



Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska, *W służbie Bogu i człowiekowi. Zarys problemu patriotyzmu w myśl George'a Berkeleya [In God's and Man's Service. An Outline of the Issue of Patriotism in George Berkeley's Thought]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2018, pp. 243

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/RF.2018.045>

Berkeley's practical philosophy, and specifically moral philosophy, economic issues presented in the *Passive Obedience*, to which Berkeley dedicated subsequent editions of *The Querist*, the philosophy of religion and various other notions related to social philosophy, contained in *Alciphron* and minor writings, has become increasingly popular among researchers at least since the publication of Paul Olscamp's monograph *Moral Philosophy of George Berkeley* (1973). Their extensive discussion in *Berkeley* (2014), a monograph by Daniel Flage, or the recently published volume edited by Sébastien Charles, entitled *Berkeley Revisited. Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy* (2015), to name but a few, stand as a testimony to the growing interest in these aspects of the Irish thinker's philosophy. However, while Berkeley's moral philosophy and, to some extent, his views on economy can be described in isolation from a specific historical or political situation, the discussion of social issues must be embedded in a wider context, as they often go beyond the analysis of an ethical concept (pointing to pragmatic and hedonistic elements, or those related to natural law), the search for links between Berkeley's religious and ethical stance, or the question of the definition (or redefinition) of free thinking in *Alciphron* either. This approach can be found in the studies of David Berman which depict Berkeley against the background of intellectual history of Ireland, Nancy Kendrick which analyse the world-view background of the Bermuda Project, Scott Breuninger on Berkeley's attitude towards the situation in Ireland, or Patrick Kelly who analyses the economic concept presented in *The Querist* against the background of the economic situation at that time. These works place Berkeley in various contexts, from which historians of philosophy, perhaps a little too hast-

ily, would like to remove him. Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska considers Berkeley's philosophy in a similar vein, as she takes the question of his understanding of patriotism as the main motif of the book.

The content and structure of Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska's monograph serves two purposes. Firstly, she embeds Berkeley's stance on patriotism in a broad historical, political, social and religious context. Secondly, she presents the development of Berkeley's views, as determined by the turns of his fate, his involvement in the intellectual life of England, the implementation of the project of founding a college in Bermuda, his return to Ireland and the bishopric of Cloyne. In order to fathom the complexity of the problem, it is enough to mention the issue of British colonies in America, for example. In the book we read: "The question of patriotism in the context of colonising America and the related issue of the development of the empire in the first decades of the 18th century may be considered in different ways. In the face of the expeditions overseas and the settlement of British people in America, doubts started arising as regards national identity, which were reflected in the questions: 'Does my country include an overseas empire? Who are my countrymen? Are the Scots or the Irish my countrymen? Are the white Protestant colonists in America my countrymen?'"¹ When reading the successive 'insights' to the eighteenth-century patriotism with reference to the changes in the political situation (marked by e.g. the Glorious Revolution or the Jacobite risings), nationality issues (relations between Ireland and England, Scotland and Wales), religious issues (the attitude of Anglicanism towards Catholicism), or finally, the aforementioned problem of colonies, it becomes obvious that we find traces of all these problems in various writings by Berkeley. From the first lines in the *Philosophical Commentaries* of 1707, where he repeats 'We Irish men'² several times, to the *Maxims concerning Patriotism* of 1750 that start with the words "Every man, by consulting his own heart, may easily know whether he is or is not a patriot",³ the question of belonging to a particular nation, state, community, is raised in many of Berkeley's writings. Anyone who is familiar with the oeuvre of the Irish philosopher will easily notice that the problems discussed in the first two chapters

¹ Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska, *W służbie Bogu i człowiekowi. Zarys problemu patriotyzmu w myśl George'a Berkeleya* [In God's and Man's Service. An outline of the Issue of Patriotism in George Berkeley's Thought] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2019), 58.

² George Berkeley, "Philosophical Commentaries," in *The Works of George Berkeley, The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, edited by Arthur Aston Luce and Thomas Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, vol. I, 1956), entries 392–394, 47.

³ George Berkeley, "Maxims concerning Patriotism," in *The Works of George Berkeley, The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. Arthur Aston Luce and Thomas Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, vol. 6, 1953), 253.

of Szymańska-Lewoszewska's book, which do not yet discuss Berkeley's philosophy, refer to such writings as the *Advice to the Tories who have taken the Oaths, An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain, The Querist* and others.

