# A STUDY OF LOCKE'S ATTACK ON INNATE KNOWLEDGE IN COMPARISON TO DESCARTES AND LEIBNIZ

*Mrs Arifa Shameem*

The scope of this essay is restricted to a study of Locke's attack on theoretical innate knowledge with reference to Descartes who was the patron of innate idea theory in modern classical philosophy ; and Leibniz's evaluation of Locke's challenge to the theory of innate knowledge. I shall omit in this paper Locke's arguments against innate practical knowledge and Leibniz's answer to him in order to bring my present study within reasonable bounds. However, I believe that the arguments Locke advances against *innate practical knowledge* and Leibniz's reply to them are in substance more or less the same as they have advanced with regard to innate theoretical knowledge.

As an heir of Descartes, who defined all thoughts and experience in terms of ideas, Locke chooses the "new way of ideas" as the easiest way to knowledge and truth. All internal and external experiences of man are known to him in terms of "ideas". "Ideas," therefore, are the media through which man knows himself, other people, external world, and God. Locke denies all direct approach to reality. The treasure of knowledge and truth is open to man by way of "ideas". In the Essay[84] Locke occupies himself with the task of defining the origin, extent and certainty of all knowledge. Tracing the origin of all knowledge, Locke declares experience as the source and fountain of all knowledge. The human mind is like a tabula rasa which comes to be furnished with "ideas" it derives from experience. Man has a double source of experience. When his mind is employed about external sensible object, it comes to be furnished with ideas of sensation; when it is employed about its own operation, it gets ideas of reflection.[85] These two kinds of ideas cover the whole range of man's experience and are the limits of his knowledge. In

[84] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, abridged and edited by AS. Pringle•Pattison, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950. 59

[85] Ibid., p. 42.

Book II, Chap. I, Sec. 8 of the Essay,[86] Locke claims that our mind comes to be furnished with ideas of sensation prior to the ideas of reflection. The latter require greater attention and maturity and are, therefore, late in experience than ideas of sensation. Considering experience as the whole range of knowledge, Locks declares that there are no "innate ideas". All ideas are acquired through experience. Locke's denial of innate ideas has led to a great controversy in philosophical circles as to what Locke means by "innate ideas" when he denies them, and what he means by "experience" when he affirms it as the whole and sole of knowledge. Or, in other words, what it is that he is denying when he denies innate knowledge, Locke's attack is not directed mainly towards Descartes who was the patron of innate idea theory in modern classical philosophy, for Locke most of the time denies those innate principles or axioms that were supplied by Scholastics to be the foundation of all knowledge. Locke was deadly against such deductive knowledge as was based upon unquestionable axioms or maxims, and first principles. Locke viewed such maxims as only general principles arrived at through abstractions and generalisations. However, the scope of this paper is limited to an analysis of his arguments in so far as they affected Descartes' position, and Leibniz's reply to them.

In *Meditation II*;[87] Descartes classifies all ideas under three heads: (1) innate ideas; (2) adventitious ideas, (3) ideas invented by the mind or ideas of imagination.

Descartes 'criteria of true and false ideas are their "clearness" and "distinctness". Of all ideas, the ideas of "God" and of "oneself" are the most "clear'and "distinct" ideas. Tracing the origin of these ideas, Descartes declares them as innate. *By innate ideas Descartes understands such ideas whose presence within me is not caused by myself; and I can by no mental catharsis get rid of them.* The cause of all innate ideas is God. In Meditation 11 he writes: "All clear and distinct awareness is undoubtedly something it cannot owe its origin to nothing and must of necessity have God as its author."[88]

Here it is important to find out what is Descartes' meaning when he traces the source of all ideas in God. Does he mean to say that God has engraved on our mind, as it were, the full-blown ideas such that in our act of

---

[86] Ibid., pp. 43-44.

[87] E.S. Haldane and G.R. Ross, Ed. and Tr., *Philosophical Works of Des-cartes*, Cambridge: University Press, 1967.

