of them".

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> own ideas I have an immediate knowledge of; and by the help of these, do mediately apprehend the possibility of the existence of other spirits and ideas. Farther, from my own being, and from the dependency I find in my self and my ideas, I do by an act of reason, necessarily infer the existence of a God, and of all created things in the mind of God. (*Three Dialogues* 231-2.)

It is not explicitly discussed in this passage, but, for Berkeley, our notion of God is clearly not a Lockean complex idea, made through abstraction and combination, since it is supposed to represent an essentially simple being. Berkeley's assumption is that unless the representation resembles God by being simple itself, it could not represent him as such. Already in the *Notebooks* Berkeley expressed his concern: [102]

> Qu: How can our idea of God be complex or compounded, wn his essence is simple & uncompounded v. Locke b.2.S 35 (*Notebooks* 177.)

What is particularly interesting about the *Three Dialogues*' description is that it can be read as suggesting that, through reflection, we are to improve our *nature* by removing its imperfections, not (only) our notion or idea of the self, as we cannot have a *passive*, merely cognitive, representation of the purely active divine nature. So, gaining the best possible knowledge of God is to achieve, through an active kind of reflection, the best possible state of mind, being as knowledgeable, virtuous, benevolent, etc. in acting as possible. As few imperfections deforming and limiting our activities and, in its etymological sense, passions our souls have, as accurately will we resemble God, and, based on the experience of our improved and more active nature, as properly will we know Him.

In other words, perfections are the activities, capacities or dispositions that characterize both humans and God functioning in the best possible manner. They are potentially the same in us and God (presumably, they are what are said to be innate to us in the *Notebooks*),[103] the "only" difference is that they are actualized infinitely better, and without any limitations, by God—in this sense our image of God, based on our limited activity, is said to be "extremely inadequate".[104] To get closer to God we need to master

[102] Cf. *Siris* 323: "God is a Mind, *khoriston eidos* not an abstract idea compounded of inconsistencies, and prescinded from all real things, as some moderns understand abstraction; but a really existing Spirit, distinct or separate from all sensible and corporeal beings."

[103] See *Notebooks* 649, but as I mentioned in the Introduction, innatism comes up numerous times in the later works, like *Alciphron* or *Siris*, as well.

[104] As we have seen in the *Notebooks*, one point of similarity lies in our shared ability to create things simply by willing it. Of course, as I already discussed it, the *ex nihilo* nature of human imagination is not as

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the 'know-how' in acting like him, not merely the 'know-that' concerning his abstract attributes of perfection.[105] So, rather than attributing some incomprehensible features to him, in order to know God we have to realize our potentiality in acting, and thus reflect the divine activity. In short, as active we become, that is, as limited the detrimental effects of sense perceptions and passions on us become, as close we can get to imitate and know God properly.

As I noted earlier, in *Notebooks* 675, Berkeley claims that though God's knowledge extends to every idea, he has no passions and is not affected by any sensations. In the *Three Dialogues,* he tells more about this.

> That God knows or understands all things, and that *He knows among other things what pain is*, even every sort of painful sensation, and what it is for His creatures to suffer pain, I make no question. But that God, though He knows and sometimes causes painful sensations in us, *can Himself suffer pain, I positively deny*. We who are limited and dependent spirits, are liable to impressions of sense, the effects of an external agent, which being produced against our wills, are sometimes painful and uneasy. *But God, whom no external being can affect, who perceives nothing by sense as we do, whose will is absolute and independent, causing all things, and liable to be thwarted or resisted by nothing; it is evident, such a being as this can suffer nothing, nor be affected with any painful sensation, or indeed any sensation at all.* We are chained to a body, that is to say, our perceptions are connected with corporeal motions […] (*Three Dialogues* 240–241, emphasis added).

One obvious reason why God has no sensation is that, for Berkeley, every sensation is necessarily either painful or pleasant, followed by some emotional responses. As we have seen earlier, God's purely active and independent power is not determined by uneasiness (see *Notebooks* 610) or affected by anything, like a sensation, as everything is under his unlimited volitional control, and there is nothing he lacks and consequently could desire. Any pleasure or delightful emotion, as states dependent on some external factors, count as passive imperfections just as much as the painful sensations and passions that clearly cannot be attributed to God (other than merely metaphorically, see *Alciphron* IV.21 and

obvious as that of the creation, and, in general, the divine will is not only infinitely greater than ours but also absolutely undetermined and unlimited. The line of thought that the activity of the human and divine will are, though different *in degree*, similar *in kind* is taken up in the fourth dialogue of *Alciphron* and to be examined in section 4.

[105] That he seems to accept that some of our knowledge, namely the knowledge-how applicable to the understanding of the essence of spirits, including God, is not dependent on cognition of ideas might be regarded as, though in a quite different sense, another anti-intellectualist trait in Berkeley.

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section 4). But, according to Berkeley, sensory perception itself entails dependence on some other power, and hence limitation, passivity and imperfection.[106]

> *There is no sense nor sensory, nor anything like a sense or sensory, in God. Sense implies an impression from some other being, and denotes a dependence in the soul which hath it. Sense is a passion; and passions imply imperfection.* God knoweth all things as pure mind or intellect; but nothing by sense, nor in nor through a sensory. Therefore to suppose a sensory of any kind – whether space or any other – in God, would be very wrong, and lead us into false conceptions of His nature (*Siris* 289, emphasis added).

Of course, unlike God, we are not to be free from passions altogether as our wills cannot and should not be completely unaffected by external causes. Humans naturally aim at happiness and pleasure, states which are not only up to them, so to speak, but depend on a lot of external factors; first and foremost, on God and the laws of pain and pleasure he established. In *Notebooks* 640, as we have seen, Berkeley quite memorably claims that there is a great difference between man and God, even bigger than between worms and humans. Berkeley himself emphasizes that much of this difference lies in our dependent nature and that, partly due to the irregularity of passions, "our nature was debased and corrupted having lost that rectitude and perfection which it must be supposed to have had coming new made out of the hands of its creator" (Sermon VI: On the Mystery of Godliness, *Works* 7.86).[107] Nonetheless, as far as possible, we have to get rid of the obstructing and debilitating passions to get closer to God's active and benevolent perfection.[108]

But, as I have tried to show, this ideal is not only presented as an ethical aim, but also as the basis of our notion of the divinity. On my reading, the Berkeleyan image of God is not a mental content, a complex *idea*, in our minds that we obtain by amending, expanding the ideas we have about ourselves (or, even less so, the ideas implied by the concept of the most perfect being), but it is the soul's essential activity—that is our

[106] Later I will argue that, strictly speaking, God does not perceive at all. It seems to me that Berkeley did not countenance the possibility of active, non-sensory perception, considering the different sorts of perception to be the various forms in which we might receive ideas in our minds, implying passivity on our side. See in III.2.

[107] Beyond the irregular passions it is also due to the fact that "the understanding of man was obscure, his will perverse" (*Works* 7.86).

[108] For a bit more on the positive and negative sides of passions in Berkeley's philosophy, see Bartha 2017.

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various capacities of actively willing, knowing, etc.—or the soul itself that was made in the image of God and serves as the basis for our analogous understanding of the divine nature. Indeed, as Berkeley famously held, we do not have an idea of our souls based on which we could produce an idea of God in the first place, since we can only experience our mental activity non-ideationally. This conception reflects a more normative approach to our souls than Locke's or Hume's 'instrumentalist' view of the mind: it is not (only) a neutral tool to calculate and perceive things, but (also) the source of improvement in virtue and godlikeness.

Correspondingly, in an interesting sermon Berkeley tells us that if we act charitably or generously, for instance, help others in need, we get closer to God, because, through exercising goodwill to others, we improve our nature in terms of benevolence:

> There is something so noble and excellent in charity, that it may be said in some sort, to exalt and transform us into a similitude with God himself, there being no one perfection or attribute of the Deity, more essential than the most diffused and active benevolence. And at the same time, that this Christian grace doth brighten up and restore the *image of God* in our souls, it doth also render us in the highest degree useful to our neighbours […] (Sermon X: On the Will of God, *Works* 7.133)[109]

As we saw earlier with regard to his active and infinite providence in orderly causing our perceptions, in this passage, too, God's "most diffused and active benevolence" is said to be the most revealing or, indeed, the most essential of his attributes. Accordingly, it is the rightness of our volitions and actions which makes us resemble God most clearly. On my understanding, by divine benevolence Berkeley means not some metaphysical goodness necessarily characterizing God's nature and actions—an abstract ideal a perfect being has to comply with or, as Malebranche preferred to put it, irresistibly loves as reflecting his glory the most—but simply to God's widely experienced will to make his creation beneficial to the creatures inhabiting it. We are to imitate God in this, perfect our volitions and make ourselves useful to our neighbours, close and far. And the more God-like we are, the more we understand what, however inadequately due to our finiteness, we mean by knowledge, goodness or power in God. In short, improving

[109] Charity is discussed more directly in another interesting sermon, see *Works* 7.33-34.

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ourselves in terms of activity, power and (good)will is what really contributes to the knowledge of God, not the mere intellectual and inert reflection on abstract concepts.

In the previous quotes, an important element of traditional Christianity is invoked, namely that we are made in the image of God ('imago Dei'). It is expressed in another sermon:

> The mind which is pure and spiritual, which is made in the image of God, and which we have in common with angels: […] tends to the knowledge and love of God as its true center, to vertue piety and holiness, to all things excellent and praise worthy; […] is an intellectual principle that knows it's true good that leads to order and decency, to temperance moderation and justice. […] It is evident that in a regular situation of things the former divine principle should be uppermost, should rule and govern in our nature. This constitutes the divine life, or the spiritual man. Whereas if the carnal earthy part prevail and contrary to order become the upper and ruling principle, there ensues a life of blindness and misrule, of vice and woe. And this constitutes what is called in scripture the carnal man: in whom the image of God is blurred and defaced and the divine life extinguished, he being alive unto sin and dead unto righteousness. (Sermon VI: On the Mystery Of Godliness, *Works* 7.88-9.)

Here, the mind, "which is made in the image of God", is said to naturally tend "to the knowledge and love of God" and "to all things excellent and praiseworthy", leading "to order and decency, to temperance moderation and justice". That morality and God are intimately connected is not a new idea in Berkeley's thought, but here it is more clearly expressed than ever that there is a divine principle in us that should guide our actions and the improvement of our nature. If we do not act virtuously and "the carnal earthy part prevail[s]" in our souls, Berkeley warns us, this "image of God is blurred and defaced and the divine life extinguished", rendering us "alive unto sin and dead unto righteousness"—and probably our knowledge of God loses its basis, as the image of God manifesting itself through our souls' praiseworthy activity is defaced and deformed.

The late *Siris* often puzzles the commentators who search for the Berkeley we are acquainted with in the early works, but with respect to the relation of self-knowledge and our notion of God it says nothing astounding or incongruous from the perspective of the earlier views. He discusses two versions: according to the first, self-reflection leads us to the inner sanctuary of the soul, which, in turn, leads us to God himself. This is the theory of Proclus.

> Proclus, in the first book of his Commentary on the Theology of Plato, observes that, as in the mysteries, those who are initiated at first meet with manifold and multiform gods, but

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> being entered and thoroughly initiated they receive the divine illumination and participate the very Deity; in like manner, if the soul look abroad, she beholds the shadows and images of things, but returning into herself she unravels and beholds her own essence. At first she seemeth only to behold herself, but having penetrated farther she discovers the mind. And again, *still farther advancing into the innermost sanctuary of the soul, she contemplates the θεῶν γένος. And this, he saith, is the most excellent of all human acts, in the silence and repose of the faculties of the soul to tend upwards to the very Divinity, to approach and be closely joined with that which is ineffable and superior to all beings*. When come so high as the first principle, she ends her journey and rests. Such is the doctrine of Proclus. (*Siris* 333, my emphasis)

Of course, due to the Platonic context this passage might not present Berkeley's view *simpliciter*, for instance his God is not ineffable in the sense that we cannot know anything positive about him. Nonetheless, it seems to reinforce Berkeley's view that self-reflection is not the mere contemplation of inert ideas, but rather, construed as an active approach to God's perfection, is the "most excellent of all human acts". Berkeley immediately mentions the second way, which is attributed to Socrates.

> But Socrates in the First Alcibiades teacheth, on the other hand, that the contemplation of God is the proper means to know or understand our own soul. As the eye, saith he, looking steadfastly at the visive part or pupil of another eye, beholds itself, even so the soul beholds and understands herself while she contemplates the Deity. (*Siris* 334.)

So, if we want to know ourselves, we have to contemplate about God. Through getting to know God we can behold ourselves as a reflection in Him. It is important to note that these two ways are not proposed as opposing theories, but can be seen as complementary methods. In fact, these seem to be different descriptions of the same path on which we can go in both directions—from the soul to God and from God to the soul. Presumably, the more we are travelling back and forth the more we progress on the road to knowing ourselves as well as God. If we come to know the real active nature of our souls, we at once get closer to understanding the essential activity of God, just like if we get an insight into the operation of God, we are gaining a glimpse into the way an active being, like us, should—in ideal circumstances—act. At the end of this line of thought, as a sort of a culmination of this seemingly never-ending and perhaps circular journey, we are told that our existence as a person is grounded in God's unity.

> According to the Platonic philosophy, ens and unum are the same. And consequently *our minds participate so far of existence as they do of unity*. But it should seem that personality is the indivisible centre of the soul or mind, which is a monad so far forth as she is a person. Therefore *person is really that which exists, inasmuch as it participates of the divine unity*. In man the monad or indivisible is the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό, the self same self or very self, a thing in the opinion

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> of Socrates much and narrowly to be inquired into and discussed, to the end that, knowing ourselves, we may know what belongs to us and our happiness. (*Siris* 346, emphasis added)

To speculate a bit on the grounds of the earlier considerations, what lies behind the pretty mystical idea of participating in the divine unity might be an exhortation to realize our minds' potentiality not only so as to understand ourselves and our happiness but also to become similar to God in our common, essential and simple activity. At the same time, as we have seen, this is how we can create the basis on which our analogous, albeit imperfect, notion of the deity rests.

II.4. THE ANALOGICAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE *ALCIPHRON* IV.

As for the other important feature of our knowledge of God, its literality, Berkeley advances his doctrine through attacking the opposite view. Berkeley criticizes the analogical or, more precisely, metaphorical way of speaking about God most overtly and extensively in the fourth dialogue of the *Alciphron*, where he argues for the view that we can apply the attributes such as wisdom or understanding to God literally, that is, in the very same sense as we predicate them of humans. One of the interesting upshots of these considerations is that for Berkeley the valid *analogical* knowledge we have about God—expressed in the passages examined earlier—provides us with an absolutely genuine knowledge of the divinity. Through immediately experiencing our souls' active nature and observing how the divine will manifests itself in the world, we are able to grasp what God really is—even if this knowledge, as Berkeley often acknowledges, is to a certain extent inadequate insofar as the divine nature with its infinite and pure activity cannot be fully comprehended by any finite and limited mind. Although one might think that radical voluntarists should go further, and, as for instance King or Arnauld did, endorse the doctrine of negative theology, holding that the predication of attributes equivocates between the human and the divine case, the moderate versions of voluntarism are absolutely compatible with predicating the divine faculties of God to literally and meaningfully characterize his nature.[110] It is also important to clarify that though the

[110] Importantly, those like King or Arnauld who seem to be more radical with regard to the issue of divine predication or the intelligibility of the divine nature might not be more radical voluntarists with regard to divine psychology. Arnauld seems to be merely a weak voluntarist, taking seriously the implications of the divine simplicity thesis, and King even claims that God, while free from internal

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discussion—following how it was first formulated by King—is cashed out primarily in terms of knowledge, understanding and wisdom, the issue is about any predicate one wants to attribute to God. So, we have no reason to think that when Berkeley defends the literal applicability of terms such as wisdom and understanding, he wants to argue that these belong to God in a sense that contradicts that his most important aspect or his essence, as Berkeley suggested in his earlier works, is literally identified with his intellectually undetermined will.[111]

From an early time, Berkeley was well aware of the debates about religious language, so prevalent in his time, between the deists, atheists and orthodox Christians, such as William King and Peter Browne. Interestingly, he thought that not only the deists, but also the orthodox defenders of faith served, though inadvertently, the cause of atheism. As we have seen in section 2, one common mistake concerning the divine nature is anthropomorphizing, i.e. "over-literalizing", our concept of God, but Berkeley saw the metaphorical theory as an equally harmful misunderstanding on the part of the orthodox theologians.

> I met with some who supporting themselves on the authority of the Archbishop of Dublin's sermon concerning the prescience of God, denied there was any more wisdom, goodness or understanding in God than there were feet or hands, but that all are to be taken in a figurative sense; whereupon I consulted the sermon and to my surprise found his Grace asserting that strange doctrine. 'Tis true he holds there is something in the divine nature analogous or equivalent to those attributes. But upon such principles I must confess I do not see how it is possible to demonstrate the being of God: there being no argument that I know of for his existence, which does not prove him at the same time to be an understanding, wise and benevolent Being, in the strict, literal, and proper meaning of those words. (*8th letter to Percival*, March 1, 1707, Works 8.32.)

The analogical or metaphorical way of speaking about God's attributes was intended to solve the supposed contradictions in the traditional characterization of God. The tension King was primarily motivated by is between God's perfect (fore)knowledge, which on

necessity, cannot will less than the best (see Pearce 2019, but see *Divine Predestination* V). In fact, the basic intelligibility of the strong voluntarist claim about the priority of the will over the understanding requires that we can meaningfully attribute those faculties to God.

[111] In fact, the whole set-up of the debate supports this characterization: whereas the volitional activity and omnipotence of God is not questioned by any side, the sense in which his other—more intellectualistic—attributes belong to him was highly controversial.

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the most natural reading entails determinism, and human freedom.[112] There might also be an inconsistency, as Bayle argued, between his all-knowing, powerful, good attributes and the evil experienced in his creation.[113] So, in order to protect the theistic or orthodox attributes of God, William King and Peter Browne adopted negative theology maintaining that the attributes like (fore)knowledge or goodness do not belong to God in a strict sense, that is, in the sense we use them with regard to humans, and hence implies no conflict with any other features of God or the creation. They argue that these attributes are just convenient and metaphorical ways of speaking about God's absolutely different nature. King claimed in his sermon on predestination, mentioned by Berkeley in his letter to Percival, that none of these attributes

> […] are more properly and literally in God, after the manner that they are in us, than hands or eyes, than mercy, love, or hatred are ; but, on the contrary, we must acknowledge, that those things which we call by these names, when attributed to God, are of so very different a nature from what they are in us, and so superior to all that we can conceive, that in reality there is no more likeness between them than between our hand and God's power : nor can we draw consequences from the real nature of one to that of the other with more justness of reason, than we can conclude, because our hand consists of fingers and joints, that the power of God is distinguished by such parts. (*Divine Predestination* VI.)

Despite their opposing conclusions, King shared a lot of views with Berkeley. For instance, he starts with stipulating that God's nature in itself is incomprehensible.

> That it is in effect agreed on all hands, that the Nature of God, as it is in it self, is incomprehensible by human Understanding; and not only his Nature, but likewise his Powers and Faculties, and the ways and methods in which he exercises them, are so far beyond our reach, that we are utterly incapable of framing exact and adequate Notions of them. (*Divine Predestination* III.)

[112] Berkeley characterizes the motivation behind the metaphysical theory as follows: "[Lysicles speaking] Suppose, for instance, a man should object that future contingencies were inconsistent with the foreknowledge of God, because it is repugnant that certain knowledge should be of an uncertain thing: it was a ready and an easy answer to say that this may be true with respect to knowledge taken in the common sense, or in any sense that we can possibly form any notion of; but that there would not appear the same inconsistency between the contingent nature of things and divine foreknowledge, taken to signify somewhat that we know nothing of, which in God supplies the place of what we understand by knowledge; from which it differs not in quantity or degree of perfection, but altogether, and in kind, as light doth from sound, and even more, since these agree in that they are both sensations; whereas knowledge in God hath no sort of resemblance or agreement with any notion that man can frame of knowledge. The like may be said of all the other attributes, which indeed may by this means be equally reconciled with every thing or with nothing." (*Alciphron* III.17.)

[113] Bayle 1991, 148-150, 166-193, cf. Pearce 2018, 177.

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In a passage that sounds like even Berkeley could have written it, King maintains

> […] the Descriptions which we frame to our selves of God, or of the Divine Attributes, are not taken from any direct or immediate Perceptions that we have of him or them; but from some Observations we have made of his Works, and from the Consideration of those Qualifications, that we conceive would enable us to perform the like. Thus observing great Order, Conveniency, and Harmony in all the several Parts of the World, and perceiving that every thing is adapted and tends to the Preservation and Advantage of the Whole […] (*Divine Predestination* IV.)

Given that we neither perceiver nor directly comprehend in any other way the divine essence and attributes, we have no other option to know God than observing his effects in nature and appealing to analogy with our faculties and attributes needed to bring those effects about.

> And it doth truly follow from hence, that God must either have these, or other Faculties and Powers equivalent to them, and adequate to these mighty Effects which proceed from them. And because we do not know what his Faculties are in themselves, we give them the Names of those Powers, that we find would be necessary to us in order to produce such effects, and call them Wisdom, Understanding, and Foreknowledge: but at the same time we cannot but be sensible, that they are of a nature altogether different from ours, and that *we have no direct and proper Notion or Conception of them.* […] Thus our Reason teaches us to ascribe these Attributes to God, by way of Resemblance and Analogy to such Qualitys or Powers as we find most valuable and perfect in our selves. (*Divine Predestination* IV, emphasis added)

The point where King's argumentation clearly departs from Berkeley's is when he adds that once we base our knowledge of God on analogy and comparison, it inevitably becomes improper, making it similar to the obviously improper attribution of body parts or passions to God.

Interestingly, Browne also reaches his position on divine predication from certain epistemological assumptions Berkeley partly shared with him, including the rejection of abstract ideas. Furthermore, they agreed that we have no ideas of our souls and mental operations, nonetheless we have immediate awareness and hence notions of them. Based on these assumptions, Browne claimed that we can know God only indirectly through analogy with what is known directly and that "we can have no Direct and Proper Ideas, or Immediate conception or Notion" of God at all (*Things Divine and Supernatural* 107).[114]

[114] Berkeley did not know Browne's *Things Divine and Supernatural* when he wrote *Alciphron*, indeed, Browne added a long reply to his work, addressing Berkeley's views expressed in the *Alciphron*. Furthermore, as he just arrived back from America, Berkeley probably did not even know Browne's earlier

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Unlike Berkeley, he occasionally went so far as to claim that "we can have no ideas or conceptions [of God] at all, either in whole or in part, distinct or confused, clear or obscure, determinate or indeterminate" (*Things Divine and Supernatural* 237). Further, also in contrast to Berkeley, he thinks that if two substances differ in kind (like humans and God), then they cannot share a property of the same kind (like knowledge), because the properties are inseparable from the substances they belong to.[115] Of course, King's and Browne's theory was even more complex than how I depicted them here. For instance, they self-consciously attempted, in Berkeley's view unsuccessfully, to find a middle way between the equivocal or merely metaphorical and the univocal or literal sense of predicating the divine attributes. Seeking to refine its excesses, Browne's understanding is often seen as subtler than King's, but even King was perfectly aware that he would be charged with advocating a metaphorical theory.

> It may be objected against this Doctrine, that if it be true, all our Descriptions of God, and Discourses concerning him, will be only Figures and Metaphors; that he will be only figuratively Merciful, Just, Intelligent or Foreknowing: and perhaps in time, Religion and all the Mysteries thereof, will be lost in these mere Figures. But I answer, that there is great difference between the Analogical Representations of God, and that which we commonly call Figurative. The common Use of Figures is to represent things, that are otherwise very well known, in such a manner as may magnify or lessen, heighten or adorn the Ideas we have of them. And the Design of putting them in this foreign Dress, as we may call it, is to move our Passions, and engage our Fancies more effectually than the true and naked View of them is apt to do, or perhaps ought. And from hence it too often happens, that these Figures are employ'd to deceive us, and make us think better or worse of things, than they really deserve. But the Analogies and Similitudes, that the Holy Scriptures or our own Reason frame of Divine Things, are of another Nature; the Use of them is, to give us some Notion of things whereof we have no direct Knowledge, and by that means lead us to the Perception of the Nature, or at least of some of the Properties and Effects of what our Understandings cannot directly reach; and in this Case to teach us, how we are to behave our selves towards God, and what we are to do, in order to obtain a more perfect Knowledge of his Attributes. (*Divine Predestination* XXI.)

For King, the difference between analogy and metaphor lies primarily in their aims. While analogy is used to gain some sort of knowledge or notion of something we do not know properly, the latter is to describe something already known in terms that can be more

work, the *Procedure*, either, so presumably King is the primary target of his criticism. In his *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, published in 1733, one year after the *Alciphron*, however, he alludes to Browne. See Pearce 2017b, 481, cf. Berman 1994, 134.

[115] See Olscamp 1970, 208-210.

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fanciful or moving than a dry literal description. As a consequence, a metaphorical or figurative understanding is intended to depict its object less accurately—dressing it up, as King says, to make it more appealing to our passions and imagination. Analogical representations, by contrast, at least try to approach the reality of the directly unknowable thing at issue.

> And whereas in ordinary figurative Representations, the thing express'd by the Figure, is commonly of much less moment than that to which it is compar'd; in these Analogies the Case is otherwise, and the things represented by them, have much more Reality and Perfection in them, than the things by which we represent them. […] what we call Knowledge and Foreknowledge in God, have infinitely more Reality in them, and are of greater moment than our Understanding or Prescience, from whence they are transfer'd to him; and in truth, these as in Man are but faint Communications of the Divine Perfections, which are the true Originals, and which our Powers and Faculties more imperfectly imitate, than a Picture does a Man: and yet if we reason from them by Analogy and Proportion, they are sufficient to give us such a Notion of God's Attributes, as will oblige us to fear, love, obey, and adore him. (*Divine Predestination* XXII.)

While they help us grasp God's nature well enough to motivate all our religious practices and beliefs, just like metaphorical figures, which deliberately convey more than what is actually in the object, the analogical attributes can also be used only improperly as they capture very little of the reality the divine perfections have in themselves.[116] Applying this conceptual framework to the alleged inconsistency between divine foreknowledge and human freedom, King claims that because human and divine knowledge are not of the same kind, and we have no proper notion of these attributes in God "any more than a Man born blind has of Sight and Colours", we should not "pretend to determine what is consistent or not consistent with" divine foreknowledge, just like "a blind Man ought [not] to determine, from what he hears or feels, to what Objects the Sense of Seeing reaches" (*Divine Predestination* VII). Following in the footsteps of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and, as he interprets him, Aquinas, Browne also made it absolutely clear that we cannot have literal, but only analogical, as opposed to the merely metaphorical, knowledge even of God's existence, let alone his nature.[117]

[116] The distinction between metaphor and analogy is made in similar but stronger terms by Browne. See Olscamp 1970, 205-208.

[117] For more on King's and Browne's views see Curtin 2014, Daniel 2011, 151-4, Olscamp 1970, 204-208 and Pearce 2017b, 468-470, Pearce 2018, 177-179, Pearce 2019.

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Berkeley's greatest problem with this approach was that, as he firmly believed, it played ultimately into the hands of the atheists and deists, making God an "unknown Subject of Attributes absolutely unknown" (*Alciphron* IV.17).[118] In his opinion, this view

> would be an end of all natural or rational religion […] for he who comes to God, or enters himself in the church of God, must first believe that there is a God in some intelligible sense; and not only that there is something in general, without any proper notion, though never so inadequate, of any of its qualities or attributes: for this may be fate, or chaos, or plastic nature, or any thing else as well as God. (*Alciphron* IV.18.)

Interestingly, this interpretation of God ("something in general, without any proper notion") has a striking similarity to one concept of matter Berkeley was so keen to reject. Generally, Berkeley's problem with matter is not that it cannot be perceived by sense—just like any spiritual substance—but that its different concepts are either inconsistent or meaningless and empty; anyhow we try to define it, it will make no positive sense. As it might be clear from the foregoing, this problem of course does not apply to the finite souls and God. We have direct access to our own souls, based on which, in addition to the widespread effects experienced in nature, we should be able to make literal, consistent and meaningful sense of the latter—just like we can have analogical knowledge of other finite souls. But the metaphorical view suggests that our notion of God is not more intelligible and meaningful than that of matter,[119] and that, contrary to what Berkeley thinks, "we cannot frame any direct or proper notion, though never so inadequate, of knowledge or wisdom, as they are in the Deity" (*Alciphron* IV.21).

As a strategy commonly employed by Berkeley, the agnostics' "well-meaning but incautious" (*Alciphron* IV.21) approach is assimilated to a more open form of atheism. Hard to determine exactly who Berkeley had in mind in the last part of the quote above, but fate, chaos and plastic nature might refer to Stoicism, Epicureanism and the Cambridge Platonist Cudworth, respectively. In Berkeley's view, these philosophies were materialistic and could feel reinforced by the metaphorical understanding of the divine

[118] Daniel suggests that Berkeley's rejection is based on his distaste for abstraction, claiming that he "rejects this proposed resolution, because it incorrectly assumes that divine and human minds can be known apart from their effects and can thus be compared to one another as if they were objects abstracted from their activities." (Daniel 2011,150.) Indeed, Berkeley was not keen on abstraction in theological matters, either.

[119] See Berkeley's reply to the so-called *parity-argument* in the *Third Dialogue* 231-234.

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attributes. In the *Theory of Vision Vindicated* after lamenting that "the notions of Hobbes, Spinosa, Leibnitz, and Bayle are relished and applauded",[120] he criticizes King's and Browne's interpretation of analogy not only as a misunderstanding but also as incautiously giving an advantage to the deists and atheists.

> [...] the proceeding of the author of a book intituled, *A Discourse of Free thinking occasioned by the Rise and Growth of a Sect called Free thinkers*, [i.e. Anthony Collins] who, having insinuated his infidelity from men's various pretences and opinions concerning revealed religion, in like manner appears to insinuate his atheism from the differing notions of men concerning the nature and attributes of God, particularly from *the opinion of our knowing God by analogy, as it hath been misunderstood and misinterpreted by some of late years*. Such is the ill effect of untoward defences and explanations of our faith; and such advantage do incautious friends give its enemies. (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 6.)

For one thing, according to Berkeley, this understanding of the analogical theory does not fulfil its purpose as it does not really solve the problems associated with the traditional characterization of God.

> Upon the whole, although this method of growing in expression and dwindling in notion, of clearing up doubts by nonsense, and avoiding difficulties by running into affected contradictions, may perhaps proceed from a wellmeant zeal, yet it appears not to be according to knowledge; and, instead of reconciling atheists to the truth, hath, I doubt, a tendency to confirm them in their own persuasion. (*Alciphron* IV.19.)

But it supports the atheists' cause also because no rational natural theology can be built on a view of God which attaches no particular and understandable meaning to the divine attributes.

> You cannot argue from unknown attributes, or, which is the same thing, from attributes in an unknown sense. You cannot prove that God is to be loved for his goodness, or feared for his justice, or respected for his knowledge: all which consequences, we own, would follow from those attributes admitted in an intelligible sense but we deny that those or any other consequences can be drawn from attributes admitted in no particular sense, or in a sense which none of us understand (*Alciphron* IV.18.)

As Berkeley points out, if its advocates want to prove anything about God, the metaphorical theory entails a gross logical mistake, called fallacy of four terms. More than

[120] One might wonder why Berkeley included Leibniz in this list, given that, as I mentioned in the Introduction, he can also be interpreted as an idealist. Though Berkeley probably did not know Leibniz's works very well, my interpretation of Berkeley provides a tool to discover a fundamental difference: the voluntarist Berkeley could not accept the intellectualism of Leibniz, implying, among other things, that intellectual principles determine the divine and human will as well as the course of nature. In the context of human freedom, this kind of intellectual determination is discussed in *Alciphron* VII. See especially VII.18, quoted in II.5.

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three terms in a syllogism makes impossible to build a valid argument from it. Even the existence of God as a spirit with certain attributes is then unprovable:

> […] it is evident that every syllogism brought to prove those attributes, or (which is the same thing) to prove the being of a God, will be found to consist of four terms, and consequently can conclude nothing. (*Alciphron* IV.22.)

Ironically, here Berkeley draws on the argumentation of the famous deist Anthony Collins, alluded to in the quote above by Berkeley himself, who, by his own account, aimed to vindicate the divine attributes against the misunderstanding of the analogy-theorists.[121]

As I showed in the previous sections of this chapter, Berkeley was absolutely sure that we can prove the existence and attributes of God. In fact, in a very crucial sense his whole philosophy is built around this aim. For instance, the famous causal or independence (or, as often called, passivity) argument found in the *Principles*, the *Three Dialogues* as well as the *Notebooks* is advanced as a conclusive argument for the existence and attributes of God, through proving his volitional activity. In any event, what his immaterialism seems to prove as the ontological basis of reality, that is God, cannot be of an absolutely incomprehensible nature.[122] This is just as true in the *Alciphron*, even though Berkeley's primary aim here is to defend Christianity and not immaterialism, in fact, trying to do the former without the contentious, if not widely ridiculed, latter. He even gives an argument for the existence of God which does not presuppose the truth of immaterialism.

> […] from natural motions, independent of man's will, may be inferred both power and wisdom incomparably greater than that of the human soul. (*Alciphron* IV.4-5.)

Berkeley argues that every single sensation and, more clearly, the magnificent complexity, coherence and conduciveness of our experiences (especially the visual ones) proves the existence of God as the infinitely wise and benevolent author of the world.

> […] optic Language hath a necessary Connexion with Knowledge, Wisdom and Goodness […] (*Alciphron* IV.14.)

[121] See *Vindication of the Divine Attributes* 5, 12-22 and 28, where he basically put forward the 'fallacy of four terms' objection against William King. Cf. Pearce 2017b, 469, Pearce 2018, 178-181, Johnston 1923, 344.

[122] See, for instance, a passage already quoted from the *Three Dialogues* (257): "When I say the being of a God, I do not mean an obscure general cause of things, whereof we have no conception, but God, in the strict and proper sense of the word. […]"

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He believes that our experiences evidently prove that God knows how to combine our perceptions to constantly and attentively inform and guide us in the created world.

> this visual Language proves, not a Creator merely, but a provident Governor, actually and intimately present, and attentive to all our interests and motions, who watches over our conduct, and takes care of our minutest actions and designs throughout the whole course of our lives, informing, admonishing, and directing incessantly, in a most evident and sensible manner. This is truly wonderful. (*Alciphron* IV.14.)

As such, Berkeley aims to prove not simply the existence of a creator, but God as the continuous cause of our visual data with their, albeit arbitrarily established, systematic and useful connections to other phenomena. The exact details of this argument are beside our point now; the important lesson for us is that the Christian concept of God is understandable, and his existence and attributes are provable by human reasoning.

> The Being of God is capable of clear Proof, and a proper Object of human Reason. (*Alciphron* IV.30.)

But in order to have this arguments work, Berkeley knew he had to dismiss the metaphorical theory, allowing us to know nothing substantial, meaningful or genuine about God's nature. Berkeley argues that King and Browne simply misinterpreted the original meaning of analogy when they, as he sees their view, basically reduced it to a merely metaphorical way of speaking.

> If there be any modern well meaning writer, who (perhaps from not having considered the fifth book of Euclid) writes much of analogy without understanding it, and thereby hath slipped his foot into this snare, I wish him to slip it back again, and, instead of causing scandal to good men and triumph to atheists, discreetly explain away his first sense; and return to speak of God and his attributes in the style of other Christians, allowing that *knowledge and wisdom do, in the proper sense of the words, belong to God, and that we have some notion, though infinitely* inadequate, of those divine attributes, yet still more than a man blind from his birth can have of light and colours. (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 6.)

Berkeley thinks that, unlike King and Browne, he follows the tradition when he is distinguishing between two senses of analogy: (i.) the metaphorical and (ii.) proper or literal analogy. The former is used when we describe God in anthropomorphic terms, attributing body parts or passions to him:

> it is to be observed that a twofold analogy is distinguished by the Schoolmen, metaphorical and proper. Of the first kind there are frequent instances in Holy Scripture, attributing human parts and passions to God. When He is represented as having a finger, an eye, or an ear; when he is said to repent, to be angry, or grieved; every one sees the analogy is merely metaphorical. Because those parts and passions, taken in the proper signification, must in

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> every degree necessarily, and from the formal nature of the thing, include imperfection. When, therefore, it is said the finger of God appears in this or that event, men of common sense mean no more but that it is as truly ascribed to God as the works wrought by human fingers are to man: and so of the rest. But the case is different when wisdom and knowledge are attributed to God. Passions and senses, as such, imply defect; but in knowledge simply, or as such, there is no defect. (*Alciphron* IV.21.)

As we have seen, that we can literally attribute body parts or passions to God is rejected by all sides of the debate.[123] The question is whether any analogy between the capacities of humans and God can ever be used to characterize the divine nature in a proper or literal sense. King and Browne argue that analogy is either nothing else but a sort of metaphor intended to generate some, albeit very deficient, sort of knowledge, or constitutes a middle way between metaphorical and literal predication. So, they believe that no analogy can be the basis of proper or literal attribution of the divine characteristics. For Berkeley, by contrast, analogy is neither a metaphor in disguise nor a third kind between univocal and equivocal predication, but a genus which incorporates both metaphorical and literal attribution.

As we have seen earlier, according to Berkeley, analogical reasoning has a crucial role in how we come by the notion of God, indeed, in the absence of any abstract comprehension of the concept of the most perfect being, this is our only shot at understanding God's nature. Further, he thinks that our souls and our ideas serve as analogues for other finite spirits and their ideas. Also, as we will see in the next chapter, scientists aim at observing various analogies in nature, based on which they form expectations about the future and the things we do not experience directly. Even discussing the grounds of our belief in a future state, he claimed that "he who is bigot enough" to deny the various analogies between the natural and the spiritual world

> must bid adieu to that natural rule of *reasoning from analogy*; must run counter to that maxim of common sense, *That men ought to form their judgments of things unexperienced from what they have experienced.* (Berkeley's Essays in the *Guardian,* I. "The Future State", No. 27. Saturday, April 11, Works 7.182)

So, Berkeley was very conscious about the importance analogy has in philosophy, science as well as theology. But if it is understood correctly, Berkeley firmly believed that the analogical predication of the divine attributes does not mean that we cannot speak about

[123] See for instance King's *Divine Predestinaion* V.

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God literally or in a proper sense. Rather, it entails nothing more than the hardly deniable fact that we, as finite beings, cannot comprehend God and his attributes in its infinite entirety. Nonetheless the analogy based on what we experience in ourselves and in the created world enables us to form reasonable judgements about what is not experienced directly, namely God's nature. We clearly understand what knowledge is for a finite entity, and there is no problem at all in attributing this very same knowledge to God in proportion to his perfection and infinity, which we also experience in form of his limitless causal activity in the natural world. Alluding to the mathematical origin of analogy, construed as "similitude of relations or habitudes whatsoever" (*Alciphron* IV.21.), Berkeley claims that

> Knowledge, therefore, in the proper formal meaning of the word, may be attributed to God proportionably, that is, preserving a proportion to the infinite nature of God. We may say, therefore, that as God is infinitely above man, so is the knowledge of God infinitely above the knowledge of man, and this is what Cajetan calls analogia proprie facta [analogy properly formed]. And after this same analogy we must understand all those attributes to belong to the Deity which in themselves simply, and as such, denote perfection. We may, therefore, consistently with what hath been premised, affirm that *all sorts of perfection which we can conceive in a finite spirit are in God*, but without any of that alloy which is found in the creatures. (*Alciphron* IV.21.)

Partly in order to invalidate Browne's appeal to the Christian tradition, Berkeley places his view in an interesting historical perspective, contrasting it with the *via negativa* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. In spite of his general affection for the Platonic tradition, he did not regard Pseudo-Dionysius as a Christian authority.

> It should seem, therefore, very weak and rash in a Christian to adopt this harsh language of an apocryphal writer preferably to that of the Holy Scriptures. I remember, indeed, to have read of a certain philosopher, who lived some centuries ago, that used to say, if these supposed works of Dionysius had been known to the primitive Fathers, they would have furnished them admirable weapons against the heretics, and would have saved a world of pains. But the event since their discovery hath by no means confirmed his opinion. (*Alciphron* IV.19.)

Instead, he draws parallels between his view and those of Aquinas and Cajetan.[124] Of course, by arguing that God's attributes are different from human perfections *in degree*, but not in kind or nature, as King or Browne assumed, he follows an even longer

[124] Recently, Fasko (2018) argued that Berkeley more closely follows Duns Scotus's solution, which was actually rejected by Cajetan.

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tradition, which holds that the human and divine properties are qualitatively the same, even though different in quantity.[125] His conclusion is as clear as it can be.

> This doctrine, therefore, of analogical perfections in God, or our knowing God by analogy, seems very much misunderstood and misapplied by those who would infer from thence that we cannot frame any direct or proper notion, though never so inadequate, of knowledge or wisdom, as they are in the Deity; or understand any more of them than one born blind can of light and colours. (*Alciphron* IV.21.)

From the perspective of this dissertation, it was particularly important to see that the characterization of God I discussed in this chapter—and which is partly based on an analogy with the volitional activity of the finite minds and which depicts God primarily as a limitless and purely active will—is put forward not only as the best possible approximation of the divine perfection we might hope for but indeed as a genuine and literally true description of the divinity.

II.5. DIVINE PSYCHOLOGY, MALEBRANCHE AND VOLUNTARISM IN THE *SIRIS*

In the last section, recapping many things already mentioned in this chapter, I seek to support further that Berkeley's approach to the divine mind bears the mark of voluntarism in the relevant sense. In the preceding sections I emphasized that throughout his philosophical career Berkeley firmly believed that the philosophically most important features of God are related to how his volitions are executed, which, on analogy with our volitional activity, can reveal something real and crucial about his nature. Now I want to show, in the terms I used to define voluntarism in the Introduction, that, for Berkeley, God's will is undetermined by and even has priority over his intellect.

First, I will contrast his general approach to the divinity with the divine psychology Malebranche put forward. This, I hope, will make it clear and more conspicuous that Berkeley, primarily following Locke's lead, emphatically rejected an intellectualist description of the divine mind and its decision-making policies. Then discussing the relevant texts—from the early statements about God and his non-blind actions to his Trinitarian description of the divinity in the *Siris*—I will conclude that Berkeley

[125] For a classic examination of this tradition, see Craig 1987, especially 16-20. For various early modern models of the image of God doctrine, emphasizing the qualitative resemblance between human and divine mind, see also Roberts 2018.

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understood God's nature in even stronger voluntarist terms, regarding the power of his intellectually undetermined will as the essence of the divinity.

Though acknowledges the incomprehensibility of God's infinite perfections,[126] Malebranche provides a nice example of doing a 'perfect being theology', working with a robust *a priori* concept of God, from which various theological, metaphysical, physical and moral truths can be deduced. In *Dialogue* 8, devoted to a discussion of the divine attributes, he claims that the word 'God'

> […] is simply the abbreviated expression for the infinitely perfect Being, there is a contradiction in supposing that we might be mistaken if we attributed to God only what we see clearly belongs to the infinitely perfect Being. […] let us attribute to God or to infinitely perfect Being all perfections, however incomprehensible they appear to us, provided we are certain that they are realities or true perfections; realities and perfections, I say, which do not take after nothingness, which are not limited by imperfections or limitations similar to those of creatures. (*Dialogues* 8.1 / JS 128)

As with other intellectualists, such as Leibniz or Henry More, who think that the absolutely perfect being's essence necessarily includes existence, this approach allows Malebranche to infer from conceiving the infinite being that it really exists: "By the divinity we all understand the infinite, Being without restriction, infinitely perfect Being. Now, nothing finite can represent the infinite. Thus it is sufficient to think of God to know He exists" (*Dialogues* 8.1 / JS 128). To be sure, this argument owes a lot to Descartes' argument for God's existence from the *Third Meditation*. But Malebranche understands this argument as showing also that whenever we think of the infinite we grasp, however imperfectly, the essence and existence of God directly and *in itself*, not

[126] See JS 135-6, LO 98, 205, 720. Malebranche claims in *Dialogues* 2.2 that we "do not see what God is. For the divinity has no limits in His perfections, and what you see when you think of immense spaces lacks an infinity of perfections. I say 'what you see,' and not 'the substance which represents to you what you see.' For that substance, which you do not see in itself, has infinite perfections" (JS 21). As Aristes puts it later on with regard to representing God's infinite nature in our minds, "I do not comprehend it, I do not get its measure; in fact I am quite certain I shall never be able to get its measure. […] the perception I have of the infinite is limited" (JS 128). Malebranche thinks that it "[…] in this life we see it [God's substance] only in a manner so confused and remote that we see that it is rather than what it is; we see that it is the source and exemplar of all beings rather than its own nature or its perfections in themselves" (JS 25). He emphasizes that we do not see God's essence as it is intrinsically, but as it is in relation to the creatures. The problems primarily revolve around the issue that the infinite intelligible extension in God—which contains everything, but is still unified—cannot be grasped or represented in its infinite and indefinite generality and abstractness by our finite minds.

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through a representation in our minds.[127] Indeed, despite the claims about the incomprehensibility, or rather the irrepresentability, of the infinite, albeit unified, perfections in God, he firmly believes that we can conceive of God as the perfect being.

