

6. In the light of the reality principle, does Berkeley's immaterialism represent a viable solution to the problem of constructing a universe without recourse to the notion of matter?

Berkeley argued for idealism and immaterialism. He believed that we never really touch reality. This world is only an immaterial world. We only have access to an object's idea in our minds. The material world out there never exists for us. Everything in the world is only a perception and part of God's plan, a plan that is never clear and final.

Berkeley tried to argue against Locke's ideas about the primary and secondary properties of objects. The primary qualities represent the existence of the object, and the secondary qualities represent the detailed properties of the object, such as its colour or smell. Berkeley argued that we are only in touch with the secondary, but not the primary properties of the object.

We are only able to grasp the idea of the object. Our minds can touch this idea. So, let us say that there are no mind-independent things in the world. If there is an object whose existence we cannot perceive, we will never believe that it exists. My computer does not exist because I am only able to perceive its shape or colour, but I cannot really perceive its existence. I only have the idea of this computer, and I grasp this idea with my mind. The existence of this monitor is independent of my mind.

All the objects that we perceive in this world can only be perceived by our senses. We are only able to perceive them through the secondary properties of the objects. I can see the red colour of the roses, but I never really perceive the primary properties of the object. When I lift this bunch of roses, I only feel their weight. I only feel it when I touch them. But I never really perceive the existence of the roses, only the mass and space of the roses. When we think about an object, we think about it as the image of the perceptual experience. When I walk away from my office, I may forget to lock my computer screen. When I think about it, I remind myself about everything I have ever seen, touched or experienced about my computer. This does not mean that my computer exists when I think about it. Someone may argue that we are still able to prove the existence of an object even we cannot perceive it, but Berkeley argued that we cannot know that. How are we able to know that a flying shark fish exists if we have never seen, touched or smelled this strange shark fish. We may guess that it exists, but we will never be sure.

Thus, if no one can perceive the reality of this world, how can we prove this world exists? Can I do a cross check between subjects? Can I ask other people to judge my opinion to prove that I am not alone in this imaginary world? Berkeley would say that I cannot. What if I point to a tree and ask if another person sees the same thing? But actually, the tree to which I point is only the idea of the tree that is constructed in my mind. The comparison of ideas should only occur in the mind. I will never be able to have your idea in my mind in order to compare it. What if we assume facts from the majority rule of the people? If I continue to ask people every day about the existence of that tree, finally, after a month has passed, I may have enough confidence that it does if most of the people say that it exists. Does this prove the reality of the tree? Berkeley would again say no. We cannot rely on the majority, because it is still possible for most of the people to be wrong. I do not think that Berkeley had a strong argument here. I think we are able to do a cross check between subjects to show

asymmetry between the subjects' opinions, and that this can prove the existence of an object.

Berkeley argued that the world exists as a result of the plan of God. Everything is in the perception of God. The world is created from the main plan or blueprint that God created. But it is not the perfect plan. It is just the draft of the main plan. The details are not yet final or confirmed. Sometimes, this plot that comes from the director is not clear or final enough for the actor to follow. The actors may be able to do the rest of it through their own improvisation. Sometimes, the actor can predict the plot, and by accident, cooperate well with or move in the same direction as the main plot that was written by the director.

Berkeley tried to build the world without the involvement of any material. He explained how we interact with the world and how the world runs without material. We only have the characteristics of everything in our minds. We construct it in our own minds. Everyone is just a character in God's plot. I think this is not a weak argument. Many aspects of the argument make sense. But if I must choose between realism and immaterialism, I will not choose Berkeley's ideas.