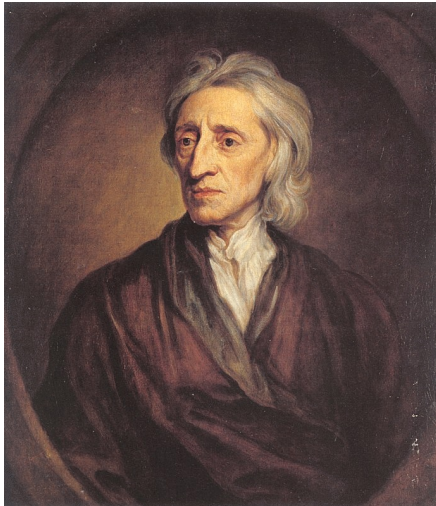


**Philosophy 203**  
***History of Modern Western Philosophy***

**Russell Marcus**  
**Hamilton College**  
**Spring 2016**



Class #14 - Locke  
Perception  
Mind and Thought  
Identity and the Self

# Business

- Writing Assignments
  - ▶ Generally excellent
  - ▶ An exemplar
    - Close attention to text
    - Original examples
  - ▶ Block quotes
    - Indent
    - Single space
    - No quotation marks
- Peer Reviews!

# Empiricism Topics

- ✓1. The primary/secondary distinction
- ✓2. Locke's arguments against innate ideas
- 3. Empiricism and perception
- 4. Locke on Minds, Bodies, and Thought
- 5. Locke's account of personal identity
- 6. The doctrine of abstract ideas
  - Locke for
  - Berkeley against
- 7. Three arguments for idealism
  - against the reality of primary qualities
- 8. Idealist accounts of mathematics and science

# Team Activity

## The Molyneux Problem

- “Suppose a man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a cube and a sphere of the same metal, and nearly of the same bigness, so as to tell, when he felt one and the other, which is the cube, which the sphere. Suppose then the cube and sphere placed on a table, and the blind man be made to see. Quaere, whether by his sight, before he touched them, he could now distinguish and tell which is the globe, which the cube?” (II.IX.8, AW 338b).
- In other words, could a person, blind from birth and suddenly given sight, be able to tell a sphere from a cube by mere sight?
  1. What do you think is the right answer?
  2. Which answer should Locke give?
- Answer first as individuals, then as a team.
- Report on whiteboards.



# Perceptions

- The British Empiricists hold, with Locke, that individual perceptions are simple and independent.
  - *particularism*
  - Wittgenstein and Russell
  - Logical empiricism
- Impressions of the same object under different sense modalities are independent.
  - The taste of the lemon is independent of its yellowness, and of its texture and odor.
- Locke's claim that the sense modalities are independent explains his response to the Molyneux problem.

# Sensation and Reflection

- Simple ideas of sensation come from individual sense experiences of particular objects.
  - We can hold those ideas in memory, and recall them.
  - Language primarily consists of names of our simple ideas.
- Using our naturally developing ability to reflect, we can go beyond the limits of particular sense experience, and memory of such experience.
  - “The other fountain from which experience furnishes the understanding with ideas is the *perception of the operations of our own mind* within us, as it is employed about the *ideas* it has gotten - which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of *ideas*, which could not be had from things without. And such are *perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing*, and all the different actings of our own minds, which we, being conscious of and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into our understandings as distinct *ideas* as we do from bodies affecting our senses... I call this REFLECTION” (II.1.4, AW 323b).

# Varieties of Reflection

- Locke uses 'reflection' to cover a wide variety of psychological capacities.
  - ▶ contemplation
  - ▶ memory
  - ▶ discerning
  - ▶ comparison
    - Similarity and difference
    - Agreement or disagreement among ideas
    - “This is so absolutely necessary that without it there could be no knowledge, no reasoning, no imagination, no distinct thoughts, at all. But this the mind clearly and infallibly perceives each *idea* to agree with itself, and to be what it is, and all distinct *ideas* to disagree, i.e., the one not to be the other, And this it does **without pains, labor, or deduction, but at first view, by its natural power of perception and distinction**” (IV.I.4, AW 386b, emphasis added).
  - ▶ composition
    - Demonstrative knowledge (as in mathematical proofs)
    - “*Morality [is] among the sciences capable of demonstration*; in which I do not doubt but from self-evident propositions, by necessary consequences, as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out to anyone who will apply himself with the same indifference and attention to the one as he does to the other of these sciences... “*Where there is no property, there is no injustice,*” is a proposition as certain as any demonstration in *Euclid*” (IV.III.18, AW 397b-398a.).
  - ▶ abstraction

# God

- Locke argues that even our idea of God comes from experience, rather than from naturally imprinted first principles.
- “If we examine the *idea* we have of the incomprehensible supreme being, we shall find that...the complex *ideas* we have both of God and separate spirits are made of the simple *ideas* we receive from *reflection*: e.g. having, from what we experiment in ourselves, gotten the *ideas* of existence and duration; of knowledge and power; of pleasure and happiness; and of several other qualities and powers, which it is better to have than to be without. When we would frame an *idea* the most suitable we can to the Supreme Being, we enlarge every one of these with our *idea* of infinity; and so putting them together, make our complex *idea of God*” (II.XXIII.33, AW 366b).



