

**EPISTEMOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN LOCKE'S REFUTATION OF
INNATE IDEAS**

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BY

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DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED PARENTS

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INTRODUCTION

This study explicates a clear exposition of Rene Descartes' 'innate ideas' and John Locke's theory of ideas. The main objective of this study is to understand and elucidate the notion of innate ideas, a crucial notion of two challenging theories by Descartes and Locke. I tried to explore the 'epistemological significance of refutation of innate ideas' and to find out 'can there be innate ideas'? In this dissertation, I would like to discuss the theories and ideas with special reference to Descartes and Locke. Then the study further going to explore what are innate ideas and also present the significance of their refutation of innate ideas from Locke's perspective. Innate ideas mean ideas that are supposedly inborn in the human mind at the time of birth; it contradicts with the ideas received from any kind of experience. This doctrine indicates that certain ideas like God, infinite, substance must be innate as there is no sufficient conceived empirical origin of them.

Descartes and Locke have different standpoints regarding theory of ideas and knowledge. The existence of innate ideas is the most important and central to Descartes' philosophy. It is described by him as an idea that is not gleaned or abstracted but is discovered, which is already present in the mind. On the other hand, Locke denies the existence of innate ideas altogether. His theory is against the notion of innate ideas. Locke gave a prime place in the begging of his '*essay*' to deny innate ideas. According to John Locke, at the time of birth our mind is 'tabula rasa, and no ideas are inbuilt in our mind. So he believed that we don't have any preconceived notions. He thus claims that whatever is in the mind is acquired through experience only. The mind must come into contact with sense experience, and sense perception must make contact with the external world, in regards to the empiricist school of philosophy.

The title of my dissertation is '*The epistemological significance of John Locke's refutation of innate ideas*'. The dissertation comprises three major chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The first chapter mainly deals with "Descartes' theory of innate ideas". Though the title of the chapter is Theory of innate ideas I have given clear information about 'what is the idea' and 'what is the innate idea' concerning Descartes' perspective, and its possible various dimensions of innate ideas. To understand Descartes' 'ideas' and 'innate ideas' clearly, we need to understand various aspects of innate ideas such as, 'dispositional account of innate ideas', 'ideas are present but in a submerged state', 'what is understanding',

'recollective account', 'objective and material sense', 'unified account', 'attention reflection and interference of body', 'ideas of God', 'ideas of extension' and so on.

Descartes uses the term 'idea' in two ways, one refers to the brain state and another is a purely mental phenomenon. That is the reason many thinkers think that Descartes has used the term ideas in an ambiguous manner. But he gives more importance to ideas as mental phenomena. The idea is a way of thinking, not a way of expressing extended substance. An understanding of one's own nature is the innate idea for Descartes. He thus tries to define the term 'understanding'. We can conceive ideas in two senses; one is material or formal sense and the second is objective sense. A thing is formally present in the empirical world, but objectively in the mind. He also explains that ideas are present in our minds but in a submerged stage. Then I move forward in defining the innate ideas and explain the dispositional account, unified account, and recollective account of innate ideas. He explains that the ideas of God, the idea of infinity must be innate because we don't find its empirical proof.

The second chapter of this dissertation is "Locke's theory of ideas". The prime objective of writing this chapter is to illustrate how Locke's notion of ideas is grounded on experience, particularly on sensation and reflection. In this chapter, I have tried to explore John Locke's philosophy of ideas, sources of ideas, and classification of ideas in my second chapter. He convincingly demonstrates that knowledge can be gained through sensory experience. All ideas, according to Locke, emerge from sensation, reflection only, and from an individual's own experiences. This demonstrates the positive aspect of his *'Essay'*. Locke carefully observes the 'idea' in order to understand the nature, extent, and origin of our knowledge, and he claimed that some of them are simple and complex. Then this chapter also deals with some of the main elements of the simple idea of sensation, as well as the simple idea of reflection, and then primary and secondary qualities.

The final chapter of the dissertation is entitled "Locke's refutation of Descartes innatism". In this chapter an attempt has been made to provide the comparison and contrast between two philosophers; then an analysis of both Descartes' and Locke's viewpoints is also discussed in this chapter. This chapter also shows that the how and why Locke's perspective regarding theory and sources of knowledge is more practically relevant and applicable. Descartes believes that knowledge would be impossible to achieve if there were no innate notions. Locke attempted to undermine the Cartesian notion of innate ideas before attempting to argue that knowledge can only be gained through experience. His philosophy explains that

there is no universally accepted truth. If ideas were innate, then everyone must be aware of them and believe in the same God. But it is not happening all the time. He posits some important questions such as; if ideas were innate, then why are children and insane persons not conscious of such original notions? Why is a child not aware of the world at the time of birth? Why doesn't everyone think the same way? Why are the rules of laws not the same for all? Locke tried to establish the concept of empiricism into the origin of knowledge because no one is completely capable of using their reason from the very birth.

I have referred to a few works of Descartes. This explores timeless fundamental philosophical issues such as knowledge, concepts, the self, the mind's relationship with body, substance, causation, perception, existence of God, and more. These are concepts discussed in his works. And the other one is some of the works of John Locke. From there I have taken some of the concepts like 'sensation and reflection', and 'primary and secondary qualities', for proving these two claims, firstly, knowledge is only possible through the sense perception and secondly, the mind is completely blank, the 'tabula rasa' at the time of birth, and it is only through the simple and complex ideas human mind is able to create the various form of ideas.

I found the problem with 'innate ideas' which is propounded by Rene Descartes, therefore the broad area of this dissertation will go around cultivating this problem 'can there be innate ideas'? For this research work, I have used the analytic method for analyzing both the philosophers Rene Descartes and John Locke, and I have also used both comparative and descriptive methods.

CHAPTER-1

Descartes' theory of innate ideas

1.1 Introduction:

Descartes sets his face against the old authorities and emphasizes the practical nature of philosophy. His practical character is something based on mathematics. Descartes' philosophical method is based on certainty and precision in mathematics. As a mathematician, he wants to give a fundamental base of mathematics into philosophy. In mathematics we first search for an axiom (self-evident truth), an axiom cannot be doubted. In order to make philosophy truly scientific, he hoped to emulate its methods after mathematics. Mathematics is based on the a-priori form of knowledge, that is, the only a-priori concept can give us certain knowledge. So he wanted to introduce mathematical aspects to philosophy and asserts that it is the reason for rational knowledge which gives us clear and certain knowledge.

Descartes is regarded as the expounder of modern philosophy and gave a new direction to the rationalist.¹ Rationalism is commonly contrasted with empiricism. He explains his objection towards empiricism for a reason. In the '*meditation*' he expressed that, "whatever he believes as 'most true'; he has gained knowledge either directly from his senses or indirectly through the senses. But over time, he discovered that his senses have been misleading, and it is not sagacious to completely trust those who have deceived us even once."² Therefore, we can deduce that senses are deceptive, and which we have once been deceived, it is wiser not to trust entirely. For instance, we can take the example of 'distant' and 'close' objects; suppose, we see a tower at a distance, it appears as round in shape, and is small in size. But, the same tower if seen from up close, we see that it is square in shape and bigger in size. So, the same tower from a distance appears round and small, and from a closer view seems to be larger. Similarly, like the tower, our sense-organs appear to us differently at different times. Still, we don't have a clear mechanism to distinguish between what is wrong and what is right.

¹ Rationalism was present before Descartes, in Plato's and Socrates' eras, but Descartes gave a new orientation to rationalism.

² Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translated and edited by John Cottingham, Cambridge university press, the pitt building, trumpington street, Cambridge, united kingdom, 1996. P. 12. All the references in this paper to the later work are from this book, hereafter referred to as '*Meditation*'.

Sometimes we see the mirage and get confused that there is water, which is not actually there. Our senses present things in such a manner that is not real/true, thus, creating an illusion in our minds.

Descartes' "*Meditation on first philosophy*" is undoubtedly one of the greatest classical works of all time. Although Descartes claims that the primary goal of meditation is to prove God's existence and distinction of mind and body. He tried to show a secure foundation in knowledge with the help of methodological doubt, in that manner the main aim of this book is to take nothing for granted in determining and achieving secure and reliable knowledge. He uses methodological doubt - it is a process of doubting everything to find out whether anything can withstand the method of doubt. It is the journey to find certainty of knowledge. This is highly applicable in our present scenario; we can avoid most of the problems, disputes, and arguments, only if we have clear and certain knowledge.

My prime concern in this chapter is to explore Descartes' notion of ideas in general and innate notion in particular. In a particular sense, he proposed that like Plato's doctrine of ideas forms, that ideas are not something that is acquired in the empirical world through the senses. That idea is not coming through the sense experience. But in another sense, Descartes is unlike Plato. For Descartes, innate ideas are present at the time of birth but whereas Plato never admitted forms in our mind. It is something that is present at the time of birth. Here, I will discuss the sources of knowledge particularly from Descartes' perspective, and how one attains it. I also discuss his classification of ideas, alongside, the viewpoints of two other thinkers' viz., Nicholas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld, on Descartes' innate ideas.

1.2 Ideas:

Ideas are a thing's active determining principle. These are the outcomes of thought. Ideas can be the mental representational images of some objects in philosophy. Human beings are defined by their ideas which are considered important and distinguishing characteristics. Ideas in general, are taken as the intellectual representation i.e. representation of objects as an image. It is a psychological process that represents the external world. In a very precise sense, an idea emerges reflexively and spontaneously, without the need for any form of reflection. By way of an illustration, suppose someone asks about the idea of an animal, he immediately starts thinking about it. Ideas are accompanied by thinking, understanding, and judgment.

Descartes defines the theory of ideas in a clear manner. His theory of idea is wholly based on pure intellect, and he believes that certain ideas can be attained by pure intellect. He also asserts that everyone has a pure intellect that can be conceived with the aid of reason, and is convinced that immersing in the senses can obscure the pure intellect. He put forward his readers to realize in this manner that pure intellectual cognition is possible.

Descartes suggests that the meditator should discover his/her intellectual capacity and the pure use of it, by not paying any attention to material things. She/he will discover that thought or intellect without an image, though that is not founded on senses, is conceivable. In the first meditation, he asserts that the radical doubt has relevance to that knowledge that has not yet had a clear and distinct perception of anything. He goes on to provide the criterion for clear and distinct knowledge. 'Clear knowledge' can be said to be something that is clearly presented to the mind and can be grasped by the mind. Likewise, 'distinct knowledge' is that which is precisely determined so that it may not be confused with anything else in any manner. Furthermore, he uses the terms 'clearness' and 'distinctness' concerning the representative functions of ideas as well. Now an idea is clear when the mind includes in it that content, which is integral and complete in relation to the mind's interpretation of it, and it is distinct when the content of the idea includes nothing other than this. For instance, the idea of God is clear when it includes all that which goes to constitute the idea of God, and distinct when it includes nothing else.

Ideas are the most important aspects of Descartes' philosophy; he briefly discusses the primary ideas, in which he suggests a principle of representation. It gives a unique identity to his epistemology. He uses the term 'idea' as a standard philosophical term, which directs sensory information. If we look at the specific sense of 'ideas' in accordance with him, we can find, "some of my thoughts are as it were the images of things."³ Images may include the thoughts of an angel, a chimera or sky, or God, or animal, which the meditator is supposed to find among his/her own thoughts.

The visual experience of certain shapes and colors affect in a certain way, and that could be the content of human knowledge. To indicate that the ideas are as they were the images of

³Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translated by Michael Moriarty, Oxford University Press, 2008, p.25

things is to show that our experience presents to us as individual things that are presented in a spatially structured manner. Besides it, all the ideas cannot be listed in the imagistic domain. In consequence, not all ideas are genuine images. Descartes remarks that only the material things have sensory images, not the immaterial beings, such as the ideas of God. By counting God and other immaterial beings in the list of ideas that are like images he insinuates that even ideas that do not possess spatial structure are still comparable to images in some way.

Ideas, like images, represent external things, and individuals. Ideas represent individuals' numerous properties. Suppose we imagine a 'man', we also imagine him as having a head, two arms, two legs, two eyes, one face, running or standing, etc., simultaneously. We cannot consider the 'idea of God' in the imagistic domain; nonetheless, it represents him as having several properties. Similarly, in his six meditations, Descartes clarifies that even all the ideas of material things do not necessarily always be genuine images.

He employs the term 'idea' in two distinct ways; firstly, he applies it as a brain state or purely mental phenomena, and secondly, it as an 'act of thought' and 'object of thought', giving greater importance to the latter. In most of his works, he uses the term idea in a quite different manner, concepts like corporeal and incorporeal substance. While in his later works he gives significant importance to ideas as mental phenomena rather than physical phenomena. Thus, making it easily understood that the term 'idea' means it depicts some kind of mental substance or act of thinking.

Descartes holds the term 'idea' as the vehicle of representation i.e. as representing something in the outer world. And every object in the outside world must be interconnected with the concepts of substance, attribute, and modes. He proposes his concepts substance, attribute, and modes as interrelated, with regards to ontological dependence. Modes are dependent on attributes and attributes on substance. So, ultimately modes are also dependent on the substance. According to Descartes, a mode of something as a way of being that thing, also means a substance ceases to exist if we remove its modes. A substance is unknowable to the human mind if it deviates from its attribute. As a matter of fact, attributes are what make existing substances intelligible to the human mind. In principle, he proposes that we can make a distinction between substances and attributes in our concept, not in reality. They are one and the same thing, and presumably identical.

By the same token, the essence of the mind is 'thinking'. Deviating from it, we could not consider it as the mind, which means, an object does not have a mind if it does not think. It can also be said that the attribute of thinking can only be applied to the existing substance like the mind. Descartes emphasizes the mind's most important features, stating that, the nature of the mind is to think and that thinking is the defining quality of mind. An idea is a method of thinking, and as a mode of thinking, it is understood as a manner of thinking or the way in which thought manifests itself. The nature of the body is to be extended, adjusted as the nature of the intellect is to think. The body is a substance with the property of extension. A mode of extension shapes. As an idea is to think, the shape is to extend. Thus a shape requires expansion and an idea presupposes thinking, which presupposes an existing substance for every principal attribute.

Descartes defines modes of thinking and he not only includes 'ideas' as modes of thinking but also 'doubting' and 'judging' is included in it. He made a classification of modes of thinking into simple and complex. And then include ideas into the simple mode category, and doubting, judging into the complex mode category i.e. constituting many simple ideas into one form.

Ideas as the modes of thinking are always directed towards the object of the mind. Object means the empirical object such as a man, a mountain, a flower, etc. Colour, sound, and so on could be added to the long list of things provided to the mind by way of its concepts, and this is the sole type of simple mode. When we consider one of the more complex modes of thought, such as fearing a tiger or confirming or denying any theory, where the tiger and theory are the objects being presented, the idea is the one making the presentation and the vehicle of representation.

