

Chapter 8, Perception: Rationalism and Empiricism

Descartes

1. Cartesian dualism:

- a) Denied purposeful tendencies in the world
 - world is a vast machine operating according to God's constant laws
- b) Sharp division between the mental and the physical world
 - problem = what is the relationship between mind and matter

2. Descartes' rationalism – Three central tenets:

- a) World is comprised of two realms – **the mental and the material**
- b) **We are members of the mental realm** – we possess a 'substantial ego' or 'self':
 - (i) **We can only know ideas**
 - Innate ideas are implanted by God and are known for certain
 - Therefore we can reason, we can know God, and we can apprehend universal truths
 - (ii) **Our senses can deceive us**
- c) There are **causal interactions** between the two realms:
 - (i) **When we will**: when we make up our minds to do something requiring bodily movement
 - (ii) In our **perception** of material things:
 - I. Our perceptions or ideas are immediate and unproblematically known
 - e.g. a mental state of fear – needs no proof
 - II. What they might represent – objects in the material world – cannot be known in this direct way
 - if they can be known at all, they must be inferred from the ideas they cause in us = the causal theory of perception

3. The external world:

Sense perceptions resemble, at least in part, the material entities that cause them
Therefore, we can infer:

- a) existence of the object
- b) its properties and qualities

Locke

Rejects Descartes' confidence in the insights of reason

- 1. Experience and the **evidence of our senses = the ultimate source of knowledge**
 - not Descartes' unsupportable 'intuitions'
- 2. Rejects the exclusive reliance upon **deduction**
 - advocates the use of both deduction and induction from empirical premises
- 3. Allowed for **probability** and for 'degrees of assent'
- 4. **No innate ideas**
 - the mind is a '**tabula rasa**' – there are no ideas 'born into' us prior to experience

Chapter 8, Perception: Rationalism and Empiricism continued

- a) Like Descartes – only some of our ideas resemble qualities in the objects
- b) **Simple ideas** – from sensation and reflection:
 - (i) **'primary qualities'**
e.g. shape, solidity, extension, size, etc.
 - (ii) **'secondary qualities'** – many other ideas caused in us by objects that don't resemble the object
e.g. colour, sounds, taste, etc.
 - (iii) Primary and secondary qualities = ideas that enter the mind **simple and unmixed** via various sensory channels
– the mind then combines them in a mosaic fashion = atomistic theory of perception
- c) **Complex ideas** – mind stores simple ideas – by reflection reproduces them and combines them to form complex ideas