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ANALYSIS OF JOHN LOCKE'S DENIAL OF INNATISM

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Abstract

John Locke is one of the greatest British empiricists who denied rationalism as the basis for human knowledge. In his book 'An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,' Locke argued that the human mind is a blank slate (tabula rasa) at birth, with all knowledge originating solely from experience, sensation, and reflection. He argued that no ideas are universally held, challenging the notion of innate speculative or practical principles. However, with John Locke's essay, the gap between rationalism and empiricism was pronounced. Despite this gap, the two camps, Rationalism and Empiricism, have a common origin. C. Mascia tries to portray the common origin of rationalism and empiricism as consisting in the phenomenalists' prejudice that man does not know things directly but grasps only the impression these objects make upon him. The essay of John Locke triggered the expansion of the chasm between the two camps. Denying the acquisition of knowledge through innate ideas, he resorted to the doctrine of acquiring all knowledge through experience.

Keywords: John Locke, Innatism, ideas, and empiricism,

Introduction

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that addresses the philosophical problems surrounding knowledge and its acquisition. It is concerned with the definition of knowledge and its related concepts, such as the sources and criteria of knowledge, the kinds of knowledge possible and the degree to which each is certain, and the exact relation between the one who knows and the object known. Omoregbe noted that epistemology is a branch of philosophy that enquires into the scope, nature, process and source of human knowledge[1i]. Epistemology is a necessary part of philosophy; it has cut across the thoughts of philosophers throughout all the epochs of philosophy. Each era has elements which characterized their philosophy and enquiry.

Historically, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle expressed their views about knowledge and its origin. Socrates believed that the human mind has some truth in it. It only takes the process of dialectics to bring to light this truth, which is innate in the mind. Thus, Socrates was the indirect originator of innate ideas, though Plato is generally regarded as the father of innatism. Socrates had a pivotal influence on Plato, from whom he basically developed his philosophy. Among all his theories of knowledge is the celebrated theory of the world of Forms[ii]. Here, he said that the human soul existed in the previous world (the world of Forms). This previous world, he regarded as the real world and the empirical world he called a reflection of this real world. According to him, in the real world, the human mind was furnished with some ideas (innate ideas) which it, in turn, remembers in the empirical world. Therefore, the human mind only remembers the form of things which it acquired in the ideal world.

In his own theory of knowledge, Augustine was concerned more with overcoming scepticism. He employed the principle of contradiction to reply to them. According to him, the mind knows that a thing cannot be and at the same time not be. Still, in response to the sceptics, he posited the argument that a doubter must exist for him to doubt. Ewelu puts it clearly when he is commenting on this argument: "… a doubter at least is sure of his existence, he must exist in order to doubt[iii]. Hence, a sceptic cannot but admit this fact since he must exist for him to doubt. His being aware of this shows that man can know things for certain. Besides this, the argument is that of rebuffing. This, according to Ewelu, holds: If the sceptic holds that we cannot know anything for certain, it implies that he is certain of this; if he is not certain that the human mind is incapable of knowing truth for certain, then he has no grounds for his position[iv].

Modern philosophers were specifically occupied with the problem of human knowledge. This continued till the emergence of the celebrated work of the popular 17th-century British empiricist, John Locke's 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding. In the book I of the book, he noted that "Neither Principles nor Ideas are Innate", he mercilessly criticised innate ideas. For him, it is an established opinion amongst some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles, some

primary notion of innate idea, as it were stamped upon the mind of man, which the soul receives in its very first being and brings into the world with it. It would be sufficient to convince unprejudiced readers of the falseness of this supposition if I should only show (as I hope I shall in the following parts of this Discourse) how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions, and may arrive at certainty, without any such original notions or principle..

From the above assertion, Locke was extremely attacking the world of form of Plato by denying totally that the mind is devoid of any idea when coming into the world. He boasted to explain the origin of all human knowledge through experience, thereby subscribing to empiricism.

With John Locke's essay, the gap between rationalism and empiricism was pronounced. Despite this gap, the two camps, Rationalism and Empiricism, have a common origin, as C. Mascia tries to portray[v]. The common origin of rationalism and empiricism consists in the phenomenalist's prejudice that man does not know things directly but grasps only the impression these objects make upon him. The essay of John Locke triggered the expansion of the chasm between the two camps; denying the acquisition of knowledge through innate ideas, he resorted to the doctrine of acquiring all knowledge through experience.

