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ARTICLE

Berkeley's Doctrine of Bodies as Powers

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Abstract

Discussions of George Berkeley often dismiss his *Notebooks* remarks that (1) bodies are powers that cause perceivers to have thoughts, and (2) bodies exist even when they are not perceived. I have previously noted these claims but have not explained how bodies are infinitely linked as *thoughts* (vs. ideas), and Melissa Frankel treats bodies as archetypes perceived individually by God but does not explain how they are individuated. I argue that because bodies identify objects only for finite minds, they are *derivative* powers by which individuated objects are related to one another infinitely.

Résumé

Les discussions autour de George Berkeley rejettent souvent les remarques de ses *Notebooks* selon lesquelles (1) les corps sont des pouvoirs qui amènent les percepteurs à avoir des pensées et (2) les corps existent même lorsqu'ils ne sont pas perçus. J'ai déjà noté ces affirmations, mais je n'ai pas expliqué comment les corps sont infiniment liés en tant que *pensées* (à distinguer des idées), et Melissa Frankel traite les corps comme des archétypes perçus individuellement par Dieu, mais n'explique pas comment ils sont individués. Je soutiens que, parce que les corps identifient les objets uniquement pour des esprits finis, ils sont des pouvoirs *dérivés* par lesquels les objets individués sont liés les uns aux autres de manière infinie.

Keywords: Berkeley; bodies; powers; archetypes; thoughts

1. Introduction

Early modern thinkers often describe bodies as physical or material objects that exist independently of the minds that perceive them.[1] George Berkeley is an exception because he does not think that bodies "exist" or "subsist" apart from minds. As he observes in his 1710 *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (PHK) and his 1713 *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (DHP), he thinks that a body's being identified depends on its being identified as that body by some

[1] For example, see Cunning (2018, pp. 256–259, 266–269); Della Rocca (2002, pp. 63–69); Lee (2018, pp. 91, 93–96, 99–102); McCann (2002, pp. 355, 369); McCracken (2017, p. 247); and Schmaltz (2018, pp. 40, 44, 51).

mind.[2] Furthermore, the identification of a body as this or that body seems to occur (at least for us) without having to relate it to *all* other bodies. It also seems that the differentiation of a finite mind occurs in the same act as the differentiation of finite objects.

But — and this is what makes Berkeley's approach unique — for him, a specific body can be understood not only as one of an infinite number of objects produced in God's general activity of creating all bodies but also as a specific activity that is distinguished from other similar activities by how it causes its specific objects. That is, the specific cause of a particular object can also be considered a body that is *derivatively* identified as the particular cause of that object because the activity of differentiating (and thus identifying) a specific object does not itself have an identity other than in terms of its determinate product. That means that if the cause of a specific, finite object is understood as related to the causes of *all* other finite objects (e.g., in terms of laws of nature), that cause can be understood (derivatively) as a body. A body as a cause can thus be said to exist in the object's being differentiated (in Berkeley's technical vocabulary) as a "thought."

When he says in his unpublished *Notebooks* (1707–1708) that "Bodies etc. do exist even when not perceived, they being powers in the active Being" (NB 52), Berkeley is thus proposing that bodies be taken in a "twofold sense": (1) as "collections of thoughts" (i.e., collections of finite ideas that are understood as infinitely related by God), and (2) as "collections of powers to cause those thoughts" (NB 282, 293). In this second sense, bodies are individuating principles in terms of which objects are differentiated from one another. Of course, as Berkeley notes in NB 282, from the perspective of an object ("a parte rei"), there may be "only one simple power" by which God differentiates bodies infinitely. But since the principle of such differentiation cannot be another body (without invoking an infinite regress), the positing of such difference allows us to think of objects as if they had specific causes when, in fact, the differentiation of objects is really the *effect* of that activity rather than its cause.[3]

So, a body is not only the *object* of a specific act of identification.[4] It is also — as Berkeley suggests in the *Notebook* passages I have cited as well as NB 84, 185, 293a, PHK 6, DHP 234–235, and *Alciphron* (1732) [Alc] VII.5 — what *causes* that identification. That is, bodies are not merely passive objects that are identified by minds; they are also causes in terms of which one object is differentiated from all others. That might seem to suggest that bodies are differentiated prior to the differentiation of objects. But that is not the case. For as I have noted, even though we are tempted to say that there is one simple perfect power that causes all corporeal differentiation, from the standpoint of the object, that one simple perfect power is not perceived by finite minds at all. For even if no finite minds exist to perceive particular objects in the world, there would still be an infinite mind to perceive all objects in

[2] See Berkeley (1949, PHK Sections 5–6, 18, 23, 47–48, 95) and Berkeley (1949, DHP pp. 222–223, 230, 241, 250).

[3] See Woozley (1976, p. 431). Cf. Hill (2022, p. 70).

[4] That is how Hunter (2014, pp. ii, 4, 10, 51, 58, 60, 124, 146) describes Berkeley's bodies. But even though he quotes from Berkeley's *Notebooks* 53 times, not once does he cite any of the six passages in the *Notebooks* where Berkeley explicitly discusses bodies in my second sense.

