

"A New World": Philosophical Idealism in America"¹

Lecture I

(Draft. Please do not quote without permission.)

1. *Introduction to the lectures as a whole*

I've taken my title for these lectures from a letter by Samuel Johnson: not, I hasten to say, *the* Samuel Johnson, but the *American* Samuel Johnson. ("Not *the* fill-in-the-blank, but the *American* fill-in-the-blank" is a refrain you may be hearing from me very often in the coming weeks.) You'll recall, many of you, that *the* Samuel Johnson responded to Berkeley's idealism with impatient physicality: he kicked a large stone and rebounded from it. (That the stone was large enough to push him backwards, and not a pebble he sent flying, will be important later on.) The response of the American Samuel Johnson, who was writing to Berkeley himself, was appreciative wonderment, culminating in a plea:

You will forgive the confusedness of my thoughts and not wonder at my writing like a man something bewildered, since I am, as it were, got into a new world amazed at everything about me. These ideas of ours, what are they?²

The metaphor of entry into a new world, or at least into a new and wilder or more rustic country, was one that Berkeley had already made his own. He promised readers of his *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* a "Return to the simple Dictates of Nature," but it would come, he said, only after a circuit through "*the wild Mazes of Philosophy*." In the end, he assured them, it would not be unpleasant. "*It is like coming home from a long Voyage: a Man reflects with Pleasure on the many Difficulties and Perplexities he has passed through, sets his Heart at ease, and enjoys himself with more Satisfaction for the future.*"³ Time spent in a new world, he thought, would make us more comfortable and secure in our possession of the old.

These lectures will be a circuit through two "new worlds": the new world (or world-system) that bewildered Johnson, and the new world—the America—in which he lived. I haven't published a word about American philosophy, or said very much about it outside my classroom (where I've taught it for some years now), and I imagine that the Berlin electors had British topics in mind when they approached me. It took me some time to settle on a topic so far removed from my own establishing competence, and from the concerns of present-day Oxford, at least in philosophy. After making my choice, I've been recalling with some nervousness the example of another American connected with the University of Texas (he was a faculty member, I'm a graduate) who came to England as a visiting professor. J. Frank Dobie was at Cambridge and lectured, I've always understood, on Texas longhorn cattle (not English longhorn cattle, but Texas longhorn cattle).⁴ Dobie was a great folklorist and his distinctly American topic was probably not unexpected. I feel sure he wasn't disappointing. I can only hope that I won't be, and that my own circuit through America, however unexpected, won't be unpleasant. Unlike Berkeley, though, I won't be returning you home. I'll be leaving you over there: in the mid-twentieth-century America of Martin Luther King, who was (though he's little known for it) the most influential recent representative of the idealist tradition whose course I will be tracing.⁵

I really will begin in the wilderness, with a writer—one who became, in my view, the greatest English-language writer, before G. E. Moore, of analytical philosophical prose—whose most famous book was completed while he was a missionary to one tribe of Indians and living under the threat of attack by another. But first I need to take care of some preliminaries. I need

to say something—a good deal, actually—about some of the idealist theses I'll be examining, and then I want to say a few words about my method and motivations.

The founding text of the idealist tradition is a passage from Plato's *Sophist*, where the Eleatic Stranger speaks of a "quarrel about reality" that he compares to a "battle of gods and giants."⁶ "How so?," young Theaetetus asks. F. M. Cornford, whose translation of the Stranger's answer I now quote, calls it a battle between "idealists" (the party of the gods) and "materialists" (the party of the giants):

STRANGER: One party is trying to drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands, for they lay hold upon every stock and stone and strenuously affirm that real existence belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define reality as the same thing as body, and as soon as one of the opposite party asserts that anything without a body is real, they are utterly contemptuous and will not listen to another word.

THEAETETUS: The people you describe are certainly a formidable crew. I have met quite a number of them before now.

STRANGER: Yes, and accordingly their adversaries are very wary in defending their position somewhere in the heights of the unseen, maintaining with all their force that true reality consists in certain intelligible and bodiless forms. In the clash of argument they shatter and pulverize those bodies which their opponents wield, and what those others alleged to be true reality they call, not real being, but a sort of moving process of becoming. On this issue an interminable battle is always going on between the two camps.

The Stranger's sympathies, and Plato's, are with the gods. As the entry on idealism in James Mark Baldwin's monumental *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* reports, "the first historical system to which the name of idealism is applied by common consent is that of Plato."⁷ The idealist thesis most emphasized by Plato is metaphysical: bodies possess a diminished reality, a reality less "true"—less real—than that of the impalpable unseen. This is the first, and probably the most basic, of the idealist theses we'll be contemplating. It is not the more extreme and perhaps more familiar thesis that bodies have no existence or reality at all. Certainly Berkeley held no such view, and I'm doubtful that it was seriously entertained by any of the idealists I will examine.⁸ Josiah Royce, in his first great idealist treatise, did write:⁹

"The world of dead facts is an illusion. The truth of it is a spiritual life." This is what philosophical idealism says.

But I think Royce was speaking loosely.¹⁰ Perhaps by "illusion" he meant only "appearance." The more extreme idealist thesis is, at any rate, a limit case of the Platonic one: according to it, the reality of bodies is so radically diminished that it comes to nothing.

Our first idealist thesis is deliberately vague. It doesn't identify (or identify with precision) what it is that has undiminished reality, and it doesn't give us any useful information, apart from their respective rankings in the great chain of being, about the relationship between beings with undiminished reality and their more impoverished bodily counterparts. America's idealists don't tend to agree about these matters. But like post-Platonic idealists elsewhere, they're skeptical of the undiluted Platonic conviction that intelligible and bodiless forms are absolutely fundamental. They may be Platonists, but if so they are neo-Platonists. They reenact the movement of thought that first made it possible to reconcile the Platonism of Plato with the God of the Bible: they suppose that Plato's intelligible and bodiless forms depend for their existence on a

mind that perceives or knows them.

Plato and many later idealists joined our first idealist thesis, the Diminished Reality of Body (and the Fundamental Reality of Mind), to a second, Time's Subordination to Eternity. In Plato's case the thought was roughly this: bodies change, come to be, and pass away, and are in that sense in time; the bodiless and unseen forms are unchanging and everlasting, and are in that sense outside of time—though it may actually be Plato's view that no temporal predicates, not even "unchanging" and "everlasting," can strictly be applied to the forms, in which case those predicates are serving as markers of atemporal eternity. From the fact that bodies have diminished reality, together with the fact that bodies are in flux, it doesn't of course follow that everything in flux has reality of lower grade; minds or souls, after all, also seem to change, and their degree of reality has not so far been addressed. I speak of time's subordination to eternity, rather than of its diminished reality, partly to take account of this, but also to leave room for the possibility that time's subordination to eternity is not, at bottom, a matter of metaphysics. Time's subordination to eternity may be *typological*: temporal facts may be signs or images of eternal facts without losing full reality, metaphysically understood. I do think that if the signification relation is not going to run in both directions—if the temporal is to become, as Royce suggests, "the symbol and the likeness of the eternal," without the eternal's becoming the symbol (however much it must remain the likeness) of the temporal—temporal facts will have to be denied a kind of value.¹¹ Idealism concerning value is something I do intend to discuss, but I'm going to leave it aside for now.

The battle of Plato's party with its faithful-to-the-earth opponents resounds throughout the subsequent history of philosophy. The theses I've extracted from the Stranger's elaborate metaphor are metaphysical, but they're often taken to broad epistemological implications, which are hinted at by the Stranger himself.¹² If real existence belongs, as the giants contend, only to bodies that can be touched or handled, two things may seem to follow: first, that the contents of the mind, if it aspires to knowledge of the real, must be derived from bodies; and second, that the mind can acquire these contents only by passive perception, by the impact of bodies upon it. (The second thesis may commonly be inferred from materialism, but there's really no reason why a materialist can't also be a nativist. So long as innate knowledge is physically realized, physically caused, and physically sustained, its existence is compatible with the Fundamental Reality of Body. So perhaps the second thesis should be modified to say that the mind, *once formed*, can acquire contents only by the impact of bodies upon it. The modified statement of the thesis leaves open the possibility that the mind might acquire contents by affecting itself, and this may be a good thing. I see no reason why a materialist has to say that the mind is wholly passive in perception. By virtue of its innate or intrinsic nature, the mind may collaborate in producing its perceptual states, and some of those states might be produced by the mind alone. In that case the mind will have to include more than its perceptual states or contents—only then could some of its own ingredients be the *cause* of its perceptual states or contents—but I don't see why that's a problem.) If however the gods are right—if true reality belongs to intelligible and bodiless forms—then if a conception of true reality is within our grasp, bodily impacts can have little to do with our achieving it. Bodies may stir or prompt the mind, but they can't engender a content that isn't somehow present in those bodies to begin with. (Here philosophers will recognize the crucial premiss of Descartes's highly Platonic Third Meditation proof of God's existence. Descartes was an idealist in both the metaphysical and epistemological senses I'm delineating. The Cartesian Malebranche, by denying causal power to bodies, diminished their reality further, thereby becoming more of an idealist than Descartes had been. And the Cartesian Berkeley—if we follow what was perhaps the fashion in late nineteenth-century Cambridge, Massachusetts, and denominate him a Cartesian—became more of an idealist still.)¹³ That our knowledge, or the best of it, is not rooted in sensation is my third idealist thesis, the Displacement of the Senses.

The epistemological significance of membership in Plato's party is brought out very clearly by Leibniz, in a famous passage from his commentary on Locke's *Essay*, the *New Essays on Human Understanding*. Echoes of this passage, first published in the middle of the eighteenth century, could still be heard in nineteenth-century America. Allying himself with Plato, Leibniz situates Locke, in company with Aristotle, closer to the party of the giants:¹⁴

Although the author of the *Essay* says hundreds of fine things which I applaud, our systems are very different. His is closer to Aristotle and mine to Plato. Our disagreements concern points of some importance. There is the question whether the soul in itself is completely blank like a writing table on which nothing has yet been written—a *tabula rasa*—as Aristotle and the author of the *Essay* maintain, and whether everything which is inscribed there comes solely from the senses and experience; or whether the soul inherently contains the sources of various notions and doctrines, which external objects merely rouse up on suitable occasions, as I believe and as do Plato and even the Schoolmen.

