A History of Philosophy
42 John Locke's Theory of Ideas
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All right, I'd like to pick up the discussion that we began last time about John Locke, and with particular reference to Locke's theory of ideas. Let's try to pick up the threads by reminding ourselves that Locke, like Descartes, has a representational theory of knowledge. That is to say that knowledge is basically of our own ideas.

Ideas are the immediate objects of our awareness. And so knowledge is, at best, representational. The mind observes its own ideas and infers from these what there is in the external world.

So, when we discuss Locke's theory of ideas, we're talking about those mental representations. Tremendously important to keep that in mind, because by setting the stage that way, he's opening himself up to problems about whether or not we can show that there are external material bodies outside the mind. Whether or not there are other minds other than one's own.

Whether or not there is an objectively real God rather than just the idea of God. Whether or not there are objectively binding moral obligations rather than just our ideas of certain moral obligations. In other words, he's opening himself up to the question as to whether we can know anything more than appearances, phenomena, as distinct from reality in itself.

And in a very important way, that question is still with us in contemporary debates over realism and anti-realism. And so, Locke, in a way, is setting the stage for a great deal that comes later. So ideas, then, are mental representations.

He distinguishes between simple ideas, complex ideas, and abstract ideas. So we need to say something about each of these. Simple ideas are simple in the sense that they are the indivisible constituents of thought.

Simple in the sense of indivisible, atomistic. Simple ideas, then, are of two sorts, simple ideas of sensation and of reflection. By sensation, he refers to what others call, I think he does at times, the outer senses.

The outer senses, the five physical senses. So simple ideas of sensation have to do with color, sound, smell, taste, and touch, the five senses. And you can readily come up with examples of simple ideas, then, of each of these.

A simple idea of color is a sensation of blueness, a particular sensation of a particular blueness. A simple idea of sound is a sensation of loudness, a particular sensation of particular loudness. And so forth across the range of things.

Simple ideas of reflection have to do with what he calls the inner sense. That is to say, introspective. So that as you experience your own experiencing, you reflect on those ideas, yes, but also on the mental states that you have in having those ideas.

So you have, for instance, a simple idea of reflection that has to do with thinking. The idea of thinking, the idea of doubting, of wishing, of hoping, of feeling, of expecting. Mental acts, mental states, as well as particular kinds of mental feelings that may come along.

So these are all simple ideas, then, of particular sensations and reflections. And if we're talking of simple ideas of sensation, particularly, then we have to distinguish between primary and secondary qualities. Because the primary qualities that we ascribe to material bodies are the qualities which those bodies themselves objectively have, whether we perceive them or not.

And the qualities which material bodies have in the Newtonian science of the day are simply the properties of spatial occupancy. Shape, size, density, primary qualities. Secondary qualities are simply qualities of our ideas that have no objective counterpart.

So the rose is not red. It doesn't really smell rosy. It's not soft in itself, but only to the touch.

That is to say, secondary qualities are qualities produced in our experience by material bodies. Their external cause is the effect of the material body via our sense organs. So that our ideas of secondary qualities are ideas of qualities which are purely subjective, exist in the consciousness only.

The sky is not blue. The rose isn't red. Now, if you're familiar with Tennyson, Tennyson in the 19th century is trying to put together something of his classical vision, shaped partly by the Greeks, partly by Christianity.

He's trying to put that together with this scientific world view of the Newtonian sort, you see. And it's this world stripped of secondary qualities, a world without color and sound and smell, of which he says, can I take a thing so dead, embrace it for my mortal good, you see. You can see how the Romanticists were going to abhor this kind of universe.

Wordsworth's heart dances with the Daffodils, you see. Never John Locke. Couldn't.

So we have these distinctions in his discussion of simple ideas. And that's simply reviewing what we did as we left off last time. Comment there, question, are you finding that fairly straightforward? Try to assimilate that.

Because it's important to see in Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, in other words, for the next six weeks at least. It's important to realize that what you know is not sticks and stones and trees, but simply ideas. Representations.

And if we do have knowledge of sticks and stones and trees, it's indirectly through a cause-effect argument that we infer that they're objectively there. But the immediate awareness is simply as of our own mental states, our own ideas. Mental representations.

