

BERKELEY'S ACTIVE SELF

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ABSTRACT

The Author considers the strengths and weaknesses of Berkeley's account of what he calls indifferently the soul, mind, spirit or self. Such an account deserves far more credit than he has standardly been awarded for a significantly modern position, most of which has mistakenly been credited to Schopenhauer. The Author relates Berkeley's views to those recently expressed by Bill Brewer and attempts to isolate the crucial difference between Berkeley and Schopenhauer.

Key words: soul, mind, spirit, self

In this paper I consider the strengths and weaknesses of Berkeley's account of what he calls indifferently the soul, mind, spirit or self. I suggest that he deserves far more credit than he has standardly been awarded for a significantly modern position, most of which has mistakenly been credited to Schopenhauer. I relate Berkeley's views to those expressed in an interesting recent article by Bill Brewer. And I end by trying to isolate the crucial difference between Berkeley and Schopenhauer.¹

¹ In what follows I use the following standard abbreviations for Berkeley's works other than the *Principles of Human Knowledge* and the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*: NTV – *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*; TVV – *The Theory of Vision, Vindicated and Explained*; PC – *Philosophical Commentaries*. These works can all be found in Ayers, M. ed. (1993), *George Berkeley: Philosophical Works; including the Works on Vision*, London: Everyman. Reference to the *Three Dialogues* is by the pagination of the standard 8-volume edition of Berkeley's entire corpus, Luce, A. A. & T.E. Jessop (1948 – 57), *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, 8 vols. London: Nelson. This pagination is marked in the Ayers edition cited above, and in my own edition of the *Three Dialogues*, (1998), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1.

A standard account of Berkeley's contribution to the eighteenth-century debate would have it that he denies Descartes' account of material substance, leaving Cartesian spiritual substance as the only substance. There is much excuse for saying such things. Here are three relevant passages:

... there is no other substance, in a strict sense, than *spirit*. (Third Dialogue p. 261)

We have shown that the soul is indivisible, incorporeal, unextended, and it is consequently incorruptible. (*Principles* §141)

... will and understanding constitute in the strictest sense a mind or spirit. (Third Dialogue p. 240)

Nonetheless the standard position seems to me to be gravely mistaken. Spirits are indeed the only substances, being the only things that are metaphysically independent. Ideas are things too, but they are not substances, being metaphysically dependent on minds. Created spirits are causally, but not metaphysically, dependent on God as their creator. But this does not yet take us all the way to Descartes' conception of spiritual substance. Descartes seems to have believed that there are two sorts of stuff: material stuff with its properties of figure, extension and motion, and immaterial stuff with its properties of thought and will. In support of this I instance the views of Locke, that the properties standardly ascribed to spiritual substance might in fact have been allotted to ('superadded to') material substance. For Descartes, no single sort of substance could have both packs of properties; each had its own. This rendered it possible for our conceptions of spirit and of matter to be in many ways similar; we have an idea of a spirit as an object with certain properties, and another of matter as an object with rather different properties.

Berkeley's whole philosophy of spirit is concerned with stressing the active nature of the mind. To conceive of the mind as an object with certain properties would, for him, have been to distort it entirely. This was, he would have said, just as well, because the relation between properties and bearer is incomprehensible. Not so, however, the relation between spirit and its distinguishing features. These are two: the ideas it has, and its powers and actions (or 'operations'). The relation between spirit and idea is the perfectly comprehensible one of perceiving; there is no mystery here. And we only succeed in making a mystery out of the relation between a spirit and its powers and operations if we make the mistake of abstracting the spirit that has those powers and engages in those operations from the powers and operations themselves, creating thereby two things between which some comprehensible relation has to be found (*Principles* §§98, 143).

A spirit, for Berkeley, is an 'active principle' or agent - a thing that thinks, perceives, and wills. As such it is entirely different from any physical thing or idea either of sense or of

imagination. All ideas are entirely passive and inert. So a spirit is not itself an idea, nor a collection of ideas, and it is not something of which we can have an idea either. For ideas, being entirely passive, are incapable of resembling an active thing, and therefore incapable of representing a spirit. So a spirit is quite different from anything that can be an object for us in the sort of way that a physical thing can be. Spirits are things, however.

