

IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE IN THE IDEALISMS OF LEIBNIZ AND BERKELEY

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Abstract

Recent philosophers assess differently the extent to which affinity is to be found between the idealist metaphysics of G. W. Leibniz and George Berkeley. I argue that these figures' idealisms are indeed strongly aligned. They espouse related accounts of the nature of mental substance and state. They similarly restrict the domain of causality. They each reject the Lockean primary/secondary quality dichotomy. Over against the criticism that idealisms cannot allow for a distinction to be made out between real and illusory perceptual experience, the two philosophers offer comparable solutions. Nevertheless, their ontologies are not identical, and are primarily to be distinguished in terms of their disparate characterisations of ultimate reality as being either immanent or transcendent to percipient subjects like us. This continuum of transcendentism and immanentism has further application as a conceptual tool both for tracing the rise of modern philosophy and for developing new metaphysical and epistemological accounts of the nature of the world and our relation to it.

1. Introduction

Efforts to connect Berkeley's position to that of Leibniz have been fewer [than to that of Kant], more limited, and (as far as I can determine) mostly pretty recent. Possibly Leibniz's notable lack of preoccupation with external world scepticism, accompanied by his uninhibited espousal of a rationalist metaphysics, has made the comparison of his philosophy with Berkeley's seem a less natural and inviting enterprise. Nevertheless, there are now at least the beginnings of a tradition linking their respective 'phenomenalisms'.

Margaret D. Wilson, 1987¹

The history of philosophy itself has a history. As such, retrospective appraisals of bygone eras of philosophy are themselves subject to changing trends and subsequent re-evaluations. Partly this is because philosophers view the intellectual accomplishments of their forebears through the lens of their own philosophical training, shaped by modern paradigms and doctrine. Partly this is because, with distance from historical texts, we are able to judge the merit of, or see commonality and difference between, writers in a way that may have been difficult to gauge for those authors themselves, who tend to exaggerate the uniqueness of their own positions and fail to see how much common ground in methodology and other assumptions that they share with their contemporaries. At any rate, accounts of the history of philosophy are no less subject to re-evaluation than philosophical doctrines themselves.

The popularity of the metaphysical position known as idealism has waxed and waned over the years. Since the rise of analytic philosophy in the early twentieth century it has been an unpopular metaphysic; then again, it could be said that almost all metaphysics have been

¹ 'The Phenomenalisms of Leibniz and Berkeley', *Essays on the Philosophy of George Berkeley*, p. 3

unpopular this last century, at least of the type understood in the historical sense and in the sense that logical positivism rallied against during the formative years of analytic philosophy. But prior to this remodelling of western philosophy, idealism attained, in one form or another, a position of dominance and even orthodoxy in nineteenth century Germany and then Britain. The positions held by the prominent figures in the latter such as Bradley and McTaggart may be traced to the ‘absolute’ idealism of Hegel, often said to be the last of the great German idealists. Hegel’s idealism may be traced back to Kant’s ‘transcendental’ idealism; and, though Kant sought to distance his position from earlier idealists such as George Berkeley and G. W. Leibniz, his ‘transcendental’ idealism may be seen as propounding related insights. All three figures’ philosophies proceed with the recognition that there is an ineliminable subjective aspect to perceptual experience which ultimately calls into question the assumption that the world itself is to be understood as absolute and independent of our perceptions of it, yet must match our representations of it despite remaining distinct from them.

Writing in the 17th and 18th centuries, Leibniz and Berkeley are influential figures in the history of philosophy who, despite their contemporaneity, have traditionally been treated as professing very distinct philosophies. This is partly due to the received view that they each belong to the opposed epistemological schools of rationalism and empiricism. Nevertheless, metaphysical *idealism* was central to each of their philosophies, in this case meaning the view that reality is fundamentally composed of minds or mind-like entities rather than matter. Some literature in the past few decades has attempted to undermine the stereotyping of the two figures as belonging to vastly divergent schools. For the most part, I aim to continue in this reconciliatory work; the traditional account has indeed obscured important similarities between the two philosophies. Nonetheless, I argue that despite substantial agreement in their views, their two accounts of reality are not to be fully identified: in particular, these accounts

are to be distinguished with respect to what I term their *immanentism* and *transcendentism*, a distinction that cuts across the usual epistemological/metaphysical divide and which I hope to show has significant utility for analysing other philosophies.

According to the standard picture, Leibniz and Berkeley respectively represent an arch rationalist and an arch empiricist. Leibniz, the rationalist, multiplies the complexity of the universe to infinity with his purportedly rationally-derived doctrine of innumerable ‘monads’, or mental substances, and their harmony. Berkeley, it is said, instead reduces the complexity of our ordinary ontological assumptions by denying the reality of matter, as a reflection of his reductive empiricist dispositions. Though this account has its value, it is overly simple. I wish to contribute to “the beginnings of a tradition linking their respective ‘phenomenalisms’” by arguing that Berkeley and Leibniz are indeed strongly aligned as idealists, despite the lack of direct comparison of the two in traditional accounts of early modern philosophy. Nonetheless, to see them united as idealists is not the full picture. As I will explain, their preference for characterising the real as either immanent to us or as transcendent of experience must be taken account of, and marks a way in which even if their accounts of the world itself are remarkably alike, their views on how we subjects relate to and figure in that world must mark their systems as distinct.

I aim to establish that, despite traditional epistemological separation, there is significant agreement between their philosophies. This will be established through comparison of their views on a number of themes they both address, including the unreality of matter; the falseness of the primary-secondary quality distinction; their Cartesian-inspired accounts of the nature of the true substances, mental entities; and their shared view that the things that may count as a *cause* are more limited in number than we ordinarily take them to be. After a direct comparison of their views will be a discussion of twentieth century logical positivism’s critique of metaphysics as ‘transcendent’, and how this concept and its contrary, the

‘immanent’, are of primary importance for appreciating in what way there is disagreement between Leibniz and Berkeley. Finally this pair of concepts will be applied to discussing Descartes, Locke, and Kant and their relations to our idealist philosophers, in order to demonstrate the further utility of the distinction for evaluating the history of philosophy.

Along the way, I will distinguish three relevant ways in which historical philosophy may be contrasted: idealist/realist; rationalist/empiricist; and transcendentist/immanentist.

Firstly, I premise that that the *metaphysical* idealist/realist division is as central to understanding early modern philosophy as the *epistemological* rationalist/empiricist divide. The latter dichotomy gathers together philosophers with radically different metaphysical views for the purpose of finding common methodologies and views about the role of reason and sense experience in sourcing knowledge. Though this has significant pedagogical virtue for learning about and teaching the history of philosophy, it obscures the fact that certain agreements, especially metaphysical, lie between philosophers whose systems are addressed in isolation from one another. Berkeley and Leibniz are treated as quintessential representatives of each of their opposing methodological schools yet, I believe, they share many of the same metaphysical conclusions.

Secondly, I will argue that the transcendentist/immanentist distinction is essential to understanding Berkeley, Leibniz, and idealism in the early modern period. Unlike the previous two distinctions, this one does not neatly fall into the category of metaphysics or of epistemology. It concerns the relation of we subjects to ultimate reality; and as such it concerns both what is truly real (metaphysics) and how we relate to it, including our knowledge relations (epistemology).

Together, Berkeley and Leibniz are the best-known of the early modern period’s defenders of a roughly shared idealist ontology; viz., one that is a monistic alternative to

materialism and that functioned as a novel solution to the mind-body interaction problem facing philosophy in the wake of Descartes' dualism and its perceived deficits. Still, it would be foolhardy to overstate the identity of the systems of Berkeley and Leibniz as over-compensation for historical neglect of their affinity. Thus the anti-metaphysical tendencies of logical positivism in the early 20th century will highlight what I take to be the main respect in which the Berkeleyan and Leibnizian positions differ, through their respective denial and assertion of an extra-empirical, transcendent realm in which the ultimately real is to be located.

I hope that this research work will be of use to the philosophical community, particularly those with interests in the history of early modern philosophy and idealism. Scholars interested in Kant as well as Berkeley and Leibniz may also find the work interesting: as we will explore, Leibniz had a large acknowledged impact on Kant, and to the latter's chagrin, his metaphysics was repeatedly accused of being Berkeleyan in spirit. Readers interested in monist ontologies, analyses of causality, and the relation between theology and ontology may also find the work useful, as these topics figure heavily in Leibniz and Berkeley and cannot be overlooked in seeking to comprehend their positions. Ultimately I seek to show how these systems function as shared expressions of some kind of ontological inspiration from their authors. They both argue that the world contains just one type of substance, which is mental rather than physical; and that the apparent material world is phenomenal and to be exhaustively cashed out in terms of perceptions or sensations of those numerous percipient mental substances. Furthermore, as Kant would further elaborate, in metaphysics we should not expect there to be material 'things in themselves' distinct-from-but-strongly-resembling our conscious sense perceptions. I argue that the idealism or immaterialism of Berkeley and Leibniz provides an important precursor to Kant's subsequent characterisation of the

empirical world, including space and time, as belonging essentially to the perceiving subject and being fundamentally shaped by subjective forms of experience.

As well as being of potential use to scholars of Leibniz, Berkeley, and Kant, I hope that my emphasis on the distinction between transcendentalism and immanentism as a means to distinguish philosophies may be of service generally in charting the history of philosophy, or even as a conceptual tool for modern philosophers wrestling with how to characterise our relation to reality in the course of epistemology and metaphysics.

1.1 The Rise of Idealism

Western philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries saw a great upheaval, with the rise and then fall of the 'mechanical philosophy' as an ideal of explanation for the natural world. What we would now call science was in the process of beginning and theories describing physical phenomena in mathematical terms would be formulated by figures such as Newton. Against this intellectual climate and its enthusiasm for rationally comprehending the natural order *qua* material and mechanistic, the idealisms of Berkeley and Leibniz stand out for their shared denial of the absolute existence of matter: just that which seemed to be coming under precise mathematical scrutiny by other philosophers impressed with the new science. Berkeley outright denies the existence of matter; Leibniz is less reactionary, granting it a conditional reality as phenomenon grounded in the mental, but not as originally real in its own right. In both systems the truly real is not matter, but rather minds or mind-like entities; the existence of these provides the foundation for the (ultimately illusory) appearance or phenomenon of matter. In this way these idealist figures contrast with their more numerous realist contemporaries, for whom matter was not only real but had seemed to newly become the object of a maximally rational, geometric comprehension.

Thus Berkeley and Leibniz each argue that it is the mental rather than the material that is ontologically fundamental. Berkeley holds that matter does not, indeed cannot, exist, and reduces talk about objects to sensory states of perceivers; Leibniz refers to material bodies as *phenomena*, and grants them a conditional reality arising from monads, mind-like substances that are fundamentally real and percipient.

According to the traditional interpretation, each figure approaches his idealist metaphysics by diametrically opposed methods. Berkeley achieved his position through an empiricism so impassioned that it departs from the initially-seeming innocuous epistemological position that all of our knowledge comes from the senses, to instead adopt the bolder metaphysical position that existence itself applies only to those sensory experiences and the subjects experiencing them. In contrast, Leibniz is classed along with the rationalist tradition and is said to reach his idealist position on rationalistic principles, arguing that knowledge of the ultimate, mind-like reality underlying the phenomena of experience may be acquired via *a priori* reflection. For him each genuine substance must be simple and have something akin to a form or active principle providing its unity; in order for this to be intelligible to us, we are to understand it in terms of it being like a mind, as we find ourselves to be, or as some other form of non-spatial mind-like entity continuous in kind with the mental substances that we are.

The view that mentation is ontologically prior to the material has usually been dismissed ever since the analytic tradition began in the early 20th century as a revolt against the then-prevailing British idealists. Nevertheless, idealism in various guises had been a significant, at times the dominant, view in philosophy since Descartes ushered in the modern era. Berkeley and Leibniz were among the earliest modern philosophers to argue for the ontological primacy of the mental. The two philosophers were separated by land mass; but they were not

entirely ignorant of one another's philosophies, and before embarking on analysis of their affinity it will be natural to consult the philosophers themselves on this issue.

1.2 Leibniz on Berkeley

Leibniz was born in 1646; Berkeley in 1685. Despite the 39 years separating their births, their most significant work was produced within a narrower time frame. Leibniz's 'mature' philosophical period began, at age 40, with the *Discourse on Metaphysics* of 1686, and in it he presents many of the themes that he would more fully articulate later, such as the emphasis on 'individual substances', 'complete concepts' detailing all past and future states of these substances, and the doctrine of pre-established harmony. He continued to write, expanding and refining among other things his famous 'monadological' account of basic substance ontology, until his death in 1716. Meanwhile, though Berkeley was not born until the year before the *Discourse*, his best-known works were published when he was in his twenties; and so his definitive immaterialist *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* was issued in 1710, subsequently being slightly recast and presented in dialogue form in the *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* in 1713. There was therefore a window of six years between when Berkeley began to publish his immaterialist works, and Leibniz's death.

In that time Leibniz certainly came to be aware of Berkeley. There are two known references verifying this. The first comes from a letter to Des Bosses dated 5 March 1715:

*The one in Ireland who attacks the reality of bodies does not seem to bring forward suitable reasons, nor does he explain himself sufficiently. I suspect that he is one of that sort of men who wants to be known for his paradoxes.*²

²Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 306

This remark comes from a passage in which Leibniz is defending the reality of “bodies”, and arguing that although they are only phenomena and not truly substances, they are nonetheless *real*. Among Leibniz’s recurring traits are, firstly, his writing to appease the audience intended for the text, and secondly, to attempt to reconcile seemingly contrary positions with each other. In virtue of the first, it can be difficult to determine to what extent he truly held the views presented in his various extant writings, which were typically in the form of a series of letters to other leading intellectuals, and to what extent he was toning down the extravagance of his considered views so as not to entirely confound his correspondents. With respect to the second, some of his attempts to synthesise multiple seemingly contrary positions and find common ground means that he can appear to contradict himself at times, as he tries out one or another turn of phrase to express his views in the language of other perspectives. Both of these considerations are relevant to his attempts here to describe matter both as real yet phenomenal (in his favourite phrase, phenomenal ‘like the rainbow’). In a spirit similar to his attempts to forge a compatibilist account of free will and determinism, he here wants to maintain of material objects that, despite the fact that they lack absoluteness and are phenomenal, they are nonetheless in some sense *real*; and thus, if successful, he can say of his reductive account of the material world of sense that it nonetheless accords with our almost inescapable commonsense intuition that, whatever else it may turn out to be, matter is real.

It is perhaps surprising that Leibniz should appear to contrast Berkeley’s position with his own so strongly on this point. Berkeley in fact follows a very similar path to Leibniz here, seeking to integrate a counter-intuitive immaterialism with a commonsense realism: despite the ideality of material substances, objects are nonetheless *real*. It is this that, despite Leibniz’s protests, makes Berkeley’s position just as much an object realism as Leibniz’s:

... [B]y the principles premised, we are not deprived of any one thing in nature. Whatever we see, feel, hear, or any wise conceive or understand, remains as secure as ever, and is as real as ever. ... we have shown what is meant by real things in opposition to chimeras, or ideas of our own framing; but then they both equally exist in the mind, and in that sense are alike ideas.³

Leibniz is more conciliatory in the following remarks written in his own copy of Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*:

*There is much here that is correct and close to my own view. But it is expressed paradoxically. For it is not necessary to say that matter is nothing, but it is sufficient to say that it is a phenomenon, like the rainbow; and that it is not a substance, but the resultant of substances, and that space is no more real than time, that is, that space is nothing but the order of coexistents, just as time is the order of things that have existed before [subexistentia]. True substances are monads, that is, perceivers, but the author should have gone further, to the infinity of monads, constituting everything, and to their preestablished harmony. Badly, or at least in vain, he rejects abstract ideas, restricts ideas to imaginations, and condemns the subtleties of arithmetic and geometry. The worst thing is that he rejects the division of extension to infinity, even if he might rightly reject infinitesimal quantities.*⁴

Here he does acknowledge some affinity, stating that “there is much here that is correct and close to my own view”. It is perhaps in the spirit of philosophical jousting that Leibniz is enumerating differences between their systems, rather than spending more time acknowledging that their ontological positions, though deriving from quite different considerations, are remarkable in their agreement. By the time of Leibniz's death, Berkeley had turned away from publishing immaterialist philosophy; and he never publicly addressed the possibility that he and Leibniz professed fundamentally alike mental-substance ontologies. Despite this, within this thesis I shall argue that a number of central features are

³ Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, §34

⁴ Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 307 (Winter 1714-15)

shared by both systems, including not only the simultaneous account of the ideality of material things yet the reality of mental substances; radical restrictions on what may be rightfully considered as a cause; and the shared rejection of Locke's attempted primary/secondary quality distinction.

I am not the first to note affinity between the two philosophers; on the other hand, nor do all who have compared the two find their metaphysics to be of a kind. Having observed Leibniz's official verdict on how his system relates to Berkeley's, we shall now explore more recent accounts as to whether or not history should record Berkeley and Leibniz as being united in their view that mind is prior to matter.

2. Contemporary Assessments

Despite the traditional pedagogical division between the British empiricists and the Continental rationalists, the latter half of the twentieth century saw a rise in interest about the relationship between the metaphysics of our two philosophers. In the following I will present a summary of several key articles from this era discussing their relation.

2.1 “*Monadology*”, *Montgomery Furth, 1967*

In this article Furth provides the initial impetus for the twentieth century reconsideration of Berkeley and Leibniz as aligned. Furth himself does not explicitly draw connections between Leibniz and Berkeley, but Berkeley is often described a phenomenalist; and Furth’s important and oft-cited appraisal of Leibniz presents the case that he too is to be cast as a phenomenalist. Before proceeding, I shall make clear my understanding of ‘phenomenalism’ and its relation to idealism so as to defuse verbal confusion arising from these subtly distinct concepts. I primarily speak of Berkeley and Leibniz as united in their ‘idealisms’ rather than their ‘phenomenalisms’. These are distinct, though interrelated, terms which post-positivist authors sometimes nonetheless employ interchangeably when discussing historical, especially pre-Kantian, figures such as Leibniz and Berkeley. Put simply, idealism is the view that all that truly exists, or at least that which primarily exists, is mental or spiritual rather than material; whereas phenomenism is the more specific doctrine that, in some sense, physical objects (or statements about them) are reducible without loss to sets of mental contents, e.g. sensations or ideas (or, again, statements about them). Strictly, neither phenomenism nor idealism entails the other: the logical positivists embraced phenomenism but were not idealists, and many German and British idealists thought that reality was essentially mind-like/spiritual but did not identify specific objects with specific

sets of sensations and so were not phenomenologists. Nevertheless, the two concepts are often linked, and it is easy to see why a non-linguistic phenomenism (arguing that material objects are nothing over and above patterns of sensation) accommodates idealism (arguing that it is minds that are fundamentally real).

Thus Furth presents the then-novel thesis that the mature Leibniz was a phenomenologist, and that within the monadology material objects are understood as constituted by perceptions. Furth's analysis begins with an analysis of the 'monad': Leibniz's pet term for the individual, innumerable mental substances that he takes to constitute reality. Furth stipulates that the notion of a monad can be obtained by making three changes to Descartes' *res cogitans*, or conscious being, the existence of which Descartes famously inferred with *cogito ergo sum*. The changes required to make this *I* of Descartes into a Leibnizian monad are: relaxing the requirement that its perceptions be conscious; changing the domain of things which the monad is to perceive; and, introducing the metaphysical principle that no two substances, i.e. monads, may be exactly similar. After the characterisation of Leibniz's mental substances as modified Cartesian thinking things, Furth goes on to attribute a linguistic material-object reductionism to Leibniz. "The theory is a phenomenism, for it offers a reductive explication of statements about material things as translations or abbreviations of statements about perceptions".⁵ As this quote indicates with its reference to reductions of *statements* of one type to another, Furth understands Leibniz's theory to be phenomenistic in a linguistic sense, as was the tendency of the logical positivists.

Furth believes that Leibniz "moved toward a more straightforwardly phenomenistic reduction"⁶ as he aged, placing less emphasis on the doctrine that material things are somehow constituted by aggregates of non-spatial monads themselves and instead presenting

⁵ Montgomery Furth, '*Monadology*', p. 184

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188

them as identical with the perceptual states of those monads. Furth quotes Leibniz clearly expressing his mature idealism:

It is true that what occurs in the soul ought to agree with what takes place outside it; but for this it is enough that events taking place in one soul correspond both with one another and with those taking place in any other soul; nor is it necessary to posit anything outside of all Souls or Monads; and on this hypothesis, when we say that Socrates is sitting, we mean nothing else but that what we understand by 'Socrates' and 'sitting' is appearing to us and to the others concerned.⁷

(to des Bosses)

Though Furth does not explicitly connect Leibniz's philosophy to Berkeley's, his phenomenalist interpretation of Leibniz paves the way to draw analogy between them and the article is often referred to, whether in agreement or not, by subsequent authors considering the relation between the two philosophers.

2.2 "Leibniz and Berkeley", J. J. MacIntosh, 1971

Four years after Furth's article, MacIntosh picks up on the phenomenalist interpretation and recognises that a direct comparison of Leibniz with Berkeley on the issue of phenomenism and idealism is warranted, concluding that they share "strikingly similar philosophical views".⁸ This article is the primary example of an attempt to strongly identify the two idealisms. The article also recognises that conceptualising contemporaneous philosophers as belonging to vastly different schools of method and doctrine can obscure what are actually mutually compatible methodologies and similar positions contained within;

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ MacIntosh, p. 147

as such, it functions as a protest against stereotyping philosophers, without qualification, as belonging to the ‘schools’ of rationalism and empiricism.

Furth had noted that Leibniz’s position gradually approached phenomenalism over time, recasting the phenomenal domain of the material as grounded in the *perceptions* of percipient monads rather than arising from an aggregate of those monadic substances themselves, presumably thus coming closer to Berkeley’s idealism. The latter certainly made objects out to consist in nothing beyond consciously experienced sensory ideas. Symmetrically to Leibniz’s gradual alignment with Berkeley on phenomenalism, MacIntosh argues that “to the extent that Berkeley’s views did undergo a gradual change, that change was towards the position of Leibniz rather than away from it”.⁹ Berkeley’s later writings are less concerned with his original immaterialist convictions, and are thus less relevant to the present comparison of the two philosophers’ idealisms, but – amongst meandering reflections on such issues as the medicinal virtues of ‘tar water’ – they reflect Leibnizian attitudes by softening the hardline empiricist epistemology inherited from Locke in favour of a renewed appreciation for the powers of pure reason.

