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Berkeley's Criticism of Shaftesbury's Moral Theory in *Alciphron* III

Laurent Jaffro

My aim is to expound Berkeley's argument against Shaftesbury's ethical views, concentrating on the Third Dialogue of *Alciphron*. I will address one limited question: To what extent is Berkeley's point correct? How far is his reading of Shaftesbury pertinent? There is indeed a second question I would like to tackle: Does Berkeley's criticism of Shaftesbury rely on specifically Berkeleyan premises? Or, to put it in Aristotelian terms, is this refutation dialectical? How far does it draw on Berkeley's own basic conceptions of the nature of morality? One might recognize in these two questions the two sides which should be distinguished in every philosophical criticism: First, does the criticism inform us correctly of the views that are held by the criticized? Second, does the criticism express the critic's own views on the subject? Our attention must be drawn to the fact that in order to be fair and relevant a criticism must fulfill the first criterion, not necessarily the second. A criticism cannot be fair without being well-informed; but it can be well-informed without being grounded on the critic's principles.

It is also to be noted that some historians of philosophy consider that the criticism one philosopher can make about another is in most cases a dialogue of the deaf. Such a statement amounts to saying that if a criticism fulfills the second criterion (if it expresses the critic's own views), then it should fail to fulfill the first (it will not inform us correctly of the views of the criticized). We may suspect that, should such an inference be true, there would not be any genuine discussion among philosophers. These methodological observations are intended only to make my point clear. In this paper, I maintain that Berkeley's criticism of Shaftesbury is fair and relevant and is not a dialogue of the deaf.

As a further preliminary, it should be recalled that *Alciphron* was written against the free-thinkers and in defense of Christianity. Today free-thinking and religious skepticism still smack of heresy, not to mention complete atheism. But even though free-thinkers in the British Enlightenment may have been heretical on the subject of religion, the majority of them were at the same time orthodox in the matter of morality. They considered Christianity as a tale, but they did not attack virtue nor benevolence. They were even happy with the Gospel when viewed as a recommendation of justice and charity. Most of them rejected the supernatural in the name of the natural, namely of the good nature of humanity and society.

Only a few, and in particular Bernard Mandeville, opposed divine commands with social conventions instead of nature. Mandeville, who is present in *Alciphron* as Lysicles—the main character of the Second Dialogue, as an advocate of vice—extended to morality and to Shaftesbury's "natural sense of right and wrong" the libertine criticism of the supernatural. In his view, morality as an autonomous realm was just another tale. When he rejected the enthusiasm for virtue as a new illusion, Mandeville seemed to stick to Hobbesian conventionalism; he might as well be regarded as a pessimistic disciple of Augustine. But this is not my point here. Rather, I want to focus on how Berkeley makes Lysicles interrupt Alciphron's Shaftesburian speech in the Third Dialogue. The moral sense is "at bottom mere bubble and pretence" because the qualities (in particular the alleged beauty of virtue) which it is supposed to appreciate are "things outward, relative, and superficial."[1] This suggests that Berkeley was able to make use of Mandeville's relativist arguments against Shaftesbury without subscribing to Mandevillian views.

Putting Mandeville aside as the exception that proves the rule, the most usual strategy of British free-thinking against Christianity was to promote the autonomy of morality, that is, to assert that moral values are at the same time independent of religion and sufficient to organize the life of man. Shaftesbury embodied this mainstream insofar as he was responsible for promoting a moral sense which was antecedent to any sense of

religion. This is precisely what Berkeley denounces at the beginning of his *Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*, referring to Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711).