Thing or being is the most general name of all, it comprehends under it two kinds entirely distinct and heterogeneous, and which have nothing common but the name, to wit, *spirits* and *ideas*. The former are *active, indivisible substances*: the latter are *inert, fleeting, dependent beings*, which subsist not by themselves, but are supported by, or exist in minds or spiritual substances. (*Principles* §89)

So for Berkeley spirit is not a kind of stuff with peculiar properties, but agent. Strictly speaking, we cannot see a spirit:

Hence it is plain, we do not see a man, if by *man* is meant that which lives, moves, perceives, and thinks as we do: but only such a certain collection of ideas, as directs us to think there is a distinct principle of thought and motion like to ourselves, accompanying and represented² by it. (*Principles* §148)

In this sense, the body of a man is not identical with the man. The man is an active principle (in the sense of *principium* as beginning, source). The body of the man is a mere collection of passive ideas. There is however, an immediate link between man and body. As agents, there are two distinct sorts of things that we can create: ideas in our own minds, and movements of our bodies; in the latter sense, minds are principles of motion. We can only directly create motions of our own bodies, while God creates in a similar direct way all natural changes whatever.

How is an active spirit known to itself? A spirit acquires a conception of *spirit* from itself, by what Berkeley calls a 'reflex act'. The conception it acquires is of course quite different from an idea - a difference that Berkeley marks by the use of the term 'notion'. We can have a notion of spirit, i.e. understand the meaning of the word, without having any idea of such a thing. It is thus *in acting* that an agent acquires a conception of itself as active.

Berkeley here differs from Descartes. Descartes seems to say that the mind knows itself as thinker, or perhaps as doubter, rather than as agent; he seems, that is, to offer an intellectual proof of a primarily intellectual being. Of course to think is, for him, to act; but that aspect of things does not seem to be crucial to the *cogito*. Berkeley, by contrast, is not offering a proof at all; there is no *ergo* in the move whereby we achieve a conception of ourselves. There is instead an action in which an active principle reveals itself

² In what sense does the body (or the collection of ideas that is the body) represent the spirit? It is not clear that Berkeley has the right to say any such thing.

to itself as agent. And this enables it to grasp the conception of another mind; 'I have therefore, though not an inactive idea, yet in myself some sort of an active thinking image of the Deity' (Third Dialogue p. 232).

There are various questions that we would like to ask about the reflex act in which the self reveals itself to itself. Is it special and rare? Is it common but distinctive? Or, finally, is it that every act is a reflex act in the required sense? It is, of course, trivial to say that we know ourselves by an act that reveals us to ourselves, or ourselves to us. If it is done at all, it must be by some act. Should we rather think about the sense in which as agent I necessarily know what I am doing? It is not as if knowing what one is doing is something distinct from doing it, something which nonetheless always accompanies doing it. Indeed, if knowing were an act, this would lead to an infinite regress, and a vicious one too. Perhaps my knowledge of myself as agent, and my knowledge that it is I who am doing this action, is in this sense a reflex aspect of every action.

Sadly, however, none of these questions receives any answer that I know of in Berkeley's texts.

2.

Berkeley agrees with Hume, therefore, that we can have no idea of a spirit as an object distinct from its ideas, thoughts and sensations. But their explanations for this supposed fact are quite different. For Berkeley, as we have seen, it is that ideas are all passive and therefore incapable of resembling or representing minds or spirits. For Hume this explanation is not available, because the mind, for Hume, is entirely passive. This might seem wrong; it is common to talk of Hume's conception of desire or passion as active, in contrast to his conception of belief as passive. But that is not relevant. Desire, for Hume, may indeed be active or pushy; the occurrence of desire is capable of explaining actions as movements of the body. Indeed, even belief is active in this sense, since Hume ascribes to belief 'force and influence' and happily speaks of beliefs as 'the governing principles of all our actions' (*Treatise*, Appendix, p. 629³). But for Hume, beliefs and desires are things that just happen to one; in forming them, we are not active but passive. This is the whole point of his naturalism in the philosophy of mind, and takes him a million miles away from Berkeley.

Hume, then, cannot make use of Berkeley's arguments that we can have no impression of a self. As far as those arguments go, self and idea are alike passive; there is no bar at all on an idea of self. So why does Hume stand out against such a thing? I have to confess here that I have always found the arguments of *Treatise* 1.4.6. lacking in force. They seem to be four:

³ Hume 1978.