With Locke's stand on empiricism, the question becomes: If Locke holds that all knowledge can be attained through experience, how can some meta-empirical realities be explained? There are some characteristics exhibited by children before the age of cognition. How can such characters be explained empirically, given that they have not yet attained the age of cognition? These are the questions that this four–chaptered work seeks to x–ray. And as well taking into cognisance of the fact that all knowledge does not come either from experience alone or originally from the mind alone, but the two, reason and experience, are needed for the attainment of truth.

Sources of Knowledge

In the introductory page of this Essay that gave the much-needed initial impetus to the foundation of British empiricism, Locke says that his purpose is "to inquire into the original certainty and extent of human knowledge"[vi]. He starts his inquiry by first attacking the suppositions of the continental rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz) concerning certain innate principles which they claimed were in the human mind from the beginning of its first coming into the world. Locke disagrees with this view and argues that all our knowledge of the world comes to us through our experience and that we have no innate ideas. He asks: "Whence has (the mind) all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience: in that, all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself"[vii].

Locke likens our minds at birth to a "white paper void of all characters, without any ideas" - a 'Tabula Rasa' (a completely clean blank slate) on which experience alone writes the 'alphabet' of knowledge[9]. Locke argues that if there were innate principles, then both children and idiots would be endowed with the same knowledge. But experience for him shows that neither children nor idiots are aware of these alleged innate truths. "To say a notion is imprinted on the mind, and yet at the same time to say that the mind is ignorant of its and never yet took notice of it, it is to make this impression ssssnothing"[viii].

If there were innate principles which have been imprinted in the minds of all, then we should think alike and organise our societies the same way. Moral values and principles, Locke claims, are not the same all over the world. Even those who have the same moral principles have different reasons for observing them. Having rejected the concept of innatism and arguing for experience as the source of our knowledge of the world. Locke posits that experience is of two forms - one is 'sensation', and the other is 'reflection'.

> Our observation, either about external sensible objects or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with

> all the materials of thinking. These two are the foundations of knowledge…[ix].

The "qualities" of an object are its powers to cause ideas in the mind. One consequence of that usage is that, in Locke's epistemology, words designating the sensible properties of objects are systematically ambiguous. The word *red*, for example, can mean either the idea of red in the mind or the quality in an object that causes that idea. Locke distinguished between primary and secondary qualities, as Galileo did. According to Locke, primary qualities, but not secondary qualities, are represented in the mind as they exist in the object itself [15]. The primary qualities of an object, in other words, resemble the ideas they cause in the mind. Examples of primary qualities include "solidity, extension, figure, motion, or rest, and number." Secondary qualities are configurations or arrangements of primary qualities that cause sensible ideas such as sounds, colours, odours, and tastes. Thus, according to Locke's view, the phenomenal redness of a fire engine is not in the fire engine itself, but its phenomenal solidity is. Similarly, the phenomenal sweet odour of a rose is not in the rose itself, but its phenomenal extension is.

In Book IV of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke defined knowledge as "*the perception of the connexion of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas*."[16] Knowledge so defined admits of three degrees, according to Locke. The first is what he called "intuitive knowledge," in which the mind "perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas *immediately by themselves*, without the intervention of any other." Although Locke's first examples of intuitive knowledge are analytic propositions such as "*white* is not *black*," "a *circle* is not a *triangle*," and "*three* are more than *two*," later he said that "the knowledge of our own being we have by intuition." Relying on the metaphor of light as Augustine and others had, Locke said of this knowledge that "the mind is presently filled with the clear light of it. *It is on this intuition that all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge rests*."[x]

The second degree of knowledge obtains when "the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of…ideas, but not immediately." In these cases, some mediating idea

makes it possible to see the connection between two other ideas. In a demonstration (or proof), for example, the connection between any premise and the conclusion is mediated by other premises and by the laws of logic. Demonstrative knowledge, although certain, is not as certain as intuitive knowledge, according to Locke, because it requires effort and attention to go through the steps needed to recognise the certainty of the conclusion[xi].