[88] Ibid.

knowing we simply make use of them? Or is there any other meaning of their being innate? When we analyse Descartes' meaning with respect to different kinds of ideas that are innate, we find that by innateness Descartes understands different things in different contexts. When he talks about the idea of God as innate, he seems to imply that the idea of God is some-thing given to us, or is present in our minds, in its full-blown form so that a denial of the presence of such an idea will be a white lie. We all have this idea within us, which we perceive instantly alongwith the ideas of our own selves. My awareness of my-self as imperfect is an awareness of an absolute perfection (God) somewhere out of myself. This is a universal idea then, which, to speak the truth, we must all affirm. It is also a necessary idea in the sense that denial of it would amount to the denial of the idea of one's own self, which is another necessary idea in the sense that the very act of denial is an affirmation of it.

To prove that the idea of God is innate within me and not in-vented by my mind or presented to me by something outside me, Descartes refers to the principle known by natural light: that is, cause must contain the effect either formally or eminently. I, he argues, can neither be the formal cause nor eminent cause of the "idea of myself comprehending the idea of God as a perfect being," for, in order to be the cause, I shall have to be either as perfect as my "idea of God," or more perfect: I am neither of these, I am rather aware of myself as an imperfect being, and as such cannot invent the idea of a perfect being. For if I could, I would have imparted all possible perfection to myself. Nor can the external objects be the cause of the idea of God, for none of them contain perfection and therefore cannot be the formal or eminent cause of this idea. My idea of God is, therefore, caused by nothing other than God Himself, and is innate in this sense.

As for my idea of myself, it is also innate. By innateness Descartes here understands something different. My idea of my-self is innate in the sense that I become aware of it by "natural light". In the very first act of reflection I become aware of myself as a thinking being and come to have a "clear" and "distinct" idea of myself. This is also a *universal* idea in the sense that whoever makes a mental exercise and pays attention to his thought becomes aware of himself. It is necessary in the sense that every act of reflection affirms to each one of us that he is a thinking being, and thus each one of us comes to have a clear and distinct idea of himself. But what is the origin of this idea? Or, in other words, who is the author of this idea of myself within me? Descartes'

answer seems to be that the cause of the "idea of myself" within me is myself, for each time I reflect I become aware of my-self as the cause or author of this idea, or, in other words, when, after purging my mind of all prejudices I reflect, I perceive myself as the cause of the idea of myself. What Descartes perhaps meant by considering "myself" the cause of the idea of "myself" is that my first act of reflection affirms, on the one hand, my own existence and, on the other hand, *my existence as the cause of the idea of myself*. However, Descartes was not himself sure of the cause of the idea of one's own being. He nowhere explicitly discusses this issue. In *Meditation IV* he makes a general remark that the cause of all innate ideas is God. But the question still persists: is God the cause of the idea of myself in me in its fully formulated form? Descartes' language is here fluctuating. Though he makes a general remark that God is the cause of all innate ideas, in this context he means to say that God has endowed us with "natural light" which is a faculty through which we are able to arrive at "clear" and "distinct" ideas of ourselves, of God and of other things. An innate idea of ons own self is an idea which is perfectly "clear" and "distinct," because it is perceived by "natural light". The innate idea of "myself" here is not *given*, *inscribed*, or engraved on my mind, but it is something which the "natural light" makes evident to me in the first act of meditation. But, is God needed to validate my ideas of myself? Does not Descartes' claim that the idea of myself is the first intuition within me of a truth, and that it is not possible for me to doubt my own existence, since the more I doubt, the more evident it becomes that I exist as a doubting being? This idea of myself as a "thinking being," then, is an idea such as which I can never purge from my mind. I can doubt the whole universe with all its glory and beauty, but I can by no effort doubt the truth of the idea of myself. Even a *Deus Deceptor* cannot make me doubt my own existence. This is, then, an idea so "clear" and "distinct" that I can have no occasion for doubting it. It is innate, then, in a very unique sense. It is an awareness of myself, my being, my own existence without which I would cease to be. I cannot doubt myself as the author of this idea. Now, this is a very confusing position. Descartes normally believes that all ideas are innate by virtue of God being their author. But in case of my idea of myself, the author seems to be undoubtedly myself and not God. Descartes nowhere clarifies this ambiguity.

