



Week 8:
Berkeley 1

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Weekly Quiz

Berkeley

Race, Slavery, and
Colonialism

Malebranche
Recapitulated

Argument for
Occasional Causation

Berkeley's
Objection

Argument against
Occasional Causation

Esse est percipi

EEP Argument

Malebranche's
Response

Berkeley's Further
Response

Arguments for
Sensible Ideas

Arguments against
Matter

Assignments

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Takaharu Oda, PhD (odat@tcd.ie)

Southern University of Science and Technology

SS149 (社会科学中心), Spring 2024

Early Modern Western Philosophy (17th-18th Centuries)

近代西方哲学（十七-十八世纪）



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- 2 Introduction to Bishop George Berkeley
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- 4 Malebranche's Occasionalism Recapitulated
 - Argument for Occasional Causation
- 5 Berkeley's Objection to Malebranche's Argument
 - Argument against Occasional Causation
- 6 Berkeley's *Esse Est Percipi* Argument
 - EEP Argument
- 7 Malebranche's Possible Response to Berkeley's Objection
- 8 Berkeley's Further Response to Malebranche
 - Arguments for Sensible Ideas
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- 9 Assignments for the Next Lecture



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Quiz 8: Blaise Pascal defended Jansenism, though it was condemned within the Catholic Church in the 17th century. What is his Jansenist friend's work on logic usually called?

- 1 Aristotelian Logic
- 2 Stoic Logic
- 3 Port-Royal Logic
- 4 Modal Logic

This is not related to your final grade, but intended to observe your understanding of the last class.



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- 1 Aristotelian Logic
- 2 Stoic Logic
- 3 **Port-Royal Logic, known for Antoine Arnauld (and Pierre Nicole)'s textbook: *La logique, ou l'art de penser* (1662)**
- 4 Modal Logic

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The first 'e' in 'Berkeley' has been traditionally pronounced in Trinity College like the 'a' in 'bar', not like the 'e' in 'her'.

– Eric Finch, *Three Centuries of Physics in TCD* (2016, 7)



Bishop George Berkeley (c.1684–1753)

Portrait (c.1743)



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Principles of Human Knowledge, Part 1 (1710);
Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous (1713)

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Portrait (c.1743)



[Google Arts & Culture \(above\)](#)
(exhibit curated by K.L. Pearce)

See also [RIA Biography](#)
(Paul O'Grady, Fellow of TCD)

- **12 March c.1684/5** – Born in Dysart Castle, Co. Kilkenny (English father).
- **21 March 1700** – Enters TCD.
- **1702** – Becomes a **Scholar**.
- **1707** – Becomes a Fellow.
- **1710** – Ordained into Church of Ireland.
- **1707–13** – 'Heroic phase' (Berman 2005, 38): publishes *NTV* in 1709, *PHK* in 1710, *DHP* in 1713, etc.
- **1721** – *De motu* ('On Motion').
- **1724** – Resigns from TCD to become Dean of Derry (aka Londonderry).
- **1728** – Marries Anne Forster and sails to America to found a college.
- **1731** – Bermuda Project fails.
- **1734** – Consecrated **Bishop of Cloyne**.
- **14 January 1753** – Dies in Oxford.

Week 8:
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Weekly Quiz

Berkeley

Race, Slavery, and
Colonialism

Malebranche
Recapitulated

Argument for
Occasional Causation

Berkeley's
Objection

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Occasional Causation

Esse est percipi
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Assignments



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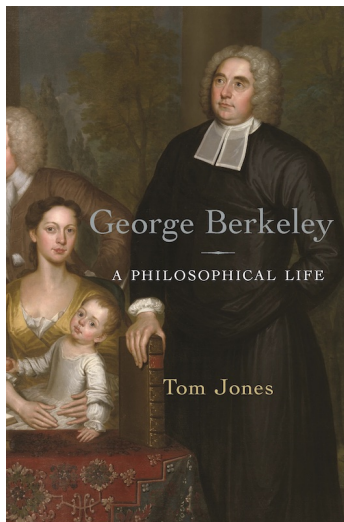
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Jones 2021; Oda 2022 (review)

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- 1 Weekly Quiz
- 2 Introduction to Bishop George Berkeley
- 3 Race, Slavery, and Colonialism
- 4 Malebranche's Occasionalism Recapitulated
 - Argument for Occasional Causation
- 5 Berkeley's Objection to Malebranche's Argument
 - Argument against Occasional Causation
- 6 Berkeley's *Esse Est Percipi* Argument
 - EEP Argument
- 7 Malebranche's Possible Response to Berkeley's Objection
- 8 Berkeley's Further Response to Malebranche
 - Arguments for Sensible Ideas
 - Arguments against Matter
- 9 Assignments for the Next Lecture



Denaming the Library?