Descartes made an effort to classify 'thoughts' in a precise way; he said it to be the bearer of truth and falsity. He states that only in cases where one thinks of a mountain, or a chimera or a sky, etc. will they be strictly appropriate to use the notion of ideas. While in the cases, where one wishes or is afraid, and affirm or deny, these thoughts have various additional forms. "There is always a particular thing which one takes as the object of his thought, which

includes more than the likeness of that thing. Some of them we recognize as volitions and emotions, while others are known as judgment."⁴

In meditations, Descartes suggests two important basic faculties of mind, one is the 'intellect' or 'understanding', and another is the 'will'. Through the help of intellect, we produce ideas. As a result, the origin of any hypothesis or notion may be traced back to the intellectual faculty. The faculty of will is where the act of affirming or any other complicated cognitions. We can achieve more complicated types of thought by combining both capacities.

Descartes doesn't give any proposition which denotes an idea as a picture or as an image; besides it, he says that ideas are as if they were images of things. It can be found in several of Descartes' works, where ideas represent external objects without necessarily reflecting them. The representational theory of ideas is what it sounds like. Despair the fact that some of the thoughts resemble humans, they are not visible images. In so far as they are ideas, the concepts of cold and hardness, for example, represent something to the mind, but they are not visual representations. The points are direct representations of God's incorporeal images. To the mind, God represents an infinite substance, which is consistent with traditional theological doctrine, which holds that God is a non-spatial and non-temporal substance. It is impossible to interpret the concept as a visual representation of God.

Descartes' representationalism has been interpreted as the objects which are immediately present to the mind are purely mental objects. This explanation focuses on Descartes' assertion that such objects exist solely in the intellect. The mind's direct awareness of an object, such as the idea of a tree, is not a physical entity, which means it is not a being beyond the intellect. The mind is directed to those objects, which is not the tree itself but is instated as a purely mental entity that is represented in the external world. The content of the idea is said to be carried forward by this purely mental object.

⁴Cottingham, John. "Descartes', Sixth Meditation: The External World, 'Nature' and Human Experience." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series*, vol. 20, 1986, pp. 73–89.

1.3 Ambiguity of Descartes ideas:

Descartes' conception of the idea is obscure because he uses the term 'idea' ambiguously. 'Idea' sometimes means 'an act of mind' and sometimes means the 'object of such an act'. He applies the term 'idea' in two distinct ways; one may be an idea as an 'act of mind' or it may be 'an object of ideas'. Descartes does not explicitly state his position on the nature of ideas, which is the reason he presents his theory of ideas ambiguously. The bitter controversy between the two great followers of Descartes in the seventeenth century, Nicholas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld support the view that Descartes uses "idea" ambiguously, sometimes meaning 'an act of mind' and sometimes meaning 'its objects'. Everyone claimed to establish the true position of Descartes. Malebranche held that we see all things in God: ideas are the objects of our seeing and they are in God. He took the fact that all thoughts are of something to entail that all thoughts have ideas as objects. And he argued against Arnauld that vision in God developed Descartes' view of ideas: Descartes may not completely declare his position about the nature of ideas or May not want to declare it, but Descartes did not want to exclude ideas in the ordinary sense.⁵

Thinkers like Arnauld proposed that our seeing is inherently representatives, and they are in our minds. He is very strong in his point that all acts of thought are inherently representative; we can name it 'ideas'. He argued against Malebranche that the vision of God is based on childhood biases and is not true to Descartes' idea.⁶

In the preface to the reader of the meditation, it is stated that Descartes uses the term 'idea' ambiguously. Though how Descartes could be so careless with the term idea which is unclear, that he seemed clear from his own admission: "He uses the term 'idea' in something equivocal, it may either taken as materially, which is an act of one's understanding, and in this sense, it cannot be more perfect than one's self, or it is taken as objectively, as the thing which is represented by this act, which although we do not suppose it to exist outside of one's understanding."⁷

⁵Cook, Monte L. "the alleged ambiguity of "ideas" in Descartes philosophy." *the southe western journal of philosophy*, vol. No 6, University of Arkansas Press, 1975. (pp.87-88)

⁶ Ibid. (p.88)

⁷ The philosophical works of Descartes, vol.1, p.138. Both Anthony Kenny and L.J. Beck cite this passage as establishing that Descartes was aware that he used "idea" ambiguously. See Descartes: A Study of his philosophy, p.99, and the metaphysics of Descartes, p.158.

The above progress attempts to prove clearly that Descartes employs the term 'idea' ambiguously. In this paragraph, he admits that 'idea' is ambiguous, because equivocation is possible, such as when it might be interpreted either physically or materially, as an act, or objectively, as the entity represented by the act.

For Descartes, the term 'idea' is a standard philosophical term, but sometimes he uses it ambiguously. "Descartes uses the term 'idea' in two ambiguous ways: first, it corresponds to a brain state in his early work, while in later work or the meditation he uses it to characterize a purely mental occurrence. However, Descartes emphasized ideas as a mental phenomenon rather as a brain state. The word 'idea' for him refers to a mode of thought rather than a mode of extended substance. The majority of the times, ideas are interpreted as mental representational images of some things. Ideas can also be abstract concepts that do not present as mental images."⁸

Descartes constantly uses the term "'idea' in the later work to specify the mental phenomena rather than physical phenomena. He comments in the preface to the meditation that ideas can be taken materially, as an operation of the intellect. Alternatively, it can be taken objectively, as the thing represented by that operation. In other words, an idea refers to an act of thinking, or it may refer to the object of that act. For instance, in referring to someone's ideas as a match-box, Descartes might mean to refer to the act whereby the person think of the match-box (material sense), but he might also mean to refer to the object of a person's thought, i.e. the match-box being represented (objective sense)."⁹

There may be confusion between the term 'idea' and 'images'. This puzzling term drags us into how Descartes uses the 'idea' ambiguously. However, in his responses to Hobbes, he writes: "He employed the term idea since it is the traditional philosophical phrase for the forms of experience that are the divine mind's property." Even if we assume that God is outside the realm of corporeal imagination. Despite this, his allocation contains no more appropriate or connected terms.

We can see that Descartes is referring to a mode of thought or a thinking substance rather than an extended substance when he says about 'idea'. In his second set of replies, Descartes

⁸ Boyle, Deborah A. *Descartes on innate ideas*. The tower building, London, continuum international publishing group, 2009. p-8

⁹ Ibid., p.10.

clarifies that 'idea' refers to more than only the images created in the mind. As a matter of fact, these images are displayed in the physical imagination, which is a part of the brain that one would not call an 'idea'. Ideas are the elements that give shape to the mind, and they are shown as a component of the brain.

1.4 Classification of ideas:

Descartes explains the notion and the type of ideas in the third meditation in this manner: "Among all the ideas some seem to be innate, some seem to be adventitious, and others have been invented by the self. But might all ideas be thought of as adventitious, or they may all be innate, or created by the self. But he is not completely aware of their true origin."¹⁰

In meditation, one thing Descartes considered is that idea plays an important role. He provides many arguments and explanations for reconstructing his account of innate ideas, concerning where our ideas are coming from? How are they coming to us? Are they within us? Or are we producing them? Or are they coming from outside things? This is the way he started making distinctions of ideas. He demonstrates three different types of ideas, i.e.

1. Innate ideas
2. Adventitious ideas
3. Factitious ideas.

My own conception of what a thing is, what exactly truth is, how it comes to my mind, and what thought is simply derived from self's nature. It is not something that is coming from the outside world; some seem to be born with me. That means, these ideas wouldn't necessarily be something we are thinking about, but we already have them within us in the same way. When we are directed by the natural light, and paying attention to them, then only we can spontaneously access them. This is the criterion for innate ideas. The adventitious idea is derived from the external world, the ideas which something exists outside to me, like hearing a sound, seeing a picture, feeling cold, smelling the fragrance of a rose this knowledge comes from the things which are located outside of the self, this is a kind of knowledge which comes from the external world, Descartes calls it adventitious ideas. Lastly, ideas like sirens, hippogriffs, unicorns, and the like are inventions or built by the self, by using their thoughts

¹⁰ *Meditation-3*, p-26

and imagination. In other words, the self creates these ideas by using his innate and adventitious ideas are known as factitious ideas. So Descartes asserts that all this knowledge the self has, perhaps adventitious, or they may all be innate, or all made up.

Though we are not completely aware of the true origin of ideas, we split up ideas into innate, adventitious, and fictitious. Here I would like to go further and develop what I noticed that, all ideas seem to be adventitious. As we know that first, the mind comes into contact with the object, and then proceeds to the knowledge of the outside world. To proceed from the things which we know to exist outside the mind and which then comes to our senses. We reach a point when the mind is capable of perceiving adventitious ideas. Furthermore, it can be said that those ideas which are acquired by the senses and ideas which are transmitted by the things are quite unadorned (simple) and distinct, we received them exactly as they are. Here, we notice that the mind has the ability to combine and separate different thoughts in many ways.

1.5 Innate ideas:

Innate ideas as its core sense mean those ideas which are inborn in the human mind since birth; this doctrine of innate ideas holds that the mind is born with ideas. Unlike Locke's notion of tabula rasa, this doctrine is not started with a blank slate. Ideas preoccupy our minds, it is there before us. This is innatism, which is something devoid of experience and the belief that not all knowledge is received through experience and senses. Innatism in general is universal to all humanity; man is born with certain innate ideas. Many prominent philosophers like Leibnitz, have stated that the mind is always born with ideas and knowledge, and no knowledge and ideas are exclusively derived from experience. The human mind is not completely blank but it is equipped with inborn ideas.

René Descartes was primarily concerned with questions that dealt with epistemology, such as what can be known, and how we can know it. Descartes believed that there is something, we can know independent of our experience, i.e. we don't gain knowledge of, through our experience of the world or our interaction with the world. Intuitively that sounds a bit odd but many philosophers believe that Descartes' position is valid.

Let's examine the notion of 'innate ideas', which is central to Descartes' theory of knowledge. This is the kind of ideas, which are not acquired by experience, and usually, that means it is not acquired through senses experience. Therefore this knowledge cannot be

derived from seeing or hearing things, and in any form, from the external world. It is entirely derived from within the subject, and not from without, in other words, we can say, a certain kind of knowledge that is fixed within the subject.

According to Descartes', no amount of sense experience can give us universal knowledge. Universal principles are supplied by the mind to the senses. The notion of innate ideas states that the mind is not only receptive but also active in nature and that the mind provides the active formative principle of knowledge.

Since, the essence of the mind is consciousness or thought to be so there are certain ideas that belong to the mind alone, especially, the innate ideas. Clearness and distinctness are the characteristics of innate ideas. In this sense, innate ideas are exclusively composed of pure and abstract thoughts. According to Descartes, an ideal example of the notion of the innate idea is the 'idea of God'. He asserts that God is infinite, perfect, endowed with all positive qualities. He explains that the sense-experience of color, taste, etc. is not in the objects; therefore, it belongs to the psychical existence.

Descartes' ultimate goal is to achieve clear and distinct knowledge. If we follow the appropriate procedure, we have all of the required knowledge in the demonstration of mathematics as well as in philosophy. Certain knowledge cannot come from the senses, because the senses only show how things impact us, not what they are in themselves. Genuine knowledge is the outcome of reasoning from some basic notions and principles, which must be inherent in the mind itself, i.e. innate, if true knowledge cannot be derived from sense experience. The mind has its own set of rules or norms that it follows in its search for truth. Descartes' main premise is that reason possesses natural rules, but he isn't convinced of their existence. He understands innate ideas in two ways; one way is that of ideas or truth impressed upon the mind, principle which the soul finds in itself, and in another way the innate capacity of the soul to produce such knowledge in the course of human experience. Descartes gives various ways to manifest the true meanings of innate ideas; he provided several arguments for innate ideas, which I am going to elaborate on one by one.

1.5.1 Innate ideas role in understanding:

Descartes gives many arguments for establishing a strong position of innate ideas. First, he shows the position of understanding in the self. The act of understanding happens in our thought, through the sense-perception. My saying means my understanding, without an

understanding of a thing, I cannot speak about it. In a general sense 'thought' does not exist outside of the self, rather it is present within the self, and comes through the perception. As a result, we can argue that will, intellect, imagination, and sense all fall under the category of thinking. In a sense, Descartes, looking for the cause of ideas in the objective sense. The structure of a thing, according to scholastics, is what makes it what it is. When one says that I have the capacity to understand, it means she has understood something about their truth and thought. By asserting that I have an understanding of God, means I know about God's qualities, such as infinite substance, omnipotent, omnipresent, supremely powerful, and independence of everything. To have an idea means to have a clear knowledge about that thing.¹¹

1.5.2 Idea as objective sense and material sense:

Everything formally exists as it is in the empirical world, not in the intellect. But the idea of one substance is objectively present in our intellect. For example, the idea of an animal formally exists in the world, but that idea objectively exists in the intellect. Here we can find many similarities to Plato's theory of ideas, he argues that objects of the world are many but still they have a common nature e.g. there are several animals but all of them have a common nature. Objects are present in various forms in the external world, but the idea is one that is present in the mind.

Descartes' representational theory examines all fundamental ideas, which include both innate and adventitious ideas. He claims that his mind's innate ideas are of or reflect his mind because the idea's objective actuality is rooted in his intellect's formal reality. Insofar as the objective reality of the concepts stems from God's formal existence, God's innate ideas represent God (an infinite substance). The objective reality of an idea is derived from the formal reality of the body, hence innate ideas of the body are said to constitute a body. The sun is said to represent the adventitious thoughts of the sun insofar as the idea of objective reality has its origin in the formal reality of the sun, and so on.

The above argument fully indicates Cartesian adventitious ideas, not innate ideas because as we know innate ideas come only from our nature, but the above ideas are derived from some

¹¹ Boyle, Deborah A. *Descartes on innate ideas*. The tower building, London, continuum international publishing group, 2009. P.11

other sources. It means adventitious ideas consist of ideas of objects, and the idea of objective sense necessarily correlates with the idea of material sense.

Descartes asserts that we have innate ideas but in a furtive manner. The idea of God is innate to everyone, but not everyone is aware of it. “Although the idea of God is imprinted on the human mind in such a way that everyone has within himself the power to know him, this does not prevent many people from passing through their whole lives without ever having a distinct representation of these ideas.”¹² Descartes tries to explain mental disposition, or mental inclination, to perceive the idea. When we say that a notion is innate in us, we do not mean that it always appears within us.

1.5.3 Innate ideas in a submerged state:

Descartes believes that innate ideas are present in the mind but are submerged. A child has a full-blown innate idea, but their way or means to this idea is hampered and obstructed since their mind is preoccupied with the physical and worldly matter.