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their infinite relatedness. Indeed, God's perception of an infinity of integrally related bodies would unite them in a way that we, as finite perceivers of disconnected objects, can hardly imagine.

To say, then, that God "perceives" *all* bodies as interrelated is quite different from saying that we "perceive" such bodies; for when we as finite minds perceive bodies, we perceive them only in finite relations. However, because "our prospects are too narrow," we fail to see how they are "linked with the whole system of beings" (PHK 153). That is why, for Berkeley, if a body is perceived by a finite mind, it is said simply to *exist*; but if it is "perceived" by an infinite mind, it is said to *subsist*. As he notes in a well-known PHK passage:

> all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind […] consequently so long as [those bodies] are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit. (PHK 6)

That is, all bodies that compose the world are said either (1) to "exist" in the minds of created spirits in associations ordered as laws of nature, or (2) to "subsist" in infinite or universal arrangements in the mind of God. Furthermore, as organized universally in God's willing that there be such distinctions, bodies are *individual* causes of our thoughts only in a derivative sense, for specific bodies are differentiated only from our perspective but not from God's perspective.

Accordingly, Berkeley proposes that the objects of our thoughts are intended by God to be understood as related to one another. Unfortunately, "that the discovery of this great truth which lies so near and obvious to the mind, should be attained to by the reason of so very few, is a sad instance of the stupidity and inattention of men" (PHK 149). For we fail to see how we can reconcile ourselves to God through transforming our fragmented ideas into integrated *thoughts* by apprehending disconnected objects as coherent organizations of infinitely related bodies.

I suggest that, in terms of the strategy I have outlined, Berkeley reframes the discussion of bodies by considering them as active powers. This invites us to refine the vocabulary of existence, subsistence, ideas, and thoughts in a way that incorporates all of his insights from his early *Notebooks* to *Siris* in 1744. So, in the next section, I argue that Berkeley uses the distinction between existence and subsistence to highlight how objects of finite minds are different from the powers that identify those objects in God's willing that there be such distinctions. In Section 3, I show how (for Berkeley) bodies are specific powers or activities whereby all things are differentiated as divinely integrated *thoughts* (vs. *ideas*) by means of infinitely related "archetypes." I note in Section 4 how I have acknowledged in the past how archetypes, for Berkeley, are infinitely related to one another, and how Melissa Frankel treats bodies as archetypes that are individually perceived by God. But I point out that neither of us explains *how* archetypal bodies are differentiated. I hope to resolve that issue (in Section 5) by pointing out how bodies can be understood as derivative powers that are properly identified in infinite relationships. I conclude by indicating how this description of

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bodies unites these various topics and links other similar topics (e.g., notions) in such discussions.

2. Existence, Subsistence, and Powers

With the exception of how I have previously contrasted Berkeley's uses of "existence" and "subsistence" (Daniel, 2021, pp. 16–17, 65, 150), exactly what Berkeley means by that distinction has prompted little comment. Basically, when bodies are understood not as *objects* of finite minds but as comprehensive and integrated complexes of *powers* responsible for identifying objects, they are said to subsist in God. That is, in the mind of God, "body" in general — note, not "a" body — refers to the unified active power of identifying things that are related infinitely to one another.[5] Alternatively, "a" body identifies a specific object in the derivative sense of how something is distinguished from (but integrally related to) *all* other things. So, to speak about how bodies in the plural are related to one another infinitely (e.g., by appealing to laws of nature) is to appeal to a system of already differentiated (and thus derivative) objects.

When Berkeley says, then, that *a* body *exists*, he means that it is perceived by some finite mind; and when he says that it *subsists*, he means that it is "truly known and comprehended by (that is, *exists in*) the infinite mind of God" (DHP 235). However, even to say that things "exist in" the mind of God in how they are differentiated from *all other things* is so different from describing how they exist in finite minds that it is more accurate to say that such things "subsist" in the mind of God (PHK 89). Indeed, from the perspective of a finite mind, our identification of something in terms of infinite relations is unintelligible, because as finite beings we simply do not perceive things in terms of their relations with an infinity of other finite things.

In the mind of God, an individual body should thus not be said to "exist" as an object of perception.[6] Instead, we should say only that it "subsists" as a derivative power, in that its distinction from other powers is intelligible only to the extent that it is thought in relation to an infinity of other objects. Indeed, even to refer to "a" body as the power to cause a particular thought can be misleading. As I have noted, that is why Berkeley says that collections of powers to cause our thoughts can be said to exist, "though perhaps *a parte rei* [from the point of view of the object] it may be one simple perfect power" (NB 282; see also NB 84). For in the mind of God, there is no real distinction of "powers" as such since such a distinction is what God's activity creates rather than recognizes. I have referred to such powers as "derivative" because their distinctions from one another are intelligible only from the standpoint of an integrated infinity of perspectives and not from the standpoints of an endless congeries of finite perspectives.

