Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Fall 2005
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Lecture Notes, November 9

I. Distinguishing veridical from misrepresentative ideas.

Descartes says that our knowledge of the physical world comes from the mind alone, since our senses give us only confused representations of objects, and our ideas, our images, are not veridical.
He uses the wax example as support.

Locke says that we can base our knowledge on the senses.
He agrees with Descartes that some information we get from the senses is confused.
But, Locke thinks that some sense information is veridical.
We just have to be careful to distinguish between our veridical and misrepresentative ideas of physical objects.

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

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

II. 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.
Compare with Descartes' 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

III. 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.

IV. 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).

V. 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)
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

VI. The Primary/Secondary Distinction

See §II.VIII.9-10

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

Locke accepts the Resemblance Hypothesis, for primary qualities only, §II.VIII.15.
Note the primacy of mathematics.
The primary qualities are mathematically describable.
Note that Locke and Descartes are not in grave disagreement about the nature of the physical world.
They do disagree about how we know about those properties.
In technical terms, their disagreement is epistemological, not metaphysical.
We should expect this, since both Descartes and Locke were writing in support of modern science, and its metaphysics.

VII. So, why do we see yellow lemons?

There is something in the object that makes me think it is the way it is.
The world really consists of particles (atoms) in motion.
These unite in varying ways.
Depending on how they unite, they affect us in different ways.
Their arrangement determines how we experience an object.
The arrangement of particles in the apple makes the light rays reflect from its surface in such a way that I have a red experience.
We might say that the apple has a 'dispositional property' which makes us see it as red, §II.VIII.13.
But the dispositional property is not redness, which is properly a property only of my experience.
This is the corpuscular, or atomic, theory.
It is not original with Locke.

In our next class, I will discuss a bit of the history of atomism, and start Berkeley.

For Monday, you should read at least Berkeley's Introduction (not the editor's introduction, though you might find that useful eventually), and the first twenty sections of the main text, pages 7-30. Also, you should look at sections 97-100, on pages 61-62.