

Rationalism and Empiricism

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Theory of Ideas

- Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge?



- ...To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. **Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves,** is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.

Taxonomy of Ideas

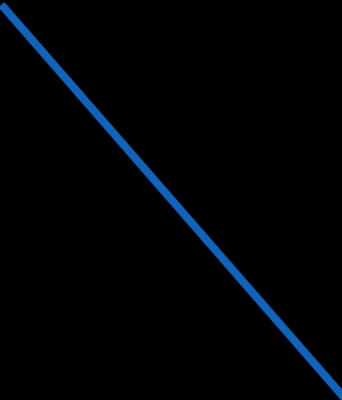
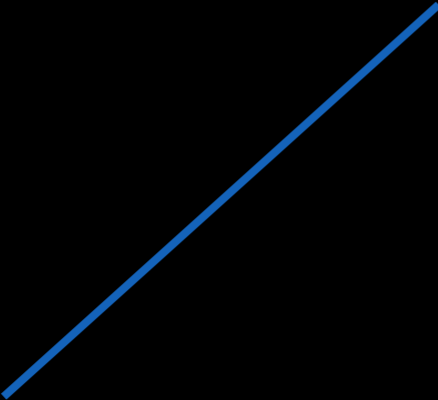
- Locke says that all ideas enter the mind by one of two sources:
- Sensation
- Reflection

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graph TD; Ideas[Ideas] --- Sensation((Sensation)); Ideas --- Reflection{Reflection}
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Ideas

Sensation

Reflection



Simple

Complex

- How does Locke's taxonomy explain our thinking?
- Let's take a few examples: tasting an apple, looking at a stop sign, doing mathematics, remembering what I had for breakfast

The Return of the Wax

Recall again Descartes' experiment with the wax.



What results did Descartes think it showed?

The Return of the Wax

What would
a Lockean
wax
experiment
show?

Would we come to
know anything “new”
about the wax?



The Taxonomy

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graph TD; Ideas[Ideas] --- Sensation((Sensation)); Ideas --- Reflection{Reflection}
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Ideas