A third degree of knowledge, "sensitive knowledge," is roughly the same as what Duns Scotus called "intuitive cognition," namely, the perception of "*the particular existence of finite beings without us*." Unlike intuitive cognition, however, Locke's sensitive knowledge is not the most certain kind of knowledge it is possible to have. For him, it is less certain than intuitive or demonstrative knowledge. Next in certainty to knowledge is probability, which Locke defined as the appearance of agreement or disagreement of ideas with each other. Like knowledge, probability admits of degrees, the highest of which attaches to propositions endorsed by the general consent of all people in all ages. Locke may have had in mind the virtually general consent of his contemporaries in the proposition that God exists, but he also explicitly mentioned beliefs about causal relations.

Locke's sensation and reflection

As regards sensation, Locke claims that our immediate encounter with objects in the external world "does convey into the mind several distinct perceptions (ideas) of things"[xii]. According to Locke, "this great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, is what I call sensation"[xiii]. For example, from the external world through the senses: we receive passively from objects external to us such simple ideas "of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet' and other sensible qualities which come directly into our minds separately in single files. From this explanation, Locke claims that the origin of all simple ideas is from sensation. 'Reflection', on the other hand, involves the ability of the mind to produce ideas by making use of the previous ideas furnished by the senses. It involves such activities as "perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing", and the other activities of the mind that produce ideas as distinct from those we receive from external bodies affecting our senses. Here, the

emphasis is on the active functions or "the (internal) operations of our own minds within us[xiv]. According to Locke: "… as I call the other sensation, so, I call this reflection, the ideas it affords being such only, as the mind gets by reflection on its own operations within itself"[19]

For example, the mind has the power to work on (by joining, comparing, separating and uniting) the 'simple ideas' received from sensation "to an almost infinite variety and so can make at pleasure new complex ideas"[xv]. It joins together the simple ideas of something white, of something hard and of something sweet to form the complex idea of a cube of sugar. The mind can also, at will, unite ideas simultaneously together, or hold them separately for the purpose of thinking and comparing their relationships, as when one says that 'this chalk is whiter than the shirt' or 'honey is sweeter than sugar'. What Locke wants to make clear is that we cannot have the experience of reflection until we have had the experience of sensation. In other words, that sensation is prior to reflection.

> If it shall be demanded, then when does a man begin to have any ideas? I think the true answer is, when he first has any sensation… In time, the mind comes to reflect on its own operations about the ideas got by sensation, and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflection (120).[xvi]

For reflection means simply the ability or power of the mind to reflect on its own operations or functions: "By reflection then… I would be understood to mean that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof, there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding" (110). But this function or operation begins when the mind is provided with ideas from without, through our senses, from objects external to us. He says: "External objects furnish the mind with the ideas of sensible qualities, which are all different perceptions they produce in us; and the mind furnishes the understanding with the ideas of its own operations" (110).

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All the ideas men have, Locke concludes, are traceable to these two ways, namely: "… External material things, as the objects of sensation and the operations of our minds within, as the objects of reflection, are to me the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings" (110). And these ideas, he says, are either simple or complex. He argues:

> Let anyone examine his own thoughts, and thoroughly search into his understanding, and then let him tell me, whether all the original ideas he has there, are any other than of the objects of his senses; or of the operations of his mind, considered as objects of his reflection: and how great a mass of knowledge so ever he imagines to be lodged there, he will, upon taking a strict view see that he had not any idea in his mind but what one of these two have imprinted; though perhaps with infinite variety compounded and enlarged by the understanding,… (110-111).[21]

In an attempt to describe the relationship between the ideas we get from external objects and the objects themselves, Locke goes a step further to explain how ideas are related to the objects that produce them. If we consider a tree, for example, what is the relationship between our ideas as the tree engenders in our minds and the actual nature of the tree? In answering this question, Locke makes a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are necessary and essential to the existence of objects. They are real, inseparable attributes of physical objects. Their alterations or changes do not affect the objects themselves. "The ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them and their patterns do really exist in bodies…"[xvii].

