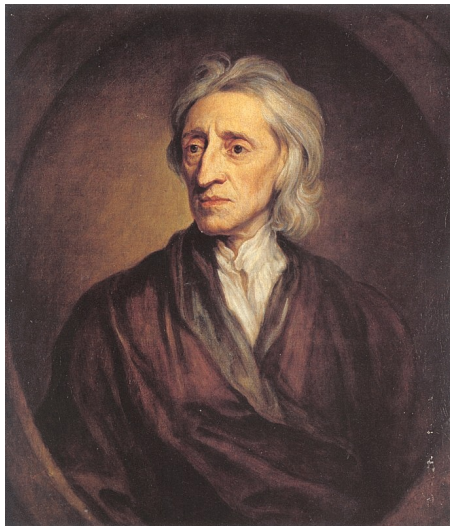


Philosophy 203

History of Modern Western Philosophy

Russell Marcus
Hamilton College
Spring 2016



Class #12
Empiricism
☞ Locke's Naive Materialism
Berkeley's Idealism ☞



Business

- Today:
 - Locke RAT
 - Empiricism Intro
 - Prep for End-of-Unit 2 Writing Assignment
 - Due Tuesday
 - Hard copy in class
- Next Week
 - Locke's Naive Materialism
 - Peer Review (on line)

Locke iRAT

- 8 minutes

Team Activity

Locke tRAT

- 9 minutes
- If you want to write an appeal, you can come get a form at any time.
- No opening your textbooks or notes until after the RAT is done!

British Empiricism

- Locke, Berkeley, Hume
 - Hobbes is a little early
 - Reid is a not ordinarily included
- Avoid grandiose speculation of Descartes and Spinoza
- Follow Hobbes
 - All knowledge comes from sense experience.
 - Blank mental slate and some naturally developing capacities to acquire and create ideas
 - Careful attention to uses of language
- Locke presents an optimistic and naive materialism.
- Berkeley's responds with a common-sense idealism.

Locke's *Essay*

- over-written
- long-winded
- insightful
- fecund
- your grandmother's attic



Locke's Goals

- Reign in the rationalists' speculative metaphysics.
 - ▶ “It may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension, to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether, and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities” (I.I.4, AW 317a).
- Avoid skepticism while limiting the scope of the understanding.
 - ▶ Descartes's standard for knowledge is too high.
 - ▶ “If we disbelieve everything because we cannot certainly know all things, we shall do quite as wisely as he who would not use his legs, but sit still and perish, because he had no wings to fly” (I.I.5, AW 317b-318a).
- Present a less-contentious epistemology.
 - ▶ “Men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions, and may arrive at certainty without any such original notions or principles”(I.II.1, AW 319a).

Four Central Topics in Locke's Work

1. The primary/secondary distinction
2. Arguments against innate ideas
3. An account of personal identity, including Locke's approach to the mind/body problem
4. Locke's philosophy of language, including the doctrine of abstract ideas

Descartes Against the Senses

- Aristotle had taken sensory qualities to be properties of external objects.
 - ▶ The redness and sweetness of an apple are real properties of the apple itself.
 - ▶ Our senses are attuned to the external environment.
 - ▶ Color vision occurs when a person's eyes are changed to be like the color of an external object.
- Descartes presented (at least) three considerations which weighed against the veridicality of sense experience:
 1. The illusion and dream doubts;
 2. The wax argument; and
 3. The sun example.
- The moral of the illusion argument is merely to take care to use one's senses in the best way possible.
 - ▶ We need not dismiss all of our sense evidence on the basis of illusion.
- The dream doubt encourages a mere skepticism.
 - ▶ Locke puts skepticism aside.

Appearance, Reality, and the Wax

- Physical objects seem liable to contradictory sense properties.
 - The wax (like all material objects) is an extended body which can take various manifestations.
 - The same object may have many different appearances.
- We should identity objects with none of their particular sensory qualities.
- The appearance of an object is thus distinct from its real qualities.
- Which qualities are real, and which are mere appearances?
 - The primary/secondary distinction



Primary and Secondary Qualities Before Locke

- Descartes

- ▶ “The only principles which I accept, or require, in physics are those of geometry and pure mathematics; these principles explain all natural phenomena, and enable us to provide quite certain demonstrations regarding them” (Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* II.64, AT VIII A.78)
- ▶ “Most philosophers maintain that sound is nothing but a certain vibration of the air which strikes our ears. Thus, if the sense of hearing transmitted to our mind the true image of its object then, instead of making us conceive the sound, it would have to make us conceive the motion of the parts of the air which is then vibrating against our ears” (Descartes, *Le Monde*, AT XI.5).