1. Self is that to which our several impressions are supposed to have a reference.
2. There is no impression constant and invariable.
3. After what manner do our particular impressions belong to the self; and how are they connected with it?
4. When I enter most intimately upon what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other.

I assume that these arguments are intended not only to show that we do not have an impression of the self, but that such an impression is impossible. As such, the first 'argument' begs the question, since it states without argument that no impression can both belong to a self and 'have a reference' to that self. Even if we were to allow this, we were surely looking for an argument for its truth that offers something of an explanation of it, and the present one is completely lacking in that respect. (Quite unlike Berkeley's.) The second 'argument' assumes that an impression of a constant and invariable object must itself be constant and invariable; but I know of no reason for accepting such a principle. Presumably the basic claim is that an impression of an object as having some property must itself have that property. But that is surely a vast over-generalisation. What is more, the second 'argument' is irrelevant, if the intended conclusion is that an impression of the self is impossible. For presumably it is quite possible that we should have a constant and invariable impression; it is just that we happen not to have one. The third 'argument' is a rhetorical question, to which, we might have thought, there is a perfectly acceptable answer, namely the one given by Berkeley: that the relation between the self and its impressions is that the self perceives the impressions. The fourth 'argument' is the one that has most impressed people, I think. But it seems to tell us nothing about *why* there can be no impression of the self. It hints at something more than the contingent fact that none of us happens to have such an idea, but takes us no further than that.

For all these reasons, then, I very much prefer Berkeley's stance on this matter, which at least offers an explanation of why the self cannot represent itself to itself in the sort of way that it succeeds in representing naturally occurring objects and events. Of course Berkeley's view goes further than this, since he also holds that no self can be represented to any other self. Hume, by contrast, restricts himself to asking whether one can have an impression of oneself; his second argument, the one about having no impression constant and invariable, would be totally and blatantly irrelevant if intended as an argument that we cannot have an impression of another self. What seems odd to me in all this is that Hume pays no attention at all to the position adopted by Berkeley. For Hume there is no question but that if the self exists it must be an object of the right sort for us to have an impression of it. I suppose that the explanation of Hume's position here is his theory of meaning: that the only way to understand a term is to derive an idea from a relevant impression. Berkeley, of course, did not accept this. He explicitly adopted a theory of meaning that allows us to understand the meanings of some terms without

the need for relevant ideas (*Principles*, Introduction §§19-20, 24). This theory is the one alluded to, though hardly adequately expressed by, his claim that we can have a notion of spirits and relations, both of which he thought of as active. Hume is at least consistent to his theory of meaning; but since that theory is not argued for, despite Berkeley's explicit rejection of it, Hume's being consistent to it is hardly an adequate defence.

3.

I now return to the distinction between activity and passivity in Berkeley. This distinction lies at the very basis of his philosophy. Everything would be fine if spirits were all uniformly active and ideas uniformly passive. Sadly, however, things are not so neat. The easy case is that of imagination. Here we are indeed our own masters; our will is paramount, and we are purely active. With the movements of our bodies things are more complicated. There is no difficulty in Berkeley's saying that we are purely active as movers of our bodies, even though here our wills are not paramount, since we need the acquiescence of God for our bodies to move. For it is not required for us to be active that whatever we will should immediately and automatically happen. But there is still a well-known crux for Berkeley here. If the movements of our bodies are ideas caused by us, they are not real things; for real things are defined by Berkeley as those ideas that we do not cause, but receive. If, however, the movements of our bodies are caused by God, as they need to be if they are to be real, then God appears to be the agent involved, rather than us. There is a problem, then, in making sense of the idea of human bodily action. In the *Principles* Berkeley has this to say:

For it is evident that in affecting other persons, the will of man has no other object, than barely the motion of the limbs of his body; but that such a motion should be attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the Creator. He alone it is who *upholding all things by the Word of his Power*, maintains that intercourse between spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other. (*Principles* §147)

