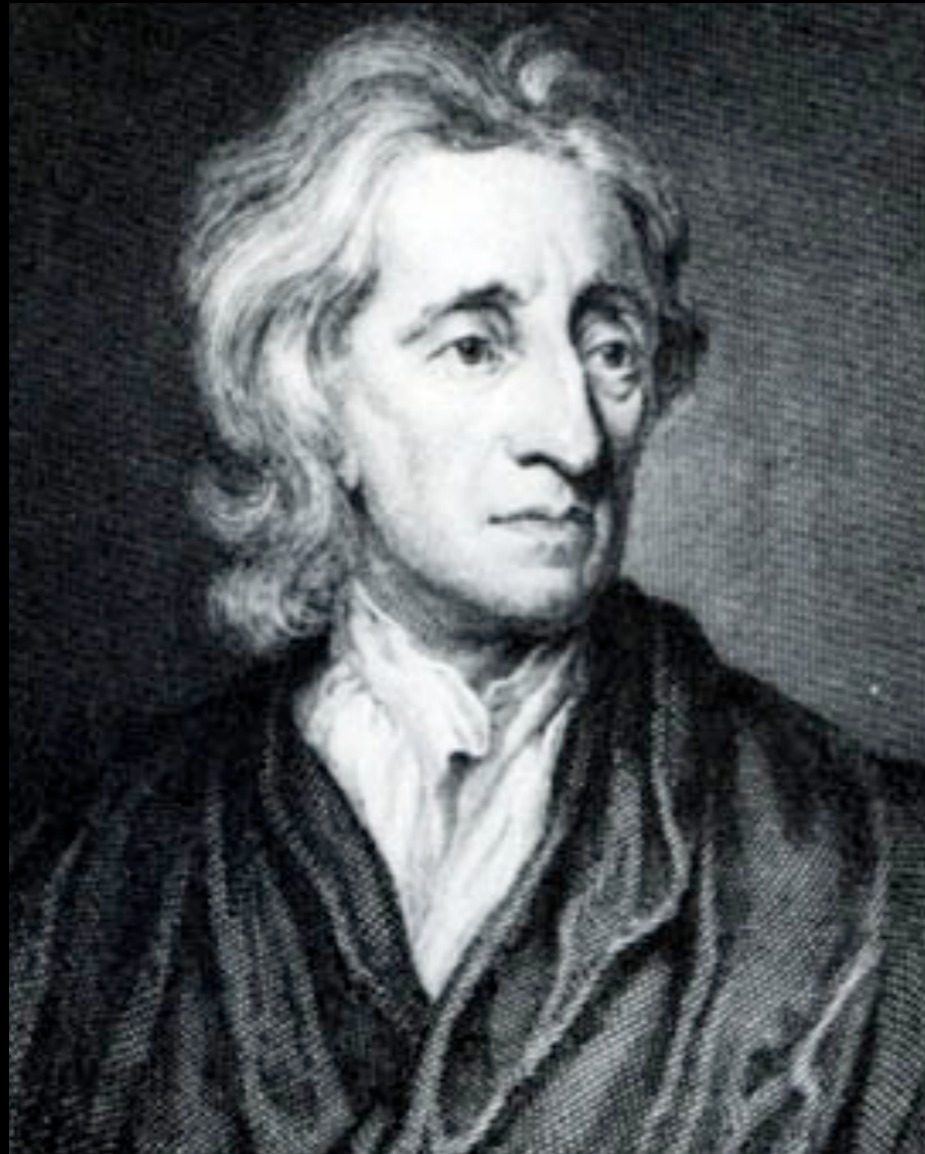


Rationalism and Empiricism

Instructor: Jason Sheley

Quiz/check-in

- Where are we at with the writing assignment?
- How are the writing sessions going?
- Are you encountering any issues or difficulties?



