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The Uneasy Berkeley on the Joys of Heaven[1]

1. TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Two questions, that of motivating the will and its freedom and that of the meaning of words without corresponding ideas, are usually treated separately in Berkeleyan studies. There is, however, an early, but largely overlooked text that brings them together: his *First Sermon* (sometimes called *Sermon on Immortality*). It is this sermon that provides the link between the two questions as well as a context that will hopefully shed light on some of the interpretative problems discussed in recent secondary literature.

Berkeley himself was preoccupied with these two questions from the very beginning of his philosophical career. We find him expressing a position on the semantics of idea-less words in his first paper, *Of Infinities*, read on the 19th November 1707, then expressing an opposite position in his *Manuscript Introduction* to the *Principles*, composed in 1708, and we are lucky to witness the arguments and reasons for the change and evolution of his position on the motivating the will in his *Philosophical Commentaries*, written during the two formative years of 1707–8. The *First Sermon* interjects into the developments on the 11th January 1708, connecting the two questions explicitly. This flurry of early activity comes to a premature stop with the second part of the *Principles*, which was to deal more extensively with questions of the spirit and free will, but was never published. We only get a late confirmation and elaboration of his positions on the two questions, albeit in separate places, in *Alciphron* in 1732.

The *First Sermon* stands in the middle of these early texts both chronologically and thematically: it connects the topic of the offer of heavenly joys and its meaning to the question why the offer is so often disregarded and not taken up. The other texts treat these two topics separately. Nor should its genre represent an obstacle: Berkeley preached it in the college chapel to an audience of fellows and professors while still a layman. If *Passive Obedience*, a fusion of three other sermons from the college chapel delivered in 1712, is rightly searched for the foundations of Berkeley's ethics, some philosophical relevance can perhaps be claimed for his *First*

Sermon as well. But let us start with the philosophical text the sermon is closely based on.

2. LOCKE AND THE INTRODUCTION OF "UNEASINESS"

Berkeley himself gives us a clue about his source: "I know a late incomparable Philosopher will have the present uneasiness the mind feels [...] to determine the will" (FS 11).[2] So it is against the background of Locke's discussion of uneasiness in the second edition of his *Essay* Book II, Chapter XXI, Of Power, §§ 31–62 that Berkeley states his case. This dependency is confirmed, apart from the mention of uneasiness, by these parallels between the two texts: only that desire moves the will, which is judged to be attainable, things impossible do not motivate us (FS 11, E § 41), the Pauline Promise of the joys of heaven to the faithful (FS 12, E § 42), Pascal's Wager (FS 12, E § 72), and the subsequent *reductio ad absurdum*, namely if the promise of heavenly joys was clear and persuasive, it would overpower the mind to such an extent that it would do nothing else but pursue the eternal reward (FS 13, E § 38).

Let us look now in more detail into Locke's concept of uneasiness. Why did he introduce it into his discussion of motivating and determining the will at all? For in the *Essay's* first edition of 1690 Locke is still a hedonist, for whom the will is determined by happiness, which we call good, and it is in fact pleasure, either of the mind or the body. But in the second edition, Chapter XXI is the most enlarged and changed. Locke himself reflects on the change: "[...] upon a stricter inquiry, I am forced to conclude that good, the greater good, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the will, until our desire, raised proportionably, it makes us *uneasy* in the want of it" (E § 35, my italics). Uneasiness helps Locke explain how come we sometimes know what is good but still fail to act in order to achieve this good, it helps him accommodate the problem of weak will into his analysis of action. His uneasiness is an intense feeling of discomfort accompanying desire, directed towards an intentional object, and as such, it is an affective rather than a cognitive state: "What determines the will is not a judgement, or any cognitive state of the agent, but

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[2] Primary literature is quoted according to the following key: FS stands for the *First Sermon*, the number refers to the page in the Luce-Jessop edition, LUCE, A.A./JESSOP, T.E. (eds): *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1948–1957, hereafter *The Works*, vol. VII, MI stands for the *Manuscript Introduction*, the number refers to the page in *The Works*, vol. II, Alc 7, stands for *Alciphron*, the *Seventh Dialogue*, the number refers to the page in *The Works*, vol. III, E § and the number stands for the number of the paragraph in Locke's *Essay*, Book II, Chapter XXI, Of Power.

rather a feeling or emotion."[3] Locke gives the example of a drunkard as a paradigm of weak will, but he also provides an elaborate classification of other cases where either our judgement fails to discover the greater good, or the greater good is too distant or faint to raise desire, and so on.