This will not really do. Suppose that God refuses to excite the relevant ideas in the minds of others. Then we have not moved our body, even though, it seems, a suitable volition has occurred, and we have created for ourselves, at least, a suitable idea as of our body moving. So far as that goes, then, the sole object of our will is an idea which God has been unwilling to turn into a real thing. Everything else that happens is caused by God. So the crux has not been resolved. I leave this problem aside, however, and turn to the equally problematic case of perception. Even Berkeley has to admit that in perception we are partly passive. 'That the soul of man is passive as well as active, I make no doubt' (2nd letter to Johnson §3⁴). But the combination of activity and passivity in

⁴ This can be found in the Luce & Jessop 1948 – 57, vol. ii, and in my edition of the *Principles*, Berkeley 1998, p. 184.

human spirits is hard for him to explain, when one considers that the self revealed to us by the so-called 'reflex act' is an active self, not a mixed one. The strategy he adopts is to insist that in perception we are active as well as passive.

It seems 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, or if there be an equal balance there must be an equal mixture of pleasure and pain to cause it, there being no ideas perfectly void of all pain and uneasiness but what are preferable to annihilation. (*PC* §833; see also *PC* §777)

Here then is one link between perception and will. But there is another:

It seems to me that will and understanding, volitions and ideas, cannot be severed, that either cannot be possibly without the other. (*PC* §841)

Only an active being can perceive, even though in perception we are passive.⁵ Now why should this be the case? The answer, I think, is that the perception of distance, and hence the ability to locate oneself in one's physical surroundings, without which perception is surely incomprehensible, is something only available to agents. Mere sensory devices, passive recorders of sensory information, would not be capable of genuine perception. To see how this comes out, we need to turn to Berkeley's account of the perception of distance (and of orientation, which he calls the 'situation' of perceptual objects), something that occupies a considerable part of the *NIV*. There is a simple expression of these views at *Principles* §44:

So that in strict truth the ideas of sight, when we apprehend by them distance and things placed at a distance, do not suggest or mark out to us things actually existing at a distance, but only admonish us what ideas of touch will be imprinted in our minds at such and such distances of time, and in consequence of such or such actions.

⁵ In the First Dialogue Philonous argues thus:

Phil: Can the mind produce, discontinue, or change anything but by an act of the will?

Hylas: It cannot.

Phil: The mind therefore is to be accounted active in its perceptions, so far forth as volition is included in them.

Hylas: It is.

Phil: In plucking this flower, I am active, because I do it by the motion of my hand, which was consequent upon my volition; so likewise in applying it to my nose. But is either of these smelling?

Hylas: No.

Phil: I act too in drawing the air through my nose; because my breathing so, rather than otherwise, is the effect of my volition. But neither can this be called *smelling*; for if it were, I should smell every time I breathed in that manner.

Hylas: True.

Phil: Smelling then is somewhat consequent to all this.

Hylas: It is.

Phil: But I do not find my will concerned any farther. Whatever more there is, as that I perceive such a particular smell or any smell at all, this is independent of my will, and therein I am altogether passive. (p. 196)

But it is hard to be sure that this is Berkeley's own opinion - though if it is not, it is one of the very few occasions on which Philonous does not fairly represent Berkeley.

Earlier Berkeley had written:

Looking at an object I perceive a certain visible figure and colour, with some degree of faintness and other circumstances, which from what I have formerly observed, determine me to think that if I advance forward so many paces or miles, I shall be affected with such and such ideas of touch. ... what he sees only suggests to his understanding that after having passed a certain distance, to be measured by the motion of his body, which is perceivable by touch, he shall come to perceive such and such tangible ideas. (NTV §45)

In modern terms, we might say that according to Berkeley our spatial perception is capable of representing an array as our own spatial environment (i.e. one within which we occupy a certain location) in virtue of its role in controlling our behaviour with respect to that environment in accordance with our purposes.⁶

Would it be right to say that for Berkeley the *content* of a spatial perceptual state includes facts about the location of the perceiver with respect to the various other objects perceived, as well as their distance from and orientation with respect to each other? This is a crucial question, and straight off the answer would seem to need to be no. Berkeley writes:

those things alone are actually and strictly perceived by any sense, which would have been perceived, in case that same sense had then been first conferred on us. As for other things, it is plain they are only suggested to the mind by experience grounded on former perceptions. (First Dialogue p. 204)

Now consider this:

As we see distance, so we see magnitude. And we see both in the same way that we see shame or anger in the looks of a man. Those passions are themselves invisible, they are nevertheless let in by the eye along with colours and alterations of countenance, which are the immediate objects of vision: and which signify them for no other reasons than barely because they have been observed to accompany them. Without which experience we should no more have taken blushing for a sign of shame than of gladness. (NTV §65)

The conclusion seems plain. Our location among the things that we perceive, like the distribution of those things, is not itself perceived, but inferred from what we do perceive. If so, the location of the perceiver is not itself part of the perceptual content of a perceptual state, to use modern jargon for a moment; such states contain sufficient information for us to infer our own location from them, once we have had sufficient experience. The content of a perceptual state itself, strictly speaking, is not directly and

⁶ This sentence is almost a quotation from Brewer 1992, pp. 17-34, p. 27.

immediately related to any thoughts about agency. So it does not seem as if we will find here any support for Berkeley's claim that only agents can perceive.

There is an intuitive appeal in Berkeley's identification of the immediate objects of perception as those which would still have been present even if this had been the first time that we had made use of the relevant sense. There is strong pressure to identify what is immediately perceived with what is perceived in a way that is not at all affected by the past experience of the perceiver. And, quite apart from that, the present case, that of the perception of distance, is special. For Berkeley's account of the *facts* of distance themselves is expressed in terms of what further ideas the perceiver would have if he did certain things. For an object to be two feet in front of me and slightly to my left is for it to be the case that if I were to experience certain ideas (those as of reaching out with my left hand in a certain direction) I would experience certain other ideas (those as of touching the cup). The account, that is to say, is run in terms of subjective conditionals; facts about distance are conditional facts. And we are intuitively reluctant to allow that we can perceive the truth of subjunctive conditionals. We are much more inclined to suppose that we can *infer* from what we perceive that in certain circumstances such and such would happen, but that we cannot strictly speaking *see* that this is so. So, for instance, we would be likely to say that the umpire in cricket does not see that the ball would have hit the stumps if it had not hit the batsman's leg first; he simply infers this from what he does see, namely the trajectory of the ball and the placing of the batsman's leg.

These points, then, suggest that for Berkeley distance and orientation are both inferred rather than perceived. Now it is true that if this is so, our awareness of distance is something in which we are active, since to infer is to act. But this would not help him to establish that we are active in perception itself, which seemed to be what was wanted.

I think, however, that we have been making a mistake, caused by an implicit identification of what Berkeley calls 'suggestion' with what we would call 'inference'. We have been working, that is, with a two-sided contrast between the immediate objects of vision, say, and those things that we can, given sufficient information, infer from those immediate objects. But there is good evidence that Berkeley was working with a three-sided contrast between the immediate objects on one side, the inferred facts on the other, and in the middle the things 'suggested' by the immediate objects. Of these last things, he is sometimes willing to say (as in the last cited quotation) that they are 'let in by the eye along with ... the immediate objects.' The eye only does this for those with sufficient relevant experience, but this does not mean that such things are *conclusions* of *arguments* from experience, reached by inference.

This tripartite distinction is perhaps available to Berkeley, but is there any evidence that he wanted to sign up to it?

Visible ideas and sensations attending vision ... come to signify and suggest [things placed at a distance] to us, after the same manner as words of any language suggest the ideas they are made to stand for. (*Principles* §43)

No sooner are the words of a familiar language pronounced in our ears, but the ideas corresponding thereto present themselves to our minds; in the same instant the sound and the meaning enter the understanding; so closely are they united that it is not in our power to keep out the one, except we exclude the other also. We even act in all respects as if we heard the very thoughts themselves. So likewise the secondary objects, or those which are only suggested by sight, do often more strongly affect us, and are more regarded than the proper objects of that sense; along with which they enter into the mind, and with which they have a far more strict connexion, than ideas have with words. Hence we find it so difficult to discriminate between the immediate and mediate objects of sight, and are so prone to attribute to the former what belongs only to the latter. (*NTV* §51)

In this last passage Berkeley is clearly introducing something that is neither immediate object of sight, nor merely something inferred from such objects. These mediate or secondary objects are suggested by sight. The clearest version of this position that I know in Berkeley's texts is this:

To perceive is one thing; to judge is another. So likewise, to be suggested is one thing, and to be inferred another. Things are suggested and perceived by sense. We make judgements and inferences by the understanding. (*TVV* §42)

It may be, then, that the content of our perceptual states, to revert to modern jargon, includes both mediate and immediate object. As we might put it, the perceptual contents available to one are a function not only of the state of one's perceptual apparatus and the nature of one's surroundings, but also of one's past experience. The perceptual contents available to an experienced perceiver are not yet available to a neophyte, who is restricted to what is primarily or immediately perceived. If this is so, we are once more able to claim that for Berkeley the perceptual content of a mature perceptual state is only available to an agent.

