Berkeley and Bodily Resurrection

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ESTABLISHING AND DEFENDING the Christian faith serves as both a guide and a limit to Berkeley's intriguing metaphysics. Thus, at the end of the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, he writes:

> For after all, what deserves the first place in our studies, is the consideration of *God*, and our *duty*; which to promote, as it was the main drift and design of my labors, so shall I esteem them altogether useless and ineffectual, if by what I have said I cannot inspire my readers with a pious sense of the presence of God: and having shewn the falseness or vanity of those barren speculations, which make the chief employment of learned men, the better dispose them to reverence and embrace the salutary truths of the Gospel, which to know and to practice is the highest perfection of human nature.[1]

I take Berkeley at his word when he says that the design of his labors was to promote the consideration of God (and by extension the truth of Christianity). He believes that his immaterialism makes Christianity more plausible.

Berkeley's immaterialist philosophy was challenged as unorthodox for a number of reasons.[2] The most well-known problem concerns his accommodation of the Mosaic account of creation at the end of the *Three Dialogues*. Less well known, however, are his views concerning bodily resurrection. Berkeley believes that im-

[1] *PHK*, 156. All Berkeley citations are from *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* [*Works*], ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1948–57). The following abbreviations will be used for convenience:

3D	*Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*
ALC	*Alciphron: or the Minute Philosopher*
PC	*Philosophical Commentaries* (the notebooks)
PHK	*Principles of Human Knowledge*

Other texts of Berkeley, not abbreviated, are also from this source. Section numbers will be used for the *Principles of Human Knowledge*; all other references will be page numbers from the *Works*.

[2] The list of attacks is long. For a good overview of the more prominent engagements (including non-theological criticisms), see Harry Bracken, *The Early Reception of Berkeley's Immaterialism 1710–1733* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), esp. 1–38.

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materialism renders this doctrine (and hence Christianity) more plausible than its materialist rivals. To defend the plausibility of bodily resurrection, he advances an argument that I call the *natural analogy argument.* On its face this argument looks rather poor. The purpose of my endeavor is to demonstrate, however, that Berkeley applied his immaterialist resources in such a way as to make this particular argument actually respectable within the confines of his system, thus lending credence to his claims that immaterialism might, in fact, support Christian faith.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BODILY RESURRECTION

The doctrine of the bodily resurrection involves at least two related claims. There are the assertions about the bodily resurrection of Christ, and there are the prophecies about the bodily resurrection of all persons after the return of Christ. In bodily resurrection the actual body of the deceased is returned to life, regardless of the length of time that has elapsed since death. Whereas one might be able to categorize the resurrection of Christ as a singular miracle, the scope of the latter claim has pushed many to look for natural explanations that would make the bodily resurrection of ordinary individuals reasonable. At a minimum, the doctrine is sufficiently distinctive of Christianity and Judaism[3] that establishing the reasonableness of bodily resurrection is tantamount (in the minds of many) to establishing the plausibility of western Judeo-Christian beliefs as a whole. This, as we shall see, is Berkeley's claim.

The Biblical references to judgment-day resurrection vary in clarity, but two points are worth emphasizing.[4] The first is that the doctrine concerns the re-animation of the body. It is the *body* that will be made to live again, not simply the soul (which is, presumably, immortal). Second, when it comes time for my bodily resurrection, it will be *my* body that is returned to me, not just any body. Despite other worries about this doctrine, the traditional view takes for granted the numerical sameness of the soul (person) that is resurrected.[5] Lastly, it is worth mentioning that *all* of the passages Berkeley mentions in his notes, in his sermons, and in the relevant passages in the *Alciphron* are Old Testament references. This restriction to the Old Testament is somewhat surprising given such obvious references as *John* 12:24–25, *I Corinthians* 15, *Romans* 6:5, and, of course, *The Revelation.*[6] One

[3] See "Resurrection," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol 4, 39. I owe thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing me to the Judaic traditions that also support the doctrine of bodily resurrection.

[4] The passages concerning bodily resurrection that Berkeley explicitly mentions includes *Job* 19:25–27, *Ezekiel* 38:12–14, *Daniel* 12:2, *Ecclesiastes* 12:7, *Isaiah* 25:8 and 26:19, and *Psalms* 16:9–10 and 104:29–30. All passages are quoted from the King James version of the Bible. See especially *Works,* vol. 7, 105–13 (Sermon 8, "On Eternal Life").

[5] One might worry here that Paul invokes a distinction between flesh and body in *I Corinthians* 15:39–40. "Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies . . . " The worry is that Paul's question about the bodily resurrection is not Berkeley's, for 'flesh' is a type term whereas 'body' is not. Some Christian creeds (like the Roman creed) indicate that the resurrection of the flesh is *not* the resurrection of the body at all. Although an interesting question, pursuing this lies beyond the scope of this discussion, since Berkeley clearly reads 'bodily resurrection' in the sense that involves the numerical identity of an object over time.

[6] 'The Revelation' is the proper short title for the final book of the King James version of the Bible. The full title is 'The Revelation of St. John the Divine'.

might speculate here that because Berkeley's aim is to make plausible the truth of Christianity he chose to focus on the prophetic claims about resurrection that occurred before Christ's own resurrection. A better explanation is available. Berkeley emphasizes the earlier claims because the resurrection of Christ is generally considered to be a supernatural event. Berkeley's intention is to show that the Christian claims about *our* bodily resurrection are, in fact, reasonable and natural—independent of the claims about the singular resurrection of Christ.

