

II. Locke Introduction

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.