As to the relevant period of affinity between the two philosophers’ careers, especially during the early years of the 18th century, Furth maintains that they share philosophical outlook. Beyond the phenomenalism usually taken for granted in Berkeley, and identified by Furth in Leibniz, MacIntosh argues for similarity between the two in the following respects:

Method

MacIntosh claims that both figures acknowledge and espouse the importance of both experience and reason, and that viewing their philosophical methods as dichotomous is entirely misleading. Despite the tradition of dividing the two along empiricist/rationalist

⁹ Ibid., p. 148

lines, “there is, it appears, no methodological reason to think of them as philosophers of a wholly different nature”.¹⁰

Metaphysics

Despite “many similarities”, MacIntosh focuses within this article on the purported shared phenomenalisms. He sources quotes from Leibniz in support of the Furthian premise that Leibniz exhibited a gradual move towards phenomenalism in the later years of his philosophy. For instance, he claims that as early as 1669 Leibniz invokes an “incorporeal principle, that is God”¹¹; later, in *First Truths*, this incorporeal principle develops into the “substantial form” – “something in corporeal substances analogous to the soul”.¹² Insistence that corporeal substances have an absolute reality, if only one held together by something soul-like, wanes: by 1686, in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, the Lockean primary/secondary quality distinction is being challenged, and both types come to be seen as essentially mind-dependent. In 1698 Leibniz espouses a view strongly suggesting reductive phenomenalism concerning primary qualities: “what is real in extension and movement consists of nothing but the foundation of order and the regular sequence of phenomena and perceptions”. From 1700 onwards the “mature” idealist position is settled. In light of the supporting evidence MacIntosh provides, he concludes that “in just the sense that Berkeley was attacking the “reality” of bodies, so too was Leibniz; and in just the sense that Leibniz was willing to regard ‘phenomena too as real’, so also was Berkeley”.¹³

MacIntosh stands out amongst commentators with his strong assurance that the two philosophies are harmonious, yet he still allows that, despite this agreement, “they did not have views which were identical beneath the terminology, they merely had very similar

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 151

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 152

¹³ Ibid., p. 155

ones”.¹⁴ One such difference he identifies concerns infinity and infinite divisibility. Leibniz regularly employs the notion of the infinite; for instance, in his systems there is an infinity of existent monads, whereas Berkeley’s empiricism leads him to reject both the infinite and the infinitesimal, as being untraceable to any immediate sense experience and thus invalid.

Another is Leibniz’s use of the pre-established harmony as an explanatory tool, employed as an alternative to requiring God to provide sensations (“ideas”) at the beck and call of spirits based on their volitions, as in Berkeley’s philosophy (and Malebranchean occasionalism).

Science

Berkeley and Leibniz both criticise Newtonian absolute space and time. However Leibniz, but not Berkeley, provides a positive account of the relativist space and time which may remain. Berkeley’s views on time are reductionist, and time is to be found only internally for a perceiver; seemingly, as the speed of streams of sensation changes, so too does time itself. MacIntosh discusses this view on time at some length, finding it to be “a very private kind of time indeed, a time that seems to make impossible the remark, ‘you were awake while I was asleep’, and leaves Berkeley embrangled in the inextricable difficulties of solipsism”.¹⁵

Also falling under the rubric of science for MacIntosh is the two figures’ related views on causality. Both limit what things in the world are to count as active and causally efficacious; MacIntosh points to Leibniz’s assertion that “matter includes only what is passive” whereas activity is found only elsewhere; specifically, “action can only be initiated by souls (or something akin to souls)”.¹⁶

MacIntosh’s enumeration of aligned doctrines between our philosophers advances compellingly on Furth’s phenomenalist reading of Leibniz, showing that Leibniz’s

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 158

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 160

tendency towards a reductive account of material object is not only aligned generally with phenomenalism but specifically with Berkeley's contemporaneous idealist ontology. Even whilst acknowledging that Leibniz's doctrine of the pre-established harmony between substances as an explanatory tool is unique to his, and not to Berkeley's, position, he nevertheless asserts:

...[G]iven the central points of agreement – the importance of the perceiver and his perceptions, the running together of primary and secondary qualities and the denial of their objectivity, and the agreement that God is the cause of the perceptions in question without the intervention of matter – the discrepancy in the two systems about the pre-established harmony may well appear to be a disagreement about a point of detail rather than about a substantial issue ...¹⁷

The affinity he finds between these positions, despite traditional philosophical historical accounts' reluctance to draw together the two systems, leads MacIntosh to scepticism about the rationalist/empiricist distinction itself, at least when applied crudely in detailing the historical development of western philosophy. MacIntosh's article remains the classic statement of the view that the idealisms of Berkeley and Leibniz are united and that their likeness is obscured by forcing the nuanced positions of historical philosophers into inflexible categories for simplicity.

2.3 “The Phenomenalisms of Leibniz and Berkeley”, Margaret D.

Wilson, 1987

...[A]ttempts to assimilate Berkeley's phenomenalism either to Kant's position or to Leibniz's give insufficient weight to certain fundamental and unique features of Berkeley's philosophical doctrines and objectives – features which in fact place him in opposition to both Leibniz and Kant ... while there are legitimate senses of “phenomenalism” (or “idealism”) in which Leibniz and

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 157

*Kant are both phenomenologists (or idealists), it simply does not follow that their views and concerns are fundamentally similar to Berkeley's.*¹⁸

Wilson's paper is a critique of attempts such as MacIntosh's to stress the similarity of the phenomenalist or idealist doctrines of Berkeley and Leibniz. Within recent philosophical literature her article is the clearest statement that, as has been historically assumed, the two philosophies are indeed substantially distinct, and that re-evaluations such as MacIntosh's which collapse their ontologies into one are insufficiently sensitive to their nuances. In her view the tendency, since Furth's "Monadology", to see the two philosophers as united is due to inattention to the subtle shades of meaning present with words such as 'phenomenalism'. To this end *nominal* agreement between them "may conceal radical philosophical differences", like the "*nominal* agreement between Berkeley and Descartes that physical things really exist, and are different in nature from minds".¹⁹ She identifies a number of points of difference that she holds to remain salient despite nominal agreement between the philosophers.

First, though both Berkeley and Leibniz are concerned with perceptions and give them unique ontological status, Leibniz's use of the word "perception" is very different from Berkeley's. Leibniz's "perceptions" include states that are neither sensory nor conscious. The mysterious definition of perception that Leibniz supplies is "the expression of many things in one".²⁰ Berkeley's mental contents, usually referred to as 'ideas', are more strictly grounded in immediately sense experience and are similar in meaning to the more modern 'sense data' or 'qualia'. Such a notion is, according to Wilson, sufficiently different from Leibniz's obscure use, to halt attempts to assimilate their positions.

¹⁸ Wilson, Margaret D., 'The Phenomenalisms of Leibniz and Berkeley', pp. 4-5

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8

Second, Leibniz allows that we cannot have demonstrative knowledge of the existence of bodies. Wilson notes that MacIntosh himself states that this is “a remarkable concession for a phenomenalist to make”; she takes that as a central difference against Berkeley, for whom bodies’ existence are guaranteed by their being perceived. As I shall later argue, I take this point to indeed be of importance in understanding why Berkeley and Leibniz are, despite common idealist agendas, to be distinguished in their metaphysics. Nonetheless, I take this point of difference, concerning the dubitability of the external world, to be merely a consequence of a more deeply lying distinction, of use in evaluating historical philosophies, between theories stressing the reality of the *immanent* versus that of the *transcendent*. This will become more apparent in the course of this thesis.

Wilson reports that the relation between Leibniz and Berkeley concerning their views on primary and secondary qualities is complicated, and that MacIntosh’s suggestion that Leibniz and Berkeley each “run together” Locke’s primary/secondary quality distinction is too simple. Berkeley rejects the distinction because for him all aspects of everyday sense experience are fully real, and there is no extra-mental realm of primary qualities grounding phenomena. Leibniz, on the other hand, allows primary qualities to be less phenomenal than secondary, though it is a difference of degree rather than kind; and all phenomena, including primary qualities, are to a greater or lesser extent mind-dependent or “relative to our perception”.²¹

Wilson thus draws attention to various ways in which she takes the ‘phenomenalisms’ of Berkeley and Leibniz to be dissimilar. As will become evident in the present thesis, I will emphasise their similarity *qua* idealists, but will argue that, as Wilson encourages, simple ‘assimilation’ of the systems distorts their character. Departing, however, from Wilson’s criteria by which to contrast the two systems, which I take to concern only extrinsic features

²¹ Ibid., p. 12

of their shared basic mental-substance-and-state ontology, I will argue that it is by their underlying and contrasting *immanentism* and *transcendentism* that these idealisms are to be distinguished.

2.4 “The Harmony of the Leibniz-Berkeley Juxtaposition”,

Stephen H. Daniel, 2007

In this recent article, Stephen H. Daniel rallies against Wilsons’s contention that MacIntosh exaggerates the affinity of our two idealists; indeed, Daniel puts forth that Leibniz and Berkeley’s positions are “much more alike than has previously been acknowledged”.²² From the early Leibniz he sources quotes such as “to Exist is nothing other than to be Sensed [*Sentiri*] – to be sensed, however, if not by us, then at least by the Author of things” and “to be [*esse*] is simply nothing other than being able to be perceived”²³, clearly supporting a Berkeleyan phenomenalist reading.

Similarities that Daniel identifies include: (1) a common phenomenism (existence of bodies consists in their being perceived); (2) a shared belief that individual perceptions cannot be understood apart from their contextual appearance in a sequence of experiences; and (3) purported similarities among their views on the divisibility of matter.

Whereas even MacIntosh thinks of Leibniz’s idiosyncratic use of the doctrine of ‘pre-established harmony’ as explanatory tool as distinguishing the idealists (see 2.2.2), Daniel argues that the two are both concerned with the remarkable harmony of the world that they take to be the result of divine creation, quoting passages from Berkeley that are indeed reminiscent of Leibniz:

²² Daniel, ‘The Harmony of the Leibniz-Berkeley Juxtaposition’, p. 164

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 163

*The constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of the creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the world.*²⁴

For both, this harmony is essential to experience: the “meaningful or sensible” existence of something involves not simple perception but perception of something in harmony with the rest of the universe.²⁵ Perception alone cannot determine whether something is real or imaginary; a harmonious place in nature must be observed to establish existence.

Further attempts are made to eliminate what seem to be differences between Leibniz and Berkeley, e.g. “The attempt ... to distinguish Berkeley and Leibniz by saying that Berkeley allows only a finite number of perceivers and Leibniz postulates an infinite number, overlooks both how Leibniz limits science to the finite or phenomenal and how Berkeley allows for the infinity of possible perceptions encompassed by the laws of nature ... and perhaps even an infinity of minds”.²⁶

Daniel is therefore the most radical of the commentators that I am aware of in his strong identification of the two metaphysical systems. Less radical, but more famous, is MacIntosh’s classic comparison arguing for strong analogy despite the ‘methodological stereotyping’ of the empiricist/rationalist distinction; and this was based on Furth’s phenomenalist reading of Leibniz’s monadology. Wilson stands apart in resisting such attempts to set aside the distinctness of the two philosophers. Given such contemporary disagreement over the historical interpretation of these early modern idealists, we shall now examine in much greater detail the nuances of Berkeley’s and Leibniz’s ontologies in search of their correspondence. What will emerge is that, *qua* idealists, Berkeley’s and Leibniz’s positions are remarkably similar indeed: but, as Wilson urges, I must depart from a simple

²⁴ Berkeley, *Principles* S146; quoted in Daniel, p. 166

²⁵ Daniel, pp. 168-169

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 178

identification of the systems, as to insist too much on their identity would be overlooking important idiosyncrasies of Berkeley and Leibniz. Nevertheless, I must also stake my own position against Wilson's, for I take her reasons for distinguishing the two systems to be neither sufficient nor necessary. I say not sufficient as her objections concern only extrinsic features of the systems that do not affect the foundational similarity, that of an ontology consisting solely of mental substance and state; and I say not necessary, as I argue that the defining characteristic separating these systems is actually their respective emphasis on *immanence* and *transcendence*; and this distinction alone is sufficient to show that the two systems are not equivalent. Finally, I will argue that this distinction has utility for distinguishing other metaphysically-minded philosophers, and it may be a useful category for those interested in constructing their own account of the nature of the world and our relation to it.

3. Affinity of Idealisms

Despite their epistemological differences, Berkeley and Leibniz argue for a core common set of ontological commitments: that is, they are united, *qua* metaphysical idealists. Their characterisations of reality correspond in a number of ways, which we shall now examine sequentially. These include similar accounts of the nature of the world's constituent mental substances and their states; a shared disposition for placing restrictions on what type of things are to count as causally active; a mutual rejection of Locke's dichotomous account of primary and secondary qualities of substances; and a similar resolution to the *prima facie* problem facing idealism of how one is to characterise, in such a world view, the difference between reality and illusion.

3.1 *The Nature of the Mental*

The basic ontology present in both Berkeley and Leibniz describes a world consisting in a number of discrete, self-sufficient, existent things or 'substances'. For both, these substances are characterised strictly as mental or spiritual, and having no materiality or extension. Nonetheless in these systems objects, the kinds of things we usually take as material constituents of reality, still exist; but these are not after all to be viewed as irreducibly made of *matter* – their reality is grounded in and cannot ultimately extend beyond the substrate of mental substances and their contents. In order to probe into the question of the alignment of the two philosophies, we will now examine both accounts of these constituent mental substances and their states.

3.1.1 Mental Substances

Berkeley and Leibniz express an ontological monism: ultimately, there is only one type of thing in the world. This can best be understood with reference to Descartes' mind-body dualism, according to which there are not one but two constituent parts of reality: the mental and the material. Despite its tremendous influence, this dualism came to be seen as possessing inherent problems; most pressingly, the problem of how it could be that interaction is possible between the two apparently entirely divorced realms. A perennial solution to this problem has been to deny the assumption that there are more than one irreducibly distinct domains of reality. Thus materialism, or as it is more commonly known today, *physicalism*, is a monism asserting the existence of only one category of substance: the material (or physical). Such an alternative to dualism is, today, overwhelmingly presented as a superior alternative. Nonetheless, materialism is not the only monist alternative to perceived problems with dualism. Berkeley and Leibniz largely inherit Descartes' view of the mind, seeing it as a distinct and real entity separate from matter; however, they embrace monism in the form of idealism, holding that it is only these mental or spiritual substances that have an underived reality: in a move seemingly the direct contrary of the materialist, dualism is solved by excising matter from ontology, or at least reframing it so as to be subservient to and derivative of mental substances.

In Leibniz's monadology, the world is composed of these mind-like substances which he terms 'monads'. Our examination of these entities will begin with Montgomery Furth's earlier-discussed analysis of Leibnizian monads, in which he argues that "[w]e can obtain the idea of a monad from that of a Cartesian *res cogitans*, conscious being, by making three interconnected changes in the latter notion".²⁷ The first is to allow for these mental entities to have *degrees* of conscious perception, and to commit to the existence of (and the coherence

²⁷ Furth, 'Monadology', p. 170

of the concept of) perceptions that are nonetheless entirely unconscious to their perceiver. The second is to picture the monad as being perceptive of the entire universe; though only a small fraction, or even none, of it is consciously apperceived. Thirdly, monads are to be differentiated by their qualities. Such qualities include the perceptions had by these mental entities, and these perceptions reach out to the entire universe, including all past and future states. By means of these all-encompassing perceptual states one monad may be distinguished from another. By Leibniz's law of the identity of indiscernibles, without the heterogeneity introduced into monads by their infinitely complex perceptions of the world, all separately existing things would collapse into a numerically singular substance as in Spinoza's philosophy. Because of this looming Spinozistic consequence, "... distinct monads must differ in point of some feature of their perceptions".²⁸

Furth concludes that, despite these departures from the Cartesian notion of the mind, "they nevertheless are not so great as to prevent us from seeing, embedded in the notion of *monad* that results from them, a Cartesian nucleus".²⁹

Now we will compare this view of mental substance with that of Berkeley. Unfortunately the majority of what the latter would have had to say about the nature of mind was irretrievably lost when his manuscript for the second part of the *Principles of Human Knowledge* went missing while he was travelling. This second part was to address the nature of mental substance more specifically than the first, whose main intention was to critique the notion of abstract ideas and to lay down the tenets of immaterialism. However, in what remains in that extant work, i.e. 'Part I', we can see Berkeley also employing a view of the mind, or 'spirit', which like Leibniz's monads can be traced back to Descartes. Berkeley certainly echoes Descartes when he writes that "by the word *spirit* we mean only that which

²⁸ Ibid. p. 173

²⁹ Ibid.

thinks, wills, and perceives”.³⁰ A mind or spirit, for Berkeley, is self-sufficient and entirely unlike the concept of matter; it is ‘embodied’ only in the very limited sense of seeming to have a perspective on a world – and, that world is one of *ideas*, not one whose reality is cashed out in terms of materiality. Unlike Leibniz, Berkeley accepts the Cartesian assumption that all that occurs mentally also occurs *consciously*. This doctrine of the transparency of the mind can be sourced in Descartes’ famous *Meditations*, where the self, or thinking thing, is distinguished from other substances precisely by being immediately apprehended by consciousness. Because of this, knowledge of the existence of the self *qua* thinking thing is indubitable, but at the cost of allowing into that conception of the mind no more than what is given directly and consciously.

A quandary is presented to anyone wishing to build an idealistic metaphysics according to which minds, but not matter, are ultimately real. How many minds, or mental substances, are there to be in such a system? To enquire about this ‘cardinality of substances’, as I term it, may seem a strange question but the different paths that Berkeley and Leibniz take show that the answer is not trivial. Berkeley does not provide an exhaustive inventory of beings that are minded, but it seems that in his ontology there are no less spirits than there are humans; he does not seem to entertain the possibility of ‘philosophical zombies’ among his fellow persons. Though there is this implicit lower limit on the number of spirits, he does not even imply that there are merely a finite number of immaterial substances; there may well be, say, angels and other beings disembodied not only in the general sense in which we are all disembodied in Berkeley’s philosophy but also disembodied in the sense of not corresponding to a set of seemingly-material ideas that are seen to move upon spiritual volitions. Notable in Berkeley’s philosophy, in which the very existence of things is

³⁰ Berkeley, *Principles*, p. 79 (§138)

dependent on their being perceived, he does not say whether non-human animals also possess (or consist in) a spirit capable of perceiving and thus instantiating objects in the world.

Berkeley's inventory of substances may leave open the possibility that there are a limitless number of mental substances, but in Leibniz's monadic system it is explicit that the number of percipients in reality is infinite. Leibniz explains that every organism is dominated by its most perceptive monad, which is to be identified in the case of animals as a soul; or, in the case of rational beings like humans, a special soul called a mind.³¹ This organism is also constituted by a body, though this is not an irreducibly-real material body like Descartes would assert. Instead, we are to understand this body itself as ultimately constituted by an infinite number of subservient mental substances; with these monads, the dominant monad – for we humans, the soul – is especially harmonious. This characteristic treatment of Leibniz's considers body and matter to be *something*, and to have a degree of intelligibility and thus even a degree of reality; yet this reality is to be cashed out as entirely derivative of the reality of the mental substances underlying the phenomena.

Berkeley's probably-finite and Leibniz's definitely-infinite are not the only possible ways of counting out the quantity of distinct mental substances within an idealism. For instance, another option, distinct from both, is Spinoza's doctrine alluded to earlier that there is only *one* substance. Spinoza himself was not an idealist; for him, matter is equally as much a mode of Nature-or-God as mind is. In some ways, Spinozism has an affinity with idealism. Beginning with the Cartesian doctrine that mental and material substances both exist and are of a radically contrary nature, idealism culls the material from that basic ontology, and is expressive of monism in embracing only one type of substance. Spinozism also limits the number of substances allowed into one's system, though it does so more radically than does idealism. Asserting the existence of just one substance, it expresses a token-monism – there

³¹ Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 208 ('Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason' §4)

is only one substance – that is more thoroughgoing than mere type-monism – that there is only one *type* of substance. The latter is trivially entailed by the former: if there is only one token, there is only one type. Idealism's one-type-of-substance and Spinoza's one-substance are, of course, aligned: denying the reality of the material, and reducing the number of existent entities to one, both facilitate systems in which unity, simplicity, and harmony are expressed or attained. (These goals are always tempting for philosophers; but one must be cognizant that, if achieved via the kinds of unintuitively reductive means discussed, be that Spinozism, idealism, or materialism, they come at the cost of 'biting the bullet' by entirely rejecting common sense inventories of the world.)

To return to the earlier question: how are we to decide on the number of percipients in an idealist system? The paths that Berkeley and Leibniz each take express their empiricism and rationalism respectively, but also their respective immanence and transcendence, which must be taken into account in comprehending the divergent positions they hold on this issue of 'substance cardinality'. This account will be explored in much greater detail in section 4.3. For now we may summarise thus: Berkeley's locating of reality as directly immanent to us disposes him to acknowledge that we cannot have an idea of an extra-empirical spirit at all, and must settle for a *notion* of one, but he still seems to hold the commonsense, non-sceptical view that there is a mind associated with each human body we encounter empirically, and one spirit for God. Leibniz's transcendentism disposes him to characterise a reality entirely divorced from empirical consciousness, and this detachment from the world of sensation allows for the extravagantly rich hypothesis that there are a literal infinity of monads, composing the world and transcending perception.

I hope to have shown so far that Berkeley and Leibniz have a sufficiently similar account of the nature of the mind, or of mental substances. As to the cardinality of substance, or the number of existent mental substances in being, and why I believe each philosopher chose to

embrace the cardinality he did, this issue will have to be resumed later. For now, we shall continue the discussion of Berkeley and Leibniz's ontological affinity by investigating the nature of the states that they purport to obtain within their foundational mental substrate.

3.1.2 Mental States

Having looked at the *form*, i.e. nature and number, of percipients within these two systems, we can now look at the other constituent element in reality for our philosophers: the *content* of these mental entities, which are internal states they label *ideas* or *perceptions*.

