

**Philosophy and Critical Thinking**  
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**Lecture 19: Critical argument against Empiricism**

Welcome in lecture 19. Today we are going to talk about the Empiricism. But this time we are going to understand the arguments against the Empiricism. So, in last few classes we have been discussing about the Empiricism. Now just let me remind you what is the Empiricism is. Empiricism who believes that that knowledge is product of experiences so, we are experiencing and we are getting knowledge so, whatever we have knowledge is just in a result of our experiences right so, this is what the empiricism is who believes that experiences are the source of knowledge, and what they did that explained everything terms of experiences, for example, the idea so, what they are saying that we are experiencing we are now we are abstracting and then we have idea right so, when we are saying that we have an idea for example a table so, we have experienced table now we have an idea If you take the Humean argument, now since we have discussed the Locke and Hume, so, we are in position to talk, argue that Humean argument and Lockean argument. So, if you see the Humean argument, he will say that as a perception, which is a vivid perception. And then the faint image of this perception is idea. So, this idea, whatever we have, it is because of this experience. So, whatever we have, we know is because of this experience. Locke has talked about many different ideas in terms of experience, which also, talks about the simple idea and the complex idea. Similarly, Hume also, argued the simple and complex idea. Locke argued that how we can perceive things, we have simple idea and the simple ideas can be arranged, rearranged and that those things are complex idea. So, mind is capable of doing that and making the complex idea out of the simple ideas. Now what we are, today we are going to do, we are going to argue against this Empiricism since this course is on a philosophy of critical thinking so, that is why it is important to first understand the argument and then also, reject those arguments and this is how this process is going to train your mind in the sense that you will be able to argue right so, what in philosophy whatever we have discussed so, far our main focus is an argument. How one person coming with an argument that there is an X and then next time some other person, some other philosopher is arguing that that X is not there or there is no possibility of X. So, there is one argument and then again argument against the first argument. So, this is what today we are going to understand some more argument against the empiricism.

So, there was a philosopher called George Berkley and timing was 1685-1753. He argued basically against the Lockean idea of empiricism. So, he rejected the idea of materialism. Materialism, it does not mean that something else, but he says, materialism is that matter and outside the mind exist. So, Berkley contains that no material thing exists. So, there is a mind, it is me, and there is an object. In last class, few classes, our empiricism is arguing

that what we are doing, we are experiencing an object and then we are getting idea, getting knowledge. So, experiencing an object, it only means that there is an object. We are coming in this world with a blank slate. This is how Locke argued. And then we are experiencing object. Now we are experiencing an object, we have an idea. Berkeley is what he is doing, is arguing that this object which he believes there is not there. So, he rejected the existence of material things. Whenever while discussing the John Locke, we should take an example of this suppose the table, so, we experience and then we have idea of table. Berkeley is saying the table is not there. He is rejecting the existence of the table. Now how he is arguing for that, let us understand. He rejects is that material things are mind independent things or substance. So, whatever is there in a mind, whatever is there in an object, it is a mind object. Whenever we are saying the material thing, for example, he is arguing rejecting the idea of matter. So, when we are saying I am rejecting any existence of an object, we are basically object now I am trying to define that object which has in a mind independent existence. So, George Berkeley rejecting those matter. He holds that there are no such mind independent thing that in the famous phrase is to be is to be perceived this is how he is presenting an argument like we perceive ordinary objects for example house, mountains you see but we perceive only ideas right for example when you are trying to perceive this table but we are end up with perceiving only the idea of table and therefore, the ordinary objects are ideas. For example, I am trying to perceive an object for X. So, whenever I am trying to perceive, we are only able to perceive the idea of X. And therefore, he is concluding that ordinary objects are ideas. He argued that mind is incapable of framing abstract ideas. I mean, he is taking the John Locke argument, that how John Locke has argued that we are experiencing thing and then we are abstracting. So, for example, we are looking at, take a same example, tomato, red tomato, or flower, or red flower, red rose. There are so many qualities. Now, the redness, we are like separating from other qualities and abstracting the idea of red. This is how when you will accept the empiricism or believe that experiences are the only source of knowledge. This is how we can argue that we are experiencing and then we are abstracting the idea. What Berkeley is arguing that mind is not capable of framing this abstract idea. We cannot do that. So, we can imagine or represent to ourselves the ideas of the particular thing we have perceived. And we can very easily divide and compound them. But we cannot, for example, find in our thought an idea corresponding to the description of the general idea of triangle, the idea of motion distinct from the body of moving. So, if like you are going to argue that we are getting the idea through experiences and we have idea, we have accepted the idea, then John Berkeley is arguing that why we do not have the idea of triangle? Why we do not have idea of motion distinct from the body moving? So, and therefore, George Berkeley is arguing that this abstraction is not possible. So, he is arguing against the John Lockean understanding. And he says that what we do, suppose there are a lot of general ideas. So, what we do, we are naming one idea which is going to represent all the particular ideas. All. So, there are many tables. And then there is a tableness and then a word tableness that is going to represent all