One of the scholars “Cottingham believes that both the dispositional account and present but submersed account, are described in Descartes's philosophy, but he shows that both these ideas are incompatible with each other. So Cottingham claims that Descartes didn't have a unified account of innate ideas. In this manner Descartes's theory of innate ideas is inconsistent.”¹³

1.5.4 Dispositional account of innate ideas:

“Descartes’ dispositional account of ideas also directs the innate ideas. When he says that idea is innate he means no more than that we have such a disposition. Many scholars give their consent that Descartes offers a dispositional account of the innateness of ideas. In support of this view, Descartes states in the 'principle of philosophy' that innate ideas are always actually depicted in some part of our mind. There are many scholars like Clarke, Nadler, and others who strongly agree with the purely dispositional accounts of innateness to Descartes. Innate ideas are present in the mind of a thinker even before he knows that he possesses them, and these ideas are present in the same way before and after they are

¹² Ibid. P. 13

¹³ Ibid. P.17

discovered. Descartes focuses on the point that ideas are not acquired but discovered by the person. Innate ideas are present in the mind of a thinker even before he knows that he possesses them, by the discovering of them one can be aware of that kind of knowledge.”¹⁴

“The mind is ‘implanted’, ‘impressed’, ‘imprinted’ with the innate notions. Such terms imply that ideas already exist in the mind in a full-fledged form rather than as a capacity. As a craftsman stamped on all his work, like that the idea of God is implanted on man by God alone. In this case, the preconceived notions just keep aside and make use of the intellect alone, by attending to the ideas implanted in it by nature.”¹⁵ The above argument shows that God places actual ideas in the infant's mind.

Descartes avoids the challenges of dispositional explanation, according to scholars like “Cottingham, by accepting the present but-submerged account of innate ideas. He admits that children have fully formed innate ideas, but that the path to these ideas is barred, impeded, or obstructed,”¹⁶ and also he explains why by stating that their brains are obsessed with bodily corporeal things.

1.5.5: Descartes account of innate ideas:

Innate ideas can be defined in three ways: idea as objective sense, idea as material sense, and idea as mental disposition. When we consider that the concept of God is innate we can conclude that the concept of God objectively exists in the mind. But there is a mental capacity to know about God because he is the actual act of perception when we gather our nature.

The idea of objective sense, the idea of material sense, and the idea of mental disposition are complementary to each other. We have the ability to recognize every object that exists. It is absurd to claim that we have the idea of objective sensation that we will never be able to perceive. The ability to recognize a concept and its Perceivability are intertwined.

“In his letter to Hyperaspistes, Descartes suggests that to have an objective sense of the idea of God is to have a natural ability to perceive clearly. In this way, he said that infants have an innate idea of God because they have the capacity to perceive that idea. The idea present but

¹⁴ Ibid. P.18

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 18-19

¹⁶ Ibid. P. 19

submerged is correct here, and it explains the fact that the idea in the objective sense is not perceived by the infants. Objects objectively exist in the intellect, but only because of sensory ideas they are blocked and not always perceived. An infant's mind is busy with bodily ideas, although he perceives the external world very clearly, he never perceives anything distinctly. Therefore some scholars draw the conclusion that bodily ideas obstruct our innate ideas because this mind is unaware about the innate idea.”¹⁷

Descartes asserts that one idea does not hinder another, and the mind can think of multiple things at once. Somehow innate ideas are there in the infant's mind but go unrecognized. The body is creating obstacles to the mind in its thought; we can say the body interferes with the process of thinking. Bodily ideas obstruct innate ideas therefore our mind is not aware of the innate ideas. It is feasible that our physical or bodily ideas will obstruct our ability to recognize our innate thought.

1.5.6 Recollective theory of innate ideas:

McRae found the recollective theory of innateness in Descartes's meditation. Before Mc Rae, Plato mentions in the 'Meno' about the recollection theory of idea, by explaining that searching and learning is the process of recollection theory of idea. Plato mentions all knowledge is the recollection of what was experienced by the soul in its disembodied state before birth.

In his work 'On the trinity' Augustine claims that the mind has a certain awareness of certain things. When we consider a certain concept, it begins to move forward as if it were at the center and begins to speak. Learning is a recollection of the past, which means learning of ideas is recollection. Learning is a process and it is nothing but remembering and recollecting. Mc Rae points out that Descartes' idea of innateness is a kind of modified version of the recollection doctrine of Socrates.

1.5.7 Reflective Description of innate ideas:

“Descartes confesses that some of our innate ideas are known through reflection because they are implicit in our thought. Some ideas are a reflection on the self; we have implicit knowledge of innate ideas simply through the process of thinking. Certain universal concepts

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 20

such as thought, existence, things substance, duration number, and universal principle are capable of being derived by intuitive induction from experience or consciousness. Every man has an implicit knowledge of these concepts from the fact that he thinks and is conscious of thinking. In that sense, they are innate in all men. We find them in ourselves when we reflect on what is implicit in our consciousness or experience.”¹⁸

Descartes established the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge. Everything we think is implicitly presupposed and occurs prior to the presupposition, “I am thinking, therefore I exist”. We must first recognize our flaws before we can comprehend God's perfection. "We must first focus on ourselves before we can devote our attention to God. As a result, we can infer our finiteness before approaching his infiniteness. Regardless knowledge of God and his perfection must always take precedence over knowledge of us and our flaws."

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Descartes defines consciousness as our state of mind when we are aware of something, and he maintains that "we are aware of everything that happens in our minds. We can't have a thought that we are not aware of right now, at the moment when it is occurring in our minds. Internal awareness is always prioritized over reflective knowledge. Even if we pretend that we don't have it, this inner awareness of one's thoughts and existence is to organically innate in all men.”²⁰

“In terms of our mental experience, we can have two levels of knowledge. One is knowledge by acquaintance which we gain merely by having some mental experience. This type of knowledge is the awareness that is not distinct from the mental experience. The second level is achieved when one explicitly perceives, through a separate act of the mind. Once a concept has been explicitly perceived, it can be further reflected on to discover its qualities. For example, once I have explicitly and through separate thought observed what thought is, I may go to my idea of thought and analyze it to see what it contains.”²¹

Some innate ideas, according to Descartes, are implicit in our mental component and are appear after examination or reflection. One discrepancy occurs here: the reflective account in

¹⁸ Ibid., p-55-56

¹⁹ Ibid. P. 56

²⁰ Ibid. P. 57

²¹ Ibid. pp. 59-60.

meditation sometimes implies that reflection should be focused solely at the cogito, and other time implies that it can be directed at any idea. That is, there is a distinction to be made between speaking of conceptions generated from thought on any component of the thinking process. And I am specifically referring to concepts derived from cogito reflection. It is still unclear if he believes that reflection may help us find concepts in any thinking or just concepts represented in the cogito. There appears to be no necessary link between the meditator's perspective of the idea and the cogito in this case. When he considers the question, he claims that one can have appropriate knowledge of what doubt, thought, and existence are.

"A reflective attentive mind, according to Descartes, can discover what concepts it relies on upon thought by attending to any of its thoughts. Human minds are not particularly good at attending to their own thought because of the distracting effect of the body."²² As a consequence, the method of doubt is necessary to assist in directing the mind away from its sense-perception, leaving just him cogito as a certain fact. As a result, of employing the doubt approach, the cogito becomes the only thought that can be addressed.

1.5.8 Interference of the body:

"Descartes says that humans do not fully comprehend all of their innate ideas immediately after birth and that our ability to perceive them can remain unrealized for years or even for an entire lifetime. This is due to the body's constant bombardment of our minds with impressions."²³ The adventitious ideas and other distractions draw our focus away from non-corporeal matters. He will demonstrate how distraction arises and how he believes it may be avoided.

"Descartes claims that in the soul, accidental ideas arise when the animal spirit flows via the nerves, moves the pineal gland, which then acts on the soul. The animal spirit can move us by providing sensations of hunger, thirst, and other natural needs, as well as pain, heat, and other conditions we perceive as being in our limbs rather than in objects outside of us. These two sorts of adventitious ideas, one arising from sensory perception and the other arising from physiological sensation, are precisely the concepts that Descartes claims occupy the brains of

²² Ibid. P. 60.

²³ Ibid. P. 62

infants and will continue to occupy the mind of adults who do not take measures to think differently.”²⁴

When we want to see something we have never seen before, we can use our willpower to cause the gland to move in the way that the spirits need to go to the pores in the brain that allow the items to be represented or pictured. We employ this volition to keep the gland pointing in one direction for a period of time when we want to focus our attention on a single item for a period of time. It entails directing our attention in both sensory and physical circumstances. The pineal gland's action causes a mental imprint to be retained, which the intellect then attends to. However, using the will we may direct the intellect's attention away from sense impressions, causing it to disregard them and think of something else.

“Descartes accepts that the soul can only affect perceptions indirectly. That is to say, it is impossible to feel nothing. For example, fear can be suppressed indirectly by using one’s willpower to divert one’s attention to other ideas, ideas that will cause one to experience a different passion. Thus, the indirect process of wishing not to see some erroneous thoughts is a direct process of willing one's intellect to contemplate another notion, a process of directing the intellect's attention.”²⁵

Descartes claims that the ‘will’ directs attention by willing the intellect to entertain specific impressions, which are created by changes in the pineal gland, in “*the passions of the soul*”. However, pineal gland motions do not cause all perception. Perceiving volition, imagining nonexistent things, and thinking of merely comprehensible, unthinkable things are all perceptions caused by the soul.

Many of the innate concepts are also entirely logical or intelligible and unimaginable at times. In theoretical aspects, intellects can be commanded to contemplate them at any time through an act of will. But Descartes believes the situation is complicated in reality. Descartes highlights the principle that the human condition causes the mind to be constantly bombarded by erroneous impressions that compete for the intellect’s attention with sensible thoughts.

²⁴ Ibid. P.62.

²⁵ Ibid. P. 63

As a consequence, there are a variety of reasons why infants are unable to comprehend their fundamental concepts or the things that are implicit in their thoughts and other ideas, in an objective sense. Infants are constantly overwhelmed with intense sensory stimuli, and overcoming them would require a continuous, exhausting effort of the will. To create a will that is patient and consistent enough to direct the intellect's attention to innate ideas takes time and effort.

1.5.9 Idea of God:

The major subject of Descartes' theory of ideas is the innate ideas of God. The first and most essential of a mediator's innate ideas is the concept of God. The 'concept of God is innate' is undeniable for Descartes. In the third meditation, the mediator expresses his innate views about God, talking about the mediator's understanding of a supreme God who is everlasting, boundless, unchangeable, omniscient, omnipotent, almighty, and creator of all things that exists in the world.

I am not focusing on the proof for God's existence in this section; rather, I am focusing on how the innate idea of God gets discovered. As I indicated in my previous section, the notion of objective sense implies the ability to perceive the concept. And the concept of God in the objective sense implies the ability to perceive that concept. Descartes says in the third meditation, "having within me the idea of God", but he also talks about the power or faculty to shape that idea of God. That is 'to form a notion of God' implies imposing God as a matter and conceiving God in the material sense. Descartes establishes a link between the objective possessions of a faculty to perceive that concept.

Everyone possesses a form or concept of understanding, which he might develop infinitely to produce the concept of God's understanding. We can rightly point out that we can have amplification power only because we already have the concept of an infinite being. As a result, using human power to amplify thoughts is not a viable replacement to positing a "real infinite being as the source of our infinite being concepts. In this sense, Descartes says that because we already have innate images of God, we may increase all manufactured perfections."²⁶ Furthermore, he believes that the concepts of God are formed by expanding his finite conception of intelligence, power, and goodness to an infinite degree, which he could not do unless he was created by an infinite creator. While the idea of God is created by

²⁶ Ibid. P. 74

expanding and amplifying features existing in ourselves, Descartes believes that we would be able to do so unless we already had an innate idea of God is the objective sense.

Even if we now have a fundamental principle and a criterion for accurate knowledge, the potential of a deceitful God remains. We don't know whether there is a God or not, or if there is whether he is reliable. This major hurdle must be removed.

Some of our ideas appear to be innate, while others are adventitious and still others are our inventions. Descartes discovered that one type of notion, the idea of God, exists only within me or within the self. This thesis can also be self-proved: nothing can originate from nothing. Everything and everyone in this world has a reason for existing, as well as a cause-and-effect relationship. The cause must be at least as powerful as the consequence. The great cause must contain more truth in itself, and it must be the most perfect and self-contained of all. Because God is the concept of perfection and infinite being, one finite being cannot be the source of the concept of God.

Although we may have a mental image of a perfect being, we cannot claim that he exists solely because we have a mental image of him. We can state that the existence of such a being as the source of the concept is intimately connected to the existence of that being.

If I have the ability to create, I must create a flawless creature and be able to preserve myself, which does not occur in reality. My parents did not create me, and if they had, they would have been able to preserve me, which seems inconceivable. As a result of the preceding reasoning, the concept of God as a flawless entity exists. Nobody has the ability to imagine a God who does not exist but is supremely perfect. Anselm's ontological argument is as follows.

One thing must be taken into consideration that divine perfection should not have more than one cause, if we found that the cause of supreme-being is many then we cannot consider it as a perfect being, as we know perfect-being must have one-caused or self-caused.

We all have an innate understanding of God, which we received from God. God is the reason for my being, and he has created an archetype man in his likeness. There is no doubt that when God created us, he should have imprinted these thoughts in the same way that a craftsman imprints his work on his product. Thinking leads to being, thus if I think about

God, I can be certain that such a notion exists. In fact, if God didn't exist, we wouldn't be able to have a concept of God or be who we are today.

When we analyze God's conception, we learn that He is omniscient, almighty, eternal, the creator of all things, and the source of all goodness and truth. Our sense-experience can experience only corporeal or material things. God is not corporeal and cannot perceive with the help of senses. God is so intelligent and has strong willpower, but not like ours.

Natural light perceives truth as ideas that we are implicitly aware of because we depend on them in our thinking. Attention to our thoughts will bring them to natural light because we rely on these principles in our thinking. Descartes repeatedly emphasizes the significance of attention in our perception of truths in natural light. He claims in meditation that there is nothing that is not manifested by natural light, but that it only manifests to me when I pay close attention. But when I pay less attention to those notions, it is difficult to remember why the idea of being more perfect than me, has to come from someone who is, in fact, more perfect.

Natural light does not comprehend all innate ideas; rather, the facts observed by natural light are only a subset of the total number of innate concepts. Things experienced by natural light, as described by Descartes, have two characteristics that distinguish them from other innate notions. The first characteristic is that what natural senses are virtually always propositions. While Descartes believes that non-propositional ideas like things, truth, thought, and God are innate, he never claims that they are perceived by natural light.

When the intellect understands anything so clearly and distinctly, according to Descartes, natural light shines. When a certain kind of judgment is made, natural light is said to shine, and making a judgment necessitates the intellect entertaining some proposition. We can claim that natural light helps us realize the essentially intellectual and common simple nature.

The second characteristic that distinguishes facts received by the natural light from other innate conceptions is that truths perceived by the natural light are exclusively mental. This indicates that they are perceived by the pure intellect reflecting on its thinking process.

Because some innate concepts are related to material substance, this property distinguishes facts received by natural light from other innate ideas. The concept of extension, according to Descartes, is intrinsic. He believes that in order to be explicitly perceived, concepts about

material substance require sense-perception or imagination. Natural light would not be able to see the innate ideas of extension because it is explicitly perceived through attention to our sense-perception.

1.5.10 The idea of extension:-

The idea of extension, according to Descartes, was innate. Robert McRae, on the other hand, says that while Descartes believed human thoughts of an unlimited number of possible figures in extension were innate, he believed the concept of the extension itself was accidental. He believes that in the six meditations, the concept of extension is generated by our bodies and hence is not natural. However, if we look carefully at the section, we can see that the meditator is more concerned with how he obtains ideas about specific bodies than with how he gets ideas about extension in general. He is attempting to establish the cause of his ideas of particular extending things, rather than the cause of his ideas of particular extended things.

