



# Introduction to Philosophy

Epistemology: Empiricism

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# What Is Empiricism?



# ∞ Empiricism ∞

*sense experience is either:*

*the beginning of our  
knowledge  
about the world*

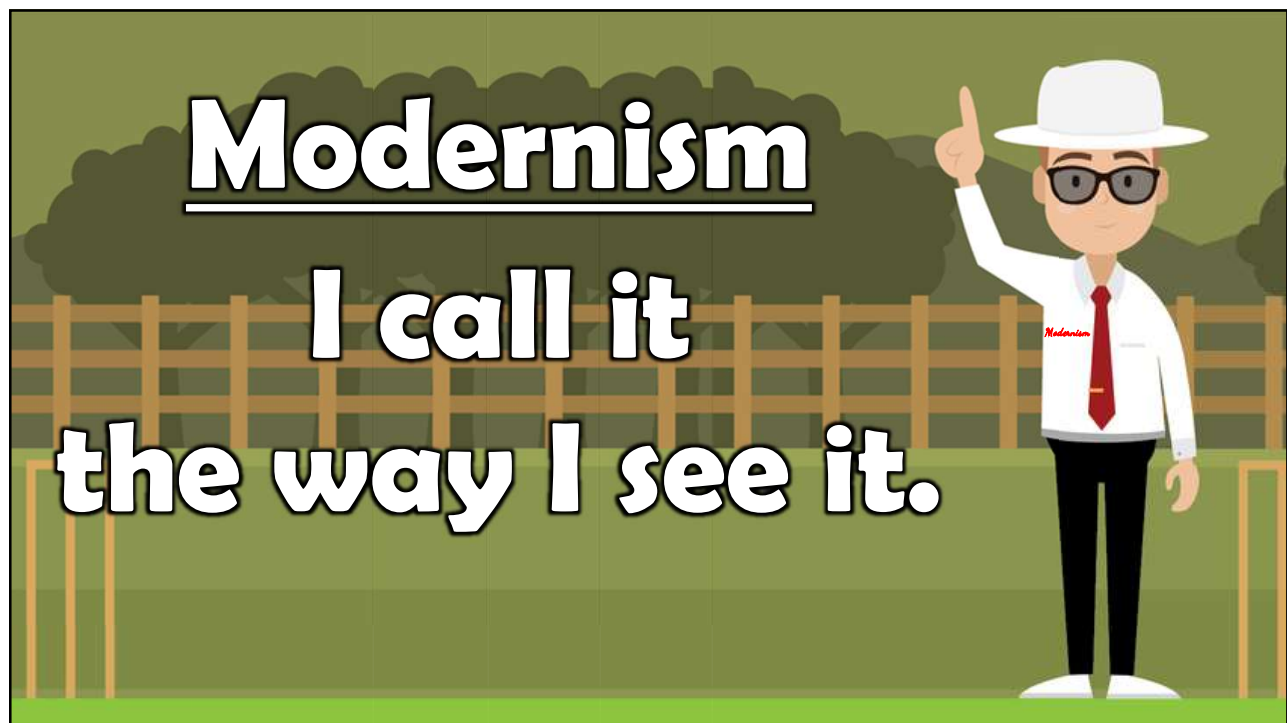
*or*

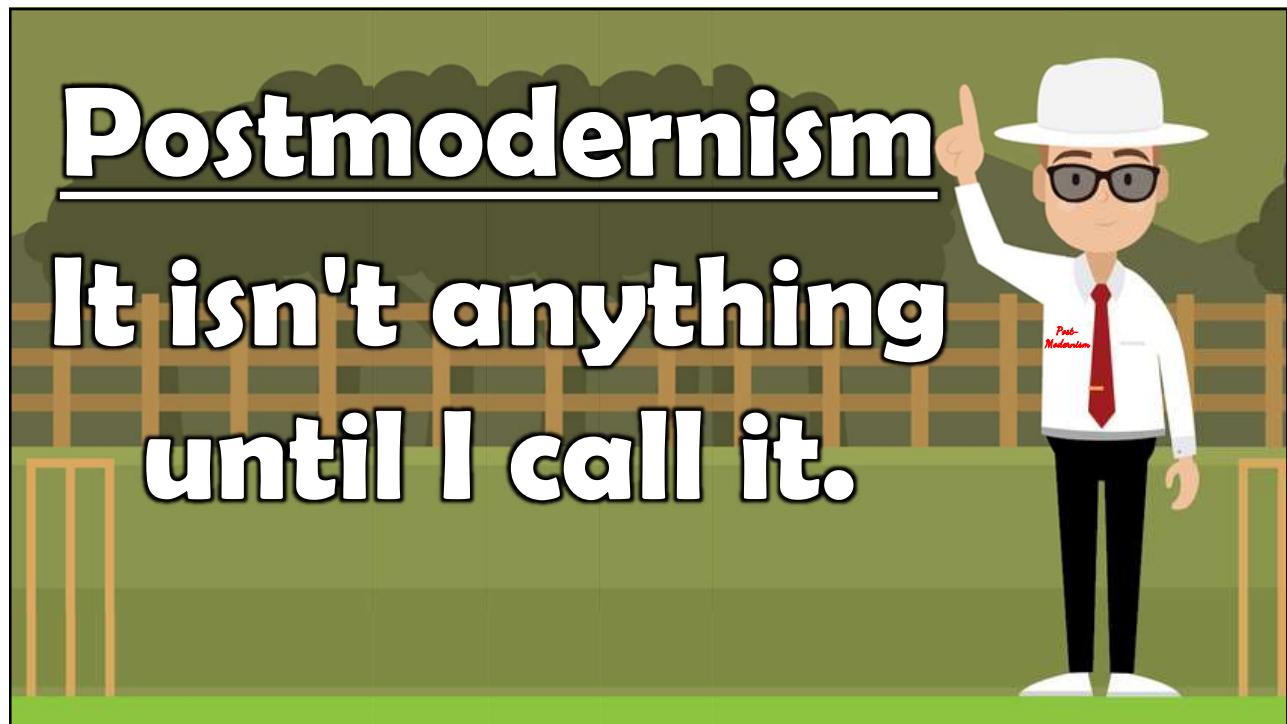
*the sole basis of our  
knowledge  
about the world*

Classical Empiricism

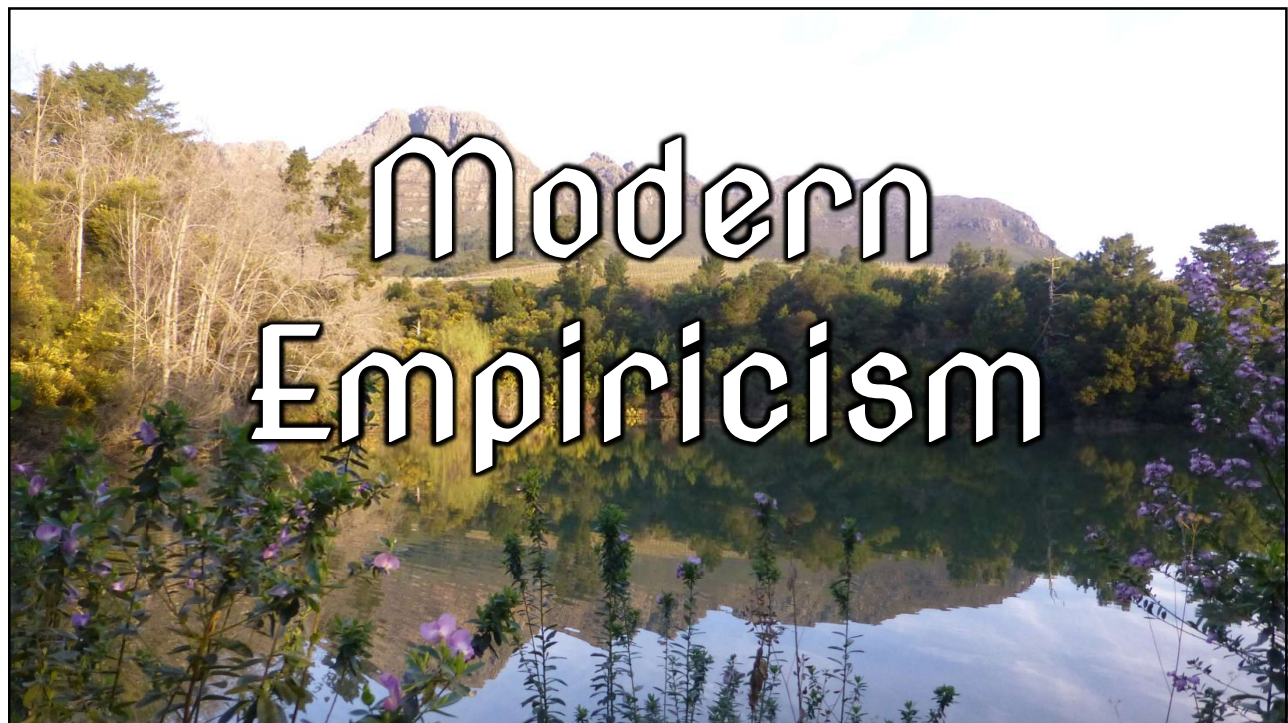
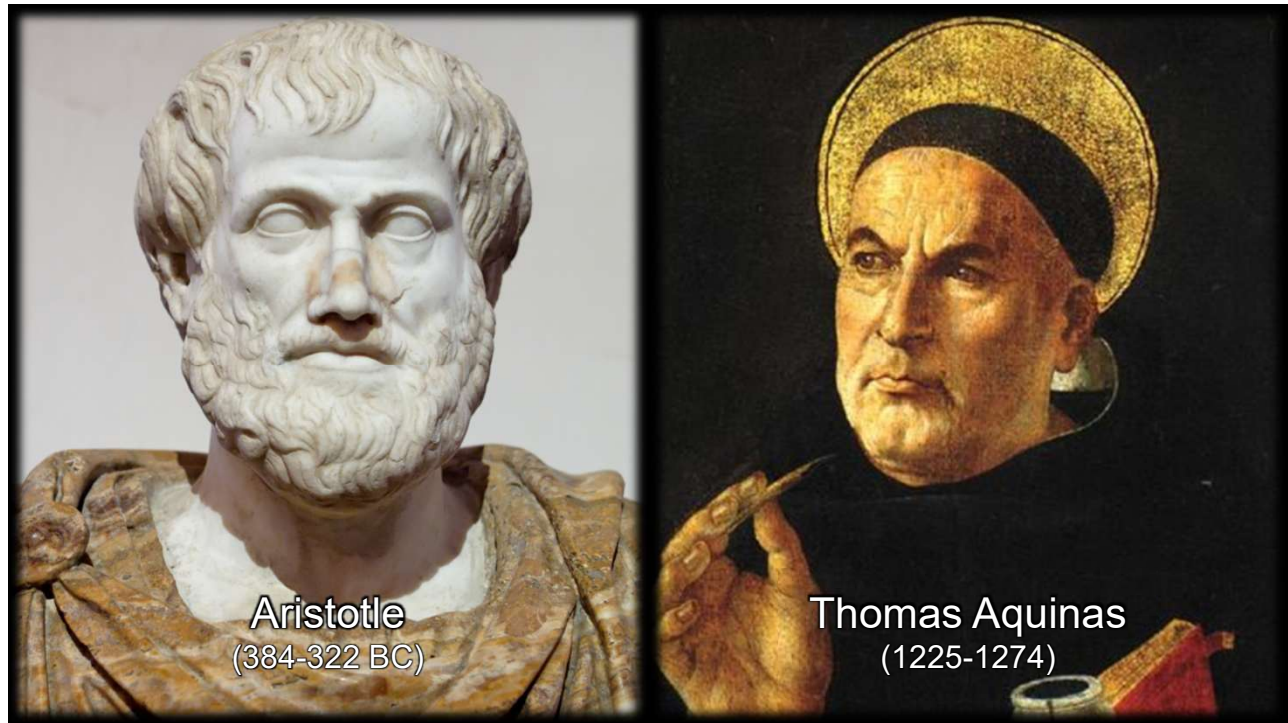
vs.

Modern & Contemporary  
Empiricism











John Locke  
(1623-1704)

George Berkeley  
(1685-1753)

David Hume  
(1711-1776)

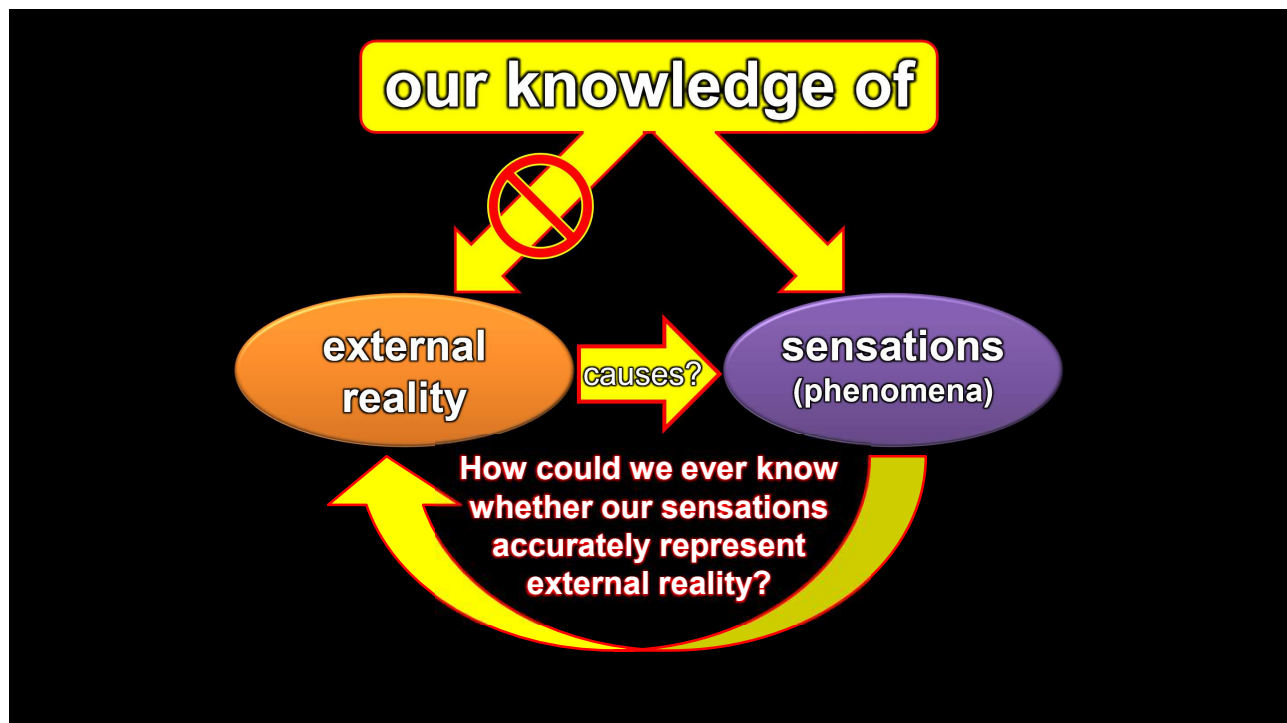
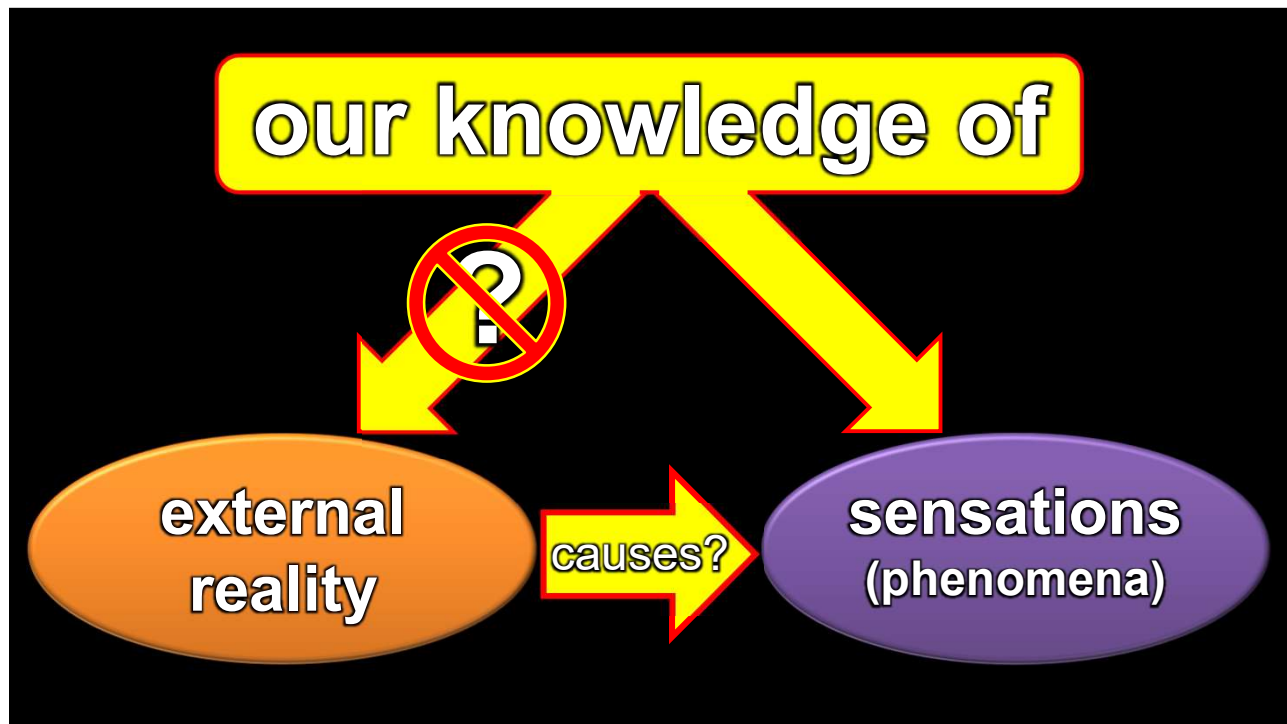
***Modern empiricism concerned itself largely with the knowing of:***

- ***"qualities" or "properties" (Locke), or***
- ***"ideas" and "perceiving" (Berkeley), or***
- ***"sensations" or "phenomena" (Hume).***



*Early on, modern empiricism was committed to the notion that such sensations were "caused" by external objects or by "substances," though such objects or substances were themselves ultimately inexplicable or unaccounted for by the wider philosophy of these Modern Empiricists.*

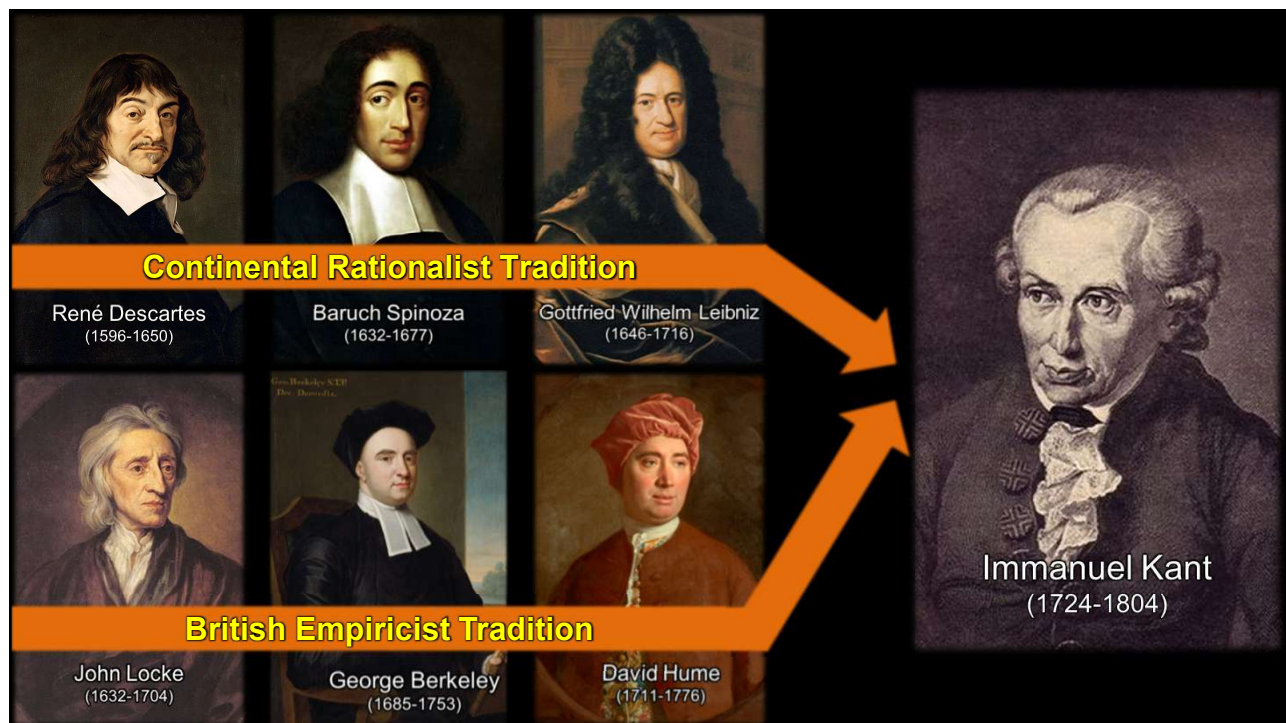
*Later, Modern Empiricists such as Hume began to realize the implications of such a divorce between knowing sensations (also called "phenomena") on the one hand and knowing reality antecedent to (and supposedly the "cause of") these sensations on the other.*





*Hume's challenge gave rise to his formidable skepticism about making philosophical conclusions about this external reality that supposedly causes our sensations.*

*This in turn led to a profound but failed attempt by Immanuel Kant to rebuild the bridge between empirical experience and certainty.*





*Modern Empiricism has continued to influence Western philosophy and has developed into what can be called Contemporary Empiricism.*



*With the transition from Modern Empiricism to Contemporary Empiricism, philosophers have less and less sought to understand human knowing along the categories of Classical metaphysics.*

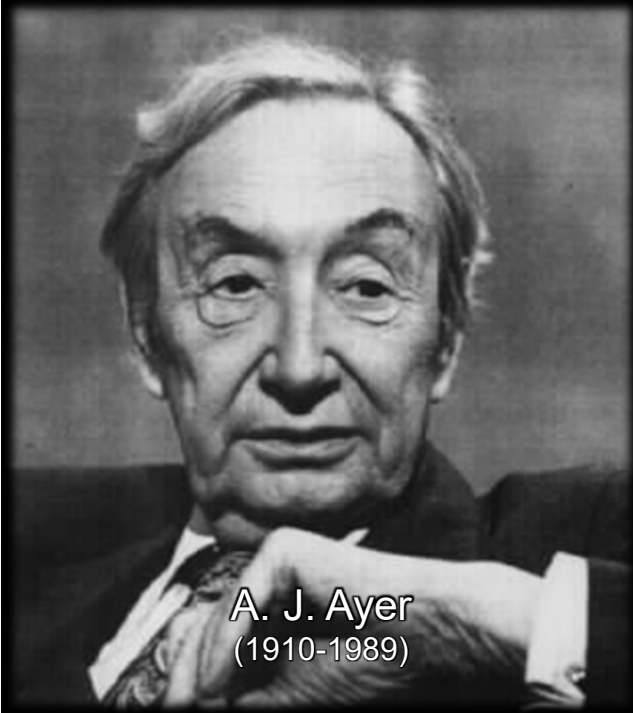
*Contemporary empiricism became absorbed into epistemology more broadly considered.*

