

1 Skepticism

By the start of the Third Dialogue, Hylas has turned into a skeptic, denying that he knows anything about the real nature of objects.

Philonous: "...the real things are those very things I see and feel and perceive by my senses." (486)

2 Berkeley's Idealism

Berkeley thinks we do not have *ideas* of God or other minds, but we do have *notions* of them.

- This is because of his Likeness Principle: Ideas can only be like other ideas.
- Ideas are passive and inert, so they cannot represent anything active, like a mind.
- But we can have immediate knowledge of our minds and of God by reflection.
 - "I do nevertheless know that I, who am a spirit or thinking substance, exist as certainly as I know my ideas exist. Further, I know what I mean by the terms *I* and *myself*; and I know this immediately, or intuitively, though I do not perceive it as I perceive a triangle, a color, or a sound." (487)
 - "For all the notion I have of God is obtained by reflecting on my own soul, heightening its powers and removing its imperfections. I have, therefore, though not an inactive idea, yet in myself some sort of an active thinking image of the Deity." (487)
- We do not have this with matter.

Real things versus dreams or hallucinations

- Ideas formed by the imagination are "faint and indistinct," and depend entirely upon the will (499)
- Ideas perceived by sense are "vivid and clear"
- This should be no different than on a materialist picture.

The possibility of error

- Berkeley doesn't deny that we can err, though he does deny that we can err in what we immediately perceive - that doesn't make any sense.
- "...his mistake does not lie in what he perceives immediately and at present ... but in the wrong judgment he makes concerning the ideas he apprehends to be connected with those immediately perceived, or concerning the ideas that, from what he perceives at present, he imagines would be perceived in other circumstances." (490-1)

The possibility of different persons perceiving the same thing

- Berkeley thinks that two persons can perceive *qualitatively* the same thing.
- He is suspicious of the notion of numerical identity, but thinks it doesn't matter if two persons can perceive *numerically* the same thing. (495)

3 Science and matter

Hylas: Matter is proportional to the gravity of bodies.

- Philonous: This doesn't show that there is matter, it presupposes it.
- Hylas: "In the premise I only mean that the motion is proportional to the velocity, jointly with extension and solidity."
- Philonous: Material substratum is unnecessary for this.

Hylas: "You say you believe your sense and seem to applaud yourself that in this you agree with the vulgar. According to you, therefore, the true nature of a thing is discovered by the senses. If so, where does that disagreement come from? Why is not the same figure and other sensible qualities perceived all manner of ways? And why should we use a microscope, the better to discover the true nature of a body, if it were discoverable to the naked eye?" (494)

"...in both cases my aim is only to know what ideas are connected together, and the more a man knows of the connection of ideas, the more he is said to know of the nature of things." (494)