For Berkeley these states are ideas, which are image-like objects of thought, and they take place in spirits. These ideas include sensory impressions of the world, such as a given visual sensation of a book or the auditory sensation of its being dropped heavily. Leibniz enumerates two types of state of simple substances, appetite and perceptions: both of which necessarily occur in all monads. Appetite is “the action of the internal principle which brings about the change or passage from one perception to another”³²: due to the windowlessness of monads, which we will examine shortly in discussing causality, it is this internal principle rather than an external cause which is the source of perceptions. With this there is an internal source of all that happens in the perceptual life of a given monad; it is only due to the law of pre-established harmony that there is an apparent correspondence and agreement between the perceptual states of different individual percipients, not due to their mutual interaction. Berkeley does not have a corresponding complement to his *ideas* as Leibniz does to his *perceptions*; though perhaps it would be in the spirit of Leibniz to say that, even within his own system, from a sufficiently informed and holistic perspective the distinction between perceptions and appetitions falls away. After all, he insists that the kingdoms of final and efficient causes are mutually harmonious, and his work suggests that just to the extent that

³² Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 215 (‘*Monadology*’ §15)

determinism is ‘pushing’ forward the train of perceptions in a monad, so teleology is ‘pulling’ them towards an eventual final state.

Though they are written of in similar ways, there are differences between Berkeley’s ideas and Leibniz’s perceptions, as Margaret Wilson urges. The term “perceptions” has an idiosyncratic usage in Leibniz. These function much as ideas do for Berkeley, but significantly, Leibniz’s “perceptions” need not be conscious; he refers to those that are with the specific technical term “*apperceptions*”. Berkeley’s “ideas”, in contrast, are necessarily consciously perceived; in this respect his philosophy of mind more clearly exhibits the influence of Descartes, for whom all mental events are conscious. Leibniz writes that “the Cartesians have failed badly, since they took no account of the perceptions that we do not apperceive.”³³ Devising a theory of mind which accommodates the notion of an unconscious mental life was a radical move for Leibniz’s time, especially in the wake of Descartes’ influential epistemological thesis that the contents of the mind are immediately accessible, in contrast to matter which we can come to verify only by inference. Incidentally, German philosophers seem to have been the primary source of theories of the unconscious even prior to the rise of psychology as a discipline in the twentieth century. Comparable themes of the unconscious mind would appear in the work of later German philosophers such as Schelling and Schopenhauer; for instance, the latter would assert the primacy of ‘will’, guiding our behaviour unconsciously and tragically. Teutonic theories of the unconscious would culminate in Freud’s formal articulation at the dawn of psychotherapy. Leibniz’s recognition of a category of perceptions that are not apperceptive is thus a remarkably early recognition and exposition of there being an unconscious component within the mind; it is beyond the present inquiry to explore whether his theories of perception would be directly influential on later accounts of the unconscious.

³³ Ibid, p. 214 (‘*Monadology*’ §14)

Another point of divergence between what Leibniz terms perceptions and what Berkeley terms ideas is that the former are said to reach out to *everything*, whereas the latter are constrained to what we ordinarily take to be the contents of our sense experience. Leibniz is exhibiting the rationalist tendency to prioritise wholes to their parts, and he expresses doctrines that resemble mysticism, yet in a literal, philosophical style. A monad is like a microcosm of the universe; in virtue of its infinite perceptions, many of which are unconscious, it mirrors the totality of everything else in existence. What separates the limited set of apperceptions we ordinarily experience at one time from the voluminous world-reflecting perceptions we are purportedly in possession of is the differential distinctness and clarity of those perceptions. Leibniz has a theory of “*petites perceptions*” which are individually unconscious, confused perceptions but which when combined in their masses give rise to conscious apperceptions, as when the sea is heard but not the individual droplets of water that contribute to the overall impression. Indeed, though there is a limited amount of conscious perception, “there is an infinity of perceptions in us, but without apperception and without reflection – that is, changes in the soul itself, which we do not consciously perceive, because these impressions are either too small or too numerous, or too homogenous”.³⁴

3.1.3 Ideas, Images, Perceptions

Berkeley interprets Locke, with some degree of fairness, as holding that ideas must be *images*, and have a pictorial quality; though using this kind of visual language obscures the fact that these ideas may be taken from any of the senses, not just sight. Thus in Berkeley, and arguably in Locke, there can be no meaningful knowledge of things for which there are no corresponding sensory images. Berkeley himself recants on this hard-line empiricism by introducing “notions”, which are supposed to be contentful mental states parallel to ideas, but

³⁴ Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 295 (‘*Preface to the New Essays*’)

that do not have a source in experience and therefore have no corresponding image.

According to this later distinction, we have notions but not ideas of other minds and of God.

Leibniz also writes of *ideas*, though he intends the word in a different sense to Berkeley, for whom Leibniz's 'apperceptions' are a closer analogue. Leibniz critiques the assumption that ideas must be image-like in their nature. For instance, while discussing the question of whether there may be an idea of God, he writes that some people "assume[e] that idea and image are the same thing. I am not of their opinion, and I know perfectly well that there are ideas of thought, existence, and similar things, of which there are no images."³⁵ For Leibniz, an idea is a *something* in the soul, or mind, which is defined by its allowing us to recognize things. He does not subscribe to the empiricist doctrine that all ideas must be traced back to sensory experience, and so using this broader conception allows for ideas of "what is not material or imaginable".³⁶

I propose that this apparent difference in their position may largely resolve into a verbal disagreement. For though Leibniz's inventory of *ideas* includes things for which there could be no empirical source, he can achieve this only with the denial that ideas are image-like. Berkeley, for whom *ideas* stop short of God and other spirits, nevertheless still maintains along with Leibniz that we do have contentful thought and discourse about these entities. Rather than stripping ideas of their image-like nature, which would allow Berkeley to share Leibniz's view that we have ideas of these metaphysical entities, Berkeley instead employs a new word, *notion*, to characterise a type of non-imagistic mental content. I maintain that the two thinkers have employed two different ways of expressing the shared claim that we have a type of knowledge of certain things for which there can be no image found empirically; the difference in expression amounting to the choice to refer to those items as *ideas* or not.

³⁵ Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 237 ('Letter to Countess Elizabeth')

³⁶ Ibid.

Leibniz's belief that we may have such knowledge or discourse manifests in his decision to allow for *ideas* not grounded in sense; Berkeley's similar view of the possibility of extra-empirical reference, in the case of God and other spirits, instead leads him to introduce notions to supplement ideas.

Thus I argue that both of our philosophers have similar Cartesian-derived accounts of the nature of mental substances, and both have related conceptions of what the states of those substances are. Leibniz's 'perceptions' have a richness and an unconscious component lacking in Berkeley's 'ideas', but both are grounded in underlying mental substances and afford us an experiential outlook on the world; and, whilst enabling experience itself, both are nonetheless the source of our ultimately mistaken assumptions about the absoluteness, subject-independence, and materiality of consciously perceived objects. Finally, Leibniz and Berkeley employ the term 'idea' in seemingly different ways; but, Leibniz's (ap-)perceptions are a closer analogue of the type of concept Berkeley is using with the word, and when Berkeley's 'notions' are combined with his 'ideas', understood as together comprising the types of object of thought, they come close to the same epistemic conception as Leibniz's 'ideas'.

The affinity between our two philosophers is not exhausted by their ontology of mental substance and state. Their metaphysical agreement is also manifested in their shared disposition for radical reduction of what may be admitted as causally efficacious.

3.2 Restricting Causality

Among the metaphysical similarities between the philosophies of Leibniz and Berkeley are restrictions on what may count as a *cause*. Louis E. Loeb considers the denial of certain domains of causality to be characteristic of the genre that he terms “Continental Metaphysics”.³⁷ Continental Metaphysicians, thus understood, include Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Berkeley, and Leibniz. This grouping of philosophers is remarkably similar to the traditional grouping of ‘rationalists’, with the unusual inclusion of Berkeley who is otherwise invariably treated as an empiricist, in contradistinction to the rationalist tradition, and who differs from the others in hailing not from the European Continent but from Ireland.

These ‘Continental Metaphysicians’ are aligned, in Loeb’s view, by a denial by each of a domain of causes or a type of causal interaction. Descartes denies that the mind’s existence is causally dependent on the body’s; Spinoza denies causal interaction altogether between mind and body; and Malebranche outdoes both with his radical denial that anything at all functions as a cause except for God. What are of particular interest to us are the corresponding causal denials by Berkeley and Leibniz.

Berkeley denies that there are causes other than volitions, supplying a ‘qualified Malebranchean’ account of causality. According to this, God is, as Malebranche asserted, an active cause. God provides us with ideas in response to our activity. Unlike in Malebranche’s occasionalism, God is not the sole cause: spirits, i.e. people, are also causes of the movements in their own limbs. (It should be noted, of course, that for Berkeley, these limbs of ours that we can move are themselves mere ideas in spirits; there is no obvious problem of interaction between disparate ontological categories ala Cartesian dualism). Berkeley

³⁷ Louis E. Loeb, *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy*.

apparently cannot abide Malebranche's thesis that it is *only* God that has active power, and that we ourselves do not even control our own bodily movements by acts of volition. For instance, while providing a theodicy excusing God from fault for the evils arising from human choice, Berkeley writes:

*... I have nowhere said that God is the only agent who produces all the motions in bodies. It is true, I have denied there are any other agents beside spirits: but this is very consistent with allowing to thinking rational beings, in the production of motions, the use of limited powers, ultimately indeed derived from God, but immediately under the direction of their own wills, which is sufficient to entitle them to all the guilt of their actions.*³⁸

Thus, Berkeley is willing to admit at least sufficiently enough causal power to our volitions and their 'production of motions' to make us morally responsible for our actions. But, apart from the volitions of God and spirits, nothing is causally efficacious in the Berkeleyan world. Causation happening within an unperceived material realm is trivially ruled out by Berkeley's elimination of matter. However, this elimination of matter is not an elimination of objects. Objects are collections of ideas, which despite being contrary to extra-mental materiality still retain full reality.³⁹

So why would Berkeley deny that objects *qua* ideas can be causally efficacious? The answer seems to be that "all our ideas, sensations, or the things which we perceive ... are visibly inactive, there is nothing of power or agency included in them."⁴⁰ Ideas in Berkeley's system are inherently passive or inactive entities, and to be "inactive" is to lack the capacity to cause change. Thus no idea may cause changes in another idea; and "to be satisfied of the truth of this, there is nothing else requisite but a bare observation of our ideas."⁴¹ As far as Berkeley is concerned, introspection will furnish us with this assurance as an *idea* is

³⁸ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, p. 70

³⁹ Berkeley, *Principles*, p. 35

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

necessarily transparent to its perceiver's consciousness. In fact, it only *exists* insofar as it is perceived consciously; so there is no room for it to have real properties that are nonetheless unperceived, unlike within the standard hypothesis of mind-independent material substance. In light of this perhaps we could supplement Berkeley's doctrine that to exist is to be perceived with a further principle based on transparency of idea: a being's *manner* of existence is *as* it is perceived.

Berkeley's views on causality are presented, in the *Principles*, in the course of an argument for the existence of God. He invites us to reflect on what power we have over our own streams of mentation. Some of our ideas we have control over through imagination in which, as a result of an act of the will, we can intentionally summon mental contents such as images or daydreams. Other ideas, however, we seem unable to control: "when in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no".⁴² If we are to follow Berkeley's argument, these involuntary ideas thus cannot have their source in us but must come from outside us. From whereabouts outside us? Berkeley's ontology is exhausted by spirits (including God) and ideas. As we have seen, he has argued that ideas themselves have no causal power, therefore leaving spirits as the only remaining source of our involuntary ideas. Berkeley clearly means to invoke God when he concludes with "There is therefore some other will or spirit that produces them"⁴³ but its ambiguous phrasing invites speculation on to what extent Berkeley allowed the volitions of human spirits to directly affect the passively received ideas in others. My imagining a non-existent object, or "exciting an idea in my fancy", does not bring it into being in the minds of others, nor does it have any other direct effects on the mental states of others. Yet "moving my arm" – for Berkeley, my willing in that unique kind of way that brings about irrepressible received ideas of motion of the limb – does have an effect on other observers: they too see the arm move, for instance.

⁴² Ibid., p. 34

⁴³ Ibid.

So, insofar as our volitions affect the contents of the minds or ‘spirits’ of other observers via manipulation of the public world, in Berkeley’s scheme we are capable of inter-spiritual causation. A consistent reading of Berkeley would suggest that this may require the intermediary of God’s directly providing the ideas; but then, however, God is once more cast as responding to the beck and call of finite persons’ volitions and motions, a position resisted for its Malebranchean suggestion. Thus, to summarise Berkeley’s views on causation: only the volitions of God and spirits possess causal activity, and the latter may only be able to causally interact with one another’s experience through the intermediary of God.

Meanwhile, Leibniz also denies causal interaction between certain entities. The entities which are causally isolated from each other are Leibniz’s monads, mental or spiritual entities underlying phenomena. In virtue of their simplicity, or irreducible unity, monads alone are true substances. All that is real is substance; only monads are truly substance; and monads do not causally interact – thus for Leibniz there is ultimately no efficient causality holding between any two real things. Rather than the disconnected chaos one might expect given such an arrangement, Leibniz saves order and correspondence between the perceptions of different percipients, by guaranteeing them synchronisation through the divinely pre-established harmony.

Leibniz’s favoured metaphor for explaining the lack of causal relations between monads is that they have no ‘windows’ through which things may come and go. A monad cannot be modified internally by things external to it, i.e. other monads, as “one cannot transpose anything in it, nor can one conceive of any internal motion that can be excited, directed, augmented, or diminished within it”.⁴⁴ Leibniz is here construing change of an entity as involving a change in that entity’s parts; monads, being simple, contain no parts, and thus are

⁴⁴ *Philosophical Essays*, pp. 213-214 (‘*Monadology*’ §7)

not susceptible to change from outside.⁴⁵ The immortality of the soul has similarly been argued for on the basis of the simplicity and indivisibility of the soul; Leibniz's argument can be seen as a generalisation of this move, extending the claim that a spiritual thing cannot be naturally destroyed to the claim that a monad cannot be subject to any change from outside at all. Leibniz further explains monadic windowlessness by saying that accidents, i.e. properties, "cannot be detached, nor can they go about outside of substances": and so "neither substance nor accident can enter a monad from without".⁴⁶ This explanation depends on a particular conception of causal interaction according to which an accident detaches from its host substance and reattaches to a new one. Leibniz is right to criticise such a conception, which he attributes to the Scholastics. But unless one already conceives of causal interaction as involving this transferral of properties from one entity to another, I cannot agree that this will count as a compelling reason to deny interaction between individual substances.

Leibniz's culling of causal interaction only applies to the fundamental monadic realm. Though he holds that this is the ultimate view of reality, this realm is mostly opaque to us, except through the types of chains of rationalist argument that he presents. Within the realm of phenomena, however, with which we are directly and empirically acquainted, we may continue to speak of everyday objects as entering into causal relations with one another, unlike in Berkeley's system. This may reflect Leibniz's more accommodating attitude towards natural science. However for Leibniz this phenomenal realm of ordinary causality is, though well-founded, merely a world of appearances: the true nature of things, accessible to reason but not sensation, is made up only of immaterial, simple, monadic substances. In this ultimate scheme, change in monads is grounded not from outside, but internally only from

⁴⁵ This step of the argument may in fact be too strong: for rather than monads' simplicity being a reason why they cannot be changed *from outside*, it seems it should be a reason why monads cannot suffer change whatsoever, no matter where that change is sourced from, e.g. from within. However, clearly change does happen, as evidenced by our own experience of changing perceptions as rational monads.

⁴⁶ *Philosophical Essays*, p. 214 ('*Monadology*' §7)

appetition: “the internal principle which brings about the change or passage from one perception to another”.⁴⁷ What keeps the content of different monads’ perceptions aligned and as of a shared public world, is the guarantee of pre-established harmony, maintaining synchronicity between the perceptions of different observers.

Thus we have seen that Berkeley and Leibniz each restrict causal interaction between certain domains. This aligns them, in Loeb’s view, as “Continental Metaphysicians”. In one way or another each of them argues that objects do not causally interact with each other. The feeling that this restriction on causality is objectionably unintuitive may perhaps be partly alleviated by teasing out just what each author means. For Berkeley the objects that are causally inactive are not the commonsense mind-independent objects that we ordinarily presume to causally interact with one another, but objects *qua* collections of contemporaneous ideas; that is mental, not material, contents. Perhaps one could object that a mental item may have causal efficacy despite its being mental. We need not accept Berkeley’s quick announcement that the nature of our ideas are fully transparent to us; alternatively, we might just deny that we find the same evident passivity among our mental contents while introspecting.

Leibniz’s doctrine that substances do not interact may also strike the reader as objectionable at first glance, though again this may be alleviated somewhat by reflection on the details of the position. This restriction on causality applies solely to the monadic realm, leaving our everyday sensed world of apparent causal interaction between objects untouched. It is difficult, as it probably should be, to say what ones’ intuitions are when considering Leibniz’s proposed underlying ontological scheme. There is no chance for intuitions to be formed via experience when the objects under consideration are purported to be only rationally apprehendable, and distinct from the world of experience.

⁴⁷ *Philosophical Essays*, p. 215 (‘*Monadology*’ §15)

Though there are differences in the restrictions on causality that Berkeley and Leibniz each espouse, both amount to denying ultimate causal power to the commonsense objects of experience. For Berkeley this is because these objects are equated with conscious sensory ideas, which ‘self-evidently’ possess only passivity; for Leibniz, it is because objects of sense are ultimately to be cashed out only as collections of monads or their perceptions, and even they, as basic real substances, have no powers of causality to interact with others.

3.3 Primary and Secondary Qualities

We have seen that, despite extrinsic differences, there is a strong core of similarity holding between the metaphysics of our two philosophers with respect to the nature of the true domain of underlying mental substances and their perceptual states, and in the way that the domain of causality is shown as thoroughly limited when viewed from a sufficiently philosophically informed perspective. Another way in which we can illuminate the relationship between Berkeley and Leibniz is by examining their response to the dichotomy between primary and secondary qualities, as made famous by John Locke’s famous 1689 exposition in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke’s distinction seems to presume the reality of matter, and the ways our idealists respond to this distinction and its assumption of a material realist ontology sheds light on the nature of their idealist commitments.

In the *Essay*, Locke first distinguishes between ideas and qualities. For him, as for Berkeley, ideas are “the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding”⁴⁸ while qualities are powers of things to produce such ideas in us. These qualities are then bifurcated into primary and secondary. Primary qualities include solidity, extension, motion, rest, number, figure, texture, and bulk. Such qualities align with a mechanical or geometrical

⁴⁸ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 48

understanding of the world, and describe the extensional attributes of what would normally be called *matter*. These qualities are in material bodies themselves, and have the power to produce corresponding ideas in us that resemble those qualities in the objects. Secondary qualities include colours, sounds, tastes, and smells. Lock holds that these are powers of objects to produce ideas in us but which do not strictly have their existence in those objects themselves; rather, this power to occasion ideas is grounded in their primary qualities, which do inhere in the objects. "... [T]he *ideas, produced* in us *by* these *secondary qualities, have no resemblance* of them at all."⁴⁹ Thus there is similitude holding between our ideas of primary qualities and the properties of the real objects that we represent with those ideas, but no resemblance between our ideas of secondary qualities and external objects. Though there is no resemblance in the latter case, still the fact that our secondary quality ideas are caused by certain configurations of primary qualities which really inhere in objects means that the secondary qualities may correspond to material objects without directly resembling. Locke also introduces a third category of qualities which are powers of external objects to affect one another, such as the power of fire to change colour and consistency in a piece of wax by operating on its primary qualities. These qualities do not figure prominently in Locke's philosophy, and lacking the same striking ontological significance as the initial distinction, have been ignored by most commentators on primary and secondary qualities.

Though Locke's distinction proved enormously influential, Leibniz and Berkeley unsurprisingly respond by rejecting, in their own ways, the dichotomy between the two types of quality. Their inventories of ultimate reality consist only of mental substance; and thus, each system conflicts with the material realist presuppositions of Locke's ontology.

Despite his enormous indebtedness to the epistemological foundations of Locke's empiricism, in both of his immaterialist works Berkeley directly attacks Locke's

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 51, italics in original

primary/secondary distinction. In fact, he uses Locke's own arguments, originally intended to circumscribe the properties of external matter, to show that this distinction is not only tenable but that such patterns of argument lead to immaterialism. In each of Berkeley's main texts, the relevant sections begin with an apparent agreement with Locke that secondary qualities exist only in the mind, not out-there in external objects. This is a slight confusion or simplification of Locke's actual position which is that secondary qualities do in fact exist in objects, but *as powers to produce ideas in us* in virtue of primary qualities. Nonetheless, this technicality of Locke's is often overlooked by commentators assuming he intended the more intuitive position that colours, tastes, etc. exist 'in the mind'. Besides, Berkeley's understanding is sufficiently correct, as the relevant consequences he wishes to derive for immaterialism may be based on Locke's system in which there is nothing corresponding to an idea – which exists in the mind – in the case of sounds, colours, etc. *except* those underlying primary qualities responsible for the production of those ideas.

After agreeing that there is nothing in external objects corresponding to our ideas of secondary qualities, Berkeley's next step is to generalise this mitigated external-object-scepticism and to show that the same considerations leading to the denial of external objectivity regarding secondary qualities also apply to primary qualities:

*In short, let anyone consider those arguments, which are thought manifestly to prove that colors and tastes exist only in the mind, and he shall find they may with equal force, be brought to prove the same thing of extension, figure, and motion.*⁵⁰

Thus we are first to accommodate ourselves to the notion of certain aspects of our experience belonging purely in the mind, as ideas, by reflecting on secondary qualities; but then we are to extend this to the realm of primary qualities as well, thereby stripping away all qualities and thus all reality from the supposed external objects which our ideas are said to resemble.

⁵⁰ Berkeley, *Principles*, p. 28

In the first of the three *Dialogues* Philonous spends a significant amount of time arguing for the mind-dependence of secondary qualities, speaking as if it is to be taken for granted that primary qualities exist externally to us in just the same way as they are perceived. After convincing Hylas of the mind-dependence of secondary qualities, Philonous then turns on primary qualities: “You are still then of opinion that extension and figures are inherent in external unthinking substances ... But what if the same arguments which are brought against secondary qualities, will hold good against these also?”⁵¹ Thus begins the assimilation of the mind-dependence of secondary qualities also to extension, figure, motion, and solidity, all stripped of an extra-mental being.