> All that is said of a vital principle of order, harmony, and proportion; all that is said of the natural decorum and fitness of things; all that is said of taste and enthusiasm, may well consist and be supposed, without a grain even of natural religion, without any notion of law or duty, any belief of a lord or judge, or any religious sense of a God; the contemplation of the mind upon the ideas of beauty, and virtue, and order, and fitness, being one thing, and a sense of religion another. (*Works* I: 252-253)

There is no exaggeration to say that *Alciphron* was written against the primacy of morality. Let me quote the defiant declaration of Alciphron himself in the Third Dialogue:

> . . . the less religious the more virtuous. For virtue of the high and disinterested kind no man is so well qualified as an infidel; it being a mean and selfish thing to be virtuous through fear or hope. The notion of a Providence, and future state of rewards and punishments, may indeed tempt or scare men of abject spirit into practices contrary to the natural bent of their souls, but will never produce a true and genuine virtue. (*Works* III: 116)

This is not only a revival of the paradox of the virtuous atheist, but, as Alciphron terms it, the "basis" for a "scheme of duty." Bearing this in mind, we should renounce all thought of piecing back together Berkeley's moral philosophy.[2] In Berkeley's opinion, the moral philosophers are the minute ones, who believe in the existence of a moral and

social realm, as if the order of morality was autonomous and did not depend on the divine command. On the contrary, Christianity saves us the trouble of developing a so-called moral philosophy insofar as it provides us with a religion, in which there is everything necessary not only to our salvation hereafter but also to the conduct of our life here-below. Thus it should be no surprise that Berkeleyan ethics could not be expressed as a "moral philosophy."[3]

To put it in Berkeley's terminology, a *conscience* exempts us from any moral sense. In the first version of Shaftesbury's *Inquiry concerning Virtue* (1699), the moral sense was referred to only as a "natural sense of right and wrong."[4] The stress must be put on "natural" as well as on "sense." On the contrary, Berkeley's conscience is a supernatural sense of right and wrong. Actually it is not a "sense" at all. One might consider that this is just a play upon words. Does not Berkeley admit a moral sensibility, or an ability to discern moral properties, insofar as he allows a conscience? But a careful reading shows that Berkeley refuses to describe this ability as a "sense." He makes use of the term "conscience" as if it was the antonym of "moral sense" or of any "sense" whatever.

For instance, in the Third Dialogue, when Euphranor declares that, "In earnest, can any ecstasy be higher, any rapture more affecting, than that which springs from the love of God and man, from a *conscience* void of offence, and an inward discharge of duty, with the secret delight, trust, and hope that attend it?," Alciphron replies: "O Euphranor, we votaries of truth do not envy but pity the groundless joys and mistaken hopes of a Christian. And, as for conscience and rational pleasure, how can we allow a *conscience* without allowing a vindictive Providence?" (*Works* III: 116).

Throughout Berkeley's writings, "conscience" is constantly associated with "religion" and deliberately opposed to moral sense (or to a sense of honor, a sense of morals). Berkeley carefully sticks to this terminological distinction, which, as far as I know, is his own. In Shaftesbury and Hutcheson (and later in Joseph Butler and Lord

Kames), "conscience" and "sense," whether moral or natural, are synonymous, as well as in many writers who do not belong to the moral sense school.[5] When Euphranor declares in the First Dialogue, section 12: "*Conscience* always supposes the being of a God" (*Works* III: 52), he just gives the correct Berkeleyan definition of this term. This terminology should be kept in mind.[6]

* * *

There are two different expositions of Shaftesbury's ethical theory in the Third Dialogue of *Alciphron*. In Alciphron's speech and throughout his discussion with Crito and Euphranor, from section 3 onwards, there is a good deal from Shaftesbury. Let us call this the first exposition. But there is a second exposition: Shaftesbury is specifically represented by Cratylus whose writings are quoted by Crito and Alciphron in sections 13 and 15.