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Irish Times (January 2023) **OPINION:** 'Erasing Berkeley's name from Trinity
would do nothing to combat racial prejudice in Ireland'

Biggar: In celebrating people, we admire them only for some things they've done



Berkeley in America

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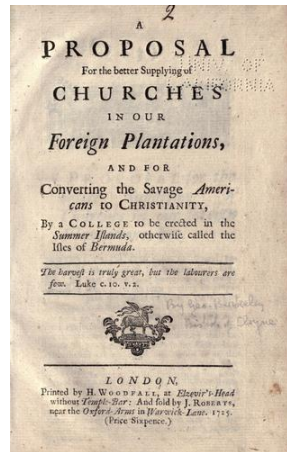
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[A] College or Seminary in [America] is very much wanted [...] By this, two Ends would be obtained. **First**, the Youth of our *English* Plantations might be themselves fitted for the Ministry. [...] **Second**,] the Children of savage Americans, brought up in such a Seminary, and well instructed in Religion and Learning, might make the ablest and properest Missionaries for spreading the Gospel among their Countrymen. [...] It is further proposed, to ground these young Americans thoroughly in Religion and Morality, and to give them a good Tincture of other Learning; particularly of Eloquence, History, and practical Mathematicks; to which it may not be improper to add some Skill in Physic.

– Berkeley, *Proposal*, 1725, *Works* VII, pp. 347–348





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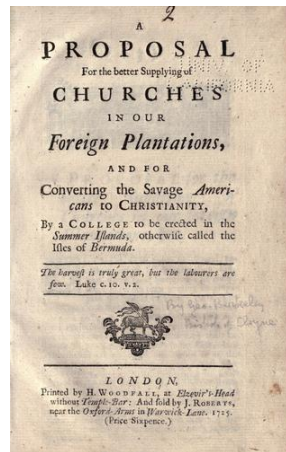
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The young *Americans* necessary for this Purpose, may in the Beginning be procured, either by peaceable Methods from those savage Nations, which border on our Colonies, and are in Friendship with us, or by **taking captive the Children of our Enemies.**

— Berkeley, *Proposal*, 1725, *Works* VII, p. 347, emphasis added





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The Muse, disgusted at an Age and Clime,
Barren of every glorious Theme,
In distant Lands now waits a better Time,
Producing Subjects worthy Fame:

[...]

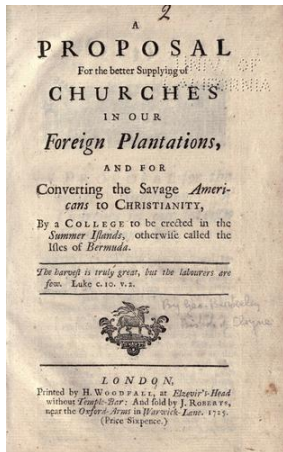
There shall be sung another golden Age,
The rise of Empire and of Arts,

[...]

Not such as Europe breeds in her decay;
Such as she bred when fresh and young,
When heav'nly Flame did animate her Clay,
By future Poets shall be sung.

Westward the Course of Empire takes its Way;
The four first Acts already past,
A fifth shall close the Drama with the Day;
Time's noblest Offspring is the last.

— Berkeley, 'Verses' on America,
1726, *Works* VII, pp. 369–373.