> […] the notion of the infinitely perfect Being is deeply engraved in our mind. We never exist without thinking of Being. But far from employing this vast and immense notion of Being without restriction to measure thereby the divinity which is continually represented to us, we consider this immense notion as a pure fiction of our mind. This is because, Aristes, Being in general does not strike our senses and we judge the reality and solidity of objects by the force by which they affect us. […] I believe they are sublime truths to which we can attain only by silencing our imagination and senses, only by going beyond ourselves. And I am firmly resolved in what follows no longer to judge God by myself nor by the ideas which represent creatures, but solely by the notion of the infinitely perfect Being. (*Dialogues* 8.9 / JS 139)

In short, we cannot have a representation of God's infinite and simple essence, but we are in direct contact with him and we can grasp his essence as the perfect being, bridging the gap between the infinite God and our finite minds. Of course, Malebranche was fully aware that his theology, requiring us to be intellectually "going beyond ourselves" and our particular experiences, is based on highly abstract general concepts. He emphasizes that our sensory experiences help us nothing in understanding God, and, as he puts it, we must not "judge God by myself nor by the ideas which represent creatures". Rather the divinity should be grasped, purely intellectually, as a "Being in general" with all the possible perfections.[128]

> If you want to judge the divine attributes consult the infinite, the notion of infinitely perfect Being, and do not stop at the ideas of particular and finite beings. (*Dialogues* 8.5 / JS 133)

Accordingly, underlying his criticism of Descartes' infamous voluntarist doctrine that God created the eternal truths—in the same sense that he (efficiently) caused the existence of the universe—Malebranche argues that the divine mind should be portrayed

[127] See also the *Second Dialogue*, claiming that "we see the substance of God in itself". With the aim of clarifying whether we know God directly or not, he says that "I do not deny that we see the substance of God in itself. We see it in itself in the sense that we do not see it by means of something finite that represents it. But we do not see it in itself in the sense that we grasp its simplicity and discover therein its perfections. As you agree that nothing finite can represent the infinite reality, it is clear that if you see the infinite you see it only in itself. Yet it is certain that you see it." (JS 25)

[128] Malebranche regularly defines God in pretty abstract terms not only as the most perfect being, "the being of beings" or *ens realissimum* but even as "Being in general" or simply a "Being, and not a particular being" (*Dialogues* 8.7 / JS 135). Cf. Locke's criticism in the *Examination* that Malebranche's God is an abstract being-in-general.

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in terms of perfections the concept of the infinitely perfect being entails rather than anthropomorphically.[129]

> Since most men judge of God in relation to themselves, they imagine that he first forms a plan, then consults his wisdom about the means of executing it. For our wills go before our reason at every moment, and our plans are almost never perfectly reasonable. But God does not conduct himself like men. This is how he acts, if I have well understood the idea of the infinitely perfect Being. God knows, through the infinite light of his wisdom, all the possible works, and at the same time all the ways of producing each of them. He sees all the relations of means to their ends. He compares all things in a view which is eternal, immutable, necessary; and by the comparison he makes between the relations of wisdom and of fruitfulness, which he discovers between the plans and the means of executing them, he freely forms a plan. But the plan being formed, he necessarily chooses the general means which are the worthiest of his wisdom, his greatness, and his goodness; for as he forms his plan only through the knowledge he has of the means of executing it, the choice of plan includes the choice of means. (*Treatise on Nature and Grace* 161.)

According to the proper, i.e. intellectualistic, divine psychology, which, again, follows from "the idea of the infinitely perfect Being", God's plan cannot precede the rational means to realize it. Since *what* he wants (that is, the plan) essentially depends on (the knowledge of) *how* he can realize it, his will, unlike ours, cannot go before his reason—obviously not in temporal sense, but not even conceptually or in the order of explanation. It seems that God cannot will anything without having in his intellect a fully formed rational explanation and justification for doing so, and "necessarily chooses the general means which are the worthiest of his wisdom, his greatness, and his goodness". Malebranche's God first entertains and surveys the (infinitely many) possible worlds in his intellect, and then decides to create or actualize one of them based on the world's inherent value and the simplicity or generality of ways in which God can create and maintain it. The will's role is simply to execute what the intellect offers as the best possibility. As he puts it in the *Dialogues*, "God is His own light unto Himself, that in His substance He finds the essences of all beings and all their possible modalities, and in His decrees He finds their existence and all their actual modalities." (*Dialogues* 8.10 / JS 140.) Indeed, Malebranche states in many other places as well that God's will necessarily chooses what his reason dictates.

[129] Cf. *Dialogues* 9.2 / JS 149: "God knows and wills, not because we know and will, but because knowing and willing are true perfections".

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> All creatures are particular beings; universal reason, therefore, is not created. No creature is infinite; infinite reason, therefore, is not a creature. But the reason we consult is not only infinite and universal, it is also independent and necessary, and in one sense, we conceive it as *more independent than God Himself*. For *God can act only according to this reason*; He depends on it in a sense – He has to consult and follow it. Now, God consults only Himself and depends on nothing. This reason, therefore, is not different from Himself.; it is, therefore, coeternal and consubstantial with Him. (*Elucidation* X, LO 614, my emphasis)

In the *Dialogues*, he confirms that God's actions are always in accordance with his intellectual nature and what the immutable order, contained in his intellect, requires.

> […] God can act only according to what He is, according to the demands of the immutable order of the necessary relations of everything He contains, the character of which the disposition of the parts of the universe must bear. […] God is always severe, always an exact observer of the eternal laws, always acting according to what He is, according to the requirements of His own attributes or of that immutable order of the necessary relations of the divine attributes which His substance contains and which He loves invincibly and through the necessity of His being. (*Dialogues* 8.14 / JS 147)[130]

As it might not surprise my reader at this point, Berkeley deeply disagreed with Malebranche on these issues. For one thing, as we have seen earlier, Berkeley seems to be less confident about grasping in *a priori* terms the essence or nature of God, and the various implications of its perfections, than intellectualists like Malebranche tend to be. From the "vast and immense" concept of the infinitely perfect being Malebranche can understand many things about God's nature—not only that he is "good, wise, just, merciful, patient, and stern" but also that he is, for instance, immutable—as well as about how the divine mind works. Berkeley, by contrast, dismisses the *a priori* arguments for God's existence and generally rests his theology on the particular observations of the divine power—on an inductive method which, for instance, cannot exclude the possibility that God might change his will. He makes it clear in *Principles* 63 that God decided to convince us of his nature through the general, harmonious, ingenious, benevolent way he acts in nature.

As we have seen in *Notebooks* 845, Berkeley regards this approach to the deity as much clearer than any *a priori* "perfect being" theology. To be sure, Berkeley does not want to deny that God is a being who has no imperfections like pain (see for instance the already quoted *Three Dialogues* 240), but he does not think this way we can really understand the

[130] See also *Dialogues* 8.15 / JS 146; 13.8 / JS 252; 14.5 / JS 271.

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nature and the workings of God's mind or that we can build any positive arguments from the definition of the most perfect being as to his necessary existence or what attributes he has to have. As I will discuss in more detail later, he clearly does not believe that it can help us see what holds necessarily in the created world or figure out the laws of nature *a priori*. As a consequence, in sharp contrast to Malebranche, Berkeley thinks we can do nothing but judge God's nature by ourselves, by what we experience in and outside ourselves. Our knowledge of God's infinity comes from realizing that we perceive no limits to his activity in nature both in time and space, as well as in terms of his power, knowledge and goodness (in line with what the tradition passed on us). In *Principles* 148, also quoted earlier, Berkeley tells us how we see God: it is not like the way Malebranche imagined—either directly perceiving God's essence or comprehending him as the perfect being—but through the ubiquitous and omnipresent effects of the divine activity: "whithersoever we direct our view, we do at all times and in all places perceive manifest tokens of the divinity: every thing we see, hear, feel, or any wise perceive by sense, being a sign or effect of the Power of God". Nonetheless, though we clearly see these effects as produced by God's will, Berkeley acknowledges that God is "wise, powerful, and good, *beyond comprehension*" (*Three Dialogues* 215, emphasis added), and his nature "is incomprehensible to finite spirits" (*Three Dialogues* 254).

> It is not therefore to be expected, that any man, whether *materialist* or *immaterialist*, should have exactly just notions of the Deity, his attributes, and ways of operation. [...] The inadequateness of our conceptions of the Divine Nature [...] is unavoidable on any scheme. (*Three Dialogues* 254.)

In line with a distinction widespread in reformed theology, Berkeley sometimes (*Principles* 117; Letter to Johnson, *Works* 2.292; *Siris* 270) calls the divine attributes like infinity or immutability "incommunicable attributes" of God—attributes which are traditionally understood as ones God does not share with his creatures. But if we do not have them, we can hardly conceive of them. Though the particular context does not prove that he endorses it as his own view, he refers to the principle that "the nature of infinite not to be comprehended by that which is finite".[131] While all this might be acceptable to

[131] Though, as we have seen, Malebranche also speaks about the incomprehensibility of the infinite divine perfections, in this respect, too, Berkeley follows Locke just as, or even more, closely. Fitting his general epistemology, Locke in his *Essays* regularly characterize, without any hesitation or qualification,

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Malebranche, Berkeley also rejects the Malebranchean way of bridging this infinite gap between the finite and the infinite mind by attributing these incomprehensible features to God according to the concept of the absolutely perfect being. Of course, as we have seen earlier, this does not mean that we cannot have a rather accurate concept of God based on an analogy with our own souls' powers and on the (regular, benevolent, etc.) effects of his activity directly experienced in nature. As such, he agrees and disagrees in important aspects with Locke's claim that "when we apply to that first and supreme Being our idea of infinite, in our weak and narrow thoughts, we do it primarily in respect to his duration and ubiquity; and, I think, more figuratively to his power, wisdom, and goodness, and other attributes, which are properly inexhaustible and incomprehensible" (II/XVII/1). Berkeley, on the one hand, concurs that our most directly comprehensible knowledge of God is grounded on our limited experience of God's unlimited and ubiquitous presence and activity in space and time. Nonetheless, he does not agree with Locke's convictions that we can attribute infinity to God with respect to his power, wisdom, and goodness, etc. only "more figuratively", i.e. metaphorically. This claim is especially mistaken with regard to God's power, which is not only suggested, but literally implied by, indeed the most important basis of, our understanding of the omnipresent divine *activity*. What I suspect lies behind their disagreement is that while Locke seems to think that the infinite (quantitative) difference in terms of power, wisdom, goodness etc. renders these divine and the human attributes so different (in kind) that we can predicate them about God only metaphorically, Berkeley denies this conclusion. As the *Alciphron* IV sufficiently shows, he rather thinks that analogical knowledge based on our minds' active powers is, though quantitatively inadequate, can produce qualitatively proper knowledge of God. So, Berkeley holds that while the divine perfections are not *fully*

God as "infinite, incomprehensible" (e.g. *Essay* I/III/18). Writing about the idea of infinity in chapter XVII, he writes "It is true, that we cannot but be assured, that the great God, of whom and from whom are all things, is incomprehensibly infinite." (II/XVII/1.) In general, Locke is much more modest with regard to theology than Malebranche, or, as he sees their disagreement, he has "humility enough to allow that there may be many things which we cannot fully comprehend, and that God is not bound in all he does to subject his ways of operation to the scrutiny of our thoughts and continue himself to do nothing but what we must comprehend." (*Examination* 2.) He adds that he must confess to be in the dark, "having no notion at all of the *substance of God*; *nor being able to conceive how his is more intelligible than any other substance*." (*Examination* 6.)

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comprehensible, their effects observed in nature as well as the similarity between the human and the divine mind provide us with a limited and empirical, but literally true knowledge of God's nature and attributes. This generally modest approach to the deity, and his relation to the created world, can be seen as a typical characteristic of voluntarists, who try to understand God retrospectively, i.e. from the effects he brings about in nature, rather than through *a priori* and abstract reasoning about the *in and by itself* incomprehensible nature and concept of the most perfect being.[132]

Also, Berkeley seems to accept the divine simplicity thesis, the view that God's various attributes and powers are not really distinct from one another and his essence.[133] The traditional doctrine that God is absolutely simple, and without any sort of composition is often invoked for voluntarist purposes, as we see with Descartes and Arnauld, because it entails that the divine faculties, being identical with God himself, cannot be separated from one another, excluding the possibility of the will being determined by the intellect.[134] But, as I see it, Berkeley does not subscribe to the divine simplicity thesis in this sense, that is, for what I called the weak voluntarist thesis, but, in line with the emphasis on the

[132] It is tempting to think that Berkeley would have traced this difference in his and Malebranche's approach to God's nature back to a difference among the Christian denominations' stance on human capacities: "Whatever unguarded expressions may be found in this or that Protestant Divine, it is certainly the Doctrine of our Church that no particular church or congregation of Believers is infallible. We hold all mankind to be peccable and errable, even the Pope himself with all that belong to him. We are like men in a cave in this present life seeing by a dim light through such chinks as the divine goodness hath open'd to us. We dare not talk in the high unerring positive style of the Romanists. We confess that we see through a glass darkly: and rejoice that we see enough to determine our practice and excite our hopes." (*Letter to Sir John James*, 7 June 1741, Works 7.147) Through the dim light in us (cf. Works 7:145: "There is an indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit, there is an inward light"), no human person—not even the Pope—can fully understand the divine nature.

[133] For an early statement, see for instance *Notebooks* 177, quoted in 2.3, claiming that God's "essence is simple and uncounponded", but we find traces of this view in the *Principles* (117), calling God indivisible, and in the late *Siris*, as well (see for instance 352, 361). Malebranche also accepts that cannot attain to "the divine substance in its simplicity […]" (*Dialogues* 2.2 / JS 22), but what he has in mind is that though there is an infinite variety of ideas in the mind of God implied by the "infinity of different perfections", he is still a simple being, "without any real distinction" (*Dialogues* 2.6 / JS 24). As far as I know, he never questions that his intellect can be taken as a separate faculty from his will, and would have never agreed with Descartes, claiming that "[i]n God, willing, understanding and creating are all the same thing without one being prior to the other even conceptually" (AT 1:152-153/CSM 3:25-26).

[134] In fact, the doctrine might cut both ways, as Leibniz's criticism of Spinoza's radical denial of the distinction shows. As Leibniz argues in section 173 of the *Theodicy*, the failure to distinguish between God's intellect and will (even in modal terms) led Spinoza to remove all freedom and contingency from God's decisions. To be sure, for Leibniz, as an intellectualist, this freedom is compatible with hypothetical and metaphysical or, as he calls it, moral necessity.

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essential causal activity and importance of the will throughout his philosophy, he re-interprets it in a stronger voluntarist manner. On my interpretation, Berkeley as a strong voluntarist thinks that God's essence is constituted by his will's unlimited power, giving conceptual priority to what is active—i.e. the volitionally active aspect of his mind—over his passive understanding, without assuming any strict divide between these functions, that is, without making them separate and independent faculties. While the divine will is always working together with the intellect insofar as it has knowledge of its intentional contents, it is still more relevant to the concept or essence of God. This is revealed most perspicuously and conspicuously in the *Siris*'s Neoplatonic understanding of the Trinity I will discuss shortly.

In addition to the divine faculties, Berkeley considered also the human faculties of will and understanding to be mere abstractions if construed separately from one another and the essential activity of the spirit.

> I must no say the Will & Understanding are all one but that they are both Abstract Ideas i.e. none at all. they not being even ratione different from the Spirit, Qua faculties, or Active. (*Notebooks* 871.)

> Men have imagined they could frame abstract notions of the powers and acts of the mind, and consider them prescinded, as well from the mind or spirit it self, as from their respective objects and effects. (*Principles* 143, cf. 27, to be quoted soon)

Berkeley's early epistemological view according to which every perception involves or implies volition might also be relevant here. This later shows up in the form of the assimilation argument applied in the *First Dialogue*, according to which pain and pleasure, affecting and motivating our volitions, are inseparable from the sensation of heat, for instance.[135] For Berkeley, interdependence works in both directions: just as there is no knowledge or perception without volition, so too no volition is without some sort of cognition.

> It seems to me that Will & understanding Volitions & ideas cannot be severed, that either cannot be possibly without the other. (*Notebooks* 841, cf. 645-6, 756, 815, 833, 842.)

[135] See *Notebooks* 833: "[…] there can be no perception, no Idea without Will, being there are no Ideas so indifferent but one had rather Have them than annihilation, or annihilation than them." For an examination of the "intimate relationship" between perception and volition, see Migely 2007, 157. That pain and pleasure are related to volitions, moving our will in the direction of or away from the object of pain or pleasure, is evidenced in the *Notebooks* as well: "in proportion to the Pleasure & pain Ideas are attended with desire aversion & other actions" (*Notebooks* 692).

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Though they do not come apart as different faculties in a strong sense, and we cannot frame absolutely distinct ideas of these interrelated "principal powers", we can differentiate two basic functions of the simple, unified, and essentially active mind, which perceives or knows and wills all the time.

> 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*. […] Such is the nature of *spirit* or that which acts, that it cannot be of it self perceived, but only by the effects which it produceth. 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 hath ideas of two principal powers, marked by the names *will* and *understanding*, distinct from each other as well as from a third idea of substance or being in general, with a relative notion of its supporting or being the subject of the aforesaid powers, which is signified by the name *soul* or *spirit*. (*Principles* 27.)

The case is not different with the divine mind, either.

> The propertys of all things are in God i.e. there is in the Deity Understanding as well as Will. He is no Blind agent & in truth a blind Agent is a Contradiction. (*Notebooks* 812.)

It is well worth reminding ourselves that not only intellectualists but voluntarists also accepted the denial of blind agency doctrine mentioned in this passage, obviously not in the sense that the will necessarily follows the (last) judgement of the intellect, but that the knowledge provided by the understanding plays some role, for instance serves as specification of the will, or, in Winkler's words, "provides the will with its content" (Winkler 1989, 209-10).[136] The mind has to represent the object it wills, but it does not mean that the knowledge of the represented object somehow determines or even limits the possibilities the mind can actually will.[137] Indeed, despite how commentators, following Winkler, tend to understand the doctrine, on my interpretation, the denial of blind agency does not require that God has any *ideational* representation present in his

[136] For interpretations of the doctrine of blind agency, see Winkler 1989, 207-16 and Stoneham 2018b, 50-53. While most of the commentators agree that there is pretty obvious textual evidence for attributing the thesis to Berkeley, some like Muehlmann 1995 and Tweyman 1985 raised some concerns about it. In light of her interpretation of divine archetypes, Frankel (2012, 395) also concludes that Berkeley did not endorse the doctrine (see footnote 145).

[137] That the human or divine will is superior to the intellect, while they the former needs the latter as a condition but not a direct or absolute cause, was accepted by many thinkers, for instance in the medieval times by voluntarists like Henry of Ghent. He basically argues that "without the prior knowledge of the intellect […], the will cannot desire anything" but the will is not determined to choose what the intellect offers as the best. For more radical voluntarists from the period, like Walter of Brugge, the intellect only has an advisory role (see Porro 2014).

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mind, only that it has representations of what it wills in the basic sense of intentionality. Accordingly, as I will suggest later on (especially in 4.4.), the doctrine is perfectly satisfied by holding that the divine mind has intentional objects only insofar as it has volitions, not the other way around, by positing ideas in his intellect waiting for the will to pick and create them.

While, on its intellectualist interpretation, the denial of blind agency might be considered to imply the will's conceptual or metaphysical dependence on the intellectual content in some significant sense, it is textually well-founded that, even in the human case, Berkeley did not endorse the principle in this sense. In fact, the doctrine served as a motivation for his endorsing the divine simplicity thesis with its voluntarist re-interpretation I will examine later in this section. In the *Notebooks*, Berkeley criticizes Locke for saying the intellect's judgement precedes the volition.

> Locke to Limborch etc Talk of Judicium Intellectus preceding the Volition. I think Judicium includes Volition. (*Notebooks* 743.)

As he puts it in the *Alciphron* concerning the human soul:

> Nor will it avail to say, the will is governed by the judgment, or determined by the object, while, in every sudden common cause, I cannot discern nor abstract the decree of the judgment from the command of the will. (*Alciphron* VII.18.)

Without going into any details, what Berkeley seemed to hold early as well as late in his philosophical career is that the will is not necessarily determined by the intellect, since the judgement of the latter cannot be distinguished from the "command of the will". Indeed, Berkeley's views about moral motivation suggest that purely intellectual considerations do not influence our volitions directly, but require the help of some passions to motivate us to act.[138]

[138] In line with his early motivational hedonism (see *Notebooks* 541, 769, 773), in one of his Guardian essays, titled *The Sanctions of Religion* (*Works* 7.199), he asks rhetorically: "are not men actuated by their passions". In the same text, Berkeley accuses the free-thinkers who advocate moral sense theory of being ignorant of the power of passions, claiming ironically that "surely they must be destitute of passion themselves and unacquainted with the force it hath on the minds of others". Similarly, in the *Alciphron*, while arguing for a non-cognitivist theory of language, he claims that "raising proper emotions, producing certain dispositions or habits of mind, and directing our actions in pursuit of that happiness" is "the primary spring and motive, that sets rational agents at work" (*Alciphron* VII.14). Even "religion must not be thought to consist in a lazy inactive contemplation of virtue and morality, of God and his attributes, of the rewards or punishments he has annexed to the good or evil actions of men. Religion, I say, is no such speculative knowlege which rests merely in the understanding. She makes her residence in the heart, warms the affections and engages the will" (Sermon II: On Religious Zeal, *Works* 7.16). As he puts it expressively in

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Leaving the questions aside concerning the sort of freedom and self-determination this picture entails, on my reading of Berkeley's metaphysics of mind, the will associated with the active functions of the mind constitutes the essence of the "spirit or that which acts" (*Principles* 27), and thus has priority over the passivity of the understanding. This voluntarist interpretation of the mind is suggested throughout his works but is most clearly expressed in the *Notebooks*:

> The substance of Body we know, the substance of Spirit we do not know it not being knowable. it being purus actus (*Notebooks* 701)
>
> But the Grand Mistake is that we know not wt we mean by we or selves or mind etc. tis most sure & certain that our Ideas are distinct from the Mind i.e. the Will, the Spirit. (*Notebooks* 847, see also 828.)

While the essence of the mind is its volitional activity, the understanding, if taken as different from the will and/or the knowledge integrated in every volition, is basically a function of the soul which is responsible for receiving perceptions or ideas it has no control over, cannot change or stop receiving, and, in this sense, is essentially passive. As he says in the *Notebooks*:

> Whatsoever has any of our ideas in it must perceive, it being that very having, that *passive reception of ideas* that denominates the mind perceiving. that being the very essence of perception, or that wherein perception consists. (*Notebooks* 301, my emphasis)[139]

Accordingly, in the *First Dialogue*, Berkeley defines the mind's activity as the mental state "[…] when it produces, puts an end to, or changes any thing." He adds that the mind can be active only through its will, and concludes that the "mind therefore is to be accounted active in its perceptions, so far forth as volition is included in them" (196-197). According to his early terminology, thoughts, as opposed to perceptions, can be taken as active

the same work, "small are the advantages we derive from the dawning of the Sun of righteousness tho we shoud discover by it's light the beauty of Holiness, and the deformity and wretchedness of sin, if withall, the heat thereof be not sufficient to stir our passions, to work in us strong aversion from the one and ardent desires and thirst after the other, if it does not kindle in our hearts the flames of Divine love […]." For Berkeley, light and heat can, and should, go only together (see also Letter to Sir John James, *Works* 7.147). I discussed these texts in Bartha 2017.

[139] See also *Notebooks* 378, 643 and 706 (quoted in I.1). Cf. Locke's view on the passivity of perception in the *Essay* II/IX/1: "… in bare naked perception, the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives, it cannot avoid perceiving". At the beginning of the *Search*, Malebranche defines understanding similarly as "that passive faculty of the soul by means of which it receives all the modifications of which it is capable" (LO 3)

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operations of the mind only insofar as they are dependent on some volitions, or as Berkeley put it in the *Notebooks*, obey the acts of volition.[140]

> Thoughts do most properly signify or are mostly taken for the interior operations of the mind, wherein the mind is active, those yt obey not the acts of Volition, & in wch the mind is passive are more properly call'd sensations or perceptions, But yt is all a case. (*Notebooks* 286.)

It seems that only those thoughts constitute our minds that are under are voluntary control to some extent, for instance we pay attention to or make associations about deliberately. Those perceptions, on the other hand, which are not actively grasped as our mental operations are, though dependent upon, not parts of our minds' essential activity. The perceived objects or ideas are the very things "out there" after all—unless, as his Lockean understanding of the term 'thought' implies (see footnote 140), we pay some thought to the acts of perception *voluntarily*.[141] Perhaps referring to this sort of priority of the will over its intentional objects, he claimed that understanding, construed not as a passive reception of ideas but as a faculty or power of the mind, is not really different from its essence, the will.

> The Understanding taken for a faculty is not really distinct from ye Will. (*Notebooks* 614)

While he thinks that volitions have to be aimed at things, that is, a volitional agent cannot be blind, those intentional objects of the understanding have no priority or, indeed, (in-)existence at all, and make no sense if abstracted from the volitions. In the *Notebooks,* Berkeley adds that volitions or mental activities do not differ intrinsically, but only in terms of their effects or objects.

> We see no variety or difference betwixt the Volitions, only between their effects. Tis One Will one Act distinguish'd by the effects. This will, this Act is the Spirit, operative, Principle, Soul etc. (*Notebooks* 788.)
>
> Will, Understanding, desire, Hatred etc so far forth as they are acts or active differ not, all their difference consists in their objects, circumstances etc. (*Notebooks* 854.)

[140] Cf. what Locke says about thought in the *Essay* II/IX/1: "thinking, in the propriety of the English tongue, signifies that sort of operation in the mind about its ideas, wherein the mind is active; where it, with some degree of voluntary attention, considers anything".

[141] See also my remark in footnote 23 that, for Berkeley, it is the will which delineates the boundaries of the mind.

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On my reading, these passages reinforces that, properly speaking, the mind is nothing else but an undifferentiated and active will with mental activities specified by the intentional objects they are directed upon.[142] Though a particular volition or mental operation cannot be distinguished from another one without referring to its intentional object, Berkeley firmly believed, and explicitly stated in the *Notebooks*, that the pure, undifferentiated will or activity, even if hardly conceivable, constitutes the substance of both the human and the divine mind.

> Substance of a Spirit is that it acts, causes, wills, operates, or if you please (to avoid the quibble yt may be made on ye word it) to act, cause, will, operate [...]. (*Notebooks* 829.)

As such, the will is not only conceptually prior to understanding or thought construed in the broader sense of the intentional content every volition has, but it is also metaphysically prior to the passive reception of ideas, perception in the stricter sense. Berkeley clearly stated that activity is more substantial than passivity, for instance the active minds than the ideas perceived and willed by them (see *Principles* 2, 7, 26, 89, 142, etc.). While in the published works—unlike the just quoted passages from the *Notebooks*—Berkeley tends to include perception among the operations of the mind, the mind's essential activity is to be distinguished from its perceptual acts. These, unlike when the mind "acts, causes, wills, operates", are strictly speaking not activities, but, using Locke's terminology, passive powers: mental acts or ways of passively receiving ideas.

In light of these considerations, the first conclusion to note with regard to God is that, as I will argue in 4.2 in more detail, the absolutely active divine mind does not perceive ideas in the proper, Lockean, sense of the word.[143] Also, though its activities are specified or individuated by the knowledge of what he wills, it should be even more obvious that the purely active divine will, just like its human image, is not determined or governed

[142] See Muehlmann 1995, 161-2 for other readings of these challenging entries. Focusing on *Notebooks* 788, he suggests that they can be naturally read as denying that volitions are intrinsically intentional. Though, I cannot deny, the word 'effect' allows for different interpretations, it can equally be understood as an idea separate from the volition, or as the intentional object the volition is to bring about.

[143] Just like Berkeley, Locke made clear that God "is truly above all passive power". The whole passage is worth quoting, as it points to the distinction between active and passive power I just referred to: "Power thus considered is two-fold, viz., as able to make, or able to receive any change. The one may be called active, and the other passive power. Whether matter be not wholly destitute of active power, as its author, God, is truly above all passive power; and whether the intermediate state of created spirits be not that alone which is capable of both active and passive power, may be worth consideration." (*Essay* II/XXI/2.)

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necessarily by the (last) judgement of his understanding. To speak meaningfully we need to distinguish between his volitions, which we can do only by referring to the aims they are to realize or the perceptions they are to generate. Nonetheless, in God these intentional contents make sense only in relation to his pure will, and do not precede the volitions in any metaphysically relevant sense.[144] After all, even in *Notebooks* 812 Berkeley calls God a "no[t] blind *Agent*": his agency, i.e. his activity is what comes first, and is modified as having a certain content or aim. In fact, as I mentioned in II.1, emphasizing God's causal activity Berkeley claims in *Notebooks* 712 that God as a purely active spirit is strictly speaking the divine will alone.[145]

And as we have seen in II.2, this voluntarist view, though in less straightforward terms, appears in his later works too. It is not merely that his most important argument for the existence of God proves him to be "some other will or spirit" who produces our

[144] In a sense, as I discussed this earlier (see footnote 36), the volitions can be said to conceptually depend on the intentional objects they are directed upon, but it does not entail that there is something metaphysically pre-given (such as ideas) the intellect provides to the volitions. On the other hand, the talk of intentional objects makes sense only because there is the will, if you like, metaphysically pre-given to them. If God, as a pure will, did not form volitions, there would be no intentional objects at all. So, when I speak about the conceptual priority of the will, I do not deny that, in one sense, the *particular* volitions are dependent on, i.e. cannot be without, the cognitions embedded in them. Rather, this is to deny that the will is determined or necessitated by the intellect (and its contents), and there is any metaphysically real thought pre-given to God's will. Also, as I claimed earlier, the cognitive states depend on the volitions, and the pure will has priority over the intellect in the sense that it constitutes God's essential or defining aspect. So, the conceptual priority of the will then means that it is more relevant with regard to the essence—to its proper concept(ualization)—or prior in terms of metaphysics—providing it with the purely active substantiality it has—but it does not exclude the possibility that there might be some sort of (inter)dependence with regard to the intentional objects it has.

[145] As I understand her view, Frankel has something similar in mind when claiming that "[…] God's perception of ideas cannot truly be separated from God's causation of those idea […]" (Frankel 2012, 389). But she takes this view as inconsistent with the denial of blind agency. On her interpretation of this doctrine, God's knowledge of what he wants would be temporally or conceptually prior to his will. In her words, the doctrine excludes that "God can will some effect (some idea) without already having an understanding of that effect (idea), since this relies on a distinction between Divine will and Divine understanding (perception)" (Frankel 2012, 395). On my reading, however, this is an unnecessarily strong interpretation, and the denial of blind agency is compatible with the view that the divine cognitions, if not ideas strictly speaking, are important, though conceptually and metaphysically dependent, specifying factors of God's volitional activity. So, while I attribute what I called the strong version of voluntarism to Berkeley, Frankel seems to adopt the extremely strong interpretation, denying the relevance, or indeed the existence of the divine intellect and the cognitive side of the divine actions altogether. To be fair, she never refers to anything like these categories, or even to voluntarism. So, while her understanding of the denial of blind agency doctrine is clearly incompatible with my strong voluntarist reading, maybe she simply wants to attribute the divine simplicity thesis to Berkeley, endorsing only the weak version of voluntarism. Cf. Frankel 2016, 59. But, as far as I can see, this would hardly justify her reductive interpretation of the "divine perception as tantamount to divine causation". I will return to these issues in 4.4.

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perceptions (*Principles* 29), but also that God's volitional activity is constantly underlined—for instance in the *Three Dialogues* God is described as "an impassive, indivisible, purely active being" (213-4). And emphasizing the omnipotence of this spirit, he claims not only that God's "will is absolute and independent" (*Three Dialogues* 242), but also that God "can *indifferently* produce every thing by a mere fiat or act of his will" (*Principles* 152, my emphasis). The wording ('indifferently') quite clearly suggests that God's will is arbitrary in the sense of not being determined by, and dependent upon, even internal intellectual factors like eternal truths of his reason (other than the merely logical constraints).[146] As I will point out later, Berkeley emphasized God's omnipotence in the *Siris* as well, indeed in a rather Lockean manner appeals to his good pleasure on which certain regularities in nature essentially depend while openly acknowledging that some things are just occult and specific—no other explanation of them can be given than the very particular and arbitrary decision of God (see for instance *Siris* 239, quoted later in 3.5). It seems, therefore, that even his published works reinforce that, for Berkeley, in sharp contrast to Malebranche, God's essential nature is his pure activity associated with his undifferentiated, indifferent, absolute and independent will. Though he actively knows and understands all things he creates, insofar as his volitions contain intentional objects as the effects or objects it aims to bring about, his actions are brought about by his will absolutely freely.

In addition to emphasizing God's unlimited power and good pleasure with regard to his actions in nature, Berkeley says more about the divine nature itself in the *Siris*. This work is especially crucial to investigate not only because it is where Berkeley is discussing the theological issues in most detail, but also because one might, quite understandably, think that, due to its Neoplatonic tendencies, the *Siris* resists a voluntarist interpretation of God. While it might be not as clear *prima facie* as it is in the earlier works (especially the *Notebooks*), Berkeley defends a voluntarist divine psychology in the *Siris* too, basically identifying God with his intellectually undetermined power to act. Indeed, through a

[146] See LO 615, for the same wording in Malebranche's criticism of Descartes, who in his voluntarist mood, claims that "it is self-contradictory to suppose that the will of God was not indifferent from eternity with respect to everything which has happened or will ever happen" (AT 7:432/CSM 2:291). Spinoza characterizes the voluntarist position in similar terms, see *Ethics* Ip33s2, quoted in footnote 37.

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Neoplatonic Trinitarian framework, he makes it as clear as ever that God's volitional side enjoys conceptual or metaphysical priority over his intellectual aspect.

In the *Siris*, Berkeley does not give up his early view that, though the volitional activity constitutes the essence of the divine mind (see most clearly in *Notebooks* 712), its agency is not blind, that is, it always has knowledge or representation of the intentional object it is directed on (see *Notebooks* 812).

> Varro, Tully, and St. Augustine, understand the soul to be *vis*, the power or force that acts, moves, enlivens. Now although, in our conception, *vis*, or spirit, might be distinguished from mind, it would not thence follow that it acts blindly or without mind, or that it is not closely connected with intellect. (*Siris* 322)
>
> Plotinus indeed saith, that *which acts naturally is not intellection, but a certain power of moving matter, which doth not know but only do*. And it must be owned that, as faculties are multiplied by philosophers according to their operations, the will may be distinguished from the intellect. But *it will not therefore follow that the Will which operates in the course of nature is not conducted and applied by intellect*, although it be granted that neither will understands, nor intellect wills. (*Siris* 254, emphasis added)

As I understand it, being "conducted and applied by intellect" does not entail that the will or the power of the soul that acts is determined in any significant sense by the intellect, or that it is only a secondary function of the divine mind. What Berkeley wants to capture by this phrase is nothing else but what he says in *Siris* 322 and what he accepted in his earlier writings, namely that the divine mind, just as its human copy, is an intelligent will, which is "closely connected with" and guided by the intellect insofar as its activity is specified, but not determined necessarily, by the intentional objects it is directed on. In other words, utilizing the categories I put forward in the Introduction, Berkeley just wants to make clear that his voluntarism is not extremely strong. Expressing with regard to the Trinitarian account of God, Berkeley claims that there is no action and power (or authority) without knowledge.[147]

[147] Following Augustine, Malebranche also used a Trinitarian framework to describe the divine mind, but he used it basically to maintain both the intellectual determination of God's will (which is, I think quite misleadingly, often associated with the third principle, divine love) and his freedom, construed as independence of anything else but himself and his eternal reason or wisdom (i.e. the second person of the Trinity). For a comparison of Malebranche's and Edward's Trinitarian account of God, see Reid 2002. More to the point I am dealing with here, Oakes in his dissertation (2009, especially 177) argues that Berkeley follows Malebranche in maintaining that the divine will, which has a pretty limited role anyway, comes only as the third person. Since there is no obvious passage to cite from the *Siris*, he refers to three passages from the *Three Dialogues* (215, 219 and 240), where we find no reference to the Trinity at all. On my reading, as I will try to substantiate it textually, Berkeley associates the divine will with the first person

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> Certain it is that the notion of a Trinity is to be found in the writings of many old heathen philosophers—that is to say, a notion of three divine Hypostases. *Authority, Light, and Life* did, to the eye of reason, plainly appear to support, pervade, and animate the mundane system or macrocosm. The same appeared in the microcosm, preserving soul and body, enlightening the mind, and moving the affections. And these were conceived to be necessary universal principles, co existing and co operating in such sort as never to exist asunder, but on the contrary to *constitute one Sovereign of all things. And, indeed, how could power or authority avail or subsist without knowledge? Or either without life and action?* (*Siris* 361, emphasis added)

These functions of God always and, perhaps, necessarily coexist and cooperate in such an intimate way that they "constitute one Sovereign". Despite the undeniable fact, mentioned in *Siris* 254, that philosophers (sometimes including Berkeley himself) tend to multiply the mental faculties, in line with his earlier writings, Berkeley seems to endorse a form of the divine simplicity thesis along the lines suggested by this passage. But Berkeley's interpretation of this doctrine is voluntarist in a more positive sense than what weak voluntarism or the traditional understanding of simplicity implies. While restricting the strict sense of simplicity to the first principle of the Trinity (see *Siris* 342),[148] and identifying a looser sense of simplicity with the close and necessary co-operation of the persons, he underlines the conceptual priority of the will. In order to show this, the following crucial, though pretty long, passage is worth quoting in full.

> *The simplicity of τὸ ἕν* (the Father in the Pythagoric and Platonic Trinity) is conceived such as *to exclude intellect or mind, to which it is supposed prior*; and that hath created a suspicion of atheism in this opinion: for, saith the learned Doctor Cudworth, shall we say that the first Hypostasis or Person is *ανοῦς* and *αλόγος* senseless and irrational, and altogether devoid of mind and understanding? Or would not this be to introduce a kind of mysterious atheism? To which it may be answered that whoever acknowledgeth the universe to be made and governed by an eternal mind cannot be justly deemed an atheist (Sects. 154, 276, 279, 287). And this was the tenet of those ancient philosophers. In the Platonic doctrine, the generation of the *nous* or *logos* was not contingent but necessary, not temporary but from everlasting. *There never was a time supposed wherein to hen subsisted without intellect; the priority having been understood only as a priority of order or conception, but not a priority of age*. Therefore, the maintaining a distinction of

having the authority or power to act just as much as, if not more than, with the third principle, which is the intellectually guided actualization of this power, i.e. his actions in the created world. Briefly discussing *Siris* 360-2, Roberts (2018, 157-8) reads these passages in light of Cudworth's axiarchic concept of Trinity, placing God's omnipotent power and omniscience in the third and second place respectively, while regarding goodness as the first person. Though once Berkeley indeed mentions that the first principle is "otherwise expressed" as goodness, he makes much clearer elsewhere that the first principle is God's power to act, which is beyond, but contains eminently, goodness. This account also ignores the fact that in *Siris* 352 Berkeley puts forward his view as a criticism of Cudworth.

[148] *Siris* 342: "The one, or *tò én*, being immutable and indivisible, always the same and entire, was therefore thought to exist truly and originally […]"

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> priority between *to hen* and *nous* doth not infer that the one ever existed without the other. It follows, therefore, that the *Father or to hen may, in a certain sense, be said to be anous without atheism, or without destroying the notion of a Deity*; any more than it would destroy the notion of a human soul, if we should conceive a distinction between self and intellect, or intellect and life. To which we may farther add, that it is a doctrine of Platonics, and agrees with their master's tenets, to say that *τὸ ἕν* or the first Hypostasis contains all excellence and perfection, whereof it is the original source, and is eminenter, as the Schools speak, intellect and life, as well as goodness; while the second Hypostasis is essentially intellect, and, by participation, goodness and life; and the third, life essentially, and, by participation, goodness and intellect. (*Siris* 352, emphasis added)

It is important to remind us that, even according to the earlier formulations of the denial of blind agency thesis, it is reasonable to regard the agency or the will as the subject which possesses or rather encompasses the knowledge. There is an order of priority with regard to the human mind's functions, as Berkeley suggests in this passage as well, claiming that the essence of the soul—referred to as the self, identified in an earlier passage with *vis* or active force or power—is not the intellect, even though, as long as it exists, it is never without it. The mind is a thinking being (cf. *Principles* 98.), but thinking does not constitute, rather derivative to, its essence, the volitional agency or activity that describes and distinguishes the mind from the other kind of, in fact less substantial, beings, namely the physical objects constituted by passive perceptions. What he calls self here, referring to the active power of the mind, i.e. the will, has a conceptual or metaphysical priority over its other aspects or functions: if it exists, it always thinks, but the pronoun "it" singles out the purely active agency as the subject of those secondary and tertiary predicates.

Similarly, God's authority or power to act is said to be conceptually prior to intellection in the sense that it has more to do with his essence. In this striking passage, Berkeley defends the Neoplatonic model of God against the criticism of intellectualists like Cudworth. In contrast to the Cambridge Platonists, Berkeley accepts as proper theism the radically voluntarist view that God is "devoid of […] understanding" as long as it "acknowledgeth the universe to be made and governed by an eternal mind". Indeed, Berkeley suggests in the *Siris* that the Neoplatonic hierarchical model, understood correctly, provides the best characterization of God's nature. What is particularly interesting about this divine psychology is that it combines the denial of blind agency, and along those lines a version of the thesis of divine simplicity, with the conceptual

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priority of the activity conventionally attributed to the divine will. Berkeley basically claims that the absolutely simple first principle of the divinity is not *intrinsically* intellectual, and even though, in temporal terms, they do not come apart in God's simple nature, the active side of the divinity that we ordinarily refer to as 'will'—or, as he puts it in the *Siris*, that side of the divinity that has the power to act—enjoys "a priority of order or conception" over what we call his 'intellect'. And even if, as the denial of blind agency suggests, Berkeley wanted to establish a deeper sort of interdependence relation between the divine will and the intellect than a merely temporal one, he could still maintain the priority of the former.[149] For instance, though the relation between a father and a son is interdependent in some sense—one cannot be a father without a son and *vice versa*—it is not a symmetrical relation, as the father can be said to be prior, for instance causally or existentially, to the son. Indeed, as Berkeley makes clear in *Siris* 361-2, the Father of the Trinity, rather than the son, who being the first principle of the deity has the authority to act.[150] The Father, also called the One in *Siris* 352, is essentially the maker and governor of the world, who, as he puts it in *Siris* 254, is what "acts naturally", "a certain power of moving matter" or the divine "Will which operates in the course of nature". This active,

[149] It is noteworthy that even in the case of the finite minds, though there is an interdependence between the mind as an active substance and the ideas it perceives, while both equally exist, the former is more substantial than the latter. Moreover, in the divine case, even the ontological status of the intentional objects is a bit shady, as opposed to the absolute reality of the divine will.

[150] Malebranche also mentions that power, properly speaking, belongs to the Father (see *Treatise on Ethics* 163), but, as I suggested in footnote 147, he does not think that it entails its priority in any relevant sense, or anything more than that God is the only causally efficacious being, who, though logically speaking has the power to do anything possible, can actualize it only by willing what is determined by his intellect (the second person). In fact, instead of speaking about anything like God's free will (deciding for instance to create or not to create the world), Malebranche tends to speak about the love (the love he has for a creation reflecting his glory) as the third person of the Trinity through which God necessarily acts, providing the irresistible impulse for his will. "For since God cannot act without knowledge and in spite of Himself, He made the world according to wisdom and through the impulse of His love—He made all things through His Son and in the Holy Spirit as Scripture teaches" (*Elucidation* X, 620, see also *Treatise on Ethics* 65). If my reading of his theology is correct, Berkeley, on the other hand, thinks that, even though his actions are never blind, God actually has the power to act or will in a way that is undetermined by his intellect. So, when Berkeley talks about the divine will he has something in mind very different to what Malebranche means by the impulse of love God has for himself and the creation which reflects his rationality the most. In fact, in contrast to Oakes 2009, it seems to me that Berkeley and Malebranche appeal to the Trinitarian account of God in very different senses and for different purposes. While, for Berkeley, it illustrates that the divine power of volition is the first principle and essence of God, for Malebranche, it shows that God is essentially an interplay between his three persons. Interestingly, much like Malebranche, Spinoza also claimed that while God's essence lies in his power to act (*Ethics* Ip34), construed as prior both to his intellect and will, he ascribed no libertarian freedom to God at all (see Ip32c1).

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volitional aspect of the divinity is said to be his essence, which contains in a higher, potential form, and hence conceptually prior to, his intellect as well as his goodness, even if it always and necessarily knowledgeable and good. As he reinforces in *Siris* 362, this "authority to establish", the active principle and the "source of all perfections", precedes the divine intellect (also called reason, order, etc.) "in respect of origin and order", though not of time.[151]

> In the administration of all things, there is *authority to establish*, law to direct, and justice to execute. There is first the *source of all perfection*, or *Fons Deitatis*; secondly, the supreme reason, order, or *λόγος* and lastly, the spirit, which quickens and inspires. We are sprung from the *Father*, irradiated or enlightened by the Son, and moved by the Spirit. Certainly, that there is Father, Son, and Spirit; that these bear analogy to the *sun*, light, and heat; and are otherwise expressed by the terms *Principle*, Mind, and Soul, by *One* or *τὸ* ἕν, Intellect, and Life, by *Good*, Word, and Love; and that generation was not attributed to the second Hypostasis, the *νοῦς* or *λόγος* in respect of time (Sect. 352), but only in respect of origin and order, as an eternal necessary emanation; these are the express tenets of Platonists, Pythagoreans, Egyptians, and Chaldeans. (*Siris* 362, emphasis added)

One way to spell out this priority is to say that God has knowledge only insofar as he has intentions or volitions to create the represented thing. As one might put it, God has no abstract, purely intellectual knowledge and knows for the sake of creating and not merely for the sake of knowing. For instance, God does not actually entertain mere possibilities in his intellect, and has representations only of what he wills to, and does, bring about. As we have seen in the *Notebooks*, God is an undifferentiated will, who, based on this interpretation, knows something only insofar as he has a volition aimed at it—and not the other way around: he can will only what he *already* knows and his intellect offers as a possibility. A less radical way to understand the priority might simply be that the will constitutes the defining aspect of God, which, though necessarily directed on *some* intentional object, is not determined by any of the representations the intellect provides it with. The texts do not help much in determining the exact details (though I will speculate a bit more on related issues in 4.4.), but the point I wanted to emphasize here is merely that, in the *Siris*, through re-interpreting the doctrine of divine simplicity Berkeley subscribes to a Neoplatonic model of the divinity in a characteristically

[151] See also *Siris* 320: "The force that produces, the intellect that orders, the goodness that perfects all things, is the supreme Being."

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voluntarist manner, instead of endorsing some proto-intellectualistic Platonic models, for instance the concept of a demiurgical God, who merely actualizes or, indeed, copies the eternal ideas his intellect entertains.

As I tried to show in this section (and basically in the entire chapter), Berkeley maintains, throughout his philosophical career, that even though they do not come apart temporally and not even as separate and competing faculties in God's simple activity, the intellect is in some important—conceptual or metaphysical—sense secondary to the more essential, fundamental and philosophically more revealing characteristic of the divine soul, which we can regard as his purely active will's unlimited and intellectually undetermined power to act.