There are many cases of a cognitive judgement failing to move the will by failing to raise desire, one of them is ineffectiveness of the promise of the joys of heaven, which is relevant for our present discussion and which Locke treats extensively in §§ 373-8. As an example of an idle will, the descriptions of heavenly joys can be "the object of bare inactive speculation" (E § 37) that do not lead to action. In fact, the whole of § 38, titled "Because all who allow the joys of heaven possible, pursue them not" is devoted to this dilemma. It starts with Locke's original view of human motivation: "the will (is) determined by the views of good, as it appears in contemplation greater or less to the understanding", which is found wanting in an original and delightful *reductio ad absurdum*, for it would result in the will being a slave to the judgement, once we apply Pascal's Wager: "the infinitely greater possible good should regularly and constantly determine the will in all the successive actions it directs; and then we should keep constantly and steadily in our course towards heaven, without ever standing still, or directing our actions to any other end". Christians would turn into zombies with their vacant stare firmly set on the ultimate prize.

The fact that this is not so was actually the reason for abandoning the original, let us say intellectual[4] account of motivation, in favour of a more nuanced analysis, allowing for distraction and weak will, based on the emotion of uneasiness. Biographical evidence points in the same direction, for the changes in the *Essay's* second edition were occasioned by criticism from William Molyneux: "you seem to make all Sins to proceed from our Understandings [...] and not at all from the Depravity of our Wills. [...] it seems harsh to say, that a Man shall be Damn'd, because he understands no better than he does".[5] Addressing the concerns of the average Christian reader is one of the strengths of the *Essay* and a reason for its popularity, and the simple question "Why do people sin when they know they will be punished for it?" was important enough for its readers to expect an answer. Locke did not leave it at that, as he also made room for salvation and supplied a recipe for spurring the will into action in pursuit of heavenly joys: the will can suspend the execution of desires (herein lies freedom of the will for Locke) and view and contemplate their objects, and then this

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[3] CHAPPELL, Vere: *Power in Locke's Essay*, in: NEWMAN, Lex (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Locke's 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding'*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, 130–156, here 152.

[4] "Molyneux was accusing Locke of overintellectualizing motivation, of making an agent's volitions depend too heavily on his judgements regarding the truth of certain propositions", in: CHAPPELL: *Power in Locke's Essay*, 151.

[5] CHAPPELL: *Power in Locke's Essay*, 151.

viewing can alter the desires. And if the agent thus makes the eternal joys a necessary part of his happiness, it will bring in uneasiness to motivate the will to achieve them (E §§ 45-48).

3. BERKELEY'S REJECTION OF UNEASINESS IN THE FIRST SERMON

Berkeley's *First Sermon* is on "Jesus Christ who abolish'd death, & brought life & immortality to light by the Gospell" (2 Tim 1,10) and treats the same topic as Locke's discussion of uneasiness: our knowledge of heavenly joys and how this affects our actions. He even calls it "the great riddle" and defines it as follows: "yt men should think infinite eternal bliss within their reach & scarce do any thing for the obtaining it" (FS 11), echoing the subject of the *Essay's* § 38. Berkeley rejects Locke's concept of uneasiness as "too brutish", and with it also Locke's solution to "the great riddle".

What Berkeley really rejects in uneasiness is its not being proportionate to the goodness of its object. Desirability of an object consists of its goodness plus attainability, while Locke's uneasiness favoured more the negative side of things: to get rid of pain and inconveniences first, and only then could it concentrate on attaining pleasures: "'It is better to marry than to burn', says St. Paul, where we may see what it is that chiefly drives men into the enjoyments of a conjugal life. A little burning felt pushes us more powerfully than greater pleasures in prospect draw or allure" (E § 34). This is one reason why, for Locke, uneasiness is very suitable to explain the failure of positive heavenly promises to attract our attention, but for Berkeley this destroys the perfect symmetry of good and evil. He introduces a new concept, that of "rational desire", endowing the characteristically emotive and irrational desire with mathematical exactness: "[...] an object with half the goodness & double the certainty, & another with half ye certainty & double ye goodness are equally desired" (FS 11). Such a move erases Locke's solution to the great riddle and in fact makes the whole dilemma even more pressing. If anything, Berkeley only sharpens the charge of intellectualizing the question of human motivation. (In this paper, we explicate Locke's position in the free will debate only as far as it is relevant to Berkeley's views on uneasiness. We do not wish to judge whether Berkeley's criticism of Locke is warranted or not, nor compare the two positions. Needless to say, Locke's views on freedom of the will are much more complex and nuanced than can be discussed here).