Principles §11-12 argues that sizes, speed, and number are “entirely the creature of the mind” by considerations of relativity. Arguments from relativity had been used previously to show that secondary qualities did not inhere in objects themselves. Now Berkeley exploits the corresponding relativity of primary quality sensations to argue for the same ontological status. As one’s spatial position changes, the size and speed of things seems to change. Therefore extension “which exists without the mind, is neither great nor small, the motion neither swift nor slow, that is, they are nothing at all.” Again, number is said to exist purely in the mind as one can arbitrarily divide something into any number of different sized units and consider it to be, say, one, ten, or a hundred units depending on one’s whim or one’s practical intentions. Arguments from relativity such as these are to be found as far back as Plato’s dialogues, but Berkeley employs them in a novel way to argue for his immaterialism. Plato conveys the limitations of analysis by pointing to paradoxical consequences that may arise from the attempt to reductively analyse certain concepts such as size without considering the wide-ranging set of mutual relations all things enter into. Berkeley is

⁵¹ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, p. 24

employing similar arguments in a novel way for his own purposes, to argue for immaterialism.

Another of Berkeley's arguments critiquing Locke's distinction, present in the *Principles* at §10, is that primary qualities cannot be conceived independently of secondary qualities: and thus cannot exist alone. Every attempt to imagine pure extension and motion of body, for instance, will necessarily involve the intrusion of "some color or other sensible quality which is acknowledged to exist only in the mind".⁵² Even if we accept Berkeley's premise that an extended but uncoloured *something* cannot be distinctly imagined, in order to attain the desired result we still need to supplement that introspective finding with the contentious premise that conceivability alone can be a reliable guide to metaphysical possibility. If, of course, we accept Berkeley's collapsing of the external world into the mind then there is good reason to think that there is a strong correspondence between what may be imagined and what is possible, as the mind and the world are thoroughly entwined. However, whether there is existence beyond perception is still an open question at this stage of the argument as the critique of primary qualities is intended to help *establish* Berkeley's idealism, and insisting upon the metaphysical conclusion to aid the argument is to beg the question.

Berkeley's position that primary and secondary qualities both have the same ontological status could be realised in two ways, both of which have the consequence that all aspects of experience, not just the primary qualities of extension, etc., are equally veridical. One is the commonsense view, rejected by "the philosophers", that all of the aspects of sensory experience are equally true of an external world which is irreducibly and objectively coloured and scented, as well as extended, etc. Berkeley, on the other hand, holds the subtly different position that although indeed all of the contents of sensory experience are true of the world, this is not because an external world exactly corresponds to our mental

⁵² Berkeley, *Principles*, p. 27

representations, but because that world itself is to be understood as an ideational, mental entity. It is partly because of this similarity between the commonsense understanding and Berkeley's position, viz. that things truly are as we experience them to be, that Berkeley claims to be upholding the views of the public with his immaterialism against the abstract and convoluted doctrines of materialist philosophers.

Leibniz too challenges Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities. In the *New Essays on Human Understanding* Leibniz's spokesman Theophilus responds to Locke's passages on "farther considerations concerning ... simple ideas". Theophilus responds to the distinction by saying that "when a power is intelligible and admits of being distinctly explained" it is a primary quality, whereas "when it is merely sensible and yields only a confused idea" it is a secondary quality.⁵³

Leibniz disagrees that ideas of what Locke calls secondary qualities are arbitrarily related to their causes, as for instance when a sensation of pain has no apparent resemblance to the motion and extension involved in a piece of steel cutting flesh. Such an arbitrary relation would be objectionably irrational, and contrary to God's choosing the best for this world. Instead, Leibniz maintains that in all cases there is some form of resemblance between ideas of secondary qualities and the underlying cause. This resemblance is one "in which one thing expresses another through some orderly relationship between them."⁵⁴ Thus for Leibniz there is "a resemblance, i.e. a precise relationship"⁵⁵ for secondary as well as for primary qualities. Here Leibniz is using the term "resemblance" in a broader sense than Locke, inviting us to see that rich relations of correspondence may hold between things irrespective of mere similarity of appearance. He acknowledges that a pain does not resemble a pin's motions, but thinks that the pain may resemble the motions in the body caused by the pin; indeed, he has

⁵³ Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, §130.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, §131

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

“not the least doubt that it does”. He may not mean that they resemble one another in the Lockean sense, but there is for him something in the movement which is represented by and corresponds with the pain, entering into a nexus of relations with it more complex than mere apparent likeness. Leibniz, like Berkeley, also rejects the strong dichotomy present in Locke’s wedge between primary and secondary qualities. Within Berkeley’s immaterialism the distinction is rejected because the things that Locke calls primary and secondary qualities are instead posited to have the same ontological status, i.e. they are both fully ideal (and, for that matter, fully real). Leibniz does not quite collapse the two into the same category in this way, but still rallies against the strong Lockean dichotomy by presenting primary and secondary qualities as located within a continuum. That is to say, though secondary qualities like colour and sound give us confused ideas of the way things really are, so too do primary qualities including extension and motion; except, the latter do so to a lesser extent.

This is because ultimately for Leibniz even extension and motion are mere phenomena, though they have reality insofar as they are well-founded in the true underlying monadic realm. Thus primary qualities may be said to be more well-founded than secondary qualities, by entering into more closely-knit relations with the fundamental monadic substances, but ideas of both types of quality suffer from degrees of confusedness.

Despite their respective idealist agendas and their common rejection of Locke’s dichotomy, it must be granted that Berkeley and Leibniz still have notably different metaphysical positions in these matters. Berkeley’s rejection of the primary/secondary quality distinction was a reaction to the claim that our ideas of primary qualities accurately resemble and inform us of a material world external to mind. When he collapses both sets of qualities, making them equally mind-dependent, the result is that the concept of a real, extra-mental world is done away with: our immediate perceptions, of size and magnitude as well as colour and sound, are all completely and equally veridical. There is nothing external to these

sensations for them to fail to correspond to, so there is no question of them being reliable guides to the way things are. In contrast, in Leibniz's idealism all of our immediate sensations are confused representations of states of affairs external to them. For Leibniz there is a 'real world', a world of extensionless, perfectly simple monads each possessing nothing but appetite and perceptions, which is distinct from our direct experience and which our sensations can only approximate, to varying degrees. When Leibniz reconciles primary and secondary qualities by holding ideas of each to be confused representations, it is not to make them both immediately real and transparent as for Berkeley but to achieve the opposite effect of making them both estranged from the real.

This difference between the two philosophers reflects a difference between their respective epistemological methodologies. Elsewhere I have expressed reluctance about stereotyping one as an empiricist and the other as a rationalist at the expense of acknowledging what are substantial commonalities. Nevertheless, here Berkeley's empiricism and Leibniz's rationalism are telling of the different shapes their idealisms take. Berkeley's distinct dual role as both empiricist and metaphysician inclines him towards the view that only what is immediately perceived is real.⁵⁶ His idealism is consequently one in which there is no extra-mental reality beyond what is given in experience, and the ontological status of mental sensations are elevated to a full reality that would in other philosophies be reserved for an unthinking, mind-independent world. By contrast, Leibniz's rationalism disposes him to conceive of reason rather than sensation as the primary source of knowledge about the world. There is room in his philosophy for a world behind appearances, distinct from our ordinary sense experience, and accessible only to reason.

⁵⁶ With special (and potentially inconsistent) exemptions for God and spirits, of which we have "notions" rather than ideas.

In essence, however, I think that the empiricist/rationalist contrast is of secondary importance in understanding why the two philosophers' ontologies take markedly different forms while still nonetheless rejecting Locke's position. The primary reason concerns metaphysics as much as it does epistemology; it is because Berkeley stresses the reality of the *immanent*, i.e. immediately given sense experience; whereas Leibniz prioritises the reality of the *transcendent*, i.e. a domain transcending experience itself and accessible only by reason. In due time we shall examine this distinction in much greater detail; for now, we will continue our appraisal of our philosophers' affinity by examining the ways in which MacIntosh and Wilson, respectively arch-identifier and arch-distinguisher of our idealist ontologies, interpret Berkeley and Leibniz on the Lockean distinction.

As one might expect, there is disagreement within the modern literature comparing the two philosophers about the significance of the apparent similarities between Leibniz and Berkeley on the status of primary and secondary qualities. MacIntosh emphasises Leibniz's progressive development of both phenomenalism and a reappraisal of the distinctness of supposed material and mental properties, writing that for Leibniz, over time "concern for body faded. In the same way, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities becomes blurred, and both sorts of quality are increasingly seen as mind-dependent."⁵⁷ This, among other considerations, leads MacIntosh to conclude of Leibniz's scattered hostile remarks about the Berkeleyan idealism that "Leibniz's quarrel with Berkeley results not so much from Berkeley's views as from his failure to offer 'suitable' reasons and explanations."⁵⁸ Wilson instead contrasts the two philosophers' views on primary and secondary qualities, remarking that their motivations for rebelling against Locke were quite distinct. In rejecting the dichotomy Berkeley "was centrally concerned to vindicate the reality of the world as presented in ordinary sense experience, against the abstractions of the

⁵⁷ MacIntosh, J.J., 'Leibniz and Berkeley', p. 152

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 155

philosophers and scientists of his time”.⁵⁹ Leibniz, however, “agreed to the superior reality or objectivity of the physicist’s conception of the world” though even such a conception is to be contrasted with the real as “qualities construed by physics as ‘real’ are themselves *mere* phenomena, relative to their monadic ‘foundations.’”⁶⁰ Wilson is correct in saying that there are points of divergence in the philosophies of the two men, but acknowledging this should not obscure the fact that they are united both in (1) rejecting Locke’s absolute dichotomy between externally real primary and only derivatively-real secondary qualities; and in (2) using this rejection to support their respective idealisms.

3.4 Reality and Illusion

Monist ontologies may be subject to the criticism that, by eliminating all but one domain of reality, there remains no way to state the commonsense distinction between real and illusory experience. Thus, for instance, one is unable to make out the difference between a hallucinated sensation of an apple and a veridical perception of one truly existing; for without at least two domains, i.e. mental and material, there can be no relation of correspondence holding between the seemingly distinct realms of subjective experience and objective reality. (It should be noted that this is not merely a problem for idealism; monist materialism, in its denial of the reality of an irreducibly mental domain of idea, sensation, or qualia, also must struggle to explain the nature of illusory experience, with only one type of being available and thus no way to speak of a trans-substantial correspondence of mind with world.) Berkeley and Leibniz ultimately assert the reality only of mental-or-spiritual substance; so, unless they are to bite the bullet and abandon the distinction between veridical and illusory experience, their positions must account for the distinction in some other way.

⁵⁹ Wilson, Margaret D., ‘The Phenomenalisms of Leibniz and Berkeley’, p. 12

⁶⁰ Ibid.

One classic philosophical example of illusion is the scepticism-inducing argument that a stick appears bent when placed in water, yet presumably remains straight despite this appearance. Other classic examples are the non-veridical content of dreams and hallucinations. All present cases where a sensory experience is had which is deemed unreal; the most intuitive account of what it is that makes such experiences unreal is that they do not correspond to reality, i.e. the way things are independently of us and our fallible perceptual experiences. Idealists such as Berkeley and Leibniz face the following problem: how is this “the way things are independently of us” to be cashed out within a metaphysic asserting the existence of only one category of substance? If an objective, mind-independent physical order has been eliminated from one’s ontology, what criterion can there be for distinguishing between veridical and erroneous sensory representations? This is a problem for any philosophy denigrating the reality of matter (or, as mentioned earlier, of mind); our philosophers seem aware that this problem looms for monisms such as theirs, and they both attempt to defuse this potential criticism.

Berkeley addresses this problem via consideration of the reality of ideas of *sense* versus those of *imagination*, with the ideas of sense being those that are imposed on one’s spirit from without. Such ideas of sense are excited in us by God, the “Author of Nature”, and these ideas are “real things”.⁶¹ Presumably ideas of imagination include dreams and hallucinatory states as well as the pseudo-sensory states obtained via effort of imagining. To distinguish the two, he claims that the “ideas of sense are more strong, lively and distinct than those of the imagination” and that they have a “steadiness, order, and coherence, and are not excited at random”.⁶²

⁶¹ Berkeley, *Principles*, §33

⁶² *Ibid.*, §30

He makes sure to remind the reader that such steadiness, orderliness, and coherence, though marking the difference between real and imaginary ideas, does not warrant a belief in matter being the source of these properties. Rather, they mark that they are less dependent on the percipient whose ideas they are and are instead “excited by the will of another and more powerful spirit”⁶³, i.e. God.

Berkeley thus refers our sensory experiences to the external and absolutely real mind of God, rather than to an external and absolutely real material world; in doing this he provides an account of the possibility of veridical experience despite immaterialism. Insofar as our ideas are veridical, they match the perceptual states of the divine “mind we depend on”. By this mind we are given ideas of sense by set rules or methods, which Berkeley identifies with the “laws of nature”.⁶⁴ Such organised rule-bound patterns of sensory experience provide us with the power to regulate our actions based on the experiences present to us, just as would be envisioned by the materialist to be sourced in the mechanical laws of matter.⁶⁵

Leibniz also recognises the potential criticism of his idealist metaphysic that it distorts our understanding of the possibility of both veridical and illusory perception. He addresses the reality/illusion distinction most directly in his ‘*On the Method of Distinguishing Real from Imaginary Phenomena*’, date unknown. There he supplies two sets of criteria, which Glenn A. Hartz terms “*internal and external marks*”.⁶⁶ The internal marks signifying real phenomena are directly subjectively accessible: a real phenomenon is “vivid, complex, and internally coherent”.⁶⁷ Leibniz’s internal marks are very reminiscent of Berkeley’s criteria: corresponding to Leibniz’s vividness-and-complexity are Berkeley’s “strong, lively, and

⁶³ Ibid., §33

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., §31

⁶⁶ Glenn A. Hartz, ‘*Leibniz’s Phenomenalisms*’, p. 520

⁶⁷ Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed., p. 363

distinct” ideas of sense, and corresponding to Leibniz’s internal-coherence are “steadiness, order, and coherence”.

Therefore both figures recognise the need to account for veridical experience so as not to make all of reality seem entirely chimerical, something they are at pains to avoid despite their reductive analyses of matter. Again we find the idealisms of Berkeley and Leibniz united: this time in their almost-identical phrasing of what internal marks are to count as indicating genuine perceptions.

In this case, however, Leibniz’s position as presented is not the full story. Berkeley’s account of the marks of veridicality stops at internal signs; Leibniz instead explicitly goes on to also consider *external* marks of real phenomena. In his system, a perceptual phenomenon provides particular guarantee of its validity when it is coherent not only with other phenomena subjectively accessible to the perceiver in question but also with the phenomena of other perceivers too. Real perception cannot be made to attain an external objectivity through being referred to an absolute material world; but Leibniz, the monadic realist, allows a type of external objectivity to be ascertained through correspondence with the perceptions of other monadic substances. Perhaps sensing an objection based on the *indirect* access we have to others’ experiences, at this point Leibniz dismisses the problem of other minds, claiming that it is “not only probable but certain” that other minds exist, and indeed not only other *human* minds.⁶⁸ Here Leibniz’s rationalism is disposing him to strong knowledge claims about the certainty of others’ existence and something of their internal mental lives; by contrast, Berkeley’s empiricism wards against sourcing the reality of our experiences in their analogy with the contents of other finite minds or spirits, of which we have only *notions* and not *ideas*.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 364

Finally, Leibniz presents what he considers “the most powerful criterion of the reality of phenomena, sufficient even by itself”⁶⁹: the capacity to successfully predict future phenomena from previous ones. On this criterion, even a life-long dream or “phantasm” would pass as a set of real phenomena, so long as it was ordered sufficiently to allow for successful prediction of phenomena.

Although none of the criteria canvassed from either Berkeley or Leibniz refers real phenomena to a correspondence with a real, mind-independent material order, each philosopher supplies a guide to distinguishing between real and illusory experiences. Both consider “internal”, or subjectively accessible, marks to be of use in making the distinction; Leibniz goes further than Berkeley, also laying stress on the value of intersubjective agreement and the power of prediction. Nonetheless, someone with an empiricist bent like Berkeley might deny that sourcing veridicality in the perceptual states of others is of use as we do not have direct cognitive access to others’ ‘ideas’ in order to establish the correspondence of our own.

It might be objected to either philosopher that all of their criteria for distinguishing the real from the merely apparent might still be satisfied and yet for the phenomena in question to be entirely illusory: e.g. a particularly well-ordered dream or, to satisfy the intersubjective criterion of Leibniz, a shared misperception among, say, a group of colour-blind observers. Without a material order grounding appearances, it seems that the only option in this situation is to accept that what seems to be an illusion is, in fact – contrary to our usual labelling schemes – real after all. Leibniz is in fact willing to bite this bullet:

⁶⁹ Ibid.

*Indeed, even if this whole life were said to be only a dream, and the visible world only a phantasm, I should call this dream or this phantasm real enough if we were never deceived by it when we make good use of reason.*⁷⁰

Berkeley's final manoeuvre with this issue is to turn the tables on he who believes in matter. He argues, on empiricist grounds, that belief in a duality of substance is ultimately of no practical help in trying to sort out which of one's own mental contents and representations are veridical:

*In short, by whatever method you distinguish things from chimeras on your own scheme, the same, it is evident, will hold also upon mine. For it must be, I presume, by some perceived difference, and I am not for depriving you of any one thing that you perceive.*⁷¹

Thus both our philosophers assert that objectivity of perceptual states may be grounded in internal marks such as vividness and coherence with other perceptions. Leibniz complements these with further external marks involving intersubjectivity; but Berkeley's empiricism disposes him against attempting this. Further alignment is evident in that each concludes with a related rejection of the very question of how to discern between the real and the illusory within idealism. Leibniz simply denies the very conceptual possibility of the totality of experience being illusory, as the materialist critic implies that idealism leads to. For Leibniz, even a life-long dream is real so long as it bears the internal and intersubjective marks of veridicality. Meanwhile, Berkeley's finale is to turn the question back on this materialist critic: given that matter is understood to be an extra-mental thing distinct from the mind, what experiences could even be possible for the materialist, but not for the idealist, that would lead to validly distinguishing between the real and the illusory?

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, p. 68; italics in original.

3.5 Reflections on Identifying Idealisms

I have so far argued for the strong similarity of the idealisms within Berkeley and Leibniz's philosophies. There is remarkable alignment in their positions as to the ultimate constitution of the world, consisting only in immaterial mental substance and state; both radically restrict what is to be admitted as a cause; both reject Locke's strong dichotomy between primary and secondary qualities, and use this rejection in support of their idealist theses; and both employ similar strategies in accounting for the difference between real and illusory perceptions within an idealist ontology. Differences in detail between their positions I have presented as extrinsic to the core of their similarity; and, in those cases where the difference was noteworthy, I have signalled that the distinction was to be made out not as an irreducible contrariness in itself but largely as consequences of Berkeley and Leibniz's respective dispositions towards *immanentism* and *transcendentism*. This distinction, inspired by the anti-metaphysical linguistic analyses of the logical positivists in the early twentieth century, will remain the focus for the remainder of this thesis. Ultimately we will see how it not only aids us in revealing the manner in which Berkeley and Leibniz are to be distinguished, but also how it may shed light on the history of metaphysical philosophy generally.

In the meantime, should we view our two philosophers as expressing, through the medium of different philosophical language and methodological commitments, what are nonetheless united theses on the nature of things, including the phenomenality or unreality of the material? In light of my thesis that the two otherwise-aligned idealists are to be distinguished primarily in terms of their respective priority of either the immanent or the transcendent, I wish to stake my position against both MacIntosh's (1971) and Daniel's (2007) earlier-discussed papers seeking to unite the two idealisms, and also against Wilson's (1987) reasons for protesting against such assimilation. Though I agree with Wilson that

there is an important difference between the ontologies at hand, I find that her objections do not tell against finding in each philosopher a basic idealist picture, sans idiosyncratic flourishes, that is united. She is correct that they two have their differences; but her critiques do not amount to a significant challenge to MacIntosh's enthusiasm for equating the two idealisms, as they lack the explicit recognition of the respective prioritising of the immanent or the transcendent underlying the reason why these idealisms may be distinguished.

In seeking to establish a strong identity between the idealisms in question, MacIntosh writes that "in just the sense that Berkeley was attacking the 'reality' of bodies, so too was Leibniz; and in just the sense that Leibniz was willing to regard 'phenomena too as real', so also was Berkeley".⁷² I agree with MacIntosh that both figures are to be classed as idealists (despite Berkeley's own purported break from 'metaphysics' and Leibniz's insistence that matter has some quasi-real status that is somehow compatible with its phenomenal and derivative status, owing to its being well-founded in the real). However, Wilson is right to resist the full 'assimilation' of the two positions. The points of difference that, in her view, are enough to halt attempts to identify the two metaphysicians, include the fact that Leibniz's perceptions are quite different entities to Berkeley's ideas; that, unlike Berkeley, Leibniz's denial of the possibility of strictly demonstrating the existence of external bodies makes it difficult to characterise him as a phenomenalist; and that MacIntosh's stress on the mutual rejection of Locke's primary/secondary quality dichotomy hides the fact that they still have distinct views on the true relationship between so-called primary and secondary qualities. Though I agree with Wilson that the two ontologies are not entirely to be 'assimilated', it nonetheless seems to me that these issues enumerated are extrinsic to the basic *mental substance-and-state* picture of reality both figures provide and that formed the kernel of their metaphysical philosophies of the early 1700s. This account portrays a world that is

⁷² MacIntosh, *Leibniz and Berkeley*, p. 155

exhausted by mind-like or mental substances and their states, which give rise to the appearance or phenomenon of material things; but this apparent materiality is so conditioned by and dependent upon the prior existence of perceivers and their perceptions that matter itself turns out to have no absolute, independent being that would remain in the absence of percipients. Both Berkeley and Leibniz characterise reality in this way, despite the received view that each reached his philosophy via an opposed methodology, viz. empiricism and rationalism. In the sense that I have outlined, I believe that their ontologies are clearly united.

Furthermore, I hold that, with their reductive accounts of the material, both philosophers may be seen as embarking on a critical appraisal of the reality of everyday objects of sense experience, to which we would ordinarily attribute materiality, that would culminate in Kant's sophisticated and measured metaphysics in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There Kant does not go as far as Berkeley in outright denying the possibility of an extra-mental reality, but instead says that such a realm is necessarily opaque to us: he is entirely pessimistic about our capacity to ever come to knowledge of the true nature of things as they may be independently of our inescapable modes of thought and forms of sensory representation. I believe that Leibniz and Berkeley both importantly prefigure this account of our relationship to the world, particularly in the way they embrace idealism, exercising freedom to doubt the unqualified reality of the apparent material world of the senses – and not merely methodologically, in order actually to secure the truth of common-sense realism, as in Descartes' *Meditations*.

