

# Origins of Mind: Lecture 01

s.butterfill@warwick.ac.uk

## 1. The Question

**Question** How do humans first come to know about—and to knowingly manipulate—objects, causes, words, numbers, colours, actions and minds?

‘... ’tis past doubt, that Men have in their Minds several Ideas, such as are those expressed by the words, Whiteness, Hardness, ... and others: It is in the first place to be enquired, How he comes by them?’ (Locke 1689, p. 104)

‘How does it come about that the development of organic behavior into controlled inquiry brings about the differentiation and cooperation of observational and conceptual operations?’ (Dewey 1938, p. 12)

‘the fundamental explicandum, is the organism and its propositional attitudes ... Cognitive psychologists accept ... the ... necessity of explaining how organisms come to have the attitudes to propositions that they do.’ (Fodor 1975, p. 198)

## 2. From Myths to Mechanisms

‘the soul inherently contains the sources of various notions and doctrines which external objects merely rouse up on suitable occasions’ (Leibniz 1996, p. 48)

‘Men, barely by the Use of their natural Faculties, may attain to all the Knowledge they have, without the help of any innate Impressions; [...] ‘it would be impertinent to suppose, the Ideas of Colours innate in a Creature, to whom God hath given Sight, and a Power to receive them by the Eyes from external Objects’ (Locke 1689, p. 48)

‘Developmental science [...] has shown that both these views are false’ (Spelke & Kinzler 2007, p. 89).

## 3. Inbetween mindless behaviour and thought

‘We have many vocabularies for describing nature when we regard it as mindless, and we have a mentalistic vocabulary for describing thought and intentional action; what we lack is a way of describing what is in between’ (Davidson 1999, p. 11)

‘there are many separable systems of mental rep-

resentations ... and thus many different kinds of knowledge. ... the task ... is to contribute to the enterprise of finding the distinct systems of mental representation and to understand their development and integration’ (Hood et al. 2000, p. 1522).

## References

- Davidson, D. (1999). The emergence of thought. *Erkenntnis*, 51, 7–17.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Fodor, J. (1975). *The Language of Thought*. New York: Harvard University Press.
- Hood, B., Carey, S., & Prasada, S. (2000). Predicting the outcomes of physical events: Two-year-olds fail to reveal knowledge of solidity and support. *Child Development*, 71(6), 1540–1554.
- Leibniz, G. W. (1996). *New essays on human understanding*. Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Locke, J. (1975 [1689]). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spelke, E. & Kinzler, K. D. (2007). Core knowledge. *Developmental Science*, 10(1), 89–96.