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BERKELEY'S VOLUNTARIST CONCEPTION OF NATURE

While Berkeley's negative judgement on the contemporary scientific developments is well-known, what his positive conception of nature consists in is less discussed and understood. I will try to contribute to our understanding of this crucial question primarily by showing that he was a voluntarist about the physical world, or, to put it more precisely, his views on the physical world, the laws of nature and how science should be conducted were informed and motivated by voluntarist considerations concerning God and his relationship to the created world. In order to appreciate the oft-overlooked uniqueness of his position, it will be essential to differentiate Berkeley's voluntarist view of nature from Malebranche's intellectualistic occasionalism along the way.

In this chapter, I will start (in 3.1.) by shortly delineating the most important reasons why Berkeley saw the science of his age problematic. His strongest conviction which, he claims, the mechanistic theories did not capture is that science—trying to discover the regular correspondences between our sensory ideas—reveals and *can* reveal only the ways in which God immediately acts in nature. I will further analyze this view (in 3.2.), discussing the doctrine of continuous creation. While the endorsement of this doctrine *in itself* might not prove that nature has no causal power independent of God's volitions, in the Berkeleyan framework, it has the noteworthy implication of pointing specifically to the importance of the divine will, as opposed to his intellectual-perceptual functions, with regard to the continuous existence of the physical world.

Although these considerations might be compatible with a merely occasionalist interpretation of Berkeley's philosophy of nature, I will show in the subsequent sections that he went further than is necessitated by the denial of matter and, hence, of physical causation. I will look (in 3.3.) more closely at Berkeley's doctrine that nature is literally a divine language, implying, again, that it is not a self-standing realm of necessary causal relations, but the manifestation of God's immediate communication with us. It can serve, however, also as a starting point for appreciating the implications of Berkeley's voluntarism for his natural philosophy. The most important lesson to take home from the analogy between language and the physical world is that all the relations in nature are

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arbitrary and contingent on the divine will, anticipating Berkeley's view that the patterns of our perceptions are not to be considered necessary laws of nature in any sense.

Turning to this issue more directly (in 3.4.), we will see that Berkeley's understanding of the laws of nature as arbitrarily established rules of God's activity in nature, along with his emphatic denial of the relevance of eternal truths to the created world, clearly commit him to a full-fledged voluntarist conception of nature as well as the complementing empiricist, broadly inductivist, method of investigating it. On my interpretation, the laws of nature are contingent not merely because God, by performing miracles, can suspend them and that they do not depend on the essences of physical things—this is what I will call the denial of their intrinsic necessity. Furthermore, it is not merely that it could have been the case that God did not decide to create their referents, i.e. the universe, at all. Merely pointing to the hypothetical nature of the laws is compatible with denying that what is most relevant to Berkeley's position, namely that God decides absolutely freely about their content as well, that is, he is undetermined by his intellectual nature both with regard to creating the world and the rules of his subsequent activity. The lack of their extrinsic necessity implies that the laws of nature might change in the future, but for Berkeley even the following counterfactual statement is true: it is metaphysically possible that we have a set of laws describing the ordinary course of nature different from those God has actually established. As a consequence, Berkeley puts much weight on God's *a priori* inscrutable will in explaining the created world, and even in the *Siris*, makes it clear that we have no other clue to understand the regular but not universally exceptionless course of nature and its metaphysically contingent laws but to observe, form inductive generalizations and even *a posteriori* hypotheses about God's highly complex and specific activities in the world.

With the aim of rendering Berkeley's voluntarism more conspicuous, I will continue emphasizing (in 3.5.) that his views on order, despite the undeniable similarities, differ fundamentally from that of Malebranche. While both of them consider generality essential to the created world and our understanding of it, for Malebranche, God, by his very nature, cannot will disorder, and has to act in the simplest and most general way, for Berkeley, by contrast, the observable regularity, but not exceptionless universality, in nature is necessitated only by human needs and purposes, freely respected by God's

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benevolent activity. I will also point to the highly significant fact that, in contrast to Collier, who turns Malebranche's own simplicity principle into an argument for the extrinsic impossibility of the material world, Berkeley does not want to take this tempting and easy intellectualistic route to immaterialism.

III.1. BERKELEY'S CRITICISM OF MODERN SCIENCE AND PHYSICAL CAUSATION

As is well known, although Berkeley admired Newton and his achievements,[152] he regarded the contemporary scientific developments as one of the main causes of the spread of scepticism, materialism and atheism. He attacked the new mechanistic worldview mostly for the following two reasons.[153]

The first worry is epistemological and based on Berkeley's conviction that, in its predominant form, modern science describes the world as having no, or only very limited, resemblance to what we normally—pre-theoretically—tend to think is perceived. For instance, claiming that the real physical objects (consisting of only primary qualities) are colourless, soundless, etc. causes of our perceptions is, for Berkeley, an unabashedly skeptical claim, which questions the reliability of sense perception and our sensory faculties.[154] Moreover, the supposed real essences of things—posited by Locke, for

[152] Cf. *Principles* 110, where Berkeley regards Newtonian physics (in particular, "a certain celebrated treatise of *mechanics*") as "the best key for […] natural science". In a similar vein, in the *Siris* he claims that "[…] Nature seems better known and explained by attractions and repulsions than by those other mechanical principles of size, figure, and the like; that is, by Sir Isaac Newton, than Descartes. And natural philosophers excel, as they are more or less acquainted with the laws and methods observed by the Author of nature" (*Siris* 243), and that "Sir Isaac Newton, by his singular penetration, profound knowledge in geometry and mechanics, and great exactness in experiments, hath cast a new light on natural science" (*Siris* 245, see also *Siris* 231). In a more personal note, he writes in the early *Notebooks* that "I see no wit in any of them [i.e. the mathematicians] but Newton, The rest are meer triflers, meer Nihilarians" (*Notebooks* 372). Nonetheless, Berkeley seems to think that though the Newtonian science is true, we can to do better in terms of philosophical justification: "We can prove Newton's propositions more accurately more easily & upon truer principles than himself." (*Notebooks* 383), or "Newton begs his Principle, I Demonstrate mine" (*Notebooks* 407). See also *Notebooks* 30. I will later (in footnote 231) discuss why Berkeley preferred Newtonian attractionism to Cartesian strict mechanism.

[153] Apart from the theoretical problems, Berkeley saw it as morally dangerous that in the deterministic modern scientific worldview God as well as human freedom seem to have little, if any, role. Cf. *Alciphron* VII.18 and *Principles* 92-96. Luckily, as Berkeley believed, fatalism is a misconception based on the assumption of matter.

[154] Besides proving his immaterialism, it is another reason why it is so important for him to deny the distinction between primary and secondary qualities or ideas. See *Principles* 9–15, *Three dialogues* 187–9.

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instance, as constituted by corpuscles—are often said to be perceptually inaccessible to us. It suggests either the "obscurity of things, or the natural weakness and imperfection of our understandings" (*Principles* 2.), both of which are unacceptable for *common sense* and its self-styled defender, Berkeley.[155] His motivation is partly theological, and based on the consideration that providence implanting in us a strong desire for knowledge about the physical world is incompatible with the claim that it is hopelessly beyond the reach of our capacities (see *Principles* 3).

The second—metaphysical—problem is that modern scientific views are inclined to attribute causal efficacy to mind-independent entities (existing in *absolute* space and time). The causal relations are supposed to hold both between the physical things themselves as well as between the physical things and the minds perceiving, and being affected by, them.[156] Berkeley was influenced by Cartesian and occasionalist (but also Newtonian and Lockean) considerations about the passivity of matter and emphatically claimed that no physical thing has causal power whatsoever.[157] Anticipating Hume, Berkeley makes it clear that we only perceive the "continual succession of ideas" (*Principles* 26), but never the causal connections themselves either between physical objects or the objects and the mind (see *Theory of Vision Vindicated* 30, 39, both to be quoted and discussed later). He argues that being merely collections of transparent ideas or passive perceptions in or dependent upon our minds, physical things, we can be sure, are wholly passive.[158]

> All our ideas, sensations, 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 another*. 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

Interestingly, Berkeley claims that Newton allows matter to have colour (see *Notebooks* 388, 453, 505?, 562?).

[155] For a nice summary of his view, see *Principles* 101.

[156] Berkeley sometimes speaks as if ideas have some effect on minds—generating sensations of pain and pleasure or emotions, for instance—but, in reality, it is God, a spiritual agent, who acts by producing both our ideas and the accompanying sensations and emotions. See *Notebooks* 692 and 833.

[157] Cf. *De Motu* 33, where opposing the vitalist conception of matter Berkeley makes his debt to the Cartesians (and/or Newton) clear.

[158] Cf. *Principles* 19, 50 or *Three Dialogues* 216.

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> reflexion, 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 any thing, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of any thing*: neither can it be the resemblance or pattern of any active being, as is evident from *Sect*. 8. 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*." (*Principles* 25, my emphasis)

On Berkeley's account, nature is simply the immediate effect of God's will, i.e. the sensations and perceptions he creates in our minds in an orderly manner. Any sense of nature that is distinct from being the essentially passive effect of God's activity is without any meaning and labelled by Berkeley, in a passage clearly betraying his familiarity with Malebranche's works, as a "vain chimera".

> 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 any thing at all. 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. (*Principles* 150.)

We find a similar view in the *Siris* as well. Interestingly, in this work he does not argue for immaterialism, indeed, puzzling commentators, expresses his criticism of the mechanical philosophy speaking in terms of bodies and corpuscles:[159]

> […] There is not any proof that an extended corporeal or mechanical cause doth really and properly act, even motion itself being in truth a passion. […] We are not therefore seriously to suppose, with certain mechanic philosophers, that the minute particles of bodies have real forces or powers, by which they act on each other, to produce the various phenomena in nature. […] Natural phenomena are only natural appearances. They are, therefore, such as we see and perceive them. Their real and objective natures are, therefore, the same—passive without anything active, fluent and changing without anything permanent in them. (*Siris* 155, 235, 292.)

And even when he does not invoke idealistic principles—for instance that, as he claims it in *Siris* 251 as well, "all phenomena are, to speak truly, appearances in the soul or mind"—Berkeley maintains that the only real causes in nature are the spiritual agents, most notably God, on the grounds that neither experience, nor reasoning can reveal any

[159] This is not absolutely unique in Berkeley's oeuvre, though, for neither the *New Theory of Vision* nor the *Alciphron* assumes immaterialism. And in the *De Motu* Berkeley adopts a seemingly Cartesian or dualist way of speaking about the physical world and the mind.

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material efficient cause (see *Siris* 154.) As he puts it in the *Principles*, even if we were to allow for the existence of matter and the causal interaction of bodies, there would be an unbridgeable *explanatory gap*, since modern materialistic science cannot provide an explanation of our experiences of the physical world simply because we do not understand, indeed, cannot imagine how matter affects the mind.[160]

> […] there is not any one *phenomenon* explained on that supposition [of matter], which may not as well be explained without it, as might easily be made appear by an induction of particulars. To explain the *phenomena*, is all one as to shew, why upon such and such occasions we are affected with such and such ideas. But *how matter should operate on a spirit, or produce any idea in it, is what no philosopher will pretend to explain. It is therefore evident, there can be no use of matter in natural philosophy*. Besides, they who attempt to account for things, do it not by corporeal substance, but by figure, motion, and other qualities, which are in truth no more than mere ideas, and therefore cannot be the cause of any thing, as hath been already shewn. See *Sect*. 25. (*Principles* 50, emphasis added, cf. *Principles* 19.)

Consequently, modern science tells us nothing about the metaphysical question concerning the real cause of natural events.

> The laws of attraction and repulsion are to be regarded as laws of motion; and these only as rules or methods observed in the productions of natural effects, the efficient and final causes whereof are not of mechanical consideration. Certainly, if the explaining a phenomenon be to assign its proper efficient and final cause, it should seem the mechanical philosophers never explained anything. […] The mechanical philosopher, as hath been already observed, inquires properly concerning the rules and modes of operation alone, and not concerning the cause; forasmuch as nothing mechanical is or really can be a cause. […] These, and numberless other effects, seem inexplicable on mechanical principles, or otherwise than by recourse to a mind or spiritual agent (Sects. 154, 220). […] We cannot make even one single step in accounting for the phenomena [metaphysically speaking] without admitting the immediate presence and immediate action of an incorporeal Agent, who connects, moves, and disposes all things according to such rules, and for such purposes, as seem good to Him. (*Siris* 231, 249, 237.)

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[160] This difficulty is admitted by Locke himself, confessing that he "Body as far as we can conceive being able only to strike and affect body; and Motion, according to the utmost reach of our *Ideas*, being able to produce nothing but Motion, so that when we allow it to produce pleasure or pain, or the *Idea* of a Colour, or Sound, we are fain to quit our Reason, go beyond our *Ideas*, and attribute it wholly to the good Pleasure of our Maker. For since we must allow he has annexed Effects to Motion, which we can no way conceive Motion able to produce, what reason have we to conclude, that he could not order them as well to be produced in a Subject we cannot conceive capable of them, as well as in a Subject we cannot conceive the motion of Matter can any way operate upon?" (*Essay* IV.iii.6, cf. IV.iii.13, IV.ii.11). This passage nicely illustrates that, as I already suggested, Locke was a voluntarist too, at least in the epistemic sense, about the connection between our simple ideas of sensation and the qualities in the bodies and, perhaps more generally, about the laws of nature, see also *Essay* II.xxxii.14. Also, in the *Examination*, he acknowledges that we cannot know how God creates our ideas, which he "[…] can resolve only into the good pleasure of God, whose ways are past finding out." (*Examination* 10.) Cf. Stuart 2013, 280-1.

This vital methodological separation of physics or natural philosophy from metaphysics is just as conspicuous in the *De Motu* as it is in the *Siris*. The metaphysical foundation, as Berkeley puts it in *De Motu* 41, "may serve to define the limits of physics, and in that way to remove imported difficulties and problems", but has nothing to do with the substantive questions of science. The mechanical explanations used by experimental science or natural philosophy concern not the metaphysical or efficient causes, nor the ontological status of the phenomena science seeks to explain, but, in Berkeley's view, only the methods and rules of the divine operation.[161]

Nonetheless, these passages sheds some light on Berkeley's conviction that we can have a consistent physical theory explaining the natural phenomena without appealing to mind-independent substances—which are senseless to posit in an intelligible theory anyway, as they cannot cause anything or, at least, it cannot be comprehended how they could do so. In a letter to Samuel Johnson, Berkeley clearly expresses this conviction:[162]

> The true use and end of natural philosophy is to explain the phenomena of nature, which is done by discovering the laws of nature, and reducing particular appearances to them. This is Sir Isaac Newton's method; and such method or design is not in the least inconsistent with the principles I lay down. This mechanical philosophy doth not assign or suppose any one natural efficient cause in the strict and proper sense; nor is it, as to its use, concerned about *matter*; nor is matter connected therewith; nor doth it infer the being of matter. It must be owned, indeed, that the mechanical philosophers do suppose (though unnecessarily) the being of matter. […] (Berkeley to Johnson, Letter II, Nov. 25, 1729, *Works* 2.279.)

While pressing that no metaphysical explanation can be given of the physical phenomena by pointing to their putative mechanical causes, the mechanical principles can be used for explaining the natural events by reducing them to general rules (see also *Siris* 251). Berkeley made it clear at many places that proper scientific explanation consists in nothing else but reducing the particular phenomena caused by God to the general rules

[161] Cf. *De Motu* 35: "The imperfect understanding of this situation has caused some to make the mistake of rejecting the mathematical principles of physics on the ground that they do not assign the efficient causes of things. It is not, however, in fact the business of physics or mechanics to establish efficient causes, but only the rules of impulsions or attractions, and, in a word, the laws of motions, and from the established laws to assign the solution, not the efficient cause, of particular phenomena."

[162] He already expressed his commitment to experimental philosophy in his early *Notebooks*: "Mem. much to Recommend & approve of Experimental Philosophy" (*Notebooks* 498).

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his actions are in line with.[163] As he argues most clearly in the *Siris*, the putative causes mentioned in the scientific theories are only secondary to the real cause being either instruments through which or the aims for which the spiritual agents act. Also, the component parts can be regarded as causes only in a derivative and inaccurate sense.

> The principles whereof a thing is compounded, the instrument used in its production, and the end for which it was intended, are all in vulgar use termed causes, though none of them be, strictly speaking, agent or efficient. (*Siris* 155.)
>
> Though it be supposed the chief business of a natural philosopher to trace out causes from the effects, yet this is to be understood not of agents, but of principles, that is, of component parts, in one sense, or of laws or rules, in the other. (*Siris* 247.)

What the scientist does better than most of us is that she makes more general, systematic and comprehensive claims about the regularities and patterns observed in nature—resulting in greater explanatory and predictive power.

> If therefore we consider the difference there is betwixt natural philosophers and other men, with regard to their knowledge of the phenomena, we shall find it consists, not in an exacter knowledge of the efficient cause that produces them, for that can be no other than the *will of a spirit*, but only in a greater largeness of comprehension, whereby analogies, harmonies, and agreements are discovered in the works of Nature, and the particular effects explained, that is, reduced to general rules. (*Principles* 105.)

Similar issues are raised in *Principles* 107, with voluntarist overtones I will discuss in 3.4, emphasizing both the immediate divine activity in nature and the usefulness of scientific explanations:

> […] philosophers amuse themselves in vain, when they inquire for any natural efficient cause, distinct from a *mind* or *spirit*. Secondly, considering the *whole creation is the workmanship of a wise and good agent*, it should seem to become philosophers, to employ their thoughts (contrary to what some hold) about the final causes of things: and I must confess, I see no reason, why *pointing out the various ends*, to which natural things are adapted, and for which they were originally with unspeakable wisdom contrived, should not be thought one good way of accounting for them, and altogether worthy a philosopher. Thirdly, from what hath been premised [i.e. the arguments for immaterialism] *no reason can be drawn, why the history of Nature should not still be studied, and observations and experiments made, which, that they are of use to mankind, and enable us to draw any general conclusions* […] *by a diligent observation of the phenomena* within our view, *we may discover the general laws of Nature,* and from them deduce the other phenomena […] (*Principles* 107, my emphasis)

[163] See also *Principles* 62: "[…] explication consists only in shewing the conformity any particular phenomenon hath to the general Laws of Nature, or, which is the same thing, in discovering the *uniformity* there is in the production of natural effects".

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Interestingly, Berkeley suggests here that we can resort to final causes in explaining nature, because it is an intelligent agent who contrived and produced, or rather continuously producing, the physical events. While in the *Siris* Berkeley argued that physics is not competent to investigate final causes, identified with the intentions of God (or other spiritual agents),[164] this passage seems to suggest that teleology is a legitimate *scientific* method, as it might be "one good way of accounting for" the natural things. But even if he is speaking about God's intentions as a general, metaphysical explanation (see *Principles* 62, speaking about the laws of nature "established and maintained in the Creation" by God "for wise ends"), invoking aims or final causes might sound as an intellectualistic move, trying to figure out the aims motivating God's actions in the physical world. In Berkeley's case, however, the assumption seems to imply nothing more than that, in order to discover the patterns according to which he freely organizes our experiences, it might be useful to see God as an intelligent will who might have had some aims with bringing about certain phenomena in the way he did.[165] We know by experience that God through his "unspeakable wisdom" wills—or, more precisely, so far has willed—the world to be a predictable and interpretable place, where most things act as if following certain rules and intentions. After all, "order, regularity, and usefulness of [the phenomena], [which] can never be sufficiently admired", can be explained only by referring to the "infinitely wise and provident" God, rather than to matter, which is "destitute of all contrivance and design" (*Three Dialogues* 258).

Not only did Berkeley never doubt that the modern experimental science bears valuable fruits in discovering the regular correspondence observed in the macroscopic

[164] See *Siris* 231 and 251, but also 155, partially quoted above, talking about mistaking ends for real causes. He might have had the Cartesian idea in mind, namely that God with his intentions can be regarded as a cause only in a general sense, actually explaining no particular phenomena.

[165] Once we distinguish Aristotelian or immanent and Platonic or external teleology, it becomes quite clear that many early moderns accepted final causality (at least) in the latter sense. For instance, Boyle, Gassendi, Malebranche, Leibniz and Newton—both voluntarists and intellectualists—appealed to final causes in natural philosophy. Relatedly, we might distinguish two uses of teleology. Someone might appeal to certain teleological reasons God had in mind (either intellectually determining him or not) when establishing a certain law of nature while thinking that in order to explain why a certain natural event occurred it makes no more sense to point to God's intentions than to the Scholastics' formal causes. For some helpful discussion on teleology in early modernity, see McDonough 2011, Osler 2001 and Nadler 1998.

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world, but he also agreed with Newton and co. that these regularities run through the microscopic levels of things as well. Consequently, quite like in the *Siris*, speaking about directly unperceived corpuscles or component parts as secondary causes, he already argued in the *Principles* that it is reasonable to look at the internal parts or mechanisms of physical things in order to explain what we can expect to experience at the higher level and thereby gain some useful insight into the way God tends to organize our experiences.[166]

One of the objections Berkeley seeks to see off in the *Principles* is that all the intricate microscopic world would be useless if, as Berkeley's immaterialism holds, God "immediately produces every effect by a *fiat*, or act of his will".

> It will be demanded to what purpose serves that curious organization of plants, and the *admirable mechanism in the parts of animals;* might not vegetables grow, and shoot forth leaves and blossoms, and animals perform all their motions, as well without as with all that *variety of internal parts* so elegantly contrived and put together, which being ideas have nothing powerful or operative in them, nor have any necessary connexion with the effects ascribed to them? If it be a spirit that immediately produces every effect by a *fiat*, or act of his will, we must think all that is fine and artificial in the works, whether of man or Nature, to be made in vain. […] How comes it to pass, that whenever there is any fault in the going of a watch, there is some corresponding disorder to be found in the movements, which being mended by a skilful hand, all is right again? The like may be said of all the clockwork of Nature, great part whereof is so wonderfully fine and subtle, as scarce to be discerned by the best microscope. (*Principles* 60)

As is often pointed out, his reply owes much to Malebranche: it is not absolutely necessary that God brings about (at least as possible perceptions) the inner mechanisms of things, but he freely does so to act according to the "standing mechanical Laws of Nature" (*Principles* 62). For Berkeley, the world is meaningful place, where we can discover correspondences between the phenomena, both small and big, which tell us "what we are to expect from such and such actions, and what methods are proper to be taken for the exciting such and such ideas" (*Principles* 65). This feature of the world is due

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[166] Many commentators have proposed that Berkeley endorsed corpuscularianism in some form or another. Wilson (1994) argues that in the *Siris* Berkeley accepts the material reality of the microphysical world. Downing (1995) holds that though Berkeley became a realist about unperceived particles in the *Siris*, restricting his instrumentalism to dynamics, he left his earlier metaphysics mostly intact. While Moked (1971, 1986, 1988) argued that Berkeley adopts corpuscularianism in the *Siris* (but probably not earlier) in terms compatible with his immaterialism, Garber (1982) proposed that Berkeley was an "immaterialist *corpuscularian"* even in the *Principles*.

to God, who decides freely to create the world to be a providential place, which works according to laws and rules we can observe and utilize in our lives. As Berkeley makes clear, among other places, in *Principles* 107, that the "observations and experiments made […] are of use to mankind, and enable us to draw any general conclusions, is not the result of any immutable habitudes, or relations between things themselves, but only of God's goodness and kindness to men in the administration of the world." As we will see in more detail later, all the seemingly necessary causal relations between things are to be analyzed semantically, that is, in terms of signs and signified things arbitrarily connected by God, communicating with and guiding us through the corresponding perceptual data. These providential links are exactly what the scientist should aim at discovering:

> […] the connexion of ideas does not imply the relation of cause and effect, but only of a mark or sign with the thing signified. The fire which I see is not the cause of the pain I suffer upon my approaching it, but the mark that forewarns me of it. […] And it is the searching after, and endeavouring to understand those signs instituted by the Author of Nature, that ought to be the employment of the natural philosopher, and not the pretending to explain things by corporeal causes. (*Principles* 65-66.)

III.2. CONTINUOUS CREATION

Reinforcing that every physical event or motion is caused by God directly, Berkeley endorses the doctrine of continuous creation—a quite standard and traditional Christian view with many medieval and early modern advocates. Just like Aquinas or Suarez before him, Descartes thinks that creation is a continuous process and there is no real, but only a conceptual, distinction between creation and conservation.[167] According to Malebranche, God continuously creates the substances with all their modes and relations. In fact, this is one of his main arguments for occasionalism, the view that no secondary causation is possible in the physical world—including, by the way, genuine human agency

[167] In the *Third Meditation* he writes that "A lifespan can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that it does not follow from the fact that I existed a little while ago that I must exist now, unless there is some cause which as it were creates me afresh at this moment—that is, which preserves me." He concludes that "the same power and action are needed to preserve anything at each individual moment of its duration as would be required to create that thing anew if it were not yet in existence. Hence the distinction between preservation and creation is only a conceptual one, and this is one of the things that are evident by the natural light" (AT 7:49/CSM 2:33). Cf. Winkler 2011a, 289-290, Curley 1984, 580.

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as well.[168] While some details of the doctrine can be interpreted diversely—for instance it is not obvious if the act and power of preservation have to be *numerically* the same as the act and power of creation, or if it entails an occasionalist or a concurrentist theory of causation—it clearly expresses the uninterrupted dependence of nature on the creative power of God's will.[169] And, as Ayers pointed out, the continuous creation doctrine can be linked to voluntarism also in the sense that, at least in its stronger form, it seems to imply that the laws of nature governing the motion of bodies do not rest exclusively, if at all, on their intrinsic natures, but also, if not exclusively, on God's continual activity. Of course, as I emphasized earlier, the denial of natural essentialism or the bottom-up model is just one, not even the most important or defining, component of voluntarism properly understood. Nonetheless, as I will argue below, while Berkeley does not build his arguments on the doctrine, in light of the other alternatives his metaphysical views allow, by adopting the divine continuous creation he exposes his voluntarist inclinations in a more relevant way, making it clear that it is God's *will*, and not his perception or anything related to his understanding, that is responsible for both the initial act of creation and the sustained existence of the world. To be sure, the denial of matter makes

[168] See *Dialogues* 8.10 / JS 115: "Creation does not pass, because the conservation of creatures is—on God's part—simply a continuous creation, a single volition subsisting and operating continuously. Now, God can neither conceive nor consequently will that a body exist nowhere, nor that it does not stand in certain relations of distance to other bodies. Thus, God cannot will that this armchair exist, and by this volition create or conserve it, without situating it here, there, or elsewhere. It is a contradiction, therefore, for one body to be able to move another. Further, I claim, it is a contradiction for you to be able to move your armchair. Nor is this enough; it is a contradiction for all the angels and demons together to be able to move a wisp of straw. The proof of this is clear. For no power, however great it be imagined, can surpass or even equal the power of God." See also JS 111–12: "[…] it is this same volition that puts bodies at rest or in motion, because it is that volition which gives them being, and because they cannot exist without being at rest or in motion. For, take note, God cannot do the impossible, or that which contains a manifest contradiction. He cannot will what cannot be conceived. Thus He cannot will that this chair exist, without at the same time willing that it exist either here or there and without His will placing it somewhere, since you cannot conceive of a chair existing unless it exists somewhere, either here or elsewhere." Cf. Winkler 2011a, 293-298, and Pyle 2003, 96-130.

[169] Cf. Winkler 2011a, 290. Recently Sukjae Lee discussed why, for Berkeley, in sharp contrast to Malebranche, the continuous creation doctrine does not entail occasionalism about the finite minds. As Winkler formulates the question: "How does [Berkeley] resist an across-the-board occasionalism, given his across-the-board endorsement of continuous creation?" (Winkler 2011a, 307). Lee rejects "Winkler's claim that Berkeley endorses the continuous creation thesis "across-the-board", arguing that "the restricted occasionalist position that Berkeley does endorse seems more a product of accommodating divine causality within his immaterialist metaphysics than a structuring of his metaphysics on the foundation of key theological considerations" (Lee 2018, 107).

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it a natural consequence, it will be clear that it is not an unavoidable, obvious and hence philosophically uninteresting conclusion to draw, as an immaterialist could equally maintain the dependence of reality on God's continuous activity by holding that he incessantly perceives the physical world. Note that this option is available only for an immaterialist, as materialists or dualists like Malebranche obviously cannot claim that it is God's perception that provides the continued existence of the mind- or, more precisely, perception-independent objects. For an immaterialist, however, God's perceiving the world could be sufficient to keep things in existence without invoking his will's continuous causal activity. This entertained but dismissed alternative makes Berkeley's endorsement of the continuous creation doctrine much more significant.

Berkeley first mentions the doctrine in the *Principles*, where he seems to acknowledge that, on his immaterialist account, God constantly reproduces our fleeting and dependent ideas constituting the physical objects. But the continuous creation of the world, he argues, is not a peculiar feature of his philosophy that could be counted as a counterintuitive disadvantage in comparison to the widely accepted materialist views.

> […] it may to some perhaps seem very incredible, that things should be every moment creating, yet this very notion is commonly taught in the Schools. For the Schoolmen, though they acknowledge the existence of matter, and that the whole mundane fabrick is framed out of it, are nevertheless of opinion that it cannot subsist without the divine conservation, which by them is expounded to be a continual creation. (*Principles* 46.)

Unlike Malebranche, Berkeley does not use it as a premise for an argument (say, for the causal inefficacy of the physical world), indeed it seems that in the *Principles* he is simply forced to accept it as a hardly avoidable, indeed almost trivial implication of his metaphysical views. As the next quote shows, however, it is evadable in immaterialist terms by accepting that God is continuously perceiving the world. But this is a commitment Berkeley, despite the textbook reading of his philosophy, does not necessarily want to make either.[170]

[170] The situation seems to be different in the *Three Dialogues*, especially with regard to the famous continuity argument for God's existence. However, it is controversial whether Berkeley really endorsed the continuity argument as a self-standing argument or God's continuous perception of the objects is just a corollary of his volitional production of them. I will return to this problem in chapter 4.2. as well, trying to substantiate my interpretation that, on Berkeley's ultimate view, God does not perceive anything in the proper sense of the word. See especially in, and around, footnote 283-4.

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> For though we hold indeed the objects of sense to be nothing else but ideas which cannot exist unperceived; yet we *may* not hence conclude they have no existence except only while they are perceived by us, since there *may* be some other spirit that perceives them, though we do not. Wherever bodies are said to have no existence without the mind, I would not be understood to mean this or that particular mind, but all minds whatsoever. *It does not therefore follow from the foregoing principles, that bodies are annihilated and created every moment*, or exist not at all during the intervals between our perception of them. (*Principles* 48, my emphasis)

While it seems to be clear how the problem of intermittent existence can be solved by assuming that God, the unnamed "other spirit" the text is probably referring to, is continuously perceiving the world, one might wonder why this view does not amount to continuous creation. As for the *continuity* part of the doctrine, the physical world construed as an object of the divine all-encompassing cognition would display an intrinsic stability and unity—since, to put it figuratively, God does not blink—as opposed to our temporally limited and essentially *dis*continuous perceptions continuously but successively, moment by moment, created by God. As for the *creation* part, as we have seen, according to Berkeley, perceiving is a wholly passive act of mind, which—in contrast to the causally efficacious volitions, divine or otherwise—cannot cause or produce anything. Differentiating the two basic types of ideas, Berkeley analyzes reality as the perceptions created by God's will. He claims that while it is necessary that physical objects be perceived by us as ideas, it is not a sufficient condition for them to be counted as real entities, because they can be imaginations generated by our own minds rather than veridical perceptions willed by God. Accordingly, divine perception seems to be insufficient to account for the actual creation of objects. To put it simply, though it might be necessary for the (continued) existence of a physical object, it is not my or anyone else's perception that makes it exist in the first place.[171]

So, with the continuous creation doctrine Berkeley refers unambiguously to God's continuous *volitional* activity creating the world of our veridical perceptions, just like he

[171] If we think that God contemplates unrealized possibilities in his mind, distinguishing between what is merely perceived by God from what is willed by him to be actually created and perceived (also) by us seems to be the most natural way to make sense of the distinction between mere possibilities and what is actually created by God. See Pitcher 1977, 171-2, and Winkler 1989, 216-7, 237. But, as I suggested in the Introduction, it is not clear at all that Berkeley is committed to the view that God has unrealized possibilities actually in his mind. Defining (unactualized) possibility as something God can do (but does not do) and as something God merely entertains in his intellect (but does not actualize) should not be seen as two sides of the same coin. Berkeley clearly accepted the former, but not necessarily the latter. I return to this issue more directly in the very last section.

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did it for the first time in the history of perceiving minds. Berkeley, however, adds that if someone finds this doctrine unpalatable (for instance, due to its leaving the intermittent existence problem unsolved), then she can just opt for the arguably more commonsensical view of God's continuous perception of the world to account for its objective and continuous reality, which is also perfectly consistent with the denial of material substances. On this account, insofar as God perceives the world from an unlimited and eternal perspective, it possesses an intrinsic unity and continuity and, being conserved by this divine perception, does not depend on our intermittent, disintegrated and instantaneous finite perceptions God is, nonetheless, creating, if not continuously, whenever we are in the right place and time to perceive aspects of the vast reality he perceives at all times and places.[172] But, as I said earlier, if it were true, it would not qualify as the continuous creation doctrine, with God simply keeping the world in existence by perceiving it, not by the repeating the original creative activity.[173] But, as we will see in a moment, when not concerned with proving immaterialism in the least neutral way possible, Berkeley unequivocally endorses the doctrine. Even later in the *Principles*, he

[172] I will come back to the continuous perception view later on, especially in chapter 4, showing that, among other problems, it cannot solve the real question at issue, namely that of the continuity of the world we are interested in, the objects we perceive by sense.

[173] In the *Three Dialogues*, he defines the original moment of creation as the event "when things before imperceptible to creatures, are by a decree of God, made perceptible to them". See 251-252: "When things are said to begin or end their existence, we do not mean this with regard to God, but His creatures. All objects are eternally known by God, or which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in his mind: but *when things before imperceptible to creatures, are by a decree of God, made perceptible to them*; then are they said to begin a relative existence, with respect to created minds. Upon reading therefore the Mosaic account of the Creation, I understand that the several parts of the world became gradually perceivable to finite spirits, endowed with proper faculties; so that whoever such were present, they were in truth perceived by them." (emphasis added). Cf. *Letter to Percival*, Sep. 6, 1710, Works 8.37-38: "In order to which I must beg you will inform her Ladyship that I do not deny the existence of any of those sensible things which Moses says were created by God. They existed from all eternity in the Divine intellect, and then became perceptible (*i.e.* were created) in the same manner and order as is described in Genesis. For I take creation to belong to things only as they respect finite spirits, there being nothing new to God. Hence it follows that the act of creation consists in God's willing that those things should be perceptible to other spirits, which before were known only to Himself. Now both reason and scripture assure us there are other spirits (as angels of different orders, &c.) besides man, who, 'tis possible might have perceived this visible world according as it was succesively exhibited to their view before man's creation. Besides, for to agree with the Mosaic account of the creation it is sufficient if we suppose that a man, in case he was then created and existing at the time of the chaos, might have perceived all things formed out of it in the very order set down in Scripture, which is no ways repugnant to our principles." See also *Notebooks* 723: "I may say earth, plants etc were created before Man there being other intelligences to perceive them before Man was created."

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claims that God upholds *"*all things by the Word of his Power*"* (147), that is, *wills* the world to exist in our perceptions.

Though it does not come up in the *Three Dialogues*, some later remarks Berkeley makes about the doctrine of continuous creation help us clarify his actual views and commitments. In a letter to Samuel Johnson, he claims that

> those who have all along contended for a material world, have yet acknowledged that *natura naturans* (to use the language of the Schoolmen) is God; and that the divine conservation of things is equipollent to, and in fact the same thing with, a continued repeated creation: in a word, that conservation and creation differ only in the *terminus a quo*. These are the common opinions of the Schoolmen; […] I am not therefore singular in this point itself, so much as in my way of proving it. Further, it seems to me that the power and wisdom of God are as worthily set forth by supposing Him to act immediately as an omnipresent, infinitely active spirit, as by supposing Him to act by the mediation of subordinate causes, in preserving and governing the natural world. […] For aught I can see, it is no disparagement to the perfection of God to say that all things necessarily depend on Him as their Conservator as well as Creator, and that all nature would shrink to nothing, if not upheld and preserved in being by the same force that first created it." (*Berkeley's letter to Johnson* of November 25, 1729)

In this passage, while nicely summarizing the main points of the continuous creation doctrine (though he interprets it in the stronger Cartesian way as "a continued *repeated* creation"), Berkeley makes it absolutely clear that he does not simply assume it, but sees it as a consequence of his argumentation. What is different to the earlier passage, though, is that here we find no sign of hesitation about endorsing it straightforwardly, indeed he seems to be proud of the unique way he is proving it. Moreover, now he not only points out that it is a commonly accepted philosophical doctrine but also defends it on theological grounds, claiming that it is in full accordance with God's perfection that he continuously recreates the world of our perceptions with the same force by which he first created it.[174] This emphatic endorsement makes it quite clear that while immaterialism is absolutely compatible with the divine perception model, Berkeley's own view, which wants to be also theologically as accurate as possible, is that the continued existence of the created world is provided through the divine will's continuous causal activity. As he puts it, "all nature would shrink to nothing, if not upheld and preserved in being by the

[174] Saying that the difference between creation and conservation is only extrinsic or circumstantial ("terminus a quo") means that the distinction depends entirely on whether we are speaking about the first moment of creation/preservation or the subsequent moments of action of the same kind.

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same force that first created it", that is, if God were to stop creating the world through willing our perceptions.

In the *De Motu*, written in 1721, he also refers positively to the continuous creation doctrine. In this work Berkeley wants to provide a theory of motion, and by interpreting the concepts of dynamics such as force, gravity, etc. in an anti-realist or instrumentalist manner to prove that only minds can be the principles of motion. That God is the cause of the physical motions, he claims, is a conclusion shared not only by the scholastics, the Cartesians and Newton but also supported by the *Scripture*:

> Today indeed Cartesian philosophers recognize God as the principle of natural motions. And Newton everywhere frankly intimates that not only did motion originate from God, but that still the mundane system is moved by the same actus. This is agreeable to Holy Scripture; this is approved by the opinion of the schoolmen; for though the Peripatetics tell us that nature is the principle of motion and rest, yet they interpret *natura naturans* to be God. They understand of course that all the bodies of this mundane system are moved by Almighty Mind according to certain and constant reason. (*De Motu* 32.)

In the continuation, he draws an analogy between the continuous creation doctrine, according to which it is God who keeps every object in existence by recreating them in the successive parts of *time*, and what he wants to prove now, namely that it is God who causes their existence in the different parts of *space*, that is, all states of motion and rest in the universe.

> Modern thinkers consider motion and rest in bodies as two states of existence in either of which every body, without pressure from external force, would naturally remain passive; whence one might gather that the cause of the existence of bodies is also the cause of their motion and rest. For no other cause of the successive existence of the body in different parts of space should be sought, it would seem, than that cause whence is derived the successive existence of the same body in different parts of time. But to treat of the good and great God, creator and preserver of all things, and to show how all things depend on supreme and true being, although it is the most excellent part of human knowledge, is, however, rather the province of first philosophy or metaphysics and theology than of natural philosophy which to day is almost entirely confined to experiments and mechanics. […] (*De Motu* 34.)

It is tempting to read this passage as endorsing Malebranche's unique take on the doctrine, according to which God creates the universe through continuously creating bodies in determinate places and spatial relations.[175] Moreover, it seems that Berkeley,

[175] See JS 115, quoted in footnote 168. Cf. OCM II 428/LO 515, where Malebranche claims that God "puts [a body] in motion by preserving it successively in several places through His simple will".

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just like Malebranche, infers from this understanding of the continuous creation doctrine that God is the only cause of motion in nature.[176] Setting now the problem aside that Berkeley, unlike Malebranche, wants to retain the common sense view that minds are also capable of causing events in the physical world (adopting either a concurrentist or a straightforward causal realist view about human agency), there are some considerations to keep in mind here. Of course, the conclusion that, not counting the human minds, God is the only cause of physical movements in nature is indeed accepted by Berkeley as a consequence of his immaterialism, but the denial of matter is not presupposed or argued for in the *De Motu*. So, the question we need to answer is whether the continuous creation doctrine can establish this conclusion for Berkeley?

In its traditional form, while the continuous creation doctrine clearly supports that physical things have no existence independent of God's activity and, possibly, that they cannot interact without God's continuous involvement, it still can be endorsed even if someone holds that physical object can contribute to their causal connections. This is the understanding implied by the concurrentist view of causation, held by many philosophers, like Aquinas, Suarez, arguably, Descartes and Leibniz, who also accepted the continuous creation doctrine. On one possible understanding of the doctrine, God does not *re*create moment by moment all the determinate attributes and relations of the physical objects but simply continuously creates—basically creates and conserves with the very same continuous act—the substances which, with or even without divine concurrence, are capable of determining their states or modes and communicating the motion they have received from an external source.

Exactly in order to close this loophole in the continuous creation doctrine, one might think with Winkler that Berkeley had the Malebranchean argument in mind to the effect that a substance cannot exist and consequently be (re)created and kept in existence without being fully determined by God with regard to all its states or modes, including its spatial relations. Of course, being adamant about the impossibility of abstraction Berkeley holds that everything is particular and fully determinate, but he does not resort to this Malebranchean argument. In general, he criticizes the substance-mode

[176] Winkler (2011b, 287-8) interprets it this way.

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metaphysics, underlying this picture, even with regard to the mind (see *Principles* 49). More specifically, in his system *spatial* relations between substances, which Malebranche bases his argument on, makes little sense, if any. To state the obvious, Berkeley's God does not create substances located in three-dimensional space, but produces the ideas from which the perceivers construct the bundles that correspond to the materialists' spatially located physical objects. But to get a little deeper, it is clear from Berkeley's theory of vision that distance is not deducible from the essential properties of our two-dimensional ideas and hence not something God has to determine in advance to produce any given perception. Spatial relations, like distance, are nothing else but extrinsic properties we attribute to the bundles of perceptions based on the contingent patterns of our experience.

So, Berkeley does not invoke this Malebranchean qualification that God, conserving the world, cannot do else but to recreate every substance with all its modes in a determinate place and spatial relation to everything else—just as he did when first created the world *ex nihilo,* in the absence of any pre-given modes of bodies. Implicit in the argument, however, is that God cannot produce bodies as merely existing and has to create them either in motion or at rest. This consideration—mentioned by Malebranche, too, as an implication of his more general principle (see JS 111, quoted above)—yields that, if God recreates everything continually, it is he who determines the bodies states of motion or rest too, making any secondary cause redundant and ineffective.

At any rate, the continuous creation doctrine seems not to be a premise in Berkeley's argument in *De Motu*, but rather an analogy for his conclusion: just as everything is continuously created by God so is everything moved by the only cause in the universe. As long as Berkeley thinks that all our talk of forces refers to mental activities, he does not need to assume the truth of the continuous creation doctrine at all, but simply that God created the physical things in the first place. Given that, on his view, bodies not only cannot initiate their own motions but they cannot even communicate the motions they receive from an external, spiritual source, then it seems to follow that God (or any mind capable of that) has to constantly move them around—but not necessarily to create them moment by moment. In any event, it is clear that Berkeley has independent reasons for holding that bodies are not real causes from which he concludes that the divine activity must be continuous in the physical world, just as he has independent reasons (not put

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forward in the *De Motu*) for thinking that God also continuously recreates the world constituted by nothing else but our passive perceptions.

So, on my interpretation of these texts, Berkeley proposed the continuous creation doctrine as a possible consequence, not so much as an assumption, of his physics and metaphysics, and indeed endorsed it as primarily a theological doctrine aptly expressing the world's heavy and uninterrupted dependence on God's *volitional* activity. As for the *Principles*, I would venture to say, the lack of decisiveness about the doctrine comes from his desire to introduce his immaterialism in the most neutral, minimalistic and supposedly commonsensical way. This might also account for the complete omission of the doctrine from the *Three Dialogues*, a work in which Berkeley aims at showing that his metaphysics is not as extravagant as the negative reception of the *Principles* suggested. Nonetheless, on my reading, Berkeley's considered position is that immaterialism is naturally complemented with the view that God, through his volitional activity, directly and continuously recreates, and not merely conserves by perceiving, the physical world.

One last thing needs to be clarified. As we have seen, the continuous creation doctrine implies that the subsequent acts of conservation and the initial act of creation are the same type of acts. So, if the first moment of creation were to be understood in Malebranchean terms, the continuous creation doctrine would not commit Berkeley to voluntarism in the proper sense of the term, that is, in the sense I am primarily interested in this dissertation—even if, in light of the alternative divine perception model, the immaterialist Berkeley's endorsement of the doctrine gains an added significance. However, while Berkeley tells us little in his published works about the initial act itself,[177] as we have seen earlier (in 1.1), the creation *ab initio* is performed by the divine will *ex nihilo*, without any pre-given ideas and determining intellectual factors, and, as we will see in more detail later (in 4.5), can be understood on analogy with an unconstrained, active and free act of imagination. So, confirming what we have seen in chapter 2 concerning the primary role of the will in the divine psychology, we might conclude that just as this first creative act of will is absolutely free, indifferent, arbitrary and undetermined by the intellect, so is the subsequent and continuous creative activity of God in nature. Rest of

[177] For some of that little, see footnote 173.

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the chapter aims to substantiate this conclusion, looking for further and, perhaps, more direct evidence supporting the voluntarist reading of Berkeley's philosophy of nature.

III.3. THE DIVINE LANGUAGE THEORY

Since the continuous creation doctrine does not shed much light on what sort of relation, if not causal, obtains in the created world with its fundamental and continuous dependence on the divine will, we have to search for other features of Berkeley's natural philosophy. Luckily, understanding what Berkeley means by characterizing nature as a divine language promises not only to specify more details with regard to the issues Berkeley's criticism of the contemporary science and his adoption of the continuous creation doctrine only hint at, but it can also be seen as the first step in distancing Berkeley's absolutely contingent world from Malebranche's understanding of the physical world, which, though free from any *causal* relations, can be characterized by extrinsically necessary laws of nature. While the divine language theory is a well-researched issue in Berkeley scholarship, its voluntaristic implications have not attracted much attention yet.

