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**The Role of the Subject in the Cognitive Process  
according to George Berkeley**

Rola podmiotu w procesie poznania według George'a Berkeley'a

Роль субъекта в процессе познания по Д. Беркли

The problem set forth in the requires an *a priori* strict definition of the concept of the epistemological activity of the subject. It also requires a reconstruction, out of necessity very brief, of its historically conditioned meanings. Without these it would be difficult to judge the question of Berkeley's views belonging to any one of the two possible conceptions of thinking on the role of the subject in the cognitive process. It is important to note at the beginning that the term "active" will not be applied to every function of the subject. The term will be used only when indicating that problems are solved by the mind in accordance with the mind's own nature and not with the nature of things. Therefore, the mere ascertainment of the specific dynamics of the subject, which discovers truth gradually and attains the knowledge of the object stage by stage, will by no means decide in favour of the activist conception. Otherwise, every epistemological theory that excludes cognition based on intuitive ocularity, whether mystical (e.g. in Plato, Nicolaus of Cusa, or in the 19th-century intuitionism), mystical-rationalist (St. Augustine), or nativist (Plato), would have to be regarded as activist which would be a gross oversimplification. The concept of the activity of the subject will be narrowed to such properties that allow it to form the object of cognition from its foundations, or through transformations and by evoking changes in the characteristic structure of the object.

In pre-Marxist epistemological thought the question of the activity of the subject appeared in the broader context of reflexions on the value

of knowledge and the validity of cognition. Idealist theories failed to notice the ontic community of the experiencing and thinking subject, and the objective reality. That is why they faced the problem of a bridge between the two forms of being and also the necessity of proving how valuable cognition was possible. The discovery of the creative faculties of the subject provoked, in turn, a question whether they do not make the cognitive contact with reality impossible and whether this reality yields to man's inspection. The way different philosophical stands solve the above problems will not be dealt with here. Our interest in them will be confined to and centered around the conceptions of activity that can be distinguished in the idealist tradition. This tradition gave birth to two distinct conceptions of activity: one will be called activity independent of will, the other — volitional activity.

The common feature of all the standpoints that make up the first conception is in a conviction that the subject is active because it cannot be passive. It is compelled to impinge upon the object of cognition by its own nature and physiological constitution. This happens outside the sphere of volition. Thus the subject has a passive-active character. A statement like this is somewhat risky because it has a form of an oxymoron. It is supposed to mean that the subject performs its actions unconsciously and without will. In this case activity is connected with the structure of cognitive organs. It results from their defects, inability to overcome their own deficiencies, or, simply, from the inability to effectively adjust themselves to the object of cognition. The activity is thus a peculiar obstacle disturbing the cognitive process.

Activity independent of will is historically earlier and certainly has a richer philosophical tradition than volitional activity. Its roots can be found in antiquity, because the earliest attempt, the beginning of activist view, can be discerned already in the theory of Democritus. In our considerations of Berkeley's stand this very conception is significant since in the 17th and 18th centuries it was one of the constitutive elements of the climate of thinking about the possibilities of the subject. Democritus' subjectivist theory of perception, recalled by Galileo, was accepted by the modern currents. Descartes referred to it in his conviction that all qualitative changes are merely subjective reactions towards motion and the geometrical properties of things. Hobbes referred to this theory by asserting that perception was not dependent on the action of stimuli, which was identical with recognizing the subjectivity of sensible qualities. The same tendency was expressed in Locke's system, the difference being that, contrary to his predecessors, he separated subjective qualities from the combination of sensible properties and defined the others after Boyle as primary. The line was to be followed by Berkeley, who especially and

only in Polish literature, is still attributed with the subjectification of primary sensible properties. A special place marked by the intensification of activity, falls to Kant's theory. In common opinion there the activity comprising both cognitive faculties is the highest.<sup>1</sup>

The criterion of the intensity of the activity of the subject in the discussed theories of the first type is determined by the degree of correspondence between the mental reality and the objectively existing being. The principle is the following: activist conceptions agree at the same time to the deformation of the image of reality towards which cognitive action is directed. This is connected with the presence in the cognitive process of the data dependent on the construction and cognitive powers of the subject. As a result there arises a new object of cognition, different from the objective reality. In a word, the view is based on incomplete correspondence or entire non-correspondence between the real and presented world. It can also be presumed that this criterion permits one to find out to what extent cognition provides objective contents in a given theory.

