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Adam Grzeliński
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland
e-mail: adamgrz@umk.pl

From *The Querist* to *Siris* and Back. Berkeley's Social Philosophy 1737–1752

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Although initially neglected and overshadowed by Berkeley's early works, Berkeley's scholars have lately drawn closer attention to *Siris* (1744). The unfavourable opinions of A. A. Luce or Ian Tipton seem to be somewhat outdated in light of recent scholarship. According to Luce's opinion, the philosophical part of the work provides an unnecessary and unconvincing support for its best part, namely the speculations concerning the virtues of tar-water[1]. As Tipton writes however, those speculations were not justified even by modern medical conceptions, and were rather bizarre: "in *Siris* Berkeley backed all the wrong horses, and we can now see that the horse called *panacea* was as lame as any[2]. Nevertheless in the detailed studies of such researchers as, Timo Airaksinen, Matthew Holtzmann, Lisa Downing, or Luc Peterschmitt, the medical issues of *Siris* were often treated as a historic curiosity and more attention was given to the scientific and metaphysical content of the work[3]. Not only did the scholars present detailed studies into early modern chem-

[1] A. A. Luce, *Berkeley's Search for Truth*, "Hermathena" No. LXXXI (1953), p. 22.

[2] I. Tipton, *Two Questions on Bishop Berkeley's Panacea*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", Vol. 30, No. 2 (1969), p. 204.

[3] See: T. Airaksinen, *The Path of Fire: The Meaning and Interpretation of Berkeley's* Siris. In *New Interpretations of Berkeley's Thought*, S. H. Daniel, Amherst (eds.), New York: Humanity Books, 2007, pp. 269–27; M. Holtzmann, *Berkeley's Two Panaceas*, "Intellectual History Review" No. 21 (2011), pp. 473–495; L. Downing, *Berkeley's Natural Philosophy and Philosophy of Science*. In *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, K. Winkler (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 230–265; L. Peterschmitt, *Berkeley and Chemistry in the* Siris. *The Rebuilding of a Non-existent Theory, New Interpre-*

istry, botany or theology with reference to *Siris*, but they also agreed that the proper analysis of its content was indispensable for the comprehensive understanding of Berkeley's philosophy; that in turn has raised the question of the possibility of its reconciliation regarding such issues as the existence of corpuscles or the status of ether with the following early works of Berkeley, namely: *The Principles Concerning Human Knowledge* (1710) or *Three Dialogues* (1712). According to Luce and Jessop, the editors or *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* Berkeley retained his early views; this interpretation led them to the statement that "Every general doctrine, and virtually every particular doctrine of his *Principles* (1710) is reaffirmed in *Siris*"[4]. Such a claim was challenged by many, especially by Timo Airaksinen, for whom the early conceptions of causality were changed in *Siris*, where the previous immaterialist standpoint seems to be irrelevant, if not abandoned[5].

In this article I would like to discuss some of the conclusions which spring from Berkeley's desertion of his early metaphysics, in which the main role was played by the opposition of spirits and ideas. A new metaphysics, having its sources in stoicism and neoplatonism, is introduced in its place together with an organistic conception of the world and emanatism, in which invisible fire mediates between God and sensual bodies. According to the interpretation presented here, we can find evidence that some of the main principles of Berkeley's philosophy changed in the period when he was elaborating *Siris*, namely a.) nature ceased to be understood in a static way, as an ideal, unchanging work, created by God once and for all b.) together with introducing the new metaphysics, Berkeley reconsidered the ways of achieving the well-being of society. Even if stoic elements can be found in the earlier works, even in *Dialogues* and *Principles*, as Steve Daniel asserts[6], I suggest Berkeley's thought underwent a later development. In particular, I will argue that in *Siris* (and after its publication) Berkeley understood that pieces of advice that he previously gave in *An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* (1721) and perhaps even in the first Dublin and London editions of *The Querist* (1735-1737) were insufficient. Seeing

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tations of Berkeley's Thought, in: *Religion and Science in the Age of Enlightenment*, S. Parigi (ed.), Dordrecht: Springer, 2010, pp. 73-85.

[4] T. E. Jessop, *Editor's Introduction* [to *Siris*]. In *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne,* A. A. Luce (ed.), T. E. Jessop, London-Edinburgh-Melbourne-Toronto-New York: Nelson, 1948-1957, Vol. 5. p. 12. Henceforward referred to as: *Works*, volume number, page number.