"I did not assert that the ideas of material things are derived from the mind, as you somewhat disingenuously make out. Later on, I explicitly showed that these ideas often come to us from bodies and that it is this that enables us to prove the existence of bodies."²⁷

Mc Rae denies that the concept of extension is innate. While our ideas of particular objects and the body, in general, are provisional, Descartes can legitimately argue that the ideas of extension and the body in general, are innate. Descartes mentions our concept of the body as one of our innate notions because he previously stated that the body is an extended material; this is the same as saying that the concept of extension is innate.

Descartes believes that there are certain kinds of fundamental principles such as extension that we can discover in our souls because they are all given by nature. Because we have an innate idea of extension, we learn that the nature of external bodies is to be extended. Descartes makes it pretty obvious that among the ways of extension are the potential figures that extension can take. Descartes may readily concede that a non-philosophical individual can think of shapes without explicitly considering an extension, and indeed may never have considered what substance and modes are.

²⁷ CSM II 253/AT VII 367

However, it appears that the person's views about shape would be clear and distinct in this scenario. To understand shapes, we need a clear and distinct understanding of modes of extension, which means that seeing a shape as a mode of extension necessitates a clear and distinct understanding of extension. To understand the different forms that extension might take, we must first understand the concept of extension. In order to have a clear and distinct perception of shape, the concept of extension must be included. As a result, if we have innate notions about a certain shape, we must likewise have fundamental concepts about the extension.

Descartes proposed various ways of innate ideas, in order to give a strong argument for the existence of innate ideas. But Locke opposed Descartes theory of innate ideas that I will discuss in my next chapter.

CHAPTER-2

Locke's theory of ideas

2.1 Introduction:

John Locke was a highly famous English philosopher of the 17th century; whose theories and works are still very relevant in the present day. He was one of his decade's most versatile philosophers. His intellectual contribution gives the empiricism tradition a new direction. "*An essay concerning human understanding*", is primarily concerned with issues in epistemology or the theory of knowledge, the philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language as well as metaphysics. The goal of the book, as stated in the title, is to learn what we are capable of understanding about the universe in which we exist through an examination of the workings of the human mind. In this chapter, I will go through Locke's 'ideas', then how he defines it, and then how sensation and reflection contribute to the acquisition of ideas through the help of sense experience, Lockean denial of innate ideas, argument against innate ideas, and what Malebranche's view about it.

Locke's 'essay' is structured into four parts, each of which contributes to his main purpose of investigating the contents and functioning of the human mind. He rules out one possible source of our knowledge in. He claims that our knowledge could not have come from our ancestors. He also claims that all of our beliefs are based on personal experience. In this work, he tries to explain how concepts like God, infinity, and space might have come through our perceptual access to the world and mental operations. Locke turns his focus to language and function it plays in our theorizing, which is a bit of a diversion. Locke's major purpose is to be cautious; he believes that language is frequently a barrier to understanding, and he offers some suggestions to avoid confusion. His 'essay' also discuss about knowledge, belief, and opinion.

"Knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion of an agreement or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas"¹ Locke demonstrates his core empiricist tenet: nothing exists in the mind that does not exist first in the senses. The mind or

¹ Yolton, John W., editor. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. abridged ed., vol. 2, London, Everyman's Library, 1947. P.133, all the references in this paper to the latter work are from this edition; hereafter referred to as '*Essay*'.

understanding is thought to create knowledge while it goes about its business of relating concepts, with the definition of knowledge being the sense of the connection of an agreement or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our thoughts. The essay is an empiricist's defence of rationalism, especially Cartesianism.

“Despite Locke’s dislike for the epistemological reason for which his contemporaries employed the doctrine of innate notions, his particular epistemological remarks are oblique rather than direct. Locke treats the doctrine as if it were an empirical hypothesis about how we come to acquire certain pieces of knowledge, rather than an epistemological thesis about why certain principles are items of knowledge, for the purpose of the attack.”²

The fact that Locke considered “the theory in this way is demonstrated by the types of arguments he uses to refute it. Those arguments are frequently subtle, especially when he is dealing with his opponents’ defensive activities in relation to his criticisms. But, in essence, his argument is aimed at demonstrating that there are no sufficient grounds for assuming that there are any innate principles. Chapter 2 of book 1 bears the brunt of his case, in which he argues against innate speculative ideas. His attack is based on a number of critical points made at the universal assent argument.”³

Locke's early definition of moral knowledge, which was founded on empirical premises, appears to be quite different from his later theory of morality, which is abstract and demonstratable. According to his earlier argument, sense provides reason with two things. firstly, evidence of design in the world from which we might deduce the existence of a creator whose will or law we are bound to obey, and secondly, knowledge of various human qualities that reveal the specific purpose of God in creating us, as well as the content of his natural law.

Locke is strong in his point that knowledge is only possible through sense experience. He is essentially arguing that because the mind lacks inborn concepts, sensory information is the only knowledge we have, implying that all of our ideas are ultimately obtained from experience; all of our propositional knowledge is empirical, and ultimately based on sensory knowledge.

² Wall, Grenville. “Locke's Attack on Innate Knowledge.” *Philosophy*, vol. 49, no. 190, 1974, p. 414

³ Ibid. pp. 414-415

2.2 Locke on ideas:-

Locke tries to figure out nature of human understanding and where the clear ground for human nature's future development begins. The idea is significant in our discussion. To understand Locke's empiricism, one must first understand his theory of ideas. Ideas, according to Locke, are all indicators that represent the external physical world and inner world of consciousness. However, in his major work '*Essay*' he goes into great detail on ideas and gives a clear account of their nature. I will try to demonstrate his explanation of the nature of ideas, in this section.

In '*Essay*' Locke defines the term 'idea' in a manner like, "it being the term which, I think, serves best to stand for whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks, I have used it to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notions, species or whatever it is, which the mind can be employed about in thinking."⁴

He started with the term 'ideas', which are the raw materials from which knowledge is built. He looked into the origins of concepts, notions, or whatever a man calls them, that he observes and is aware of in his mind, and the process by which the understanding is provided with them.⁵

Locke emphasizes the process of getting knowledge, which he refers to as experience, although the element of the process is imperceptible. He maintains that what we see is the concept of objects in the real world, not the objects themselves and that the idea is not a material but an immaterial substance. As a result, we can conclude that what we see is a gateway between the object and the subject.

Locke is primarily concerned with the sources of knowledge and understanding. He attempts to explain how the human mind transfers experience together with bits of knowledge in order to comprehend future data. He represents 'idea' as a fundamental unit of human comprehension. Locke briefly outlines the three stages of knowledge acquisition: sensation, reflection, and judgment. These are the three main phases by which the human mind gains knowledge most frequently.

⁴ *Essay*, (1.1.8). P.21.

⁵ *Ibid.* (1.1.3), p.6

The first subject of investigation, according to Locke, is ideas. By saying that understanding something is equivalent to getting ideas, ideas are the most basic requirement of knowledge. He looked into the sources of ideas and came to the conclusion that sensation and reflection are the only sources of ideas in terms of human understanding.

As a result of these findings, "we can deduce that the cognitive process is influenced by both the mind and the external world and that the link between them is the idea. The external world offers ideas to the mind at various levels, and knowledge emerges as a result."⁶ Locke seeks to show that the mind is passive before getting ideas, but becomes active after it receives them.

"The things we perceive and the ideas we have are not the same. Several external objects impact our sense organs, generating ideas in our minds; however, this does not imply that the objects we perceive are in our minds. In this respect, Locke argues that ideas are representations of certain objects that we experience and that they are dominating in our minds. The mind gets knowledge through ideas."⁷ As a result, we can say that ideas are mental representations of external objects. It is clear that the mind does not know things directly, but it does so through the intervention of ideas. Locke argues that ideas have a representational nature. We only have direct knowledge of concepts and not of substance. Knowledge's immediate objects are simply thoughts. Ideas represent the quality of substance. We infer substance and quality through their corresponding ideas. We can say it is mediation between objects and the knower. So Locke's epistemological dualism depicts that ideas are the mediate between the subjects and objects. This is the representationalism of Locke.

Ideas, according to Locke's representational realism, are mental representations of external objects, and the mind obtains knowledge through this representation. While the mind and the outside world interact, the feeling is the cause via external things, and thoughts created in the mind are the effects. As can be seen, Locke is both a realist and a believer in the causal theory of perception. According to the causal theory of perception, sense perception is caused by the mental effects of physical objects' actions on our bodily senses.

"According to Locke, we can never truly build a comprehensive mental picture of an object that matches the objects as it exists in the physical world. We can only speculate about the

⁶ Rubaia, Rafat E. "Locke's theory of ideas: A critical exposition." *philosophy of progress*, vol. lxi-lxii, 2017, p.135

⁷ Ibid. p.135

objects. Consider this scenario: I have a piece of cake in my hand, and I can look at it, smell it, and then taste it. My mind will form beliefs about the cake based on my experience with it. We learn about an object by looking at it, touching it, smelling it, hearing it, or testing it through our senses.”⁸ Even if it does not provide us with the ultimate truth about the thing, we can obtain information about it. In the sense that concepts are the objects of our thinking, whatever we think of them. Locke cites several ideas of objects and qualities based on sensation. In his words, “Idea is the object of thinking. Every man being conscious to himself that he thinks; and that which his mind is applied about whilst thinking being the ideas that are there, it is past doubt that men have in their minds several ideas- such as are those expressed by the words whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephants, army, drunkenness, and others.”⁹ He is aware that certain knowledge and ideas or impressions are imprinted on their minds.

2.2.1 Idea of sensation and reflection:-

“All ideas come from sensation or reflection. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.”¹⁰

According to Locke, we acquired ideas through two kinds of sources i.e. sensation and reflection. The mind is like white paper, without any ideas. The mind is furnished with ideas by experience. When we have an experience, we use our observation skills to observe either exterior tangible objects or internal mental operations that we perceive and reflect on. Locke considers the exterior perceptible objects and the internal operations of the mind to be the two sources of knowledge from which all of our conceptions arise.

“Our senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them.”¹¹ Our senses come into contact with various sensible objects and communicate the information they have about those objects in our minds. As a result, we receive ideas of various sensible qualities such as yellow, white, heat, cold, hard, bitter, sweet, and so on.

⁸ Ibid. p.136

⁹ *Essay* (2.1.1), p.77

¹⁰ Ibid. (2.1.2), p.77

¹¹ Ibid. (2.1.3),p.77-78

According to Locke, this great source of most of our thoughts is based entirely on our senses and derived from them to our understanding.

The concept of reflection is the thought of various mental actions. This set of ideas could not have come from anything else. For example, perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and so on, are distinct from the concepts we get from our bodies affecting our senses. According to Locke, every man has a source of ideas within himself, which would be appropriately referred to as internal sense.

There is a strong parallel between the deliverance of internal sense and external sense. The sensitive symbol derives from sensation. Sensitive symbols are appearances of material substances and reflective symbols are the appearance of the mind. If we look at the idea of sensation it completely depends upon the organ of senses, while the idea of reflection depends upon the mind itself and its operations on its ideas.

2.2.2 Simple and complex ideas:

There are two types of ideas proposed by Locke: simple ideas and complex ideas. We get simple ideas through the senses and this is just what we get when we are perceiving things. When we touch, smell, hear and see something, we are gaining all of this raw material from our experience, and these counts as simple ideas and it is important to note that we don't choose to receive these ideas, we just simply receive them. So it is not like we are choosing to have perceptions of the world, we are just passively receiving perception from the world. For example- the ideas of coldness, hardness, sweetness, etc. so these are simple ideas, we don't get a lot of content from them but we do get the raw materials we need to start building all of our other ideas. And this notion of building ideas or getting other ideas comes to us from Locke's notion of complex ideas. We can take all of those raw materials we get from our simple ideas and perception and then we use our mind to take those simple ideas or the raw materials to create a new one. Our mind has the power to create ideas from the simple ideas we get. For instance- the idea of the unicorn, Golden Mountain, etc. the most important thing we have to notice is that our ideas can be simple or complex and secondly we get all of our ideas either through sensation, reflection, or through the creation of new ideas.

The thoughts of those sensible characteristics are simple and unmixed, distinct from each other because the distinct sensible qualities (e.g. coldness and hardness of a piece of ice) are different from each other even if they are existing together in the sensible object (e.g. a piece

of ice). The coolness and hardness that a man perceives in a chunk of ice are as distinct mental images as the scent and whiteness of a lily or the taste of ice cream, or the scent of a rose.

Simple thoughts are suggested and provided to the mind by sensation and reflection; the mind cannot create or destroy them. When simple thoughts are stored in the understanding, it has the ability to repeat, compare, and unite them. The mind is incapable of inventing or creating a single new simple concept.

The division of ideas can also be created on the basis of the many methods in which they approach and form themselves in our minds. To begin with, some ideas only occur to us in one sense. Second, some ideas are sent to the mind through more than one sense. Third, some ideas are derived solely through reflection, and forth, some ideas are derived just from sensation and reflection.

Some concepts are only accessible through one sense. Colour knowledge, such as white, red, and black, with their numerous shades and combinations, such as green, scarlet, purple, sea-green, and the rest, is acquired primarily through the eyes whereas all forms of noise, and tones are acquired exclusively through the ears. A number of objects can be tasted and smelled by the palate and nose, respectively.

Locke clearly mentions in his *Essay*, that “the ideas we get by more than one sense are, of space or extension, figure, rest and motion. For these make perceivable impressions, both on the eyes and touch; and we can receive and convey into our minds the ideas of extension, figure, motion, and rest of bodies, both by seeing and feeling.”¹² In order to get clear ideas about an object, we need to use more than one sense.

"The idea of perception, and the idea of willing, we have from reflection".¹³ According to Locke, the mind pays close attention to the two primary actions of perception and willingness. The mind's activities are simple reflection thoughts. The mind is aware of its own acts and, as a result, has ideas about them. We can derive the concepts of perception and willingness from the principle of reflection. The first is perception or thinking, and the second

¹² Ibid. (2.5), p.97

¹³ Ibid. (2.6.2), p.98

is volition or willingness. These are the two major processes of the human mind that we commonly address in our daily lives.

“There are the simple ideas which convey themselves into the mind by all the ways of sensation and reflection, viz. Pleasure or delight, and its opposite, pain or uneasiness; power; existence; unity.”¹⁴ Simple thoughts, such as pain and pleasure, have entered the mind as a result of sensation and reflection. Almost all of our thoughts are mingled with feelings and reflection. These aren't generated by the mind. We would understand pleasure and pain to mean that it emerges from our brain's thoughts or from anything working on our body. On one hand, we call it satisfaction, delight, pleasure, and happiness; on the other, we name it uneasiness, trouble, pain, torture, anguish, and misery. They are all varying degrees of the same thing, and they are all related to the concepts of pleasure and pain, delight and unease. The ideas of existence and unity, thoughts of power, and ideas of succession are some of the other ideas that fall into this category of ideas that arise from both sensation and reflection.

