



## Berkeley and Sensible Things

### Berkeley dan Objek-objek Inderawi

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to re-reading Berkeley and reposition his philosophy of knowledge between the claims of adherents of idealism or immaterialism that so far have been labeled by interpreters. In other words, the label as an adherent of idealism or immaterialism is not a position stated by Berkeley himself, but the result of interpreters reading the consequences of Berkeley's philosophy of knowledge. Those who called Berkeley an idealist included: Georges Dickers, Robert G. Meyers and Robert J. Fogelin. His assumption, citing Dickers, branded Berkeley as an idealist because of Berkeley's view that there are only ideas and thoughts rather than physical objects. Meanwhile, those who label Berkeley as adherents of immaterialism include: I.C. Tipton, David Berman. His assumption cites Berman that Berkeley's labeling of immaterialism is hypothetical and a consequence of his philosophical views. This study uses a descriptive method, where relevant texts are collected first as research objects, which the writer then describes as variables. The status variable itself has no influence or relationship or correlation with other variables. The findings of this study are that both interpreting Berkeley as immaterialist and idealist are related to Berkeley's rejection of religious skepticism. In addition, labeling as an immaterialist or idealist comes from the interpretation of Berkeley's scholar on the consequences of Berkeley's rejection of physical objects that are independent of the subject's mind.*

**Keywords:** Sensible Things; Experience; Ideas.

**Abstrak:** *Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk membaca ulang Berkeley dan mendudukan kembali posisi filsafat pengetahuannya antara klaim sebagai penganut idealisme atau immaterialisme yang telah dilabeli oleh para penafsir. Dengan kata lain, label sebagai seorang penganut idealisme maupun penganut immaterialisme bukanlah posisi yang Berkeley nyatakan sendiri melainkan hasil pembacaan para penafsir atas konsekuensi dari filsafat pengetahuan Berkeley. Bagi yang melabeli Berkeley sebagai penganut idealisme di antaranya: Georges Dickers, Robert G. Meyers maupun Robert J. Fogelin. Asumsinya mengutip Dickers, pelabelan Berkeley sebagai seorang idealis karena pandangan Berkeley yang menegaskan bahwa apa yang eksis hanya ide-ide dan pikiran semata ketimbang objek fisik. Sedangkan bagi yang melabeli Berkeley sebagai penganut immaterialisme antara lain: I.C. Tipton, David Berman. Asumsinya mengutip Berman bahwa pelabelan Berkeley sebagai immaterialisme berdasarkan hipotesis maupun dari konsekuensi pandangan filosofisnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif yaitu mula-mula, teks yang relevan dikumpulkan sebagai objek penelitian yang kemudian penulis gambarkan sebagai suatu variabel. Status variabel itu sendiri tanpa ada pengaruh atau hubungan maupun korelasi terhadap variabel lainnya. Adapun temuan dari penelitian ini yaitu bahwa baik menafsirkan Berkeley sebagai penganut immaterialis maupun idealis berkaitan dengan penolakan Berkeley terhadap sikap skeptisisme dalam beragama. Selain itu, pelabelan sebagai seorang immaterialis maupun idealis berasal dari penafsiran para peneliti atau sarjana Berkeley atas konsekuensi dari penolakan Berkeley terhadap objek fisik yang mandiri dari pikiran subjek.*

**Kata Kunci:** Objek-objek inderawi; Pengalaman; Ide-ide.

## Introduction

Regarding the core issue of Berkeley regarding the relationship between the perceiving subject and the perceived object, at least two views emerge, namely those who position Berkeley as an immaterialist and those who position Berkeley as an idealist. In short, immaterialism is a doctrine which asserts that there are no material entities or external realities (the outside world) but only the soul (spirit) and the ideas or sensations it acquires.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in a nutshell, idealism is a view which states that the mind is the basis for most of reality and that the physical world exists only as an appearance or expression of the mind. Or in other words, mental entities are part of the inner essence itself.<sup>2</sup> In other words, both immaterialism and idealism both affirm that ideas or thoughts and material objects are two related and inseparable entities. In addition, it is implied that the two views that what is real and exists is the mind, while physical reality completely depends on the mind.

For groups that position Berkeley as an immaterialist, quoting Berman, Berkeley's acceptance as an immaterialist is something interesting and can be traced that has escaped the attention of Berkeley scholars (Berkeley Scholar). Labeling Berkeley as an immaterialist is also the result of a common reading that is directly linked to the view that Berkeley rejects matter and automatically embraces it. This labeling

peaked when Arthur Collier's essay entitled *Calvis Universalis* in 1713 was quite famous, adapting Berkeley's writings in *Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713). According to Berman, Collier adapted from the discussion of the essay on *Clavis and Touchstone* in which the proportions of the essay are similar to those of Berkeley's with paraphrases but without mentioning that it belongs to Berkeley.<sup>3</sup> The result of Berman's investigation is that labeling as an immaterialist is indirectly given to Berkeley's thoughts through Collier's essay which denies the existence of matter. In other words, in my opinion, labeling as an idealist is a dual-oriented conclusion. On the one hand, this labeling leads to views in Collier's essays that deny the existence of matter, but on the other hand, this labeling also has an impact on philosophers who have similar thoughts in terms of rejecting the existence of matter.