For example, "solidity, extension, figure (shapes and sizes), motion or rest, and number". Secondary qualities, such as "colour, sound, taste (touch and smell)", on the other hand, are not intrinsic parts of physical objects but "power to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities." With this distinction, Locke was convinced that there must be 'something' which either holds all the qualities together

or gives rise to them, and this he calls 'substance' or "substratum"[xviii]. But when asked what this substratum is, Locke retorted, "… If anyone will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what support such qualities..."[xix]

Turning to the question of the degrees of knowledge, Locke opines that our ideas, depending upon the objects we experience, are related to each other in some ways, and this determines the extent and validity of our knowledge claims. He defines knowledge as "the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas[xx]. Thus, "Where this perception is, there is knowledge, but where it is not… though we may fancy, guess or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge"[xxi]

Locke identifies three main modes of perception in human knowledge, with each leading to a different degree of knowledge about reality. These are intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive. In intuitive knowledge, "the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two (or more) ideas immediately by themselves without intervention of any other"[xxii]. Such kind of knowledge, Locke says, is said to be "the clearest and most certain that the human frailty is capable of"[xxiii]. For example, that the human faculty is capable of giving us certainty about the knowledge of our own existence is intuitive; also with the help of intuition, we can know immediately "that white is not black, that a circle is not triangle, that three are more than two and equal to one and two" because we can perceive the repugnancy of these ideas to other ideas. Demonstrative knowledge, Locke claims, occurs when "the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of any ideas but not immediately"[xxiv]. Though perception is possible by calling attention to further ideas, this kind of knowledge is less clear.

Simple ideas

Simple ideas are the elements of thought we passively receive through sensation and reflection. According to Locke, Simple Ideas mostly agree with things, since **"**the mind... can by no means make to itself any simple ideas. These are all the products of things naturally operating on the mind." Thus, we can have ideas derived from (a) one sense, e.g., taste, smell, colour, etc., (b) through more than one sense, e.g., figure,

motion, size, etc.; (c) through reflection, e.g., perception; (d) through sensation and reflection, e.g., pleasure and pain, etc.[xxv]

What is the relation between these ideas and the objects of which they are the ideas? Besides their existence in the mind, Locke holds that many of the simple ideas are also referred to the external world, where they are supposed to belong. Colour, for example, is commonly regarded as, at once, a sensation and an attribute of objects. To avoid confusion between the mental existence of ideas and those physical facts which are supposed to give rise to them, the latter are called not ideas, but qualities. In this connection, Locke draws an important distinction. According to Locke, simple ideas are of two kinds; some are ideas of primary qualities which, in reality, belong to the object, e.g., ideas of solidity, extension, figure, motion and number. Others are ideas of secondary qualities, and, in this case, there are no qualities in the object which these ideas resemble.

The primary qualities are those that are inseparable from the bodies and are enumerated as solidity, extension, figure, motion, rest, and number. The secondary qualities are all the rest: colour, taste, smell, etc. Primary qualities, he maintains, are actually in bodies; secondary qualities, on the contrary, are only in the percipient. Without the eye, there would be no colours, without the ear, no sounds and so on. Secondary qualities are really nothing in the objects themselves but only powers which the objects have to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities.

> "Take away the sensation of them; let not the eye see light op colour, nor the ears hear sounds, let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell; and all colour, tastes, odours, and sounds, as they are such particular ideas, vanish and cease and are reduced to their causes, i.e., bulk, figure and motion of parts.[xxvi]

Locke's view is then that the ideas of primary qualities are resemblances of real qualities. These patterns do exist in the bodies themselves. Whereas the ideas we have of secondary qualities bear no resemblance to the bodies, being caused in us by

qualities in the bodies which they do not in the least resemble. The question here is raised as to how Locke can know that primary qualities belong to matter. Locke simply believes this and accepts it without any criticism. Locke is here accepting the physicists' position and attempts to justify it psychologically. Berkeley shows afterwards that there is no psychological distinction between primary and secondary qualities[xxvii].

"All our complex ideas of them must be such and such only, as are made up of such simple ones as have been discovered to co-exist in nature." Complex ideas are formed by the mind, by comparing, combining and abstracting from simple ideas. The acts of the mind wherein it exerts its power over its simple ideas are mainly three:

(1) Combining several simple ideas into one compound idea.

(2) Bringing two ideas together and setting them by one another to take a view of them at once, without uniting them into one, by which it gets all the ideas of relation.

