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Locke's Idea on the "Quality" Of Matter and Berkeley's Criteria For "Existence"

What Locke Means By A "Quality" Of Matter

As Locke argues, the qualities of matter are features that humans may experience. Qualities are the distinguishing characteristics of a substance that allow us to see and interact with the physical world. Locke separates attributes into primary and secondary categories.

Primary qualities are those that are inherent to the substance and not influenced by the observer. These are intrinsic properties of matter that are unaffected by observer perception. The fundamental attributes include solidity, extension, shape, size, quantity, motion, and stillness (Locke & Nidditch, 1979). They constitute the essential components of matter and the physical cosmos.

Secondary qualities depend on the observer's perception rather than being inherent to the substance itself. These characteristics result from the observer's engagement with the material

and involve the senses. Color, sound, flavor, and fragrance are examples of secondary attributes. These attributes are personal and not inherent properties of the drug itself.

Three Examples Of Locke's Primary Qualities, And Secondary Qualities

Examples of Locke's Basic Characteristics include being solid, extended, and in motion or at rest. The capacity of matter to be sensed through touch or feeling is called its solidity. The extension is characteristic of matter that enables it to occupy space. Motion or rest is the property of matter that allows it to change position or remain in a fixed place.

Locke's Secondary Qualities include color, sound, and odor. Color is the property of materials that allows it to reflect a specific wavelength of light. Sound is a characteristic of matter that allows it to generate audible vibrations, and odor enables matter to produce odors that the human nose can detect.

Primary characteristics are intrinsic to the substance and independent of any observer, whereas secondary qualities are not fundamental to the substance but depend on the observer's perception. Primary qualities are the essential components of matter and the physical world, whereas secondary qualities are subjective and not inherent aspects of the substance.

An Example From Locke's Writing That Describes A Material Object In Terms Of Its Fundamental Primary Qualities Versus Its Secondary Qualities

His writings use a piece of wax to illustrate the distinction between fundamental and secondary qualities. He explains that its basic properties change when a piece of wax approaches a flame. Wax melts transform in size, shape, and texture and takes on a new form. Yet, its secondary characteristics, such as color and odor, remain unchanged (Berkeley,1999). This example illustrates how Locke's division between primary and secondary attributes explains the

material reality of an object. When the wax comes near a flame, its primary properties alter while its secondary properties stay unchanged.

Berkeley's Criteria For "Existence"

According to Berkeley, something is real or exists if the senses perceive it. Berkeley argues that when we claim something is actual or existent, we mean that it can be perceived or experienced by sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. He contends that only things that can be immediately experienced through the senses exist. In contrast, nothing not directly experienced exists.

Why Berkeley Thinks We Should Not Believe In The Existence Of Independent Primary Qualities

According to Berkeley, we should not hold onto independent Fundamental Qualities because our senses cannot directly detect them. Physicists and cosmologists agree that fundamental qualities give matter and the physical universe their fundamental structure. Still, Berkeley contends they do not exist because the senses cannot perceive them (1999). Therefore, Berkeley does not believe in matter, as the physical universe consists of Fundamental Qualities that cannot be stated to exist. Hence, there is no physical universe.

What Berkeley Has To Say About The Ultimate Source Of All The Sensory Experiences We Receive

Following his critique of materialism, Berkeley believes that mental processing ultimately accounts for sensory experience. As only mental experiences can be directly experienced, he contends that only mental incidents can be considered to exist. Hence, according to Berkeley, the mind is the ultimate source of all sensory experiences.

References

Berkeley, G. (1999). *Principles of human knowledge and three dialogues*. Oxford Paperbacks.

Locke, J., & Nidditch, P. H. (1979). *The Clarendon edition of the works of John Locke: An essay concerning human understanding*.