The aforementioned method of successive insights to the problem of Berkeley's patriotism can be seen in the division of the monograph into three chapters, the first of which discusses general historical background to the situation of the British Isles in the 18th century, the second is devoted to the patriotic traditions in the Isles, and the third, the most extensive, is dedicated to the reconstruction and analysis of Berkeley's patriotism in the years 1709–1753. In the first of the introductory chapters, the authoress makes extensive use of British literature on the subject, but she also uses the works of well-known Polish researchers (H. Zins, J. Z. Kędzierski, S. Grzybowski, N. Davies). This chapter discusses the situation in Great Britain and (in a separate sub-chapter) Ireland. The reader will find there both information concerning legal acts regulating relations between the two countries and detailed findings concerning Ireland's economic situation in the first half of the 18th century. The discussion of this issue, and in particular the country's recovery from poverty and economic development in the 1740s, is clearly a reference to Berkeley's *The Querist*. In the light of the interpretation of this work, the comment by J.C. Beckett, cited by the authoress, which highlights the rhetorical nature of the polemical writings of this period, in which British legislation was blamed for the ruin of Ireland, also deserves special attention. From the point of view of the authors of these writings, 'the more deficient the Irish economy, the more their arguments resounded'.⁴ This rhetorical stubbornness can be heard just as strongly when reading Berkeley's work.

In the context of Berkeley's patriotism, the analyses contained in chapter two, which the authoress begins by delving into a range of the 18th century meanings of such notions as the *people, nation, commonwealth and country*, are particularly interesting. There she discusses such issues as territorial ethnic, political, cultural or social affiliation, and, last but not least, affiliation with an economic community. Further on, she discusses different ways in which John Milton, Robert Filmer, John Locke, Shaftesbury and Lord Bolingbroke understand patriotism in its two forms, royalist and republican. As the authoress points out, reflecting on patriotism at that time was often associated with the religious image of the chosen nation, with the conviction of England's historical mission in the history of the world, which was the ideological foundation of English and British colonialism developed under the slogan of propagating Protestantism and transferring the hubs of science and political

⁴ Szymańska-Lewoszewska, *W służbie Bogu i człowiekowi*, 41.

power to new places. It was not only colonies in America that Britain was concerned about. It also had colonial aspirations towards neighbouring Ireland.

In discussing the notion of Irish patriotism, the authoress recognizes as essential to its formation the religion of the population – the indigenous Catholic population and the Protestant minority, against which language or cultural issues played a secondary role. This difference determined the attitude towards the Crown: loyalty to the United Kingdom or the pursuit of some form of autonomy, which can be seen in the writings of William King or William Molyneux. The authoress also discusses in detail two other iconic figures for the Irish patriotism of the time: Jonathan Swift and Charles Lucas, representatives of what J.D. Clarkson called “humanitarian nationalism” and advocates of Ireland’s independence. The chapter also contains a discussion of the activities of scientific and ecclesiastical societies: The Dublin Philosophical Society, The Dublin Society, The Incorporated Society for the Promotion of Protestant Schools in Ireland, and others. It is worth noting that the changes taking place in Ireland in the first half of the eighteenth century – the economic development, scientific and social activities of the said societies – convince the authoress that it is possible to discuss this phenomenon collectively and characterise all these changes as the Irish Enlightenment. From this perspective, the Irish patriotism of this period should not be understood as a conservative and reactionary trend: it was rather a pragmatic approach and the promotion of the good of the nation in a situation of political dependence on the United Kingdom. The remark of one of the researchers cited by the authoress is an important indication for the interpretation of George Berkeley’s oeuvre.

The third chapter, occupying more than a half of the volume, is devoted to the reconstruction of Berkeley’s position on patriotism. It is divided into parts corresponding to the three periods of the philosopher’s life. The first of them, described as British, covers the years 1709–1722 – it is dominated by universalist or cosmopolitan threads, and Berkeley’s thought is focused on moral issues. *Passive Obedience*, essays from “The Guardian” and selected sermons are the principal writings in which this subject matter is to be found. In the second period called somewhat misleadingly “the period of American patriotism”, i.e. the decade between 1722–1733, where Berkeley’s thought faced new challenges due to the Bermuda project and his short stay in Newport. The return from America commences the last period justifiably called Irish: at that time Berkeley was absorbed by the relations between the Protestant minority and the indigenous Catholic population of the country, as well as political and economic issues.

The book by Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska convinces us that in none of these periods is it easy to determine the exact object and char-

acter of Berkeley's patriotism. Although in general his position should, in her opinion, be attributed to the "humanitarian nationalism" trend, during particular periods it tended to adopt a slightly different character in connection with the different problems with which the philosopher was confronted. We read:

In the first period, it was the problem of recognizing obedience to the ruler in a situation where his faith was different from that of the majority of society. As for the second, the issue of Britain's participation in building an empire by colonising the New World gained key importance. In the final stage, Berkeley, in turn, faced the economic crisis that dominated the situation in Ireland at the turn of the 1830s and 1840s, as well as the emergence of a separate Irish identity.⁵

The significance of the monograph *In the Service for God and Man* should be considered from two perspectives – Polish research on the history of modern philosophy and the studies on Berkeley being conducted all over the world. In recent years, several books have been published in Poland, which allow for gaining a better understanding of Berkeley's philosophy, which goes far beyond textbook knowledge. I have in mind both monographic works,⁶ as well as translations.⁷ Suffice it to say that owing to the published translations of *Philosophical Commentaries* (translated by B. Żukowski), *Alciphron* (translated by M. Olszewski), as well as those done at the Institute of Philosophy of the Nicolaus Copernicus University by, *inter alia*, M. Szymańska-Lewoszewska (*An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision and other philosophical writings* (2011), *Siris* (2013), *Querist and writings on social philosophy* (2016), *Essays from "The Guardian" and sermons* (2019, in print)), the Polish reader is offered an easy access to most of the works by the Irish philosopher. However, if we ignore the comments contained in the last two volumes of translations, we will see that Polish research usually focused on Berkeley's theoretical philosophy and was only occasionally devoted to social issues or moral

⁵ Szymańska-Lewoszewska, *W służbie Bogu i człowiekowi*, 98.