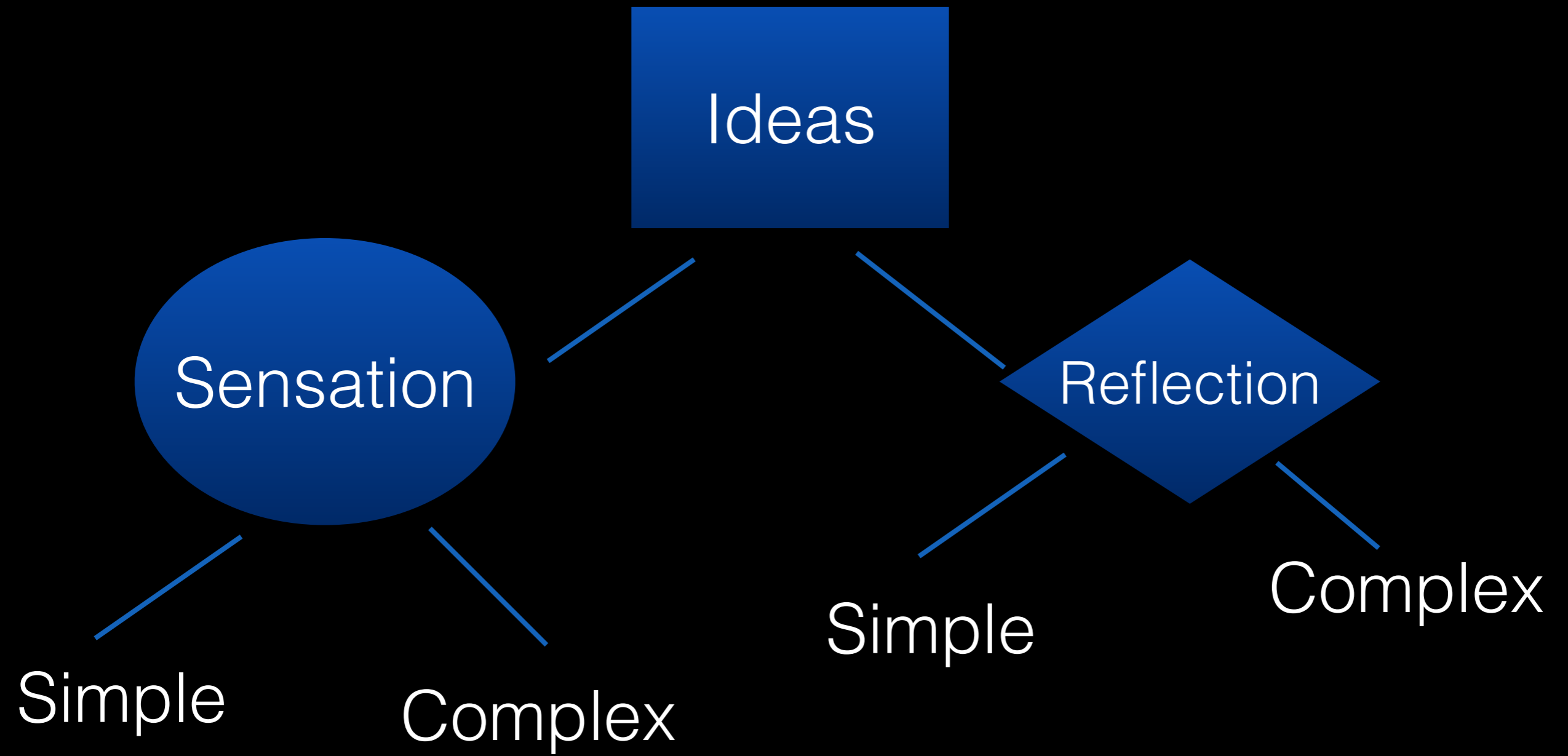
Sensation

Reflection

Ideas

Sensation

Reflection



Complex ideas of substances

- How is it that I acquire the idea of an apple? What makes it the same thing over time?
- Locke says the answer is that we have a complex idea of the substance...
- Book II, chapter 23... (pp 52-54)

- Recall again the ship of Theseus puzzle.
- Suppose that we can change each of the parts of the ship with parts identical to the first.
- Is it still the same ship? If so, what is the ground for saying so?
- Given what Locke says, what does his answer seem to be?



According to Locke,
the wax has a substratum.
What is Locke's argument for this?

- Remember that any idea I have, according to Locke, must come from the senses, or from reflecting on the powers of the mind.
- The question is, are the senses able to furnish us with the idea of substance?
- (Later, compare Berkeley and Hume on this point...)

Implication of the view

- Locke extends this reasoning to the domain of personal identity
- The question is: what makes someone the same person over time?

- Let's look at what Locke says at Book 2, ch 27 (pp 66-9)

“If a sleeping man thinks without knowing it, the sleeping and waking man are two persons.”

Why does Locke think this?

Locke on Knowledge

- In Book 4, Locke gives his account of knowledge.
- What is knowledge of?
- What kinds does it have?

KNOWLEDGE then seems to me to be nothing but
THE PERCEPTION OF THE
CONNEXION OF AND AGREEMENT, OR
DISAGREEMENT AND REPUGNANCY OF ANY OF
OUR
IDEAS. In this alone it consists.

But to understand a little more distinctly wherein this agreement or disagreement consists, I think we may reduce it all to these four sorts:

- I. IDENTITY, or DIVERSITY.
- II. RELATION.
- III. CO-EXISTENCE, or NECESSARY
CONNEXION.
- IV. REAL EXISTENCE.

- How does each type of knowledge work?

Within these four sorts of agreement or disagreement is, I suppose, contained all the knowledge we have, or are capable of. For all the inquiries we can make concerning any of our ideas, all that we know or can affirm concerning any of them, is, That it is, or is not, the same with some other; that it does or does not always co-exist with some other idea in the same subject; that it has this or that relation with some other idea; or that it has a real existence without the mind.

Thus, 'blue is not yellow,' is of identity. 'Two triangles upon equal bases between two parallels are equal,' is of relation. 'Iron is susceptible of magnetical impressions,' is of co-existence. 'God is,' is of real existence.

- How far does our knowledge extend?

- 1. Intuitive knowledge
- 2. Demonstrative knowledge
- What is the difference between each?

- Notice what Locke says about skepticism...

- Let's look at book 4, chapter 4

If any one say, a dream may do the same thing, and all these ideas may be produced, in us without any external objects; he may please to dream that I make him this answer:—1. That it is no great matter, whether I remove his scruple or no: where all is but dream, reasoning and arguments are of no use, truth and knowledge nothing. 2. That I believe he will allow a very manifest difference between dreaming of being in the fire, and being actually in it. But yet if he be resolved to appear so sceptical as to maintain, that what I call being actually in the fire is nothing but a dream; and that we cannot thereby certainly know, that any such thing as fire actually exists without us:

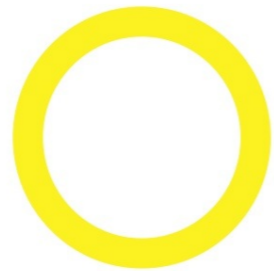
I answer, That we certainly find that pleasure or pain follows upon the application of certain objects to us, whose existence we perceive, or dream that we perceive, by our senses; this certainty is as great as our happiness or misery, beyond which we have no concernment to know or to be.