Complete correspondence is recognized by the theories which take the stand of naive realism and see no need to differentiate the components of the cognitive process. At the earliest stages of epistemology this resulted from insufficient cognitive consciousness. With its development the notions of subject and objects become differentiated. There also arises separately a need to discuss being and that which is being cognized. The dialecticians of Elea were the first to effect a breakthrough but it was Democritus who gave a clearer and conscious form to epistemological problems. The analysis of cognition made by him accepts the relation of noncorrespondence, or otherwise, of incomplete correspondence. This standpoint still admits the possibility of reaching the real being. For although conventional properties transform the image of reality, they are not proper object of cognition but the mathematical properties which yield to rational cognition. The guarantee of the objective character of man's knowledge is reason.

The trend differentiating the fundamental elements of the cognitive process tended to separate the subject and processes in it from the world of things. On the other hand, experienced-intellectual contents were objectified, thereby gaining a status of the independent, substantial

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<sup>1</sup> We have only cited the conception of the activity of the cognitive subject although in Kant's philosophy activity covers more than the plane of cognition. In his anthropology Kant supports the conception of man as a free being, self-creating and improving in the historical process. Nevertheless he makes this form of activity independent of epistemological decisions. The cognitive and historical subjects are conceived by Kant as disjointed. Hence, only one of them can be analyzed.

reality. Descartes' theory can also be placed in this line, which made a precedent of penetrating the world of the subject, and, although it defended the existence of the outside world, priorly negated, it demonstrated the autonomy of the mind at the same time and created the possibility of discussing the subject and the object within subjective reality. This possibility was exploited by Kant. His stand is an example of complete non-correspondence obviously because of the reformulation of the conception of mind. The mind has no longer receptive functions but it introduces into the cognitive process its own *a priori* forms of inspection and categories of judgment. This makes the existence of things to be placed beyond the boundaries of possible cognition, that is in fact outside it.

Epistemological theories now faced two roads. Both absolutized the participation of the subject in cognition, although each produced essentially different consequences: two different stands on the mode of existence of the object under cognition. One practically meant the return to realism as it led to the hypostasis of consciousness. As a result this process made subjectivity an ontic principle, as for example with Hegel or Schopenhauer. It lost man at the same time, leaving him with a role of the alienated instrument in the complex structure of being. The other road, which already had epistemological idealism as its foundation, made it even more extreme. For it led to the overcoming of the subjective-objective bond, that is to immanentism, thereby creating a new conception of the subject's activity. Its distinct form was presented by Fichte. Despite his intentions, however, he failed to break the connection between the subject and the object. He only made a shift from the plane, on which the object was identified with the reality outside the mind, deeper into the subject itself, where subjective contents became the object of cognition. Thus, the object of cognition did not disappear. It only changed its mode of existence, still remaining in a way outside the "cognitive I". As a result, however, the subject and object of cognition gained a common ontological background. In that way Fichte could make the cognized contents firmly dependent on the acts of will. The subject obtained a full independence in this doctrine. In truth, Kant's theory had already vested man with autonomy, yet, nevertheless, it could not get rid of its burden of a peculiar complex of impotence: agnosticism. This situation was due to the recognition of a necessary interdependence between *Ding an sich* and its human transformation, the phenomenon. Here, the object of cognition was still two-sidedly conditioned by the objectively existing material and by the operations of the theoretical subject. In the case of Fichte's theory the *ego* creates both objects and their contents; it is the only factor generating reality and the only object

of cognition beyond which there is nothing. We deal here with the activity of the free, active *ego*.

In view of the foregoing considerations, a possible inclusion of Berkeley's views in activistic conception should, be the result of finding theoretical premises indicating the acceptance of at least one of the following two outlooks. One recognizes the deformation of the object of cognition and at the same time questions or confines the objective dimension of knowledge. Or, one does not negate it but rejects the role of the senses in acquiring knowledge. The other asserts the causative dependence of the object of cognition on the acts of will. Whereas the qualification of Berkeley's proposition as one more in the current of passivist conceptions should take place after we have found out whether, according to him, the relation of correspondence obtains and whether the subject is characterized with non-volition. Moreover, the two discriminants would have to occur at the same time. If only one was found, this cannot unequivocally decide in favour of any conception of the subject.