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The University of California, **Berkeley** (1868–)
Also: Berkeley College (1934–) in Yale University (1701–)



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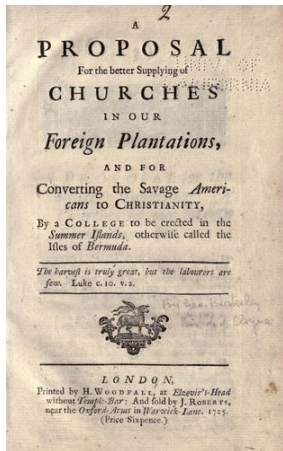
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- In Rhode Island, Berkeley purchased three or four enslaved African people: Agnes, Edward and/or Anthony, and Philip.
- When Berkeley left in 1731, the plantation, probably including the enslaved people, was donated to Yale.



Figure: Whitehall, Rhode Island





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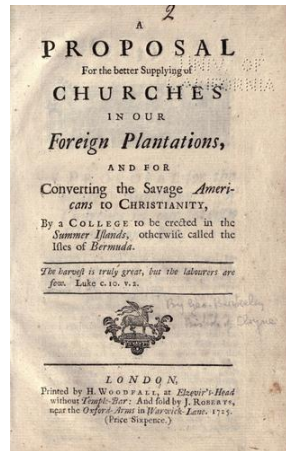
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An ancient Antipathy to the *Indians*, whom it seems, our first Planters [...] imagined they had a Right to treat on the foot of *Canaanites* or *Amalekites*, together with an irrational Contempt of the Blacks, as Creatures of another Species, who had no Right to be instructed or admitted to the Sacraments, have proved a main Obstacle to the Conversion of these poor People.

To this may be added, an erroneous Notion, that the being baptized is inconsistent with a State of Slavery. To undeceive them in this Particular, which had too much Weight, it seemed a proper Step, if the Opinion of his Majesty's Attorney and Solicitor-General could be procured. This Opinion they charitably sent over, signed with their own Hands.

– Berkeley, 'Anniversary Sermon before the **Society for the Propagation of the Gospel**', 1732, *Works* VI, pp. 121–122



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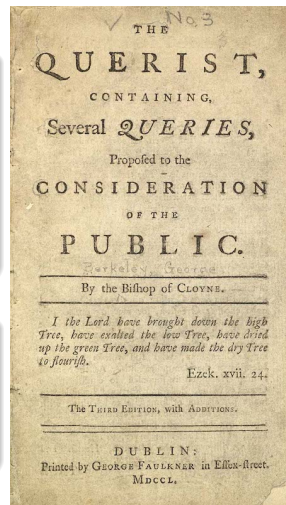
Alleged Problem

Whether the bulk of our Irish natives are not kept from thriving, by that cynical content in dirt and beggary which they possess to a degree beyond any other people in Christendom?

— Berkeley, *Querist*, 1735–37, *Works* VI, Query 19

Proposed Solutions

- Improve economic system
- Forced labour
- Eugenics





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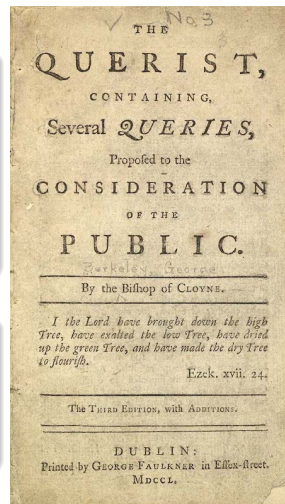
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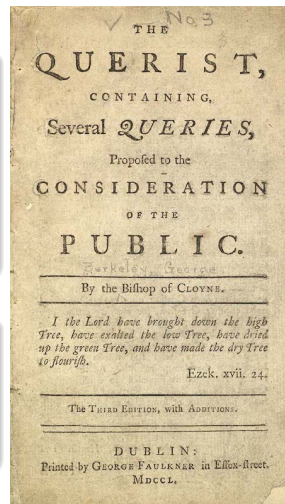
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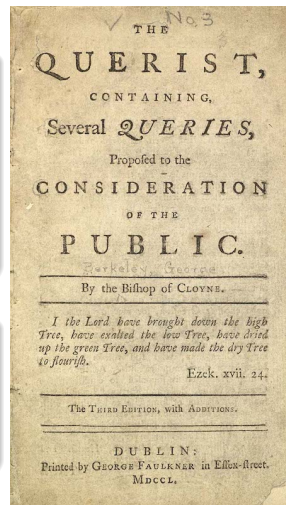
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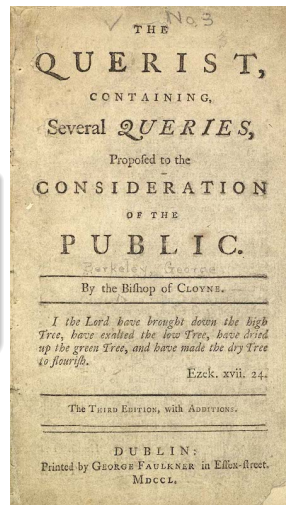
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Other Proposals

