

Isaiah Thomas

PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Jeffrey Dueck

1 March 2022

John Locke was an empiricist who believed that people could acquire knowledge from experience. Ideas acted as the relation of experience, we got knowledge. Locke claims that ideas lead to knowledge through experience. Through investigating the three main sources of ideas of Locke. John Locke, an Empiricist who believed that knowledge was attained through experience. Ideas acted as the raw materials and by knowing the relation of the ideas, people attained knowledge. All ideas are a result of experience but “knowledge can also be justified by intuition and demonstration.”(Locke) through reflection, sensation, intuitive and demonstrative knowledge produce evidence. In investigating the main three sources of Locke's ideas, we then will explore his proposed three kinds of knowledge: Intuitive, demonstrative, and sensitive.

Intuitive knowledge is the only certainty through instant perception. The mind understands or knows something immediately without the need to learn it, discover it, or think about it. The mind then identifies the truth without the need to prove or examine it. Direct reasoning, perceives that humanism is different from an animal, as a square is from a triangle. The mind discovers the agreement and disagreement of the two ideas with their interference. “Such kind of truths, the mind perceives at the first sight of the Ideas together, by bare Intuition, without the intervention of any other Idea; and this kind of knowledge is the clearest, and most certain, that humane frailty is capable of.” (4.2.1, 531) Our consciousness implies that our existence is known, without any need for proof. This is because there is nothing more certain than our existence.

Locke's other view of knowledge, demonstrative knowledge is logical information, and it is gained by examination and exhibition. For instance, some of us can't see that the three inside points of a triangle are equivalent to two right points essentially by checking them out. Yet, part of us, with the help of a science educator, can be made to see that they are equivalent through mathematical evidence or exhibit. This is the model for decisive knowledge. Locke claims that this is the lesser view of knowledge, and demonstrative knowledge because of its lack of innate knowledge is not as important as the intuitive knowledge humans have at birth.

Locke's final category of knowledge is sensitive knowledge. It is the knowledge of the existence of things, and it is only acquired through sense perception. Sensitive knowledge is the idea of our relationship with the physical objects in our external world. ("knowledge of the existence of something distinct from our mind") For example when we see a tree that is our perception of seeing an object in the external world, meaning it exists outside of our mind in the physical world.

#### Problems in Locke

Locke argues that there are no innate ideas of the mind that they are all perceived through the experience of the world. Locke's first problem with his theory is his rejection of innate ideas. rejecting this view alongside Aristotle, he believes that "There is nothing in the intellect which is not first in the senses."(Lensi) Locke insists that knowledge comes through our experience of the world. According to Locke, he claims that our sense perceptions are the first ideas that we hold in the world, which is problematic. When researching Locke's theory of knowledge I found this point the most problematic, his idea that we are not born with any innate ideas. For example as a young child when we throw something on the ground we are filled with immediate regret because we know it is wrong. We have an innate idea of wrongdoing that was given by God at birth. Which is also known according to Locke as intuitive knowledge, something we need no understanding without our mind needing to learn it. I would say this proves that we have some

innate ideas placed in our memory at birth and goes to disprove Locke's beliefs that we are born without innate ideas.

I also disagree with his idea that we obtain knowledge through our own experiences of the world. I partially agree with his statement but find it hard to believe that this is the only way of attaining knowledge through our own experiences. I think we can obtain knowledge and experience through other people's experiences as a form of sharing knowledge. And it is through other people's experiences of the world that we gain knowledge. For example, historical books, poetry, and journals give us knowledge that was experienced by others to implant known knowledge and experiences of life, to educate other people without the need for them to gain knowledge of that through their own experience which Locke proposes.

John Locke, an Empiricist who believed that knowledge was attained through experience...All ideas are a result of experience but “knowledge can also be justified by intuition and demonstration.” through reflection, sensation, intuitive and demonstrative knowledge produce evidence. In investigating the main three sources of Locke's ideas, I concluded that John Locke's theory was well developed and does have some truth to it, but his lack of evidence to prove his theories, and his rejection of innate ideas at birth, resulted in the overall weakness of his theories.

#### *Works cited*

Aurum, S. Introduction to Philosophy, New-York: Holt Rinehart and Wiston Inc, 1967.

Lensi, Michael. “Two-Minute Philosophy: Language Store’s Scientific & Cultural Energy.” Two-Minute Philosophy: Language Store’s Scientific & Cultural Energy, Wisdom Never Dies, 31 Jan. 2018, [www.wisdomneverdies.com/blog/2min-language?format=amp](http://www.wisdomneverdies.com/blog/2min-language?format=amp).

Lensi, Michael. "Two-Minute Philosophy: Language Stores Scientific & Cultural Energy." Two-Minute Philosophy: Language Stores Scientific & Cultural Energy, Wisdom Never Dies, 31 Jan. 2018, [www.wisdomneverdies.com/blog/2min-language?format=amp](http://www.wisdomneverdies.com/blog/2min-language?format=amp).

Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* ed. by Roger Woolhouse, London: Penguin Books, 1997.