*It concerned itself with issues related to the strict definition of terms and the rigors of formal logic (Analytic philosophy).*

*It attempted to eliminate the philosophical challenge of accounting for any antecedent realities like substances by restricting itself as a **second-order discipline** which should only be concerned with aiding the endeavors of the natural sciences.*



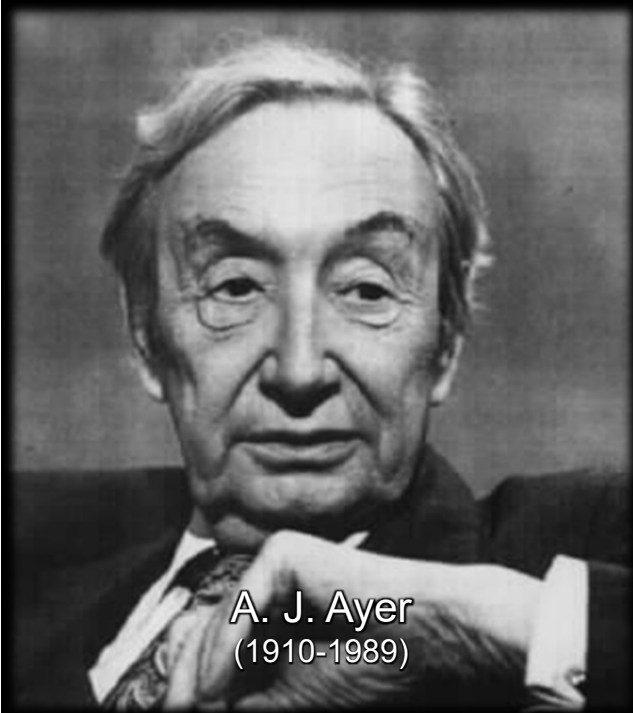




**A. J. Ayer**  
(1910-1989)

**"We mean also to rule out the supposition that philosophy can be ranged alongside the existing sciences, as a special department of speculative knowledge."**

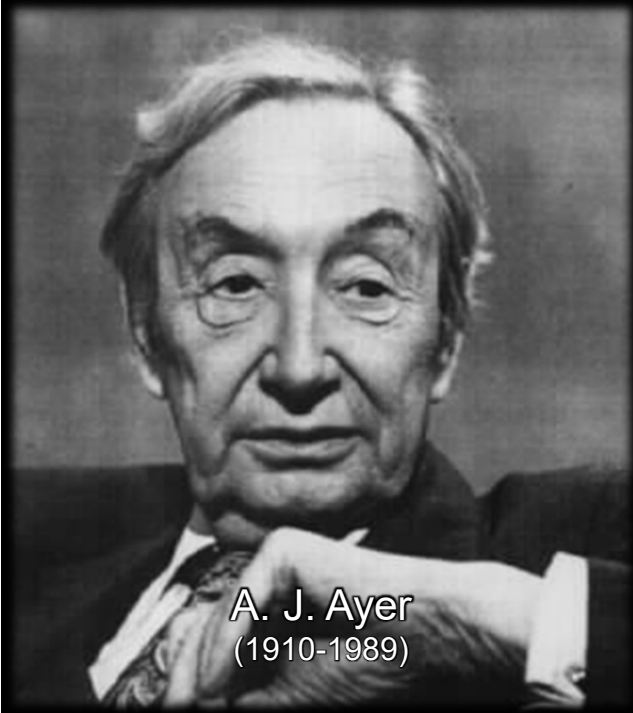
[A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), p. 48]



**A. J. Ayer**  
(1910-1989)

**"There is no field of experience which cannot, in principle, be brought under some form of scientific law, and no type of speculative knowledge about the world which it is, in principle, beyond the power of science to give."**

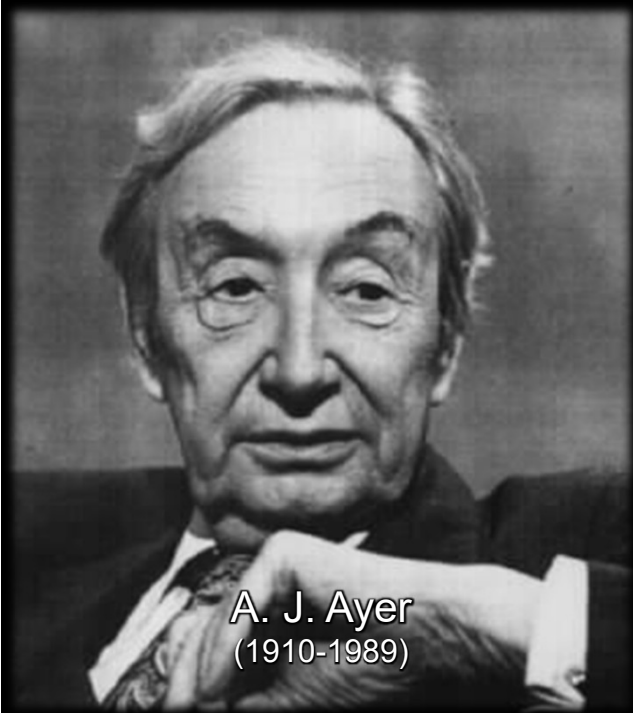
[Ayer, *Language*, p. 48]



A. J. Ayer  
(1910-1989)

"But, actually, the validity of the analytic method is not dependent on any empirical, much less any metaphysical, presupposition about the nature of things. For the philosopher, as an analyst, is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. He is concerned only with the way in which we speak about them. In other words, the propositions of philosophy are not factual, but linguistic in character."

[Ayer, *Language*, p. 57]



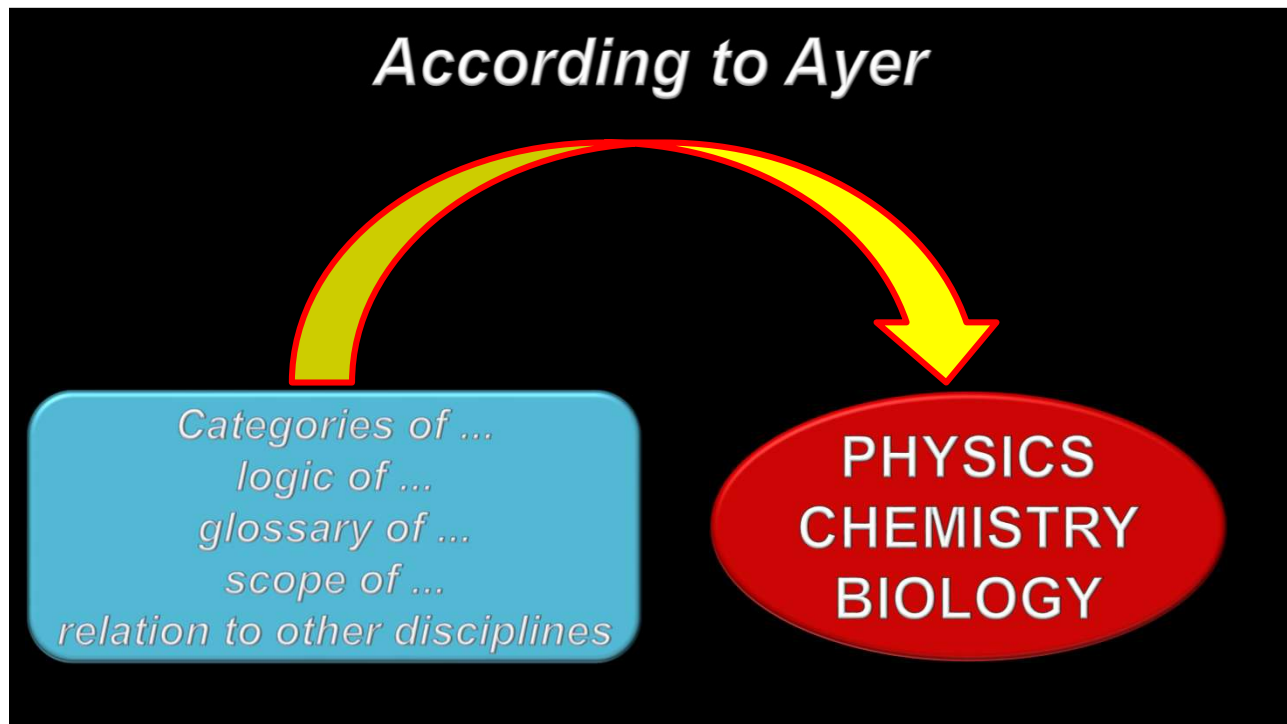
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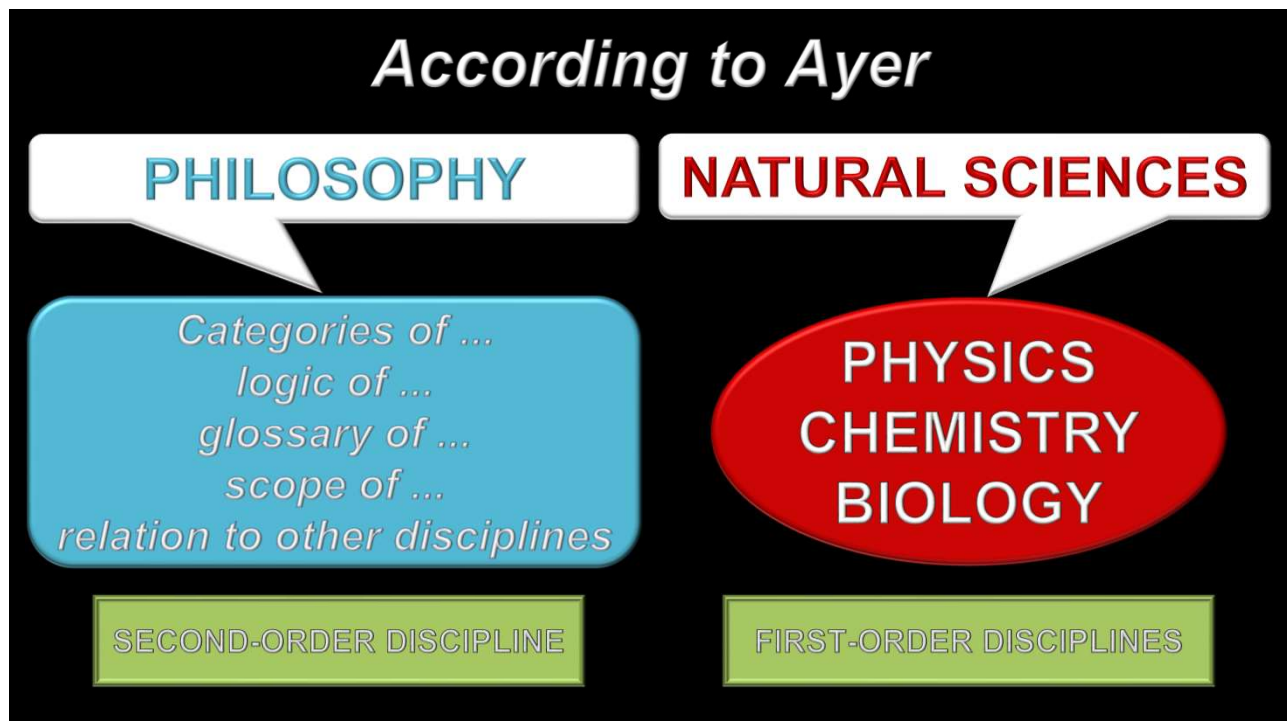
[Ayer, *Language*, p. 57]

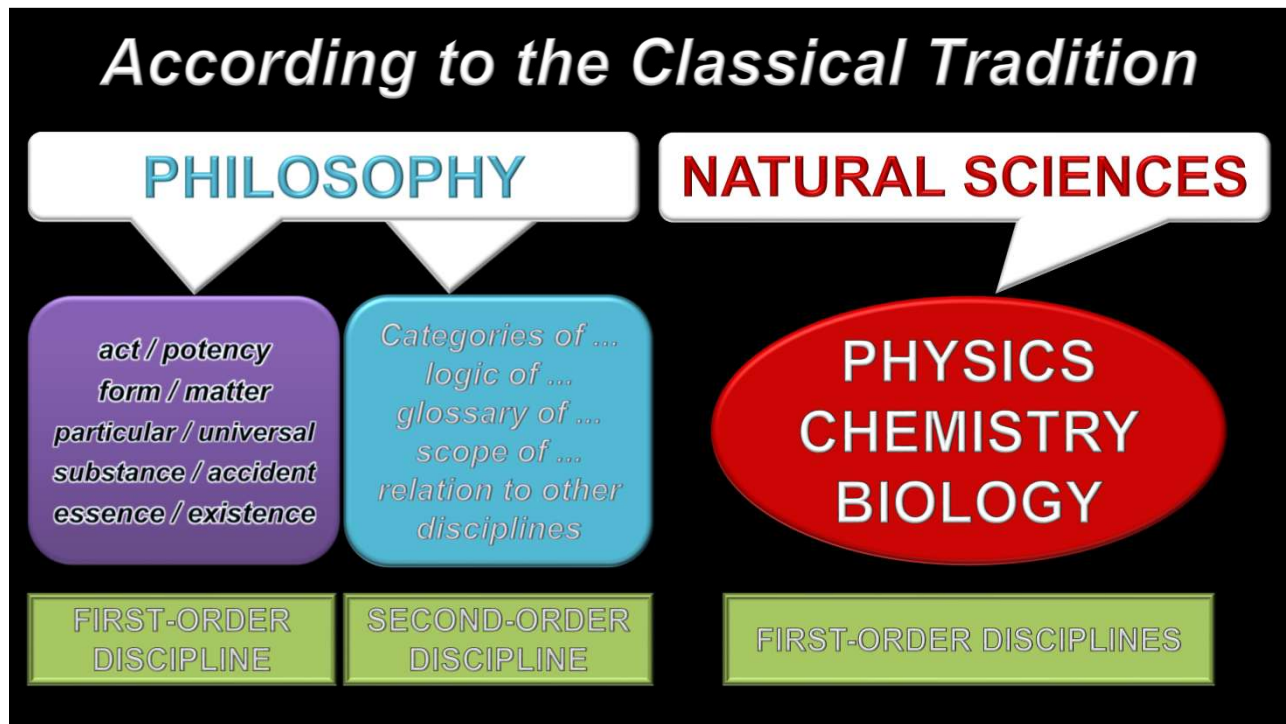


## According to Ayer



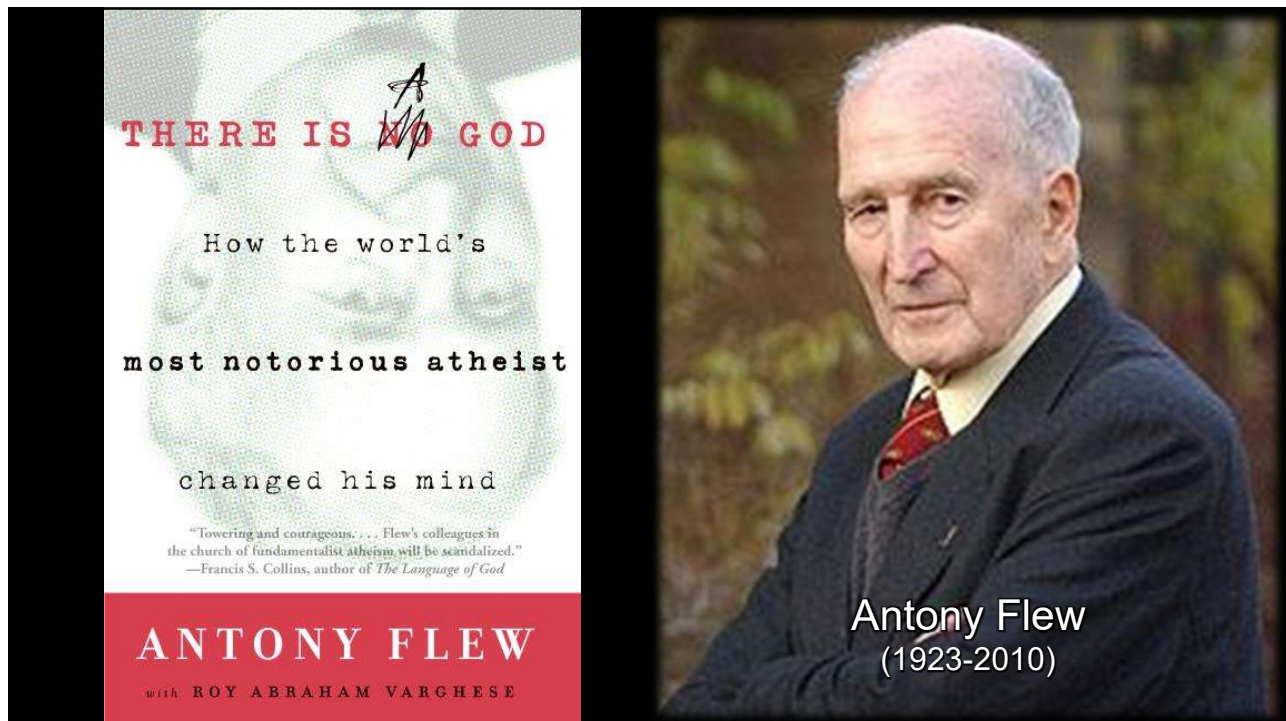
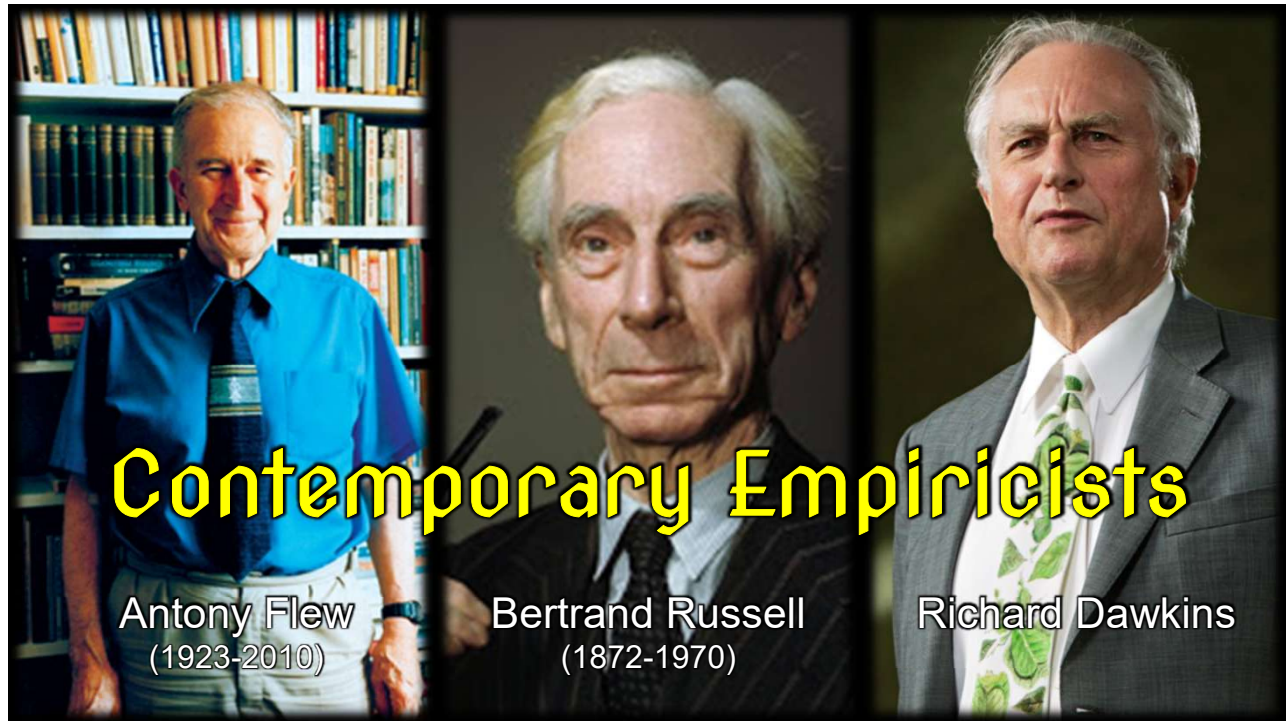
## According to Ayer

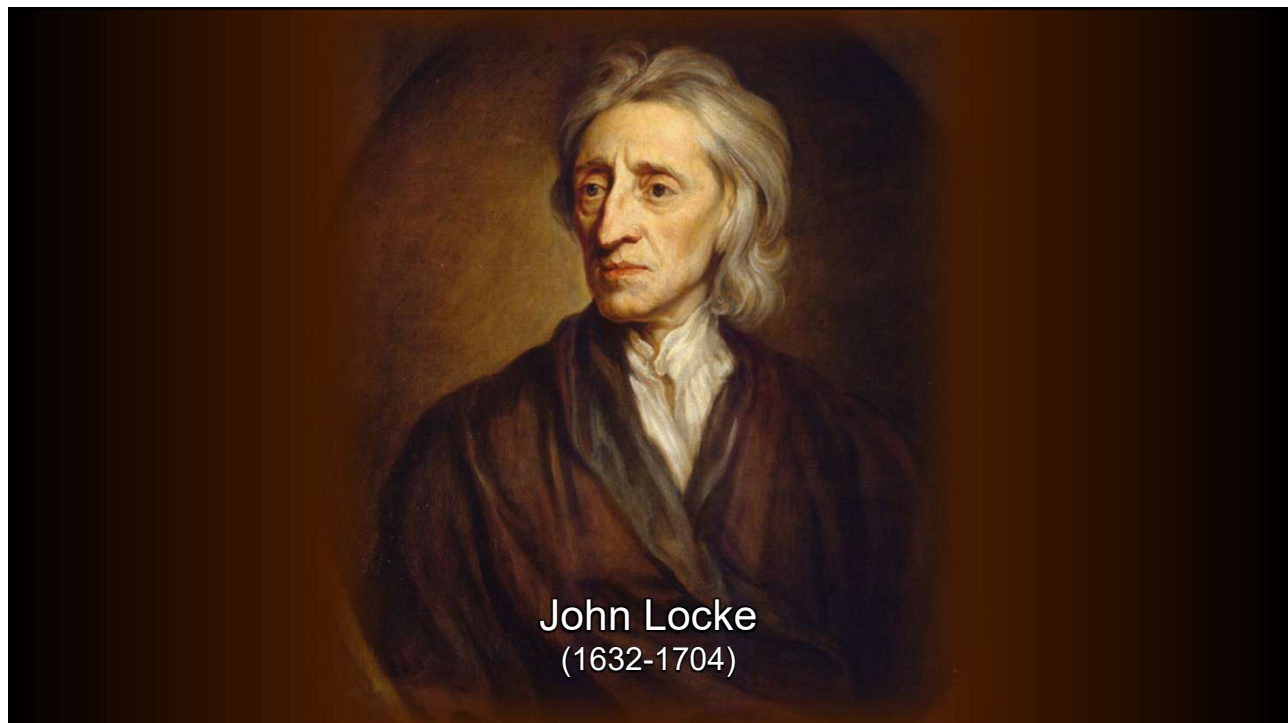
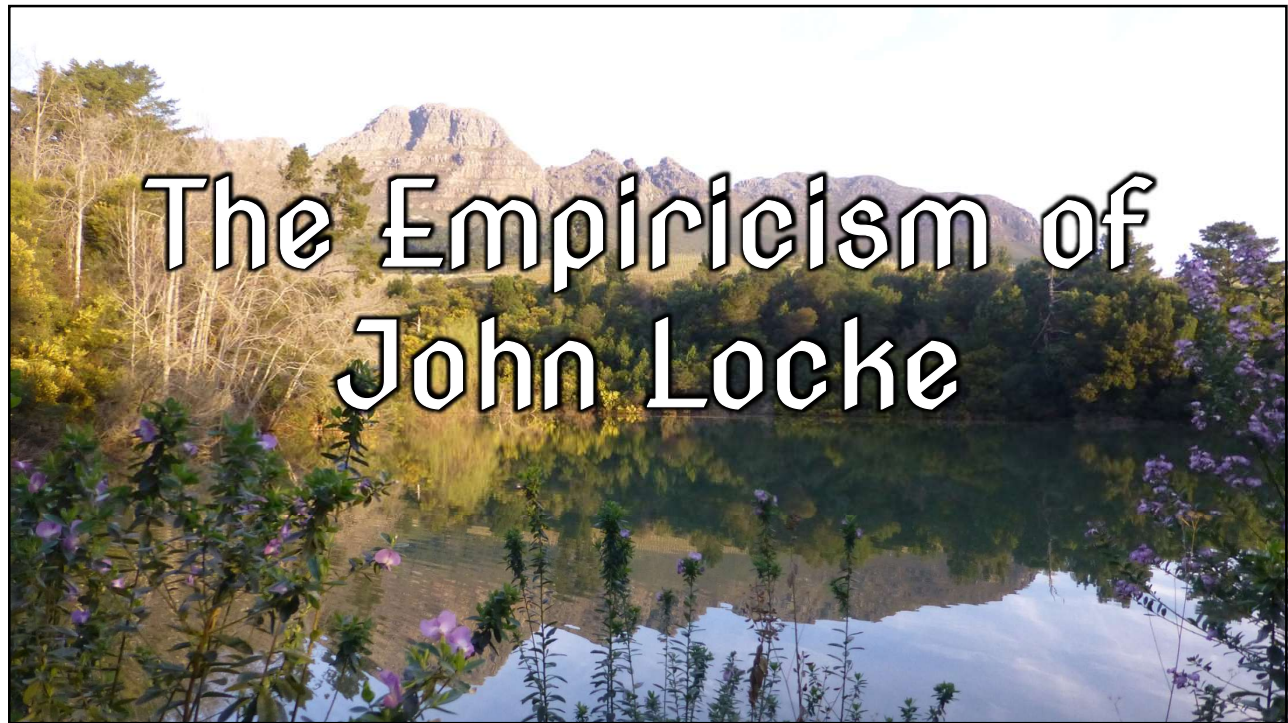




