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Berkeley Is Pronounced Barclay

By Richard A. Watson

Washington University, (St. Louis)

In response to my inquiry about how Berkeley is pronounced, four scholars responded. Patrick G. Kirby, Chairman of the Board of Review, Department of Employment and Training, State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, writes as follows:

In 1985 as Mayor of Newport, Rhode Island, I was participating in the Berkeley Tri-centenary celebrations in Cloyne, Co. Cork, Ireland, and a descendent of Bishop Berkeley told the assembled gathering that it was "Bark-ley" in his family. This comment was in response to a question posed by one of the participants at the gathering. There was a division among the assembled as to which version was correct. As a lifetime resident of Newport, Rhode Island, I grew up with the "Burkley" version, but after marrying a Dubliner and spending a portion of the past thirty years in Ireland, I am now a "Barkley" adherent.

Professor John Troyer of the University of Connecticut writes:

My thesis advisor, Roderick Firth, claimed he was the last Berkeleian, and for him Berkeley's name rhymed with 'darkly'. All the philosophers I know agree, but the only evidence I have found which supports this consensus comes from Luce's biography:

In the College Books of the day his name is spelt in five different ways - Berkeley, Berkley, Berkly, Berkely and Barkly - the last seeming to determine the pronunciation. Berkeley himself always, I think, spells it with three "e"'s.

BERKELEY IS PRONOUNCED BARCLAY

(A. A. Luce, *The Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1949, p. 24).

Since there is a tradition of sorts of spelling 'bark' as 'berk' and no tradition of spelling 'berk' or 'burk' as 'bark', I think Luce's remark has some weight - if someone who had only heard Berkeley's name wrote 'Barkly', it probably did rhyme with 'darkly'.

The most extensive comment is from Harriet Jeffrey, Professor Emeritus of the University of Colorado:

One piece of evidence that 'Barkly' is right lies in the parish records of the Trinity Church, Newport, huge volumes which are kept in a fire-proof basement safe-room in Trinity Church. The sexton or assistant sexton admitted me to the vault with his keys whenever I went there. Canon Ballard had told me to investigate for myself, and I believe it was he who first mentioned the Barclay spelling to me while we were residents in the nineteen fifties. In the summer of nineteen sixty three, I was given access to the room, and spent hours under a bare lightbulb, reading many notations about G.B. The notes record such things as the Sundays when he preached at Trinity, his baptising his three negroes and giving them his name, and so on. One scribe wrote the name in perfect clarity as Barclay.

Sepr 14 Caesar [?] Dalton
 21 Mary Weston
 Henry Barclay Son of Dean Barclay
 Baptised by his Father
 and recieved into the church Sepr 21.

Obviously he was familiar with Newport's most famous new resident, but had never seen his name in print or correctly handwritten. But I bless this unknown recorder who spelled the name phonetically!

RICHARD A. WATSON

If you are familiar with Newport, you will have noted that the street name in town is pronounced "Burkly" as is the avenue running east of the lane to Whitehall. Quite naturally we have Americanized "Berkeley", but it is ironic that Berkeley, California was named for him as a tribute to his hopes for the advancement of learning and culture in the New World, and that the American pronunciation obscures the connection!

Incidentally, I know of no evidence that there was "an Irish pronunciation" of G. B. 's name. His English antecedents were known, and his Irish born friend, Jonathan Swift, would not have introduced him to Pope, Addison et.al. as "Burkly". Certainly the educated Irish I have known call him "Barclay"! That includes Professor E. J. Furlong of Trinity College, Dublin University, who came over for the Charter Meeting of the International Berkeley Society in April 1977 in Newport.

Finally Alan Gabbey, former head of the Department of the History of Philosophy and Science at Queen's University, Belfast, says that the pronunciation is "Barclay" and that it is most probably the same family name as that of Barclay's Bank. This seems to be pretty much to settle the issue, but if anyone has a dissenting view I'd like to hear it.

Editor's Note: *Berkeley Newsletter* Vol. 3 (1979) p. 16 has a short note on the same point.

Reviews

George Berkeley De Motu and The Analyst: A Modern Edition with Introductions and Commentary, Edited and Translated by Douglas M. Jesseph, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992, Pp. x + 230 £51.00.