Heat and cold, light and darkness, white and black, motion and stillness, and other seemingly opposing ideas are equally obvious and good in the mind. It is sometimes believed that this knowledge is unrelated to concepts and merely understands.

"Ideas are present in the mind; qualities are present in the body. To discover the nature of our ideas the better, and to discuss them intelligibly, it will be convenient to distinguish them as they are ideas or perceptions in our minds; and as they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions in us: that so we may not think that they are exactly the images and resemblances of something inherent in the subject; most of those sensation being in the mind no more the likeness of something existing without us, than the names that stand for them, are the likeness of our ideas, which yet upon hearing they are apt to excite in us."¹⁵

The mind observes or notices something in itself, or it is the subject of direct observation. Concept or understanding, which is referred to as an idea, has the power to form any concept in our minds, and this is referred to as a subject's quality. For example, the power to produce in us the ideas of ideas of white, cold, and round- the power to produce those ideas in us, as they are in the snowball, we can call it quality. We name their ideas because they are sensations or perceptions in our understanding.

¹⁴ Ibid. (2.7.1), p.98

¹⁵ Ibid. (2.8.7), p. 103

2.2.4 Primary and secondary qualities:

There are two types of qualities, according to Locke, primary and secondary. According to him, the real quality of matter is not extension but solidity which really depends on the insensible, minute particles of matter called atoms.

Primary qualities are closely related to the physical body. Whatever modifications are made to an object's condition of existence, whatever force is applied to it, the essential attributes are intrinsically connected to the material objects. "Divide a grain of wheat into two pieces; each part retains solidity, extension, figure, and mobility; divide it again, and it retains the same qualities, and so on until the portion becomes insensible; each part must maintain all of its attributes. Because division can never take away someone's solidity, extension, figure, or mobility; it can only create two or more different separate masses of matter from what was once one."¹⁶ These are what Locke refers to as the body's original or essential features. These properties, according to him, produce simple conceptions in humans, such as solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and the number.

Secondary qualities such as colors, sounds, and tastes, have the ability to cause various feelings in us through their primary qualities, i.e. figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts. These are the secondary attributes, yet they have nothing to do with the object itself. These are the attributes that aren't as important as the primary ones. The real qualities in the subject are secondary qualities.

Let's take the example of ice cream and its extension, figure, motion, number, and solidity to simplify those primary and secondary qualities. These fundamental qualities are independent of the mind; they exist in the physical world outside of us. However, the ice-cream user has secondary qualities. What are those secondary qualities? The ice color, creams' taste, fragrance, and sound are secondary features that are dependent on the mind. These are perceptions of concepts in our minds. In the external world, these don't exist.

However, according to Locke, primary qualities have the capacity to create secondary qualities that we perceive. The object's extension and figure exist outside the mind, in the external reality; the object's flavor and color do not. The ice cream is a tasteless and colorless thing, but when one views it, the extension and figure cause the mind to see color. The

¹⁶ Ibid. (2.8.9), p. 104

fundamental quality formed the idea in my thoughts again when one took a bite of the ice cream.

The universe is perceived indirectly, there is a physical world, but the strength of the essential attributes of the items cause us to see it in a radically different light. Consider a red and white color in porphyry; without light, we cannot detect the colors; color is light-dependent. Let's shine a green light on the porphyry; now we see the red and white porphyry as green. The color may change, and it may appear different at different times, but the porphyry solidity remains constant; it is always seen in the same way. As a result, we may see a discrepancy between how we perceive an object's color and how we perceive its length. The contrast between primary and secondary quality is well defined by Locke. So color is only a sense in our mind, not anything that exists in the porphyry.

We may have a query about how bodies develop ideas in us when we examine bodies that produce ideas in us. When external items form thoughts in objects, they may not connect to our minds, and we observe these original traits in each of them in a unique way that comes within our senses. It is obvious that some motion must then be continued by our nerves or animal spirits, by some section of our bodies, to the brains or the seat of a sensation in order to form the specific notions we have about them in our minds.

2.3 Locke's Degrees of knowledge:

Locke categorizes knowledge into three levels of grades i.e. intuitive, demonstrative, and sensitive. When it comes to intuitive knowledge, the mind accepts concepts without depending on any other ideas that come to mind at the same time. These kinds of knowledge are instantaneous, complete, as well as certain. For example, no objects can be blue and non-blue at the same time, white cannot be black, and a circle cannot be a triangle at the same time. "All our knowledge consisting, as I have said, in the view, the mind has of its ideas, which is the utmost light and greatest certainty we, with our faculties, and in our way of knowledge, are capable of, it may not be the case to consider a little the degrees of its evidence... Sometimes the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other, and this; I think we may call intuitive knowledge."¹⁷ The agreement or disagreement we directly see the light with our

¹⁷ Ibid,(4.2.1), p.503

eyes. Intuitive knowledge is the most definite and certain type of knowledge, occupying the highest level of understanding. Human beings are capable of achieving this knowledge.

Demonstrative knowledge, as its name means to show or to display, an agreement or disagreement between two ideas. For example, P and Q are equal since they are both equal to R. We can state our logic in the following way:

$$P=R$$

$$Q=R$$

$$\text{Therefore, } P=Q$$

Demonstrative knowledge is made up of a succession or chain of intuitions, as shown in the example above. Demonstrative knowledge is sure, but it gains through any medium, it is a piece of indirect knowledge, it requires proof depending on the quickness and sagacity of the mind. This process requires the intervention of other ideas. It is in fact knowledge by deduction. When we compare between intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, we can see that intuitive knowledge has no doubts, whereas demonstrative knowledge has doubts before the demonstration. We can say that demonstrative knowledge is not so clear, because it crosses through different stages. This knowledge goes through the memory of the previous steps or intuitions; however, memory opens the door to possibilities of errors and mistakes. As a result, we have come to the conclusion that demonstrative knowledge is less certain than intuitive knowledge.

Locke explains the third level of knowledge: "Sensitive knowledge of the particular existence of finite beings without us. These two, viz. Intuitive and demonstration, are the degree of our knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but faith or opinion, but not knowledge, at least in all general truth"¹⁸ Sensitive knowledge is the lowest degree of knowledge. As we observe above, knowledge of intuitive and demonstrative are coming with certainty. And anything that comes close to acquiring the certainty of intuitive or demonstrative knowing is knowledge, while anything less than sensation is not knowledge but an opinion. This information comes from the outside world. Although, Locke does not find a particular element of certainty in sensitive knowledge, he cannot deny it to be included in the knowledge category.

¹⁸ Ibid, (4.2.14), p.143

2.4 Malebranche on Locke's theory of ideas:

The ideas are the entities of which words are the signs. They exist in the mind. However, it never resolves the evident issues that arise from the senses. It would have been helpful if Locke had made a clear distinction between mental activities of thinking (perception and imagination) and the concepts that are connected with ideas. In the sense that they are states of mind, the mental activities are in the world. There is certainly some alteration in my mind when I think of a figure which I did not think of before. However, the notion (figure, color) cannot be 'in the mind' in the same way.

The best instance of this problem is imagination. When we are asked to visualize a dog, we usually assume that we have an image of a dog in our mind. If we were asked 'what kind of dog have you imagined?' it would make sense. 'What color is it?' Now, while the process of imagining is undoubtedly 'in the mind', what about the images? We assume it has something to do with the mind. It is formed by the act of imagining and vanishes as soon as that act is completed. As a result, it resembles Locke's theories, perceiving, thinking, picturing, and remembering are all in the mental processes. The mind is in charge of the thoughts that are entertained during these activities. They vanish the moment the activity comes to an end. Unfortunately, Locke does not adhere to this act-object distinction.

What is the position of thoughts and what is their nature? Locke believes that ideas can be true beginnings but not substances, just as motion can be a real being but not a substance, in more observations on Malebranche. But he also criticizes Malebranche for claiming that an idea is a spiritual entity rather than a substance, or a relation because I have no other conceptions. Then, what is the mind notion of Locke? Is it mind or modes of mind or connections? They cannot be in the mind in any strict sense, according to Locke.

The mind, often known as the soul, is a single, immaterial substance that cannot be divided. On this sheet of paper, I can now see the back and white. In the next room, I hear someone singing, I can feel the heat of the fire in front of me, and I taste an apple that I eat all at once. If you want to use the term modification, may the same expected indivisible material have different inconsistent (as these of black and white must be) change at the same time?

Locke's '*Essay*' contains the notion that what is understood is present to the mind. When examining how our bodies generate thoughts in us, particularly concepts of the originals or primary features, "the ideas in the body are manifested by impulse, the only way which we

can conceive bodies to operate in.”¹⁹ He then goes into greater detail on how ideas are created.

"If then external objects are not united to our minds when they produce ideas therein; and yet we perceive these original qualities in such of them as singly fall under our senses, it is evident that some motion must be thence continued by our nerves or animal spirits..., there to produce in our minds the particular ideas we have of them.”²⁰

Malebranche on this point cited that either object themselves are united to the mind, or ideas of objects are united to the mind. Locke agrees on the point that thoughts do contain ideas. At the end of the *essay*, there is an even more Malebranche remark: “for since the things the mind contemplates are none of those, besides itself, present to the understanding, it is necessary that something else, as a sign or representation of the thing it considers, should be present to it: and these are ideas.”²¹

Locke disagrees with Malebranche on the causation of ideas: not God, but corpuscular action is their cause. Nor does he take ideas to be real beings. There are many passages where Locke uses the language of ‘objects’ while talking about ideas, e.g., “whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks”²²; the mind has no immediate objects other than its idea, and it is only these concepts that the mind contemplates. More of these passages can be found. It may seem then that, although the objects of the mind when it thinks are not God-given ideas, it is nevertheless ideas and not thoughts that are present to the mind. The question has been becoming, how important is it that Locke's ideas are not real beings?

Before we pursue this question, we should note that Malebranche's concept of the idea is not the only doctrine echoed in Locke's *essay*. The definition of ideas "whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks", is somehow linked with "whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species," a clear echo of some portion of the scholastic doctrine. In addition, Locke's "epistle to the reader" includes Descartes' adaptation of the scholastic doctrine. Locke explains that instead of the term 'clear' and 'distinct' for ideas, he proposes

¹⁹ *Essay*, (2.8.11), p.105

²⁰ *Ibid.* (2.8.12), p.105

²¹ *Ibid.* (4.21.4), p.309

²² *Ibid.* (1.1.8), p.9

using 'determinate' and 'determined'. He then says that "by those denominations, I mean some object in the mind, and consequently determined, i.e. such as it is there seen and perceived to be." Locke's elaboration confirms that we are hearing Cartesian reflections in the talk of some object in the mind and the object is there seen and perceived: "This, I think, may fitly be called a determinate or determined idea, when such as it is at any time objectively in the mind and so determined there, it is annexed and without variation determined to a name or articulate sound." Whereas Descartes spoke of the 'objective reality of ideas', meaning the reality of objects as they exist in the mind, Locke talks of ideas being in the mind objectively.

Locke did not become involved, as Descartes did, with the ontological aspect of objective reality, but he did give as an unequivocal account of what he meant by the notion of 'being in the mind': for if these words to be in the understanding have any propriety, they signify to be understood. Here we have a verbatim repetition of Arnold's remark "I say that an object is present to our mind when our mind perceives or conceives it." The echoes from Arnauld are more pronounced on another important issue that divided Arnauld and Malebranche, namely, the nature of ideas.

Arnauld insisted that ideas were not real beings and that having ideas and perceiving were virtually the same. In several places, in the essay, Locke repeats this linking of having ideas and perceiving.

"Whatever idea is in the mind is either an actual perception or else, having been an actual perception, is so in the mind that by the memory it can made an actual perception again"²³ Several unique views of things are conveyed into the mind by our senses, according to Locke. He clarifies his use of the word 'convey' by saying that the sense from external objects expresses into the mind what causes such sensations. External objects are said to provide the mind with notions of perceptible qualities, which are all of the many impressions they generate in humans. When you ask when a man first has any thoughts, you are asking when he first starts to perceive, because having ideas and having perceptions are the same things.

‘When a man first has any sensations?’ Locke answers in response to the query, ‘when does a man begin to have any thoughts?’ He defines sensation as an impression or motion made in some part of the body, and he claims that impression causes some perfection in the intellect. “Our conceptions are nothing but genuine perception in the mind,” Locke states while

²³Ibid, (1.4.21), p.55

discussing memory. Memory is thought to have the ability to restore perceptions that the mind formerly possessed. For the sake of our concept, which is nothing more than bare appearance or perceptions in our minds? Ideas in our minds are just a collection of experiences or appearances.

The contrast in these passages with Malebranche's strong characterization of ideas as distinct, real beings is marked. With the variety of references to other doctrines on ideas and perception in the essay, with Locke using the different language of these diverse doctrines. In his consideration of P. Malebranche's Opinion of seeing all things in God. Malebranche claims that anything the mind senses must be physically present and intimately connected to it. Because the mind cannot sense things at distance, or far from it, Locke understands that for Malebranche, "it is ideas, not things that are present in the mind." Ideas are only existent in the mind because God, who is the source of them, is present in the mind. The idea of being intimately connected to our soul or the mind, according to Locke, is not particularly apparent. He wants to know how two spirits or two beings may come together if neither of them has any extension or surface. He claims that the concept of union is derived from the bodies, where bits of one enter the surface of the other and make contact with their internal parts.

According to Locke, Malebranche's description of seeing in God is no better than just claiming that thoughts are generated in the mind without an explanation of their connection to the soul. According to Malebranche, our bodies are related to our souls, but not in the way that the soul requires us to perceive them. He is curious as to what distinguishes one union with God from the other in terms of perception (with bodies). Malebranche claims that bodies and souls are not joined in such a way that they can be perceived because there is no balance between them. If it shows anything, Locke says, it shows that a soul and a body cannot be connected or united since one has surfaced to unite while the other doesn't.

What the argument of equality fails to establish is why the relationship between soul and body is insufficient to allow the body, rather than God, to generate ideas in the soul. According to Locke, the soul and God have a similar relationship to that of the mind and body. According to Malebranche, Locke points out that mere existence is not enough for perception: God must reveal those ideas to us. Locke is interested in knowing more about the revealing. The only things Malebranche makes on disclosure that Locke can find is that "when God discloses them, we see them; his, in short, appears to me to mean only...that when we have these thoughts, we have them, and we owe them in our maker"

According to Locke, God created our souls and connected them to our bodies in such a way that when certain motions in our bodies are generated by external objects, the soul experiences such and such perceptions or concepts. Locke's physical description reveals just as much as Malebranche's about the evolution of ideas: the operation of external items on our senses when the sun displays them to us gives us the ideas of figure and color. But how does the sun display them to us, or how does the sun's light produce them in us? What is the nature of the change in our spirits, and how is it achieved? I don't know, and it doesn't appear that our author does, based on what he writes, that he knows what God does when he shows us, or what is done to our minds. He admits that the mere presence of them in our minds has no effects on us.

