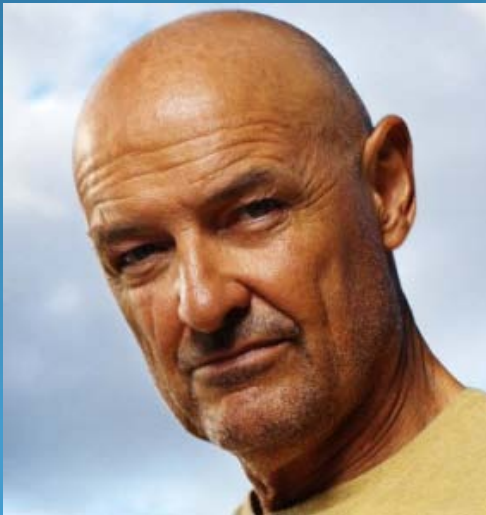


A Presentation on Book I of John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

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Modern Philosophy: Marcus

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Overview

- Purpose of work
 - “Inquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion, and assent” (I.I.2, AW 316 A).
- Innatist argument
 1. Certain principles enjoy universal consent, and
 2. This can only be explained by appeal to innate ideas and principles, so
 3. There are innate ideas and principles (Tlumak, 109)
- Locke attempts to pose “A strong *challenge* to innatism, and advertising a superior *alternative*” (Tlumak, 109).

Tabula Rasa

- Locke's alternative viewpoint
- Man is born with no innate principles ideas or knowledge
 - The mind begins as a blank slate
 - “Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any *ideas*” (II.I.2, AW 323a).

Then where does knowledge come from?

- Experience
- “Our observations 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*” (II.I.2, AW 323a)
- Sense experience and internal perception and reflection on sense experience help to form knowledge

Idea

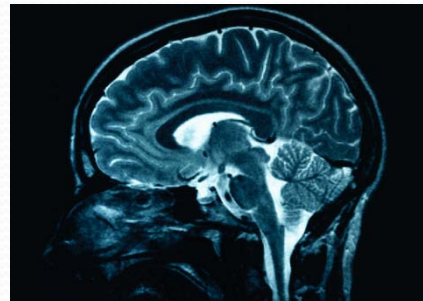
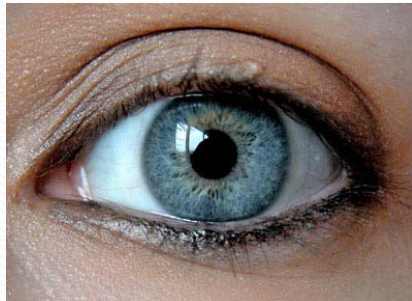
- “Whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks.”

Or

- “Whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking; and I could not avoid frequent in using” (I.I.8, AW 318b).

Sense and Reflection

1. Senses let in particular idea
 1. Slate is no longer blank
2. As the mind grows familiar with *ideas* they become lodged in memory
3. Mind gives names to distinct *ideas* and through further abstraction adopts general names
 1. Language → General names attached to specific *ideas*
4. Once mind has *ideas* and language can exercise its discursive faculty

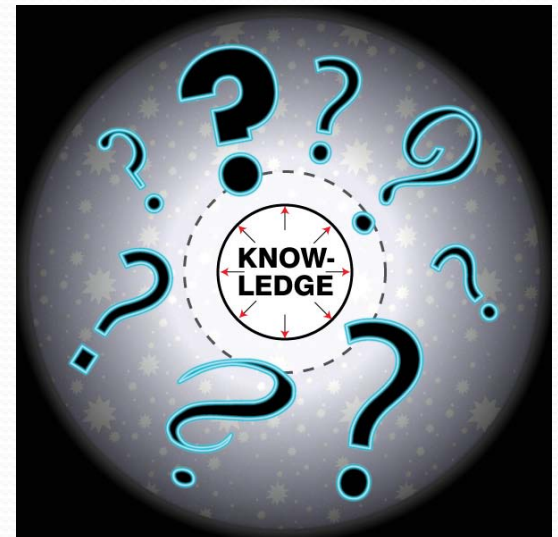


Discursive Faculty

- “Proceeding to a conclusion through reason rather than intuition” (The Free Dictionary).
- Knowledge is obtained through reasoning done in the mind
- Reasoning occurs once *ideas* have been perceived through the senses and reflected on by the mind
- All knowledge is acquired
- Some knowledge obtained before discursive faculty is realized
 - “In *ideas* thus got, the mind discovers that some agree and others differ, probably as soon as it has any use of memory, as soon as it is able to retain and perceive distinct *ideas*” (I.II.15, AW 321b)
 - i.e. sweet is not bitter example

What is Knowledge?

- “*Knowledge* then seems to me to be nothing but *the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnance, of any of our ideas*. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is there is knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowing” (IV.I.2, AW 386b).



Sorts of Agreement or Disagreement (Intuitively apprehended)

1. *Identity or diversity.*

- When mind perceives *ideas* knows what each one is and the differences between them
- Each idea agrees with itself. Distinct ideas disagree with each other
- How does it do this → through minds natural power of perception and distinction

2. *Relation.*

- “*the perception of the relation between any two ideas*” (II.I.5, AW 387a)
 - Relation can be one of agreement or disagreement

3. *Coexistence or necessary connection.*

- Something that belongs to a particular substance coexists within it
- i.e. Gold has fixedness (power to remain in fire unconsumed)

4. *Real existence.*

- *Ideas* have real existence without our mind

Degrees of Knowledge

- Intuitive Knowledge
 - Knowledge where “the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two *ideas* immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other” (II.II.1, AW 389a)
- Demonstrative knowledge
 - Where agreement or disagreement of two ideas is not immediately clear
 - Need “the intervention of other *ideas* (one or more, as it happens) to discover the agreement or disagreement [of original two ideas]” (II.II.2, AW 389b)

Demonstrative Knowledge Cont.

- Demonstrative knowledge depends on proofs
 - “So that to make anything a *demonstration*, it is necessary to perceive the immediate agreement of the intervening *ideas*, by which the agreement or disagreement of the two *ideas* under examination (of which the one is always the first, and the other the last in the account) is found” (II.II.7, AW 390b).
 - Intervening ideas must be intuitive
- This is reasoning!