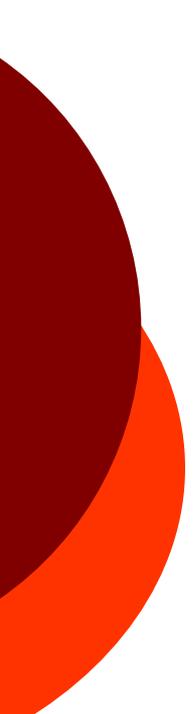


# V71LAR Locke, Appearance and Reality

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TOPIC 1: DO HUMANS POSSESS  
INNATE IDEAS?



# 1. Course logistics

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- Five compulsory seminars. Sign up using the Philosophy NEXUS website:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/philosophy/nexus](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/philosophy/nexus)
- All information in yellow Module Guide.
- Course WebCT page:  
<http://webct.nottingham.ac.uk/webct>

## 2. Metaphysics and Epistemology

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Does time flow?

What is change?

What is causation?

What is free will?

Is the world determined?

Is everything that exists physical?  
Mental?

What are minds?

How are minds related to bodies?

Do souls exist?

Do numbers exist?

Are there moral properties?

What is truth?

### Metaphysics

What is the difference between a particular object (such as *my cat*) and its properties (such as *grey, fluffy*)?

What is the differences between primary properties (such as *shape*) and secondary properties (such as *red*)?

What is a person?

## 2. Metaphysics and Epistemology, ctd.

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What is it that all instances of knowledge have in common that makes them knowledge? (Justified true belief?)

Can pure reason provide us with knowledge?

How do we know mathematical truths?

How do we know moral truths?

# Epistemology

Is knowledge possible?  
(The Sceptical Question)

Is there any innate knowledge?

How, if at all, does memory provide us with knowledge?

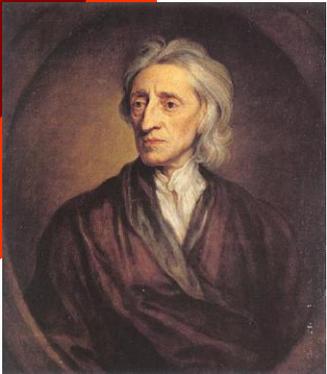
How, if at all, does sense-perception provide us with knowledge?

What makes a belief justified (i.e. reasonable to believe)?

# 3. Epistemology: Rationalism and Empiricism

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## ○ 'The British Empiricists'



- Locke. 1632-1704. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 1689.
- Berkeley. 1685-1753. *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* 1710.
- Hume. 1711-1776 *A Treatise of Human Nature* 1739-40.

## ○ 'The Continental Rationalists'



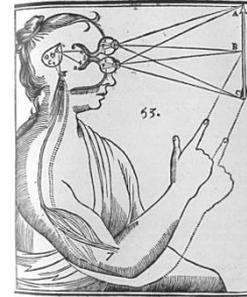
- Descartes. 1596-1650. *The Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1641.
- Leibniz. 1646-1716. *New Essays on Human Understanding*. 1704.
- Spinoza. 1632-1677. *Ethics* 1677.

# 3. Epistemology: Rationalism and Empiricism, ctd.

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**Rationalism:** Pure reason is an important source of our ideas and knowledge (in some specified subject area).



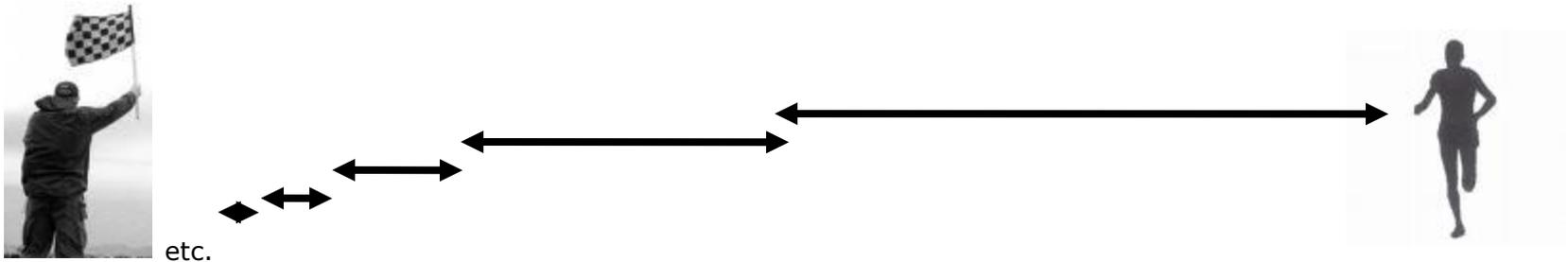
**Empiricism:** Sense-experience is an important source of our ideas and knowledge (in some subject specified area).

