

Introduction to Modern Philosophy

Lecture §10

I. Last remarks on Leibniz

- 2 leftover problems: (i) metaphysical idealism
(ii) extremist theology

II. Locke against innate ideas

- the empiricist reaction to rationalism: (i) "subjectivist turn" (ii) all ideas, thoughts, thinking, knowledge begin in experience, or are constructions from it.
 - what is the theory of innate ideas? (cf. Plato) Intrinsic mental contents. Descartes: adventitious, invented, innate.
 - what motivates the theory? Explains: (i) a priori K (ii) that Mind is better known than Body (iii) K of God.
 - 2 versions of the theory: (i) simple (=actual possession); (ii) subtle (=dispositional possession+actualization in "right conditions")
 - objections to the simple theory: (i) consensus: not universal, and even if universal, not sufficient (ii) human mental capacity too small (math).
 - objections to the subtle theory: (i) not everyone gets them, even in "right conditions" (ii) dilemma: ideas manifest, or not. Never perceived by mind, never IN the mind (iii) evidence for theory consistent with empiricism.
 - what would it take to prove innatism? Ideas not poss. acquired. E.g. idea of a PB.
- Locke's view on that idea.
- Descartes vindicated? Chomsky on universal grammar.

Input	Us	Output
Experience----->	LAD----->	Linguistic Competence ("Creativity")

Review:

First objection: Isn't GL's BPW fully determined? Yes. Well, then it doesn't account for the fact that we are free. GL: no, I do acct for what appears to be freedom. But this appearance is as close as we get to true freedom. Yet, the price of giving up a determined world is to give up the BPW. Seems rational to GL, since why would you give up the BPW for sake of full freedom (esp'ly since we appear free from our perspective).

Second objection: Pangloss's happiness appears to be at the price of accuracy about conditions of life. Makes rationality seem absurd, if it entails the maintenance of beliefs at such variance with our experience. Anti-reason only on surface: Voltaire actually thought reason was of great value, but thought simply there was something wrong with the account of reasonableness found in GL.

Leftover probs: (i) metaphys. idealism (there's nothing in the world but minds and ideas). Is this

acceptable? How to handle the 'over against me'. (ii) determinism+BPW+punishment of sinners guaranteed (which looks like punishing a robot for executing its program). Extreme theology. Advantages of rat'lism: yields absolute knowledge, which seems intuitively correct for at least some of the sciences (certainly math and logic).

II. Locke Introducton

Empiricism Cometh!

All our knowledge does not depend upon reason. Rather, it depends upon and originates in experience. But this is not view that all is sensory experience, but that all ideas begin in sensory experience. A motivation for this view is the subjectivist turn which began in the second meditation of RD. To know reality, first we must know the mind=subjectivist turn. So, emp'ists think that mental contents all begin in experience. Hence reason is limited by experience.

JL thinks a useful objection to rat'lism is attack on the theory of innate ideas (bec this throws a huge wrench in the core claims of the doctrine--denies there is anything intrinsic to mental contents). If successful, it establishes the primary claim of emp'ism: all ideas are adventitious or invented.

Advantages/motivation for rat'lism: explains a priori knowl, why mind is better known than the body, and our knowledge of God.

JL is highly repetitive. JP's condensed version (see above). JL offers arguments against two diff. versions of theory of innate ideas, one simple (we actually possess all the innate ideas), one more subtle (we all have the disposition to come to that knowledge under the right conditions). JP: the simple theory is, frankly, just stupid, and RD probably never held it.

Objections to simple theory: there is no consensus 'out there' among the general population about associated claims. And even if there were consensus, this would not prove claim was true. Further, does not prove the ideas are innate, just bec the ideas are universal (assuming full consensus exists). So universal consensus is suff. neither for truth or innateness.

Objections to subtle theory: (a) do all minds get these truths when they use their reason under even the 'right conditions'? Answer: no. Many minds fail to do so. RD: I didn't mean that all minds would get this in fact. I meant only that all those which get the method right would. So, you thought you had the 'right conditions' in these cases, but you really didn't. (b) either one has an idea (it is manifest before the mind), or one does not. The only justif. for claiming to have an idea is that at some point it was manifest. If not, JL thinks you cannot justify claim to have it. This is what JP calls the 'acquaintance thesis': having-an-idea = being acquainted with it, now or in past. On this view, having an idea potentially is nonsense if it doesn't mean that the idea at least was manifest to the mind before (mind had acquaintance relation to it at some time in the

past). This is a concept possession restriction. JP: this view of c. poss. invalidates claims to having inchoate, vague or otherwise indistinct/unclear ideas (including 'little perceptions'). This being a problem, JP thinks JL's best argument is (c) look at what evidence supports dispositional theory of innate ideas. Slave case in the Meno. JL then claims: how does this differ from my claim that all ideas are acquired by experience? JL thinks he can explain all slave cases with claim that these are cases of learning, not cognitive 'discovery' of innate contents.

How to save innatism? Well, if you could come up with ideas which could not be acquired thru experience/learning, then this would undermine JL's best arg. against innatism. RD's candidate is idea of PB. JP thinks JL is right here, that this idea is acquired thru experience.