Preface

Over the past several decades, scholarship in the history of early modern philosophy has undergone a major methodological shift. Historians of philosophy once focused almost exclusively on the logical analysis of philosophical arguments presented in a handful of canonical 'Great Books' with only very limited attention to historical context or the specific interests and concerns of the philosophers under discussion.[1] While this kind of logical analysis is clearly important, most historians of philosophy today believe that contextual factors must play a much larger role. The 'contextualist revolution' (as Christia Mercer (2019) has called it) has led to greater attention to texts and authors outside the traditional canon and opened up new possibilities for interdisciplinary research, building greater connections to fields such as intellectual history, history of science, theology, and religious studies.

John Locke (1632–1704) was an early beneficiary of this shift. Beginning from John Yolton's *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (Yolton, 1956), there has been significant interest in the historical context of Locke's philosophy, including volumes such as *Locke's Philosophy: Context and Content* (Rogers, ed., 1994) and *English Philosophy in the Age of Locke* (Stewart, ed., 2000). These studies have contributed to a deeper understanding of Locke's philosophy and its connections to the scientific, political, and religious issues of his day, and also brought to light fascinating philosophical work by Locke and others that had previously been neglected.

To date, George Berkeley (1685–1753) has not received the same level of benefit. Although scholars such as Bertil Belfrage (1986), David Berman (1994; 2005), Stephen Daniel (2011), and José Antonio Robles (2001) have advocated for the importance of Berkeley's historical context and the influence of Irish thinkers such as John Toland, William King, Peter Browne, and Robert Boyle, Berkeley's context has yet to receive the kind of sustained scholarly attention that has been paid to Locke's. This is closely connected with the fact that most scholars of early modern philosophy are still unaware of the complex and sophisticated philosophical and religious debates that took place in Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries.

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[1]   For an example of this kind of approach see Bennett (1971).

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Today, Berkeley's *Principles* (1710) and *Three Dialogues* (1713) are among the standard texts for the study of European philosophy. No other Irish philosopher, and no other work of Berkeley's, has achieved this 'canonical' status. However, Ireland was a major centre of philosophical activity in Berkeley's lifetime, and Berkeley was far from the only contributor. Studying this broader Irish philosophical discussion will improve our understanding of Berkeley and also of early modern philosophy more generally. This is in line with a new approach to the history of philosophy focused on philosophical conversations, rather than on the 'grand systems' of individual thinkers.[2]

To promote this much needed study, we proposed to hold a conference on the topic Irish Philosophy in the Age of Berkeley, with papers to address the Irish context of Berkeley's philosophy; the philosophical work of other Irish thinkers active during Berkeley's lifetime; the reception within Ireland of other philosophical figures, ideas, and movements; and the reception of Irish philosophy outside Ireland. Three papers were invited, and an additional nine chosen by anonymous review of abstracts.

The Irish Philosophy in the Age of Berkeley conference took place at Trinity College Dublin 5 and 6 April 2019, with the generous support of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, the Mind Association, the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute (Making Ireland Research Theme), the Trinity College Dublin Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Event Fund, and the Trinity College Dublin Department of Philosophy. We are pleased to present in this volume ten of the twelve papers given at the conference. The papers discuss the philosophical work of a wide variety of Irish writers, including Robert Boyle (1627–1691), William King (1650–1729), William Molyneux (1656–1698), Robert Molesworth (1656–1725), Peter Browne (c. 1665–1735), Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), John Toland (1670–1722), Thomas Prior (1680–1751), Mary Barber (c. 1685–1755), Samuel Madden (1686–1765), Arthur Dobbs (1689–1765), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), Constantia Grierson (c. 1705–1733), Laetitia Pilkington (c. 1709–1750), Elizabeth Sican (fl. 1730s), and John Austin (1717–1784). The range of topics addressed is also quite wide, including philosophical reflections on mind, science, religion, economics, beauty, free will, laughter, education, motherhood, gender, and knowledge.

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[2]   This approach is exemplified, for instance, by Hutton (2015).

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The first section, comprising the first four chapters, sheds light on the early modern Irish context of Berkeley's philosophy. We begin with 'The Irish Context of Berkeley's "Resemblance Thesis"' by Peter West and Manuel Fasko. Berkeley's resemblance thesis states that 'for one thing to *represent* another, those two things must *resemble* one another' (p. 7). The authors argue that this principle – which plays a central role in Berkeley's immaterialist arguments – must be understood against the specifically Irish background of Berkeley's thought. In particular, they show that this principle plays an important role in the philosophical work of Molyneux and King.