As for groups that position Berkeley as an idealist, quoting Dicker, they sometimes also refer to him as a subjective idealist or Berkeley idealism as a form of differentiation from other idealisms. For example, Kant's transcendental idealism and Hegel's absolute idealism. In other words, the term idealism by attaching it to Berkeley is the result of the interpretation of Berkeley scholars who affirm that Berkeley only recognizes existing ideas and thoughts rather than matter. The view that Berkeley adopts an idealistic view because Berkeley's position makes the spirit or mind as something independent in which physical materials or objects depend on it. More explicitly, Berkeley asserted that there is no substance other than the spirit (*spirit*) or the perceiving person. The independence of the subject and the dependence of objects is the subject of Berkeley's discussion in terms of rejecting Locke's representationalism view. Berkeley's denial was also an attempt to assert that both in terms of sensory qualities as primary qualities, it is entirely the ideas or sensations in the mind that form the foundation of his philosophy. Or according to Dicker, Berkeley's denial of the existence of physical objects can be called the argument from the principle of perception directly as part of the form of the idealism argument or the argument from the egocentric predicament.<sup>4</sup>

Both groups who position Berkeley as an immaterialist and those who position him as an idealist are the two perspectives they take as an effort to position Berkeley's philosophy. In addition, both groups are also Berkeley scholars which means that there is another interest in positioning their reading of Berkeley philosophy. In other words, these two interests, namely to position Berkeley's philosophy and to position Berkeley's reading or scholars themselves, are the important focus of this research. The aim or focus of this research becomes urgent when it is collided with various readings from Berkeley interpreters and references from the original text itself which seem to be a separate dynamic for Berkeley's reading of philosophy. It is examining and tracing these dynamics that will lead to the reasons of Berkeley scholars to

interpret both as an immaterialist and as an idealist. Because by knowing the reasons and arguments for reading a philosopher that he is like this and that is an effort to dialogue on the development of the study of the philosophical text itself. There are several objectives, including: so that the study of philosophical texts is not monotonous and stagnant, in order to encourage the study of philosophy in the direction of discourse that is connected with the latest readings, as well as, to provide various ways of interpretation as an effort to uncover various possibilities of the philosopher's intentions implicit in the texts.

### **The intersection between Rationalism and Empiricism**

Before the emergence of empiricism, the dominating understanding was rationalism which presupposed that there were clear and segregated innate ideas in the mind a priori without going through a process of experience. Descartes was a philosopher who affirmed the view that innate ideas are something clear and sorted out in the mind rather than sensations. Therefore, it is necessary to separate innate ideas, adventitious ideas and ideas made by the mind. For example, when you hear the sound of a car horn, the sound of a water engine, you feel the heat of a fire, they are part of the sensations that come from objects outside yourself and are not something that comes from your own nature.<sup>5</sup> In other words, in my opinion, innate ideas must come from within that are clear and separated from other ideas that come from outside as non-innate. This means that it is necessary to emphasize that of all the forms of ideas that arise in the mind, it is as if a process of filtering is needed which ones are innately clear and segregated and which ideas are not innate, blurred and mixed.

Meanwhile, the understanding that is "opposite" in principle from the philosophical claims of rationalism is the understanding of empiricism whose pioneer was John Locke. According to empiricism, ideas that are considered as innate by Descartes are none other than sensory experience through sensation and perception. Or as Locke puts it:

*"All ideas come from sensation or reflection. Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: - how comes it to be furnished? ... To this I answer, in one word, from experience."*<sup>6</sup>

In other words, it is through experience that knowledge gains its foundation so that certain ideas in the mind can be known clearly and segregated. This is contrary to Descartes that clear and segregated ideas must come from the mind as innate. For Locke, sensory perception has an important role, namely as the internal operations of the mind or as material for the mind to supply an understanding. More explicitly, knowledge is not innate but perceptive, namely through sensory perception, experience and sensation.

Both rationalism and empiricism are part of the philosophy of knowledge (*epistemology*) which has certain characteristics, namely the characteristics of the modern era. As is commonly known that Descartes is the father of Modern philosophy as well as “breaking” the previous philosophical tradition to follow the path and find the first philosophy that he was looking for. It was this first philosophy that he later claimed was a philosophical discovery that departed from certain cogito and intuition so as to get clear and segregated innate ideas in the mind. Descartes began to philosophize by asserting a methodical quest that he did not have a clear idea of the initial judgment about what was wrong and what was right. In addition, Descartes also does not offer a particular theory of truth, nor does he even offer a general difference between right and wrong judgments. According to Harry Frankfurt, Descartes in his First Meditation begins his philosophical questions without presupposing that he has general criteria of truth and falsity.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper, I will try to elaborate on the issue of the role of perception as a principle for knowledge according to George Berkeley who is an Irish-born philosopher who supports empiricism. Berkeley’s point of departure is to respond to Locke’s view that secondary qualities regarding color, sound, smell and so on can vary according to the state of the perceiving subject. In short, quoting Stroud, Locke held that secondary ideas or qualities about things resemble nothing in the objects themselves. Right at that position, Berkeley made a clear response or objection that perception is a fact that is relative to primary qualities. In other words, Berkeley asserted that primary qualities resemble nothing in the object and so, there are only primary and secondary qualities in the mind. Although on the other hand, there are groups that reject Berkeley’s criticism of Locke and emphasize that Berkeley’s efforts are in principle not directly aimed at the views that Locke actually holds.<sup>8</sup>

According to Mayers, there are two pressing issues that arise from the understanding of rationalism and empiricism, namely first, the justification of what is believed (justification of our belief) and secondly regarding the origins of the concepts. Regarding the origin of concepts, for example in Descartes who believes that there are ideas and knowledge that are innate which are therefore not based on experience. On the other hand, Locke argues that all ideas and knowledge are acquired through experience. In other words, the question of the origin of concepts and beliefs is psychological. Meanwhile, the justification of what is believed is related to the type of evidence needed to guarantee the proposition which is part of the epistemic question. Furthermore, the justification of a justified true belief does not have to be innate to justify it a priori. Justification and true belief in this context is a concept obtained through experience and involves the use of certain language. Although in some cases, there are also beliefs that can be justified a priori.<sup>9</sup> For example, beliefs about God, concepts in religion that can be traced through certain experiential

processes, both mystical and formal in nature. In other words, experience refers to certain concepts and objects of experience which reaffirm that there are certain ideas in the mind that justify these a priori concepts.