There is generally no doubt that Berkeley's philosophy, showing its theoretical affinity with the Cartesian trend, centres its interests not around the object, but on the cognitive subject. Berkeley's interpreters do not find it problematic, either, that the subject is active according to his theory. At best, they raise the question to what extent Berkeley supported the activistic conception of the subject and whether his theory can be included in phenomenalism or in the more extreme immanentism.

It might indeed seem that the activity of the subject is according to Berkeley an unquestionable fact since he says so directly in all his works. It is worth reverting to them, though, to find out whether and possibly in what sphere of cognitive relations this activity is really revealed and what decides about it.

A close reading of Berkeley's works proves that he uses the notion of activity in two ways. In a broader aspect he applies it as the ontological fabric of beings different from the idea. Already in *Philosophical Commentaries* there is a thought, a constant and characteristic property of Berkeley's doctrine, that the reality has two foundations: the perceived which is passive, and the active which is percipient<sup>2</sup>. In isolation, this assertion, imposes an interpretation that activity is identical with the process of perception. However, the differentiation within the foundations of reality means here no more than that the active being is the subject of cognitive processes, while the passive being, that is the one not entitled to perceptive activities, is their object. There would be

<sup>2</sup> For example in Entries 408, 429, 437, 863. All references are to A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (eds.): *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne*, London 1948—1957.

nothing original in this conception, derived from Descartes' ontology, were it not for the fact that the commentaries, persistently treating Berkeley's theory of cognition as a manifesto of sensualism, reveal a conviction that this theory entails a reduction of the subject to a combination of ideas. The examination of Berkeley's philosophy for such an understanding of ontology of the subject is useful to the extent that it will reveal either inconsistencies in his views, because a sum total of passive ideas cannot make up an active being, or a disparity between its interpretations and the content of the system. The corroboration of the above conception of the subject should at the same time close the considerations on the question of activity, whereas in the other case, the questions remain open. It does not thereby cancel the appropriateness of examining the problem according to the criteria established at the beginning. Therefore I make it conditional upon the definition of what the mind is in Berkeley's conception, whether to continue the analysis of the problem of activity.

It turns out that none of Berkeley's works permits one to attribute to him the stand which makes the mind a combination of perceptions, and only perceptions. The stand was close to Hume's and anticipated the structuralist conception of the subject. The only exceptions are the few entries in the *Philosophical Commentaries*,<sup>3</sup> one of Berkeley's earliest text. However this problem might be commented upon, one thing is certain: the mind so conceived is passive, which is in contradiction to its prior definition. It is obvious that the negation of the instrumental functions of the mind leads in consequence to the rejection of the possibility of using the category of spiritual substance, or at any rate makes it invalid. There is not need to justify thoroughly the significance of this category in Berkeley's philosophy. It is enough to say that it constitutes its foundations and at once the focal point around which all the remaining theoretical spheres are centred. According to Berkeley, the fact of performing acts of perception is more typical than defining mind as a combination of perceptions. The two ways of conceiving mind can be treated as mutually exclusive. In them we can observe the stages of the development of the mature conception in the making. However, on account of the context of other entries, among which these appear, I suggest that we should interpret them as the verbalization of the already studied and established contents, and above all, as two aspects of reflexion on the mind. In the first, "Humean" case, Berkeley analyzes the mind which yields to empirical perception, that is the mind not different from other sensible things. Hence the mind as idea renders what is passive in it, whereas no idea corresponds to the active side of the mind. None can

<sup>3</sup> Entries 577, 578, 580, 587.

be found, although man has introspective knowledge of what is active in him. The mind as a kind of being which is not an idea, but an active, spiritual, and thinking principle, and in which cognitive operations take place, cannot be rendered in the sensuous image, as is the case with the exteriorized forms of its presence and action. Sensible cognition can concern ideas alone, that is immediate objects, with which the organs of the subject come in contact. Under no circumstances can it refer to the reality which is by its nature non-sensible. Hence according to Berkeley the cognition of the mind is possible through other human faculties: reason and reflexion.

These explanations still leave us where we began them, with activity understood as an antithesis of inactive, inanimate ideas deprived of the gift of perceiving. The perspective of understanding activity in another way is opened only by all those remarks by Berkeley, where the foundation of activity is not perception, but the faculty of making an impact upon the object, of modifying its structure or creating it anew.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the concept of activity, in its other, narrower meaning, refers to such a predisposition of the subject which is realized through creative and transformative acts. In this context ideas are interpreted as the effects of the causative action of the active being and are tied with the acts of will. It follows therefrom that the proof of the activist conception of the subject in Berkeley's philosophy should be confined to demonstrating only such manifestations of the subject's action that generate new ideas or changes in the existing ones. Our interest should also cover the process of perception since it is necessary to find out whether the two aspects of the notion of activity coincide, referring to the same sphere of the functioning of the mind, or whether Berkeley separates perception from creation.