There is a certain justice in this, I think. For content is often contrasted with the possible results of inference, even if it is characterised in terms of the inferences it supports; an account of content in terms of inferential powers does not suppose that the content includes the results of any and all such inferences. Berkeley places facts about distance and orientation squarely on the side of suggestion rather than on that of inference. If that is right, we must ascribe to him what one might call a nested conception of perceptual content.⁷

⁷ Something should be made here of the analogy with the relation between sounds and meanings, but I cannot find the right way to do this at the moment.

My conclusion, then, is that Berkeley is justified in claiming that perception and agency go together. The sorts of perceptual states we enjoy are only available to agents, since their content is partly characterised in terms of the possible consequences of action, conceived first-personally.

4.

The question of the way in which perception reveals the subject's location is now at the forefront of attention in contemporary philosophy of mind. There are two obvious possibilities: that the subject and his location relative to other things perceived are themselves among the things presented in perception, or that they are not perceived but inferred. In a recent article, Bill Brewer argues against both of these; he suggests that though both may sometimes occur, neither alternative could explain the fact that our location is something we are *always* aware of when we perceive. His alternative suggestion is this:

perceptual contents are self-locating in virtue of their contribution to the subject's capacity for basic purposive action in the world... The basic idea is that various perceptions are organized and integrated into a presentation of the subject's spatial environment in virtue of their role in controlling his behaviour with respect to that environment in accordance with his purposes. (Brewer 1992, pp. 26-7)

Brewer says of this position that 'the fundamental insight ... is very much Schopenhauer's' (*ibid.*). I want to suggest that he would have done better to appeal to Berkeley.

We have already seen how Berkeley claims that the content of a perceptual state includes facts about the subject's distance from and orientation with respect to the various features of his surroundings, even though the subject himself is not a possible object of perception. And we have seen how he explains this by understanding those facts about distance and orientation as conditional truths about the potential results of various actions available to the subject. So far as this goes, everything that Brewer might hope to find in Schopenhauer is also in Berkeley. And this is surely not an accident. It is not as if Schopenhauer was ignorant of Berkeley's work. He was an ardent and explicit follower of Berkeley's idealism, which, like Berkeley, he thought to be obviously true for anyone who considered the matter at all carefully.

The theses that Brewer attributes to Schopenhauer are these:

- (i) *Qua* subject of representation *alone*, I can have no sense of myself as an item in the world.
- (ii) *Qua* subject of will, I do have a sense of myself as an item in the world. (p. 18)

Of these two theses, the first is pure Berkeley. In Berkeley's terms, it amounts to the claim that we can have no idea of a spirit, because ideas, being passive, are incapable

of resembling, and so incapable of representing, active objects such as spirits. Spirits, therefore, cannot be perceived, and hence *a fortiori* we cannot conceive of ourselves as one among the perceivable things. As for the second thesis, things are more complicated. First, both Schopenhauer and Berkeley accept that we have what we might call a sense of ourselves as agents. But is the item so sensed one of the things in the world? Schopenhauer's answer to this is in a way yes and in a way no. He conceives of the world as the totality of representable objects, and a subject of will cannot be represented. Our body can be presented, but as subjects of will we cannot. The trick in Schopenhauer is that he identifies acts of will with movements of the body. He writes:

Every true act of his will is also at once and inevitably a movement of his body. ... The act of will and the action of the body are not two different states objectively known ... but are one and the same thing, though given in two entirely different ways, first quite directly, and then in perception for the understanding.⁸

The idea here is that there is only one thing, which is both act of will and bodily movement; so far as it can be represented and perceived, it is bodily movement, and so far as it can reveal a subject, it is act of will. And it is this dual-aspect view that Brewer appeals to to solve the problem of how the location of the subject is given in perception when the subject of the relevant perception is not perceptually presented.⁹

Is it true then to say that Schopenhauer claims that *qua* subject of will, I do have a sense of myself as an item in the world? Not, I think, in the sense required. For that which perception succeeds in locating in space with respect to its surroundings, i.e. a subject of will, is not itself given *as an item in the world*. It remains true for Schopenhauer that the only way in which things in the world can be given is in representation, and the will cannot as such be represented. *Qua* subject of will, I am an item in the world; but I cannot be given to myself as such in perception.

