

Reading Guide #3: Materialism and Idealism

These reading guides are provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not required to hand in written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Page numbers refer to Peter A. Morton, *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, Broadview Press, 1997.

Thomas Hobbes, from *Leviathan*, pp 129-133.

1. According to Hobbes, what is the source of all thoughts?
2. For Hobbes, how do objects causes sensations in us?
3. How does Hobbes disagree with the Aristotelians about the nature of objects?
4. How does Hobbes account for imagination and memory?
5. According to Hobbes, why do memories fade?
6. How does Hobbes account for creative thoughts, new images? How does he account for dreams?
7. What, according to Hobbes, is understanding?
8. How is the succession of our thoughts regulated?
9. What distinguishes disorganized thought from organized thought?

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John Locke, from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (handout)

1. How does the mind first get its ideas?
2. When do we start using names for our ideas? How do we get general ideas?
3. “[I]t will be convenient to distinguish them as they are ideas or perceptions in our minds; and as they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions in us... (§II.VIII.7)” What does this mean? Why does Locke think that this distinction is important?
4. How does Locke distinguish ideas from qualities?
5. What are the primary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)
6. What are the secondary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)
7. How do ideas of external objects get into our minds, according to Locke?
8. How do we get ideas of secondary qualities?
9. “The ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves, but the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblance of them at all (§II.VIII.15).” Explain.
10. Do we think that the warmth is in the fire? What does this show?
11. “Take away the sensation of them; let not the eyes see light or colors, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell, and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds, as they are such particular ideas, vanish and cease, and are reduced to their causes, i.e. bulk, figure, and motion of parts (§II.VIII.17).” Explain.
12. How does the example of the porphyry support the primary/secondary distinction?
13. How does Locke’s discussion of the water support his primary/secondary distinction?
14. How does Locke demonstrate that figure is a primary quality?

George Berkeley, from *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, pp 134-40.

1. What are the three types of ideas? Where do they originate?
2. What do terms like 'apple' mean, for Berkeley?
3. What is a mind, or a soul?
4. How does Berkeley argue that unthinking things must be perceived in order to exist?
5. What contradiction arises from the belief that sensible objects have an independent existence?
6. How does the notion of the independent existence of material objects depend on the doctrine of abstract ideas?
7. What kind of abstraction does Berkeley say we can perform? What can't we do, as regards abstraction?
8. Can an object which I don't perceive exist? Explain.
9. How does Berkeley argue that there can be no material substratum for our ideas?
10. Why can't our ideas of objects resemble material substance? How does this show the primary/ secondary distinction to be unhelpful?
11. "In short, extension, figure, and motion, abstracted from all other qualities, are inconceivable (§10)." Explain. What does this show?
12. How does Berkeley argue that number does not exist without the mind?
13. Explain Berkeley's argument against the primary qualities from the relativity of perceptions, in §14 and §15.
14. What problem does Berkeley find in the argument that matter supports extension?
15. "Hence it is evident the supposition of external bodies is not necessary for producing our ideas... (§18)" Explain.
16. Why does the materialist have a problem explaining the origins of our ideas? Why does Berkeley accuse the materialist of positing useless objects?
17. "In short, if there were external bodies, it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we have now (§20)." Explain.
18. On what single question does Berkeley's idealism rest? Why doesn't thinking of an unperceived object refute Berkeley?
19. How are ideas passive?
20. How does Berkeley argue that there must be perceivers, in addition to perceptions?
21. Explain the argument for the existence of a higher power in §29.
22. What are laws of nature, according to Berkeley?