Not only does Berkeley recognize the unusual nature of these claims, he revels in them. In the *Alciphron*, one of Berkeley's explicit goals is to demonstrate to his readers the truth of Christianity.[7] Thus the doctrine of the bodily resurrection figures prominently in his demonstrations. The view is sufficiently fantastical that given both multiple, consistent testimonies (about bodily resurrection) and the social and political climate of the time, one ought to give more weight to such claims and not less.[8] While he employs several arguments in the *Alciphron* and elsewhere defending the more general issue of the immortality of the soul, Berkeley generates only one serious argument specific to the resurrection; it appears most forcibly in the *Alciphron*. I call this the *natural analogy argument*, in which Berkeley seeks to make resurrection credible by comparing it to similar phenomena that everyone will admit occurs in nature. If the doctrine of the bodily resurrection is reasonable, then that is evidence that Christianity as a whole is true.

My intent here is not so much to evaluate the ultimate success of this argument as it is both to reconstruct its role in Berkeley's thought and to understand why he was so convinced that his metaphysics bolstered Christianity. Berkeley *claims* that immaterialism leads to God. Beyond his arguments for the existence of God, it would be nice to see whether one can reasonably make this case with other orthodox Christian beliefs. With Berkeley's goals in mind, let us turn to the argument he provides in the *Alciphron*.

THE NATURAL ANALOGY ARGUMENT

As I already mentioned, Berkeley's strategy is to make the doctrine of the resurrection plausible by comparing it with natural events. The complaint lodged by Berkeley's principal antagonist, Alciphron, is that Christianity is committed to some mighty odd views, including things like devils, miracles, regeneration, and even the resurrection of the dead.[9] Claims about bodily resurrections are difficult to believe, so much so that they border on the inconceivable. Berkeley's initial reply through Euphranor is the true but relatively weak retort that difficulty of belief implies nothing about impossibility. Similar sorts of things happen all the time in human society. A Siamese person might think the concept of snow so absurd as to border on the inconceivable, but that hardly makes propositions about snow absurd or impossible. Unless there is some internal contradiction evident in

[7] The *Alciphron* is decidedly a work of Christian apologetics as well as a philosophical text. It is important not to stray too far without reminding ourselves occasionally of this point. Cf. T. E. Jessop, "Berkeley as Religious Apologist," in *New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy*, ed. Warren Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 98–109.

[8] *ALC*, 274–282, esp 281.

[9] See *ALC*, 239.

the assertion, incredulity alone is insufficient to refute it. To be sure, Berkeley is right about this, but it hardly establishes that the claims are, in fact, true or even reasonable.

To make the resurrection of Christ (and the promise of bodily resurrection in general) plausible, Berkeley argues that resurrection is analogous to a natural phenomenon.

> EUPHRANOR: As for the resurrection of the dead, I do not conceive it so very contrary to the analogy of nature, when I behold vegetables left to rot in the earth rise up again with new life and vigor, or a worm, to all appearance dead, change its nature, and that which in its first being crawled on the earth become a new species, and fly abroad with wings.[10]

Berkeley is not introducing a line of analysis that is new. Comparing bodily resurrection to a cycle of decay and rebirth is venerable in the Christian tradition.[11] As an *argument* that makes its conclusion *plausible,* however, this hardly looks like one of Berkeley's best. Alciphron—even in the eighteenth century—was not compelled to think that the plants that rotted in the winter are numerically the same plants that grow again in the spring. The caterpillar example is not even one most would recognize *as* a case of death and resurrection, as suggested by Berkeley himself when he says that such a worm is "to all *appearance* dead." One could reasonably say that the butterfly is not the same creature as the worm. This, therefore, is not a case of resurrection at all. Alternatively, even if this were a case of resurrection, it is not analogous to bodily resurrection, since the prophesied promise guarantees that it will be the *same* (unchanged) body, not a new, radically altered one. On the surface of things, this just looks bad.

To be fair to Berkeley, however, perhaps this criticism is to hold him to too high a standard. First, it should be noted that in the early church, fertility and repetition in nature were common metaphors for resurrection. Thus Berkeley is drawing on a tradition in the Anglican Church.[12] Second, it is wise to note that the point of his argument is not to conclusively establish that resurrection occurs in nature, but rather to show that things *suitably like* resurrection occur. If near-resurrection-type events occur naturally, then it cannot be supposed absurd to have an instance of a genuine resurrection. Or so we might say in defense of Berkeley.

The problem is that we have evidence to think that Berkeley really did take this argument to be compelling, or, to be more cautious, we have excellent evidence to believe that he thought this sort of argument was at least rhetorically persuasive. The natural analogy argument appears several times in his later sermons. In his notes to a sermon at Newport, Berkeley writes the following:

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[10] *ALC,* 241. This is reminiscent of *I Corinthians* 15:36–37, which also invokes an analogy with seeds. See also *John* 12:24.

[11] In eighteenth-century discussions of religion, arguments from analogy were not uncommon. See, for example, Peter Browne, *Things Divine and Supernatural: Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1990; reprint, 1733), esp. 164–240.

[12] For a detailed discussion of this history, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), esp. 22–27.