⁸ Schopenhauer 1958, p. 100.

⁹ This is not quite right. The fact is that Schopenhauer runs two dual-aspect theories together. First there is the one cited in the text above, which concerns the identity of action and bodily movement. Second, there is the identity of intellect and will, or of subject of intellect and subject of will. Perception is an activity of the intellect, not of the will, for Schopenhauer; though, like Berkeley, he ties things together by arguing that only a willing being can perceive. He has, however, a thick conception of the subject of will, identifying acts of will with bodily movements, and the thinnest of all conceptions of the subject of intellect, the perceiver, which he conceives of as an extensionless point, for familiar Kantian reasons. This makes it possible for him to say that the body is given as an item in the world, and hence that the subject of will is given in perception, and hence that the subject of perception is given in perception. But these extensional identities do not extend to showing that the perceiver and his location relative to his surroundings is able to be given in perception in any way at all; and this was what was really required.

Note that to the extent that Brewer may be appealing to both dual-aspect theories at once, he would be appealing to what is recognised as one of the weakest elements of Schopenhauer's philosophy - the supposed identity of the extensionless point and the subject of will. Schopenhauer himself called that identity 'the greatest miracle', apparently without thinking of this as a term of abuse. It is worth noting that here Schopenhauer falls at the same hurdle as troubled Berkeley, namely the problem of holding together as one thing the willing and the perceiving object. But at least Berkeley did not need to appeal to a miracle.

It seems to me therefore that the appeal to Schopenhauer's dual-aspect theory is not going to solve the question how the self is perceptually located in the world. We only think otherwise if we fail to take seriously the gulf between will and potential object of representation. Berkeley's position does, by contrast, contain the seeds of a resolution of the question of self-location; but it is not a dual-aspect theory. For Berkeley, the self is located in the world by the various possibilities for action that perception reveals as available for it. The self is also intimately related to the body; leaving aside the acts of the imagination (as Schopenhauer consistently and conveniently does, so far as I can tell), Berkeley claims that 'the will of man has no other object, than barely the motion of the limbs of his body' (*Principles* §147). But still the body is an idea or a collection of ideas, and passive, and the self is active. Dual-aspect monism, then, fails to solve the problem, while a Berkeleian dualism does offer a solution.

This is, however, not at all what Brewer wants. For at the end of the day he wants to have his Schopenhauerian solution to the problem of self-location without the idealism that Schopenhauer took from Berkeley. Brewer wants a dual-aspect realism rather than a dual-aspect idealism; he speaks of an agent as a 'single, persisting physical entity' (p. 28), and his conception of the physical is not intended to be idealistic at all. This gives him a very strong motive to stick with Schopenhauer and not to resort to Berkeley's solution. For that solution comes straight out of Berkeley's idealistic conception of distance and orientation as to be understood in terms of the likely perceptual effects of possible actions. Take the idealism away, and this conception of distance and orientation will yield to one that is run in terms of one's place in an objective spatial array. We will find ourselves back with a Newtonian (or post-Newtonian, no doubt) conception of space, within which distance is not to be defined in terms of action.

It seems to me, therefore, that even if Schopenhauer's dual-aspect theory is somehow extractable from his general idealism without damage, which I doubt, it does not give us what is required for a solution to the problem of self-location.

5.

I close by considering the main supposed difference between Berkeley and Schopenhauer. Here my overall view is that Schopenhauer was a long way from acknowledging his true intellectual debt to Berkeley when he wrote:

The world is representation. This truth is by no means new. Berkeley ... was the first to enunciate it positively, and he has thus rendered an immortal service to philosophy, although the remainder of his doctrines cannot endure.¹⁰

¹⁰ Schopenhauer 1958, p. 3.