The first exposition is a broad outline of Shaftesbury's conceptions in his *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*. This outline is correct when it puts the focus on the notion of "relish," "taste" or "sense," which must be seen from two angles: first, as the ability in a rational creature to discern beauty and goodness of an action or of an agent (this is moral sense as *judgment*); and second, as a practical principle that governs the action and motivates the agent's self-control (this is moral sense as *motivation*). This conflation between judgment and motivation is typical of Shaftesbury. I quote Alciphron's speech:

> To relish this kind of beauty there must be a delicate and fine taste; but where there is this natural taste, nothing further is wanting, either as a principle to convince, or as a motive to induce men to the love of virtue. And more or less there is of this taste or sense in every creature that has reason. (*Works* III: 117)

The account of Shaftesbury's ethical theory in this section 3 could have been even more satisfactory if it had distinguished more explicitly between what Shaftesbury himself

calls goodness and virtue. Goodness, according to Shaftesbury, refers to actions motivated by first-order affections (especially but not exclusively benevolent affections or “natural affections”); virtue refers to actions motivated by second-order affections, that is, by a rational appraisal of the first-order affections. Actions of the first kind may be termed *good* or *bad*, depending on whether they promote the well-being of the species and the universe in general. Only good actions of the second kind deserve to be termed *virtuous*, insofar as they do not originate directly in an affective motivation, but in the critical judgment which the rational agent makes on affective motivation.

> In a creature capable of forming general notions of things, not only the outward beings wich offer themselves to the sense are the objects of the affections, but the very actions themselves, and the affections of pity, kindness, gratitude and their contraries, being brought into the mind by reflection, become objects. So that, by means of this reflected sense, there arises another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the subject of a new liking or dislike.[7]

One might recognize here the Stoic distinction between, on the one hand, the simple or animal use of representations (in which our conduct or desire is immediately determined by representations that function as stimuli) and, on the other hand, the critical or rational use of representations (in which representations are tested and checked). In any event, Alciphron sticks to Shaftesburian orthodoxy in the continuation of the passage I have just quoted, at least if it is carefully read:

> . . . all rational beings are by nature social. They are drawn one towards another by natural affections. They unite and incorporate into families, clubs, parties, and commonwealths by mutual sympathy. As, by means of the sensitive soul, our several distinct parts and members do consent towards the animal functions, and are connected in one whole; even so, the several parts of these rational systems or bodies politic, by virtue of this moral or interior sense, are held together, have a

> fellow feeling, do succour and protect each other, and jointly co-operate towards the same end. Hence that joy in society, that propension towards doing good to our kind, that gratulation and delight in beholding the virtuous deeds of other men, or in reflecting on our own. (*Works* III: 117)

Alciphron does not sacrifice the rational dimension of the moral sense in his definition of "affection," and in this he is faithful to Shaftesbury's frequent use of the term "affection" as a synonym for "disposition." This is why there are affective affections (emotions, passions, inclinations, etc.—the Latin *affectus*, in Greek *pathos*) and non-affective affections (the Latin *affectio*, in Greek *skhesis*) which Shaftesbury sometimes translates "disposition" or "relation."[8] Contemporary commentators often forget this ancient meaning of "affection," but Berkeley was well aware that Shaftesbury used it to identify the moral sense with a rational disposition.

Berkeley could have just denied that reason, insofar as it is a "discursive faculty," should be regarded as a "sense" or "taste." But he chose to put into Euphranor's mouth a slightly different criticism. Merging "sense" and "passion," which is not faithful to Alciphron's argument, Euphranor points out that it seems "a very uncertain guide in morals, for a man to follow his passion or inward feeling" and suggests that this rule would "infallibly lead different men different ways, according to the prevalency of this or that appetite or passion" (*Works* III: 120). If my understanding of this passage is correct, Euphranor claims that a Shaftesburian moral sense would be subjective—and as such arbitrary—insofar as it is identical with "passion or inward feeling." Here Euphranor reuses the argument which Berkeley had employed in his *Sermon on Passive Obedience* (1712), section 13:

> Tenderness and benevolence of temper are often motives to the best and greatest actions; but we must not make them the sole rule of our actions: they are passions rooted in our nature, and, like all other passions, must be restrained and kept under, otherwise they may possibly betray us into as great enormities as any other