Not surprisingly, commentators generally do not notice how Berkeley insists that we cannot think of all the things in the world as a totality without thinking of how those things are integrally related to one another. That is, for Berkeley, we should

[5] Cf. Hobbes' 1668 view that "Deus esse corpus" (God is body). See Hobbes (2012, Appendix Chapter 3 to *Leviathan*, Volume 3, p. 1229); Gorham (2013, pp. 244–245); and Gorham (2017, p. 174).

[6] As Thomas' (1976) title has it, "Berkeley's God Does Not Perceive."

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think of "the whole system of beings" as (1) subsisting in infinitely differentiated and associated relations in the mind of God, not as (2) existing as a collection of discrete objects perceived by finite minds. So, bodies can be said either (1) to *subsist* in the mind of God as the active (though derivative) principles that identify objects as infinitely related, or (2) to *exist* in virtue of being passively perceived as objects by created spirits.

This way of speaking about bodies as subsisting in the mind of God surely sounds unusual because we are used to thinking of bodies as objects (Pearce, 2017, p. 173). But as Berkeley makes clear in his *Notebooks*, the infinite complex of bodies in the mind of God should be understood as active, in that they are differentiating principles by means of which objects are identified as a complex and integrated totality. In this sense, bodies are obviously more than objects that happen to be perceived by individual minds; for when they are understood as a totality, they are seen as active powers in God. As I have suggested, though, to think of them in the plural is already to think of the power by which they exist in the derivative terms of the objects they identify (cf. McCracken, 1979, p. 285). That is why, for Berkeley, a "more full and clear view" (PHK 148) is one in which we think of God not only as comprehending the totality of ideas but as being the creative principle by means of which all ideas are understood collectively.

No doubt, to think of bodies as powers — even "derivative" powers — seems un-Berkeleyan for anyone who thinks that he adopts a Cartesian or Lockean way of thinking of bodies as objects. But this latter view focuses only on how bodies are understood as passive objects of finite perception. Instead, I focus on how Berkeley's account of bodies-as-powers treats bodies as active causes of ideas even when those bodies are not perceived by specific minds. That is, even though a body might only be the passive object of a mind (to the extent that it is identified as this or that body in comparison to other bodies finitely), it can also be understood as the active, determining cause of a particular body (to the extent that it is identified in comparison to an infinity of other bodies). It is in this second sense that "to be is to be perceived" does not apply to bodies other than derivatively.

No doubt, commentators have recognized that Berkeley may have initially toyed with this latter view, but because they think that Berkeley did not consider the possibility of speaking about bodies in any way other than as objects, they conclude that he ultimately rejected it.[7] I do not think, however, that Berkeley changes his *Notebooks* view that "Bodies taken for Powers do exist when not perceived" (NB 293a), because, for him, bodies are not things at all but rather how things (i.e., ideas) are identified. That is, I do not think that he ever thinks of the "standard" (Cartesian-Lockean) substance-mode ontology as a reasonable strategy for describing the relation between bodies and minds. That is why I refer to bodies as powers in only a derivative way, because their identities are differentiated only in virtue of the objects they identify. It is also why God can be said to will *that* there be differentiation without first knowing the objects that such differentiation produces other than in an after-the-fact sense.

[7] For example, see Grayling (1986, pp. 97–98); Luce (1963, pp. 134–135, 140, 154, 156); and McKim (2005, pp. 87–88).

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3. Bodies as Thoughts

As I have mentioned, this way of reading Berkeley has generally been overlooked by his commentators. Charles McCracken argues, for example, that even though Berkeley originally thought that objects are powers in God, he changed his view, because to describe a body as I have would mean that a body would be both active and passive — which, for McCracken, contradicts Berkeley's claim that objects are passive (McCracken, 1979, pp. 284–285). But to think that way would assume that bodies are only determinate objects — something that Berkeley explicitly rejects by saying that bodies are combinations of powers "in an unknown substratum" (NB 80) whose "existence is not actual" (NB 293a) (cf. Ayers, 1992, p. xii). That is why I have suggested that Berkeley thinks that the combinations of powers that identify objects cannot be known or be said to exist because bodies are individually *unperceived* activities or principles, whereby objects are differentiated.[8]

Of course, when I say that bodies are "unperceived," I do not mean that they are unperceived *objects* that cause our ideas. For characterizing powers as bodies in no way identifies the cause of such differentiation as an object. So, instead of thinking of bodies as objects, Berkeley identifies the specific active causes of objects (derivatively) as bodies that are differentiated only because they are subsequently associated with those (passive) objects. This is how a body can be thought of as both active and passive, and that is what characterizes it as a power.

Indeed, describing a power as both active and passive explains why Berkeley at first seems to be evasive about whether we as finite minds are the causes of our ideas or whether God is the cause of our ideas. The simple solution here is to say that in willing that finite things be perceived in determinate ways, God creates (in the same divine act) both the world of finite objects and the world of finite minds. As such, "one finite and narrow assemblage of ideas denotes a particular human mind" (PHK 148) — not in the sense that the mind *consists* of those ideas but in the sense that the mind is the active identification of those ideas in their finite relations to one another. Accordingly, to the extent that we fail to think of the objects of our experience in harmony with all other things, we think finitely; but to the extent that we think (and will) things to be in harmony with *all* other things, we think of them as God does.

