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Problems in Locke's Theory of Knowledge

Minimah, Francis Israel, Ph.D.

Department of Philosophy
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

E-mail: f_minimah@yahoo.com

Tel: +2348033765513

Abstract

As a solution to the epistemological problem of inquiring into what the human mind is capable of knowing, John Locke, founder of British empiricism rejects the rationalist assumption that the human mind does have a privileged access to reality. He is especially critical of the Cartesian notion of innate ideas as an explanation of how knowledge is acquired. Locke insists that the senses are the final arbiter of truth. He believes that as our mental powers develop from childhood; we tend to learn things about external objects primarily through our interactions with the world and in adult age puzzle over the meaning, reliability and limits of our acquired knowledge and beliefs. His notable theses include the concepts of sensation and reflection, simple and complex ideas, primary and secondary qualities, substance and the degrees of knowledge. Given this background, this paper, from two spectra, attempted a rigorous exposition of the major issues in Locke's theory of knowledge. By showing the essential details of his position and arguments on these issues, the author raised several possible objections or problems as well as critical assessment of some of his reasoning and conclusions. One important contribution of this work is that Locke, far from being an empiricist deviated and turned towards the rationalistic philosophy that he sets out to criticized - a view that would inevitably be dissatisfying to those who are drawn to Locke's theory of perception as a reaction to the traditional conception of reason; the faculty that governs the whole of one's cognitive life in the pursuit of truth.

Introduction

When philosophers describe knowing as a conscious act, they mean that there is an immediate apprehension of an object by a subject that becomes aware of it. But such an awareness is not yet knowledge until the subject interprets or judge if in sense perception –until he says mentally “this is”, “that is” or “this is not” or “that is not so and so”. In the same way, the relationship of the subject and object is present in the consciousness of our own bodies, in our feelings of bodily pleasure or pain, (though we spontaneously believe in some sort of a unity or continuity of the object with the subject). Here, we are the knowing subject and our bodies are the known object. This idea dates back to the Pre-Socratic philosophers and to Plato and Aristotle who try to give an objective understanding of the human mind or consciousness, soul, psyche or spirit that was seen as the noblest part of a person. For Plato, the human soul “as the king of heaven and earth” (“Philebus” 28c, Plato, 1105) is an independent entity detachable from the body. For Aristotle, the soul is the functional organization of living things. It is the form or aspect of the body not detachable from it; such that there are different souls for different things and hierarchies of souls (Aristotle, 2201).

With the sixteenth and the post seventeenth century philosophy, there was a radical move from an objective to the subjective understanding of the soul such that the question of the soul turns into an analysis of the mind or of thought. From now on, the focus of philosophy shifted to epistemology and man became the centre of reality. In this way, philosophers of some certain persuasions began to set the philosophical agenda to understand the objective world on the foundations of rationalism. These philosophers –Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz contend that our intellectual life is and ought to be directed by the faculty of reason as the best and surest route to knowledge. Here, thinking becomes the crucial question. In Descartes, there is a relational conception of thinking or thought. Each thought is a relation between the self and the object of thought. The self as the foundation of knowledge is in an enclosed circle, a prison from which it becomes impossible to escape. Leibniz tells us that the rational minds are “images of the divinity itself” (223) - as well as the capacity most directly tied to human flourishing. Indeed, Spinoza writes that “in life, therefore it is especially useful to perfect as far as we can our intellect or reason. In this one thing consists man’s highest happiness or blessedness” (588).

With the rise of the empirical philosophical currents in the 17th century, adherents of the British philosophers - Locke, Berkeley and Hume began challenging the rational intellectual tradition. Underlying this challenge was a deep and pervasive skepticism regarding the capacity of reason to provide us with substantive knowledge of how things are. In searching for ways to get out of the Cartesian circle of the self, these British philosophers argue that reason offers us little or nothing more than tautologies and prepositions about the world devoid of factual content such that the question was: Are the objects of thought created by us? Do we ever in our knowledge reach reality?