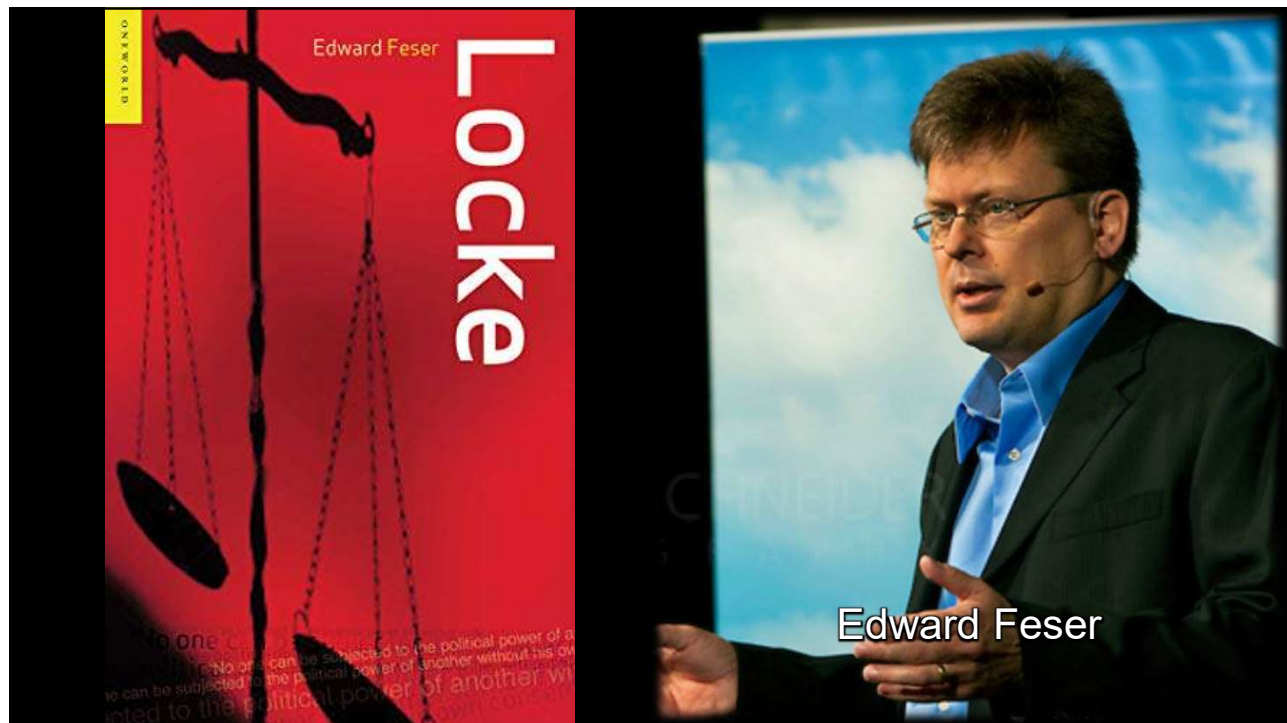
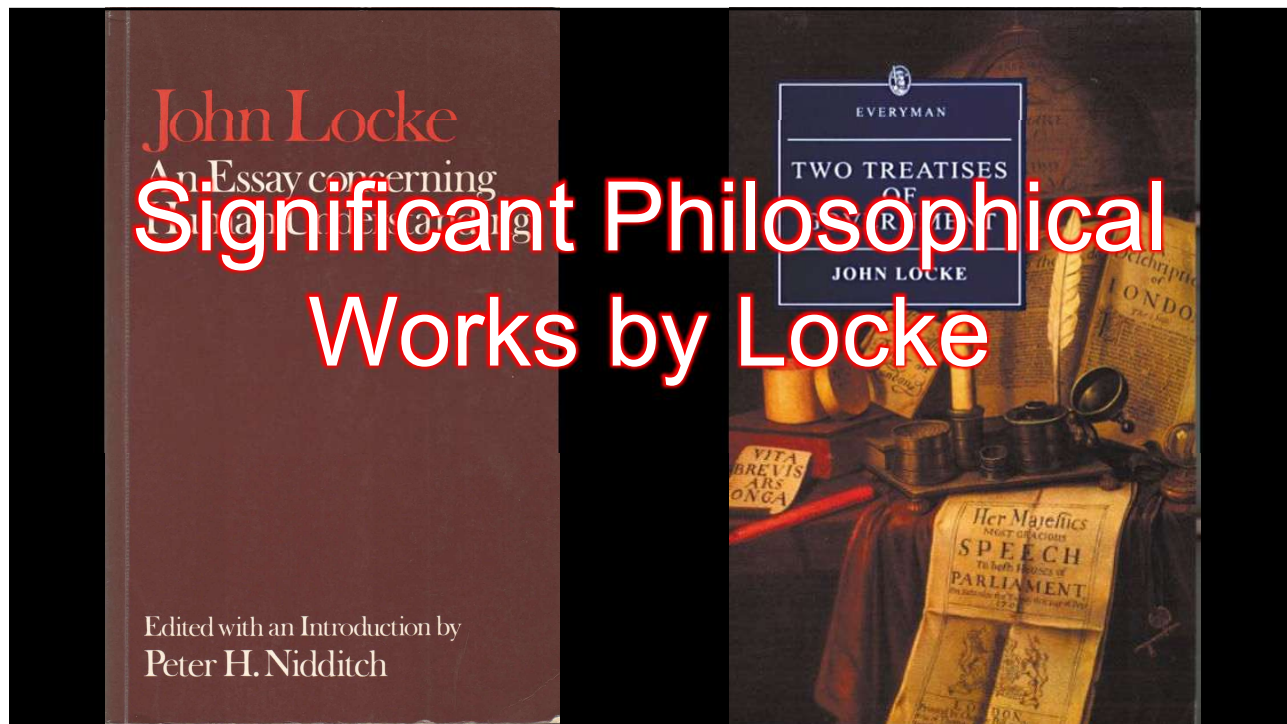
***Most recently, certain aspects of contemporary epistemology have challenged the assumptions of the justification discussion and have sought instead to talk in terms of "warrant." (Alvin Plantinga)***











*Locke opted for the method of the modern sciences as the basis of his philosophy, i.e., experimental method*

*He begins on a negative note: a rejection of innate ideas*

*Next, he argues that the origin of our ideas is experience.*

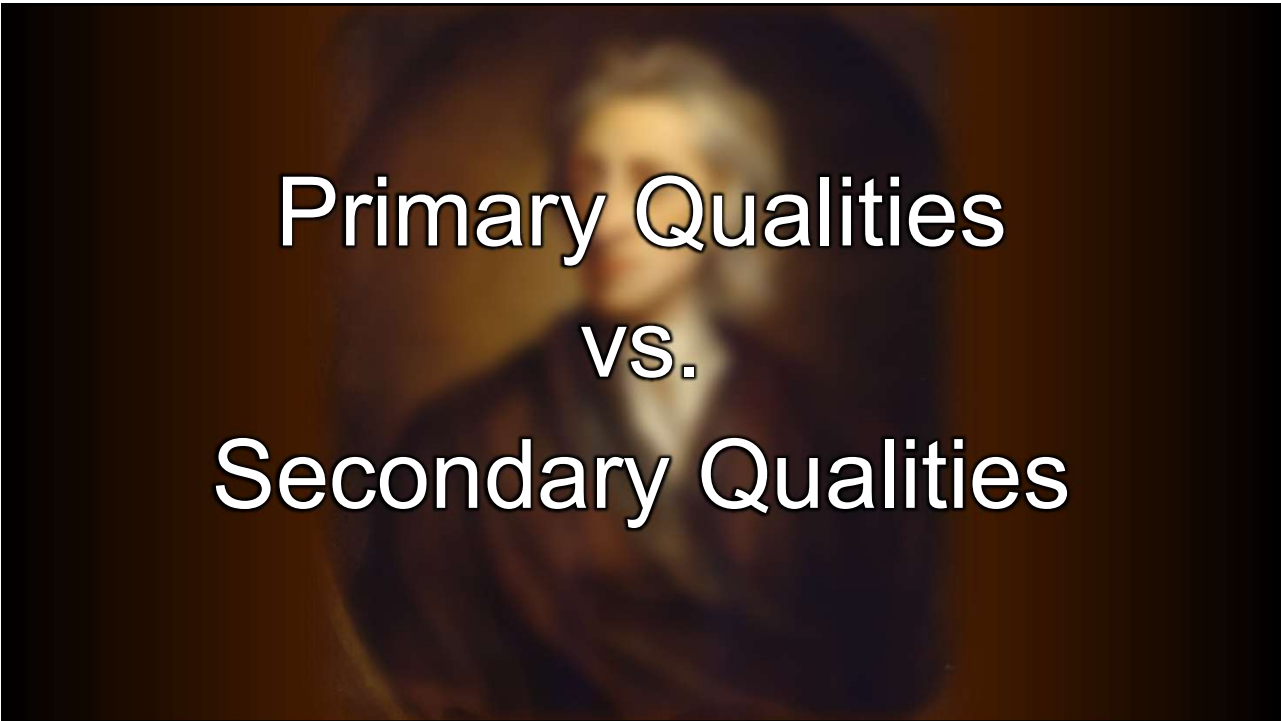
For Locke, experience has two forms:

- ❖ *"External" experience: sensation*
  - = objects in the external world enter our minds, e.g., hot, cold, red, yellow, hard, soft, sweet, and bitter*
- ❖ *"Internal" experience: reflection*
  - = thinking, willing, believing, doubting, affirming, denying, and comparing*





Tabula Rasa  
*"blank tablet"*



Primary Qualities  
vs.  
Secondary Qualities

## ☞ Primary Qualities ☞

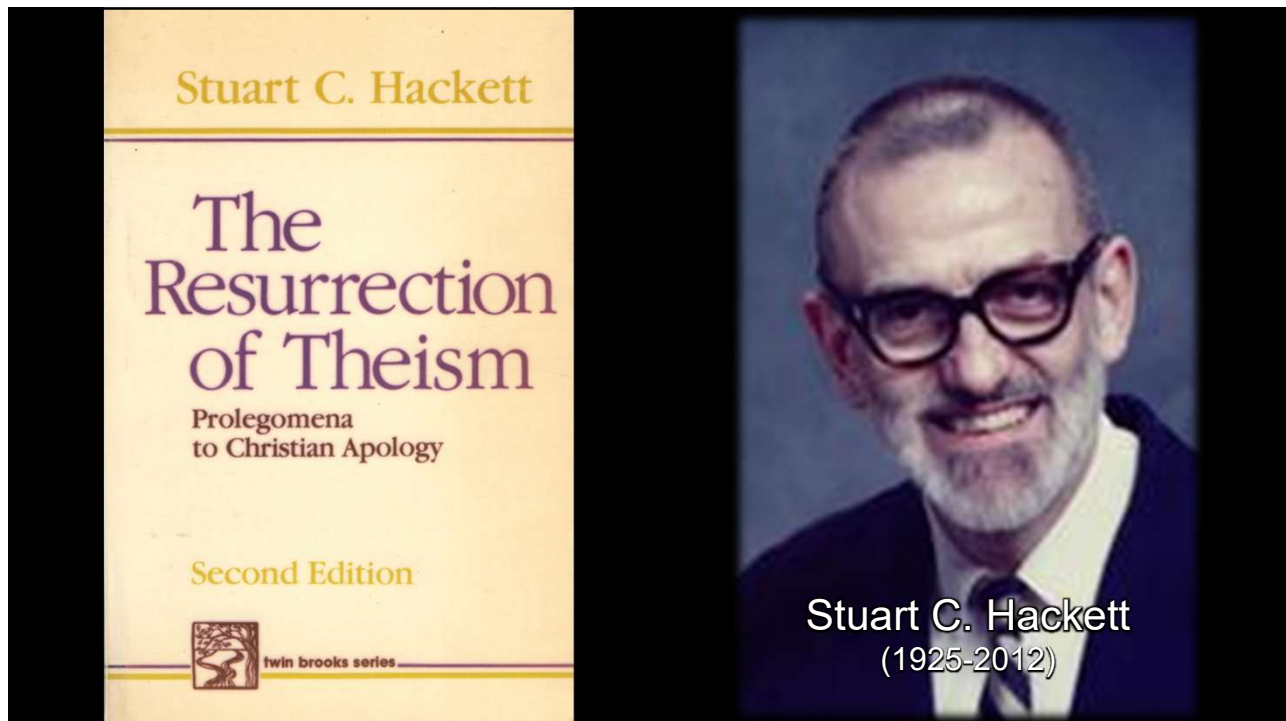
*those qualities or properties of a thing that are "in" the thing itself*

*Such qualities remain true of the thing even when it is not being perceived, such as the spherical shape and the motion of the ball.*



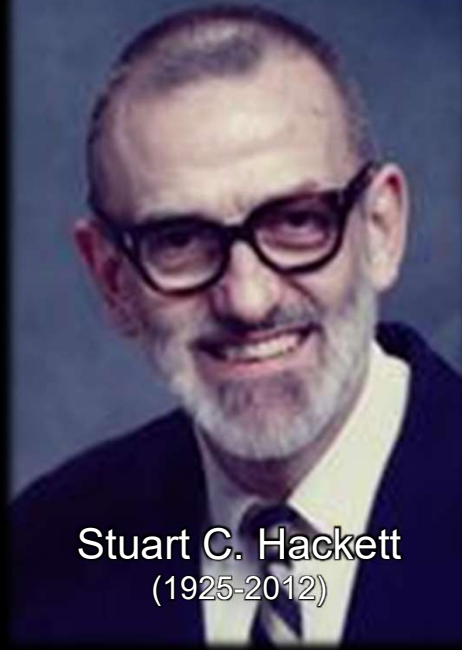


# Locke's Epistemological Dualism



*"Epistemological dualism is the doctrine that the immediate object present to the mind is not the independently existing reality—say a box or what have you—but a representative idea of this object. All the mind knows directly are its ideas and nothing else."*

[The Resurrection of Theism: Prolegomena to Christian Apology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 38]



Stuart C. Hackett  
(1925-2012)

# The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim

A Philosophical  
and Critical Apologetic

Stuart C. Hackett

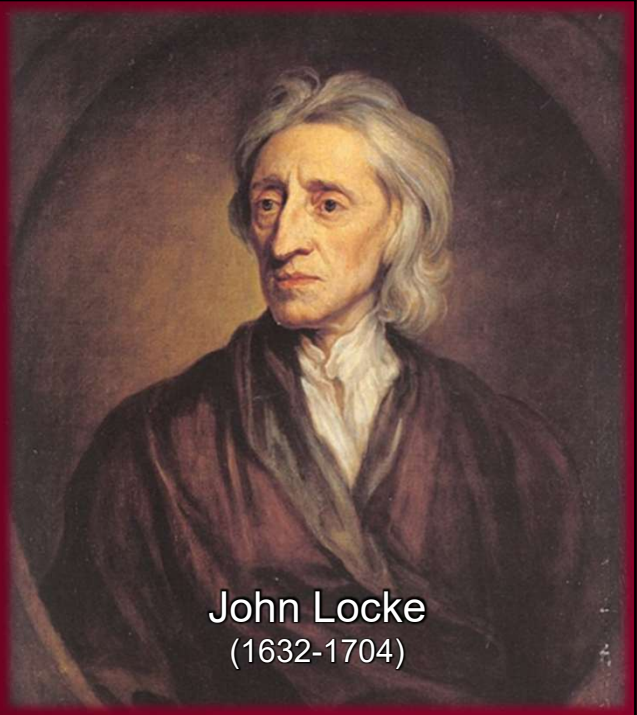


Stuart C. Hackett  
(1925-2012)



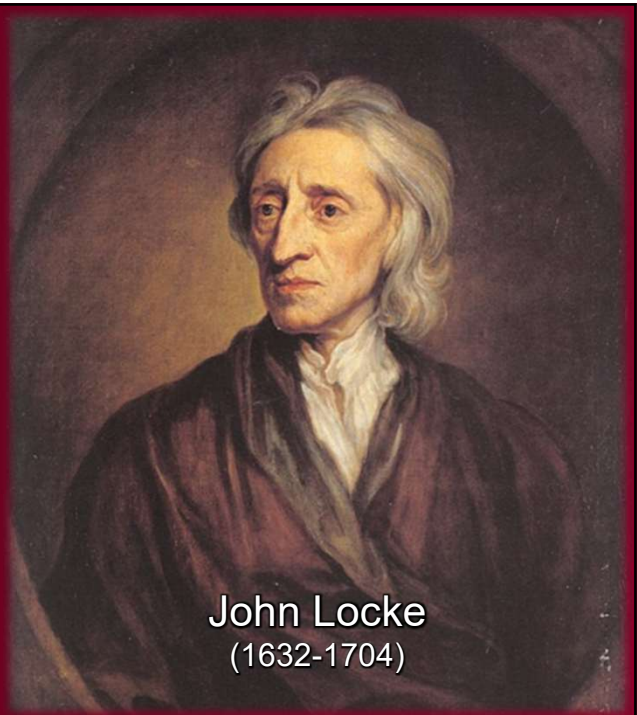
*"Since the Mind, in all its Thought and Reasonings, hath **no other immediate Object** but its own Ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident, that **our Knowledge is only conversant about them**. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas. In this alone it consists."*

[An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, IV, I, 1, §1-§2, ed. Peter H. Niddich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 525]



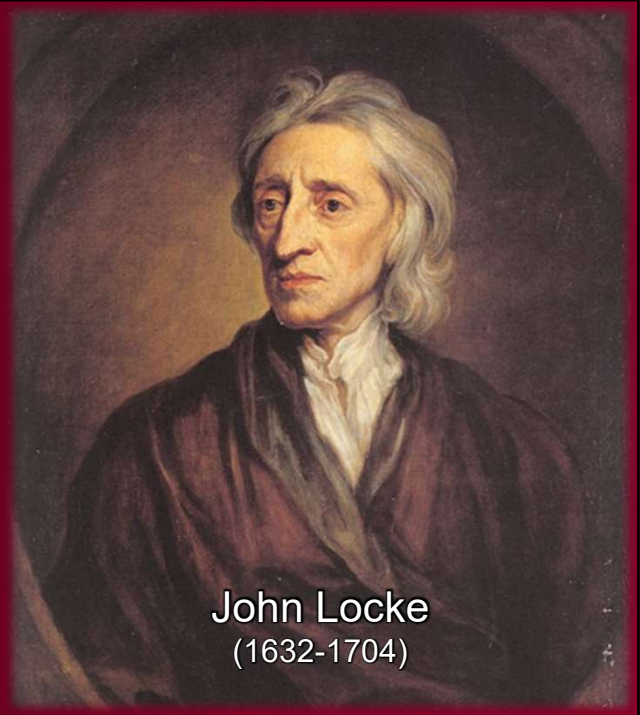
John Locke  
(1632-1704)

*"'Tis evident, the Mind knows not Things immediately, but only by the intervention of the Ideas it has of them. Our Knowledge therefore is real, only so far as there is a conformity between our Ideas and the reality of Things."*



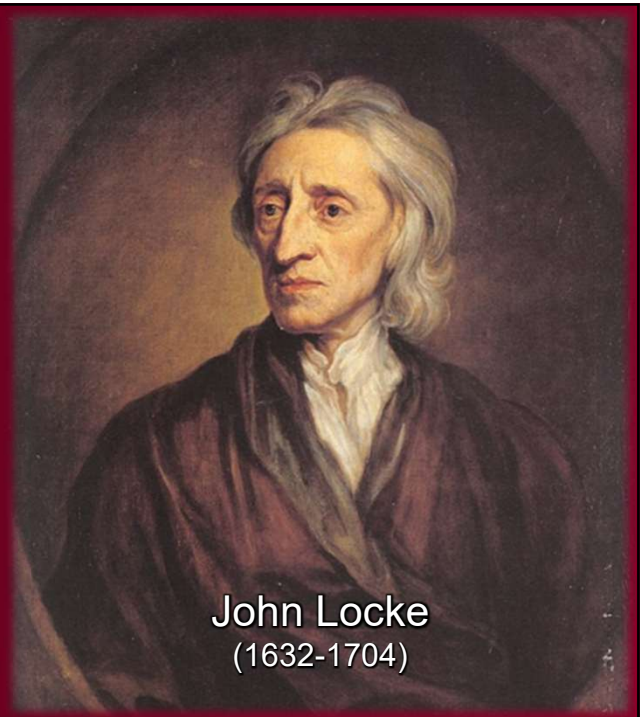
John Locke  
(1632-1704)

*"But what shall be here the Criterion? How shall the Mind, when it perceives nothing but it own Ideas, know that they agree with Things themselves? This, though it seems not to want difficulty, yet, I think there be two sorts of Ideas, that, we may be assured, agree with Things.*



John Locke  
(1632-1704)

