

## Berkeley's positive views

Now that we know what doesn't exist (material substance) what does?

### 1. Ideas exist

*"It is evident to any one who takes a Survey of the Objects of Humane Knowledge, that they are either Ideas actually imprinted on the Senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the Passions and Operations of the Mind, or lastly Ideas formed by help of Memory and Imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways." Principles I.1*

Locke could (and did) say just as much.

## Berkeley's positive views, cont.'d

### 2. Sensible things exist

But within the same opening paragraph of his *Principles*, Berkeley went on to add something we do not find in Locke:

that bodies just are collections of ideas, commonly observed to occur together, and so referred to using a single name

*“as several of these [ideas] are observed to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one Name, and so to be REPUTED AS one Thing”* [my shouting]

Collections of ideas come to be viewed or thought of as one thing

and that is all there is to things

*“Other Collections of Ideas constitute a Stone, a Tree, a Book and the like sensible Things”*

So a stone is a collection of ideas, and, in a real and proper sense, it is made up of ideas

## Berkeley's positive views, cont.'d

### 3. Minds exist

Ideas

and collections of ideas constituting “sensible things”

are not the only things that exist

In addition to ideas there has to be something that perceives them, and that operates on them in the other ways we are aware of

remembering, imagining, willing (which are all so many ways of bringing ideas about)

So we can say that in addition to ideas and sensible things there are minds

and that minds are radically different

they are not ideas or collections of ideas, but the things that create and perceive ideas

## Existence

For minds, to exist is to perceive

For ideas, to exist is to be perceived

everyone would agree that our memories, our daydreams, our passions, our appetites and volitions, exist only insofar as they are perceived

and they would hold the same of pleasure and pain, and it seems no less evident that all sensations

that is, all ideas imprinted on the senses

exist only insofar as they are perceived

## Phenomenalism

Since sensible things are just collections of ideas, for them to exist is also just for them to be perceived

everyone would agree that when we say that something existed, we mean it *was perceived*, either by us or by someone else

so similarly, when we say that something *exists*, all that we mean is either that we now perceive it

or that some other mind now perceives it

or, that we perceived it in the past, and for that reason, think that if we will to contract certain muscles in our limbs, that will be followed by our perceiving it again

## The “substance” of sensible things

While it is a “strangely prevailing” opinion that sensible objects have a “real or natural” existence distinct from their being perceived

the fact is that we don’t perceive anything but our own ideas or sensations

and these are not the sort of things that can exist unperceived

So, when I stop perceiving something, that thing must cease to exist

unless some other spirit perceives it

or it is held in the mind of God

The only “substance” that supports the existence of sensible things, and in which they inhere is therefore minds

## Mind

Ideas are obviously “inert.” They don’t act. They are just presented to the mind.

in memory, imagination, and willing, I act to produce ideas

in sensation, I feel myself acted upon to have ideas produced in me

but I don’t feel myself acted upon by the ideas

they are rather the effects of whatever it is that is acting on me

## Mind, cont.'d

Because ideas are “inert,” one idea can do nothing to produce another idea

in particular, our ideas of extension, figure, and motion can do nothing to cause our ideas of sensible qualities

nor can any arrangement of variously shaped, sized, and moving “corpuscles” (sensible things) have a power to do this

At best, it might be a “law” that ideas of one sort are regularly followed by ideas of another sort

and in fact, we do perceive a continual change and alteration in our ideas

but then it is not the ideas themselves that account for their changes or for any regularity in their changes

something else makes them change, and change regularly by changing them in accord with a law



## Mind, cont.'d

Since this cause can't be the ideas themselves

because they are inactive

or material substance

because there is no such thing

it only remains that it could be a mind

## Mind, cont.'d

Because mind produces and perceives ideas, and so is active,

whereas ideas are inert

ideas can be nothing like minds

This means that we can have no idea of mind

We know of mind by reasoning from its effects, which are ideas

this reasoning gives us some “notion” of mind, though not an idea

## *Principles 89*

In addition to knowledge by way of ideas, we are able to obtain “notions” of our own minds by “inner reflection” and of other minds by reasoning.

We reason that ideas cannot exist without being perceived

which implies that there must be something that perceives them, though we have no idea of this thing.

We nonetheless understand that it would have to be active

(because it does something: perceives)

Moreover, inner reflection tells us that our minds produce ideas of imagination through willing,

and also have a power to change their sensory ideas of the position of their bodies

(not the position of their bodies, their sensory ideas of the position of their bodies)

So inner reflection and reason give us some notion of ourselves.