- Sumptuary laws (i.e. regulating expense)
- Repeal of penal laws (including admission of Catholics to TCD)
- Founding a Catholic university





Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth* (*De la recherche de la vérité*, 1674–75)

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– Malebranche, *Search after Truth* 6.2.3. (1997, 448)



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On the terms 'true' and 'false'

We will strictly mean that sentences or propositions have truth-values, and anything else such as entities and terms (e.g. 'causes') do not, although the latter may be called 'true' in the sense of 'real' (fr. *véritable, vrai, réel*). This linguistic distinction of the term 'true' is very important when you formulate a valid and sound argument, whereby you must judge the **truth or falsity of each proposition**. Thus, we will adhere to the western classical two-valued logic, according to which the truth-values are either *true* or *false*.



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Reconstruction from Malebranche, *Search* §6.2.3

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Malebranche's argument for occasional causation

- ① If 'the nature or power of each thing is nothing but the will of God', then 'all natural causes are not true causes but only occasional causes' for God to will. $\varphi \supset \psi$
- ② The nature or power of each thing is nothing but the will of God.
 φ [Affirming the Antecedent, AA]
- ③ Therefore, all natural causes are not true causes but only occasional causes for God to will. ψ [Conclusion from P1 and P2 by Modus Ponens]



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- 1 If 'the nature or power of each thing is nothing but the will of God', then 'all natural causes are not true causes but only occasional causes' for God to will. $\varphi \supset \psi$
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Berkeley's Objection to Malebranche's Argument

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Which premiss(es) of Malebranche's argument would Berkeley reject?

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How and why is premiss 1 rejected?

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The rejected premiss of Malebranche's argument: P1

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- 1 If every created being is necessarily an *occasional* cause for God to will (for you, *occasionalists*, have 'God alone to be the immediate efficient cause of all things', PHK §53), then our minds, as created beings, just passively perceive ideas. $\psi \supset \omega$
- 2 Our minds *do not* passively, but actively, perceive ideas (PHK §2 'my self', §27 'active being', §89, Intro §1, etc., according to the *esse est percipi* principle, §3, etc.). $\neg \omega$
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Berkeley's *Esse Est Percipi* Argument

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PHK §3, Notebooks §429 (Works I), etc.

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I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this, by any one that shall attend to what is meant by the term 'exist' when applied to sensible things. The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should 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 odour, that is, it was smelled; there was a sound, that is to say, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived 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 perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.

— Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part I §3



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Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle as *argument*

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Berkeley's *esse est percipi* argument

Eng. **to be is to be perceived** (as ideas in any minds whatsoever)



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- ① The being ('esse' or to be, to exist, to be real) of **any** sensible object consists in being perceived ('*percipi*' or to be perceived, as an 'idea' or 'object of knowledge', §2) by the mind. **[Major premiss including a universal subject]**
- ② The table in Berkeley's study is a sensible object. **[Minor premiss including a particular subject]**
- ③ Therefore, the being of the table in Berkeley's study consists in being perceived by the mind (i.e. **either his mind or**, if he was not in his study, '**some other spirit**', '**minds**', '**thinking things**', §3). **[Conclusion from P1 and P2 by syllogism, UI]**



Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle as argument

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Berkeley's *esse est percipi* principle as *argument*

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Berkeley's *esse est percipi* argument

Eng. **to be is to be perceived** (as ideas in any minds whatsoever)

- 1 The being ('*esse*') of any sensible object consists in being perceived ('*percipi*') by the mind.
- 2 The table in Berkeley's study is a sensible object.
- 3 Therefore, the table's being consists in being perceived by the mind.



