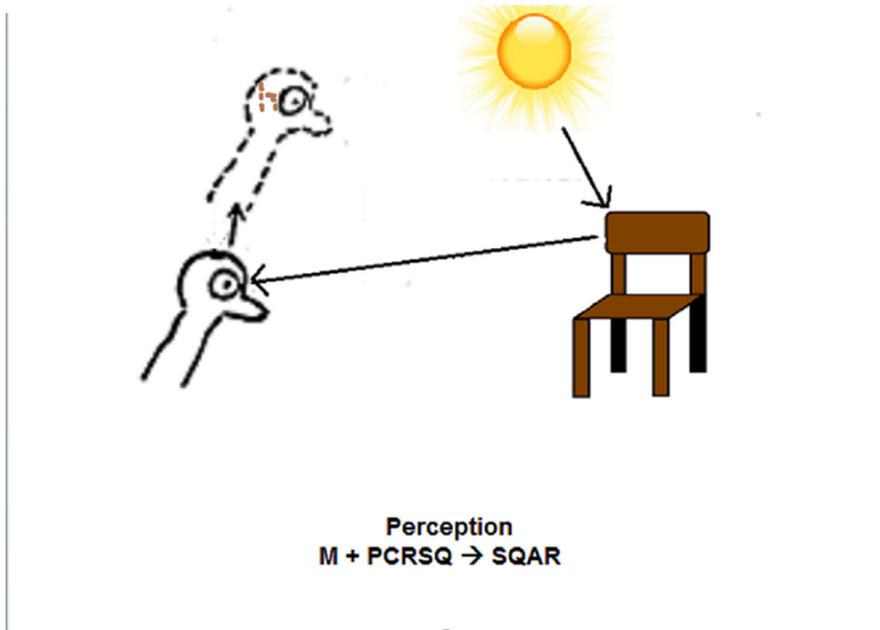


Locke 2



Locke—and Descartes—on Ideas as the immediate objects of thought:

-I,1,8(p. 1): sloppy def. of idea: “whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks”
-but, Locke seems to use “idea” such that ideas are in the mind. The definition above would seem to imply that we can only think about things in our own mind.

-II,8,8 (p. 9): more careful statement: “whatever the mind perceives in itself or is the *immediate* object of perception, thought, or understanding” (emphasis added)

-compare Descartes:

Considering the ideas of all these qualities which presented themselves to my thought, although the ideas were, strictly speaking, the only *immediate* objects of my sensory awareness, it was not unreasonable for me to think that the items which I was perceiving through the senses were things quite distinct from my thought, namely bodies which produced the ideas.

–6th par. of M6, AT 75.2, Cottingham translation, emph added; compare our tr., p. 49.7

Knowledge, especially of “Real Existence”

-at 4,1,1-2, p. 15: “Our knowledge conversant about our ideas only”!

-yet at 4,1,3, p. 15:, Locke allows that we have some knowledge of “Real existence”

-4,10,1-3, pp. 15-16: Knowledge of God seems to come via a causal inference from one’s own existence

-Knowledge of anything else “is to be had only by actual sensation” (4,11,1, p. 16). Seems to just squeak in as knowledge, through some generosity: “not so certain as demonstration, yet may be called knowledge” (4,11,3, p. 16).

-But (in terms Hume will pick up), “this knowledge extends as far as the present testimony of our senses” (4,11,9, p. 19) and (added at 4,11,11, pp. 19-20) our memory of what our senses testified to in the past.

-No such generosity is extended to the present existence of things not now sensed (4,11,9, p. 19), or of the existence of “other finite spirits” (4,11,12, p. 20)!