I have said that despite the differences Wilson correctly identifies, I generally agree with MacIntosh and Daniel that Leibniz and Berkeley's idealistic ontologies are strikingly alike. MacIntosh is not dogmatic about his enumeration of similarities between the two systems: "I do not, of course, want to say ... that they had the same philosophy, but there are enough points of contact and overlap to make comparison profitable, and to render somewhat silly

our present practice of putting one in a box labelled rationalism and the other in a box labelled empiricism.”⁷³ Nonetheless, MacIntosh overlooks what I argue to be the primary difference between the two philosophical systems. This distinction, of immanentism and transcendentism, is not, as such, the epistemological difference between empiricism and rationalism; though it is connected to that distinction. Instead, this distinction concerns the metaphysical concept of the nature of the real as much as it does the epistemological concept of its being known to us; though it is a complex distinction, and it clearly relates both to methodology and to epistemology. With this in mind, it will now be time to embark on a discussion of this distinction, firstly how it is to be found in the writings of the logical positivists’ reflections on language and metaphysics, and then how it may be used not only to distinguish the idealisms of Berkeley and Leibniz but for charting the history of philosophy generally.

⁷³ MacIntosh, *Leibniz and Berkeley*, p. 163

4. Immanence and Transcendence

4.1 Logical Positivism on Metaphysics

Western philosophy in the early twentieth century saw a revival of interest in strong empiricism, and with it certain Berkeleyan themes. In particular, Berkeley's phenomenalism, i.e. his view that objects are in fact constituted by 'ideas', or experienced sensations, was revisited; though the later construal was meant to concern a purported translatability of object-language into experience-language. It was thus a *linguistic* phenomenalism, and might be contrasted to what we can in Berkeley call (for the most part) a *metaphysical* phenomenalism. I say 'for the most part', for although there are many cases of Berkeley's famously identifying objects with mental contents – e.g. '... all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind'⁷⁴ – there are two examples in the *Principles* where he presages the positivists with a clearly linguistic phenomenalist account of meaning. The clearest example is:

*The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it.*⁷⁵

Again, though the following quotation concerns not so much the existence of objects, but of motion:

...the question, whether the earth moves or no, amounts in reality to no more than this, to wit, whether we have reason to conclude from what has been observed by astronomers, that if we

⁷⁴ Berkeley, *Principles*, p. 25 (§6)

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24 (§3)

*were placed in such and such circumstances, and such or such a position and distance, both from the earth and sun, we should perceive the former to move among the choir of the planets...*⁷⁶

Here Berkeley is characterising the very meaning of the statements “The table I write on exists” and “The earth moves” in terms of actual and possible perceptions of these objects. These isolated linguistic phenomenalist remarks express well the more modern attempts, associated with the positivist programme, to reduce statements about objects to those of perception. Berkeley anticipates both a straightforward reduction of objects to sensations and a more complex ‘logical construction’ of objects out of not only actual but possible perception statements (“... if we were placed in such and such circumstances, ... we should perceive...”). However, as we will see, it would be mistaken to attribute a Berkeleyan idealist ontology to the positivists, as it would be misleading to ascribe any strict ontology to these figures, who rallied against the very possibility of metaphysics.

Linked with the positivist principle of phenomenalism is that of verificationism. Moritz Schlick, leader of the ‘Vienna circle’ and representative of logical positivism early last century, discusses in his 1932 paper ‘Positivism and realism’ the main doctrines of logical positivism and is concerned with its relation to Berkeley. One of the central positivist doctrines he employs is the verificationist account of meaning. According to this, the meaning of a proposition is closely tied to the conditions under which we would be able to verify it as true. Schlick argues that the only way to convey the meaning of a truth claim is “by describing the state-of-affairs that must obtain if the claim is to be true.”⁷⁷ Berkeley did not present this account of meaning and truth, as his concern was with the ‘way-of-ideas’ rather than the ‘way-of-words’; nonetheless, in the following way, verificationism directs us to restrict our thought to the given as Berkeley would advise. (Specifically, Berkeley would tell us not to abstract our thought beyond our ideas, which by constituting thought become its

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 45 (§58)

⁷⁷ Moritz Schlick, *Positivism and Realism*, p. 264

proper domain; and, for Berkeley, our ideas just are the given, for they are passively received from without.) For Schlick, a proposition concerning a state-of-affairs must be verifiable, at least in principle, “in the given”; indeed, “the meaning of every proposition is ultimately determined by the given alone, and by absolutely nothing else.”⁷⁸ Thus, according to this perspective, in order to qualify as even having semantic content, a statement must admit of being verified. Otherwise, we are told, the claim is literally meaningless; and this class of meaningless statements is said to include all metaphysics, particularly those which make claims about a transcendent reality, understood as necessarily existing outside “the given”. On such an account a metaphysician like Leibniz is imputed to be guilty of speaking, not falsehoods, but rather meaningless non-propositions, when he attributes a way of being, i.e. a monadic one, to a transcendent extra-empirical realm that is not empirically discoverable.

By contrast, our other metaphysician Berkeley explicitly denies the transcendent. Instead, given sensations immanent within experience are accorded full reality, and there can be no *esse* independent of *percipi* (or *percipere*). Though Berkeley is aligned with the later positivists in prioritising the given, such representatives of positivism as Schlick make clear that the very denial of the transcendent is a claim that is equally as problematically metaphysical as the assertion of it:

*... [W]e are obliged to say that anyone who asserts this principle [i.e., ‘Only the given is real’] thereby attempts to advance a claim that is metaphysical in the same sense, and to the same degree, as the seemingly opposite contention, that ‘There is a transcendent reality’.*⁷⁹

Schlick thus holds that both the denial and the assertion of the transcendent are equally metaphysical and unverifiable, and thereby meaningless and illegitimate, statements. I take this claim to be praiseworthily consistent, if not necessarily true. Accepting the principle that

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 262

words aiming to refer outside possible experience are unverifiable and thus cannot in fact refer at all does lead to the conclusion that attempts to refer to such extra-empirical realities, *either to deny or to assert* their existence, are doomed to failure. Denying the transcendent thus becomes as much an impossibility as asserting it; if the positivist's account of language is correct, we simply cannot speak of what lies beyond experience; so, there is not even a relevant, meaningfully stateable metaphysical proposition, either to defend or to contest.

Thus Berkeley counts, for the positivists, as making 'metaphysical' statements even in his denial that there is a real, objective, mind-independent material realm grounding our ideas and perceptions. Nonetheless, Berkeley does not refer to his own immaterialist project as a metaphysical one; and there is a strong sense in which his philosophy can be contrasted to others, such as Leibniz, who more straightforwardly make metaphysical assertions rather than denying the existence of the transcendent. Berkeley's insistence that it is only the given – for him, just the ideas in one's mind or spirit – that are ultimately real, though in a sense still a 'metaphysical' position, in fact presages the positivist scepticism about the unverifiable.

Berkeley was influential in posing questions about the very intelligibility and conceivability of the claim that there are things existing beyond the immediately experienced empirical sensory realm, arguing for instance in his so-called 'master argument' that, logically, we cannot even conceive of the unconceived. Doing so is to make the supposedly *unconceived* conceived after all, thereby leading to a contradiction:

But say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it: but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of anyone that may perceive them? But do you not yourself perceive or think of them all the while? [...] When we do our

*utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas.*⁸⁰

In this way Berkeley invites us to see the impossibility of constructing a contentful representation of things purportedly existing independently of us. If all our conceptions are necessarily marked as belonging to us subjectively, then it appears that they are going to have great difficulty in conveying some kind of subject-independent absolute realm. It may be objected that the properties that a concept (or ‘idea’) has may include a representational capacity to refer to things which do not share properties with that concept. An analogy: a sign may point at things which are not signs. Nonetheless, the essence of the argument is that you cannot literally *imagine* something existing independently of you; though you may say the words, “tables exist when unperceived”, there is no mental image that can correspond: any you do conjure up have the property of being *thought of*, and are therefore dissimilar to what is supposed to be being represented, in *precisely the respect* that the image is relevantly meant to be conveying. In this respect I hold that Berkeley anticipates both Kant and the positivists, and that together the philosophies of Berkeley and Kant provide reasons for being sceptical about our capacity for knowledge of the reality and nature of how things are independently of us, i.e. transcendently; and in this way they prefigure the positivists. We will later give more time to the way that the categories of transcendence and immanence apply to Kant’s philosophy in the context of its relation to the idealisms of Berkeley and Leibniz, and the development of early modern philosophy. For now it is worth noting that Kant insists that there is a domain of transcendent ‘things in themselves’, the existence of which we can have certain knowledge, despite their transcending empirical reality; and so, for the positivists, Kant and Berkeley alike are guilty of uttering semantically empty

⁸⁰ Berkeley, *Principles*, p. 32 (§23)

utterances, when they respectively affirm and deny the existence of an irreducibly real domain transcending appearances.

So there are similarities between, on one hand, Berkeley's and Kant's forms of idealism and on the other, the positivist program of phenomenalism and verificationism. A theme common to them all is a reduction of what counts as meaningful language. For Berkeley, references to the material world and independently existing objects are strictly invalid, at least so long as that material world is treated as objectively existing apart from its being perceived. (Although it should be noted that Berkeley tries to soften the revolutionary nature of his immaterialism both by presenting it as harmonious with a common-sense, pre-philosophical worldview.) Without going so far as to disavow the existence of things 'in themselves', Kant nonetheless denies the possibility of speaking positively and contentfully of their nature. Finally, the positivists seek to banish all metaphysical language and reduce meaningful statements to those which can be verified in the given. Taken together these related approaches signify a different conception of the project of metaphysics, which differs from and rejects the 'classic' notion of metaphysics common in early rationalist figures such as Spinoza and Leibniz. For instance, Berkeley denies the possibility of matter, which is for him a transcendent realm, though still executing his own unique brand of empiricist metaphysics. The positivists instead reject *all* metaphysical statements, viewing them as empirically unverifiable and semantically empty, and this includes negative claims about transcendent reality such as Berkeley's. These approaches are certainly related, but it is of note that the positivist camp sees itself as standing *outside* metaphysics, and goes so far as to attempt to disbar the possibility of even speaking of metaphysics, rather than merely staking their place with a novel metaphysical position.

Why, then, did Schlick and his positivist contemporaries distance themselves so from metaphysics, and instead restrict their philosophical discourse to *language* issues? It might be

asked: whatever is the purpose of merely analysing language statements from one to another rather than actually engaging in the more traditionally conceived philosophical enterprise of seeking fundamental knowledge of the world and the self through reflection? Schlick succinctly expresses an attitude common to twentieth century analytic philosophy: “It is the proper business of philosophy to seek for and clarify the *meaning* of claims and questions.”⁸¹ He distinguishes his own analytic method from the “chaotic state in which philosophy found itself throughout the greatest part of its history”.⁸² Are we to accept this doctrine, that philosophical enquiries concerning actual existence are to be rejected in favour of a process of clarifying syntax and semantics? I have argued that, in their own ways, both Berkeley and Kant may be seen as precursors of the positivists’ radical empiricism and consequent scepticism regarding the possibility of engaging in, or even speaking of, transcendent metaphysics. Nonetheless, both figures were clearly involved *in* metaphysics, despite their empiricist tendencies and consequent critique of claims to knowledge of (for Berkeley) the *existence* and (for Kant) the *nature* of extra-empirical reality. They both thus express the compatibility of a sceptical empiricism with a rationally derived metaphysical scheme. Such a combination could not be embraced by the positivists or others associated with the rise of analytic philosophy, who sought to bar the possibility of metaphysics as they distanced themselves from the Hegel-influenced idealist philosophies of their immediate predecessors.

Logical positivism’s characterisation of metaphysical claims as concerning transcendent reality, whether they be positive or negative, results in both our idealist philosophers being classed as mistaken. Berkeley and Leibniz equally turn out as erroneously metaphysical, despite Berkeley’s insistence that he is opposed to metaphysics. Denying the existence of an ultimately real, subject-independent, extra-empirical domain – Berkeley’s ‘matter’ – is presented as an equally blameworthy position, in that it makes equally unverifiable,

⁸¹ Schlick, *Positivism and Realism*, p. 263

⁸² *Ibid.*

meaningless pseudo-statements in denying features, e.g. existence, of the transcendent, as more traditionally ‘metaphysical’, viz. speculative rationalist, statements do when the discovery is announced of a logically derivable true account of reality transcending any and all experiences.

For Berkeley matter is a transcendent notion; were it real, it would transcend and be distinct from all our experiences. Indeed, even if it was real, we would have no reason to believe that to be the case. He argues in his various ways that it is not real (indeed, that it cannot be real) and so the concept of the transcendent refers to nothing. Perhaps God is in some sense transcendent in Berkeley’s system; but it is very tempting to think of Berkeley’s God as rather like just another perceiver in the system, and so not especially more transcendent than the spiritual substance of other humans. (Berkeley’s God is admittedly one with particularly impressive powers to induce changes in other spirits’ perceived ideas and powers to preserve things by being aware of all objects as his own ideas in the absence of mortal perceivers; but nonetheless, he seems to have existence as a spiritual substance in quite a similar way to how we do, and as for the supposition that God’s special transcendent significance is due to his not being embodied, in a very real sense for Berkeley *no-one* is embodied!)

So far we have mainly concerned ourselves with the links between the various anti-transcendentist positions of Berkeley, Kant, and the logical positivists. It is time to return to Leibniz, and consider his boldly transcendent claims about the structure of the world, in relation to positivism’s radical empiricism and verificationism. Leibniz, like Berkeley, espouses an idealist ontology in which material substance is ultimately unreal or phenomenal. Nonetheless, Leibniz’s idealism prioritises the reality of the *transcendent* domain of the monadology, accessible only to reason, and in this way he makes many

positive ‘metaphysical’ claims, very much in the pejorative sense that Berkeley, Kant, and the positivists all criticised in their own ways.

Leibniz’s embracing of the transcendent is manifested in his epistemology, wherein knowledge of the monadology is to be found only through *a priori* reflection. Upon reflecting on the general nature of substance, activity, unity, etc, Leibniz would have us ineluctably drawn towards a picture of reality matching the system of monads, at least insofar as we reasoned validly. But this domain is not to be found through experience; though perhaps we have a limited knowledge of the way things are through finding ourselves existing as perceptive monads, the sheer infinity of Leibniz’s vision of the world of mental substances and its idiosyncratic features such as windowlessness and dominance hierarchies detail structures that no possible experiences could lead to warranted beliefs about.

There are many features within Leibniz’s system whereby various principles are supposed to operate *a priori* in establishing substantial metaphysical claims. To illustrate one such feature: Leibniz takes the principle of the identity of indiscernibles to be *a priori*, with the consequence that there can be no two qualitatively identical things that are numerically distinct. Applied to his baseline ontology of monads, this means that all of the (infinitely many) monads must differ from one another in respect of their perceptions and/or appetites, which together are the states exhausting the content of monads. This is a claim pertaining to what is, for Leibniz, the transcendent, extra-empirical realm of monads underlying appearances. To be fair, this realm is not held to be *entirely* beyond our experience; each of us is a monad, albeit a rational one perhaps better termed as a soul, and we are to conceive of the remainder of the endless throng of monads by analogy with our own intuitive knowledge of ourselves *qua* mental substance. Nonetheless, the purported reality of infinite extensionless monads existing in a ‘heap’, epistemically accessible only to pure reason, is a

prime example of a transcendent claim of the way the world is beyond possible experience and thus empirical verification.

Leibniz asserts that this transcendent realm is the truly real; the seeming reality of immediate perception has only a secondary and phenomenal existence. In this way Leibniz prioritises the reality of the transcendent. As we have seen, Berkeley denies the reality of a *transcendent* realm beyond that of immediately sensed experience; and this latter domain, that of the *immanent*, is instead held to be the genuinely real. Thus we have arrived at that criterion by which our two philosophers are to be primarily distinguished: their embracing either of *immanentism* or *transcendentism*.

4.2 Detailing the Distinction

The distinction between empiricism and rationalism is an epistemological one; the distinction of idealism and (material) realism is a metaphysical one. This distinction I put forward for understanding our two philosophers, that of *immanentism* versus *transcendentism*, is non-identical with either of these aforementioned distinctions. Unlike those, it cannot straightforwardly be characterised simply as epistemological or metaphysical. A philosopher's view that, with respect to we perceivers, reality is to be found either within or beyond experience straddles the apparent distinction of knowledge and reality. As a consideration involving our own relation to, and knowledge of, reality, the choice between immanentism and transcendentism involves epistemology; yet, as a categorisation ultimately concerning what form that reality takes, i.e either as immediate within experience or as existing distally and independently of subjects, it engages with ontology and thus metaphysics.⁸³

⁸³ I invite the reader to speculate whether either metaphysics or epistemology may even be pursued in a void, i.e. without presupposing a position in the other field. That is: Can questions about knowledge

With particular relevance to our idealist philosophers, to have settled that a given philosopher is an idealist⁸⁴ is to leave unresolved the question of their belief in the ontological priority either of the immanent or of the transcendent. Berkeley and Leibniz, both to be counted as idealists as MacIntosh urges, are nonetheless to be contrasted, as Wilson insists; though the primary way in which their positions are to be distinguished must regard their respective immanentism and transcendentism.

For Berkeley it is clear that there is no transcendent reality, with the possible exception of God.⁸⁵ His ‘immaterialism’ turns out to be not so much an attack on matter *per se* but an attack on the assumption of a certain conception of the real: as an independent, absolute reality distinct from yet responsible for individual experience. Had Berkeley been less insistent on labelling his philosophical target ‘matter’, he might have instead launched his attack on the transcendent, recasting matter phenomenally as a real thing consisting in a bundle of ideas, which is how he describes objects. Perhaps his critics would have been less quick to condemn his philosophy if he had cast his attack on a ‘transcendent’ reality of the absolute and unperceived rather than a ‘material’ one; I doubt it would have occurred to Dr Johnson to ‘refute’ Berkeley by kicking a stone. Then again, perhaps the inimitable novelty of an *immaterialism* ensured the perennial interest in Berkeley’s philosophy that might not have taken hold were his position characterised differently.

and our relation to the known even be entertained without at least some minimal ontological commitments, i.e. that the knower is distinct from the known? And – Could a program of research with the goal of knowing the ultimate nature of things, i.e. metaphysics, even begin without first reflecting on and committing to some characterisation of knowledge itself? This latter question reflects an empiricist caution that we must be clear about what knowledge itself is before employing that concept in ontology, where we make claims to knowledge. Nonetheless, I suspect that attempts to first come to *know* the nature of *knowledge* itself from some epistemology-free original position must be paradoxically self-defeating.

⁸⁴ Or, for that matter, a materialist.

⁸⁵ I say *possible* exception: God acts on us directly and constantly in supplying us with ideas, and seems himself very much like Berkeley’s ‘finite spirits’, viz. a spiritual/mental subject who perceives ideas and performs acts of volition.

Berkeley was a deeply religious man and eventually a bishop. His *Three Dialogues* are subtitled: “in Opposition to SCEPTICS and ATHEISTS”. Clearly he saw the attack on matter as important in clearing the ground for religiosity; to have instead critiqued ‘the transcendent’ – or a similar, potentially mystical-sounding notion implying a reality outside finite minds that was not burdened by the mundane, earthly connotations of ‘matter’ – might have had quite the opposite effect to that intended and been seen as irreligious.

At any rate, Berkeley chose to identify matter with the transcendent and then sought to repudiate both. This rejection of the transcendent is not, however, a nihilism regarding objects: instead their reality is to be located immanently, i.e. in immediately given experience. Berkeley is sure to remind the reader that though he denies matter, he does not deny the existence of *things*. These retain full reality despite not being grounded in anything extra-mental; and, if we are to accept *esse est percipi*, it is actually perception itself which grants being, and so (apart from minds-or-spirits) it is only immediate experience – the *immanent* – which is truly real. Here we have illustrated the unique nature of the *immanentist/transcendentist* distinction, in its straddling of both epistemology and metaphysics. Depending on how one wishes to conceive of it, it amounts to a distinction concerning either the nature of reality *simpliciter* (‘What is it that is real?’); or, of the nature of our relation to that reality (‘How am I connected to what is real?’). Phrased in the first sense, the distinction is mostly metaphysical; in the second, it is mostly epistemological. Immanentism, for example, is metaphysical in its ontological assertion that it is the immediately experienced that is truly real, but at the same time it is epistemological – to say that reality is located immanently describes not just what is to count as the real (that which is immanent) but how we subjects are related to it (we have direct access); and, by implication, what it would be to enter into knowledge relations with it.

In light of this, Berkeley's *immanentism* is not simply an epistemological position, but it is nonetheless aligned with his empiricist epistemology. Someone whose theory of knowledge dictates that all knowledge and thought must proceed from immediately given sense experience is likely to carry the same emphasis on the immediately given with them when they engage in metaphysical speculation. Furthermore, it is difficult to envisage how someone could confidently conclude that there was more reality to be found entirely *outside* experience if knowledge itself only extended so far as the limits of experience. (Perhaps Kant may be construed as having a position like this, insisting on the reality of unknowable things-in-themselves, though his idealist successors certainly took him to task on this very point.) Nonetheless, as far as I can see, there is no conceptual impossibility involved in the supposition of an empiricist metaphysician denigrating the reality of sensory experience relative to some (immediately-) unperceived transcendent reality.

Berkeley's immanentism is the primary means by which his immaterialism is to be distinguished from Leibniz's transcendentist idealism. They are united as idealists; both argue that reality is exhausted by mental substances and their states and that we can have some degree of empirical knowledge of the nature of those mental substances – precisely because each of us happens to be one, and we have some powers of introspection. But their philosophies resist being collapsed into one another, as Leibniz's idealism, unlike Berkeley's, is concerned with *a priori* knowledge of a real domain which is outside all possible experience.