Malebranche's Possible Response to Berkeley's Objection

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The *entire* passivity of matter and the mind

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The faculty [i.e. bodily, not mental, faculty] of receiving different figures and configurations in bodies is entirely passive and contains no action, so the faculty of receiving different ideas and modifications in the [human] mind is entirely passive and contains no action.

– Malebranche, *Search after Truth* §1.1.1 (1997, 3)

Bodies, [human] minds, pure intelligences, all these can do nothing. It is He [God only] who made [human] minds, who enlightens and activates them. It is He [God only] who created the sky and the earth, and who regulates their motions.

– Malebranche, *Search after Truth* §6.2.3 (1997, 451)

[My emphases are added to both quotes]



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Berkeley's Further Response to Malebranche

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Assignments

- 1 Weekly Quiz
- 2 Introduction to Bishop George Berkeley
- 3 Race, Slavery, and Colonialism
- 4 Malebranche's Occasionalism Recapitulated
 - Argument for Occasional Causation
- 5 Berkeley's Objection to Malebranche's Argument
 - Argument against Occasional Causation
- 6 Berkeley's *Esse Est Percipi* Argument
 - EEP Argument
- 7 Malebranche's Possible Response to Berkeley's Objection
- 8 Berkeley's Further Response to Malebranche
 - Arguments for Sensible Ideas
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- 9 Assignments for the Next Lecture



Berkeley's further response to Malebranche from the *esse est percipi* argument

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Berkeley replies as follows [this is not an argument]

- 1 **Matter does not exist**, no matter what matter (corporeal substance) is 'entirely passive' as an unthinking extended substance. [n.b. Malebranche is a Cartesian]
- 2 **The mind is not 'passive'**, but causally active, in terms of its function of perceiving ideas. To this end, the active mind and the passive matter are distinct. **P2 of Berkeley's argumant against occasional causation: 'Our minds do not passively, but actively, perceive ideas.'** [Go back to 'Berkeley's Objection' in the left column]
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Berkeley's two arguments for **sensible ideas**

(Rickless 2013, 5–6)

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- ① Sensible objects are perceived by sense.
 - ② Anything that is perceived by sense is an idea.
 - ③ So, sensible objects are ideas. [Conclusion from P1 and P2]
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- ① Sensible objects are collections of sensible qualities.
 - ② All sensible qualities are ideas.
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Berkeley on the CONTRADICTION of matter

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[T]here is not any other substance than spirit, or that which perceives. But [...] the sensible qualities are colour, figure, motion, smell, taste, and such like, that is, the ideas perceived by sense. Now for an idea to exist in an unperceiving thing is a manifest contradiction; for to have an idea is all one as to perceive; that therefore wherein colour, figure, and the like qualities exist, must perceive them. Hence it is clear **there can be no unthinking substance** or *substratum* of those ideas.

– Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* §7

By 'matter' therefore we are to understand **an inert, senseless substance**, in which extension, figure, and motion do actually subsist. But it is evident from what we have already shown that extension, figure, and motion are only ideas existing in the mind, and that an idea can be like nothing but another idea, and that consequently neither they nor their archetypes can exist in **an unperceiving substance**. Hence it is plain that the very notion of what is called matter or corporeal substance involves a contradiction in it.

– Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* §9



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Rickless's reconstruction from PHK §§7, 9
(2013, 102–03, emphasis added)

Berkeley's argument *for* the contradiction of 'matter'

1. Matter is defined to be an unperceiving support of sensible qualities (such as extension, figure, and motion).
2. Sensible qualities, as has already been established (or so Berkeley claims), are 'only ideas existing in the mind'.
3. Therefore, matter is an unperceiving support of sensible ideas. [from P1 and P2]
4. But to support (or have) an idea is just to perceive it.
5. Therefore, matter is an unperceiving supporter of sensible ideas. [from P3 and P4]
6. So, the very concept of matter is self-contradictory. [from P5]



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Rickless's reconstruction from PHK §§7, 9
(2013, 102–03, emphasis added)

Berkeley's argument *for* the **contradiction** of 'matter'