Galileo and Locke

On Secondary Qualities

- Galileo:
 - ▶ ...that external bodies, to excite in us these tastes, these odours, and these sounds, demand other than size, figure, number, and slow or rapid motion, I do not believe, and I judge that, if the ears, the tongue, and the nostrils were taken away, the figure, the numbers, and the motions would indeed remain, but not the odours, nor the tastes, nor the sounds, which, without the living animal, I do not believe are anything else than names (Galileo, *Opere* IV, 336).
- Locke:
 - ▶ Take away the sensation of them; let the eyes not see light, or colors, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell; and all colors, tastes, odors, and sounds as they are such particular *ideas* vanish and cease, and are reduced to their causes, i.e., bulk, figure, and motion of parts (Locke, II.VIII.17, AW 334b).
- The importance of the distinction for Locke is obviously not its originality with him.
- Its importance is mainly in how he uses it to support his empiricism.
 - ▶ And a bit on how he refines the argument.

Locke's Water Experiment

- The same object displays incompatible properties at the same time.
- The Heraclitean response to the wax example
 - ▶ “No one subject can have two smells or two colors at the same time. To this perhaps will be said, has not an opal, or the infusion of *lignum nephriticum*, two colors at the same time? To which I answer that these bodies, to eyes differently placed, it is different parts of the object that reflect the particles of light. And therefore it is not the same part of the object, and so not the very same subject, which at the same time appears both yellow and azure. For it is as impossible that the very same particle of any body should at the same time differently modify or reflect the rays of light, as that it should have two different figures and textures at the same time” (IV.III.15, AW 396b).
- The Heraclitean response is unavailable in the water case.
 - ▶ The exact same water displays the incompatible properties.
- Locke needs an account of the error that will not force us to abandon all sense experience to the poverty of the stimulus argument.



Locke's Destructive Principles

- Locke tacitly presumes two principles to distinguish veridical ideas from misrepresentative ones.
- LP1: If one perceives an object as having two (or more) incompatible ideas, then those ideas do not represent real properties of the object.
 - ▶ Besides hot and cold, other sense ideas are not veridical, according to LP1.
 - ▶ Color in porphyry (II.VIII.19)
 - ▶ Taste in almonds (II.VIII.20)
 - ▶ Descartes's wax example
- LP1C1: Even if a change in us entails the change in the perceived quality, the ideas which vary can not be veridical.
 - ▶ Orange juice
- LP1C2: Qualities that appear different to different observers are not veridical.
 - ▶ Color-blindness

Locke's Constructive Principle

- LP2: If an idea of an object is the same under all conditions, that idea is veridical.
 - “We may understand how it is possible that the same water may, at the same time, produce the sensations of heat in one hand and cold in the other; which yet figure never does, that, never producing the *idea* of a square by one hand, which has produced the *idea* of a globe by another” (II.VIII.21, AW 335b).
- LP2C: If every observer receives the same idea from an object, then that idea is veridical.

Team Activity

Ideas of an Apple

- Red
- Round
- Cool to the touch
- Sweet, though a bit sour
- Shiny
- Smooth
- Sits still on the table
- Crunchy
- Weighs 4 oz.
- Has a mass of 120 grams
- Is one apple
- Is being considered by you
- Smells apple-like



Primary Qualities and Secondary Qualities

- Primary
 - Solidity
 - Extension
 - Figure
 - Motion/ Rest
 - Number
- Secondary
 - Color
 - Odor
 - Hot/ Cold
 - Sound
 - Texture
 - Taste
- We can justify our beliefs on the basis of sense experience without worrying that we will be forced to accept errors as true because we are relying on our senses, rather than pure reason.

Four Central Topics in Locke's Work

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Team Activity

End of Unit 2 Writing Assignment Prep

- For now, talk about how to answer each question.
- At the end of class, you'll choose one of the numbers at random.
- You are to write your essay-ettes on your own.
- Feel free to talk more with each other.