As the greatest explanatory theory of perception, Locke uses the corpuscular account, which describes the motion of particles of matter striking our sense organ. He goes into great detail regarding how each sense works, with his example of light being particularly detailed. Locke, on the other hand, does not claim understanding how we view an item once it has been formed on the retina. However, he does believe that it is simpler to imagine a visible picture in diverse changed things than in God's invariable essence. He repeats his physical description of retinal impressions, cerebral processes, and mental thoughts. He claims that saying we see things in the bottom of our eyes is more understandable than saying we see them in God.

When it comes to some of the finer points of Malebranche's theory, such as the distinction between 'sentiment' and 'idea', Locke has difficulties with it. It's worth noting that he refers to his doctrine as making ideas equal to sense on multiple tests. When Malebranche attempts to refute those who believe our minds have the ability to generate ideas for things they would think about. And that the impressions that objects leave on the body inspire people to create them. Locke observes that one who believes tights are nothing more than mental sensations annexed to certain bodily motions by the will of God, who has directed such perceptions to constantly accompany such motions, is mistaken. Though we have no knowledge of how they are generated, we do in effect consider those concepts or perceptions to be nothing more than passions of the mind when they are produced in it by an external object, whether we want them or not.

The section where Locke examines Malebranche's presentation of concepts as real thongs contains the greatest affirmation of ideas as senses. Although Malebranche does not state that

ideas are substance, Locke believes that this is what the phrase actual spiritual creatures means. Malebranche, of course, would have saved the term substance for God. Within Malebranche's ontology, anything existing must be a substance or a mode of substance, according to Locke. As a result, he comes to the conclusion that ideas must fall into one of these two categories.

Colour and shape, according to Locke, are attributes that can be perceived. It's also worth considering how a state of mind might have a color and shape. This is an issue with Locke's theory of ideas in general. Why should we believe that all forms of mental activity entail the having of ideas, that is, the apprehension of non-substance things that rely on the mind for their existence? There appear to be reasons behind this. One is the assimilation of ideas to images or pictures, which is assisted by unique perception and memory experiences.

For in these instances, it is plausible to maintain (as will be shown below) that there is an entity (sense-datum or the memory picture) that has the characteristics of shape, color, and so on, that we see, even though its existence is dependent on the mind. This is then extended to other mental operations like thinking, deliberating, pretending, and anticipating, where maintaining that these include the apprehension of mind-dependent entities is far from reasonable. The description of an idea as to what a word means encourages this tendency. Comprehension of the words that make up a phrase necessitates an understanding of the words that make up its constitutions. And a word's meaning is assumed to be an idea.

Ideas are described as whatever the mind perceived in them, or as the immediate object of perception, cognition, or understanding. This might seem to imply that ideas are not just objects but objects which exist in the mind.

Locke's article contains the notion that everything that is understood is present to the mind. Ideas are defined as whatever the mind discerned in them, or as the immediate objects of perception, cognition, or comprehension. This might seem to imply that ideas are not just objects but objects which exist in the mind. I will stop here and will make a further comparison between Locke's idea and Descartes' ideas in my last chapter.

CHAPTER-3

Locke's refutation of Descartes innatism

3.1 Introduction:

In this chapter, I am going to explore the debate on innate ideas with reference to Rene Descartes and John Locke. As we know, Descartes was very much in favour of innate ideas; and the doctrine of innate ideas is central to his theory of knowledge. He says that without innate ideas one cannot have clear and distinct knowledge. Whereas John Locke was very much opposed to innate ideas. According to him, the mind is '*tabula rasa*' i.e. at the time of birth the mind is a blank slate. We get ideas only through sense experience. I have discussed Descartes and Locke's theory of ideas in detail in my previous chapters. I would like to compare and contrast their theories in the present chapter.

3.2 Locke's connection to Descartes:

Though, various philosophers proposed that the refutation of innate ideas which was opposed by John Locke was not the exact same theory upheld by Descartes, but I strongly believe that Locke's refutation of innate ideas is directly against Descartes. In this part I am going to show, how Locke's refutation of innate ideas aimed at Descartes. We are all aware of this point that Descartes' writings have played a great role in arousing Lockean philosophy. Lockean philosophy has raised its face against Descartes nativism, first, he refutes the notion of innate ideas of Descartes, and then he proceeds for his notion of sensation and reflection. But his relation to Descartes seems never to have been one of dependence; he is the real expounder of empiricism. Anyhow, Locke stands on the Baconian ground in his battle against the doctrine of innate ideas. Of course, we must assume that each particular argument in Locke's writings is directed against some corresponding assertion in Descartes' writings. Therefore, it is not right to say that Locke's philosophy does not have any relation to Descartes' theory of knowledge.

Locke aims in his doctrine predominantly directed towards Descartes and understands by innate ideas exactly what the latter understands by them in his main works. We are well aware that Descartes occasionally modifies his teaching, especially in his series of letters, and formulate a doctrine of innate ideas which Locke's criticism does not reach. But it must not

be forgotten that this modified view is inconsistent and incompatible with Descartes' fundamental notions. The contrast between the two philosophers is very much clear; they differ in principle and the way of presenting the sources of ideas. But here I am going to show in what sense Locke's position is more relevant and applicable to human knowledge than Descartes. Let us first consider the rationalism of Descartes, and then we will discuss the greatest antagonism between the two philosophers.

Descartes started doubting everything and rejecting all knowledge gained through the senses. We can know only the things as they are by clear and distinct thought, he claims. We can't blindly believe our senses because they tell us not 'what a thing is', but 'how it affects us.' for example when I bring a piece of wax near the fire, nothing of what I saw with my sense remains; all the characteristics of wax, such as taste, smell, sight, touch, and hearing, change, but the wax remains; then what is the wax, he says? One cannot perceive through the senses; one can only think.

Furthermore, Descartes wishes to educate all those who believe that nothing in the mind can exist without first appearing in the senses. It's important to keep in mind that there are innate notions that can't possibly come through the senses. Descartes here again tries to explain that those ideas are not present in the mind in an innate form and will not be attained through our experiences. All the facts, truths, ideas, our assertion, the proposition must have once present in the understanding in an innate form, in an implicit form.

Because we cannot trust our senses, all of our knowledge must come from our minds, which may assert the existence of certain innate principles. However, accepting as true what he has not ascertained to be true, and trusting more to the senses, in other words, to consider judgments of childhood rather than the dictates of mature reason is in no way consistent with the character of philosophy.

3.3 Descartes and Locke on innate ideas:

If rationalism is strong enough in its position, then it would have made the argument that knowledge is based on innate ideas. Knowledge would be impossible if there were no innate ideas. If empiricism is to stand, it must emphatically repudiate this assertion. Its first and foremost task must be to reject the doctrine of innate ideas. This task Locke undertakes in the first book of his *essay*. Locke aims to disprove the Cartesian notion of innate ideas before attempting to argue that knowledge can only be gained through experience. With this position

he established the destructive part of his work: 'it is necessary for Locke to doubt the innate principle because one has been forced to accept many things for granted.'¹ In order to establish that human experience plays an important role in gaining knowledge, it is important to face against the innate principle.

Descartes assumes the existence of innate ideas, while Locke denies it. Let us now see what the former understand by them, and in how far he is affected by the latter's criticism. The entire essence of the human mind, according to Descartes, is thinking; it is a thinking substance, a *res cogitans*. We destroy the mind's nature when we separate thinking from it: it senses to be when it ceases to think. As a result, the mind is constantly thinking. Nor have I affirmed without reason that the mind always thinks, wherever it may be, even in the mother's womb. For what more certain or self-evident proof could be adduced in support of this than the proposition that its nature or essence consists in thinking, just as the essence of the body consists in extension. Nor can anything ever be deprived of its essence.

While Descartes believes in the existence of innate ideas, Locke does not. Let's see what the former implies by them and how much he is influenced by the latter's criticism. The entire essence of the human mind, according to Descartes, is thinking; it is a thinking substance, a *res cogitans*. We destroy the mind's nature when we separate thinking from it: it ceases to be when it ceases to think, as a result, the mind is constantly thinking. I also haven't started without cause that the mind always thinks, no matter where it is, including in the mother's womb. What could be more solid or self-evident proof could there be than the fact that its nature or essence is thought, just as the essence of the body is the extension? Nothing can ever be devoid of its essence.

As an outcome, it appears to me that we should not listen to anyone who denies that his mind has been thinking at times when he does not recall having experienced it, any more than we should listen to anyone who denies that his body has been expanded at times when he does not remember having noticed it. He provides adequate justification for the mind being a thinking substance and the body being an extending substance. The concepts, truths, and understanding must be ingrained in the mind as a thinking material, wherever it may be, even in the mother's womb.

¹ *Essay*, (1.4.26), p.60,

Then a genuine question arises, 'what is thinking', by the term 'thinking' Locke means, all those processes in us of which we are immediately conscious. Thinking means self-consciousness. A thinking being is one who has the characteristics of doubt, understands, affirms, denies, wills refuses, imagines, and perceives.² "By the term 'thinking' one can conceive it like everything that is in us so that we are immediately conscious of it. Thus all the functions of the will, intellect, imagination, and the senses are 'thoughts'. The term 'thought' refers to all that which takes place in us that we are immediately conscious of."³

Thinking means we are conscious of something. If a man says, I am thinking about God that means he is conscious about God's quality, like omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, creator of all, and so on. Thinking leads to one understanding and understanding leads to the thoughts, and thought means which are immediately conscious of things. Descartes uses the term 'understanding' differently, for him, understanding is a defining characteristic of innate ideas; the ability to understand does not rely on the sensory experience.

The essence of the mind is consciousness. As a result, everything in the mind and belonging to it must be conscious of the mind. Because an idea is something that exists in the mind and is a type of thinking, the mind must be aware of its ideas. When Descartes says, by the term, 'idea', he means that form of any thought by the instant experience of which one is cognizant of those same thoughts, he is referring to this conclusion.

When we see the definition of an idea by Locke, we immediately see who he thought about it: "whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call idea."⁴ "It being that term which, I think, serves best to stand for whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks, I have used it to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking."⁵ When compared with Locke's definition of an idea, we see who he was thinking of once: whatever the mind sees by its capacity and the immediate reflection of the objects by the perception, thinking, and understanding which are directed

² *Meditation iii*, (p.26)

³ *Principles*, 1,9, Veitch's translation, p.196.

⁴ *Essay*,(2.8.8), p.104

⁵ *Ibid*, (1.1.8), p.9

towards the notion of ideas. The term idea is appropriate to stand for when a man thinks and expresses the fantasy, notion, species, or whatever the mind can think of it.

According to Descartes, there are no ideas of which the mind is unaware of. And an idea, of which the mind is not conscious of, is not an idea, and we are well aware of the different kinds of ideas; we find that some are innate, some are adventitious, and some are fictitious. In order to analyze this without disrupting the meditation sequence he has set for himself, it is important at this time to split all of the thoughts into particular groups, and to consider where truth and error are, strictly speaking, to be found in each of these classes.

"Some thoughts are, in a sense, representation of the objects or the images of things, and the name concepts belong solely to these, as when one thinks of a man, a chimera, the sky, an angel, or God. Others, again have certain other forms; as when one will, fear, affirm, or deny, one always indeed, apprehend something as the object of thought, but Descartes also embrace in thought something more than the representation of the object; and of this class of thoughts some are called volitions or affections, and others judgments. But among these ideas, some appear to be innate, others adventitious, and others to be made by individual self."⁶

However, some fundamental facts exist, such as the notion of causality. These are not considered existing things, but rather general principles or mental axioms. "Whatever objects fall under our knowledge we consider either as things of the affection of things or as eternal truths possessing no existence beyond our thought."⁷

Then come to the point of eternal truth, when we apprehend that, it is impossible a thing can come from nothing, it is also impossible to draw a thing which itself does not have existence. For instance- 'nothing comes out of nothing is seen as an eternal truth existing in our minds, and is known as a common notion or axiom. The following are some examples of this class: it is impossible for the same object to be and not to be at the same time, and what has been done cannot be undone, he who thinks must exist while he thinks, and numerous others, all of which are difficult to list. However, if we are not blinded by prejudices we will be able to see them when the opportunity to think about them arrives.

Descartes does not give a complete and systematic account of such innate ideas and innate truths. But all we care to know is what he understands by innate ideas and truth. For example, he mentions in the earlier case, innate ideas are particularly the idea of God and the idea of

⁶ *Meditation III*, pp. 25-26

⁷ principle, I, 48

the soul; as examples of the latter – innate truths, the principle of causality, by means of which he proves the existence of God, the principle of identity and contradiction, and all necessary truths, such as are immediately certain. These he calls axioms.

When we compare with the above passages, the first sentence with which Locke begins his investigation, we can rarely wipe out Descartes' name from the list of Locke's opponents. It is a traditional opinion among some men, that, Locke says in *the essay*, “that there are in the understanding certain innate principle; some primary notions, character, 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.”⁸

Descartes is undoubtedly one of these men because he affirms precisely what Locke denies; the two philosophers use nearly identical words in this context. We already know what Descartes means by innate ideas; we will see how Locke views them, how he applies the definition constantly, and how he denies the existence of everything that is innate in a moment. It is sometimes claimed that the founder of rationalism meant by innate that the mind contains within itself the faculty of developing such an idea, however, this is not the case.

The English philosopher was not unaware of the possibility of such an interpretation. He points out, however, that if the having of innate ideas means the natural capacity to know them, such an assertion is illogical. Because all of our ideas are innate, in those circumstances. So if the natural impression is argued for is true, all the truths a man ever learns will be innate. And this enormous argument will amount to nothing more than a highly unsuitable manner of speech, which, while asserting the contrary, says nothing different than those who reject innate ideas.

Descartes rejects the innate laws and believes that only positive laws exist. There is a major distinction between an innate law and a natural law, i.e. between something that is imprinted on our minds from birth and something that we could learn about through using and applying our natural faculties.

⁸ *Essay*, (1.2.1), p.9 Compare with this(2.9.6), p.113: "Whereas these innate principles are supposed to be quite of another nature, not coming into the mind by any accidental alterations in or operations on the body; but, as it were, original characters impressed upon it, in the very first moment of its being and constitution."

It is true that Descartes sometimes seems to imply that the innateness of an idea refers to the mind's ability to generate it. In response to Hobbes' point, he argues, when one states that an idea is innate in us that do not mean it always presents itself to his or her thought. But there is a faculty in our thought which has the capacity to produce it. If the philosopher had always said like this he might not have had so many objections to reply. However, we must not forget that this conception of innate ideas neither directs the doctrine as laid down in Descartes' chief work nor with the Cartesian principle that consciousness constitutes the essence of mind.

We are now familiar with the teaching of Descartes, the essence of the mind is thinking. Consciousness is thinking. Therefore the mind must know all that is in it. As we have seen, his fundamental ideas inevitably lead to this conclusion, which he uses to define the concepts. Innate ideas become so obvious that the mind's essence is imprinted. Therefore the mind should always be aware of them. This necessary conclusion, Descartes repudiated from his basic proposition that, if placed before him, the essence of mind consists of consciousness, can readily be believed. Nevertheless, Locke only understood too well the logical outcome of his education. He strongly believes that certain speculative and practical principles are agreed upon by all humanity. There is nothing commonly considered as something accurate, which they argue must be constant impressions received by men's souls in their first being and which they do any of their inherent abilities.