Of course, it might *seem* that we are not free to perceive things in any way we choose; for in creating us, God wills that we identify ourselves in relation to other minds. But as Berkeley makes clear, we are free to

> enlarge our view, so as to comprehend the various ends, connexions, and dependencies of things […] [and] shall be forced to acknowledge that those particular things […] have the nature of *good* when considered as linked with the whole system of things. (PHK 153)

[8] This solves McCracken's worry (1979, p. 284) about how bodies in *Genesis* can exist before finite minds, for bodies are the derivatively identified powers in God that identify objects as related to *all other objects*, not just the finite number of objects to which we relate.

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In being willing to think of ourselves in terms of the totality of things, we identify ourselves with God as the active cause of all we perceive and of all that accounts for what we do not fully understand. And in this way we acknowledge our own finitude within the context of the infinite totality of God's creation.

Being embodied thus means having the power to have an impact on all other things (i.e., ideas) in the universe while at the same time being determined by all the other things in the universe (and ultimately by God). The dual relation permitted by this expanded notion of body allows Berkeley to align the power of finite minds with the infinite power of God without concluding that God perceives a collection of discrete things.

To make this point more clearly, Berkeley describes the formal causes of our ideas as "notions" (rather than "bodies") in the 1734 editions of PHK 27, 89, 140, 142 and DHP 233; for the term "notions" more explicitly indicates how the actions that differentiate archetypes or powers are derivatively (though infinitely) related (cf. Daniel, 2021, pp. 153, 163; Winkler, 1989, 232–234). Even though Berkeley had originally acknowledged (in his manuscript of PHK 140) that, in fact, we do have a notion of mind, he deleted the reference in the first edition. But in the second edition of 1734, he reinserts the remark when he notes, "In a large sense indeed, we may be said to have an idea, or rather a notion of *spirit*, that is, we understand the meaning of the word." Indeed, by retrieving the term, he shows how notions identify the *meaning* of objects by differentiating them from the meanings of other objects and by derivatively referring to such differentiations as thoughts (see Daniel, 2021, 40, 66, 88–89, 99, 129, 140). As such, what God creates ends up being a complex totality ordered by reason rather than one built up by aggregating an endless collection of sensations.[9]

My point is that a body can be understood both as an idea, object, or effect of sensation, *and* as the rational (yet derivative) cause of an object. It is a "derivative" cause in the sense that, unlike us, God does not identify that object sensibly in relation to other objects. Instead, God identifies the meanings of bodies in terms of their universal and necessary places in the totality of all things. As Berkeley notes in his 1733 *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (TVV) — where he contrasts the power, causality, and agency of finite perceivers with the (capitalized) Power, Causality, and Agency (or active Being) of God — objects are rationally related:

> The cause of these ideas, or the power producing them, is not the object of sense, not being itself perceived, but only inferred by reason from its effects, to wit, those objects or ideas which are perceived by sense. From our ideas of sense the inference of reason is good to a Power, Cause, Agent. But we may not therefore infer that our ideas are like unto this Power, Cause, or active Being. On the contrary, it seems evident that an idea can only be like another idea,

[9] Flage (1987, pp. 1–4, 9–10, 180–192) refers to notions as "intentional acts" by which things are identified, but he does not explain *how* this occurs. Similarly, Hill (2022, pp. 55, 70) says that notions are "operations" that allow us to know what substance, emotions, virtue, unity, relations, equality, and beauty are, and that such operations form objects; but again, how? My answer to both is that, for us, notions are the means to identify objects by differentiating them in specific, evaluative ways from other objects.

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> and that in our ideas or immediate objects of sense, there is nothing of power, causality, or agency included. (TVV 11)

In other words, the power, cause, or active being responsible for objects of sense is simultaneously God and individual minds, but finite minds express the harmony of their objects incompletely (i.e., in a way that only approximates the divine creative order). As such, for Berkeley, powers should not be understood (as they are by Cartesian or Lockean readers) as things that inhere in material substances; rather, they are specific activities in which minds engage. Since minds (like powers) are the *activities* by which things are distinguished from other things, neither minds nor powers should thus be called "things." That is why Berkeley explicitly says that we should not say that the mind is "that thing" that perceives (NB 581) or "a thing at all that wills" (NB 658). Instead, as that which differentiates and identifies our ideas, mind is the active principle by which identity and difference are made possible in terms of derivative embodiment.

It is not accidental that Berkeley acknowledges that "bodies etc. do exist, even when not perceived, they being powers in the active Being" (NB 52); and that "bodies do really exist, whether we think of them or no, they being taken in a twofold sense: collections of thoughts and collections of powers to cause those thoughts"; for bodies cause us to think the things we think, even though they (as causes of our thoughts) "may be one simple perfect power" (NB 282; also NB 84). As I have noted before, "Bodies taken for Powers do exist when not perceived, but this existence is not actual" (NB 293a; also NB 802), for actual existence would require that bodies have a discernible identity — however, in fact, they have no identity at all but are rather the means by which things come to be thought of as having an identity.

