

Berkeley Responds

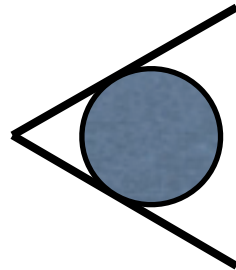
by David Barnett

Where does Descartes leave us?

The Cartesian Theatre

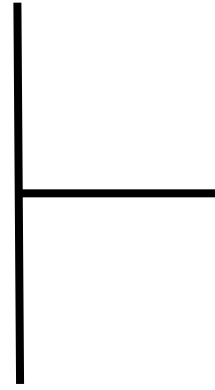
The Private World

Sensations
Thoughts
Emotions
Seemings



The External World

Chairs
Food
Planets
Other People



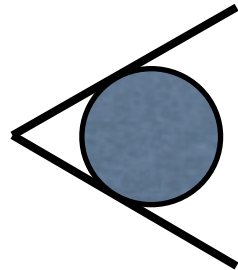
Two Commonsense Claims

1. In normal visual and tactile experience, we are directly aware of physical objects.
2. The existence of physical objects does not depend on being perceived.

The Cartesian Theatre

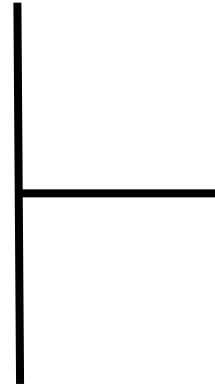
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Berkeley's Idealism

Berkeley's Arguments for Idealism

1. Argument from perceptual relativity
2. Argument from common sense

I. Argument from perceptual relativity

- Locke's primary/secondary distinction:
 - Primary qualities:
 - shape, hardness, mass, size
 - Secondary qualities:
 - color, taste, smell, sound

2. Argument from commonsense

1. It is impossible to conceive of an unconceived object.
2. Therefore, unconceived objects are impossible.
3. Therefore, physical objects cannot exist unconceived.

What's wrong with the argument from common sense?

- Berkeley:
 - It's impossible to conceive of an unconceived object.
- Analogy:
 - It's impossible to draw an undrawn object.
- Ambiguous:
 - ✓ 1. It's impossible for there to be an object that is both drawn and not drawn.
 - ✗ 2. It's impossible for there to be a drawing which depicts an undrawn object.

What's wrong with the argument from common sense?

- Berkeley:
 - It's impossible to conceive of an unconceived object.
- Ambiguous:
 - ✓ 1. It's impossible for there to be an object that is both conceived and not conceived.
 - ✗ 2. It's impossible for there to be a conception depicting an unconceived object.

2. Argument from commonsense

1. It is impossible to conceive of an unconceived object.
2. Therefore, unconceived objects are impossible.
3. Therefore, physical objects cannot exist unconceived.

If Premise 1 means 'It is impossible for there to be an object that is both conceived and unconceived', then it is true, but the argument is invalid.

If Premise 1 means 'It is impossible for there to be a conception depicting an unconceived object', then it is false.

Either way, the argument is unsound.