CHAPTER-IV

DEVELOPMENT OF BERKELEY’S PHILOSOPHY

The empiricism established by Thomas Hobbes was passed on to Locke who faithfully supported it and gave it additional strength. But how far did he succeed in this task? Berkeley remarks that although Locke set out on the right path he did not proceed far enough. Berkeley took up empiricist thought where Locke had left off, for Berkeley was as staunch an empiricist as his predecessor had been. He is related to Locke as Spinoza to Descartes. He notices blemishes and contradictions allowed by his predecessor to remain, and, recognizing that the difficulty is not to be remedied by minor corrections and artificial hypotheses, goes back to the fundamental principles, takes these more earnestly than their author, and, by carrying them out more strictly, arrives at a new view of the world. The points in Locke’s doctrines which invited a further advance were the following: Locke proclaims that our knowledge extends no further than our ideas, and that truth consists in the agreement of ideas among themselves, not in the agreement of ideas with things. But this principle had scarcely been announced before it was violated. In spite of his limitation of knowledge to ideas, Locke maintains that we know (if not the inner constitutions, yet) the qualities and powers of things without us, and have a “sensitive” certainty of their existence. Against this, it is to be said that there are no primary qualities, that is, qualities which exist without as well as within us. Extension, motion, solidity, which are cited as such, are just as purely subjective states in us as colour, heat, and sweetness. Impenetrability is nothing more than the feeling of resistance, an idea, therefore, which self-evident can be nowhere else than in the mind experiencing it. Extension, size,
distance, and motion are not even sensations (we see colours only, not quantita-
tive determinations), but relations which we in thinking add to the sense
qualities (secondary qualities), and which we are not able to represent apart
from them; their relatively alone would forbid us to consider them objective.
And material substances, “support” of qualities invented by the philosophers,
are not only unknown, but entirely non-existent. Abstract matter is a phrase
without meaning, and individual things are collections of ideas in us, nothing
more. If we take away all sense-qualities from a thing, absolutely nothing
remains. Our ideas are not merely the only objects of knowledge, but also the
only existing things—nothing exists except minds and their ideas. Spirits
alone are active beings, they only are indivisible substances, and have real
existence, while the being of bodies (as dependent, inert, variable beings, which
are in a constant process of becoming) consists alone in their appearance to
spirits and their being perceived by them. Incogitative, hence passive, beings
are neither substances, nor capable of producing ideas in us. Those ideas which
we do not ourselves produce are the effects of a spirit which is mightier than
we. With this a second inconsistency was removed which had been over-looked
by Locke, who had ascribed active power to spirits alone and denied it to
matter, but at the same time had made the former affected by the latter. If
external sense is to mean the capacity for having ideas occasioned by the
action of external material things, then there is no external sense. A third point
wherein Locke had not gone far enough for his successor, concerned the
favourite English doctrine of nominalism.¹ Locke, with his predecessors, had
maintained that all reality is individual, and that univeresals exist only in the
abstracting understanding. From this point Berkeley advances a step further,
the last, indeed, which was possible in this direction, by bringing into question
the possibility even of abstract ideas. As all beings are particular things, so all
ideas are particular ideas.²
Of course, Berkeley derived his main inspiration from the metaphysics of Locke. Berkeley is famous mainly for rejecting something which Locke accepted, namely, belief in natural substance. So Berkeley was reacting against Locke. His main logical point, which is profound, is that nothing in experience can ever give us a warrant for inferring the existence of something which is not experience. He maintained that we can never be justified in claiming the existence of inaccessible, unexperiencable, unconceptualisable material objects "out there" in the external world which cause us to have some of these experiences. Berkeley claimed that all we can ever know is that there are experiences and experiencing subjects. He thought that this standpoint was an inductible consequence of the empiricist method that Locke had put forward. He arrived at an idealism, according to which "ideas" are mental particulars, the immediate objects of the perception whereby the contents of our mind are revealed to us. Images, sense-experiences, thoughts, concepts—all are "ideas" in Berkeley's sense, since all are immediate objects of mental perception. This position is the outcome of the interpretation of Locke's conception of "idea" in the narrow sense. Berkeley expounded his idealism in the Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710). According to this brand of idealism, the world contains nothing but spirits and their "ideas."

Berkeley looks on the refutation of two fundamental mistakes in Locke—the assumption of general ideas in the mind, and the belief in the existence of a material world outside it—as his life work, holding them the chief sources of atheism, doubt, and philosophical discord. The first of these errors arises from the use of language. Because we employ words which denote more than one object, we have believed ourselves warranted in concluding that we have ideas which correspond to the extention of the words in question, and which contain only those characteristics which are uniformly found in all objects so named.
This however, is not the case. We speak of many things which we cannot represent; names do not always stand for ideas. The definition of the word triangle as a three-sided figure bounded by straight lines, makes demands upon us which our faculties of imagination are never fully able to meet; for the triangle that we represent to ourselves is always either right-angled or oblique-angled, and not—as we must demand from the abstract conception of the figure—both and neither at once. The name “man” includes men and women, children and the aged, but we are never able to represent a man except as an individual of definite age and sex. Nevertheless we are in a position to make safe use of these non-representative but useful abbreviations, and by means of a particular idea to develop truths of wider application. This takes place when, in the demonstration, those qualities are not considered which distinguish the idea from others with a like name. In this case the given idea stands for all others which are known by the same name; the representative idea is not universal, but serves as such. Thus when I have demonstrated the proposition, the sum of all the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles, for a given triangle, I do not need to prove it for every triangle thereafter. For not only the colour and size of the triangle are indifferent, but its other peculiarities as well; the question whether it is right-angled or obtuse-angled, whether it has equal sides, whether it has equal to or unequal angles, is not mentioned in the demonstration, and has no influence upon it. Abstracta exist only in this sense. In considering the individual Paul I can attend exclusively to those characteristics which he has in common with all men or with all living beings, but it is impossible for me to represent this complex of common qualities apart from his individual peculiarities. Self observation shows that we have no general concepts; reason that we can have none, for the combination of opposite elements in one idea would be a contradiction in terms. Motion in general,
neither swift nor slow, extention in general, at once great and small, abstract
matter without sensuous determinations—these can neither exist nor be perceived.\(^4\)