That is why Berkeley identifies this active being or thing as "Soul and God" (NB 712), which he says is the power to cause in us the perception of a specific thing that itself is not differentiated as a distinct power other than derivatively. As I mentioned before, God does not distinguish one body from other specific bodies. Rather, he identifies infinitely related archetypes of bodies that "exist independently of my mind" by differentiating them simultaneously from *all* other archetypes (DHP 214; also DHP 248). As such, archetypes are powers in God that differentiate and order all things even if they are not experienced by finite perceivers. By contrast, *we* (finite minds) identify bodies by differentiating them not in terms of their *specific* causes (for there are none) but in terms of the particular (and limited) ideas we experience when we relate one idea to another. In this way, we might aspire to be like God in willing that all things be in harmony with one another, but we do not perceive the specific causes of the infinity of different bodies, because they are differentiated only retroactively in terms of the finitude of our experiences.

All of this is to say that we cannot perceive the specific causes of our ideas because the relative identities of those ideas are due to our own finite perspectives. As Berkeley says:

> Our knowledge of the cause is measured by the effect, of the power by our idea. To the absolute nature, therefore, of outward causes or powers, we have nothing to say: they are no objects of our sense or perception. Whenever, therefore, the

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> appellation of sensible *object* is used in a determined intelligible sense, it is not applied to signify the absolutely existing outward cause or power, but the ideas themselves produced thereby. (TVV 12)

That is, "bodies" should not be understood as exclusively *material* objects that exist apart from our thoughts, for that would raise the question of how such objects could intelligibly exist *apart from* their being thought. Instead of being thought of as something different from the activity of thinking by which they are identified, bodies simply should be thought of as the causes of the *specificity* of our thoughts. That is what Berkeley means by calling them "powers."

Note, though, Berkeley is not saying that bodies — understood even in this sense of powers in an active being — are *specific* causes of our thoughts, because that only begs the question of how they become specific causes in the first place. Instead, a body is identified as a specific body — just as a cause is identified as a specific cause — only when it is identified retroactively in terms of the object it identifies in relation to all other objects. As I have suggested, this means that a particular body is identified as a cause only when the body it identifies is understood (derivatively) in relation to other bodies. Of course, this does not mean that those other bodies become objects of perception, since if a body is truly a power (rather than simply being the product of a power), it cannot be an object of perception except in the derivative sense of being considered apart from its relationship to other bodies. That is why we need not think that there are particular causes in God's mind that account for the existence of particular bodies, because the specificity of such causes occurs only in how *our* perceptions relate to one another as ideas that collectively constitute objects rather than as infinitely integrated *thoughts*.

This distinction between *ideas* (as passive effects) and *thoughts* (as specific active causes) to which I have drawn attention has hitherto attracted little comment. No doubt, Frankel equates the two, noting in passing that "collections of thoughts" and "collections of sensory ideas" are interchangeable (Frankel, 2016, p. 57). I suspect that commentators have not recognized how, for Berkeley, *thoughts* are not objects (i.e., ideas) at all. Instead, they are how objects are identified in being differentiated from and related to one another. In Berkeley's words, "thought itself, or Thinking, is no Idea: 'tis an act, i.e., Volition, i.e., as contradistinguished to effects" (NB 808; also 621, 644, 756, 792). As the cause of an idea, a thought is individuated reflexively only in virtue of how one object relates to another, never "in itself." That is why bodies can be "taken in a twofold sense: collections of thoughts and collections of powers to cause those thoughts" (NB 282; also 293), for bodies identify how ideas are related to one another and how they can cause in us those thoughts.[10] So, ideas reflexively designate powers as their specific causes, but powers are not themselves differentiated prior to or apart from the ideas so differentiated.

A body can thus be understood not only as an object but also as the principle of differentiation by which something is distinguished from and related to other objects.

[10] Berkeley had written in NB 282 that "Bodies do ~~really~~ exist whether we think of 'em or no" — a point he reiterates at NB 52, 312, and 863 — but he deletes "really" because bodies are only derivatively individuated as specific collections of powers or thoughts. Cf. Grayling (1986, p. 97).

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This latter sense of "body" is what Berkeley means by calling it a collection of "thoughts." But to avoid being misunderstood, Berkeley adds that we can also say that a body is the collection of powers to cause us to think of some thing *in relation to* other things. In this way, "bodies exist without [i.e., apart from] the Mind, i.e., are not the Mind, but distinct from it" (NB 863), for bodies are individuated as specific powers in a way that the mind is not. A body can thus be understood as the defining cause or differentiating principle of the content of what we think. As such, the substratum in which such powers exist is the "unknown" — and as I will describe later, unknowable — activity by which things are differentiated and identified in the first place. That is also why such an activity is not a knowable *thing* at all, because things (i.e., ideas) are the products of our activities and not their causes (see NB 581, 658–659, 829; cf. Daniel, 2021, pp. 76–77, 122–138, 293, 305).