Our ideas then of primary qualities are indeed representations, copies, of the way things are. So this is sometimes called a copy theory of knowledge. We have mental copies.

So in that sense, truth is seen as correspondence between the idea and the thing. But our ideas of secondary qualities are not copies. So it's a copy theory as far as primary qualities are concerned, not secondary qualities.

Okay, simple ideas, any comment there? Complex ideas are simply the result of our compounding and combining various simple ideas. And he makes the point that this compounding seems to be a voluntary kind of activity. So that we've somehow or other chosen to put these simple ideas together into larger composites.

So my idea of a human body is a composite that I've constructed. It's a mental construct. Compound ideas, complex ideas, yes, let's put it down, they are mental constructs.

And inasmuch as my mental construct is of a person with a certain color to the face, with perhaps a softness to the skin, perhaps a little fragrance, particularly if you come straight from a phys-ed class, all right, then insofar as it incorporates those things, those compound ideas, complex ideas, are not exact representations. Because the secondary qualities are subjective. They don't have objective correlates.

So there's no guarantee, built-in guarantee, that our complex ideas of bodies and houses and ships and trees have objective reference, just as they are. Complex ideas are mental constructs. He gives a number of examples, and they become crucially important in the development of this tradition.

Take, for instance, the example of power, causal power, which he discusses on 184, 185. He suggests this is a complex idea, most clearly derived from simple ideas of reflection on the relationships between our mental states, on the relationship

between my willing and then affirming something, or on the relationship between my deciding to do something and then physically doing it. Because I see that there is some sort of correlation going on between willing and doing, I assume there's some sort of causal connection between the mind that wills and the body that does.

So the idea of causal power arises as a complex idea that we suppose represents what goes on between mind and body. Now, you notice in the way I describe that, a distinction between there being correlations between two events and there being a connection between two events. Correlation, if you like, conjunction.

They are there in conjunction. But is there any connection? Now, says Locke, the idea of a connection just arises, and we voluntarily affirm it, the idea of causal power. Now, it's precisely that which David Hume is going to criticize.

It's crucial. Because in this representational view, how do you know there is an external world? Whether it be a world of material things, a world of other minds, or a world in which God is included, how do you know those things exist? Unless it is by a cause-effect argument. Here's the effect, the ideas.

Here is the cause: those external things. Now, you can only use a cause-effect argument if you know there's a cause-effect connection. Whereas, in fact, all you know in your ideas is the correlation, the conjunction.

You don't know the connection. So, a couple of weeks from now, when you're reading David Hume, you'll hear him saying that all there is to this idea of power is the idea of constant conjunction. We have no empirical basis at all for affirming any causal connection.

And he becomes a skeptic about knowing anything about causal power. Now, what's that going to do to Newtonian science? Where everything is understood in terms of forces, causal power. What's it going to do to the possibility of knowing anything about the material world? Knowing anything about other minds or God, if you can't have causal arguments? So what he's doing then with complex ideas like the idea of power is crucial.

The idea of substance, likewise. As you read Locke, notice carefully the way he talks about substance on pages 186 and again 189. Whether it be material substance or whether it be mental substance, immaterial mind, spirit, or soul.

You see, what we have in our simple ideas is simply ideas of certain qualities. Primary qualities, secondary qualities. Where does the idea of substance come from? Well, it's an idea of something which has those qualities.

You see? You get the idea of material substance by putting primary quality ideas together. It is something I know not what that has those qualities. And the way Locke talks about material substance then is simply to call it something I know not what.

Sickle. And he talks of spiritual substance, mind, or soul, the same way. It's something that has mental properties.

Something I know not what. Now, obviously, somebody like Hume is going to make hay out of that. You see? Yeah.

Or try the concept of infinity again. We don't have the actual paragraphs that deal with that in our selection, but in the full text, he discusses the idea of infinity, a complex idea. How do we get the idea of infinity from simple ideas? Well, if we're talking of space being infinite, as Newton did, what we're talking of is a point beyond this point, beyond this point, beyond this point, and so on, as we say ad infinitum.