As for the ideas of sensible objects, again, so long as they are mere perceptions, they do not convey any knowledge to the mind. But our minds

are capable of having "clear" and "distinct" ideas of them, through the "natural light," and an eternally veracious God ensures that whenever I have a "clear" and "distinct" idea of anything; the idea so long as it is "clear" and "distinct" cannot be false; and there must exist something in the external world which is the cause of the idea. The immediate causes, therefore, of the ideas (not perceptions) of sensible objects as extended beings are those physical objects outside me of which they are ideas. But these ideas are innate in the sense that they are presented to me by "natural light" which is a faculty of clear and distinct perception (rational apprehension) endowed to me by God. The clear and distinct ideas of a sensible object, then, are not given to me in the sense of being engraved or inscribed on my mind: in their fully formulated forms, they are innate in the sense of my potentiality of knowing them by the "natural light": though an immense variety of such adventitious ideas may never become a part of my thoughts.

All ideas for Descartes, then, are innate, from the simple idea of my own self, to the idea of God, and complex ideas of a variety of things.

Here it is important to note that, though Descartes regarded all ideas as innate, he uses the term "innate" in different senses in different contexts. The idea of God is innate in the sense that it is present in the mind in its fully formulated form, and is revealed to the mind as soon as mind becomes aware of its imperfection. It is an idea, then, which is what Locke would call "something that soul brings with itself". The idea of myself is innate in the sense of being self-evident to me as a necessary truth. The ideas of physical objects as extended substances are innate in the sense of being "clear" and "distinct" idea whose truth is qualified by an eternally veracious God. However, despite these different shades of meaning of innateness, Descartes writes in his *Notes Against A Programme*[89] and in his letter addressed to Mersenne, and at many other places, that by innateness he means nothing other than the faculty of thinking itself. All ideas are innate, then, in the sense that the mind has the capacity to formulate them, though it may actually never formulate them.

Locke in Book I of the Essay[90] denies all innate ideas and principles whether theoretical or practical. All knowledge, according to Locke, is derived from *experience*. Experience, then, is the whole and sole of our

[89] Ibid.

[90] Op. cit., pp. 16-41.

knowledge. Human mind is like a *tabula rasa* on which impressions are imprinted as a result of experience. As stated before, Locke's polemic against innate ideas is not specially directed towards Descartes. However, Locke was fully familiar with Descartes' philosophical position and was an heir of Descartes' in so far as his "new way of ideas" is concerned. One can safely say that Descartes' theory of innate ideas must have been in his mind when he attacked innate ideas and principles. Before examining Locke's attack on innate ideas, it is important to specifically lay down the meaning of the terms "idea" as it is used by Descartes and Locke.

Descartes uses the term "idea" in three senses: (I) idea is used to stand for a sensible impression; (2) idea signifies an immediate intuitive apprehension of something; (3) idea is used to denote a mental concept. When Descartes talks of innate ideas, by ideas in this context he understands the intuitive apprehension of something. The ideas, impressions or images produced by body on our minds do not play any part in Descartes' epistemology. These ideas or impressions are forthwith rejected by Descartes as confused perceptions that obscure our thoughts and have no foundation in reality. Those ideas, then, that are known by intellectual intuition form all the data of our knowledge.

Locke, who is proud of his "new way of ideas," gives a completely different scheme of knowledge. Locke defines an idea as "whatsoever is the object of understanding when a man thinks". He classifies all ideas as (a) ideas of sensation and (b) ideas of reflection. The former are impressions imprinted on the mind in its immediate relation with sensible objects. The latter are impressions received by the mind when the mind is employed about itself. These are simple ideas of which, when combined together in different ways, our mind comes to have complex ideas. The whole of our experience comprises these ideas. Locke rejects the possibility of any other source of knowledge. All knowledge for Locke is derived from experience. "Experience" is the general term that covers immense variety of ideas. In view of Locke's notion of ideas, knowledge and experience, let us see how far his attack on innate ideas affects Descartes' position.