It is in this context that the problematic of reason becomes crucial. Experience (with the empiricists) seems to offer a promise. The promise to be able to escape the circle of subjectivity, because in experience, something is imposed on us from the outside. Their inexhaustibility parallel the inexhaustibility of the self. When trapped within the confines of the self, the empiricists have insisted that we are limited in our innate ideas. But with experience we go out of ourselves. Here, there is a continuous new image; new insights are opened up by experience. With experience as the world for the empiricists, they seemed to be able to recapture the world. This is the core of the difference between rationalism and empiricism - the self-mind/world polarity.

Background to Locke's Philosophy

John Locke, an English empiricist, moral and political philosopher was born in Wrington, Somerset, England on August 29, 1632. (Woolhouse, editor's introductions xi). He attended the Westminster School, London in 1646. Upon completing his studies at Westminster; Locke was admitted to Christ Church, Oxford in 1652 and graduated with Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in 1656 and 1658 respectively. In 1659, he was elected a Lecturer and taught Greek, Rhetoric and moral philosophy at Oxford University. His contact with Robert Boyle influenced his interest in the empirical sciences (Woolhouse, ix). During this period, he developed an interest in Medicine in 1664 and this provided the basis for a close relationship with Thomas Sydenham who was one of the experimental physicians of the seventeenth century. Later in 1666, Locke came in contact with Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper the first Earl of Shaftsbury and became his personal physician, adviser and private secretary. This contact made Locke abandoned his academic life for the political world (Woolhouse x.). His political career interrupted his medical studies to serve as secretary to the English Ambassador to the Elector of Brandenburg and became fully involved in politics from the 1670s'. Locke was on exile on two different occasions and on his return the second time, he declined several political positions to concentrate in the writings and publications of his two major philosophical works - *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatises of Civil Government* both published in 1690. His other works include *Letters on Toleration* (1689, 1690 and 1693) *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) and in 1695 *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Woolhouse, x).

Before this period, Locke focused his energies on questions of politics, religion and science. There was no indication that he showed any interest in epistemology prior to 1671 when he started writing his celebrated work - *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that was seen as his greatest contributions to philosophy. According to William Lawhead, "it is commonly held that the Age of enlightenment was ushered in with the publication of Locke's Essay in 1690" (Lawhead, 280) - a work which not only set up a structure of his theory of mind but popularizes the fundamental principles of the empiricists' thesis. Writing in his introductory 'Epistle to the Reader' in his Essay, Locke tells us how he and his friend (five or six) met in 1670 at his chamber in

Exeter House, London to discuss a moral issue on ‘the role and authority of religious revelation as a source and foundation of morality’. The attendant controversies that were generated at the meeting as to how this problem should be resolved made Locke to think they had made a wrong beginning. For the next meeting, Locke went beyond the questions of moral knowledge by proposing to his friends that the difficulties that arose at their last meeting would have been resolved if they had first undertaken a detailed and systematic investigation into the nature and activities of the human understanding. He writes:

Were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this essay, I should tell thee that five or six friends meeting at my chamber and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had a while puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts, that we took a wrong course; and that, before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understanding were or were not fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry. Some hasty and undigested thoughts on a subject I had never before considered...gave the first entrance into this discourse, which ...thou now sees it (Locke, 8).

Locke’s Theory of Knowledge

In the introductory page of this Essay that gave the much needed initial impetus to the foundation of British empiricism, Locke says that his purpose is “to inquire into the original certainty and extent of human knowledge” (55) . He starts his inquiry by first attacking the suppositions of the continental rationalists, (Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz) concerning certain innate principles which they claimed were in the human mind from the beginning of its first coming into the world. Locke disagrees with this view and argues that all our knowledge of the world comes to us through our experience and that we have no innate ideas. He asks: “Whence has (the mind) all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience: in that, all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself” (109).

Locke likens our minds at birth to a “white paper void of all characters, without any ideas” (109) - a ‘Tabula Rasa’ (a completely clean blank slate) on which experience alone writes the ‘alphabet’ of knowledge. Locke argues that if there were innate principles, then both children and idiots will be endowed with the same knowledge. But experience for him shows that neither children nor idiots are aware of these alleged innate truths. “To say a notion is imprinted on the mind, and yet at the same time to

say, that the mind is ignorant of its and never yet took notice of it, it is to make this impression nothing” (60-61).