Locke's *reductio* and the Christian zombies return with greater force, despite their uneasiness: "were our *desires* of ye things brought to light thro' the Gospel such as in strict reason they ought to be, nothing could be more vigorous & intense, nothing more firm & constant than they. & *desire producing uneasiness & uneasiness action* in proportion to itself it necessarily follows that we should make life & immortality our principal business, directing all our thoughts, hopes & actions that way & still doing some-

thing towards so noble a purchase" (FS 13, my italics). Berkeley incorporates uneasiness into Locke's original account of motivation, though he makes it a part of the problem, not a solution to it. But since the fact of the matter is not so, the only explanation is that our desires have not been rationalised enough: "we have not a rational desire for ye things brought to light by our Saviour & yt because we do not exercise our reason about them as we do about more trivial concerns [...] we never think, we never reason about it" (FS 13).

Two reasons are given for this shortcoming, and a solution is canvassed. The first reason is that we think immortality is too far away, the second reason is more philosophically interesting: our ideas of the future state are not clear and determined enough, which aspect takes on the explanatory burden instead of uneasiness in "the great riddle" and of which more below. The ideas of the joys of heaven are basically not strong and vivid enough to command our attention all the time: "Would the Almighty inspire us with new faculties & give us a taste of those celestial joys, there could be no longer living in this world we could have no relish for the things of it but must languish & pine away with an incessant longing after the next" (FS 13). The solution to this predicament does not, surprisingly, differ much from Locke's suggestion that we make, by repeated and constant contemplation, the attainment of heaven a necessary part of our happiness, and thus spur uneasiness. In order "to beget in our selves this zeal & uneasiness for life & immortality' Berkeley advises us to 'cast an eye on them, think & reason about them with some degree of attention" (FS 14).

Despite uneasiness being rejected in the *FS* as a solution to "the great riddle", Berkeley's actual solution does not, at least superficially, look different from Locke's solution: both result in more contemplation. For Locke, it had been a fruitful application of his doctrine of suspension, which had allowed him to find a way out of two related difficulties: that of motivating assent (*Essay*, 4.20.15) and the freedom of the will (*Essay*, 2.21.53). Suspension goes to the very heart of the *Essay* and is integrated into its most basic principles, while Berkeley's parasitical solution seems further philosophically unmotivated in the *First Sermon*. Fortunately, we may turn to his *Philosophical Commentaries*, composed before and after the *First Sermon*, for further background and arguments.

4. Uneasiness in the Philosophical Commentaries

When it comes to uneasiness, Berkeley adopts an orthodox Lockean position in the first three entries concerning it: 145, 145a and 166. His emancipation from it begins only in 357, an entry which is immediately preceded by a no less orthodox statement of Lockean semantics: "Axiom. No word to be used without an idea" (356) which will be later rejected and reworked. Here it shows that questions of motivating the will were intimate-

ly intertwined in Berkeley's thinking with questions of the meaning of words, as the *First Sermon* amply demonstrates. But let us return to our main topic: "If uneasiness be necessary to set the will at work. Qu: How shall we will in Heaven" (357). This celestial perspective had not probably occurred to Locke. By definition, heaven is a place where the blessed lack nothing and feel no pain or discomfort, therefore there also seems to be nothing there to motivate their wills, a conclusion reached explicitly in 610: "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." When we take God and angels as our paradigms of spiritual and willing persons, then Locke's emphasis on uneasiness, pain and discomfort may indeed seem "too brutish", as Berkeley remarks in the *First Sermon*.