The idea of infinity is a complex idea developed by that process of extrapolation. An endless extrapolation. Similarly, with the idea of infinite time.

Extrapolation. And so that's the way the Newtonian conceptions of space and time are accounted for. Absolute, infinite space and time.

Complex ideas derived from simple ideas of particular points in space, particular periods of time. And he says that that's the way in which we get the idea of God as a spirit who is infinite. I mentioned that Locke's Father was one of the signatories of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The Westminster Confession defines God as a spirit, infinite in wisdom, goodness, love, and power. It defines the human person as a spirit, finite in wisdom, goodness, love, and power. God is a spirit, infinite in the same regard.

Well, how do you get the idea of an infinite God? How do you get the idea of God? By extrapolation from our ideas of the wisdom, goodness, love, and power which human minds exert. Extrapolating that to infinite wisdom, infinite goodness, infinite love, infinite power, and you have the idea of an infinite being. That's how the idea of God develops.

Complex idea. So he tries to account in that way for the whole kind of mental apparatus, conceptual apparatus, which we have. In keeping with his basic conviction that we have no innate idea of God or of anything else.

That all of our ideas ultimately derive from experience. That is to say, from simple ideas of sensation and reflection. Complex ideas.

Comment? Yes, Esther. Complex ideas have their qualities. Some of them at least have, yes.

They are qualities of your simple ideas. How do you know that you are actually seeing a correct representation? How do you know that what you think is correct? How do you justify that your simple ideas are correct? Could you hold on to that until we get down there? Because he makes a distinction that is as old as Plato between knowledge and opinion. Knowledge and belief.

And in effect, he's going to say that there are different degrees of knowledge. And the third degree that he calls opinion, belief, is what applies to knowledge of material things. In other words, you don't have certainty.

But even as far as spatial things like that, a square or a cubic object, that's been learned. You don't see that and know that. That's right, and he's willing to admit it.

That's a matter of opinion. There are things that we can know, but only some things. Well, look here, since you've raised that, let's jump ahead and pick that up while it's hot.

What he does in talking about knowledge and belief is to distinguish three kinds of knowledge. Knowledge of the first kind, the second kind, and the third kind. And you can track this down for yourself, pages 198 to 201, thereabouts.

Knowledge of the first kind is by intuition. Knowledge of the second kind is by demonstration. Knowledge of the third kind is by sensation, sensory means.

These three kinds. Now, intuition is what we know immediately, by immediate awareness. We only have knowledge where there is immediate knowledge rather than representational knowledge.

Okay? You only have intuitive knowledge when it's known immediately rather than by representation. Well, what do we know then that's intuitive? You see? Well, what you know that is intuitive is that A equals A. In other words, the laws of logic. And applications of the laws of logic that you get, for instance, in mathematics, where the three angles of a triangle add up to two right angles.

You say, is that intuitive? Well, in the final analysis, it is, after it's worked out, it comes through intuitively. So the intuitive is what is immediately self-evident. If you like, the fact that I now have a sensation of blueness, that would be intuitive.

But that there is a blue object out there in the real world, that's not intuitive. Demonstration, knowledge by demonstration of the second kind, is what we know as a result of logical demonstration, logical proof with certainty. In other words, if you

have certain intuitive premises, self-evident premises, or first principles, you can deduce certain things and prove them.

And as I indicated in the mathematical example, each step in the proof must come through with intuitive certainty. But again, that's not dealing with what is representational unless the proof is such as to get beyond the representation to reality itself. But how, in a deductive proof, do you get external reality in a conclusion if it's not in one of the premises? You see, in no syllogism can you have in the conclusion something which is not involved in one of the premises.

So if we're talking about knowledge of the external world, we are consigned to knowledge of a third kind. What we have with sensation seems to be based on probability, not a matter of certainty, but simply of probability. If, for instance, we want to think of some general concept, some generalization, some general concept, then obviously any empirical generalization is going to be limited to probability tied to how large the sample that we've experienced.

So you can have a probability there. But by the same token, he would think that causal arguments, inasmuch as the notion of causal power is at best a construct, are at best probability arguments. And so that likewise leaves you with a lesser degree of knowledge.