Leibniz's special term for mental substances such as you or I is a 'mind'; this technical term singles out amongst the infinite multitudes of monads those that have powers of memory and apperception. Reality is monads, and we are monads – so, each of us, *qua* minded monad, has some empirical connection to the monadology. But beyond that minimal connection, our access to the true underlying monadic structure transcending sensory

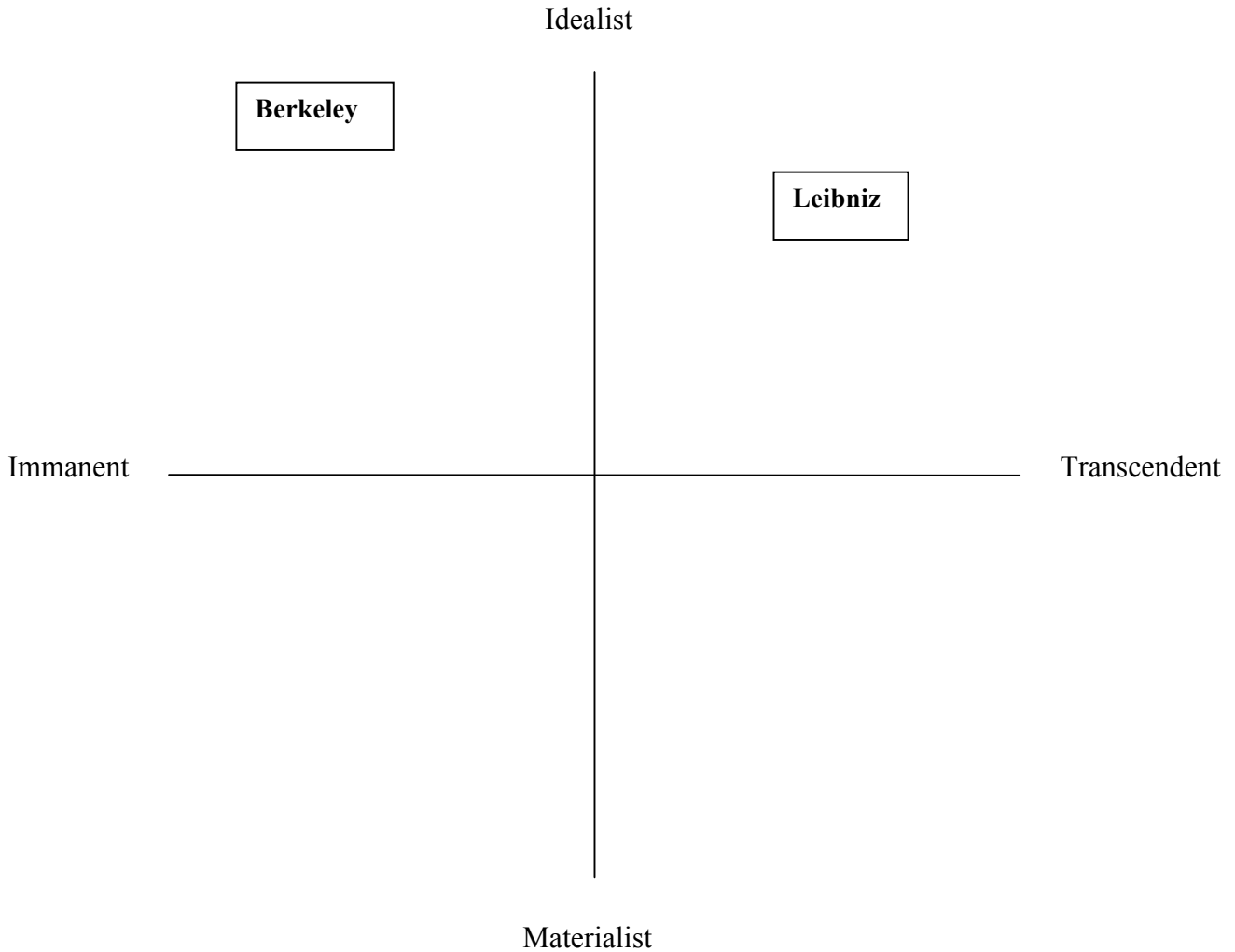
experience is only through reason, specifically the type of reasoning that Kant would dub the ‘synthetic a priori’: reasoning or knowledge independent of experience yet applicable to the world and not merely true by conventional definition. It is by this means that we are told we may gain access to how things really are; experience itself can, for Leibniz, provide only a confused mass of phenomenal perceptions lacking internal unity and therefore true substantiality. What is truly real transcends the manifold of perceptions and is actually the ground of that manifold; and, in a flourish of rationalism, Leibniz reveals that knowledge of this mind-like domain is available to us only through the exclusive source of the *a priori*.

Berkeley’s ultimate reality is entirely located within our everyday sense experience, and his position mirrors the commonsense view that the real properties of the things we enter into with experience are precisely what we take them to be. Our knowledge of ontological truth involves reason but takes its inspiration from sense experience. It does this through a critical reflection on the nature of the contents of experience directly and, Berkeley hopes, through the recognition that an idea “can be like nothing but an idea”, and “a color or figure can be like nothing but another color or figure”.⁸⁶

Both our philosophers hold that, at its core, reality consists of substances conceived as mental or spiritual and their perceptual states. But Berkeley’s empiricism, with its priority of the given, disposes him to locate the real within the immanent, while Leibniz’s rationalism disposes him to set aside the empirical world in order to rationally aspire to the universal, independently of the *a posteriori* and contingent, which leads him to embrace the transcendent.

To illustrate the distinctness of an ontological idealism/materialism choice from the decision to emphasise the immanence or transcendence of reality, we can represent them as lying thus on a plane:

⁸⁶ Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, p. 25 (§8)



This illustrates how the decision to launch an idealist ontology is logically independent from the decision whether to construct that mind-like reality in a relation of immanence or of transcendence to we perceivers and our experiential states. I should explain why the positions of the two philosophers on this plane are not symmetrical, given my insistence that they are united *qua* idealists yet distinguished *qua* immanentist and transcendentist. I present Leibniz as a (slightly) less radical idealist than Berkeley. Leibniz is more concerned than Berkeley with providing an account of some sort of phenomenal or secondary reality to matter. Leibniz expects that, as our knowledge increases and our understanding of the state of things develops, we should see ever more clearly that materiality has its true foundation in monads.

Nonetheless, the evident, apperceived, material domain retains some degree of veridicality, perhaps due to its ‘well-foundedness’ in the real monadic substrate, and this ever-present synthetic disposition of Leibniz’s contrasts here with Berkeley, who is comfortable with his hard-line position outright denying matter without qualification. Thus my placing of these two figures on the above plane reflects that Leibniz’s idealism is, relative to Berkeley’s, qualified and retains undertones of material realism that Berkeley goes to great lengths to distance himself from. It may also be noted that neither are placed at the extremes of the immanence/transcendence scale. I have illustrated it thus to reflect the fact that neither philosophy may be entirely and exclusively characterised as one or the other. For Leibniz, the real was certainly transcendent of experience and was to be accessed via reason rather than the senses; but our own subjective connection to the true state of things is via our own status as monads, the constitutive substances of the world.

Further illustrations of how this Cartesian plane may be employed to categorise and distinguish philosophers will follow.

The decision to locate the real within either the immanent or the transcendent, in the context of idealist metaphysics, has important consequences on the form that that system must take. To illustrate, we shall see how this analysis sheds light on why our philosophers vouched for a conception of reality which contains for each philosopher a radically different quantity of constituent mental substances. Indeed, this difference of cardinality is of an infinite magnitude.

4.3 Consequences for Idealisms: Substance cardinality revisited

In order to demonstrate that interpretation with reference to the immanence and transcendence distinction is useful, and that a philosopher's choice on this issue may have profound consequences for their broader ontological accounts, I shall here illustrate by discussing the contrasting accounts by Berkeley and Leibniz on the number of constituent mental substances in the world, and indicate how these positions follow naturally from their respective immanentism and transcendentism. We will be resuming the discussion of substance cardinality begun in section 3.1.1, now applying the immanence and transcendence distinction to work in explaining the disparity of their idealist substance counts.

Leibniz's monads are entities that could never be encountered in spatially structured sensory experience: they have no spatial properties, and are all 'in a heap' divorced from the phenomenal materiality present within perception. We are here brought to an epistemological upshot of Berkeley and Leibniz's contrasting positions concerning immanence. As empirical knowledge of the monadology itself is blocked – empirically we meet only with phenomena – there is in Leibniz's position no empirical source of knowing the number of existent percipients. Someone could agree with Leibniz that reality was essentially composed of mental rather than physical substances, but remain unsure as to how many discrete mental substances to count this foundation as consisting in: only phenomena are presented empirically, not their substrate. Leibniz exhibits his rationalist tendencies in declaring that we may have certainty that there are infinitely many, owing to *a priori* considerations concerning the apparent infinite divisibility of the world, and of God's free-yet-inescapable choice to instantiate maximal harmony and richness in the act of creation.

Berkeley's ontology is notably sparser; he seems to adopt a commonsense one-percipient-per-person approach, and is quaintly silent on the ontological status of animal

minds-or-spirits. Strictly, he does not say how many minds or spirits are in existence. His empiricism here combines with his dichotomy between active spirits and passive ideas conceived as two mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive types of real entity. Only ideas may be present to us; the spirits of others cannot themselves enter into sensation. Instead, only the perceived, ideational results of spirits' activity – take, for instance, the movement of a coloured patch – are empirically apprehended. For Berkeley, the existence of other minds cannot strictly be given empirically; we have no *ideas* of other spirits or their contents, and this results in his acceptance of the so-called “problem of other minds”.

Though widely employed, this phrase is misleading for describing the epistemic situation it refers to; referring to this consequence of an empiricist epistemology as a ‘problem’ of other minds is misleading. It implies that a theory stating that knowledge of the existence of others must be inductively inferred and is thereby uncertain, must itself be ‘problematic’ and in want of a ‘solution’. If such a theory is, on the contrary, within its empiricist framework, an appropriately honest and humble recognition that our experiences and thus our warranted beliefs have necessary limits imposed on them by the brute fact of the nature of our relation to the world, then it is not a problem at all. Rather, it is a philosophical achievement: intellectual progress, of the most lofty sort. It is the sort of progress of Kant’s quest to reveal the limits of reason or of Gödel’s discovery of the limits of number theory – both of which are positive achievements concerning discovery of the limits of our situation and not themselves ‘problems’.

For Berkeley, the only *problem* present here is how to reconcile these epistemological truths with the common-sense, pre-philosophical intuitions of the masses; and his philosophy

is, in part, an attempt at just such a synthesis: such as with its instruction to “think with the learned, and speak with the vulgar”.⁸⁷

At any rate, Berkeley is certainly not a solipsist. Though he denies we may directly experience the being of other spirits, that never leads to a rejection of there being fellow cognizers perceiving and willing like oneself. Thus one of the most common criticisms laid against him is that he is inconsistent by not applying his radical scepticism regarding matter also to other spirits. The strength of Berkeley’s position depends on one’s perception of the strength of his argument from analogy. In reflecting on the impossibility of having a Lockean *idea* of another person *qua* mind or spirit, he writes:

*As we conceive the ideas that are in the minds of other spirits by means of our own, which we suppose to be resemblances of them: so we know other spirits by means of our own soul, which in that sense is the image or idea of them, it having a like respect to other spirits, that blueness or heat by me perceived has to those ideas perceived by another.*⁸⁸

Though he does not explicitly say so, presumably the foundation of this argument is that one first has sensible ‘ideas’ of oneself, such as visual perceptions of one’s own body; but that one also has direct knowledge of oneself as immaterial percipient, and so is able to discern a regular correspondence (and will quite likely, though perhaps erroneously, start making causal judgments) between the two domains, such as observation of one’s own volition to move a limb and then a corresponding change in visual and tactile ideas as it moves. Next, one perceives the sensory ideas of others’ ‘bodies’ and finds them analogous to the sensory ideas of oneself; and so infers that in their case as in one’s one there is a mental or spiritual substratum constituting the real person that corresponds to and can act as substratum for the perceived ideas of their body.

⁸⁷ Berkeley, *Principles*, p. 42 (§51)

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79 (§140)

At worst, this inference fails because it is based on only a single datum: that of correspondence between oneself *qua* mind and *qua* collection-of-perceived-ideas-constituting-a-body. Thus, unless we have independent reasons for presuming that there is likely to be universal homogeneity in metaphysics giving us warrant for making strong generalisations from one single observed instance, the assumption of a spirit corresponding to a perceived body cannot be confidently extrapolated to other cases where only the ideas of their body are presented.

Even at best, though, by allowing the inference from a single observed correspondence, the inference by analogy would still only be warranted when applied to other congregates of sensory ideas strongly analogous to the perceived set of ideas composing one's own body. But Berkeley, progressing at this stage in his career towards becoming a bishop, desires to establish the existence of God even more than he does other earthly persons. At first glance there would seem to be a lack of an analogue here corresponding to the perceived ideas of the bodies of other persons. For an empiricist, what experience is to count in favour of an immaterial behind-the-scenes God in the way that perceiving others' bodies counts for the presence of a mind, whatever that might be, at their helm?

*... God is known as certainly and immediately as any other mind or spirit whatsoever, distinct from ourselves. We may even assert, that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men; because the effects of nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to human agents.*⁸⁹

Berkeley's solution is to consider the entirety of experience itself evidence of a boundless spirit as its author. Specifically, however, he wishes to draw the reader's attention to a set of features of experience that are notably reminiscent of Leibniz's pet themes:

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 82 (§147)

... [I]f we attentively consider the constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty, and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of the creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the whole ... we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid spirit [God].⁹⁰

Therefore in Berkeley's system, spirits, both finite and infinite, are not to be known directly, but rather through their effects on sensory experience. Congeries of particular ideas of sound, sight, etc. present to us the ideational manifestation of other spirits and their volitions; and we are justified in making a (fallible) inference from those ideas to the existence of corresponding percipient spirits. The inference to the existence of God is not based on any particular sensory idea, but is still to be grounded in the empirical, either through the sensed perception of regularity, order, beauty, harmony, etc. or from experience considered as whole.

Berkeley's God is, in some senses, transcendent of experience, as are all other percipient spirits. Yet in another way, God does not have an especially privileged ontological status. He is characterised as a spirit capable of perception and volition, who enters into transactions of sensory ideas with other spirits. Just as with finite spirits, his existence is to be inferred from experience.

In this account of the world we cannot aspire to indubitable certainty about the cardinality of substance but are warranted in reasoning that there is one foundational mental substance for each person we meet in veridical experience and one extra spirit for God.

It could be said that Berkeley's sparse account of the cardinality of substances comprising reality is expressive of his empiricist commitments, inclining him to reduce the number of real existents to the minimum number still compatible with a (theistic) common-

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 82 (§146)

sense account of the number of subjects in the world, and to admit no greater number of percipients than is warranted by sense experience and the argument from analogy. Even more so, however, I think it is appropriate to interpret Berkeley's position on substance cardinality in terms of his immanentism. An approach like his which strongly prioritises only the given in experience will exercise suspicion about granting reality to entities lying beyond the immanently presented; and Berkeley's one-per-person-and-one-for-God enumeration yields the minimum quantity of subjects consistent with Christianity's assertion of a real God and a spirit-or-soul for each created human.

Leibniz was also a devoutly religious man; but his embracing of transcendence enables his philosophy to depart from Berkeley's immanentist, reductionist tendency. By locating the real outside experience and requiring *a priori* reflection to access this domain, the true nature of the world revealed through metaphysics need not resemble our perceptions at all. Thus Leibniz is freed to characterise reality as expressing beauty, harmony, and divinity through its being constituted by an *infinite* quantity of percipient monads. With his principle that God was constrained (yet free) to instantiate only the best of all possible worlds, he writes:

This interconnection or accommodation of all created things to each other, and each to all the others, brings it about that each simple substance has relations that express all the others, and consequently, that each simple substance is a perpetual, living mirror of the universe ... [and] because of the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are, as it were, just as many different universes, which are, nevertheless, only perspectives on a single one, corresponding to the different points of view of each monad ... [a]nd this is the way of obtaining as much variety as possible, but with the greatest order possible, that is, it is the way of obtaining as much perfection as possible ... [m]oreover, this is the only hypothesis (which I dare say is demonstrated that

*properly enhances God's greatness ... [f]urthermore, in what I have just discussed, we can see the a priori reasons why things could not be otherwise.*⁹¹

Freed from characterising reality as identical with the content of immanent experience, Leibniz's transcendentalism allows him here to exercise *a priori* reasonings purporting to adequately describe the real things as an infinity of mental substances. Due to his transcendentalism, Leibniz espouses a stronger distinction between appearance and reality than Berkeley does, and in this way is given the freedom to exercise more creativity in characterising the ultimate state of things, employing synthetic *a priori* reasonings concerning a transcendent realm. Emphasising the reality of the transcendent allows Leibniz to argue not only for the distinctly unintuitive thesis that reality is, at bottom, exclusively mental in nature, but also, contra Berkeley, that reality is comprised of a literally *infinite* quantity of simple, extra-empirical, mind-like units.

This section has been concerned with illustrating that a philosopher's choice to characterise reality either as immanent or as transcendent, with respect to its inhabitants, has consequences that will shape the ontological structure of the system in significant ways. It has been shown that Berkeley's immanentism disposes him to be frugal in granting reality to mental substances, which in his system are not immediately apprehended and must be dubitably inferred only from experience and analogy. By contrast, Leibniz's transcendentalism frees him to characterise reality unhindered by the constraint of referring metaphysics always to ordinary experience, instead making out reality to consist in an infinity of substances, in a way that could not be empirically warranted in an immanentist philosophy like Berkeley's.

If my analysis is correct, the metaphysics and epistemologies of Leibniz and Berkeley cannot be adequately compared and contrasted without acknowledging, and taking as

⁹¹ Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 220 ('*Monadology*' §56-60)

foundational, their contrary positions characterising the nature of the world and its relation to us either as immanent or as transcendent. Though I have presented this distinction in the context of an inquiry into whether the idealisms of Leibniz and Berkeley are to be identified, I hold that this conceptual tool has worth well beyond this present purpose. With the intention of showing that philosophy more broadly can be fruitfully analysed by employing the immanence and transcendence distinction, I now turn to an examination of other important figures in the history of modern philosophy and their relation to the idealisms of Leibniz and Berkeley.

5. Application to Early Modern Metaphysics

As we will see, the distinction I have employed to distinguish between the otherwise aligned idealisms of Berkeley and Leibniz has practical application beyond this instance of contrast. I hold that the history of metaphysics may be illuminated with the application of the distinction between immanence and transcendence theories of reality and our relation to it. In order to illustrate this, I shall discuss the relationship of three other important early modern philosophers to Berkeley and Leibniz with reference to their positions on the immanent or transcendent status of the real.

5.1 Descartes

Historians trace the origin of the era of modern philosophy to Descartes' iconic publications. With Descartes the nature of the philosophical enterprise was to change; defining works such as the *Meditations on First Philosophy* invited a subjective, first-person, and doubting perspective on the world from which to build a 'first philosophy'. Idealist systems that prioritise the reality of the self *qua* immaterial being to that of the material world owe enormous debt to this Cartesian decision point. We have earlier addressed the Cartesian influence on doctrines of the nature of the mind in our idealist philosophers.⁹² In what follows we will consider other ways in which Descartes impacted on the philosophies of Leibniz and Berkeley and their positions on immanence and transcendence.

Cartesian dualism invites a stark division between the external world and the mind, or 'thinking thing'. Descartes writes that he has "clear and distinct" ideas of himself *qua* thinking but not extended thing and of body *qua* extended but not thinking thing; the conclusion he wishes us to follow him in is that "it is certain that I am really distinct from my

⁹² See §3.1.1.

body, and can exist without it”.⁹³ Descartes argues that the existence of thought cannot be rationally doubted without contradiction, and concludes “[thought] alone cannot be separated from me. I am; I exist – this is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking”.⁹⁴ The mind is held to be immediately accessible and indubitably real due to the famous *cogito ergo sum*, whereas the external world is to be known only indirectly.

In Descartes’ system the existence of the external world and the veracity of our perceptions are established only mediately by first reflecting on the non-deceiving nature of God, whose existence is purportedly established *a priori*. This foundational division between the self-as-thinking-thing and the material world provides just the background against which to depart from this ontology and argue for the existence of only one type, or perhaps even of neither. Both Leibniz and Berkeley argue for the priority of mental substances over the material. Indeed, Berkeley’s position is discoverable in germinal form within Descartes.

The ontology presented by Berkeley in his main works strongly resembles the position that Descartes expresses at the height of his sceptical concerns early in the *Meditations*. Here Descartes has, for methodological reasons, come to doubt all that he previously held true, except that which is indubitable. His initial all-inclusive scepticism appears when he proposes that an evil genius is deceiving him by creating for him the appearance of all seemingly external things when in fact none do exist. He writes that “I have persuaded myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world: no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies”⁹⁵; the next step is to admit the *self* as, initially, the only indubitable existent, the existence of which cannot be doubted without contradiction. Descartes goes on to characterise that self as a thinking thing that “doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things, wills, refrains from willing, and also imagines and senses”. With this, Descartes has

⁹³ Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 51

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18

arrived at a formulation of the position that Berkeley would later explicitly adopt: matter is unreal, but mind is real, and the source of our impressions is not a mind-independent material realm but the volitions of some other kind of non-physical being who interacts directly with percipients. For Descartes, this being is an evil genius; for Berkeley, a benevolent God. It may be said that Descartes' dystopian idealist account of deception regarding the reality of the senses is transformed by Berkeley into a utopian idealist account of a community of immaterial minds living harmoniously under the providence of God. Berkeley's God provides minds with sensory data directly without the intervention of a material world, but unlike Descartes' evil genius, he does so without the intention to deceive.

Based on the train of arguments presented in the *Meditations*, one may presume that Descartes would have said of Berkeley's system that, despite the latter's protestations, a world which appeared to its perceivers as our own does, but that did not contain material substances underlying appearances, would be a world in which, *per impossible*, God was a deceiver. Berkeley anticipates this in the *Three Dialogues*; Philonous curiously terms the belief in matter an "epidemical opinion arising from prejudice, or passion, or thoughtlessness"⁹⁶, absolving God of deceit but instead blaming mankind for assent to the belief in matter.

This stage in Descartes' argument presents a world in which only the immanent is knowable, and both the nature and the very existence of a transcendent extra-mental reality is called into question. Had this been his final position, we could assimilate Descartes with his sceptical meditations into the same immanentist position as Berkeley. However, this position of Descartes', which is so foreshadowing of Berkeley's, is but a methodological step. Its suggestion that ultimate reality might be entirely unknowable and that reality may obtain only in our immediate experience gives way, via quaint *a priori* reasoning, to his settled

⁹⁶ Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, p. 76

position that God's status as a non-deceiver ensures the reality of a world beyond the self to which our perceptions veridically correspond. Descartes, arch dualist, ultimately thinks that both mind and matter exist; though it must still be the case that our epistemic relation to the latter is somewhat less immediate than to the former, due to the intermediate chains of inference required to establish the veracity of our senses and the existence of matter. Thus Descartes' methodological immanentism is replaced by a characteristic neutrality towards our distinction: both the immediate contents of consciousness and material bodies outside oneself have full reality, the first via the irreducible reality of mind, the second via the equally irreducible reality of matter.