[5] T. Airaksinen, *Light and Causality in* Siris. In *Berkeley's Lasting Legacy. 300 Years Later*, T. Airaksinen, B. Belfrage (eds.), Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p. 92.

[6] S. Daniel, *Berkeley's Stoic Notion of Spiritual Substance*. In New *Interpretations of Berkeley's Thought*, p. 121 ff.

the world from a more human and temporal perspective, he stressed the need of changing human habits not only by immediate operation of the law, but also by sensitivity to human misery and the improvement of education: such claims are the echoes of *Siris* still heard in the new passages added to *The Querist* in the early fifties, in which Berkeley's previous optimism concerning nature and the human world declined, which made him ask "Whether there be any Thing perfect under the Sun?"(Q 343, *Works*, 6, 133)[7].

There are quite a few Berkeley's works which deal with political (in the broad meaning of the word) issues, that is: *Passive Obedience* (1712), *An Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* (1721), *Alciphron* (1732), *The Querist* 1735-1737, and several minor writings, such as *A Discourse Addressed to Magistrates and Men in Authority* (1738) or *A Word to the Wise* (1749). Very seldom, if at all, *Siris* is listed among them. What is more, usually it is not its social content, but rather metaphysics, science, or theology that draws the attention of its contemporary readers. Nevertheless, the lives of the poor and to find the means "to feed the hungry and cloathe the naked", so the main purpose of *Siris* was "to cure the ill" – by improving both people's opinions and their state of health, "for – as Berkeley writes after Plotinus – if the lute be not well tuned, the musician fails of his harmony"[8]. Also the quotations from the *Epistle to the Galatians* and Horace, which open the work, disclose the social aim of *Siris*. In Gal, 6:10 we read: *As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men*, and in Horace's letter: *Hoc opus, hoc studium, parvi properemus et ampli* [*Si patriae volumus, si nobis vivere cari*]: *This work, this study, let us, high and low, urge on with vigour, if we desire to be dear to our country, dear to ourselves*.

The Querist 1735-1737

The Querist is principally focused on economic issues – the improvement of the economic situation in Ireland, the implementation of paper

[7] All the references to *The Querist* according to Luce-Jessop edition. Nevertheless, it must be added that it is very difficult to trace all changes between the two first editions of the work (1735-1737) and the editions from the 1750s, because Luce and Jessop base their edition on the last printed version of Berkeley's works, supplementing the text with the appendix containing the queries omitted in the later editions, but not stating clearly which parts of the text were added later, although they do not appear in the first two editions. The comparison between earlier, i.e. from the 1730s, and later, i. e. from the 1750s, editions of *The Querist* would not be possible without Professor Bertil Belfrage's new edition, the manuscript of which I could use. I would like to express my gratitude for this possibility.

[8] *Works* 6, 31.

money, the increase of national income, and – to some extent – making Ireland independent of international trade. Patrick Kelly points out two main motifs Berkeley's project was subordinated to. One was presenting "a new way of thinking about Irish economics"[9], namely presenting the true meaning of money as such and stressing the importance of domestic commerce for the national wealth. The other key motif was to indicate the proper means (political and strictly economic alike) designed to extricate Ireland from economic collapse which was a result of the political situation at the dawn of the 18th century. Among the most significant of Berkeley's recommendations were: establishing the national bank and introducing paper money instead of foreign currency together with stirring up industry and providing full employment.

According to Berkeley, to stir up industry several conditions had to be met.

A) A *new way of thinking* is necessary, especially concerning the true understanding of the money, which is nothing but "a ticket or counter" (Q 23, *Works*, 6, 106). That involves the breach of a mercantilist dogma, according to which the only way to gain wealth is to accumulate gold and silver, the amount of which is the true rate of the wealth of a nation. In the place of this traditional understanding of the economic well-being Berkeley postulates the introduction of paper money (banknotes), the value of which is assured by the import-export balance and covered by land. The wealth is no longer the total amount of gold and silver (being quite an abstract idea), but rather a synonym of the "plenty of all the necessaries and comforts of life" (Q 542, *Works*, 6, 149). Finally, it is not the victory in the international economic competition that will bring wealth to Ireland, but "a domestic commerce between the several parts of this kingdom" (Q 110, *Works*, 6, 114), which should "suffice in such a country as Ireland, to nourish and cloath its inhabitants, and provide them with the reasonable conveniences and even comforts of life" (Q 127, *Works*, 6, 115).

