

Berkeley 1
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1. Background: mechanism and the distinction between primary and secondary properties.

2. Berkeley's notion of a sensible object

Immediate versus mediate perception (only the latter involves reason)
—the coach and its sound

'Sensible things therefore are nothing else but so many sensible qualities, or combinations of sensible qualities.'

3. Berkeley's arguments that the "secondary qualities" do not exist outside the mind

Pleasure and pain

Arguments from variation

Hot and cold hands

"Distempered palate", jaundice, etc.

The argument from microscopes

Q: what are the 'immediate objects of vision' of a "jaundiced" person?

4. Berkeley's arguments that the "primary qualities" do not exist outside the mind

Arguments from variation

Vision of a mite

Effects of distance on visual perception

Differences in how we measure time

5. The distinction between sensations and their objects

The picture: without applying reason, the only things that we can immediately come know about through the senses are our sensations. (According to Berkeley, we *perceive* our sensations, and they are coloured, extended, etc.) Knowledge of anything else must be acquired through inference.

Question: what are these extramental, material objects like?

Common sense says: they are extended, coloured, etc.

Berkeley's response: these are properties of ideas (sensations); an idea can't resemble a non-idea

Further argument: on what basis would we determine the "true" colours, etc., of material objects?

So the believer in material objects must claim that they are entirely *different in nature* from sensations

Berkeley's response:

- (i) we can't conceive of such entities; talk of them is strictly meaningless.
- (ii) Even if we could, there would be no good reason to believe in them.

6. Berkeley's 'master argument'

- (1) It is impossible to conceive of an unconceived-of object
- (2) Therefore, unconceived-of objects are inconceivable
- (3) Therefore, there are no unconceived-of objects

Notice that the argument would look equally good if we replace 'unconceived-of' with 'unconceived of by me'... Something must be going wrong. What could it be?

Suggestion: 'x conceives of [imagines] an F ' seems to be ambiguous between the following two meanings:

- (i) 'x conceives [imagines] that there is an F '
- (ii) 'there is an F , y , such that x conceives of y '