In the structure of the active mind Berkeley found no room for perception in the latter meaning. Although perception is the necessary condition for the mind to exist, yet, since it is man's innate faculty<sup>5</sup>, it does not depend on the acts of his will. Like thinking for Descartes, for Berkeley perception determines the mode of existence of spiritual substance.

The thesis *esse est percipi* does not go beyond existential judgment and does not explain how the mind works. Let us try to turn this dictum round; *percipi est esse*, with *in intellectu* implied. This operation permits one to reveal the Berkeleyan theory of thinking, analogous to that by Descartes in *Meditation III*, where while defining the object of the mind

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<sup>4</sup> See *Principles...*, paragraph 27, or *Three Dialogues...*, I.

<sup>5</sup> The actualization of innate faculties, contrary to acquired skills, does not require that the subject should assume an active attitude. See *Philosophical Commentaries*, entry 651.

he says: *res ipsa cogitata, quatenus est obiective in intellectu*. Here being thought means as much as being the object of thinking, while the cognitive process consists in apprehending the mind of ideas, their relations, as well as their origin.

Is that an activistic conception? Definitely not. Indeed, it is not man who is the perpetrator of the ideas he thinks, his mind apprehends something already existing. There are thus such contents of the mind which do not depend upon it. Entry 646 of *Philosophical Commentaries* expresses a view that existence is inconceivable without perception or an act of will. This proposition seems important for the problem in question. Nonetheless it was not presented in a sufficiently clear way. It is difficult to infer from its literal formulation, whether Berkeley conceived the act of will and perception as two aspects of the same process, identifying the will to perceive with an act that realizes it. Or whether he used the conjunction "or" in its disjunctive function. If this doubt was decided in favour of the former, we would deal with a conception of creative activity, and hence with extreme epistemological realism. The latter case imposes the conclusion of distinguishing between specific cognitive non-volition, concerning perception, and the creative activity connected with willing and not willing. Such an approach appears more correct, the more so that it is confirmed by other notes in the same work. For example Entry 645 says that perception is possible without will. The theme of the non-volitionality of perceptions is found in all works by Berkeley<sup>6</sup> but it is most pronounced in the first of *The Three Dialogues*, where like Locke, the philosopher distinguished, two dispositions of the mind: a volition-based faculty of causing changes and the non-volitionality of sensation. Berkeley even used an example taken from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. When he is trying to prove that the subject is passive in perceiving, he asks whether we can avoid the sight of the sun while looking at it. The mind, therefore, acquires, feels, and apprehends some of its contents without will. Moreover, the contents resist will.

It has been explained so far that the subject introduces nothing of itself into cognition, and does not deform the object under cognition thorough its will. If we stopped at that, the conclusion about its complete passivity would have an enthymematic overtone, because so far the considerations do not permit such a thesis. In the introductory passages, correspondence has been recognized, besides independence from will, as a condition determining the passivist attitude. It is in order therefore to see whether we deal with correspondence in Berkeley's philosophy.

The criterion of correspondence was deduced on the basis of repre-

<sup>6</sup> *Principles*, paragraph 29.

sentationalist theories. Hence there is some difficulty here, as Berkeley's epistemology is the only attempt in modern philosophy before Reid to justify the immediate and at the same time non-mystical presence of the object in the cognitive process. Representationism was concentrated on the problem of relation between the contents of the mind and the reality being cognized. It asked how the subjective reflects the object of cognition, whether knowledge is suited to the extra-subjective world, and whether it describes this world adequately and faithfully. If, according to Berkeley's doctrine, the contents of the mind do not represent anything, we cannot look for the answers to the above questions in his theory. One of the methods of ascertaining the passivity of the subject having thus proved futile, another should be used instead, more appropriate and effective. Rather than consider the adequacy of knowledge, we shall concentrate on its value in itself, while Berkeley's view on problem can be obtained from his stand on the importance and cognitive abilities of the subject's faculties.