In the very beginning of Chap. II, Book I of the Essay, Locke remarks: "It is an established opinion amongst some men 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

beginning and brings into the world with it."[91] As he proceeds, he writes: "It would be sufficient to convince unprejudiced readers of the falsiness of this proposition, if I should only show (as I hope I shall do in the following part of the discourse) how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all knowledge they have without the help of innate impressions, and may arrive at certainty without any such original notions or principles."[92]

With these remarks, Locke proceeds to examine and criticise all innate ideas, notions or principles whether theoretical or practical. Before we proceed to examine Locke's arguments against innate ideas, it is important to note that Locke considers innate ideas and principles as if they are "stamped upon the minds of men," or which "the soul receives in its very beginning and brings into the world with it". Now, this is not the meaning of innate ideas and principles as held by the exponents of innate knowledge theory. No one ever held that innate ideas and principles are as if "stamped upon the mind". Locke is misled by his metaphor *tabula rasa* which he uses for mind on which, as it were, impressions are imprinted. There is no denying the fact that the function of the mind begins when it conies into contact with the external world. This is also true that all knowledge begins with experience. But, what does it matter? Is not experience a co-ordinated function of the mind and the external world? Locke's language seems to imply that in the reception of the data of knowledge, mind is passive to the extent of not functioning at all. But Locke cannot give any evidence of it from experience.

Locke commits another error when he claims to show to his opponents that "how men barely by their use of natural faculties may attain to all knowledge they have, without the help of any innate principle".[93] This statement of Locke's is based upon a complete misunderstanding of the nature of innate idea and principle theory. No significant philosopher except some old Platonists and Scholastics, have ever meant by innate ideas or principles certain notions or propositions which are given ready-made at the birth of a child. Tile exponents of innate idea theory have not made any greater claim than that these ideas and principles constitute the framework of our mind which, in its contact with the external world, yields knowledge ; or that we all discover certain ideas and principles within us as necessary truths,

---

[91] Ibid., p. 16,
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

which form the basis of all our knowledge. However, Locke's attack need not be supposed as throwing stones in the vacuum. It definitely hurts the position of Descartes with regard to his idea of God. As for the other innate ideas, Descartes traces them to the faculty of reason or, what he calls, the "natural light," but he seems to believe that the idea of God is present in our mind in its fully formulated form and is yielded to the mind in its first serious act of meditation. Descartes even searches for the cause of the idea of God (which is the same as idea of an absolutely perfect Being) and gives arguments to prove that the cause of this idea within us in its fully formulated form is God Himself. It is innate, then, in the sense of being actually given to us by God in its fully formulated form, or, what Locke would say, "the soul receives in its very beginning and brings into the world with it". However, with the sole exception of Descartes' idea of God, all other innate ideas are regarded by Descartes and others as certain notions and principles that the mind comes to attain through its use of natural faculties or reason. Leibniz specifically emphasises this point in his reply to Locke in his *New Essay*. He writes: "When it is read that innate notions are implicitly in the mind, this must simply mean that it has the faculty of knowing them."[94]

Locke, with the above-mentioned misunderstanding about the nature of innate ideas, advances a number of arguments against the theory of innate ideas and principles.

Locke's first charge against the exponents of innate idea theory is that they consider these ideas and principles as *universal* and as those "that are constant impressions which some of men receive in their first beginning and which they bring into the world with them as necessarily and really as they do any of their faculties".[95]

As for the second part of the charge that these ideas are considered as brought by the souls at the time of their birth alongwith other faculties, we have already seen that the exponents of innate idea theory never seriously meant that (with the sole exception of Descartes' innate idea of God which is innate in the sense of being logically necessary along with our ideas of our own selves). Leibniz totally rejects this view and clarifies that by innate ideas

---

[94] Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*, London : J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., New York : E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1956.

[95] Locke, op. cit., p. 17.

and principles is meant the faculty of knowing them or the faculty of finding them in itself and a disposition to approve them when it thinks of them as it should.