B) The development of some *new economic instruments*: improving the circulation of money (both banknotes and small coins, which would make it possible for everyone to enter into monetary transactions (Q 22, 225, 227), establishing the national bank and own mint (Q 94, 485, 573) which would make Ireland independent of some other currencies (especially English) and the fluctuations of its value.

[9] P. Kelly, *Berkeley's Economic Writings*. In *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, p. 347.

C) A change in thinking about the nature of money and of economic mechanisms conditioning the improvement of the situation of a society (A) together with providing the abovementioned solutions (B) will extricate people from the embrace of spleen and idleness (Q 362) and will dispose them to work in the moment when the "bulk of our inhabitants have shoes to their feet, cloathes to their backs and beef in their bellies" (Q 112, *Works*, 6, 114). However, it is not the exchange of goods but the circulation of money that can foster industry. This line of reasoning can be clearly noticed when the following queries are juxtaposed:

> Whether money be not only so far useful, as it stirreth up Industry, enabling men mutually to participate the fruits of each other's labour? (Q 5, *Works*, 6, 105)
> Whether the way to make men industrious, be not to let them taste the fruits of their industry? (Q 355, *Works*, 6, 134)
> Whether all manner of means should not be employed to possess the nation in general, with an aversion and contempt for idleness and all idle folk? (Q 379, *Works*, 6, 136)

Though only in some respects does Berkeley seem to be innovative, the comparison of *The Querist* with his earlier work, *An Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain*, allows Patrick Kelly to state that since the time of its publication Berkeley has deepened his knowledge of economics considerably. Whether Berkeley did make use of the pile of publications on Irish economy that came out in the twenties and thirties, or rather he was a careful spectator of the affairs on the domestic political scene, those writings must have provided him with detailed information about the current situation. Previously what seemed to be a proper remedy was just a "recourse to those old-fashioned trite maxims concerning religion, industry, frugality, and public spirit" which were of late "forgotten"[10], and not more or less sophisticated economic tools but merely calling for abandoning luxuries and extravagancies and for finding the satisfaction in a modest and moderate way of life. In his earlier work Berkeley seems to neglect the fact that it was no other person then George I who was the governor of the South Sea Company, the collapse of which ruined Great Britain and was the immediate cause of writing the essay. We would search in vain for any hint that one of the reasons of the South Sea frenzy was the level of confidence in the Parliament, whose members made the whole plot possible. In *An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* we still find the same precepts of blind

[10] G. Berkeley, *An Essay towards Preventing the Ruin of Great Britain*, *Works,* 6, 69.

obedience to the supreme power which we remember from *Passive Obedience* (1712):

> …and perhaps it may be no easy matter to assign a good reason why blasphemy against God should not be inquired into, and punished with the same rigour as treason against the king. For though we may attempt to patch up our affairs, yet it will be to no purpose; *the finger of God will unravel all our vain projects, and make them snares to draw us into greater calamities*, if we do not reform that scandalous libertinism which (whatever some shallow men may think) is our worst symptom, and the surest prognostic of our ruin[11].

In short – as the catastrophe caused by the collapse of the company springs solely from the abandonment of Christian piety, the remedy seems to be quite simple – the recourse to a virtuous and religious life, the renunciation of luxuries, "our gaming, our operas, our masquarades"[12]. Although the "history of Great Britain" does not lack great personages, who can "inspire men with a zeal for the public, and celebrate the memory of those who have been ornaments to the nation, or done it eminent service"[13], later departure from the rules of Christian religion was the cause that people "degenerated, grew servile flatterers of men in power, adopted Epicurean notions, became venal, corrupt, injurious, which drew upon them the hatred of God and man, and occasioned their final ruin"[14].

The situation is quite clear: the catastrophe was culpable, the wrath of God was just, and the remedy is still in our hands.