Even though through experience it seems clear and valid about the data that is conceptualized in the mind on external reality, however, there are still clear errors. For example, the concept of something that does not exist based on sensory experience which is then accepted as a priori knowledge. Therefore, in this context, quoting Meyers, an empiricist is unable to distinguish between the concepts of “exist” and “subsist”, so that it seems to equate the two. Or even further, there is a jumping point process that “hits” the boundaries of the empirical rules themselves which are based on sensory experience as a fundamental principle in the flow of empiricism. The impression that then arises from this “violation” is that the adherents of the empiricist school are not consistent with the fundamental principles of what they promote. For example, Russell criticized the concept of God that Locke and Berkeley accepted as a priori knowledge whose arguments were full of ambiguity. The reason is because both Locke and Berkeley provide the notion that existence includes physical and non-physical objects that exist in space and time. While on the other hand, the concept of livelihood (subsistence) includes abstract entities such as the physical world and its relationships so that. In other words, according to Russell, it becomes unclear how Locke and Berkeley put God who is neither spatial nor abstract.

The inconsistency of Locke and Berkeley as adherents of empiricism lies in the use of their own fundamental principles as the basis of these schools. The inconsistency increases when the two of them also do not distinguish between empirical justification and logical justification, both of which lead to clear consequences, namely between the a priori and the posteriori. In the context of a subsistence entity, even though it does not exist in the scope of the senses, Locke and Berkeley consider it to have an existence apart from thought. This situation has the impression that regarding the subsistence matter, the mind owns it a priori and its existence is detached from thoughts or sensory perception so that it becomes knowledge.<sup>10</sup> In my opinion, who is the emphasis here, both Locke and Berkeley imply that although both of them are empiricists, on the other hand, they do not seem to ignore the principle of ratios. Locke’s discussion of God is that knowledge and knowledge are available through the mind even though it is not innate because it is related to existence and self-happiness to know Him. Therefore, knowledge of God is the clearest truth found by reason as well as mathematical certainty which is correlated with deductive and intuitive methods in the form of a proposition.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to Descartes, who made God the epistemic guarantor of his method of doubt, leading to the cogito authority to obtain clear and distinct of innate ideas.

## Berkeley and Philosophy

In the introduction to Berkeley's writings in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (TCPHN), he begins by placing the position of philosophy as the study of wisdom and truth (The Study of Wisdom and Truth). With that emphasis, Berkeley emphasized that for someone who chooses the path of philosophy tends to spend a lot of time and pain to get peace, clarity and evidence of greater knowledge. The tendency towards the path of philosophy actually makes one not bothered by doubts and difficulties to understand compared to other people who prefer "ordinariness" which relies on the role of common sense alone. Furthermore, ordinary people will follow or be more regulated by nature's dictates (dictates of nature) so that they are not disturbed deeper into fundamental issues because they are foreign and difficult to understand. In other words, ordinary people do not complain about the lack of evidence of their senses and do not try to escape all the dangers of skepticism.

By tracing the path of philosophy through the process of reasoning, meditating and contemplating the nature of things, then it does not make philosophers find peace over the sensory objects they already know so that doubts arise. The emergence of these doubts is even worse about things that were previously considered fully understood. According to Berkeley, prejudices and errors of the senses occur from every exploration of these senses which then become part of the way of looking at objects. This mistake then led to confusion and inconsistency that arose when starting to speculate so that he was "stranded" in a complicated maze. This situation, according to Berkeley, is being faced by seekers of wisdom and truth, or it is precisely this situation that makes a person choose a skeptical path.<sup>12</sup> According to the author, an important point that needs to be made clear is that one of Berkeley's challenges in philosophizing is to avoid understanding knowledge skepticism which always fails to understand physical objects.

The ambition to philosophize is motivated by human curiosity as a natural instinct, but with a wide range of objects of understanding, which in turn creates absurdity. In other words, responding to these conditions, Berkeley positioned that the human mind has limitations along with its scope for the object that is thought of so that the nature of infinite cannot possibly be understood by the finite (the nature of infinite not to be comprehended by that which is finite). Thus, Berkeley's philosophical position is to affirm that knowledge must depart from things that are sensory so that, Berkeley asserts allegorically:

*"We have first raised a dust and then complain we cannot see"*

From this philosophical position, Berkeley reiterated that his goal in philosophizing is to try to find principles for empirical knowledge to get rid of the doubts and

uncertainties, absurdities and contradictions that arise from various philosophical sects. The condition at that time caused many skepticisms to emerge which considered that ignorance could not be cured, arising from the nature of ignorance and the limitations of the faculties within oneself.

Regarding matter as sensible objects, it is closely related to issues of perception (perceived things) involving sensory organs such as the perception of sight and touch with issues of experience (experience things). Berkeley rejected the view that sense objects are divided into two. First, sensory objects that are separated from the mind (mind-independent) are perceived indirectly (mediated perception), namely in the form of primary qualities. Second, sensory objects that depend on the subject's mind (mind-dependent) which are perceived directly (immediate perception), namely in the form of secondary qualities. According to Berkeley, ideas that are considered attached to objects and independent of the reach of the mind are part of a secondary quality and depend on the mind of the subject. Or as it says in the dialogue between Hylas and Philonous:

*“Pardon me, Hylas, if I am desirous clearly to apprehend your notions, since this may much shorten our inquiry. Suffer me then to ask you this further question. Are those things only perceived by the sense which are perceived immediately? Or may those things properly be said to be “sensible” which perceived mediately, or not without the intervention of others?”<sup>3</sup>*

In other words, sensible things according to Berkeley are a form of perceiving directly both in relation to objects outside oneself and those relating to the perceiving subject. Therefore, Berkeley then reiterated that all sense objects are only what is directly perceived by the senses.<sup>14</sup> That is, knowing the objects of the senses means trying to perceive all the qualities both primary and secondary directly so that the mind can understand them.

In the 9th sub-discussion on “Philosophical Understanding of Material Causing Contradictions” in “(TCPHN)”, Berkeley begins to anonymously criticize the views of philosophers who distinguish between primary qualities and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are areas, motion, shape, silence, solid and numbers that refer to objects. while secondary qualities such as color, sound, taste and so on refer to the subject. Furthermore, these ideas about secondary qualities are not based on the likeness of anything that exists without thought or without perception. However, ideas about primary qualities actually become certain patterns or images of things that exist without thought and are unthinking substances known as “matter”. Hence, perceiving matter as an inert (untouchable) substance and as an insensible substance. Matter as substance is the realm of primary qualities believed to be in objects precisely for Berkeley, all of which are conclusively proven as ideas in the mind. According to Berkeley, an idea cannot resemble anything other than itself (object etc.) unless it becomes other ideas (immaterial) so that consequently, these ideas cannot



exist in a substance that cannot be perceived. In other words, it becomes clear that the idea of what is called “Material” or Corporeal Substance actually creates contradictions in it.<sup>15</sup>

In line with that, the Berkeley project also in “(TCPHN)” is to investigate the First Principles for Human Knowledge which filter and examine knowledge from all sides to find the truth.<sup>16</sup> Knowledge is closely related to language or certain abstract notions about something in the mind which makes these abstract ideas seem to be the center of philosophers’ struggles. Furthermore, these abstract ideas are considered as something that is “familiar” in the mind. Something abstract is sometimes obtained through a process of abstraction in which the qualities of something never really exist and separate themselves from the others but merge and seem to mix together with some of the same objects. But on the other hand, the mind is also capable of considering each quality singly or abstracted from other qualities put together by which it is framed into abstract ideas. For example, the eye perceives the vision of a table as an object that is expansive, brown in color and can be shifted (movable/motion) which becomes a mixed or compound idea (complex ideas).

The mixed ideas (complex ideas) are then broken up by the mind into several parts which are arranged simply and referred to separately so that the abstract ideas regarding expansion, color and motion are composed in a single way. For Berkeley, this does not mean that it is conceivable that color and motion exist without their extension (breadth), but only by supposing that thought can carry out the process of abstraction. This abstraction process will later separate the idea of color from its breadth, the idea of expansion and motion which is not included in color and motion so that it becomes an abstract idea.<sup>17</sup> Or in short according to Berkeley, language is the source or origin of general ideas or the origin of abstract general ideas because of two double errors. First, that each word has only one meaning and second, that the sole purpose of language is to communicate ideas to one another. Communication of ideas marked by words is not an end in itself but can also serve as an arousal, inhibit an action or to put the mind in a certain disposition.<sup>18</sup>

General abstract words as part of ideas for Berkeley, relate to words that appear as ideas related to emotions where the names refer to certain ideas. For example, when a person experiences a frightening and shocking event, at that moment certain words appear in his mind which are driven by the emotion earlier. In addition, general names are often used in communication without the aim of marking the idea in the minds of the interlocutors. For example, when talking about a philosopher and connecting it with a particular study concept in ethics, the other person can give a respectful response or even reject it. The concept of honoring or insulting as common names is certainly not uttered by the speaker and is not a direct goal to be embedded in the listener’s head. In other words, there is a close and direct

relationship between words and other concepts (respect and contempt) in the process of communicating with the interlocutor (meaning).<sup>19</sup>

### **Berkeley, Perception and Objects of Human Knowledge**

According to Berkeley, objects of human knowledge are ideas imprinted on the senses or as perceived by following passion and work of the mind or ideas formed with the help of memory and imagination.<sup>20</sup> From the various ideas obtained through observation of the various senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch) which are then marked as a name and as an object. The color is green, has a sweet taste, is round in shape and the texture is not too hard, and when bitten it makes a crunchy sound. If all of these ideas are observed simultaneously so that they are different from one another and aggregated into one idea, then it can be named as Malang Apple. Malang apples as an idea that is named can also be referred to as sensible things that can be pleasant or unpleasant, generate impulses of love, hatred, joy, sadness and so on. Once again, objects of knowledge are ideas that are closely related to the activities of the mind –spirit– soul so that they can be known and also because of perceiving them. Mind or perception activity to produce ideas can be in the form of willing, imagination, and recalling these ideas.

The act of perception is then said by Berkeley as Mind, Spirit, Soul or Self which of the four words Berkeley does not designate “a person” but something different from ideas. Ideas are therefore something that exists that resembles a perceived object which reaffirms that the existence of an idea arises because of the act of perception.<sup>21</sup> Quoting Fogelin, something exists for Berkeley because it is perceived, even when the person does not perceive it, these objects still exist because others perceive it. Even a universe that is not perceived does not “contain” anything or even, the absence of a universe is better than no human being who perceives the universe. Furthermore, Fogelin clarifies the fundamental errors associated with Berkeley so that there are two important differences. First, the claim that something exists because someone perceives it (*to be is to be a perceiver*) with the claim that something exists because it is perceived (*to be is to be perceived*).<sup>22</sup>

Besides quoting Fogelin, the fundamental part of the active universe exists for those who think, perceive, imagine, remember and so on which refers to the activity of Spirit, Soul or Mind. In other words, everything that is thought can exist only in the mind or the person who perceives which argument is truly in accordance with common sense. The thought that an object is going out of existence thus allowing the mind to wander elsewhere becomes less relevant. Berkeley’s philosophical position is therefore driven by three fundamental ontological commitments, first, related to the status of qualities that form the object that is perceived and leads to the notion of “idealism”. Second, related to the status of the object itself and its various

particularities which are sometimes referred to as nominalism. Third, namely a strong commitment to theism. According to Fogelin, the third position is not strong enough to support or adequately supported by Berkeley's commitment to idealism and particularism so that his argument is more theological in nature (regarding the evidence for the existence of God).