(3) And, thirdly, separating them from all other ideas that accompany them in their real existence. This is called abstraction; thus, all the general ideas are formed. We might, for example, compare many triangles with each other and, finding that they agree in two attributes alone, we might take only these two attributes, disregarding all particularities of the particular triangles.

> So the general idea of a triangle will be a plane figure bounded by three straight lines. Locke's view of general ideas is known as conceptualism. Conceptualism is a theory of universals, in which general words like 'man', 'tree', 'dog', 'bird', etc. have their existence only in human minds. They are nothing but 'concepts' or 'ideas'. In this context, we may discuss, in short, the central metaphysical problem for a philosopher, viz., the Problem of universals. The problem was first introduced into philosophy by Plato. The Platonic view is often called **"**Realism**."** Plato held that universals, like 'manhood' cat-hood, and ' blueness, really exist. There is this cat, and

> that cat, but there is also the universal 'cat-hood' or 'catness'[xxviii].

Cat-hood' is simply the complex set of properties defining cats. But what is the relation, according to Plato, between universals and the particulars? Between 'man' and 'manness'? They are so different in nature that it would be difficult to see how there could be any relation between them. Particulars like this blue coat, this man—they exist in space and time, and are known by our sense-organs. But the universal blueness which is present in every blue thing is neither in space nor in time. Consequently, they cannot be known by our sense organs. In the world, there are many blue things, but 'blueness' does not exist in this world; it belongs to the realm of universals.[26]

Particulars just imperfectly copy these universals, which only really exist, and are known by our understanding or Reason, not by sense-experience. The universals are timeless and unchanging. Even if there is no example of a perfect 'man' anywhere, perfect man-ness exists. They are the realities.

Complex Idea

Complex ideas may be divided into three classes: (i) modes, (ii) substances and (iii) relations.

(1) Modes: Modes are such combinations of simple ideas which do not contain in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves but are considered as dependents on or affections of substances". Modes are those combinations of simple ideas which cannot subsist by themselves but need a substance or support or substratum in which to subsist. Modes are of two types**:**

(a) Simple modes are those which are "only variations or different combinations of the same idea without the mixture of any other idea, e.g., a dozen or a score, which are nothing but the ideas of so many distinct units added together." Simple modes are, therefore**, "**contained within the bounds of one simple idea."

(b) Mixed modes are composed of simple ideas of several kinds, e.g. Beauty, consisting of a certain composition of colour and figure, causing delight in the beholder. The second complex idea, according to Locke, is the idea of,

(2) Substance: Locke thinks that modes are conditions which do not subsist by themselves but need a basis or support. They are not conceivable apart from a thing whose states or properties they are. Substance is the substratum in which the modes inhere. We notice that certain qualities always appear together and habitually refer them to a substance as the ground of their unity in which they subsist, or from which they proceed. Substance denotes the self-existence (we know not what) which has or bears the attributes in itself and which arouses the idea of them in us. All ideas of sensation presuppose a body, and all ideas of reflection presuppose a mind. Instead of calling them material and mental substances, Locke calls them cogitative and non-cogitative substances, since it is not inconceivable that the creator may have endowed some material objects also with the capacity of thought. Starting from the point of view of common sense, Locke is right in arguing that we cannot think of qualities as existing by themselves. Locke's admission of substance, however, is inconsistent with his empirical position. Locke explicitly says that we can have the substance neither from sensation nor from reflection. Yet he never ceases from believing that there are substances behind the qualities. It is for him, the unknown unknowable background of known qualities. To account for the togetherness of qualities, Locke is obliged to introduce the idea of substance, but it remains always a supposition with him.

(3) The third complex idea is the idea of Relation: Relations are not copies of actual things, but they are formed by comparing and reflecting on things. The understanding in the consideration of anything is not confined to that object merely; it can, as it were, bring one thing and set it by another and carry its view from one thing to the other. The things so brought together (by our understanding) are said to be related. Types of Relation include:

(a) Causal Relation: According to Locke, the experience of change suggests the idea of a cause which brings about the change. Locke is concerned mainly with particular changes and particular causes. He gives no adequate explanation of the Law of Causation as a whole, i.e., the principle "Every event must have a cause**".** But mere observation of particular changes gives no explanation why every event should necessarily have a cause.

