

## Question #08

Give critical exposition of Berkeley's doctrine of *Esse Est percipi* or "To be is to be perceived".

Answer:

Outline:

- a → Introduction:
- b → An insight to "To be is be perceived."
- c → perception of God and man.
- d → Existence precedes ideas.
- e → Subjective nature of sensation.
- f → objective and subjective existence of physical objects.
- g → Subjective Idealism of Berkeley.
- h → The push behind the existence is spiritual Being.
- i → Criticism.

### Introduction:

Berkeley proposed his philosophy in response to Descartes' "I think therefore I am". Berkeley argued that only to thing does not mean that one exists. The necessity of existence is perception. In his view, existence precedes ideas. The idea may be in the mind of God or man. If a thing is not

present in the mind of a man then it must be present in the mind of God. Moreover, the perception causes sensations, which is subjective, it may appeal to one person in one way and the same thing could appeal to another person in some other way. Furthermore, he says that the universe consists of infinite mind which is God and finite mind which is man. But comparably, the perpetual push behind the existence is spiritual Being, which constantly looking upto the material objects and ensures the existence of the physical world. However, the later philosophers has criticised his philosophy and alleged him as solipsist, which means ego-centric and person of the fallacy of solipsism.

a. An insight to "To be is to be perceived":

This quotation means that if a thing exists then it is necessary to be perceived. The perception could be in the mind of man or the mind of God. The existence is the mind of God projects the permanence of the object.

However, this is not possible that a thing is neither in the mind of ~~mind~~ man nor in the mind of God but still the thing exists. For instance, a person is present in a room and sitting on a chair then the object is in his mind and thus exists. But if he left the room then the object still exists because that thing is in the mind of God. Absence in both man's and God's mind is meant that the object does not exist.

#### b. Perception of God and man:

According to Berkeley, there is difference between the perception of God and the perception of man. The perception of God is distant, vivid and clear and thus prone to deity. While the perception of man is not as clear because the sensory experiences of man are dubious sometimes. For instance, a straight pencil is dropped in the water, then the pencil seems bent like which is not actually. So they (senses) betray us, but there is no such faculty in the perception of God. Because he is omnipresent

and live in the essence of an object.

### C. Existence precedes ideas:

Existence of an object comes first and ideas are created later.

Berkeley is an empiricist and he believes on the mind to be a "Tabula Rasa", which means that mind is a clean

slate or sheet which is filled through the ideas by sensory experiences. While idea comes

first in the mind of creator who is an infinite mind

and then comes the existence of that object. And the case with finite mind-man

is completely opposite. In this regard he puts forward

the example that we learn how to drive a bicycle

through experience. In experiencing bicycle we go through injuries and hurdles and then

later the tabula rasa acquires how to drive a bicycle

in order to avoid injury and falling down.

d. Subjective Nature of ~~En~~ Sensation:

Berkeley denied the fallacy of solipsism but still argued that sensations are subjective. The same thing would appeal to one person in one way and to other person in some other way. By drawing the conclusion or synthesizing the end, both may be right or both may be wrong. For instance, showing an apple to one person, he/she will draw one types of primary qualities but from the same apple another person will draw totally different primary qualities. That is why, Berkeley argues that sensations are always subjective. Mathematical truths are exempted.

e. Objective and subjective existence of a physical object.

Though Berkeley rejected the primary and secondary qualities concept of John Locke, but still he is indebted to him on account of sensory and mental sensation which is the pure outcome

6.

of primary and secondary qualities.  
By objective nature of an object, Berkeley means, the actual presence and the appearance of an object. Like, color, height and weight. While addressing the subjective nature of an object, he overtly borrowed Locke's concept of secondary qualities. He said that subjective nature of an object shows qualities like taste, the intensity of color etc, which are concerned with mental processing of a man. These different treatment of an object projects the objectivity or subjectivity of an object.

Subjective Idealism of Berkeley:

The philosophy of Berkeley is an attempt to hold the world in two faculties i.e. finite mind (man) and infinite mind (God). Furthermore, in subjective idealism, he says that mind is responsible for the processing to verify the existence of an object. One use of mind is subjective and can interpret things differently. which is a subjective faculty in nature.

By using subjectivity, he was alleged as solipsist but he reacted to it of being not a solipsist.

The push behind the existence is the spiritual Being.

Berkeley confidently claimed the existence of God. He said that human mind is not capable enough to outreach every place at one time. But the hold of God upon all the things across the world is complete and can able to hold all the things at one time. He is omnipresent and observe all the universe at once.

He quoted the example of the universe, that man is unable to see other large planets but the God is looking and seeing it, that's why they exist. In other case, they would have passed away.

Conclusion:

Berkeley came up with the conclusion that the perception of a thing is necessary if it exists. 90  
The perception is not possible

in any case, then the existence of an object is not possible. The perception could either be in the mind of God or in the mind of man. Because, in this world, existence comes first and ideas later. The object attempts to build and shape our ideas. He further explore this point on the premises that if the ideas precede existence, then there could have no margin of subjectivity. The sensations are subjective and thus the ideas are also subjective. Though there are certain things which can make a thing either subjective or objective in primary qualities (objective) and secondary qualities (subjective). But Berkeley retaliated to it and concluded that the push behind all the things in world is the spiritual Being which looks at things non-stop without a blink.