In his treatise on *the theory of vision*, Berkeley advanced the view that it is important to consider the distance and location of objects and to consider the difference between the idea of seeing and the idea of touch as a principle of the work of optics. According to Berkeley, "distance" plays an important role because it relates to perception directly with sight (a certain viewing distance). Distance is a line that is directed directly and becomes the boundary coverage for the eye to see it so that vision occurs, namely a certain viewing distance (horizon). The horizon or line of sight is a fixed point which is always the same with regard to whether the distance is longer or shorter. In short, according to Berkeley, object distance is no longer directly related to the sense of sight alone, but also related to experience. For example, when you perceive houses, mountains, fields, rivers and so on, you experience them as places that take up quite a lot of space. Because it takes up enough space, it can be concluded that the objects seen (outside their true nature) are very far away.

Still regarding the distance of the object, when the object looks so faint and small which has been experienced before from a fairly close distance, it actually makes the appearance of the object become strong and large which leads to the conclusion that the object is far away. Once again, according to Berkeley regarding distance, views and objects, the ideas generated come from experience rather than relying solely on the sense of sight. Therefore, without experience, large and small sizes as an idea cannot be known conclusively so that the distance of an object is an important part of the experience itself. In other words when talking about distance, experience generates ideas indirectly while the sense of sight gives ideas directly. The assumption is that, based on the working principle of the eye, the closer the direct light falls on the eye, the farther the point of intersection will be. This condition is in line with the view that when the mind perceives various ideas indirectly, it requires several other ideas. For example, when someone is emotional while giving a speech, the appearance of a red face appears, where the emotion in the mind as an idea is certainly not visible, but the red color on the face as a face is certainly visible.

Thus, according to Berkeley, there are no unperceived ideas that belong to the perceiver as a means of understanding other ideas either based on objects or originating from within (secondary). Returning to the example of the person making an emotional speech, the blushing face shows that there is a desire as an idea in his mind (which was initiated by self-ideas about that person).<sup>23</sup> In a different place according to Berkeley, the beauty of sense objects is only when perceiving them using sight.

However, the beauty of a physical object is not maximized if it is not followed by its function or use and compares its shape with other different uses. In other words, the idea of beauty is not simply generated by the eyes or sight alone, but rather, the idea is also generated by the experience of comparing it with other physical objects. From this assertion, Berkeley wants to distinguish between the act of seeing a physical object by using the senses and other actions that come from experience to distinguish it from other beauties.<sup>24</sup>

As confirmation in my opinion, that objects of natural beauty in the form of natural, large, reassuring mountain views can be distinguished into beauty based on the sense of sight or based on experience involving other senses. Based on the sense of sight, the mountains just now look so close, big and “neat” so that it leads to multiple ideas about the beauty of the mountains. However, based on experience involving other senses, these mountains are far away and need to be accessed with serious effort so that when you have climbed it, you lose the idea of big and “neat”. The reason is based on experience, no longer seeing mountains as objects but as part of the journey process. In addition, it turns out that the mountain consists of an uneven ground surface, an arrangement of trees of varying order, so that the appearance and the process of experiencing it become two different things. In other words, when the object of beauty is zoomed out, it will look so solid that it is composed of single simple ideas. Meanwhile, when a beauty object is zoomed in, it will actually look more complex, which is composed of multiple ideas. Hence, the object of beauty according to the appearance can be investigated in parts through experience to find the same ideas from what is given by the sense of sight.

In *An Essay the New Theory of Vision*, Berkeley elaborates on two distinct ideas that contradict one another. First, ideas generated from the perception of the sense of sight, namely regarding the distance, size and condition or quality of objects. Second, the idea generated from the perception of touch is about the size and condition or quality of the object as well. According to the researchers, the difference between visual perception and touch perception is that visual perception refers to the appearance of objects while tactile perception refers to the condition of objects as reality. Hence, following Berkeley, it is necessary to consider common ideas that bridge the gap between the ideas of sight and touch. Because if not, there will be consequences such as: misleading colors, object illusions. For example, looking at the roof of a room that is illuminated by lights, causes the color of some of the roof to appear partly bright due to the light shining on it and partly appearing dark because it is not illuminated by the light. Meanwhile, when looking at a tree trunk from a distance, it appears as an object that has an even color with a smooth surface so that, when perceived by touch, the color of the tree trunk is uneven and the surface is wavy.

What bridges different perceptions from both the sense of sight and the sense of touch which leads to the magnitude of the object and the quality of the object is experience. Regarding the quality of the size of the object is also very influential on the distance that on one side, objects look big with the closest distance, while on the other hand, objects look small with the furthest distance. According to Berkeley, this condition is the same as seeing the color red or the look on someone's face which, by sense, is only limited to observing such things. However, the correlation with the idea of shame or anger is through the experience of interaction with various conditions of such a person. In other words, what was sensed from the flushed face and the change in facial expressions was not enough to give any reason to the ratio without experience.<sup>25</sup> In my opinion, Berkeley reiterated his position as an empiricist who is consistent with the experiential method, namely that the perception of each sense must be justified through experience. That is, what is perceived from the senses as a perception needs to be correlated with experience to get ideas about the appearance. In other words, the locus of the production of ideas is through experience based on the use of the senses which is then known as a process of sensation or perception.

