

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Spring 2006  
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Lecture Notes, March 29

## I. Locke's defense of the senses

We finished on Monday considering the water temperature experiment, at §II.VIII.21.

Essentially, this is the same problem that Descartes faced with the wax.

One object seems to have two conflicting properties.

Locke's example is even more compelling than the wax, because the conflict occurs in the object at one time.

No Heraclitean rescue is available.

Still, Locke thinks that Descartes underestimates the role that the senses play.

Locke's point is much like Mersenne's example of the stick in the water in the *Objections and Replies*.

Our senses do give us some misrepresentations.

But if we had no senses, we could not even start to understand the physical objects.

Locke thinks that some sensory evidence is veridical.

An idea is veridical if it truly represents an external object.

For example, if my idea of an apple were fully veridical, then the apple itself would be red and sweet.

Descartes, of course, argues that no sensory information is veridical.

Our idea of an object includes many different qualities.

Locke thinks that Descartes is right that at least some qualities are not veridical, like those of hot and cold.

The debate between Locke and Descartes concerns whether no ideas are veridical.

Locke thinks that some are, and so has to distinguish between those that are and those that are not.

## II. Distinguishing veridical from misrepresentative ideas.

Consider an apple.

We might have the following ideas of the apple:

Red

Round

Cool to the touch

Sweet, though a bit sour

Shiny

Smooth

Sits still on the table

Crunchy

Weighs 4 oz.

Has a mass of 120 grams

Is one apple

Is being considered by you

Smells like an apple

Locke uses two principles to distinguish the veridical ideas, which represent real properties of the apple, from the misrepresentative ideas, which tell us nothing directly about the apple itself.

### III. First principle for distinguishing veridical from misrepresenting ideas

Locke tacitly presumes the following principle:

If we perceive an object as having two (or more) incompatible ideas, then those ideas do not represent real properties of the object.

Descartes tacitly presumes the same principles in his discussion of the wax.

Locke does not discard all sense properties, in contrast to Descartes.

The following sense ideas are not veridical, according to Locke's first principle:

Hot and cold, §II.VIII.21

Color, because porphyry loses color in dark, §II.VIII.19

Taste and odor, because an almond changes taste and odor when mashed, §II.VIII.20

### IV. A corollary to the first principle

Even if a change in us entails the change in the perceived quality, the ideas which change can not be veridical.

In this case, we are like two people: one before and one after.

The object appears to have incompatible properties to two different stages of us.

For example, consider tasting orange juice before and after brushing your teeth.

What tasted sweet before, tastes sour (for want of a better word) after.

Thus, the sweetness and sourness are not real qualities of the orange juice.

### V. A second principle

If an idea of an object is the same under all conditions, that idea is veridical.

The object truly has that property.

See §II.VIII.9: "Qualities such as are utterly inseparable from the body..."

A corollary:

If every one has the same idea, then that idea is veridical.

See §II.VIII.21 and the discussion of figure (shape).

### VI. Applying the principles to the apple

Red	Misrepresentative
Round	Real
Cool to the touch	Misrepresentative
Sweet, though a bit sour	Misrepresentative
Shiny	Misrepresentative
Smooth	Misrepresentative
Sits still on the table	Real
Crunchy	Misrepresentative (But maybe real, if we consider its brittle texture)
Weights 4 oz.	Misrepresentative
Has a mass of 120 grams	Real
Is one apple	Real
Is being considered by you	Misrepresentative
Smells like an apple	Misrepresentative

Apply the two principles and their corollaries to the rest of the list we made:  
Some things that exist, with some of their properties

Air: invisible, light, has temperature  
Made of/by: gas, nitrogen and oxygen  
Used for: needed for breathing

Air vents: white  
Made of/by: metal  
Used for: allow air to circulate

Bags: green, flexible, pink

Books: small,  
Made of/by: paper  
Used for: holds words, used for learning

Ceiling: rough, tiled pattern, high

Chairs: white, blue, black, reclines, four legs, attached to desk, inanimate, hard, firm, smooth, comfortable, uncomfortable, stable  
Made of/by: people or machines, plastic, metal, wood, made of tiny particles  
Used for: for sitting, leaning on