If there were innate principles which have been imprinted in the minds of all, then we should think alike and organize our societies the same way. Moral values and principles, Locke claims, are not the same all over the world. Even those who have the same moral principles have different reasons for observing them. Having rejected the concept of innatism and arguing for experience as the source of our knowledge of the world. Locke posits that experience is of two forms - one is ‘sensation’ and the other is ‘reflection’.

Our observation employed either about external sensible objects; or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves; is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the foundations of knowledge... (109).

As regard sensation, Locke claims that our immediate encounter with objects in the external world “do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions (ideas) of things” (109). According to Locke, “this great source of most of the ideas we have depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding is what I call sensation” (110). For example, from the external world through the senses: we receive passively from objects external to us such simple ideas “of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet,” (109) and other sensible qualities which come directly into our minds separately in single files. From this explanation, Locke claims that the origin of all simple ideas is from sensation.

‘Reflection’ on the other hand involves the ability of the mind to produce ideas by making use of the previous ideas furnish by the senses. It involves such activity as “perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing” (109) and the other activities of the mind that produces ideas as distinct from those we receive from external bodies affecting our senses. Here, the emphasis is on the active functions or “the (internal) operations of our own minds within us” (110). According to Locke: “... as I call the other sensation, so, I call this reflection, the ideas it affords being such only, as the mind gets by reflection on its own operations within itself” (110).

For example, the mind has the power to work on (by joining, comparing, separating and uniting) the ‘simple ideas’ received from sensation “to an almost infinite variety and so can make at pleasure new complex ideas” (122). It joins together the simple ideas of a something white, of something hard and of something sweet to form the complex idea of a cube of sugar. The mind can also at will unite ideas simultaneously together, or holds them separately for the purpose of thinking and comparing their relationships, as when one says that ‘this chalk is whiter than the shirt’ or ‘honey is sweeter than sugar’. What Locke wants to make clear is to tell us that we cannot have

the experience of reflection until we have had the experience of sensation. In other words, that sensation is prior to reflection.

If it shall be demanded, then when a man begins to have any ideas? I think, the true answer is, when he first has any sensation... In time, the mind comes to reflect on its own operations about the ideas got by sensation, and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflection (120).

For reflection means simply the ability or power of the mind to reflect on its own operations or functions: "By reflection then... I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof, there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding" (110)

But this function or operation begins when the mind is provided with ideas from without, through our senses; from objects external to us. He says: "External objects furnish the mind with the ideas of sensible qualities, which are all different perceptions they produce in us; and the mind furnishes the understanding with the ideas of its own operations" (110)

All the ideas men have, Locke concludes are traceable to these two ways, namely: "... External material things, as the objects of sensation and the operations of our minds within, as the objects of reflection, are to me the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings" (110)

And these ideas he says are either simple or complex. He argues:

Let anyone examine his own thoughts, and thoroughly search into his understanding, and then let him tell me, whether all the original ideas he has there, are any other than of the objects of his senses; or of the operations of his mind, considered as objects of his reflection: and how great a mass of knowledge so ever he imagines to be lodged there, he will, upon taking a strict view see that he had not any idea in his mind but what one of these two have imprinted; though perhaps with infinite variety compounded and enlarged by the understanding,... (110-111).

In an attempt to describe the relationship between the ideas we get from external objects and the objects themselves, Locke goes a step further to explain how ideas are related to the objects that produce them. If we consider a tree for example, what is the relationship between our ideas as the tree engenders in our minds and the actual nature of the tree? In answering this question, Locke makes a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are necessary and essential to the existence of objects. They are real, inseparable, attributes of physical objects. Their alterations or changes do not affect the objects themselves. "The ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them and their patterns do really exist in bodies..." (36). For

example, “solidity, extension, figure (shapes and sizes), motion or rest, and number” (135). Secondary qualities such as “colour, sound, taste (touch and smell)” (135) on the other hand are not intrinsic parts of physical objects but “power to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities.” (135). With this distinction, Locke was convinced that there must be ‘something’ which either holds all the qualities together or gives rise to them and this he calls ‘substance’ or “substratum” (268). But when asked what this substratum is, Locke retorted; “... If anyone will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what support such qualities...” (268).