Plato's battle of gods and giants, as re-enacted by the "idealist" Leibniz and the "empiricist" Locke, was the subject of John Dewey's first philosophical book, written when Dewey himself was an idealist, and not the pragmatist he later became.¹⁵ But the great articulator of the metaphysical and epistemological stakes in Plato's battle, the writer who set the terms for much of American philosophy from the second quarter of the nineteenth century onwards, was not Leibniz but Kant. Like Plato's Stranger, Kant comes forward as witness to a "stage of conflict."¹⁶ He identifies three distinct points of contention, of which I'll mention only two. With respect to "**the object** of all of our rational cognitions," the "**sensual philosophers**," led by Epicurus, "asserted that reality is in the objects of the senses alone, and that everything else is imagination." To say that "everything else is imagination" is to say, I think, that everything else is merely imagined or nonexistent. Epicurus and his school stand with the party of the giants. The second school, the "**merely intellectual philosophers**," was according to Kant led by Plato himself. They stand with the Stranger's gods, maintaining, according to Kant, "that in the senses there is nothing but semblance, and that only the understanding"—which Kant is here contrasting with the sense-based power of imagination—"cognizes that which is true." Here Kant, mixing the metaphysical with the epistemological, tracks the Stranger fairly closely, but he lays more emphasis on the epistemological—on what I've called the Displacement of the Senses.

The second point of disagreement is expressly epistemological, and here Kant follows Leibniz, whose *New Essays* he clearly has in mind. (The *New Essays* were completed in 1703 or 1704, but when he learned of Locke's death in 1704, Leibniz decided not to publish them. They did not appear until 1756, when Kant's career as a writer was already well underway. For Kant and his contemporaries, Leibniz's voice was not distant but near.) "**With regard to the origin** of pure cognitions of reason, whether they are derived from experience or, independent of it, have their source in reason," Kant writes,

Aristotle can be regarded as the head of the **empiricists**, Plato that of the **noologists**. Locke, who in recent times followed the former, and Leibniz, who followed the latter (although with sufficient distance from his mystical system), have nevertheless not been able to bring this dispute to any decision. (A 854/B 882)

The combatants on Kant's stage are theoreticians, debating theoretical issues. Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James both draw on Kant's descriptions, but widen them in characteristic ways. For Emerson, the issues at stake are practical as well as theoretical; for James,

who accepts Emerson's wider view of the issues, the debates engage not only the intellect, but the full character or temperament of anyone who enters into them. In his 1842 lecture on "The Transcendentalist," Emerson describes two sects in which human beings as thinkers have always been divided:¹⁷

What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842. As thinkers, mankind have ever divided into two sects, Materialists and Idealists; the first class founding on experience, the second on consciousness; the first class beginning to think from the data of the senses, the second class perceive that the senses are not final, and say, the senses give us representations of things, but what are the things themselves, they cannot tell. The materialist insists on facts, on history, on the force of circumstances, and the animal wants of man; the idealist on the power of Thought and of Will, on inspiration, on miracle, on individual culture. These two modes of thinking are both natural, but the idealist contends that his way of thinking is in higher nature. He concedes all that the other affirms, admits the impressions of sense, admits their coherency, their use and beauty, and then asks the materialist for his grounds of assurance that things are as his senses represent them. But I, he says, affirm facts not affected by the illusions of sense, facts which are of the same nature as the faculty which reports them, and not liable to doubt; facts which in their first appearance to us assume a native superiority to material facts, degrading these into a language by which the first are to be spoken; facts which it only needs a retirement from the senses to discern.

James sees the whole history of philosophy as "to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments."¹⁸ The clash is between "rationalist" and "empiricist": "empiricist" meaning your lover of facts in all their crude variety," he tells the audience of his lectures that became *Pragmatism*, "rationalist" meaning your devotee to abstract and eternal principles." "No one," James says "can live an hour without both facts and principles, so it is a difference rather of emphasis; yet it breeds antipathies of the most pungent character between those who lay the emphasis differently." He adds to each of the two headings "some secondary qualifying characteristics," with the caution that the list is "to a certain extent arbitrary." "I select types of combination that nature offers very frequently," he says, "but by no means uniformly." Here are the field marks he assembles:

Historically we find the terms 'intellectualism' and 'sensationalism' used as synonyms of 'rationalism' and 'empiricism.' Well, nature seems to combine most frequently with intellectualism an idealistic and optimistic tendency. Empiricists on the other hand are not uncommonly materialistic, and their optimism is apt to be decidedly conditional and tremulous. Rationalism is always monistic. It starts from wholes and universals, and makes much of the unity of things. Empiricism starts from the parts, and makes of the whole a collection—is not averse therefore to calling itself pluralistic. Rationalism usually considers itself more religious than empiricism, but there is much to say about this claim, so I merely mention it. It is a true claim when the individual rationalist is what is called a man of feeling, and when the individual empiricist prides himself on being hard-headed. In that case the rationalist will usually also be in favor of what is called free-will, and the empiricist will be a fatalist—I use the terms most popularly current. The rationalist finally will be of dogmatic temper in his affirmations, while the empiricist may be more sceptical and open to discussion.

He then arrays his identifying traits in two columns, headed the "tender-minded" and the "tough-minded."

THE TENDER-MINDED

Rationalistic (going by 'principles'),
 Intellectualistic,
 Idealistic,
 Optimistic,
 Religious,
 Free-willist,
 Monistic,
 Dogmatical.

THE TOUGH-MINDED

Empiricist (going by 'facts'),
 Sensationalistic,
 Materialistic,
 Pessimistic,
 Irreligious,
 Fatalistic,
 Pluralistic,
 Sceptical.

To the first list we might add, "like a hedgehog," and to the second we might add, "like a fox."

There is a great deal in James's left-hand column, and in the Emersonian inventory that anticipates it, that goes beyond the three theses I've stated. I'll touch on some of those other entries from time to time, but my three stated theses will occupy most of our attention, along with a fourth thesis that may not seem, at first, to be idealist at all. It was, however, explicitly called idealist, for example by Benjamin Peirce, the great Harvard mathematician who was Emerson's friend and the father of the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. "In every form of material manifestation," writes Peirce the elder, "there is a corresponding form of human thought, so that the human mind is as wide in its range of thought as the physical universe which it thinks. The two are wonderfully matched."¹⁹ This, you may say, is not idealism, but merely a philosophically non-committal sort of optimism. My expectation is that when we press it, as Emerson for example did, we'll find that it comes to something more. I will call it the thesis of Correspondence.

For now, I'll say no more about what idealism means. As the lectures go on I'll be clarifying the theses I've stated and exploring relations among them. I'll also be adding at least one more thesis—idealism concerning value—to the list. I want to conclude these introductory remarks with the brief words I promised on my method and my motivation.

Although I'm a professor of philosophy I've tried not to take the title of this lecture series lightly: my lectures will be, I hope, contributions to the history of ideas, meaning at least that I'll seek to recover the intended meanings of the writers I'll be discussing, having paid (if not in the lectures themselves, then at least in my preparation for them) the kind of attention to context that such recovery requires. No philosopher, though, can embark on the history of ideas without recalling Sir Isaiah Berlin's famous decision, as recounted for example in the preface to his *Concepts and Categories*, to turn from philosophy to history. Sir Isaiah had, I feel sure, a clearer mind than mine, but I believe that he was facing, in the Oxford of the 1940's, a more austere philosophical environment than the one I'm facing now. My hope is that I can philosophize while historicizing, and that I can do so without offending against prevailing standards: that I can persuade you of the philosophical interest of the idealist arguments I'll be examining (though there will not, I warn you, be arguments in every lecture); that I can offer reasonable solutions to some of the interpretive puzzles they present; that I can make some useful criticisms of them; and that I can draw from them some lasting philosophical lessons. I don't know how familiar this audience will be with the definition of the word "berlin" in *The Philosophical Lexicon*, a joke dictionary of philosophical terms of art created (by Daniel Dennett and others) out of famous proper names. A *berlin*, says the dictionary, is "an old fashioned stage coach, filled with international travelers, all talking rapidly and telling anecdotes of vivid life elsewhere." "As the berlin came through town," reads the sample sentence, "one could hear many accents one had never heard before, and

delightful tales." No historian of ideas excels Sir Isaiah in providing both present delight and lasting value. I'll do my best to give you something approaching this, but the smooth Europeans speaking many languages will have to give way to rustic Americans speaking only one. And I will allow myself, when the need arises, to be philosophical or even "technical," confident, or at least hopeful, that the demarcation line between history and philosophy isn't patrolled as aggressively here as it may have been in the 1940's. However that works out, anecdotes of vivid life elsewhere I'll certainly try to give you. Emerson quotes Montesquieu's confession that he was "always charmed with Plutarch," because "in his writings are circumstances attached to persons, which give great pleasure."²⁰ The philosophers I'll be taking up in these lectures will be as "circumstanced" as I can conveniently make them. At times, you may need to grasp the circumstances to appreciate the arguments, but I also hope you'll find them entertaining.

In commenting on my method, I've said at least something about my motivations. William James once described the study of literature as "an appreciative chronicle of human master-strokes," and bringing good things to your attention is certainly one of the items on my agenda.²¹ (That chronicle will be, as Royce said of his own lectures on idealism, selective and "illustrative" rather than exhaustive.)²² I'm also eager to correct the impression that the history of pragmatism is the history of American philosophy, though American idealism often aspires to be practical, as we'll see. I hope there will not only be some lessons here for philosophers, but possibly larger lessons for people—and I suspect there are many—who sympathize with some or all of the idealist theses I've stated. I admit I've made it easy: had I required idealists to stipulate that bodies do not exist at all, I would have lost many more of you than I perhaps already have. Despite the antique and implausible character of some of the arguments for idealism, and the apparent absence of argument in many of the passages in which it's most compellingly asserted or intimated, the belief that the inward has some sort of priority over the outward, and that in our inwardness we make contact with a world less fugitive and more valuable than the world of sense, is not an easy one to shake. It is worth inquiring how successful a certain tradition was in bringing clarity to the thought, and in making it defensible and practical.

What I've just said makes me realize that there's another preliminary I must attend to. Many of you will have been mulling over my idealist theses and thinking something along the lines of what Berkeley's Hylas thought when Philonous clarified idealism for him: "What! this no more than I and all Christians hold; nay, and all others too who believe there is a God, and that he knows and comprehends all things" (Second Dialogue, *Works* 2: 212). Hylas was on target; it's no coincidence that many of my subjects will be Christians or theists. But we'll also be looking at some non-believers. (Joel Porte calls Thoreau, for example, a "dangerous heretic." I suspect he had his tongue in cheek as he wrote this, but the basic thought is just about right.)²³ I won't ignore the religious beliefs of some of my subjects, but I'll be seeking out arguments with non-theistic premisses, and when argument is absent, for writing with energies that are not necessarily theistic in their origins, however theistic they may sometimes be in their upshots.