Chalk: white, powdery  
used for writing

Chalkboard: green, spans wall, flat, wide, contrasts with chalk, dusty, divided in three sections, smooth, rectangular  
Made of/by: metal separators  
Used for: for writing, displaying words

Clock: black, white, twelve numbers on it, three hands, circular, clear, two red hands, one black hand, small, always moving, automatic, inanimate, on wall  
Made of/by: mechanical, plastic, small parts inside,  
Used for: shows time, accords with universal standard

Clothes: different textures  
Made of/by: cotton, courdoroy, leather, down, denim, made of fibers  
Used for: keep us warm

Desk: black, light and dark gray, rectangular, big, heavy, solid, flat, hard, dense, smooth  
Made of/by: wooden, plastic, metal  
Used for: holds books, holds paper and other objects

Door: brown, silver handle, checkered windows, transparent, solid, compact, heavy, 3 hinges, pattern, rectangular  
Made of/by: wood, nails  
Used for: opens and closes, blocks noise and distraction, opens and closes for entrance/exit, can be locked

Electrical outlet: rectangular, two prongs, silver, gray  
Used for: holds screws in place

Floor: hard, white, gray, and black, looks like marble, sturdy  
Made of/by: linoleum, made of pieces  
Used for: for walking on

Glasses: bent to fit face, brown  
Used for: helpful for seeing

Gravity: invisible, but felt  
Used for: keeps objects stable

Gum: rubbery, sweet, sticky, has color

Light: bright, can see it  
Made of/by: produced by electricity, made of rays or particles

Light bulbs: bright, on ceiling, square, long,  
Made of/by: glass, electrical, fluorescent

Light switch: grey, on wall next to door, small  
Made of/by: metal, electrical  
Used for: controls lights

Microscopic organisms: invisible to the naked eye

Notebook: red, absorbs ink  
Made of/by: paper  
Used for: for notes

Pen: white and black, lightweight, solid, compact, not too thick  
Made of/by: plastic, man-made, made of parts  
Used for: tool for writing

People: ready to learn, six feet tall, 160 lbs, alive, 5'4", brown eyes, light skin, diverse, thinking, complicated, girls and boys, have nationalities, communicate, intelligence, mobile  
Made of/by: 75% water, other minerals, cells, organs, limbs, hair, made of small parts, hearts and brains,

Projector: gray, high-tech, hanging from ceiling  
Made of/by: many wires, plastic,  
Used for: shows slides of others' thoughts on a screen, for visual learning

Projector screen: long, rolled up  
Made of/by: has a handle

Shoes: style, color laces, solid  
Made of/by: acrylic, sole made of leather  
Used for: protect feet from dirt, blisters, infection

Speaker: hung upside down, transmits sounds

Time: intangible, though representations of it are visible, unstoppable forward progress

Trash bin: large, skinny, brown, grey, in front of the room,  
Made of/by: plastic,  
Used for: holds garbage, for throwing away objects

Vents: square, allow air to pass, on ceiling

Walls: big, white, hard, flat, smooth, sturdy, strong  
Used for: separates spaces

Water: essential for humans, blue  
Made of/by: hydrogen, oxygen

Window blinds: opaque, move up and down, thin, rectangular  
Made of/by: plastic,  
Used for: block sunlight, darkens room

Windows: clear, thick  
Made of/by: glass  
Used for: allow light and air to enter, portal to outside world, or into the classroom

## VII. The Primary/Secondary Distinction

See §II.VIII.9-10

Primary Qualities	Secondary Qualities
Solidity	Color
Extension	Odor
Figure	Hot/ Cold
Motion/ Rest	Sound
Number	Texture
	Taste

Locke accepts the Resemblance Hypothesis, for primary qualities only, §II.VIII.15.