

Philosophy 1320: Theories of the Mind, Stern College - Yeshiva University, Spring 2007  
Russell Marcus, Instructor  
email: [philosophy@thatmarcusfamily.org](mailto:philosophy@thatmarcusfamily.org)  
website: <http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Mind/MindHome.htm>

Lecture Notes, February 14

## I. Locke's criticisms of Descartes' mind/body distinction

Locke's work is in large part a response to Descartes' work, especially against his doctrine of innate ideas.

For Descartes, ideas of the self, God, and mathematics are innate, built into our minds.

Laws of physics, depending as they do on mathematics, are also innate, the result of pure, intellectual judgment.

Descartes and Locke both defended the new science and its method of experimentation.

The new science posits a world of material objects, which we think of through use of the imagination.

For Descartes, though, these images are confused; the only real properties are those we can understand by pure reason, through innate ideas.

Locke argues that we do not know some of the ideas which Descartes alleges are innate.

More importantly, on the handout excerpt from *Essay*, Locke argues that he can dismiss innate ideas, by accounting for all of human knowledge on the basis of sense experience, §I.I.1.

In the selection in Morton, Locke assesses the debate between Descartes and Arnauld.

He observes that the communication of motion of light to the retina will impel us to see a color.

That is, there are lawful correspondences between physical events and some mental states.

But we have no understanding of why a particular wavelength of light should correspond to a particular color, or why the vibration of the ear should correspond to the sound it does.

If these lawful correspondences are possible, it seems possible for matter to think.

Moreover, it seems equally unlikely for whatever substance in which thought resides to be the seat of thought as for matter to be the seat of thought, p 115.

Locke thus draws a skeptical conclusion, pp 114-5.

The materialist and the dualist each make the error of claiming to know something that is beyond the reach of our ideas.

Morton intimates that Locke makes another criticism, which is not clear in the selection provided.

Any dualist, like Plato and Descartes, must confront the problem of interaction, often just called the mind/body problem.

The problem, crudely stated, is to explain why the mind gets drunk when the body does the drinking.

Conversely, how can mental acts, like the decision to speak, result in bodily movements?

If the mind is non-physical, then it can have no interaction with the body.

Bodies only interact with other bodies.

Interestingly, Descartes located the seat of the soul in the pineal gland.

I have scanned a copy of [a letter Descartes wrote about the pineal gland](#).

Descartes' position, that the pineal gland is the location where the soul interacts with the body, does not solve the problem of interaction.

It merely locates the problem.

## II. Monism

One way to solve the mind/body problem is to deny dualism.

There are two obvious monist options.

The materialist claims that the mind is really just the body.

And the idealist claims that there are no bodies; there are only minds.

We have read Aristotle as a materialist monist.

Now, we will look at a modern materialist monist, Hobbes, before we get to the contemporary monists.

Then we will look at an idealist monist, Berkeley.

Morton writes that depicting the materialist as claiming that there are no minds is misleading.

For, the claim is really that what we normally think of as a mind can be explained on the basis of matter.

Still, Hobbes' claim is clearly a rejection of Descartes' substance dualism.

Hobbes in fact wrote a quite hostile, and not very good, set of objections to Descartes' *Meditations*.

## III. Materialism

The challenge for any materialist is to account for mental phenomena, especially mental causation.

While my qualia are not thought to be real qualities of external objects, they are real qualities of my conscious mind.

Further, they seem to have some effect on my actions.

If I am in pain, I will act in ways that I will not act if I am not in pain.

Hobbes' reply to the problem of mental phenomena consists in his insistence that they are in fact physical phenomena, motions in the nerves and brain.

He is holding fast to the core idea of the new science, that all that exists are particles in motion.

"Hobbes' s general account of thought was rather hamstrung by his obsession with mechanics (*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. IV, p 38)."

According to the new science, interactions of particles are limited to transfer of momentum.

So, nothing could be given to us by external objects, except their motions, p 129.

Hobbes adopts the primary/secondary distinction we have seen in Descartes and Galileo.

The world really consists of particles, or atoms, in motion.

Depending on how the atoms unite and move, they affect us in different ways.

Their arrangement determines how we experience an object.

The arrangement of particles in the lemon makes the light reflect from its surface so that I have a yellow experience.

## III. Locke, and the materialist's primary/secondary distinction

Descartes and Galileo argued for the primary/secondary distinction on analogy with a tickle, or pain.

Just as we don't think that the pain or tickle is in the knife or feather, we should not think that redness or sweetness is in the apple.

Arguments for analogy tend to be weak, since everything is like everything else in some way.

We need to know if the analogy holds in a particular, relevant way.

Descartes also argued for the primary/secondary distinction on the basis of the wax example. I mentioned that one possible response to the wax argument was Heraclitean. The Heraclitean argues that any change in the properties of an object entails a change in the object itself. Or, for two objects to be the same object, they must share all properties. The Heraclitean claims that the wax before melting and after melting are different objects, and so no contradiction arises among the sensory properties. There are just two different objects, loosely tied together merely by a name, 'wax'. Given our contemporary understanding of chemical changes, Descartes' interpretation of the wax argument is weaker still. There really do seem to be two different objects under consideration.

Locke provides more effective arguments for the primary/secondary distinction. Consider the water temperature experiment, at §II.VIII.21. In this case, one object seems to have two conflicting properties at the same time. No Heraclitean rescue is available.

So, our senses do give us some misrepresentations. But, Locke argues, if we had no senses, we could not even start to understand the physical objects. Locke thinks that some sensory evidence is veridical, and so can be used to justify knowledge of the physical world. 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 argues that no sensory information is veridical.

The debate between Locke and Descartes concerns whether any sensory ideas are veridical. Locke provides a method to distinguish between veridical and non-veridical, or misrepresentative, sense impressions.

#### IV. Distinguishing veridical from misrepresentative ideas

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. Consider the following ideas we might have of an apple:

- Red
- Round
- Cool to the touch
- Sweet, though a bit sour
- Shiny
- Smooth
- Sits still on the table
- Crunchy
- Weights 4 oz.
- Has a mass of 120 grams
- Is one apple
- Is being considered by you
- Smells like an apple

Locke's first principle for distinguishing veridical from misrepresenting ideas:

LP1a: If we perceive an object as having two (or more) incompatible ideas, then those ideas do not represent real properties of the object.

The following sense ideas are not veridical, and so are secondary properties, 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

Note that Descartes tacitly presumes LP1a in his discussion of the wax.

There is a quick corollary to Locke's first principle:

LP1b: Even if a change in us entails the change in the perceived quality, the ideas which change can not be veridical.

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.

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.

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

LP1a and LP1b allow us to determine secondary properties.

The next principle yields primary qualities.

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

Locke's second principle allows us to affirm that some ideas are veridical:

LP2a: If an idea of an object is the same under all conditions, that idea is veridical, and the object truly has that property.

LP2a also yields a quick corollary:

LP2b: If every one has the same idea of an object, then that idea is veridical.

LP2b is applied at §II.VIII.21 in the discussion of figure (shape).

We can apply all of these 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

Weighs 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

Thus, the primary qualities are solidity, extension, figure, motion/rest, and number.  
And the secondary qualities are color, odor, hot/cold, sound, texture, and taste.  
See §II.VIII.9-10 and §II.VIII.15.