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**Author:** Legg, Cathy

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**Abstract:** Much mainstream analytic epistemology is built around a sceptical treatment of modality which descends from Hume. The roots of this scepticism are argued to lie in Hume’s (nominalist) theory of perception, which is excavated, studied and compared with the very different (realist) theory of perception developed by Peirce. It is argued that Peirce’s theory not only enables a considerably more nuanced and effective epistemology, it also (unlike Hume’s theory) does justice to what happens when we appreciate a proof in mathematics.

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