(b) Spatial and Temporal Relation: Objects are always in some space and at some time, i.e., both in some space and time. 'Far and near', 'in or out', 'above and below' are spatial relations, whereas 'before, after, before and posterior to' are words that express time relations. Things have spatial relations among them. Events occur in time, and always come one after another. The event which occurs earlier than the other is called the prior event, and the other event which comes later is called the posterior event. These are temporal relations. Locke believed in the genetic theory of space and time. According to him, our knowledge of space and time comes from particular experiences of distances and duration[27]. There is some truth in the doctrine, no doubt, for experience is needed to develop our ideas of space and time.

But Locke does not see that distance and duration are nothing but parts of space and time, so that it is an argument in a circle to derive the ideas of space and time from the experiences of distance and duration. It is Kant—who comes much later in the history of philosophy—who logically showed that the ideals of space and time are not derived from experience; rather, our experience presupposes the ideas of space and time. According to Locke, we can set no limit to space or time. The ideas of Immensity and Eternity are, therefore, purely negative ideas. We cannot form any positive idea of immensity and Eternity because they cannot be experienced. To form the complex ideas of an infinite space and an infinite time, we may add together the units of particular spaces and times and stretch them infinitely. Locke, however, does not explain why there should be this mental obligation to go on adding together units of space and time[xxix].

Argument for Locke's denial of innate ideas

Locke, in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* attempts "to inquire into the origin, certainty and extent of human knowledge[xxx]. In doing so, he argues that there are no innate principles in the mind. By this he means that there are no notions that are "stamped upon the mind of man, which the soul receives in its very first being and brings into the world'[2]. He uses in his arguments the example of two universal maxims ("Whatever is, is" and "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be") in order to illustrate how these principles, which he deems "have the most

allowed title to innate",[xxxi] are in fact equally capable of being empirically derived claims. Locke uses various arguments to assert that, in fact, all the claims for innate principles are equally capable of being derived through the senses. For this essay, we will explain the arguments, as well as their possible objections.

Firstly, Locke argues that if principles were innate, they would have universal assent (that is, everyone would be in agreement regarding them). But Locke claims this is not the case, and so Universal Assent ceases to be a valid argument for innate ideas. But how is it that he can be sure that universal assent is indeed not given to these innate principles? Firstly, one needs only retrace history to see the diverse values and ideals of various cultures and epochs. But it could be argued that the explanation for these diverse principles lies in experience. Experience divides us into individuals (as we each experience separate things). If we apply this to different cultures, we see that it is possible that we perhaps began with innate ideas, and then society conditioned us into variances. Essentially, experience taints each individual/culture/epoch differently, resulting in our divergence from universal assent. Another example of the lack of universality is found in children. Arguably, children need to be taught these principles, and in teaching them, they cease to be innate. But there is a case for a child's actions giving assent to maxims before they are verbally capable of doing so. That is to say, one may teach a child that:
"Whatever is, is" and "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be", but it does not necessarily follow that the child does not already know these truths. Children lack the verbal and cognitive maturity of adults, but even in their very simplistic actions, they are capable of displaying knowledge of these maxims.

Locke's reply to this objection would be to say that if a child is not conscious of the maxim, it can't give assent. Locke believes that "to say that a notion is imprinted on the mind, and yet at the same time to say the mind is ignorant of it is to make this impression nothing[xxxii]. But why is this so? Why isn't it possible for beings to have thoughts they are not conscious of? On the other hand, it could also be argued that those which we consider should be innate maxims are in fact the opposite: they are derived from the senses and the influence of society. Theoretically, if innate principles

exist, then they would be more evident in children than in adults, since children are less exposed and affected by society and the world at large.[xxxiii] So that makes those which we consider to be innate really a result of our experiential influences. Locke's strongest argument against universal assent is in proving that there are other things (not innate ideas) which we agree on universally, making universal assent no longer a quality unique to innate ideas. For example, we universally agree that 2 + 2 = 4, and mathematics is clearly an empirical science. In proving this, we see that if Universal Assent meant that innate ideas existed, then empirical truths, such as maths, or that "sweet is not sour", and "black is not white" would also, by that criterion, be innate truths[xxxiv].