2. *The idealism of Edwards*

It would be perfectly fair to begin my story with Berkeley. Samuel Johnson's 1729 letter was addressed to Berkeley in what is now Middletown, Rhode Island, where Berkeley was waiting for the funds, pledged by King and Parliament, for his projected college on the island of Bermuda. Berkeley's exchange of letters with Johnson is certainly the most familiar document in the early history of American idealism. In the course of the exchange, Johnson worked his way through the bewilderment he expressed in the letter I began by quoting. He became a loyal convert to Berkeley's cause. His *Elementa Philosophica* of 1752, printed in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin

and his partner David Hall, was the first American idealist testament. (Johnson dedicated the book to Berkeley, who was then living in Oxford, but Berkeley died before the presentation copy sent to him by Johnson could arrive.) I'm going to begin, though, with what is more truly the beginning of idealism in America. I'm going to begin in 1716, more than a decade before Berkeley landed in Rhode Island, at a small Puritan college in Connecticut. Johnson, an Anglican convert by the time he wrote to Berkeley, was then a tutor there. (Perhaps I'll have time to tell you the dramatic story of Johnson's conversion and his journey to England for a proper ordination—all of it part of the "great apostasy" of September 12, 1722.) And among his pupils was a young man, son of a minister and grandson of a minister on his mother's side, named Jonathan Edwards.

When Edwards arrived at what came to be called Yale College he was thirteen. He read Locke (if we can trust his earliest biographers) by the time he was fourteen and Newton not long after that.²⁴ Like Johnson, Edwards felt that his reading placed him on the threshold of a philosophical America. If we inquire after causes and seek out new and strange phenomena, he wrote, "it's probable we may be led into a New World of Philosophy."²⁵ When he was sixteen, he asked his father (at the instigation of Timothy Cutler, the new rector of the college who was slated to become his tutor, Johnson having been pushed aside after students rebelled against his poor teaching) whether he could provide him with a copy of the widely used Cartesian logic, *The Art of Thinking* by Arnauld and Nicole.²⁶ (At some point, I should tell the story of the "great apostasy" of September 12, 1722. On that day—commencement day—Rector Cutler ended the service with words from the Anglican prayer book: "And let all the people say, Amen." He then announced his conversion to the Church of England. He was acting in concert with other ministers, Samuel Johnson among them, who had been studying and talking together. Johnson was one of several who went to England for a proper ordination.) Edwards probably also read Malebranche, whose *Search after Truth* was included, along with books by Locke and Newton, in the collection Jeremiah Dummer gave to the school in 1717.²⁷ Edwards read, in other words, many of the same books that a somewhat more seasoned George Berkeley read when he was a pupil, about ten years earlier, at another provincial institution of higher learning, Trinity College Dublin. And Edwards came, as we'll now see, to pretty much the same conclusions.

I'll start by stating them. They'll cause many of you to wonder whether Edwards borrowed from Berkeley, who published the *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* in 1710 and the *Three Dialogues* in 1713. But the consensus among Edwards scholars is that he came to these conclusions independently. They say this partly because Edwards (in the passages I'll quote) never refers to Berkeley. Normally an argument from silence wouldn't carry much weight, but no one has been able to find a single American library that held a copy of either of Berkeley's books in the years when Edwards came to these conclusions.²⁸

My quotations will come from manuscripts that Edwards never published, though he added to them over many years. "Of Atoms," the whole of which may have been written in 1721, is probably the earliest. "Of Being" was begun in the same year; its last paragraph was probably added in 1732 (Anderson, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, pp. 183, 185, 190). Edwards began work on "The Mind" in 1723; the manuscript was enlarged in both 1724-5 and 1726-7 (Anderson, pp. 326-7), and Edwards may have returned to it in 1728 (p. 328). He indexed the existing manuscript of "The Mind" in 1747 or 1748 (p. 328); further additions were made as late as the 1750's, in the final decade of his life (p. 329). The last of the passages I'll display also dates from the 1750's. It comes not from "The Mind," but from a single, untitled sheet at the Beinecke Library in New Haven, now catalogued as "Rough notes on his idealism." (I should say that by the 1740's and 1750's, at least, Edwards had read Berkeley.) I offer the range of dates as evidence of Edwards's enduring commitment to idealism, despite his decision not to publish. Edwards never published anything that we would now describe as primarily scientific or philosophical. All of his

published works have a direct religious purpose. (Even in his published writings, Edwards is nervous about appearing too metaphysical. A paragraph in *Original Sin* begins as follows: "On the whole, if any don't like the philosophy, or the metaphysics (as some perhaps may choose to call it) made use of in the foregoing reasonings . . ." (p. 409).)

He once intended to publish some of his early metaphysical writings, though, and before I present you with some of the passages of philosophical substance, I thought you might like to see some accounts of his plans. They are winning expressions of his youth, self-conscious provincialism, and literary craft:

The world will expect more modesty because of my circumstances—in America, young, etc. Let there be a superabundance of modesty, and though perhaps 'twill otherwise be needless, it will wonderfully make way for its reception in the world. Mankind are by nature proud and exceeding envious, and ever jealous of such upstarts; and it exceedingly irritates and affronts 'em to see 'em appear in print. Yet the modesty ought not to be affected and foolish, but decent and natural. (*Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, p. 193)

Before I venture to publish in London, to make some experiment in my own country; to play at small games first, that I may gain some experience in writing. First to write letters to some in England, and to try my [hand in] lesser matters before I venture in great. (p. 194)

If I publish these propositions that are so metaphysical that 'tis probable will be very strange to many learned divines and philosophers, to propound 'em only by way of question, as modestly as possible, and the reasons for 'em; not as if I thought them anything well demonstrated, but only as worthy to bring the matter into consideration. Entirely submit 'em to the learned . . . and if it be possible, to conceal my determination. (p. 194)

To bring in those things that are very much out of the way of the world's thinking as little as possible in the beginning of a treatise. It won't do, for mayhap it will give an ill prejudice and tincture to the readers' mind in reading the treatise. Let them be given a good opinion of the others first, and then they will more easily receive strange things from me. If I tell it at first, it will look something like affectation of telling something strange to the world. They must be pleased with seeing what they believed before cleared up before they will bear to see their opinions contradicted. Let the way be so paved . . . (p. 194)

I can't resist pointing out that even here, in these very personal memoranda, there are uncanny echoes of the young George Berkeley who, disappointed with the reception of the *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, published in Dublin, went to London to publish the *Three Dialogues*:

I am young, I am an upstart, I am vain, very well. I shall Endeavour patiently to bear up under the most vilifying appellations the pride & rage of man can devise. (Notebooks 465)

I imagine whatever doctrine contradicts vulgar and settled opinion had need been introduced with great caution into the world. For this reason it was I omitted all mention of the non-existence of matter in the title-page, dedication, preface, and introduction, that so the notion might steal unawares on the reader, who possibly would never have meddled with a book that he had known contained such paradoxes. (Letter to Percival, September 6, 1710)

I must not pretend to promise much of Demonstration, I must cancell all passages that look like that sort of Pride, that raising of Expectation in my Readers. (Notebooks 858)

The similarities to Edwards are striking, and it may be worth observing that although Berkeley's *philosophical* works were apparently unknown to the young Edwards, Berkeley did figure in his wider education. One of Edwards's most cherished books—the one he lent to family and friends more often than any other—was *The Ladies Library*, a three-volume collection of advice and wisdom for women said on its title page to be written "by a Lady" and "published" by Sir Richard Steele. The young Edwards modeled his literary efforts on the six rules for writing presented in volume 1 (pp. 144-52), which were lifted from Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. Steele was, as I've said, named as publisher on the title page, but the actual compiler of the miscellany was his friend Berkeley.²⁹

Here at last is a representative selection of idealist pronouncements by Edwards:

Nothing has existence anywhere else but in consciousness. No, certainly nowhere else, but either in created or uncreated consciousness. ("Of Being," p. 204 in *Scientific and Philosophical Works*)

Those beings which have knowledge and consciousness are the only proper and real and substantial beings, inasmuch as the being of other things is only by these. From hence we may see the gross mistake of those who think material things the most substantial beings, and spirits more like a shadow; whereas spirits only are properly substances. ("Of Being," p. 206)

The substance of bodies at least becomes either nothing, or nothing but the Deity acting in that particular manner in those parts of space where he thinks fit. So that, speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself (we speak at present with respect to bodies only). ("Of Atoms," p. 215)

How truly then is it in him that we love, move and have our being. ("Of Atoms," p. 216)

Nothing else has a proper being but spirits, and . . . bodies are but the shadow of being. ("The Mind," p. 337)

We have . . . shewn that all existence is mental, that the existence of all exterior things is ideal. ("The Mind," p. 341)

Though we suppose that the existence of the whole material universe is absolutely dependent on idea, yet we may speak in the old way, and as properly and truly as ever. ("The Mind," p. 353)

That there is no such thing as material substance truly and properly distinct from all those that are called sensible qualities. ("Notes on Knowledge and Existence [Rough notes on his idealism]," p. 398)

How real existence depends on knowledge or perception. ("Notes," p. 398)³⁰

The Diminished Reality of Body is explicit in most of these passages and the Displacement of the Senses is implicit in many of them. In passages I haven't quoted, Edwards warns against the

traps into which our sense-based faculties may lure us, for example on p. 204 in "Of Being," where he plaintively observes that "it is our imagination hurts us." A short piece I haven't yet mentioned, intended as a "lemma to the whole" of a projected treatise on natural philosophy that was to include "Of Being," is directed against the prejudices of sense-based imagination. "Of all prejudices," Edwards writes there, "no one fights with natural philosophy, and prevails more against it," than these (p. 196). "'Tis that which makes the vulgar so roar out upon the mention of some very rational philosophical truths" (p. 196). Edwards's hope is that his paper will "put every man clean out of conceit with his imagination" (p. 198). In a passage added to "The Mind" in the 1750's, Edwards quotes Ralph Cudworth's restatement of Plato's parable of the cave, in which prisoners who could, as Edwards puts it, "see nothing but the shadows (of certain Substances behind them)," wrongly took those shadows to be "the only Substances and Realities" (p. 359).