2. uncertainty of Time, brevity certain. case not hopeless of a resurrection. many hints from nature in changes analogous thereto. night & day. winter & spring. fruits plants insects. production of animals.[13]

His eighth sermon, entitled 'On Eternal Life', discusses how the doctrine of the bodily resurrection is ample proof of the immortality of the soul. *Your* bodily resurrection could occur only if *you* persisted, in some sense, to be revived.[14] All that remains is to establish that resurrection is a plausible view.

> First then I am to shew that the belief of a future state is supported by good reasons from the light of nature. It is a natural way of proceeding, to argue from things past to things future, from things known, to things unknown, from visible things, to invisible. Let us then look abroad into this world, which was at first created and is still preserved and governed by God. Let us try whether we can discern therein any marks and tokens, footsteps or traces, parallels or examples whereby to illustrate and infer a resurrection. And indeed it is hardly possible to open our eyes and not see something that puts us in mind thereof. All the parts of this corporeal world are in a perpetual flux and revolution, decaying and renewing, perishing and rising up again. The various successions and returns of light and darkness, winter and summer, spring and autumn, the renovation of plants and fruits of the earth, all are in some sort so many instances of this truth.[15]

Even if we account for the fact that Berkeley is delivering a sermon to a lay audience, the extended emphasis on the natural analogy argument is noteworthy. At least one more extended passage is worth considering.

> Resurrection, I say, how strange soever at first sight will be found natural, that is conformable to the course of nature in her ordinary productions, which nature is the work of God. In the common course of things, that which was dead reviveth, that which was sown in the earth riseth again out of the earth. The winter is a kind of death to most things. The plants and herbs of the field decay and disappear. Fruits and seeds fall to the ground, and therein moulder and rot. The trees are disrobed of their beauty and look like dead and dry timber. In the spring all nature revives. New plants, new blossoms, new leaves. That which was sown being old and after sowing corrupted in the ground, now riseth again, fresh and young. And may we not hope the good and gracious God will do as much for man whom he hath made after his own image as we see him do every year to the meanest vegetables of the field.
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> For so much as we can gather from this visible frame of things there is a similitude in the operations of Providence. The God of nature acts by general and uniform laws. And if so may we not in reason think with St. Paul that the burial of humane bodies is to be regarded as the sowing of seed in the earth? And if other things that are sown rise again at the end of the year, why may we not conceive that after the season of corruption is expired, at the end of the great year, the consummation of all things, our bodies shall rise again according to the express word of God?[16]

From these additional passages we can reconstruct Berkeley's most complete argument. The natural analogy argument has the following structure:

[13] *Works*, vol. 7, 73. Notes for a sermon at Newport.

[14] This is, of course, consistent with an immaterial self being revived in a new body. We shall explore this possibility shortly.

[15] *Works*, vol. 7, 106–07 (Sermon 8, "On Eternal Life").

[16] *Works*, vol. 7, 107.

(1) Instances of resurrection and renewal occur in nature.
(2) Human death shares certain similarities with these events that occur in nature.
(3) God acts only in uniform ways. (Alternatively: nature is uniform.)
(4) Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that humans will be resurrected as well.

Notice the cautious nature of the conclusion. Berkeley does not take the rash position that he can prove the truth of the resurrection doctrine. His claim is merely that the doctrine is reasonable. "And although these instances are no direct proof of our resurrection, yet they shew that there is no absurdity or incongruity with the nature of things in that supposition."[17]

Even granting that these arguments would have some rhetorical power for his audience, their analogical force is, at best, suspect. The first premise *seems* to be false, and by extension, the second premise looks false as well. I maintain, however, that despite the superficial absurdity of it all, Berkeley actually has sober philosophical reasons for believing that both premises are true.

BODIES: SAME AND DIFFERENT

In the *Principles,* Berkeley explicitly engages the issue of resurrection only once. There the issue is not the natural analogy argument or the plausibility of resurrection *per se,* but rather the compatibility of immaterialism with religious orthodoxy. The passage is sufficiently rich, however, to give us clues as to how we should reconstruct his reasoning and explain his odd commitment to the natural analogy argument.

> The same absurd principle [the existence of matter], by mingling it self with the articles of our faith, hath occasioned no small difficulties to Christians. For example, about the resurrection, how many scruples and objections have been raised by Socinians and others? But do not the most plausible of them depend on the supposition, that a body is denominated the same, with regard not to the form or that which is perceived by sense, but the material substance which remains the same under several forms? Take away this material substance, about the identity whereof all the dispute is, and mean by body what every plain ordinary person means by that word, to wit, that which is immediately seen and felt, which is only a combination of sensible qualities, or ideas: and then their most unanswerable objections come to nothing.[18]

According to Berkeley, Socinian scruples and objections all stem from the supposition that sameness of body depends on the *numerical* sameness of the material substance that constitutes a body. It is not merely that material substance is involved; the objections arise from the statements of diachronic numerical identity *about* the matter. But can we not make similar judgments and raise similar questions about the sensory ideas we perceive as our bodies? After all, the doctrine of the bodily resurrection concerns the return of my body, not just some body.[19]

[17] *Works,* vol. 7, 108.

[18] *PHK,* 95.