To conclude, Locke's arguments against nativism are well structured and extensive. However, they depend on the assumption that the contents of the human mind are transparent to itself: essentially that we are incapable of unconscious thought. Furthermore, his arguments rely on the belief that an idea must be given universal assent in order to be innate. Locke gives innate ideas the quality of requiring universal assent in order to prove their innateness as a crutch, which he constantly reproaches. But what if there were another defining confirmation of innate ideas? Essentially, Locke misses the simplest of oppositions against innate ideas: that there would be no way of proving them to be true. Realistically, there is no way to verify that those ideas which we consider innate are in fact true, not to mention innate.

Arguments against Locke's denial of Innatism

The question that perplexed all the scholars of Locke was, against whom was the polemic directed? The traditional answer that everybody believed until the end of the nineteenth century was that Descartes and the Cartesians were the main target of Locke. However, this answer became untenable when scholars, after examining Locke's writings, realised that Locke was very much indebted to Descartes and there were rationalist elements in his writings. Locke himself has mentioned only the name of Lord Herbert of Cherbury[8] in his 'Essay.' Nevertheless, the way in which Locke has introduced Herbert, it is clear that he could not have been the principal opponent

of Locke. Some commentators on Locke argued that the Cambridge Platonists were the main opponents of Locke. It is true that though some.

Cambridge Platonists upheld the theory of innate ideas; there were some who rejected it. Therefore, the Cambridge Platonists were not the sole opponents of Locke. According to Professor Gibson, Locke directed his polemic against the University teachers of his day[xxxv]. It is also evident from the closing section of Book I that Locke had the University teachers in his mind. However, Aaron argued that from Professor Gibson's writings, it is hardly believable that University teachers were the only opponents of Locke. Windelband named only Descartes and the Cambridge Platonists.[10] Hoffding contended that the sole opponent of Locke was not Descartes but the scholastic philosophers who based all knowledge upon maxims, which are known intuitively. Recently, Rivaud said that Locke directed his polemics at scholastics, Descartes and Herbert of Cherbury[xxxvi]. Seth Pringle-Pattison agreed with Hoffding and Gibson. Lamprecht has opined that Locke's argument against innate ideas and principles was against Cambridge Platonists and enthusiastic sectarians in religion and politics. [14] The difficulty in finding Locke's opponent led some people to believe that, in order to establish his own view firmly, Locke had himself presented an opposite view and attacked it. No philosopher actually upheld such views. Cassier argued that Locke really had no one in mind in Book I. Therefore, his opponent was perhaps a man of straw[xxxvii].

Descartes explicitly denied that children come into the world with some ideas implanted in their minds, for example, the idea of God. The question then is what Descartes actually meant by innate knowledge. Aaron has suggested two answers. [32] Firstly, he said that by 'innate' Descartes meant 'innate faculty,' which he has identified with thinking. If Descartes meant this, then Locke would agree with him, for Locke has also admitted the existence of innate faculties.

Secondly, Descartes may have meant that we are prone to think in certain fixed ways and according to certain 'germs of thought' in the mind innately. However, children are not aware of this germ in their mother's womb. It seems that the universality and necessity of such truth itself suggested this view to Descartes. Locke attacked this view. Locke did not deny the university and necessity of such truth. He, however,

denied that universality and necessity make such truth innate. Indeed, we do not find such truth in the way we acquire other truths. According to Aaron, it is frequently forgotten that Locke has attacked this view of innate knowledge as well as the cruder kind that the above passages do not express. Nevertheless, is Descartes's claim in these paragraphs justified?

Some commentators argued that what Descartes wanted to say is that when the soul enters the body in the womb, it already possesses the explicit knowledge of certain truths in addition to its possession of the faculty of thinking. Voltaire ascribed this view to Descartes. Aaron cited a passage, which he thought commentators of Descartes had ignored. Voltaire might have had this in his mind. However, Descartes and the Cartesians are not the only ones against whom Locke's polemic is directed. At the time of Locke, some University teachers who followed a narrow scholastic tradition believed that our knowledge begins from some indubitable innate maxims from which we deduce other truths syllogistically. Locke believed that these maxims were not doubtful, but denied that they were innate. In the final chapter of Book I, Locke has attacked this scholastic view. Some Cambridge Platonists during Locke's time also upheld the theory of innatism, but not its cruder form.