“It is a traditional belief in some men that there are certain innate principles in our understanding. Some primary notions were imprinted upon the mind, which the soul receives in its very first being and brings into the world with it. This will be sufficient to convince unbiased readers of the falseness of this supposition. Here Locke would try to show that, by the use of natural faculties only, men attain all the knowledge they have without using any innate principle, and also one can arrive at certainty without any such original innate principle. If it can be shown that our knowledge is in any way acquired, the assumption of innate ideas will fall without further argument. Locke, however, does not follow this line of reasoning, although he was led to deny the existence of original knowledge in this way.”⁹

He aims to tackle the theory of innate ideas by logically deducing and contrasting the consequences of Descartes' principle of the facts. His entire argument is founded on the

⁹ *Essay*, (1.2.1), pp.9-10

notion that whatever is in the mind must be aware of it. Original intellectual ideas must be known to the mind and must be known to it at all times. But no man has such ideas always in front of him, and no man is conscious of the same notions. It varies from person to person, thus there are no innate ideas.

Our discussion leads to Locke's positions on innatism by inquiring into the form of these innate principles. Locke gives many examples of innate principles; to begin with, it is evident that Locke considers innate principles to be explicit propositions rather than powers or dispositions. Secondly, they must also be capable of becoming conscious either from the moment of birth or at some later time. As regards the first point, he says that nothing is taken for granted more than the fact that there are some ideals... universally accepted by all mankind. The important point is that the principles are agreed upon. One does not agree upon implicit or unformulated propositions or ideas. From the example, Locke gives off the sort of principles ordinarily considered as being innate; we see we are dealing with what is expressible as tokens of specific linguistic types of utterance.

In reference to the second issue, it is said that no notion can be considered to be in the mind that it has never known or been conscious of. Whether Locke's objections against innatism will hold up if we suppose that there may be unconscious principles is a problem we shall return to in our discussion of Locke's alternative to innate ideas. For the present we must notice that Locke has construed the innate doctrine in a very strong sense which does not involve dispositions, tendencies, etc. it is the construction of the problem which has made his commentators different.

3.4 Locke's argument against innate ideas:

Locke has argued against the innate principle and gave many powerful arguments to disprove innate. I am going to explain a few arguments given by him. Such as, he does not found any proof of universal existence and also no innate truth and principles are there. Theology and moral doctrine also do not have universal assent.

3.4.1 No universal ideas:

Locke did not find any universal principles on which all men will give their assent. If the innate principle is the same for everyone, why is it not present in all children and idiots, why don't they have the least apprehension? It merely seems a contradictory statement. If it is imprinted by the soul, it must be present to everyone. But it is very difficult to digest that,

principles are imprinted on the mind without mind's perceiving it. If the children and idiots have minded, soul, in the same manner, the others have, and then they must unavoidably perceive them. This is enough to destroy the innate principle. No naturally imprinted to everyone leads to no innate principle. If the notion is imprinted then how can it be unknown to the mind? It is illogical to say principle imprinted on the mind and yet at the same time confess that the mind is ignorant of it, and never have noticed it.¹⁰

Locke asserts that "even if there were certain truths wherein all mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate: they may all have been acquired through sense experience."¹¹ But there are no such universally accepted truths. Even the most important speculative and magnified principles, like, "Whatever is, is and it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be"¹², are without such universal assent. Children and idiots know nothing of them, hence they cannot be innate. An attempt is made to escape this conclusion by asserting that the soul is not yet conscious of these innate truths, but that it contains them nonetheless. However, this seems contradictory to Locke, for the essence of the soul consists in consciousness. "It seems to be near a contradiction to say that there are truths imprinted on the soul which it perceives or understands not: imprinting if it signifies anything, being nothing else but the making of certain truths to be perceived. For the imprinting, anything on the mind without the mind perceiving it seems to me hardly intelligible... No proposition can be said to be in the mind which it never yet knew, which it was never yet conscious of. If a proposition can be innate without being known, then we have no means of distinguishing between truths. To be innate then means to be capable of being known, and in this sense all true propositions are innate."¹³ As a result, to understand an innate notion, we must first understand a conscious thought.

Therefore, "children are not conscious of such original notions, and universal assent is lacking in them. To meet this difficulty the problem is slightly modified. It is held that all men assent to certain truths as soon as they exercise their reason. This may mean that men discover them as soon as they come to the use of reason. If we assume the first case, there will be no difference between the maxims of the mathematicians and the theorems they

¹⁰ Ibid, (1.2.5), pp.10-11

¹¹ Ibid, (1.2.3), p.10

¹² Ibid, (1.2.4), p.10

¹³ Ibid, (1.2.5), p.10

deduce from them: all are discovered by reason; hence all must be equally innate.”¹⁴ But by reason, the philosophers who assume the existence of innate ideas understand “the faculty of deducing unknown truths from principles or propositions that are already known.”¹⁵

As a consequence, to claim that reason disclosed a man's concepts is equivalent to claiming that reason revealed to him what he already knew because innate is synonymous with consciousness. However, we must reject the other criterion if we argue instantly to the criterion of innateness because the immediate argument does not involve reasoning.

In the second case supposed above, we assent to propositions as soon as we come in possession of our reason. However, this is false, according to Locke; for children have their reason long before they have the slightest knowledge of speculative propositions. The same may be said of savages and illiterate people. We arrive at such knowledge in the following manner. The senses at first furnish the empty cabinet of the soul with particular ideas. “The mind by degrees grows familiar with them, and they are lodged in the memory and names given to them. Then the mind proceeding further abstracts them and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language; and the use of reason becomes daily more visible, as these materials that give it employment increase. Having general ideas and the use of general words and reason usually grows together, but this does not mean that these truths are native to reason and are developed from it. The knowledge of some truths is very early in the mind, but these always consist of acquired ideas. The child first has sense-perception; the understanding discovers similarities and differences among them long before it comes to the use of reason.”¹⁶

Innate could signify one of two things. All minds, from the beginning of their existence (which for Descartes went back to the life of the fetus in the womb), and hence the minds of newly born children, had an innate thought. When it was pointed out to Descartes that children's minds were devoid of mathematical, philosophical, and theological concepts, he proposed the alternative view that an innate idea has the ability to have ideas.

Innate can refer to one of two things. All minds, and thus the minds of newly born children, have an innate thought from the beginning of their existence (which for Descartes went back

¹⁴ Ibid, (1.2.8), p.12

¹⁵ Ibid, (1.2.9), pp.12-13

¹⁶ Ibid, (1.2.15), p.16

to the life of the baby in the womb). Descartes provided the alternative notion that an innate idea had the power to have an idea when it was pointed out to him that children's minds were empty of mathematical, philosophical, and theological concepts.

We give up the argument of universal consent if we maintain that innate ideas are gradually hidden by prejudices, education, and custom. If we assert that they cannot be eradicated, we must find them in all people, including infants and the illiterate.

3.4.2 No principle based on innate ideas:

No proposition can be innate unless its ideas are innate. If all our ideas of color, sounds, tastes, figures, etc., are innate then it goes contrary to what we experience. Moreover, the fact those truths are not innate, if they were innate, they would be known.¹⁷

In short, however, defenders would say, if principles are innate, they must have universal assent to them. It is contradictory to say that one principle is innate to the mind, and not universal assent found yet. It is not plausible that one idea is innate to the men at the same time he is ignorant of it. We cannot say that 'A' is present and not present at the same time and same place.

We look at the matter, there are no general propositions to which all men agree. All human beings would have to agree to the innate truth, for an innate truth is one of which every mind must always be conscious, one which it must always accept, and one which must be present in the mind before all experience.¹⁸ “Whatever is in the mind, it must be aware of it, it is quite impossible that truth is innate and also unknown, at least to anyone who knows anything else. If they are an innate truth they must have innate thoughts, as we know, there is nothing in the mind that it has never thought of.”¹⁹

Locke's famous work *Essay* is an attack on innate ideas. He mentions, "Principles not innate unless their ideas are innate... since, if the ideas which made up those truths were not, it was impossible that the propositions made up of them should be innate, or our knowledge of them be born with us. For, if the ideas are not innate, there was a time when the mind was without

¹⁷ Ibid, (1.2.18), p.18 “For if they were innate, what need they be proposed in order to gain assent when by being in the understanding by a natural and original impression (if there were any such) they could not but be known before” (1.2.21)

¹⁸ Ibid, (1.2.24-25), pp.22-23

¹⁹ Ibid, (1.2.26), p.23

those principles; and then they will not be innate.”²⁰ The question of who this attack was directed against has generated a lot of discussions. Descartes and his followers held the hypothesis of innate conceptions on the issue, and Locke was familiar with their work. He classified thoughts as adventitious (produced in the mind by external stimuli, such as color and the heat), factitious (made by the mind itself, such as hippogriffs and chimeras), and innate (arising from the mind's essential nature).

Locke is so strong in the point that knowledge is possible only through sensation and reflection and simultaneously he reconciles it that there is no such innate principle. The final solution to Locke's dilemma of necessary and self-evident truth arrives in book IV when he must reconcile it with his principle that all our ideas come from sensation and reflection. However, a solution is suggested during his argument against innate notions. It is based on the distinction made in the previous section between ideas and propositions. It is very important to note that Locke's attack is titled 'no innate principle in the mind', and practically all of the instances presented are propositions rather than notions.

"Locke points out that, as soon as sweetness and bitterness are experienced, it is self-evident that they differ, and similarly that a rod is not a cherry. All propositions asserting difference are self-evidently and necessarily true and therefore all should be innate. But since no proposition can be innate unless the ideas about which it is innate, this will be to suppose all our ideas of colors, sounds, taste, figure, etc., are innate, then there cannot be anything more opposite to reason and experience.”²¹

An innate truth must be self-evident. It carries its light and evidence with it and does not require any more proof. Practical truths are not of this kind. Not only can I raise the question as to why I ought to act so or so, but the answers which may be given to this question are absolutely different and sometimes contradictory. What is a sin to some people is the duty to others. Now it is hard to imagine an entire nation of men publicly rejecting and renouncing what every single one of them understands to be a law, as they must who had it imprinted on their minds. Although breaking a rule is not proof that it is unknown, the fact that it is widely allowed is proof that it is not innate. The innate rule is either a principle that inspires and

²⁰Ibid, (1.4.1), p.43

²¹Ibid, (1.2.18), p.18

directs all human being's actions at all times or a reality that all men have imprinted on their minds and as a result, know and accept. However, it is not innate in either of these ways.

Locke concludes that the practical principles are also derived from experience, for white paper receives any character. Custom is a greater power than nature, for it makes men regard as divine what it has produced itself.

3.4.3 Innate ideas role in Theology and moral doctrine:

The theory of innate ideas served as a foundation for the theological and moral doctrine that was becoming increasingly unstable as the eighteenth century progressed. This evokes institutional religion's power diminished, with the several proclamation of Locke's 'essay' as a work of skepticism and atheism. These two charges being intended as interchangeable can be understood only through the realization that the essay was interpreted as posing a threat to religion and morality because of the attack on innate ideas.

As Yolton made clear about the first response to Locke's theory of knowledge as a theory with skeptical implications was not to see it as threatening epistemological skepticism, such as was developed by Hume, but rather religious skepticism.

Many scholars of the time believed that natural law was the source of fundamental moral principles, and the natural law required an innate conscience to provide those principles. Similarly, many people believed that the doctrine of God's existence necessitated an innate knowledge of that existence, so denying such innateness was interpreted as denying the possibility of knowledge of that existence. Hence, the charge against Locke on religious skepticism. Of course, there is no immediate logical connection between the innateness of a belief and its truth, and to a contemporary mind, the whole dispute may appear to have been irrelevant to the important issue, the truth of fundamental moral and religious doctrines, since it is quite possible that a belief should be innate, yet false.

Because of the broad acceptance of belief in the teleological ordering of nature according to the divine will in the early eighteenth century, the relationship between innateness and truth may have been taken for granted as often as it was. That belief may well have made it seem unintelligible that the human mind should come equipped with a set of innate principles that could be relied upon to guarantee their truth. An eighteenth-century philosopher Joseph Butler arguing in favor of an innate conscience, he remarks that, if a creature's true nature guides him and is fitted to such and such purposes solely, or more than any other, it is

reasonable to suppose that the author of that nature is for those purposes. The argument, when applied to God's existence, is of course circular, requiring the assumption that God exists as a support for the truth of the allegedly innate idea of that existence.

Locke next examines moral propositions and comes to the same conclusion. This proposition also does not have any universal assent. They are just as true as the speculative principles, but not as evident as they would have to be if they were innate; "moral principles require reasoning and discourse, and some exercise of the mind, to discover the certainty of their truth."²²

Moreover, such practical, innate principles would have to urge men to action and not merely terminate in contemplation; otherwise, they would differ in no respect from speculative principles.²³

It is true that our actions are influenced by certain natural inclinations. The desire for happiness and the aversion to misery, for example, are basic truths that are universal and powerful. These are, however, appetites for good, not perceptions of truth on the understanding.

"It is commonly taken for granted that certain principles viz. speculative and practical are universally agreed by all human beings. It shows a certain constant impression, which the souls receive in their first beings, which are brought into the world with them, it is necessary from their inherent faculties."²⁴ Though, certain principles like, speculative and practical, in which all mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate. Locke here says that if there were any other way to prove the innate principle, then I will jump up on that, not the innate way.²⁵

There are no innate truths, neither speculative nor practical. Even the ideas of which they are made up are acquired and not original. What for example do children know of the ideas which make up the principle of identity? Locke raises the same objections to the concepts of God that Descartes places a strong emphasis on. If this concept is innate, then everyone must

²²Ibid. (1.3.1), p.25, They lie not as open as natural characters engraved on the mind; which if any such were, their needs must be visible by themselves, and by their light be certain and known to everybody.