So the answer essentially is this. If it's not something you know immediately, intuitively, if it's not something that can be demonstrated from what is known immediately, then the only way you know that something is the way you think it is, is on the basis of experience. Probabilities are the best we have.

And I think that's characteristic of this whole empiricist tradition, that if you want to know anything beyond present experience, you have to go with probability. Now the question he's not asking is about the logical basis of probability, because probability assumes the uniformity of nature. And it remains for David Hume to question the logical basis of probability.

He really does a thorough job. Okay? On demonstration, can you give an example of what he would say you can prove by demonstration? Mathematical theorems. That's the classic example, obviously.

And he can't go much beyond that if he wants to be true to his empiricism. Yes, sir? Because if he's going to say you can know independently of sense experience, things about the physical universe, he's not going to be an empiricist. Yeah.

Dave? Jumping back to the simple ideas for a second, are the reflections reflections of the sensations that we receive, or are they? Reflections can be after-images, memories of original sensations. Or they can be simple ideas of our own mental

activities, of thinking, doubting, hoping. So that the immediate sensation is one thing, a simple idea of sensation.

Your subsequent reflection on that is something different. Get that distinction? When we get to Hume, we'll see he adapts the terminology to make that distinction a little clearer. For Hume, the immediate sensation is called an impression.

And then an idea, that term, is used for your subsequent idea of the impression. But the immediate sensation is an impression. That language has other reasons for it, but it makes the distinction rather nicely.

Okay, let me back up now to abstract ideas. Okay. Abstract ideas.

And here we get into the question of universals. Because the term abstraction, abstraction, plainly is the Aristotelian and scholastic term for the way in which we gain universal concepts. And is, in effect, where does John Locke come out on theories of universals? Now, hark back to what we were doing last semester as we got into this period.

And we observed that Bacon and Hobbes are both directly influenced by the alchemist nominalism, and take nominalist positions. That is to say, all we can think is particulars. We don't even have words that stand for abstract ideas, because we don't even have abstract ideas.

All we have are general ideas. And so both Bacon and Hobbes are nominalists. Now, in the case of Descartes, somewhat different.

Descartes is not an empiricist on the source of our ideas. He's a rationalist. There are things we know independently of experiencing particulars.

So Descartes is a conceptualist. We do have abstract ideas, not just empirical generalizations. Even though Descartes did not believe that there were real universals in the Platonic or Aristotelian sense.

Descartes, the conceptualist. Bacon and Hobbes are nominalists. John Locke also, I think, is a conceptualist.

And it seems to be the influence of Descartes here. Because John Locke is going to be taking up a mind-body dualism like Descartes. We'll see this later on, but he agrees with Descartes' cogito ergo sum argument.

I think, therefore I exist. I'm a thinking thing, a mind, a soul, an immaterial entity. So he follows Descartes in that regard, even though he's an empiricist, as simple ideas of reflection are what lead him to that.

And being a conceptualist then, he's not going to take it back, having an immaterial mind. He's not going to be so tied to physical sensations as was Thomas Hobbes. And he thinks of the powers of the mind, the active powers of the mind, that we're aware of in reflection.

And one of these mental activities, mental powers we're aware of, is the power of abstraction. And so what he's doing in the section on abstract ideas is talking about our ideas of reflection of abstracting. Now, with that in mind, turn to those two passages and take a look at them.

The first one is on page 182, where it's part of chapter 11, under the title of Discerning and Other Operations of the Mind, within which, talking about operations of the mind, yes, he talks about naming as one operation of the mind. At the very bottom of 181, when children have, by repeated sensations, got ideas fixed in their memories, they begin, by degrees, to learn the use of signs. That's how they learned names and words.

And then the section on abstraction, the use of words, being to stand as outward marks of internal ideas. Words are outward marks, physical signs, written or heard, seen or heard. Words are outward signs of internal ideas, ideas taken from particular things.

If every particular idea that we take in should have a distinct name, names would be endless. So to prevent this, the mind makes the particular ideas become general ideas by considering them as separate from all existence. And from the circumstances of existence, separate from time, place, or anything else.