> unbridled lust. Nay, they are more dangerous than other passions, insomuch as they are more plausible, and apt to dazzle and corrupt the mind with the appearance of goodness and generosity. (*Works* VI: 23)

We may well admit that passion as such is not a reliable basis for morality. But what has this to do with the moral sense issue? Euphranor could have better objected to Alciphron—who did not conflate sense with passion—that the moral sense as a subjective disposition does not guarantee the universality of moral rules, even if we recognize that it is quite different from the whim of passion. If the moral sense theory does not give a satisfactory account of the universality of moral rules, it is not because such a theory would merge conscience and passion, but just because it exempts the moral agent from following a rule. According to such a view, the moral action does not consist in following a rule, but in following the dictates of a moral taste. How the same moral taste, as a subjective ability to appraise the value of an action, can be found in a number of individuals, is far more complicated to explain than just to say that the same moral rule is to be followed by different people, whether they appreciate it or not.[9] In short, Alciphron's first exposition of Shaftesbury is fair enough, but Euphranor's criticism is quite cavalier.

Anyway, this is not Euphranor's last word in his criticism of moral sense philosophy; nor is Euphranor the sole speaker on that topic, as we will see in a moment. Euphranor has another argument which does not presuppose any conflation of sense with passion. He makes this new point when he insists that even if we have the experience of some immediacy in moral appreciation, this does not justify the appeal to a moral sense. Alciphron has put stress on the fact that we do not deliberate, compute, premeditate or even argue in the matter of morality. He considers that this rules out any explanation that would have recourse to interest or deliberation, and that this legitimates the Shaftesburian hypothesis. "How can we account for this but by a moral sense, which, left to itself, has as quick and true a perception of the beauty and deformity of human actions as the eye

has of colours?" Euphranor is right when he replies that such a hypothesis is superfluous: "May not this be sufficiently accounted for by *conscience* [my emphasis], affection, passion, education, reason, custom, religion; which principles and habits, for aught I know, may be what you metaphorically call a moral sense?" (*Works* III: 121). We suspect here that, according to Berkeley, moral conduct is not something that has to be appreciated, but is rather something that first has to be taught and learned. The point against the moral sense is that it does not explain how morality can be enforced; it even seems to exempt us from the necessity of any enforcement of morality. For Berkeley, the heart is not that which gives an account of moral duties, but that in which moral duties are to be inculcated. Here it is obvious that Berkeley's criticism of Shaftesbury on morality is but a part of a wider conflict regarding education.

* * *

Let us turn now to the second exposition, which is indirect. Cratylus's opinions as a writer are reported by Alciphron. This is a very different method. The first exposition was a broad yet fair summary of Shaftesbury's ethical theories as if they were known only from hearsay; the second is a precise account of Shaftesbury's argument in his *Characteristics*, and especially of the essay *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author*. It is to be noted that Alciphron's first exposition draws mainly on Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, with some materials from Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good* (1725).[10] The examination of the *Soliloquy*, even if it is brief, testifies to a further reading of Shaftesbury.

Here is the big question: Why two different expositions? Why did Berkeley have two goes at it? My answer is: because Berkeley was well aware that Shaftesbury had changed his mind concerning the moral sense and that in the *Soliloquy* he had substantially modified the views he had expressed formerly in his *Inquiry concerning Virtue*. If my understanding is correct, the twofold exposition of Shaftesbury in the Third Dialogue is intended to suggest that Berkeley has a thorough knowledge of what he is

criticizing; that he knows that Shaftesbury, at the beginning of his philosophical carrier, began with a conception that regarded the sense of right and wrong as analogous to our sensory organs (and this view was shared by Hutcheson who reformulated it in a Lockean vocabulary, namely the discussion of moral properties as qualities, i. e. powers in the objects to produce sensations in us). As Alciphron puts it in the first exposition, thanks to our moral sense we have "a perception of the beauty and deformity of human actions as the eye has of colours." But Shaftesbury, in his *Soliloquy*, had developed a quite different conception, according to which the moral sense, as a moral *taste*, has to be cultivated and trained. The reality of moral values is not diminished. The new point is that moral values can be correctly apprehended only through a process of self-improvement, "a regimen and discipline of the fancies"[11], and this is the price to be paid for reaching the height of disinterestedness and moral finesse.