Just like the continuous creation doctrine, the idea that the natural world is a medium through which we can get to know God and by which he communicates with the creatures is not new or peculiar to Berkeley. In early modern times, not only Galileo, Descartes, Boyle, Newton and others, but also some deists, like Toland or Shaftesbury thought so.[178] Bradatan (2006, 57-86) links Berkeley's theory to the 'liber mundi' tradition originating in the New Testament, however there is an important difference to note. While the "book of the world" as a self-standing substance may exist even if God is not immediately and continuously writing and readers are not reading it, the world construed on the model of *spoken* language irrevocably ends when God stops talking and loses its purpose when no one is actually listening to it. According to the Berkeleyan analogy, nature essentially depends on God's uninterrupted and immediate communication with us, which capturing the most important idea behind the continuous creation doctrine clearly excludes a deist—"the self-standing book"—understanding of the divine

[178] See for instance Olscamp 1970, 5, 166, 187, 203.

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language.[179] But, as I want to show it in this section, it also makes clear the arbitrary, albeit orderly, way he acts and communicates with us in nature.

Berkeley traces the origins of the theory back to Plotinus:

> There is a certain analogy, constancy, and uniformity in the phenomena or appearances of nature, which are a foundation for general rules: and these are a *grammar for the understanding of nature*, or that series of effects in the visible world whereby we are enabled to foresee what will come to pass in the natural course of things. Plotinus observes, in his third *Ennead*, that the art of presaging is in some sort the *reading of natural letters denoting order*, and that so far forth as analogy obtains in the universe, there may be vaticination. And in reality, he that foretells the motions of the planets, or the effects of medicines, or the result of chemical or mechanical experiments, may be said to do it by natural vaticination. (*Siris* 252, emphasis added)

While this passage, speaking about "reading the natural letters", might be consistent with the book of nature metaphor, it hints at another important element of the Berkeleyan nature, namely that it has a grammar. Without grammar or at least some syntactic rules, we could barely understand the world around us, do science or discover analogies in nature. But what is most remarkable in his theory, only implicit in *this* passage, is that Berkeley goes further than any similar views based on the metaphorical analogy between nature and a book written or a language spoken by God, insofar as he *literally* identifies the divine communication with nature itself.[180] For Berkeley, nature is nothing else but God's immediate communication with us, a divine language spoken in terms of orderly presented ideas or perceptions.

As we have already seen (in 2.2), the divine language theory was put forward in (the third edition of) the *New Theory of Vision*, briefly mentioned the *Principles,* but expressed most clearly in the *Alciphron* and the *Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*. The most important aim of the *New Theory of Vision* is to reject the geometric theories of spatial perception (advocated by Descartes or Malebranche, for instance), according to which the spatial features, such the distance, size (magnitude) or position (situation) of an object can be judged infallibly based on the necessary relations between these features of the

[179] See the *Theory of Vision Vindicated* where Berkeley explicitly argues against the deists.

[180] Creery (1972), Olscamp (1970, 36-7), Stoneham (2013, 219-220) and Pearce (2007, 174-180) are some of the notable interpreters who recognized this crucial aspect of the divine language theory.

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objects and the optical angles and lines reaching the eyes.[181] After excluding the idea that we see the spatial features immediately, as a universally rejected theory, Berkeley points out that axes, lines and angles cannot be found and perceived in nature (see *New Theory of Vision* 14). Moreover, while they are immensely useful mathematical hypotheses in optics, they cannot help us answer the philosophical question about vision, namely that how certain ideas are able to suggest other features, including spatial properties (cf. *Alciphron* IV.10.), of an object in the absence of any necessary connection perceived between them (see *Theory of Vision Vindicated* 43, to be quoted below).

Berkeley's answer starts with claiming that visual ideas do not represent the spatial features of the world necessarily, through perceptual similarity, that is, it is not due to its intrinsic nature or essence that "one [a visual] idea is qualified to suggest another [a tangible one]" (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 68) or the object's spatial properties. To put it simply, that how an object is presented to us visually *in and by itself* does not tell us how far or how big it actually is. That a certain visual perception comes to signify another sort of perception—or the *tangible* distance, size or position of an object—is simply by virtue of experience or habituation, that is, "meerly by being often perceived with it" (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 68).

> Ideas which are observed to be connected with other ideas come to be considered as signs, by means whereof things not actually perceived by sense are signified or suggested to the imagination, whose objects they are, and which alone perceives them. And as sounds suggest other things, so characters suggest those sounds; and, in general, all signs suggest the things signified, there being no idea which may not offer to the mind another idea which hath been frequently joined with it. In certain cases a sign may suggest its correlate as an image, in others as an effect, in others as a cause. But where there is no such relation of similitude or causality, nor any necessary connexion whatsoever, two things, by their mere coexistence, or two ideas, merely by being perceived together, may suggest or signify one the other, their connexion being all the while arbitrary; for it is the connexion only, as such, that causeth this effect. (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 39.)

[181] See for instance *New Theory of Vision* 24 or 45. Berkeley is often accused of misrepresenting the Cartesian theory of vision, since neither Descartes nor Malebranche claimed that we make *conscious* intellectual judgements concerning the spatial properties of objects, but the point Berkeley really aimed at is that spatial perception is not based on any necessary relation that could be discovered even by an "as if" natural geometry or without any appeal to our intermodal perceptual experiences. For a discussion on the other ways Cartesians thought we can know the spatial features, see Simmons 2003. For Berkeley's view, the best work to look at is still Atherton 1990.

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So, it is not a mathematical deduction or rational judgement performed by our understanding, but rather an associative or suggestive connection between our tangible and visible experiences that makes us able to perceive the spatial features by sight. While, as this passages suggests, the spatial features are "not actually perceived", being seen only in a quasi-sensory way in our imagination, but we definitely do not merely infer or judge them.[182] Of course, the real cause, namely who establishes the arbitrary connections between certain perceptions as signs and signified things and thus makes it possible for us to associate the co-existence and correlation of these ideas, is God. Therefore, the above-mentioned philosophical question concerning vision is answered:

> How comes it to pass that a set of ideas, altogether different from tangible ideas, should nevertheless suggest them to us, there being no necessary connexion between them? To which the proper answer is, That this is done in virtue of an arbitrary connexion, instituted by the Author of nature. (*Theory of Vision Vindicated* 43.)

Accordingly, the *New Theory of Vision* concludes that through the visual data (and their connection with the tangible information) God directly communicates with us, and the proper visual objects, namely "light, shades, and colours, variously combined" (*Alciphron* IV.7.),[183] "constitute an universal language of the Author of nature".

> Upon the whole, I think we may fairly conclude, that the proper objects of vision constitute an universal language of the Author of nature, whereby we are instructed how to regulate our actions, in order to attain those things that are necessary to the preservation and well being of our bodies, as also to avoid whatever may be hurtful and destructive of them. It is by their information that we are principally guided in all the transactions and concerns of life. And the manner wherein they signify, and mark unto us the objects which are at a distance, is the same with that of languages and signs of human appointment, which do not suggest the things signified, by any likeness or identity of nature, but only by an habitual connexion, that experience has made us to observe between them. (*New Theory of Vision* 147, third edition)

Berkeley draws a comparison between language and vision in many ways and respects.[184] For one thing, that the objects of sight signify or suggest the spatial properties of the objects more directly experienced by tangible experiences is, of course, to our greatest

[182] Cf. *Theory of Vision Vindicated* 42: "To perceive is one thing; to judge is another. So likewise, to be suggested is one thing, and to be inferred is another. Things are suggested and perceived by sense. We make judgments and inferences by the understanding."

[183] See also *New Theory of Vision* 77, 103, 129-130.

[184] See for instance *New Theory of Vision* 17, 32, 51, 66, 73, 140, 143.

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benefit "in all the transactions and concerns of life", just as language is immensely useful in our everyday life. But there are more substantive parallels as well. In the *Alciphron*, building on his early theory of vision, Berkeley defines language—both ordinary or artificial, such as English (what *we* call natural language), and divine kinds—as

> the arbitrary use of sensible signs, which have no similitude or necessary connexion with the things signified; so as by the apposite management of them, to suggest and exhibit to my mind an endless variety of things, differing in nature, time, and place: thereby informing me, entertaining me, and directing me how to act, not only with regard to things near and present, but also with regard to things distant and future. No matter, whether these signs are pronounced or written, whether they enter by the eye or the ear: eye or ear: they have the same use, and are proofs of an intelligent, thinking, designing cause. (*Alciphron* IV.7.)

As he defines it more succinctly in the *Theory of Vision Vindicated*, "a great number of arbitrary signs, various and apposite, do constitute a language" (40). Satisfying all the criteria of language, vision occupies the most important place (perhaps closely followed by touch), because the other sense modalities seem to provide arbitrary signs which do not constitute a language strictly speaking.[185] For my purposes, however, the most important element in these definitions is arbitrariness.[186] To state the obvious, the words of the artificial or natural languages could have signified other things (or, in fact, still can). As mentioned in 2.2, the only difference between natural or human and divine language is that the latter is universally the same everywhere (see *New Theory of Vision* 152, quoted

[185] Cf. *Alciphron* IV.12, 1752 edition. While the other sense modalities, like smell and taste, might provide us with signs and signify things, they are not complex enough to be applicable to a variety of uses, like vision (and touch). Presumably, while they lack grammar, as you cannot come up with rules determining their, say, proper combination, and they are not part of the divine language strictly speaking, they still contribute as pragmatics to the broader context of the divine language. See Pearce 2008, 251 and 2017, 180-183. Sometimes, as in the *Principles*, Berkeley, however, suggests that all of our perceptions—not only vision—count as divine language. See *Principles* 66, 108 and *Siris* 252.

[186] It is, of course, not a unique position with regard to language. For instance, Locke also thought that arbitrariness is a defining feature of language, see *Essay* III/II/1 and 8. See Stuart 2013, who makes clear that arbitrariness (in Locke) does not mean randomness or having no purpose. For a Locke, "a state of affairs is arbitrary if (i) it is one of several logically possible arrangements; (ii) it depends upon the choice of an agent or agents; (iii) when the agents choose that it should obtain, there is no such thing as getting it right or wrong, except insofar as the choice does or does not serve their interests; and (iv) the agents responsible could in principle replace it with a different state of affairs." (Stuart 2013, 289.) This is exactly the meaning of arbitrariness Berkeley adopts and applies to divine decisions—by the way, probably just like Locke did himself. As Kendrick summarizes, "Berkeley does not mean by this that the connection is capricious; rather he is advancing the following three claims: the connection depends on something *external* to the ideas themselves, it is contingent, and it is (as expressed in the OED) "to be decided by one's liking; dependent upon will or pleasure." (Kendrick 2014, 7-8.) See *Notebooks* 732, *Principles* 36., *Three Dialogues* 214.

earlier)—which, *in principle*, could be the case with a natural language as well. Nonetheless the stable connections between visual data and the suggested spatial (tangible) objects or ideas are still arbitrarily instituted by God, just like the various languages' word-meaning relations have been arbitrarily instituted by certain communities (see *New Theory of Vision* 59, 63-64, 104-105). They are contingent because we can see no reason to deny that God might have decided to produce the ideas in different correlations or different ideas in the same patterns. For instance, the visual data might suggest no spatial feature at all, or ones different to what they currently do. This principle was clearly set out as early as the first entries of Berkeley's *Notebooks*.

> Qu: whether possible that those visible ideas wch are now connected with greater extensions could have been connected with lesser extensions. there seeming to be no necessary connexion between those thoughts. (*Notebooks* 181.)
>
> Tis possible (& perhaps not very improbable that is is sometimes so) we may have the greatest pictures from the least objects. therefore no necessary connexion betwixt visible & tangible ideas. these ideas viz. great relation to the Sphaera Visualis or to the M: V: (wch is all that I would have meant by our having a greater picture) and faintness, might possibly have stood for or signify'd small tangible extensions. Certainly the greater relation to S.V: & M:V. does frequently in yt men view little objects near the Eye. (*Notebooks* 256.)

It is also a conceivable that other sense modalities, such as hearing or tasting, could signify the spatial features, not vision or touch.[187] Moreover, from the *New Theory of Vision* onwards, Berkeley constantly emphasized not only that there is no necessary connection between the objects of the various sense modalities, but also that they are of essentially different kinds: the ideas of each sense modality are completely heterogeneous and incommensurable.[188] Theologically speaking, there is nothing necessary at all about the intrinsic nature of ideas that could determine or even just limit the patterns in which God is (continuously) creating our perceptions. Accordingly, it is completely due to God's

[187] Indeed, we tend to hear a car being at a distance. See the coach analogy both in the *New Theory of Vision* and the *Three Dialogues*.

[188] Berkeley does not exclude that there is a necessary connection between ideas of the same modality, as they can resemble one another based their own intrinsic nature, i.e. perceptual content. It also might suggest that there can be necessary truths about resemblance classes (see Flage 2009, 366-9). I agree with Flage that since similitude is a relation, which, according to Berkeley, includes a (comparing) act of mind (see *Principles* 142), it is not grounded merely in the ideas themselves, but also in the mind which creates the connection. To find similarity requires a point of view from which it holds.

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arbitrary decision that whenever we have a certain kind of visual experience, we ordinarily feel a corresponding sort of tangible perception.

In the *Theory of Vision Vindicated,* Berkeley makes the voluntarist implication of this understanding of nature even more conspicuous when claiming that there is no necessary connection between the various sorts of ideas and their cause(s), either. In section 30, he suggests that because we neither perceive nor can prove by reason the contrary, the cause of our perceptions—God on Berkeley's account—seems to act arbitrarily.

> As to what you advance, that our ideas have a *necessary* connexion with such cause [i.e. material objects], it seems to me *gratis dictum*: no reason is produced for this assertion; and I cannot assent to it without a reason. The ideas or effects I grant are evidently perceived: but the cause, you say, is utterly unknown. How, therefore, can you tell whether such unknown cause acts arbitrarily or necessarily? I see the effects or appearances: and I know that effects must have a cause: but I neither see nor know that their connexion with that cause is necessary. Whatever there may be, I am sure I see no such necessary connexion, nor, consequently, can demonstrate by means thereof from ideas of one sense to those of another. (*Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained* 30.)

Just as no necessary connection can be perceived between ideas of different sense modalities, so too their cause has no necessary relation with either of the ideas. Even if the relations between the perceptual contents of the ideas are contingent, and there is nothing intrinsic about them that suggests any other idea, they might still have a necessary relation to their cause, and through this causal story to one another. This might be Locke's position: while the ideas are arbitrary signs with respect to each other insofar as we perceive nothing intrinsic about them that could represent the other,[189] the archetypal quality existing in their material cause necessarily determines the various ideas we perceive of an object. But, for Berkeley, it seems unjustified to claim that, for instance, the archetypal shape of the table is in a necessary causal relation to my visual and tangible ideas of its shape. Rather, he suggests that the cause of our ideas, namely God, creates the contingent relationships between certain ideas *arbitrarily*. It is not just that there is nothing intrinsic in the ideas we perceive that could determine the way God has to establish their interrelations, but also that he acts arbitrarily in causing them. This seems to mean, especially having my earlier examinations in mind, that in establishing the relations between our ideas God is not even determined by any archetypal ideas or objects

[189] See for instance *Essay* II.XXXI.14, IV.III.10. or IV.III.28.

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in his mind, according to which he *has to* establish the connections between the intrinsically unrelated ideas. So, according to Berkeley's theory of vision and sensation in general there is no necessary connection whatsoever—that is, intrinsic or extrinsic/causal—between the various forms of sense data, for instance between what we see and what we feel. On the contrary, every modality provides us with a unique and completely heterogeneous set of experiential data related by its cause, God, absolutely freely and arbitrarily. It is only due to God's purely contingent decision that whenever we have a visual experience of a certain sort, we ordinarily feel a corresponding but completely distinct sort of tangible perception.

But, as *Siris* 252, quoted at the beginning, showed, the arbitrary nature of the divine language does not deny that "there is a certain analogy, constancy, and uniformity in the phenomena or appearances of nature". Indeed, its constant and recognizable pattern or order is another important aspect that renders nature literally a language, i.e. a system of arbitrary signs capable of an almost infinite variety of signification. Grammatical rules are just as essential for mastering natural languages as they are to make the natural world of (visual) perceptions intelligible and interpretable for human beings. To really understand the operation of God in nature (for instance, scientifically), we have to look for and discover the syntactic rules underlying the conventional and orderly patterns of perceptions.

In the *Siris*, Berkeley adds that our understanding of this regular, constant, rational, "coherent, entertaining, and instructive Discourse" with God depends on how attentively we interpret our experiences and its guiding rules.[190]

> As the natural connexion of signs with the things signified is regular and constant, it forms a sort of rational discourse (Sect. 152), and is therefore the immediate effect of an intelligent cause. This is agreeable to the philosophy of Plato, and other ancients. […] Therefore, the phenomena of nature, which strike on the senses and are understood by the mind, form not only a magnificent spectacle, but also a most coherent, entertaining, and instructive Discourse; and to effect this, they are conducted, adjusted, and ranged by the greatest wisdom. This Language or Discourse is studied with different attention, and interpreted

[190] See also *Siris* 253: "[…] the phenomena of nature are alike visible to all; but all have not alike learned the connexion of natural things, or understand what they signify, or know how to vaticinate by them." Berkeley seems to suggest as a further analogy that the successful communication in both the human and divine languages depends partly on the recipient's previous knowledge, skills and attention in interpreting the raw information received.

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> with different degrees of skill. But so far as men have studied and remarked its rules, and can interpret right, so far they may be said to be knowing in nature. A beast is like a man who hears a strange tongue but understands nothing. (*Siris* 254.)

As Berkeley makes it clear from the *New Theory of Vision* onwards, this syntax or structure of our experience is not arbitrary insofar as some sort of correspondence is required between the absolutely heterogeneous kinds of perceptions freely established by God. For one, making our lives much easier or, indeed, manageable, the tangible and the visual experiences are made to be structurally identifiable (see *New Theory of Vision* 142). Its structure makes a thing "fit" to be identified with a structurally parallel other experience.

> I observe that visible figures represent tangible figures, much after the same manner that written words do sounds. Now, in this respect, words are not arbitrary, it not being indifferent, what written word stands for any sound: But it is requisite, that each word contain in it so many distinct characters, as there are variations in the sound it stands for. Thus the single letter *a* is proper to mark one simple uniform sound; and the word *adultery* is accommodated to represent the sound annexed to it, in the formation whereof, there being eight different collisions, or modifications of the air by the organs of speech, each of which produces a difference of sound, it was fit the word representing it should consist of as many distinct characters, thereby to mark each particular difference or part of the whole sound: And yet no body, I presume, will say, the single letter *a*, or the word *adultery*, are like unto, or of the same species with the respective sounds by them represented. It is indeed arbitrary that, in general, letters of any language represent sounds at all; but when that is once agreed, it is not arbitrary what combination of letters shall represent this or that particular sound. (*New Theory of Vision* 143.)

And once the individual connections between ideas are established and the meanings are stipulated, the relations in nature are not entirely arbitrary anymore, as there has to be an observable regularity and analogy (in addition to the structural correspondence) between the perceptions, otherwise we would not be able to understand the message God wants to convey through speaking to us. Just like with natural languages: if in every case a certain word or sound had a different meaning, the language would cease to be understandable and meaningful. So, *if* God wants us to understand the rules, he has to produce our ideas in a way that is structurally identifiable and systematic enough to make us recognize them.[191] But nothing determines the rules God established freely and he has to respect no pre-given order or structure necessarily.

[191] See also *Principles* 62, an important passage which will come up again in the next section, addressing the question more directly whether the laws of nature are at least nomologically or physically necessary for Berkeley.

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Berkeley warns us that we should not pay attention only to the grammar or the letters as opposed to the meanings and aims conveyed by language. Luckily, this is easier to be done than one might think. Unless we concentrate on separating the sign from the signified thing, we normally attend only to the latter,[192] just like in the case of human languages ordinarily we focus only on the meaning, not the words or sounds.[193] Furthermore, we do not need to know the grammatical rules *in the abstract* in order to speak a language or understand the connections in nature. It is obvious in practical situations, but, as we will see, stretching the rules too much might be counterproductive in science as well.

> Those men who frame general rules from the *phenomena*, and afterwards derive the *phenomena* from those rules, seem to consider signs rather than causes. A man may well understand natural signs without knowing their analogy, or being able to say by what rule a thing is so or so. And as it is very possible to write improperly, through too strict an observance of general grammar-rules: so in arguing from general rules of Nature, it is not impossible we may extend the analogy too far, and by that means run into mistakes. (*Principles* 108.)

Instead of understanding the grammar for its own sake or, as sometimes scientists tend to do, trying to reduce everything to a few general principles, in the grand scheme of things, we should look at the entire message God wants to convey to us, trying to realize what is needed for our survival and happiness.[194]

In this section, I tried to show that the understanding of nature as a divine language instructing and informing us can be naturally read from a voluntarist viewpoint. While continuously creating the world and communicating with us through sensory ideas, God wills us to perceive a nature which is devoid of causal powers as well as intrinsic natures grounding any necessary relations between our various perceptions. Rather, the created world consists only of signs and signified ideas arbitrarily connected and willed to structurally and regularly correspond by God. Just as any natural language is based on conventional semantic relations and syntactic rules, so too the relations and

[192] See *New Theory of Vision* 140: "Visible figures are the marks of tangible figures. […] In themselves they are little regarded, or upon any other score than for their connexion with tangible figures, which by nature they are ordained to signify."

[193] See *Theory of Vision Vindicated* 48: "As it is usual, in hearing or reading a discourse, to overlook the sounds or letters, and instantly pass on to the meaning."

[194] The natural language *as a whole* reveals God's principal aim in nature: to help us to survive and conduct our lives efficiently as well as to appreciate the divine glory and beauty in nature. See *Principles* 109.

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correspondences in nature are arbitrarily determined by, and contingent on, the divine will. A particularly interesting moral for us is that, while neither the *Theory of Vision* nor the *Alciphron* is based on immaterialist assumptions, both clearly express views about the divine language pointing in the direction of an essentially voluntaristic understanding of nature. This, I think, shows that Berkeley's voluntarism is far from being a trivial consequence of his immaterialism.

III.4. LAWS OF NATURE AND ETERNAL TRUTHS

But, to be fair, the doctrine of divine language only anticipates and hints at the view I would like to spell out in more details. On the reading I am proposing, Berkeley thought early on, and maintained it consistently, that the patterns running through the world of our perceptions, equivalent to the syntactic structure of a language, do not constitute laws of nature that could be regarded as necessary in any metaphysically relevant sense. To be more precise, there are no laws in nature that are either intrinsically or extrinsically necessary, just as there are no eternal truths in God's intellect determining his actions in nature. By intrinsically necessary, I mean that a law of nature is grounded in and entailed by the intrinsic, essential features of the things it describes. Though, reflecting another use of the term, one might want to call only those eternal truths intrinsically necessary that are necessarily true in virtue of themselves (like logical and mathematical truths), I will also label those laws of nature as intrinsically necessary which simply supervene on more basic constituents, such as the essences of the physical objects they describe. By extrinsically necessary, in contrast, I refer to any cases which could not be otherwise but grounded not in the essences of things falling under the scope of the given law but in God's nature determining the way he acts in the world. The divinely ordained but just as necessary laws of nature, on this model, prescribe—not only describe—the behaviour of physical things.[195]

[195] As I mentioned in the Introduction, using Ott's terminology these are related to the bottom-up and top-down models of laws nature. See Griffin (2012, 4-5) for a somewhat different usage of the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic necessity. See footnote 246 for Collier's definition of intrinsic and extrinsic necessity in his *Clavis Universalis*. Spinoza defines these two types of necessity in terms similar to Collier's, see *Ethics* 1p33.

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Insofar as extrinsic necessity obviously requires that God wills to create the world at all, the distinction seems to largely map onto the distinction between absolute and hypothetical necessity, but the point is not the same. I will call a law extrinsically necessary even if it is absolutely necessary, because some absolutely necessary eternal truth, for instance, about the necessarily existing God's nature entails both that God creates the world and implements the law of nature in question. And both extrinsic and intrinsic necessity, as defined above, can be formulated hypothetically, the question being: if God creates bodies, what, if anything at all, determines the law describing or governing them? Either the physical things' intrinsic natures or the divine nature with God's intellectually determined will. A borderline case is where the content of a law of nature depends on the essences of things construed as immutable natures in the divine intellect. Accordingly, we might distinguish between Platonic and Aristotelian sorts of essentialism. While the latter is a pre-eminent case of intrinsic necessity, the former might imply either extrinsic or intrinsic necessity. If the immutable essences in God's mind entail some eternal truths and creation cannot be brought about with any other set of essences then it implies the intrinsic necessity of the laws. But if God merely, but just as necessarily, chooses according to his own nature and intellectual preferences among various equally realizable sets of essences then they are extrinsically necessary. Anyway, the content of the laws is not determined by God's will freely in either case. In sharp contrast, as I will argue in this section, Berkeley holds not merely that the essences of physical things—construed in either sense—are irrelevant to the laws of nature, but also that neither God's intellectual nature nor any eternal truth determines necessarily how physical things are disposed to act or, to put it in more Berkeleyan terms, how God brings about and connects our various perceptions of the physical world.

To clear this *seemingly* evident issue up is particularly important for a couple of reasons. For one thing, some scholars argue that the laws of nature are necessary in Berkeley's view. Based on the divine language theory, Flage (2009) claims, for instance, that by analogy with rules of language use or meaning relations construed as stipulative definitions ("by X I mean Y"), the laws of nature (understood as the grammatical rules of the divine language) function as necessary truths. Stipulative or nominal definitions

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cannot be false, so they are necessarily true.[196] I find this way of speaking pretty misleading, though. The necessarily true nature of stipulative definitions is not what we are looking for when it comes to the laws of nature. It shows only that, once God decided that X to be related (in whatever way) to Y, then it will necessarily be true that X is related (in whatever way) to Y.[197] But the real questions are about what makes God want X to be related to Y in the first place, and whether he is free to defy this connection at the time of establishing it or anytime later on.

Similarly, one might think, as for instance Brook (1973, 21 and 28, cf. Flage 2009, 365) seems to suggest, that due to the necessary connection between the omnipotent divine volition and its effects, Berkeley maintained that the laws of nature are necessary in some sense. Ignoring the details of the controversy over Berkeley's concept of causality, it is often assumed that he construed causality as a necessary relation. While some commentators, such as Winkler (1985) and Kendrick (2014), argue that Berkeley did not think necessity is a requirement of a causal relation in order to provide place for genuine finite agency, it is reasonable to interpret him as holding that, in the absence of defeating circumstances, the cause always produces its effect (cf. Stoneham 2002, 149). Simply, God's case is peculiar because there can be no defeating circumstances, as his power, unlike ours, is unlimited. In God's case, any intention, once formed, is necessarily actualized in the world. However, as I discussed in the Introduction, every Christian thinker of the period—both the intellectualists and the voluntarists—agreed that God's exercised volitions cannot be defied.[198] But this does not mean at all that they had no

[196] As Berkeley himself realized with regard to human conventions, most notably mathematical truths: "The reason why we can demonstrate so well about signs is that they are perfectly arbitrary & in our power, made at pleasure." (*Notebooks* 732.)

[197] Note here that I take X and Y to stand for particulars or concrete events. If they were about general sorts or types of things or events with no time constraint involved, then this claim would probably have more relevant implications for the necessity of the laws. However, the suggestion that there are kinds or types before God's decisions and our actual perceptions not only begs the question against a voluntarist reading, assuming much more than what the divine language doctrine suggests, but also goes against Berkeley's nominalism.

[198] Famously, this was a very important consideration that motivated Malebranche to think that God is the only real cause. In her interesting paper, Kendrick (2014) seems to conflate this feature of God—which might be called almightiness, referring to the necessarily efficacious nature of divine volitions—with arbitrary or blind agency. While she rightly claims that Berkeley emphatically rejected the latter, it does not follow that Berkeley did not believe in God's almightiness just as deeply as Malebranche did. And, on the other hand, while Malebranche indeed emphasized divine almightiness, as the ground of the causal relations

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debates over the issue whether God's intellect or nature can determine his will to act necessarily and/or whether God created physical things with their own causal powers grounding the laws, rendering the laws of nature necessary in one of the above-mentioned senses. In any event, Flage himself acknowledges that Berkeley's (supposedly) necessary laws of nature cannot be known by us *a priori*—hence Berkeley is a forerunner of Frege in holding that there are necessary truths which are not knowable *a priori*—and even that they are arbitrary or contingent in the sense that they result from intentions. He concludes, to my mind pretty paradoxically, that because they are "divine meaning intentions, natural laws are necessary truths, but, insofar as they are the effects of divine will, they are fundamentally contingent" (2009, 372).

There is another sense in which commentators, such as Psillos, claim that Berkeley follows Malebranche in regarding the laws of nature as necessary.[199] As Psillos recently put it, that the "laws are naturally necessary is a view that, perhaps surprisingly, can be attributed to Berkeley, too" (Psillos 2018, 95). By natural (or, as I will also call it, physical or nomological) necessity I mean that, in the regular course of nature (that is, barring the supernatural interventions) things and events happen according to the laws necessarily and universally. In other words, given those physical natures and laws we currently have it is necessary that things happen accordingly.[200] First of all, as Psillos and Ott themselves emphasize, it is not a metaphysical necessity even God cannot overwrite, since he can

in nature, he did not think at all that God can actually use his omnipotent power in an intellectually undetermined or arbitrary way.

[199] Ott also draws comparison with Malebranche at this point: "In making this reply to the superfluity objection [put forward in *Principles* 60], Berkeley is, whether consciously or not, following Nicolas Malebranche." (2019, 3.) Downing (2013) commenting on *Principles* 60, also writes that "Berkeley's answer […] is indebted to Malebranche."

[200] By the way, I found it pretty confusing to claim with Psillos the laws of nature to be 'naturally' ('physically' or 'nomologically') necessary. While we can ask if it is *metaphysically* necessary that certain laws of nature, and not other ones, hold in nature, it is rather a certain event governed by the laws that can be said necessary in the above-mentioned senses. As I will argue, Malebranche believed in the metaphysical necessity of certain laws, despite the fact that the events falling under their scope are only physically (etc.) necessary with God being able to suspend their execution in special cases. That a law is physically necessary therefore means only that it is universally true of the events it is supposed to govern or describe, barring the exceptions and miracles. It seems to be a way to formulate the view that the physical laws of nature correspond to necessary relations rather than mere regularities in nature.

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make exceptions by bringing about miracles.[201] Indeed, Berkeley seems to warns us, God can change the very rules of his activity grounding the laws any time he wants. Moreover, it seems that Berkeley, unlike Malebranche, is fine with the laws of nature, even with leaving miracles aside, not being exceptionless. He seems to hold that even when God decides to act "according to the standing mechanical laws of nature", he is not bound by them universally. You might think it means there are no real, at least nomologically necessary, laws of nature, only *ceteris paribus* ones, corresponding the mere regularities or tendencies in nature. This I think is not a bad way of looking at Berkeley's views at all. After all, apart from God's mere decision, there are no natures of things (construed either as physical essences or immutable ideas in the divine mind) that could ground necessarily and universally the laws of nature even in the regular (natural or nomological) course of actions. I will return to this issue later (at the end of this section as well as in 3.5), emphasizing that not even divine nature, for instance divine goodness or God's preference for simplicity could make the laws necessary even in this restricted sense.[202]

The second aim of clarifying what Berkeley thinks of the status of the laws of nature is, on the other hand, to show that he does not merely deny some trivial sense of necessity

[201] So far, it is indeed similar to Malebranche's view. See *Elucidation* XV, LO 662-3: "[…] while nature remains as it is, i.e., while the laws of the communication of motion remain the same, it is a contradiction that fire should not bum or separate the parts of certain bodies. Fire cannot cool like water unless it becomes water, for since fire is only wood whose parts have been agitated with a violent motion by an invisible matter surrounding them, as is easy to demonstrate, it is impossible for these parts not to communicate some of their motion to the bodies with which they collide. Now, since these laws are constant, the nature of fire and its virtues and qualities do not change. But this nature and these virtues are but consequences of the general and efficacious will of God, who does everything in all things. As a result, the study of nature is false and vain in every way when true causes are sought in it other than the volitions of the Almighty, or the general laws according to which He constantly acts. God can absolutely do all He pleases without finding dispositions in the subjects on which He acts. But He cannot do so without a miracle, or by natural ways, i.e., according to the general laws of the communication of motion He has established, and according to which He almost always acts. […]" As I suggested in footnote 93 in II.1, for Malebranche, the very few miracles are necessitated by higher-order, metaphysical principles, and hence are not genuine exceptions with regard to order as such.

[202] For Malebranche it is the nature of things in the divine mind (like the concept of extension) and, more importantly, the principles of his action, reflecting most of all simplicity and generality, that determine with extrinsic and hypothetical necessity which laws hold with nomological necessity and, in the regular course of nature, are maintained universally. As the continuation of the passage I just quoted from *Elucidation* XV, LO 662-3, puts it: "[…] *God does not multiply his volitions without reason; He always acts through the simplest ways*, and this is why he uses the collision of bodies to move them, not because their impact is absolutely necessary for their motion, as our senses tell us, but because with impact as the occasion for the communication of motion, very few natural laws are needed to produce all the admirable effects we see" (my emphasis).

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to them, and goes further than is required by occasionalism or immaterialism. As I suggested just now (as well as in the Introduction), one can deny the metaphysical necessity of laws of nature in at least two senses. One is that she rejects essentialism, the idea of intrinsic necessity, the view that the intrinsic natures or powers of things determine necessarily how things act and, hence, are to be described by the laws of nature. The other possibility is to say that nothing, not even factors extrinsic to the physical things, determine necessarily how God has to arrange and move around the physical things. This view rejects not only that the laws of nature are based on the essence or causal powers of things, but also that their content has any sort of grounding in God's intellectual nature, independent of his mere volitions or decisions. In the rest of this section, I want to show that Berkeley denies the necessity of laws of nature in both of these senses. So, when interpreters, such as Psillos, Downing or Ott, tend to suggest that Berkeley regarded the laws of nature as *metaphysically* contingent just like Malebranche did, because both thought that the natures and alleged causal powers of physical objects do not determine how God has to act about them, an important disagreement remains overlooked. With the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic necessity in mind, however, we should not be surprised that there are noticeable—but only partial—similarities between Berkeley's and Malebranche's views, namely those concerning the intrinsic sense of metaphysical necessity.

Accordingly, their shared acknowledgment of the possibility of miracles, as a sign of God's freedom from the essences of things, is often interpreted as the reason they both think the laws are contingent in a metaphysical sense. It is, however, worth pausing for a moment considering whether the mere possibility of miracles is really as straightforward an indication of the denial of the laws' metaphysical necessity as it might seem at first glance. Even if God is capable of violating the laws, and, for any reason, he indeed exercises his supernatural power, one might think that there is something necessary about that particular law holding most of the time. In fact, this is Malebranche's view: it could not be the case that another law holds in the non-miraculous course of nature. Though God can violate the simplest physical laws if some higher-order generality requires it, those laws nonetheless have nomological necessity backed up by a metaphysical

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grounding in God's nature.[203] This is why I do not find it revealing and fruitful to concentrate on the sort of contingency revealed by the possibility of miracles, the mere fact that God can, or even actually does, cause exceptions. Indeed, I think this is merely a superficial agreement between Malebranche and Berkeley, covering up a deeper disagreement about the modal status of the non-miraculous activity of God in nature.

So, while Malebranche ultimately takes an essentially intellectualist position on the laws of nature and the eternal truths, Berkeley can be seen as a proper voluntarist. The intellectualist view I attribute to Malebranche holds that the laws of nature, putting miracles aside, are necessary, at least, in the extrinsic and hypothetical sense.[204] On the Malebranchean view, it might be the case that this law of nature does not hold in our universe, but it cannot be the case that another does instead. If there is a created world at all, a certain set of particular laws has to obtain with at least nomological necessity. The voluntarist position I attribute to Berkeley, by contrast, claims that the general statements about how God moves around the physical things are neither extrinsically nor intrinsically necessary. In slightly different words, what Berkeley holds is not simply the view that it is, or rather was, in God's absolute power as a purely logical possibility to choose other laws of nature, nor it is simply the view that God could have freely decided *not* to create the world and hence implement any law at all. Rather, on the voluntarist reading, the strong metaphysical contingency of the laws means for Berkeley that, there is nothing

[203] As mentioned before, sometimes Malebranche speaks as if God can do everything and it is only nomologically necessary that he acts "by natural ways, i.e., according to the general laws of the communication of motion He has established, and according to which he almost always acts." While God can do miracles, it would be misleading to say that the laws of nature are only nomologically necessary. They are metaphysically necessary in the sense that it is metaphysically necessary that they hold for God's non-miraculous activity, but they are not at the top of the hierarchy of all laws, as higher-order metaphysical or moral laws can overwrite the specific physical ones, making God suspend their execution. These supernatural interventions are not only negligibly rare, but the physical laws—with any higher order law, i.e. miracles, aside—are something God cannot really change. In other words, you might say that while these laws are not metaphysically necessary *simpliciter*, but it is (metaphysically) necessary that they (and not other ones) hold with nomological necessity. I simply take the latter claim as an interpretation of the former. To put it in other words, that a certain law obtains in the regular course of nature is metaphysically necessary, but any particular case it describes or governs is only physically or nomologically necessary, that is, in case God is not obliged to intervene in and suspend temporarily the law in question.

[204] If I am right that the borderline case of Platonic essentialism can be regarded as a form of intrinsic necessity, Malebranche might accept that there are intrinsically (but hypothetically) necessary laws of nature. Hereafter, I will neglect this possibility, and focus on the fact that Malebranche emphatically denies natural essentialism.

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about the essences of things or of the intellectual nature of the divinity that could, at least, extrinsically determine the laws. As we will see, for Berkeley, God can, and does, not only suspend a law without being necessarily determined by a higher-order generality (hence bringing about genuine exception to *all* lawlike regularity relevant to the created world), but there is no metaphysical ground that could determine in the regular course of action what physical laws have to hold. God could really have decided to act according to other, if any, regularities. Berkeley openly embraces also the natural but, for some, radical implication of voluntarism to the effect that God still could any time change the actual rules of his activity in nature.

Recording that, while Berkeley denies, Malebranche endorses the existence of eternal truths seems to provide us with a straightforward evidence of their disagreement. The standpoint that everything, even logical or mathematical truths, are created by God's will in the same way as the universe was is often regarded as one of the hallmarks of voluntarism—especially in the context of Cartesian philosophy. But Berkeley, unlike Malebranche, did not discuss the issue of eternal truths in this sense and did not commit himself to this Cartesian, extremely strong type of voluntarism. Though Berkeley considered such basic mathematical concepts as unity to be human conventions and abstractions (see *Principles* 13), and, consequently, claimed that "the Science of Numbers is subordinate to Practice" (*Principles* 120), as we have seen earlier, Berkeley does not think that God can override logical or conceptual truths and impossibilities. When he criticized the concept of eternal truth (discussed briefly in 1.1. as well), he simply denied the existence of any necessary law or truth in nature or rather the relevance of any necessary truths to nature. So, we must not be content with merely pointing out this verbal disagreement, because Malebranche does not speak about the same thing as Berkeley, i.e. the laws of nature—the topic I am primarily interested in in this section. In Malebranche's terminology, an eternal truth refers to something in God's mind that is independent of his will altogether, like mathematical and logical or even moral truths. The laws of nature are clearly not such, because the created world described or governed by these laws exists only because God willed to create and wills to maintain it. Still, as I showed, a Malebranchean law of nature can be regarded as hypothetically and extrinsically necessary in the sense that, given that he decides to create the world, God's will is determined by

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his intellectual nature to create the world, and subsequently act, in accordance with certain laws of nature. So, for Malebranche there is an important divide between the concept of eternal truth—which is an absolutely and intrinsically necessary truth—and that of the law of nature, which is only hypothetically and extrinsically necessary.[205] This helps us explain why Malebranche tends to suggest that laws of nature are contingent in *some* sense. On my interpretation, alluding to God's capability of not creating their referents and occasionally intervening with them, he only means that they are not necessary in the very same—i.e. absolute and intrinsic—sense as the eternal truths are. For Berkeley, by contrast, denying the existence of eternal truths amounts to the same as denying that there are necessary laws of nature in any of the senses discussed above.

As we have seen, Berkeley defines that laws of nature as the rules God generally follows in the production of our ideas. On my understanding, these rules are in fact idealizations of God's highly complex and specific activities in nature, hence the laws are best seen as *ceteris paribus*, not exceptionless, but useful regularities or tendencies. We learn these rules by experience and observation, more precisely as results of induction or generalization of God's orderly actions in nature.[206]

> […] Now the set rules or established methods, wherein the mind we depend on excites in us the ideas of sense, are called the *Laws of Nature*: and these *we learn by experience*, which *teaches us that such and such ideas are attended with such and such other ideas, in the ordinary course of things*. (*Principles* 30, my emphasis, quoted earlier in 2.2.)

What nowadays is often referred to as the Humean theory of laws, the view that there are only regularities but no necessary relations between the putative causes and effects in nature, was pretty popular in the period.[207] Though, as Berkeley emphasized early on,

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[205] For a short summary of this distinction, see *Meditation* VII, 12 / OCM X 73: "God has two kinds of laws which rule him in his conduct. The one is eternal and necessary, and this is order; the others are arbitrary, and these are the general laws of nature and of grace. But God established the latter only because order required that he act in that way." (translation from Riley 2003, 70.) Cf. *Treatise on Nature and Grace* 163, LO 14-15, 586-587 and *Dialogues* 8.2 / JS 129-130.

[206] Cf. similar passage in *Principles*: 31, 58–9, 60–5, 101–7, see also *Alciphron* IV.12 and VII.11. etc. Recently Ott argued against the regularity reading of the Berkeleyan laws, distinguishing the mere regularities from the rules God follows in producing the natural phenomena. Indeed, only the most general rules God follows are the laws of nature properly speaking. While he claims that it is not to constrain God, he refers only to the fact God can bring about miracles. As I have shown, this overlooks a deeper divergence between Malebranche and Berkeley.

[207] In fact, using the contemporary moniker ("Humean") is doing injustice not only to many of Hume's predecessors, but perhaps even to Hume himself. In any event, even if he really believed in the regularity

"[…] our knowlege of the Laws of nature is not perfect & adequate" (*Notebooks* 221), we can explain phenomena by reducing them to rules generalized from our observations of certain uniformities in nature.

> There are certain general laws that run through the whole chain of natural effects: these are learned by the observation and study of Nature, and are by men applied as well to the framing artificial things for the use and ornament of life, as to the explaining the various *phenomena*: which explication consists only in shewing the conformity any particular phenomenon hath to the general Laws of Nature, or, which is the same thing, in discovering the *uniformity* there is in the production of natural effects; as will be evident to whoever shall attend to the several instances, wherein philosophers pretend to account for appearances. That there is a great and conspicuous use in these regular constant methods of working observed by the Supreme Agent, […] (*Principles* 62.)

Discovering the regularities behind the divine activities help us not only in "framing artificial things for the use and ornament of life" but also predicting the future and understanding the ordinary course of nature. Indeed, as Berkeley puts it in *Principles* 105, the scientists "greater largeness of comprehension, whereby analogies, harmonies, and agreements are discovered in the works of Nature, and the particular effects explained, that is, reduced to general rules, […] grounded on the analogy, and uniformness observed in the production of natural effects […]" approximates divine omniscience by "extend[ing] our prospect beyond what is present, and near to us, and [enabling] us to make very probable conjectures, touching things that may have happened at very great distances of time and place, as well as to predict things to come".

Addressing one of the most basic problems of the standard regularity interpretation of the laws, in the *De Motu* Berkeley specifies that not all generalizations should count as a law of nature but only the most general ones, the axioms under which the most other generalizations and explanations can be subsumed.[208]

> Similarly in mechanical philosophy those are to be called principles, in which the whole discipline is grounded and contained, those primary laws of motions which have been proved by experiments, elaborated by reason and rendered universal. These laws of motion

theory of laws, as opposed to only expressing his scepticism about our abilities to discover the necessary rules of nature, it was not only him, but for instance also Locke, who made it clear that, even though there is or rather might be deeper, necessary, relations in nature, we have to live up with our generalizations (see *Essay* IV.iii.29). Of course, Berkeley is not a Humean in thinking that there is an objective grounding for the regular course of nature, namely God's (good)will.

[208] See Downing 2005a, 250. As Ott 2019 points out, this is a clear precursor to what is nowadays called the Humean Best System analysis of laws.

> are conveniently called principles, since from them are derived both general mechanical theorems and particular explanations of the phenomena. A thing can be said to be explained mechanically then indeed when it is reduced to those most simple and universal principles, and shown by accurate reasoning to be in agreement and connection with them. For once the laws of nature have been found out, then it is the philosopher's task to show that from the constant observance of these laws, that is from these principles, any phenomena necessarily follow. In that consist the explanation and solution of phenomena […] (*De Motu* 36-7.)

While the scientific method delineated in this passage is often seen as rejecting his early inductivism, I see it only an improvement and refinement of that method. Even in the diversely interpreted *Siris*, Berkeley seems to maintain his early empiricist approach to science, confirming that the discovery of the rules or methods generally applied by God in nature must be based on particular experiences of the divine action.[209] In passages like *Siris* 252, 254 and 295, he claims that *observing* the motions in nature and paying attention to the rules of the divine discourse or the uniformity of our *experiences* serve as the foundation for our understanding of the laws of nature.

> The laws of attraction and repulsion are to be regarded as laws of motion; and these only as *rules or methods observed in the productions of natural effects* […] (*Siris* 231.)

Though reasoning leads us to God, the real metaphysical cause, it is sense experience that reveals the patterns behind the ordinary course of nature.

> Sense and experience acquaint us with the course and analogy of appearances or natural effects. Thought, reason, intellect introduce us into the knowledge of their causes. (*Siris* 264.)

In the controversial section 228, contrasting this inductive method with the hypothetico-deductive model, he suggests that the laws of nature cannot be discovered without apt observation or by framing *a priori* hypotheses.

> It is one thing to arrive at general laws of nature from a contemplation of the phenomena, and another to frame an hypothesis, and from thence deduce the phenomena. Those who supposed epicycles, and by them explained the motions and appearances of the planets, may not therefore be thought to have discovered principles true in fact and nature. And, albeit

[209] As is often remarked, the *Siris* breaks with the style of Berkeley's earlier works and, for many, it also questions his strict commitment to immaterialism (see also footnote 166). In addition, many interpreters, including Moked (1971, 1988), emphasize the hypothetico-deductivism in the *Siris*. Downing (1995, 281 and 2005a, 264) also suggests that Berkeley relaxes his commitment to empiricism in this work. A related thesis of Downing (1995, 294-5) I take issue with in particular is that in the *Siris*, just as in the *De Motu*, Berkeley, through construing the Newtonian dynamics in an instrumentalist way, discards the inductivist approach to the laws of nature we found in the *Principles*.