Edwards's case for idealism has many sides, and I cannot do justice to all of them here. At least five or six deserve separate mention, and towards the end of this afternoon's lecture, I'll begin to examine the most developed—what might be called Edwards's *voluntarist* argument for the Diminished Reality of Body—in considerable detail. The voluntarist argument was of greater importance to the mature Edwards than any of the others, but the argument, or the structure of thought on which it rests, produced tensions in his thinking that he never successfully resolved. I hope that you will begin to feel those tensions by the time we end today. In next week's lecture I plan to explain them more fully as well as to intensify them, so that by Lecture III, you'll be able to sympathize with the nineteenth-century readers of Edwards who found them intolerable. These readers, among them William Ellery Channing, the greatest figure in the early history of American unitarianism, sought a purified idealism—an idealism freed of the tensions—that came to be known as transcendentalism.

The first youthful argument we'll examine—and please keep in mind that these are youthful arguments, hasty, over-bold, diverse and even opportunistic in their strategies, sometimes obviously fallacious, but richly suggestive and, in places, flashing with literary brilliance—is not strictly an argument for idealism, though Edwards later links it to one. It is an answer to the question that according to a well-known observation by Leibniz (in the *Principles of Nature and Grace*), first presents itself, to anyone who accepts the principle of sufficient reason, as Edwards did throughout his life.³¹ Why is there something rather than nothing? Edwards's bold reply is that there is something rather than nothing because it is impossible for there to be nothing.

That there should absolutely be nothing at all is utterly impossible. The mind can never, let it stretch its conceptions ever so much, bring itself to conceive of a state of perfect nothing. It puts the mind into mere convulsion and confusion to endeavor to think of such a state, and it contradicts the very nature of the soul to think that it should be; and it is the greatest contradiction, and the aggregate of all contradictions, to say that there should not be. 'Tis true we can't so distinctly show the contradiction by words, because we cannot talk about it without speaking horrid nonsense and contradicting ourselves at every word, and because "nothing" is that whereby we distinctly show other particular contradictions. But here we are run up to our first principle, and have no other to explain the nothingness or not being of nothing by. Indeed, we can mean nothing else by "nothing" but a state of absolute contradiction. And if any many thinks that he can think well enough how there should be nothing, I'll engage that what he means by "nothing" is as much something as anything that ever [he] thought in his life; and I believe that if he knew what nothing was it would be intuitively evident to him that it could not be. (p. 202 in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, p. 9 in the *Reader*)

A state of absolute nothing is a state of absolute contradiction. Absolute nothing is the aggregate of all the absurd contradictions in the world, a state wherein there is neither body, nor spirit, nor space: neither empty space nor full space, neither little nor great, narrow nor broad, neither infinitely great space nor finite space, nor a mathematical point; neither up nor down, neither north nor south (I don't mean as it is with respect to the body of the earth or some other great body, but no contrary points nor positions nor directions); no such thing as either here or there, this way and that way, or only one way. When we go about to form an idea of perfect nothing we must shut out all of these things. We must shut out of our minds both space that has something in it, and space that has nothing in it. We must not allow ourselves to think of the least part of space, never so small, nor must we suffer our thoughts to take sanctuary in a mathematical point. When we go to expel body out of our thoughts, we must be sure not to leave empty space in the room of it; and when we go to expel emptiness from our thoughts we must not think it squeeze it out by anything close, hard and solid, but we must think of the same thing that the sleeping rocks dream of; and not till then shall we get a complete idea of nothing. (p. 206 in *Writings*, p. 13 in the *Reader*)

Now it may run counter to Edwards's intentions to extract an argument from these paragraphs, because the first seems to insist that no such argument is possible. We've "run up" to a first principle, and there is, according to the paragraph, no prior premiss to which we might appeal. But the second paragraph suggests a line of reasoning: a thought without content is no thought at all (no more a thought than the dreams of sleeping rocks); a thought of absolute nothing would be a thought without content; and it would be a thought without content because it could not make use of any predicates. Against this it can of course be objected that it's at most been shown that absolute nothing is unthinkable, not that it's impossible. (Perhaps faith in what I've called Correspondence made Edwards less sensitive than he should have been to the difference between inconceivability and impossibility.) But the line of reasoning is still worth exploring.

When Edwards challenges us to conceive of absolutely nothing, is he asking us to contemplate only the absence of *things*, or the further absence of their *predicates* or *properties*? Our second paragraph suggests the latter. There Edwards seems to be assuming that all positive predicates fall into what I'll call *ranges*, in which predicates and their complements (of which there may be one or several, also positive) exhaust a certain domain. (Edwards doesn't say explicitly that all of the predicates he has in mind are positive, and "emptiness"—one of the predicates surveyed in the second paragraph—is arguably negative, but I'm not sure that *Edwards* thinks of it as negative, and it seems to me that the paragraph as a whole shies away from complements formed by negation, and does so as a matter of policy.) Within one domain, everything must be little or great. Within a second, everything must be here or there. Within a third, everything must be body, spirit, or space. Perhaps no one of these domains encompasses absolutely everything (though I suspect that in Edwards's view, the last one mentioned does). But if we take all of them together, Edwards seems to think, they supply us with the tracks along which all of our thinking inevitably moves. To think is to move along these tracks. To form a thought is to place something against the background of one or more of these ranges. If all such backgrounds are removed, as the thought of absolute nothing seems to require, then no thought seems possible at all.

That the thought of absolute nothing excludes, for Edwards, predicates no less than things seems confirmed by the paragraph that follows the one last quoted:³²

A state of nothing is a state wherein every proposition in Euclid is not true, nor any of those self-evident maxims by which they are demonstrated; and all other eternal truths

are neither true nor false. (p. 206 in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, p. 13 in the *Reader*)

The young Edwards accepts the correspondence theory of truth. (We'll learn more about this very soon.) He would have encountered Cartesian versions of the theory—versions in which the vehicles of truth are ideas, or propositions constructed out of ideas—in two of his textbooks: the *Port-Royal Logic*, and the *Compendium logicae secundum principia D. Renati Cartesii* by William Brattle, a New England Puritan divine and a teacher at Harvard College. (Brattle was an admirer of the *Port-Royal Logic*.) Brattle for example defines truth as the conformity of our ideas to things (p. 13 in the *Compendium* [Boston, 1735]). The young Edwards takes this to mean that all truths require actually existing truthmakers. If we suppose that he understands "things" (*res*) to be *realities*, and to embrace properties as well as "things" in the narrower sense in which I've used that term so far, we can easily understand why he thought that a state of absolute absence would topple even the eternal truths. This gives us a separate argument against the possibility of absolute nothing: the eternal truths are necessarily true; they would not be true (not false either, but not true) if there were absolutely nothing; hence it is impossible for there to be absolutely nothing.

But there is an objection to the line of reasoning we've been tracing, even if we grant that a state of absolute absence excludes properties as well as things, narrowly understood: the absence of ranges may rule out all *positive* thoughts—all "placements" of a thing against a positively contentful background—but why should it rule out the wholly negative thought that there is nothing at all? Could Edwards reply that if it were to be true, even the proposition "there is nothing" would require an absolutely existing truthmaker, perhaps because there are, at bottom, no negative facts, all negative truths being rendered true by something positive? Perhaps so, but there is no account of negative truths in Edwards's youthful manuscripts.

From the claim that it's impossible there should be absolutely nothing, Edwards infers that "it is necessary some being should eternally be." By this he seems to mean not that being or entity, absolutely considered, must eternally be, but that some *particular* being must eternally be. (It won't surprise you to learn that this being is eventually identified as God, and the fact is that Edwards's conception of God suffers—or profits—from a perplexing duality. Edwards speaks of God both as a particular being, and as being itself: as being without restriction or limitation. If God is thought of as a particular being, Edwards's inference is fallacious. [Locke's proof of God's existence, which Edwards presumably studied, commits precisely this fallacy.] If God is thought of as being absolutely considered, it is not. I hope to return to this duality in my next lecture.) Edwards takes himself to have shown, then, not just that there cannot always be absolutely nothing, but that there cannot *ever* be absolutely nothing, and that at every moment when there isn't absolutely nothing, there is, rather than one of a succession of distinct and transient things, some one eternal thing. He also infers that this eternal being must be omnipresent, because the impossibility of there being absolutely nothing everywhere (at any time) means, he thinks, that there cannot be absolutely nothing anywhere (at any time) (p. 202, p. 9 in the *Reader*).

This line of reasoning is not, as I've said, strictly an idealist one, but Edwards joins it up with another line of reasoning that is. After bringing us to the existence of a necessary, eternal, and omnipresent being by this *via negativa*, his thinking takes an affirmative turn. Edwards argues that one particular being is cognitively inevitable or inescapable.

Space is this necessary, eternal, infinite and omnipresent being. We find that we can with ease conceive how all other things should not be. We can remove them out of our minds, and place some other in the room of them; but space is the very thing that we can never

remove and conceive of its not being. If a man would imagine space anywhere to be divided, so as there should be nothing between the divided parts, there remains space between notwithstanding, and so the man contradicts himself. And it is self-evident, I believe, to every man, that space is necessary, eternal, infinite and omnipresent.

But I had as good speak plain: I have already said as much as that space is God. And it is indeed clear to me, that all the space there is not proper to body, all the space there is without the bounds of the creation, all the space there was before the creation, is God himself. And nobody would in the least stick at it, if it were not because of the gross conceptions that we have of space. (p. 203)

On the assumption that the listed attributes of space are "incommunicable" or proprietary attributes of God, the stated argument is simple: space is necessary, eternal, infinite, and omnipresent, as Edwards's various thought-experiments show; these attributes are God's alone; therefore space is God. The stated argument suggests, though it does not directly say, that bodies depend on space for their existence. If so, and if God is, as Edwards certainly assumes, a spirit, we reach the conclusion that bodies have diminished reality insofar as they depend for their existence on mind.

