This presentation is about the question, is there an external world? I will be discussing 5 thinkers’ opinions and what I think of them. I will compare them and discuss any loopholes.

Rene Descartes was one of the earlier philosophers and used logic to base his theories on. One of his theories was based on sensory illusions. He said that if his senses lied to him, and if they were all that his experience was based upon, then how can he trust his experience. Therefore, he claimed that everything was completely external to him. For example, the iPad that I am typing this up on is in a completely different world, maybe even dimension. This theory also implies upon the separation of body and mind, so my mind is my world and this body is alien to me. I don’t believe in this theory neurology (being the leading art of the brain) clearly states that there are electrical currents from the brain that control what the bodies do.\*

John Locke was a strong believer in fact. He believed that everything had a theory behind it and that Descartes’s idea was nonsense. His theory was that everything existed and that you can’t prove him wrong. For example, if I am sat on a chair, I can feel it, smell it, and taste it therefore this chair exist. I know that the chair is a bundle of protons neutrons and electrons therefore it exists however I cannot see it in its true form. I can only see it in an alternate perception. I personally believe that this is a plausible explanation but I can’t see it to the end because I cannot seem to grasp how I can see something differently that it is but feel it the way my eyes see it.\*

George Berkeley believed the complete opposite of Locke and an extreme version of Descartes’s theory. He believed that anything we think as real is just an idea. Perception is the only real thing. He says that we can only see colour because the mind cannot see without colour. On that basis, he also stated that shape is a mere concept and that our mind is the only thing that I know is real. I honestly believe that he is completely wrong in that how can I live in an ‘ideal’ world is that things exist as ideas when I cannot control my mind because it is illogically independent.

Karl Friston believes in the idea of boundaries and perceptions. He says that anything that has a boundary exists but we cannot be sure that the existing perception is actually real. He says that it definitely exists, but in a different form. For example a pen exists but said pen may be a banana in its real form. He is also a mathematician and likes to work his theories into numbers so they can be incredibly difficult to work with. I honestly think that his idea is the best that there is. His reputation as the most cited philosopher definitely helps in his reliability. He is a neurologist so he knows the brain well and has a solid basis that is easy to work with and as close as we can get to true.\*

Rupert Read, on the other hand, believes that these questions are irrelevant. That we must deal with the current situation with no regrets or complaints. We must embrace the fact that we will die and not dwell on it to maximise the time we live for. Nothing matters except for the fact that we accept that what is happening is happening and to get on with the task at hand. I think that this is a great way of living life because it minimises the suffering that we induce upon ourselves when we procrastinate and dwell on dark things. It is also a very to the point theory.\*

In conclusion to all of this, I believe in a mix between Karl Friston and John Locke’s idea. I believe that anything that has boundaries exist but we are not seeing it in it’s true form and the form that we see it in varies from person to person.

References:

* \*The brilliant club booklet. N/D The institute of art and ideas