

Berkeley's philosophy revolves around the following claim: **There is no such thing as matter**; this was an apparent fact to him. All the objects we perceive & ordinarily take to exist in the world outside ourselves are **simply collection of ideas, existing only in the mind**. **Idealism: God implants ideas in us in an orderly manner & that in God's mind all things exist all times**. Reality consists of the eternal mind of God & our finite minds, between which rational communication takes place by means of ideas, Berkeley gets rid of the problems past philosophers have dealt with in giving an account of material substance, & the mind/body problem, & restores God as the necessary & sustaining source of all things. But in its place he has the difficulty of how to think of the physical sciences (for they purport to establish truths about a physical universe, which Berkeley declares to be non-existent). He eventually solves this difficulty by saying that they are useful theories rather than factual accounts; theoretical structures are employed for use & predictive power than their factual truth.

## I. MAJOR THEMES:

### A. Idealism or "immaterial hypothesis":

1. He denies the very possibility of inert, mindless, material substance. Materialism is the belief in the existence of mind-independent material objects: It is incoherent, untenable, & ultimately leads to skepticism. 2. **Argument for Immaterialism** involves his account of causation & the claim that material objects are unnecessary: **Regarding causation:** neither material ideas nor ideas can be causes; they are entirely inert; three is neither activity nor power in them; only spirits can be causes. Why? Consider the power of volition. For ex. consider the connection between our willing to raise our arm & the fact that we are able to raise our arm. Neither ideas nor material substances can be wills. Regarding the claim that material objects are unnecessary: even if material objects existed, we couldn't know this; nothing in our senses can establish the existence of anything outside of our minds; reason can't establish it either (Descartes' methodic doubt: dreams, deceiving God, etc). Lastly, Berkeley's system is a more simple & elegant explanation

### B. For something to Exist it must be perceived:

*"Esse Est percipi": To be is to be perceived.*

1. Denies the "realist" contention that in perception we become directly aware of objects that persist unchanged when they cease to be perceived. 2. For something to exist it must either be perceived or else be the active being that does the perceiving. 3. **Sensible qualities are things that are perceived.** 4. Sensible things or ideas can't exist except as the *"passive objects of minds or spirits, active being that perceive and will."* 5. There can be nothing except active spirits on the one hand & passive sensible things on the other: The latter can't exist except as perceived by the former.

### C. Criticism of Contemporary Science:

*"Mere triflers, mere Nihilarians"*

1. Vindicate Christianity without undermining science. In pursuit of this goal he wants to defeat Locke's atheism, materialism, & skepticism, and return to common sense regarding the ordinary objects of experience. 2. natural science was descriptive rather than explanatory and was concerned with correlations than with causes. 3. Berkeley sees science not only challenging faith, but common sense about knowledge, for there is no difference between how things appear to be & how things actually are.

### D. Sensible Qualities are the Signs of God's Purpose:

*"He daily speaks to our senses in a manifest and clear dialect."*

1. The order of phenomena was willed by God for the good of created spirits. In deciphering the conjunctions & sequences of our sense experience we are learning what God has decreed. 2. sensible qualities are the language in which God speaks to us. They are divine visual language by which God teaches us things are good & harmful. 3. Thus, just as man's words reveal his thoughts & intentions by means of the conventional signs of language, so the sensible order reveals God's will in phenomena that could've been ordered quite differently if He so decided.

## II. 4 STRATEGIC ATTACKS ON LOCKE:

A. Get rid of matter without destroy science; B. It is impossible to say that our ideas resemble objects if we don't have access to external objects; C. Like secondary qualities, primary qualities have no existence outside of the mind; D. The idea of abstraction is incoherent.

(3) *Why discredit materialism: They denied that God could create something out of nothing; the derision of immaterial substances; viewed soul as divisible & corruptible; denied Providence;*

*attributed events to blind chance or fatal necessity*

### A. # 1 Strategy: Attack Materialism: Get rid of matter without destroy science: His plan is to discredit materialism:

1. **His claim:** Nothing exists independently of our minds;
2. **His method:** Make objects out of our ideas instead of making ideas out of our objects.
3. **Arguments against the Existence of Material Substance:** master conceivability argument; argument from perceptual relativity; argument from pleasure & pain:
  - a. **Master [conceivability] argument:** It is inconceivable that objects exist outside of the mind: *In order to conceive it possible for a tree to exist outside of our minds, we need to be able to think of an unconceived tree. But as we try to conceive of this unconceived tree, we have conceived it. So we have failed.*
  - b. **Argument from perceptual relativity [regarding primary & secondary qualities]:** our perceptions of these qualities are highly variable, although we suppose the object itself is not variable. Therefore, the perception must be in our minds. For example, a piece of wheat can be big to a mite & but small to a person [primary quality of extension] or colors can look different in varied lighting conditions [secondary quality of color]. Given that we have these highly variable perceptual experiences of both primary & secondary qualities, Berkeley concludes that what we are experiencing can't be anything mind-independent.
  - c. **Argument from pleasure & pain** [regarding secondary qualities]: we experience intense heat as pain. Pain exist only in the mind and is therefore mind-dependent. Intense heat only differs from ordinary heat by a matter of degree. Therefore, all heat exist in the mind. For example, we experience intense heat as pain. But pain can't exist in a insentient object. Therefore, pain can't be in material objects. Pain can only be in a mind. But if we feel intense heat as pain that means that intense heat also can't exist outside of mind. So, intense heat is mind-dependent. This means that all heat must be mind-dependent, since intense heat is obviously the same kind of thing as all other degrees of heat.

## B. # 2 Strategy: Attack Locke's Representational Realism:

### 1. What is Locke's view?

a. Locke believes that objects are substances that exist independently of us; b. These external objects or substances cause our ideas. c. We are only aware of our ideas; d. We have 2 kinds of awareness: awareness of primary qualities & awareness of secondary qualities. Remember, secondary qualities don't resemble properties of objects; instead, secondary qualities are produced in us by the powers by primary qualities.

### 2. Berkeley's Response:

a. Locke claims our ideas resemble external objects yet Locke admits we have no access to the external objects [because of the veil of perception problem or gap between me and external world]; b. Therefore, it is impossible to say that our ideas resemble external objects if we don't have access to the external objects. c. Thus, realism is not superior to immaterialism as a source of explanatory power.

## C. # 3 Strategy: Attack the Distinction between Primary & Secondary Qualities:

### 1. Locke's View:

a. Maintains that secondary qualities don't correlate with real properties of the external objects; 2. secondary qualities don't really exist, applying a perceptual relativity argument. For examples, the sky is not really blue, sugar, is not sweet, etc.

### 2. Berkeley's Response:

a. It is impossible that objects exist with primary qualities alone; b. primary qualities are no more real than secondary qualities (applying the argument from perceptual relativity). c. Thus, primary qualities, like secondary qualities, have no existence outside of the mind.

## D. # 4 Strategy: The Materialistic Mistake Of Abstraction:

1. Berkeley considers the claim that objects can exist outside of perception to be an illegitimate abstraction. We can't abstract an "idea" of man by looking at Matthew, mark, & Luke & subtract away their oddities. Every time we think of "man," we think of a man w/ definite characteristics. 2. We don't think of a man w/ "some" shape, but rather we think of a man w/ "a" shape. 3. Thus, the idea of abstraction is incoherent for Locke, for we can't say "this apple exists" independently of all perception, yet this is what the realist maintains. 4. Berkeley does admit that that we have general ideas & words that enable us to make claims. For ex. "this apple is a fruit."

We can make a word stand for a general category of objects without engaging in abstraction & claiming the existence of an object independent of our perceptual experience.

**Berkeley's view of Spiritual Substances:** (A) There are only 2: Spirits (minds) & ideas. (B) A spirit is a simple, undivided being. (C) "understanding" refers to a mind perceiving ideas whereas "will" refers to a mind producing ideas. We know our own mind directly (Cartesian) & we know others minds indirectly by analogy.

*The "new philosophy" or "corpuscularian philosophy" that became dominant near the beginning of 18th century, maintained that the material universe was atomic or "corpuscular" in its structure & mechanical in its operation. The world worked entirely in terms of mass, shape, size, & motion (properties generally thought to be primary qualities of matter). So-called secondary qualities such as tastes, colors, & temperatures we ordinarily ascribe to things, were held not to be in the things themselves but in us, although produced in us by "powers" in the external bodies. Perception was generally analyzed as a causal process in which a stimulus is transmitted from the sense organs to the brain which then causes "ideas" to be produced in "the mind." These "ideas" rather than objects themselves that are actually perceived. This theory was held by John Locke. Locke argues that there are things we don't understand, such as (1) real nature of things ("I know, not what"), how the mind works, how particles cohere together, whether soul is immaterial or material. Locke argues that human faculties are limited & so endorses a certain type of ignorance. Berkeley responds & says the problem is due to the philosophers themselves; "that we have first raised a dust, and then, complain, we cannot see." Berkeley opposes skepticism of lockean sense, a distrust or denigration of senses, and the denial that we need to doubt what we see. In fact, Berkeley denies that the world is not really as it seems: this is the central point of Berkeley's Three Dialogues. But Locke says we are ignorant of the real essences of things "while we know that gold is yellow, we do not know its true nature."*