Leibniz too wrestles with Descartes' doctrine that doubting the material world is to accuse God of deception. Leibniz writes that "by no argument can it be demonstrated absolutely that bodies exist, nor is there anything to prevent certain well-ordered dreams from being the objects of our minds, which we judge to be true".⁹⁷ He thus rejects Descartes' rationalist argument purportedly establishing the existence of a material extra-mental world. Leibniz's position, like Berkeley's, is more akin to that earlier enunciated by Descartes in the *Meditations* prior to the argument for a non-deceiving God and its hasty return of our faith in the material world. Leibniz is adopting this position as his mature outlook; Descartes states this position but uses it only methodologically, to reach his considered realist conclusions. Yet Leibniz, like Berkeley, rejects the Cartesian contention that one is accusing God of deception by withholding full assent to the reality of bodies: "we are deceived not by God but by our judgment, asserting something without accurate proof".⁹⁸ He asks rhetorically: "What if our nature happened to be incapable of real phenomena?"⁹⁹ Of course, for Leibniz's mature metaphysics, our sensory experiences are but confused intellectual representations of the way

⁹⁷ Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, p. 364 ('*On the Method of Distinguishing Real from Imaginary Phenomena*')

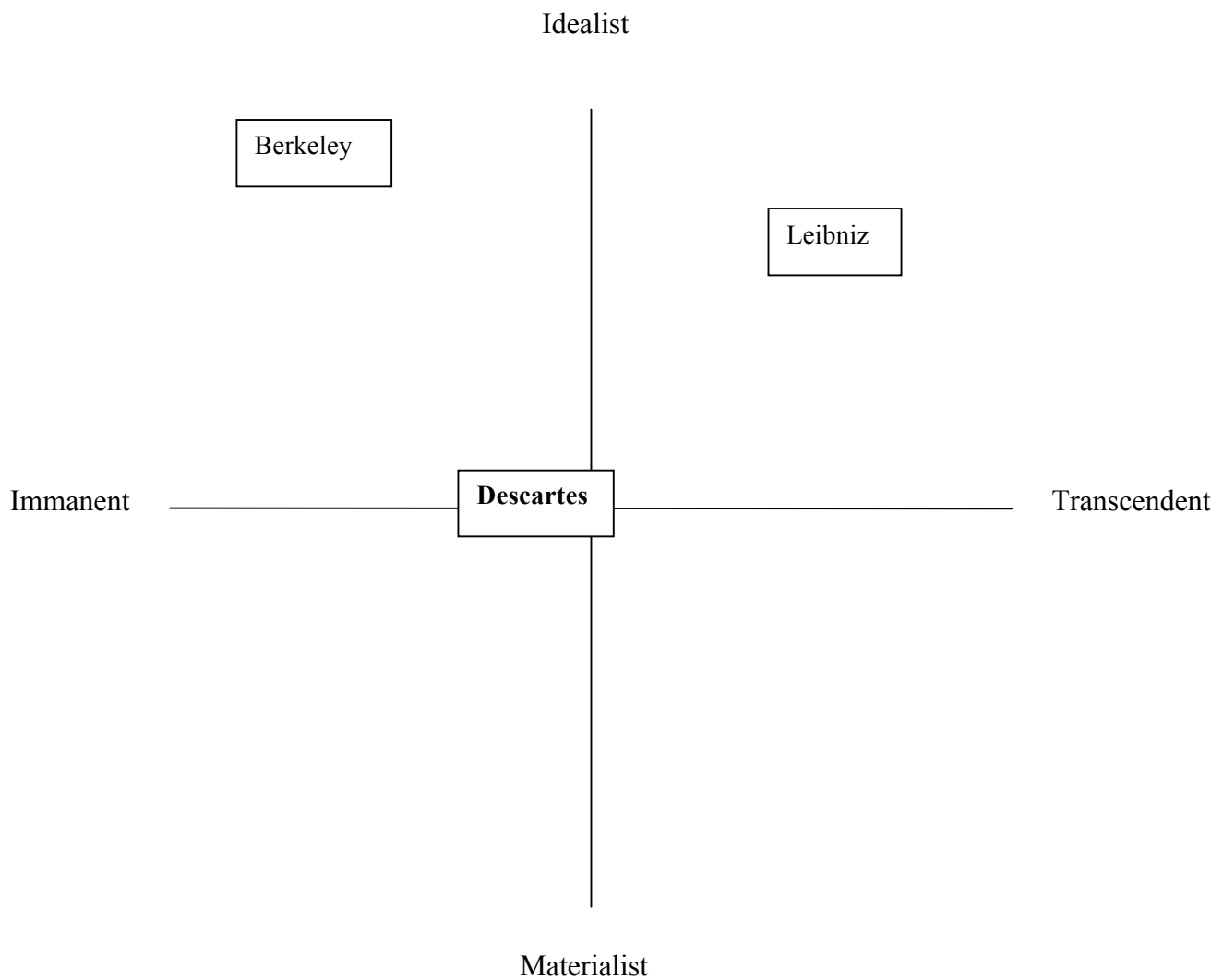
⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

things really are. Ultimate reality pertains to the transcendent domain of monads, knowable only through reason. When Leibniz says that sensory phenomena are real, he means no more than that they are internally consistent and are 'well-founded' in the more fundamental metaphysical realm.

Descartes' dualism may be described as expressing both immanentism and transcendentism. The former is visible in his belief that there is an irreducible type of reality immanently present to us as *res cogitans*, which is of an entirely different manner to matter; and this maps onto Berkeley's view that immediately given ideas are truly real and not mere phenomenal facsimiles of an external actuality. Unlike Berkeley, though, Descartes also holds that there is also a transcendent external reality which is equally as real as the immediate objects of consciousness. In this respect he mirrors Leibniz; though Leibniz will not characterise that transcendent realm as material.

Descartes thus reflects aspects of both Berkeley and Leibniz's positions on our relation to the real. I here present his position as very slightly within the domain of immanentism, in virtue of his sceptical Meditation presenting the ideational reality of immediate sensation as irrefusable, whilst allowing the possibility of sceptical doubt concerning an objective transcendent reality matching these *ideas*. Even if this scenario does not reflect Descartes' settled fully dualist ontology, it is revealing of the type of epistemological foundation that Descartes employed and that would eventually lead to empiricism and Berkeley, via Locke's application of empiricist principles to Descartes' radically subjective sceptical 'original position'. So, with Descartes characterising as real both the domains of the immanent and transcendent but holding the former to be less dubitable, and with his mind-body dualism expressing a symmetrical ontological status for both the ideational and the material, we may plot Descartes' position directly as such upon our pictorial representation:



5.2 Locke

We have treated Locke already, in discussing our idealists' rejection of his primary/secondary quality dichotomy. However, this is not the only respect in which Locke is highly significant for understanding the idealist philosophies of Berkeley and Leibniz. Furthermore, for our present purposes, examining the way in which Locke handles the notion of substance, and his attempts to cling both to a strong empiricism and to a dogmatically material realist position, gives us ample opportunity to witness an attempt at combining an immanentism with a materialism; though his attempt suffers from an internal tension that Berkeley would exploit. Berkeley, whose debt to Locke's epistemology cannot be overstated,

presented his own immaterialist philosophy as a corrective to Locke's material realist doctrines. Leibniz's philosophy also manifests as a response to Locke, with Leibniz's own *New Essays on Human Understanding*: a book that went unpublished in his lifetime but that functioned as an extended commentary on almost the entirety of Locke's *Essay*, in a vigorous and sustained manner that permits us to witness Leibniz's own rationalist jousting with that modern philosopher most associated with empiricism.

Locke's status in his own time was considerable, with the *Essay* becoming "recommended reading for students almost as soon as it first appeared in print" in 1689.¹⁰⁰ Locke's famed empiricism serves both as the epistemological foundation of Berkeley's primary works and as a point of contrast for Leibniz's rationalist tendencies. Here we will consider a number of themes in Locke's work that are relevant to appreciating these idealist responses, beginning with Locke's central empiricist concern with the contents of mind, which he terms *ideas*.

For Locke's predecessors such as Descartes, *idea* refers primarily to the objects of thought or cognition. But when Locke wields the term its primary signification is more of objects of sensory experience than of intellection. Nevertheless, Locke writes that the term *idea* stands for "whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks".¹⁰¹ Such reference to *understanding* and *thinking* somewhat belies Locke's actual doctrines of the nature of mentation and ideas. Though "complex ideas" may include any number of abstract concepts such as substance, God, or eternity, all such concepts must ultimately resolve to simple ideas from which they are constituted. The simple ideas are themselves acquired either via sense experience or by reflection; and, in the case of the latter, this reflection is directed towards the operations of one's own mental faculties as they work only with the

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth P. Winkler, Editor's Introduction to Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. ix

¹⁰¹ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 6

simple ideas given by experience. Thus all ideas are composed of simple ideas, both types of which involve reference to the ideas given through sensation. Being in this way expressive of his empiricism, Locke's use of the term *idea* diverges from earlier modern philosophers; and it is a manner of speaking that will be adopted by the successive British empiricist philosophers Berkeley and Hume.

Locke spends the first book of the *Essay* denying that we have innate ideas. This acts as a prolegomenon not only to the remainder of the *Essay*, in which Locke attempts to provide empirical sources for concepts and ideas thought innate; but also to the empiricist movement in philosophy that Locke spearheaded, in which it was considered settled that no ideas were innate. The rationalist tradition, including Leibniz, is often contrasted with empiricism centrally due to the contrary estimations of the reality of innate ideas. Locke pared innate ideas from his ontology of mental contents; Berkeley would then inherit Locke's ontology of ideas, but would in turn preface his major work, the *Principles*, by first excising *abstract* ideas. (Hume would accept both excisions, and work from a twice-culled set of ideas.)

Locke's view that the mind is passive in its receipt of simple ideas from the senses is accepted by Berkeley, and by expanding on this theme and declaring that ideas themselves are also purely passive, lacking causal power, Berkeley prepares the way both for an argument for idealism and an argument for the existence of God. In the *New Essays* Leibniz objects to Locke that the mind must be active at least with respect to the ideas garnished from reflection: "the mind must at least give itself its thoughts of reflection, since it is the mind which reflects."¹⁰² Of course, though he does not state it in this reply, Leibniz's considered view is that all perceptions, sensory or otherwise, must have their origin from the self, from a teleological 'internal principle' providing we monadic substances with our trains of

¹⁰² Leibniz, *New Essays*, §119

successive perceptual states. Thus for Leibniz, contra Locke, the mind or soul expresses activity in all of its perceptions.

In order to extract from Locke his attempts to describe our relation to reality, at least in respect of its primary qualities, as immanent to our experience, we must look to his famous idiosyncratic views on substance, which are among the most striking aspects of the *Essay*, and which (despite Locke's own material realism) prefigure the rejection of material substance by later idealisms.

First, Locke drives a wedge between the types of entity dubbed 'substance' despite their nominal agreement. "[T]he name *substance*, stands for three several distinct *ideas*": these three are God, matter, and the soul, though Locke queries "what hinders, why another may not make a fourth?"¹⁰³ This division may lead to the reflection that there need not be ontological parity among the different kinds of things contingently labelled alike as 'substances', and it then becomes possible to deny the reality of one of the categories, e.g. matter, without thereby denying the others in virtue of their shared status as substances.

Second, Locke holds that all *substance*, traditionally viewed as supporting accidents which inhere in it yet distinct from them, must be unknown to us. "[T]he substance is supposed always *something* besides the extension, figure, solidity, motion, thinking, or other observable *ideas*, though we know not what it is."¹⁰⁴ Ideas are modifications of thinking things; properties are modifications of material things; but those *things* themselves are inaccessible, and can only be known through how they present. This doctrine can, I believe, be construed as (1) a critique of the traditional Scholastic metaphysical-cum-linguistic account of the world as consisting of independently existing substances in which accidents inhere, or (2) a scepticism about our capacity for knowledge of things in themselves,

¹⁰³ Locke, *Essay*, p. 73

¹⁰⁴ Locke, *Essay*, p. 119

independently of our modes of knowing (as Kant would more explicitly endorse). Berkeley pounces on this apparent scepticism; he contrasts his own system, in which *ideas*, the objects of sensation, are the real things; as there are no extra-mental archetypes for ideas to conform to, there is no room for scepticism about the correspondence between the apparent and the real. Without more closely examining Berkeley's philosophy, it could be seen as paradoxical or absurd that Berkeley, who is denying the reality of matter, should see himself as gaining the upper hand over Locke, who is a realist, by accusing the latter of scepticism.

Leibniz accepts Locke's characterisation of how we form the idea of substance, providing the concept of a *substratum* for properties to inhere in (though, contra Locke, he insists upon "properties" not "ideas", as according to Leibniz, ideas should be more strictly reserved for mental representations instead of blended into being direct attributes of external substances). Nevertheless, Leibniz does not see this to be inviting scepticism about the notion of substance: "we have no need to 'accustom' ourselves to it, or to 'suppose' it; ... I do not see why it is made out to involve a problem".¹⁰⁵ Leibniz strongly links the subject-predicate judgment form with the substance-attribute view of ontology, and holds both to be valid. For him substance is not an inert, disposable notion: "this pure subject in general" is "what is needed for the conception of 'the same thing'".¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, "this conception of substance, for all its apparent thinness, is less empty and sterile than it is thought to be."¹⁰⁷ Much of Leibniz's metaphysics revolve around the concept of the substance and its relation to the subject-predicate form, such as his view that every substance has a complete concept containing everything true of it across time and that every ultimately real substance must be simple, not compound.

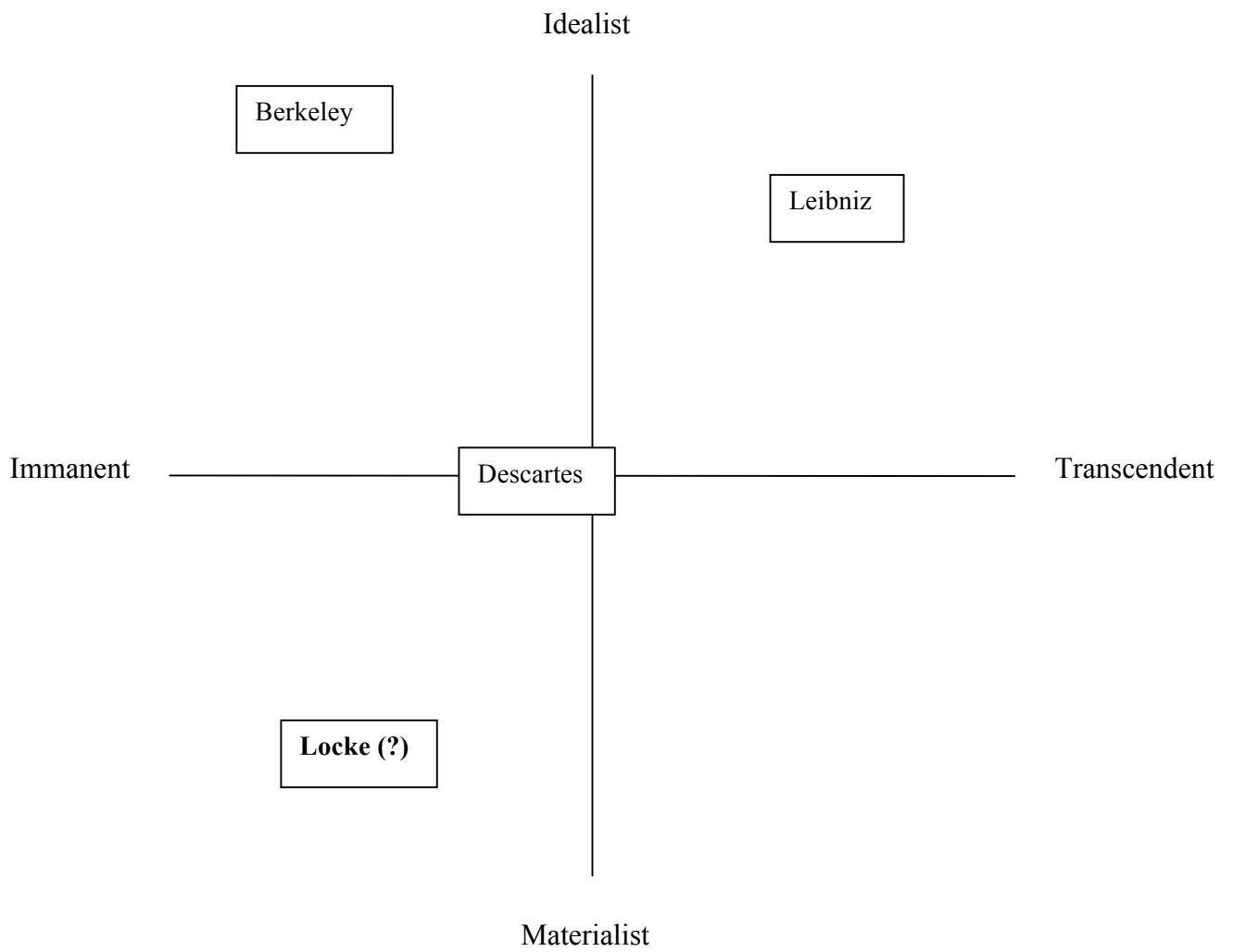
¹⁰⁵ Leibniz, *New Essays*, §217

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, §218

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Locke maintains that all of our knowledge is restricted to our own ideas – yet, as outlined in section 3.3, he wants to maintain knowledge that our experience of primary qualities are entirely veridical, and that our ideas of extension, solidity etc. exactly resemble how material things are in themselves, i.e. apart from their manifestation as idea. His philosophy thus strikes a peculiar tension between a transcendentalism and an immanentism, with inconsistent accounts of the nature of our relation to the primary and secondary qualities of a material world. Despite Berkeley's misleading presentation in the *Three Dialogues*, for Locke, even secondary qualities have some kind of transcendent status. They possess an extra-mental reality which is distinct from our ideas of them – though this extra-mental reality is ultimately nothing above powers to produce these ideas in us in virtue of primary qualities. Yet these primary qualities, on the other hand, Locke wants us to conceive as directly accessible and being immanent in their full nature to our experience *qua* sensory idea in a way that renders external world scepticism impossible, or at least rather silly and beneath serious consideration.

As a materialist, he wants to assert the primary reality of matter, though he is sceptical about the worth of characterising it as material 'substance'. He seeks to break out of the empiricist limitations of being subject only to one's own private subjective states, by identifying our ideas of primary quality with those actually subsisting in matter; but to do so is to threaten the consistency both of his empiricism and his materialism. If we are to give Locke the benefit of the doubt and categorise him within our plane in the way he sees his own philosophy, and so long as we attend particularly to Locke's views on primary qualities (which, after all, he holds to ultimately be the only type of irreducibly real quality), it may appear thus:



5.3 Kant

*[A]t last the philosophy of modern times, especially through Berkeley and Kant, has called to mind that all this [the world] in the first instance is only phenomenon of the brain, and is encumbered by so many great and different subjective conditions that its supposed absolute reality vanishes, and leaves room for an entirely different world-order that lies at the root of that phenomenon, in other words, is related to it as is the thing-in-itself to the mere appearance.*¹⁰⁸

Arthur Schopenhauer, 'On the Fundamental View of Idealism' (1844)

Like Berkeley, Kant is a figure who can be variously construed as metaphysical or anti-metaphysical depending on one's reading. In support of the former, he maintained the existence of things-in-themselves transcending experience; but, on the other hand, he denied the possibility of traditional conceptions of metaphysics, and limited the power of reason to knowledge relating to the domain of things empirically conditioned. In his doctrine of transcendental idealism, he expresses a related thesis to Berkeley's insight that one cannot eliminate the presupposition of the subjective from considerations of the supposedly objective. Kant expands on this by fleshing out the way that our given appearances are necessarily conditioned by the conceptual and spatiotemporal schemes of the subject. What we subjectively supply by way of the forms of our experience are not to be found outside us; the upshot of this, for Kant, is that things existing independently of our cognition are neither spatial nor temporal, they do not conform to our basic a priori categories of thought, and apart from these negative characterisations they are otherwise unknowable and ineffable.

Berkeley would baldly state the impossibility of making the transcendent an object of thought, partly on empiricist grounds. Kant shows that, even if we can think of things as

¹⁰⁸ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. II, p. 3

barely existing independently of us, the form they take as such must be entirely dissimilar to that which we are able to represent in intuition. Furthermore, our empirical experiences are conditioned by us in such a way that we are left ignorant of what the objects of those experiences are like considered in themselves, stripped of our subjective cognitive processing. In these respects, Berkeley and Kant both express idealisms that pose real threats to the naïve realist intuition that our immediate experiences are straightforwardly grounded in a mind-independent, objective realm that nonetheless strongly matches the way we perceive it to be. Such considerations lend themselves to the logical positivist campaign that we examined earlier, and are aligned with its emphasis on restricting our knowledge and our speech to the given and the verifiable.

Kant professes a form of idealism, albeit one which allows for the domain of things in themselves to have some kind of existence that is not ideational or of the manner of substance. He is said to have attempted a synthesis of empiricism and rationalism in his philosophy, and is thus of special importance in considering the kindredness of Berkeley and Leibniz. His novel approach was to argue via transcendental argument, which was a consideration of the conditions that must first obtain in order to enable the possibility of experience. His metaphysics, especially in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, bear superficial resemblance to Berkeley's; and although it was a transcendental *idealism* that Kant provided, he "vehemently repudiated" the suggestion by an early critical review by Garve and Feder that his position was Berkeleian.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Eberhard responded to Kant critically, claiming that "Kant had made no advance on and only erroneous deviations from Leibniz".¹¹⁰ Evidently, despite the intended departure from both empiricism and rationalism, comparison of (and attempted reduction of) his views to those of both Berkeley and Leibniz were made right from the initial publication of the first *Critique*.