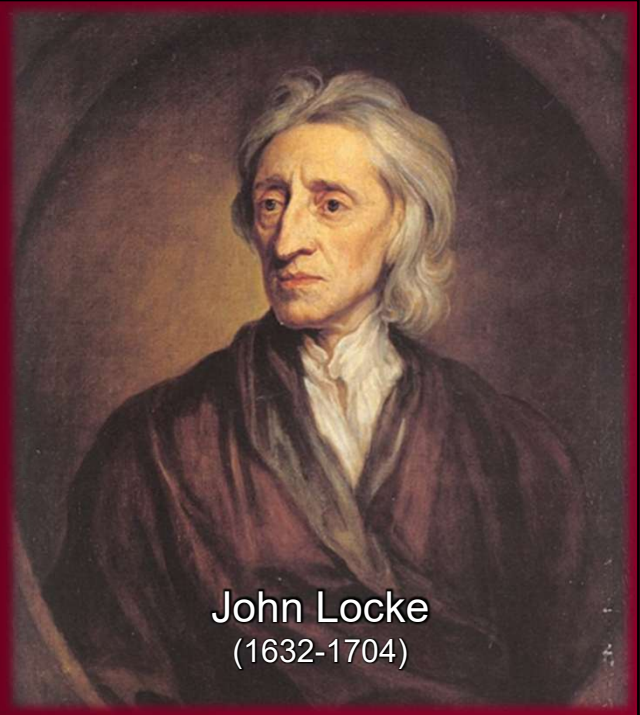
*"First, The first are simple Ideas, which since the Mind, as has been shewed, can by no means make to it self, must necessarily be the product of Things operating on the Mind in a natural way, and producing therein those Perceptions which by the Wisdom and Will of our Maker they are ordained and adapted to.*



John Locke  
(1632-1704)

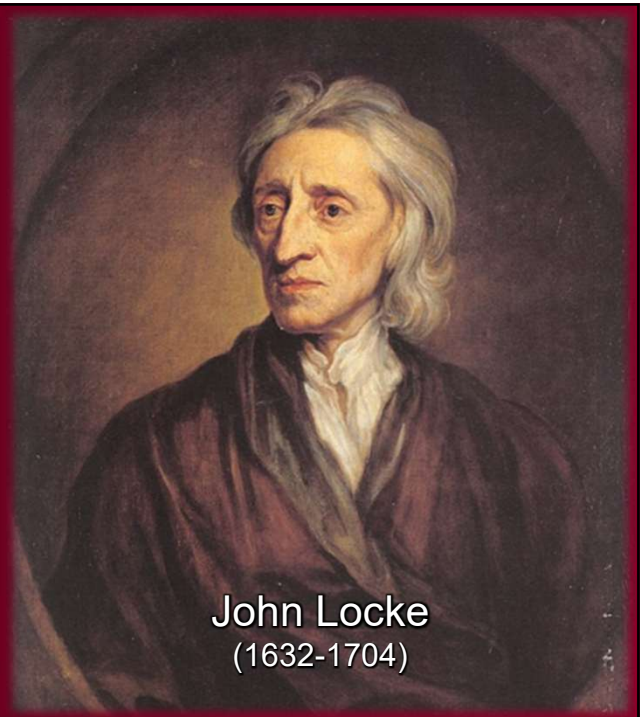


*"From whence it follows, that simple Ideas are not fictions of our Fancies, but the natural and regular productions of Things without us, really operating upon us; and so carry with them all the conformity which is intended; or which our state requires:*



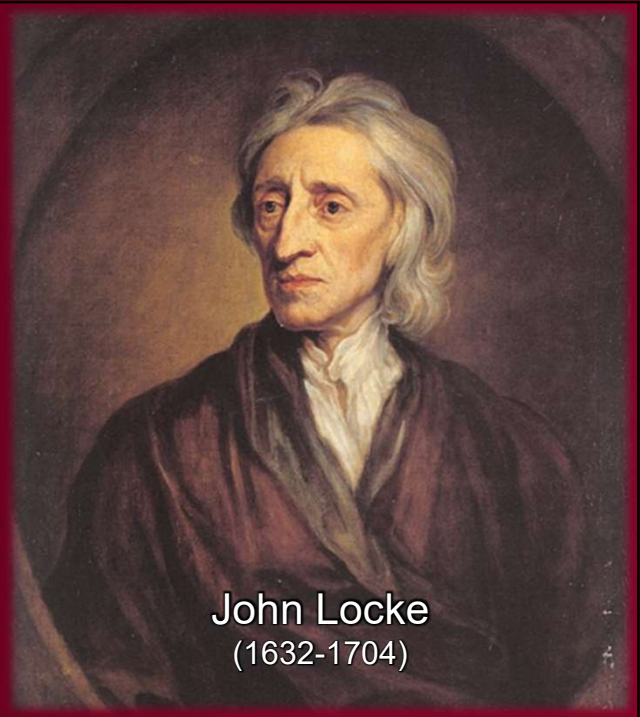
John Locke  
(1632-1704)

*"For they represent to us Things under those appearances which they are fitted to produce in us; whereby we are enabled to distinguish the sorts of particular Substances, to discern the states they are in, and so to take them for our Necessities, and apply them to our Uses.*



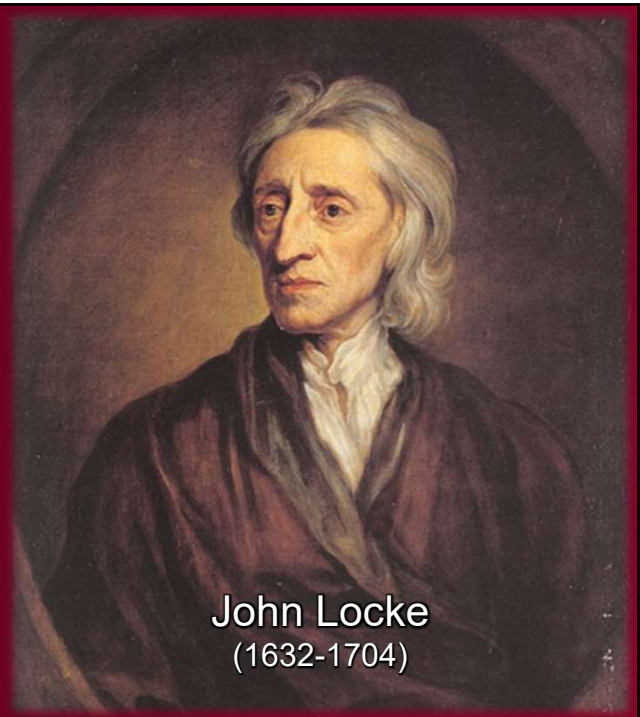
John Locke  
(1632-1704)

*"Thus the Idea of Whiteness, or Bitterness, as it is in the Mind, exactly answering that Power which is in any Body to produce it there, has all the real conformity it can, or ought to have, with Things without us. And this conformity between our simple Ideas, and the existence of Things, is sufficient for real Knowledge.*



John Locke  
(1632-1704)

*"Secondly, All our complex Ideas, except those of Substances, being Archetypes of the Mind's own making, not intended to be the Copies of any thing, nor referred to the existence of any thing, as to their Originals, cannot want any conformity necessary to real Knowledge. For that which is not designed to represent any thing*

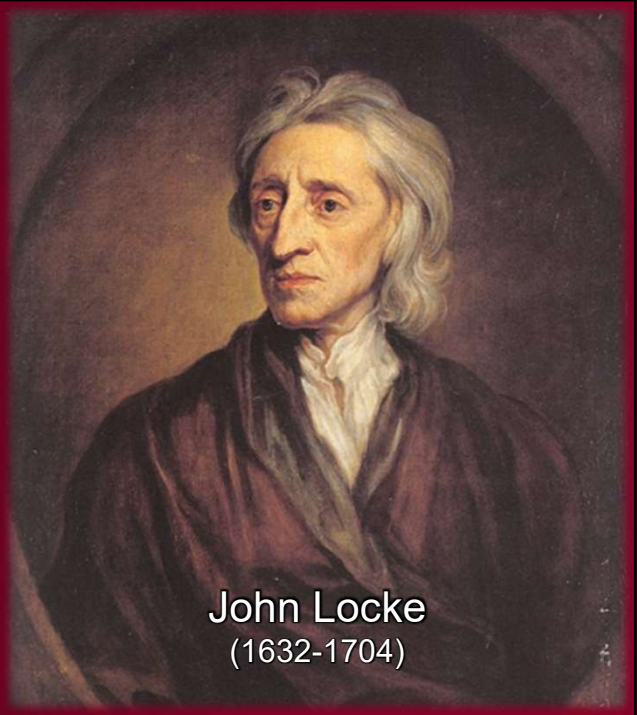


John Locke  
(1632-1704)



*"but it self, can never be capable of a wrong representation, nor mislead us from the true apprehension of any thing, by tis dislikeness to it: and such, excepting those of Substances, are all our complex Ideas, which the Mind, by its free choice, puts together, without considering any connexion they have in Nature."*

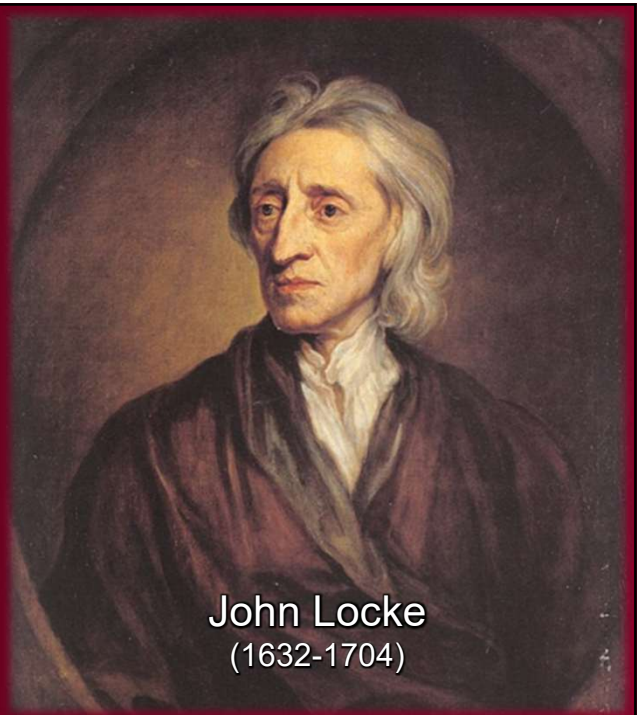
[An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, IV, I, 4, §3-§5, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 563-564]



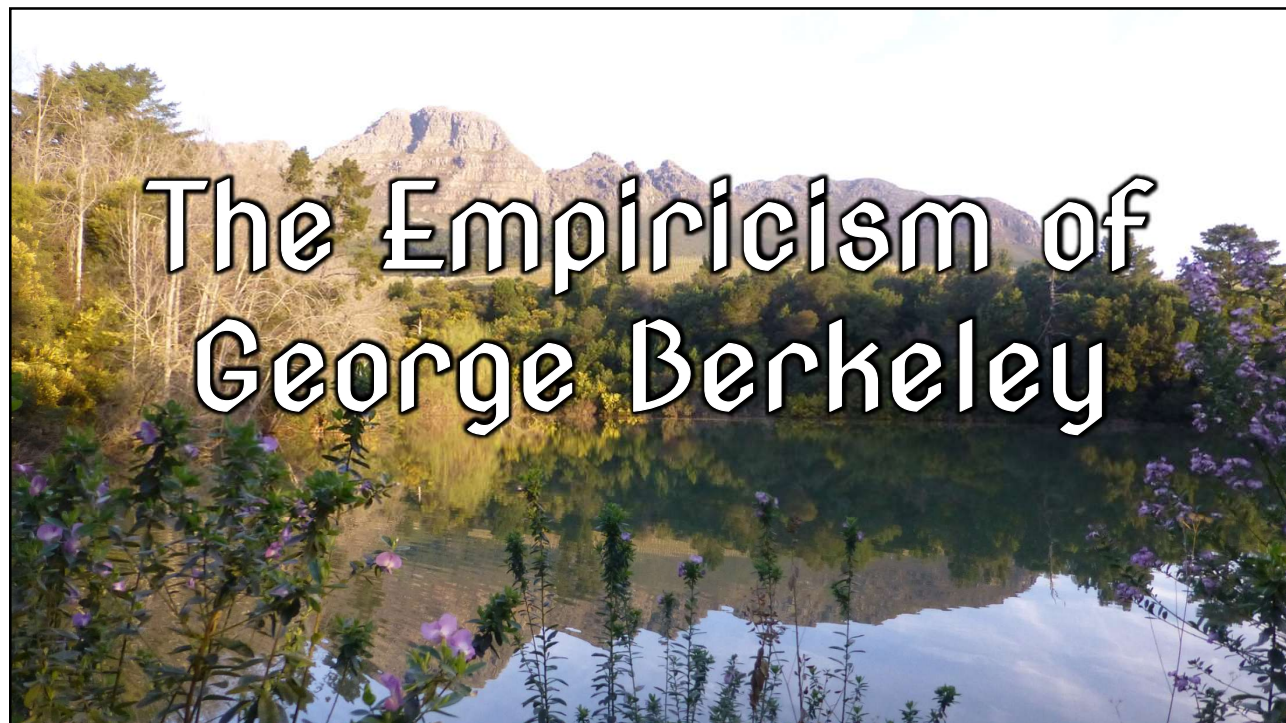
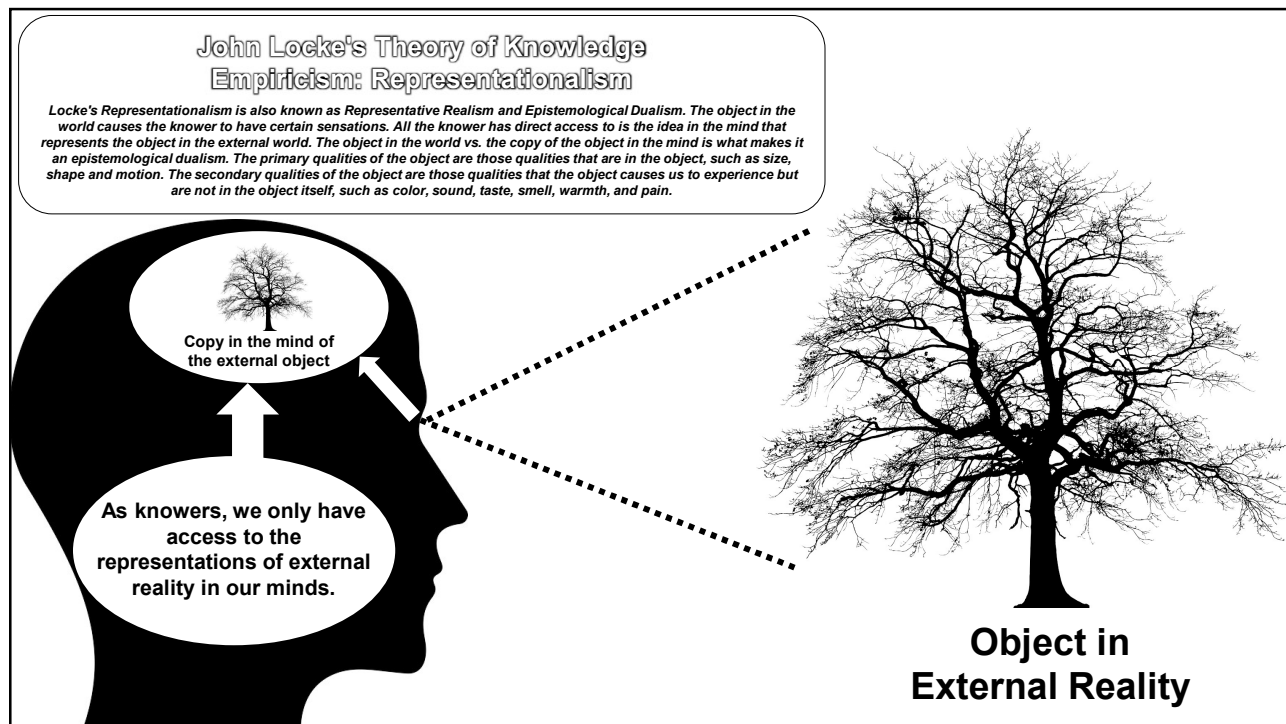
John Locke  
(1632-1704)

*Though Locke admitted that material substance itself was not perceivable, he maintained that it was necessary to affirm its reality as an explanation:*

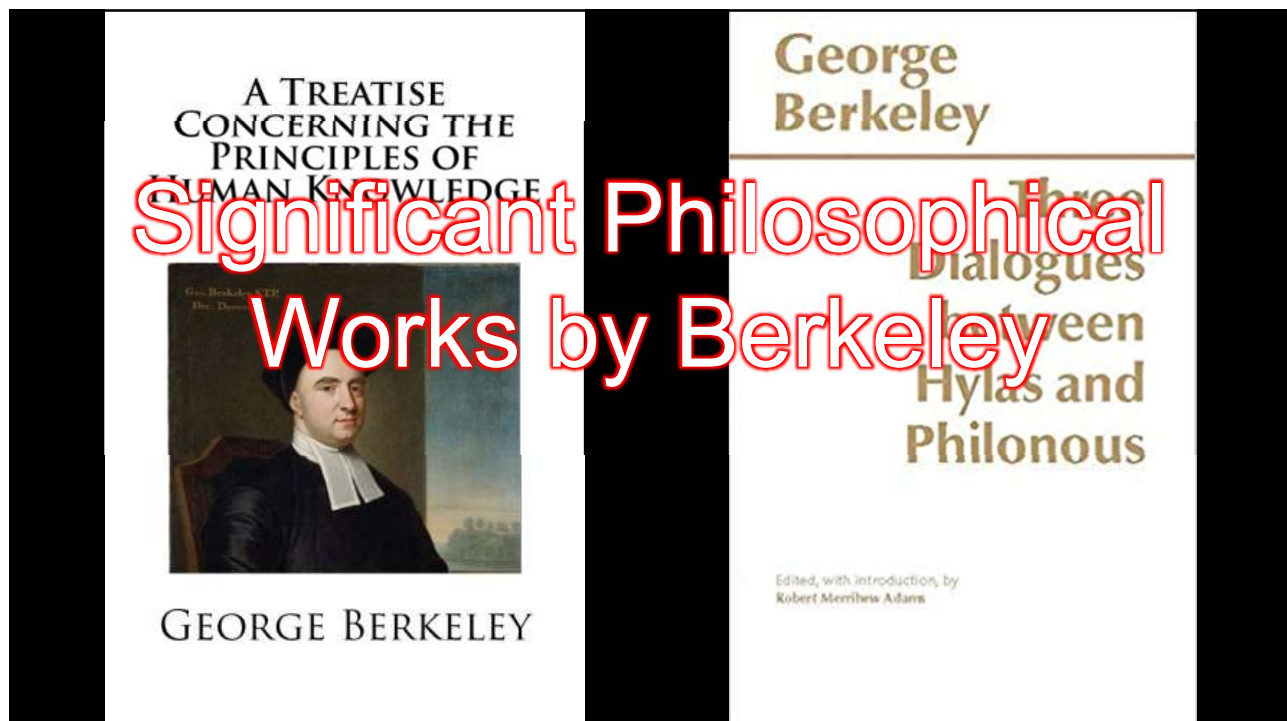
- 1) *for the continuity of our experiences (when leaving and then returning to a room, our experience of the room is the same), and*
- 2) *for the passivity of our experience (what we perceive in the room is happening "to" us and not something we are causing in ourselves).*



John Locke  
(1632-1704)



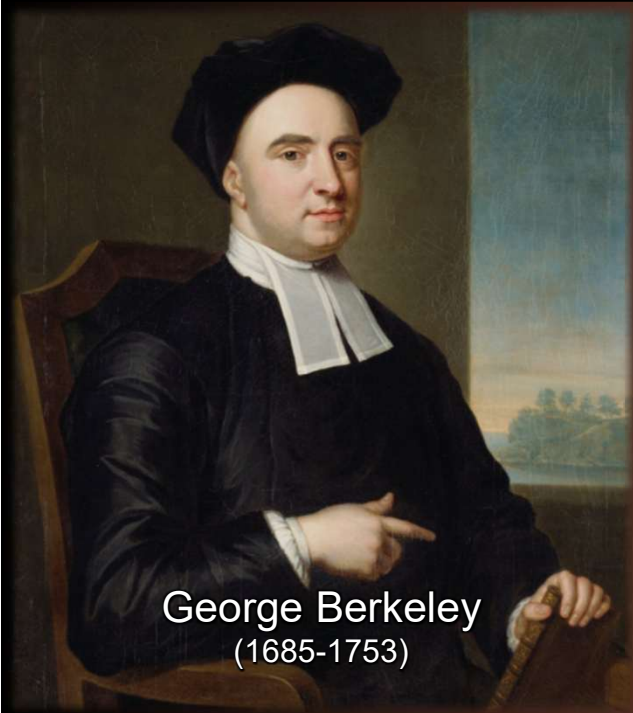




*Berkeley argued that his epistemology could account for everything Locke's epistemology could without the superfluous notion of material substance.*

*All accounting for reality can be done along the categories of perceptions and minds as perceivers.*

*The continuity and passivity of our perceptions is accounted for by God (a mind) who causes in us (minds) the perceptions we have.*

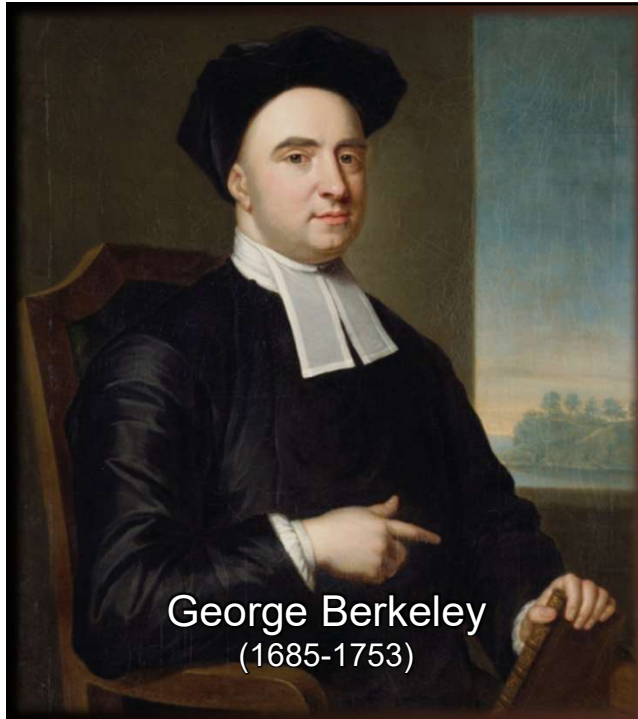
A portrait of George Berkeley, an Irish philosopher, depicted in clerical attire (black robe with a white collar and a black cap). He is seated in a wooden chair, pointing his right index finger towards the right. The background is a simple interior with a window showing a landscape.