Berkeley maintains that Locke's doctrine of abstract ideas is false. He writes:

"Whether others have this wonderful faculty of abstracting their ideas, they best can tell: for my self I find indeed I have a faculty of imagin- ing, or representing to myself the ideas of those particulars things I have perceived and of variously compounding and dividing them. I can imagine a man with two heads or the upper parts of a man joined to the body of a horse. I can consider the hand, the eye, the nose, each by itself abstracted or separated from the rest of the body. But then whatever hand or eye I imagine, it must have some particular shape and colour. Likewise the idea of man that I frame to my self, must be either of a white, or a black, or a tawny, a straight, or a crooked, a tall, or a low, or a middle size man. I cannot by any effort of thought conceive the abstract idea above describe (i.e. the one 'retaining only what is common to all' men)."\(^5\)

For Berkeley the formation of abstract ideas is a psychological impossibility. He thinks that this will be the case for everyone else too. He clearly expects no challenge from anyone who tries to form abstract ideas.\(^6\) Berkeley's denial that ideas can be abstract, however, is just at odds with the facts. The explanation of it is that without quite realising it Berkeley objected to the theory of abstract ideas not on psychological but on logical grounds. For a definite, wrong rea- son, he thought it logically impossible that there should be an abstract idea.

According to the common view, these objects—houses, mountains, and rivers—have an existence, natural or real, distinct from their being perceived
by the understanding, and our ideas of them are copies or resemblances of all these things without us. Now, says Berkeley, either those external objects or originals of our ideas are perceivable, or they are not perceivable. If they are, then they are ideas (for an idea = something perceived). In that case, there is no difference between objects assumed to be without us and our ideas of them; and “we have gained our point”. “If you say they are not, I appeal to any one whether it be sense to assert a colour is like something which is invisible; hard or soft, like something which is intangible; and so of the rest.” Hence, there is no real difference between things and our ideas of them. The words sensible thing and idea are synonymous. 

Our ideas, or the things which we perceive, are visibly inactive. It is impossible for an idea to do anything, or to be the cause of anything. Hence, spirit or thinking substance alone can be the cause of ideas (sensible things). A spirit is one simple, undivided, active being,—as it perceives ideas, it is called the “understanding”, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called “will”. Now all ideas (perceived things) being essentially passive, and spirit eminently active, it follows that we cannot, strictly speaking, have and idea of spirit, will, or soul; at any rate, we cannot form as clear an idea of it as of a triangle, for example. In as much as the idea is absolutely passive and spirit the very essence of activity, the idea of spirit is a contradiction in terms, and no more like spirit than night is like the day.

Berkeley’s theory emerges full-grown, if not fully armed. Even in his Common-place Book there is no hesitation in the reference to “my doctrine”, “the immaterial hypothesis”. Only persons exist: “all other things are not so much existences as manners of the existence of persons”. He knows that “a mighty sect of men will oppose me,” that he will be called young, an upstart, a pretender, vain; but his confidence is not shaken: “Newton begs his principles; I
demonstrate mine.” He did not, at first, reveal the whole truth to the world. An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision deals with one point only—the relation between the objects of sight and those of touch. Molyneux had once set the problem of Locke, whether a man born blind, if he recovered his sight, would be able by sight alone to distinguish from one another a cube and a sphere, with both which he had been previously acquainted by touch. Molyneux answered his own question in the negative, and Locke expressed agreement with his solution and admiration for the insight which it showed. Berkeley was of one mind with them about the answer to the query, but for a more fundamental reason. If extention be an idea common to sight and touch (as Locke held), then visible squareness must be the same as, or have something in common with, tangible squareness. In virtue of this, the man born blind, so soon as he is made to see, should be able to distinguish between a visible square and a visible circle, and to identify this distinction with the distinction between the square and the circle already known by touch. If he is unable to do so, it is because there is nothing in common between the visible object and the tangible. And this is Berkeley’s view. “The objects of sight and touch”, he says, “make, if I may so say, two sets of ideas which are widely different from each other..... A man born blind, being made to see, would at first have no idea of distance by sight: the sun and stars, the remotest objects as well as the nearer, would all seem to be in his eye, or rather in his mind”.

The important question for Berkeley is: Does an extra-mental world exist; is there an independent world of matter?

The “materialistic” hypothesis, according to Berkeley is the assumption that a material world exist apart from perceiving mind, and independently of being perceived. This hypothesis is, first, unnecessary, for the facts which it is to explain can be explained as well, or even better, without it. Secondly, it
is false, since it is a contradiction to suppose that an object can exist unperceived, and that a sensation or idea is the copy of anything itself not a sensation or idea. Ideas are the only objects of the understanding. Sensible qualities (white, sweet) are subjective states of the soul; sense objects (sugar), sensation-complexes. If sensations need a substantial support, this is the soul which perceives them, not an external thing which can neither perceive nor be perceived. Single ideas, and those combined into objects, can exist nowhere else than in the mind; the being of sense objects consists in their being perceiveć (esse est perципi). I see light and feel heat, and combine these sensations of sight and touch into the substance fire, because I know from experience that they constantly accompany and suggest each other.\textsuperscript{11} The assumption of an "object" apart from the idea is as useless as its existence would be. Why should God create a world of real things without the mind, when these can neither enter into the mind, nor (because unperceived) be copied by its ideas, nor (because they themselves lack perception and power) produce Ideas in it? Ideas signify nothing but themselves, i.e., affections of the subject.\textsuperscript{12}

The further question arises, what is the origin of ideas? Men have been led into erroneous belief in the reality of the material world by the fact that certain ideas are not subject to our will, while others are.\textsuperscript{13} According to his principles, Berkeley says that, \textquotedblleft ideas formed by help of memory and imagination — either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways. By sight I have the ideas of light and colours, with their several degrees and variations. By touch I perceive hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance, and of all these more and less either as to quantity or degree. Smelling furnishes me with odours; the palate with tastes; and hearing conveys sound to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition. And as several of these are observed to accompany each other, they
come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one thing. Thus, for example, a certain colour, taste, smell, figure and consistence having been observed to go together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name “apple”; other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and the like sensible things— which as they are pleasing or disagreeable excite the passions of love, hatred, joy, grief, and so forth.” “But, besides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise something which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering, about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call mind, spirit, soul, or myself. By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or, which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived — for the existence of an idea consists in being perceived.” “That neither our thought, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind, is what everything will allow and it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose), cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them.— I think an intuitive knowledge be obtained of this by any one that shall attend to what is meant by the term exists, 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 smelt; there was a sound, that is, 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’s theory that “Esse Est Percipi” (to be is to be perceived) is deduced from Locke’s conception of the idea of a human body. Locke points out that the body, or any object, possesses solidity, extension, form, motion, colour, design, taste, smell and sound. Some of these qualities such as colour, sound and taste are perceived because of the presence of one who perceives. Other qualities such as extension, solidity, form, motion and enertia or lack of motion actually form part of the body or object. Such qualities were called the primary qualities by Locke. But Berkeley’s analysis of Locke’s thesis proves that there is no difference between the primary and secondary qualities. Ideas of extension and solidity are the result of touch, and extension cannot be separated from colour and other secondary qualities. It is impossible to perceive an object which has extension but no colour. There can be no idea in the mind of such an object. And hence such an idea is no better than an abstract idea which has no existence.

In an authoritative work entitled Berkeley (Pelican Books, 1953) G.J. Warnock has given a lucid interpretation of Berkeley’s central use of idea as follows. An idea is an immediate object of perception, and this is what is described in a statement of immediate perception. Such a statement is one in which a speaker, while saying how things seem to him, takes nothing for granted about how they actually are. Such statements are ideally of the form: “It seems to me as if I were seeing (hearing, touching, etc.) a so-and-so.” Warnock also suggest that esse est percipi can be paraphrased as follows: “Every material thing is a ‘collection of ideas.’ Any statement about any material thing is really (can be analysed into) an indefinitely large set of statements about what it seems as if the speaker and other people and God were hearing.
seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling — that is, into an indefinitely large set of statement describing the idea of which any material object is a collection. It is clear then than nothing is ‘without the mind’, for any such statement about a material object is analysed into a set of statements, each of which mentions some ‘spirit’ (human or divine) by whom the ideas that constitute the collection are actually had.”

**Fundamental elements in Berkeley’s theory of “Esse Est Percepi”**

The following four points are implicit in Berkeley’s theory ‘to be is to be perceived:

1. Our ideas, feelings and images have no existence apart from the mind.
2. Ideas independent of the knower also have no existence.
3. When the word ‘existence’ is used in connection with an object, it implies nothing more than perception.
4. It is useless to talk of an object which has no connection with perception.

There is no particular difficulty concerning the first and second points mentioned above, but the third and fourth points present features of interest which should be considered at length. These last two points led to the popular misconception of Berkeley’s theory that it implies that we eat and drink ideas. Berkeley answered the charge by saying that this inconsistence is apparent because of the confusion inherent in the common idiom. He agrees that in normal conversation we should say that we eat solid food and drink liquid food, but at the same time points out that food, of any kind and variety, is nothing more than our ideas. It must be admitted that thinkers who frame this objection do not keep in the mind that Berkeley’s use of the term ideas is not in its ordinary connotation. Ideas imply our knowledge, complete in itself, of any
particular object. But we cannot say what the object really is apart from our knowledge of it. Hence, every object that is experienced by us is only an idea and it has no existence outside the mind.

It is essential to keep the following fact in mind, in trying to understand Berkeley’s theory, ‘to be is to be perceived.’

1. Perception is not personal:—In the first place it should be remembered that by perception Berkeley does not imply perception by an individual, and hence his theory cannot be said to be solipsist. In saying that ‘to be is to be perceived’, Berkeley means merely that a thing which is not perceived cannot exist, irrespective of the individual or not perceiving. If I do not perceive an object I cannot say that it does not exist, for the simple reason that another soul might be perceiving it. But if an object is unperceived by any soul, then its existence can rightly be doubted.

2. Perception is not limited to the present:—Another point to be remembered is that Berkeley’s theory does not imply perception in the present, but in any point of them. If a particular object is not being perceived by me at the moment, I cannot state that it does not exist, for it may have existed in the past or it may do so in the future.

3. Ultimate perception is in God:—It is perfectly possible that I, or even any other living soul, may not perceive existing things either in the past or to exist in the future. Yet this assumption does not disprove the theory because the existence of objects is perceived by the Supreme Soul or God. If a thing exists without being perceived by any human soul, then it must necessarily be perceived by God. No object can exist if it is not perceived by God. Berkeley, being a man of religion, accepts that God is all powerful.

Sensations are distinguished from the ideas of imagination, which we can
excite and alter at pleasure, by their greater strength, liveliness, and distinctness, by their steadiness, regular order, and coherence, and by the fact that they arise without our aid and whether we will or no. Unless these ideas are self-originated they must have an external cause, This, however, can be nothing else than a willing, thinking Being; for without will it could not be active and act upon me, and without ideas of its own it could not communicate ideas to me. Because of the manifoldness and regularity of our sensations and Being which produces them must, further, possess infinite power intelligence. The ideas of imagination are produced by ourselves, real perceptions are proceed by God. Berkeley says that in his principles, "Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz., that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind, that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of my other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit — it being perfectly unintelligible, and involving all the absurdity of abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a spirit. To be convinced of which, the reader need only reflect, and try to separate in his own thoughts the being of a sensible thing from its being perceived”. "From what has been said it follows there is not any other Substance than Spirit, or that which perceives. But, for the fuller proof of this point, let it be considered 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”. “But, say you, though the ideas themselves do not exist without the mind, yet there may be things like them, whereof they are copies or resemblances, which things exist without the mind in an unthinking substance. I answer, an idea can he like nothing out an idea; a colour or figure can be like nothing but another colour or figure. If we look but never so little into our thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness except only be ween our ideas. Again, I ask whether those supposed originals or external things, of which our ideas are the pictures or representations, be themselves perceivable or no? If they are, then they are ideas and we have gained our point; but if you say they are not, I appeal to any one whether it be sense to assert a colour is like something which is invisible: hard or soft, like something which is intangible; and so of the rest.¹⁷