[19] I warn the reader that none of this analysis assumes that Berkeley believes that persons cannot exist without bodies. That is an inference to which Berkeley would not assent. See *Works,* vol. 2, 282 (Letter to Johnson). This analysis simply concerns the doctrine of bodily resurrection and how Berkeley thinks he can accommodate it.

The answer, I submit, is no. When it comes to judgments about ideas, the concept of numerical identity does not apply *from our perspective as finite minds.* Being clear about this point from the outset matters. I am not indicating that Berkeley denies the concept of numerical identity. Rather, I am arguing that Berkeley believes that judgments about the numerical identity of (sensory) ideas perceived by finite minds are idle.[20] That is, there is a fact of the matter as to whether two ideas are numerically identical or not, but we do not have epistemic access to that information.

Berkeley believes that there is no significant distinction between the various qualitatively identical ideas had by distinct finite minds. 'No significant distinction' here means that, whether or not one posits it, the distinction *does no work.* In the *Three Dialogues,* Hylas challenges Philonous to explain how two persons can perceive the same thing. "But the same idea which is in my mind, cannot be in yours, or in any other mind. Doth it not therefore follow from your principles, that no two can see the same thing? And is not this highly absurd?"[21] The absurdity comes from at least two sources. The first is that Berkeley generally claims to be capturing the commonsense notions of ordinary folk; denying that two persons can perceive the same thing appears anything but commonsensical. Second, the metaphysics of how the ideas of finite minds are related to those of other finite minds looks hopelessly confused. If ideas were private (i.e., only I have my ideas), then regardless of appearances it would seem that no two persons could have numerically the same idea. If ideas are not private, then how are we to distinguish the ideas had by different minds? And what is the relationship that holds between minds and ideas?

Berkeley's reply to Hylas—and, by extension, to these concerns—is somewhat surprising. He claims that the vulgar view of 'same' extends only to qualitative identity. That is, when one makes judgments concerning sameness or difference among ideas, such pronouncements apply only to judgments of qualitative identity and not to those of numerical identity.

> If the term *same* be taken in the vulgar acceptation, it is certain (and not at all repugnant to the principles I maintain) that different persons may perceive the same thing; or the same thing or idea exist in different minds. Words are of arbitrary imposition; and since men are used to apply the word *same* where no distinction or variety is perceived, and I do not pretend to alter their perceptions, it follows, that as men have before, *several saw the same thing,* so they may upon like occasions still continue to use the same phrase. . . . But if the term *same* be used in the acceptation of philosophers, who pretend to an abstracted notion of identity, then, according to their sundry definitions of this notion (for it is not yet agreed wherein that philosophic identity consists), it may or may not be possible for divers persons to perceive the same thing.[22]

Note the two implicit claims. First, we ought to understand the word 'same' in the ordinary sense of qualitative identity, and second, the "philosophic" notion of numerical identity is an abstract one when applied to ideas. When combining

[20] Judgments about the identity of our ideas and those of God, however, are exempt from this claim. It is both possible and meaningful to ask whether our ideas are numerically identical with God's.

[21] *3D,* 247.

[22] *3D,* 247.

these two points, Berkeley believes that he has generated a consistent position that coheres well with common sense.

Contrary to the views of other scholars who take this passage to be either a muddle or an outright mistake, I think Berkeley is trying to make a considered philosophical point, and one that avoids at least an obvious blunder.[23] That it appears to rub common sense the wrong way rests largely on the mistake of begging the question against Berkeley's supporting metaphysics. Here I will argue that Berkeley merely wishes to invoke the following analysis: *From the standpoint of finite minds,* there is no "definite distinctness" between sensory ideas perceived by two separate finite minds. To make sense of this claim, we need to unpack the concept of the definite distinctness of ideas.

'Basic distinctness', on this view, refers to either numerical distinctness (in the positive case) or *perfect* qualitative identity (in the negative case). Two ideas are distinct when there are *two* ideas. *Definiteness* is a conjunction of two claims. An idea is definitely distinct from another idea when (a) the perceiver *knows* that they are numerically distinct, *and* (b) the fact that the two ideas are numerically distinct *matters* in terms of how each idea is connected to the rest of the perceived world. For instance, our ideas of "dog" and "pet" are definitely distinct. Not only do we know that there are two ideas, the ideas come apart under analysis in terms of our understanding the rest of the world. We might encounter dogs that are not pets, as well as pets that are not dogs.

Non-definite distinctness is, therefore, also the conjunction of two claims: (a) we do *not* know whether two ideas are numerically distinct or (perfectly) qualitatively identical, and (b) it does *not* matter whether or not they are numerically distinct in terms of how they are connected to the rest of our perceptual experiences. That is, one can stipulate that the ideas in question are numerically distinct but perfectly qualitatively identical, or that they are numerically identical (and hence, trivially qualitatively identical), and nothing hinges on which option one selects.

Let us return now to Berkeley's analysis of perceiving the same thing. He notes that questions about whether the sensory idea I have is numerically, or merely qualitatively, identical to that of another are simply empty; there is no substance to the dispute. Consider two persons gazing at a fallen leaf. Since there are two persons, are there two ideas being perceived or only one? The question, Berkeley thinks, is idle. There are two possibilities. In case (1), there are two numerically distinct, but perfectly qualitatively identical, ideas had by each person. In case (2), there is only one idea being perceived by the two minds. So is there one idea or two? Berkeley says it does not matter. Whatever judgments we make or actions we take in case (1) will be the same as the judgments we would make or the actions we would take in case (2). In terms of the connections of the ideas perceived, when we have perfect qualitative similarity, the connections will be the same, regardless of whether the qualitative identity metaphysically involves one idea or two.

