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## **ESPISTOMOLOGY: JOHN LOCKE**

Empiricism has been a topic of discussion for centuries. The definition for empiricism is the theory that all knowledge is derived from sense-experience. It was said to be stimulated by experimental science. John Locke was one of the Philosophers who chose to believe and expound on this topic. He was born in the United Kingdom, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1632, in Wrington, and studied law at Oxford University. He believed that all knowledge was founded.

He pursued a study based on an article a fellow philosopher, Rene Descartes wrote, explaining his approach to knowledge, which is according to him Descartes was “carrying out the strategy of leading the mind away from the outside world, away from the external senses, and focusing on the meditator’s inner awareness of his own existence”. He went on to say “Descartes’s appeal to innate idea (the existence of God. I think, therefore I am)”. (Page 26, Col 1, Para. 2). The concept promotes the idea that knowledge came from thinking. He said the idea “had a long ancestry” that means it originates from Plato, another philosopher of those times. Locke went all out to challenge this belief.

Locke argues that, “The senses are the primary source of all knowledge and that the mind is tabula rasa (A blank sheet)” (Page 26, Para. 2. Col 1, TB). He then introduced the empiricist concept, which means, “observation via the senses” (Page 26. Para 2. Col 1) everything that is learnt, is from experience. Through observation plus minds reflection on information, this constitutes the basic of all knowledge that we have and can achieve. He further stated that innate ideas are definitely

inadequate. According to him, Innatists usually appeal to universal assent, ones who think that certain fundamental truths are accepted to this point, he cited an “idiot and children” making reference to two concepts, mathematics and logics, which was often used to prove innate principles. He said he observed that many people go through a lifetime without even thinking about these things. Also using savages and illiterate people to back up his statement.

Locke explains his understanding of how people gain knowledge. He says “The senses let in particular ideas” (Page 26 Para 1. Col 2.) These ideas get to the mind, which are then imprinted upon the blank space. He agreed that there are innate capacities, but a capacity does not have anything unless it is placed there, if it was so, it would then speak to the fact that we learn everything through the supernatural. He concluded that the human mind does not have the “least glimmering” of any idea which does not come from sensation or subsequent reflection. (Page 26, Para 1, Col 2)

He explained why he came to this conclusion by showing that even though man uses the concept of universal consent to push the innate principles. There seems to be no substance in the principle, because it “is a necessity that men should come to the use of reason, before they get the knowledge of those general truths” He was saying that they never use them until they sense them and could reason them out.

Highlighting Descartes' views that, “Nothing reaches the brain from the outside world except various local motions transmitted via the sense organs” (Page 86, Para. 1, Col. 1.) prompted Locke to

make “radical” distinction between what he calls Primary and secondary quality of things. Primary (such as shape) he quoted from the extract (Essay concerning Human Understanding). He said primary qualities exist inside the body and create an idea in our mind, that makes us think it I and secondary qualities are those that bring about feelings from what we observe, by using our senses. He basically pointed out that the ideas are dependent. Primary qualities which produce simple ideas in us “such qualities, which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves, needs power to produce various sensations” (Page 87, Para. 4, Col 1). This power is secondary qualities, “such as colors, sounds, taste etc.”. His point here it leads back to what he wants to say, those sensation form new ideas, which makes his point that knowledge come from experience. Trial and error. The question I have from all of this, who was the first

Like Gottfried Leibniz, I agree that some knowledge is taught or come about by observation via the senses, “that sensory stimulation is necessary” (Page 31, Para 1, Col 1). Using children and idiots, but what if in the case of idiots, who do not have the capacity of being taught, how do they learn certain things? And children on the other hand, who he claims had to wait until they could come to use reason before they learn certain things, how does he explain children who naturally do things that they have never seen anyone around them does? I strongly believe both concepts exist. People learn from sense-experience (empiricism) and the concept or item of knowledge which is said to be universal to all humanity (innate idea), empathy. I remember when I was six years old, I used to take out my Grand Mother’s neighbor’s, who was blind, potty. The neighbor did not ask me to, nor anyone told me to, but I did it out of empathy. Other children I know would have made fun of her and me also.

I also agree that ideas need action to make them real, because if they are not acted on, they will remain just that, ideas. They sometimes need additives to make them have purpose. Idea can bring about emotions, that make you have a moment of joy, because joy comes from within' for example, the idea that came to me naturally of what I did for the lady, brought me joy at the time, because I did something physical, but years after when I remember it, the thought still brings me joy. This can be considered innate idea, because it is universally said, if you do something and it comes from the heart, it will give immense joy.