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> we may from the premises infer a conclusion, it will not follow that we can argue reciprocally, and from the conclusion infer the premises. (*Siris* 228, emphasis added)

Moked (1971, 259-265), Downing (1995, 293-4) and Hight (2010, 26) all interpret this passage differently. According to them, Berkeley here offers two possible and legitimate methods of doing science: an inductive and a hypothetico-deductive model.[210] In contrast, on my less original reading, Berkeley plainly rejects the latter, and follows Newton's famous inductive principle.[211] In order to see this, we need to differentiate the method of inferring the existence of certain unperceived entities (like corpuscles) based on our actual experiences from the hypothetico-deductive model as Berkeley and Newton understood it, according to which we could discover the rules God established in nature by first framing some *a priori* hypotheses (for instance, as the Cartesians sought to do it, based on our concepts of divine nature or extension) then check if they can be used to deduce, i.e. calculate and predict our experiences accurately. While both rejected the latter as a scientific method of discovering the actual laws of nature, the former in an instrumentalist, or even realist, manner was not problematic for Berkeley, nor was it for Newton. I do not see any reason to think that the inductive understanding of nature Berkeley and Newton subscribed to necessarily excludes the supposition of unobserved microscopic entities. They might justify theorizations like this—deductions *from phenomena*, as Newton called it—in two ways: the experienced generalities might suggest the existence of some unobserved entities as an inference to the best explanation of the phenomena[212] or provide an analogical basis for anticipating or predicting that the observed structural regularities continue uniformly in the unobserved world, even if we

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[210] With primarily the *De Motu* in mind, Buchdahl writes in a similar vein that we should not simply conclude that "[…] Berkeley must be an "inductivist Newtonian", who is vocal in his opposition to 'hypotheses' […]." In fact, he claims that his idealism "drives Berkeley to a more sustained employment of a hypothetico-deductive approach." (Buchdahl 1969, 291, n1.)

[211] See, among others, the General Scholium of Book III of the *Principia*, which along with various methodological remarks from the *Opticks*, clearly made a great impression on Berkeley: "I have not as yet been able to deduce from phenomena the reason for these properties of gravity, and I do not feign hypotheses. For whatever is not deduced from the phenomena must be called a hypothesis; and hypotheses, whether metaphysical or physical, or based on occult qualities, or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy. In this experimental philosophy, propositions are deduced from the phenomena and are made general by induction." (Newton 1999, 943.)

[212] The entailment that we are justified to suppose nothing more than what is required by our experiences is endorsed by Berkeley, for instance, when claiming that "It doth not seem necessary, from the phenomena, to suppose any medium more active and subtle than light or fire" (*Siris* 225).

might never be in a position to confirm this assumption.[213] To be sure, an inductive generalization might not only include or extend to suppositions of directly not perceived but probabilistically inferred (if you like, *a posteriori* hypothesized) entities, but the inductive generalization itself might also be considered a hypothetical theory, insofar as new experiential data could restrict its scope or modify and specify how it should be formulated.[214] But while what Newton called a theory or proposition is ultimately based on experiences, even if what it presupposes is not directly perceived but only inferred from, or suggested by, our actual observations, the hypotheses both him and Berkeley denounced are not made on the basis of any earlier experiences, but being put forward straightaway as universal, "all-or-nothing" claims tested against our particular observations and experiments only afterwards.[215]

In her careful examination, Lisa Downing (1995, 294-5) points to two features of Newtonian dynamics which, she claims, led Berkeley to conclude that it falls into the hypothetico-deductive category.[216] First, it invokes forces, which do not, and cannot, have an experiential basis and hence cannot serve as the basis for an induction, but can be posited merely as a useful hypothesis. Secondly, as we have seen, in the *De Motu*,

[213] The uniformity of great and small is endorsed in *Siris* 234 and 283 for instance. Cf. Downing 1995, 295-6.

[214] Since even the most cautious induction is based on a limited amount of experience and always open to refinement, it yields only probable and fallible results or hypotheses (cf. *Siris* 295, quoted above), which is in line with Berkeley's early acknowledgment that "our knowledge of the Laws of nature is not perfect" (*Notebooks* 221). But, as Newton's fourth rule of natural philosophy points out, unlike in the case of the hypothetico-deductive model, where an incompatible result would simply falsify the proposed hypothesis, an inconsistent observation in itself does not falsify, or even raise serious doubts about, the inductive generalization, as the resulting qualifications needed to be added to the formulation just make it more precise (see Newton 1999, 796). Accordingly, I suggested earlier, for Berkeley the laws of nature need not to be exceptionless regularities, otherwise, we might think, by adding further and further qualifications we could easily reach such complexity that our statements about the generalities in nature would lose all of their explanatory and predictive power.

[215] Cf. Brook's analysis (1973, 96-98) of *Siris* 228, according to which, Berkeley follows Newton in rejecting what Brook calls *ad hoc* hypotheses, such as the Cartesian vortex-theory.

[216] While Downing related Berkeley's instrumentalism about the Newtonian dynamical concepts to the hypothetico-deductive model, and his realism about particles to inductivism, for Moked, in sharp contrast, Berkeley's commitment to the hypothetico-deducitve model is established by his assumption of unperceived particles, and the traditional inductivist picture is retained for the Newtonian approach of (primarily) the earlier works. In the earlier paragraph I was taking issue with Moked's association of the supposition of corpuscles with the hypothetico-deductive model. In this paragraph I will raise doubts about Downing's claim that Berkeley's understanding of the Newtonian dynamical concepts entails that he endorsed the hypothetico-deductive model.

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Berkeley regards a generalization as a genuine law of nature only if it enables us to deduce other regularities in nature. Indeed, a Newtonian law of motion might not correspond directly to any inductive generalization (see Downing 2005a, 250).[217] However, as we have seen (and as Downing is well aware) classifying the Newtonian approach into the hypothetico-deductive category would be a direct assault against Newton's own assessment. Moreover, while, as we have also seen, in other passages Berkeley makes clear his endorsement of, indeed admiration for, the Newtonian science, on the most natural reading of this passage, Berkeley is critical of the hypothetico-deductive model—after all, what it produces are mere hypotheses, not the actual laws of nature. Hence, it seems to me highly unlikely that Berkeley wanted to say in *Siris* 228 that Newton has employed the same methodology as Ptolemy and, indeed, has not "discovered *principles* true in fact and nature" (my emphasis).[218] Even though this quote taken in isolation might refer to the essentialist or realist understanding of the Newtonian dynamical concepts he criticizes in the *Siris* just as clearly as in *De Motu* (see for instance *Siris* 245), the context makes clear it is not the case.[219] In the quoted passage (and its continuation) the contrast Berkeley seeks to underline is between different methodologies and their capabilities of revealing the actual principles or structure of reality rather than between the metaphysical status of entities or properties the inductive generalizations describes and entities or properties the hypotheses posit to deduce the phenomena.

Moreover, it is unclear to me why speaking about forces in an anti-realist or instrumentalist way would mean that Berkeley breaches the limits of inductivism and surrenders to the hypothetico-deductive model? On my understanding, they are not necessarily competing theories. What Berkeley aims to do with the dynamic terminology

[217] Stoneham – Cei (2009, 77) also claims that Berkeley in the *De Motu* "is more open to there being projectible, highly general laws which are not based on induction", and, since "we may not have observed attraction (as opposed to its alleged effects)", "laws of attraction are not discovered by inductive generalization on experienced correlations".

[218] Cf. *Siris* 245, where Berkeley asserts that Newton "opened several deep secrets of nature".

[219] It is worth noting that, in Berkeley's view, Newton never thought that the laws of motion correspond to some forces inherent in the bodies (see, for instance, *De Motu* 17). For him, the Newtonian inductive science, as we have seen for instance in his letter to Johnson (*Works* 2.279) is absolutely compatible with the denial of physical forces. So, Berkeley could not have meant it as a criticism of Newton himself. To be fair, neither Downing nor Moked reads this passage to be critical of the hypothetico-deductivist approach.

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is not to hypothesize in an instrumentalist manner about hidden forces or causes in order to deduce the (otherwise unexplained) effects we experience but rather to provide us with a mathematical tool for abbreviating and simplifying complex inductive generalizations about various motions with the aim of making them easier to use for prediction and calculation.[220] But even if he thought that the dynamic concepts, unlike the supposition of corpuscles, can have no inductive, but only instrumentalist, justification, with respect to the subject matter of the passage—the laws of nature—it is clear that Berkeley does not want to deny that there are "principles true in fact and nature" (*Siris* 228). As we will see, the laws of attraction are indeed regarded as true laws of motion, insofar as they are proper generalizations based on, and in line with, the most convincing experiential and experimental data, revealing the nomological order God has decreed.[221] Also, the example of epicycles is interesting—in addition to my earlier suggestion that it would be deeply inappropriate, if not ironic, to associate it with Newton. For Berkeley, the hypothesis of epicycles is nothing like the Newtonian theory of universal attraction. To be sure, Berkeley criticizes the theory of epicycles not because it attributes anything (such as some inherent force, e.g. centripetal force) to the planets they do not really have (as opposed to speaking in instrumentalist terms), but because it is based on a hopeless methodology, which starts from a hypothesis that has no experiential grounding at all, trying merely to provide a theoretical framework to calculate and predict the observed movements of the planets. But, as Berkeley emphasizes, this method does not work the other way around (as he puts it, "it will not follow that we can argue reciprocally, and from the conclusion infer the premises"), that is, the experiences the hypotheses might help us predict and calculate cannot ground the truth of the theory as a genuine law of motion. Unlike with

[220] It does not mean that we can directly reduce all the force-talk to generalities of observed motions, because, as I suggested earlier, there might be inductive generalizations which include or extend to actually unobserved, and even (practically) unobservable, entities and motions.

[221] As far as I can see, Berkeley's approach to the laws of nature is rarely distinguished from his attitude towards their theoretical posits, such as forces. Downing, for instance, takes Berkeley's view to be that the Newtonian laws of motion are justified in the same instrumentalist way as the dynamical concepts are, as "their importance lies in their applicability, not in descriptive content (which Berkeley ultimately thinks they lack)" (Downing 2005a, 251). Recently, Ott 2019 challenged the instrumentalist reading of Berkeley, see also Hight 2010 and Peterschmitt 2009. For a bit more on my views on why Berkeley was not an instrumentalist, thinking that the laws of nature are grounded in the highly complex nomological reality God has established, see Bartha 2019.

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the dynamical concepts, the justification of a theory about the actual rules of nature cannot come merely from its utility or predictive power. Though the hypothesis of epicycles might be as useful in a predictions or calculations as the Newtonian theories about planetary motions, it is wrong since its methodology is invalid and inadequate to reveal the real rules according to which God tends to bring about the phenomena.[222]

That deduction or *a priori* reasoning has a role in Berkeley's philosophy of science should not bother us either. He never denied that it plays a part in discovering the laws of nature:

> The natural or mechanic philosopher endeavours to discover those laws by experiment and reasoning. (*Siris* 234)

By induction we come up with initial generalizations of the phenomena, but, as he realized from the *De Motu* onwards, we can regard only those generalizations as real laws of nature from which other less broad generalizations can be deduced. Of course, not only building this hierarchical structure of increasing levels of generality, but every single inductive generalization needs more than just mere observation, since we need to render them universal by pure reasoning and, possibly, formalization (see *De Motu* 36).[223] Nonetheless, even the most general laws as well as the way we organize the various regularities according to their levels of generality ultimately need to go back to the empirical data captured by the initial inductive generalizations. I see no reason to think with Downing and others that Berkeley meant anything more than this when acknowledged that mathematization, universal formulation, and even deduction are part of the essentially inductive method of discovering the laws of nature.

Of course, the identification of the laws of nature with the general rules idealized from God's orderly activity, emphasizing their contingency as well as the essentially inductive nature of their scientific discovery, should not surprise us, since, as I mentioned earlier

[222] Accordingly, in the *Analyst* 10, Berkeley warns us not to "confound the usefulness of a rule with the certainty of a truth". See the various assertions in the *Alciphron*, for instance II.24, III.16, IV.1. For an insightful analysis of how truth and usefulness, though related, come apart for Berkeley, see Pearce 2017a, 158-162.

[223] As Brook (1973, 91-92) maintains, the general rule or law of nature (referred to, for instance, in *Principles* 104) that is supposed to explain its particular instances should not be a simple inductive generalization but rather a mathematical law.

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(in 3.1, for instance), from the *Notebooks* on, Berkeley repeatedly identified nature with manifestation of God's will to *freely* produce some perceptions in our minds. In his own words, nature is nothing else but "the Ordinance of the *free Will* of God" (*Notebooks* 794, my emphasis).[224] In line with the divine language doctrine, he criticized the concept of "necessity of Nature" that allegedly links two perceptions and claimed that:

> I think not that things fall out of necessity, the connexion of no two Ideas is necessary. 'tis all the result of freedom i.e tis all Voluntary. (*Notebooks* 884.)

Berkeley leaves no doubt about his stance on necessity in the created world, firmly believing that the divine operation in nature, though constant, is absolutely free:

> Parmenides, who thought all things to be made by necessity or fate, understood justice and Providence to be the same with fate; which, how fixed and cogent soever with respect to man, may yet be voluntary with respect to God. And in the *Asclepian Dialogue* it is expressly said that *fate follows the decrees of God*. And indeed, as all the motions in nature are evidently the product of reason (Sect. 154), it should seem *there is no room for necessity in any other sense than that of a steady regular course*. (*Siris* 271, emphasis added)

Nothing is necessary in nature, because what is interpreted by some as necessity or fate is just the regularity which follows from the divine mind's free decisions. A voluntarist reading of these passages offers itself pretty naturally: after all, there is said to be no genuine—in the more-than-regularity—sense of necessity in nature. Looking at these passages on their own, however, they might show no more than that necessitarianism is false and the creation of the world is a contingent fact, which being compatible with hypothetical necessity of the laws is something Malebranche accepted too. Or, one might argue that, in these passages, Berkeley only refers to natural (Aristotelian) essentialism or intrinsic necessity, which is clearly unacceptable for an immaterialist.[225] To be sure, he straightforwardly condemns essentialism as based on premature generalizations:

> But we should proceed warily in such things: for we are apt to lay too great a stress on analogies, and to the prejudice of truth, humour that eagerness of the mind, whereby it is carried to extend its knowledge into general theorems. For example, gravitation, or mutual

[224] As mentioned in 2.1, Berkeley emphasizes the freedom of God and his actions in nature at various places. For instance, in *Passive Obedience* XIV, he claims that "Nature […] is nothing else but a series of *free actions* produced by the best and wisest Agent" (emphasis added). See also *Notebooks* 794, 884, *Theory of Vision Vindicated* 2.

[225] Cf. *Principles* 93. Another important benefit of doing away with material essences is that it protects us from the Lockean sort of skepticism, implied by the combination of the epistemological voluntarist position with the supposition of some hidden essences. See *Principles* 102 for instance.

> attraction, because it appears in many instances, some are straightway for pronouncing *universal*; and that to *attract, and be attracted by every other body, is an essential quality inherent in all bodies whatsoever*. Whereas it appears the fixed stars have no such tendency towards each other: and so far is that gravitation, from being *essential* to bodies, that, in some instances a quite contrary principle seems to shew it self: as in the perpendicular growth of plants, and the elasticity of the air. *There is nothing necessary or essential in the case, but it depends entirely on the will of the governing spirit*, who causes certain bodies to cleave together, or tend towards each other, according to various laws, whilst he keeps others at a fixed distance; and to some he gives a quite contrary tendency to fly asunder, just as he sees convenient. (*Principles* 106, emphasis added)

Gravitation is neither essential to bodies nor universally true of all objects at all times and places. It is just true in cases in which God decided to make it obtain for some, if any, reason.[226] As this example shows, we do not need to find anything necessarily grounding factor in the physical things to explain why a certain law of nature obtains. After all, an omnipotent spirit, "an Infinite Mind in the macrocosm or universe, with unlimited power" (*Siris* 154.), can do anything simply by willing it—indifferent to essences or the complex inner structures of things we might think are necessary to produce a certain natural phenomenon. In Berkeley' view, God's power and omnipotence clearly implies that he and his actions in the natural world are not bound by the essences of physical things:

> 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 doth: nothing being more evident, than that *an omnipotent spirit can indifferently produce every thing by a mere fiat or act of his will*. (*Principles* 152, emphasis added)

But, as these passages taken together might already suggest, we will see that Berkeley goes much further than Malebranche and denies that the laws of nature are necessary in any—even extrinsic or hypothetical—sense, because, in line with his divine psychology discussed in 2.5, there is nothing in the divine intellect or in God's nature that his will has to obey even when creating our ordinary perceptions.[227] This means that the laws of

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[226] Locke in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) claims in a similar vein that "it is evident, that by mere matter and motion, none of the great phænomena of nature can be resolved: to instance but in that common one of gravity, which I think impossible to be explained by any natural operation of matter, or any other law of motion, but the positive will of a superior Being so ordering it." (*Works* IX, 184.)

[227] As I mentioned in the Introduction, the disagreement with his "first proselyte", Dr. Arbuthnot, was about the necessity of the laws of nature: "As to what you write of Dr. Arbuthnot's not being of my opinion, it is true there has been some difference between us concerning some notions relating to the necessity of the laws of nature, but this does not touch the main point of the nonexistence of what philosophers call material substance, against which he has acknowledged he can object nothing." (*Works*

nature are genuinely, and in a strong sense, contingent, that is, they could have been, in fact, still could be, different to those God actually established, and that every event in nature, even such universal ones as the case of gravity, "depends entirely on the will of the governing spirit" (*Principles* 106). The laws of nature, instead of being metaphysically necessary, are subject to God's limitless will, as nothing else but the free and arbitrary divine "will constitutes the Laws of Nature" (*Principles* 32), and God freely, indifferently and arbitrarily established even the rules themselves according to which he ordinarily acts.

> […] there is an omnipresent eternal Mind, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and *according to such rules as he himself hath ordained*, and are by us termed the Laws of Nature. (*Three Dialogues* 230-1, emphasis added)

What we take as the laws of nature function as prescriptions, limitation or conditions only for the physical and human actions, but not for God's. The divine being, who, as he puts it in the *Three Dialogues* 219, "is himself above all limitation or prescription whatsoever," does not have to comply with them—even if we are talking only about non-miraculous activity in nature.

In the *Siris*, Berkeley makes it particularly clear that everything in nature depends on God's will in a strong sense: not only in the sense that he actualizes and executes the possible laws of nature through his volitions, but also that it is absolutely up to his "good pleasure" what and how he creates:[228]

8.70.) Though I could not identify the exact issue they did not agree on, this passage might confirm my main point in this chapter, suggesting that Berkeley did not regard the laws of nature as even extrinsically necessary—given that the disagreement between them cannot concern the intrinsic necessity, as immaterialism, accepted by Dr. Arbuthnot as well, excludes its possibility.

[228] Using terminology similar to Berkeley's, Locke claims in the *Essay* that "the original Rules and Communication of Motion being such, wherein we can discover no natural connexion with any *Ideas* we have, we cannot but ascribe them to the arbitrary Will and *good Pleasure* of the Wise Architect" (IV.iii.29, emphasis added). See also Stuart 2013, 286-287. With regard to the infamous possibility of thinking matter, he also claims that whether matter is made to think or not is determined "merely by the *good pleasure* and Bounty of the Creator" (*Essay* IV.iii.6, emphasis added). Given that we do not really know the nature of thinking, the concept of thinking matter, *as far as we know*, does not contain any contradiction. This possibility is compared with the explanation of how matter affects the soul, which, being equally unknown to us, we attribute "wholly to the good Pleasure of our Maker". See also various passages in the *Examination*, for instance 3, 14, 27, 35, 47. Cf. Schuurman 2018. Of course, his epistemological voluntarism is not across the board, as he maintains some intelligibility of strict mechanism, the view that bodies can interact only at contact by impact (see for instance IV.iii.13). Like Malebranche, he thinks that our idea of body includes solidity (or impenetrability) and hence limits the possible outcomes of collision God can choose from (see Stuart 2013, 290-291). But he does not think with Malebranche that God's nature, in addition to his idea

> Why may we not suppose certain idiosyncrasies, sympathies, oppositions, in the solids, or fluids, or animal spirit of a human body, with regard to the fine insensible parts of minerals or vegetables, impregnated by rays of light of different properties, not depending on the different size, figure, number, solidity, or weight of those particles, *nor on the general laws of motion*, nor on the density or elasticity of a medium, but *merely and altogether on the good pleasure of the Creator, in the original formation of things*? From whence divers unaccountable and unforeseen motions may arise in the animal economy; from whence also various peculiar and specific virtues may be conceived to arise, residing in certain medicines, and not to be explained by mechanical principles. For although the general known laws of motion are to be deemed mechanical, yet peculiar motions of the insensible parts, and peculiar properties depending thereon, are occult and specific. (*Siris* 239)

This passage straightforwardly denies both natural essentialism grounding the intrinsic necessity of the laws ("not depending on the different size, figure, number, solidity, or weight of those particles") and a more Malebranchean intellectualist alternative, according to which general laws, for instance of motion, either fully determine or significantly constrain the various processes and interactions God could actualize in nature. The way God acts in nature is not only independent of the natures or causal powers posited by the materialists in the physical objects, but even of any universal rule, like a general law of motion, that could necessarily determine how God has to act in all instances and circumstances in the non-miraculous course of nature.[229] As we have already seen, Berkeley often emphasizes that overstretched generalizations and claims about universality need to be handled with caution, if not suspicion, since the peculiar, specific and even "occult" ways God implements in nature are hardly accountable by simple mechanical laws or indeed by any general principle.

> Some corpuscularian philosophers of the last age have indeed attempted to explain the formation of this world and its phenomena by a few simple laws of mechanism. But if we consider the various productions of nature, in the mineral, vegetable, and animal parts of the creation, I believe we shall see cause to affirm that not any one of them has hitherto been, or can be, accounted for on principles merely mechanical; and that nothing could be more vain and imaginary than to suppose with Descartes that merely from a circular motion's being impressed by the supreme Agent on the particles of extended substance, the

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of body, determines it to one specific outcome, excluding the metaphysical possibility of attraction for instance (even if we might not be absolutely sure what this particular outcome is). This difference makes him more in line with Berkeley's view on the (status of) the laws of nature than Malebranche.

[229] As he puts it in the *Siris* 160 with regard to the secondary causes, the generality of nature—the laws of nature—too is "[…] necessary to assist, not the Governor, but the governed". To be quoted in full in the next section.

> whole world, with all its several parts, appurtenances, and phenomena, might be produced by a necessary consequence from the laws of motion. (*Siris* 232.)

The Cartesian laws of motion, especially the infamous vortex-theory, fail to do justice to the variety and diversity of the natural phenomena. As Berkeley makes it clear, it is not a personal failure, but the very idea of reducing the various motions in nature to "a few simple laws of mechanism" necessarily and universally determining them is fundamentally misguided. The world is not "going like a clock or machine by itself, according to the laws of nature, without the immediate hand of the artist" (*Siris* 233). In order to make sense of the variety of the phenomena, God's free and arbitrary activity is needed to be acknowledged in every particular type of motion. Note that it is not merely to advocate occasionalism—the view that it is God himself, and not the physical objects, that acts in nature through the general laws of motion—or to claim that God can bring about miracles any time he wants. More importantly, the position Berkeley holds is that the particular ways of God's ordinary activity, however regular they are one by one, cannot be reduced to a couple of general principles.

> All the phenomena in nature are produced by motion. There appears a uniform working in things great and small, by attracting and repelling forces. But the particular laws of attraction and repulsion are various. (*Siris* 234)

While our experiences of the particular phenomena are clear, sticking to general laws to explain them might lead in some cases to far-fetched and obscure or, as he puts it in *Siris* 237, "incomprehensible" theories and conclusions.[230] We just have to accept that we cannot explain everything in nature by a few universal principles, let them be Cartesian or Newtonian laws.[231]

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[230] While, as we have seen, the danger of overgeneralization is also mentioned in the *Principles* 106 and 108, I have to add that, by the time of writing the *Siris*, Berkeley realized that due to his conception of God and nature we can have even less confidence in any universal law.

[231] As we have seen, Berkeley nonetheless prefers the Newtonian attractionism to the Cartesian strict mechanism. The reason I think is not that Newtonian attractionism has more empirical basis or predictive success, but rather that it allows for a voluntarist understanding of God, according to which it is just as pointless to seek to understand God's nature or any eternal truths in order to deduce the laws of nature as it is to try to discover the hidden essence or natures of bodies. The real task and aim of science are rather to describe, and cautiously generalize from, the observed regularities, correspondence and analogies discovered by experiment (and subsequent reasoning) in nature. On these principles, universal gravitation cannot be rejected as an obscure phenomenon, which, allegedly unlike the impact between particles, has no objective grounding in the nature of bodies or in the *a priori* principles of divine action. Of course, though he is silent about this commitment for the most part in the *Siris*, the concept of extension was a non-starter for the *immaterialist* Berkeley, which served as a basis for the Cartesian and even occasionalist

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> The minute corpuscles are impelled and directed, that is to say, moved to and from each other, according to various rules or laws of motion. The laws of gravity, magnetism, and electricity are diverse. *And it is not known what other different rules or laws of motion might be established by the Author of nature*. Some bodies approach together, others fly asunder, and perhaps some others do neither. When salt of tartar flows *per deliquium*, it is visible that the particles of water floating in the air are moved towards the particles of salt, and joined with them. And when we behold vulgar salt not to flow *per deliquium*, *may we not conclude that the same law of nature and motion doth not obtain between its particles and those of the floating vapours*? A drop of water assumes a round figure, because its parts are moved towards each other. But the particles of oil and vinegar have no such disposition to unite. And when flies walk in water without wetting their feet, it is attributed to a repelling force or faculty in the fly's feet. But *this is obscure, though the phenomenon be plain*. (*Siris* 235.)

As Berkeley makes clear in *Siris* 261, "in the mundane system, the steady observance of certain laws of nature, in the grosser masses and more conspicuous motions, doth not hinder but a voluntary agent may sometimes communicate particular impressions to the fine æthereal medium". Indeed, God might act in radically different ways than how we imagine it right now, and we might not be able to figure out "what other different rules or laws of motion might be established by the Author of nature" (*Siris* 235), since "divers unaccountable and unforeseen motions may arise" (*Siris* 239) at any time or place, especially with regard to the directly not perceivable microworld.[232]

> So likewise, how to explain all those various motions and effects by the density and elasticity of æther seems *incomprehensible* (Sects. 153, 162). For instance, why should the acid particles draw those of water and repel each other? Why should some salts attract vapours in the air, and others not? Why should the particles of common salt repel each other, so as not to subside in water? Why should the most repellent particles be the most attractive upon contact? Or why should the repellent begin where the attractive faculty leaves off? *These, and numberless other effects, seem inexplicable on mechanical principles, or otherwise than by recourse to a mind or spiritual agent* (Sects. 154, 220). Nor will it suffice from present phenomena and effects,

advocates of strict mechanism, entailing eternal truths about the impenetrability of bodies, the plenum of the universe and the necessity of contact action. But, for Berkeley, we need to find no justification whatsoever for attractionism besides that we experience, and infer indirectly based on the phenomena, that things seem to attract and repel one another. Strict mechanism, with its intellectualist background assumptions, wants to reduce these experiences to more basic terms, allegedly more comprehensible, more real and more in accordance with the intelligible nature of matter or with the intellectual nature of the divinity who moves things around. For Newtonians and/or voluntarists, on the other hand, the laws of nature do not have to, in fact, cannot, be grounded on our concept of the perfect being or of the nature of body (see for instance Newton 1962, 138).

[232] Cf. *Siris* 131-134 for an application of this method. Interestingly, in a quite modern way, Berkeley makes a distinction between the macro- and the microphysical. Despite a general uniformity or analogy between "things great and small" (*Siris* 234.), while latter seems to obey the observed regularities more faithfully, the latter is much more unpredictable and chaotic. Nonetheless, as *Principles* 106 and *Siris* 235 suggest, gravity is not universally true of the medium-sized dry goods either.

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> through a chain of natural causes and subordinate blind agents, to trace a divine Intellect as the remote original cause, that first created the world, and then set it a-going. We cannot make even one single step in accounting for the phenomena without admitting the immediate presence and immediate action of an incorporeal Agent, *who connects, moves, and disposes all things according to such rules, and for such purposes, as seem good to Him*. (*Siris* 237.)

This passage reinforces not only that a lot of "effects, seem inexplicable on mechanical principles", or that the divine actions are clearly not restricted by the essences or powers of bodies, as God acts according to any rule or purpose that "seem[s] good to Him". It even mentions that we have no direct knowledge of these purposes, if any, behind the divine decisions, and we can only figure them out from the effects retrospectively. With the quoted qualification, however, Berkeley might have wanted to add a stronger voluntarist twist to the statement as well. Of course, this clause might be endorsed by an intellectualist as well in the sense that God needs to regard whatever he is going to create as good, but, on my reading, in this particular context it more aptly expresses the voluntarist thought that, beyond the fact that God decided so, no reason, rule or purpose of the divine action is to be looked for to account for any natural event. God wills things *just because* he does, and his actions and decisions require no underlying reason or principles to ground and justify them.[233] In contrast to supposing some autonomous and self-sufficient laws simply got up and running by a divine intellect, the only proper way to account for the phenomena is accepting and starting from the arbitrary nature of the divine agent's immediate actions in nature. So, this passage concerns not only, as I noted earlier, the causal or metaphysical explanation of nature, but also the status of the laws of nature and the proper way of doing science. In other words, it claims not only that God is the real cause of natural events, but also that this cause is to be construed as a free agent acting according to rules arbitrarily established by him, as opposed to a divine intellect which in creating the world merely puts some principles and/or natural causes into operation and motion. As *Siris* 232 and 237 suggested, were God to act simply by executing some necessary laws, he might just leave them to do the work on their own. If

[233] Cf. *Principles* 106, claiming that God acts in nature "just as he sees convenient". Boyle, who is widely regarded as a voluntarist, in his *Some Physico-Theological Considerations about the Possibility of the Resurrection* similarly claims that "[…] the most free and powerful Author of those laws of nature, according to which all the phenomena of qualities are regulated, may (*as he thinks fit*) introduce, establish or change them in any assigned portion of matter" (Boyle 1991, 207, emphasis added).

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God's role is only to bring the world about with laws that are necessary and universal, it seems to leave, apart from his keeping the world and its laws in existence, all of God's direct involvement, his particular decisions and activities redundant.[234] In this sense, intellectualism and the uncritical adherence to the general mechanical laws of nature might easily lead to deism, and hence was a deeply problematic set of theological, metaphysical and natural philosophical views for Berkeley.

Whiles *some* of the passages in the *Siris* are open to an epistemic interpretation as well, others, such as *Siris* 239, emphasizing God's good pleasure and freedom in deciding about the laws of nature as well as the particularity and arbitrariness of his actions suggest that Berkeley went further than merely maintaining an epistemological voluntarist view. On this stronger, metaphysically construed, voluntarist worldview, God does not follow necessarily any intellectual principles that could ground the most basic laws of motion. Accordingly, in the early *Notebooks* Berkeley explicitly denied that there are any necessary truths with regard to the created world, either understood intrinsically or merely extrinsically and hypothetically.

> Let any Man shew me a Demonstration not verbal that does not depend either on some false principle or at best on some principle of Nature which is ye effect of God's will and we know not how soon it may be changed. Qu: wt becomes of the aeternae veritates? Ansr they vanish (*Notebooks* 734-5.)

Even with regard to the most extrinsic, or, if you like, less intellectualist, form of metaphysical necessity (controversially advocated by Descartes), Berkeley claims that we cannot appeal simply to the immutability of God's will so as to maintain the necessity or eternality of some truths. Since God freely made all the laws of nature, including the allegedly eternal truths, by an arbitrary choice, we have no reason to deny that he might change them any time—it is not only that we can be mistaken in our expectations about the future laws of nature, but God can indeed change the rules according to which he acts in the ordinary course of nature. On the critical point of talking down the relevance of the divine will's immutability, Berkeley agrees with Malebranche, but there is a crucial difference with regard to their positive views. For Malebranche, that the immutability of

[234] Cf. Descartes AT 8-1: 61/CSM 1:240, who by claiming that the laws of nature are secondary and particular *causes* might have wanted to say that they are causally efficacious on their own.

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the divine will, which he endorses nonetheless,[235] is simply not sufficient *in itself* for saving the eternality of certain truths shows that we rather need to regard their content as independent of the divine will altogether.[236] While, as we have seen earlier, the laws of nature, as opposed to the proper eternal truths, are immutable and necessary not intrinsically, but extrinsically, as the consequence of the determining factors of God's intellectual nature, even this understanding of the laws counts as intellectualism in a more substantive sense than what the immutability of the divine will entails for Descartes, leaving no role in determining the content, but only the role of execution, to the will. For Berkeley, by contrast, we cannot even know for sure that God will not change the laws he established, as even the content of the laws depend so heavily—in an "absolute and immediate" sense (cf. *Three Dialogues* 219)—on his free will in the first place. As he reinforces it in the *Principles*, it renders *a priori* demonstration about nature impossible and leaves us with one way of doing science, namely observing the perceptions produced by God and coming up with idealized generalizations about them.

> [...] by a diligent observation of the phenomena within our view, we may discover the general laws of Nature, and from them deduce the other phenomena, I do not say demonstrate; for all deductions of that kind depend on a supposition that the Author of Nature always operates uniformly, and in a constant observance of those rules we take for principles: which we cannot evidently know. (*Principles* 107.)

[235] Malebranche accepts that "all the natural laws of the communication of motion are but the consequences of the *immutable volitions of God*, who always acts in the same way" (*Elucidation* X, LO 466, my emphasis) Cf. *Dialogues* 7.9. / JS 115: "From all eternity God has willed, and to all eternity He will continue to will—or, to speak more accurately, God wills unceasingly though without variation, without succession, without necessity—everything he will do in the course of time." See also *Treatise on Ethics* 158, claiming that God is "always immutable in His conduct".

[236] See LO 615, OCM III 312: "[…] if eternal laws and truths depended on God, if they had been established by a free volition of the Creator, in short, if the Reason we consult were not necessary and independent, it seems evident to me that there would no longer be any true science and that we might be mistaken in claiming that the arithmetic or geometry of the Chinese is like our own. For in the final analysis, if it were not absolutely necessary that twice four be eight, or that the three angles of a triangle be equal to two right angles, what assurance would we have that these kinds of truths are not like those that are found only in certain universities, or that last only for a certain time? *Do we clearly conceive that God cannot stop willing what He has willed with an entirely free and indifferent will? Or rather, do we clearly see that God could not have willed certain things, for a certain time, for a certain place, for certain people, or for certain kinds of beings-given, as some would have it, that He was entirely free and indifferent in His willing*? As for me, I can conceive no necessity in indifference, nor can I reconcile two things that are so opposite." (emphasis added) Accordingly, "power or will adds nothing to the eternal law, to the relations of perfection which subsist between the eternal and immutable ideas" (*Reflexions* XVIII, OCM XVI 99, translation from Riley 2003, 76).

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This is another reason why, as he suggested in the *Siris* as well, a law of nature needs not to be, and cannot be justified as, strictly universal. The point is not simply that the laws are metaphysically contingent due to the possibility of miracles. Of course, miracles have a pretty natural place in his philosophy of nature, indeed, more natural than in Malebranche's, since when God does a miracle he needs no higher-order principle making him overwrite the law of nature in question, but simply contradicts our expectations based on inductive reasoning. But the more interesting points these passages want to stress is that even in the regular course of action, as *Notebooks* 734 suggests, God can change the very principles of his actions, construed as nothing else but the effects of his will. As a consequence of the highly complex and arbitrary activity of God in nature, as *Principles* 107 suggests, even the rules "we take for principles" should not be regarded as universally true.

So, while for Malebranche the laws of nature, though executed or even constituted by the divine will, originates in, and are prescribed by, the divine intellect, Berkeley understood the laws of nature as metaphysically ungrounded rules behind God's arbitrarily enacted particular volitions and decrees.[237] It is not to say that there is no objective nomological order in nature, it is just that it is highly complex and deeply contingent, that is, the rules God tends to follow, i.e. the laws of nature, are not necessary in metaphysically or even nomologically. In contrast to Malebranche, Berkeley thought that philosophy of nature requires nothing necessary, essential or universal in or outside the divine intellect.[238] It is explicitly stated with respect to his famous criticism of

[237] As I mentioned earlier, Ott (2019) claims that Berkeley regarded the laws of nature as the most general rules of God's actions in more or less in a Malebranchean manner, though without attributing them any causal power. As he puts it, trying to address the question of what role these rules could have for God, "Berkeley seems to treat them as reminders God gives himself: in situation x, bring about ideas y–z." (Ott 2019, 4.) While he mentions that it "hardly seems consistent with divine omniscience", it seems to be definitely incompatible with Berkeley's criticism of occasionalism, according to which it is absurd to assume the existence of anything like notes or marks in the mind of God guiding his actions—an idea "too extravagant to deserve a confutation" (*Principles* 71). On my reading, these rules are not pre-given to God, but it is us who come up with them to understand the complex patterns of his activity in nature.

[238] Malebranche explicitly express this conviction in *Tenth Elucidations of the Search after Truth*: "[…] if order and eternal laws were not immutable by the necessity of their nature, the foundation of the clearest and strongest arguments of religion would seemingly be destroyed, as well as freedom and the most certain of the sciences. If this order depends on God's free decree, it will always be necessary to call upon God to learn of His decree […]" (LO 615-6). As I tried to prove, Berkeley indeed thinks that with regard to our understanding of the natural world it should "always be necessary to call upon God to learn of His decree".

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abstraction in an unpublished passage in which, I would conjecture, he has Malebranche and the "English Malebranche", John Norris, in mind.

> This being rightly consider'd I believe we shall not be found to have any great need of those eternal, immutable, universal ideas about which the philosophers keep such a stir and without which they think there can be no science at all. (*First draft of the Introduction to the Principles* 16, Works 2.132.)

This conviction is reflected in one of the crucial passages of the *Principles* itself, where Berkeley claims that the correspondences, regularities and analogies we observe in the world does not correspond to any necessary relation between physical things or eternal essences.

> […] from what hath been premised no reason can be drawn, why the history of Nature should not still be studied, and observations and experiments made, which, that they are of use to mankind, and enable us to draw any general conclusions, *is not the result of any immutable habitudes, or relations between things themselves*, but only of GOD's goodness and kindness to men in the administration of the world. (*Principles* 107.)

On my reading of this passage, Berkeley contrasts his natural philosophy not only with materialism but also with a Malebranchean sort of intellectualism. My suspicion is that by the phrase "immutable habitudes", however obsolete it sounds to us today, Berkeley refers to the then well-known Malebranchean-Platonist alternative to the materialist concept of natural essentialism or the Aristotelian sort of intrinsic necessity ("relations between things themselves"). Norris used the expressions *eternal* or *immutable habitudes* particularly often, for instance, in his *An Essay towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World* he writes that "[…] to the premised general notion of eternal truths, that they are eternal habitudes of things, we may now […] venture to add this more explicit one, viz. that they are *habitudes that are between divine ideas*, or the intelligible essences of things in the mind of God." (Norris, *Essay* 326.) Against this background, Berkeley argues that observations allows us to make general conclusions about nature, with are based not on immutable relations discovered in nature or in God's intellect between divine ideas and their necessary order, but rather on experiencing and understanding the patterns through which God's benevolent particular volitions tend to be working in the physical world. As he puts it in the *Principles* 31, that we have practical and scientific knowledge of the world is "not by discovering any necessity conexion between our ideas, but only by the

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observation of the settled laws of Nature," which are, as he adds in the next sentence, constituted merely by God's will.

Moreover, as I will further elaborate it in the next section, unlike Malebranche, Berkeley never argues that some essential feature of God's nature (like his irresistible preference to choose the simplest or most general possibility) determines how he will act in the created world. It is sometimes suggested—based on passages like *Principles* 32 and 107—that goodness is supposed to play that role.[239] However, as Schmaltz (2008, 310-11) pointed it out, goodness tells us virtually nothing about which particular physical law was or at least could be enacted, while we can see how simplicity or immutability at least limits the possible options.[240] The only thing God's goodness towards us reveals to us and requires from him is that his actions should be orderly to the extent that we can make generalizations useful for our scientific and pragmatic purposes, allowing us to make reasonably reliable predictions.[241] Also, for Berkeley, God's goodness is not a mark of perfection included in his *a priori* concept as an intrinsic aspect of the divine nature, but experienced in his continuous acting in the world to our benefit and for our "good". Indeed, as he puts it in *Principles* 100, we do not have an abstract idea of goodness "separated from everything that is good", but can understand it only in certain contexts, construed as particular goods for or to something or someone. As we have seen in chapter II, we start with our experiences from which we can gather some knowledge about God, not the other way around. Accordingly, based on the many goods God has

[239] For instance, Kendrick argues that "though the arbitrarily instituted relations are contingent—they could have been instituted by God differently—they could not have been instituted so as to bring about the creature's ill-being, that is, contrary to God's benevolence. The omnipotence of Berkeley's God is constrained by his benevolence and wisdom." (Kendrick 2014, 12.) Cf. Ott 2019, 4, especially fn. 15, and Schmaltz 2013 (see next footnote).

[240] Nonetheless in his other work, Schmaltz writes that "Berkeley retains the emphasis in Malebranche on the need to appeal to the reasons that govern the divine will in order to explain the centrality of general laws in the natural and moral realms" (2013, 112.) and that "Berkeley appeals to divine goodness in explaining God's action in accord with general laws rather than, as in Malebranche, God's desire for simplicity." (2013, footnote 18.) But, as I argued in various places, you will not become an intellectualist just because you think that there are some non-determining reasons for the general tendency of God's actions, namely fostering our well-being and understanding of nature.

[241] While divine goodness might have a more relevant role when it comes to morality, on my reading of Berkeley, in ethics, just as in physics, there is no standard pre-given to God independent of our interests. Unfortunately, I do not have room here to examine the undeniably intricate relationship between divine goodness and morality. For a little, though, see footnote 47.

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presented us with so far, we can form a probable expectation that he will keep doing so and acting in similarly regular ways in the future, without imposing any restrictions on his volitions.

III.5. THE ORIGIN OF ORDER IN NATURE, THE SIMPLICITY PRINCIPLE AND COLLIER

Since Berkeley's voluntarism is conspicuously reflected in his understanding of the general order of nature, a few more words on the origin or metaphysical grounding of regularity experienced in the created world might be conducive to differentiate more clearly Malebranche's intellectualism from Berkeley's voluntarism. It is especially important because commentators, from McCracken, through Downing, Schmaltz and Ott, often point to a fundamental similarity between their understandings of order. Sometimes it is even suggested that Berkeley agreed with Malebranche that simplicity is an essential feature of the divine nature, manifesting itself in his orderly actions of the created world. To show that it is far from being the case, I will contrast Berkeley not only with Malebranche, but also with his English immaterialist follower Collier. It is especially remarkable that, unlike Collier, Berkeley resisted the temptation to construe the simplicity principle in an intellectualistic manner, even though it offered him an easy route to prove the impossibility of matter.

Though acknowledging that the remarkable constancy of physical events might lead us away from realizing the important role of God's will in nature (see *Principles* 32), as we have seen earlier, Berkeley indeed agrees with Malebranche that the generality of nature expresses God's perfection more clearly than any miracle.[242] For Berkeley, though God's activity in nature is absolutely free and arbitrary, it is not at all capricious or whimsical. His "operations are regular and uniform" (*Principles* 57), and the ideas of sense "are not excited at random, as those which are the effects of human wills often are, but in a regular train or series […]" (*Principles* 30). As we have seen earlier in this chapter, it is due to this regularity freely and kindly willed by God that we can discover correspondences and

[242] See, for instance, Malebranche, *Elucidation* XV, LO 662-3, quoted in footnote 201-2.

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analogies in the natural world, figure out its laws, and predict with high probability what could happen in the future (see for instance *Principles* 65 and 107).

But what I want to stress, yet again, that Berkeley does not gloss the providential order of the world in an intellectualistic way, as Malebranche is inclined to do through grounding our understanding of God's regular actions on the concept of his perfect intellectual nature. As we have seen earlier in 2.5, for Malebranche, "God cannot will disorder", and even he must submit himself to divine laws of simplicity and generality, with his *essentially* general volitions necessarily following the immutable archetype of order contemplated by his intellect.[243] As I discussed, Berkeley generally rejects the Cartesian idea that we can gain knowledge about the created world based on an *a priori* notion of God's nature, but with regard to the idea of simplicity—which is so important to Malebranche and his followers—Berkeley specifically claims that God's "thrifty management" is not a feature we should base our concept of divine wisdom on. After all, why would someone who is equally capable of bringing about every alternative be intrinsically inclined to choose the simplest option?

> 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 doth: nothing being more evident, than that an omnipotent spirit can indifferently produce every thing 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. (*Principles* 152.)

His denial that God's nature requires that he act in the simplest way does not prevent Berkeley from exploiting a simplicity principle against views like Malebranche's, which suppose the existence of some totally redundant entities, namely, the inert and imperceptible matter.

[243] See *Elucidation* X, LO 616-7: "If it is not a necessary order according to which man be made for his Author and that our will conform to the order that is the essential and necessary rule of God's will, if it is not true that actions are good or evil as they conform or not with an immutable and necessary order and that this same order requires that the former be rewarded and the latter punished, finally, if all men do not naturally have a clear idea of order, but *an order that is such that God Himself cannot will otherwise than as this order prescribes (because God cannot will disorder*), then surely I can see nothing but universal confusion." (my emphasis). Cf. LO 586-587, and many other passages I quoted earlier.