In *The Querist* Berkeley puts much more attention on the economic rather than moral aspect of the disastrous situation: he analyses the results of the lack of balance between exporting necessary wares and importing luxuries, the problem of absentees and the leaking of specie, the necessity of diversification of production of various textiles, weak domestic commerce, the impossibility of wool trade and so on. But again, it is almost a hopeless task to find the remarks about the act of English Parliament from 1699 precluding Ireland from exporting wool (the only country that could buy Irish wool was England, but it was virtually impossible due to the barrage duty imposed on it). No remark can be found that the trade restrictions laid by George II have not been withdrawn, and the English market was closed for Irish dyed linen or iron[15]. Instead, Berkeley suggests that Irishmen should "strike out and exert ourselves

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[11] Ibidem, *Works*, 6, 71, italics mine.
[12] Ibidem, *Works*, 6, 81.
[13] Ibidem.
[14] Ibidem, *Works*, 6, 85.
[15] S. Grzybowski , *Historia Irlandii*, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1977, p. 246.

in permitted branches of trade, than to fold our hands and repine" (Q 73, *Works*, 6, 111) and asks: "Whether the prohibition of our woollen trade ought not naturally to put us on other methods, which give no jealousy?" (Q 81, *Works*, 6 112) It was not cynicism (as Caffentzis suggests in his exaggerating this aspect of the work[16]) but a sober judgment in which real possibilities were weighed.

Thus in *The Querist* Ireland is still treated – as it was in *An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain* – as a country subject to Great Britain. Although Berkeley is aware of unfavourable laws instituted by England, he utters no word about them. Similarly, it is hard to believe that while proposing the project of establishing the Irish mint, he was unaware of William Wood's halfpence controversy from 1722, which alarmed many noblemen (including archbishop King and Jonathan Swift) and induced a general distrust of any English intervention in Ireland[17]. Berkeley seems to be walking on thin ice, doing his best to secure Ireland's economic growth, but also trying not to annoy the English and say nothing about their responsibility of (at least a part of) the underdevelopment of his country. That allows him to seek rather oversimplified reasons for the rivalry between the two countries and state that it was only "our hankering after the woollen trade, be not the true and only reason, which hath created a jealousy in England towards Ireland" (Q 89, *Works*, 6, 112).

Although England and Ireland are two nations, they should become "one people" (Q 89, 90, *Works*, 6, 112). What is more, the upper (that is Protestant) part of Ireland should recognize its own identity, since in fact they are "truly English, by blood, language, religion, manners, inclination, and interest" (Q 91, ibidem). Berkeley's desire to maintain the *status quo* is also discernible in the later editions of *The Querist*, where he advocates the need of sustaining the law order (Q 336) and adds: "Whether those men, who move the corner-stones of a constitution, may not pull an old house on their own heads?" (Q 337, *Works*, 6, 121).

The brave and innovating project of economic growth based on inward economy, was rather the means and not the end: surrounding Ireland with "a wall of brass a thousand cubits high" (Q 134, *Works*, 6, 116) should make Ireland stand on their own feet and became – perhaps under the British wings – an equal rival of the leading economies of the time.

This quick recourse to some economic issues shows that although he often quoted detailed economic data, the particular solutions he proposed were shaped by his sincere desire to help people in need (both

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[16] See: C. G. Caffentzis, *Exciting the Industry of Mankind. George Berkeley's Philosophy of Money* Dordrecht-Boston-London: Kluwer Academics Publishers, 2000.

[17] P. Kelly, *Berkeley's Economic Writings*, p. 345.

Catholics and Protestants) and his general views on politics (Irish dependence upon Great Britain and the primacy of protestant religion), on economics (his objection against treating specie as a synonym of wealth did not mean an ultimate breaking with the mercantilist tradition), and even more general views on the nature of society and nature. Among those more general views, there are the following:

a) Recognizing that the human world is an organic whole; for example in Q 48 (*Works*, 6, 109) Berkeley suggests that for a proper understanding of the nature of the development of economic growth it would be right to consider "a ship's crew cast upon a desert island, and by degrees forming themselves to business and civil life"; later he adds that the public should act according to "an end, a view, a plan" (Q 50, *Works*, 6, 109). Similarly to nature which is administered by its wise Author, so does the human society need governance of wise legislators for its development; but the successful development needs the improvement of the conditions of all social strata;

b) This organic whole is hierarchical, and particular social classes should contribute to the public good, each in its own, proper way, gentlemen and criminals alike (Q 53, 57). Social structure is inviolable and sacred, feeding the poor and clothing the naked is like "feeding the root, the substance whereof will shoot upwards into the branches, and cause the top to flourish" (Q 59, *Works*, 6, 109). Or, less metaphorically:

Whether the dirt, and famine, and nakedness of the bulk of our people, might not be remedied even although we had no foreign trade? And whether this should not be our first care, and whether, if this were once provided for, the conveniences of the rich would not soon follow? (Q 106, *Works*, 6, 114).

c) The true sources of wealth are "the four elements, and man's labour therein" (Q 4, *Works*, 6, 105). As in the earlier works, the providential order is not doubted, and Berkeley seems to follow the same path as did Augustine and modern philosophers such as Leibniz and Descartes before him, convinced that the perfection of the Creation overshadows the imperfection of its parts seen from the limited human perspective. We live in the best of worlds, created by the benevolent Author, and the evidence of God's care over the world was found not only in the Scripture, but also in the beauty of nature[18], being so overwhelming that the "very Blemishes and Defects of Nature are not without their use, in that they make an agreeable sort of variety, and augment the beauty of the rest of the creation, as shades in a picture serve to set off the bright-

[18] G. Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, Works, 2, 210.

er and more enlightened parts"[19]. In *The Querist* such evidence of providential care is the natural richness of Irish land, whose soil is the "most fertile" and the climate "most temperate" (Q 273, *Works*, 6, 128). It is only weakness and wickedness of human nature that should be blamed if any disaster occurs, for none other but Berkeley's countrymen are the readiest to find excuses rather than remedies (Q 274). It is nature that is perfect, it is human wickedness and weakness that is the cause of the economic evil.

From *The Querist* (1737) to *Siris* (1744)

Although in *Siris* Berkeley carefully avoids referring to the notion of matter, he uses the word *matter* very seldom and only in a commonsensical rather than a technical way[20]. He prefers, as well, to use the notions of *bodies* or *corpuscles* instead (we read about "elements of air, earth, and water, and … all sorts of mixed bodies"[21]; "divers kinds of bodies"[22], the immaterialism plays no role in the work. Its main theme, to some extent similar to that of *The Querist*, namely bringing help to those who need it, is reformulated: the charitable effects of tar-water are explained by referring to God's causality in the Creation[23]. In contrast to his earlier works, causality is neither understood in its psychological, nor physical sense. Berkeley abandons his earlier view, according to which there is a sharp opposition between spirits and ideas, and God immediately causes (in a metaphysical sense) us to see bodies.

Whereas in his early works (*Principles, New Theory of Vision*) Berkeley separates the fields of metaphysical and scientific discourse in *Siris,* the situation is not so clear. In some parts of the work, Berkeley shows a vision, in which the main role is played by the invisible fire – subordinated to God, but also being a subject of scientific investigations (though indirectly and only through their effects). Hence, Berkeley provides its readers with many references both to the speculative ancient philosophers (like Plato, Plotinus and the stoics) and to the 17th-century natural philosophers and scientists, such as Homberg, Boerhaave, von Helmont and even Newton). He adopts their views and adjusts them to his general vision of the organic, animal-like universe, enlivened by in-

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[19] G. Berkeley, *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, par. 152, Works, 2, 111.

[20] *Siris*, par. 71, *Works*, 5, 54; par. 127, ibidem, 5, 75.

[21] *Siris*, par. 36, ibidem, 5, 43.

[22] *Siris*, par. 126, ibidem, 5, 74.

[23] T. Airaksinen, *The Path of Fire: The Meaning and Interpretation of Berkeley's* Siris, p. 271.

visible fire[24]. The vision stresses the ancient and renaissance parallelism between the macrocosm (that is the universe) and microcosm (the man). As the primary efficient and final cause is the benevolent Reason which acts by the use of the secondary and intermediate cause of the invisible fire enlivening the world, so the principal cause in man is his mind, and the intermediate one – animal spirits enlivening his body. In *Siris* 43 we read for example: "light or solar emanation (…) in respect of the macrocosm is what the animal spirit is to the microcosm"[25]. So, the parallelism can be described as follows

God → invisible light/spirit → natural effects
Mind → animal spirits → living human body

Let us go no further into questions of how promising was the project of reconciliation of the metaphysics with scientific investigations of Berkeley's times, or how profoundly Berkeley was acquainted with the discoveries of 17th and 18th-century chemistry that should have been its justification[26]. Nonetheless, adopting the Neo-platonic emanatism and an organistic vision of nature meant that immaterialism was no longer a handy weapon against emerging modern irreligious scientism. Apart from that, the change in understanding the causality had its significant and quite far reaching consequences both for Berkeley's conception of the world and for his general attitude towards social issues.