As an additional example, Descartes and Malebranche reveal that there is no definite distinction between God's creation and conservation, since, from our

[23] Cf. Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (New York: Clarendon, 1971), 155–60; and George Pitcher, *Berkeley* (Boston: Routledge, 1977), 146–50.

perspective, there is no discernible difference. On the creation theory, God creates the world entirely anew at each instant in time. Technically, therefore, the desk in front of me now is not numerically the same desk that was before me a moment ago. On the conservation theory, God's will preserves the numerically same objects in the world from moment to moment. From our finite perspective, what differences would we detect in the world over time? They inform us that the answer is none at all. Hence, from our perspective, nothing hinges on which view we adopt, even if there are otherwise important *metaphysical* differences between the views. The creation and conservation views are non-definitely distinct ideas.

For our sensory ideas, they might be numerically distinct from those had by other finite minds—and nothing prohibits one from rationally attempting to make such a distinction—but nothing substantive turns on whether we accept or deny this assertion. Just as with the creation and conservation doctrines, the same *observable consequences* follow from both theories.

When we claim that we perceive different things, what do we *detect* other than qualitative differences? What additional feature is present during perception that allows us to separate otherwise indistinguishable ideas (assuming location and time are parts of the ideas)? Berkeley answers: nothing. And so he finishes here: "But who sees not that all the dispute is about a word? To wit, whether what is perceived by different persons, may yet have the term *same* applied to it?"[24] To reinforce his point, Berkeley considers another example. Imagine a house whose insides are gutted and replaced while the exterior is left untouched. One person might argue that there are two houses, while another might disagree and claim there is only one house. In so doing, however, the two persons have the exact, qualitatively identical ideas of the house(s) in mind. Here Berkeley invokes the same lesson learned from the distinct perceivers case. Other than purely verbal differences in attaching words to ideas, whether one thinks of there being two houses or only one has no *deep* impact on either the world or our understanding of it.

The house example is important because it raises potential objections. One might have taken notice that, in my original presentation, I use *perfect* qualitative similarity. The examples Berkeley uses make it doubtful that he has *perfect* qualitative identity in mind. After all, when two persons look at a leaf (or consider a house), it is hardly reasonable to suppose that all of the details are exactly the same. This worry, however, misses the point. For Berkeley, non-definite distinctness need only apply to the relevant features of an idea. So if, when considering whether the two houses are the same or not, that one person has an idea where the doors are brown, and the other has an idea where the doors are black, this distinction is irrelevant to the disagreement. The dispute in this case is whether the first house is "the same" as the second (with its insides replaced). If your idea is an idea of a house with brown doors and mine is not, *that* difference has nothing to do with whether our ideas of the two houses are the same. We are not comparing *your* idea of the original house with *my* idea of the rebuilt house; we are comparing the first ideas of each person with their own second ideas of the house. In other words, nothing prevents ideas from being non-definitely distinct in various ways. All that matters is

[24] *3D*, 248.

that, in the specific case at issue, whether there is one idea or two does not matter in terms of the observable consequences of judging one way or the other. This does not deny that there might be other irrelevant differences. But the features *at issue* are perfectly qualitatively identical, even if the rest of the particularities of the ideas are not. As a result, there is no cause for concern here.

Perhaps I have missed the thrust of the objection. One might insist that Berkeley cannot appeal to perfect qualitative identity because, as a matter of ordinary experience, we do not think we can establish this in the first place. After all, if two persons are gazing at a house or a leaf, their perceptions will differ, at a minimum, because of their different perspectives. The leaf might look round from my perspective, but oval from yours. Nonetheless, this case at least nominally counts as one where two persons are "seeing the same thing." The house case, as Berkeley presents it, is not susceptible to this sort of worry, since he is not comparing the ideas of distinct perceivers. The leaf example, however, is another matter. Berkeley appears strangely oblivious to this concern in the *Three Dialogues.* The best I can do for him, at this point, is to suggest that there might be some ambiguity about the *level* at which he identifies objects.[25] This is a well-known problem with his collections view of common-sense objects: it is not clear what *constitutes* perceiving an ordinary object. It might well be that I perceive a certain sensory idea that, strictly speaking, is different in its visual content from what another perceives (the leaf looks round instead of oval), even though we are nonetheless seeing the same *leaf.* The difficulties surrounding Berkeley's theory of common-sense objects lie outside the scope of this endeavor, and I have no sense that Berkeley was sensitive to this concern, at least not in this context.

Although I have relied heavily on Berkeley's analysis in the *Dialogues,* these examples are not an isolated exposition of his thoughts. In his notebooks he writes: "No identity other than perfect likeness in any individuals besides persons."[26] This appears to be an explicit rejection of any identity among sensible things other than qualitative identity. The entry, however, is marked with a '+', indicating that Berkeley might have been hesitant about it.[27] Here I suggest that his hesitancy stems from the fact that he does make use of numerical distinctness (even in addition to persons). Berkeley started with the insight that judgments of numerical identity cannot be made and later retreated to the more plausible position that, although they can be made, at least with respect to the sensory ideas had by finite minds, there is no profit in making them. There are other places where Berkeley implies that questions of numerical identity are without significance. In *De Motu,* for instance, he notes, "[s]imilarly, when the striking moveable body loses motion, and the struck body acquires it, it is not *worth* disputing whether the acquired motion is numerically the same as the motion lost; the discussion would lead into metaphysical and even verbal minutiae about identity."[28] Here Berkeley grants that

[25] I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this issue and providing the response.