The moral sense is thus not a ready-made equipment but that which we should cultivate within ourselves. Crito's description of Cratylus in section 13 is correct when it stresses the connection between "taste" and "politeness":

> It is true the main scope of all his writings (as he himself tells us) was to assert the reality of a beauty and charm in moral as well as in natural subjects; to demonstrate a taste which he thinks more effectual than principle; to recommend morals on the same foot with manners; and so to advance philosophy on the very foundation of what is called agreeable and polite. [. . .] For the sake therefore of the better sort, he has, in great goodness and wisdom, thought of something else, to wit, a taste or relish: this, he assures us, is at least what will influence; since, according to him, whoever has any impression of gentility (as he calls it) or politeness, is so acquainted with the decorum and grace of things as to be readily transported with the contemplation thereof. (*Works* III: 133)

In the same section, Crito makes a shrewd observation on the consequences of the perfectionist premises that are typical of Shaftesbury's philosophy. The mind that is

entirely taken up with Stoic enthusiasm "will ever be its own object, and contemplate mankind in its own mirror." Crito is not wrong at all in suggesting that for Shaftesbury mankind is not the totality of all men and women, but some heroic ideal that only the happy few can fulfill. Crito gives us to understand that a perfectionist viewpoint leads Shaftesbury to prioritize conversation with oneself to the detriment of conversation with others. The perfectionist definition of humanity entails the primacy of conversation with oneself. If humanity is not a collection but a perfection, then one needs to take care of one's real self in order to raise it up to the ideal of a "better self." This is why the method of Shaftesburian perfectionism is soliloquy or "self-discourse," "self-practice," "home-regimen," which corresponds to the Stoic intelligent use or control of representations. The real self has to converse with the inward daemon. This impartial spectator is the embodiment of accomplished humanity. In his essay *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author*, Shaftesbury had formulated the theory of this "self-discourse" in the following way:

> By a certain powerful figure of inward rhetoric, the mind apostrophizes its own fancies, raises them in their proper shapes and personages and addresses them familiarly, without the least ceremony or respect. By this means it will soon happen that two formed parties will erect themselves within. For the imaginations or fancies being thus roundly treated are forced to declare themselves and take party.[12]

I place particular emphasis on Crito's perspicacity. When Berkeley makes him declare that the Stoic contemplates mankind in his own mirror, this remark is directed against the connection between moral perfectionism and self-cultivation.

In short, Berkeley makes use of two arguments against Shaftesbury's moral sense:

(1) In the first exposition, the moral sense as a natural subjective disposition—a faculty for discerning the qualities that motivate actions, analogous to a sensory organ—is accused of being arbitrary and in any case superfluous. Shaftesbury was aware that the

best way to escape this objection was to move to another conception which would require that the sense be trained.

(2) In the second exposition, the moral sense as a cultivated and artful taste, analogous to those dispositions that we reach only through good-breeding, is accused of being elitist insofar as it supposes a personal achievement. As Crito puts it, "Cratylus, having talked himself, or imagined that he had talked himself, into a Stoical enthusiasm about the beauty of virtue, did, under the pretence of making men heroically virtuous, endeavour to destroy the means of making them reasonably and humanly so." Indeed this is a satire, but it is not a caricature. It is difficult to deny that the claim that the moral taste should be refined, or that something more than our ordinary equipment is required to appreciate the beauty of virtue for its own sake, rests upon the assumption that our sensitivity to morality is a matter of refined education and of some kind of connoisseurship.

