

**Phil 300 - CSUF**  
**Instructor: Jason Sheley**

# George Berkeley



- “It is indeed an Opinion strangely prevailing amongst Men, that Houses, Mountains, Rivers and in a word all sensible Objects have an Existence Natural or Real, distinct from their being perceiv'd by the Understanding.” (Principles, sec 4)

- “The Table I Write on, I say, Exists, i. e. I See and Feel it, and if I were out of my Study I shou'd say it Existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my Study I might perceive it, or that some other Spirit actually does perceive it. There was an Odor, i. e. it was Smelt; There was a Sound, i. e. it was Heard; a Colour or Figure and it was perceiv'd by Sight or Touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like Expressions. For as to what is said of the Absolute Existence of unthinking Things without any relation to their being perceiv'd, that is to me perfectly Unintelligible. Their Esse is Percipi, nor is it possible they shou'd have any Existence, out of the Minds or thinking Things which perceive them.”

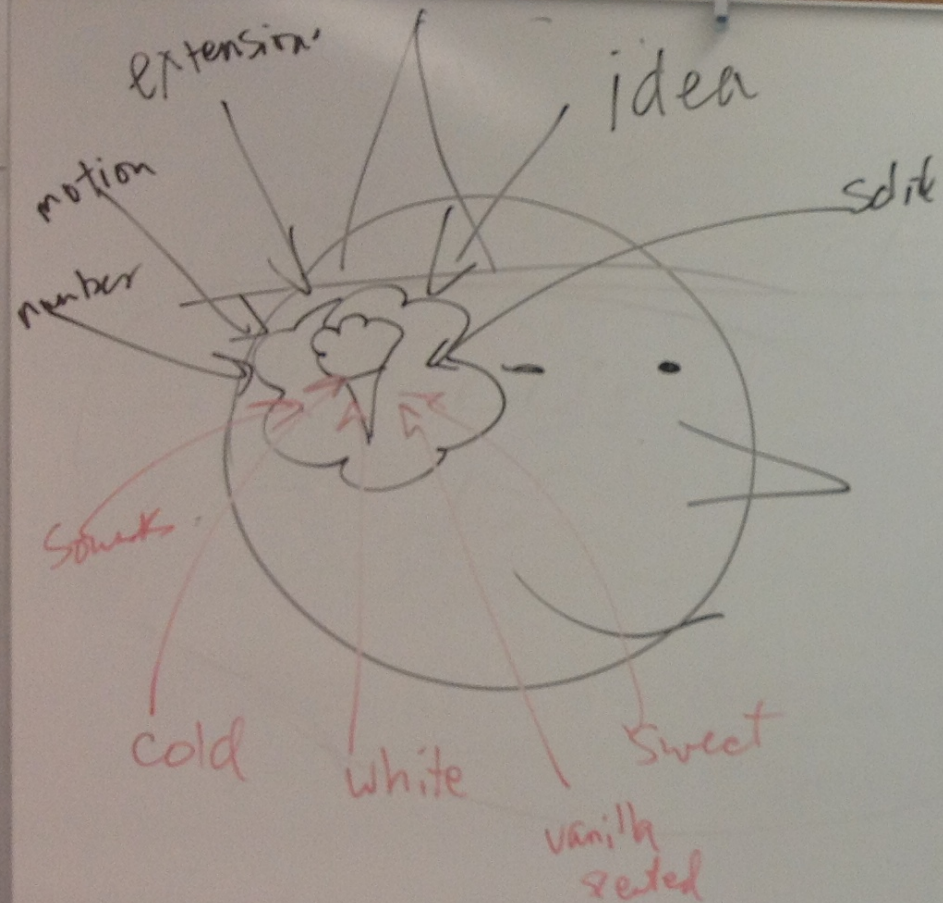
# Three Dialogues

- A note on the two characters:
- Hylas - (from the Greek word "Hule")
  - "Materialist"
- Philonous - (literally, "lover of mind")
  - Represents Berkeley's views

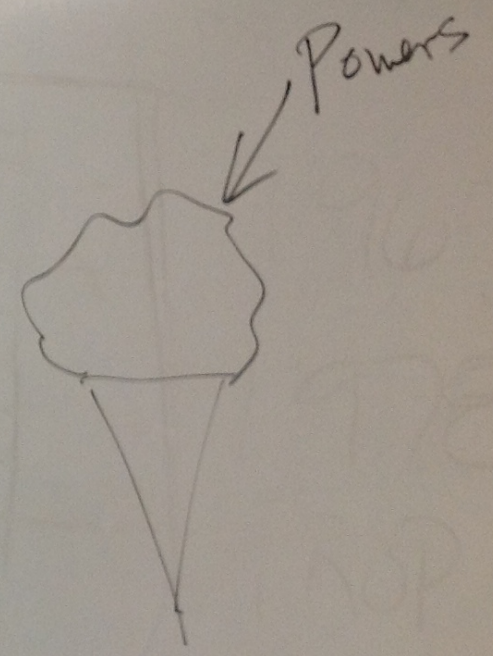
- Do you notice anything peculiar about the subtitle of the work?
- What is Berkeley's purpose in writing it?