In the “Essay,” Locke had said that all the objects of knowledge are ideas, and he had thus much difficulty — as indeed Descartes had had before him — in defending the reality of the things which he supposed to be represented by the ideas. Berkeley solves the difficulty by denying the distinction. The ideas are the things. “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 perceived by the understanding”. But the opinion needs only to called in question to show the contradiction it involves; for these objects are the things we perceive by sense, and we perceive nothing but our ideas. With magnificent confidence he passes at once to the assertion: “Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz. that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind; that their being is to be perceived or known”.¹⁸
Refutation of primary and secondary qualities

Bishop Berkeley finds John Locke's dichotomy between primary and secondary qualities untenable, and in order to refute it he suggested the following objections:

1. If one were to accept Locke's theory, then in the perception of a table, the form of the table is outside the mind while its colour is within the mind. Berkeley suggested that, in fact, we observe a coloured object having a definite form. There is no truth in the statement that the table loses its colour if we do not perceive it. How can we then argue that the mind imnoses the colour of the table upon the table?

2. It is possible to use the same arguments for proving the existence of primary qualities which are used for proving the secondary qualities.

3. An idea can resemble only another idea. If idea is believed to be distinct from object, then knowledge would amount to finding similarity in the dissimilars, and this is contradictory. Therefore, if primary qualities are the subjects of knowledge, they also must be mental.

Refutation of matter

The main object behind disproving the distinction between primary and secondary qualities was to disprove the concept of matter. By implication, therefore, Berkeley refutes Locke's theory of substance, which is the basis of the qualities that an object has, since qualities that do not exist within the mind should have a basis outside it to support them. Matter is the basis, since substance is the basis of all qualities. Locke has not been able to attribute any other distinction to this substance and has been compelled to end rather lamely by saying that it is something -I-know-not what. Berkeley rebelled against this inconsequential thinking and rejected the notion of a substance about which
nothing can be postulated. In fact, his system of thought does not require the existence of any such substance for the simple reason that he proves, to his own satisfaction, that all qualities are mental, that is they have their basis in the mind.

Another argument adduced to prove the existence of matter is that the sensations aroused in our minds are more distinct, inevitable and specific than imaginary idea and therefore their origin is not the mind but a substance outside it within which exist those qualities that have the power to cause such sensations. Berkeley objects to this argument in saying that there need not be a causal relation between substance and experience because both are completely different, a difference which is rejected by the very nature of a causal relation.

Some philosophers suggest that while matter is not the cause of our sensations it is an instrument of such sensations since only when a specific kind of substance is presented to our consciousness is it possible for a corresponding experience to be imprinted upon our mind, by the grace of God. Berkeley suggest that by accepting the inevitability of the instrument we delimit the power of God, who is omnipotent and possessed of the ability to create an impression upon our minds without the aid of any instrument.

**Two types of Reality — mind and matter**

Berkeley believes in two kinds of ideas, a fact which should have become apparent from the foregoing account. He believes in: (1) Images which are the consequence of an individual’s private volition and can be changed; and (2) Real things which exist through God’s acts of volition he says that, “I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in
my fancy; and by the same power it is obliterated and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of ideas doth very properly denominate the mind active. Thus much is certain an grounded on experience; but when we think of unthinking agents or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse ourselves with words”.19 “The ideas of sense are more strong, lively, and distinct than those of the imagination; they have likewise a steadiness, order, and coherence, and are not excited at random, as those which are the effects of human wills often are, but in a regular train or series, the admirable connexion whereof sufficiently testifies the wisdom and benevolence of its Author. Now the set rules or established methods wherein the Mind we depend on excites in us the ideas of sense, are called the laws of nature; and these we learn by experience, which teaches us that such and such ideas are attended with such and such other ideas, in the ordinary course of things”.20

Berkeley therefore, believes that there are two kinds of existents in this universe, the mind and its ideas and also that there are two varieties of mind in the universe, God’s mind or Infinite Mind, and the other human mind or the finite mind. Real things are in fact the ideas of God, beyond the pale of human idea and action. Berkeley remarks, “But, whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, I find the ideas actually perceived by sense have not a like dependence on my will. When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether I shall see or no, or to determine what particular objects shall present themselves to my view; and so likewise as to the hearing and other senses; the ideas imprinted on them are not creatures of my will. There is therefore some other Will or Spirit that produces them”.21 He obviously means that the finite mind is not the cause of sensations, but they must have a cause that is mental since an effect such as sensation can only be caused by a mental cause. This mind also cannot be finite since it has a power greater
than the power of finite mind. Such a mind possesses the power of creating identical impressions or sensations in various finite minds. We observe an inevitability and regularity in natural laws on account of the functioning of such a mind. This great mind is God’s Ideas that arise in that mind are more varied, permanent and regulated than the ideas of a finite mind and are therefore characterized as real things. Laws of nature are divine in origin. As to why these divine laws are regulated and permanent, Berkeley suggests that the quality of being trustworthy can be attributed to God only in the event of his volitions being dependable. In this manner Berkeley has recourse to religious faith in order to bear out scientific fact. What the scientists is actually looking for is the rule or rules controlling divine volition. God has within Him the power to cause miracles but He chooses to be regular in volition because that strengthens our faith in Him. It is possible to ask the question: If sensations are mental and their source is God then why do they appear to emanate from external objects. Berkeley has this to say with the naive realists that he believes objects are what they appear to be and appear to be what they are. Therefore, he reasons: objects appear to be external and sensations apparently emanate from them because God wishes that it should be so. Secondly, even when one finite mind is not perceiving the object it continues to exist since it remains part of the infinite mind as an idea.

