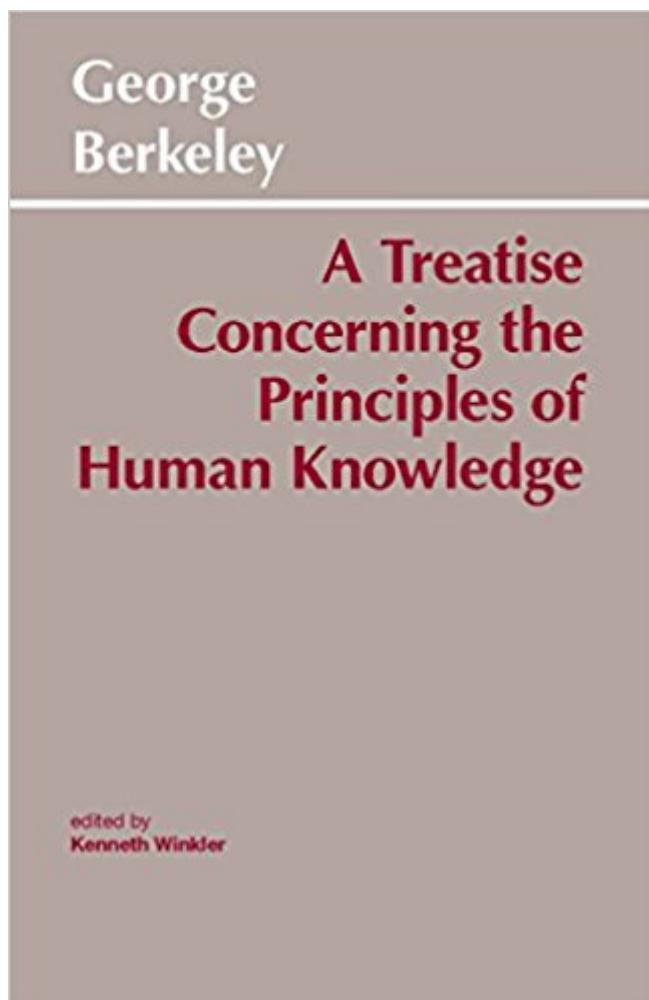


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A Treatise Concerning The Principles Of Human Knowledge (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

Kenneth Winkler's esteemed edition of Berkeley's *Principles* is based on the second edition (London, 1734), the last one published in Berkeley's lifetime. Like other members of Hackett's philosophical classics series, it features editorial elements found to be of particular value to students and their teachers: analytical table of contents; chronology of the author's life; selected bibliography; note on the text; glossary; and index.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jonathan Dancy, Professor of Philosophy, University of Reading.

This work was the first I'd ever read by George Berkeley. In this treatise, Berkeley expounds on his theory of immaterialism. This basically states that no material thing exists outside of that which perceives it and bears no relation whatsoever to solipsism — the belief that only the self exists. Berkeley was a deeply religious man who believed that nature and matter did not exist without being perceived in consciousness; that this perception was an idea instilled in the spirits of men through the infinite all-perceiving mind of God. Therefore, the revelation of God as the very originator of creation is available to anyone not bound by the notion of material existence outside of consciousness. From a materialist, purely Cartesian, Newtonian perspective, his ingenious works might seem ludicrous. There were no physicists at the time to chime in with

theories of quantum physics that so readily collapse the foundations of materialism. Berkeley stood his ground alone. The prose is bloated and bombastic, but let's not forget the text was written in 1710, and compared to other writings of his time, his was simple and straight to the point. A TREATISE CONCERNING THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE is a treasure to anyone with a spiritual or religious inclination. The message is as deep as it is subtle, and can be quite transformative if you allow its transcendental logic the benefit of a truly open mind.

Heavy reading. Attempts to answer the age old, 'if a tree falls in the forest does it make a sound' question. If you want to know what he determines....buy the book. :)

This man was brilliant. Whether you agree with everything he wrote or not, reading his work is enlightening. Peruse it carefully and deliberately. It is no wonder Kant and Hume were so influenced by him.

This is not the place for a philosophical analysis of Berkeley's original text, and its content of argument. The review concerns the specific book edited by Dancy, and its worth in respect of its further contribution to understanding the Treatise. This book is to be strongly recommended as it provides a multitude of resources that contextualise, criticise, and clarify, the positions put forward by Berkeley in this work. The most substantial contribution is the extensive introduction comprised of 15 punchy sections, covering Berkeley's life, his academic heritage, and analysis of his thought (both internal and external to that given in the Treatise). Dancy is fair to Berkeley in setting forth the most robust defences of his position, and marshalling critical arguments against the Berkelian stance. This is supplemented by an extremely thorough set of endnotes that are continually present in the background of the text, offering detailed guidance whenever necessary, or desired. Additionally, the book offers a summarised concise overview of the arguments provided in the Treatise, a glossary of archaic terms(!), and a very helpful short section entitled "How to use this book" (why don't more books include this sort of thing?). There is also a manageable annotated bibliography of further reading to trail a path for academic expansion. Overall, I found that this book provided a systematic treatment of the text and provided a solid structure of support surrounding the subject. Also included, the letters between Berkeley and Johnson, provide an unexpected bonus. This book is relatively cheap, considering its breadth and depth. In my opinion, it is an ideal text through which to study (and enjoy) Berkeley's Treatise.

A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (Commonly called "Treatise" when referring to Berkeley's works) is a 1710 work by the Irish Empiricist philosopher George Berkeley. This book largely seeks to refute the claims made by his contemporary John Locke about the nature of human perception. Whilst, like all the Empiricist philosophers, both Locke and Berkeley agreed that there was an outside world, and it was this world which caused the ideas one has within one's mind; Berkeley sought to prove that outside world was also composed solely of ideas. Berkeley did this by suggesting that "Ideas can only resemble Ideas" - the mental ideas that we possessed could only resemble other ideas (not physical objects) and thus the external world consisted not of physical form, but rather ideas. This world was given logic and regularity by some other force, which Berkeley did his best to conclude was a God. Long refuted by most philosophers, Berkeley's claims are often felt to have been a form of rationalisation - Berkeley later became Bishop of Cloyne, and was a highly religious man. Treastise's suggestion that the world was made of ideas with an omnipotent force guiding was his alternative to the Lockean Empiricism popular at the time, which Berkeley felt led to skepticism. In spite of this Berkeley was a capable, respected and entertaining thinker. Some doubt exists as to whether he truly believed his conclusion that the world at large was composed of ideas; with modern thinking tending towards him indeed having thought this to be the case.

This is a very important work of George Berkeley. One of its most interesting topics is that about the existence of matter. As, for human beings, the "existence" of something is related to its perception, there is a very close link between "things" and ideas. Both cannot have their existence completely proved. The arguments place the book among the most interesting on the top issues discussed in its time (empiricism, materialism, etc.)

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Very good

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