### **Berkeley's philosophical position on Sensible Things**

Regarding the position of Berkeley's philosophy, at least the commentators have attempted to group it into two, namely Berkeley as an adherent of idealism and Berkeley as an adherent of immaterialism. According to Fogelin, Berkeley's assumption adheres to idealism in general, namely that he has certain high moral standards and has a commitment to certain standards of purpose. But philosophically, the word idealism actually implies a rejection of real things which Berkeley doubts that this understanding adheres to. Instead of Berkeley as an adherent of idealism, other commentators prefer to call him an adherent of immaterialism. For example, Luce, whose title of his comments on Berkeley's writings was given the title "Berkeley's Immaterialism" aimed at defending Berkeley from Samuel Johnson's criticism. Furthermore, still quoting Fogelin, Luce insists that he took the courage to deny that Berkeley was an idealist.<sup>26</sup>

Dicker actually did the opposite by making Berkeley explicit as an idealist in his work entitled: "Berkeley's Idealism" which refers to Berkeley's view of the principles of human knowledge. The assumption is that objects that are perceived using the senses are just ideas (not the object). This understanding is in line with Locke's perception of representationalism which asserts that ideas function as representations of material things based on similarities to the primary qualities of the material. If this is true, that is, there are similarities between ideas and material qualities, according to Dicker, then Berkeley's view is wrong.<sup>27</sup> Dicker continued, Berkeley also emphasized that there may be things that exist without thought in unthinkable substance.

However, Berkeley chose that an idea could be just an idea, for example, the idea of color or shape could be nothing but mere color and shape.

In Berkeley's view, if you see an object but never enter into your mind, it becomes impossible to accept it as a likeness except as an idea. On the other hand, Berkeley is also of the view that ideas or qualities that are considered to be found in external (primary) objects are original so that they can be "visible" whereas, ideas or qualities secondary are not "visible". Berkeley's objection was reiterated that it is impossible to say that secondary qualities such as color are as invisible as hard or soft as intangible. According to Dicker, explicitly this problem can be resolved by first understanding that in truth, an idea can only resemble an idea (quality only exists within oneself). Moreover, something that is perceptible cannot resemble something that is not perceptible which, both refer to Berkeley's assertion:

*But how can that which sensible be like that which is insensible? Can a real thing in itself invisible be like a color; or a real thing which is not audible, be like a sound? In a word, can anything be like a sensation or idea, but another sensation or idea?*<sup>28</sup>

In the book *History of Western Philosophy*, regarding material, Russell portrays that Berkeley, who represents the Philonous character, emphasizes that he does not deny objects or sensory matter. According to Russell, in his work *The Dialogues of Hylas and Philonous*, Berkeley wanted to prove that all reality is a mental phenomenon so that what is seen from matter is its non-object qualities, whose properties depend on the observer who sees it (perceiver). In addition, Berkeley also does not deny physical objects, namely what is directly perceived by the senses, but what he denies is the cause of the existence of these physical objects. For example, not seeing the cause of the color of an object or the sound of an object (the cause of sensation) so that the senses do not make any conclusions. In other words, through sight, one can perceive only light, color and form; through hearing, perceiving only sound and so on. The consequence then arises that, apart from the qualities of sensory objects, there is no object that can be sensed or a collection of sensory qualities.<sup>29</sup>

Berkeley is one of the philosophers who believes that the reality of physical objects exists when they are perceived so that perception and the existence of the object are the same thing. For example, evening clouds that are "reddish" in color are actually not that color, looking at objects using a microscope, of course, the results are different from using the naked eye. Berkeley further asserts that the qualities that are primary also become part of the secondary qualities through a (relative) experience. For example, the weight of an object will of course be of a different quality for each person who lifts it, the size of an object will also be different along with the difference in the viewing distance and quality of vision. Likewise with motion, for someone, the swing back and forth can be fast while for others, the swing can also mean slow.

By separating objects with sensations where each of them has two different qualities, for Berkeley, creates a contradiction. The reason is that, ideas (primary qualities) cannot be outside the scope of the comprehending mind or there cannot be independent (incomprehensible) ideas outside the self.

Therefore, Berkeley adheres to the notion that what is perceived from objects directly are ideas, thereby reaffirming that the existence of objects and subjects who perceive them are one and the same thing. According to Russell, mental sense data (*sense datum*) is supported by Berkeley with a detailed examination of the various roles of the senses so that sensations are positioned in the mind. In short, sensations and sensory objects for Berkeley are mental in nature which are not only obtained through the senses but experience.<sup>30</sup> There is criticism of Berkeley's view of "mental", which is concerned with the experience within oneself with the object being experienced. Therefore, the experience of someone who sees a blue bottle is related to awareness as a subject that exists with the bottle itself, where awareness must only relate to the subject. The subject-object relation is thus generated through constant and variable elements, namely the essential awareness which connects the observer and the observed simultaneously. Therefore, knowledge as ideas (mental in nature) is not related to self-awareness so that it cannot go beyond the subject-object relational experience.<sup>31</sup>

Subject-object relations can at least be broken down as follows: First, ideas are imprinted on and originate from the senses. Second, objects that are perceived by taking into account the passion that is experienced which concentrates on how the mind works. Finally, ideas are also formed by the help of memory and imagination either unite, combine sensory data or share it and even reproduce it through memory. From the descriptions above, it is at least doubtful (a skeptical attitude) that the existence of material existence is back, giving rise to disputes and controversies in the realm of philosophy. For a materialist, external physical objects are incorruptible whereas for an idealist, it is the qualities of the object that are incorruptible. The consequence for a materialist is that physical objects that are considered as material are real things so they tend to believe in the senses and their references (material objects). For an empiricist, the power of sensation becomes important to get ideas so as to avoid doubts about matter. Such a philosophical view believes that simple ideas are received through two senses, namely the sense of sight and the sense of touch. Meanwhile, compound ideas are received through more than the two senses, such as ideas about space or expansion, shape, silence or motion. That is, partial sensory objects become impressions that can be perceived both by the eye and by touch that a person can receive and convey to the mind so that they become abstract ideas.<sup>32</sup> The process of forming ideas is implied through the process by which

physical objects are captured through the senses, then conveyed to the mind in the form of ideas, then manifested into words.