**George Berkeley**  
(1685-1753)

*"For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their esse is percipi, nor is it possible they should have any existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them."*

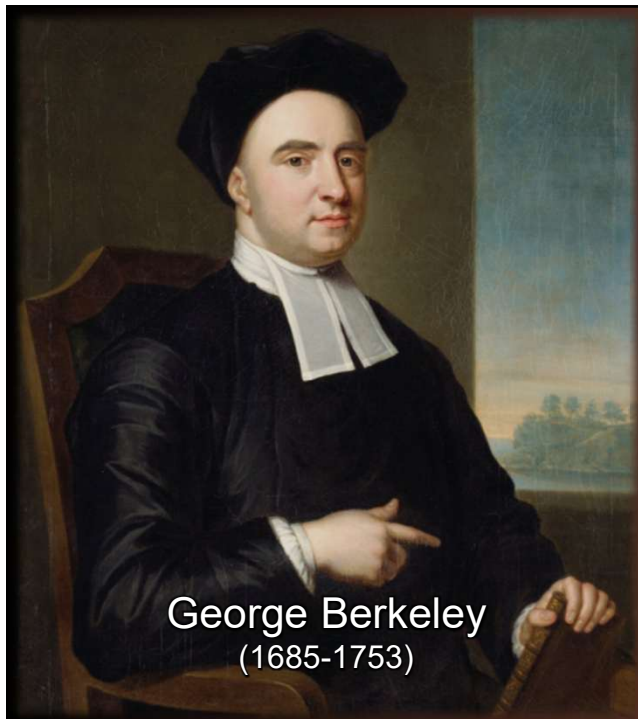
[A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, "On the Principles of Human Knowledge," § 3, in *The Empiricists: Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), 152]





George Berkeley  
(1685-1753)

*"It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible objects, have an existence, natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding ... yet whoever shall find in his heart to call it in question may ... perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction."*



George Berkeley  
(1685-1753)

*"For what are the forementioned objects but the things we perceive by sense? and what do we perceive besides **our own ideas or sensations**? and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these, or any combination of them, should exist unperceived?"*

[Human Knowledge, "On the Principles of Human Knowledge," 152]

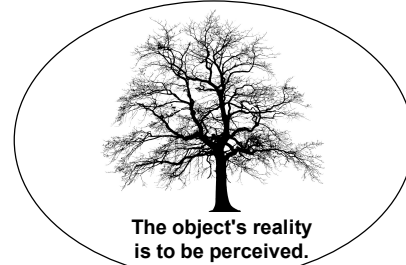
### George Berkeley's Theory of Knowledge Empiricism: Idealism

*Berkeley reasoned that since all talk of objects is ultimately only talk about perceptions, then everything that can be understood about the nature of objects can be understood as a matter of ideas in the mind. Berkeley held that all that exists are minds (ours and God's) and the ideas in those minds. The continuity and coherence of our ideas was accounted for by positing that God directly causes the ideas in each individual human mind.*

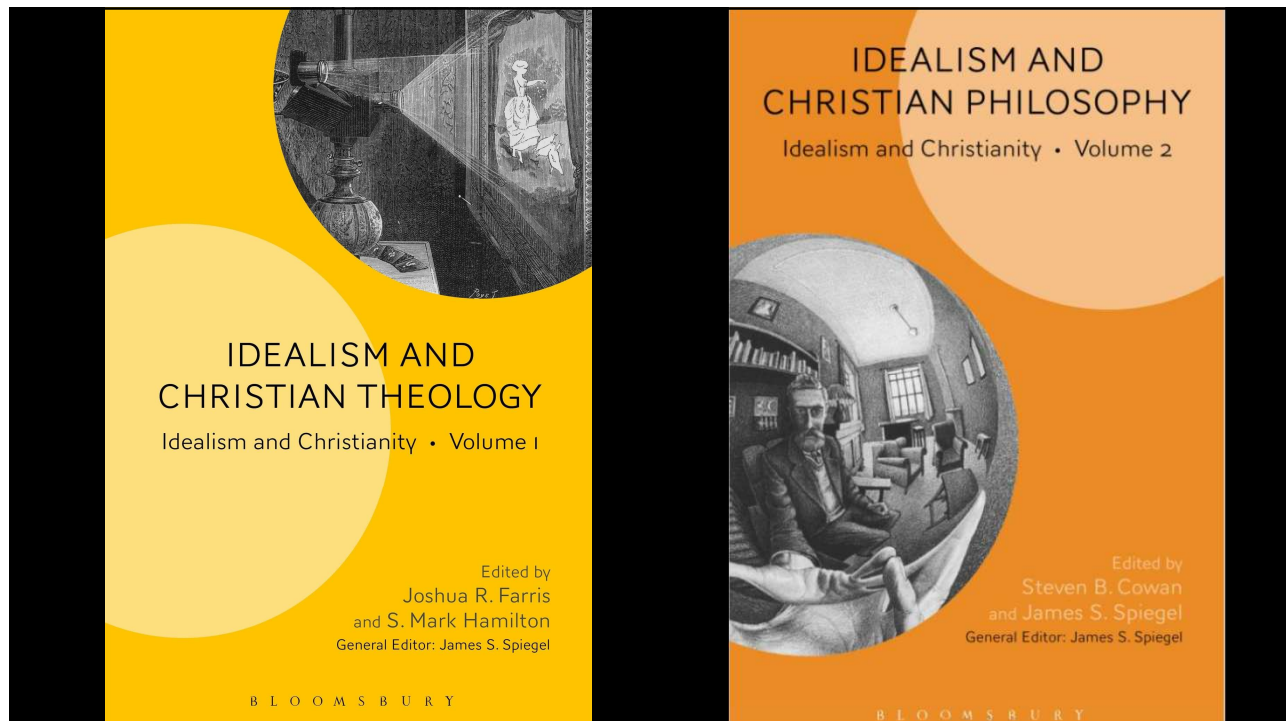
# GOD

Ideas in God's mind imprinted on the human senses by God are called real things.

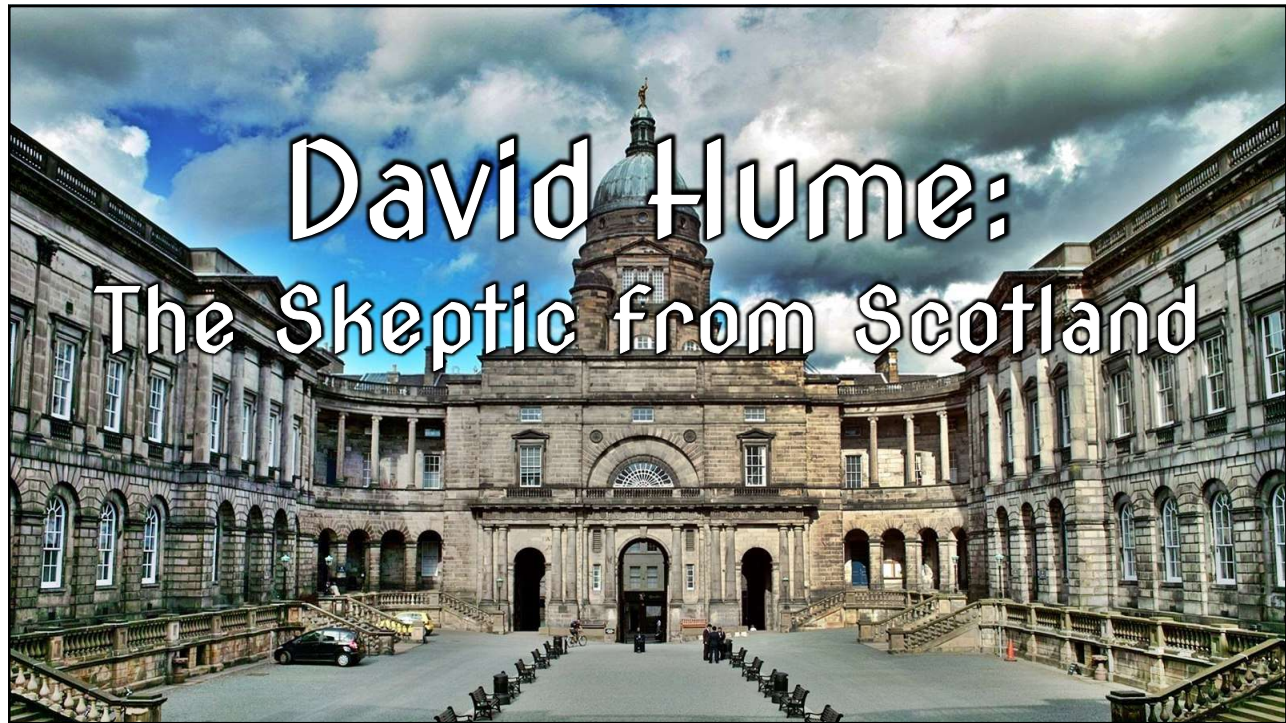
***"To be is to perceive  
or to be perceived."***



**Individual Mind**

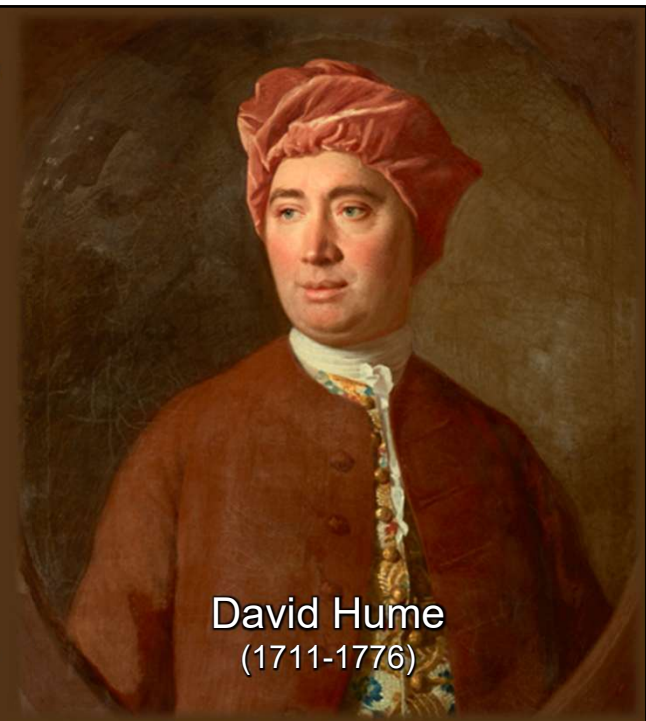


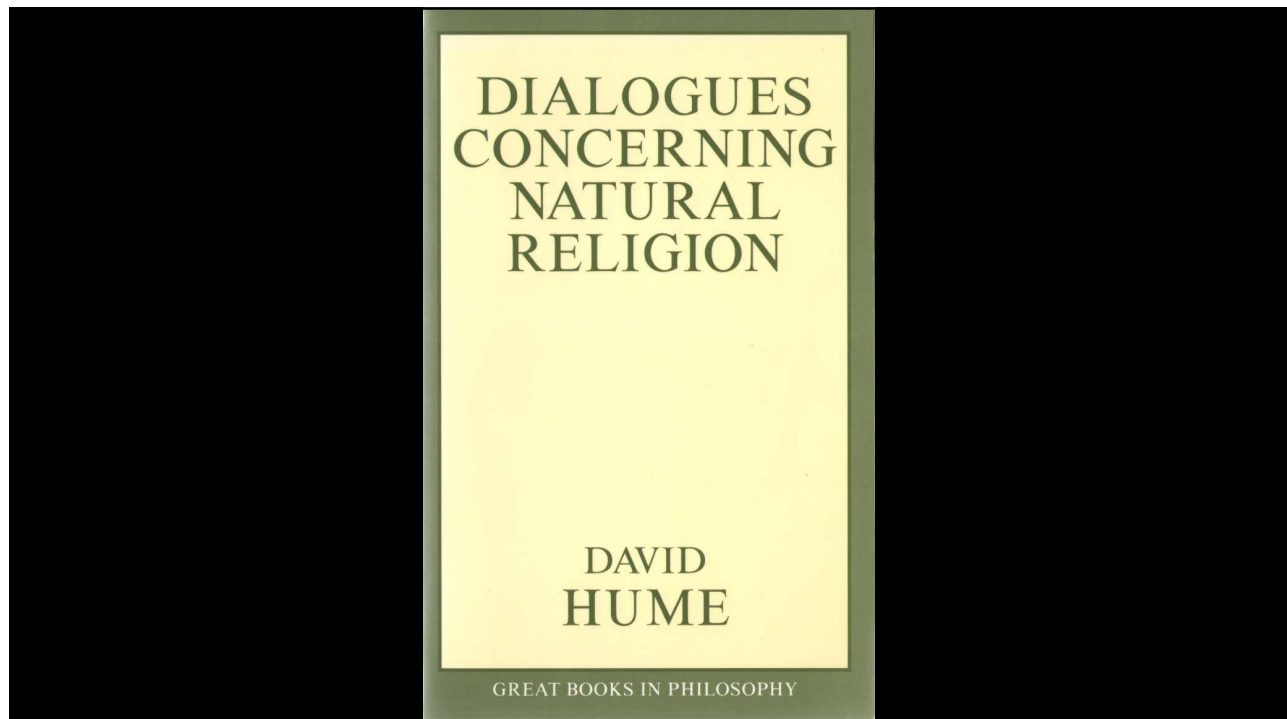
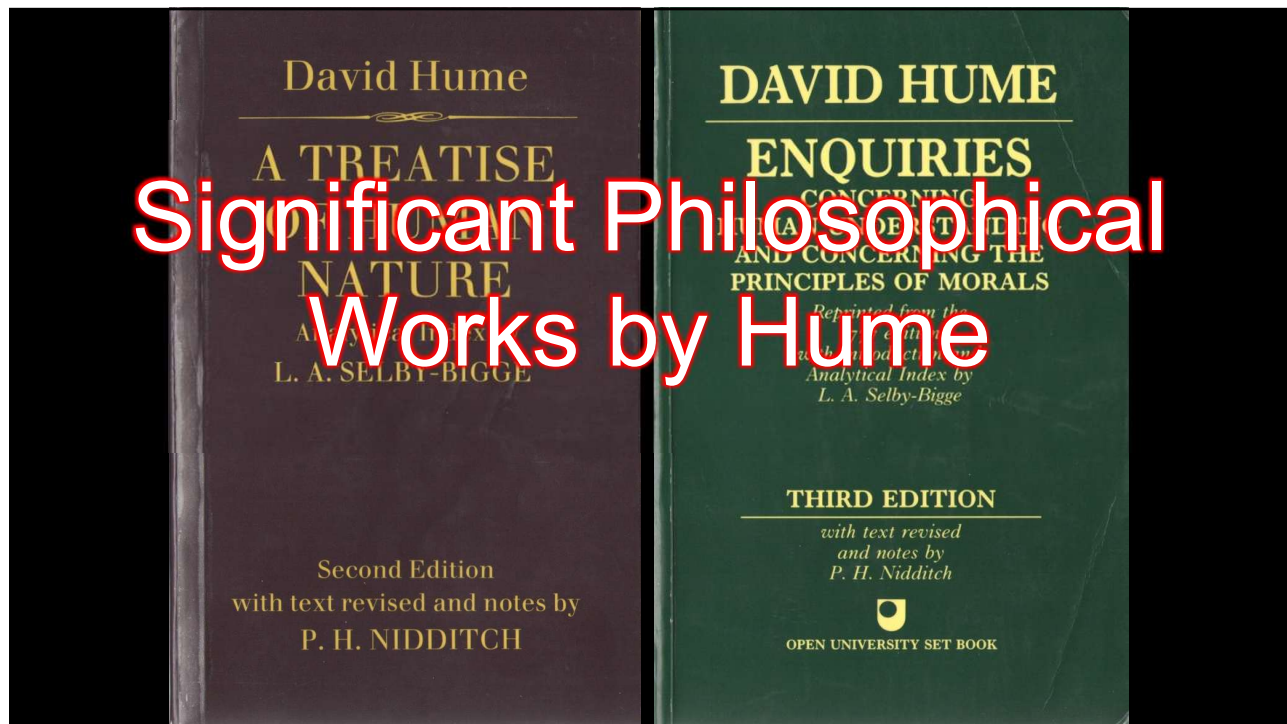




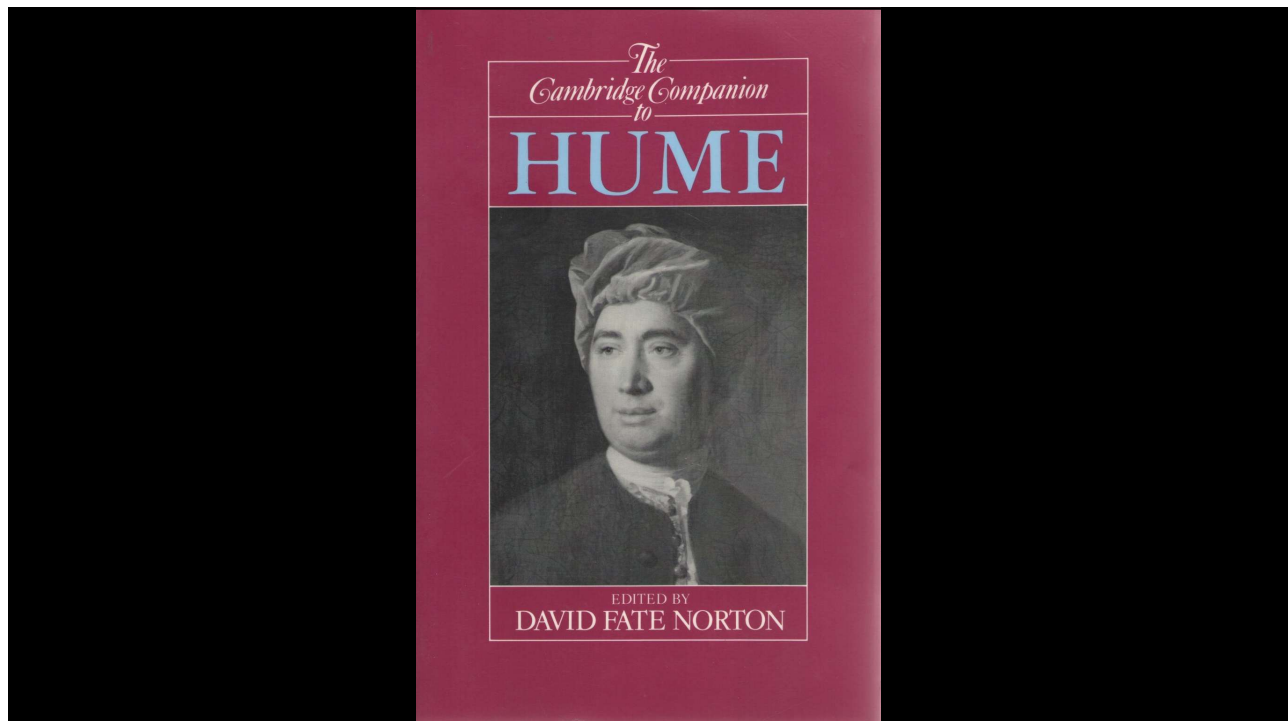
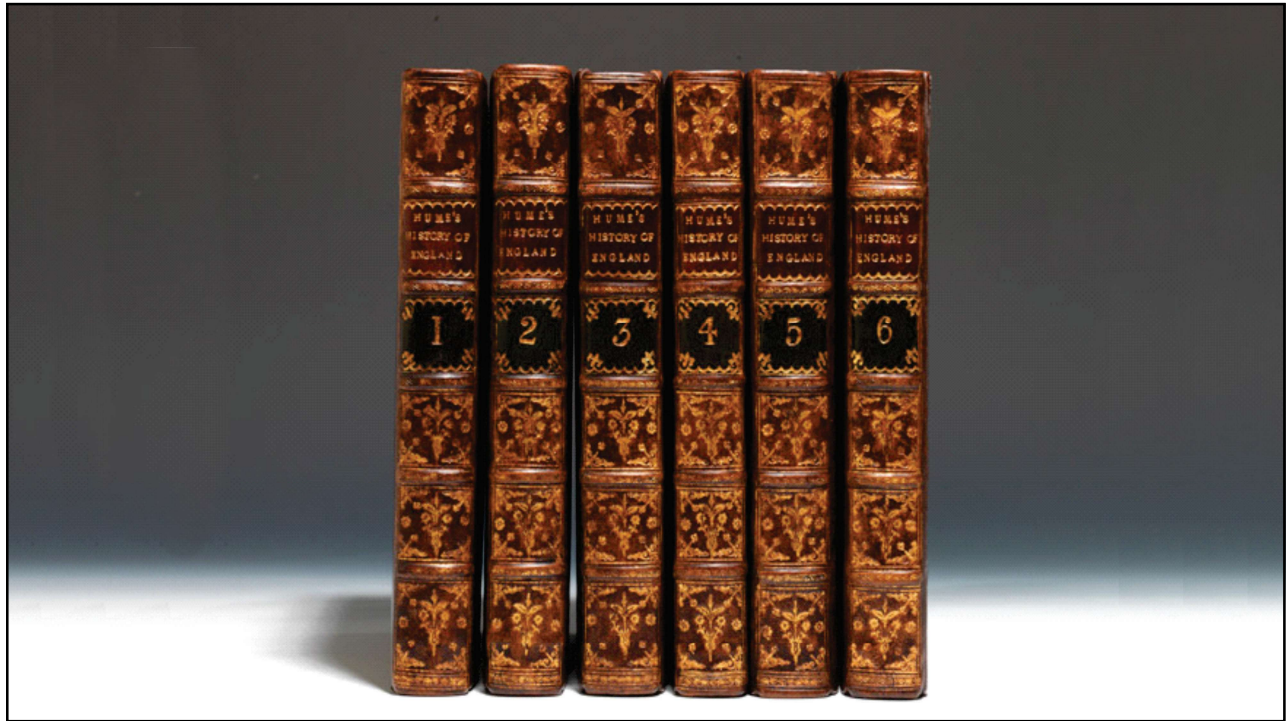
- ❖ born 1711 in Edinburgh, Scotland to a Calvinist family of modest means
- ❖ attended Edinburgh University where he studied classics, mathematics, science, and philosophy
- ❖ went to France for three years where he wrote the *Treatise of Human Nature*
- ❖ once confessed that the hope of achieving literary fame was his "ruling passion"

[William F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Stamford: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning, 2002), 310]

