

The projects of *Essay II.viii-xi*

- Complete the study of simple ideas of sensation
by commenting on which of those ideas are
“resemblances” of qualities in bodies
- Identify and study the simple ideas of reflection

Locke's inept distinction between qualities and ideas

From *Essay* II.viii.7:

“To discover the nature of our *Ideas* better, ... it will be convenient to distinguish them, as they are *Ideas* or Perceptions in our Minds; and as they [!] are modifications of Matter in the Bodies that cause such Perceptions in us ...”

From *Essay* II.viii.8:

“... the powers to produce ... *Ideas* in us, as they are in the [object], I call *Qualities*; and as they [!] are Sensations or Perceptions in our Understandings, I call them *Ideas* ...”

“... as they are modifications of matter” probably means “as they are taken to be modifications of matter”

“... as they are sensations or perceptions” probably means “as they are identified by means of the sensations or perceptions they cause”

What would entitle us to suppose that a quality in our ideas is also a quality in bodies?

No change in nature is able to separate it from bodies.

All bodies we can discover have them, and all bodies we have reason to suppose to exist are supposed to have them.

Qualities in bodies:

- Primary: monadic properties
- Secondary: powers arising from the primary qualities to cause sensations in sentient creatures (a kind of relational property)
- Tertiary: powers arising from the primary qualities to cause alterations in other things (another kind of relational property)

Ideas in us:

- [type i]: ideas of extension, solidity, motion and their modes
- [type ii]: ideas of sensible qualities: colour, heat and cold, smell, taste, sound
- [type iii]: ideas of pleasure and pain

Locke's thesis

Our type (i) ideas are resemblances of qualities in bodies.

Because the only way one thing can be conceived to act on another is by impact.

So the only way objects can act on our senses to give us ideas is by impact.

So objects have to be extended, solid, and moving, since those are required for impact

Why should we suppose that type (ii) and (iii) ideas are not resemblances of qualities in bodies?

[Answer for type (iii):

because we carry those ideas away with us when we leave the vicinity of the objects that caused them]

Answers for type (ii):

because type (ii) ideas can shade off into type (iii) ideas (*fire & snow example*)

even if bodies had qualities resembling those of type (ii) ideas, those qualities could not be the causes of our type (ii) ideas (given that they must result from impact)

(both type (i) and type (iii) are supposed to be caused by impact, so by parity of example, type (ii) should be as well) (*manna example*)

the qualities of type (ii) ideas are not universally observed to exist in bodies under all conditions whatsoever (*porphyry example*)

operations that can only plausibly be supposed to change the primary qualities of bodies result in different type (ii) ideas in us (*almond example*)

the same object can give us different type (ii) ideas at the same time (*bucket of water example*)

Summary

- Primary qualities in the insensibly small parts of things constitute their secondary and tertiary qualities
- Secondary qualities cause our ideas of all types
- Type (i) ideas resemble the macroscopic primary qualities of things as they are in themselves
- we are not able to discern what gives things their secondary and tertiary qualities
- Type (ii) and type (iii) ideas do not resemble any qualities of things
- Changes in the type (ii) ideas of bodies give us “relative” ideas of the tertiary qualities of things that cause those changes.

Active elements in perception

External objects can only produce alterations in our sensory systems.

They do not convey ideas into us

And before the effects they have on our sensory systems can cause us to have ideas, we have to notice those effects

So there can be no unconscious perceptions.

Perception requires the co-operation of the understanding, as well as affection by the object.

It may be overlaid with further active elements as well, in the form of unnoticed judgments.

Locke's theory of vision

The immediate objects of vision are only two dimensional.

(We do not immediately see depth.)

(This is "made evident in painting.")

We think we see depth only because we infer 3-D properties from features of the immediately perceived 2-D objects.

These inferences are drawn so quickly and easily that they go unnoticed and we think that we are simply perceiving rather than judging.

As a consequence, those newly made to see should see in only two dimensions.

They should not, therefore, be able to tell in advance of experience what 3-D features belong to the objects they are seeing.

Thus, a person blind since birth and newly made to see should not be able to tell which of a globe and a cube is a globe and a cube, just by looking at the 2-D images of those objects.

The underlying point

A lot of things we think are immediately perceived are not.

So, a lot of things we might think are immediately perceived by inspection on the part of the intellect alone might not in fact be immediately perceived at all, but be the products of unnoticed inferences and other operations performed on ideas given by sense experience.

An unnoticed, serious challenge:

“the same Water may at the same time produce the Sensation of Heat in one Hand, and Cold in the other; which yet Figure never does, that never producing the *Idea* of square by one Hand, which has produced the *Idea* of Globe by another.” (II.viii.21)

Are our ideas of the spatial features of objects really common to both sight and touch? If not, are they really different from our type (ii) ideas?

(because in original visual perception we encounter objects that do not as a matter of fact possess these features)

(or possess corresponding features of such a radically different kind that the two cannot be taken to be the same, even though they are given the same names)

(Locke’s claim at II.viii.21 that we never get different ideas of figure from the same body may have been what motivated Molyneux’s question)

Locke's (and Molyneux's) answer to the question

The newly sighted person would see shaped, extended, and variously located colour patches

and so would get ideas of extension, shape, size, and motion from vision

However, the newly sighted person has no reason to believe that objects would be felt to have a certain shape merely because they look to have that shape

and the question concerns what they could *know*, not what they could *guess*.

Moreover, the shapes seen in vision are rarely identical to those felt in touch (they are 2-D projections of 3-D shapes), so this doubt is entirely motivated.

A further consideration

The newly sighted person's tactile experience of edges and corners and uniform surfaces does not map neatly onto their experience of variations in colour (the smooth globe is variously coloured, the uniformly coloured face of the cube has 4 prickly corners to the touch)

As a consequence, the newly sighted person may not apply the same concepts or names for shapes to the objects of vision that the sighted do, even though they can identify shapes.

Locke's inept accounts of memory

(i) as a storehouse for ideas not currently being perceived

(if ideas cannot exist apart from being perceived, they cannot be stored)

(ii) as a capacity to revive previously perceived ideas together with the thought that they were had before

(what gives us the idea of "beforeness"?)

(supposing we have such an idea, why would we attach it to an idea we have *now*?)