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> 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. (*Principles* 19.)
>
> And if it pass for a good argument against other hypotheses in the sciences, that they suppose Nature or the divine wisdom to make something in vain, or do that by tedious round about methods, which might have been performed in a much more easy and compendious way, what shall we think of that hypothesis which supposes the whole world made in vain? (*Three Dialogues* 214.)
>
> As to the opinion that there are no corporeal causes, this has been heretofore maintained by some of the Schoolmen, as it is of late by others among the modern philosophers, who though they allow matter to exist, yet will have God alone to be the immediate efficient cause of all things. These men saw, that amongst all the objects of sense, there was none which had any power or activity included in it, and that by consequence this was likewise true of whatever bodies they supposed to exist without the mind, like unto the immediate objects of sense. But then, that they should suppose an innumerable multitude of created beings, *which they acknowledge are not capable of producing any one effect in Nature, and which therefore are made to no manner of purpose, since God might have done every thing as well without them; this I say, though we should allow it possible, must yet be a very unaccountable and extravagant supposition*. (*Principles* 53, emphasis added)

Interestingly, though commentaries on these passages regularly neglect this, Berkeley does not assert here that God's nature—with his essential preference for simplicity—makes it metaphysically or extrinsically impossible that matter exist.[244] Clearly, one does not need to make the commitment that God's nature requires that he act in the simplest way even if one wants to exploit a simplicity principle against views like Malebranche's—especially if these thinkers otherwise accept that God's nature requires the simplest or most general action.[245] Berkeley simply claims that without any reason suggesting the contrary—rendering it at least a little bit reasonable—it would be insensible from us to suppose the existence of causally inert and explanatorily useless material substances, i.e. that God acted in an unnecessarily complicated and indirect way. For Berkeley, the

[244] Many interpreters have not only overlooked this but, indeed, basically interpreted Berkeley as an intellectualist on this point, see for instance Ablondi 2005, 495: "it would seem that any material world would have been needlessly created, and this is contrary to God's nature as one who does nothing in vain and who operates always in the most economical of manners." Berman (1994, 40-41) even found an inconsistency between these assertions and the *Principles* 152, just quoted.

[245] So, there is clearly an *ad hominem* character in the quote from the *Three Dialogues* at least ("*if* it pass for a good argument against other hypotheses in the sciences"), aimed to defeat a Malebranchean or occasionalist alternative on its own ground. See also *Three Dialogues* 219, quoted in II.2, where the existence of a "lifeless inactive instrument" is suggested "to be incompatible with the infinite perfection of God" and hence untenable by Hylas's (or Malebranche's) "own confession".

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simplicity principle entails nothing more than that the burden of proof is on the proposer of an entity that is not necessary to explain the phenomena in question.

Many of his contemporaries recognized the inevitability of immaterialism in Malebranche's philosophy. For our purposes, the case of his fellow idealist Arthur Collier is the most relevant. Arguing for the conclusion that even if it were not intrinsically impossible, the totally unknown and unperceivable matter would be extrinsically impossible, Collier makes use of the principle of sufficient reason, the principle that God cannot do anything without having a sufficient reason or purpose for doing so.[246]

> a useless creature [an imperceptible matter] cannot possibly be made, when we regard its cause, viz. God, who can do nothing to no purpose, by reason of his *wisdom*. Here then lies the *impediment* in spoken of in the *cause*, which makes it extrinsically, but yet really impossible, that there should be any such world. I say *really* so, because the wisdom by which God acts is necessary and immutable; and therefore if it be simply against the order of wisdom to do an useless act, the impediment against the doing of it is to the full as invincible as if a repugnancy were found in the idea or conception of the thing itself […] and consequently an useless effect is a real impossibility. (*Clavis* 67-68.)

Since God could create our perceptions in a simpler way, without the unnecessary assumption of matter, there is absolutely no need and hence no sufficient reason for his making use of matter. If this is true, and matter being imperceptible is redundant for perception, then God *cannot* even do so, as it would be in conflict with the order of wisdom according which he acts necessarily. Consequently, even if—and it is a big if for Collier—matter is logically possible, it is not only an unnecessary assumption but also utterly (though, as far as this argument goes, only extrinsically) impossible.

This was a fashionable argument in the period, used not only by Collier but raised as an objection to Malebranche by Locke, or employed in a more positive way by Bayle, Lanion and many others. Locke asked Malebranche the rhetorical question: "since God does all things by the most compendious ways, what need is there that God should make a sun that we might see its idea in him when he pleased to exhibit it, when this might as well be done without any real sun at all?" (*Examination* 20.) But Berkeley, unlike Collier, never proposed this argument as a positive demonstrative proof of idealism, he never

[246] Collier defines extrinsic impossibility as an "impediment in the cause" (or other circumstance) as opposed to intrinsic impossibility, which is a "contradiction in the concept of the thing itself" (*Clavis* 66-67).

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argued like Collier or Bayle that speaking in philosophical terms (as opposed to faith in Bayle's case) God, given that he always acts in the simplest way, could not create matter. This rarely noticed point is remarkable especially because it clearly shows that Berkeley resists the temptation to appeal to God's intellectual nature even for immaterialist purposes. Like Collier's example shows, it would have been a very simple and straightforward way to prove that matter cannot really exist, since not even on the vaguest and emptiest understanding is its concept metaphysically possible. As we have seen, Berkeley refers to *his* version of the simplicity principle three times and all three times avoids using those strong—in fact, any—modal claims and terms that Collier does ("cannot possibly be made"; "who can do nothing to no purpose"; "yet really impossible", etc.). More generally, he is not alluding to God's nature or wisdom at all in order to restrict what he *can* bring about.[247] This, I believe, cannot be accidental. One might think he simply rejects the simplicity argument *as such*, but, as we have seen, that is just not true, since he accepts it as a theoretical tool. What he rejects is that God has to conform to this principle, or, at least, that we can know that he has to. That 'God always and necessarily acts in the simplest way possible' and that 'In the absence of any other consideration, simplicity is a theoretical virtue in natural philosophy' are two pretty different claims. Berkeley occasionally makes use of the latter, and, given the almost unmissable chance it offers for putting the final nail in matter's coffin, I think, rejects the former just as clearly.[248]

[247] Another difference is that Berkeley is more precise, and more restrictive with regard to the scope of this argument, than Collier: the matter he is targeting is not only imperceptible, as for Collier, but also totally inert, useless both explanatorily and perceptually.

[248] It is clear from the emphasized part of the quote from *Principles* 53 that this empty concept renders matter logically and metaphysically possible. Since, as far as we can know, the divine action is not bound by the simplicity or any other criterion which could strictly speaking rule this possibility out, God could really create it. Nonetheless this concept of matter is an *epistemic* impossibility: it is not only an absolutely useless and unaccountable hypothesis, which explains nothing at all, but a concept which cannot be formed with any meaningful content and, as a consequence, it means nothing to us. As he puts it in *Principles* 19, "it is evident the production of ideas or sensations in our minds, can be no reason why we should suppose matter or corporeal substances, since that is acknowledged to remain equally inexplicable with, or without this supposition", and, in *Principles* 53, it is "a very unaccountable and extravagant supposition", as "God might have done every thing as without them". It leads to an interesting, if subtle, difference in Berkeley's and Collier's understanding of the impossibility of matter.

But returning to the broader question of generality or simplicity in nature, according to the voluntarist reading I propose, it is crucial that the order we experience in the created world comes not from God's nature or intellect necessarily and directly, but from his free decision or volition that the creatures be able to understand and interpret the physical world so as to use this knowledge to their benefit. So, unlike Malebranche, Berkeley thought, on the one hand, that a chaotic world is not incompatible with God's nature, and, even putting miracles aside, God himself is not necessitated by his intellect to create a simple and ordered universe (let alone the most simple and ordered one). On the other, he firmly believed that a world of perceptions without *some* observable generalities and correspondences, though metaphysically possible, would be utterly incomprehensible and pointless from the finite perceiver's essentially practical point of view.[249] In this context, the most often quoted passage is *Principles* 62:

> […] though the fabrication of all those parts and organs be not absolutely necessary to the producing any effect, yet it is necessary to the producing of things in a constant, regular way, according to the Laws of Nature. There are certain general laws that run through the whole chain of natural effects: these are learned by the observation and study of Nature, and are by men applied as well to the framing artificial things for the use and ornament of life, as to the explaining the various *phenomena*: which explication consists only in shewing the conformity any particular phenomenon hath to the general Laws of Nature, or, which is the same thing, in discovering the *uniformity* there is in the production of natural effects; as will be evident to whoever shall attend to the several instances, wherein philosophers pretend to account for appearances. That there is a great and conspicuous use in these regular constant methods of working observed by the Supreme Agent, hath been shewn in *Sect.* 31. And it is no less visible, that a particular size, figure, motion and disposition of parts are necessary, though not absolutely to the producing any effect, yet to the producing it according to the standing mechanical Laws of Nature. Thus, for instance, it cannot be denied that God, or the intelligence which sustains and rules the ordinary course of things might, if he were minded to produce a miracle, cause all the motions on the dial-plate of a watch, though no body had ever made the movements, and put them in it: but yet if he will act agreeably to the rules of mechanism, by him for wise ends established and maintained in the Creation, it is necessary that those actions of the watchmaker, whereby he makes the movements and rightly adjusts them, precede the production of the aforesaid motions; as also that any disorder in them be attended with the perception of some corresponding disorder in the movements, which being once corrected all is right again. (*Principles* 62.)

While, as interpreters have pointed out, this passage seems to mirror Malebranche's view on order, it is clearly compatible with God choosing to respect the laws of nature in our

[249] For Malebranche, this practical aim is only secondary to God's preference for his own glory or for acting in a way that reflects his rationality. See Schmaltz 2013, 114, referring to *Dialogues* 7.10 / JS 116.

practical and scientific interests absolutely freely—unlike Malebranche's God, who, in the non-miraculous cases, is intellectually bound by his irresistible love for order to act in the simplest, most general way possible. Berkeley sounds the most Malebranchean when addressing the issue of theodicy.

> It will I doubt not be objected, that the slow and gradual methods observed in the production of natural things, do not seem to have for their cause the immediate hand of an *almighty Agent*. Besides, monsters, untimely births, fruits blasted in the blossom, rains falling in desert places, miseries incident to human life, 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. […] (*Principles* 151.)

Though in this passage Berkeley claims that the "methods of Nature are absolutely necessary", as in section 62 he emphasized twice, they cannot be absolutely necessary after all, because it is necessary only "in order to working by the most simple and general rules, and after a steady and consistent Manner" (*Principles* 151). Unlike Malebranche, he never claims that we can know that the created world is orderly and simple because it is what flows necessarily from the divine nature, but, the other way around, the discoverable generality established by God in nature "argues both the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God." He does not explicitly mention it here but from the other passages discussed earlier it is absolutely clear that the "steady and consistent Manner" of nature shows God's goodness because he freely respects and takes into consideration our dependence on regularity and simplicity for comprehending the patterns running through nature. Moreover, it is in the very next section that Berkeley emphasizes that God does not need to act always and necessarily in the simplest or most "thrifty" way, and "the splendid profusion of natural things" should be interpreted as an "argument of the riches of his power" (*Principles* 152, quoted above). In fact, the bad things in the created world are not only necessary by-products following from the simplicity and generality *our* needs and the successful communication between God and us require, but while "considered in themselves appear to be *evil*, have the nature of *good*, when considered as linked with the whole system of beings" (*Principles* 153). Indeed, this seems to be his ultimate answer to the problem of evil, as based on his philosophy of nature and theology he is not allowed to appeal, in a

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Malebranchean or Leibnizian manner, to the exceptionless and necessarily simple and general ways God, by his own nature, is obliged to act.[250]

Free from the pressing problems the issue of theodicy presents, in the *Siris* as well—or indeed even more straightforwardly—Berkeley emphasizes that while God acts regularly and according to what is to be taken merely as instrumental or secondary causes, he does it freely and only because of our limitations and our need for constant guidance.

> The mind of man acts by an instrument necessarily. The {to ëgemonikon} or Mind presiding in the world, acts by an instrument freely. Without instrumental and second causes there could be no regular course of nature. *And without a regular course, nature could never be understood*; mankind must always be at a loss, not knowing what to expect, or how to govern themselves, or direct their actions for the obtaining of any end. Therefore in the government of the world physical agents, improperly so called, or mechanical, or second causes, or natural causes, or instruments, are *necessary to assist, not the Governor, but the governed.* (*Siris* 160, emphasis added)

As we have seen earlier, too, God does not need general rules to guide his action, only we do.[251] If God were not to act regularly in nature, we would be at loss, since without constancy rules "would cease to be rules".

> Mechanical laws of nature or motion direct us how to act, and teach us what to expect. Where intellect presides there will be method and order, and therefore *rules, which if not stated and constant would cease to be rules*. There is therefore a constancy in things, which is styled the Course of Nature (Sect. 160). (*Siris* 234, emphasis added.)

In line with the denial of both metaphysical and nomological necessity of the laws of nature, the only necessity these passages refer to is merely a practical one freely respected by God. What is necessary is simply that, due to our quite limited understanding of the world, that the divine activity is general to a recognizable, indeed pretty high, extent, but, even if we ignore miracles, not universal in the sense of grounding exceptionless laws of nature. In other words, it is not an essential feature of God's nature that he acts in the

[250] In *Siris* 256, Berkeley also addresses the problem of evil, similarly acknowledging that "Natural productions, it is true, *are not all equally perfect*. But neither doth it suit with the order of things, the structure of the universe or the ends of Providence, that they should be so. General rules […] are necessary to make the world intelligible: and from the constant observations of such rules, natural evils will sometimes unavoidably ensue: things will be produced in a slow length of time, and arrive at different degrees of perfection."

[251] As we have seen for instance in *Three Dialogues* 219, he makes clear that God, who is "himself above all limitation or prescription whatsoever" acts regularly, as if through secondary causes or instruments, "merely in compliance with the laws of Nature", but there is nothing actually necessary about it.

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most simple and general way possible, and when he actually decides to act, for the most part, according to simple and general rules, he does it only because of having our pragmatic interests in mind.[252]

Of course, even though Berkeley's God needs not to have any general laws or rules in mind *over and above* his particular volitions guiding his actions, nonetheless, being omniscient, he might know how we will construct them from the particular ideas he decides to produce in our minds. Indeed, insofar as he wills not only the particular ideas but also the patterns or the nomological order in which he organizes them, he himself needs to have some knowledge of the rules he wants us to understand. Nonetheless, while God comprehends the general law as well, it is reasonable to say that for him the general plans are only derivative to, or dependent upon, the particular volitions.[253] He knows the laws of nature through, or relative to, us and our law-making policies, but not in his intellect *intrinsically* and directly.[254] To put it differently, since it would make no difference to him, God does not generalize his particular volitions (as we do in order to categorize and differentiate kinds of things and events), only insofar as the intellectual limitations of human perceivers make it necessary and, at the same time, useful and meaningful *for them*. In Malebranche's intellectualistic case, by contrast, the order of the divine ideas, and indeed the laws of nature possess an *intrinsic* and abstract nature of

[252] Like Berkeley, Locke also argued that God established regular correspondence in nature, for instance between the physical motions and our perceptions (cf. *Examination* 15.) with a practical aim in his mind, so as to "carry all the conformity our states requires", namely to help us navigate in life, to live our lives; "for they represent to us things under those appearances which they are fitted to produce in us: whereby we are enabled to distinguish the sorts of particular substances, to discern the states they are in, and so to take them for our necessities, and apply them to our uses" (*Essay* IV/IV/4).

[253] To be sure, Berkeley's nominalism and criticism of abstraction are relevant here. Cf. for instance the *Introduction to the Principles* 15, where he makes it clear that universality is not positive or intrinsic feature of anything (say a law of nature): "It is I know a point much insisted on, that all knowledge and demonstration are about universal notions, to which I fully agree: but then it doth not appear to me that those notions are formed by *abstraction* in the manner premised; *universality*, so far as I can comprehend, not consisting in the absolute, positive nature or conception of any thing, but in the relation it bears to the particulars signified or represented by it: by virtue whereof it is that things, names, or notions, being in their own nature *particular*, are rendered *universal*." In contrast to some Neoplatonist interpretation of Berkeley, I see no reason to suppose that it is different in the case of God's knowledge. In fact, many philosophers thought that our ability to abstract—i.e. to create intrinsically universal ideas in our minds—shows how limited our capacities are, unlike God's, whose cognition encompasses everything at once. Cf. Winkler 1989, 34-5.

[254] In a way, one might argue, the case is analogous to his knowledge of pain. God does not experience pain directly but understands through willing and causing our sensations of them. As I will argue in the following chapter, divine cognitions of all our perceptions are similar as well.

generality even if no finite perceiver ever existed or no creation took place. Not only the proper eternal truths, but also the extrinsically and hypothetically necessary laws of nature can be regarded as conceptually prior to creation in the sense that the latter cannot be brought about in any other way than by realizing the eternal order through our essentially general laws of nature.[255] I suspect that Berkeley himself recognizes this as an important part of their fundamental disagreement when he claims that Malebranche "builds on the most abstract general ideas, which [he] entirely disclaim[s]" (*Three Dialogues* 214). While Malebranche's God has to act through general and abstract volitions to live up to his absolutely perfectly rational nature, Berkeley thinks that no order is conceptually prior to his particular actions in the world freely arranged in observable and predictable patterns.

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[255] Malebranche makes it pretty clear that after creation—the most important, if not the only, *volonté particulière*—God always acts by *volontés générales*. And even if God wills the particular events one by one as well, those are at best consequences of his general volitions, constituting the laws of nature. (See for instance *Treatise on Nature and Grace* 195: "I say that God acts by general wills, when he acts in consequence of general laws which he has established".) In this respect, Berkeley sides with Arnauld in his famous debate with Malebranche. Emphasizing God's specific activity as opposed to his general volitions was one of the important elements in Arnauld's criticism of Malebranche. In his view, God does not act *by* general volitions, or generalize like we do, but simply decides to act *according to* general laws. For more on Arnauld's voluntarist God and his criticism of Malebranche's intellectualism, see Nadler 2008.

THE TWO-WORLD THEORY AND THE PROBLEM OF ARCHETYPES

The nature of archetypes and the role they play in Berkeley's philosophy is a recurrent and hotly debated topic in the secondary literature. It has often been suggested that the issue of archetypes is not only a crux for all students of Berkeley's philosophy, as Luce put it once, but a fatal interpretative mess that not even the seasoned commentators can sort out. The problem is especially pressing since, as Daniel stated more recently, the "theory of divine ideas or archetypes would be at the heart of his idealistic immaterialism" (Daniel 2001, 247), purportedly solving problems related to the objectivity and continuity of the physical world. In this chapter I will be proposing a reading that emphasizes the volitional nature of archetypes as opposed to the standard interpretations, according to which archetypes are divine ideas construed as mental objects God perceives or comprehends. That Berkeley did not believe in any archetypal world constituted by divine ideas shows once again that he did not endorse an intellectualist understanding of the divine mind, including an account of creation according to which God has to choose and actualize a specific world from the possibilities entertained in his mind. But, on my interpretation, he rejects not only the view that the divine ideas, along with God's intellectual nature, determine necessarily how God acts—which is a straightforward version of intellectualism—but also the weaker (intellectualistic) assumption of an actual but purely intellectual world in God's mind separated from his volitions and the world we perceive. This will be offered as the best, albeit undeniably charitable, reading of the texts, which is also supported by Berkeley's broader philosophical project and motivations: unless we interpret his view on divine archetypes in this voluntarist manner, either the basic doctrines of his epistemology, such as his theory of representation and his commitment to anti-skepticism in perception, or his theological commitments face insurmountable problems.

In the first section, IV.1, I will start by clarifying the relationship between intellectualism and the two-world theory, according to which the archetypes constitute a world in the divine intellect different from the physical world created by God and perceived by us. Though more and more have been challenging it, I will show that this

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traditional interpretation—originating with Samuel Johnson—is still a prominent one in Berkeley scholarship. In IV.2, I will examine what functions archetypes fulfil in Berkeley's philosophy on the traditional, more precisely, the more widely endorsed ("standard") interpretation, holding them to be divine ideas in the intellect of God, construed as mental objects *either* represented by *or* identical to our various, diverse and intermittent perceptions. In this section, I will argue that while the traditional problems cannot be solved adequately if the divine ideas are taken to be qualitatively different from ours, God cannot perceive our ideas strictly speaking. In IV.3, I will discuss the various senses in which Berkeley uses the term 'archetype', trying to establish what he clearly denies: not only the Lockean material archetypes but also the Malebranchean understanding of divine archetypes as objects of God's comprehension and constituents of an intellectual realm representing the physical world. I do not want to deny that Berkeley's primary aim was to attack both the Lockean and the Malebranchean understandings of the archetypes, leaving us with very little detail concerning his positive view. But while, luckily for commentators, we have some room to speculate, Berkeley' criticism of his predecessors views lays the groundwork for the voluntarist reading I am proposing. According to my reading, archetypes are not mental or intellectual *objects* in God's mind our ideas somehow represent or are identical with, but rather the intentional objects or contents of his volitions to bring about our ideas. Having my earlier investigation of Berkeley's denial of blind agency in mind, I will try to work out the some of the details of this in the next section (IV.4). To cash the proposal out in terms Berkeley used, I will compare God's knowledge embedded in his volitions to imagination and extend Berkeley's model of divine knowledge of our pain sensations to all of God's archetypal cognitions. Using another Berkeleyan jargon, we might say that God has *notions* of our ideas, similar to ours of our own mental activities. On my reading, Berkeley's God does not entertain objectified entities in his mind but achieves knowledge of our perceptions through his volitional activity, which is much, but not completely, like human imagination. If, along these lines, a coherent interpretation can be given of the rare but all the more puzzling passages concerning the divine archetypes, then not only a fuller and richer voluntarist

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picture emerges before our eyes but Berkeley's supposed burden at the heart of his philosophy might also be lightened.[256]

IV.1. INTELLECTUALISM AND THE TWO-WORLD THEORY

In this thesis, one point I have tried to prove so far is that it is not *trivially* true that Berkeley as an immaterialist must also be a voluntarist. An intellectualist version of immaterialism is not only a theoretical possibility, but was actually endorsed by philosophers like Collier or, arguably, Leibniz. As we have seen, the former case is particularly informative: while Collier, just like Berkeley, straightforwardly denied the existence of mind-independent objects, he had much stronger inclinations to ground his arguments on intellectualist background assumptions, appealing for instance to the essential rationality of both the creator and his creation. As a typical component of the intellectualist version of immaterialism, the ideas the divine mind entertains before creating the world of our ideas are pre-given conceptually, if not temporally, to his volitions, decisions and actions, and constitute a different world from the physical world we perceive around us.[257] Especially in a Leibnizian context, what these ideas constitute

[256] Few commentators defended similar interpretations. Winkler is one of them, claiming that archetypes are the ideas God has "of the ideas he causes in us", but he interprets them not merely as intentional contents of God's volitions, but as representations or mental objects ("ideas") along the lines of ours. See Winkler 1989, 204-237. Frankel is another example of emphasizing the causal role of archetypes, but she does away with all their cognitive side, identifying archetypes with pure powers on God's part to cause our ideas. Accordingly, unlike my interpretation, she wants to explain away Berkeley's denial of blind agency. For her brief position on archetypes, see Frankel 2012 and 2016. McCracken 1979 also identifies God's cognitions with his decrees about what ideas the finite perceivers will have under such and such circumstances. On Ablondi's (2005) interpretation, the divine archetypes are causally active ideas in God's mind. None of these interpretations make any reference to, and relate the problems of archetypes, to voluntarism, providing no broader context and support for this type of interpretation. And, more importantly, none of them identify archetypes with the volitional contents or objects of the divine volitions, either reducing the divine archetypes to volitions or decrees—ignoring its cognitive aspect—or regarding them as some sort of quasi-perceptual objects or ideas in God's mind, no matter how different they are to our ideas. Other commentators, challenging the classical two-world theory of archetypes, emphasize that archetypes are not distinct from our perceptions either qualitatively or numerically. Hight (1995) defends the numerical identity-theory in the most detailed way, but, along with the likes of Jacquette (1993), Dancy similarly claims "there are good reasons from within Berkeley's position why he should stick to the view that our ideas of real things are identical with ideas in the mind of God" (Dancy 1987, 52). Fields 2013 even proposed that the divine archetypes are neither mental objects nor volitions—indeed, have no essential relation to them—but rather ideas in the sense of "acts of divine self-consciousness".

[257] Collier explicitly commits himself to the existence of an archetypal world in the intellect of God, on which the creation of our perceptions is modelled. He writes in the *Clavis* that "[…] I believe infinite worlds

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are often called *possible* worlds, as opposed to the physical reality God finally actualizes, but for intellectualists like Collier, Norris or Malebranche the existence of the archetypal world, that is, the world which serves as the model for creation is often taken to have ontological priority, and is regarded not only as necessary but even more real and true than the world God contingently decides to bring about. And even the mere possibilities God entertains in his intellect exist there in some sense, or, as Leibniz writes to Arnauld, have a "[…] reality they have in the divine understanding" (Leibniz 1989, 75). Especially for intellectualists—who are much more certain about the spiritual world God comprehends than they are about the existence of the material world—the existence in the divine intellect as the object of his understanding entails much more actuality and metaphysical reality than mere logical possibilities (see for instance Malebranche, *Dialogues* 1.5-6 / JS 9-12, Norris, *Essay* 214).[258] Indeed, Malebranche, and Norris maintained that the divine archetypes are neither created by God, nor exist outside of him in a Platonic realm, but rather co-eternally constitute his essence or substance.[259]

might exist, though not one single created […] mind ever in being […] there is an universe, or material world in being, which is, at least, numerically different from every material world perceived by mere creatures. By this, I mean the great mundane idea of created (or rather twice created) matter, *by* which all things are produced; or rather, […] *by* which the great God gives sensations to all his thinking creatures and by which things that are not are preserved, and ordered in the same manner as if they were." (*Clavis* 9-10.) He also makes clear that God "made all things according to the platform of his own wisdom; in other words, that their forms or essential differences stand necessarily related to the different ideas exhibited or represented in his own infinite mind. By standing necessarily related, etc., I mean the same as to say that the perfection and goodness of their being consist in their similitude to their original ideas in the mind of their efficient cause, God." (*Confession* 5, see in Muirhead 1931, 118.) This view is clearly influenced by Malebranche, with the obvious difference that for Collier we do not perceive the divine ideas themselves but only their copies or ectypes. The original world exists in God's mind alone (along with all the merely possible worlds), and is said to be numerically, though not qualitatively, different from the created world, providing the continuity and objectivity of the world we perceive. It is exactly the view Berkeley is traditionally associated with.

[258] As we have seen, Collier calls the archetypal world "a universe […] *in being*" (*Clavis* 9, emphasis added). That the existence of the intelligible world is even more certain than the material one is particularly pressed by Norris. This line is taken up by Collier as well, pointing to the inconsistency of Norris's position that doubting the existence of the material world is the worst kind of skepticism, see *Clavis* 127-130. Berkeley does not refer to this line of argument, I would speculate, because, as we will see, he rejects the premise that the intelligible world is any more real than the physical one.

[259] See Malebranche, LO 230, OCM VI 118, 125, *Dialogues* 2.2 / JS 21, Norris, *Essay* 27, 157-8, 240. The identification of divine ideas with God's essence goes back (at least) to Aquinas, who argued that, though there is only one idea (of the created world) in the mind of God, it is his essence itself, see *Summa Theologiae* pt. I, qu. 15, art. 1, and pt. I, qu. 14, art. 4.

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This view, which can be called a 'two-world' theory, qualifies as a version of intellectualism (as defined in the Introduction) only if one adds that this other, archetypal, world in the divine mind determines the laws of nature and/or God's volitions and actions, for instance, in nature. While I do not know of commentators who *explicitly* interpret Berkeley as an intellectualist, as we have seen earlier, some of them leave us with this impression for instance when attributing an intellectualistic interpretation of the simplicity principle to him or when overemphasizing the divine goodness as a necessary principle of God's regular actions. Indeed, the fact that he emphatically, but not trivially, rejected some intellectualist assumptions is so generally overlooked that, I hope, it has been worth underlining his voluntarist tendencies. Many interpreters, however, openly hold that Berkeley endorses the two-world theory, implicating that he shares some intellectualistic inclinations with Malebranche and his followers after all—inclinations that, one might argue, do not fit very well with the *strong* voluntarist tendencies, on my reading, Berkeley's philosophy displays.

Unsurprisingly, many find evidence of Berkeley's commitment to an ideal world in the mind of God in his appeal to divine archetypes. This longstanding tradition starts with one of the very few converts Berkeley made in his lifetime, Samuel Johnson. Resonating with a lot of contemporary commentators, he asks Berkeley to clarify his view in his first letter.

> Some of us are at a loss to understand your meaning when you speak of archetypes. You say the being of things consists in their being perceived. And that things are nothing but ideas, that our ideas have no unperceived archetypes, but yet you allow archetypes to our ideas when things are not perceived by our minds; they exist in, i.e., are perceived by, some other mind. Now I understand you, that there is a twofold existence of things or ideas, one in the divine mind, and the other in created minds; the one archetypal, and the other ectypal […] (Johnson to Berkeley, Sept. 10, 1729, *Works* 2.274.)

In the following letter, he interprets Berkeley along the lines of a two-world interpretation:

> [...] according to you, the ideas we see are not in the divine mind, but in our own. When, therefore, you say sensible things exist in, as being perceived by, the infinite mind I humbly conceive you must be understood that the originals or archetypes of our sensible things or ideas exist independent of us in the infinite mind, or that sensible things exist *in archetypo* in the divine mind. (Johnson to Berkeley, Feb. 5, 1730, *Works* 2.286).

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It is not only how he interprets Berkeley, but Samuel Johnson adopts this traditional understanding of archetypes as his own positive view as well. Indeed, he applies it to the problems most commonly associated with idealism, namely the problem of continuity and objectivity of the sensible objects the divine archetypes are supposed to provide a remedy for.[260]

Turning to the modern commentators, as I mentioned in the introduction concerning the fashionable Neoplatonic interpretations of Berkeley, Bradatan and Wenz straightforwardly advocate a two-world interpretation. Wenz controversially claimed that Berkeley was "a Christian neo-Platonist, one who holds the view that abstract ideas exist in the mind of God and that the world was created by God using these ideas as models or archetypes" (Wenz 1976, 537). The subsequent controversy has focused not so much on the attribution of the two-world theory to Berkeley as in his further claim that the divine archetypes are *abstract* ideas.[261] To my knowledge, no one has followed Wenz in this respect, but the Platonic two-world theory is still a popular model of understanding Berkeley's take on divine archetypes. Bradatan is no less unambiguous, claiming for instance that, for Berkeley, "things exist only insofar as they are the expressions of a higher order of reality—that is, the order of ideas. […] this sensible world that we see around is but a reflection of a world of ideas, or archetypes, and that all things in "this world" are—in a sense—but some sort of "embodied ideas," "terrestrial" shades of a higher, "celestial" ontological order" (Bradatan 2006, 32). He makes it absolutely clear that, on his interpretation, Berkeley endorses the "existence of two worlds". In fact, he

[260] Much like Collier, Samuel Johnson was an intellectualist immaterialist, who thought that "[…] the real original and permanent existence of things is archetypal, being ideas in *mente Divina* […] and our ideas are copies of them, and so far forth real things as they are correspondent to their archetypes." (*Works* 274.) While Samuel Johnson believed in the existence of an archetypal world, probably due to Berkeley's influence he entertained some voluntaristically-sounding tenets as well, for instance mentioned in the very same letter to Berkeley that God freely chose those laws of nature that "He is pleased to observe" (*Works* 274). Though he makes clear in other places (see for instance *Elementa Philosophica* 25-6) that this contingency is compatible with the hypothetical necessity of the laws, implying nothing more than that God could have decided not to create the universe at all and that he can still destroy—or at least, as Malebranche preferred to put it, stop creating—it.

[261] Directly responding to Wenz, McKim does *not* take issue with the claim that Berkeley being a "Christian neo-Platonist of a sort" believed in an archetypal world of divine ideas, only that these divine archetypes are *abstract* ideas. See McKim 1982.

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adds that "he could not have done otherwise as this notion was one of the logical results of the very principles on which his whole approach had been based" (Bradatan 2006, 36).

Many other commentators, without explicitly utilizing a Neoplatonic framework, interpret Berkeley's appeal to archetypes in a similar vein. The starting point for these considerations is nicely summarized by Ablondi. It is clear that Berkeley did not think of the archetypes "as existing in some kind of Platonic realm, independent of any minds whatsoever. But neither does Berkeley want to follow Malebranche in holding that the ideas we perceive are one and the same with the archetypal ideas existing in the mind of God, nor does he want to say that perception is a matter of some kind of a vision in God." (Ablondi 2005, 494.)[262] The obvious option left is that the archetypes are entities in God's intellect numerically distinct from our perceptions.[263] As Taylor writes, "[…] given Berkeley's criteria of identity it is correct to say that God reveals to us the very same ideas as he himself has, this must be understood as the thesis that God's ideas and ours are tokens of the same types. By his criterion of token identity *God's ideas are not the same token ideas as ours, but numerically distinct originals of which our ideas are copies*." (1985, 73-74, emphasis added).[264]

As I mentioned earlier, the two-world theory might be compatible with weak or perhaps even strong voluntarism as long as God's will is not determined necessarily, or

[262] To be sure, Malebranche thinks we and God perceive (intellectually) the same ideas, namely the archetypes existing in his intellect, but these are not the ordinary physical objects around us. Those can be perceived only indirectly through the mediation of the divine ideas. As Malebranche's theory of archetypes shows, divine ideas can function both as entities that are represent*ed* by our ideas and entities represent*ing* the physical objects, but in either case, they are distinct from the physical objects (or the ideas constituting them) and form a reality in God's mind independent both of his volitions and the physical world around us.

[263] To be fair, Ablondi does not take this line of thought in the direction of saying that there is a qualitative similarity between the numerically distinct divine archetype and human ectype, but he rather emphasizes the causal activity of God's ideas. Nonetheless, he does not deny that there is a realm of ideas in the mind of God distinct from ours. Winkler might fall into this category as well, holding that, in causing our ideas, God also has some ideational representations, and even that there are divine ideas in God's mind of all the non-actualized possibilities. Unlike Frankel's more radical interpretation, they think that God has ideas—which are probably numerically and even qualitatively different from ours—although they also stress that these ideas are essentially dependent on God's volitions. The traditional (and more straightforward) two-world theory denies the latter claim.

[264] Bracken also thinks Berkeleyan archetypes are much like Malebranche's (see chapter 12 of Bracken 1974).

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limited severely, by the archetypal world contemplated in his intellect.[265] Nonetheless, I will argue that Berkeley did not take divine archetypes to constitute an actual world of ideas in the intellect of God, abstracted from his volitions to create the world we perceive. If this is right, the voluntarist interpretation of Berkeley's theology I am offering in this thesis can be complemented and strengthened by a stronger claim: he even denied a typical component, if not requirement, of intellectualism, namely the two-world theory. In other words, this interpretation of archetypes distances Berkeley again—and now even further away—from the intellectualistic tendencies of occasionalists like Malebranche. It claims not only that the archetypes do not serve as prototypes in the divine intellect which, provided that he wills to, determine *how* God has to create the world. But, more importantly, this "one-world" position holds that archetypes, being their intentional objects or contents, have no existence, indeed make no sense, independent of the divine volitions—in line with Berkeley's insistence that no passive perceptual object, like our sensory ideas, could possibly exist in God's mind and affect his purely active will. As a consequence, for Berkeley, the real and only world is what God knowingly wills us to experience directly. I suspect that his main motivation for embracing this implication of voluntarism is primarily theological, like those considerations I discussed in relation to divine psychology (most extensively in 2.5.), especially those which play down the importance of a separate or pure intellect in God and tends to identify God's essence with his purely active will. Another important reason is epistemological, for, on the traditional, two-world interpretation of archetypes, the tenability of Berkeley's commitment to the directness of perception of the real world is under serious threat. If the real world exists exclusively in the divine intellect, and we can only perceive directly our own perceptions, our ideas can be nothing else but mere representations, as opposed to constituents, of the real world. Indeed, as we will see shortly, even the indirect

[265] Though, as a version of divine idea theory, the two-world theory entails that the archetypal world God actually comprehends in his intellect is metaphysically and conceptually pre-given to his volitions. While this is not necessarily a determination relation, it might not appeal to a strong voluntarist, like Berkeley, who wants to ascribe metaphysical and conceptual priority to the will. That God does not even need divine ideas in order to produce our perceptions by his will is one way to express the strong voluntarist understanding of the priority of the will. I will return to this later, especially section 4.

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perception of this archetypal world seems to be impossible or at least prone to similar skeptical arguments the Lockean representative realism faces.

IV.2. OBJECTIVITY, CONTINUITY AND DIVINE IDEAS

In the traditional way, originating in Plato's *Timaeus*, archetypes are taken for models or perfect exemplars of the created world. In immaterialist terms, archetypes are normally construed as divine ideas or some sort of quasi-perceptual objects in God's intellect serving as the originals to our perceptions He brings about. While the application of this interpretation to Berkeley faces serious problems, it also has a great advantage of assigning a crucial role to the archetypes in Berkeley's system, namely the role of guaranteeing the much-needed objectivity of the physical world. If, as the standard interpretation of archetypes holds, God has ideas of the sensible objects we perceive, then he might be able to maintain the continuity and provide the unity of the physical objects as well.

First, let us consider the issue of objectivity. If our ideas are construed as private entities in our minds that constitute the physical objects, Berkeley has difficulties to account for the simple common-sense belief that different people may perceive the very same objects, and, as a consequence, there is an objective reality accessible to more of us. On the standard reading of idealism, the object I see must be distinct from what others see, because while the former is constituted by my private ideas, the object others perceive is constituted by their own ideas.[266] Berkeley raises the possibility of archetypes precisely at the point when Hylas wants Philonous to explain how different perceivers being in similar circumstances may perceive the same things. This piece of common sense, Hylas argues, is an easily justifiable fact for the materialist simply by assuming the existence of material objects and their qualities as the common originals and referents of our representations (*Three Dialogues* 248, see below). The issue is complicated a little bit by Berkeley's reluctance to take the theoretical problem of identity very seriously. He seems to regard the philosophical notions of identity as mere abstractions, indicating that

[266] That ideas are private entities in one's mind is far from being obvious. In the context of the divine archetypes, Hight (1995) is probably the most prominent critic of this view. See also Stubenberg 1990, 233-4.

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he agrees with the vulgar usage of the term and considers the whole philosophical debate about the exact nature of identity to be pointless and merely verbal.

> If the term same be taken in the vulgar acceptation, it is certain (and not at all repugnant to the principles I maintain) that different persons may perceive the same thing; or the same thing or idea exist in different minds. Words are of arbitrary imposition; and since men are used to apply the word same where no distinction or variety is perceived, and I do not pretend to alter their perceptions, it follows, that as men have said before, several saw the same thing, so they may upon like occasions still continue to use the same phrase, without any deviation either from propriety of language, or the truth of things. But if the term same be used in the acceptation of philosophers, who pretend to an abstracted notion of identity, then, according to their sundry definitions of this notion (for it is not yet agreed wherein that philosophic identity consists), it may or may not be possible for divers persons to perceive the same thing. But whether philosophers shall think fit to call a thing the same or no, is, I conceive, of small importance. (*Three Dialogues* 247.)

Although Berkeley is reluctant to get to the bottom of the problem of identity—and his sympathy with the vulgar use suggests he is focusing on qualitative, rather than numerical, identity—archetypes as divine ideas could serve as a sort of solution for Berkeley, even if someone with Lockean inclinations (like Hylas) insists that no two perceivers can have the same—that is, numerically the same—idea.

> HYLAS. But they [the materialists] suppose an external archetype, to which referring their several ideas, they may truly be said to perceive the same thing.
>
> PHILONOUS. And (not to mention your having discarded those archetypes) so may you suppose an external archetype on my principles; external, I mean, to your own mind; though indeed it must be supposed to exist in that mind which comprehends all things; but then this serves all the ends of identity, as well as if it existed out of a mind. And I am sure you your self will not say, it is less intelligible. (*Three Dialogues* 248.)

On the traditional interpretation, Berkeley's proposal is that our various perceptions gain, so to speak, their identity through referring to, or representing, the very same archetype—just like the materialists argue, with the obvious difference that the Berkeleyan archetype is in the mind of God.[267] As is the case with the materialist solution, where the archetype

[267] Stubenberg (1990, 224-5) argues that this is not a viable solution at all, because the divine ideas being inert cannot cause our perceptions, unlike the material substances. Firstly, it is not beyond any doubt that Descartes or even Locke really thought that it is the material substances, and not God, that cause our ideas. Secondly, though I will argue later that the mere reference to the causal connection between the divine volitions and our ideas might solve the problem of identity—even without any ideational representation in God's mind appealed to—I do not see why the traditional solution cannot work without reference to God's causal activity. On this proposal, our ideas are said to be identical insofar as they refer to or represent, but not necessarily caused by, the one and same thing.

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can either be the physical object itself or the particular quality it has, this divine archetype can also be interpreted either as an idea in God's mind of the particular quality (say, a particular red patch) we perceive, or as the whole object perceived by God incorporating all the numerically distinct ideas (of the red patch and so on) the finite perceivers have—and even all the possible perceptions any finite mind might have—of the object.[268]

On the first version, the idea of the red patch I perceive and the idea of the red patch you perceive can be regarded as identical not due to their qualitative identity but rather due to the fact that both represent an idea of red patch in God's mind. But if this representation is possible because the divine archetype is, though numerically distinct, qualitatively identical to our ideas, it seems unnecessary to appeal to the representative relation between our ideas and God's in order to establish that mine is of the same quality as yours. If mine is related to your perception through the qualitative identity between God's ideas and ours, then, taking the transitivity of these relations into account, why cannot the qualitative identity between ours connect mine with yours directly? But, even if we are allowed to have qualitatively same ideas,[269] one might argue that the qualitative identity between our ideas does not solve the issue, since even qualitatively indistinguishable ideas can belong to two distinct physical objects. Maybe the divine ideas are supposed to help in this matter, but it is unclear to me how the particular red patch in God's mind could disambiguate the situation. It is perfectly possible that both of our perceptions represent the qualitatively identical divine idea, and hence are of the same quality, when we would commonsensically think they belong to different physical objects. If the objects of God comprehension are disintegrated ideas, I do not see any reason to suppose that God has two numerically distinct but qualitatively identical ideas in his mind disambiguating our qualitatively identical perceptions of the two distinct objects. What would make them two numerically distinct ideas in the divine intellect if there are no corresponding objects in God's mind each of the ideas could be incorporated into? So,

[268] It is worth noting that Berkeley is generally quite imprecise in his use of the term 'idea', sometimes speaking about ideas as particular qualities as opposed to the objects or bundles constructed by them, while sometimes by the term 'idea' he simply means houses and other ordinary physical objects.

[269] Some commentators, such as Wenz (1976, 542) and Stubenberg (1990, 239-40), argue that we cannot have qualitatively identical perceptions, given the perspectival nature of our perceptions.

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it seems that the second understanding of divine archetypes might do a better work, for, according to this theory, instead of grasping disintegrated qualities, God comprehends bundles of ideas and objects the particular qualities are indexed to, which serve as the divine archetypes our private ideas refer to. On this proposal, our private perceptions are identical if and only if (i.) they are qualitatively identical with their divine counterpart and hence with one another, *and* (ii.) exclusively refer to the very same divine idea, namely that and only that qualitatively identical divine idea which is part of, or indexed to, the bundle constituting the same object in the divine mind. The case would be much more straightforward, though, if God actually had those very ideas we have, with all our various perceptions being part of the bundle of ideas constituting the *archetypal* object perceived fully only by him—regardless of the fact whether our various perceptions are qualitatively identical with each other or not. Indeed, this way the problem of unity might be solved along with the problem of objectivity. It is commonsensical to think that finite perceivers perceive only certain (spatio-temporal) parts of an object with the whole existing (partly) behind the scenes of our perceptions.[270] We can have different perceptions from different perspectives, and according to various circumstances, etc., but the physical object as a whole unifies and incorporates all of these ideas. With divine archetypes construed as unified objects in God's mind constituted not only by our actual ideas but also all our possible perceptions of a particular object, Berkeley could have established the unity of the objects in a robust sense.[271]

[270] For a current discussion of some related issues, see Stoneham 2018a.

[271] I will call this theory the sub-set theory of perception. It seems to me that there are three possibilities of cashing this out: (i.) The object comprises of our actual as well as possible ideas, all of which God actually perceives in his mind. This version, which is what I just suggested in the body text, entails that God has some perceptions numerically identical to our ideas, and, as such, it would not count as an archetype theory in the traditional sense. (ii.) The object comprises of our actual as well as possible ideas, but God perceives only the latter in his mind. It qualifies as a sub-set theory in the sense that our actual ideas our only a sub-set of the whole object (but the whole set is not perceived by God either). Apart from the fact that it is not a straightforward archetype theory again, it is pretty untenable because it makes the object exist partly in our minds, and partly in God's mind. This is not a very promising solution to the problem of unity, but it is problematic theologically as well, since God would not know certain aspects—namely those ideas we actually perceive—of the very objects he perceives. God might not know or perceive certain things (contradictions, passions, future contingents, mere possibilities, etc.), but an omniscient being cannot have *partial* knowledge of something. (iii.) The object comprises only of our actual ideas. It can be taken as a sub-set theory insofar as the ideas we perceive *individually* are only a sub-set of the whole object constituted by all the ideas we perceive *collectively*. On this account, the divine archetypes play no role and problem of unity is not solved at all, as the object, even if we take all our actual ideas into account, can

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But even if the appeal to divine archetypes does not solve perfectly the issue of identity—I will discuss some more general reasons shortly—Berkeley's point is that the Lockean materialists do not fare better either, as long as they "acknowledge what we immediately perceive by our senses, to be our own ideas."[272] So, as Berkeley ends his response, there are two conclusions we can draw. One possibility is that "there is no difficulty at bottom in this point", since the problem of identity only arises if ideas cannot be identical either numerically or in virtue of their qualitative identity, and even in this case the divine archetypes, just like the material ones are supposed to do, can provide some sort of identity to our perceptions. But "if there be [a difficulty in this issue], […] it makes equally against both opinions", and the "difficulty therefore, that no two see the same thing, makes equally against the materialists and me" (*Three Dialogues* 248). The disjunctive nature of this argumentation may suggest that Berkeley regards the archetypes as only a possible hypothesis, needed just in case someone is disturbed by the thought that his or her perceptions are not numerically the same as others'. In fact, Berkeley does not want to take a firm stance on the question whether different perceivers' ideas, construed as the objects of their perceptions, can be numerically the same or not, and seems to be genuinely interested only in their qualitative identity. Nonetheless, he wants to show that even if one is committed to the privacy of ideas, by appealing to divine archetypes immaterialism can provide a solution at least as tenable as the one the representative realists invoke. On the other hand, Berkeley's lack of enthusiasm might suggest that he has some concerns—even if not the ones I discussed above—over the proposed understanding of divine archetypes. This leaves the door open for a different theory of ideas which either denies that the identity of perceptions should consist in their numerical identity or that ideas are private entities. While these possibilities have been explored by commentators, I am now more interested in a different interpretation of

still be pretty fragmented. As another possibility, (iv.) we might go for a phenomenalistic solution, saying that the object comprises of mere possibilities or God's decrees about the ideas we might perceive under certain circumstances. I will briefly suggest this power-based view of objects as the best solution at the end of this chapter.