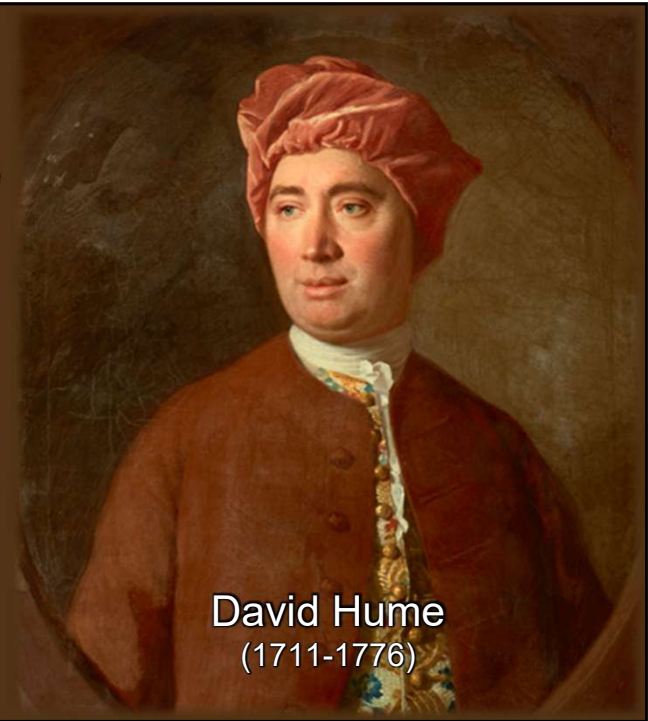






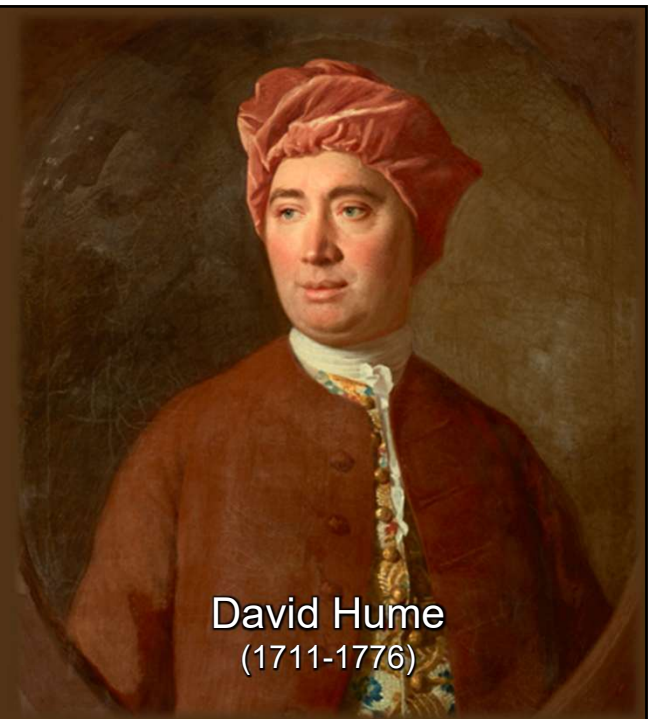


***Considered by some  
to be one of the most  
formidable  
philosophical  
skeptics.***



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

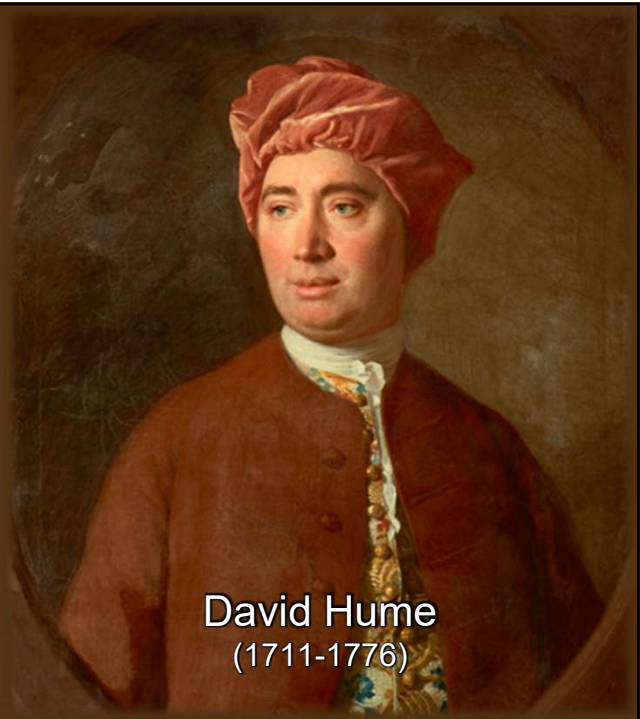
***He is regarded as a  
skeptic not because he  
denied the possibility of  
knowledge altogether,  
but because he  
challenged philosophy's  
ability to deliver the  
more cherished  
philosophical beliefs.***



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

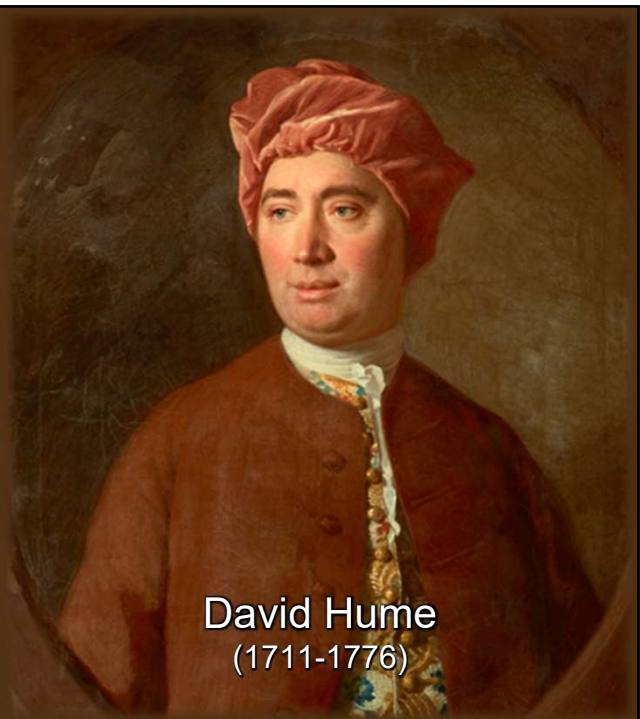


- *causality*
- *substance*
- *the existence of external reality*
- *the continued existence of external reality when not being perceived*
- *the self*



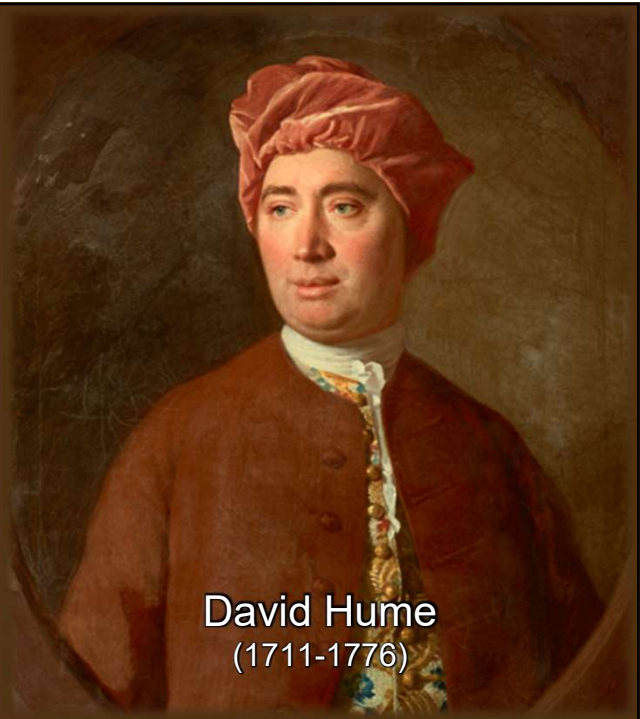
David Hume  
(1711-1776)

*Though Hume was a skeptic, it is still accurate to call him an empiricist, for he believed that all knowledge comes through experience.*



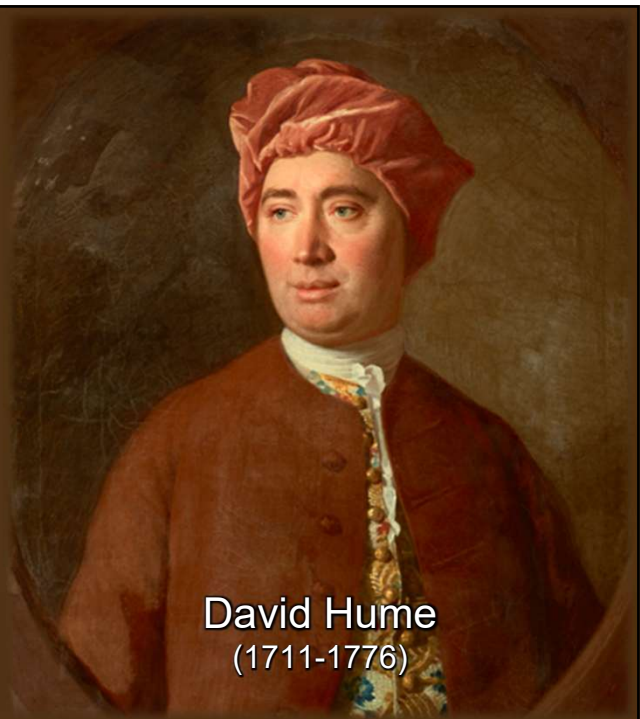
David Hume  
(1711-1776)

***Several of the most important apologetic / philosophical issues argued today are framed and discussed the way they are because of the influence of David Hume.***



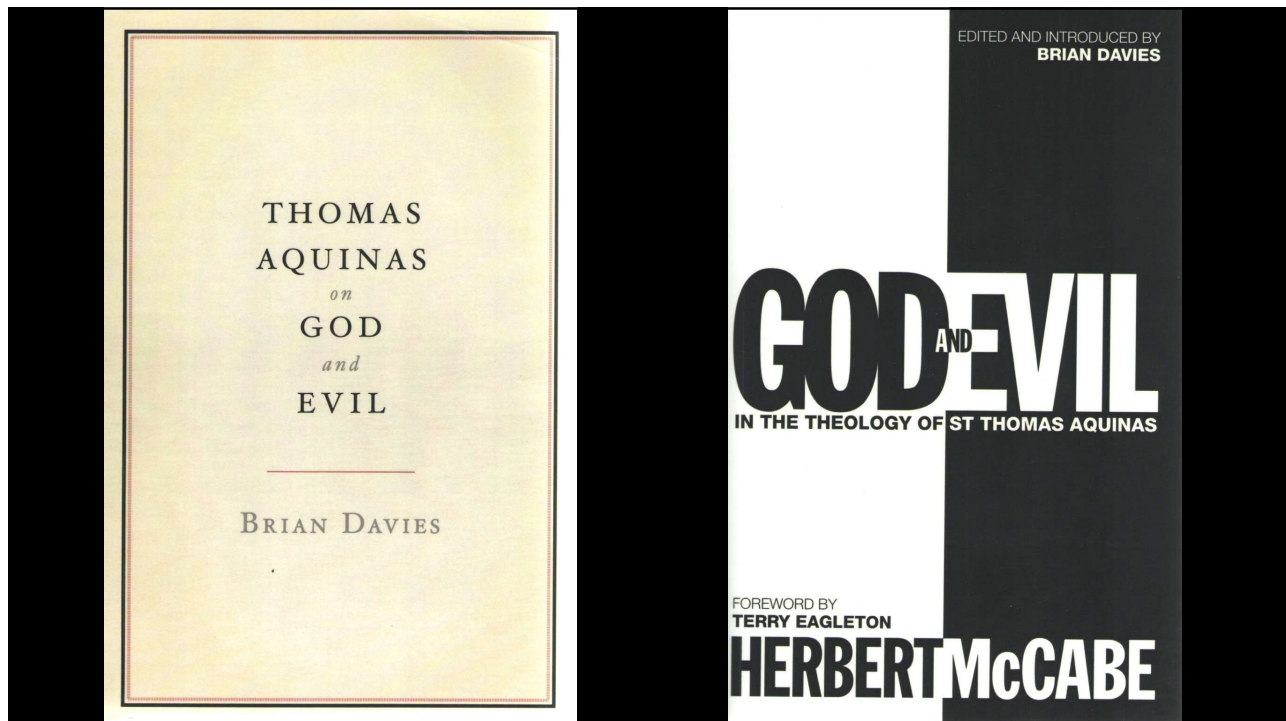
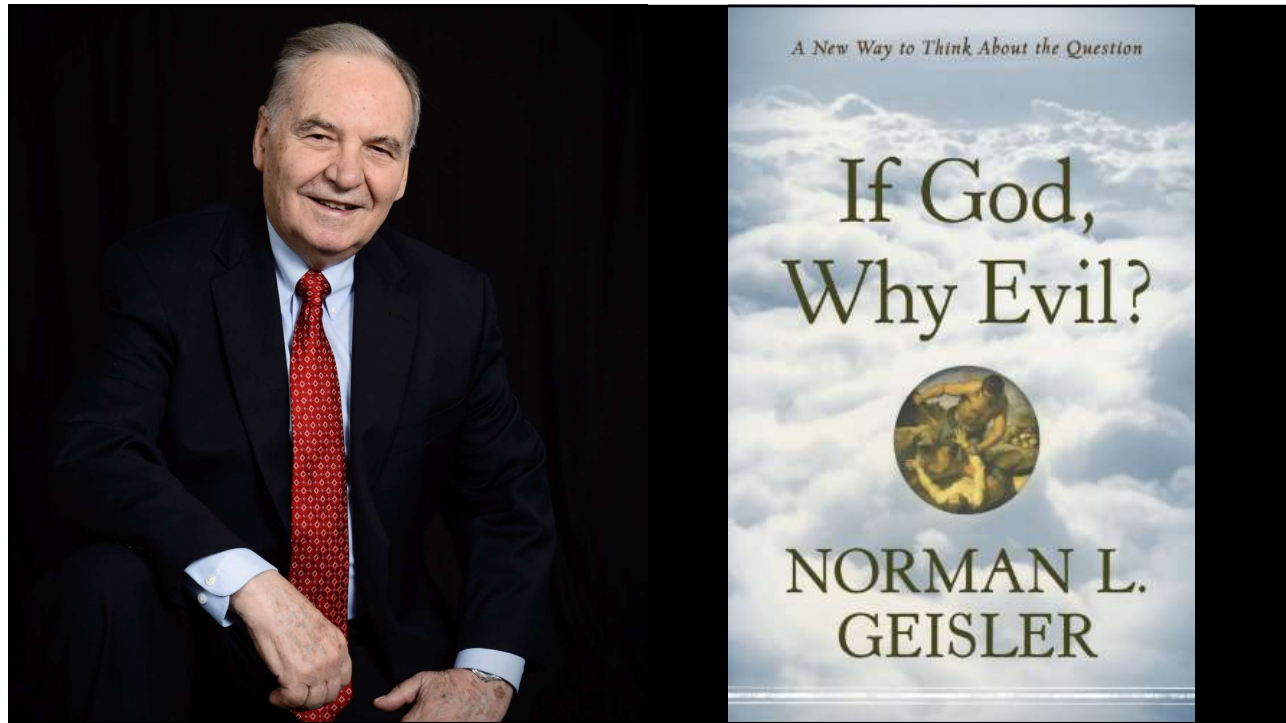
David Hume  
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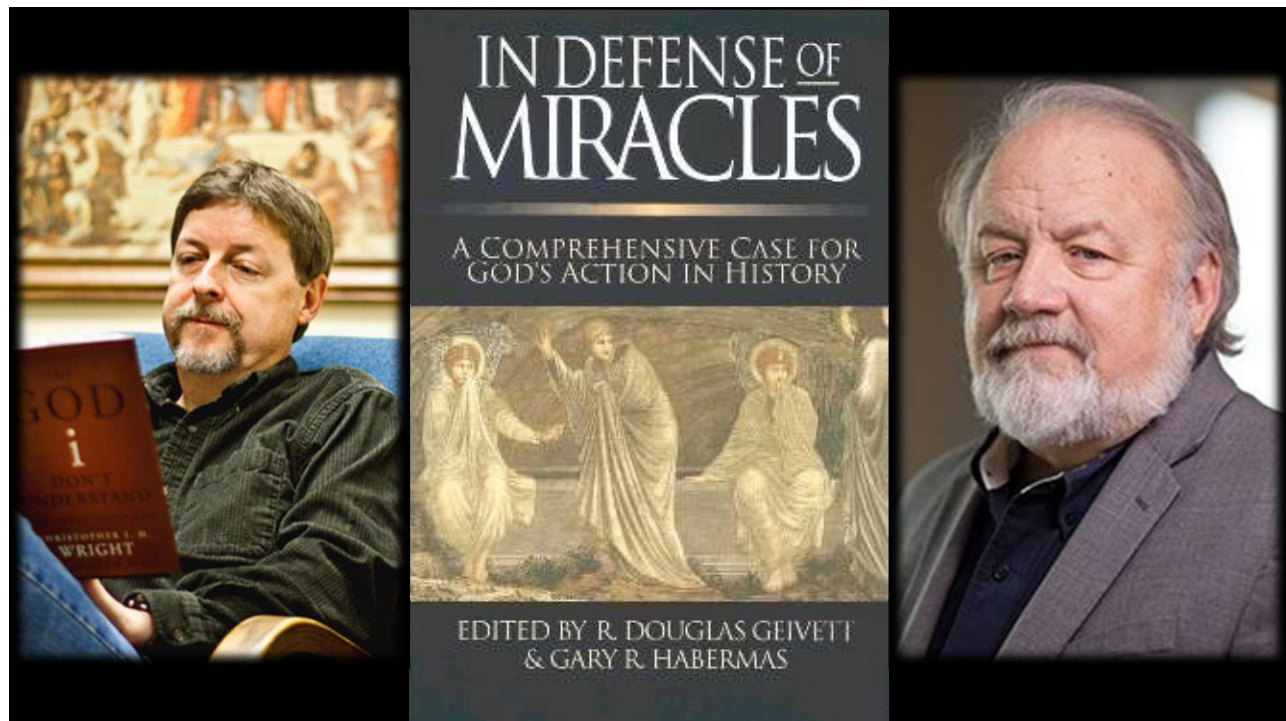
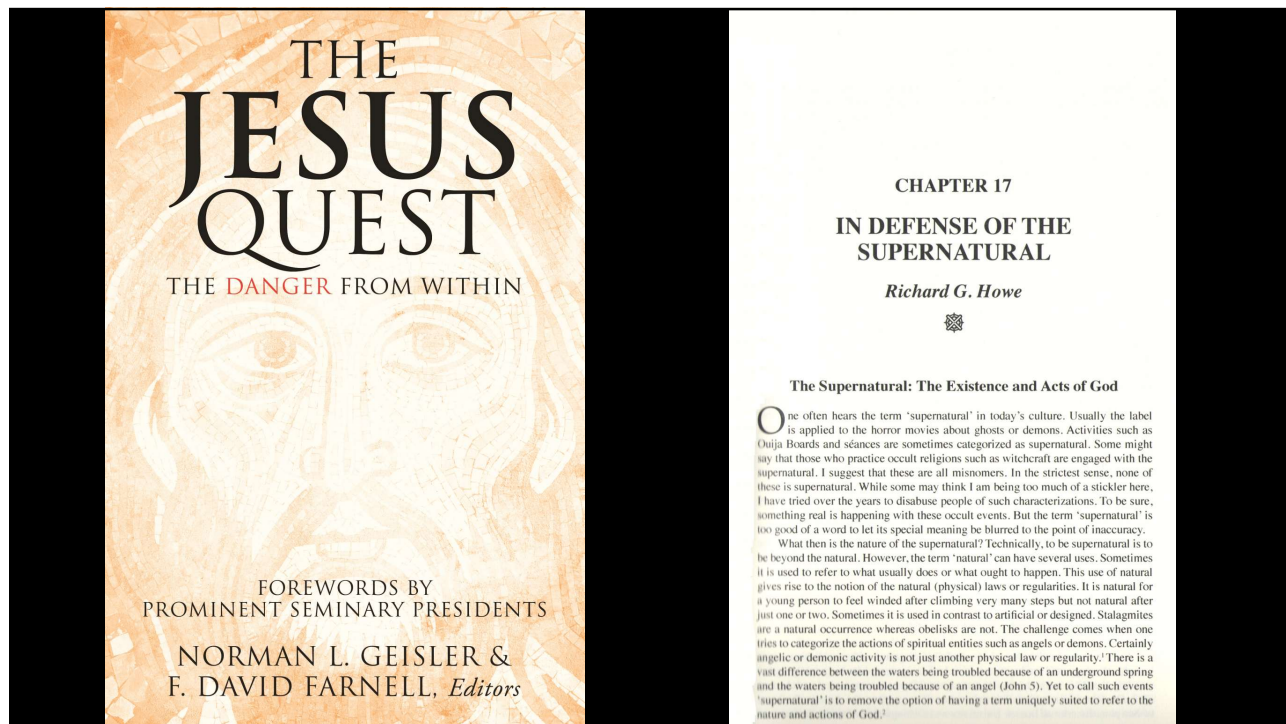
- ❖ ***the reality or knowability of causality***
- ❖ ***miracles***
- ❖ ***the design argument for the existence of God***
- ❖ ***the problem of evil***



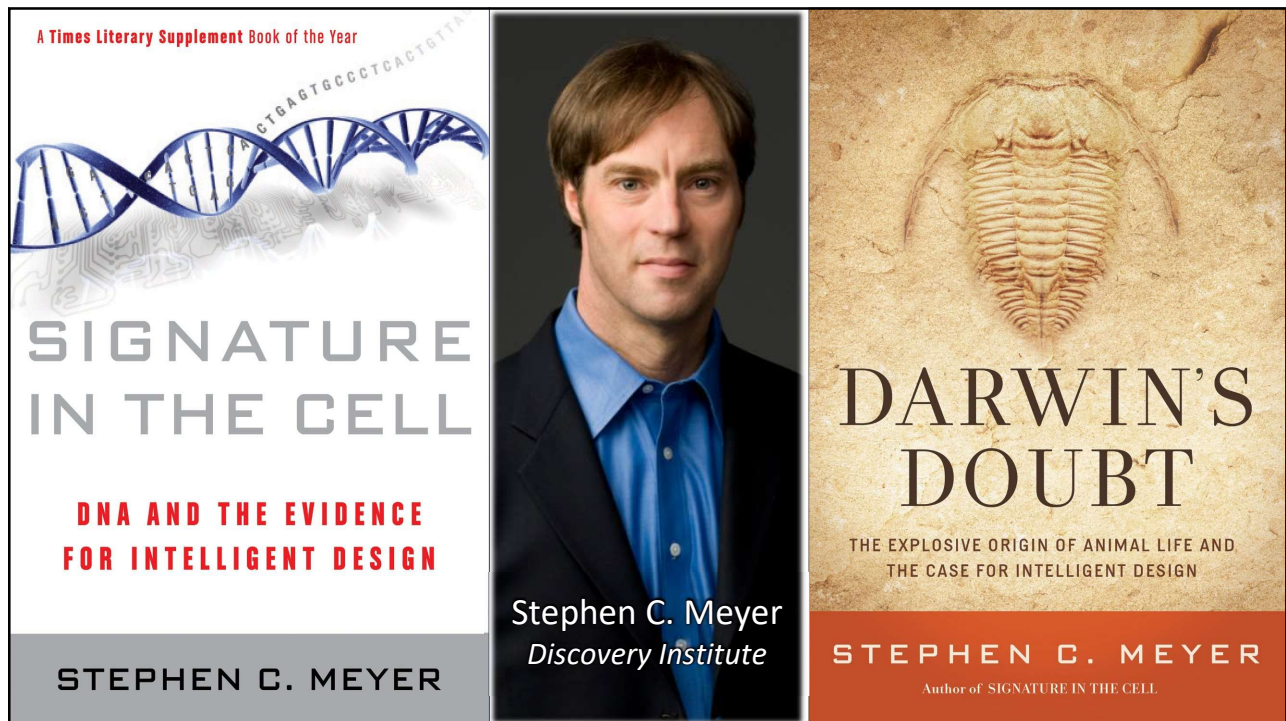
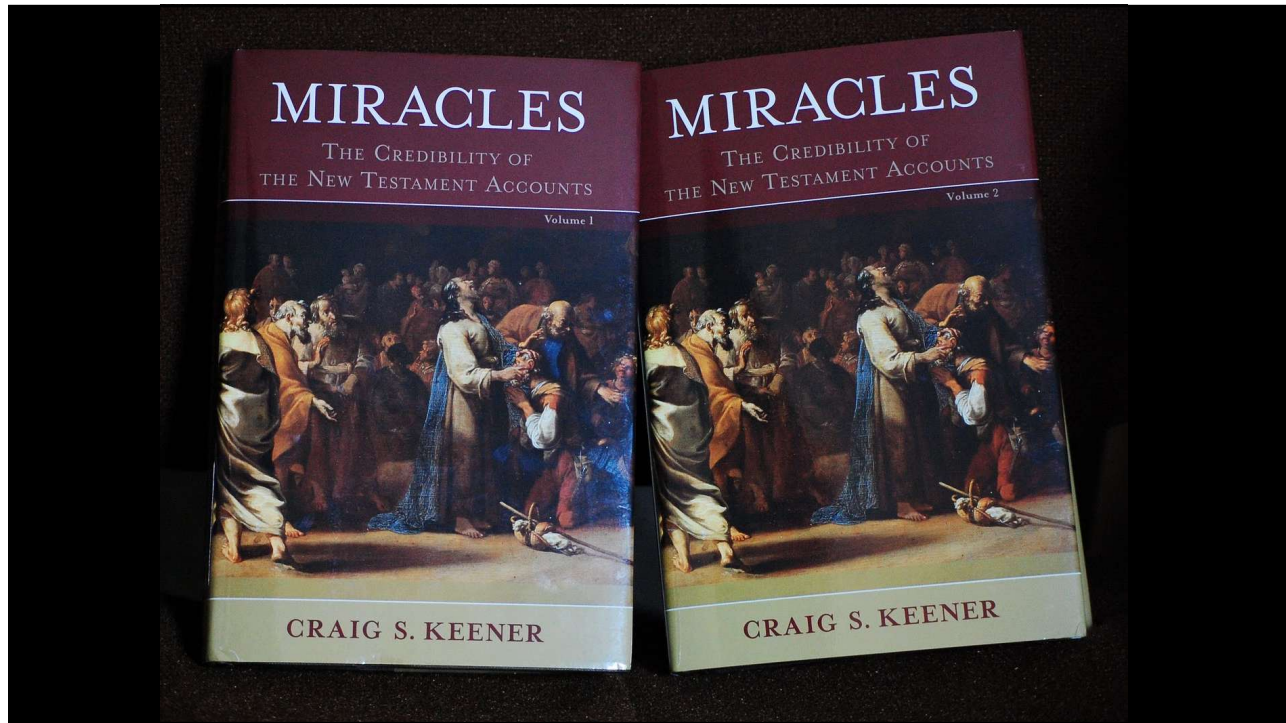
David Hume  
(1711-1776)