Turning to the question of the degrees of knowledge, Locke opines that our ideas, depending upon the objects we experience are related to each other in some ways and this determine the extent and validity of our knowledge claims. He defines knowledge as “the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas” (467). Thus; “Where this perception is, there is knowledge, but where it is not... though we may fancy, guess or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge” (467).

Locke identifies three main modes of perception in human knowledge with each leading a different degree of knowledge about reality. These are intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive. In intuitive knowledge, “the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two (or more) ideas immediately by themselves without intervention of any other” (472). Such kind of knowledge, Locke says, is said to be “the clearest and most certain that the human frailty is capable of” (472). For example, that the human faculty is capable of giving us certainty about the knowledge of our own existence is intuitive; also with the help of intuition, we can know immediately “that white is not black, that a circle is not triangle, that three are more than two and equal to one and two” (472) because we can perceive the repugnancy of these ideas to other ideas. Demonstrative knowledge, Locke claims, occurs when “the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of any ideas but not immediately” (472). Though perception is possible by calling attention to further ideas, this kind of knowledge is less clear. Under this level of knowledge, Locke classifies our knowledge of God’s existence and mathematical reasoning. With sensitive knowledge, Locke refers to the actual existence of other bodies and external objects. Here, experience simply gives us in single files a direct awareness of qualities of things as they are presented to us and because we never sense the realities behind the qualities, we have no assurance that these qualities presented to our senses represent the true nature of things. Locke argues that because of the deceptiveness of our sense impressions, we cannot rely on sensitive knowledge as certain like the other two. Of this kind of knowledge, he says:

There is, indeed, another perception of the mind, employed about the particular existence of finite beings...which going beyond bare

possibility, and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of knowledge (477).

Problems in Locke

In formulating the empiricists' theory of perception, Locke examines the rationalist theory of innate ideas which he presents as being the notion that: "There are in the understanding certain innate principles: some primary notions, characters 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" (59).

Locke rejects this view and following Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics he believes that 'there is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses'. The assumption underlying Locke's argument is that if there are notions (innate rational principles) imprinted (in the mind) how can they be unknown... No proposition can be said to be in the mind...which it never yet conscious of' (60-61). Locke insists that knowledge comes to us through our experience of the world. According to him, the immediate data of our sense perception are ideas and this constitutes the first major area of the problematic in Locke's theory of knowledge. For the most part, Locke uses 'thought' and 'perception' interchangeably with each generally meaning every act of the understanding. Locke apologizes to his readers "for the frequent use of the word ideas..." (58). He defines ideas as that which "stand for whatsoever is the object of the understanding, which a man thinks..." (59). It does appear Locke borrowed his concept of ideas from Descartes who himself defines it as "all that is in our mind when we conceive a thing in whatever manner we conceive it" (Descartes, 'Meditations' 265). This ambiguous use of the word idea by Locke poses a fundamental problem to his philosophy. First, Locke argues that ideas are perceived by the mind through experience involving sensation. This means ideas are the immediate objects of our sensory awareness or perception (i.e. of pain, sound, cold, hard, colour etc.). Again, 'idea' also refers to the compounding of the objects of our sensation by the senses (i.e. the idea of a cube of sugar for instance). Thus, images of our memory or imagination or abstract ideas and concept formed by the internal (mental) operations of our minds which Locke calls ideas of reflection' are included in this term. Although, the term as we have seen is employed by Locke in various ways, they however have the same function as representation of physical objects and our inner world of consciousness in which case an object is out there in the eternal world perceived by the mind.

In his discussion of simple ideas, Locke's explanation is not clear. The assumption that the original of our ideas are simple elements further complicates his theory. Locke claims that we can break all our experiences of the world down into fundamental parts. Our main objection to this is to ask if there can be an end to Locke's 'breaking down' of experience into component parts of simple ideas of sensation and complex ideas of reflection? Are there other fundamental parts of our experience that cannot be further

broken down in Locke's view? Sometimes, Locke uses the term simple ideas to mean the smallest units of experience or what is given in experience in contrast to what is interpreted or constructed out of it. Do we start with the ideas for example of 'red', 'sweet', 'round' etc. and compound them to the idea of apple or do we see an apple and then by process of experience note that it is 'red', sweet round and so on? It is difficult for Locke to name particular idea without reference to generality. Here, Locke is seen moving from particular to the general without noticing of that he has done so.