We also have “notions” of relations.

We cannot have notions of relations without having ideas of the related things.

But we can have ideas of things without having notions of relations.

One consequence:

We have a notion that ideas are related to something by the “perceives” relation and that this thing provides ideas with their “support” (i.e., is what makes them exist).

This allows us to make meaningful use of the term, “substance,” when applied to spirit.

## Two Classes of Ideas.

	Sense	Imagination
Phenomenal Difference	strong, lively, and distinct	weak, dim, and confused
Phenomenological Difference	steady, ordered, and coherent	excited at random
Metaphysical Difference	independent of my will	produced by my will

Both ideas of sense and ideas of imagination only exist in our minds.

## Berkeley's Realism

Whereas ideas of imagination are produced by me, ideas of sense are not.

They must therefore be produced in me by some other mind.

Ideas of sense are real things.

Ideas of imagination are images of real things.

The laws of nature are the rules this other mind invariably follows in exciting ideas in us.

We mistakenly suppose that those ideas occurring earlier in a sequence are the cause of those that come later.

In fact, the only cause is God

## Distinguishing between reality and illusion

	Reality	Illusion
Phenomenal Difference	strong, lively, and distinct	weak, dim, and confused
Phenomenological Difference	steady, ordered, and coherent	excited at random
Metaphysical Difference	caused by some other spirit	caused by me

In clear-cut cases, all the indicators are on one side or the other.

But there are tricky cases where some indicators are on one side and others on the other

- body motion
- dreams
- miracles and other anomalous events

In these cases we remain uncertain until such time as we can uncover an explanation for the anomaly that places it on one side or the other of the divide.



## Berkeley's Spiritual Realism

I know myself by a kind of inward feeling or reflection.

Through this inward feeling or reflection I know myself to be a thing that

- wills
- perceives
- deliberates and performs other operations on ideas

These are all activities.

But no idea is active.

So no idea is adequate to be an image or likeness of myself. (*Principles* 137)

The inward feeling or reflection by which I gain some notion of myself cannot be something that gives me ideas.

## Immortality

The kind of thing I am is variously called “soul,” “mind,” “spirit.”

So in knowing myself I know the existence of a soul, mind, or spirit.

Since spirits are entirely distinct from ideas they are not corporeal

(i.e. not extended, solid, or movable, but active, simple, and uncompounded).

So they are not liable to be broken or dissolved by the natural laws of motion.

So they are naturally immortal.

## Knowledge of other minds

I think of other minds as active beings like myself.

I am convinced of their existence by reasoning from certain changes in some of my ideas of sense.

Specifically, from changes in my ideas of other human bodies, or of things moved by other human bodies.

The changes in these ideas are not due to me.

The best explanation is that they are due to some other spirit.

I ought to draw the same conclusion from a contemplation of the works of nature.

These works exhibit:

- regularity
- order
- arrangement to a purpose
- magnificence
- beauty
- perfection in the large
- exquisite contrivance in the small
- harmony and correspondence of all parts

in virtue of which we ought to infer:

- unity
- wisdom
- goodness
- perfection

in their cause.

A comment on the powers of finite spirits and the role of  
God (*Principles* 147)

All ideas of sense are caused by God.

Consequently, a finite spirit can do no more than will the motion of its limbs

That its ideas and those of others looking at it should change accordingly is entirely due to God.

It is God who makes us all perceive a common world.

*Principles 151-153*  
**The argument from evil**

Is God therefore complicit in our crimes?

A broader version of the problem:

The degree of disorder in nature suggests that the spirit(s) responsible for our ideas of nature are not particularly unified, wise, or benevolent.

## Berkeley's Theodicy

1. Were God to intervene to prevent every disorder, there would be so many violations of regularities that it would be impossible to discern any regularities in nature.

This would not only undermine our best argument for the existence of God, it would make learning and the improvement of the conditions of life impossible.

2. Such blemishes in nature as cause us no pain merely serve to set in sharper contrast the beauty of the whole. Likewise, such waste as does not interfere with the conditions of our lives is not a mark of ineptitude in the work of a being who has no need for economy.
3. When we take a large enough view of the nature of human freedom and the connections of things towards other ends, things that on their own are considered evil can be seen to be conducive to the greater good.