In this argument, Edwards seems to regard space substantively, as a receptacle in which every body has a place. But he soon abandoned this conception, replacing it with one in which space is viewed as both relational and "mental."³³ In "The Mind," where Edwards charts what Jasper Reid thinks of as his "mature" metaphysics (Reid, p. 385), the argument is cited with approval but with a crucial qualification:

Space, as has been already observed [and here I follow Anderson, p. 203, in taking this to be a reference to the paragraph I've quoted from "Of Being"], is a necessary being (if it may be called a being); and yet we have also shewn that all existence is mental, that the existence of all exterior things is ideal. Therefore it is a necessary being only as it is a necessary idea—so far as it is a simple idea that is necessarily connected with other simple exterior ideas, and is, as it were, their common substance or subject. It is in the same manner a necessary being, as anything external is a being. (p. 341)

If space is inevitable or necessary only in thought, and not *in re*, the entire force of this qualified argument is carried by the claim, also said to be already shown, that the existence of exterior things is ideal.³⁴ If this too is a reference back to "Of Being," it must be to what might be called Edwards's *cognitivist* argument for Diminished Reality of Body, the third line of thought we will examine, which rests on his claim that "it is really impossible . . . that anything should be, and nothing know it" (p. 204).

The cognitivist argument spans six paragraphs that were added to "Of Being" in 1723.³⁵ Here is a short selection from them, and from an entry in Edwards's *Miscellanies* made around the same time:

And how it doth grate upon the mind, to think that something should be from all eternity, and nothing all the while be conscious of it. Let us suppose, to illustrate it, that the world had a being from all eternity, and had many great changes and wonderful revolutions, and all the while nothing knew; there was no knowledge in the universe of any such thing. How is it possible to bring the mind to imagine? Yea, it is really impossible it should be, that anything should be, and nothing know it. Then you'll say, if it be so, it is because nothing has any existence anywhere else but in consciousness. No, certainly nowhere else, but either in created or uncreated consciousness. (pp. 203-4, p. 10 in the *Reader*)

We fancy there may be figures and magnitudes, relations and properties, without anyone's knowing of it. But it is our imagination hurts us. We don't know what figures and properties are. (p. 204)

For in what respect has anything had a being, when there is nothing conscious of its being . . . Thus for instance, supposing a room in which none is, none sees the things in the room, no created intelligence: the things in the room have no being any other way than only as God is conscious [of them]; for there is no color there, neither is there any sound, nor any shape. (*Miscellanies*, entry pp)

In "The Mind," the immaterialism of these paragraphs is elaborated so as to account for apparent examples of bodies that are not objects of consciousness:

That which truly is the substance of all bodies is the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable idea in God's mind, together with his stable will that the same shall gradually be communicated to us, and to other minds, according to certain fixed and exactly established methods and laws: or in somewhat different language, the infinitely exact and precise divine idea, together with an answerable, perfectly exact, precise and stable will with respect to correspondent communications to created minds, and effects on their minds. ("The Mind," p. 344)

The existence of things . . . that are not actually in created minds, consists only in power, or in the determination of God that such and such ideas shall be raised in created minds upon such conditions. ("The Mind," p. 355)

Since all material existence is only idea, this question may be asked: In what sense may those things be said to exist which are supposed, and yet are in no actual idea of any created minds? I answer, they exist only in uncreated idea. But how do they exist otherwise than they did from all eternity, for they always were in uncreated idea and divine appointment? I answer, they did exist from all eternity in uncreated idea, as did everything else and as they do at present, but not in created idea. But, it may be asked, how do those things exist which have an actual existence, but of which no created mind is conscious—for instance the furniture of this room when we are absent and the room is shut up and no created mind perceives it—how do these things exist? I answer, there has been in times past such a course and succession of existences that these things must be supposed to make the series complete, according to divine appointment of the order of things; and there will be innumerable things consequential which will be out of joint—out of their constituted series—without the supposition of these. ("The Mind," pp. 356-7)

Dispassionately viewed, the paragraphs I've taken from "Of Being" do no more than state or (as even Edwards seems to acknowledge) "illustrate" their fundamental claim, which is that nothing can exist that is not an object of consciousness. And even if we allow that every existing thing must be known by some mind or other, or that the whole system of existing things must be known by the mind of God, it doesn't follow that things exist "nowhere but in" the mind (p. 206), if the word "in" is meant to signal that they are dependent on the mind, and not merely the objects of its knowledge. Edwards may be aware of this. The first paragraph suggests that he may see the dependence of bodies on consciousness as the best explanation of their unavoidable presence to consciousness, rather than a deductive consequence of it. When wrapping up this argument, Edwards announces it to follow (as "Corollary 1") "that those beings which have knowledge and consciousness are the only proper and real substantial beings, in as much as the being of other

things is only by these" (p. 12 in the *Reader*, p. 206 in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*). But the preposition "by" is no less tricky than "in." That exterior things depend on the mind, and exist "by" the mind in that sense, may be the best explanation of the necessity that they be known "by" the mind in another sense, but Edwards never undertakes to argue that this is so.³⁶

Edwards's fourth argument proceeds from the nature of truth. Edwards conceives of truth as correspondence, and "in ordinary conversation," he suggests, there is no harm in following tradition—in this case, a well-known sentence from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (1011b25) recast in the language of ideas (in which form the young Edwards would have found it, as I've said, in both *The Port-Royal Logic* and Brattle's *Compendium*)—and in defining truth as "the agreement of our ideas with the things as they are" ("The Mind," p. 342).³⁷ But in an application of what William James would later call the pragmatic method, Edwards asks what this all-too-familiar formula really means. He insists that "it should be inquired, *what is it* for our ideas to agree with things as they are" (p. 342, emphasis mine). The clue to his anticipation of pragmatism is his observation that the idea of existence—the idea at the bottom of the formula—is "a perfect abstract and mere idea of existence" (p. 345). "Abstract" was the word Berkeley had used for ideas that stand in need of what James (who cited Berkeley as an instructive predecessor) saw as pragmatic clarification, and here it functions similarly for Edwards. (Edwards also uses the word to signal the lifting of restrictions or limitations. In that sense, the idea of God is the most abstract. See "The Mind," p. 355.) His pragmatically inspired proposal is that vague talk of correspondence to things as they are should be cashed out as correspondence to ideas in the mind of God (pp. 345, 342).³⁸ "Truth, in the general," he writes, "may be defined after the most strict and metaphysical manner" as "the consistency and agreement of our ideas with the ideas of God" (pp. 341-2). This cashed-out definition has, in Edwards's view, at least two advantages. The first, which Edwards does not make fully explicit, is that it condenses the nebulous notion of correspondence into the clearer notion of agreement in idea. Ideas are straightforwardly commensurate. And if we're already clear on what it means for ideas to agree, we don't need a *further* notion of correspondence in order to account for truth. A true idea concerning a contingent thing is nothing more than an idea that is "consistent with the series of ideas that are raised in our minds by, according to, the order of nature" (p. 342). Edwards is more explicit about the second advantage. He thinks that his theocentric correspondence theory gives us a fully general account of truth, one that applies not only to contingent truths but to eternal ones (p. 342). Consistency with a series of ideas—the course or order of nature—can account for contingent truths, but it cannot account for eternal ones. It is agreed, Edwards thinks, that the truth-makers for eternal truths are abstract ideas, rather than the concrete ones that will be impressed on us in the future. (Here, I think, abstract ideas are assuming the truth-making role that had been assigned, in "Of Being," to predicates and properties. This is arguably another instance of pragmatic clarification.) In "The Mind," Edwards struggles with the question of whether abstract ideas are (as his reading in Locke perhaps suggested) purely human creations.³⁹ Early on he seems persuaded that they are. Accordingly, he seems to define abstract or eternal truth *subjectively*, as the agreement of our ideas with themselves:

Truth as to abstract ideas is the consistency of our ideas with themselves, as when our idea of a circle, or a triangle, or any of their parts, is agreeable to the idea we have stated and agreed to call by the name of a circle of a triangle; and [thus] it may still be said [in eternal truths as in contingent truths] that truth is the consistency of our ideas with themselves. (p. 342)

But even at this early point, before he fully appreciated that "there is great foundation in nature for those abstract ideas which we call universals" (p. 359), his understanding of eternal truth is not as subjective as it may seem.⁴⁰ He immediately draws three conclusions he describes as

corollaries, and to me they seem at odds with a subjective reading of the passage: that God is truth itself; that truth consists in perfect and adequate ideas of things; and that certainty is the clear perception of this perfection (p. 342). I believe that "the idea we have stated and agreed to call by the name of a circle or of a triangle" isn't the idea we actually have but the idea we *intend* or *aspire* to have. It's the *divine* idea of a circle or triangle. Hence truth as to abstract ideas is the consistency of our ideas with their archetypes in God. (Insofar as we intend the divine idea we do in some sense "have" it. The further we progress in geometry, the truer to itself our idea of a triangle becomes.)

If time permits I may want to discuss the following passage:

Truth is the perception of the relations there are between ideas. Falsehood is the supposition of relations between ideas that are inconsistent with those ideas themselves, not their disagreement with things without. All truth is in the mind, and only there. 'Tis ideas, or what is in the mind alone, that can be the object of the mind. And what we call "truth" is a consistent supposition of relations between what is the object of the mind. Falsehood is an inconsistent supposition of relations. The truth that is in a mind must be, as to its object, and everything pertaining to it, in that mind; for what is perfectly without the mind, the mind has nothing to do with. (p. 340)⁴¹

I conclude with a brief mention of a fifth immaterialist argument, according to which we can't conceive of body except in terms of mind. I'm sorry that I won't have time to discuss it. Our conception of body differs from our conception of space because we understand body to fill space. But what is the space-filling attribute? (See for p. 361 of "The Mind," where Edwards speaks of "that idea that filled space.") It cannot be color because color is agreed to be subjective. Edwards thinks it can only be solidity or resistance. ("It is intuitively certain that if solidity be removed from body, nothing is left but empty space," p. 377 of "The Mind.") But when one body resists another, he asks, "what is it that is resisted?" "It is not color," he answers, but then "what else is it?" "It is ridiculous to say that resistance is resisted. That does not tell us at all what is to be resisted. There must be something resisted before there can be resistance, but to say resistance is resisted is ridiculously to suppose resistance before there is anything to be resisted" ("The Mind," p. 351).⁴²

So far, we've seen Edwards operating much more as a fox than as a hedgehog. You might expect to find the idealist Edwards squarely on the tender-minded side of the Jamesian dichotomy I quoted earlier. But he had plenty of tough-minded qualities, not the least of them his tendency to demand pragmatic clarification. (Despite the irenic claims James makes for the pragmatic method, to me it has always seemed more tough-minded than tender-minded.) Edwards's tough-mindedness was, in fact, notorious: nineteenth-century readers saw him as America's most prominent defender of fatalism and Calvinist pessimism. One of those readers (an admirer and biographer of his friend Emerson, though he couldn't be called a transcendentalist himself) was Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. Holmes is now less well-known than his son Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., an influential justice on the United States Supreme Court, but in the middle of the nineteenth century, the elder Holmes was very nearly the official voice of cultivated New England. (The name of the magazine he helped to found, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and the name he came up with for the State House in Boston, "the hub of the solar system"—still in use, especially among headline writers, as "the hub" or "the hub of the universe"—give a pretty fair indication of the authority he took that voice to have.)⁴³ Holmes wrote a very dismissive essay on Edwards, published in the *International Review* in 1880, that climaxed in this blunt account of Edwards's world-view: "Edwards's system seems, in the light of to-day, to the last degree barbaric, mechanical, materialistic, pessimistic."⁴⁴ We'll unpack this verdict in Lecture III, where we may

also have a chance to consider Holmes's partial explanation of Edwards's intellectual and spiritual shortcomings: "If he had lived a hundred years later, and breathed the [post-revolutionary] air of freedom," Holmes speculated, "he could not have written with such old-world barbarism as we find in his volcanic sermons. . . . We cannot have self-government and humane laws without its reacting on our view of Divine administration."