These views are first of all expressed in the polemics with the theories where the cognitive faculties received a pejorative note, being regarded as imperfect and unable to reconstruct the reality as it really is. The lack of confidence in the mind gave birth to opinions, entirely abortive in Berkeley's view, that the nature of things was outside the sphere of our faculties, and that the contents they provided scarcely symbolize being. This in turn influenced the search for truth outside the data supplied by the subject. Berkeley's interpretation of his closest intellectual tradition and his whole philosophy are directed against such a methodological attitude and the consequent structure of the cognitive process. Berkeley's stand is accompanied by his oppositional attitude towards representationalist epistemology that assumes the existence of reality outside the possible range of the mind. That is why propositions about the limited abilities of the cognitive apparatus, whether pronounced directly or only deducible from the contexts of other judgments, give rise, according to Berkeley, to "hopeless scepticism" and agnosticism. For that reason he counted among the representatives of scepticism, such as Spinoza, Hobbes, or Locke, the authors of theories generally not regarded as sceptical. Berkeley voiced those views in the introductions to *The Principles* and to *The Three Dialogues*, where he explained to his readers that the task of those works was to lay bare the errors of philosophical thinking in his epoch about the problems of existence and cognition. It is therefore evident that he could never have accepted the positions which would not have regarded as their own the views about the usefulness of all faculties, and about full cognizability.

His support of the value of human cognition was not only revealed in

the polemical angle of Berkeley's work. His own judgments on some epistemological questions provide ample evidence. One of them was to discard the difference between the properties of things. Their uniformity was expressed in the objectification of secondary properties. However, this did not in any way mean their exteriorization with regard to the subject, but their independence from the mind in the sense that it no longer created those properties.

The cognitive faculties, therefore, function so efficiently and effectively that they apprehend being in a valuable way, that is, as it really is. Such is the function of both the senses and the mind and they are suited for this very purpose. A close connection with Berkeley's Christian finalism can be seen here.

The view God is recognized as the cause and the ultimate end of the universe provides the unequivocal ground to justify the veracity and value of human knowledge. In Berkeley's philosophy the safeguard of the objective meaning of knowledge has a double dimension. He could not at once look for the guarantee of the veracity of cognition in the absolute being, because with his system he wanted to prove that the absolute being and providence existed. That is why, in order to avoid the error of *petitio principii*, he preferred to assume the following: the real similarity of subjects, the universally constant mode of the functioning of their cognitive faculties, sensitivity barrier common for all<sup>7</sup>, and the feelings, identical for each man, and about the externality and spatiality of ideas, derived from experience<sup>8</sup>. These assumptions, combined with the naturalistic-pragmatic conception of the objects of sight<sup>9</sup> and the conviction about the invariable order obtaining among ideas, made knowledge as certain as in extreme aprioristic currents. They deprived knowledge of the mark of individuality for universal character. Ultimately, however, Berkeley made cognition dependent upon the Creator, who, by an act of will, gave life to the harmonious and orderly world, and men who cognize it. In that way God's freedom, manifested by the work of creation, became man's necessity<sup>10</sup>. Hence already this stage of

<sup>7</sup> It is constituted by atoms of cognition, which Berkeley calls sensitive minima or particles.

<sup>8</sup> The ascertainment of the externality of objects, that is the presence of the object distant from man, as well as of the tridimensional expansion is not the work of the senses, yet the result of experience, of constantly repeated observations. This is the main thesis of Berkeley's works on vision.

<sup>9</sup> Objects of sight inform about what is indispensable for the protection and safeguarding of man's welfare, and warn against what threatens the body. They steer the actions of the subject. See *An Essay towards A New Theory of Vision*, paragraphs 59, 147.

<sup>10</sup> This is not tantamount to finding fatalism in Berkeley's theory. It only means that, although the world created by an act of God's will is deprived of

discussion allows us to conclude that Berkeley's conception of the subject has a passive character.

The demonstration of the passivity and dependence of the subject in the sphere of cognition leaves out the influence of volitional activity upon its object. However, it does not entirely eliminate the connection of will with the course of the cognitive process. The justification of the second part of this thesis requires additional explanations that will throw more light on the functions of will among the other disposition of the subject.

Unlike with Malebranche, in Berkeley's conception the will is a creative force, in whose acts man's freedom is expressed, contrary to what Locke believed. Yet we must distinguish between the mode of the participation of will in the cognitive process and its creative functions.

In sensuous cognition acts of will accompany perception, which consists in setting the subject's limbs in motion in order to make cognition possible. For example, to turn the head towards the object we wish to cognize, or to pick up a flower and bring it to the nose when we want to find its smell.