Entry 610 is, in fact, only the first one in a cluster of entries chiselling away at uneasiness. Volition is to be sharply separated from ideas, which include uneasiness (612, 613), Berkeley appeals to experience to show that not every volition is preceded by uneasiness (628) and even attempts to introduce complacency instead as "the Essence of volition" (630), all the while affirming Locke's one-word one-idea semantics (638, 639). But an interesting twist awaits: in the important entry 643 he makes a *volte-face* and rejects this restrictive semantics precisely because the will is no idea. It is in fact "The grand Cause of perplexity & darkness" to treat the will and volition as if it were ideas, to assimilate it to a passive object of thought which can be contemplated, because it is represented by an idea. Later, Berkeley will introduce his technical term "notion" to capture meanings of words which do not stand for any ideas. The discovery of this categorical mistake frees him to explore the semantics of words that do not stand for ideas (660, 661, 661a), but a more thorough approach to idea-less language will emerge only in the *Manuscript Introduction*.

The categorical chasm between the will and ideas is reaffirmed in 657: "To ask have we an idea of ye Will or volition is nonsense. an idea can resemble nothing but an idea." The reason given is an interesting one, for the principle that an idea can resemble nothing but an idea will be used in the *Principles* against the material substance, of which we have no idea either. Here we witness the birth of a typically Berkeleyan concept of idea, independent of its Lockean predecessor, one that does not represent substances and is not needed for semantics of certain words. But why cannot an idea represent and resemble the will? Later on, in the *Principles*, Berkeley will explain that it is because ideas are altogether passive, and therefore have nothing in them that could resemble or represent something active, i.e. a spirit. And this argument is encapsulated already in the crucial entries 653–654: "Folly to enquire wt determines the Will. Uneasiness etc are Ideas, therefore unactive, therefore can do nothing therefore cannot determine the Will. 654 Again. wt mean you by determine?" Here,

uneasiness is finally dethroned from the position of the will-maker precisely because it is an idea, and thus causally impotent. Other, subsidiary arguments against it are also to be found in entries 707 and 857.

Let us pause here and concentrate on the radicality and novelty of Berkeley's rejection of all talk of determining the will at all: "Folly to enquire wt determines the Will. [...] Again. wt mean you by determine?" Indeed, what does it mean when we say that something determines the will? Locke had spent dozens of pages trying to discover the thing that determines the will, he took its existence for granted: § 29 of chapter 21, book 2 of the *Essay* is called "What determines the Will" and the quest is not over until the end of the chapter, some forty pages later. He advanced at least two competing theories as to its identity (greater good vs. uneasiness), rewrote much of the chapter for the second edition and constantly used words drawn from mechanics to describe its influence on the will: it moves it, it is its spring, it drives and pushes it, it operates on it, it justles out other ideas or raises them, and it seizes it. This is, in short, the meaning of "determining the will", and these are the dangerous reifying metaphors that Berkeley warned us against. For him, it is an impossible travesty that something passive should operate on the will instead of the active will operating on something passive.

5. ALCIPHRON ON THE FREE WILL

The travesty is still present in *Alciphron* from 1732, where we at last find Berkeley's published discussion of the problem of free will and determinism, after aborting the second part of the *Principles*. The atheistic freethinker Alciphron states his case for determinism in the familiar mechanistic idiom: "the will is not indifferent in its actions, being absolutely *determined* and governed by the judgment. Now whatever *moves* the judgment, whether the greatest present *uneasiness*, or the greatest apparent good, or whatever else it be [...]." (Alc 7, 17, my italics) First of all, notice that Locke's two answers to the question "what determines the will?" are again treated as coming down to the same, deterministic thing, the supposed advantage of uneasiness over greater apparent good being brushed aside. Berkeley's spokesman, Euphranor, objects to the terms in which the deterministic case is framed: "Nor will it avail to say, the will is *governed* by the judgement, or *determined* by the object... while I know the sensible object to be absolutely *inert*... If I should suppose things spiritual to be corporeal... I do not know what may follow" (Alc 7, 18, my italics again). The ontologically confusing talk of spiritual things as if they were ideas leads to determinism. Berkeley repeatedly insists on the intuitive connections between the will and activity and ideas and passivity: "though you should tell me that man is inactive, and that the sensible objects act upon him; yet my own experience assures me of the contrary" (Alc 7, 19).