[272] This conviction of Berkeley might have been influenced by Malebranche, who criticized Descartes for holding that no two people can have the very same idea in any non-figurative manner. The Malebranchean solution is that we perceive the very same divine ideas, the eternal archetypes. See Jolley 2013, 108.

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divine archetypes, which might account for the identity and unity of our perceptions without appealing to divine ideas at all.[273]

The supposition of archetypes seems to explain another pressing problem for Berkeley's system. If God has archetypal ideas of the ordinary objects we perceive, we might argue that the objects keep existing in his mind even when we have no actual perceptions of them. For instance, the infamous tree in the quad seen by no finite perceiver would still exist in God's mind. In terms of the sub-set theory I introduced above (see the first possibility I discussed in footnote 271) the objects can be construed as spatio-temporal unities that exist in God's mind continuously, no matter how many spatio-temporal parts we happen to perceive of it.

> 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. (*Principles* 6.)

While in this passage—just like in *Principles* 48, I discussed in the context of the continuous creation doctrine—Berkeley seems to allow for the possibility of the physical objects having no existence at all while not being perceived by finite minds, his view is beyond doubt that God knows and comprehends all things. It is not merely that the omniscient and benevolent God cannot be ignorant of our ideas he creates and orders to be perceived by us. As we have already seen, Berkeley thinks God indeed has ideas in the broad sense of having knowledge even of sensory ideas like the feeling of pain (*Three Dialogues* 240-1). But he even straightforwardly maintains in the *Dialogues* that "all sensible things must be perceived by him" (*Three Dialogues* 212), even during the intervals we do not perceive them.[274]

[273] I will return to this issue directly only at the end of the chapter.

[274] "Men commonly believe that all things are known or perceived by God, because they believe the being of a God, whereas I on the other side, immediately and necessarily conclude the being of a God, because all sensible things must be perceived by him. [...] sensible things do really exist: and if they really exist, they are necessarily perceived by an infinite mind: therefore there is an infinite mind, or God." (*Three Dialogues* 212.)

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> When I deny sensible things an existence out of the mind, I do not mean my mind in particular, but all minds. Now, it is plain they have an existence exterior to my mind; since I find them by experience to be independent of it. There is therefore some other Mind wherein they exist, during the intervals between the times of my perceiving them: as likewise they did before my birth, and would do after my supposed annihilation. And, as the same is true with regard to all other finite created spirits, it necessarily follows there is an *omnipresent eternal Mind*, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules, as He Himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the *Laws of Nature*. (*Three Dialogues* 230.)

An obvious interpretation of this view is that God continuously perceives the same physical objects and, hence, ideas at least qualitatively identical to the ones we perceive only intermittently, but it can also be the case that God eternally and in a non-sensory way knows the archetypes of the physical objects we perceive every now and then. The former looks to be a more straightforward solution to the issue at stake but the latter is preferable for theological as well as textual reasons. Holding that the God knows the archetypes of our ideas does not require from him, rather unorthodoxly, to perceive the very same sensory ideas we do.[275] But even if his ideas are only qualitatively the same or even just similar to ours, it entails the same problems. This is also what the textual evidence shows, as Berkeley makes clear that God does not perceive by sense (see *Siris* 289 and *Three Dialogues* 240-1): the way God knows our perceptions is definitely not the temporal, fragmentary, affective and, most importantly, passive way we perceive them.

Many commentators understand Berkeley's claim pretty literally, arguing that though God does not perceive ideas by sense, he nonetheless perceives, in a non-sensory and active manner, the ideas of sense, constituting the physical objects we perceive.[276] We

[275] This single consideration makes the identity-theory endorsed, for instance, by Hight (1995), very untenable.

[276] For instance, Pitcher 1977, 175-179, Winkler 1989, 235-236, or Hight 1995, 107-8. McDonough argues that "one should not […] be overly worried that God's perception of ordinary objects must be quite different from our sensory perception of ordinary objects insofar as the former must be active and the latter must be passive. For such a concern represents a standard worry confronting essentially all Christian philosophers of the past, and Berkeley would have been in good company in allowing that God may perceive in some sense even if not in exactly the same sense in which creatures perceive."(McDonough 2017, 395.) As we will see, in fact, Berkeley is in good company in denying that God perceives in the proper sense of the word. Interestingly, Rickless talking about divine active perception claims that "since God is purely active and in no way passive, his ideas are produced by his own mind (in a way that resembles, at some level, the way that finite minds produce ideas by means of imagination)" (Rickless 2018, 99). The problem with this interpretation is that human imagination is passive exactly insofar as we *perceive* the imagined ideas, regardless of the fact that we are its cause as well. To put it simply, that you cause your idea (let's say of pain), does not make you active in perceiving it. Nonetheless, as I will argue in section 4,

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have good grounds to dismiss this interpretation as incompatible with Berkeley's theory of perception and theological commitments. It is not only that this view entails that our ideas are not private entities after all, as God is said to have direct access to them. This, as I just discussed, might not bother Berkeley too much, but it is quite mysterious to me how the essentially sensory ideas, namely the *sense* objects we perceive, could be perceived in a non-sensory way. What remains from the perception of a red circle if it is not presented to God as either red or circular? Whatever God perceives of my ideas, if they are not like mine, they are different ideas. Moreover, you might formulate the information in any way you want, rendering it, for instance, in highly abstract signs—as for example Lehman suggests with regard to God's knowledge coded into non-sensory signs (see footnote 287)—if you still get this information from outside, presented to your understanding, you are in some sense passive with respect to it. Also, Berkeley thought that all perceptions entail pain and uneasiness (see *Notebooks* 833.) God obviously cannot have. Even if this is only a contingent fact of human psychology, Berkeley made it very clear in the *First Dialogue* that perception not only entails but also itself is much like sensation, as in perception the content or object cannot be separated from the act of having it. As a consequence, not even God can *perceive* our sensory ideas, in a non-sensory way, or actively, without being affected by having those perceptions.[277] In fact, it seems to me that passivity is an essential, indeed defining, characteristic of any sort of perception. As we have seen, for Berkeley, just as for Locke, perception, understood properly, i.e. as separated from any volitional act, is a *passive* confrontation with or a mere reception of a metaphysically real object, an object with a phenomenal character or content over which we have no control and which is fully determined by the object.[278] It

divine cognition is indeed similar to imagination, but only if understood as requiring no perceptual relation between God as the imaginer and the idea he caused or imagined.

[277] As I will argue later, it is not necessarily true of intentional acts such as imagination, which, as a consequence, is much more suitable an analogue for divine cognitions than perception.

[278]. Berkeley endorses the Lockean view concerning the fundamental passivity of perception most clearly in the *Notebooks* (see 301, 378 and 706.) See also *Three Dialogues* 196-7, emphasizing the passivity of perceptions. Probably it was Locke's view as well that God does not perceive, since perception is essentially passive, while God is essentially active. Relatedly, he claims that God cannot even reason or infer; "[…] we cannot say God reasons at all; for he has at once a view of all things. But reason is very far from such an intuition, it is a laborious and gradual progress in the knowledge of things […]." (*Examination* 53.)

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is clear that in perception, through being presented with a sense object, we are acted upon by God. But even when we are reflecting on our ideas we are merely passively acknowledging and noticing the inner events of our mind. So, it seems to me that it is not only that *sense* perception is incompatible with God's pure activity, but any perception, even mental or inner perception, of an object entails passivity and dependence on experiencing things in a way that is not purely up to the agent's will. To put it bluntly, God does not perceive by sense or by anything like inner sense or introspection, his knowledge does not come from realizing what has just happened inside or outside him.[279]

To be sure, it should not be seen as a disability on God's part. Divine perception is simply conceptually impossible: God knows everything knowable, but cannot perceive our ideas properly speaking. Objecting that it violates his omnipotence, if not his omniscience, is like saying that he must be able to feel passions and pain, but, in reality, nothing positive is denied to God in either case.[280] Accordingly, Berkeley rarely describes God's cognition of our ideas in terms of perception—*Three Dialogues* 212, with its surroundings, is an exception, possibly because at that point he concentrated much more

[279] For Berkeley, mental activity always means the involvement of the will in the mental process, and once it is involved, the putative active kind of perceptions seems to boil down to the mere, albeit non-blind, causation of our ideas, that is, to the competence of the will. It is a further question whether this sighted volition requires from God to have any ideas in his intellect, but it clearly does not require that he perceives *our* ideas. Later I will even argue for a negative answer, distinguishing ideas in their proper sense as metaphysically real perceptual entities from intentional objects or contents embedded in the divine volition. If one still insists on calling the divine cognition involved in willing our ideas 'perception' than the debate becomes hopelessly verbal.

[280] By the way, it was a pretty traditional view, endorsed (presumably) not only by Locke, but by others in the period and before. For instance, Malebranche made it clear that God does not perceive material beings directly, only their intellectual ideas in his intellect: simply by knowing that he willed them to be created, he knows the physical objects, just like he can cause all our sensations without having them himself. See McCracken 1983, 214 and 238, where he cites LO 234. The ordinarily accepted principle "Deus nihil extra se intuitur" clearly applies to this case as well. See Norris, *Essay* 157-8. To be sure, the view that God, being an atemporal or eternal and impassive being, cannot perceive is to be traced back to the medieval times. As Aquinas and other theologians, including Augustine, believed, God does not acquire his knowledge from things outside of him, but only from himself, more precisely, from his will and intellect. He knows the things he created not through experiencing them after creation, but through the very creative act or through realizing that he actualized certain possibilities intellectually comprehended in his essence. See, for instance, *Summa Theologiae* pt. 1, qu. 14, art. 5. To be sure, the intellectualist tradition, Malebranche included, nonetheless claimed that God perceives the divine archetypes of his intellect as ideas or objects of his eternal thought. On my reading, Berkeley believed this is (almost) as unacceptable as the claim that God perceives our ideas directly.

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on selling the continuity argument for God's existence than on getting right the theological nuances concerning the exact nature of divine cognition.[281] At this point, I think it might be useful to differentiate more precisely the two senses in which Berkeley understood the term "perception". Sometimes he used it in a broader sense, referring to any sort of cognition, including both the divine and finite sorts of knowledge, especially in cases when its intentional object is the physical reality God wills us to perceive. This meaning is sometimes referred to as "understanding", "comprehension", "knowledge", "notion" and such like, and associated with the cognition of the intentional object of one's volitions. In a stricter sense, however, the term "perception" often denotes exclusively the human or finite sorts of cognition: both the sensory and inner perception of ideas as well as the quasi-perceptual human imagination. In all these cases, we have an idea passively before our minds, determining the character of our experience and being capable of affecting us in various ways. So, when Berkeley sometimes tells us that God perceives, it is reasonably to think that he means it only in the broader sense of having knowledge of his volitional activity concerning what is strictly speaking only *our* perceptions. This ambiguity can be seen also in the case of the term "idea" as well as the locution "being in the mind". In *Principles* 91, for instance, being perceived has the broad meaning of not being "exterior to all thinking beings". But, even if Berkeley himself used the terms "perceptions" and "ideas", etc. pretty loosely, it is worth making a stricter, terminological, distinction and christen the fundamental difference between the two sorts of cognition he talked about: the idea-oriented passive perception and the active grasping of the intentional objects of one's volition—even if often, but not always, Berkeley used the same word for them insofar as both are cognitions of our perceptions.

And, in line with a phenomenalistic understanding of objects, even the continuity argument can be interpreted in a way that does not commit Berkeley to the view that God actually perceives the ideas when no finite mind is around to do so. As we have seen earlier, God's continuous perception of created objects seems to be incompatible with his conception of creation, according to which the existence of created things is tied to

[281] In *Principles* 91 as well, Berkeley appears to be fine with, though not particularly assertive about, the possibility of divine perception. See footnote 295.

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finite perception, not God's eternal comprehension.[282] But then creation requires that God wills our perceptions, and consequently, when we do not perceive the tree in the quad, because God does not will it, his perception cannot make it actual or real. God does not create anything by perceiving it. Alternatively, if his perception were enough for the actual existence of objects, given his eternal comprehension of objects, he would never really create anything at all. So, as I suggested in 2.2, Berkeley seems to put the continuous creation doctrine forward as an alternative to the idea that God continuously perceives the world—a doctrine he clearly endorses in his works where he is not as much preoccupied with his public reception as in the *Dialogues*. On my proposal, then, the divine perception or comprehension the continuity argument aims to prove actually refers to nothing more but the possible perceptions of an object that God would cause, and hence cognize in some sense, under certain counterfactual circumstances, rather than the actual divine perception of ideas he does not cause to be perceived by us. The objects, construed as spatio-temporal unities God knowingly wills us to perceive partially at certain times (and places), can be said to exist in this rather minimalistic sense even in the intervals of our actual perceptions.[283]

Accordingly, in his theologically more self-aware moments—as for instance *Three Dialogues* 230, quoted above, shows—he rather uses terms with broader connotations like 'knows' or 'comprehends' to characterize divine cognitions.[284] He also emphasizes in, for instance, *Notebooks* 640, that the divine knowledge transcend our perceptual knowledge infinitely. Indeed, as we will see, Berkeley explicitly attacks Malebranche's view on archetypes on the grounds that our passive ideas cannot be embraced by the pure activity

[282] See *Notebooks* 723, *Three Dialogues* 251-252 and *Works* 8.37-38, all quoted in footnote 173.

[283] So, in accordance with some commentators, I propose a deflationary account of the continuity argument. It is deflationary in the sense that it demotes the argument to be a version of the passivity argument. For various versions of the deflationary accounts, see Frankel 2012, Dicker 2011, 259-60, Ayers 1987. Cf. Pearce 2017b, 463-4. At the end of the chapter I will return to this issue, arguing that objects should be construed as divine powers to bring about all the nomologically possible or rather appropriate—well-timed and well-placed—perceptions. I will also suggest, as I did earlier, that Berkeley was not really bothered by the possibility that objects do not exist continuously in a more robust sense. See also Bordner 2017.

[284] Though it is not very popular nowadays, it was famously raised by Thomas 1976 that God does not perceive at all. See McCracken 1989 (especially 282), Bordner 2017 and Frankel 2012 for more recent defences of the view that Berkeley's God does not perceive at all, or at least not *our* ideas.

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of God (*Three Dialogues* 213-4).[285] Also, the few passages concerning divine ideas suggest that God does not perceive the very ideas we do but has the archetypes of those in his mind. In a letter to Johnson, Berkeley claims he has "no objection against calling the ideas in the mind of God *archetypes of ours*" (Berkeley to Johnson, Letter IV, *Works* 2.292, emphasis added). But, famously, interpreted in terms of the traditional archetype theory, even this innocuously-sounding claim raises some serious problems.

For many commentators, positing divine ideas in God's mind that are even just numerically distinct from ours leads to a theory as hopeless as the Lockean representative realism in explaining the relationship between our ideas and those constituting the reality which exists independently of our minds. It is, as Warnock and others argue, just as impossible to justify the resemblance between something we know directly and something—the ideas of God in this case—that is behind the veil of *our* ideas as it is between the qualities of a material substance and our perceptions of them. It is true that taking our ideas to *represent* the divine ideas—meaning that our ideas are merely copies of, but not constituents of, the archetypal reality—violates Berkeley's commitment to defending common-sense direct realism, the view that we are in direct perceptual contact with the objective world. Indeed, since we cannot have both the divine and the finite ideas in our direct comprehension, we cannot assess whether his knowledge is qualitatively similar to ours—giving way to all sorts of sceptical worries—because we can discover the resemblance only between two ideas that are in our minds. But having no access to God's mind we have no means to judge whether his ideas has anything in common with our ideas. Nonetheless, it seems that the divine ideas are in a better position to be represented perceptually than the material qualities insofar as Berkeley's famous likeness principle might be satisfied in the sense that our ideas can, *in principle*, resemble equally mental archetypes understood as ideas in God's mind—unlike in the materialist case in which ideas are supposed to resemble non-mental things, which

[285] To be fair, in his later formulations, for Malebranche, the archetypes are regarded as causally active ideas, which would raise other difficulties for Berkeley: not only a conceptual problem—namely that ideas are *per definitionem* passive in his terminology—but also a theological one concerning God's will being restricted, and made redundant, by the autonomous activity of his intellect's ideas. These problems apply to Ablondi's interpretation of Berkeley's archetypes as well.

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appeared manifestly absurd to Berkeley.[286] But even if there is no ontological barrier between our ideas and what they allegedly represent, the metaphysical problem of representation cannot be solved this way. The problem is not merely that the divine archetypes cannot be accessed directly and hence compared to our ideas, but, more importantly, that the ideas God comprehends are of a different sort than those we perceive. The two-world theory in this sense entails that reality in the divine mind is not only numerically but also qualitatively different from the world of our perceptions. Indeed, insofar as one is essentially active and non-sensory, the other is passive and sensory the possibility of any relevant qualitative resemblance, grounding the supposed representation relation, between our ideas and God's cognitions is not only undiscoverable but straightforwardly impossible.[287]

It is not only an insuperable problem for his theory of representation, but threatens specifically the traditional answer to the question of continuity: if God's ideas, unlike ours, are purely intellectual and active, his comprehension cannot in any straightforward way maintain the continuity of the world we perceive by our senses. Indeed, in light of these problems, on the traditional, i.e. two-world divine-idea interpretation, archetypes cannot really fulfil any of their traditional duties—those duties which invoked and justified introducing the hypothesis of archetypes in the first place. It is hardly helpful in conceiving the objectivity—just as the continuity—of ordinary objects to suppose some ideas in God's mind that are both numerically and qualitatively different from our ideas.

[286] For a discussion of the likeness principle—which, of course, is another controversial territory—and its relation to divine archetypes, see Frankel 2016. On my reading, the likeness principle is more about the nature of the represented and representing objects than the exact resemblance between the representational content of the idea and its original quality. In order to make sense of any representation relation, Berkeley claims, both *relata* have to be of the same nature, that is, the supposed material qualities also have to be passive, mind-dependent objects, perceivable by a given sense modality, i.e. what he calls visual, auditory, etc. "idea". This likeness *in nature* is what makes any comparison between them possible. So, what Berkeley seems to say in his likeness principle is not that an idea of, say, a red circle cannot represent a circular green object but that a sensory perception like an idea of a red circle cannot represent a thing which actually has no sensible features at all.

[287] Lehman (1981, 201) suggests that God's ideas are not sensible, but still resemble ours. He compares God's knowledge to the digital codes spaceships send to stations on Earth about what their environment looks like. But it is hard to see where any perceptual resemblance might lie between a sensory and a non-sensory idea, much like between a mental and a physical entity. Berkeley criticizes the materialist view by asking: "how can that which is sensible be like that which is insensible? Can a real thing in itself invisible be like a colour; or a real thing which is not audible, be like a sound?" (*Three Dialogues* 206.) This criticism would be equally fatal to the traditional divine idea interpretation of the archetypes.

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What we can judge at best is that God knows or comprehends (i.e. not perceives the way we do) objects that are not, and not even like, *our* ideas, but are constituted by *his* ideas. Consequently, whatever he knows about the tree in the quad will hardly be in any connection to the tree we perceive with our own eyes. Though God's world might be as continuous, objective as one wants it to be, with unified objects inhabiting it, the supposition of an archetypal world of divine ideas helps nothing to solve the real issues at stake, namely the problems concerning the world we perceive directly. And to claim that reality exists only or primarily in God's mind, i.e. beyond our perceptions both numerically and qualitatively, is something like reformulating the Lockean representationalism Berkeley attacked so vehemently, leaving us vulnerable to the skeptical arguments immaterialism was supposed to get rid of for good.[288]

IV.3. BERKELEY'S ARCHETYPES AND HIS CRITICISM OF MALEBRANCHE

Despite the incapability of the divine ideas to fulfil the roles they are associated with, the issues of objectivity, continuity of the sensible world and the unity of the physical objects should not be neglected entirely if an interpretation seeks to reflect Berkeley's motivation to live up to the common sense, and his conviction that these aspects of reality can be accounted for by reference to God's archetypal activity in an immaterialist framework just as well as in terms of matter. For many interpreters, however, the explanatory idleness of divine ideas along with Berkeley's rare and reluctant allusions to them seem to prove that archetypes play no significant or positive role in Berkeley's philosophy at all. Mabbot was one of the pioneers of this interpretation, claiming that "Berkeley did not make the Divine Ideas an essential part of his system and […] there is good reason to doubt he believed in them at all (Mabbott 1968, 370). More recently, Brykman similarly held that for Berkeley "God is the cause and not the seat of ideas" (Brykman 1987, 108). While these commentators touch on an important aspect of the issue, but, in my view,

[288] This clearly goes beyond the skeptical problems the subset-theory entails, holding in some sense that reality as it is for God, i.e. in its entirety with all the possibilities and perspectives, is beyond us. While this allows us to have a moderate, but necessarily perspectival and partial knowledge of the very same reality and objects God knows perfectly and entirely, the two-world theory of divine ideas cuts us off this reality completely. Of course, as we have seen in footnote 271, the most straightforward versions of the sub-set theory (that is, i-iii.) have their own—just as serious—problems.

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fail to make a crucial distinction between divine ideas and archetypes. On my proposal, Berkeley was sceptical only with respect to divine *ideas* specifically, or divine archetypes construed in a more or less Malebranchean or Neoplatonic sense. But, based on examining the various contexts in which Berkeley uses the term, I will argue that 'archetype' in his terminology does not always mean the (supposed or real) represented object of our ideas, and that even divine archetypes should not be necessarily construed as *ideas* in the sense our perceptions are. On my interpretation, while he was indeed pretty uncomfortable with the thought of actual divine *ideas* existing in God's mind—whether they constitute an *archetypal* reality over and above our perceptions or supposed to be identical numerically and/or qualitatively with our perceptions—he did not exclude the possibility of a tenable theory of divine archetypes.

The alternative interpretation I want to defend in what follows takes seriously the passages quoted in the previous section where Berkeley appeals to God's archetypal knowledge for maintaining the continuity of physical things and providing the ground for the identifying our ideas. As the problems of the traditional interpretation discussed in the previous section show, in order to sustain the world as it appears to (more of) us these arguments make sense only if God perceives and/or wills *our* ideas. But it is equally crucial that Berkeley rejected not only the two-world theory but also the other version of the divine idea interpretation of the archetypes, since, as we have seen, mainly for theological reasons Berkeley leaves no doubt that God does not perceive ideas qualitatively, let alone numerically, identical to ours. Hence the relationship between God's mind and our ideas should be understood as primarily in terms of volitions.[289] As I will try to substantiate, the texts allow for, and even hint at, an interpretation according to which the divine archetypes should not be construed as ideas or mental objects at all—nor simply reduced to the divine volitions—but rather regarded as the intentional objects or contents of God's volitions aimed at our perceptions. And archetypes construed this

[289] Consider Berkeley's first allusion to archetypes, claiming that, when discussing the meaning of the word 'thing', our ideas should be contrasted with volitions, presumably God's volitions, not with material archetypes. So, if archetypes make sense, they have something to do with the divine volitions that cause our ideas. "The word thing as comprising or standing for Idea & volition usefull. as standing for Idea and Archetype without the Mind Mischievous & useless." (*Notebooks* 689.) See also one of his latest references to divine ideas, claiming in agreement with Plato that "the term idea does not merely signify an inert inactive object of understanding, but is used as synonymous with αἴτιον and ἀρχή, cause and principle." (*Siris* 335.)

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way can be said, though only in a pretty loose sense, to exist in God's mind with an important, though secondary, function to fulfil.

Berkeley uses the term 'archetype' explicitly in three different senses, and suggests a fourth possibility, which, on my interpretation, he regarded as the correct understanding of divine archetypes. Most commonly, he mentions archetypes with reference to the supposed (primary) qualities existing in the material substances represented by our ideas. He, as is well-known, emphatically dismissed archetypes in this material sense, so much so that the most references to archetypes belong to this category, from the very first allusions to archetypes (such as the *Notebooks* 689, quoted in footnote 289) through several utterances in the *Principles*, like:

> But it is evident from what we have already shewn, that extension, figure and motion are only ideas existing in the mind, and that an idea can be like nothing but another idea, and that consequently neither they nor their archetypes can exist in an unperceiving substance. (*Principles* 9.)
>
> If he can conceive it possible either for his ideas or their archetypes to exist without being perceived, then I give up the cause [...] (*Principles* 45.)

to similar formulations from the *Three Dialogues*.[290]

Berkeley criticized the Lockean or material sense, according to which "to make our knowledge real it is requisite that the ideas answer their archetypes"[291], on the grounds that an essentially mind-dependent idea can never answer a material archetype. But while criticising this sense of the term, these passages, however, do not exclude the possibility that the talk of archetypes makes sense in another, i.e. non-material sense. And indeed, in more affirmative way, on other occasions, with the term 'archetype' Berkeley alludes to the ideas of sense in contrast to those of imagination. He regards the ideas of imagination, including those perceived in dreams, as copies or images of the ideas of sense considered to be their archetypes or originals. The archetypes are simply identified with real things construed as ideas of sense or, as he later tended to formulate, bundles constituted by those:

[290] See also *Principles* 87, 90, 99 and *Three Dialogues* 204, 206, 213-4, 222, 234.

[291] *Essay* IV/IV/8. See also IV/IV/3, cf. II/XXX/1-3, II/XXXI/1-3, IV/IV/2-5, 11-12.

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> Ideas of Sense are the Real things or Archetypes. Ideas of Imagination, Dreams etc are copies, images of these. (*Notebooks* 823.)

According to the official view he puts forward in his published works, he considers the ideas of imagination to be less vivid constituents of a less ordered and coherent series of ideas than the sensory perception they are supposed to copy or represent:

> 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 properly 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 it. (*Principles* 33.)

While not mentioning archetypes explicitly, this passage reveals Berkeley's sustained propensity to contrast the ideas ordered by God to be perceived by us—what was called archetypes in the *Notebooks* 823—and their self-produced representations, i.e. the ideas of imagination, in terms of distinguishing *real* things from mere ideas. This shows that the term 'idea' can mean either, in a perhaps stricter sense, the representation (referring to the ideas of imagination) or, more commonly in his published works, the real things themselves.[292] The crucial metaphysical difference between the ideas of imagination and their archetypes, i.e. the ideas of sense, is that the former are caused by the perceiver itself, unlike the ideas of sense, which are brought about by God directly. In this sense, taking its causal origin into account, the former depends on our minds both causally and perceptually, while the latter is independent of the particular perceiver's mind in the sense that they are, albeit perceived, not caused by them.[293]

[292] Cf. *Principles* 30. or *Notebooks* 818.

[293] The problem of dream, though not particularly relevant to our purposes now, is pretty interesting. On the one hand, as Berkeley himself claims, they count as ideas of imagination, because they are not part of reality and normally are not caused by God directly. Phenomenally speaking, they might be "dim, irregular and confused", but sometimes they are just as clear as our waking experiences. In that case, we should be able to invoke the causal explanation. If they are not part of reality, they have to be caused—and imagined—by the perceiver herself. It seems not to be problematic, as ideas of dream are caused by our minds, hence subsumed under the competence of our imaginative faculty in a broad sense, but their dependence on our will is clearly unlike that of ideas of imagination in a stricter sense, including ideas of

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> The ideas formed by the imagination are faint and indistinct; they have besides an entire dependence on the will. But the ideas perceived by sense, that is, real things, are more vivid and clear, and being imprinted on the mind by a spirit distinct from us, have not a like dependence on our will. There is therefore no danger of confounding these with the foregoing: and there is as little of confounding them with the visions of a dream, which are dim, irregular, and confused. (*Three Dialogues* 235.)

Of course, Berkeley sometimes understands archetypes in the traditional sense, as ideas in God's mind.[294] As we have seen, in *Three Dialogues* 248 (quoted in the previous section), he allows for the possibility of archetypes existing in God's mind providing identity to our numerically distinct perceptions. Another endorsement of divine archetypes can be found in the Samuel Johnson correspondence, also quoted earlier:

> I have no objection against calling the ideas in the mind of God archetypes of ours. […] (Berkeley to Johnson, Letter IV, *Works* 2.292)

This passage—unlike *Three Dialogues* 248—explicitly identifies archetypes with divine ideas. While discussing the idealist interpretation of creation, in another passage in the *Three Dialogues*, Berkeley acknowledges the twofold state of things in a way that, for some commentators, confirms his belief in a realm of divine ideas in God's intellect:

> [...] the one [of which is] ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and eternal? The former was created in time; the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God. Is not this agreeable to the common notions of divines? or is any more than this necessary in order to conceive the Creation? (*Three Dialogues* 254.)

But, as we have already seen, his assessment of this traditional usage is far from being unambiguous. The two passages from the *Three Dialogues* do not speak about divine *ideas*, and, as for the passage from the Johnson correspondence, Berkeley comes off as pretty reluctant, especially if we consider how much more attention Johnson devoted to this problem in his earlier letter. More importantly, Berkeley adds some crucial qualifications to this view in the following sentence.

> […] But I object against those archetypes by philosophers supposed to be real things, and to have an absolute rational existence distinct from their being perceived by any mind

memory. Even though those, too, can be triggered automatically, they are more often under our voluntary control. In the regular cases, dreams are not: we do not knowingly "imagine" them.

[294] In another sense, Berkeley alludes to God as the *archetype* of our souls in one of his sermons: "I regard my own soul as the image of her Creator, and receive great consolation from beholding those perfections which testifie her divine original, and lead me into some knowledge of her everlasting archetype." (XI. sermon - Immortality, *Works* 7.222)

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> whatsoever, it being the opinion of all materialists that an ideal existence in the divine mind is one thing, and the real existence of material things another. (Berkeley to Johnson, Letter IV, *Works* 2.292)

As discussed before, for epistemological as well as theological reasons, Berkeley could not hold consistently that our ideas are copies or ectypes of the divine exemplars or archetypes. And this is exactly what he points out in this reply as well. So, even when Berkeley is willing to speak about divine ideas as archetypes of our ideas, as in the correspondence with Johnson, he opposes not only to a materialistic view but also a Platonic or Malebranchean understanding of divine ideas, according to which they are supposed to have "an absolute rational existence" or "an ideal existence in the divine mind" and are regarded as the "real things" as opposed to the sensible objects "being perceived by any mind whatsoever". That this passage applies not only to Locke, but also to this intellectualistic understanding of divine archetypes is suggested both by this description—referring to their absolute *rational* existence as well as their *ideal* existence in the divine mind—and by alluding to 'philosophers' and 'materialists' in the plural. Though this passage has a dual aim, criticizing two pretty difference concepts of archetypes in a single—and, as Hight put it, "mysteriously cryptic" (1995, 124, fn. 29)—sentence, it is nonetheless clear that Berkeley does not want to make a sharp, metaphysical distinction between the so-called real existence of the things and their ideal existence in the divine mind. In Berkeley's idiosyncratic terminology any materialist philosopher, Malebranche included, who makes a metaphysical distinction between the archetypes and the physical objects or ideas we perceive commits the same mistake, separating our perceptions from the real things.[295] In other words, Berkeley does not want to duplicate the world: the archetypes that exist in God's mind "ideally" should not be seen as metaphysically real entities distinct from our ideas caused by him. This is in accordance with how he used the term 'archetypes' in the *Notebooks*—and the term 'ideas' in his published works—as denoting the real things, i.e. our sensory perceptions willed by God, rather than some distinct entities representing or represented by our ideas. So,

[295] Cf. *Principles* 91, where he makes it clear that he counts as materialists not only those who regards the physical objects as being external to all minds but also those who, in the "eternal mind of the Creator […] suppose only ideas of the corporeal substances created by him", as both groups maintain that the real physical objects are "distinct from being perceived by any mind whatsoever".

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we should not be worried to much about Berkeley identifying archetypes with divine *ideas* in this passage, not merely because he sometimes uses the term "idea"—much like the way we have seen with regard to his ambivalent use of "perception"—in a broad sense of cognition or notion, but, more importantly, because it might simply refer to knowing, but not perceiving like we do, *our* ideas, without having any correspondent ideational representations in his mind.

As this passage suggests, Berkeley is wary of and generally reluctant about speaking of divine archetypes primarily due to his fear that this could be (mis)interpreted as an endorsement of a Malebranchean theory—just as he decided not to use the term 'archetype' in his published works in the positive sense of 'real things' either, probably due to its unintended Lockean connotations. So, it is absolutely crucial for my purposes, just as it was for Berkeley himself, to distinguish his view from Malebranche's. It touches exactly upon the question of how Berkeley did and did not conceive of the divine archetypes and God's cognitions. Specifically, it will help us see that, for Berkeley, while they do not constitute a separate realm of ideas, divine archetypes are not simply identical with our perceptions either. As is well-known, Malebranche was one of the most influential proponents of both the two-world theory and the divine idea interpretation of the archetypes. He writes, for example, in the *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion* that:

> Ideas have an eternal and necessary existence, and the corporeal world exists only because it pleased God to create it. Thus, to see the intelligible world, it suffices to consult Reason which contains intelligible, eternal, and necessary ideas, the archetype of the visible world. (*Dialogues* 1.5.)

In (the 1734 edition of) the *Three Dialogues*, unlike in his letter to Johnson, Berkeley identifies Malebranche as the target of his attack.[296] His first criticism of Malebranche's theory of divine ideas is that our passive ideas cannot be in God's mind, as they cannot be constituents of an entirely active entity. Berkeley always insisted that no passive content, like our ideas, could possibly exist in God's mind and affect his purely active will.

[296] It might not be an accident that this version contains a long criticism of Malebranche's theory of divine ideas, as it appeared only a few years after Johnson had pressed Berkeley about the question of archetypes.

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> I do not understand how our ideas, which are things altogether passive and inert, can be the essence, or any part (or like any part) of the essence or substance of God, who is an impassive, indivisible, purely active being. (*Three Dialogues* 213-4.)

Strictly speaking, this objection shows that *our* passive ideas, that is, the numerically same ideas we have, cannot be in God's mind, but his criticism also applies to the supposition of divine archetypes that are qualitatively identical or similar to our *essentially* passive and affective perceptions.[297] Hence, as we have seen earlier, in light of Berkeley's theory of representation and the likeness principle, the divine archetypes can neither be directly perceived ideas in the mind of God represent*ing* the physical objects, nor divine ideas that are represent*ed* by our perceptions. Apart from the epistemological problems it entails, what Berkeley particularly cannot stand about Malebranche's view is that the ideas, construed as perfections of his intellectual nature, are said to be in union with God obviously implying that they abide *in* his mind. According to his view, divine ideas, as parts, as well as objects he comprehends, constitute the essence of God insofar as he is representative of the creatures.[298] Naturally, the requirement that ideas like ours cannot constitute the essence or be any part or indeed like any part of God's substance should be reflected by Berkeley's positive theory.[299] This suggests again that God does not have mental objects in his mind at all. And the way he cognizes is not as we do: it is not like a subject being presented or confronted with a perceptual object in or before his mind.

We are also already familiar with the second objection Berkeley raises against Malebranche in the *Second Dialogue*. He claims that, even if we were to allow that God has

[297] Cf. McCracken 1983, 237-8, who rightly notes that Berkeleyan ideas are much like Malebranche's sensations.

[298] See *Dialogues* 2.2 / JS 21. Hylas aptly characterizes Malebranche's view in the following way: "They conceive that the soul being immaterial, is incapable of being united with material things, so as to perceive them in themselves, but that she perceives them by her union with the substance of God, which being spiritual is therefore purely intelligible, or capable of being the immediate object of a spirit's thought. Besides, the divine essence contains in it perfections correspondent to each created being; and which are for that reason proper to exhibit or represent them to the mind." (*Three Dialogues* 213.) "Creatures" means all created things, physical objects just as much as living beings. See also OCM VI 118, 125, cf. Jolley 2013, 107.

[299] Berkeley speaks about God's *substance* specifically simply because Malebranche does so. For Malebranche and his followers, the divine ideas have to be in God's substance, that is, in his intellect intrinsically, because otherwise they would be in a Platonic realm independent of his mind. So, by referring to the divine substance Berkeley does not want to leave open, let alone suggest, the theologically even more heterodox possibility that the ideas *perceived* by God exist extrinsically to God's substance, as the identity theory seems to suggest (see Hight 1995, especially 116, cf. Winkler 1989, 235-6).

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ideas, the theory of vision in God—the view that we directly perceive God's ideas and, only through them, the sensible reality—is just as implausible, and suffers from the same sceptical problems, as the Lockean materialistic representationalism.

> [...] He [Malebranche] maintains that we are deceived by our senses, and know not the real natures or the true forms and figures of extended beings; of all which I hold the direct contrary. (*Three Dialogues* 214.)[300]

Berkeley's strong, even if often questioned, commitment to common sense realism and his alleged "vindication of the sense" against Descartes or Malebranche do not allow him to doubt that the world, with all the real natures in it, is perceived directly by our senses (see also *Principles* 150). In this respect can the usage of archetypes as synonym for real, i.e. physical, things be understood as a criticism of Malebranche's theory, since it emphasizes that the directly perceived ideas or the objects they constitute are the "archetypal" physical objects themselves, whereas for Malebranche the archetypes—the only objects perceived directly—are only intellectual representations in the divine mind of the actual physical objects. Though, as Berkeley acknowledges in *Three Dialogues* 254, there are two aspects or states of *this* world—one viewed from the divine (eternal) perspective, one from the temporally and in many other ways limited human viewpoint—Berkeley never subscribes to the Malebranchean view of two distinct worlds. In contrast, by asserting that we perceive directly the real objects, Berkeley suggests that the archetype-talk refers merely to the divine aspect of the same reality, and there is no metaphysically distinct archetypal world in the mind of God—a world even more real than the one he created for us to live in.

In the final part of his criticism, referring to both elements discussed above, Berkeley emphasizes that what we perceive in God is not his, but our own ideas.[301]

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[300] There are other concerns mentioned in this passage I cannot deal with now (like abstraction or assuming the existence of the material world): "Few men think, yet all will have opinions. Hence men's opinions are superficial and confused. It is nothing strange that tenets, which in themselves are ever so different, should nevertheless be confounded with each other by those who do not consider them attentively. I shall not therefore be surprised, if some men imagine that I run into the enthusiasm of Malebranche, though in truth I am very remote from it. He builds on the most abstract general ideas, which I entirely disclaim. He asserts an absolute external world, which I deny." (*Three Dialogues* 214.) See also the issues raised in what precedes this passage in the *Three Dialogues*, and *Principles* 68-71. concerning the occasionalist conception of matter.

[301] Note that this line of argument can be levelled against the identity theory, as it makes clear that our ideas are not God's ideas. Surprising as it may sound, Malebranche's understanding of archetypes can be

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> [...] So that upon the whole there are no Principles more fundamentally opposite than his and mine. It must be owned that I entirely agree with what the holy Scripture saith, "That in God we live and move and have our being." But that we see things in His essence, after the manner above set forth, I am far from believing. Take here in brief my meaning:—It is evident that the things I perceive are my own ideas, and that no idea can exist unless it be in a mind: nor is it less plain that these ideas or things by me perceived, either themselves or their archetypes, exist independently of my mind, since I know myself not to be their author, it being out of my power to determine at pleasure what particular ideas I shall be affected with upon opening my eyes or ears: they must therefore exist in some other Mind, whose Will it is they should be exhibited to me. The things, I say, immediately perceived are ideas or sensations, call them which you will. (*Three Dialogues* 214.)

Illustrating his verdict that "upon the whole there are no principles more fundamentally opposite" than Malebranches's and his, he claims that "[i]t is evident that the things I perceive are *my own ideas*", which or their archetypes "exist in some other mind whose *will* it is they should be exhibited to me" (*Three Dialogues* 213, my emphasis). On my reading of the passage, Berkeley here suggests again what we have seen earlier: our ideas exist in the divine mind only insofar as the volitions to produce our perceptions can be said to exist there, namely in the pretty loose sense that his will is that "they should be exhibited to me". The key point is that not even the archetypes of our ideas are in the mind of God as intellectual or perceptual objects or ideas in the strict sense, in their own "ontological" right, but only in the sense of being the intentional objects or contents of his volitions to bring about our ideas. Though this might also be true in some sense of the perceptions finite minds have, it is definitely true that the divine cognition embedded in his volitions does not entail literal and ideational existence of mental objects in his mind. The divine archetypes of the perceptions that are in some sense—as ideas—are in our minds, i.e. perceived by us, are said to exist outside it, as intentional contents or objects in the understanding of God, who causes them.

> Again, the things I perceive must have an existence, they or their archetypes, out of my mind: but being ideas, neither they nor their archetypes can exist otherwise than in an understanding: there is therefore an understanding. (*Three Dialogues* 240.)

The only reason why Berkeley thinks that the archetypes of the physical or created objects are in the divine mind is that our perceptions of them are *causally* dependent on God. Even though this cause cannot be blind, and has an understanding as well as a will, it

seen as a two-world identity theory: what we perceive are the very same ideas God comprehends in his intellect, constituting a world distinct from the physical world our bodies inhabiting.

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does not entail that the knowledge God has about the perceptions he creates presupposes the existence of ideas or perceptual objects presented to his mind in the way they are said to be in our mind. Rather, many texts can be read as reinforcement of the interpretation that, for Berkeley, our ideas or, indeed, "all the created things [are] in the mind of God" *only* insofar as they are causally dependent on his sighted activity.

> […] from my own being, and from the dependency I find in my self and my ideas, I do by an act of reason, necessarily infer the existence of a God, and of all created things in the mind of God. (*Three Dialogues* 231-2.)

Our ideas are in God's mind pretty much in the sense we are in his mind: not as mental states, modes or objects, but rather as causally dependent entities, which he, through some form of non-ideational archetypal cognition, knowingly wills us to perceive.

Though God might be said to know everything insofar as he can knowingly will and do everything logically possible, as an anti-intellectualistic consequence of this interpretation, there is no repository of actual thoughts or mental objects floating in, if not around, the divine intellect, waiting for his will the replicate some of them as human perceptions.[302] Of course, God knows everything actual, but might not *actually* cognize everything possible. On this reading, the mere logical possibilities are not mental objects in God's mind, and the created world is not one of the (infinitely) many possible worlds he entertains in the isolation of his intellect. Instead, as the letter to Johnson underlines, the ideal or rational existence of the physical objects in the divine mind is inseparable from God's volitions to cause those ideas to be perceived by human minds as real things. That Berkeley's archetypal world of cognitions, abstracted from their realization as our perceptions, is no more actual than any logical possibility God could or could have willed is in sharp contrast with the *actual* metaphysical existence, even necessity, of Malebranche's or Collier's archetypal world. While the archetypes as the intentional contents of what God wills to create from all eternity might be said, though only in a pretty loose sense, to exist in his understanding, as actual ideas they are perceived only

[302] Recall *Notebooks* 831, discussed in 2.1, asserting that "Every Idea has a Cause i.e. is produced by a Will". It seems to mean that there are no ideas in God's mind, at least no ideas God do not cause us to perceive. Interestingly, not only the proponents of the traditional two-world theory, but also of the identity theory sometimes speak about "God's infinite mind as the repository of all ideas […]" (Jacquette 1993, 456). I will return to this peculiar view of omniscience in the next section.

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by finite minds, and depend on God as their primarily volitional cause, rather than his intellect as the passive repository of their originals. This, I propose, is all what Berkeley means by the twofold state of things. On this understanding, the divine archetypes add nothing to reality beyond what we are already observing as the manifestations of God's free and arbitrary volitions in the natural world, but simply constitute a different perspective on the same reality from the active, generative side of the one and only world.[303]

IV.4. ARCHETYPES, IMAGINATION AND PAIN

In the last section of the chapter, I want to further elucidate Berkeley's positive view of archetypes with the help of some analogies he himself used. In particular, I will investigate how the concept of intentional object or content, as opposed to *ideational* objects, can be cashed out in Berkeleyan terms. It is clear from his theory of language that he had some understanding of intentionality which is independent of ideational representation, allowing for meaningful words without having any ideas or images in our minds. As he famously argued, we can have a notion of a mind, a mental activity or a relation, for instance, without being able to conjure up a mental object in our mind resembling it. Unfortunately, Berkeley does not define vey helpfully what he means by 'notions',[304] but

[303] One might worry that since this is not a traditional theory of archetypes, Berkeley would have not used the word 'archetype', with its etymology suggesting an image-model relationship. Though sometimes Berkeley shows interest in etymological analysis, this is clearly insufficient evidence to prove that he regarded archetypes as God's original ideas after which ours are moulded. Moreover, while this meaning was well-known in the period (see for instance Johnson's famous dictionary), some philosophers like Locke argued that archetypes are not necessary like the ideas they are the original patterns of. He claims, for instance, that all ideas have archetypes, even fantastical or chimerical ones, which "have no foundation in nature" (*Essay* II.XXX.1). Secondary qualities can be regarded as archetypes as well, since secondary ideas correspond to them causally, maybe structurally, though not qualitatively. But because of this causal correspondence established by God, even secondary ideas are adequate representations, but not likenesses, of their archetypes. Locke thinks that even inadequate ideas have archetypes, defined as ideas "which are but a partial or incomplete representation of those archetypes to which they are referred" (II.XXXI.1). Furthermore, mixed modes and relations are the archetypes of themselves, making clear that the archetype and the ectype do not even have to be distinct things (see II.XXX.1). Elsewhere Locke confirms that mixed modes and relations are "archetypes without patterns, and so having nothing to represent but themselves" (II.XXXI.3). Cf. Frankel 2016, 57-8, addressing the same objection.

[304] He claims in *Principles* 140, though, that having a notion entails that we understand the meaning of the word and can make meaningful claims about it: "In a large sense indeed, we may be said to have an idea, or rather a notion of *spirit*, that is, we understand the meaning of the word, otherwise we could not affirm or deny any thing of it."