So this is called abstraction. You develop abstract general ideas, whereby ideas taken from particular beings become general representations with general names, applicable to whatever exists conformable to such abstract ideas, so we get general concepts, carried by those names, those words. And these abstract ideas, then, are what he's talking about.

And in the next paragraph, Brute's Abstract Note, he makes the point that this is one of the main distinctions between humans and animals: we have abstract ideas, we think abstractly, animals do not. They may have sense perception and so forth, but they don't think abstractly. Now that's the one passage.

The other passage is on page 192, where in book three, he's talking about general words again. Repeat something of what he said earlier. Notice in the middle of the second column, the end of paragraph eight, a new idea is made, not by any new addition, but only, as before, by leaving out shape and other properties, other

particular properties, retaining only a body with life, since spontaneous motion is comprehended under the name animal.

How do you get the general idea of an animal? By abstracting what is essential to all animals from the particular properties of every animal. You leave aside all the particular properties and think in abstraction of just what is essential to being an animal. That is to say, a body with life since spontaneous motion.

That's the essence of an animal. And on 192, then, he goes on, top of the page, of the complex ideas signified by the names man and horse, leaving out particulars in which they differ, retaining only those wherein they agree. Those making a new complex idea, giving the name animal to it, one has a more general term.

Leave out the idea of animal, sense in spontaneous motion, remaining complex idea, so forth, becomes a more general one under the more comprehensive category, too, vivens, living, living things. Notice how he's playing with the Aristotelian things. Humans are rational animals. What's an animal? Animals are living things. What's a living thing? You see, the larger and larger universal categories.

Until he gets to the end of that paragraph to conclude this whole mystery of genera and species, the Aristotelian classification, this whole mystery of genera and species, which makes such a noise in the schools, the scholastics, with justice so little regarded out of them, is nothing else but abstract ideas with names annexed to them. And if you look across the page at 193, you see a section entitled, Abstract Ideas of the Essences of Genera and Species. And he points out at the end of that section that essences of the sorts of things, and consequently the sorting of things, is the workmanship of the understanding that abstracts and makes general ideas.

So, what are essences? Well, they're not real forms of a transcendent sort, as in Plato. They're not real metaphysical entities, as in Plato and Aristotle. Essences are those common and recurrent qualities essential to all members of a class, conceived of abstractly, in abstraction from all particular properties, in our abstract ideas, and referred to by abstract terms.

Conceptualism. Now, watch this, because it's his conceptualism that makes it possible for him to talk of things like mind, spirit, causal power, because some of these complex ideas are abstract ideas. Now, when you get to Hume, you'll find that Hume is a nominalist.

All of our terms have to be referred to particular ideas. Nominalism. And so, because Hume is a nominalist, he rejects conceptions of matter and mind as substances and of causal power and of infinite space or infinite time.

Now, not only Hume, we'll find it next week when we get to George Berkeley, who's sort of a halfway house to Hume. Berkeley, too, is a nominalist, as distinct from a conceptualist. So, the old problem of universals is going to play a crucial role in this 18th-century debate.

Okay, anything there? Yeah? Yeah. Yeah, I'm not sure it's fair to say he classifies it with the other five. He's saying we have two different kinds of simple ideas, because we have two kinds of sense.

We have outer sense and inner sense. Inasmuch as it's inner sense, it's not classified with the five. They're outer sense.

But it's still a source of simple ideas. But that inner sense is dependent on the outer sense. Well, it is for the simple sensory ideas on which we reflect.

But it's not dependent on the outer sense for our reflective awareness of our own mental activities. Well, in a sense, it's just from the way you describe it, it seems like he almost says it is, because it's like, well, what can I hope for if I don't have, I mean, okay, shutting out all prior sense perception. Yes.

What can I hope in if there's nothing to hope? What can I perceive? Oh, okay, I see what you're saying, yeah. If there had been no sensations of an external sort, would I be aware of my own thinking? Or think at all, in a sense, almost. Yeah, yeah.

If there were no sensations of an external sort about particular properties of supposedly particular things, would I be developing abstract ideas? Would I be aware of my own abstracting? Yeah, I think you can ask that question. I'm not sure that he answers it. He might, I suppose, he might well say that there are mental activities which are independent thereof.