There is another interpretation, though, which does not see Berkeley as rejecting all talk of determining the will. When commenting on the important entry 653 "Folly to enquire wt determines the Will." James Harris exclaims: "Berkeley's view, however, is surely not that *nothing* determines the will."[6] While Harris's analysis imaginatively concentrates on the introspective evidence of freedom, showing that Berkeley does not attempt to provide an argument for the reality of human liberty, he still takes him to be exploring Locke's old question of what it is that determines the will, and coming up with the answer "the agent himself". To that effect he quotes Euphranor, who seems to be saying that very thing: "I am conscious that I am an active being, who can and do determine myself" (Alc 7, 18) .But all the other mentions of determining the will are made by Alciphron the determinist, and Locke's quest is explicitly rejected by Euphranor: "the question being not... what determined his will... but only whether he did it wilfully" (Alc 7, 19) as an example of an idle and misleading philosophical question. So when Berkeley says that the agent is "self-determined" (Alc 7, 19), it is not a result of a philosophical enquiry or argument, but one of "those received natural notions" which precede all philosophy—it is an analytical statement of voluntarism that does not provide us with any new information, and it certainly need not be spelled out over forty pages.

So far, we have explored Berkeley's changing attitude towards Locke's concept of uneasiness as the motivator of the will—from tacit acceptance to a resolute rejection. Uneasiness cannot determine the will, because it is an idea, and as such altogether passive, and it cannot influence anything, for it lacks causal power. There is a gaping ontological chasm between ideas and minds, and once Berkeley realizes this he takes another step towards voluntarism. The *Philosophical Commentaries* unsurprisingly provided deeper systemic reasons for the rejection than the *First Sermon*, which, however, helped to set the problem into the context of "the great riddle", namely why people sin, when they know they are going to be punished for it. Now it is time to turn to that other question related to it, one we have already touched upon: how certain is our knowledge of the joys of heaven.

6. Lockean semantics and the Pauline promise

In the *First Sermon*, Berkeley is well aware of the problems Christians face when trying to imagine what awaits them after death. The Bible uses only metaphors to describe the joys of heaven: "green meadows, fragrant groves, refreshing shades, crystal streams & wt other pleasant ideas our

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6 Harris, James: *Berkeley on the Inward Evidence of Freedom*, in: Jaffro, Laurent/ Brykman, Genevieve/Schwartz, Claire (eds): *Berkeley's* Alciphron, *English Text and Essays in Interpretation*. New York: Olms Verlag 2010, 341–350, here 345.

fancys can glean up in this Vale of misery" (FS 12). There is, though one eyewitness to the heavenly bliss, namely St. Paul. His testimony of the eternal bliss, alas, does not improve on the Biblical metaphors: "it is wt eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither hath it enter'd into the heart of man to conceive" (a paraphrase of I Cor 2,9, hereafter the Pauline Promise). Berkeley calls this description "empty" and it is hard to disagree with him on this point. Now we have here our second problem: how can this empty description motivate our will? Even worse, on Locke's theory of meaning, which requires every word to stand for an idea in order to be meaningful, the Pauline promise is not only empty, it is meaningless as well.

Strangely enough, Locke himself does not see the theological implications. He uses the Pauline Promise to describe the outer limit of our happiness (E §42), and is content to anchor his celestial semantics by another Biblical quote: "With him is fullness of joy, and pleasure for evermore" (paraphrasing Psalm 16,11). So what we get here are just glimpses and reflections, and the centre of gravity of our words lies in heaven. It was John Toland who exploited the semantic invitation to the full in his *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) claiming that words that do not raise in our minds any ideas are gibberish. He even invented a new word, "blictri", deliberately devoid of any meaning, which he used to ridicule theological discourse of his times. Berkeley was well aware of the challenge and tried to meet it by eventually providing a semantics for some words that does not rely on ideas.