A tendency in recent critical work on *De Motu* has been to relate it to certain current preoccupations in philosophy of science. Examples of this are Popper's discussion of Berkeley as an "instrumentalist" and various interpretations relating Berkeley's views to those of Mach and logical positivism. A feature of this tendency has been to ignore the specific historical context of the text. Gerd Buchdahl's magisterial *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science* (1969) avoided this unhistorical approach and related Berkeley more closely to his contemporaries, presenting his scientific views as a more rigorous development of those of Locke. While Richard Brook emphasised the role of Berkeley's doctrine of meaning in relation to questions in the foundations of mathematics and physics, in his *Berkeley's Philosophy of Science* (1973), he also avoided the temptation of making Berkeley a protagonist in twentieth-century controversies.

Douglas Jesseph takes the same stance and assiduously avoids discussing Berkeley's work in relation to contemporary disputes. He presents a new translation of *De Motu* with the original text. He also includes an edition of *The Analyst* with introductions to both texts, bibliographies and indices. His rationale for this publication is,

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to present Berkeley's two most important scientific texts in a form which meets contemporary standards of scholarship while rendering them accessible to the modern reader.(p. ix)

Unfortunately the goal is not entirely achieved, since in dealing with *De Motu* the book falls short of the standards of scholarship cited, as I shall discuss. To a lesser extent this is also the case with *The Analyst*.

De Motu is introduced by reviewing the major controversies about motion which influenced Berkeley. First there is an account of the views of motion of a) Aristotle and the scholastics, b) Descartes and Galileo, c) Leibniz and d) Newton. The brief account of Aristotelian and Medieval theories about motion relies on dated studies and has no references to primary sources. This may be excused, perhaps, since Jesseph states that "Berkeley apparently had no detailed knowledge of Aristotelian and scholastic theories of motion" (p. 9). The sections on Galileo, Descartes and Leibniz are better served in this respect, with apposite quotations to illustrate the issues discussed. However the discussions are rather short, and indeed the section dealing with Newtonian mechanics has disproportionately long quoted passages to the small amount of text.

After this Jesseph presents particular disputed issues, such as the "Vis Viva Controversy", Percussion and Gravitation. This serves as a brief orientation to reading *De Motu*, but there is no attempt at presenting interesting interpretative angles on the text. The four pages devoted to "The Place of *De Motu* in Berkeley's

Philosophy" do not adequately deal with this issue. While merely stating that metaphysics and physics are separate provinces for Berkeley, Jesseph doesn't explore the rationale for and implications of this position. A brief paragraph mentions that Luce held that immaterialism was central to understanding *De Motu*, without any attempt to assess this claim. The same paragraph mentions the positivist reading of Berkeley, again without any engagement. Nor does the couple of hundred words under the heading "A Note on the Text and Translation" constitute a contribution to Berkeley scholarship.

As to the translation, the stated aim was to balance considerations of readability against those of accuracy - which resulted in "a fairly literal translation which can still be read with relative ease" (p. 37). The main translation hitherto available was that of Luce in *Works*, also reprinted in the Everyman edition of *Philosophical Works*, M. R. Ayers (ed.). One way in which the present translation is an advance on the Luce version is the inclusion of footnoted references to quotations and allusions to other philosophers. However, the translation itself doesn't always have the limpidity and clarity of the Luce version and the latinate syntax sometimes occludes the sense. For example;

*Ad veritatem inveniendam praecipuum est cavisse ne voces male intellectae nobis officiant: quod omnes fere monent philosophi, pauci observant. (*1)*

In the pursuit of truth the most important thing is to beware that poorly understood words do not hinder us: nearly all philosophers warn of this, but few heed the warning. (Jesseph)

In the pursuit of truth we must beware of being misled by terms which we do not rightly understand. That is the chief point. Almost all philosophers utter the caution; few observe it. (Luce).

*Quo modo curva considerari potest tanquam constans ex rectis infinitis, etiamsi revera ex illis non constet, sed quod ea hypothesis ad gometriam (sic) utilis sit, eodem motus circularis spectari potest, tanquam a directionibus rectilineis infinitis ducens, quae suppositio utilis est in philosophia mechanica. (*61)*

Just as a curve can be considered as consisting of an infinity of right lines, even if in truth it does not consist of them but because this hypothesis is useful in geometry, in the same way circular motion can be regarded as traced and arising from an infinity of rectilinear directions, which supposition is useful in mechanical philosophy. (Jesseph)

A curve can be considered as consisting of an infinite number of straight lines, though in fact it does not consist of them. That hypothesis is useful in geometry; and just so circular motions can be regarded as arising from an infinite number of rectilinear directions- which supposition is useful in mechanics. (Luce).

However, the single most glaring feature of Jesseph's book, illustrated in the Latin text of section 61, quoted above, is the proliferation of the most appalling typographical errors. Misspellings abound, print is smudged, abominations (in this age of word-processing) such as "And surely when we when we call a body heavy..."(p. 83) mar the text.