# Challenges for Locke

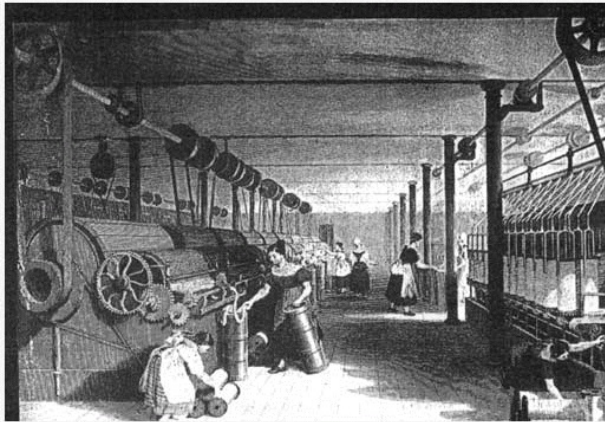
- We have seen that Locke criticizes innate ideas, and argues that we have psychological capacities for attaining reflective knowledge.
- Further, he criticized Descartes's demand for indubitable certainty.
- In the place of innate ideas, he has sensation and reflection.
- Let's see how the view plays out with some familiar themes:
  - Minds and bodies
  - Mathematics
  - The Self

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# Locke, Materialism, Dualism

- Locke was suspected of Hobbesian materialism.
  - His account of mental causation is basically Galilean.
- But he writes like a dualist.
  - Much talk of souls and God
  - Saddled with a typical mind-body problem



# Team Activity

## Locke and the Mind-Body Problem

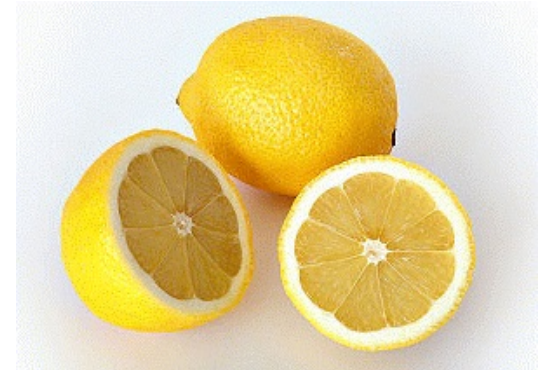
- Locke's view of the relation between minds and bodies seems different from others we've seen.
  - ▶ We have the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or not, it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without revelation, to discover whether omnipotence has not given to some systems of matter fitly disposed a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to matter so disposed a thinking immaterial substance—it being in respect of our notions not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking, since we do not know in what thinking consists, nor to what sort of substance the Almighty has been pleased to give that power, which cannot be in any created being, but merely by the good pleasure and bounty of the Creator. (Locke's *Essay*, IV.3.6)
- Which of the given interpretations of Locke's view is best?

# Team Activity

## Connections Between Primary and Secondary Qualities

- Our minds not being able to discover any connection between these primary qualities of bodies and the sensations that are produced in us by them, we can never be able to establish certain and undoubted rules of the consequence or coexistence of any secondary qualities, though we could discover the size, figure, or motion of those invisible parts which immediately produce them. We are so far from knowing what figure, size, or motion of parts produce a yellow color, a sweet taste, or a sharp sound that we can by no means conceive how any size, figure, or motion of any particles can possibly produce in us the idea of any color, taste, or sound whatsoever; there is no conceivable connection between the one and the other.
- Which interpretation best captures Locke's about the connection between the primary and secondary qualities?
  - A. We do not and can not know how the primary qualities are related to the secondary qualities.
  - B. We do not know how or why the primary and secondary qualities are connected, but we can observe those connections.
  - C. We do not know how the primary qualities are connected to the secondary qualities, but we know that they are connected.
  - D. The primary qualities are causes of our secondary qualities, but other kinds of secondary qualities could come from the same primary qualities.
  - E. The primary qualities are the cases of the secondary qualities.

# The Hard Problem



- So, why do the lemons appear yellow?
- Why is it that such and such motions in the air cause me to hear a symphony?
- Why is it that certain wavelengths of light cause me to see blue?
- We lack an explanation of the connection between my quale and its cause.
- The easy problem of consciousness: finish neuroscience
- The hard problem: explain the connections
  - Not just a list of correlations.

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# Who Am I?





# The Problem of Material Constitution

## The Ship of Theseus

- We can replace every plank on the ship, one at a time.
- It changes its material composition completely, but remains the same ship.
- We can make a new ship with the old wood, and find ourselves completely confused about what to say.
- Is the ship that Theseus uses, with all new materials, his ship?
- Or, is the new ship made of the old wood his ship?
- My dishwasher



# The Self

- We might make a distinction between artifacts and natural kinds.
  - Maybe there are no facts about the ship of Theseus or the dishwasher.
  - Maybe the ship itself *is* constantly changing.
  - We have a merely practical problem of determining which ship belongs to Theseus.
- For our selves, and other natural kinds, we have a deeper problem.
  - We remain constant.
  - Our pets and our trees persist through time.
  - I have interests in the future of my self that I do not have for other people.
  - There seems to be an underlying haecceity.
- Descartes identified the self with the soul.
  - Reincarnation, Pre-existence, Eternality
- Hobbes identified the self with the body.
  - But ship of Theseus!
- Locke: the self is a moral (forensic) concept.
  - Used for practical purposes of ascribing responsibility