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18 September 2007

Report on the dissertation of Marek Tomeček, 'Berkeley's Metaphysics and Epistemology between common sense and science'

This dissertation presents a sympathetic reading of Berkeley's Immaterialism, the philosophy largely embodied in his three classic works of 1707-1713. The dissertation is well-argued and economically written, showing a deep acquaintance with Berkeley's texts and the principal modern commentaries on Berkeley's philosophy. It was a pleasure to read, beginning with the descriptive Table of Contents, which I found helpful for finding my way in the dissertation. I don't think I can say enough in praise of the clear, graceful and lively style of the writer. Here let me say straightaway that I recommend that the dissertation should go ahead to the oral examination.

The middle chapter contain impressive discussions of the traditional difficulties in Berkeley's immaterialism- especially the problem of the continuity of physical objects- where Tomeček wades into the scholarly literature, doing an admirable job of sorting out some pretty slippery and complicated material, as inevitably it must be with so many rival interpretations. These chapters abound with careful analysis and real insights into Berkeley's meaning.

However, it was the first and last chapters that I found most valuable and distinctive. I felt that they also provided some of the unifying structure of the dissertation. I thought that sections 1.4 and 1.5, on the inner-outer metaphor and implicit and explicit commonsense, were particularly insightful. But

given the importance of commonsense within the thesis, I would be interested to have some further elaboration from the candidate on the latter distinction and how it connects with the views of J. L. Austin. I also liked the way the candidate brought in God in the final chapter, where he explains the relation between the theological arguments in Berkeley's *Principles* and *New Theory of Vision* (most clearly expressed in section 3.4), in short, that the former work proves God's existence and the latter (with *Alciphron* IV) proves His attributes, especially His wisdom. (I felt Tomeček's probably goes too far in saying God's love (pp. 114 and 123).

I now move to other issues about which I should like to hear the candidate comment at the viva, which, for convenience, I consider seriatim. First there is his striking claim (on p. 12) that Locke had a negative attitude to commonsense. I don't think this is the usual view of Locke. And although Tomeček's interpretation is well-defended by references and quotations, I still think that Locke's attitude is not as negative in *Essay* IV. X.x.3 as Tomeček suggests. For one thing, I think Locke is more critical of unthinking gentlemen than the vulgar or commonsense folk.

Another issue on which I should like some elaboration is the candidate's argument against Descartes (on p. 14) : that it is unimaginable that anyone could experience bodies without hardness. Yet isn't that what Berkeley imagines in his thought experiment of the unbodied mind at the end of the *New Theory of Vision*, that the unbodied mind is seeing things that have no hardness?

On a somewhat different tack, I would like Tomeček to say something of his use of certain terms traditionally used to describe Berkeley's thought, beginning with solipsist, which I think is introduced abruptly on p. 32. Wouldn't phenomenalist have been a more apt description? (Also see p. 49 top.) Similarly, I think the candidate needs to say a word or two about what he means by idealist and phenomenalist (see p. 57.)

Moving to more arguable matters, I wonder if Tomeček's own high regard for ordinary language has made him believe that Berkeley also truly thinks highly of it (see pp. 64- 6).

Another similar issue is: how close are Berkeleian ideas to images?

Tomeček thinks that they are not close (pp. 80-3), I think they are.

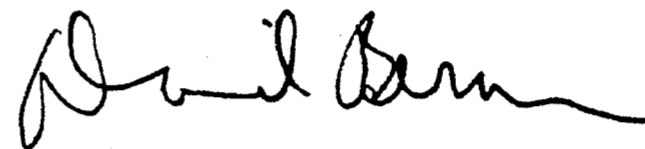
A more specific factual question I have (see p. 84: line 7 from bottom) is: what does Tomeček mean by 'looking at our own eye "from the side"'

Does he mean looking at it in a mirror?

I also had some trouble with the claim that the immaterialist account of causality belongs to the philosophical museum (p. 99). For doesn't Hume himself accept its occasionalism?

P. 115, line 2: something seemed to be wrong here.

Having mentioned these points for discussion at the viva, I think I should conclude by recording my admiration for Tomecek's work, which I believe to be a solid contribution to the study of Berkeley's philosophy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Bern". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.