In rational cognition will functions as the Aristotelian active reason. Although it initiates cognition and its acts precede inference, it has no influence on the contents of cognition. Reason, Berkeley asserts, discovers relations between ideas. It discovers them but does not form them. In its action reason is therefore no less receptive than the senses; the point is that it contacts its object not immediately but indirectly, after a prior sensuous recognition of ideas. Reason also covers existential propositions, from those judging about the existence of empirical objects to those asserting the suprasensible being, God, as the highest principle of unity, of the identity of existence<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, from the point of view of Berkeley, a theologian and metaphysician, reason is responsible for the *a posteriori* proof of the existence of the Creator. That is why, only on account of that, knowledge must be receptive.

The case is similar with introspective cognition. An act of will only conditions and activates cognitive actions, thereby making it possible for the subject to reflect on the operations going on in himself. As a result the subject acquires real knowledge about himself as a thinking and perceiving being.

Berkeley obviously recurs in his conception of will to the trend which

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necessary determinations, and although men are free because they have will, yet they have no power to effect changes in this world. Man cannot confine the freedom of the Creator.

<sup>11</sup> See *Siris*, paragraph 294, p. 137.

assigned to will the role of the factor that directs cognition. It was begun by St. Augustine. The voluntarist conception of the epistemological activity of man and the preference of the primacy of will over the functions of reason was again found in the 14th-century Christian thought of Henry of Ghent or John Duns. The modern era in turn renewed the medieval tendency in the philosophy of Descartes. This was evident in his conviction that the activity of the subject was expressed in the acts of will. That created grounds for the voluntarist conception of judgment. For that reason it was to intellectual cognition, being the result of the subject's passive faculty, passive because reduced to a representational role, that Descartes ascribed the value of certainty and veracity. On the other hand, the will, active of itself, could be the source of error. Thus the Cartesian subject did not err when it represented something, but when it predicated about the existence or non-existence of the real counterpart of the mental object.

Berkeley fully shared his predecessor's remarks about the presence of the will in cognitive actions although the principle of *esse percipi* and his conviction about the direct contact between the subject and object excluded the problem of correspondence. Hence he understood the question of error in a different way. He treated the falsity of judgment as a result of the will-derived choice of premises for inference. The choice of a false premise was caused by the subject's insufficient orientation about the character of ties between the objects of senses. Obviously, every premise that describes an immediate object must be true, according to Berkeley's theory. What can be problematic will only be the value of the premise about the mediate object suggested to the subject by the immediate object. Now, the mechanism of imagination will always choose interrelations often experienced out of the reservoir of memory, and it is these interrelations that by the force of habit it will include in the immediately experienced object. The task of the will is to decide whether the choice is right, which is expressed in the formulation of judgment. Another task is a possible correction which consists in negating the usefulness of a given reproductive image and in compelling imagination to extract from memory the information about rare interrelations. A correction can naturally be made only when the subject has prior appropriate observations at his disposal.

Will therefore initiates, makes it possible and controls cognition, but it does not create its object. At the same time it must be admitted that according to Berkeley's view will retains its creative faculty, especially in co-operation with imagination. The co-operation of the two faculties of the subject occurs at that point outside cognition.

Imagination, the subject's creative and at once volitional property,

gives man an opportunity of proving his highest activity and confirming his membership of human species. Berkeley regarded imagination so conceived as one of the criteria distinguishing man from animal. For example, the idea of a blue horse can only be thought of by man<sup>12</sup>. The analogous view can be found in *Alciphron*, where creative imagination was called a faculty of the soul, superstructured above the sensuous-in instinctive plane. It is much more significant that Berkeley compared the faculty of creative imagination to the power of the divine *fiat*<sup>13</sup>. Obviously, the antiabsolutist character of his philosophy at once imposes essential constraints since the ability of creation *ex nihilo* belongs exclusively to God. This automatically narrows the sphere of man's possibilities. Man is thus left with the creation of his world, but out of the material drawn from cognition. It is then evident that cognition is connected with volitional activity only in such a way that it provides this activity with the indispensable elements to construct the object. Cognition begins with abstracting, that is separating individual qualities from the idea. The next stage consists in creating a whole from these abstracted parts, and, finally, the newly-created wholes are ordered into the original situational planes. These are immanent and dependent upon the mind, and they make up the world of fantasy. Fantastic objects differ from the real ones by lesser intensity, they are weaker and paler, and first of all they appear in the order different from the natural, imposed by the subject<sup>14</sup>.