I also agree that the source for ideas comes from two sources, namely sensation and reflection. Sensation is the direct contact of the senses with objects while reflection is the direct contact of the mind with the ideas that are collected in the mind. In other word, for an empiricist, the power of sensation becomes important to get ideas so as to avoid doubts about matter.<sup>33</sup> But on the other hand, I also disagree with the notion that material that is unquestionable is independent of the mind that understands it. In this kind of my statement, my position is more in favor of Berkeley's view in general that there is no material apart from the mind of someone who thinks about it (*mind independent think*). There is something interesting that in the early writings on "*Treatise of Human Knowledge*", in my opinion, Berkeley claimed that the assumption that there is matter apart from the mind is a form of skepticism:

*"What I here make public has, after a long and scrupulous inquiry, seemed to me evidently, true and not unuseful to be known—particularly to those who are tainted with skepticism..."*<sup>34</sup>

*"They complain not of any want of evidence in their senses, and are out of all danger of becoming sceptics"*.<sup>35</sup>

But on the other hand, skepticism is also aimed at those who deny the existence of matter that exists and is independent of thought. Portraits of mutual accusations regarding whose philosophical attitude is skeptical, can be traced by outlining their assumptions and arguments. Those who support that matter is separate from mind (subject) give rise to two different qualities as well.

In my opinion, the assumption is that mind entities and body or material entities are different because both have different characteristics. Mind (subject) covers as far as it relates to the senses and experience, while matter has a scope that includes the material world (motion, area, rest, form). Mind, senses and experience are instruments related to the subject while motion, area, silence and form are entities that exist independently of themselves (in itself). Therefore, there are two substantial differences, namely the difference in so far as it relates to the mind (subject) and something as far as it relates to physical objects as external objects for the mind. While the arguments to strengthen the two differences between mind and matter are as follows. The mind, senses and experience are instruments that are very important for a person as a horizon that bridges between the self (thoughts, senses and experience) and the world (external object). If one of the senses does not function properly or his mind is disturbed, then this will also affect his abilities. That is, both sensory thoughts and experiences, the locus is within oneself which is affected by objects outside of itself. While external objects (sensible things) are inversely proportional,



namely their status as “something” which is the object of observation from which the subject can draw information that is useful for compiling knowledge. In these circumstances, the external object is not an entity that can be intervened by the subject because it inherently has certain characteristics. Therefore, both subject and object, have two characteristics that are different from one another.

Berkeley’s philosophical position on sense objects (sensible things) that the assumption of external causes that exist in objects as well as determine the qualities of objects is seriously rejected. His argument is that when perceiving the sound of tapping on a table, what is perceived directly is the sound without first perceiving the cause which is claimed to be on the object independently. That is, that when perceiving an object is indirectly due to the characteristic differences between the subject and the object, Berkeley firmly refuted this. In the case of the sound of tapping on the table, it is difficult to imagine the sound and shape of the table separately from the subject’s vision. Furthermore, every visible object has a visible color within it. Objects as physical substances (corporeal substances) are therefore only sensory objects without assuming that they have “something” that cannot be reached or perceived by the subject. For Berkeley, the physical substance is nothing more than something that as a whole can be touched by subject instruments which include thoughts, senses and experiences which are referred to as sensory objects (sensible things).<sup>36</sup> In my opinion, Berkeley’s philosophical position emphasizes that when the process of perceiving an object, as a whole is part of the subject’s self which is related to his senses, thoughts and experiences. In other words, perceiving means capturing objects directly so that all of them are within the scope of the senses that perceive the object and the mind that understands the catch.

Still regarding the position of Berkeley’s philosophy in my opinion, the philosophical notion that matter is independent of mind has consequences for the notions of skepticism, atheism and irreligion. The reason for this is because believing that material objects are independent of the mind is the same as believing that the existence of matter and its mechanisms are beyond the understanding of the subject who understands it. In other words, the detachment of matter from the object that contemplates presupposes that the mind has no power to perceive the object. Meanwhile, at the same time, objects can be understood because the subject has certain instruments such as the senses, experience and ratios so that they can produce ideas that are imprinted in the mind on the material. In my opinion, this condition can be analogous to that of a physicist who first encounters a physical reality that has a mechanism detached from thought. But then, the phenomenon or reality is then understood by the mind so that through the senses and experience, the mind is able to draw a certain “law” of the physical phenomenon. After physicists discover certain laws, then, the antithesis of these laws can be drawn so as to produce a certain

product as a result of the manipulation of the physical laws found in the material reality. In other words, according to the researcher, there is no material reality that is simply separated from the mind because the existence of material objects is to be understood by the mind.