These lead us to the conclusion that Locke directed his polemic against the Cartesians, certain members of the Cambridge Platonists and others like Herbert who advocated the theory of innate ideas. Jonathan Barnes has also supported Aaron's view of Aaron in his paper. [35] He pointed out that in recent years, historians of philosophy have divided the innatists of the seventeenth century into four groups. The first group consists of the Cartesians. An erasure in one of Locke's early lectures on moral philosophy suggests that Descartes's name came to Locke's mind when he was dealing with innatism.

The English school of Cambridge Platonists, which includes Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, and Damaris Masham, formed the second group. Cudworth's daughter was Locke's correspondent and patron. Locke was also well accustomed to the Platonic view. Therefore, we may say that Locke's polemic was against the Platonists[xxxviii].

Shaftesbury's 'Modern and barbarous schoolmen' who are known under the title 'Peripatetic' may be said to belong to the third group. Some followers of Aristotle belonged to this group. They had undertaken to make him speak Plato's sense and uphold innatism. Furthermore, many Englishmen also advocated innatism. Among them was Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester, who was Locke's most celebrated adversary. Yolton says:

> *In England, we find that the doctrine of innate knowledge was held, in one form or another, to be necessary for religion and especially for morality from the early years of the century right through to the end and into the beginning of the following century*[xxxix].

The innate hypothesis was a cornerstone of the major Philosophical and theological systems of Locke's day, English and foreign, orthodox and heterodox. We can say that it was against this widespread opinion, and not against any particular opinion, that Locke directed his polemic. Locke himself said that he was attacking 'an established opinion among some men.'[37]

Evaluation

Locke's discussion of knowledge of the external world brings us to confront many of the central themes in Locke's philosophy. Locke thinks of knowledge of the external world as sensitive knowledge of real existence. That is, it is knowledge that some object exists distinct from our mind and affects our mind by producing certain ideas in it. This knowledge is achieved through sensory experience. It is neither the result of reflecting on ideas already in our mind nor of deductively reasoning from some premises.

Integrating sensitive knowledge with Locke's broader epistemology is no easy task. Locke's definition of knowledge appears to make all knowledge *a priori*, but knowledge of the external world is patently *not* a priori knowledge like knowledge of mathematical truths—even by Locke's own lights. It is empirical knowledge gained through experience. Locke nevertheless insists that we have sensitive knowledge.

Efforts to understand the place of sensitive knowledge in Locke's epistemology as a whole lead to probing not only important questions about his definition of knowledge, such as whether it really does make all knowledge *a priori,* but also his philosophy of mind and accounts of representation and mental content. Indeed, efforts on these issues have led to a very radical rethinking of Locke's entire philosophy, such as Yolton's effort to understand Locke's theory of perception in direct perception terms. Finally, Locke's account of sensitive knowledge is intimately related to but significantly distinct from his reply to scepticism. Locke does not think that particular instances of sensitive knowledge, such as when you know that the paper (or screen) you're reading from exists, depend on being able to defeat sceptical doubts.

Conclusion

A critical examination of Locke's theory of knowledge, however, revealed several inconsistent conclusions contrary to his original thesis. One major problematic aspect is the obvious implication of his concept of ideas for scientific progress. Locke has shown us that we have no direct knowledge of objects, but only of our ideas about them, that is, as representations of things in our minds. Thus, we cannot verify whether our ideas or knowledge of objects are true representations of objects themselves. In this way, Locke posited the existence of an underlying reality that is not perceivable, yet denied that we can know anything about this same reality. Other problematic aspects of Locke's theory of knowledge include his classification of primary and secondary qualities and the degrees of knowledge. Here, Locke was severely criticised for taking an irresistible rationalistic turn in his philosophy. His emphasis on primary qualities, intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, which are rational above secondary qualities and sensitive knowledge, which are empirical, are some of the obvious contradictory principles inherent in his philosophy-- a fact that leads to there being 'rationalist' as well as 'empiricist' elements in Locke's thought" (Woolhouse, xiii). This is especially critical considering the tremendous emphasis he placed on experience as the foundation of knowledge.

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