

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

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Class 20 - Finish Berkeley
Start Hume

Ideas, Thoughts, Representations

- Aristotle: thinking is sensing.
- Descartes cleaving thought from sensation, and isolating the self from the external world, took thought to be representational.
 - We can think clearly and distinctly about things that we can not picture.
 - Conception, rather than Perception
 - But, Descartes's separation was accompanied by a doctrine of innateness.
- The empiricists, rejecting innate ideas, took representation as picturing in the imagination.
 - Sense experience as the source of all beliefs
 - Resemblance Hypothesis
 - Solipsism and skepticism follow.
- Many of our thoughts are representational.
 - Emotions might be an exception.
- We need a theory of mental representation that avoids both innateness and mere picturing.

Finishing Berkeley

Look Ma, No Problem of Sense Error

- On the materialist view, there is no yellow, no sweetness in external objects.
 - ▶ As applied to objects, terms for secondary qualities are mere names.
- Berkeley interprets terms for secondary qualities as referring to our mental states.
 - ▶ The lemon is yellow, since I really have a yellow sensory experience.
 - ▶ “*Philonous*: That the colors are really in the tulip, which I see, is manifest. Neither can it be denied that this tulip may exist independent of your mind or mine; but that any immediate object of the senses, that is, any idea or combination of ideas, should exist in an unthinking substance or exterior to all minds, is in itself an evident contradiction” (First Dialogue, AW 468b).
- Berkeley’s account solves the problem of error for our beliefs based on the senses.
 - ▶ All ideas are independent.
 - ▶ We need not ascribe contradictory properties to an external object.
 - ▶ The problems of error that motivated Descartes and Locke are obviated.
- Berkeley has a new set of problems.



Intersubjectivity and Persistence

- How do we account for different people having similar experiences?
- How do we account for the fact that objects do not seem to go in and out of existence, that they persist?
- Berkeley posits God.
- “For, though we hold indeed the objects of sense to be nothing else but ideas which cannot exist unperceived; yet we may not hence conclude they have no existence except only while they are perceived by us, since there may be some other spirit that perceives them though we do not. Wherever bodies are said to have no existence without the mind, I would not be understood to mean this or that particular mind, but all minds whatsoever. It does not therefore follow from the foregoing principles that bodies are annihilated and created every moment, or exist not at all during the intervals between our perception of them” (*Principles*, §48).

The Limerick

There was a young man who said, "God
Must think it exceedingly odd
When he finds that this tree
Continues to be
When there's no one about in the quad."
"Dear Sir, your confusion is odd.
I am always about in the quad.
And that's why this tree
will continue to be
Since observed by, yours faithfully,
God."

Uniformity and Blemishes

- If we attentively consider the constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty, and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the whole, but above all the never-enough-admired laws of pain and pleasure, and the instincts or natural inclinations, appetites, and passions of animals; I say if we consider all these things, and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the attributes One, Eternal, Infinitely Wise, Good, and Perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid spirit, *who works all in all, and by whom all things consist* (*Principles*, §146).
- We should further consider that the very blemishes and defects of nature are not without their use, in that they make an agreeable sort of variety, and augment the beauty of the rest of the creation, as shades in a picture serve to set off the brighter and more enlightened parts... It is plain that the splendid profusion of natural things should not be interpreted weakness or prodigality in the agent who produces them, but rather be looked on as an argument of the riches of His power (*Principles*, §152).

Berkeley's World

- There are colors, sounds, and smells.
- The apple is just how I experience it.
- The mental world, while not a material world, is not a world of imagination.
- “The ideas imprinted on the senses by the author of nature are called *real things*; and those excited in the imagination, being less regular, vivid, and constant, are more properly termed *ideas*, or *images of things* which they copy and represent” (*Principles* §33, AW 453b).
- The drawback is that Berkeley's world is purely psychological.
- Can we transcend our mental states to refer to, or understand, a world external to us, even if it is not a physical world?



Starting Hume

Hume and the Empiricists

- Hume agrees with Locke and Berkeley on their empiricist methodology.
 - We are immediately aware of only our ideas, not an external world of objects.
 - That external world, as well as any laws governing or applying in the world, and any mathematical principles, is perceived only mediately, or inferred.
- We start with a modest appraisal of our experience and our psychological capacities.
- We will examine the nature of our psychology, and see what conclusions are warranted.
- And, we will humbly avoid making unsupported claims.
- The major difference between Hume and Locke is the severity with which Hume invokes his empiricist limitations, and his consequent skepticism, and atheism.
- Hume's conclusions are skeptical, rather than idealistic.
 - “The mind never has anything present to it but the perceptions and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connection with objects. The supposition of such a connection is, therefore, *without any foundation in reasoning*” (§XII.1, AW 595a, emphasis added).

Claire and Lexi