The attitude of atheism, skepticism and irreligion as a result of the philosophical notion that matter apart from the mind of the subject who understands it can be understood because what is considered the mechanism of matter goes beyond the reach of the mind. That is, between self-mechanism and material mechanisms are two different things. Self-mechanism includes how the senses, experiences and thoughts work. Meanwhile, physical mechanisms include certain game rules in space and time that limit the movement of the matter. Furthermore, the view of the detachment of matter from the mind has the consequence that there is no “thing” behind matter other than the mechanism which is the characteristic feature of that matter. That is, matter can move through its mechanism regardless of the subject’s thoughts. At the same time, the mechanism that is considered to be independent of the subject’s mind is part of the subject’s understanding of the material which is considered to have its own mechanism. In other words, the terms mechanism, material detachment or independence are part of the subject’s understanding of the material itself so as to make the assumption of material detachment from the mind ambiguous. Thus, this argument wants to show that “assumption” is also a form of the mind’s effort to understand objects outside of itself, which means that the object is open to be “touched” by the mind. Attempts to “touch” the object or material in the form of certain concepts can then be said that the material cannot be separated from the subject who understands it.

In closing, regarding Bekeley’s position as an immaterialist or idealist, the researchers did not find it explicitly in Berkeley’s books, which he explicitly stated himself. However, from several texts that the author found, Berkeley’s philosophical position seems to reject material entities or (sensible things) because the qualities that are considered to be in objects turn out to depend on the mind of the subject who understands them. In addition, these primary qualities are also considered to stand independently outside the understanding mind which is objectively rejected by Berkeley. For him, through experience, what is considered objective is actually subjective and depends entirely on the experience of the subject. As for the terms immaterialism and idealism, they are the result of interpretations by several Berkeley scholars of the philosophical positions they hold. In my opinion, reading Berkeley as an immaterialist assumes the consequences of Berkeley’s denial of material entities. But if you read Berkeley as an idealist, then the assumption is that what is true for Berkeley are the ideas that result from the perception of matter. In other words, if you conclude Berkeley as an immaterialist, focus on what he denies matter as

“process” whereas if you conclude as an idealist, focus on the results of Berkeley’s denial as “results”. But again, this is the assumption of the researcher on the polarization of the model from the interpretation of Berkeley’s philosophical position. or as a final statement, the use of immaterialism is when emphasizing the attitude of negation of matter as a physical object while the use of the term idealism is when emphasizing the affirmative attitude towards the existence of ideas.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I will draw several conclusions from the results of this study which include two things. First, research on Berkeley and its philosophical position still needs to be discussed seriously for researchers or scholars who have a concentration on Berkeley philosophy. Because, Berkeley’s philosophy as a style of empirical philosophy is still relevant to continue to study on the grounds that empirical as an epistemic method and its relevance to attitudes of faith can be traced from Berkeley’s philosophical stance itself. That is, Berkeley’s philosophical position is unique because he does not abort his position as a philosopher as well as a spiritual bishop. Second, regarding the claims and positions of Berkeley’s philosophy both as an immaterialist and as an idealist, for the time being it is not found clearly in his texts. In other words, these claims are the result of readings, interpretations and conclusions from Berkeley reviewers or scholars who are concerned with their philosophical positions. This means that as a product of interpretation, Berkeley’s philosophical texts are still wide open for wide reading and interpretation to gain dynamics of Berkeley’s philosophy.

**Endnote:**

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2. Sprigge, T.L.S, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).
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6. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (The Pennsylvania University, 1999).
7. Harry G. Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers & Madmen the Defense of Reason in Descartes's Meditations* (UK: Princeton University Press, 2008).
8. Barry Stroud, "Berkeley v. Locke on Primary Qualities", *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 55, April 1990.
9. Robert G. Meyers, *Understanding Empiricism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006).
10. Meyers, *Empiricism*, p. 2.
11. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (US: The Pennsylvania State University, 1999), p. 612-613.
12. George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, (eBook Edited by Al Haines), p. 3.
13. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, p. 5-6.
14. All the qualities which are "believed" to be present in the object as primary qualities and so cannot be understood are part of the fully comprehensible qualities of the subject. See, Berkeley in *Three Dialogues*, p. 6-7.
15. Berkeley, *The Principles*, p. 13.
16. Berkeley, *The Principles*, p. 3.
17. Berkeley, *The Principles*, p. 4.
18. For example, the case regarding passions of fear, love, hatred, admiration, contempt and the like which immediately arise in the mind through the perception of certain words without any ideas arising between thoughts and actions.
19. Berkeley, *The Principles*, p. 9.
20. For example, through the eye it has the idea of light and color, through touch the idea of hardness and softness of a surface, through smell it has the idea of aroma, and through hearing it functions to transmit sounds to the mind in various tones and compositions.
21. Berkeley, *The Principles*, p 11.
22. Robert J. Fogelin, *Berkeley and the Principles of Human Knowledge*, (London: Routledge Philosophy), p. 21-22.
23. George Berkeley, *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*. Edited by David R. Wilkins (Dublin: 2002), p. 1-2.
24. George Berkeley, *Alchiphron in Focus*. Edited by David Berman (Toronto: York University), p. 67.
25. Berkeley, *Theory of Vision*, p. 17.
26. Fogelin, *Berkeley Human Nature*, p. 23.
27. Georges Dicker, *Berkeley's Idealisme* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 149
28. Dicker, *Berkeley*, p. 151.
29. Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 648.

30. Bertrand Russell, *Sejarah Filsafat Barat*. Penerjemah, Sigit Jatmiko, Agung Prihantoro dan lainnya (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007), p. 850-851.
31. Talia Mae Bettcher, "Berkeley's Theory of Mind: Some New Models", California State University. *Journal of Philosophy Compass*, 2011, p. 694-695.
32. Locke, *Human Understanding*, p. 109.
33. Tyron Goldschmidt and Scott Stapleford, *Berkeley's Principles Expanded and Explained* (New York and London: Taylor & Francis Group), p. 83
34. Berkeley, *Principles of Knowledge*, p. 2.
35. Berkeley, *Principles of Knowledge*, p. 3.
36. Berkeley, *Hylas and Philonous*, p. 17.

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