Idealism

Idealism denies the reality of external objects independent of the knowing minds. It regards reality as ideas or spiritual or mind-dependent. Here Mind or Thought or Spirit or Idea is taken to be the primary reality. The Idealists maintain no external objects as they are considered to be only mind-dependent.
Subjective Idealism of Berkeley

Berkeley denies the existence of external objects reducing the external objects to the subjective ideas of the finite minds that perceive them. Denying the existence of the external world Berkeley admits the existence of God and the finite minds only. Hence Berkeley’s idealism is branded as subjective idealism. His idealism which is also known as Mentalism or Immaterialism or Idealism or Spiritualism is in fact a conclusion arrived at by him in his development of the empiricism of Locke to its logical consequence. In Berkeley’s opinion, to be is to be perceived, whatever is not either an idea or the subject of some mind exists, whatever is not an idea or a subject of some mind has no existence. By saying that an object should be the subject of a mind. Berkeley does not mean that it should be the subject of his mind alone, it may be the subject of any mind, finite or infinite.

As regards material things, therefore, a single phrase expresses Berkeley’s thought: “their esse is percipi”. There is a passive, dependent existence. Active, independent existence can belong to minds or persons only. From this position he never wavered, though there is a good deal of difference between his earlier and his later views. He saw that, as the existence of ideas consists in being perceived, so mind must be regarded as perceiving. “Existence..., is percipi or percipiere” is one of his earliest statements; and, as men may sleep or be rendered unconscious, he is willing, at first, to accept the consequence that “men die or are in a state of annihilation oft in a day”. But this solution seemed too dangerous and was soon relinquished, and thus he held it “a plain consequence that the soul always thinks”. As there is no material substance, so also there can be no material cause. Material things, being our ideas and altogether passive, are related to one another not as cause and effect but only as sign and thing signified. We learn to understand their grouping, and thus one idea sug-
gests others, the like of which have followed it in previous experience; while further experience confirms the anticipation. What we call laws of nature, therefore, are simply a statement of the orderly sequences in which the ideas of the senses occur in our minds. The material substance to which philosophers refers these as their cause is, he labours to prove, an unmeaning and self-contradictory abstraction. Certain ideas — those which we call ideas of immagination — are constructed by the individual mind; but the ideas of sense, or sensible things, though they exist only in the mind, are not caused by mind or by any other finite mind. There must, therefore, be "an omnipresent eternal Mind, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules, as he himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the laws of nature".22

**Solipsism**

Berkeley’s thought does not amount to solipsism. Solipsism is a theory which believes in the exclusive existence of "my own mind and myself". Any such theory would be automatically inadequate for explaining universe. Berkeley believes in the existence of minds other than his own knowledge he knows that those are many objects in the world of which he has no personal and private experience. This forces him to the conclusion that there must be other minds in the universe. It also forces him to the inevitable thought that there must be many objects that are not the subject of finite minds but of the infinite or God’s mind. In this manner Berkeley evades the charge of solipsism by accepting the multiplicity of minds other than his own.

**Chief tenets of subjective idealism**

Putting it briefly, it is possible to analyse the Berkeleyian theory and discover the following main points:
1. Esse est percipi — Whether they be images or real objects, they are the subjects of knowledge if they have existence. It is not necessary that they be subjects of my perception, for they continue to exist even when they are the objects of mother's perception.

2. Qualities also exist only when perceived — It is no less true of the qualities of an object than it is true of the object itself that they exist only when they are perceived to exist. In this relationship there can be no distinction between the so-called primary and secondary qualities. Objects are dependent upon the infinite mind.

3. Images depend upon individuals — Berkeley believes the world to be possessed of two kinds of existents, images and actual or real objects. The former depend upon human beings for their existence while the latter depend upon God or the infinite mind. The nature and existence of images depends upon the manner in which they are known by infinite minds while the existence of real objects depends upon how they are known by the infinite mind.

4. Objects conform to knowledge of them and knowledge conforms objects—Berkeley does not accept the existence of any quality between object and the knowledge of it since the object does not exist outside the knowledge of it, which knowledge also determines its nature and qualities. On this point Berkeley finds something on which he can agree with the naive realists. Besides, he does not deny that objects are independent of the knowledge of them, but he does not interpret this to mean that they are material or physical on that account. The only thing that can be deduced from this dichotomy is that the object does not fail to exist because it continues to exist in the infinite mind. This concept saves Berkeley from the difficulty of explaining how a certain object not known to anyone for the present becomes known later on. These objects existed even before there was knowledge of them.
5. Knowledge of the object is direct — According to Berkeley there is nothing in the universe besides mind and its idea. Hence, it follows that nothing intervenes between the object and its knowledge. All knowledge is direct knowledge, a concept which refutes Locke’s notion of representationism.

6. Objects are not public — It is within the capacity of God to create similar experience in different finite minds; otherwise the experience of each individual finite mind is private. By holding this view Berkeley rejects the thesis of naive realism that objects are not private but public. According to him objects are private rather than public.

7. Refutation of materialism — Subjective idealism believes in the existence only of mind and its concepts, rejecting the notion of any substance distinct from this mind. It thereby refutes materialism and indirectly atheism.

8. Establishing theism — Subjective idealism aims at and achieves the establishment of theism. It holds that God is the fundamental cause the reality and order in the universe. The regularity of natural laws and the accuracy of our knowledge is caused by him.