Initially, Berkeley sees no problem with Locke's rather restrictive semantics in the *Philosophical Commentaries*: "Axiom. No word to be used without an idea" (356) as well as in entries 638 and 639. The crucial entry 643 realizes that there is no idea for the will, because all ideas are passive whereas the will is active. The same is affirmed in entries 657 and 660, where Berkeley finally admits this to have repercussions for semantics: "Some words there are wch do not stand for Ideas v.g. particles Will etc" (661) but probably tries to assimilate the volition vocabulary to particles, because Locke had explicitly admitted that particles do not stand for ideas: "particles stand for volitions & their concomitant Ideas" (661a). Such an *ad hoc* solution is not pursued further as Berkeley probably realizes he needs a more robust theory of meaning for these problematic words, which are totally dissimilar to particles. This more robust semantics is worked out, though not in the *Philosophical Commentaries* any more, where entry 661a is the last one to deal with meanings of words, but rather in the *Manuscript Introduction*.

Of the three arguments in the *MI* as to why words are not always used to excite particular ideas in the mind of the hearer, the discussion of the Pauline Promise is the longest, and ties nicely with the same topic in the *First Sermon*, for example the epistemic gap is expressed there as well: "we can in this life have no determin'd idea of the pleasures of the next & yt

because of their surpassing, transcendent nature wch is not suited to our present weak & narrow faculties" (FS 12). Furthermore, Berkeley calls the simple Lockean semantics "most dangerous and destructive both to reason and religion" (MI 140), no doubt alluding to its application by Toland.

From the very beginning of this draft of the eventual Introduction to the *Principles* Berkeley says the orthodox Lockean semantics relying on ideas to provide meanings of words is the one he is arguing against. The second and longest argument against it takes as its departing point the Pauline Promise and the danger to its meaning: "What man will pretend to say these words of the inspir'd writer are empty and insignificant? And yet who is there that can say they bring into his mind clear and determinate ideas of the good things in store for them that love God?" (MI 137) This time, Berkeley refrains from saying the promise is empty, even though the words do not raise any clear and determinate ideas in the hearer's mind. Instead, he introduces the concept of a "design" of an utterance, roughly corresponding to Austin's perlocutionary act[7], and the design of the Pauline Promise "is to make (men) more cheerfull and fervent in their duty" (MI 137). And this encouragement may be achieved "without making the words "good things" to stand for and mark out to our understandings any ideas either general or particular" (MI 137). Berkeley then goes on to provide the semantics of a promise of reward—usually the mention of a reward (a good thing) brings to the mind two things: the idea of the particular good thing together with "an alacrity and steddiness in fulfilling those conditions on which it is to be obtain'd" (MI 137).

Now comes the surprising move, for Berkeley claims that the first step can be omitted and the second phase may still follow. There are two conditions for this to happen: there is an epistemic gap between the speaker and the hearer, the speaker cannot communicate certain ideas directly to the hearer, either for lack of experience or imagination on the part of the latter. Berkeley illustrates this by means of the case of a child being promised a good thing, and then applies this to the Pauline Promise: "the Apostle never intended the words "good things" should mark out to our understandings the ideas of those particular things our faculties never attain'd to" (MI 138). The epistemic gap between the speaker and the hearer comes down to the transcendent nature of the heavenly joys which Paul has witnessed but lacks the words to convey. The second condition postulates a relationship between the speaker and the hearer, they cannot be total strangers to each other, there must be trust between them, the hearer: "has found by experience that upon the mentioning of those words by an *honest* man it has been his interest to have doubled his zeal and activity

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[7] AUSTIN, J.L.: *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: OUP 1962. Austin's theory of the speech act, with its emphasis on the pragmatic aspect of the utterance, as opposed to its descriptive function, is in the background of our analysis of Berkeley's semantics in this paper.

for the service of *that* person" (MI 138, italics added). The semantic burden of the indeterminate "good things" is borne by the other promises that the speaker has already kept.

7. HONEST ABOUT THE GOOD THINGS

Now our interpretation of the word "honest" here aims to slightly correct the current prevailing interpretation of the semantics of the Pauline Promise, provided by Kenneth Williford in his article[8]. Williford and Roomet Jakapi have tried to overthrow the interpretation of the previous generation of scholars, who argued that Berkeley's semantics of religious language amounts to emotivism[9]. Belfrage, Berman et al. were the first to draw attention to Berkeley's rejection of Lockean idea-based semantics, but they concentrated solely on the "design" of a religious utterance, corresponding roughly to its perlocutionary force, with the unfortunate and anachronistic result of voiding it of all cognitive content. Such a reading is unpalatable for Williford (and Jakapi[10]) for it compromises Berkeley's commitment to the truth of the Christian religion. While generally sympathetic to this new turn in Berkeleyan studies, we wonder if perhaps Williford has not gone too far in the constative as opposed to the performative direction in the case of the Pauline Promise, as it is analysed in the early, unpublished manuscript.