- 'Idea': "...whatsoever is the object of understanding when a man thinks...or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking" (*Essay* I.i.8). In our terms, a *concept*. E.g. **Mind, Body, Ham, Existence**. When ideas are put together they form *principles* (e.g. "Minds exist").
- 'Knowledge': A belief (in a principle) that is *justified* in the right sort of way.

# 3. Epistemology: Rationalism and Empiricism, ctd.

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- Rationalism
  - E.g. Eleatics (Parmenides, Zeno of Elea).
  - Zeno's argument against motion.



# 3. Epistemology: Rationalism and Empiricism, ctd.

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- Rationalism
  - E.g. Descartes.
  - Held that we can only trust sense-experience to deliver knowledge of the world *once we know* (by pure reason) that God exists and is no deceiver.
  - Also held that some concepts (e.g. **Substance, God**) were provided by pure reason ('the understanding').



# 3. Epistemology: Rationalism and Empiricism, ctd.

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- Empiricism. E.g. Locke



'Tabula Rasa'

*Genetic Empiricism*: Sense experience alone can explain where all our ideas come from. (*Essay II*)

- *Methodological Empiricism* (about the external world): Sense experience alone can provide us with all the knowledge of the external world we can have.
- Hence, for Locke, Philosophy (pure reason) was a mere 'under-labourer' to the empirical sciences. Unlike on Descartes' view, there is no 'first philosophy' required to underwrite the deliverances of sense-experience.

# 3. Epistemology: Rationalism and Empiricism, ctd.

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- Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).
- Intellectual shift away from Scholasticism (Aquinas, Aristotle, the Bible) towards the 'new experimentalism' (Bacon, Boyle, Kepler, Galileo, The Royal Society).
- "If we want to understand nature, we must consult nature and not the writings of Aristotle" (Bacon).
- Locke's task: "...before we set ourselves upon [other] inquiries...it [is] necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understanding were , or were not, fitted to deal with" (*Essay*, Epistle to the Reader)
- First task: Where does the mind get its ideas from?
  - *Essay* Book I: Attacks the rationalist account of the sources of our ideas (reason, innateness)
  - *Essay* Book II: Gives a positive empiricist account of the sources of our ideas (sense-experience)

# 4. Innate Ideas and the Great Argument

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- Locke's two Rationalist targets in Book I of the *Essay*:
  - A. *The innate concept/principle thesis*: We have some concepts/principles as part of our rational nature. (Wall calls this the 'psycho-genetic' claim.)
  - B. *The innate knowledge thesis*: We have knowledge of some truths as part of our rational nature. (Wall calls this the 'epistemological' claim.)
- Locke's primary attack is on (A).
- (Wall notes that Locke could have accepted (A) and attacked (B), as Parker had done before him.)

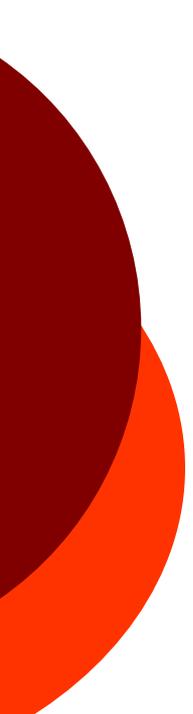
# 4. Innate Ideas and the Great Argument

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- The Great Argument in favour of the innate concept thesis (*Essay* I.ii.2):
  1. If a principle is universally accepted then it is innate (as are the ideas that make it up)
  2. There are some principles which are universally accepted

Therefore

3. These principles (and the ideas that make them up) are innate.



# Key points for the lecture

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- The accounts of **metaphysics and epistemology**
- Within epistemology, the differences between **rationalism** and **empiricism**.
- The **Great Argument** in favour of innate principles (and ideas)

# Reading

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## **Compulsory reading for first seminar**

- E.J. Lowe *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Locke on Human Understanding* (Routledge 1995). Chapters 1 & 2.
- Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* abridged and edited by K. Winkler (Hackett 1996). Book I, chapters 1-4.

## **References for this lecture**

- Wall, G. 'Locke's Attack on Innate Knowledge' in I. Tipton (ed.) *Locke on Human Understanding*.
- For additional reading, see module guide.

# Questions?

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- Use the discussion board on the WebCT page.
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- **Office hours:** Thursdays and Fridays 12-1(room C8a, top floor, Trent building).