**Refutation of Dualism, Atheism, and Scepticism**

Berkeley maintains that the idealistic theory banishes from philosophy several obscure questions. Whether corporeal substances can think? Whether matter is infinitely divisible? How it operates on spirit? These are some of the difficult questions. It reduces human knowledge to knowledge of ideas and knowledge of spirits. It gets rid of the dualism of intelligible objects, or objects in the mind, and real objects, or objects outside the mind. This dualism is the root of scepticism, for how can we know that the things which are perceived are comfortable to the things which are not perceived? If color, figure, motion, extention, and the like are referred to things outside the mind, we perceive
appearances only, not the real qualities of things; this distrust of the senses leads to scepticism. Berkeley believes that the idealistic theory dispels all such doubts.23

The doctrine of matter is also the cause of atheism. Berkeley remarked: "give up materialism, and the whole fabric of atheism disintegrates." If a self-existent, inert, unthinking substance is the root and origin of all things, we exclude freedom, intelligence, and design from the formation of the world. Dispense with matter and your Epicureans, Hobbes, and others of their kind are deprived of their pretense of plausibility. Idolatry, too, stands and falls with matter, for if objects of sense are merely so many sensations in the mind, then it is scarcely likely that men will fall down and worship their own ideas. Also, take away material substance and mean by body what every plain ordinary person means by the word — that which is immediately seen and felt, which is only a combination of qualities or ideas — and every objection to bodily resurrection comes to nothing. In brief, eliminate the hypothesis of matter, and atheism, idolatry and irreligion lose their basis and support.24

Another source of error is the doctrine of the abstract ideas. Everybody knows that what time, place, and motion, taken in particular or concretely, are. But after they have passed through the mind of a metaphysician, they become too abstract and fine to be apprehended by men of ordinary sense. Time abstracted from the succession of ideas in our minds is nothing, hence the duration of any finite spirit must be estimated by the number of ideas or actions succeeding each other in the same spirit or mind. That the soul always think is a simple consequence of the identification of time with the succession of ideas in the mind. The rejection of abstract ideas also implies that where extention is, there colour is also, i.e., in the mind. The archetypes of extention and colour can exist only in some other mind, and the objects of sense are nothing but
sensations combined, blended together in a concrete nexus. None of these entities — time, space, sense qualities, etc. — can be supposed to exist unperceived. We cannot frame an idea of pure time exclusive of the sequence of ideas, nor of pure space exclusive of all extended sensations. Pure space means the ability of the limbs of my body to move in all directions without the least resistance.25

The sceptics deal with natural philosophy. They say: we do not know the real essence, the internal qualities and contribution of things. There is something in every drop of water, in every grain of sand, which it is beyond the power of human understanding to fathom or comprehend. This complaint is groundless. There is no inward essence of things whence their discernible qualities flow and whereon they depend. It is also a vain labour to endeavour to explain appearances or qualities, the production of colour and sound, for example, by the figure, motion, weight, and like qualities of insensible particles. There is no other agent or efficient cause than spirit; motion, like all other ideas, is perfectly inert.26

**Space, time and motion**

According to Berkeley, space, time, and motion, all these are abstractions, not realities. It is impossible, he held, to form an idea of pure space apart from the bodies in it. We find that we are hindered from moving our bodies in some directions and can move them freely in others. Where there are hindrance to our movement there are other bodies to obstruct us, and where we can move unrestrictedly we say there is space. It follows that our ideas of movement and of body (Principles, article 166).27

So too our conception of time is inseparable from the succession of ideas in our minds and from the "particular actions and ideas that diversify the day";
hence Newton's conception of absolute time flowing uniformly must be rejected (Principles, articles, 97, 98).²⁸

Newton had also upheld absolute motion, but this too, according to Berkeley, is a hypostatized abstraction. If there were only one body in existence there could be no idea of motion, for motion is the change of position of two bodies relative to one another. Thus sensible qualities, without which there could be no bodies, are essential to the very conception of movement. Furthermore, since sensible qualities are passive existences, and hence bodies are too, movement cannot have its source in body; and as we know what it is to move our own bodies, we know that the source of motion must be found in mind. Created spirits are responsible for only a small part of the movement in the world, and therefore God, the infinite spirit, must be its prime source. "And so natural philosophy either presupposes the knowledge of God or borrows it from some superior science" (De Motu, article 34).²⁹

**Berkeley's explanation of causation**

Berkeley provided some original ideas on the subject of causation. According to him, causation in its real sense is to be discovered only in the working of the soul. The volitions of the soul have the power of causation. Berkeley has postulated that God is the creator of all the limited souls in the world. He has created the souls as well as their ideas. Berkeley concluded from this that what are called natural causes are really signs of what follows them. Nothing can be cause except (the will of) a spirit. Fire does not cause heat, but is so regularly followed by it that it is a reliable sign of it as long as "the Author of nature always operates uniformly" (Principles, article 107). He wrote: "The connection of ideas does not imply the relation of cause and effect, but only a mark or sign with the thing signified. The fire which I see is not the cause of pain I suffer upon my approaching it, but the mark that forewarns me
of it.” (Principles, Article 65) Thus Berkeley held that natural laws describe but do not explain, for real explanations must be by reference to the aims and purposes of spirits, that is, in terms of final causes. For this reason, he main-
tained that mechanical explanations of movements in terms of attraction were misleading, unless it was recognized that they merely recorded the rates at which bodies in fact approach one another (Principles, article 103). Similar ar-
guments apply to gravity or to force when these are regarded as explanations of the movements of bodies (De Motu, article 6). This is not to deny the importance of Newton’s laws, for Newton did not regard gravity “as a true physical quality, but only as a mathematical hypothesis” (De Motu, article 17). In general, explanations in terms of forces or attractions are mathematical hypotheses having no stable being in the nature of things but depending upon the definitions given to them (De Motu, article 67). Their acceptability depends upon the extent to which they enable calculations to be made, resulting in conclusions that are borne out by what in fact occurs. According to Berkeley, forces or attractions are not found in nature but are useful constructions in the formulation of theories from which deductions can be made about what is found in nature, that is, sensible qualities or ideas (De Motu, articles, 34-41).}

Berkeley himself was religious man, a man of God, and he believed that the universe can be explained best by referring to divine laws and not to natu-
ral laws. The relation of cause and effect that we find in scientific discovery is only an aspect of the real causation. Causation in material objects should not be accepted because then it becomes impossible to establish any one laws that explains the working of innumerable objects. On the other hand, if it is accepted that everything that happens in the universe occurs because of God wills it, and it is God who establishes the relations between the various souls, it becomes easier to explain the functioning of the universe. Berkeley holds that
it is wrong to state that fire creates heat, because it is more scientific to state that heat is the sign of fire. Berkeley has no objection to such statements if they are merely the expression of fact through a commonly accepted idiom. His dictum is that we should think with the philosopher but converse with the common man. It is commonly stated, for example, that the sun sets or rises. Berkeley does not object to this, even though every knowledgeable person realises that the setting and rising of the sun are mere illusions, created by the rotation of the earth on its own axis.