Williford sees Berkeley developing a theory of operative meaning in the Manuscript Introduction, recognising that language has other functions apart from the communication of ideas, and moreover, sometimes no ideas are communicated at all and the utterance is still meaningful. An example of such a limiting case would be one-word insults: "Upon hearing the words lie &c rascal, indignation, revenge and the suddain motions of anger do instantly ensue in the minds of some men without their attending to the definition of those names or taking the least notice of the ideas that

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[8] WILLIFORD, Kenneth: *Berkeley's Theory of Operative Language in the* Manuscript Introduction, in: British Journal for the History of Philosophy 11 (2003) 2, 271–301.

[9] BELFRAGE, Bertil: *The Clash on Semantics in Berkeley's Notebook A*, in: Hermathena 139 (1985), 117–126; *Berkeley's Theory of Emotive Meaning (1708)*, in: History of European Ideas 7 (1986), 643–649; *Development of Berkeley's Early Theory of Meaning*, in: Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger 3 (1986), 319–330. BERMAN, David: *Cognitive Theology and Emotive Mysteries in Berkeley's* Alciphron, in: Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy 81c (1981) No. 7, 219–229 (reprinted in BERKELEY, George: *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher in Focus*, ed. David Berman. London: Routledge 1993, 200–213); *Berkeley's Semantic Revolution: 19 November 1707–11 January 1708*, in: History of European Ideas 7 (1986), 603–607; WALMSLEY, Peter: *The Rhetoric of Berkeley's Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990, 9–25, 182–189.

[10] JAKAPI, Roomet: *Emotive Meaning and Christian Mysteries in Berkeley's* Alciphron, in: British Journal for the History of Philosophy 10 (2002) 3, 401–411; WILLIFORD, Kenneth/ JAKAPI, Roomet: *Berkeley's Theory of Meaning in* Alciphron VII, in: British Journal for the History of Philosophy 17 (2009) 1, 99–118.

are suppos'd to be intromitted along with them. All that passion and re-
sentment having been by custom connected to those very sounds them-
selves and the manner of their utterance" (MI 139–140). Here there is but a
single word spoken in an accusatory manner and pronunciation in the
utterance, and it conveys no idea to some hearers, yet it is fully compre-
hensible and provokes an angry reaction. The "design" of the speaker to in-
sult, to use Berkeley's term, is understood without a single idea being
relayed. This original semantics of insults and vulgarisms differs from that
of the Pauline Promise, according to Williford, which represents a "mixed"
case "where, in order to grasp a speaker's full intent, it is essential that one
grasps some of the ideas marked by the terms of an utterance but not
necessarily all of them (enough, for example, to understand that one is
being promised a reward and not a punishment)."[11]

But exactly which words in the Pauline Promise do communicate ideas?
Williford says that "the only idea-less terms here are "good things"",[12]
presumably leaving the words "eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither
hath it enter'd into the heart of man to conceive" to raise ideas in the
hearer. If this is so, it is a weak interpretative proposal, for Berkeley him-
self introduces the compact phrase "good things" as a shorthand for "eye
hath not seen etc.", which is rather a mouthful, and never indicates there
is a difference in meaning between them, or that the latter is more particu-
lar or concrete. We contend that it is possible to communicate the opera-
tive intention of a promise without the intervention of any ideas, just like
it is possible to communicate the operative intention of an insult simply
through the appropriate expressive pronunciation. The polarity of these
illocutionary acts being constitutive for them, we can insult someone only
with a negative word, and praise him with positive ones: "Good boy!" The
same goes for promising something: it must be something desirable and
good, and conversely a threat makes sense only with something that hurts.
The only function of the words "eye", "ear" and "mind" et al. in the Pauline
Promise is to intensify the positivity of the promised thing, they carry no
cognitive content and no ideas. Thus we propose assimilating the seman-
tics of the Pauline Promise to Berkeley's innovative semantics of insults.