- 1 Matter is defined to be an unperceiving support of sensible qualities (such as extension, figure, and motion).
- 2 Sensible qualities, as has already been established (or so Berkeley claims), are 'only *ideas* existing in the mind'.
- 3 Therefore, matter is an unperceiving support of sensible ideas. [from P1 and P2]
- 4 But to support (or have) an idea is just to perceive it.
- 5 Therefore, matter is an **unperceiving perceiver** of sensible ideas. [from P3 and P4]
- 6 So, the very concept of matter is **self-contradictory**. [from P5]



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The instructor's reconstruction from PHK §§7, 9

Berkeley's *reductio* argument *against* matter

- ① 'Matter' is assumed to be an unperceiving substance (or unthinking, corporeal '*substratum*') that have sensible qualities (such as extension, figure, and motion) 'subsist[ing]' in it.
- ② Sensible qualities are defined to be sensible ideas ('ideas perceived by sense') *only* 'existing in the mind'.
- ③ For a substance, 'to have an idea' means 'to perceive'.
- ④ There is a substance *unperceiving* and *perceiving* sensible ideas. [from P1 and P3, **contradiction**]
- ⑤ Therefore, there exists nothing called 'matter' as unperceiving substance. [the *assumed* P1 is unacceptable as the argument is realised to be ***reductio ad absurdum***]

N.B. Given a contradiction and the law of explosion, 'reduction to an absurdity' is a valid inference to *any proposition* (i.e. trivial or vacuous consequence).



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- Is Berkeley's argument against occasional causation sound and convincing?
- What is Berkeley's defence of the **activity** of finite minds (not merely that of God) and the **passivity** of perceived ideas?
- Is Berkeley's argument against matter (i.e. 'an inert, senseless substance', PHK §9) sound and convincing?
- When he was *supposed* to visit Malebranche in Paris in November 1713 (it is unknown whether they actually met), was Berkeley himself the '**occasional cause**' of Malebranche's death in 1715?
 - Joseph Stock (1776) *Life of George Berkeley*
 - T.E. Jessop (1938, 124) 'Malebranche and Berkeley'



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Assignments

- 1 Weekly Quiz
- 2 Introduction to Bishop George Berkeley
- 3 Race, Slavery, and Colonialism
- 4 Malebranche's Occasionalism Recapitulated
 - Argument for Occasional Causation
- 5 Berkeley's Objection to Malebranche's Argument
 - Argument against Occasional Causation
- 6 Berkeley's *Esse Est Percipi* Argument
 - EEP Argument
- 7 Malebranche's Possible Response to Berkeley's Objection
- 8 Berkeley's Further Response to Malebranche
 - Arguments for Sensible Ideas
 - Arguments against Matter
- 9 Assignments for the Next Lecture



Final Essay Questions in Part 2: C18th

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Assignments

- 1 Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument about occasional causes, compared with Malebranche's occasionalism.
- 2 Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument against one of the twelve objections in the *Principles*.
- 3 Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument about embodiment in the *Three Dialogues*.
- 4 Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument for mechanical causes as distinguished from metaphysical ones in *De motu*.
- 5 Critically evaluate Hume's argument about the uniformity of nature in his problem of induction (*Enquiry*, §4).
- 6 Critically evaluate Hume's argument that there is no idea of power or necessary connection (*Enquiry*, §7), along with Shepherd's response to that argument.
- 7 Critically evaluate Shepherd's argument for a necessary connection in the *Essay*, along with Hume's sceptical response to that argument.
- 8 Critically evaluate Reid's 'same shop' argument for trust in the senses.



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- 1 Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument about occasional causes, compared with Malebranche's occasionalism. [this week]
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- 4 Critically evaluate Berkeley's argument for mechanical causes as distinguished from metaphysical ones in *De motu*.



Next Week 9: Berkeley 2

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Assignments



Assignment 1: Read Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part I, §§34–72 [a set of 12 Objections and Berkeley's response: **24 arguments** in total].



Assignment 2: Read the 'Argument Advice' and 'Essay Questions' in PDF. And ask me or your assigned TA for anything unclear in the documents and slides.

- Keep active in the **WeCom/企业微信** group for this course, and pay attention to the **Blackboard** (SS149, Spring 2024), in which you can find all the basic info and recommended references.
- **Office hours** of the instructor (Center for Social Sciences, C111) and TAs (their offices) are Mondays 2-4pm, or any working time of appointment, by WeCom direct message or email.