[26] *PC,* 192.

[27] Bertil Belfrage ("A New Approach to Berkeley's *Philosophical Notebooks,*" in *Essays on the Philosophy of George Berkeley,* ed. E. Sosa [Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987], 217–30) has cast doubt on the traditional "black list" interpretation of the '+' symbol. Nonetheless, his analysis does not deny that many of these passages so marked are rejections. At best the '+' entries should used with care and only in conjunction with other textual evidence.

[28] *Works,* vol. 4, 50 (*De Motu,* sec. 68). The emphasis is mine.

one might reasonably ask about this distinction, but nothing turns on it. The question of the numerical identity of the motion passed is irrelevant to the mechanical principles under study. In other words, I submit that Berkeley is thinking about whether our perceptions (ideas) of the two motions in question are identical, and he does not see how that issue can be profitably addressed beyond the qualitative features of the ideas. Berkeley consistently reduces questions about identity to questions about perceived sameness.[29]

One immediate and important consequence of this analysis concerns the commonly held view that all (even sensory) ideas for Berkeley are private. If the sensory ideas of finite minds are not definitely distinct, then one might reasonably object that my reading of Berkeley could deny their privacy. And so it might. If, as Berkeley tells us, the ordinary understanding of 'same' involves only qualitative identity, then ideas are *already* not private, and nothing of consequence is lost. If two persons are looking at a leaf, and their ideas are qualitatively similar, then they have the "same" idea. As Berkeley says, "I do not pretend to alter their perceptions . . ."[30] On the other hand, if 'same' is used as it is by the "minute" philosophers to mean "numerically identical," then ideas will be private. But ideas are not definitely distinct, and I do not see Berkeley all that worried about this problem. Since nothing hinges on this aspect of the privacy of ideas in terms of our interaction with the sensible world, the issue is a non-starter.

SAMENESS AND THE NATURAL ANALOGY ARGUMENT

Returning at last to the issue of the bodily resurrection, we are now in a position to reconstruct Berkeley's reasoning in the *Principles* passage; and we also have the resources to see why he might have thought the natural analogy argument has some genuine persuasive force. Berkeley simply assumes in his metaphysics that the numerical identity of the mind or soul (perhaps, better yet, the person, but Berkeley is hesitant to use the word 'person'[31]) is preserved over time, including after death. I am going to grant him this assumption, since it is not strictly relevant to the issue of the bodily resurrection we are engaging here. The point under contention is how he can meaningfully say that it will be *my body* that is returned to me when I am resurrected.

And now we have a plausible story as to how. When God resurrects me, He provides me with the sensory ideas I formerly called "my body." This requires that we remember that, for Berkeley, there are no such things as physical bodies in the sense of mind-independent physical entities. You have a body as sure as you have a mind (and bodies are "real things"[32]), but to "have" a body is just to perceive a certain set of sensory ideas. Whether or not these ideas are numerically the same as the ones I had prior to my bodily death matters not. There might well be a fact of the matter, but from our perspective, the question is idle. As long as there is

[29] *PHK*, 95. This is not to say that Berkeley has no use for concept of numerical identity. He certainly does seem to invoke it elsewhere, but not with respect to the phenomenological content of the ideas of finite minds.

[30] *3D*, 247.

[31] See *PC*, 713.

[32] *PHK*, 33.

no definite distinctness between my pre- and post-resurrection ideas of my body, everything promised in the Christian doctrine is preserved.

This, in turn, makes the natural analogy argument look significantly better. Recall that the argument asserts that, since instances of resurrection and renewal occur in nature, it is plausible to suppose that a God who acts uniformly would not deny us the same treatment. The obvious objection is that the cases he cites—plants rotting and then arising again from the soil, worms turning into butterflies, and so on—are not really instances that anyone would call genuine cases of resurrection. From our preceding analysis, we can now give Berkeley some resources to respond to this objection. We mistakenly say that these are not instances of genuine resurrection because we are in the grip of a materialist ontology. From our perspective (as ordinary finite minds), the plant that rots away in the winter may well be the very same plant renewed in the spring. All that matters is that the qualitative appearances are preserved. And sure enough, the wheat-like perceptions I have in the winter give way to strikingly similar wheat-like perceptions in the spring and summer. It need not even be the case that the spring wheat is *perfectly* identical to wheat in the winter, so long as the *important and relevant* aspects of the wheat are perfectly similar. When I look at my arm, I see an appendage with a pattern of hair on it. Even though one of the hairs might have moved in the interim, when I look next, so long as the features of my arm are importantly similar, I still judge the arm to be mine. There is a potential problem lurking at this point, since Berkeley does not provide us with much analysis on how we accommodate qualitative change over time. Which features are important and relevant and which are not? I have no ready answer in defense of Berkeley. We know this much: we *do* accommodate change. In fact, sometimes that change is a good thing, and I think it actually a virtue of Berkeley's analysis that he can handle the possibility of change in our sensory ideas of our bodies.

