

Stefan Storrie, ed. *Berkeley's Three Dialogues: New Essays*. Oxford University Press 2018. 240 pp. \$57.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780198755685).

The philosophy of George Berkeley has acquired an ever-increasing popularity among professional philosophers lately—more and more scholarly works have been published on the various aspects of his life and works in the last one or two decades. The collection of essays edited by Stefan Storrie is dedicated to Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, the work that is usually thought to be a popularized version of his *Principles* by which Berkeley hoped to reach a wider audience and to emphasize the anti-sceptical nature of his attack on matter.

This anthology consists of papers delivered at an International Berkeley Society conference in 2014 in Dublin celebrating the 300th anniversary of the work's publication in 1713. All of the papers are insightful discussions of some aspects of Berkeley's philosophy. The topics range broadly from the sensible qualities through Berkeley's Neoplatonism to the question of the extendedness of spiritual substance. Unfortunately, four years have passed since 2014 and most of the arguments and ideas discussed have been published elsewhere. Hence, the subtitle *New Essays*, is a bit misleading. Yet, this does not subtract from the value and originality of the essays.

The volume contains an introduction and twelve scholarly articles of which the first eight 'follow roughly the general structure of the dialogues,' while four subsequent papers explore themes of the *Dialogues* in a broader context. Due to space limitations, I cannot discuss all the papers in detail. My decision to discuss only the last four in more detail does not entail negative evaluation of the rest.

In the first essay, Lisa Downing explores the merits of Berkeley's terminological change from 'ideas' to 'sensible qualities' in attacking the primary/secondary-quality distinction. The next, by Tom Stoneham, is a thoroughgoing clarification of the role of 'suggested ideas' against the background of Berkeley's claims that we perceive ordinary physical objects by sense and that objects are nothing but sensible qualities, which are themselves perceived immediately. Jennifer Smalligan Marušić presents an interpretation of Berkeley's theory of perception according to which Berkeley can maintain that 'sensible qualities are in the mind' without assuming an act of the will on the part of the perceiver. In the fourth essay, Keota Fields explains that sensible objects could be external despite including internal ideas as parts, because these components (the divine and the personal) are combined by universal semiotic rules. In the next essay, Samuel C. Rickless provides a detailed analysis of the argument for the existence of God in the *Dialogues* and compares it to the one in the *Principles*. Sukjae Lee presents his views on the 'contained' or limited nature of Berkeley's occasionalism. James Hill seeks to develop a theory of 'active perceiving self' in which 'the mind actively unites the passive perceptions' (134). Finally, Stephen H. Daniel explores the way God can possess sensory knowledge – especially pain – with the conclusion that God does not perceive particular pains, but knows them as one part of the entirety of sensory experience.

Although in the introduction the editor tells us that in 'A Puzzle in the *Three Dialogues* and Its Platonic Resolution' John Russell Roberts considers how Berkeley in the *Three Dialogues* can accept both a faculty of pure intellect and innate ideas while rejecting a faculty of abstraction, what the paper actually provides is a presentation of a Neoplatonist view of Berkeley based almost exclusively on *Siris*. The core idea of his reconstruction is that pure intellect is not contemplating rationality but rather volition, pure act, and innate ideas are not stamps on the self and something that is constitutive of it, since the only innate ideas mentioned by Berkeley are 'such things as virtue, reason, and God,' although 'they are to be called "notions" rather than passive "ideas"' (156). With a further

twist, he arrives at the claim that ‘the soul is itself the innate idea of God’ (153). I think Roberts’s reconstruction of the ‘Platonic Berkeley’ of *Siris* in the spirit of a Cambridge Platonist, Ralph Cudworth, is convincingly correct, but I still think that there is no convincing textual evidence or undisputable traces of this bent in Berkeley’s early works.

