

# Origins of Mind: Lecture 01

s.butterfill@warwick.ac.uk

‘... ’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 co-operation 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)

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

## 1. 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)

## 2. 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)

*Object permanence*

the ability to know things about, or represent, objects you aren’t currently perceiving.

‘there are many separable systems of mental representations ... 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).

## 3. Two Breakthroughs

## 4. Social Interaction

‘children learn words through the exercise of reason’ (Bloom 2001, p. 1103; see Bloom 2000)

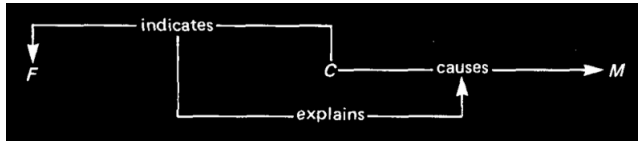
‘Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one. Or again: as if the child could already think, only not yet speak.’ (Wittgenstein 1953, 15–16, §32)

‘[t]he child learns this language from the grown-ups by being trained to its use. I am using the word ‘trained’ in a way strictly analogous to that in which we talk of an animal being trained to do certain things. It is done by means of example, reward, punishment, and suchlike’ (Wittgenstein 1972, p. 77)

‘the child’s early learning of a verbal response depends on society’s reinforcement of the response in association with the stimulations that merit the response’ ((Quine 1960, p. 82); compare (Quine 1974, pp. 28–9))

‘A child learning to speak is learning habits and associations which are just as much determined by the environment as the habit of expecting dogs to bark and cocks to crow’ (Russell 1921, p. 71)

## 5. Representation



source: (Dretske 1988, p. 84, figure 4.1)

‘Once C is recruited as a cause of M—and recruited as a cause of M because of what it indicates about F—C acquires, thereby, the function of indicating F. Hence, C comes to represent F. C acquires its semantics, a genuine meaning, at the very moment when a component of its natural meaning (the fact that it indicates F) acquires an explanatory relevance.’ (Dretske 1988, p. 84)

## References

- Bloom, P. (2000). *How children learn the meanings of words*. Learning, development, and conceptual change. Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press.
- Bloom, P. (2001). Controversies in the study of word learning. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 24(6), 1124–1130.
- Davidson, D. (1999). The emergence of thought. *Erkenntnis*, 51, 7–17.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Dretske, F. (1988). *Explaining Behavior*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- 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.
- Quine, W. V. O. (1960). *Word and object*. Studies in communication. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Quine, W. V. O. (1974). *The roots of reference*. Paul Carus lectures ; no, 14. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court.
- Russell, B. (1921). *The Analysis of Mind*. www.blackmask.com: Muirhead Library Of Philosophy / electronic edition by Blackmask Online.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1972). *The Blue and Brown books* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.