¹⁰⁹ Gardner, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 184

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 329

Kant directly appraises Leibniz's metaphysics in the Critique of Pure Reason. The section, an appendix to the Transcendental Analytic called "On the amphiboly of concepts of reflection", presents a sustained critique of Leibniz's method and conclusions. It may also be read more broadly as a criticism of intellectualist, rationalist tendencies in philosophy; it is in this section that Kant famously declares that "Leibniz intellectualized the appearances", although he also rallies against pure empiricism, declaring pejoratively that "Locke totally sensitivized the concepts of understanding".¹¹¹ In Kant's view, Leibniz and Locke, standing for rationalism and empiricism respectively, cling either to the representations of the understanding or those of sensation, and so both fail to recognise the truth that there is a dual source for all judgments. For each misguided epistemological outlook, the preferred faculty is taken by its proponent as related to things in themselves, while the other faculty's status is denigrated. For instance, Leibniz treated sensibility as "only a confused kind of representation ... and not a special source of representations".¹¹²

Kant's fundamental criticism of Leibniz is that he "took the appearances for things in themselves", treating the inner nature of (monadic) substances as being accessible to reason or the understanding.¹¹³ Kant maintains the existence of a transcendent reality distinct from mere appearance, but in his philosophy the form in which these things-in-themselves exist is necessarily beyond our knowledge; our cognition is restricted to knowledge of subjectively conditioned, phenomenal appearances found in sensation. We may *think* of a transcendent or noumenal reality, and even know that there is such a thing, but we cannot attribute anything with positive descriptive content to that concept. Leibniz's philosophy presumes to know just how things are in themselves directly and *a priori*. It portrays an overly "intellectual system

¹¹¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A271/B327

¹¹² *Ibid.*, A270/B326

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, A264/B320

of the world” in which one can “cognize the inner constitutions of things by comparing all objects only with the understanding and the abstract formal concepts of its thinking”.¹¹⁴

Kant sources Leibniz’s purported mistakes in the wayward use of the concepts of reflection, concepts which he introduces for the first time in the *Amphiboly*: those of identity/difference, agreement/opposition, inner/outer, and matter/form.¹¹⁵ These are to be used for comparison of concepts, but cannot, contra Leibniz, be applied to metaphysics, understood as investigation into the extra-sensory nature of things as they are in themselves.

Kant also attacks Leibniz’s controversial Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles. He argues that Leibniz, stressing intellectual understanding at the expense of consideration of sensation, fails to note that numerical difference between entities is given in sensation, and is indeed a condition of outer sensation at all. Just as “a part of space, even though it might be completely similar and equal to another, is nevertheless outside of it, and is on that account a different part”, so experienced objects may be qualitatively identical and yet be numerically differentiated in virtue of their appearance in spatially discrete locations.¹¹⁶

Though his position is described as an ‘idealism’, specifically a transcendental one, Kant’s philosophy maintains the existence of an absolute domain of things-in-themselves distinct in nature from our representations of them. Kant attempts to critique external or transcendent world scepticism, in a section introduced in the second edition titled ‘*Refutation of Idealism*’, which nominally would seem to be the natural source of criticism of Berkeley’s position; but in fact the target is Descartes’ “problematic idealism” rather than Berkeley’s “dogmatic idealism”. Kant takes Descartes’ view to be that there is only one item of indubitable empirical knowledge: that the self exists. Kant somewhat mischaracterises Descartes’ considered view, passing over the fact that, as we have seen, Descartes proposes

¹¹⁴ Ibid., A270/B326

¹¹⁵ Ibid., A261/B317

¹¹⁶ Ibid., A263/B320

this situation merely methodologically in the *Meditations*, using the thought experiment to show that in fact a much larger corpus of empirical beliefs is justified due to God, whose existence is known *a priori*, being a non-deceiver.

However, Kant's characterisation of Berkeley's position seems even further off the mark, inviting the question whether Kant had actually read Berkeley before presuming to refute his position. (Turbayne argues that although the view that Kant did not read Berkeley is "the accepted view, backed by seemingly strong evidence" and "the most plausible", it is nevertheless "almost wholly mistaken".¹¹⁷ However the apparent misunderstandings expressed in Kant's published writings seem to the present writer to almost certainly convey unfamiliarity or disinterest with the arguments contained within Berkeley's primary texts.) According to Kant, Berkeley's position is that (1) "space, together with all the things to which it is attached as an inseparable condition [is] impossible in itself" and that (2) "things in space [are] merely imaginary".¹¹⁸ Neither of these assertions adequately characterise Berkeley's idealism, which is essentially independent of any theory about the nature of space.

(1) Regarding the possibility of space, Berkeley says that "supposing all the world to be annihilated besides my own body, I say there still remains *pure space*", though this is cashed out as meaning "only that I conceive it possible, for the limbs of my body to be moved on all sides without the least resistance".¹¹⁹ If even one's own body was also annihilated, "there could be no motion, and consequently no space". Thus the reality of space is dependent on the existence of things which may move through space; and so space may have a merely derivative, non-absolute existence, but it is certainly not Berkeley's view that it is "impossible in itself".

¹¹⁷ Turbayne, '*Kant's Refutation of Dogmatic Idealism*', p. 225

¹¹⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B274

¹¹⁹ Berkeley, *Principles*, §116.

(2) Concerning Kant's accusation that Berkeley considers things in space to be imaginary, it is clear that this is completely at odds with Berkeley's own account and reflects a lack of familiarity with his published writings. Again and again Berkeley reminds his readers that his immaterialism does not detract from the reality of the sensed world, and his account certainly does not result in the spatial world being deemed imaginary. As discussed earlier in section 3.4, Berkeley provides a positive account within his idealist metaphysics of the distinction between real and imaginary ideas.

The Refutation is aimed at the problematic idealist rather than the Berkeleian 'dogmatic' idealist. This is because Kant believes that the Transcendental Aesthetic, prior to the Analytic, has been sufficient to refute Berkeley. However, as seen, neither of Kant's characterisations of Berkeley's metaphysics is accurate.

Kant's approach may be seen to be a synthesis of Berkeley's immanentism and Leibniz's transcendence. Berkeley and Kant both hold that the spatial world of sensation is within the mind; the difference is that Berkeley takes the material world to be exhausted by those sensations, whereas Kant takes the sensations to be appearances of a real extra-mental, but ultimately cognitively inaccessible, realm. Kant refers to the commonsense world of subjectively conditioned experience as 'empirically real', and by maintaining that there is a notable manner of reality to be found at this level despite the further claim that there exists the transcendent, he is reminiscent of Berkeley, who insists that the immediate contents of experience are *real* despite being inherently subjective and opposed to the concepts of absoluteness, transcendence, and possibly permanence.

But, opposed to Berkeley, and instead aligned with Leibniz, Kant is a transcendence; in the sense that both philosophers affirm the existence of an external, absolute, reality distinct from our representations. Their difference in this respect is that, for Kant, Leibniz is in error by presuming to have knowledge of the nature of the transcendent; and it is Leibniz's

assimilation of intuition to cognition that leaves him overstepping the boundaries of pure reason's grasp.

Essentially, Kant wishes to reject the immanent / transcendent distinction and say that neither has uniquely privileged ontological status, thus ultimately parting with both Berkeley and Leibniz, each of whom prioritises one or the other.

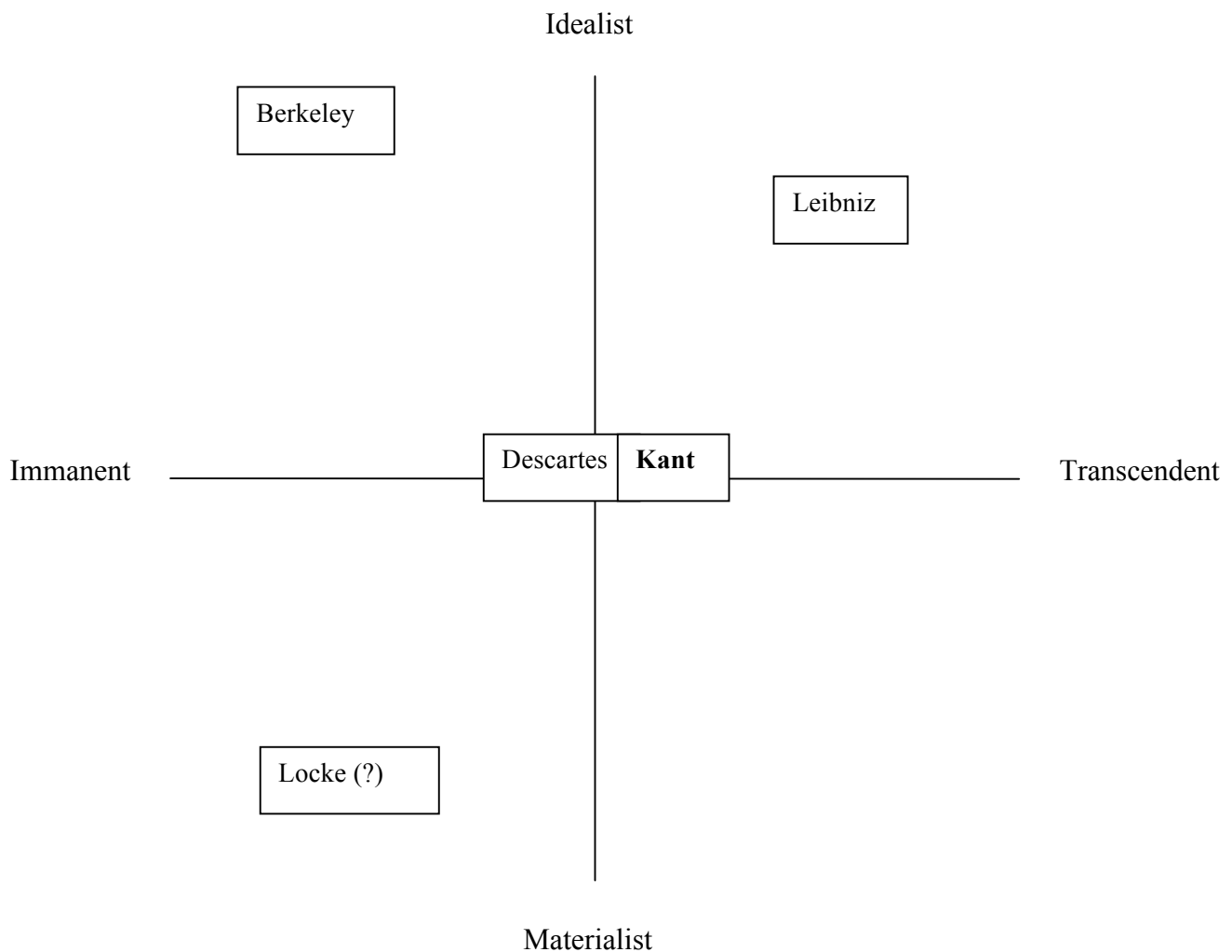
This means that, despite being nominally an idealism, Kant's metaphysics is more akin to Descartes' dualism. Kant allows for a species of reality to pertain both to the immediate contents of experience, by way of *empirical* reality, and to an extra-empirical domain of things-in-themselves, or *transcendent* reality.

Certainly, though he here expresses a dualism, it is not identical to Descartes'. He does not identify the reality of the immanent as taking place in a self-subsistent 'mental substance', and does not identify the transcendent with matter; and so his dualism is far from being the Cartesian one of mind-and-body. Instead it may be said that his foundational dualistic contrast is between *sensation* and *reflection*, with a recognition that, contrary to the epistemologies of both empiricists and rationalists, all contents of thought have a dual origin in both sources; and perhaps it is ultimately this that results in his philosophy embodying a synthesis of transcendentism and immanentism.

In the plane that follows, I have represented Kant's philosophy as slightly more transcendentist than immanentist. This is to capture that, though Kant holds there to be reality within both domains, nonetheless the transcendent form of reality, whatever form it may take, is absolute and real without qualification; whereas the empirically real arises only from an interaction of subject and the absolute, is irreversibly conditioned by inescapable forms of thought and intuition, and depends for its continued actuality as much on the subject's activity as on the transcendent domain of the real-without-qualification. The empirically real,

despite its status as real, is thoroughly conditioned by the cognitive and intuitive faculties of the subject, and so its apparent nature cannot be a guide to the way the world is in itself.

I have further represented Kant as being characterised, for our purposes, equally as an idealist as a materialist. This could be controversial. Kant was not an idealist; or, at least, not straightforwardly. His *'Refutation of Idealism'* was intended to establish that fact in the eyes of his critics. Yet nor was he easily described as a materialist. He believed in a transcendent domain distinct from appearance, but did not identify it, as Descartes did, with matter. Matter involves the notion of extension in space and time, yet these things in Kant's system have no application outside the empirical and conditioned, and so there is no possibility of the transcendent taking this form.



This brings us to the end of what I hope is an illustration of how the immanentist-transcendentist distinction has utility, especially when juxtaposed against the idealist-materialist continuum, in understanding and classifying historical metaphysical philosophies. I will not be dogmatic in my characterisation of these philosophers within the twin continua of idealist/realist and immanentist/transcendentist, and welcome disagreement as to how they are to be conceived within this scheme. My primary intention has instead been to illustrate that the immanentist-transcendentist distinction as a useful, or even necessary, element when comparing the idealisms of Leibniz and Berkeley; and that the same conceptual tools have further utility in examining metaphysical philosophies. I hope that the present chapter has indicated that the distinction is itself different either from the epistemological rationalist/empiricist or the metaphysical idealist/materialist continua, and that it has potential for future application in describing the historical development of philosophy or even for building new systems.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to show that (1) Berkeley and Leibniz are aligned defenders of idealism, with their shared insights into the possibility of a monist alternative to Cartesian dualism other than materialism; and that (2) their accounts of the structure of the world must nevertheless be distinguished in virtue of their respective doctrines of the immanence or the transcendence of the ultimately real existents.

The idealisms of these philosophers together reverse the materialist's priority of material over mental substance, but as an alternative monism to materialism they too present a simpler taxonomy of the real and avoid dilemmas associated with dualism. In prioritising the reality of mental substances, be they monads, spirits or minds, the ontological status of the material is downplayed: it is called 'phenomenal' by Leibniz, or, for Berkeley, it is outright impossible and chimerical. Nonetheless, for both philosophers, objects are real, but only with reference to mental substances: objects exist as sensory impressions or ideas in minds (Berkeley) or they are confused appearances without their own inherent unity but that still possess a kind of secondary, derived reality in virtue of being well-founded in the monadic realm (Leibniz). Essentially each figure conceives of reality as exhausted by mental substances and their states. A case can be made that for either philosopher even God is to be subsumed under this ontology of mental substance and state; one reading of Leibniz (albeit one that he wishes to resist, as it threatens to collapse his position into Spinozism) suggests that God is to be seen as the chief monad, with all other subservient monads (and thus all reality) understood by analogy with his 'body'; and Berkeley imagines God maintaining the reality of otherwise unperceived objects essentially by being in a state of perception with

regard to them, as we are when we observe by sense.¹²⁰ Owing to the underlying monadic or spiritual/mental support, objects still have their reality, and physics is still able to predict future events with apparent accuracy; but we are mistaken to imagine that the ‘physical world’ would remain were there no percipient mind-like substances.

Beyond the basic shared idealist metaphysics of mental-substance-and-state, I have argued that there are further similarities in their metaphysics:

1. Both figures wish to restrict the domain of what is to count as a cause: Leibniz denies causal power to ‘windowless’ monads, each of which unfolds in some non-spatial isolation from the others, but nonetheless with a divinely decreed as-if-interactions-occurred coordination due to the pre-established harmony. Berkeley allows that earthly mental substances, viz. humans, have causal powers, at least concerning the movements of their own limbs; but otherwise only God has active power. In this account objects are comprised of ‘ideas’ rather than material constituents. Berkeley thinks it inadmissible that a mere mental idea, which he takes on inspection to be evidently passive and causally inefficacious, could itself have the kind of active power of bringing about change that Berkeley takes to belong only to spiritual agents.

2. Both philosophers are opposed to Locke’s dichotomy of primary and secondary qualities and its account of how relative degrees of reality are furnished to us via different sense modalities. Berkeley attributes entirely the same extent of being to all ideas of sense, or at least those imposed on one’s spirit from without (i.e. from God). For Berkeley, ideas of sense do not stand for and represent extra-mental material objects at all, and so cannot fall short of veridical adequacy in virtue of failing, as they must, to represent the contentless and

¹²⁰ As *Esse est percipi* is intended to have universal application, it is to apply to God as much as to mortals: if being and being perceived are to be identified together, it is only by God’s perceiving things as ideas in his ‘mental substance’, by analogy with what happens with our sense experience, that he could lend them their existence and thus maintain them.

impossible notion of an absolute material object. So, for him, so-called primary qualities exist only as idea, and to just the same extent as he interprets Locke characterising secondary qualities. Leibniz too rejects the strict Lockean dichotomy of primary and secondary qualities, though for different reasons. Leibniz conceives of the two purported types of quality not as dichotomous (as does Locke) nor as equivalent (as does Berkeley), but rather considers them as laying upon a continuum. From our perspective, we may hold that the primary qualities have a greater core of reality than the secondary, but both are, in the end, inescapably mind-dependent; and both would naturally come to be seen as ultimately illusory and phenomenal if viewed from a sufficiently informed vantage point. Thus both our idealists resist Locke's dichotomous categorisation of types of quality, and both hold that in essence neither type of quality has the categorical objectivity that Locke attributed to it.

3. Both philosophers deny that idealism leads to the impossibility of accounting for the difference between real and illusory perceptual states. Though there is no possibility of trans-substantial correspondence between a mental representation and an external material reality within idealism, both philosophers enumerate ways in which the distinction can be made out, especially focussing on 'internal marks'. Between them they include, as internal marks of real perceptions and phenomena, the properties of vividness, complexity, strength, liveliness, distinctness, steadiness, order, and coherence.

As discussed earlier in §2, J. J. MacIntosh and Stephen H. Daniel have also emphasised the similarity between the underlying metaphysical systems, derived in part from Montgomery Furth's 1967 'Monadology' which argued for a phenomenalist interpretation of Leibniz. Margaret D. Wilson voices opposition to the collapsing of the two philosophers' systems into one another, pointing out differences and suggesting that the apparent agreement is only nominal and in many instances sourced in misleadingly similar terminologies that nonetheless stand, for each philosopher, for very different concepts. I

maintain there is indeed remarkable affinity between the two philosophers' idealisms, but that the two metaphysical structures must not be 'assimilated', as Wilson puts it, as the two authors differ by espousing either an immanentist or a transcendentalist account of our relation to reality. The notion of metaphysics as rational enquiry concerning the transcendent, either to assert or deny its existence, can be sourced in logical positivist statements of verificationism such as Moritz Schlick's. Here the notion of the transcendent is a fundamentally real something beyond experience, that cannot admit of being perceived. I have argued that this notion of the transcendent, and its contrasting term, the immanent, is the crucially distinguishing feature of the idealisms of Leibniz and Berkeley, and that furthermore it may be applied elsewhere in order to illuminate and chart metaphysics more broadly in the modern period.

I have endeavoured to show that this distinction courts both epistemology and ontology, and is thus not the same as the purely epistemological distinction of empiricism and rationalism. The empiricism-rationalism distinction has proved to have enduring appeal as a means of teaching the history of philosophy, but as a sole guide to viewing the numerous interrelated strands of reflective thought mingling throughout the British Isles and continental Europe in the modern period, it is clearly insufficient. Even in 1958, Frederick Copleston's classic account of the history of philosophy signalled awareness that over-reliance upon this distinction distorted the true nature of the interconnected flourishing of western philosophy in the early modern period:

Though I think that the old division into continental rationalism and British empiricism is justified, provided that a number of qualifications are added, a rigid adherence to this scheme is apt to give the impression that continental philosophy and British philosophy in the seventeenth

*and eighteenth centuries moved on two sets of parallel straight lines, each developing in entire independence of the other. And this is an erroneous impression.*¹²¹

J. J. MacIntosh writes that crudely stereotyping historical philosophers according to the continental rationalist/english speaking empiricist distinction is “barbarous”.¹²² I present this work as an attempt in this spirit to encourage alternative accounts of the rise of philosophy instead emphasising other aspects of historical philosophers and bringing out the remarkable parallel development and interconnectedness present in the history of ideas. In particular I have stressed that the development of early modern philosophy is usefully charted by interpretation according to an idealist-materialist and immanentist-transcendentist continuum, in addition to the traditional epistemological categorisations. By such broadening of our conceptualisation we may usefully trace the development of metaphysics and philosophy generally, in a richer manner than simply in terms of the traditional English-speaking-empiricist versus Continental-rationalist opposition.

As well as contributing to the debate on the affinity of Leibniz and Berkeley, the design of my thesis has been to illustrate the utility for studying metaphysical philosophy of the immanence-transcendence distinction, by sketching how it could be employed (1) to explain further-reaching aspects of our two philosophers’ systems such as their conception of the number of existent substances, and (2) to illuminate interpretation of the rise of early modern philosophy, including the metaphysics of Descartes, Locke, and Kant. It has not been my purpose as such to argue for the *truth* or *falsity* of the propositions asserted by Leibniz or Berkeley, but rather to approach their systems primarily descriptively and allow them their claims, as I have also done with those who argue against them. Such an approach has been to examine the history of philosophy as an organic system and to chart its development, rather than to score easy points criticising centuries-old philosophers of yore who are now unable to

¹²¹ Frederick Copleston, ‘*A History of Philosophy Vol. IV*’, p. ix

¹²² MacIntosh, ‘*Leibniz and Berkeley*’, p. 163

defend their own systems. I have found that study of the progression of ideas is better served by aiming for a neutral stance with regard to the truth status of individual philosophical doctrines, such as the presently vastly unpopular position of *metaphysical idealism* itself, when tracing the process of philosophy's development and change. Rather than seeing in the history of philosophy nothing but a sequence of false opinions in the past giving way to a set of conveniently true opinions that happen to hold in the present, neutrality fosters sensitivity to the subtleties of the great philosophies. With this can come a better appreciation of the richness of the speculative inspiration of the past, and insight into the fact that episodes of intellectual consensus are always transient when viewed across the centuries.

Though the pursuit of metaphysics and the embracing of an idealist ontology have been unpopular within analytic philosophy of the last century, like all other disciplines, philosophical consensus is subject to contingent fashion and drift across time; so we should never be too confident that widespread assent within the discipline might not some day resemble the past more than it does the present. Students of the history of ideas can find themselves becoming suspicious about present-day claims to certainty. Each generation believes it has superseded the achievements of its forebears, but tracing the history of intellectual development remains of utmost importance. The study of the rise of modern philosophy is not merely of value as an intellectual curiosity. As we become better able to understand the myriad historical developments leading to present-day philosophy, we will be better equipped to deliver its future.

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