a) Nature is no longer conceived in static terms and its dynamism is recognized. In *Principles, Three Dialogues* or *De Motu* the stable and reliable laws of nature together with the immaterialist thesis were a premise for the providential order and the perfection of nature, and the beauty of Creation elevated human soul and convinced man about its perfection. The picture of the world was so overwhelming that it did not allow any hesitations: all imperfections were defects of men, who cannot explain all phenomena according to the well-established laws of nature, who is not sensible enough to appreciate nature's beauty (*Dialogues*), who is immoral, advancing temporal advantages over moral perfection (*Passive Obedience*), and, finally, who is too idle and lazy to gain profits by raising crops in the rich soil and to contribute to the wealth of the nation, guaranteed by God to the industrious. Also moral precepts that lead to "the general well-being

[24] *Siris*, par. 152–156, 166, 175, 262, 273–279.
[25] *Siris,* par. 4, *Works*, 5, 45-46.
[26] See: L. Peterschmitt, *Berkeley and Chemistry in the* Siris. *The Rebuilding of a Non-existent Theory*, p. 76 ff.

of all Men, of all Nations, of all Ages of the World"[27] refer to moral perfection and the promise of salvation of those who step on the path of Christian faith, rather than a remedy for earthly calamities. In the opposition to the universal and rational precepts, in *Siris* Berkeley exhorts to practice another way of improving the state of men: careful studies of nature and an immediate and temporary help for those in need. In various cases tar-water should be used differently. Its universal effectiveness, its being a *panaceum* is nothing more than an assumption and hope. It cures not only the human soul (as the evidence of God's gift given to men), but also the weak and suffering human body.

b) Nature as an organic, animal-like whole is different from nature described in scientific, physical terms. Macrocosm, like microcosm, although they are both governed by reason and enlivened by fire or animal spirits, can be temporarily corrupted. And even if nature, as the work of the incomparable Creator is not mortal, like the human body, its immortality is not identical with a perfection in the meaning of the word which can be found in *Principles*, where we read about "the very blemishes and defects of nature" that are but "shades in a picture serving to set off the brighter and more enlightened parts"[28]. Now Berkeley writes for example: "This mighty agents is everywhere at hand, ready to break forth into action, if not restrained and governed with the greatest wisdom. Being always restless and in motion, it actuates and enlivens the whole visible mass, is equally fitted to produce and to destroy, distinguishes the various stages of nature, and keeps up the perpetual round of generations and corruptions"[29]. Destruction and corruptions are an indispensable part of the Creation.

Back to *The Querist* (1750-1752)

In the later editions of *The Querist* from the early fifties, which were published after *Siris*, Berkeley omitted some queries (especially those concerning the proposal of funding the national bank), but added 45 new ones. Can any hints suggesting a change in Berkeley's views be found there?

As we have seen it was not a change concerning political matters – Berkeley advocates the political *status quo*, to maintain the functioning

[27] G. Berkeley, *Passive Obedience*, par. 7, *Works*, 6, 20.
[28] G. Berkeley, *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, par. 152, *Works*, 2, 111.
[29] *Siris*, par. 152, *Works*, 6, 82.

of the law and is convinced that – given the circumstances – the situation is favourable, at least at a certain measure for all: Protestants and Catholic alike. One can suppose that for Berkeley, the same Berkeley who cured poor Irishmen with tar-water, any rebellion – such as the Jacobite uprising in 1745 – would ruin the political body and the established order. I would like to draw attention to three issues that appear in the later editions of *The Querist*.

Berkeley is still convinced that the improvement of the situation in Ireland can be attained by fostering education – not only promoting charity schools that should provide the young with practical skills and inculcate the rules of Christian religion in them (Q 304, *Works*, 6, 161), so as "some of the better sort of children in the charity schools" were bred up and qualified "missionaries, catechists and readers" (Q 264**,** *Works*, 6, 127). Now – that is in the fifties – he has in mind speculative issues, rather than "historical, moral, and political" (Q 183, 184, 185, *Works*, 6, 120). So he writes:

> "Whether a wise State hath any Interest nearer Heart than the education of youth? (Q 195, *Works*, 6,121).
> Whether the mind like soil doth not by disuse grow stiff; and whether reasoning and study be not like stirring and dividing the glebe? (Q 196, *Works*, 6, 121).
> Whether an early Habit of reflexion, although obtained by speculative sciences, may not have its use in practical Affairs? (Q 197, *Works*, 6, 121).
> Whether even those parts of academical learning which are quite forgotten may not have improved and enriched the soil, like those vegetables which are raised, not for themselves, but plowed in for a dressing of land? (Q 198, *Works*, 6, 121).