The Big Picture

Locke



Berkeley



Hume



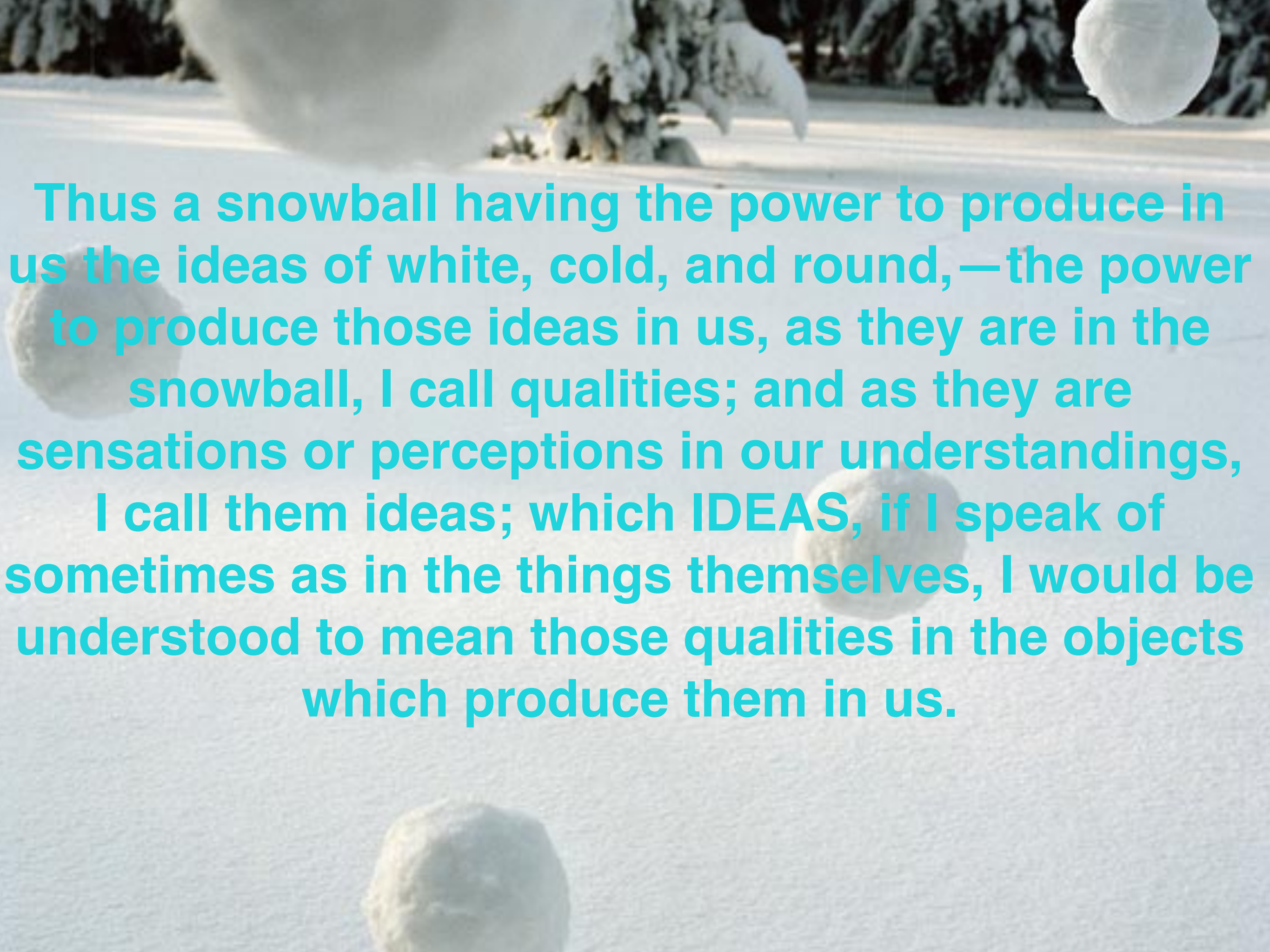
Primary vs Secondary Qualities

- Locke introduces the distinction in Book 2, chapter 8, secs 7-9
- (we will see that this distinction is quite important when we move on to Berkeley)

Ideas in the Mind, Qualities in Bodies.

To discover the nature of our IDEAS the better, and to discourse of them intelligibly, 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

Whatsoever the mind perceives IN ITSELF, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call IDEA; and the power to produce any idea in our mind, I call QUALITY of the subject wherein that power is.

A snowy landscape with several snowballs scattered on the ground. The background shows snow-covered trees and a bright sky. The text is overlaid in a bold, cyan font.

Thus a snowball having the power to produce in us the ideas of white, cold, and round,—the power to produce those ideas in us, as they are in the snowball, I call qualities; and as they are sensations or perceptions in our understandings, I call them ideas; which IDEAS, if I speak of sometimes as in the things themselves, I would be understood to mean those qualities in the objects which produce them in us.

- Let's look at section 9...

Robert Boyle

- Locke's distinction is founded on a different concept of matter: Corpuscularianism
- This view was developed by Robert Boyle
- According to Boyle,