Or, if we do not want to go so far, we can look for the markers of the
illocutionary force in the broader context, perhaps in the words "the things
God hath prepared for them that love him" which immediately follow the
Pauline Promise in I Cor 2,9 but which neither Berkeley nor Williford
quote directly. However the hearer gets to understand that he is being pro-
mised something, whether through words connected with ideas or without

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[11] WILLIFORD, Kenneth: *Berkeley's Theory of Operative Language in the* Manuscript Intro-
duction, British Journal for the History of Philosophy 11 (2003) 2, 271–301, here 288.

[12] WILLIFORD, Kenneth: *Berkeley's Theory of Operative Language,* 295.

them, one thing is certain, it is not very clear what he is being promised. He has to take it on trust. But why should he?

Williford is a bit hasty here, he rightly claims that "the hearer has in mind no idea answering to the words 'good thing', but that does not mean that he does not understand the context of the utterance, that he is being promised a reward" but then he adds "and that the speaker of the promise is honest."[13] Williford is right to insist on the genuine nature of the promise here, pace Belfrage, whose interpretation would turn the promise into some imperative "Cheer up!" or other, but saying that by understanding an utterance as a promise the hearer understands the speaker to be honest is a dangerous short-circuit. The speaker may be promising something that he does intend to carry out, and the hearer will find out only after he has fulfilled his part of the bargain. The promise may, after all, be broken.

The word "honest" does not refer, in Berkeley's account of the Pauline Promise, to the future and it does not guarantee that the speaker will keep his promise. It rather refers to the past and describes a general trustworthiness of this particular speaker, whose other statements, historical narratives, promises or prophecies have turned out to be true. When Berkeley models his original semantics of the Pauline Promise on the example of a child who "has found by experience that upon the mentioning of those words by an honest man it has been his interest to have doubled his zeal and activity for the service of that person." (MI 138), he clearly indicates that it takes some time to build a relationship of trust. Only then will the hearer take up the promise. He thus shifts the semantic weight of the positive but "empty" Pauline Promise to the other true utterances and statements of the Scripture.

The Pauline Promise represents a rather complicated piece of language. It is a testimony of things Paul has witnessed but cannot communicate due to the epistemic gap between this world and the next, this testimony forms part of a promise of a reward, which is to be ascertained from the Biblical context, and this promise makes up one half of an offer that God has made to people, the other half being our duties and deeds. Berkeley is alive to all these different illocutionary dimensions and layers of the utterance, with the most general one, that of "offer" being the topic only of the *First Sermon*: "the eternal God makes us an offer of happiness boundless as our desires & lasting as our immortal souls" (FS 14).

8. CONCLUSION

The *First Sermon* with its "great riddle" has enabled us to bring together two questions, that of motivating the will and that of the semantics of

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[13] WILLIFORD: *Berkeley's Theory of Operative Language*, 294.

idea-less words. The first one we found answered in the *Philosophical Commentaries*, where the emergence of a purely passive Berkeleyan idea which cannot determine anything, let alone the active will, is later confirmed in the voluntarism of *Alciphron*. The second question was dealt with in the *Manuscript Introduction*, where the bold proposal that not all words stand for ideas was exemplified in the Pauline Promise. Minor points in the interpretations of Harris and Williford were, hopefully, corrected.

Abstract
Berkeley's First Sermon raises an interesting question: why are so few people motivated by the promises of heavenly bliss to lead virtuous lives? He tries to answer this question against the background of Locke's views on human motivation and semantics of words without corresponding ideas, but in his two later and more philosophically relevant manuscripts he rejects the Lockean approach. The Philosophical Commentaries provides a sustained discussion of the role of uneasiness in motivating the agent, with its eventual rejection being caused by a change in the concept of idea. The ensuing fragmentary account of the freedom of the will is published only in the much later Alciphron of 1732, because the second part of the Principles, which was to have treated of the spirit, never appeared. The Manuscript Introduction, on the other hand, comes with an original semantics of religious language, which is specifically applied in order to explain our understanding of the promises of heavenly bliss in the Bible. We try to avoid labelling it emotivism and also hope to correct a minor misconception regarding the semantics in the recent secondary literature.