Like "a dressing of land" education is designed to change Irish society in a slow, but inevitable way. As "dressing the land" is designed to prepare the soil for future crops, so is education designed to change the future, which cannot be obtained immediately, or at once. And the subject matter of education should be not only the heavenly order contained in the Christian learning, but also the earthly one, or natural issues contained in speculative sciences.

The parallelism of the microcosm and the macrocosm remains adequate in the description of political affairs. The curative procedure is now designed not only for the human body (thanks to the invisible fire operating in the bodies of those who do not drink strong alcohol but take well prepared tar-water instead) or human soul, but also to the body politic.

Whether there be anything perfect under the sun? And, whether it be not with the world as with a particular State, and with a State or body politic as with the human body, which lives and moves under various

indispositions, perfect health being seldom or never to be found? (Q 343, *Works*, 6, 133).

Whether, nevertheless, men should not in all things aim at perfection? And, therefore, whether any wise and good man would be against applying remedies? But whether it is not natural to wish for a benevolent physician? (Q 344, *Works*, 6, 133).

Though economics and proper laws given by wise legislature are still the keys to a better future, it is not a lawgiver that proposes the remedies, but a benevolent physician. So Berkeley prescribes not only strict rules of the law, but says he should be a *benevolent* physician. Men deserve his help – in many aspects: religious, moral, but also earthly matters. And again, although still it is human weakness and inability that is the source of human misery and it is the duty of the physician to improve it, now – and perhaps not earlier – Berkeley admits that "nothing under the sun is perfect". Could the younger Berkeley, an admirer of the perfect nature, created by God, write such words?

There are at least two moving testimonies of this change in Berkeley's opinions. The first is the puzzling declaration which closes *Siris*, in which he looks back at his previous achievement and quoting Cicero's words he seems to acknowledge his earlier mistakes: "He that would make a real progress in knowledge must dedicate his age as well as youth, the later growth as well as first fruits, at the altar of Truth. *Cujusvis est errare, nullius nisi insipientis in errore perseverare*"[30].

The other testimony can be found in a letter to Prior (the third letter to Thomas Prior on tar water according to the Luce-Jessop edition). Describing the forerunners of the plague that could invade the Britannic islands (unusual quantity of insects, epidemic distempers among the cattle, long easterly winds), he adds:

Beside these natural forerunners of a plague or pestilence in the air, it is worth observing that a prognostic may be also made from moral and religious disposition of the inhabitants. Certainly that the *digitus Dei* doth manifest itself in the plague was not only the opinion of mankind in general, but also in particular of the most eminent physicians throughout all ages down to our own[31].

Although Berkeley, still a faithful Christian, is still trying to justify God's sentences by seeing the right punishment for human immorality in them, he feels obliged to give a detailed prescription to ease people and to help them bear the suffering – of course instructing them how to use a preventive medicine in order to avoid the plague.

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[30] *Siris*, par. 368, *Works*, 5, 164.

[31] G. Berkeley, *A [Third] Letter to Thomas Prior*, *Works*, 6, 191-192.

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Summary

The article reconstructs a shift in Berkeley's understanding of nature and human society in his late works: *The Querist* (1737-1752, various editions) and *Siris* (1744). Together with the abandonment of metaphysics of his early works, Berkeley seems to have reconsidered the notion of nature there. He ceased to understand it in a static way, as an ideal, unchanging work, created by God once and for all and conceived it rather as an organicistic and dynamic whole developing in time. Together with that change in metaphysics, Berkeley developed a new approach towards solving social problems which stressed the need

of changing human habits not only by immediate operation of law but also by sensitivity to human misery and the improvement of education. This change can be seen when the earlier and later the editions of *The Querist* are compared.

Keywords

George Berkeley, *The Querist*, *Siris*, Platonism, Irish philosophy, social philosophy