Storrie’s ‘The Scope of Berkeley’s Idealism in the 1734 Edition of the *Three Dialogues*’ is an interesting piece discussing the exact meaning of and commitment to Berkeley’s idealist claim that ‘only minds and ideas exist.’ Storrie claims that ‘Berkeley’s changes in the 1734 editions are the result of a recognition of an internal tension in his various writings about the kind of proof he can muster for his strongest idealist claim’ (161). He starts by claiming that in order to provide full support for the idealist claim, Berkeley needs not only to prove that material substance cannot have any existence, he also needs to prove that there cannot be any existing thing other than minds. The proof of this latter claim is the one that causes trouble, for it seems that absolute space is a perfect candidate for this ontological slot: neither mind nor sensible thing, but ‘still something’ (Newton). In the 1710 edition of the *Principles* Berkeley appealed to the ‘meaning of existence’ claim to rule out absolute space as an existing something. According to this semantic argument, ‘pure existence’ is an empty concept. But he soon realized that this argument was not conclusive, so moved toward a pragmatic stance that dominated the 1734 editions: if there is no reason for assuming the existence of an absolute space, then we can reject its existence. Therefore, the idealist claim that ‘only minds and ideas exist,’ cannot be proven conclusively, yet Berkeley held it true in the 1734 editions.

‘Matter, God, and Nonsense,’ Berkeley’s Polemic against the Freethinkers in the *Three Dialogues*’ by Kenneth Pearce opens with a puzzling comment Berkeley makes in his *Notebooks*: ‘To use the utmost Caution not to give the least Handle of offence to the Church or Church-men’ (NB 715). Though in later works his attack on freethinkers is more emphatic, he did indeed mean to defend traditional theism from the very start. Pearce thinks to resolve this apparent tension by pointing out that the ‘parity argument’ Berkeley uses against the materialists is actually the same weapon that Anthony Collins wielded against Archbishop William King’s sermon which was intended to respond to Bayle’s objection that the existence of evil is inconsistent with the Christian conception of God. To block Bayle’s inference, King appealed to the doctrine of analogy, claiming that divine attributes should not be taken literally, merely analogically. In his response, Collins argued that King’s victory is Pyrrhic since he managed to reinstate consistency solely by emptying the attributes of God, making them meaningless. Philonous’s parity argument works the same way: first, it shows that materialism taken literally is contradictory, then argues—in the same way as Collins—that materialism taken analogically is meaningless, so it must be rejected. There is however, a problem besides the fact that he is using an argument intimately related to atheism: namely, if it is sound then it can be directed with equal force against theism. In Pearce’s reconstruction Berkeley tries to show that the disanalogy of matter and God hangs on the fact that God resembles something we have immediate knowledge of, i.e., ourselves, but matter does not. Unfortunately, Berkeley’s manoeuvre depends essentially on the rejection of divine analogy. That explains the reminder to give no offence to his fellow churchmen. Moreover, this reconstruction of Berkeley’s position fits well with the bigger picture, because it is consistent with his interest in defending common sense and the ‘ordinary faith of ordinary folks.’

In the closing essay, titled ‘Hey, What’s the Big Idea? Berkeley and Hume on Extension, Local Conjunction, and the Immateriality of the Soul.’ Don Garrett explores the similarities and dissimilarities of the views held by them regarding the topics mentioned in the title. According to Berkeley some ideas are literally extended and should be no wonder for anyone, while Garrett argues

that the same is true in Hume's case despite the consequences of this claim. Although the extendedness of some ideas does not imply that these ideas must be located spatially (inside or outside of minds), this doctrine of placeless perceptions conjoined with the bundle theory of mind reveals serious inconsistencies in Hume's system. Notwithstanding, Garrett concludes that the way Berkeley relates the extended perceptions to the unextended mind by the relation of perception instead of ontological inherence is open for Hume too. Albeit that would require a serious revision of Hume's philosophy. Thus, Garrett is not really proposing a Berkeleyan solution to a Humean problem, he is rather toying with the 'Big Idea.'

Overall, this collection of essays provides enough evidence for Storrie's apologetical claim that the *Three Dialogues* is not merely a derivative reformulation of the *Principles*, and also that it exhibits plenty of philosophical subtleties of their differences. If that were the main goal of the volume we could declare it successful. Unfortunately, despite the refined analytic arguments, valuable discussions of the differences between the two aforementioned works of Berkeley we learn very little about the general structure and purpose of the *Three Dialogues*. Due to this unfulfilled promise in Storrie's introduction, the volume with all its undeniable merits leaves a huge gap.

Krisztián Pete, University of Pécs