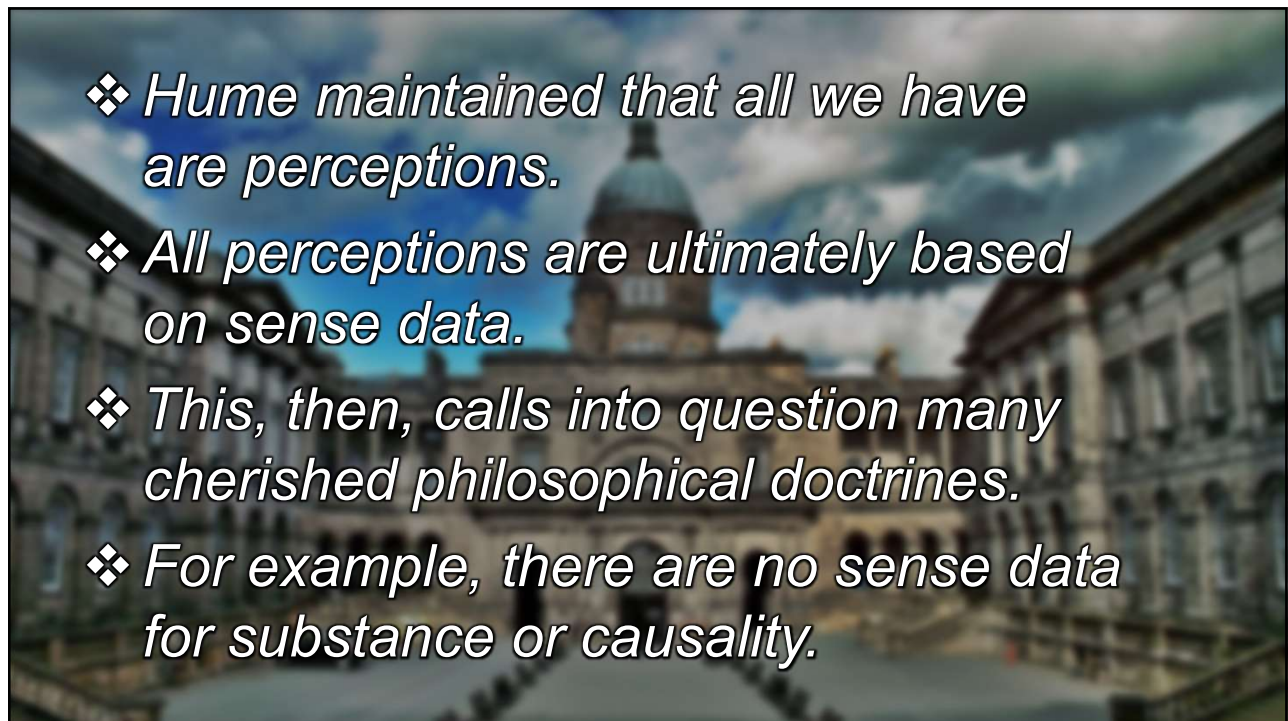
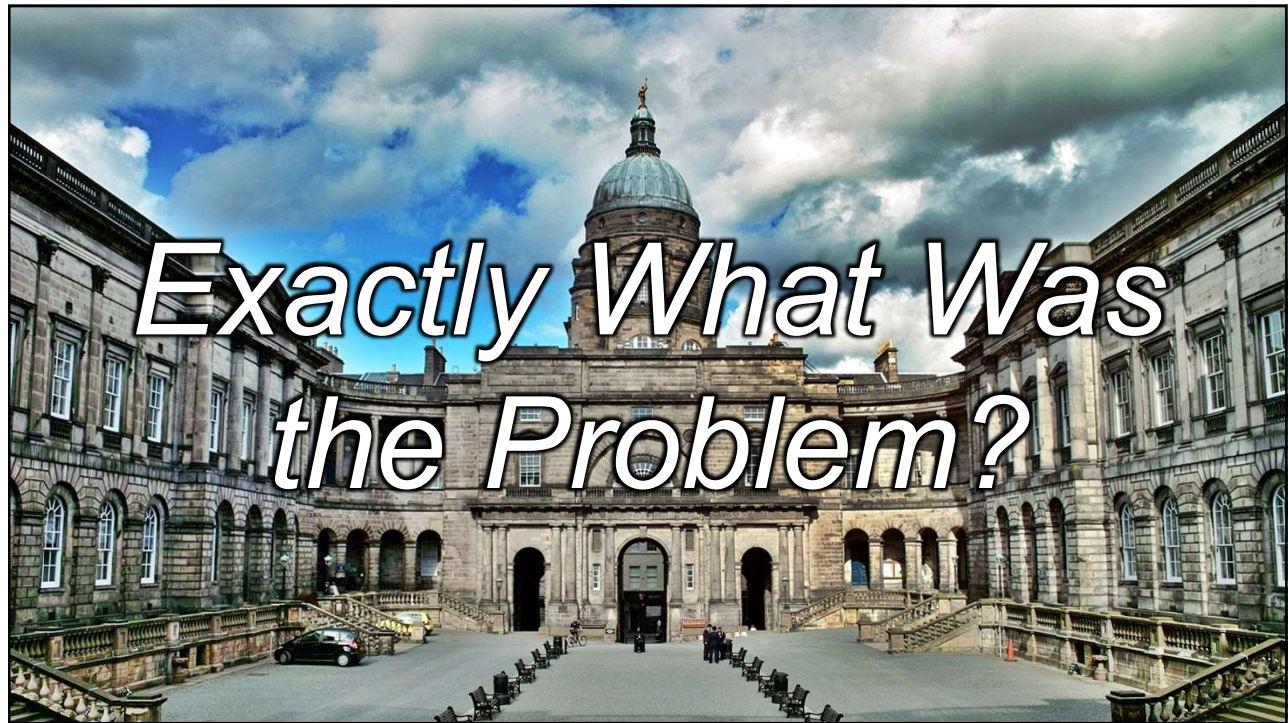














## Perceptions.

Impressions (feelings) - sensations, passions, and emotions as they make their first appearance in the soul.

- ❖ simple Impressions - admit of no distinction nor separation (the sensation of blue, the sensation of sweet)
- ❖ complex Impressions - can be distinguished into parts (the sensation of a tree, the sensation of a man)

## Perceptions.

Ideas (thinking) - faint images of these in thinking and reasoning

- ❖ simple Ideas - admit of no distinction nor separation (the thought of blue, the thought of sweet)
- ❖ complex Ideas - can be distinguished into parts (the thought of a tree, the thought of a man)

# Perceptions.

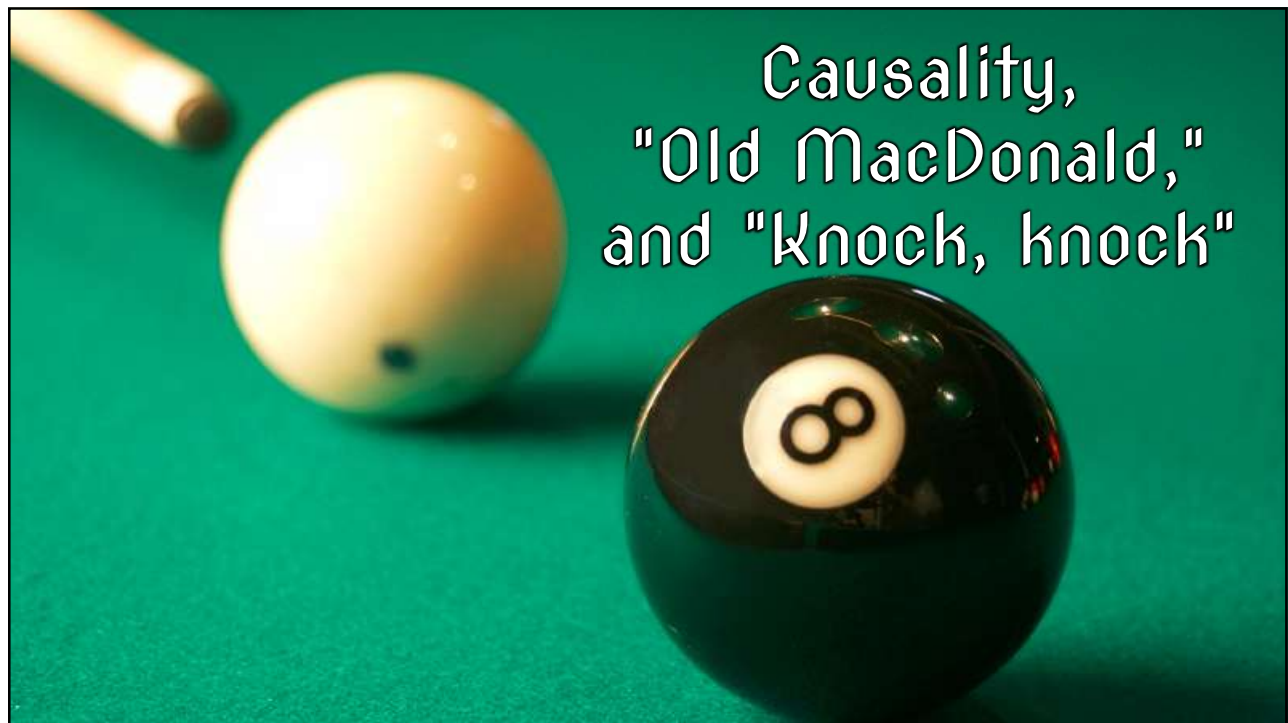
## Imagination vs. Reasoning

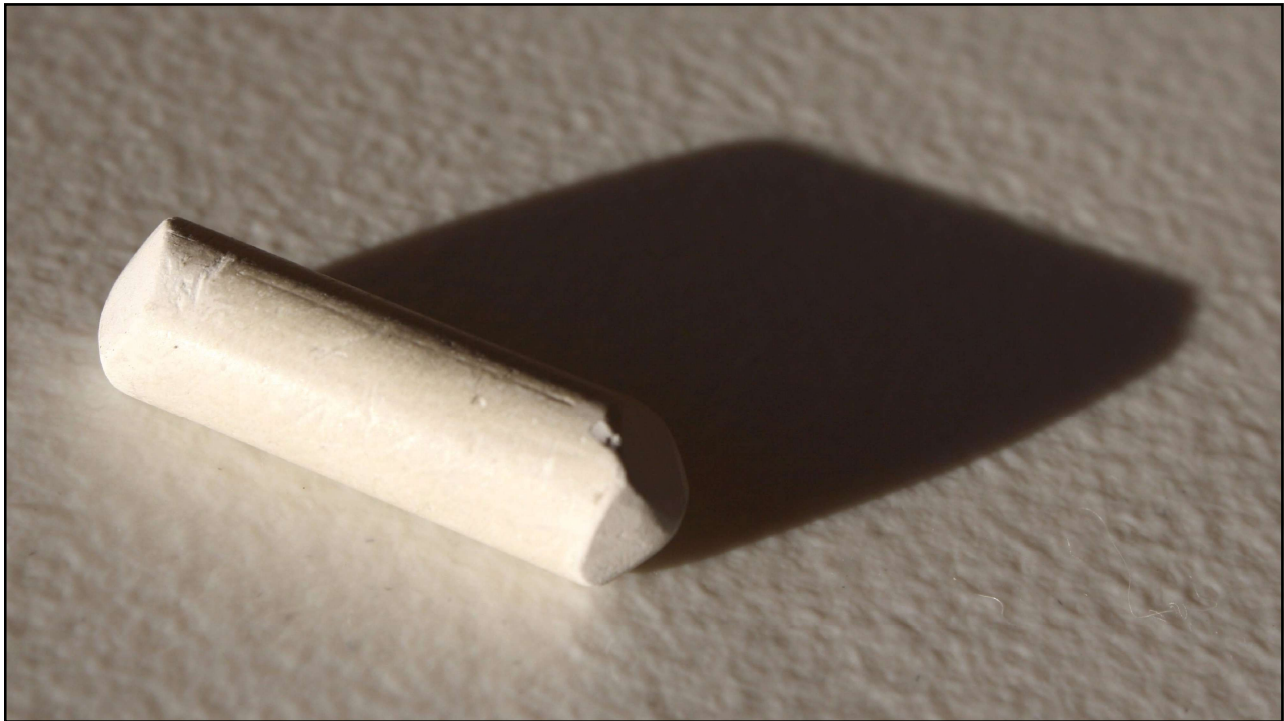
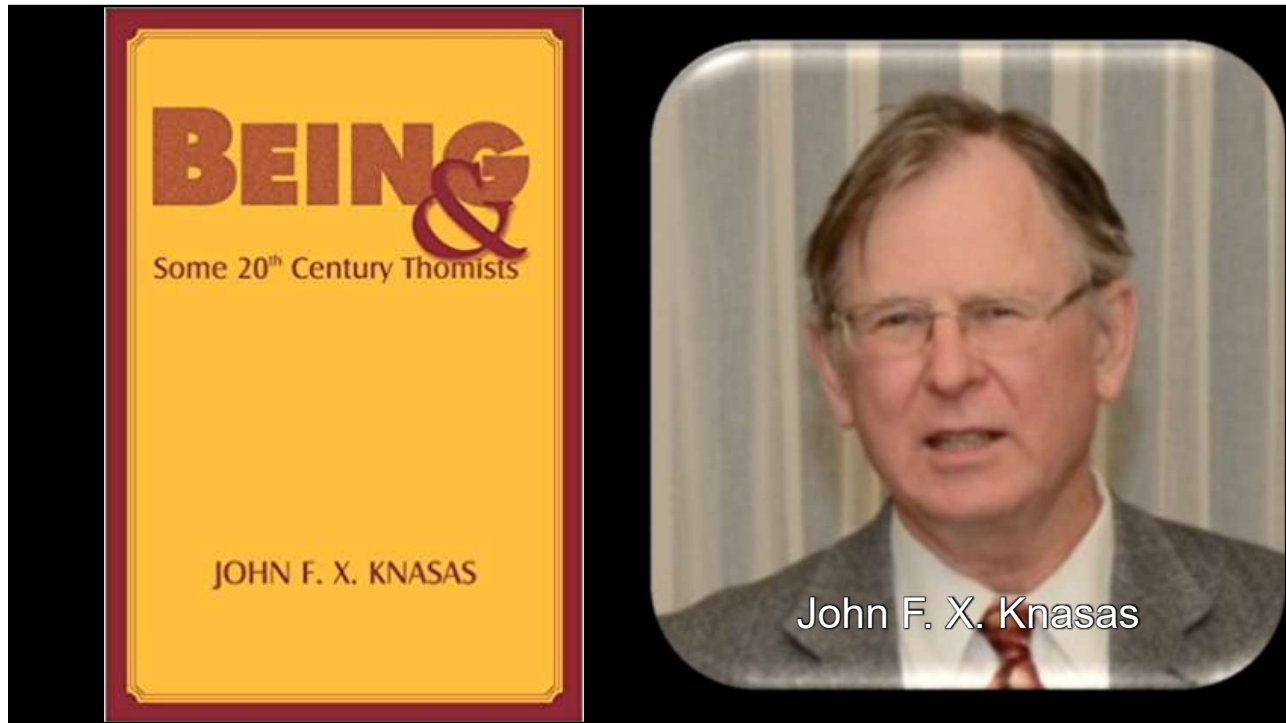
- ❖ The mind, by way of the imagination, can assemble simple ideas and disassemble complex ideas as it pleases.
- ❖ Reason is the faculty in us that assembles ideas consistently according to patterns.

❖ *Our beliefs in such philosophical doctrines, while perhaps natural to us, are nevertheless philosophically unwarranted.*

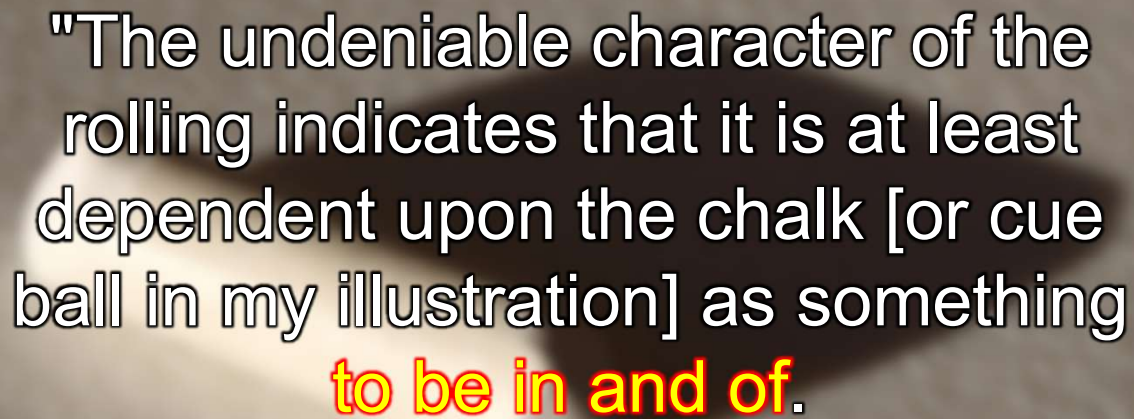
❖ *But why are they natural (i.e., virtually inevitable) for us to believe?*



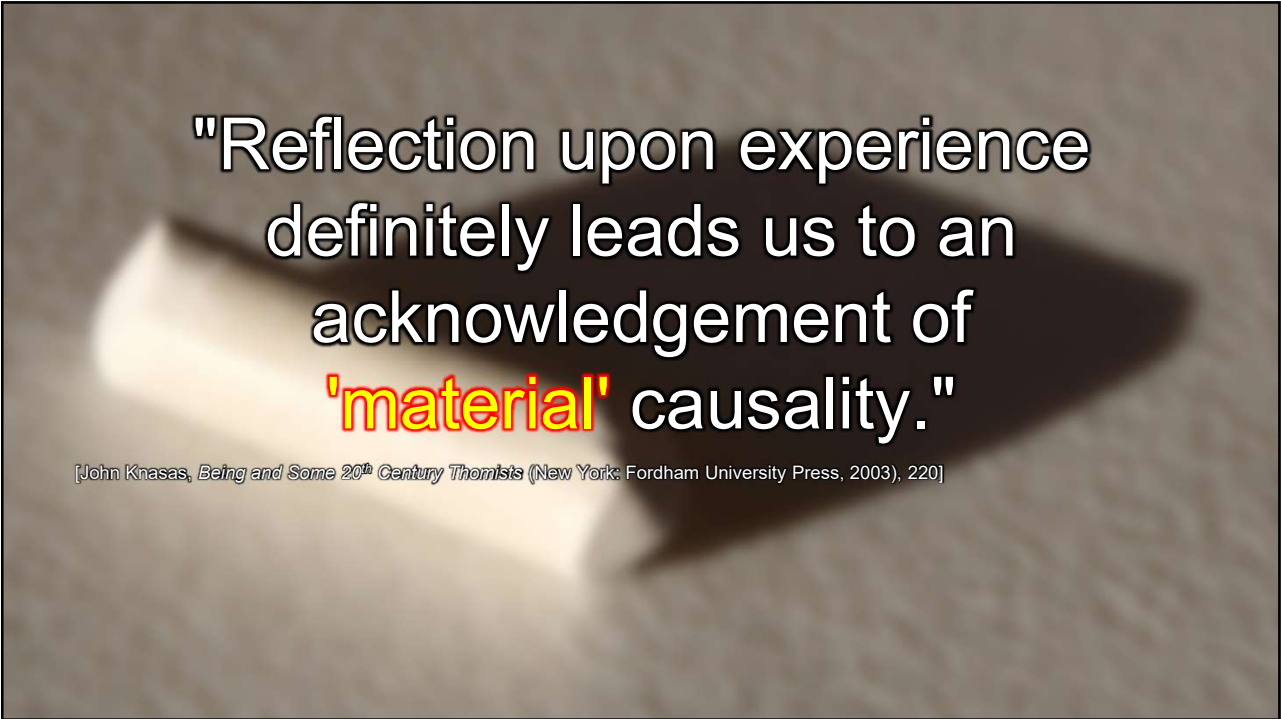






A photograph of a piece of white chalk lying on a dark, textured surface, likely a chalkboard. A soft shadow is cast to the right of the chalk. The text is overlaid on the image.

"The undeniable character of the rolling indicates that it is at least dependent upon the chalk [or cue ball in my illustration] as something **to be in and of.**

A photograph of a piece of white chalk lying on a dark, textured surface, likely a chalkboard. A soft shadow is cast to the right of the chalk. The text is overlaid on the image.

"Reflection upon experience definitely leads us to an acknowledgement of **'material'** causality."

[John Knasas, *Being and Some 20<sup>th</sup> Century Thomists* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 220]

"The rolling cannot be totally depend upon the chalk, since as having the motion in and of it, the chalk is in potency to the motion and so cannot completely explain it.