It is to be noted that the first argument, namely the claim that the moral sense is arbitrary and in any case superfluous, foreruns Jeremy Bentham's charge against moral sense theories in his *Principles of Moral and Legislation*.[13]

The second argument, that is, that the moral sense as a cultivated taste might be unattainable to the average human being, replaces the question of education at the center of the controversy. The point is whether education should be regarded as an aristocratic self-improvement or as a collective training. Is it the artistic formation of an outstanding personality or the regulation of habits through the discipline of pleasures and pains? At the very end of *Alciphron*, Berkeley proclaims to be a defender of Plato's and Aristotle's political education against the Stoic ideal of heroic self-achievement. Moral dispositions are not the individual perfections that I should cultivate within myself and by myself; on the contrary, as common habits, they are first enforced through laws.

* * *

I would not say with David Berman that Berkeley did not "shine" in the Third Dialogue, nor, with Bonamy Dobrée, that "he never really gives his minute philosophers their due".[14] I subscribe to the opinion expressed by Stephen Clark: "More detailed and careful study of the texts under review would show Berkeley to have allowed his opponents some excellently contrived speeches, and to have been very much to the point in his mockery."[15] My account of Berkeley's criticism of the moral sense also rectifies two claims made in 1970 by Olscamp:[16]

> (1) That "Berkeley and Shaftesbury actually agreed with each other more than they disagreed." On the contrary, I maintain that Berkeley was well aware of the existence of two different stages in Shaftesbury's thought or, at least, of two different conceptions of the moral sense in the latter's work, both of which he completely rejected with adequate arguments.
>
> (2) That the Third Dialogue of *Alciphron* expresses a "systematic moral philosophy." My suggestion is rather that if we put aside the arguments which Berkeley uses against his enemies and if we want a clear expression of Berkeley's own views on morality, we should stick to Euphranor's concise remarks on the nature of conscience as that which supposes the being of a God. This was enough for Berkeley. He was pushed to elaborate on the subject of morality only within the context of a refutation.

One may easily accept this latter statement only insofar as it applies to substantive ethical claims about what is right or wrong. In that sense, there is no doubt Berkeley considers that morality consists in nothing else than following the Gospel. But if by "moral philosophy" we mean an account of the justification of those ethical claims, an inquiry into the nature of rules—in a word moral theory as roughly distinguished from substantive normative assumptions—, then there is no reason why Berkeley should be shy about it. In fact, some commentators claim to find a full-blown theoretical account of

moral rules in *Passive Obedience*, section 8, where Berkeley carefully distinguishes between two "ways" or "methods" of achieving the "well-being of mankind":

> Either first, without the injunction of any certain universal rules of morality, only by obliging every one upon each particular occasion, to consult the public good, and always to do that which to him shall seem, in the present time and circumstances, most to conduce to it. Or, secondly, by enjoining the observation of some determinate, established laws, which, if universally practised, have, from the nature of things, an essential fitness to procure the well-being of mankind… (*Works* VI: 621)

On that basis, one may be tempted to ascribe to Berkeley a rule consequentialist moral theory, according to which the moral quality of an act does not depend on the consequences of the act itself, but rather on the consequences of the rule or the set of rules ("some determinate, established laws") to which that act conforms.[17] However, I would maintain (1) that Berkeley's argument against the view that morality should be submitted to subjective evaluation and left to private determination is identical (as has already been suggested) with his first argument against the moral sense theory in *Alciphron* III; (2) that the recourse to utility does not entail that Berkeley subscribes to a consequentialist account of morality, nor even that he looks beyond the Gospel for a criterion of morality.