²³Ibid. (1.3.3), p.26-27, Practical principles derived from nature are there for operation and must produce conformity of action, not barely speculative assent to their truth, or else they are in vain distinguished from speculative principles

²⁴Ibid. (1.2.2), p.10

²⁵Ibid. (1.2.3), p.10

be aware of it and believe in the same God. The existence of entire notions who either do not believe in God or have a completely different understanding of him than we do proves that this is not the case. Even if the concept was universal, this would not imply that it was innate, any more than the universality of the concept of the burning world. "For the visible marks of extraordinary wisdom and power appear so plainly in all the works of creation, that a rational creature that will but seriously reflect on them, cannot miss the discovery of a deity".²⁶

This discovery is transmitted, and in this way arises the notion of the innateness of this idea. The idea of a God would have to be the first object of human knowledge if it were imprinted on the mind. But unfortunately, it is far too late for children to grasp such a notion. And when we find it over there, how much more precisely does it resemble the teacher's opinion and ideas than it does the real God. If God had set his mark on men, how could so many different notions of him exist in the same country? The notion of God is acquired by thought and meditation. Nor is the idea of substance, which is frequently called innate, anything of the kind. We have no idea of substance at all, either by sensation or reflection. "But we see, on the contrary, that since by those ways whereby our ideas are brought into our minds this is not, we have no such clear idea at all, and therefore signify nothing by the word substance, but only an uncertain supposition of we know not what, i.e. of something whereof we have no distinct positive idea, which we take to be the substratum or support of those ideas we know."²⁷

The mind combines numerous simple ideas which are always carried by the senses, put together into a unity, which is denominated by a particular word and constitutes the notion of substance. The mind is loaded with a variety of simple concepts that are communicated through the senses. External things and reflection on one's operation might lead to the discovery of the senses. We accustomed ourselves to suppose a substratum wherein they do subsist, and from which they do originate, which we name the substance, as Locke has remarked in covering how these simple thoughts can subsist by themselves. In other words, ideas and truths are as natural as the arts and science. Nothing is innate; the mind begins as a '*tabula rasa*', a 'black room', an 'empty cabinet', and all of our ideas are generated from our experiences.

²⁶Ibid. (1.4.9), p.48

²⁷Ibid (1.4.8), p.47

The outcome of this debate with Descartes can be summarised in a few words. The mind's essence is thinking. According to Descartes, is consciousness; so the mind must be aware of its contents. From this, Locke deduces that every innate notion or truth be known in every mind at all times. Because there are no innate ideas or principles, Locke concludes that the soul is an empty state on which experience inscribes its characters. Locke comes to a logical conclusion, but it is based on Cartesian premises. He is correct if consciousness is the essence of the soul.

He however rejects this premise. To say that actual thinking is essential to the soul and inseparable from it, he says, is to beg what is in question, and not to prove it by reason, which is necessary to be done, if it is not a self-evident proposition.

If the essence of the mind consists in conscious thinking, man must always think, which not the case is. Descartes had said that we have as little right to separate thinking from the mind as we have to separate the extension from the body. To this Locke replies: "I know it is an opinion that the soul always thinks, and that it has the actual perception of ideas in itself, as long as it exists, and that actual thinking is as inseparable from the soul as the actual extension is from the body."²⁸ But I cannot "conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move; the perception of ideas being as I conceive to the soul, what motion is to the body, not its essence, but one of its operation."²⁹

"But in this, I have adopted the following order: first I have essayed to find in general the principles, or first causes of all that is or can be in the world, without taking into consideration for this end anything but God himself who has created it, and without reducing them from any other source than from certain germs of truths naturally existing in our minds."³⁰

There is one further point which must be brought out concerning the innatism Locke is arguing against, viz. the use to which the believers in this form of innatism put these principles. Locke denies that he is objecting to innatism construed as the disposition to hold certain propositions. He said, "If the capacity of knowing to be a natural impression

²⁸Ibid. (2.1.9), p.80

²⁹Ibid. (2.1.10), p.81

³⁰Discourse on Method, vi, Veitch's translation. Compare this with the preface to the French edition of the Principles, p.10.

contended for, all the truth a man ever comes to know will...be ... innate; and this in point, will amount to no more, but only to a very improper way of speaking; which, whilst it pretends to assert the contrary, says nothing different from those who deny innate principles... The capacity they say is innate, the knowledge acquired. But then to what end contests for certain innate maxims?"

3.5 Basic disagreement between Descartes and Locke:-

I would like to propose a reading of Locke's basic disagreement with Descartes. Descartes held this particular form of innatism is not immediately apparent. He compares innate principles with innate diseases. One is "born with a certain disposition or propensity for contracting them" ³¹ On the surface, this looks compatible with Locke's position. Locke has not denied innate dispositions but just denied specific innate principles. A closer examination of Descartes reveals that these dispositions are not those countenanced by Locke.

Locke wishes to claim that all of our ideas are derived from simple ideas and the powers of mind. Descartes thinks that the process of forming ideas cannot begin unless one already possesses performed mental representations of the ideas which one will later develop. The problem for Locke is to show that there are some restrictions upon perception such that only certain ideas may be formed given sensory experience. Is there something about perception which enables the organism to differentiate out of the perceptual flux those simple ideas which the mind will then operate upon in informing complex ideas of modes, substance, and relations?

When we examine the difficulty of the attack on Locke's notion of innate ideas refutations, we discover that it is merely an assumption. Opponents of Locke believe that the Locke theory is a straw man argument. It has been said that Locke's arguments will not impact Descartes' famous doctrine, not because he has offered faulty reasoning, but because they do not act upon Cartesian position.

Locke argues against innate speculative principles, claiming that the argument from universal consent, For example, does not prove them to be innate. Because children and fools are unaware of these ideas, there is no universal consent. Even if there was such consent,

³¹Descartes, R., Notes Directed against a Certain Programme, in Haldane and Ross, (eds.) The Philosophical Works of Descartes, vol. I. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 429-450.

innateness would not be proven if it could be demonstrated, as Locke carefully does, that intelligent assent to the principles may be explained on the ground other than innateness.

He claims that those reasons are nothing more than the application of one's natural ability for understanding, which anybody capable of understanding the principles possesses. In developing this argument, Locke emphasizes the fact that no Cartesian or other proponent of innateness would ever deny: children do not come out of the womb chanting such maxims as "whatever is, is". If someone responds to Locke by saying that knowledge of innate principle exists in a latent or unconscious form, Locke's counter-response will be a genuine question: "If they are not notions naturally imprinted, how can they be innate? And if they are notions imprinted, how can they be unknown?"³²

Locke's theory of knowledge and his empiricism has been criticized as insufficient theory. He faces controversy over the term 'idea', on explaining its foundation. However, it is evident that Locke considered ideas as the foundation of his empiricist theory. Henry Lee critiqued Locke's theory of ideas, claiming that Locke's obsession with ideas causes his theory of knowledge to be too far divorced from reality, as he regards ideas as the foundation of all knowledge.

"On the key term 'idea', John Norris in his cursory reflection raises the crucial question, such as 'what sort of entities are ideas'? Norris wants to inquire what kind of things these ideas are in essence: are they first place of a real being or not."³³

"For Locke, ideas are real beings in the sense that they have real attributes, are quite different from one another, and represent very different things in nature, according to Norris. But he wonders if they are substances or modifications of substances. Norris contends that Locke could not have meant concepts to be modifications of substance because modification, unlike ideas, cannot be representative of substance. Then Norris questions 'are they material or immaterial?' and he believes that they cannot be material."³⁴

According to Locke, children might have certain concepts or ideas prior to birth based on their sense experience. They may have suffered from diseases or famine. Even though Locke

³² *Essay*, (1.2.5), pp.10-11

³³ Yolton, John. *John Locke and the way of ideas*. oxford university press, 1956, p.87

³⁴ Norris, J. *Cursory reflection upon a book call'd An essay concerning human understanding*. California, the augustan reprint society, 1961, p.22

acknowledges that some pre-experience may exist, he is certain that this pre-existence are distinct from the innate ideas. Many of the notions that were created in the minds of children at the beginning of their sensations came to him. These concepts will be lost if they are not repeated in the future. For example, someone who has been blind since childhood may or may not have a color conception.

In the third meditation, Descartes tried to prove the existence of God, with the help of idea of God, which is an innate idea. He brings out various issues like objective reality and formal reality, clear and distinctness, to show the importance of innate ideas. He also tries to show that, the idea God, which is an innate, clear and distinct than any other ideas. By this we can understand that he gives less priority to the ideas that are from experience. But Locke succeed in showing that, there are no ideas without any experience. So Descartes potentially innate idea stand point cannot withstand against Locke's theory of ideas. I would like to conclude that our sense experience plays a pivotal role in gaining knowledge. Every object comes through contact with our mind then we come to know about an object. Knowledge is not discovered by the senses but acquired by the senses.

Conclusion

Throughout my dissertation, I have discussed two philosophers i.e. Descartes' and Locke's great contribution to the theory of knowledge. And it was found that, both of them show the different methods of acquiring knowledge from their own perspective. Descartes strongly argued that a-priori form of knowledge is possible; we received the knowledge by using our intellectual faculties. And in this manner, he introduces the innate principle. 'Innate ideas' are central to his philosophy that are not formed or acquired but discovered. In contrast, John Locke is opposite to Descartes' innate ideas and asserts that knowledge is possible only through sense-perception. Both were also contrast in their tradition; one is strong in their rationalistic tradition, and claim that knowledge is possible only through reason, while another tradition is strong in their empiricist standpoint and asserts that knowledge is possible only through sense-experience, and also he added the notion like sensation and reflection.

The purpose of writing the first chapter is to show the various possible dimensions of innate ideas. The findings of this chapter are, Descartes innate ideas are not acquired by using any sense organs; in fact, more specifically it is not acquired by experience, and usually, when people say that they mean it is not acquired through senses experience. Rather it is discovered by the self. He pointed out that ideas are not acquired but discovered. Therefore this knowledge doesn't derive from seeing things, hearing things, and anyway from the environment. It is entirely derives from the subject and fixed to the subject. No amount of sense experience can give us universal knowledge, the sense experience in particular. In this chapter I have also discussed that how Descartes uses the term 'idea' ambiguously. He used the word in two senses i.e. 'act of mind' and 'the object of such act'. Then further I have proceeded for the classifications of ideas where I have tried to explain three kinds of ideas propounded by Rene Descartes i.e. innate, adventitious, and factitious ideas. Then this chapter goes around cultivating the various dimensions of innate ideas, including the idea of God.

Descartes also believe that mind is always in an active form, means it is always active in nature. The doctrine of innate ideas also shows that the mind is not totally receptive but it is also active in nature. It supplies the active formative principle of knowledge. The nature of the mind is to think, and an idea is the mode of thinking, in being the mode of thinking, an idea is understood as a way of thinking or an idea is a way in which an instance of thinking is

manifested. Descartes proposed various arguments to prove the existence of innate ideas, which I have disclosed briefly in the first chapter.

In my second chapter I have explained John Locke's notion of ideas. When Locke uses the term 'idea', he implies the objects of a man's understanding when he thinks. He employed words like the notion, concepts, phantoms, and species to describe how the mind is programmed to think. The mind is full of mental acts. When one thinks of a figure that he or she has never thought of before, there are no doubt that something changes in one's mind. However, ideas themselves cannot be in the mind in the same way. Perceiving, thinking, and remembering are all actions that take place in the mind. The mind is locus of the thoughts that are entertained during these activities. They cease to exist the moment the activity ceases. Locke and Malebranche both attack each other on the point nature of the idea. Malebranche made a distinction between the act and object but Locke does not subscribe it. In order to reply Malebranche Locke asserts that, ideas may be real being but not substance. He criticizes Malebranche for claiming that ideas are a spiritual entity rather than a substance.

Locke's article contains the notion that everything that is understood is present to the mind. Ideas are defined as whatever the mind discerned in them, or as the immediate objects of perception, cognition, or comprehension. This might seem to imply that ideas are not just objects but objects which exist in the mind.

Dissertation entitled '*The epistemological significance of John Locke's refutation of innate ideas*' provided the various dimensions of Descartes' innate ideas which I have elaborated in my first chapter. To establish the a-posteriori form of knowledge or sense-based knowledge, we need to face against innate ideas as John Locke did in his '*Essay*'. In the second chapter, I have presented a better understanding of Locke's ideas. And in my concluding chapter, I have explained Locke's connection to Descartes, his different powerful argument against innate ideas, and what were the basic disagreement between them, how and why he refutes the innate ideas? In the same chapter, I have also explained the significance of establishing the destructive part of his essay, means, why he refuted and the significance of his refutation of innate ideas. I think I succeed to show the dominant and influential argument in favour of sense-experience, and the strongest argument against innate ideas given by John Locke.

The broader area of this dissertation is aimed to refute innate principle with the help of John Locke, and also shows many strongest arguments to disprove the existence of innate ideas.

Among many powerful arguments given by him, against innate principle, I have discussed a few. Such as, no universal idea means to any innate ideas. Universal principle means, on which all men will give their equal assent, universal means uniformity must be there, and it present to everyone. But, in reality, this is not the case; all ideas are not present to everyone. No naturally imprinted to everyone leads to no innate principle. Another argument as given by John Locke, that no principles are innate unless its ideas are innate. If all ideas of color, sound, taste are innate then it goes contrary to what we have senses through experience. Then John Locke examines moral propositions and he comes with a conclusion that, this proposition also does not have any universal assent. They are just as true as the speculative principles, but not as evident as they would have to be if they were innate.

Those who oppose that, John Locke's theory of innate ideas faces the fallacy of straw man argument, and the doctrine of innate ideas which was opposed by Locke, was not the same theory upheld by Descartes, they will have an answer to it. I strongly believe that John Locke's refutation of innate ideas was mainly aimed at Descartes' theory of innate ideas. I hope the reader of my dissertation will be able to get an idea that Locke's essay does not come under the fallacy of the straw man argument. And also I strongly believe that John Locke refutation of innate ideas does not come under the fallacy of straw man argument.

In my earlier chapter I have shows, in what sense Locke's position is more relevant and applicable to human knowledge than Descartes. Then I made an attempt to elaborate Descartes and John Locke's notions on innate ideas and their connection regarding on that notion. It is important to face against innate principle, for establishing the knowledge is possible through sense, which I have already discussed. For Locke, there are no innate truths, neither speculative nor practical. If there were any other ideas except innate notion then he would jump upon that not on innate.

Locks' theory of knowledge and his empiricism has been criticized as insufficient theory. Henry Lee, who disagrees with Locke's theory of ideas, claimed that Locke's obsession with ideas causes his theory of knowledge to be too far divorced from reality, as he regards ideas as the foundation of all knowledge. But I strongly believe that Locke's ideas are real beings in the sense that they have real attributes, are quite different from one another, and represent very different things in nature.

Both the great philosophers have expressed their views on innate ideas. One says knowledge is possible through reason, and another defends it and asserts that knowledge is possible

through sense- experience. Concerning all these views I have given many arguments through the help of many thinkers. And lastly, I would like to conclude that our sense experience plays a pivotal role in gaining knowledge. Every object comes through contact with the sense experience and then to our mind then, we come to know about an object. Knowledge is not discovered by the senses but acquired by the senses.

My main concern for writings this dissertation is to shows, human beings have several ideas in their mind, and how these ideas are comes through sensation and reflection. How we acquire knowledge, how we develop our intellectual faculties, how we furnished our mind? And to all these questions, answer lies in one word answer i.e. 'Experience'. Because it is experience on which all our source of knowledge is founded. Our experience based on the external and internal source of the mind. Our understanding also guided by the sense experience. We achieve knowledge by employing our intellectual faculty such as perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, etc. The mind receives the reflection on its own operation.

Even though I am completely agreed with John Locke's theory of knowledge, I am not fully denying rational faculty must be there in the human mind. Particularly I have some problem with the innate principles. Because, if we fully agree with the innate principle then our knowledge from sense experience start ceases, and it will goes into vague. It was found that both were played an equal important role in the sphere of source of knowledge.

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