All causality is in God

Berkeley believes that all causality is in God. When two events are seen to occur one after the other in a particular order, the relation between the antecedent and consequent events is commonly alluded to as a causal relation. But, in fact, this relation is caused by God. In the relation between fire and heat, fire is the antecedent and heat the consequent, and this happens because God has willed that heat should occur only where there is fire. Causality subsists neither in the heat nor in the fire, for both are effects. Real causality lies only in God, who wills that fire should produce heat. We are realise the relation of causality between various objects in the universe only because God has willed that we should have such realization. Through God’s benevolence man learns the relation of causality between different objects and thus manages to direct his practical life away from pitfalls and dangers.

Necessity of the idea of God

Having accepted Locke’s distinction between the primary and secondary qualities Berkeley proceeds to demonstrate that the so called primary qualities also depend upon the mind and that nothing apart from the ideas of our minds exists in this world. If one should want to explain the existence of objects the
ideas of which do not exist in one individual’s mind or of objects which are not the subjects of this individual’s perceptions, Berkeley points out that these objects may exist as ideas in the minds of other individuals. But, it may be further pointed out, that apparently certain objects and phenomena have existed on the earth before man ever was born. How can there existence be explained? Berkeley introduces the idea of God and points out that the ideas which do not exist in any limited or finite mind, exist in the mind of God. Hence, without accepting the reality of God, conceptual theory cannot be established since such a step would lead either to solipsism or to a complete failure to explain the universe. By introducing the idea of God, Berkeley manages to escape the consequence of solipsism.

**Source of God’s knowledge**

God is the universal soul in Berkeley’s philosophy it is known in the same manner in which the other souls are known. Knowledge of other soul does not follow up perception for we deduce the existence of other souls from different kinds of experience, knowledge of souls is not perception but an awareness. In this manner, according to Berkeley, the vision of God is found in nature, for nature, in fact, is the language of God.

**Natural laws are divine laws**

God creates certain images or ideas in our minds according to certain definite and real order, this order being based on the laws of nature. These natural laws, in fact, are the laws of God’s infinite mind. Certain ideas have been related to other ideas by God Himself. The ideas of good, for example, is conjoined to the idea of nutrition, and similarly the idea of sleep is connected with the idea of revitalization. The idea of fire and the sensations of heat are related to each other. Had there been no order or system in our sensations then
we should have experienced the greatest difficulty in performing the simplest function because we should not have been able to forecast any event about to take place. Hence, God has introduced order into our sensations so that our practical life should be able to proceed smoothly. Berkeley had no difficulty in believing that the order in nature is the creation of God, for he was a religious man. Besides, the only real causality is the divine causality, and it is foolish to try to discover causal relations between any two ideas. Since we observed that the ideas of fire and heat, sleep and feeling fresh, and other such ideas are found in combination, we tend to reason that fire is the cause of heat and sleep that of feeling fresh. But the cause of heat and the cause of feeling fresh is not in fire or in sleep, respectively, but in God. Fire provides heat and sleep fresh-ness because God has willed that they should do so. It follows that everything that happens in the universe, happens because God wants it. Nothing can possibly occur should God not want it.

**Characteristics of ideas are created by God**

The ideas that exist in our mind are not the same as ideas that are placed there by God. It is for this reason that ideas generated by God are called real objects and are found to differ from the creations of our imagination and memory. Our own ideas, compared with the sensations created in our minds by God, are less ordered, less permanent and less varied and vivid. And hence, they are nothing more than shadows or representatives of real objects. God’s ideas on the other hand, are more systematic, more real and vivid. But this does not mean that sensations are distinct from ideas. They, too, are ideas and exist in the mind or soul even if they are more varied, ordered and co-ordinated than our own ideas. They, too, belong to a substance which is capable of thinking, a sentient substance which perceives them. They, too, are order and motivated by the volition of some soul. This soul is definitely equipped with
better attributes than our own soul, but nevertheless it is a soul, the supreme soul. Berkeley proves the reality of God by establishing the reality of the universe. The world is the subject of our experience and our awareness of it indicates that such a thing as a supreme soul exists, one that impresses upon our minds the ideas of the world. But, it should be noted further that Berkeley believes that it is nature which is based on the reality of God, that it is caused by God, not that God depends upon the reality of nature. Sensations are caused by God, and God never deceives. Hence our sensations provide us with accurate knowledge of the universe and by depending upon them we can perform various functions successfully.

