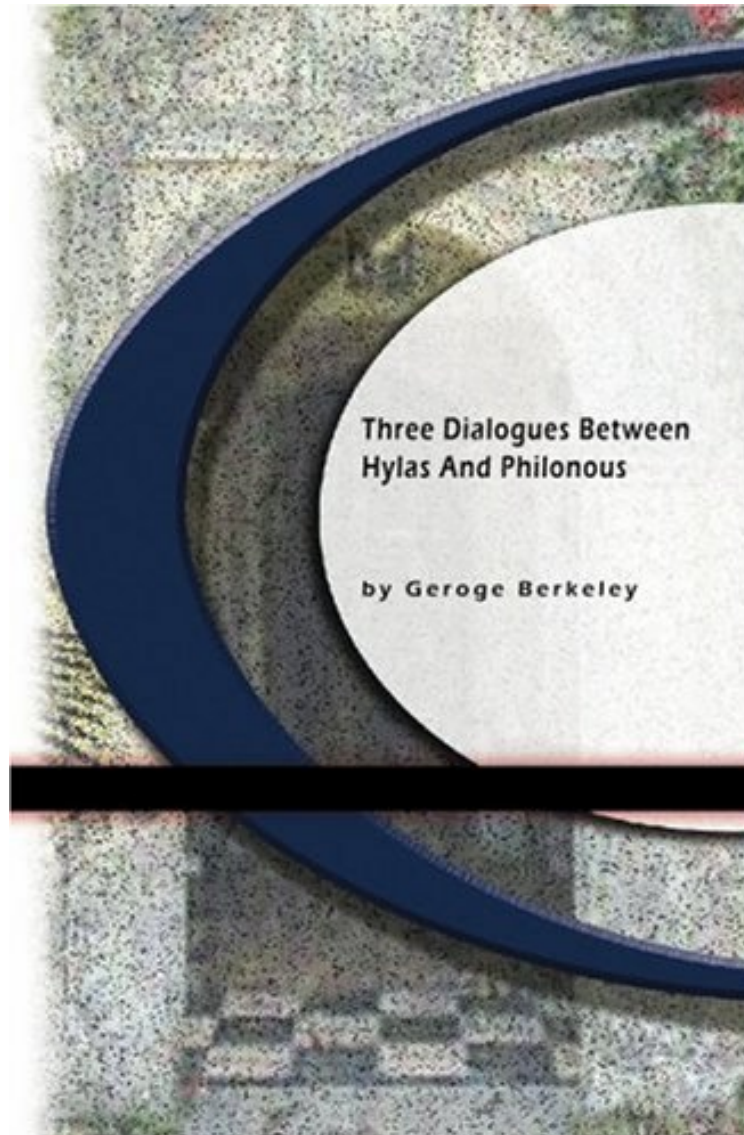


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Three Dialogues Between Hylas Philonous

George Berkley

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George Berkley : Three Dialogues Between Hylas Philonous before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Three Dialogues Between Hylas Philonous:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Man Ahead of His TimeBy RlotzThis is a wonderful little book. However clever Kant may have been, prose style took a turn for the worse in his systematic treatment. Berkeley, by contrast, is a great writer, and these dialogues brim with wit and charm.Many of the arguments that Berkeley puts forward in these dialogues will seem very strange to a modern reader who is used to the discoveries of the natural

sciences; and it is certainly true that many of Berkeley's arguments against materialism are fallacious. Nonetheless, Berkeley's thinking was a giant leap forward from Locke (whose position is represented by Hylas), and is in many ways strikingly modern. Here is the best way I can frame it for the philosophical debutante. Philosophers have long had the nasty habit of positing unknowable metaphysical entities to account for the world. In Aristotelian and Cartesian conceptions, this was simply substance; in Leibniz, it was the monads; in Locke, Berkeley's main opponent it was primary qualities; and in Kant, it was noumena. These entities are, as it were, conjured up by the philosopher's magic wand to account for the existence of matter, as an underlying substratum that is forever unknowable to us puny mortals. Berkeley pulls this position to pieces, and for good reason. Why conjure up a mysterious substance or primary quality with no discernible characteristics? It is only a name we give to the unknown. Instead, Berkeley argues, we should concentrate on what we can access with our senses. Matter is not some ghost-like thing without extension of weight, but is instead what we normally take for granted as matter—something with weight, extension, that exists in space and time. Believe it or not, Hylas's argument was the same intellectual trap that Immanuel Kant fell into almost one hundred years later when he posited the unknowable things-in-themselves (or noumena) that do not exist in space or time. If you substitute noumena for matter in these dialogues, you can see how far ahead of his time was Berkeley. Indeed, near the beginning of the 20th century, Edmund Husserl and Bertrand Russell—two of the most influential philosophers of the last 100 years—held a similar position, known as phenomenism. Such a perspective is also conducive to science, because it shifts the emphasis away from metaphysics to physics. To sum up, Berkeley is a great writer and a penetrating thinker. The dialogues are short and entertaining; and, when stripped of some of their fallacies, most of his arguments still relevant today.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Relatively easy read.
By R. Michael Rhoades Interesting philosophical questions. Relatively easy read.
1 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Meh
By Tony Not my cup of tea. Some good reflective points, but in all I found the translation and wording to be too laborious.

An extension of Berkeley's ideas, the work presents his philosophy in the form of dialogues. The author has presented arguments to prove the existence of God and that the material world consists completely of ideas and not physical objects. He reiterates that there is a deity that maintains order and arrangement in the world around us.

From the Publisher
Library of Liberal Arts title.
About the Author
George Berkeley, also known as Bishop Berkeley, was an influential Irish clergyman and philosopher. He was chiefly reputed as the originator of the modern school of idealism.