The bibliography for *De Motu* is comprehensive, but not complete - missing for example the 1989 Italian translation by Mariapaola Fimiani which had lengthy historical studies and which addressed the relationship between that work and immaterialism.

Jesseph is on different ground in dealing with *The Analyst*. He is prepared to make stronger philosophical claims for it. It is presented as an essential part of our understanding of Berkeley's account of science and mathematics and Jesseph claims that it is independent of immaterialism (however still no discussion of this). He forays into the heady world of Berkeley scholarship in discussing the possible identity of the 'infidel mathematician' attacked in the text. His presentation of the mathematical background is detailed in comparison to his discussion of the mechanical background to *De Motu* and his discussion of the elements of the infinitesimal calculus and Newton's calculus of fluxions is clear, as is his account of Berkeley's arguments against these. The 'outline analysis' of *The Analyst* is useful for those unfamiliar with that work. Once again the discussion of responses to Berkeley's position is scanty, as is the note on the text.

As an introduction to the two texts it serves well - but no Berkeley novice would buy so expensive a work (£51.00). Specialists in Berkeley gain no great insights from the introductory material and no detailed interpretative strategy is presented. Issues which could be addressed are sidestepped, such as the immaterialism issue, the relation of theory of meaning to ontology, etc.. It (rightly) claims no superior status for its translation of *De Motu* or the text of *The Analyst* over pre-existing versions. What is puzzling about this book is who might constitute its intended readership.

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Vision: Variations on Some Berkeleian Themes, Robert Schwartz, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1994, Pp. 162.

This relatively short book, in four chapters, addresses some key issues in the theory of vision: the manner in which we perceive distance and size, and the nature and relevance of inference in the perceptual process. These issues are presented in the context of Berkeley's seminal work on vision and throughout the book the author is at pains to present an impartial account of Berkeley's work in the light of subsequent research. Appropriately, the book concludes with a comparison of Berkeley's position with that of J. J. Gibson.

Perhaps one of the most engaging qualities of the book is the fairness with which Schwartz treats not only Berkeley but all of the other "vision theorists", psychologists, and philosophers who populate the pages. Indeed, it is the willingness to attempt to see "what was really meant" in Berkeley's writings, rather than being content with the (often incorrect) interpretations of others, which continually provides one with the motivation to carry on reading even when one disagrees with Schwartz's perspective. Given that Berkeley's writings are very often misunderstood, this is a very welcome characteristic. Indeed, as a companion to Berkeley's own text, this book would play a very useful role in keeping a reader's prejudices at bay whilst coming to an understanding of Berkeley's intended message. Nonetheless Schwartz is no apologist for Berkeley; rather he provides an impartial assessment of Berkeley's position on vision, an altogether more comfortable endeavour.

From a Berkeleian perspective, Chapter 1 of Schwartz's book is undoubtedly the most interesting and compelling. It takes Berkeley's position on distance and views it from the different perspectives of subsequent vision theorists. If I can pick out one single detail for mention, it is the problem of calibrating one's perceived distance (or "egocentric distance") with absolute distance (or "ecocentric distance"). For Berkeley, this is accomplished by learning, through association of the perceived distance and the actions of the perceiver in his environment. That is, it is achieved through the association of proprioceptive information with exteroceptive information. This is an issue of great contemporary interest in psychology, epistemology, and computational perception, and Schwartz does no small service in reminding us that it is not a new problem. He also provides a very well presented discussion on the nature of binocular stereopsis and, in particular, on the relevance of stereopsis to Berkeley's position. Contrary to common belief, stereopsis does not damage in the least Berkeley's case for the indirectness of the perception of distance and it is instructive to read Schwartz's account of this.

Chapter 2 treats the perception of size and, *inter alia*, how it is we perceive given objects to have a constant size irrespective of their distance from us and in spite of the consequent variation in the size of the image which is projected onto the retina. Berkeley's position on this issue is that the perception of size is achieved through the association of the tangible size of objects with (a) the visible size of an object - the tangible size being proportional to the visible size; (b) the relative blur of the visual

appearance - tangible size being inversely related to the degree of blur; and (c) the intensity of the visual appearance - the tangible size being inversely related to the intensity. Unfortunately, most of the chapter is given over to a discussion of a position that Berkeley himself rejects: the so-called 'taking account of distance' thesis. This thesis posits that the magnitude of an object is perceived by the prior estimation of its distance from the observer and by exploiting this information with a knowledge of the visual angle subtended by that object at the retina of the eye.

Chapter 3 on perceptual inference introduces many interesting issues, not the least of which is Schwartz's observation that Berkeley's theory of vision can be construed as a thesis that the perceptual process is like linguistic understanding. That said, very little of chapter 3 addresses overtly Berkeleian issues. This is not surprising given that Berkeley argued strongly that visual perception does not involve any sort of deliberate inferential (or reasoning) process. This is no criticism of the book for, as Schwartz points out, a great deal of modern vision theory presumes the validity of the inferential position. Again, the service which Schwartz does is to assess this purported validity in a balanced manner. In doing this, Schwartz notes a distinction (as he does elsewhere in the book) between organic or physiological processes of visual sensing, on the one hand, and psychic or psychological processes, on the other. Schwartz's point is that it is very difficult to say with any confidence where one should draw this distinction in the first place. Arguments for the validity of perceptual inference are often based, for example, on some inadequacy in informational content which results from purely physiological

processes and the consequent necessity to invoke some compensatory psychological processes. Schwartz's solution is to side-step the issue completely. He argues that it is the drawing of the distinction in the first place which causes the difficulty by giving vision theorists irrelevant (and non-existent) problems to solve - 'bogus controversies' as he calls them. His arguments are appealing. I have, however, to say that I believe he draws an unsupported conclusion when he asserts: 'much of the air should be knocked out of the debates over whether ... a realist or anti-realist account of vision is correct'. This assertion seems unsupported because Schwartz has almost systematically avoided becoming engaged in any deep consideration of the ontological foundations of vision, a matter I will return to in a moment.

Chapter 4 is primarily concerned with the work of Gibson, a vision theorist almost as controversial as Berkeley. In this instance, Berkeley acts as a backdrop for Gibson and the purpose of the chapter seems to be to present an impartial and fair assessment of the merit of Gibson's position. That said, Schwartz does draw some very interesting parallels between the work of the two men, perhaps the most important being the observation that 'Berkeley and Gibson each make much of the fact that it is our experience of the visual world that is significant for behaviour. This leads them both to emphasize the inseparability of seeing and doing'. This is a very instructive, for it is something that so-called modern practitioners of computational vision, for example, are now re-discovering.

Chapter 4, and the book, concludes with an all-too-brief look at the ontological foundations of vision theories. Given Berkeley's own priorities, arguably the book finishes perhaps as it should have begun. Schwartz makes some very valuable and even-handed observations on these ontological issues. For example, he states that 'the realist thesis of a world ready-made, independent of our contribution, is no more tenable than the idea that the world is whatever we fancy it to be'. And he notes, in passing, that 'a radical subjectivist thesis is no part of Berkeley's idealism.' Indeed as so often in the book, this is a pertinent and thoughtful observation which can go some way to correcting common misconceptions.

Although this is a valuable and enjoyable book, it is not without shortcomings. Perhaps the most obvious deficiency is that it does not contain a complete and succinct summary of Berkeley's position as presented in the *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*. The book also misses the opportunity to rehearse the essence of Berkeley's arguments, for these have an elegance and beauty all of their own, irrespective of their subject matter. To get the most out of this book, it would be essential to have first made a careful reading of Berkeley's original text.

There is another lesser shortcoming. Although Schwartz acknowledges the importance of David Marr as a contemporary theoretician of vision, he does not address his work in any substantive manner. This is a pity since Marr's work has been so influential on modern thought on vision and it would have been

instructive to have Berkeley's approach contrasted with Marr's position, if only to highlight the strength of the Berkeleyian tradition.

As we noted above, Schwartz does not develop in any depth the ontological and epistemological foundations of vision. Furthermore, Schwartz's final sentence of the book leaves one feeling disappointed. He states that 'it would seem that serious work in the theory of vision can best proceed by letting these grander metaphysical ideas float free on their own'. This is indeed regrettable if one remembers the epistemological problem with which we are inevitably faced when we attempt to provide any exposition of the nature of perception, visual and otherwise. For any attempt at such an exposition must depend on the very thing we are investigating, namely vision! It is clear that irrespective of how hard it is to deal with these issues, the ontological and the epistemological concerns inevitably raise their heads and demand to be addressed. Schwartz's desire to make progress without addressing them is understandable, and he is certainly not alone in this. So one must beware of singling him out for criticism. However it is unfortunate, given that perhaps Berkeley's most valuable legacy was an understanding of the deep interdependence between our perceptual processes and our conceptions of reality.

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