4. Bodies as Derivative Powers

My point in saying that bodies are "derivative" causes of our ideas is to show how, for Berkeley, God allows us to think of objects as unrelated to (and even disconnected from) one another *even though that is not what God wants of us*. That is, even if the finitude of our minds prevents us from being able to comprehend that system in its entirety, God wants us to recognize how the causes of our ideas should be "considered as linked with the whole system of beings" (PHK 153) — that is, that "Ideas of Sense are the Real things or Archetypes" (NB 823). As such, sensible bodies can be considered archetypes in that they are understood (derivatively) to be finite causes that are *infinitely* related to one another.

This way of speaking about archetypes indicates how Berkeley combines his account of specific bodies as causes of our ideas with a more traditional description of God's power as cause. Indeed, as I have noted in previous work, even though "*we* perceive such archetypal acts of differentiation as bodies, Berkeley concedes that bodies can be said to be powers in God that cause us to have certain ideas" (Daniel, 2001, p. 251; also, Daniel, 2021, pp. 156). But nowhere have I explained how such powers are themselves initially differentiated or why such differentiations are made in the first place. For that, we need to know about the activities or powers by means of which bodies-as-objects are identified.

This is where I now appeal to the concept of a "derivative" power to capture the import of Berkeley's point that the *activity* of identifying an object is itself individuated only in the object's being differentiated from other objects. Before an object is identified as this or that object (i.e., in relation to other objects), "it" does not exist. The specific activity by which it is identified as an object (e.g., a football, a headache) does not exist either, because that very activity is identifiable only in terms of the specificity of the object created by the differentiating activity. That is why I have referred to it as a "derivative" power.

So, when Berkeley writes that "Bodies etc. do exist whether we think of them or no, they being taken in a twofold sense: collections of thoughts and collections of powers to cause those thoughts" (NB 282), he is drawing attention to both the objects identified by our perceptions and the activities in terms of which those objects are perceived. If (as materialists claim) such bodies were understood as

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not depending on our thinking of them at all, then their existence would be unknown to us, and we would not be able to think about "them" or call them "bodies" at all.

What we are left with is the ability to think of bodies either as specific objects of thought or as the powers to cause us to have those thoughts. In the latter case, "it may be one simple perfect power" (NB 282) — that is, God — whose differentiating activity identifies those objects. But the cause of *our* thoughts does not have to be God, for we can always limit our explanations for what we experience simply to finite causes, in which case we would still perceive objects as collections of thoughts organized (more or less) according to laws of nature.

We thus need to recognize how Berkeley's description of bodies as collections of thoughts and collections of powers highlights the distinction between objects identified by the mind and the activities of the mind that are subsequently differentiated in virtue of the plurality of objects it produces. Berkeley highlights this distinction in NB 194, where he explicitly replaces "ideas" with "thoughts" in his manuscript. There he writes that the identity of finite substances consists in "the existence of our ~~ideas~~ thoughts (which being combined make all substances)." About this passage, I noted several years ago: "the combination of thoughts make up finite substances, for a spiritual substance is not defined by its ideas (understood as objects) but by the combination of activities […] by which those ideas exist" (Daniel, 2013, p. 27) — that is, by the specific activities by which those ideas are differentiated and thus related as thoughts. As such, bodies are objects of thought that are identified by powers that are themselves identified (again, derivatively) as their causes. Unfortunately, I did not use that opportunity to explain exactly how this differentiation of powers identifies bodies and thoughts.

Adopting a thoroughly different strategy, Frankel (2016, pp. 46–47, 57) claims that Berkeley thinks of bodies as divine archetypes — even though she admits that he is "somewhat reluctant" to use the term "archetype" in his account (Frankel, 2016, p. 56; cf. DHP 239). However, in Frankel's account, it is not Berkeley's spokesman Philonous who calls bodies "archetypes"; it is rather Philonous' interlocutor Hylas. That would normally indicate a view with which Berkeley might have some concerns. But here Frankel simply wants to highlight the fact that archetypes (i.e., "bodies") can be considered powers by which thoughts are differentiated and associated (Frankel, 2016, p. 57). She adds, though, that "collections of thoughts" is the same as "collections of sensory ideas" (Frankel, 2016, p. 58). That is where it becomes apparent that, by failing to distinguish between thoughts and ideas, she fails to see how the causes of our *finite* ideas can themselves be infinitely related.

By contrast, I have identified the specific powers that designate finite ideas as derivative (though infinitely related), in that they identify causes of their finite effects but are not the kind of infinite causes that characterize archetypes. As such, we do not have to conclude (as Frankel does) that "divine archetypes are numerically identical with human ideas" (Frankel, 2016, 58), for ideas in the mind of God are always infinitely related to one another — which is certainly not the case regarding our ideas.