Another area of problem in Locke is his distinction between primary and secondary qualities of objects. As we have seen, Locke has argued that primary qualities are essential attributes of physical objects that make the objects what they are while secondary qualities are subjective non-essential parts that do not define the objects. This is why one sees an object as being white another sees the same object as being black. Of particular significance is the priority or supremacy Locke assigned to primary qualities that are known a priori over and above secondary qualities that are empirical. Locke is deeply in error in conceiving of the importance of one over the other because one cannot think of a thing that has a certain figure, that is extended without thinking of that thing as having a particular colour, taste, sound etc. In this way, our sensation of secondary qualities is intimately related to primary qualities. Locke's position that knowledge only comes through sense experience rest on the assumption that the external world has an independent existence. But if all that we see in our experience of external objects are representations of these ideas of primary and secondary qualities themselves, how can Locke claim that the ideas of primary qualities resemble their originals and that those of secondary qualities do not resemble their originals (even if they are effects of physical objects)? In short, how do we know whether these representations which experience affords us are true to their originals or not? Obviously, answering this question is going to require some comparison with the originals, but we cannot do this. If all that appears are representations, then we are never in a position to check what they are representations of? No doubt, Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities has serious implication on the nature of scientific knowledge and our ordinary experience of object generally. Through it, he sought to distinguish between appearance and reality - a basic difficulty which has baffled empirical philosophers and modern scientists ever since. This difficulty involves the properties scientists describe of an object, our daily experience of the same object and the degree of reliability of both our knowledge and scientific knowledge. If our ordinary experience and the scientific description of objects are limited to the representations (appearance) of empirical qualities that we see, then our knowledge of things and the objective claims of natural science would be problematic because they are based on our limitations of the existing qualities that we experience. Even then, how do we know whether there is conformity between these representations (qualities) that science describes, our ordinary experience of these qualities and the real

nature of things? If this is the case, then, “any science that man can develop about the world must always fall short of complete certainty” (Popkin et al 198). On this rather faulty basis, Locke’s empiricism could not avoid the rationalistic pitfalls it wanted to correct. It took the painstaking efforts of Berkeley and Hume as direct successors of Locke to tackle the same problem raised by representation; but not without some far-reaching consequences for human knowledge.

Again, Locke’s conception of substance as a thing ‘he knows not what’ creates more difficulties for his theory of knowledge. His search for certitude was influenced by his belief that knowledge is limited and that the human mind cannot know everything about the universe. He argues that substances exist and yet we cannot know them. But how can Locke claim that something exists and at the same time say that we cannot know it? For Stumpf, Locke’s position “leads to skepticism, so much that he denied substance or the reality behind appearances” (Stumpf, 269). S. Avurum also shares Stumpf’s view when he argues that:

Locke’s empiricism seems to lead to skepticism about the reality of our knowledge and to any genuine assurances that we can know something about the world outside our minds. Thus, if Locke’s account is true, the consequence is that nothing can be known of reality (104).

This, being the case, Locke fails in his attempt to prove the existence of an external world distinct from our representation of them and since our experience are purely private, a further extreme point is the glaring case of subjectivism as evident in his philosophy. Also, Locke’s conception of substance is rational. Here, he exposes the metaphysical basis for his approach to the problem of knowledge and faith. How can Locke empirically explain his theory of an underlying reality that is not perceivable? From the empiricist point of view, if we cannot perceive it, then it does not exist; yet Locke was convinced that there must be something which either holds all the qualities together or give rise to them and this he called ‘substance’ or matter.