**Realism through God**

By introducing the idea of God, Berkeley makes his philosophy realistic. Since he believes that there is nothing in the world except ideas, it is only natural to ask if the sun, stars and moon, tree and all other natural phenomena are only ideas. Berkeley points out that such things are real and not imaginary because the sensations corresponding to them are caused by God. In this sense Berkeley is even prepared to accept the reality of substance because it is God who creates the sensations of material objects in our minds. He uses the same argument to refute the objection that we eat and drink ideas. By accepting the reality of God it is possible to prove that sensations of eating, dancing and normal living are rare, and that such sensations differ from the images of memory and imagination. Hence, if it is assumed that sensations are ideas caused by God and that imagined or memory sensations are subjective, there can be no difficulty in accepting that there is nothing except idea in the world. By introducing the idea of God Berkeley makes God the substratum of the universe, instead of substance, and thereby he manage to refute both atheism and materialism. Many ideas are present in God’s mind in the form of possibilities.
Many ideas are called archetypes by Berkeley. Ideas that we possess are caused by these archetypes. During Berkeley's lifetime considerable research was done concerning the laws of gravity, and it was believed that gravity is also caused by God, it depends upon the will of God. God caused motion in the different objects in the world, causes some to evolve and others to degenerate. Hence, God is the sole cause in the world. There is nothing else that possesses the power of causation. Entire creation is the result of the volition of an intelligent and pure soul. Philosophers should concern themselves with the discovery of this proposeful intelligence and in trying to find out God's purpose in the creation of the universe.

**Synthesis of religion and science**

Berkeley's faith in God does not disclaim research and experimentation. Although religious, he supports the need for science. He is even regarded as the precursor of Mach and Einstein in physics. His works *De Motu* in devoted to physical science. Our research and experimentation can provide us with knowledge of the mutual relations between various objects found necessary for our day-to-day life, but this knowledge cannot be obtained without God's willingness. If the presence of God is not accepted, it becomes impossible to sustain logically any system in the universe. Natural laws are, in fact, divine. The importance of Berkeley lies mainly in the logical arguments which he advanced in trying to drive home his philosophical points.

**Refuting scepticism by God**

Berkeley aims at the refutation of scepticism by introducing the ideas of God. Scepticism is the outcome of atheism and natural philosophies. Berkeley points out that divine laws function in the universe at every stage. It is God's will that we should understand the laws of nature, and because God is benevo-
lent one must believe that any knowledge that be gives to man is real knowl-
edge. Hence the universe should be explained in terms of God rather than in
terms of nature and materials reality. Scepticism arises only when we try to
understand the universe in terms of natural reality. All scepticism can be elimi-
nated by accepting the existence of God.

Berkeley’s answer to scepticism is to deny that there is a gap between
experience and the world by asserting that ideas and things are the same.

**God occupies a position**

Berkeley is commonly regarded as an idealist whose system is saved from
subjectivism only by the advent of a God more violently *ex-machina* than the
God of any other philosopher.

Some critics are of the opinion, that the idea of God is introduced by
Berkeley merely to grant perfection to his theory of perception. In other words,
when Berkeley realised that idealism could not be established without bring-
ing in God, he introduced this concept. The difficulty is believed to arise from
the fact that the finite soul’s knowledge of objects outside its reach could not
be explained unless the finite soul could be proved to arise from an infinite
soul. This criticism must be denied for God is central to Berkeley’s philoso-
phy, *God is the focus of his thinking*. God is the fundamental reality in Berkeley’s
philosophy, one which must be believed in before we can proceed further. The
existence of God is beyond the sphere of doubt because He is not the object of
perception but of awareness. The question of existence can be posed only in
connection with the reality of substance. There can be little doubt that God is
the focus of Berkeley’s Philosophy, and if this idea is eliminated from his
theory the entire universe is reduced to a jumble of ideas which are not related
to each other. If God does not exist, no relation can be postulated to any two
phenomena of nature, and it is this which Berkeley wanted to demonstrate.
Relation between God and universe

Obviously, in Berkeley’s philosophy, the relation between God and universe is an intimate one. He is the creator of natural laws, the originator of the sensations that appear to us in a particular and definite order. It is He who has created the different qualities in the different objects of the world. The fact that different sensations are related to each other in this manner leads us to the false conclusion that one sensation is caused by another. In fact, God is the only cause, and it is only He who creates order in natural phenomena. Berkeley is of the opinion that the ideas created in our mind by God and real objects, are more consistent, vivid, and varied than the images of our imagination and memory. Berkeley, therefore is a realist, with the sole difference that the reality of the world is conceived to depend upon God. Looked at from this point, he appears to be engaged in an attempt at synthesising science and religion.

The great principle in vogue in Berkeley’s time was that of attraction. The word, says Berkeley, does not mean anything but the effect itself. It does not tell us anything as to the manner of the actions whereby it is produced, or the cause which produces it. Many pronounce gravitation universal: to attract and to be attracted by every other body is said to be an essential quality inherent in all bodies. There is nothing necessary or essential in gravitational attraction—it depends entirely upon the will of the Governing Spirit, who causes certain bodies to cleave together or tend towards each other, according to various laws. Hence it is vain to seek for a natural efficient cause distinct from mind or spirit. The whole creation is the workmanship of a wise and good Agent, and philosophers should concern themselves solely with the find causes of things: they should try to discover the various ends to which things are adapted, and for which they were originally contrived. There is no reason why observations
and experiments stem should not be made. “That they are of use to mankind and enable us to draw general conclusions, is not the result of any immutable habitudes or relations between things themselves, but only of God’s goodness and kindness to men in the administration of the world. By a diligent observation of phenomena within our view, we may discover the general laws of nature, and from them deduce the other phenomena; I do not say demonstrate, for all deductions of that kind depend on the supposition that the Author of Nature always operates uniformly and in a constant observance of those rules we take for principles: which we cannot evidently know” (A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, sec. 107). The rules of morality, however, which have a necessary tendency to promote the well-being of mankind, Berkeley thinks can be demonstrated, and possess the same immutable, eternal truth as the propositions of geometry.31

Physical objects have been resolved by Berkeley into ideas or sensations. Ideas or sensations, Berkeley argues, have no power activity in them. They cannot do or cause anything. In ordinary talk we speak of the fire making (causing) the kettle to boil, but since such a sequence is really a sequence of sensations — Kettle—being-put-on-the-fire sensations followed by kettle-boiling sensations — this way of speaking must be incorrect. but our sensations must have a cause. This cause can only be the will of spirit, for only a will can make anything happen. We are not the cause of that great orderly train of experiences that constitute our sensations. So there must be some other very powerful spirit who is their cause. In this way Berkeley argues from the world to God.32