the particulars. The same sort of ideas. Now, as a name or sign for all other particular ideas of same sort. Suppose there is a name, like for example, table-ness is a sign or any sign we are using for all other many particular, the same sort of idea. To say a thing exists when no mind perceives them. It is perfectly understandable. The idea is, whenever we are saying there is an object, it only means that it is in a mind dependent. For example, if I am saying there is a table, it only means that I am perceiving this table. So, for example, I am saying I am experiencing this table. So, experiencing table means it is in mind. I am perceiving this table. and therefore, this is a table. Suppose even I am not in this room, someone else is perceiving this table. So, what he is basically is arguing that we cannot talk about the existence of any object if there is no mind. Now he is taking the argument of the John Locke. So, how he argued the simple idea and simple and then complex idea. Later we will also, talk about the primary quality and secondary qualities. Now he is arguing against this Lockean argument of the simple and primary and the secondary qualities. He argues that the color, sound, taste, smell are the effect of the body produced in a perceiving subject. So, when we are talking about these qualities, this quality is produced where? In the person who is perceiving the subject. And this quality residing not in the body itself but in me. And we call them secondary qualities. Now, the so-called primary qualities are the same as secondary. So, whatever John Locke has argued in terms of the primary qualities, they are also, like secondary qualities. That is in me, not in the object. Berkley argues that I cannot separate my idea of extension from the idea of color and the secondary qualities. So, this is how he is arguing. The primary qualities are inseparably united with the secondary. So, how John Locke argued, as we have discussed in the last class, that the primary qualities and the secondary qualities. What Berkley is arguing, that we cannot separate them, that this is a primary and this is a secondary quality. All our idea or sensation or thing perceived are inactive and have no power to do anything. Hence, extension, figure, motion, all of which are ideas cannot be cause of sensation. Now, Berkley has an argument that there is an object. Object in the sense, when we are talking about the empiricism, empiricist says that we are getting things to the sensation. Now, what Berkley is arguing, all this idea or sensation perceived are inactive. And they have no power to do anything. And therefore, there is any extension figure in a motion cannot cause of sensation. But again, if the object and these qualities cannot cause of sensation, but there is sensation, then what is the cause of that sensation? So, suppose we are rejecting that, okay, fine, which are the ideas, but we have to talk about what are the causes of, cause of this idea in mind. Now, what George Berkley argues that in corporeal, active substance or spirit is the cause of sensation. So, he is arguing that the sensation, the quality cannot be, is the cause of the sensation. So, then now question is, even we have an idea, what is the cause? George Berkley is saying that spirit is the cause of sensation.

Now, he argues a spirit is one undivided active being. The ideas are passive. In understanding, in so, far as it produces or otherwise operates upon them, it is called will.

Berkley argued that we cannot understand a spirit. But through the effect, we can talk about the spirit.

Berkley has a different way to talk about dualism. Here is a spirit and an idea. Active and then passive. So, spirit is the main cause of sensation, as Berkley argued. But again, there is a question that if you open this eyes, there are many objects. We can see the river, the mountain, the forest and everything is there. Even I do not want to perceive, but still it is there. How it is possible? If suppose it is just an idea. We have this idea. So, even I do not want to do that. We do not want to perceive that. But still, I feel there is a world out there, which is like, for example, the many objects or sometimes very beautiful way it is there, in a proper order are there. What is the cause of that? Who is doing that? So, Berkley is arguing, even I do not want to perceive, but there is an object there, we are perceiving that, because of the Supreme Mind. And the Supreme Mind excites us in this idea of sense. An argument is called a law of nature. So, we do not have the control over. But still for us there is an idea. Because of the supreme mind. The idea of God. So, this is how Berkeley has rejected the empiricism saying that even you talk about the experiences. Even you talk about the simple idea or complex idea. Or let us say the primary qualities or secondary qualities. Everything is just in us. And this object which you are talking about, they are not cause of the sensation. So, when Berkley is rejecting the idea of matter, it only says that this matter does not have an independent existence of mind. So, whenever you are saying there is a table, it is always because we are perceiving the summer table. I am experiencing. So, mind is there. And this sensation is worth because of spirit, not because of object. So, he basically, this is what we call Idealism, where he believed that idea is real, not the matter. He is saying the idea is everything. And he explained this idea and this perception in terms of the supreme mind and the mind. God and mind. So, this is how Berkeley rejected the idea of empiricism. We have just taken a few arguments from Berkeley. And if you are interested, you can read the Berkeley in well in detail.

This lecture is based on these two books and the Stanford Encyclopedia. And this book also, have talked about the George Berkeley in well in detail. In this class, our intention was just to present some argument against Empiricism. So, we have an idea to understand one concept from the different perspective. And that is what the main goal of this course, Philosophy and Critical Thinking. Thank you so, much for your kind attention. Thank you.