In *Alciphron* V, section 9, Crito admits that "it is certainly right to judge of principles from their effects", but he immediately adds that "we must know them to be effects of those principles" (*Works* III: 182). In a sense, Christianity is useful to mankind. We can draw on the positive effects of Christian principles on societies to justify our claim that we should follow Christian principles. Yet this does not imply that Christianity is true because it is useful. On the contrary, it is useful because it is true.[18]

George Picher is correct when, drawing on *Passive Obedience*, he says that the view of Berkeley as a rule utilitarian needs to be qualified since the philosopher does

not claim that moral rules should be obeyed because their observance increases the general happiness:

> For Berkeley…, it is their being God's commands to us that makes them the set of rules we ought to obey; our obligation to obey them stems not, then, from the fact that their general observance leads to more human happiness, but directly from the fact that God has willed them: 'nothing is a law merely because it conduces to the public good, but because it is decreed by the will of God, which alone can give the sanction of a law of nature to any precept' (PO 31).[19]

My point goes beyond the fact that Berkeley has a divine command account of the source of normativity, since Berkeley's God is the source, not only of obligation, but also of utility. The promotion of the well-being of mankind is an effect of Christian principles; it does not prove that Christian principles are true only insofar as they are favorable, but that there must be some truth in Christian principles which produces such an effect. If utility were the criterion, since Pagan religions also sometimes have utility value, we should equally consider being Pagan. In fact, utility is not a criterion, but rather a sign of the truth of practical principles. Therefore we should express the matter the other way around: if Pagan religions are also sometimes useful, they must contain some principles of such a nature as to produce these effects, i. e. Christian principles. This is the line of argument which is found in *Alciphron* V, section 10:

> We do not deny but there was something useful in the old religions of Rome and Greece, and some other Pagan countries. On the contrary, we freely own they produced some good effects on the people. But then these good effects were owing to the truths contained in those false religions: the truer therefore, the more useful. I believe you will find it a hard matter to produce any useful truth, any moral precept, any salutary principle or notion in any Gentile system, either of religion or philosophy, which is not comprehended in the Christian, and either

> enforced by stronger motives, or supported by better authority, or carried to a higher point of perfection. (*Works* III, 183)

In short, even though Berkeley gives a seemingly rule consequentialist account of morality in some passages of *Alciphron* and in *Passive Obedience*, his discussion about the origin of moral rules shows that his point is not that a law is divine and should be obeyed because it is useful to mankind, but that it is useful to mankind because it is the law of God. Here again Berkeleyan moral theory amounts to his strict notion of what "conscience" is and of what, or rather whom, it supposes.

Notes

1. George Berkeley, *Works*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Nelson and Sons, 1949-58), III, p. 131. Subsequent citations of Berkeley are from the volumes of this edition.
2. The quest for Berkeley's "moral philosophy" is as old as Berkeleyan studies. See the collection of republished papers, *Money, Obedience, and Affection: Essays on Berkeley's Moral and Political Thought*, ed. Stephen R. L. Clark (New York: Garland, 1989).
3. See George Pitcher, *Berkeley* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1977), p. 228: "It is surprising that Berkeley does not devote more of his energies to moral philosophy… Of course he has views about these matters, but it cannot be said that he anywhere provides, or tries to provide, adequate backing for them."
4. The *Inquiry* was rewritten and republished in 1711 as a part of Shaftesbury's famous collection of essays. The phrase "moral sense" appears only in this second corrected edition: *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, I, 3, 2, in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (London: 1711, 3 vol.), II: 46: "For

notwithstanding a man may through custom, or by licentiousness of practice, favored by atheism, come in time to lose much of his natural moral sense, yet it does not seem that atheism should of itself be the cause of any estimation or valuing of anything as fair, noble, and deserving, which was the contrary." See Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, vol. II: *Shaftesbury to Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 124.

5. Thomas Burnet, who restored this terminology against Locke, used "sense" as synonymous with "natural conscience." See his *Remarks on Locke*, ed. G. Watson (Doncaster: Brynmill Press, 1989), p. 63: "I understand by natural conscience a natural sagacity to distinguish moral good and evil, or a different perception and sense of them, with a different affection of the mind arising from it; and this so immediate as to prevent and anticipate all external law and ratiocination."