The main apparent difference between the two thinkers is that Berkeley appears to conceive of the natural world as passive and inert, while Schopenhauer conceives of it as will. For him, my body and its movements are will, and so are all other natural changes, though the will which they express is not mine, of course. Commentators tend to understand this as the claim that there is in nature a sort of purposiveness, striving or end-seeking, analogous to that of human action. I would myself rather understand it as the claim that teleologically explanation does not demand the presence of purpose, and that natural events are uniformly explicable teleologically *as well as* causally.

In assessing this supposed difference, it is important to get Berkeley right first. Berkeley's view is that natural changes bear the same direct relation to God's will as the movements of my body bear to mine (*Principles* §147; *Third Dialogue* pp. 236-7). Berkeley, then, would agree that if the movements of my body are will, so are all other natural events. The difference between them, if any, then rests on differences in their understandings of the relation between actions and bodily movements. It would be possible to think that for Berkeley, an action is a purely mental event, such as a volition, and that this is what separates him from Schopenhauer, for whom the action is itself bodily. But this would be a mistake. It is true that Berkeley writes:

Phil.: ... I ask whether all your ideas are not perfectly passive and inert, including nothing of action in them?

Hylas: They are.

Phil.: And are sensible qualities anything else but ideas?

Hylas: How often have I acknowledged that they are not?

Phil.: But is not motion a sensible quality?

Hylas: It is.

Phil.: Consequently it is no action.

Hylas: I agree with you. And indeed it is very plain, that when I stir my finger, it remains passive; but my will which produced the motion, is active.

Phil.: Now I desire to know in the first place, whether motion being allowed to be no action, you can conceive any action besides volition (*Second Dialogue* p. 217)

And elsewhere he writes 'I have no notion of any action distinct from volition' (*Third Dialogue* p. 239). But such a claim, in Berkeleian prose, does not mean that all action is pure volition. It only means that there can be no action without volition. It remains possible that the action consists of volition-plus-movement (of the finger, say). Given that the movement is itself passive, not active, this would mean that the action consists of a complex which includes a non-active element. But this would pose no problems for Berkeley, since it is exactly what he would say of an act of the imagination. Here we

would have a combination of volition and idea, since there can be no imagination without content, without something imagined ('it seems to me that ... volitions and ideas, cannot be severed, that either cannot possibly be without the other' *PC* §841); and the idea that is imagined is passive and inert. But in imagination we are pure agents.

Now if the action includes the passive movement, then we have a good sense in which action is not placed apart from the physical world of movement and rest. That would only have occurred if we had identified the action with the volition, which Berkeley shows no sign of doing. For him, there is a willing and a thing willed, and when the willing is effective, the thing willed is a thing done.

This gives us two ways in which Schopenhauer's views are not so distinct from those of Berkeley. The first was the claim that natural events are to be explained teleologically, because all stand in an equally close relation to some will. The second is that bodily movements, though not themselves *active*, are proper parts of actions. The world of agency and the world of event are not divorced from each other.

There remains a third way in which we can pull Berkeley towards Schopenhauer. Natural movements and changes are passive, but they have an intrinsic significance. They are not an intrinsically meaningless series of events, on which meaning has been plastered by an act of will. That picture of things is Cartesian, and Berkeley rejects it. Natural change is the Language of God, for Berkeley, and the movements of our bodies are, analogously, part of the language in which we express our will, just as are the sound we make in speech. Bodily changes, therefore, have a purposive significance that is intrinsic to them, even though they are still incapable of being causes, being passive and inert.

I do not mean to suggest that Schopenhauer and Berkeley are entirely in agreement on these three issues. As Severin Schroeder has impressed upon me, Schopenhauer's position remains distinctive in each case. In the first, Schopenhauer's Will is very different from a designing God, being more like a blind force that has no idea where it is going. In the second, Schopenhauer did not believe that bodily movements are parts of actions. The movement is the action; there is no room for volitions in Schopenhauer's story at all. In the third, as in the first, Berkeley's picture is of a world impregnated with purpose, intention and meaning; it would be hard to associate linguistic meaning with the kind of blind purposiveness that is a Schopenhauerian Will. My aim in this final section has been merely to stress ways in which the doctrines of Berkeley do not seem so different from those of Schopenhauer.¹¹

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