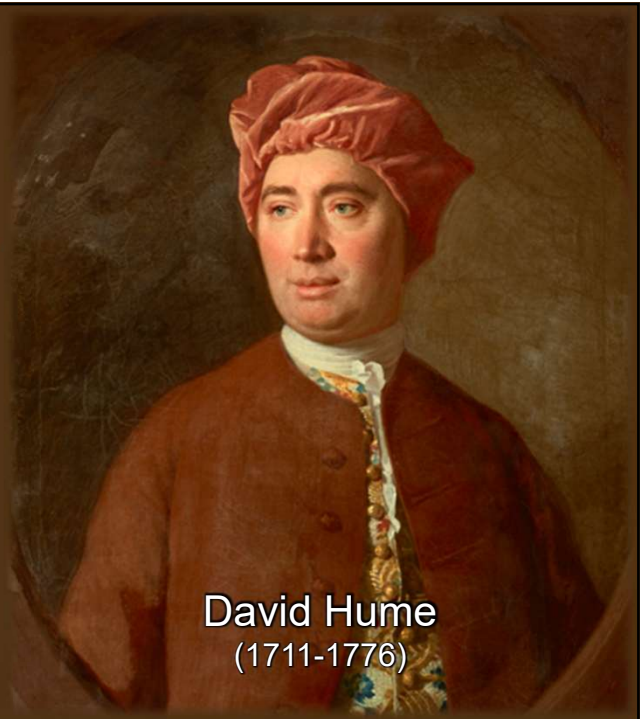
"A complete explanation demands something else, and this is the cause. The cause is responsible for the **accident** being in and of some thing."

[John Knasas, *Being and Some 20<sup>th</sup> Century Thomists* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 220]



***"But allow me to tell you that I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause: I only maintained that our certainty of the falsehood of that proposition proceeded neither from intuition nor demonstration; but from another source."***

[David Hume to John Stewart, Feb. 1754, in *The Letters of David Hume*, 2 vols., ed. by J. Y. T. Greig (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), I: 187]



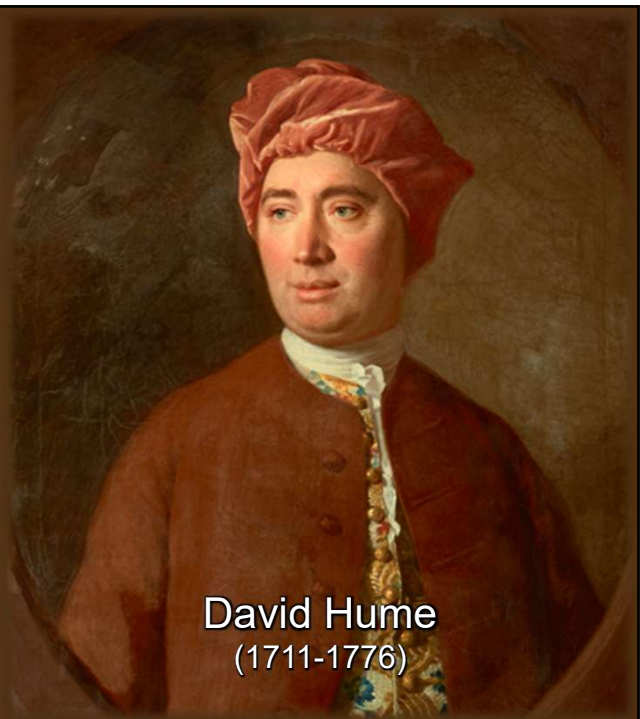
**David Hume**  
(1711-1776)

***Note that Hume is saying that the way we know that the proposition***

***"Something might arise without a cause"***

***is false is not by intuition (Rationalists) nor demonstration (Empiricists) but from another source.***

***This other source is habit.***

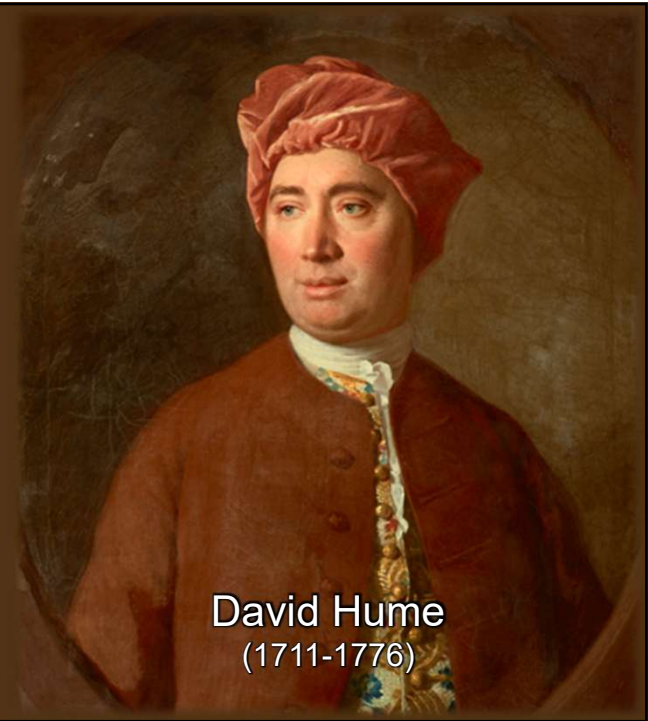


**David Hume**  
(1711-1776)

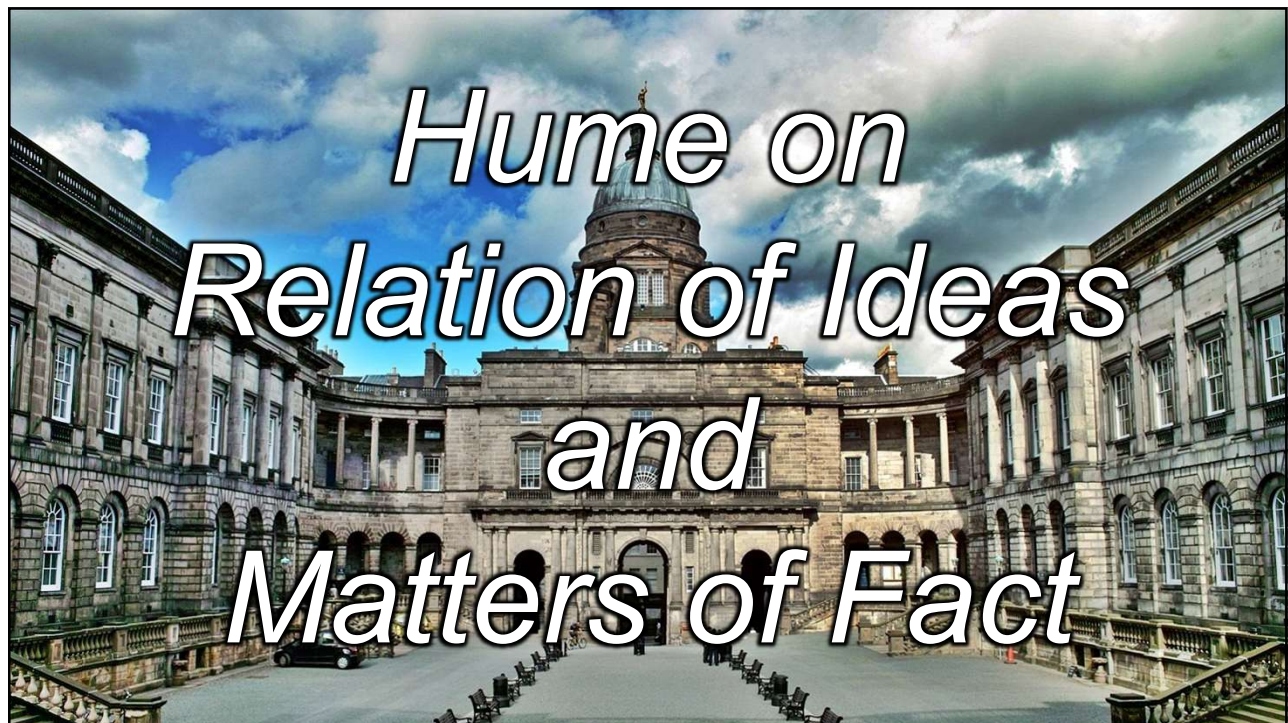


*"Even though we examine  
all the sources of our  
knowledge, and conclude  
them unfit for such a  
subject, there may still  
remain a suspicion, that the  
enumeration is not  
complete, or the  
examination not accurate."*

[David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch, Oxford, 1975, § IV, pt. II, pp. 38-39]



David Hume  
(1711-1776)





***"All the objects of  
human reason or  
enquiry may  
naturally be divided  
into two kinds, to wit,  
Relations of Ideas,  
and Matters of Fact."***

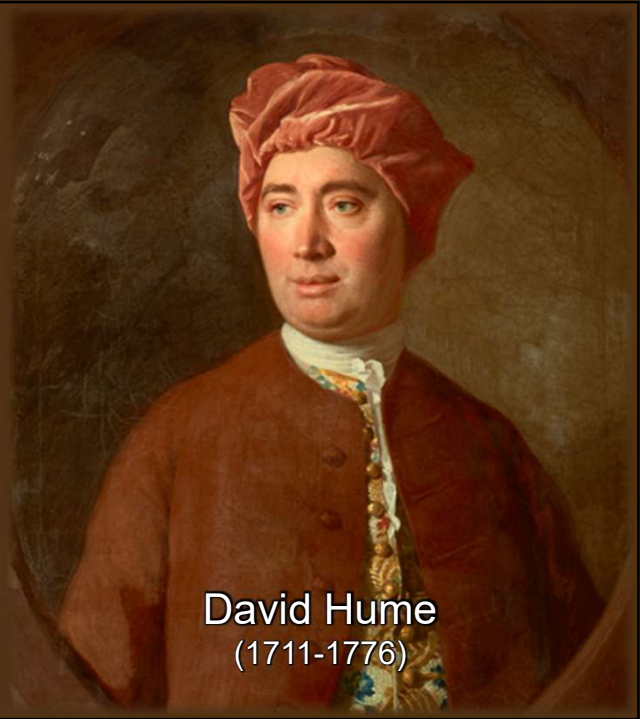
[David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 25]



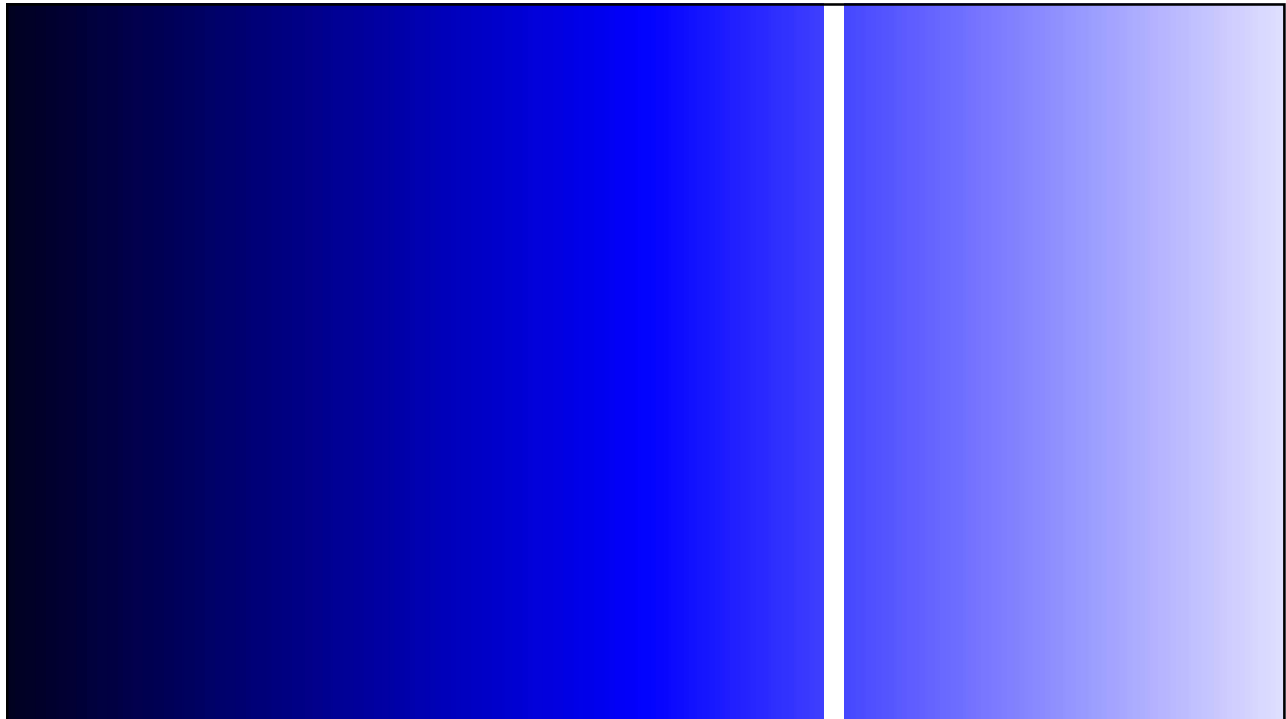
David Hume  
(1711-1776)



*"Suppose, therefore, a person to have enjoyed his sight for thirty years, and to have become perfectly acquainted with colours of all kinds except one particular shade of blue, for instance, which it never has been his fortune to meet with. Let all the different shades of that colour, except that single one, be placed before him, descending gradually from the deepest to the lightest; it is plain that he will perceive a blank, where that shade is wanting, and will be sensible that there is a greater distance in that place between the contiguous colours than in any other.*



David Hume  
(1711-1776)





*"Now I ask, whether it be possible for him, from his own imagination, to supply this deficiency, and raise up to himself the idea of that particular shade, though it had never been conveyed to him by his senses? I believe there are few but will be of opinion that he can: and this may serve as a proof that the simple ideas are not always in every instance, derived from the correspondent impressions; though this instance is so singular, that it is scarcely worth our observing, and not merit that for it alone we should alter our general maxim."*

[David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 21]



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

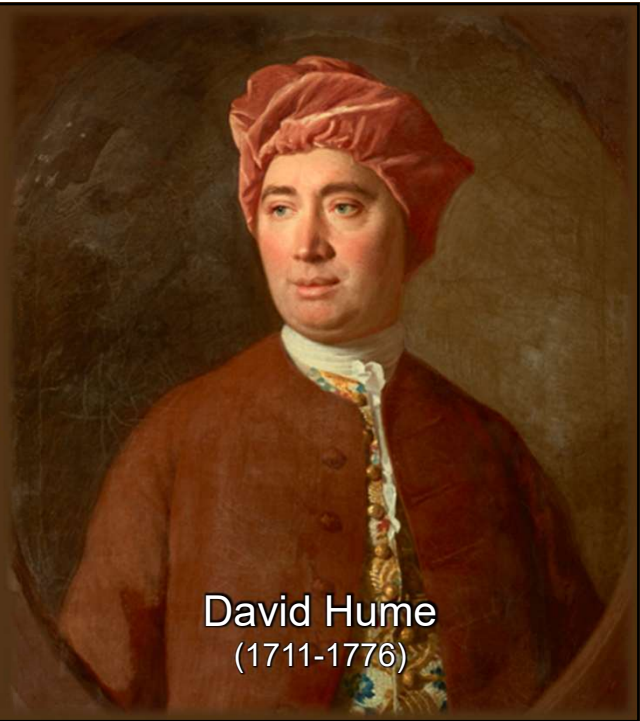




*Hume is almost singlehandedly responsible for the rise of Kant's philosophy (the problems of which we will see in due course).*

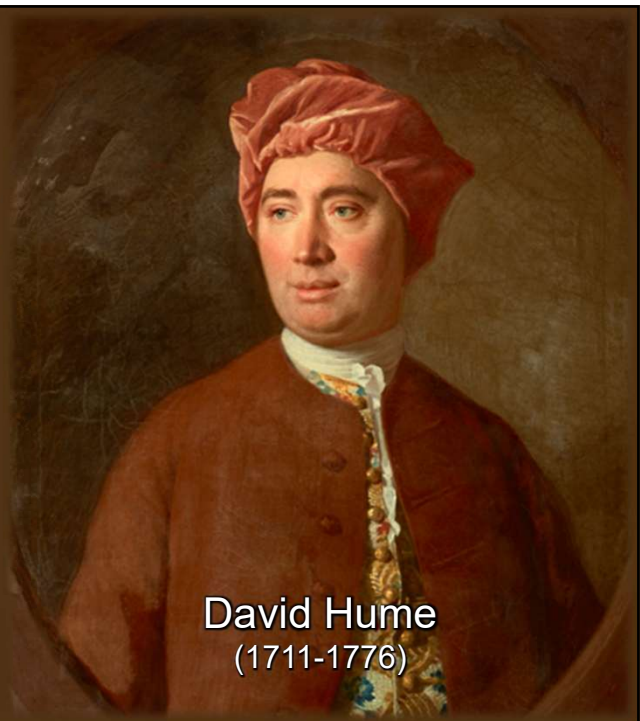
*Kant sought to answer Hume's skeptical philosophical challenge to, among other things, causality, with its implications for the natural sciences.*

*It is perhaps not too much to say that the "cure" from Kant is worse than the "disease" from Hume.*



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

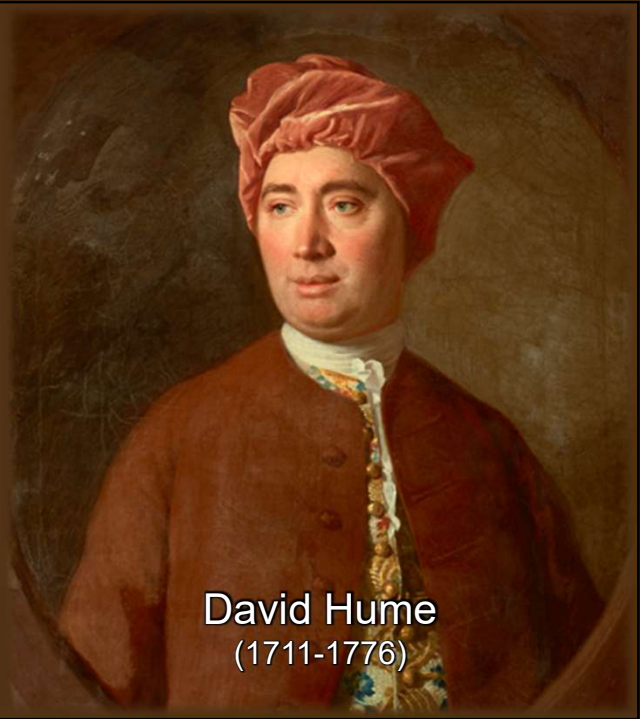
*"By all that has been said the reader will easily perceive that the philosophy contain'd in this book is very sceptical, and tends to give us a notion of the imperfections and narrow limits of human understanding."*



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

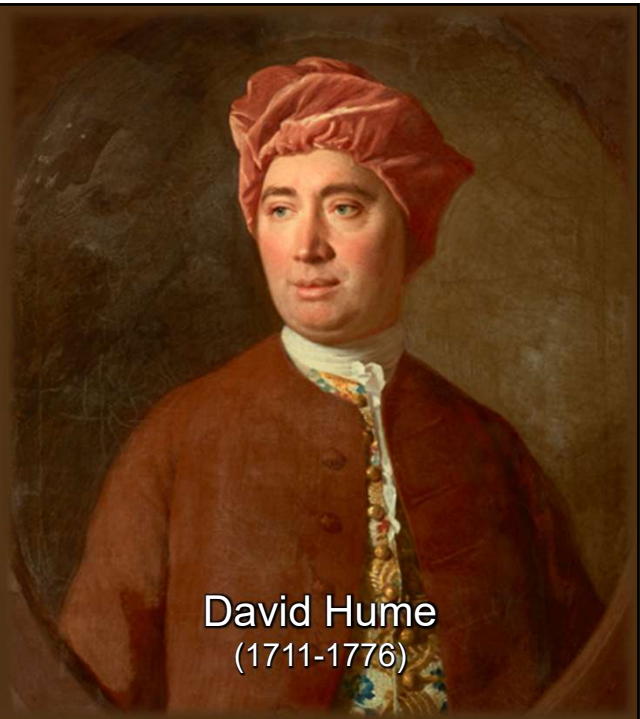


*"Almost all reasoning is there reduced to experience; and the belief, which attends experience, is explained to be nothing but a peculiar sentiment, or lively conception produced by habit."*



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

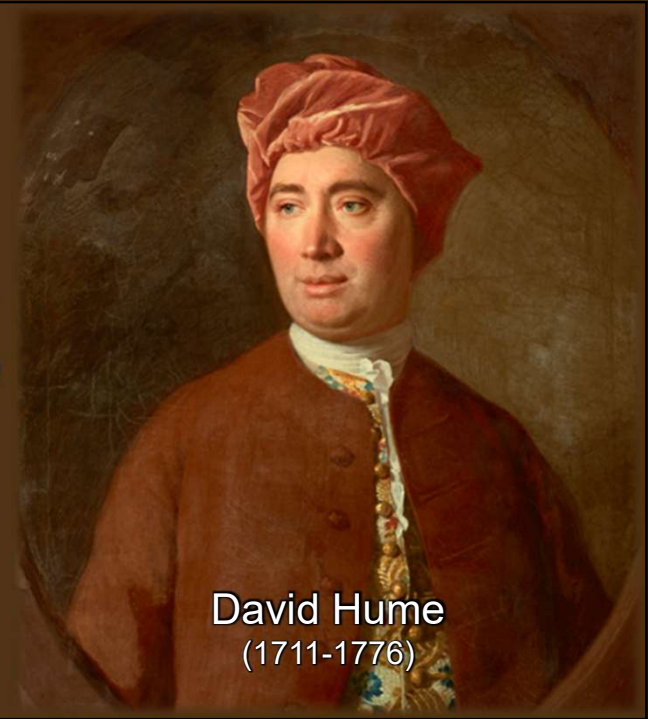
*"Nor is this all, when we believe any thing of external existence, or suppose an object to exist a moment after it is no longer perceived, this belief is nothing but a sentiment of the same kind."*



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

*"Our author insists upon several other sceptical topics; and upon the whole concludes, that we assent to our faculties, and employ our reason only because we cannot help it. Philosophy would render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were not nature too strong for it."*

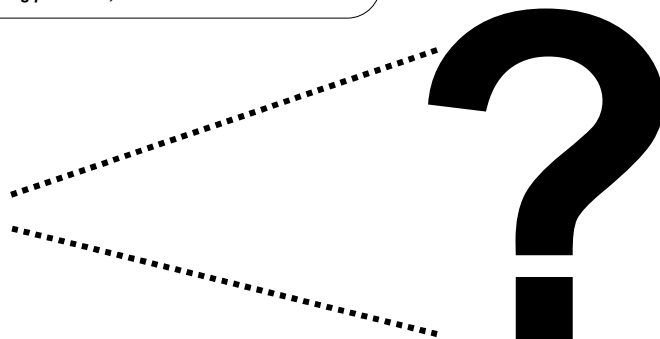
[Abstract to the *Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 657]



David Hume  
(1711-1776)

### David Hume's Theory of Knowledge Empiricism: Phenomenalism

*All we have are perceptions which are made up of impressions (vivid, lively sensations) and ideas (pale copies of impressions). Philosophically, we cannot be justified in believing what we cannot perceive, such as causality and external reality but psychologically we cannot help but believe such things. Other cherished philosophical doctrines that Hume maintained were philosophically unjustifiable were: the reality of the self, the continued existence of the external world when not being perceived, and the existence of God.*



**Unknown  
Causes**