John Locke

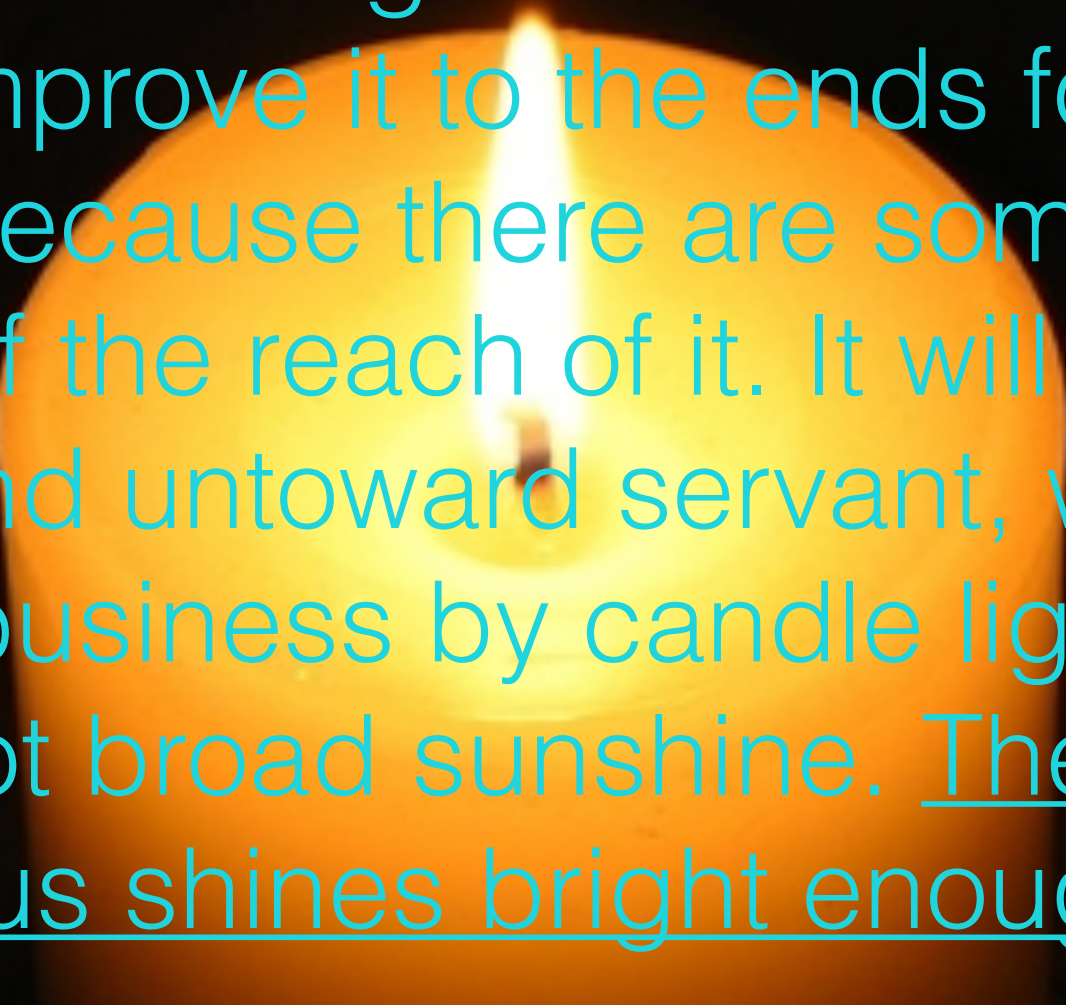
Methods

- Epistle: how did Locke compose the Essay?
- Intro: what does he aim to show? How will he show it?

**How does Locke's project
compare to Descartes' project?**

**What is Locke's
attitude towards
skepticism?**



A lit candle with a bright flame, set against a dark background. The candle is the central focus, with its flame glowing brightly. The background is dark, making the candle stand out.

And it will be an unpardonable, as well as childish peevishness, if we undervalue the advantages of our knowledge, and neglect to improve it to the ends for which it was given us, because there are some things that are set out of the reach of it. It will be no excuse to an idle and untoward servant, who would not attend his business by candle light, to plead that he had not broad sunshine. The Candle that is set up in us shines bright enough for all our purposes.

The discoveries we can make with this ought to satisfy us; and we shall then use our understandings right, when we entertain all objects in that way and proportion that they are suited to our faculties, and upon those grounds they are capable of being proposed to us; **and not peremptorily or intemperately require demonstration, and demand certainty, where probability only is to be had, and which is sufficient to govern all our concernments.**

If we will disbelieve everything, because we cannot certainly know all things, we shall do much what as wisely as he who would not use his legs, but sit still and perish, because he had no wings to fly.

What does Locke mean by his use of the word "idea?"

How does this compare to Descartes' use of the term?

Does Locke subscribe to the
transparency thesis?*

* Transparency thesis: the mind is aware
of any and all ideas that it has.

Locke on Knowledge

Against Innate Ideas

Locke thinks that there are no innate ideas.
Why does he think this?

If Locke is correct, what would this do to
Descartes' project?

- Locke suggests that if there were innate principles, we would expect to find unanimous assent to the truth of the principles.
- But instead, we find widespread disagreement.
- Therefore, the ideas are not innate, but come into the mind by experience alone.

- Locke's view is actually a little more complicated than the previous slide suggests....