I suspect that the worm example pleases Berkeley exactly along these lines. Here we have an example of a finite mind that starts with one set of sensory perceptions and winds up with another—and arguably a better one at that. Why should we not suppose the same will be true for us in the afterlife? There will need to be certain similarities in our perceptions pre- and post-death, but why should we not believe that as resurrected beings our perceptions will be, in some sense, superior? Few angels are depicted with acne, warts, and revolting deformities. I readily confess that this line of reasoning is purely speculative, but I find it consonant with Berkeley's line of thought elsewhere. It is my body in the afterlife, and somehow I know this, but that does not necessarily entail that the perceptions are perfectly similar in all respects. We grow and change during our lifetimes, so perhaps we grow and change in the afterlife. He is intent on preserving Christianity, so much so that he labors quite hard to make certain that his metaphysical system is not merely consistent with it, but positively promotes it and makes it more plausible. That might sound odd given the peculiarities of immaterialism, but I want to suggest that immaterialism itself should not sound so odd to someone convinced that it renders Christianity more obviously true. Thus, I do not suggest that the natural analogy argument is now a piece of impeccable reasoning, suitably understood. I do, however, wish to defend the claim that the argument might not be a *complete*

non-starter, given the rest of his metaphysical views. In fact, inside his metaphysic of immaterialism, I submit that the argument has some genuine plausibility. This is not meant to be an argument *for* immaterialism, but rather one *from* it.

IMMATERIALISM AND BODILY RESURRECTION

We have not, of course, come to the end of our worries about Berkeley's immaterialism and the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. We must still explore both views to see whether immaterialism really can comfortably accommodate bodily resurrection, properly interpreted. My position here is not only that immaterialism is compatible with a version of the bodily resurrection, but that it is probably a better fit than its materialist rivals. My position is a difficult thesis to prove, and so my goal in this final section is only to show how immaterialism does not engender any special difficulties with respect to resurrection. As a result, its ability to defuse traditional worries about the sameness of body makes it the more attractive mate for the doctrine of bodily resurrection. None of this implies anything about the correctness of either view, of course. The exploration of this terrain, however, provides insights into the motivations Berkeley had for his system.

As we have seen, there is a trivial sense in which Berkeley's immaterialism is an improvement over materialism with respect to Christian doctrine. No problem arises with bodily resurrection, because we do not need to account for material bodies. What we call "body" is just a combination of sensible qualities, and one does not need a vivid imagination to see how the story will go from there. In his correspondence with Berkeley, Samuel Johnson concedes the obvious point but raises another objection.

> There are some who say, that if our sensations don't depend on any bodily organs—they don't see how death can be supposed to make any alteration in the manner of our perception, or indeed how there should be (properly speaking) any separate state of the soul at all. For if our bodies are nothing but ideas, and if our having ideas in this present state does not depend upon what are thought to be the organs of sense, and lastly, if we are supposed (as doubtless we must) to have ideas in that state; it should seem that immediately upon our remove from our present situation, we should still be attended with the same ideas of bodies as we have now, and consequently with the same bodies or at least with bodies however different, and if so, what room is there left for any resurrection, properly so-called? So that while this tenet delivers us from the embarrassments that attend the doctrine of a material resurrection, it seems to have no place for any resurrection at all, at least in the sense that word seems to bear in St. John 5; 28, 29.[33]

Berkeley has a ready answer. Prior to death my mind perceives certain sensory ideas. Upon my bodily death, I stop having *those* sorts of experiences (ordinary sensory perceptions). Instead, I have different sorts of perceptions that happen to be non-sensory. When I am resurrected, I start having (ordinary) sensory perceptions again.

> I see no difficulty in conceiving a change of state, such as is vulgarly called death, as well without as with material substance. It is sufficient for that purpose that we allow sensible bodies, i.e., such as are immediately perceived by sight and touch; the exis-

[33] *Works*, vol. 2, 274 (Letter to Berkeley I).

> tence of which I am so far from questioning (as philosophers are used to do) that I establish it, I think, upon evident principles. Now, it seems very easy to conceive the soul to exist in a separate state (i.e., divested from those limits and laws of motion and perception with which she is embarrassed here), and to exercise herself on new ideas, without the intervention of these tangible things we call bodies.[34]

The soul can exist "in a separate state," by which Berkeley means that the ordinary limits we normally experience in sensory perception (such as the laws of motion) do not apply. Tangible things no longer intervene, but we still have ideas—"new" ones. These are ideas sufficiently different from those sensory ideas we perceive during our normal lifetimes to justify Berkeley's claim that they are exempt from the limits of our mortal sensory perception. In short, Berkeley is suggesting that we can account for bodily death by invoking different *kinds* of perceptual experiences while the mind continues to exist, as he says, "in a separate state." One might think—and Berkeley seems to leave room for this speculation—that he is suggesting that we might not have *bodies* at all in the afterlife. That strikes me as exactly right. For all we know, the sensory ideas with which we associate our mortal bodies might not apply in any straightforward way to our future state. Although this is true for all Berkeley knows, we may rest comfortably supposing that we will have our bodies in some recognizable sense because of God's promise to resurrect our bodies.