- In the first dialogue, we find the arguments against Lockean:
- PQ/SQ distinction
- Substratum
- Veil of Perception





veil of perception





- Berkeley aims to refute external world skepticism.
- Berkeley aims to refute Locke.
- Locke is no skeptic.
- These need not be an inconsistent triad.

- The dialogue is divided into three parts, each corresponding to a different day
- Does Hylas keep the same views throughout the dialogue? Or do his views change? If so, how?

# Beginning, p. 218

- What views does Hylas accuse Philonous of holding?
- How does Philonous respond?
- What is the goal of Philonous' discussion from here forward?

- What definition of skepticism do they agree to?
- p. 219
- Notice that they come to an agreement on the definition of sensible thing
- p. 221

- Hylas: "To exist is one thing, and to be perceived is another..."

- Let's look at the example of fire that they explore.
- Notice that on p. 223 Philonous gets Hylas to agree that heat is in the mind. Hylas has trouble with this...



- p.226
- Notice the conclusion: heat is not in the fire, nor is sweetness in the sugar...
- The next examples: flavors of food, smells, sounds,
- At this stage, Hylas continues to insist on the distinction between the sensations as perceived by us, and the qualities in the bodies that produce them.

# Common Sense

- Bottom of p. 228
- What does each character say about what constitutes common sense?

# Against Corporeal Substance

My reason for asking was, because in saying, EACH VISIBLE OBJECT HATH THAT COLOUR WHICH WE SEE IN IT, you make visible objects to be corporeal substances; which implies either that corporeal substances are sensible qualities, or else that there is something besides sensible qualities perceived by sight: but, as this point was formerly agreed between us, and is still maintained by you, it is a clear consequence, that your CORPOREAL SUBSTANCE is nothing distinct from SENSIBLE QUALITIES.

- The argument comes to a head at p. 233.
- Hylas is forced to admit that the secondary qualities have no existence outside of the mind.

- For Berkeley, the strategy remains the same for undermining each Lockean position:
- Locke says we can make sense of primary and secondary qualities, the veil of perception, and substratum.
- **For each one, what are the ideas we actually have access to?**

# *Principles*, sec 15 and 16

- Berkeley summarizes the case against Locke's concept of substratum here.



- The next step is to show that the same reasoning applies to the primary qualities, as well.

# The Mite Example

- Let's look at the example on p. 234...

PHIL. Your judgment will soon be determined, if you will venture to think as freely concerning this quality as you have done concerning the rest. Was it not admitted as a good argument, that neither heat nor cold was in the water, because it seemed warm to one hand and cold to the other?

HYL. It was.

PHIL. Is it not the very same reasoning to conclude, there is no extension or figure in an object, because to one eye it shall seem little, smooth, and round, when at the same time it appears to the other, great, uneven, and regular?

# The Master Argument

Berkeley says that all of his arguments can be summarized in one challenge...

Can you frame in your mind an object that is unperceived by the mind?

- “Insomuch that I am content to put the whole upon this Issue; if you can but conceive it possible for one Extended, moveable Substance, or in general, for any one Idea or any thing like an Idea to Exist otherwise than in a Mind perceiving it, I shall readily give up the Cause:”



Principles, sec 23...

# Let's try it...

Can you think of a way of framing an idea of some object that is unperceived?

# From p. 238...

PHIL. But I think the point may be speedily decided.

Without doubt you can tell whether you are able to frame this or that idea. **Now I am content to put our dispute on this issue. If you can frame in your thoughts a distinct ABSTRACT IDEA of motion or extension, divested of all those sensible modes, as swift and slow, great and small, round and square, and the like, which are acknowledged to exist only in the mind, I will then yield the point you contend for.** But if you cannot, it will be unreasonable on your side to insist any longer upon what you have no notion of.

- Berkeley says that he is unable to frame abstract ideas, and that all the ideas he has are particular.
- Why does he say this? What does he mean?

# The Tulip

- Berkeley summarizes the position on p. 240



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