

# Empiricism

John Locke - considered the founder of Empiricism which teaches that all knowledge is derived from sense experience.

David Hume:

1. adopts Lock's tabula rasa (blank white paper) theory - our minds are a blank slate
2. develops the "copy theory of ideas" - our senses cause impressions. Simple ideas correspond to these impressions.
3. develops the "atomic theory" of the operation of the mind.  
Simple ideas are like atoms that "admit of no distinction nor separation."  
Complex ideas are like molecules composed of smaller units -- in this case, simple ideas.

## Difficulties with Hume's Arguments (radical empiricism)

1. He argues that events or effects do not require a cause, refuting the principle that "whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence".

Results: the elimination of such things as natural science, metaphysics, and common sense beliefs.

2. One can have knowledge of the existence of the simple and complex ideas that are in one's mind. One cannot know if these ideas really match up with or are caused by anything that may exist outside the mind.

Result: there is such a limitation to knowledge that Hume is only a few steps from Skepticism - the view that certain knowledge or certain kinds of knowledge are impossible to acquire. He is also moving in the direction of Solipsism.