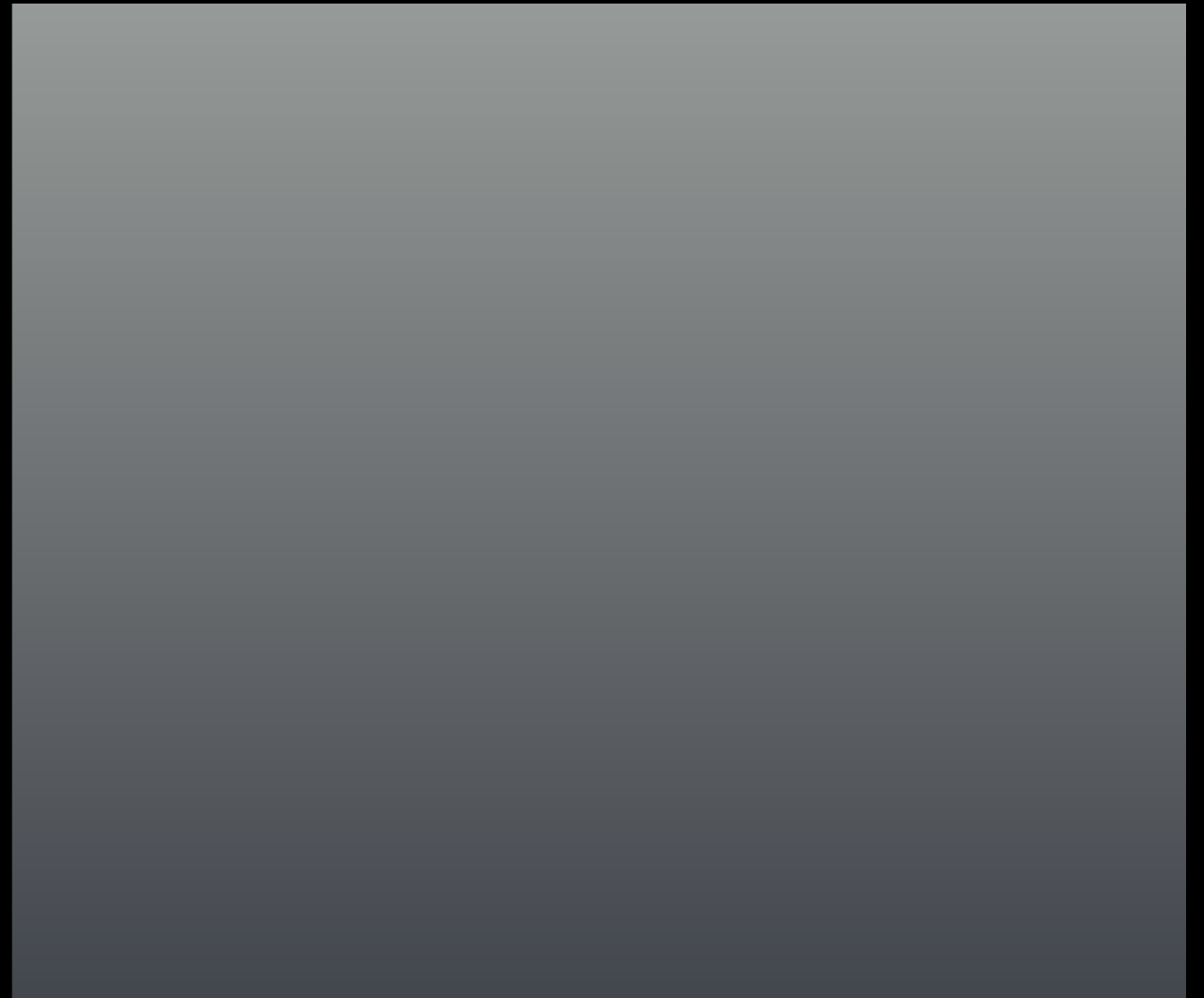
This argument, drawn from universal consent, has this misfortune in it, that if it were true in matter of fact, that there were certain truths wherein all mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate, if there can be any other way shown how men may come to that universal agreement, in the things they do consent in, which I presume may be done.

But, which is worse, this argument of universal consent, which is made use of to prove innate principles, seems to me a demonstration that there are none such: because there are none to which all mankind give an universal assent...

I shall begin with the speculative, and instance in those magnified principles of demonstration, "Whatsoever is, is," and "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be"; which, of all others, I think have the most allowed title to innate. These have so settled a reputation of maxims universally received, that it will no doubt be thought strange if any one should seem to question it. But yet I take liberty to say, that these propositions are so far from having an universal assent, that there are a great part of mankind to whom they are not so much as known.

The "Tabula Rasa"

Locke compares the mind at birth to a blank slate that has not yet received any marks upon it.



The senses at first let in PARTICULAR ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet, and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them.

Afterwards, the mind proceeding further, **abstracts**

them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the MATERIALS about which to exercise its discursive faculty. And the use of reason becomes daily more visible, as these materials that give it employment increase. But though the having of general ideas and the use of general words and reason usually grow together, yet I see not how this any way proves them innate.

- In chapter 2, Locke extends this reasoning to show that practical principles are not innate, either.
- In chapter 3, he extends this reasoning to show that the idea of God is not innate, either.