In presenting his voluntarist argument, Edwards operates more as a hedgehog, and it will take us until the end of next week's lecture to sort the argument out. It rests on a consideration of what "makes up what we call body" ("The Mind," p. 351), and on the assumption—embraced, Edwards says, by "every knowing philosopher"—that "colors are not really in the things, no more than pain is in a needle" (p. 351). The *ad hominem* turn in Edwards's reasoning—its exploitation of assumptions granted by his audience—is, as we'll see, a recurring feature:⁴⁵

For what idea is that which we call by the name of body? I find color has the chief share in it. 'Tis nothing but color, and figure which is the termination of this color, together with some powers such as the power of resisting, and motion, etc., that wholly makes up what we call body. And if that which we principally mean by the thing itself cannot be said to be in the thing itself, I think nothing can be. If color exists not out of the mind, then nothing belonging to body exists out of the mind but resistance, which is solidity, and the termination of this resistance with its relations, which is figure, and the communication of this resistance from space to space, which is motion, though the latter are nothing but modes of the former. There, there is nothing out of the mind but resistance. ("The Mind," p. 351)

He maps out a similar line of reasoning in "Of Atoms," another paper in his natural philosophy project, where he identifies solidity or resistance as the very essence of body:

Since . . . solidity is the resisting to be annihilated, or the persevering to be of a body, or, to speak plain, the being of it—for being and persevering to be are the same thing, looked upon two a little different ways—it follows that the very essence and being of bodies is solidity; or rather, that body and solidity are the same. If here it shall be said, by way of objection, that body has other qualities besides solidity, I believe it will appear to a nice eye that it hath no more real ones. What do you say, say they, to extension, figure, and mobility. As to extension, I say, I am satisfied it has none more than space without body, except what results from solidity. As for figure, it is nothing but a modification of solidity, or of the extension of solidity; and as the mobility, it is but the communicability of this solidity from one part of space to another. (pp. 211-12)

Solidity is, as Edwards says elsewhere in his papers on natural philosophy, a primary quality of body, "a quality so primary that the very being of the thing depends on it" (p. 290). Gravity is also an essential and primary quality of body, "but there is this difference: the one [solidity] is essential in order to the very existence, the other in order to the harmonious existence, of body" (p. 290).⁴⁶

So far, Edwards's argument may seem no more voluntarist than those we've already reviewed. But the argument takes a voluntarist turn when Edwards asks what it is that's responsible for solidity. His answer begins with another *ad hominem* postulation. He recalls the case of gravity, which is "by all . . . confessed to be immediately from some active influence" (p. 377). "Being a continual tendency in bodies to move," he reflects, "and being that which will set them in motion though before at perfect rest, it must be the effect of something acting on that body" (p. 377). It is, furthermore, "as clear and evident that action is as requisite to stop a body that is already in motion, as in order to set bodies a-moving that are at perfect rest." But the

stopping of bodies already in motion is one of solidity's characteristic signs. "We get the idea and apprehension of solidity only and entirely from the observation we make of that ceasing of motion, at the limits of some parts of space [by which I assume he means parts of space cordoned off by solid matter], that already is, and that beginning of motion that till now was not, according to a certain constant manner" (pp. 377-8). And "why," he concludes by asking on p. 378, "is it not every whit as reasonable that we should attribute this action or effect to the influence of some agent, as that other action or effect which we call gravity, which is likewise derived from our observation of the beginning and ceasing of motion according to a certain method?"

The reference to "a certain method" is crucial here. It is not the sheer beginning or ending of motion that bespeaks an active agent, but the beginning or ending of motion that takes place according to law. These laws are "perfectly arbitrary," meaning that they could be otherwise (p. 378). They are, as Edwards says explicitly, in "no way necessary of themselves" (nor are they dictated by anything we can discover in the nature of body), which entails that the laws of motion are not eternal truths of either of the two kinds he identifies on p. 388 of "The Mind": those whose denials are contradictory, and those whose terms are "invincibly" though non-analytically connected (terms that are necessarily connected, as Kant might have said, though neither is contained within the other). It is, however, "agreed on all hands that there is something there that supports . . . resistance" (p. 378). Because the law of its effects is arbitrary, this cause or ground "must be intelligent and voluntary" (p. 378). "There is," Edwards goes on to say,

no reason in the nature of the thing itself why a body, when set in motion, should stop at such limits more than at any other. It must therefore be some arbitrary, active and voluntary being that determines it. (p. 378)

Solidity's cause or ground, in other words, must be spirit. And in view of the infinite scope and utter inviolability of nature's laws, it must be a spirit who is infinite. That spirit is, in fact, the very substance of solid bodies:

The reason why it is so exceedingly natural to men to suppose that there is some latent substance, or something that is altogether hid, that upholds the properties of bodies, is because all see at first sight that the properties of bodies are such as need some cause that shall very moment have influence to their continuance, as well as a cause of their first existence. All therefore agree that there is something that is there, and upholds these properties; and it is must true, there undoubtedly is. But men are wont to content themselves in saying merely that it is something; but that "something" is he by whom all things consist. (p. 380)

As he writes in "Of Atoms," "the substance of bodies at last becomes either nothing, or nothing but the Deity acting in that particular manner in those parts of space where he thinks fit. So that, speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself (we speak at present with respect to bodies only). How truly, then, is he said to be *ens entium* [the being of beings]" (p. 215)—and how truly is it that "in him we live, move and have our being" (p. 216).⁴⁷ Divine power, "or rather the constant exercise of it," is "the very substance of the body itself" (pp. 350-1).

This voluntarist argument for the Diminished Reality of Body doesn't seem open to the kind of objection we brought against Edwards's cognitivist argument, because the necessity of being caused by mind, unlike the necessity of being known by it, is a genuine form of dependence. To this it can of course be objected that the argument confuses causal dependence with ontological dependence, but as we'll see next week, although the distinction between causal and

ontological dependence can certainly be insisted upon, Edwards does not *confuse* them: he has a reason for thinking that they must boil down to one.

There is, however, an obvious objection to the argument: why can't some property of *body* uphold solidity? It's true that Edwards's inventory of body's properties—an inventory that is, in its sparseness, typical of the early modern period—gives us little or nothing to work with.⁴⁸ But couldn't there be an *unknown* property of body that is a locus not only of power, but of arbitrary power—an arbitrarily acting yet unthinking cause?

Edwards has, as we'll see in my next lecture, two related reasons for hesitating to accept this—and in both cases, we find the reasons developed in his published works. The first has to do with the principle of sufficient reason. The second, to which Edwards devotes far more attention, has to do with his doctrines of causation and creation. Edwards turns out to have an argument that no body can exert any causal power at all. In response, Edwards lodges all of the causal power normally assigned to bodies to his omnipresent God, who brings about change in the physical world by continuously recreating that world in revised versions. The basic vision is present in another of his unpublished early papers on natural philosophy, though the argumentative structure is not quite what it will be when he comes to publish:⁴⁹

Since, as has been shewn, body is nothing but an infinite resistance in some part of space caused by the immediate exercise of divine power, it follows that as great and as wonderful a power is every moment exerted in the upholding of the world, as at first was to the creation of it; the first creation being only the continuation or the repetition of this power every moment to cause this resistance. So that the universe is created out of nothing every moment; and if it were not for our imaginations, which hinder us, we might see that wonderful work performed continually, which was seen by the morning stars when they sang together. (pp. 241-2)

It is here, though, that we can begin to feel the tensions I mentioned earlier. In a passage I've already quoted, Edwards declares that "there is no proper substance but God," but he is careful to add in parentheses, "we speak at present with respect to bodies only" (p. 215). He wants to leave room in the world for substantial finite spirits. In next week's lecture we'll see why, but can he legitimately do so? The same line of reasoning that deprives bodies of causal power seems to be no less damaging to the credentials of finite spirits, as Edwards himself points out in an early memorandum on God's existence:

The mere exertion of a new thought is a certain proof of God. For certainly there is something that immediately produces and upholds that thought; here is a new thing, and there is a necessity of a cause. It is not antecedent thoughts, for they are vanished and gone; they are past, and what is past is not. But if we say 'tis the substance of the soul (if we mean that there is some substance besides that thought, that brings that thought forth), if it be God, I acknowledge; but if there be meant something that has no properties, it seems to me absurd. If the removal of all properties, such as extendedness, solidity, thought, etc. leaves nothing, it seems to me that no substance is anything but them; for if there be anything besides, there might remain something when these are removed. (*Miscellanies* 267)

Due perhaps to the sway of this line of thought, the parenthetical qualification I've emphasized seems to vanish: "as to bodies," Edwards writes at one point in "The Mind," we have shewn in another place that they have no proper being of their own; and as to spirits, they are the communications of the great original Spirit. And doubtless, in metaphysical strictness and

propriety, he is, as there is none else" (pp. 364-5). This is idealism as I've generously defined it, but it's veering towards a very tough-minded pantheism. Edwards himself is uneasy about it, I think, and next time we'll see what he can make of it. Meanwhile, I trust that the philosophers among you will be recalling the parity objection that Berkeley's Hylas puts to Philonous. To repudiate material substance while embracing spiritual substance is not, complains Hylas, "fair dealing." "To act consistently," he tells Philonous, one must "either admit matter or reject spirit" (Third Dialogue, *Works* 2: 232). In notes Edwards wrote in the 1750's, he raised a very similar concern:

MATERIAL SUBSTANCE. Answer to that objection, that then we have no evidence of immaterial substance.