6. Clark, in his Introduction to *Money, Obedience, and Affection*, p. xxvi, remarks that "some elements of Berkeleyan ethics almost amount to *making a dictionary of words*."

7. *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, I, 2, 3, in *Characteristics*, II: 28; see also I, 2, 4, in *Characteristics*, II: 36: "As to those creatures who are only capable of being moved by sensible objects, they are accordingly good or vicious, as the sensible affections stand with them. It is otherwise in creatures capable of framing rational objects of moral good. For in one of this kind, should the sensible affections stand ever so much amiss, yet if they prevail not, because of those other rational affections spoken of, it is evident, the temper still holds good in the main; and the person is with justice esteemed virtuous by all men."

8. See my “La question du sens moral et le lexique stoïcien,” in *Shaftesbury. Philosophie et politesse*, ed. F. Brugère and M. Malherbe (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), pp. 61-68.

9. A similar argument is employed in *Passive Obedience*, section 21, even if in a different context: “to suppose all actions lawful which are unattended with those starts of nature would prove of the last dangerous consequence to virtue and morality” (*Works* VI: 28).

10. In his “Berkeley on Beauty” (1985), reprinted in Berkeley, *Alciphron in Focus*, ed. D. Berman (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 179-184, J. O. Urmson claims that *Alciphron* III draws mainly on Hutcheson. This appreciation is the result of Urmson’s focus on the question of beauty in the first exposition. He also affirms that “it is surely wrong for Jessop to claim, as he does in his edition of the *Alciphron*, that Alciphron either faithfully presents or is meant faithfully to present the ideas of Shaftesbury, though Shaftesbury, clearly referred to under the name of Cratylus in the dialogue, is represented as being of the same school of thought.” Against Urmson, I have shown that, even in the first part of the third Dialogue, Berkeley’s exposition of Shaftesbury is quite faithful.

11. *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author*, I, 2, in *Characteristics*, I: 186.

12. *Characteristics*, I: 188. Berkeley had a perfect understanding of the importance of self-discourse for Shaftesbury. He goes back to the same topic in the Fifth Dialogue, where Euphranor mocks Shaftesbury’s free verse. Alciphron reformulates Cratylus’s doctrine: “You must know this great man has (to use his own words) revealed a grand arcanum to the world, having instructed mankind in what he calls mirror-writing, self-discoursing practice, and author practice” (*Works* III: 200).

13. “One man says . . . he has a thing made on purpose to tell him what is right and what is wrong; and that is called a ‘moral sense’; and then he goes to work at his ease, and says, such a thing is right, and such a thing is wrong—why? ‘Because my moral sense tells me it is’.” *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), p. 26.

14. David Berman, *George Berkeley: Idealism and the Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.164; Bonamy Dobrée, “Berkeley as a Man of Letters”, *Hermathena* 82 (1953), quoted by Ian Tipton, *Berkeley. The Philosophy of Immaterialism* (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 9-10.

15. Clark, Introduction to *Money, Obedience, and Affection*, p. xxi.

16. Paul J. Olscamp, *The Moral Philosophy of George Berkeley* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p.154; see also p. 171.

17. It is a commonplace that Berkeley was responsible for the first presentation of rule consequentialism. See for instance Brad Hooker, “Rule Consequentialism”, in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, ed. H. LaFollette (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 183.

18. In the Fourth Dialogue, Crito is well aware that his recourse to utility theory sounds Mandevillian: “We should endeavour to act like Lysicles upon another occasion, taking into our view the sum of things, and considering principles as branched forth into consequences to the utmost extent we are able.” Yet Mandeville would not approve of the qualification that follows: “Now, the Christian religion, considered as a fountain of light, and joy, and peace, as a source of faith, and hope, and charity (and that it is so will be evident to whoever takes his notion of it from the Gospel), must needs be a principle of happiness and virtue” (*Works* III: 178).

19. Pitcher, *Berkeley*, p. 239.