However we may value Berkeley's criterion which distinguishes objects produced by the volitional-imaginative activity of the subject, that is, no matter whether the criterion evokes reservations or can be considered sufficient, the fact remains that it is not the objects in question that are the field of the mind's cognitive inquiries.

While the maximum of the creative activity of imagination is being realized, its contact with the plane of cognition is negligible. It is reducible to the conditioning of the effects of the subject's manipulative actions by the material accumulated in experience. This is defined by the principle of genetic empiricism, which is the organic part of Berkeley's doctrine. Hence the inference seems to be valid that the presence of the volitional activity of the subject differentiates the imaginative and cognitive processes. The mind assumes a creative or a receptive attitude accordingly, whereas the relation between creative and cognitive actions is converse. The turn towards reality means the reduction of creative activity and the attainment by the mind of the ceiling of passivity and

<sup>12</sup> *Philosophical Commentaries*, entry 753.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, entry 830.

<sup>14</sup> See *Principles*, paragraphs 28, 30, 33.

receptivity. An additional argument can be brought forth to support this thesis: it is Berkeley's view, clearly outlined in *The New Theory of Vision*, that imagination does not behave creatively when participating in cognitive processes.

It might be remarked that even when the mind copies the real, sensible idea, we deal with the act of will because the take-over of the role of receptors by imagination is conditioned by man himself. Moreover, it is also he who decides about the ideas of imagination coming into existence and assigns to them as immanent beings arbitrary duration.

The obvious legitimacy of the remark is, however, exhausted the moment we turn towards cognition. It must be strongly stressed that there are such ideas of imagination which are determined not only by the subject. This refers to the ideas of touch given to the subject through sight. In the arbitrary, God-decreed connection between the objects of sight and of touch, the former apprehends things directly while the corresponding tactile sensations are prompted by imagination. In this case imagination makes use of the immediate, tactile experiences of the subject, which are fixed in memory. However, we should not see the action of will here as the cognition of the visual-tactile wholes taking place in a mechanical and automatized way, through the habitual association of the contents of the sense of sight with the objects of touch. Moreover, the distinction of the object of one of the two senses is neither necessary nor possible for the normally functioning subject. This is connected with Berkeley's typically associationist conviction that in the process of cognition empirical objects appear as properties apprehended by various senses, and irreducible to the contents of one, and also composed of data obtained in past experience. A possible decomposition of these objects into simple elements and the isolation of what has been currently and directly apprehended by the subject from the elements supplied by experience do not fall under real sensations but theoretical analysis. The subject can naturally perform one but by ascending a higher order of cognition, that is by inquiring after the principles and mechanisms governing his own mind. This takes place in the sphere of reflexive cognition rather than empirical-sensuous and again by the receptive method.

The aim of this paper was to present Berkeley's conception of cognition as a passivist one. Although according to his doctrine the subject is not inertly static, although it is characterized by the dynamics of the

processes occurring within it, and finally, although the subject goes beyond the sensuous-instinctive level of existence by virtue of imagination and reason, it remains nonetheless passive in the sphere of cognition. This conclusion was arrived at on the evidence that the essence of each cognitive faculty lies in fulfilling its innate receptive function, and that will, in Berkeley's epistemology, does not belong to the factors shaping the object of knowledge but to the conditions of cognition.

#### STRESZCZENIE

Teza artykułu brzmi: Poznanie w epistemologii G. Berkeley'a ma charakter receptywny. Podmiot nie jest więc sprawcą myślaných przez siebie idei. W procesie poznania umysł, zgodnie z naturą rzeczy a nie swoją własną, obejmuje rzeczywistość już istniejącą. Przekonanie to wyłącza teorię Berkeley'a z kręgu idealizmu teoriopoznawczego zarówno w postaci fenomenalizmu jak też immanentyzmu.

#### РЕЗЮМЕ

Тезис данной работы звучит: Познание в эпистемологии Д. Беркли носит рецептивный характер. Таким образом субъект не является творцом мыслящих им идей. В процессе познания ум, согласно с природой вещей, а не собственной, охватывает действительность уже существующую. Это убеждение исключает теорию Д. Беркли из круга теориопознавательного идеализма как в виде феноменализма, так и имманентизма.

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