In Chapter 2, 'Does Berkeley's Immaterialism Support Toland's Spinozism? The Posidonian Argument and the Eleventh Objection', Eric Schliesser, considers Berkeley's 'clockwork' argument from design in the eleventh objection against his own principles (*Principles* §§60–66), as it invoked a scholarly debate between Daniel Garber and Margaret Wilson. Schliesser argues that Berkeley's response to this objection must be understood against the background of what he calls the 'Posidonian argument', a form of design argument derived from Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods*. Schliesser discusses the versions of this argument that were advocated by Boyle and Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) and criticized by Toland.

In Chapter 3, 'Poverty and Prosperity: Political Economics in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', Marc Hight aims to situate Berkeley's arguments about social and economic policy in *The Querist* (1736) with respect to contemporary mercantilist wisdom and three other Irish thinkers of the same period: Madden, Dobbs, and Prior.

In Chapter 4 'Berkeley's Criticisms of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson', Samuel Rickless elucidates the nature and purpose of Berkeley's metaphysical and moral arguments in Dialogue 3 of *Alciphron* (1732). In this dialogue, Berkeley criticises the moral theories of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) and Hutcheson. Rickless argues that Berkeley's disagreements which Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in ethics and aesthetics can be linked directly to Berkeley's idealism.

The second section, comprising the remaining six chapters, sheds further light upon other Irish philosophers in Berkeley's lifetime. The first two of these chapters continue the discussion of Hutcheson.

Chapter 5, 'Francis Hutcheson on Liberty' by Ruth Boeker, focuses on Hutcheson's Latin textbook on metaphysics, *Metaphysicae synopsis: ontologiam, et pneumatologiam, complectens* (1742), which was probably composed in Dublin in the 1720s. Boeker argues that this underexplored text, which contains

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Hutcheson's most detailed commentary on philosophical debates about liberty, is best understood by positioning it within the Irish context, and particularly the views of King and the views discussed in Molesworth's circle.

In Chapter 6 '"Plainly of Considerable Moment in Human Society": Francis Hutcheson and Polite Laughter in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland', Kate Davison reveals another aspect of Hutcheson's philosophy by examining his *Reflections upon Laughter* (1725), originally published in the *Dublin Journal*. Hutcheson was one of the earliest proponents of what is now known as the 'incongruity' theory of laughter. Drawing on contemporary views, such as those of Shaftesbury and Swift, Davison considers Hutcheson's philosophy of laughter in the context of early eighteenth-century British and Irish conceptions of gentlemanly politeness in order to understand the moral and social role of laughter according to Hutcheson's theory.

The following two chapters concern the place of women in early modern philosophy. In Chapter 7 'What the Women of Dublin Did with John Locke', Christine Gerrard spotlights the writings of a group of Dublin women, often known as the 'triumfeminate' of their mentor Jonathan Swift. Despite the name, the 'triumfeminate' actually had four women as members at different times: Barber, Pilkington, Grierson, and Sican. Gerrard argues that the literary output of these women shows deep engagement with Locke's philosophy, particularly Locke's views on motherhood, education, and memory.

In Chapter 8 'From Serena to Hypatia: John Toland's Women', Ian Leask examines the role of women in the thought of the religious and political radical John Toland. Leask chiefly focuses on two of Toland's works: his 1720 biography of Hypatia of Alexandria and his *Letters to Serena* (1704). Leask argues that in these texts a feminist (or at least proto-feminist) polemic is intertwined with Toland's critique of priestcraft.

Chapter 9, Kenneth L. Pearce's 'Peter Browne on the Metaphysics of Knowledge', examines the philosophy of one of Toland's most vigorous opponents. Browne originally developed his theory of analogical language in order to answer Toland's objections against religious mysteries. However, Pearce shows that Browne employs analogy much more broadly in his theory of mind. In particular, Pearce argues that Browne's analogical account of knowledge has important similarities with functionalist theories in contemporary philosophy of mind.

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The final chapter concerns Irish philosophy in exile. Jacob Schmutz's 'John Austin SJ (1717–84), The First Irish Catholic Cartesian?' provides an analysis of a previously unknown manuscript of a metaphysics course conducted in Rheims in 1746–1747 by an Irish Jesuit. Schmutz shows that the course is not so conservative and Scholastic as might have been expected, but instead shows significant Cartesian influence particularly in the theory of mind and knowledge.

The papers in this volume represent only a small sample of Irish philosophy as it existed in Berkeley's lifetime. It is our hope that this sample might serve to demonstrate how much is to be gained by further attention to this topic and, more broadly, how much value there is to interdisciplinary history of philosophy beyond the canon.

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