By appealing to the derivative specificity of bodies, Berkeley is able to indicate how the objects of finite experiences are usually (if not always) identified without having to describe them in terms of the infinite relationships that would characterize divine

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archetypes. Indeed, I think that Berkeley assumes this latter understanding of bodies as powers when he contrasts his view with that of John Locke. As he notes:

> I am more certain of the existence and reality of bodies than Mr Locke since he pretends only to what he calls sensitive knowledge, whereas I think I have demonstrative knowledge of their existence, by them meaning combinations of powers in an unknown substratum. (NB 80)

As the principle of differentiation itself, that substratum is unknown because it is not an object at all and is, instead, how all objects are differentiated and infinitely related. Accordingly, we know of the differentiation of objects not because we sense them as differentiated but because their being perceived as differentiated demonstrates how the activity of perception identifies (again derivatively) the powers by which objects are known.

Again, interpreters claim that Berkeley abandons the above view when he decides "not to mention the Combinations of Powers but to say the things, the effects themselves, really exist even when not actually perceived" (NB 802).[11] But this is not a change from describing effects of originally specified powers to describing effects of reflexively differentiated powers, for the powers (or "bodies") that differentiate things (or ideas) are themselves differentiated only derivatively as causes of *those* ideas.

My point is that I do not think that Berkeley ever claims that bodies are initially combinations of powers, for that would not explain how such powers are themselves differentiated without changing those powers into objects. To think that bodies could be identified as objects of other minds (even God's) would still make them objects — which is exactly what Berkeley repeatedly rejects. Instead, what I am claiming — in a way that Berkeley never rejects, from his *Notebooks* onward — is that he thinks of bodies as derivative combinations of powers and not necessarily ideas or objects.

Of course, none of this means that we cannot think of a body as integrated in an infinity of all other bodies. It is only to say that if we think of a body *as an object*, we are not thinking of it as a component in an infinity of *all* other bodies. That is, we should not think that a body (understood as the power to cause us to perceive a certain thing) has an identity apart from how that thing is perceived in relation to *all other things*. Indeed, God calls us to perceive all things in the world in a totalizing way, all the while recognizing how "this great truth which lies so near and obvious to the mind, should be attained to by the reason of so very few" (PHK 149). As Berkeley tells us at the end of the first book of the PHK, the fact that few people (if any) will ever think of bodies as integrated causes of the totality of our ideas should not prevent us from seeing how all the objects in our experience encourage us to recognize "the intimate presence of an *all-wise Spirit*, who fashions, regulates, and sustains the whole system of beings" (PHK 151). After all (as NB 508 indicates), his promised second book of the PHK was intended to show how God's activity allows for the freedom of human actions in terms of the ability to see how all things are integrated.

[11] Cf. Grayling (1986, pp. 97–98); Luce (1963, pp. 134–135, 140, 154); and McDonough (2017, pp. 392–394).

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5. Individuation as Embodiment

Berkeley's maxim "to be is to be perceived" (PHK 3) is typically understood to rule out claims about the existence of physical objects apart from their being perceived (if not by us, then certainly by God). Of course, this simple formula ignores the status of the minds that do the perceiving — particularly what it means to say that such minds exist even though they are not like objects. Indeed, even to refer to minds in terms of the activities by which objects are identified and differentiated seems to assume that minds are differentiated prior to their objects (at least logically).

That, however, is not the way that I have described how Berkeley thinks of minds. Instead, he describes minds as the *activities* by which ideas are differentiated (PHK 2; DHP 195, 233). As such, he does not suggest that those activities are differentiated prior to the designation of their objects. Rather, such differentiations are identifiable only in the derivative sense to which I have referred — that is, in how a thing is differentiated from all other things. In such an account, we do not start with things in the world that just happen to have powers and then describe how they interact. Rather, we begin with the activity that differentiates them — that is, with the pronouncement by means of which such differentiation is made possible — for example, in the expression "Let there be light" or "In the beginning was the Word." Because this aboriginal act of differentiation is the principle that identifies and relates all things to one another, "it" has no identity, but it is only in terms of it that we can subsequently identify all things.

As I have suggested, this strategy informs how Berkeley links powers and bodies. Powers are not things that substances *have* but are what substances *are*. Instead of thinking, with Locke, that a substance is an unknown thing that supports the powers or qualities of the thing (Locke, 1975, II.23.2, II.31.13; cf. Ayers, 1975, pp. 16–17) — as if a substance or support of ideas is some *thing* — Berkeley identifies substances as powers themselves. That is, instead of being characteristics of an object that has an identity apart from its being identified, powers are the activities by which something is identified in the first place (see Daniel, 2021, pp. 28–29, 65–66). Powers are thus never the objects of any cognition, since it is through them (as the active principles by which things are perceived) that things are identified *as* objects of cognition in the first place. So, instead of identifying a substance in terms of some Lockean "I-know-not-what" that supports qualities, Berkeley suggests that a substance is an integrated *embodiment* of powers.