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the paradigmatic case of self-consciousness can be construed as a non-ideational knowledge of, and through, one's activity. Applying this to divine archetypes, we might say that God has *notions* of our perceptions.[305] Of course, all this is related to Berkeley's denial of blind agency I discussed earlier: knowledge of the intention (or representation in its minimal sense of intentionality) is needed even for God to act and create our ideas, but this knowledge is not necessarily an actual entity, an idea or a representation in a more robust sense or a mental object that is conceptually or metaphysically prior to, or exists independently of, the particular activity—that is, it is not necessarily anything else than merely the intentional object or content of the volition in question.[306] Perhaps surprisingly, the case of human imagination provides a particularly relevant analogy to understand this proposal better, showing not only that we can make sense of intentional content in Berkeley's conceptual framework, but also that it is applicable to God specifically. Berkeley himself compares God's creative act as well as knowledge to human imagination in certain respects. Furthermore, what Berkeley tells us, on analogy with imagination, about divine knowledge of our pain sensations can be extended to a general account of divine cognitions or archetypes of all our perceptions. One important lesson of this is that while God's cognition is said to be purely active, without supposing any objectified entities capable of affecting or resisting his will, it is deeply intertwined with the volition and production of our perceptions. God knows our pain because he causes it and, through this volitional activity, gains some sort of (quasi-imaginative) understanding of how it feels for us. As I will try to establish in what follows, although this sort of divine cognition does not involve any images or ideational representations in

[305] Cf. Winkler 1989, 232-3.

[306] I will not draw a distinction between intentional object and content, as it is sometimes done in contemporary philosophy distinguishing the object (real or merely intentional) and the mode of perceiving, or thinking of, it. Though the distinction seems to be applicable to my interpretation as well, insofar as we might say that our ideas are not only the intentional objects of the divine volitions, but also of his cognitions. If it is right to say that the intentional object of the divine cognition is our idea as it is perceived by us, it has to be cognized by God under a different mode, that is, with a different intentional content. But I find this way of talking quite confusing, suggesting mistakenly that the divine cognition can be separated from the volition, having its own intentionality, analyzable in terms of intentional object and content of its own. On my proposal, the divine cognition, that is, the archetype, is nothing else but the intentional content or object of the divine volition. And, as far as I can tell, it makes no sense to differentiate the intentional content and object of a volition.

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God's mind passively perceived by him, it is very much like imagination insofar as it is an essentially active and free volitional act to create ideas, with intentional contents or objects that are conceptually and phenomenologically distinct from the actual ideas it produces.[307]

It is generally claimed that imagination provides the classic example of how ideational representation works for Berkeley, namely through a resemblance relation between two (quasi-)perceptual objects, i.e. the real object perceived—according to Berkeley's early terminology, the archetype—and an idea representing it in our imagination in a less vivid form, for instance while remembering or, perhaps, dreaming. This representation is said to be a necessary relation: two images are either intrinsically similar and hence capable of representing one another, or not, and we can do nothing about it. But, as Berkeley emphasizes with regard to the distinction between sense perception and imagination, the latter has an active aspect as well, insofar as the image we imagine is produced by a free intention. This understanding of imagination, however innocuously it sounds, poses some problems Berkeley never addressed explicitly. In footnote 293, I have already mentioned the case of dreaming, where, normally, there is no conscious intention in play—which could be said about a bunch of other related mental events like involuntary memories as well—but it is equally unclear if all sorts of imagination require ideational representation. Why could we not imagine something that as such represents nothing or, in other words, produce an idea which has no archetype in reality? What does the imagined centaur represent, for instance? Maybe a body of a horse and a head of a man I have seen earlier, but that is clearly not what I *intend* to imagine—it is not the intentional content or object of my imagination. Accordingly, we might distinguish between two types of imagination: one that represents an earlier experience in memory, and one that creates original combinations of ideas without any obvious perceptual object to represent. The latter might be called 'imagination proper', and referred to in *Principles* 1.

[307] Dancy (1987, 53 and 59) one of those few who noticed the analogy between divine knowledge and human imagination, but claimed, in my view pretty misleadingly, that God's ideas are *ideas* of imagination. As I mentioned in footnote 276, Rickless (2018, 99) also hints at some sort of analogy between imagination and divine *perception*. As we will see, most commentators dismiss the analogy, though. For helpful discussions of imagination in Berkeley, see Charles 2010 and Fields 2017.

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as the mental operation of "compounding, dividing", as opposed to "barely representing", ideas.

As we have seen early on, Berkeley suggests in entry 830 of the *Notebooks* that imagination is analogous to the creation of the universe, as they both come from nothing. To quote again,

> Why may we not conceive it possible for God to create things out of Nothing. certainly we our selves create in some wise whenever we imagine. (*Notebooks* 830.)

This passage, if understood in an immaterialist framework, seems to claim that the divine act of creation is like human imagination to the extent that the created world of perceptions is not pre-determined by earlier ideas.[308]

> Mem: to enquire diligently into that strange Mistery viz. How it is that I can cast about, think of this or that Man, place, action wn nothing appears to Introduce them into my thoughts. wn they have no perceivable connexion wth the Ideas suggested by my senses at the present. (*Notebooks* 599.)

To be sure, neither our present nor earlier perceptions determine the content of our imagination. In fact, it is not only the way the ideas are put together is absolutely up to us, but also the tokens of idea are ontologically new entities, produced freely by the imaginer. In light of these, it is fair to say that imagination comes from nothing, or rather it comes from our will, and not our understanding and its ideas directly. While with respect to these aspects of the process we are in control, the outcome, however, might be different from what we wanted to imagine. Whenever I intend to remember or imagine something, it can easily happen that the idea actually produced in my imagination turns out to be phenomenologically very different from the intentional object or content I tried to imagine. This seems to be the case with Berkeley's example of remembering a painful feeling without the pain sensation itself. The intentional content or object is the earlier painful sensation but the way this is re-created in the mind has significantly different phenomenology. Indeed, if we analyse the process of imagination conceptually, it seems clear that while, according to Berkeley's denial of blind agency, as a volitional activity it

[308] Cf. my interpretation of this passage in 2.1, where I claimed there that the *ex nihilo* part actually means that God creates purely "from his will" without any divine ideas pre-given to his creative acts.

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needs some sort of representation or intentionality, it cannot be ideational.[309] If in order to intend to imagine or remember something we already have to have an *idea* in mind, we either do not bring about any new idea or an infinite regress arises. If we have to first bring about a distinct representation of the idea we actually intend to imagine, then why do not we have to have a representation of that representation as well, and so on? Or, if the first representation is nothing else but the idea to be imagined itself, what role does the actual imagination play, given that we already have in our minds the idea we intend to imagine? That imagination is nothing else but actualizing some dormant ideas in our minds seem to violate Berkeley's commitment both to common sense and the transparency thesis—let alone his claim that there is a genuine similarity between imagination and creation *from nothing*.[310]

So, it seems that, in his model of imagination, Berkeley needs to provide some conceptual space to the intentional content in addition to, if not in place of, the stronger concept of representation based on a resemblance relation between two objects of the mind. And even though having an idea is a necessary feature of imagination, it cannot be sufficient for establishing the representational relation. It is not only that the imagined centaur *as such* represents no other actual bundle of ideas at all, but also, as Berkeley

[309] For Malebranche, we are capable of forming the intention to imagine something, while it is not us, but God who actually produces the image in our minds. This shows that Berkeley must have been aware of the possibility of making a conceptual distinction between these phases of imagination, even if, in his case, the actual agent is probably the same as the one who forms the intention. See Luce 1934, 88.

[310] See also *Principles* 28, suggesting that in imagination new ideas arises in our minds. "I find I can excite ideas 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 our selves with words." As I discussed in 2.1, it is not absolutely clear in what sense Berkeley thinks human imagination depends on having earlier perceptions. On my interpretation, it means only that our current capacity of imagining the types of ideas we can imagine depends on having experienced ideas of the same type, but the tokens, ontologically speaking, are absolutely new and created from nothing. I cannot imagine a red object without having perceived something red, but that particular instance of imagining brings about an entirely new idea of red in my mind. The other alternative is to deny the ontological originality of the ideas of imagination, which would entail a concept of memory as a repository of actual ideas unperceived, contradicting Berkeley's transparency thesis, and his understanding of ideas as actually perceived objects of the mind. Berkeley thinks that an "unperceivable perception a contradiction" (*Notebooks* 347.) and "an idea cannot exist unperceived" (*Notebooks* 377).

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acknowledges, ideational representation—the resemblance between two ideas—can be very (c)rude in case of remembering.

> […]the ideas laid up in the imagination need not be images, strictly speaking, of what they represent. […] When you recollect in your thoughts the idea of any house or city, for instance, 'tis certain that idea do's very rudely resemble the thing it represents, and not in each circumstance accurately correspond with it. And yet it may serve to most Interests and purposes as well as if it did. (*Letter to Molyneux*, 8 December 1709, Works 8.25)

Naturally, when remembering a certain house I perceived earlier I produce an image of a house in my mind, but it seems that the correspondence or the representative relation between the earlier experience and the imagined idea is independent of the resemblance they (hardly) have. After all, if I can revoke a house in a very crude manner, how does it not pick out an idea of a different house I saw earlier? What can establish the relation between the actual house and my memory of it, if, as Berkeley puts it, the latter as an image does not accurately correspond with it? Presumably because my mere intention connects me sufficiently and unambiguously with the proper intentional object—what I wanted to remember—no matter how badly the image I produced in my mind represents it in terms of resemblance.[311] This is even clearer with regard to memories of pain, since the past pain we are imagining is normally not represented in the qualitatively same way, which makes it hard to see what else could connect these two distinct experiences than merely the intention to remember it illustrated with the imagined idea of pain.[312]

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[311] Of course, Berkeley has to maintain that while the intention might identify the earlier experience as the represented object in imagination—making an idea represent another no matter how little, if any, the similarity is between them—this cannot do the job for the Lockean materialists with regard to the supposed representative relation between an idea and its original we do not perceive directly. Clearly, in case of a passively received sensory idea we cannot determine what it represent in reality or objectively, while with regard to an idea we produce from nothing our intention really matters in determining its representational content. Indeed, the distinguishing feature of imagination is exactly that it is an intentional act, unlike perception, where intentions can play no role whatsoever. Obviously, we cannot simply stipulate that our sensory ideas represent material objects, without having any objective ground, namely similarity, or at least the *possibility* thereof, between them, for doing so. Also, one might argue that one can connect two of her ideas or experiences through intentional acts, even without any significant resemblance perceived between them, but not, as Berkeley argues against Locke, between an idea and an unperceived, indeed imperceptible quality or object. The problem with representative realism is not merely that we perceive no resemblance between our perceptions and the supposed originals, but that there *cannot* be any at all, grounding objectively what they are supposed to represent. This argument is, of course, equally fatal against the traditional understanding of divine archetypes, as, despite there being no ontological barrier, I do not perceive them any better than the imperceptible material qualities, indeed I know on theological grounds that God's cognitions have to be very dissimilar to our ideas.

[312] Also, it sounds psychologically implausible to say that we can remember something only insofar as the image we create in our imagination resembles it well enough. And if it can be vague, how vague can it

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This is by no means to deny that Berkeley claims that ideas of imagination "are more properly termed *ideas*, or *images of things*, which they copy and represent" (*Principles* 33) and that, in addition to "compounding, dividing", in imagination ideas are "barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways [i.e. by sense perception and reflecting on our passions and mental operations]" (*Principles* 1). These claims are of course naturally read to prove that, for Berkeley, ideas of imagination (especially formed in memory) represent their originals through resemblance between them. In addition to *Notebooks* 823, quoted earlier, in the *Notebooks* we find a perhaps even stronger statement referring to likeness: "properly speaking Idea is the picture of the Imagination's making this is ye likeness of & refer'd to the real Idea or (if you will) thing" (*Notebooks* 657a).[313] I believe these claims are compatible with my interpretation, which does not deny that (i.) ideas are produced in imagination, and that (ii.) these ideas are, or at least can be *regarded as*, copying and representing an original. The real question is whether they do it necessarily and automatically through a similarity relation grounded on their intrinsic features or not. I argue for the negative. Since while basically any idea can be taken, or made by an intentional act, to signify or refer to any other, their intrinsic features are often not sufficient for establishing the representational relation with their intentional objects. It is evident in the case of remembering an earlier pain sensation or even a house.[314] My interpretation can even accept that there needs to be some similarity

be to still be a successful representation of the particular object it is supposed to represent? Instead, it seems more sense to say that we are intending to remember—this alone establishing the intentional connection with the content—and then come up with a sort of illustration related to, but not necessarily resembling, it in our imagination. That is to say, the idea produced in imagination is rather a side product of the process than the decisive factor of the representation. This side product is, of course, the only actual *product* of the process—maybe this is the reason why Berkeley thinks we need to have some idea in imagination at all.

[313] Another objection might point to *Principles* 138, for instance, where Berkeley claims that we cannot have an idea of a spirit, because it cannot represent or resemble it even partially. This is missing my point, since Berkeley is not speaking about imagination but a completely different form of cognition, namely perceiving through introspection or inner sense. Just as in sensory representation, so too with regard to perceiving our own minds, our intention to connect *two* ideas however we want does not have any relevance.

[314] And, as I suggested earlier, it is reasonable to think that the other type of imagination, 'imagination proper', compounding and dividing ideas, does not represent anything real in terms of likeness at all. Also, as we have seen in 3.2, even entirely heterogeneous and arbitrarily appointed ideas can signify and suggest one another through regularly experienced connections, but without any intrinsic features determining these relations.

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between these ideas, but this is often so vague and indeterminate that only the imaginer can establish, through her intentions, the representation relation between any two ideas. Relatedly, as I mentioned earlier, similarity seems to require an act of mind with an intention, providing the respect(s) in which two things can be taken as similar. Further, there is another sense in which Berkeley can consistently claim that idea of imagination—even in case of imagination proper—are copies of an earlier experience, *re*-presenting them, since, as I suggested in 2.1, we need to have some earlier perceptions to gain the capability of creating ideas of that type. This does not entail, however, that, in imagining and remembering, the ideas are created in order to represent through their resemblance those particular experiences I had to have earlier to be able to come up with the types of idea I produce in my imagination. That I can imagine a stop sign requires that earlier I have experienced, among other things, something red, such as a red rose, but clearly the redness of the sign I imagine (or re-present in some sense) is not intended to represent the redness of the rose. By the way, this account works better for what I called 'imagination proper' than the traditional account. In the case when I am not remembering the traffic sign I saw yesterday, but 'properly' imagining a non-existent one, I do not intend to represent any particular earlier experience, just *re*-present one of the same type to visually represent something else, for instance an abstract traffic rule.[315]

[315] As a historical note, it might be worth mentioning that many early moderns entertained the possibility that resemblance is not necessary for representation not only with regard to words and signs but also perceptual relations. Indeed, Descartes considered ideas to be "as it were images of things", which he thought is a definition compatible with thinking that they do not, at least not in all cases, resemble the things they represent or are the images of. For Locke, as we have seen, the copies, i.e. the ideas, do not resemble necessarily their archetypes or what they represent. It is noteworthy that even Arnauld uses similar expressions and calls the acts of perception "ideas" and even "images" of things, while making it clear that they do not resemble their intentional objects. See his *On True and False Ideas*, chapter V, especially definition 8 (Arnauld 1990, 66). Of course, Arnauld is often interpreted as an intentionalist, who straightforwardly claimed that ideas should be understood either as the representative mental *acts* that grasp directly the physical objects or the objects themselves as represented by the mind in this very act, but not as a second object or image in our minds representing the original. Some interpreters, like Yolton 1984, 132-143, or Fields 2011 interpret even Berkeley as endorsing an act theory of ideas, something like Arnauld's intentionalism. Field 2013 even attempts to employ this understanding of ideas to divine archetypes. Here I cannot give a comprehensive account of Berkeley's theory of perception, but I propose that this account is pretty illuminative with regard to his conception of imagination and divine cognition. It is perhaps fair to say that Berkeley thought that imagination (along with divine cognition) and veridical perception are to be analysed in two fundamentally different ways.

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So, in contrast to the often-emphasized claim that imagination is the *par excellence* form of ideational representation, it is probably more crucial to imagination that it is not a passive reception of ideas but an intentional activity to create ideas. This is to be understood not only in the sense that, putting dreams and involuntary memories aside, *we* decide to imagine or remember but also in the sense that what one imagines and what it represents depends primarily, if not exclusively, on her will. For God this dependence is clearly unlimited and exclusive, while for us it is true only "in some wise", as we might be limited to the types of ideas we already experienced to create nonetheless unique and original combinations of newly produced tokens of ideas. And for God, the end result of this *ex nihilo*, freely willed, activity does not present him with a quasi-perceptual object—unlike the imagined idea we create. However deliberately we started to imagine something and produce it as a new entity, what we end up imagining can easily escape our voluntary control, resisting our will and affecting us in any, even unexpected, way. Intending, for instance, to remember a pleasant experience related to a deceased relative or friend can actually trigger some unpleasant feelings. The possibility of these feelings and affections are the direct consequences of what, on my reading, Berkeley considered to be the passive aspect of human imagination, namely the passive quasi-perception of an idea. Of course, for God there can be no passive element in "imagination", and the idea he imagines, i.e. creates, is reified or actualized in the finite perceivers' mind. God only needs to cognize, in accordance with the denial of blind agency, the intentional content of this volitional process, but not a secondary ideational representation, created in not his, but our mind.

But, as Berkeley emphasizes, the affective phenomenology of the original sensations is mitigated or even neutralized even in the case of human imagination. Imagining or remembering a severe pain is clearly not like actually feeling it. It is an essential aspect of memory that we know that what we are not *actually* going through the feeling we remember, even when we are reliving an earlier experience, that is, even when we are affected by it much more deeply than when we are merely remembering an experience from a third person point of view. Despite being aware of its unreality and that it is our free intention to remember or imagine, the idea we produce in the course of this process is still a quasi-perception we are passively confronted with, with a phenomenal character

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presented to us and determined by our prior act of will. This passively perceived object is then capable of escaping our voluntary control and having some effect on us—even if it is not the negative sensation we felt originally. Nonetheless, in line with the generally presumed feebleness of imagination, its affective capacity, so to speak, is much less strong than that of the original experience and it might be that in imagination or memory the original sensation has completely changed. Interestingly, Berkeley uses this feature of human imagination to shed some light on the divine knowledge of all ideas:

> God May comprehend all Ideas even the Ideas wch are painfull& unpleasant without being in any degree pained thereby. Thus we our selves can imagine the pain of a burn etc without any misery or uneasiness at all. (*Notebooks* 675.)

Many commentators argue that imagination, as suggested by this passage for instance, is not an apt analogy for divine cognition, as it would mean that God is a blind agent, lacking the qualitative experience he causes in us.[316] But, on my interpretation, the analogy which Berkeley uses to describe God's cognitions of our perceptions and sensations concerns not the relation between our actual idea of pain and the qualitative and numerically different idea we have of it in imagination or memory, but the intentional character of both divine comprehension and human imagination. When God comprehends our ideas, he "imagines" it through an intentional process of causing it without being affected by perceiving this idea, just like when we are remembering an earlier sensation, we relate to this event intentionally without feeling the original sensation (although, unlike God, we feel something else, which is very different qualitatively from the original sensation). Whether this intentional knowledge of our pain satisfies the denial of blind agency doctrine is, of course, a controversial matter. Let me note only that the problem of divine knowledge of pain and pleasure is a pressing problem for any Christian thinker, and a standard solution is that God knows these insofar as he causes, rather than being a passive subject of, them.[317]

[316] Recently, Daniel 2018, 140-1 argued this way.

[317] In contrast to Luce's claim that Berkeley follows Malebranche in his views on imagination, as he could "find no guidance in Locke", who gave "no systematic treatment of the imaginative faculty" (Luce 1934, 86), I suspect that Locke provided some inspiration for Berkeley to compare divine cognition with human imagination. In the *Examination*, Locke argues that God has ideas of sensations in the way we imagine or remember pain. "It is true the colour of the flower is not actually in God, no more is its figure actually in God; but that we can consider no other understanding, but in analogy to our own, cannot

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So, my contention is simply that imagination without the all too human limitations discussed above provides us with a proper analogy for God's activity and cognitions. Though exercised in pretty different ways—namely, either with or without earlier experiences or potentially affecting perceptions involved in the process—the power of both human and divine imagination is essentially the same. Imagination is, on the one hand, a volitional act to create an idea, indeed the only sort of *human* activity that (directly) produces new mental objects, while, on the other, having an intentional content or object which is conceptually as well as phenomenologically different from the idea presented to the perceiver. It is just as true of the divine sort of imagination (i.e. creation and knowledge) as it is of human memories in imagination that the real physical objects are cognized in a volitional act without the affectivity they have as actual perceptions. This analogy is relevant even if the idea produced in our imagination, while can be radically different from the original sensation, has its own existence and is quasi-perceived by us passively, for God, the idea produced by his "imagination" is not a perceptual object in *his* mind that could affect his pure activity in any way.

Accordingly, God's knowledge of our pain sensations, likened to how we deliberately imagine those in memory, can be extended to all his archetypal cognitions. There are at least two important aspects to underline with regard to the divine knowledge of pain that are relevant to all of his cognitions. First, God wills the painful sensations (if not positively, but in terms of the general laws of pain and pleasure), and causes all particular instances. But, as Berkeley makes it clear, when God causes the pain, he is not a blind agent, but has knowledge of what he is going to do. The cognition of our pain in this case lacks any of the passivity of our painful sensation, and is not like an idea or a perception, is not something that, as a mental object, could be in his mind, nor is a state

conceive otherwise but as the ideas of the figure, colour and situation of the leaves of a marigold is in our minds, when we think of that flower in the night when we see it not; so it was in the thoughts of God before he made that flower. And thus we conceive him to have the idea of the smell of a violet, of the taste of sugar, the sound of a lute or trumpet, and of the pain and pleasure that accompanies any of these or other sensations which he designed we should feel, though he never felt any of them, as we have the ideas of the taste of a cherry in winter, or of the pain of a burn when it is over." (*Examination* 41.) Though it might sound like a divine idea theory of archetypes Berkeley rejected, Locke makes it clear that God has these ideas in the sense of "having a power to produce all things, and in this way, this is true, God *contains all things* in himself, but in a way not proper to make the *being* of God a representative of those thing to us". (*Examination* 45.)

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or mode of his mental activity. It should be rather seen as a notion or a form of imaginative act, that is, a cognition achieved through the realization of perceptions or mental states in our minds. As a consequence, and this is the second important lesson to take home, the divine cognition works only through volitionally causing our sensations.[318] It seems to me that without there being any finite beings capable of feeling pain, God would have no knowledge of it, as he could not intend it to be actualized and, then, cognized through this volition.

The most important conclusion I wanted to prove in this chapter is that, on Berkeley's theory of archetypes, divine cognitions do not come before his volitions conceptually or in any metaphysically relevant sense, as they are not actual things, mental objects in their own right, or ideas in its technical sense, God could entertain in his intellect. In a rather voluntarist manner, for Berkeley, it does not make sense to speak about divine archetypes in any more robust sense than merely as the intentional contents or objects of God's volitions. Metaphysically speaking, while the volition exists in its own right, the intentional object does not, as it is not a perceptual object or an idea. But, for the record, archetypes are secondary to the volitions only in this metaphysical or conceptual sense but not temporally: when there is a volition, there is always a cognition of its intentional object or content (and, for that matter, also an idea perceived by us). But this is all Berkeley's denial of blind agency requires: whenever an agent acts, she needs to have knowledge of her intention. It does not require, though, that this intention come before the volition temporally or even metaphysically and conceptually, or that it need to be a representation in the stronger sense of an actual mental object or idea.[319]

Interestingly, in light of his reductionist understanding of the archetypal world it seems to be true that not even the non-realized possibilities can be the actual objects of God's comprehension. Indeed, Berkeley never claims that God has all the *possible* perceptions actually in his mind, and when asserting that God knows all things or ideas,

[318] It seems similar to Leibniz's view that God does not perceive the phenomena directly but rather as the states of the monads. See Pearce 2016, 9. But, on my interpretation, God does not need to perceive our ideas even indirectly, as his volition provides him with all the required knowledge.

[319] See introduction (footnote 36) and 2.5 (footnote 144), where I acknowledge that there is a sort of conceptual priority of the intentional objects over the particular volitions, as they are necessary conditions or components of the volitional acts, but this is not in conflict with Berkeley's strong voluntarism.

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he seems to mean that he has knowledge of all *actual* things and all *our* ideas as the intentional contents or objects of his volitions. That God does not entertain the possibilities in his mind, however, seems to entail a peculiar understanding of omniscience, one which might seem to be less prestigious than what intellectualists tend to subscribe to. As I put it earlier in 2.5, trying to spell out the priority of the will over the intellect, divine knowledge should not be construed as knowledge God has for its own sake, and his cognitions are always connected to some volitional activity. On this minimalistic understanding, God knows, and needs to know, only everything actual, only those ideas that are actually caused by him and perceived by us. In comparison to any finite mind, he already knows much more than we do. But, of course, all the possibilities *can* be known by him—perhaps including some possibilities no finite mind could ever understand. To put it more precisely, possibilities are what God can do, and hence cognize, but are actually known only if he wills to, and does, realize them. As I mentioned with regard to my reading of the continuity argument, he might even know a lot of counterfactual truths, namely what he would will under certain circumstances, but this does not entail that he has actual ideas of all those nomologically possible perceptions. This understanding of divine knowledge clearly has a voluntarist ring to it, insofar as omniscience is said to be derivative to his omnipotent will: cognition of everything is to be accounted for in terms of God's power to knowingly bring about everything possible, that is, everything that does not entail a contradiction. His account of creation is consistent with this interpretation, as it does not require or suggest that God has all possibilities in his mind pre-given to his volitions. Creation is not construed as bringing about a "second" idea, the idea actualized in our minds, representing the possible originals in the divine mind, but simply as a change of perspective from God's eternal volition and comprehension of our ideas to the finite minds' temporal perception of them.

One might worry that, on my interpretation, Berkeley might have to limit divine knowledge even more. If there is nothing in God's mind perceptually, but knows everything insofar as he wills it, it is an interesting question to ask if he knows the things we imagine or think of. It seems God cannot know what we think or imagine, as he does not cause (not even partially) our thoughts and imaginations. Of course, this is a

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traditional problem: if God does not gain his knowledge from outside, how can he know our thoughts? One possible way out of this dilemma would be adopting an occasionalist (or concurrentist) position, namely that God (partially or even indirectly) brings about our ideas of imagination and thoughts, though we ourselves initiate or contribute in some other sense to these processes. Indeed, this would account for the passive and affective *perceptual* aspect of human imagination. Furthermore, God might not know what we are going to do, as (contingent) future states are not yet caused, and he cannot actually know them even as possibilities. This problem, which in the period would be associated with the Socinian heresy, might be alleviated by pointing out that Berkeley considered God's knowledge to be eternal, and as such all future states or at least all volitions of God might be actual in his eternal present. But even if these theologically uncomfortable problems cannot be solved adequately, they at least provide substantial room for human freedom. On a speculative note, Berkeley might have been more willing to restrict divine knowledge in these senses than to endorse determinism, or even to appeal to a metaphorical characterization of divine omniscience.[320]

One might also object that, on my narrative, Berkeley wants to avoid modal realism (roughly the view that all possibilities are real in quite the same sense as actualities are) so much that he ends up being a necessitarian, for whom there are no mere (non-actualized) possibilities at all. But the point I want to make is simply that for Berkeley possibilities should not be examined in terms of divine knowledge: they are not what God actually conceives of, but rather what he can bring about.[321] And what he can bring about, i.e.

[320] See *Notebooks* 875: "Qu: whether the Will can be the object of Prescience or any knowlege." The answer remains a mystery. In *Alciphron* VII.17, the title character argues for determinism "from the prescience of God". In his answer, Euphranor rejects this conclusion, but it is unclear whether he thinks that the argument is invalid, or the premise is false (i.e. God has no prescience in this strong sense). Cf. *Alciphron* III.17, quoted in II.4. Writing to Percival, Berkeley nonetheless lists as one of aims of the soon-to-be-published *Principles* "the reconciliation of God's foreknowledge with freedom of men". However, and quite remarkably, he does not even attempt to fulfill it in the published text. In the *Siris*, too, Berkeley was pretty permissive concerning what views on divine knowledge are acceptable for a Christian, see for instance *Siris* 327.

[321] Berkeley's view on omniscience and divine knowledge of mere possibilities can be compared to the Scotist or Suarezian account of possibilities as merely logical ones, and contrasted with the ontological account of Aquinas, according to which mere possibilities are construed as unactualized divine ideas. By the way, other voluntarists such as Descartes should face similar problems, given that willing is simply knowing and *vice versa*, with there being not even a conceptual distinction between God's will and intellect

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what is possible, is of course much bigger a set than what he actually does.[322] In any event, he is definitely not a necessitarian in the sense, arguably, Spinoza or Leibniz is, as Berkeley does not think that, due to God's intellectual nature, the actual world is the only metaphysically possible one. It could have been otherwise, not only because it is possible that the actual world would have not been created at all, but also because it is not metaphysically necessary that the actual world is the only possible one God considered. In light of his freedom to create any world with any laws of nature, God could have brought about a different world, even though he never actually thought of any other.[323]

As a last point, I want to suggest how simply the causal story about the divine volition connecting our ideas and the divine archetypes might provide some solution to the classical problems associated with immaterialism—problems which, on the standard account, motivated the introduction of archetypes as divine ideas in the first place, namely the issue of objectivity, continuity and the unity of the physical objects.[324] On this reading, Berkeley might have argued that even if we assume that our ideas are numerically distinct, they can be regarded as identical in the sense of referring to the same archetype, if they are both caused by divine volitions of the same type. This externalist interpretation promises to give an answer to the metaphysical, if not the epistemological, question of disambiguating our qualitatively identical perceptions that might belong to, or pick out, different objects. Whenever we perceive the same object, it is not merely because we have qualitatively same or similar ideas, but because God has volitions of the same type

(see footnote 133). Also, Ockham's take on divine ideas would be interesting to compare with Berkeley's. For an examination of Ockham's views, see Klocker 1980.

[322] Accordingly, Berkeley would have rejected the Platonic idea of plenitude, which was endorsed in the period, for instance, by Cockburn, implying that everything that can be, and metaphysically possible in accordance with God's nature, is actual. On Thomas's (2017) reading, Cockburn was a modal realist, almost like David Lewis, who believed that there are worlds actualized by God other than ours. Interestingly, the intellectualist Cockburn developed this view while attacking the voluntarist Law.

[323] See also footnote 37 in the Introduction, where I raised this surprising comparison between Spinoza's necessitarianism and strong voluntarism.

[324] Though Berkeley claimed that the materialists are not entitled to appeal to a causal story with regard to perception, because there is an unbridgeable explanatory gap between the material and the mental, Locke definitely did so with regard to the relationship God established between the material qualities and our simple ideas of them. As we have seen, it seems pretty clear at least in the case of the ideas of secondary qualities that they, as ectypes, represent the original archetypes—which are construed as powers to produce the corresponding idea in us—not through any resemblance relation, but a purely causal one. Of course, for Berkeley, the causal story between two mental entities, God and us, should be totally unproblematic.

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to cause our perceptions, and, as a consequence, our ideas refer to the same type of cognitions, i.e. divine archetypes. The correspondence between the divine archetypes and our distinct perceptions, rendering our ideas identical, is then grounded in no ideational similarity—which, as we have seen, is impossible anyway—but merely in their causal and structural correspondence. In the nomological order of the physical regularities God established, there are certain types of circumstances and situations in which God wills us to perceive numerically distinct, but qualitatively similar or even identical ideas. To put it in slightly more concrete terms, God knowingly wills my perception of the cup in front me, as well as yours from a different perspective according to certain tendencies or discoverable regularities, corresponding to what we ordinarily take as physical objects, and hence we are justified to take these perceptions to be of the same thing. Just to be sure, these divine volitions, and their intentional contents, are not intrinsically general ones in a Malebranchean manner, but generalized into types by us from the regular patterns discovered in the complex system of God's particular volitions. And, as we have also seen earlier, God has these volitions, and established the corresponding regularities, freely, that is, they are by no means universal necessities, or types pre-given to God, existing independently of his decisions.

This conclusion seems to be unavoidable even on the divine-idea model. It holds that in order to solve the problem of intersubjectivity, our perceptions should refer to common divine ideas through resemblance. But, as I have argued, we can never be in a situation to establish it; in fact, we have good reasons to think that God does not have qualitatively similar perceptions, condemning us to the pretty sceptical position of a two-world theory, according to which the real objects are hidden in God's inaccessible intellect. And if our ideas and God's cognitions are indeed so dissimilar that no resemblance can be between them, what else could make all our numerically distinct ideas equally refer to the divine archetypes other than the fact that they are caused by the same type of divine volition. So, why not simply say that our ideas refer to God's cognitions construed not as ideas ours should represent but as the intentional content of his volitions causing, and providing the identity of, our numerically distinct perceptions?[325]

[325] It is relevant to remind ourselves that in *Three Dialogues* 248, where he addresses the problem of objectivity, Berkeley does not claim that the archetypes external to our minds are *ideas* in God's mind. They

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Perhaps this is all we can, and need to, know according to Berkeley's concept of intersubjectivity, and, along similar lines, we might account for the unity and continuity of objects as well. We might say that those ideas constitute an object's synchronic and diachronic identity (continuity) which God wills and might will to bring about according to their "place" in the nomological order he established in nature, including those aspects and (in)sides we never perceive of it, or the intervals between our occurrent perceptions. In line with my interpretation of divine knowledge, namely that God does not have actual cognitions in his mind of ideas that are not willed by him and perceived by us, the unified physical objects cannot be bundles of divine and human ideas, as the unperceived ideas (hidden aspect or sides, for instance) of the objects are not actually perceived by God, either. They are nothing more than mere nomological possibilities. This excludes the possibility of the sub-set theory both in the sense that we perceive a sub-set of the whole set of ideas, constituting the object in the full sense, perceived only by God, and in the sense that we and God perceive two distinct sub-sets—namely, those ideas we actually perceive and those, for us only possible ideas, God perceives—that together make up the whole objects (see version (i.) and (ii.) in footnote 271). Rather, closer to the phenomenalistic interpretation of Berkeley's immaterialism, the identity, continuity and unity of the objects are grounded in a conception of bodies as bundles of powers (as Berkeley put it in the *Notebooks*).[326] In other words, bodies are construed as possibilities God might make us perceive under certain circumstances and regularities, at certain

can very well be the intentional contents of his volitions. And even with regard to the problem of continuity (to be discussed next), he more often emphasizes the causal activity of God than his ideas. The solutions proposed in these pages are not entirely unique to my interpretation of archetypes as intentional contents, but to those more numerous ones that emphasize the importance of divine volitions. For some other interpretations, see for example McCracken 1979, 288-90 or Frankel 2016, 58-9.

[326] "Bodies etc do exist even wn not perceiv'd they being powers in the active Being." (*Notebooks* 52.) "Bodies taken for Powers do exist wn not perceiv'd but this existence is not actual. wn I say a power exists no more is meant than that if in ye light I open my eyes & look that way I shall see it i.e ye body &c." (*Notebooks* 293). See also *Notebooks* 80: "I am more certain of y^{e} existence & reality of Bodies than Mr Locke since he pretends onely to wt he calls sensitive knowlege, whereas I think I have demonstrative knowlege of their Existence, by them meaning combinations of powers in an unknown substratum." God can be taken as an "*unknown* substratum" in the sense of being imperceptible. Berkeley, of course, changed his terminology, but I think not his view, in the published works. As he seems to instruct himself concerning his public formulations: "Not to mention the Combinations of Powers but to say the things the effects themselves to really exist even wn not actually perceiv'd but still with relation to perception." (*Notebooks* 802.)

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spatio-temporal places of the nomological reality he wills, but does not actually perceive in his eternal comprehension. Just like there being a lot of logically as well nomologically possible objects God never wills to be perceived at all, there can be certain possible perceptions of an actual object that God never actualizes, most evidently, the back or inner sides of objects no one can, or simply just happened not to, turn around or dissect. On this proposal, those ideas we perceive, combine into bundles according to the discovered patterns of their existence and label with common nouns (see *Principles* 1) constitute, though only partially, the real objects as those aspects of them that God actually willed to be perceived by us. As such, this description satisfies the common sensical sub-set theory in a sense, though clearly in a less robust way than the ones discussed earlier. Those possible perceptions that are actually willed by God and perceived by us constitute a sub-set of all the possible perceptions God might will, and we might perceive, according to the nomological order of the created world corresponding to the various relations the materialists assume between physical objects. Of course, on this account, the whole objects are logical constructs, but such that have metaphysical grounding in the nomological order God established, and there is no principled reason why they, in all respects, could not be willed to be actualized as our perceptions. Nonetheless, this account of objects, one might still insist, seems to be at odds with common sense.[327] But Berkeley was surprisingly unfazed by the possibility that the spatio-temporally unified object do not exist in the same sense as the ideas perceived by us do.[328]

[327] One might worry also because this account seems to violate Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle. However, Berkeley's thesis is not that existence can be reduced to perceptions or actually perceived objects, and not simply because there are imperceptible, but perceiving spirits as well. His claim in *Principles* 3 is merely that the essence or existence of ideas or sense objects are constituted by their being perceived. See also *Notebooks* 578, where the "existence of Ideas" is identified with consciousness or perception. Cf. *Notebooks* 429 and 408, though, where the meaning of the word 'existence' is defined in terms "perceiving & being perceived". Even if we regard this as Berkeley's considered position, we might think his concept of existence was much broader, including *possible* perceptions as well. To be sure, at this point, Berkeley admittedly used the "word Existence in a larger sense than ordinary" (*Notebooks* 473), covering not only all actual ideas, but also the imagined, and, as we have seen in the earlier footnote, the possible perceptions as well.

[328] We have seen this with regard to his answer to both the objectivity and the continuity objections. *Notebooks* 472 nicely illustrates this attitude, suggesting that only those objects matter that, in order to think or talk about them, we are either perceiving or imagining: "You ask me whether the books are in the study now wn no one is there to see them. I answer yes. you ask me are we not in the wrong for imagining things to exist wn they are not actually perceiv'd by the senses. I answer no. the existence of our ideas consists in

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In light of this last suggestion, it is pretty tempting to say that Berkeley, with the introduction of archetypes, did not want to solve these issues in a way that is fully in line with all our pretty different intuitions—if he wanted to solve them anyway at all. The dialectic of the texts examined earlier in the chapter—where he refers to divine cognitions or archetypes answering the objections from intersubjectivity and continuity—suggests that Berkeley only wanted to offer possible answers for those who, in an immaterialist framework, want a more robust conception of the physical world than what is minimally entailed by his immaterialist principles. For those who want more than mere qualitative identity to establish the identity of our perceptions (and are committed to the privacy of our ideas), and for those who think that the synchronic and diachronic unity or continuity of objects are unquestionable elements of common-sense realism. For these people, tainted with Lockean and Cartesian philosophical prejudices, Berkeley utilized his understanding of divine archetypes, which, if what I have been presenting is correct, instead of leading to all the problems of the intellectualistic two-world theory and the divine-idea interpretation, exposes, yet again, his inclinations towards a strong voluntarist description of the divine mind. On my reading, then, the ultimate justification for divine archetypes comes not from their potential to solve the traditional problems, but from Berkeley's theological voluntarism, holding that archetypes have an important, though only derivative, role as the intentional contents or objects of the divine volitions.

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being perceiv'd, imagin'd thought on whenever they are imagin'd or thought on they do exist. Whenever they are mention'd or discours'd of they are imagin'd & thought on therefore you can at no time ask me whether they exist or no, but by reason of yt very question they must necessarily exist."

CONCLUSION

It has been long enough, so in the concluding section I just want to *briefly* recap the most important contributions of this dissertation, point to some of the interesting implications of my interpretation, and see what paths of investigation it opens up for the future.

My main thesis is that Berkeley was a theological voluntarist. At the very least, I wanted to show that it is an interesting and substantive question to ask whether the immaterialist Berkeley was a voluntarist about God, the created world, the laws of nature and the divine cognitions, etc. Even if he talked little about these commitments and assumptions directly and explicitly, reading between the lines, I think we can extract some quite substantive evidence of his being influenced by characteristically voluntarist considerations that go far beyond what his metaphysics require. At any rate, he does not talk less about these issues than about the mind or the self, which is still a fashionable topic among commentators. But does this mean we have found a new general interpretative framework? Shall we label Berkeley as "voluntarist" from now on replacing the "empiricist", "rationalist", "Platonist" classifications? As I discussed in the Introduction, though I believe there are some blind spots a more general voluntarist interpretation—pointing to the overarching importance of the will, both human and divine, throughout Berkeley's philosophy—could shed some light on, I did not undertake this even more ambitious project. Indeed, it might be debated that any search for a new classificatory framework is tenable or even desirable. Nonetheless, my investigation of his voluntarist inclinations in theological and physical matters already related him to many like-minded philosophers, including Locke, Newton and Boyle. Though we all knew very well that Berkeley owes a lot to these philosophers, but, in light of some fundamental voluntarist assumptions he shared with his predecessors, now we might start to appreciate another, hitherto overlooked, aspect of this connection. Of course, there are interesting differences between their exact positions, but every classification, label, indeed every analogy or similarity is only a narrative, or rather a tool, like a map, that helps us navigate and get to a point where we need it no more, realizing the subtleties and idiosyncrasy of every original thinker.

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Accordingly, even my more restricted claim about Berkeley's *theological* voluntarism can be interpreted in various ways and degrees. Utilizing the terminology I advanced in the Introduction, it is quite clear that he was a weak voluntarist, who denies intellectualism or the view that God's intellect determines his volitions. But my more ambitious aim was to show that he was of a stronger type, believing in the conceptual and metaphysical priority of the divine will. By putting special emphasis on the intentionality of the volitions he made it clear, though, that he was not an extremely strong voluntarist, and did not want to deny the intelligent and intelligible nature of God altogether. It is another question whether he was a voluntarist only in an epistemological sense. For Locke, God, *as far as we can tell*, made a lot of arbitrary decisions, and, due to the limitations of our epistemic abilities, we simply cannot do better than conceiving of his nature in terms of an intellectually undetermined will. But, pace Locke, Berkeley seems to be more optimistic, though not as enthusiastic as the intellectualist Malebranche, about our positive knowledge of God, and, on my interpretation, adopts strong voluntarism as a proper, though not perfect, characterization of God.

Through providing a voluntarist reading, I hope, I was able to contribute to the scholarship on Berkeley in some more specific ways as well. I wanted to draw our attention to rarely, if ever, addressed issues like his pretty interesting views on divine psychology or the Trinity. I offered new perspective on "old" issues concerning his philosophy of nature, yielding a more proper understanding of the contingency of the Berkeleyan laws of nature. Applying the voluntarist conceptual framework to divine cognitions, and taking seriously the analogy with imagination, I also tried to give a new solution to the puzzle the divine archetypes pose for Berkeley's philosophy.

Moreover, as a very important implication of utilizing a voluntarist framework, it provides us with a tool to re-evaluate Berkeley's vexed relationship to his two most important predecessors, Malebranche and Locke. While Malebranche is regularly cited as the direct source of Berkeley's theological views and theocentric natural philosophy, I tried to show that there are very important distinctions to draw between their concepts of God along the lines of the voluntarism-intellectualism debate. Also, there is a lot to say about the various subtle ways their views on the modal status of the laws of nature reflect this difference about divine psychology. I tried to point out that commentators

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were too quick to identify their views insofar as both deny the absolute or metaphysical necessity of the laws while considering them to be nomologically or physically necessary in the ordinary course of nature. While for Malebranche, it is true, if not exactly along these lines, that the laws of nature are both necessary and contingent in various important aspects, for Berkeley, I argued, they are utterly contingent. So, despite the important Malebranchean themes and terminology picked up and developed by Berkeley, there are also some very deep but often overlooked differences—differences, I cannot but think, Malebranche would have been very keen to point out. While Berkeley was less interested in debating theological issues in the abstract, as I tried to establish, he made his stance against a Malebranchean sort of intellectualism pretty clear in various areas of his thought, including his understanding of divine psychology, laws of nature and archetypes. Accordingly, as I suggested, Locke's influence on Berkeley should not be seen as a closed issue either. Given the various parallels between how Locke and Berkeley formulated many of their views on divine nature and the laws of nature, it is worth investigating their philosophical relationship from a voluntarist point of view. But more generally, it would be useful to conduct a deeper investigation of the influence Gassendi, Boyle, Locke, Newton, etc. had on Berkeley's voluntarism. Despite some work that has been done on it recently, his relation to the intellectualist immaterialist Collier also deserves more attention from historians of philosophy, since, as I discussed briefly, it reveals that behind the façade of similar metaphysics one might have quite different theological foundations.

There is another aspect of the picture that is missing from these pages. It seems to be an important and relevant question if Berkeley was a voluntarist in ethical terms as well. All the more so because the ethical consequences of voluntarism were a main concern for many in the period, such as Shaftesbury or the Cambridge Platonists. But for the Cartesians, Locke, Boyle, Newton—figures who had the greatest influence on Berkeley—voluntarism had as clear, if not more important, implications for the natural world as for the ethical. Nonetheless, one might think if Berkeley was not a voluntarist with regard to ethics, a *coherent* voluntarist reading of his philosophy faces a serious problem. And, in fact, some interpret Berkeley's ethical views in an intellectualist manner, claiming that God wills his decrees according to reasons determined by his benevolent nature. Besides those reasons I gave in footnote 47 for why this omission should not bother us very

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much, I just want to press again that a not extreme sort of voluntarist does not need to deny that God has aims, only that these aims determine his volitions and actions necessarily. Indeed, just as when decreeing his morally binding laws, we have seen that Berkeley often emphasizes that God has aims when acting in nature, most importantly to promote the happiness, practical and scientific interests of mankind. In contrast to some abstract, pre-given standard, essentially characterizing the most perfect being, I argued with regard to the order in nature that this is all what constitutes divine goodness for Berkeley. Presumably nothing more is required by his ethical voluntarism either. So, if Berkeley's God freely decrees our moral laws with the aim of our happiness, then it is absolutely compatible with the strong voluntarist reading of his divine psychology I presented in this dissertation.

But this, as many other issues and subtleties I could hardly touch upon, deserves much more thorough examination. Nonetheless I hope I did not only prove how limited our, indeed my, knowledge of Berkeley's constructive philosophy is but was able to highlight some interesting elements in his positive contributions to theology and natural philosophy. In a way, I tried to falsify Anne Berkeley's famous claim about her husband: "had he built as he has pulled down, he had been a master builder indeed; but unto every man his work: some must remove rubbish, the others lay foundations" (cited by Turbayne 1963, xii). Even if the edifice Berkeley "the master builder" wanted to construct has not been fully finished, I hope this dissertation proves that it has a strong voluntarist foundation.

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