

Topic Page: [Berkeley, George, 1685–1753](#)

Definition: **Berkeley, George** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Irish philosopher and cleric. Drawing on the empiricism of John Locke, he argued that there is no existence independent of subjective perception (*esse est percipi*). For Berkeley, the apparently ordered physical world is the work of God. This view is often called subjective idealism.

Summary Article: **Berkeley, George**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(bär'klē, bûr–), 1685–1753, Anglo-Irish philosopher and clergyman, b. Co. Kilkenny, Ireland. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, he became a scholar and later a fellow there. Most of Berkeley's important work in philosophy was done in his younger years. His *Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), and the famous *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) are among his more important works. At considerable personal sacrifice he organized a movement to establish a college in the Bermudas to convert the indigenous peoples, going to Rhode Island in 1728 to wait for promised support. This support never came, and after three years he returned to England. He was made bishop of Cloyne in 1734. Berkeley in his subjective idealism went beyond Locke, who had argued that such qualities as color and taste arise in the mind while primary qualities of matter such as extension and weight have existence independent of the mind. Berkeley held that both types of qualities are known only in the mind and that therefore there is no existence of matter independent of perception (*esse est percipi*). The observing mind of God makes possible the continued apparent existence of material objects. God arouses sensations in us in a regular coherent order. Selves and God make up the universe. Berkeley felt that his argument constituted a complete disproof of atheism. He believed that qualities, not things, are perceived and that the perception of qualities is relative to the perceiver.

See edition of his works by A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (9 vol., 1948-57);
Pitcher, G. , ed., *The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (8 vol., 1988-89);
biographies by J. O. Urmson (1982) and G. J. Warnock (1983).

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Berkeley, George. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/berkeley_george_1685_1753



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