Unlike Berkeley, whose Philonous is anxious to divide the two cases, Edwards seems willing to bite the bullet:

Answer: True; for this is what is supposed, that all existence is perception. What we call body is nothing but a particular mode of perception; and what we call spirit is nothing but a composition and series of perceptions, or an universe of coexisting and successive perceptions connected by such wonderful methods and laws. (p. 398)

Next week we'll be asking how far this tough-minded answer can be taken.

Kenneth P. Winkler
January 19, 2012

¹ This is the text of the first in a series of six lectures, honoring Isaiah Berlin, delivered at Oxford University in January and February, 2012. For the opportunity to give them, I'm grateful to the benefactors and electors of the Sir Isaiah Berlin Visiting Professorship in the History of Ideas, to the Faculty of Philosophy, and to Corpus Christi College. The present lecture was delivered on January 17. This document isn't an actual transcript of my talk—it was prepared before I spoke (and lightly edited afterwards), and contains far more than I was actually able to cover—but it is written as if to be spoken. It is more loosely structured than a formal paper would be, and the notes sometimes contain reminders to myself. It is, above all, a draft piece of work, and I hope that it won't be quoted or cited without my express permission.

² This is from Johnson's first letter to Berkeley, written in 1729.

³ From the Preface to *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*.

⁴ My long-standing sense of Dobie's syllabus was a bit off the mark, as it turns out. His topics were indeed American—he was occupying the university's only professorship in American history—but more conventional (see *A Texan In England* [Boston: Little Brown, 1945], pp. 4-5). But it's likely he said at least a little something about longhorns ("I asked . . . if it would be all right for me to mention Texas cattle," p. viii), the topic of a popular book he published two years before he arrived in Cambridge.

⁵ I don't mean to be saying that the tradition has ended altogether; Marilynne Robinson seeks to perpetuate it in the essays collected in *The Death of Adam* and especially in her Terry Lectures, *Absence of Mind*. But Robinson is best known as a novelist. For professional philosophers in America, idealism is an option showing few signs of life. Of the journals originally intended to carry on the tradition of Boston personalism that King represented, *The Personalist* long ago became the *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*; the *Personalist Forum* has been recently refashioned as *The Pluralist*; and *Idealistic Studies*, though it retains its name, also has a new and more spacious identity. "Established . . . as a vehicle for American Personalism and post-Kantian Idealism," its publisher's website explains, "the journal's purview now includes historically earlier expressions, as well as the inheritance of that past in the developments of late 19th to mid-20th century philosophy. The journal has also become a venue for a number of philosophical movements that share Idealism in their genealogies, including Phenomenology, Neo-Kantianism, Historicism, Hermeneutics, Life Philosophy, Existentialism, and Pragmatism. The mission of *Idealistic Studies* is to provide a forum for writing that recognizes the defining significance of consciousness and mind in the concerns of philosophy and other expressions of high culture" (<http://secure.pdcnet.org/pdc/bvdb.nsf/journal?openform&journal=pdc_idstudies>, accessed on July 22, 2010).

⁶ The passage begins at 246a.

⁷ Volume 1 was published in New York and London in 1901 (though printed at Oxford University Press while the American editor was living in Oxford; see p. xv); the passage quoted appears on p. 500. The quoted entry was written by Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison of the University of Edinburgh, but because the volume, edited by a Princeton philosopher, marks the coming of age

(and the emerging worldwide reach) of professional philosophy and psychology in America, with Dewey and James joining Sidgwick and Stout as consulting editors, and Royce and Peirce joining Bonsanquet and Moore as contributors, I think it deserves a place in my American story. (The appearance of the dictionary was also an important event in the creation of an Atlantic philosophical culture.) For signs of Baldwin's professional self-consciousness see for example pp. vii-viii of his editor's preface. For more on Plato as the standard-bearer of idealism see for example Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912): "Emerson was an idealist in the Platonic sense of the word, a spiritualist as opposed to a materialist" (p. 391). Holmes then says that Emerson believes that "the soul makes its own body," and comments that "this of course involves the doctrine of preexistence." (I should perhaps take account of Terry Givens's remarks on transcendentalism in his recent book on preexistence.)

⁸ G. Watts Cunningham, in *The Idealist Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy* (New York: Century, 1933), a close observer of the scene on both sides of the Atlantic, offers confirmation: "The assertion that idealism denies the existence of matter does not apply, in its *prima facie* meaning, to any of the thinkers whose views we have been studying; they are not idealists in that sense. One and all insist that matter in some sense is and that its nature must find satisfactory explanation in any philosophy which demands serious consideration. If, however, what is meant is that idealism denies, not the existence of matter, but its existence out of any implicative relationship to mind or spirit, then the assertion would apply without exception; in this sense they are all idealists. Against, it is not true that idealism affirms the reality only of mind or spirit, if this is taken to be equivalent to the denial of the existence of matter as distinguished from its absolute or independent existence. The assertion is true, however, in the sense in which it means that idealism analytically resolves matter into a system within which mind or spirit is held to be of basal logical significance. All of the thinkers we have studied are idealists in this sense" (p. 338).

⁹ *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy: A Critique of the Bases of Conduct and of Faith* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), p. 333.

¹⁰ Later he was more careful. In the Preface to *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy: An Essay in the Form of Lectures* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892), p. xiii, he borrows a definition of metaphysical idealism from Richard Falckenberg, who defines it, in Royce's translation, as "belief in a spiritual principle at the basis of the world, without the reduction of the physical world to a mere illusion" (from Falckenberg's *Geschichte der Neueren Philosophie* [Leipzig: Veit, 1886]; Royce cites p. 476 in what must be the first edition. The passage Royce quotes appears in the second edition [Leipzig: Veit, 1892] on p. 508). There Falckenberg gives a definition of ethical idealism that may be useful to me later on: "in ethics," he says, idealism is exemplified "by all those views that locate the end of human beings in something higher than the satisfaction of sensual desire and selfish needs." This is very much along the lines of Hugo Münsterberg's definition of idealism in *Science and Idealism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906). Emerson, he says, was no "technical scholar, but not one stood more warmly, more luminously, more wholeheartedly for the deepest convictions of idealistic philosophy: he believed in the freedom of man and in the absolute value of man's ideals" (p. 5). I'll say more about this Axiological Idealism in later lectures. Edwards is also an idealist in this sense; I'm sorry that I won't have time to discuss the ethical idealism of his book *True Virtue*.

¹¹ The Royce quotation is from his posthumously published *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, edited by J. Loewenberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), p. 259.

¹² I should point out that even the metaphysical thesis is expressed in epistemological terms: bodies are the things we see and touch.

¹³ On Berkeley as a Cartesian see *The Harvard University Catalogue, 1876-77* ([Cambridge: Harvard University, 1876], p. 55), announcing George Herbert Palmer's course on "Cartesianism." The figures to be examined were Descartes, Malebranche, and Berkeley. It is possible that Palmer offered Berkeley as a critic of Cartesianism, but for various reasons I think that's doubtful.

¹⁴ I quote from the Preface in the translation by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett, pp. 47-9. This passage doesn't bring out the metaphysical disagreements that Leibniz had with Locke, and for that reason I may want to add to it. John Dewey quotes a revealing letter, one of the inspirations for S. Nicholas Jolley's recent study of the *New Essays (Leibniz and Locke* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987]), in which those disagreements are front and center: "Above all," Leibniz writes there, "I have laid it upon myself the save the immateriality of the soul, which Locke leaves doubtful" (quoted on pp. 69-70 of volume 1 in Dewey, *Leibniz's New Essays concerning the Human Understanding: A Critical Exposition* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs, 1888)).

¹⁵ For Leibniz as an idealist see volume 2, p. 272 ("the objective idealism of Leibniz"); for Locke as an empiricist see volume 1, pp. 68, 75. Dewey does say, intriguingly, that "idealism must be in some ways arbitrary and superficial to him who has not had a pretty complete course of empiricism" (p. 69), a comment to which I will return.

¹⁶ *Critique of Pure Reason* A 853/B 881.

¹⁷ I quote from the first paragraph of the lecture. I've left off the final sentence, which I hope to take up in Lecture III: "Every materialist will be an idealist; but an idealist can never go backward to be a materialist."

¹⁸ All quotations are from the second lecture in *Pragmatism*.

¹⁹ Quoted in Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*, p. 156.

²⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Introduction" to Goodwin's edition of Plutarch's *Morals* (1870), p. x.

²¹ James's comment is from "The Social Value of the College-Bred," delivered in 1907.

²² *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, p. 4.

²³ *Consciousness and Culture: Emerson and Thoreau Reviewed*, p. xvii.

²⁴ For early testimony and other relevant evidence see Wallace E. Anderson's introduction to Jonathan Edwards, *Scientific and Philosophical Writings (The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, volume 6) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 10-19. It is Samuel Johnson himself who reports that during Edwards's time at the college, Johnson and a fellow tutor "introduced the study of Mr. Locke and Sir Isaac Newton as fast as they could" (*Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, p. 15).

²⁵ Quoted in Sereno Edwards Dwight, *The Life of President Edwards*, p. 50.

²⁶ This letter is quoted by Dwight.

²⁷ This is Jeremiah Dummer, Jr. His father, Jeremiah Dummer, Sr. was a prominent silversmith. His "Wrentham Beaker" is now (2010) on display in the Sackler Museum at Harvard.

²⁸ Edwards became aware of Berkeley's *Principles* (entry 318 in his "Catalogue" of Reading) and *New Theory of Vision* (entry 319) sometime between 1726 and 1728; see Edwards, *Catalogues of Books*, edited by Peter J. Thuesen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 184. The catalogue is not a record of Edwards's reading, but of books that came to his attention. Berkeley's *Alciphron* (entry 350, p. 192) joined the catalogue in the early 1730's. Wallace E. Anderson has plausibly conjectured that by 1729 or soon after, Berkeley had probably read the *New Theory of Vision*; see his Editor's Introduction to the *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, pp. 36 and 102-3. Edwards was also familiar with two books, published by Richard Steele, in which Berkeley had a hand, though Edwards had no way of knowing that: *The Guardian* and *The Ladies Library*. Edwards owned both books and lent *The Ladies Library* more frequently than any other book in his collection ("Account Book," pp. 331-2 and 335-6 in *Catalogues of Books*). As I'll explain in the main text in just a moment, though the title page of *The Ladies Library* says that it was "published by Mr. Steele," it was actually compiled by Berkeley.