I'd have problems with that. I'm inclined to think we're such integral psycho-physical beings that it's the physical and sensory interaction with the world which awakens self-awareness within us. So I think that the hypothesis which somebody proposed in that day of a person who has all his life been encased in a coat of stone so that none of the senses have any contact with the world and then is animated, would have no experience at all, would have no consciousness at all.

But it's only as the stone is chipped away, say, from the eyes, that consciousness begins to arise. There was a Frenchman, the Baron de Condillac, who constructed that hypothesis. I think there's something to be said for that.

Not for Condillac's reasons. He was a materialist. But simply because of the way in which our psychosomatic unity functions.

But that's one question. Would reflection have anything to reflect on if there'd been no initial sensory input? That's one question. The origination question.

The other question, though, is here I am, a functioning human being. Do I have anything to reflect on other than sensations? Yes! Yes, I have all sorts of ideas, abstract ideas, general ideas, and my own mental activities to reflect on. Enough to keep me busy, quite apart from new sensations.

So in that sense, right. Right. I thought he was kind of saying on the reflection sensation, that reflection, yeah.

Yeah, but that's only one function of reflection. Self-awareness, self-consciousness. Basically, if there were no sensation, there would still be reflection.

Yeah, that's my point. That's my point, yes. Reflection means basically introspective awareness.

You see, there are all sorts of things going on in introspective awareness. You asked me yesterday in the office, wasn't it, what he means by reflection is abstraction. And I said no.

No, my reflective awareness includes awareness of abstracting. But in that sense, abstracting is a mental activity that isn't just reflection. You see, it's an active kind of thinking of which I am reflectively aware.

In that case, reflection is, Well, you see, here am I abstracting. And there's a background of self-consciousness about it as it turns in on the abstracting process. It's sort of a reflexive activity involved in reflection.

Reflection, reflexive. You see, the two words are cognates. All right, a couple more comments about knowledge and belief.

I said that knowledge of the third kind, sensation, admits only of probability. This as opinion, belief, those terms are kosher. Distinguishing, as in Plato's divided line, between knowledge and opinion, knowledge and belief.

What is it that contributes to probability? What contributes to probability? Well, two things basically. One is the consistency of what I believe with my experience, with other things I know. That is to say, there can be beliefs that are contradicted by other beliefs or knowledge based on experience.

So there's a matter of overall consistency, coherence. Secondly, the testimony of others he admits as contributing to the probability of belief. Testimony of others.

And obviously, this would be the case if we're talking about distant places, where what you believe about those places depends largely on the testimony of others. This would be the case with things that you read, where what you learn depends on the testimony of those who wrote. The testimony of others.

That notion of the testimony of others begins to play a role in empiricism and in the whole matter of evidence for obvious reasons. Any one individual's experience is very, very limited. And it's perfectly obvious that we, all of us, by virtue of the very small scope of individual experience we have, all develop beliefs that do depend greatly on the experience of others.

That's true in the sciences, it's true in everyday life, and so it's recognized once empiricism begins to develop. But once again, David Hume has some things to say about the credibility of witnesses, whose testimony we draw on, and we'll see what he has to say about that subsequently. All right.

One other comment about knowledge and belief. In response to Esther's question about how we know that the things we come to believe are true, the simplest response that Locke would give would be simply the term evidence. There is evidence.

And in contemporary epistemology, Locke is known as an evidentialist. In fact, he's sort of the paradigm case of an evidentialist. The way he puts it is this, and it's on page 201, and it's so crucial as his conclusion at this juncture that I think we ought to underscore it.

Page 201. No, it's not in this 201, I beg your pardon. He talks about evidence there, but I don't think he makes this point there.

Okay. Take that back. The point that he makes is this.

You should proportion your assent to the evidence. You should always proportion your assent to the evidence. Now, the first time I came across that, I sort of nodded in assent as if I had enough evidence for that assertion.