Furthermore, we find some problems in Locke on the degrees of knowledge which he arranged according to their hierarchy of clarity and certainty. At the beginning of his philosophy, we saw Locke arguing for the senses as providing the foundation for all knowledge and later he assigned intuitive and demonstrative knowledge based on human reasoning higher modes of perception than sensitive knowledge which he placed as the least in his classification. It is through intuition for example that Locke like Descartes’ proof the existence of the self as a conscious being and through demonstrative knowledge; he established the existence of God. Here, it does seem that Locke forgot his empirical background and took a bend towards rationalism. This is because if empiricism deals with the primacy of the senses as opposed to reason, then the senses cannot have God and the operations of the mind as its proper object since

the senses cannot perceive them as there are no ideas corresponding to them. Taking this as a premise, one wonders why Locke's empiricism led him into the issue of God's existence and its proof through demonstration based on deductive reasoning? How can Locke reconcile his views about the cognitive activities of the mind and the empiricist position? Does his claim that intuitive (and demonstrative knowledge, though with a lesser degree of certainty than intuition) is the clearest and the most certain not contradict his position as an empiricist? It is in this light that Lawhead traces Locke's indebtedness to Descartes by identifying his ideas with the rationalist epistemology. For this same reason, "Locke could hardly be called a 'pure empiricist'" (Lawhead, 285). His powerful influence on later philosophy is tremendous. It is for his views on the nature of human knowledge... that he is remembered in modern philosophy" (Stokes, 82). In fact, the works of other philosophers beginning with Berkeley, Hume, Kant and the Logical Positivists as direct successors were reactions to Locke. Although, some scholars have not come to terms in one way or another with his philosophy, Locke's contributions to the history of ideas cannot be over emphasized.

Summary and Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, we can see that the scientific revolution in mathematics, physics and astronomy which proceeded by the method of experiment and deduction provoked an intense debate about the powers and limits of human reason and consequently led to the analysis of human knowledge as the preoccupation of many philosophers in the modern period. John Locke, founder of the British empirical tradition along with other empiricists –Berkeley and Hume "examined the powers and principles of the human mind and...attempted to determine what forms of certain knowledge were possible" (Thomas, Forward, iv). Locke, particularly was convinced that if we could describe what knowledge consists of and how it is obtained, we could determine the extent and validity of our knowledge claims. As we have seen, the subject matter of his *Essay* as the title suggests was to inquire into the nature, source and limits of the human understanding: "...that is, the very way in which the human mind collects, organizes, classifies and ultimately makes judgments based on data received through the senses" (Stokes, 83)

Locke's conception of how we know was a reaction and protest against the aspiration of the continental philosophers like Descartes who argued that there are innate rational principles immanent in the mind from birth. Locke rejected the rationalists' concept of innate ideas and held that there are no basis for a priori reasoning while maintaining that the mind at birth is a *tabula rasa* or blank slate which ultimately derived knowledge from experience either from the observation of perceivable objects of our simple ideas of sensation from without or from the inspection and assessment of the workings of the human mind as complex ideas of reflection from within. They are simple when they derive directly from the senses, the source of knowledge and they are complex when formed by the voluntary mental process or union of simple ideas. Thus, as the mind

perceives sensations, it relates reflects or associates them – a process which Locke called reasoning. In this way, personality is gained through the complex combination or, accumulation of ideas while personal identity is the storing of ideas in the memory.

A critical examination of Locke's theory of knowledge however revealed several inconsistent conclusions contrary to his original thesis. One major problematic aspect is the obvious implication of his concept of ideas for scientific progress. Locke has shown us that we have no direct knowledge of objects but only of our ideas about them that is as representations of things in our minds. Thus, we cannot verify whether our ideas or knowledge of objects are true representations of objects themselves. In this way, Locke posited the existence of an underlying reality that is not perceivable yet denied we can know anything about this same reality. Other problematic aspects of Locke's theory of knowledge include his classification of primary and secondary qualities and the degrees of knowledge. Here, Locke was severely criticized for taking an irresistible rationalistic turn in his philosophy. His emphasis on primary qualities, intuitive and demonstrative knowledge which are rational above secondary qualities and sensitive knowledge which are empirical are some of the obvious contradictory principles inherent in his philosophy “-a fact that leads to there being ‘rationalist’ as well as ‘empiricist’ elements in Locke’s thought” (Woolhouse, xiii). This is especially critical considering the tremendous emphasis he placed on experience as the foundation of knowledge.

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