By saying "embodiment," I am drawing attention again to his remarks in the *Notebooks* where he explicitly refers to powers as "bodies." As I have acknowledged, this sounds strange coming from Berkeley, but it is a claim he repeatedly makes. For example, at NB 52 he remarks, "Bodies etc. do exist even when not perceived, they being powers in the active Being." He makes the same point later at NB 282 and 293a, where he claims that bodies can be said to exist if they are understood not as *objects* of perception but as the powers by which objects are identified as objects. As I have already argued, in this early (and never rejected) sense, a body can be understood as the specific power by which an object of perception is identified as that object in relation to *all* other objects. A body can still be understood as something that exists by being perceived as an object by a finite mind, but that

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does not mean that it cannot also be understood as the principle by which an object is distinguished from all other objects. Since such a principle would depend for its own differentiation on other principles (infinitely), I have proposed that the only way to think about it is in the derivative terms of "all minds whatsoever" (PHK 48).

When Berkeley says, then, that "existere is percipi or percipere" (NB 429), he does not mean the same thing as "*esse* is *percipi*" (PHK 3); for both minds and objects "exist" (*existere*), but only objects instantiate what it means "to be" (*esse*). In distinguishing things from one another, the mind identifies those things as *objects*; but the *activity* by which things are distinguished (and thus identified) is not itself differentiated from any activity other than in terms of its results — and those results are derivatively called "bodies."[12]

All of this is why Berkeley proclaims in NB 712 that "the spirit, the active thing, that which is soul and God, is the will alone," for the distinction of our minds and God's mind as operative principles is found only in their effects (i.e., bodies) and not prior to such discrimination. As he says, "Tis one will, one act distinguished by the effects. This will, this act is the spirit, operative principle, soul, etc." (NB 788). God *and* soul are simply the will that there be difference and identity (i.e., determinate perceptions, thoughts, or volitions). Such a will is not some *thing* that wills that there be such difference and identity, because we would then need to explain how that thing comes to be identified as that thing in the first place. That is why (as Berkeley puts it) we should say that there is "nothing but a Will, a being which wills being unintelligible" (NB 499a), for no being has an identity apart from its being what it is (i.e., doing what it does).

Of course, this does not rule out the possibility of referring to "a being that wills" (NB 499), for as long as we understand such a being (just as Francisco Suárez does) as a determinate (yet derivative) activity rather than as a subject, we will understand the point Berkeley makes — namely, that the activity by means of which something is identified is itself identified only in virtue of the thing identified. This way of putting it might be surprising, but that should not prevent us from seeing how Berkeley's repeated preference for referring to minds as "beings" rather than "things" signals a significant shift away from Locke's "I-know-not-what" substance talk (see PHK 2, 27, 89, 151, 153; DHP 233, 239, 260, 262).

God and finite minds are thus distinguished only by the extent, complexity, and harmony of their objects. In thinking about things, I am expressing the will that there be objects for a consciousness that only reflexively and derivatively become identified as *my* volitions or *my* perceptions (NB 744). But the will that there be objects for my consciousness cannot *originally* be said to be objects of "my" will because I am defined only by the activity of those ideas being differentiated and associated in and as a determinate order. So, even if the finitude of *what* we will distinguishes us from God — and opens up the possibility of our uniting our wills with God by willing the unity of all things — *that* we will certainly unites us to him.

Here we must be careful not to suggest that this *one* will or *one* act can be contrasted with other acts, for the very possibility of multiplicity itself is based on

[12] Berkeley thus appropriates Suárez's distinction between the quiddity of a thing (*res*) and the discriminatory activity by which that thing is identified (*ens*). Cf. Suárez (1861, III.2.4, p. 108).

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this activity which itself is originally not numbered because "it" has no specific identity. As Berkeley says:

> If you ask what thing it is that wills, I answer if you mean Idea by the Word *thing* or any thing like any Idea, then I say tis no thing at all that wills. This how extravagant soever it may seem yet is a certain truth. We are cheated by these general terms, *thing*, *is*, etc. Again, if by *is* you mean *is perceived* or *does perceive*, I say no thing which is perceived or does perceive Wills. (NB 658–659)

The willing differentiation of ideas is how a mind establishes itself as the cause of specific ideas. Furthermore, that is how "bodies" become understood *derivatively* as the powers in terms of which such distinctions are to be explained.

6. Concluding Remarks

According to Berkeley, God wills that there be an infinity of finite perspectives of all things in the universe. "Bodies" identify both (1) the activities of making such distinctions, and (2) the objects of such distinctions. I have referred to the specific activity of differentiation by which an object becomes that object as a "derivative" power because, in God, there is no specific power to cause any object, only the power to cause all objects in infinite relations. To the extent that finite minds actively differentiate ideas in ways that mirror God's archetypal ordering of objects, they are the embodiments of the causes of our ideas and the justifications for how our ideas become characterized as "thoughts" or "notions" (i.e., the volitional differentiations and associations of objects).

I have also argued that, for Berkeley, the causes of our ideas cannot be other ideas, for those causes are not objects at all. Rather, they are what Berkeley early on refers to as "bodies," that is, the differentiating activities by which objects are identified as ideas. And I have suggested that the fact that he later avoids speaking about such activities as "bodies" does not so much indicate that he changed his mind about them as that he came to see that there were more appropriate ways to speak about the specification of causal activity than in terms of the objects they identified.

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