Because I think that we are conditioned in a scientific age to proportioning our assent, at least to the scientific beliefs, proportioning our assent to the evidence. But then I was struck when I heard a philosopher make this comment. Where is the evidence for that criterion of assent? Why should I believe Locke when he says I should proportion my assent to the evidence when he tells me that with insufficient evidence? You see, and I think that self-referentiality argument, as it's called, self-reference, the criterion applied to itself, that self-referentiality argument, I think, is very telling.

Particularly in the light of this question. Is belief voluntary? Now you notice that Locke has told us that we voluntarily compound ideas. We put together simple ideas voluntarily into compound ideas.

But in the same way, he is saying that assent to any proposition. You see, knowledge and belief have to do with propositions that, as you know, have both subject and predicate. Propositional outlines consist of propositions that predicate something, assert something, or deny something.

Truth or falsity is a quality of propositions that we believe, know, or think. So propositions, beliefs. But we assent to a proposition.

We deny a proposition. Well, says Locke, we should only assent to a proposition in proportion to the evidence. There are degrees of assent.

He is assuming that assent is always voluntary and you can sort of mete it out bit by bit as the evidence accrues. I wonder, how did you come to believe in the existence of material bodies? When did you give your assent to the proposition that material bodies exist? You know, if this were a second day of an Introduction to Philosophy course, you'd think me crazy asking that question. You've always believed in the existence of material bodies, haven't you? As long as you can remember.

You just grew up believing it. You couldn't imagine what it would be like not to believe it. You know, that's why trying to sell introductory students on Berkeley's idealism is such a headache.

You know, I'm not sure that beliefs are always voluntary, you see. And there's another tradition that develops, represented by Scottish realism, which we'll be talking about after Hume. A tradition that speaks of the fact that we are so constituted that certain beliefs arise spontaneously, naturally.

Nowadays, philosophers are talking of belief-forming mechanisms that are at work in the human psyche. Belief-forming mechanisms. And the way Thomas Reed put it in the 18th century was that some of the things which Descartes doubted, those doubts are not the sort of things that philosophers can deal with.

I mean, they need other kinds of specialists to deal with people who doubt those things. There's something wrong. Their belief-forming mechanisms aren't functioning aright.

They need some psychological help, not philosophical help. Well, it's interesting, you see. And it really marks the watershed between two basic approaches to the whole question of the justification of belief.

The evidentialist approach represented by John Locke, you see. And the, what do you want to call it, basic belief, natural belief approach represented by the Scottish realists. And this is one of the crucial epistemological issues today in the late 20th century.

It's what a large part of the epistemological debate is all about. And, of course, it applies to apologetics. Locke's influence was such that Christian apologetics in Britain during the 18th century was working on amassing evidence that would increase the probabilities.

And that probabilistic approach characterized Anglican approaches to apologetics well into the 20th century. The classic example in the 18th century was Joseph Butler's book, The Analogy of Religion, in which he used analogical arguments from phenomena in nature to the structure of things religious, in arguing for the truth of things religious by analogy from the truth of things in nature. You see.

But it's sort of a probabilistic approach. And the other view, the belief is spontaneous, has become more characteristic of the reformed tradition. Scottish realists were Presbyterians of a sort.

But in what is currently called reformed epistemology, being developed by Alvin Plantinga, people like that, you get this notion of a naturally developing belief and the discussion of belief-forming mechanisms and so forth. So that if somebody says to Plantinga, well, I just don't believe in the existence of material bodies, his response is, what's wrong with you? And in his Gifford Lectures in Scotland a few years ago, which he's putting into print now, he does the same thing with regard to the existence of God. You don't believe in the existence of God.

What's wrong with your belief-forming mechanisms? You see. And for a reformed theologian who thinks that our belief-forming mechanisms, like everything else, are affected by our condition in sin or grace, that's a loaded question. What's wrong with your belief-forming mechanisms? Well, this, consciously, in the contemporary debate, goes back to John Locke.

The person who raised the question in my hearing about the evidence for Locke's insistence on evidence was Nicholas Walderstorff, who is one of the people in this development of belief-forming mechanism theory. Okay, that means that next time, ethics and social philosophy. But before we get to that, I want to say something about reason and revelation in John Locke's thinking.

Okay, that'll wrap up the knowledge and belief section.