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Reading Question Week 4

Locke, "Qualities and Ideas" (Essay . . .) – pp. 86-90

1. In Locke's philosophy, a "quality" of matter refers to any characteristic that an object possesses. These qualities can be perceived by the senses or inferred through reason. Qualities can be either primary or secondary, depending on their nature and origin.
2. Three examples of primary qualities are extension, shape, and motion. Three examples of secondary qualities are color, taste, and smell. Locke explains that primary qualities are objective and measurable, whereas secondary qualities are subjective and dependent on the observer's perception.
3. An example of a material object described in terms of primary and secondary qualities could be a piece of fruit. The fruit's primary qualities would include its size, shape, and weight, which are objective and measurable characteristics. Its secondary qualities, such as its color, taste, and smell, are subjective and depend on the observer's perception. Locke's distinction helps us understand that the fruit has certain properties that are inherent to it, regardless of our perception of them, while others are dependent on our perception and interpretation.

Berkeley, "Nothing Outside the Mind" (Principles . . .) – pp. 97-102

4. Berkeley's criteria for existence is that something is "real" or exists if it is perceivable by the senses or is an idea in the mind. In other words, for Berkeley, existence is dependent on perception and consciousness.
5. Berkeley argues that we should not believe in the existence of independent primary qualities because they cannot be perceived without secondary qualities. Primary qualities, such as extension and shape, are inseparable from our perception of them and cannot exist independently of it. Therefore, matter, as traditionally understood as a collection of independent primary qualities, cannot exist.

6. As a result of his critique of materialism, Berkeley posits that the ultimate source of all sensory experiences is the mind of God. He believes that everything we perceive is a manifestation of God's ideas, and that sensory experiences are a way in which God communicates with us. In this way, Berkeley sees the world as a kind of divine language, with sensory experiences as the words and phrases used to convey meaning.