Thus, there remains a sense in which Berkeley retains bodily resurrection, Johnson's worries notwithstanding.[35] In subsequent letters, Johnson drops this particular objection, apparently satisfied by the answer.[36] He does, however, pursue another line of argument to which he adds a wrinkle about the resurrection.

The new worry is that the mind might not always think. Johnson cites fairly standard examples: dreamless sleeps, fetuses before they start to perceive, and states of *deliquium* without thought.[37] If the mind need not necessarily think, then its state is just like death. The logical extension of this view is that the soul might "sleep" after death until resurrection, such that one moment the mind finds itself near (bodily) death and the next it discovers its body resurrected. Furthermore, this description seems to make human resurrection just like the resurrection of brutes, who also perceive. Either the doctrine of resurrection does not apply specially to human persons, or Berkeley's argument for the natural immortality of the soul is threatened.

Berkeley's reply to this last of Johnson's objections is conciliatory, but he refuses to retreat from his position. These difficulties result from paradoxes concerning the nature of time. For Berkeley, a succession of ideas constitutes time. As a result, it is entirely possible and reasonable that the resurrection might follow "immediately" upon bodily death (from our perspective, at least). If God so arranged the sequence of ideas in that way, it would be so. Berkeley is effectively saying that Johnson does

[34] *Works*, vol. 2, 282 (Letter to Johnson II).

[35] Berkeley is consistent on this point. At *PHK*, 78, Berkeley even mentions the possibility of our having different kinds of ideas, should we develop a new sensory faculty.

[36] Interestingly, Johnson might have pursued this challenge further in the following way. Given what Berkeley has said, how could one—on Berkeley's empiricist principles alone—determine whether or not one has already been resurrected? Berkeley has no ready answer, so far as I can tell.

[37] *Works*, vol. 2, 289 (Letter to Berkeley III).

not really have an objection here. Rather, he is just giving voice to concerns about the odd-sounding nature of the consequences. Berkeley admits this:

> One of my earliest inquiries was about Time, which led me into several paradoxes that I did not think fit or necessary to publish; particularly the notion that the Resurrection follows from the next moment to death. We are confounded and perplexed about time.[38]

Berkeley simply denies Johnson's starting assumption. The mind always thinks. There are no intervals where it does not, since time is defined by the passing or succession of ideas. Berkeley concedes that what follows is unusual. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that his view remains consistent. There is no reason to think that immaterialism conflicts with bodily resurrection given any of the challenges made by Johnson.

The main lesson from this analysis is that unusual consequences do not, in themselves, constitute refutations. One might note that the following is consistent with my reading of Berkeley on the resurrection.[39] Prior to my bodily death, I have certain sensory ideas that constitute my body. I die and am resurrected, as promised by God. In the afterlife, however, I discover that when I will to raise my arm, I have the disconcerting experience of an insect-like appendage being raised. Could I be a bug in the afterlife? As was already suggested by Berkeley's treatment of the worm and butterfly case, the answer is, quite simply, yes. If God wills to provide me with bug-body sensations in the afterlife, then I would be a bug. But part of the promise God made in the pronouncements of the bodily resurrection is that we would be returned to *our own* (hence human) bodies. I have suggested that this might nonetheless entail some improvements and hence changes, but I think it incongruent with His promise for God to make me a bug. This does not deny that it is metaphysically possible, even if there are moral constraints in play, based on God's omnibenevolence. Importantly, however, even odd cases like this do nothing to damage the coherence of Berkeley's immaterialist account. Indeed, I rather think the opposite. God *could* raise us as bugs but promised not to do so. As a result, we have a testament not only to God's power, but to the fact that the promised resurrection is independently plausible given an immaterialist metaphysic.

There remains one last difficult issue. Some might allege that this view I attribute to Berkeley is, in fact, unorthodox. The promised bodily resurrection is anything *but* natural. God's fulfilling his promise in this way is supposed to be miraculous and supernatural. Hence, to the extent that Berkeley makes the promised resurrection a natural and "reasonable" event, it is to that degree no longer an article of faith.[40] Although I recognize the force of this concern, I think it misguided. Berkeley was trying to preserve the core features of Christianity *and* to demonstrate that they are, in fact, true. So he selected a doctrine peculiar to Christianity (and Judaism) and sought to defend it. I speculate that, in his mind, far more service

[38] *Works*, vol. 2, 293 (Letter to Johnson IV).

[39] My thanks to Michael Murray for the example.

[40] I am thankful to Geneviève Brykman and Father Carl deSousa, who simultaneously brought this worry to my attention in private discussion.

is done for Christianity (especially in an age where atheism and skepticism were taken seriously) by rendering its tenets plausible and even likely. Indeed, it is miraculous and good that God has given us the power to understand how and why He is going to keep his promise. It is to the *greater* glory of God that we can learn through the light of reason of the reasonableness of Christianity.

I conclude with a few reflective observations. Berkeley's views on Christian doctrines—and I speculatively wish to extend this beyond the doctrine of the bodily resurrection—ought to be viewed only within the framework of his immaterialist metaphysics. Part of the reason he adopted immaterialism is precisely because he believed it to strengthen, and perhaps demonstrate, the tenets of Christian theology. Thus, we have some obligation to read his arguments within that framework, since intellectual honesty demands nothing less of us.[41]

[41] I am thankful to several anonymous referees for their helpful comments.