⁶ Stanisław Kijaczko, *Immaterializm: epistemologia i metafizyka: próba interpretacji filozofii George'a Berkeleya* [Immaterialism: Epistemology and Metaphysics. An Interpretation] (Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2002); Przemysław Spryszak, *Filozofia percepcji George'a Berkeleya* [George Berkeley's Philosophy of Perception] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2004); Adam Grzelinski, *Człowiek i duch nieskończony. Immaterializm George'a Berkeleya* [The Man and the Infinite Spirit. The Immaterialism of George Berkeley] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2010), Bartosz Żukowski, *Esse est percipi? Metafizyka idei George'a Berkeleya* [Esse est Percipi? George Berkeley's Metaphysics of Ideas] (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, 2012); Piotr Szałek, *Istnienie i umysł. Studium podstaw filozofii George'a Berkeleya* [Existence and Mind. A Study of George Berkeley's Philosophical Fundamentals] (Kraków: Universitas, 2016).

⁷ Marta Szymańska, "George Berkeley's Philosophy in Polish Studies," *Berkeley Studies* 19 (2008): 32–40.

philosophy. Particularly innovative in Poland is in this respect not only the choice of the subject matter of the monograph, but also – and most importantly – the wide context in which it is embedded. It offers a historical, social and political context that has thus far been practically absent in publications. In the light of more detailed research, the chronological context taken up by the authoress by pointing to changes in Berkeley's understanding of patriotism is also important. Finally, the erudite nature of the work and the plurality of references to the literature of the subject cause that the book not only reconstructs Berkeley's thought, but also in a sense constitutes a bibliographical guide to literature on the social and political situation in Ireland in the first half of the 18th century, as well as to studies on Berkeley's social philosophy.

Although the monograph has been published in Polish, it is also an interesting work in the context of global research.⁸ First of all, the background to Berkeley's practical philosophy has been outlined in the most convincing fashion. In the light of Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska's analyses, it is not only the motivations concerning the project of founding a college in America (in the *SPG sermon*), the appeal to the Catholic clergy (in *A Word to the Wise*), or the legitimacy of the rhetorical style in *The Querist* that become clarified. The changes in Berkeley's own perception of his own views also become more readable. The interpretation presented by the authoress seems to support Berkeley's thesis on the development of Berkeley's thought and a certain changeability between the different stages of his life, in which the realisation of the Bermuda project is a very important, though not the only turning, point.

The authoress skilfully juxtaposes the analysis of sources with the discussion of existing interpretative positions referring to the elaborations on Berkeley's thoughts by B. Belfrage, D. Berman S. Breuninger, C. G. Caffenzis, D. Flage, E. S. Gaustad, D. Leary, P. Olscamp and balancing the arguments presented by these authors. Aside from the emphasis on the evolutionary nature of Berkeley's views, and apart from the excellent embedment in the source material and meticulous analyses, the value of the monograph is also its recapitulative character in relation to the research conducted to date. In many issues, the researchers mentioned above have carried out pioneering research, often focusing on some selected elements of his thought, such as the economic

⁸ That is why it is very good that certain threads present in the monograph can be found in the articles of the authoress available in the English language. Cf. Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska, "Religion and Politics. Changes in Berkeley's Understanding of Ireland's Well-being in the Early and Late Editions of 'The Querist,'" *Ruch Filozoficzny* LXXI, no. 4 (2015): 113–128; "Berkeley's double understanding of 'social appetite,'" *Berkeley Revisited. Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy*, edited by Sébastien Charles (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015), 147–160.

concept presented by Berkeley in *The Querist* (C. G. Caffenzis, P. Kelly, I.D.S. Ward, S. Rashid, T.W. Hutchinson et al.), moral philosophy (P. Olscamp, B. Belfrage, D. Flage), Berkeley's attitude towards Ireland (D. Berman, S. Breninger, P. Hanczewski) or America (E.S. Gaustad, N. Kendrick). Indeed, until now there has been no study summarising the various aspects of Berkeley's attitude towards his homeland. With the monograph recapitulating the research to date and presenting it in a new, original light, we may speak not only of Berkeley the metaphysician, Berkeley the epistemologist, moralist or economist. The book by Marta Szymańska-Lewoszewska is the first to present in such detail the complicated image of Berkeley the patriot.

Adam Grzelinski
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń
ORCID: 0000-0002-4007-6507
e-mail: Adam.Grzelinski@umk.pl