

## Idealism: Problems with the role played by God, illusions and hallucinations.

- Berkeley thinks that the philosophical idea of matter is incoherent and that the only source of our sense data must be something that can itself possess sense data and which has active power to cause them in us.
- Matter can do neither as it is not sentient (able to perceive or feel things) or active.
- He also agrees with Locke and Russell that the regularity and predictability of our sense data, and that they are not subject to my will and that different senses cohere with each other, shows that the source of them is external to me.
- He concludes that the source of sense data must be a mind, a powerful mind.
- So, Berkeley does not see it as bringing God in to save his theory, but that his arguments have led to the existence of God as the only possible explanation of our experience.

- How can we distinguish between reality and imagined objects if perception is dependent on the mind?
- Berkeley responds by saying the imagined is subject to my will, I am in control, I conjure their existence, when I imagine an object it is far less vivid and clear than when I am actually perceiving one.
- But, if there is no mind-independent reality, then illusions and hallucinations would appear no different from veridical perceptions, which does not fit with common sense.
- Berkeley responds by saying when subject to an illusion, I am not mistaken about the actual sense data or ideas. An illusion and hallucination are subjectively indistinguishable from other sense experiences and it would be nonsense to say we could be wrong about these. They are illusory because they incline us to make false inferences about what we may perceive next. If I try to grab a dagger which I see before me, but clutch thin air, then I have been fooled by a hallucination. If I see an oar half bent in water, it will also feel bent to the touch, then I'm making an error.
- The error in both cases is with the inference made about further sense data because I judged I would have certain tactile sensations which are not forthcoming.

### Can God have sensations?

A problem is that if God is the source of sense experiences and perceives all then God is subject to sensations, including pain and so therefore, God cannot be perfect.

P1: What we perceive is in the mind of God.

C1: It follows that the idea of pain is in the mind of God; God suffers pain.

P2: But if God suffers pain, then he is imperfect.

P3: God is defined as a perfect being.

C2: Therefore, Berkeley's views lead to contradiction.

Berkeley's response God knows what it is for us to suffer, but God does not suffer himself. We suffer because pain is caused in us by the laws of nature, we have no control over them. But God does not have a body, so God does not suffer pain or other sensations against his will. God is pure spirit and determines his ideas, he cannot passively 'suffer' from pain or any other sensations. But, there is still a problem, as sensations change and are fleeting, the world perceived by God is also one of change. If God has sensations, then he must change. And if he changes then he cannot be perfect and immutable,



"Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee

