

## The Nationwide Sketch

Characters: Interviewer 1  
Professor Hans Merkel  
Interviewer 2  
Walter Tichley

**Interviewer 1** First it was Christ Church College, Oxford. Then it was Oxford itself. Then it was Cambridge. Yes, they've all disappeared. Will London be next? The question on everybody's tongue's today is "Does the material world really exist?" Join us as epistemology goes Nationwide

Does a material world exist outside of men's minds? We asked Professor Hans Merkel to help us. Professor?

**Professor** Back at the lab, we have set up an experiment to film a tomato inside a completely sealed room. The camera and the developer are fully automatic, so that no human mind is involved in the process.

**Interviewer 1** We actually have the Professor's film, and we will see it now.

**Professor** Just a minute. If we see the film, then *we* are involved in the process, and it defeats the object of the experiment.

**Interviewer 1** All right, we'll now *not* have a look at the film. (Blackout) Professor, could you talk us through it.

**Professor** I don't seem to be able to see very much. (Lights up again)

**Interviewer 1** Well, the results of that seem pretty inconclusive. Over now to the Plymouth studio.

**Interviewer 2** Walter Tichley has been cultivating tomatoes for 35 years, trying to perfect a strain of completely perceived tomatoes. Tell us, Walter, your amazing story.

**Walter** Well, what I think happened was this. Due to a mutation in the genetic make-up of the perceived parent tomatoes, I produced a tomato with phenotypal characteristics of an independently existing material tomato.

**Interviewer 2** In other words, Walter.

**Walter** I've grown a real tomato.

**Interviewer 2** Let's have a look, Walter.

**Walter** Well, here's one of my perceived tomatoes, and this (dramatic pause) is my real tomato.

**Interviewer 2** But they look absolutely identical.

**Walter** I don't understand that either.

**Interviewer 2** Well the results seem pretty inconclusive to me. But down here in Plymouth, we're not so worried about material existence. Back now to our London studios. (Pause) We seem to have lost London. (Blackout)

END