²⁹ Since Edwards's memoranda were written under the influence of Astell's rules for writing, it's worth considering whether the two young men had internalized the same ideals—and the same sense of publication's dangers.

³⁰ In the Beinecke Library, this sheet is now catalogued as "Rough notes on [his?] idealism."

³¹ The principle of sufficient reason is especially important to the argument of *Freedom of the Will*. In *Original Sin*, Edwards's declaration that "no cause can produce effects in a *time* and *place* on which itself is *not*" (p. 240 in the *Reader*) presumably rests on the PSR. (It would be interesting to consider this declaration in light of Edwards's final conception of space.)

³² Other passages are more ambiguous, for example this one from p. 13 in the *Reader*:

There is such a thing as nothing with respect to this ink and paper. There is such a thing as nothing with respect to you and me. There is such a thing as nothing with respect to this globe of earth, and with respect to this created universe. There is another way besides these things having existence. But there is no such thing as nothing with respect to entity or being, absolutely considered. And we don't know what we say, if we say we think it possible in itself that there should not be entity.

Does "entity or being" include properties or predicates? The examples leading up to it suggest that the answer is no. But the argument seems more persuasive if the answer is yes.

³³ On Edwards's transition from a substantival to a relational view of space, see Jasper Reid, "Jonathan Edwards on Space and God," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41 (2003), pp. 385-403.

³⁴ Should I discuss the motives behind Edwards's revised conception of space? Reid is helpful on this, but I suspect that Edwards's thoughts about the "place of minds," provoked by *Essay concerning Human Understanding* II xxiii (see Anderson's notes on article [2] of "The Mind"), are a neglected part of the story. Spirits, Edwards explains in "The Mind," are in space "in this sense only": "they have clearer and more strongly impressed ideas of things in one place than in another" (meaning, I take it, that the *things* are in those places), or "can produce effects here and not there" (*Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, p. 338). "As this place alters, so spirits move." Hence "the soul may be said to be in the brain, because ideas that come by the body immediately ensue only alterations that are made there, and the soul most immediately produces effects nowhere else" (p. 339). "No doubt," he adds, "all finite spirits, united to bodies or not, are thus in place; that is, . . . they perceive or passively receive ideas only or chiefly of created things that are in some particular place at a given time." When a finite mind is disembodied or "separate," though (p. 339), the "rule[s]" by which bodies cause ideas in us, or by which we cause changes in bodies, won't run, as they now do, through changes in the brain. These things will take place according to some rule, "only we know not what." God is omnipresent, because each of his ideas is wholly clear and his immediate efficacy is universal. If this analysis captures the only way in which minds (infinite or finite, embodied or "separate") are in space, it is hard to think of their presence in space as containment. God will not be contained in space (nor will God *be* space), and if God's spatial presence is not containment, it's not easy to see how ours could be, since the two are so similar in kind. But does this, by itself, give us reason to doubt that *bodies* exist in a substantival space? This is something I need to think more about.

³⁵ This is the same year in which Edwards commenced work on "The Mind," which makes all but certain that Edwards is referring to "Of Being" in the paragraph we've been discussing.

³⁶ Edwards also has a moral argument for the existence of minds in his idealist quiver, which I hope to touch on in a later lecture. The rough idea is that a world in which everything is known is better than a world in which the same things exist without being known. It suffers from the same basic problem as the cognitivist argument: even if a body must be an object of consciousness, it doesn't follow that it exists only insofar as it is an object of consciousness. Why are there minds at all? They magnify (or multiply) excellency. "This is an universal definition of excellency: The consent of being to being, or being's consent to entity. The more the consent is, and the more extensive, the greater is the excellency" (p. 26). "Pleasedness in perceiving being always arises, either from a perception of consent to being in general, or of consent to that being that perceives" (p. 26). "Agreeableness to entity must be agreeable to perceiving entity" (p. 26). The existence of minds gives creation an enormous boost in excellency: minds consent to the consent of body to body, thereby magnifying the excellency of already existing instances of consent; they consent to one another; they consent to their consent to one another (to their own consent, and to the consent of others); they consent to their consent to their consent This is worth comparing to a famous argument of G. E. Moore: consciousness of beauty has more intrinsic value than beauty itself. "As nothing else has a proper being but spirits, and as bodies are but the shadow of being, therefore, the consent of bodies to one another, and the harmony that is among them, is but the shadow of excellency. The highest excellency, therefore, must be the consent of spirits one to

another. But the consent of spirits consists half in their mutual love one to another, and the sweet harmony between the various parts of the universe is only an image of mutual love."

³⁷ Aristotle writes that "to say of what it is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what it that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."

³⁸ A passage from pp. 344-5 deserves to be quoted in full:

TRUTH. After all that has been said and done, the only adequate definition of truth is the agreement of our ideas with existence. To explain what this existence is, is another thing. In abstract ideas, it is nothing but the ideas themselves; so their truth is their consistency with themselves. In things that are supposed to be without us, 'tis the determination, and fixed mode of Gods exciting ideas in us. So that truth in these things is an agreement of our ideas with that series in God. 'Tis existence, and that is all that we can say. 'Tis impossible that we should explain and resolve a perfectly abstract and mere idea of existence; only we always find this, by running of it up, that God and real existence are the same.

Corol. Hence we learn how properly it may be said that God is, and that there is none else, and how proper are the names of the Deity: "Jehovah" and "I Am That I Am."

I think these paragraphs enact the same line of thought I follow in the main text. There is an "adequate" or philosophically proper definition of truth—originating with Aristotle, but now cast in modern terms—according to which truth is the agreement of our ideas with "existence." But the idea of existence is "perfectly abstract." We can say that truth is correspondence with existence, but such talk doesn't really make our meaning clear. By "running of it up"—by pursuing this abstract meaning to its concrete source—we find that God and real existence are the same. Royce's idealist "argument from error," the topic of Lecture V, is another argument of just this sort. Royce's came to see his argument as a deliberate application of the pragmatic method. For other anticipations of pragmatism in Edwards see "Of Atoms," p. 215, Corollary 11, and "The Mind," p. 345. For more on definition, see "The Mind," p. 367: "That is not always a true definition that tends most to give us to understand the meaning of a word, but that which would give anyone the clearest notion of the meaning of the word, if he had never been in any way acquainted with the thing signified by that word." Edwards's thought here isn't perfectly clear, but he illustrates it with a reductive definition of motion: "Motion is a body's existing successively in all the immediately contiguous parts of any distance without continuing any time in any."

³⁹ I think he finally concludes that they are not.

⁴⁰ For more cautions against assuming that abstract ideas are all subjective see [37] on p. 355 of "The Mind": "Genus and species indeed is a mental thing. Yet, in a sense, nature has distributed many things into species without our minds. That is, God evidently designed such particulars to be together in themind, and in other things. But 'tis not so indeed with respect to all genera. Some therefore may be called 'arbitrary' genera, others 'natural.' Nature has designedly made a distribution of some things; other distributions are of a mental original." It seems clear that triangles and circles are not in view here, though.

⁴¹ Here a further idealist consideration is intimated but left undeveloped: the claim that the only objects of the mind must be in (or dependent on) the mind. I need to think more about this, and about an intriguing passage on p. 388 of "The Mind":

Concerning a two-fold ground of assurance of the judgment: a reducing things to an identity or contradiction as in mathematical demonstrations, and by a natural invincible inclination to a connection, as when we see any effect, to conclude a cause; an opposition to believe a thing can begin to be without a cause. This is not the same with the other and cannot be reduced to a contradiction.

That we humans have two grounds of assurance does not mean that there are two kinds of (eternal) truths, but if it does, there will be *three* relations among the ideas in the mind of God: contingent relations; unchangeable and inescapable relations reducible to identity; and unchangeable and inescapable relations not reducible to identity. The first will be known to us by experience; the second by demonstration; and the third by invincible conviction.

⁴² In a fuller discussion I'd have to consider whether a sense-based conception of solidity or resistance (or the sort advocated by Locke in the *Essay*) might get around the difficulty raised here. In "Of Being," Edwards seems to agree that any conception of solidity is—and must be—sense-based. In "The Mind," he seems to be asking for something more, for something approaching rational articulation.

⁴³ *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table: Every Man His Own Boswell* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1858), p. 143.

⁴⁴ The passage is taken from Holmes's *Pages from an Old Volume of Life: A Collection of Essays, 1857-1881*, fourth edition (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1884), pp. 361-401. It dramatically conveys the change in atmosphere between western Massachusetts in the time of Edwards and eastern Massachusetts in the time of Emerson, a change I'll say more about in Lecture III.

⁴⁵ In its *ad hominem* character, Edwards's reasoning is intriguingly similar to closely related arguments by Berkeley (see *Principles* 15) and Hume (see *Treatise* 1.4.4 and *Enquiry* 12).

⁴⁶ He adds that "though gravity itself between the continuous parts is necessary in order to the existence, the mind does not so intuitively see how." I believe that Edwards is reflecting here on the coherence of the solid parts of body, but this is a complication I'll ignore. It raises a delicate question: if gravity is responsible for the coherence of solid particles, which is more fundamental, solidity or gravity? It can be argued on the one hand that solidity is more basic, because the pieces joined by gravity are already solid. But it can be argued on the other hand that the even the smallest parts owe their coherence and hence their "indiscernibility" (see "Of Atoms," p. 208) to gravity. I suspect that in the end, Edwards has no real need to face the question, since both solidity and gravity are resolved into divine activity.

⁴⁷ Acts 17: 28 was also a favorite passage of Berkeley.

⁴⁸ Color is out, at least in the opinion of Edwards and his contemporaries, and other sensible qualities (associated, perhaps, with the "sensations by the sense of feeling" to which Edwards

refers on pp. 379-80 of "The Mind") may be out for similar reasons. Resistance itself would seem to be unavailable, because it is resistance—whether it is conceived as a mere power, or as something actual (on which see "Of Being," p. 205, and "The Mind," p. 351)—whose cause or ground we are seeking.

⁴⁹ Although I won't be able to examine it here, Edwards's mention of "infinite resistance" is telling. He argues in "Of Atoms" that solidity is an infinite power: that a solid atom of matter can resist the entry of any other body, regardless of size, into the space the atom occupies (see p. 208). This affords Edwards another idealist argument. Because solidity is an infinite power, it must be the work of God.