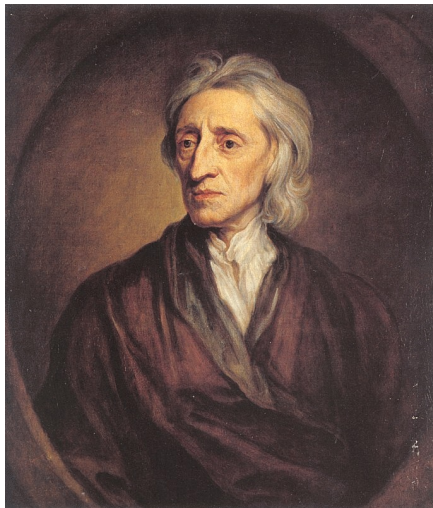


**Philosophy 203**  
***History of Modern Western Philosophy***

**Russell Marcus**  
**Hamilton College**  
**Spring 2011**



**Class 13 - Locke Intro**

# Midterm

- 8 of 14 from short list

# Locke's *Essay*

- over-written
- long-winded
- insightful
- fecund
- your grandmother's attic



# ***koinai ennoia***

- Descartes had pure intuitions, and clear and distinct perceptions of innate ideas.
  - the self
  - God
  - mathematics
  - laws of physics
- Spinoza
  - rational and intuitive knowledge
  - Our minds are literally part of God.
- Leibniz
  - truths of reason
  - Against transeunt causation, monads are self-contained.
- Grand metaphysical systems which claimed that reality is much different from our ordinary interpretations of sense experience.

# Locke's Goal

- limit the scope of the understanding
- reign in the speculative metaphysics
  - “It may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension, to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether, and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities” (I.I.4, AW 317a).
- Avoid skepticism
  - Descartes's standard for knowledge is too high.
  - “If we disbelieve everything because we cannot certainly know all things, we shall do quite as wisely as he who would not use his legs, but sit still and perish, because he had no wings to fly” (I.I.5, AW 317b-318a).
- The rationalists' epistemology is bloated.
  - “Men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions, and may arrive at certainty without any such original notions or principles”(I.II.1, AW 319a).

# Four Central Topics in Locke's Work

1. Arguments against innate ideas
2. The primary/secondary distinction
3. An account of personal identity, including Locke's approach to the mind/body problem
4. Locke's philosophy of language, including the doctrine of abstract ideas