As for Locke's charge that the upholders of innate idea theory regard some speculative and practical principles universal, this is true of Descartes so far as ideas of God and of oneself are concerned. As for other clear and distinct ideas (adventitious ideas), Descartes regards them innate but not necessary or universal. However, the maxim to which Locke refers, namely, 'what is and it is impossible for it not to be" was certainly regarded by Stoics and Scholastics as universal. But this and some other maxims were considered only as self-evident principles with do not require any proof. Locke also approves of self-evident knowledge, in view of which it is unfair for him to criticise others. Locke's argument that this and such other principles are not innate since not known to children and idiots has no force. For, as Leibniz has pointed out, universality is no criterion of innateness. Particular principles depend upon general principles which are necessary and which constitute the basis of our knowledge but are known after some labour. They are present in all of us at the framework of our knowledge (and are universal in this sense only), but we may not necessarily know them explicitly. They are implicit in our minds, which means that the mind has a faculty of knowing them; it has a faculty of finding them in itself and a disposition to approve them. Locke's argument is based upon the assumption that "no proposition can be said to be in the mind, which it never yet knows, which it was never yet conscious of.[96] This is a totally false claim which has no psychological basis. Everybody knows that there are a number of ideas and principles in his mind of which he is not all the time conscious, but which are stored in his memory. In the same way there are a number of truths which our minds are capable of discovering, but which every mind does not actually discover.

Leibniz rejects Locke's claim that the innate truths, if they are actually innate, should be known to children and idiots. Leibniz argues that the apperception of that which is in us depends upon attention and order. Children give more attention to the ideas of senses, because their attention is regulated by their needs. As for idiots, if they are not capable of discovering these truths, that does not mean that these truths are not innate. The idiots

[96] Ibid., Book I, Chap. II, Sec. 18.

lack the ability of knowing and understanding anything as a defect of their minds, much in the same way as a blind man cannot see as a result of a defect in his eyes. But that does not stop us from saying that man is a seeing animal. Innate principles such as the law of contradiction, referred to above, are implicit in us and without them no reasoning is possible. Leibniz argues that there is no identity between truths and thought. There are a number of truths that never become a person's thought. Leibniz goes even farther than Descartes in maintaining that what is innate is not necessarily known clearly and distinctly. Much attention and method is necessary in order to have its perception.

Locke argues that if by innate truth is meant that the mind is capable of knowing certain ideas without *actually* knowing, this amounts to saying that all ideas are innate in so far as we all have a faculty to know them, which Locke sees no need to deny, but which for Locke is not a meaningful claim. Locke's argument does not touch the position of Descartes, though this is true that for Descartes all ideas are innate. But when Descartes calls all ideas as innate, by "innateness" he does not understand *simply a faculty of knowledge* that is capable of yielding truth, when it comes in contact with the external world. By "innateness" he means a *definite propensity* to know certain truths. Nor by an "idea," here, he understands what Locke understands by an "idea". For Locke an "idea" is simply an impression or perception or a re-presentation of the object, or, as he put it, "whatsoever is the object of understanding when a man thinks".[97] For Descartes "idea" connotes an intellectual apprehension, an intellectual truth known by the natural light of reason.

Leibniz criticises Locke for his failure to draw a distinction between *truths of fact and truths of reason*. By innate truths, Leibniz understands truths of reason or intellectual ideas. Truths of fact are truths in a very relative sense and they have no deep basis in our soul. In the *New Essay*, Leibniz, while explaining innate ideas as truths of reason, writes:

> "The mind is not simply capable of knowing them, but also of finding them in itself If it had only the simple capacity to receive knowledge, or the passive potency necessary for that, as much without determinations as that which the wax has to receive shapes and the tabula rasa to receive letters, then it would not be the source of necessary truths, as I have just proved that, in fact, it is. For it is incontestable that the senses are not sufficient to make us see their necessity, and so the mind has the dispositions (as much active as passive) to draw them itself out of its own

[97] Ibid., p. 15.

depths, though the senses are necessary to give to it the occasion and the attention required for this, and to lead it rather to one sort than to the other."[98]

Necessary truths are the basis of the truth of experience.

Concerning mind's potentiality to yield innate truths Leibniz believes that it is not simply a naked faculty which consists in mere possibility of understanding them ; it is a disposition, an aptitude, a performation which determines our soul and which make; it possible for them to be derived from it.

Though Leibniz draws a distinction between truths of reason and truths of fact and calls the former innate, yet the system of reality he offers necessitates him to regard all knowledge as innate. Descartes also regards all knowledge as innate. An eternally veracious God ensures that I am not deceived each time I perceive a "clear" and "distinct" idea. Both Descartes and Leibniz maintain that the discovery of innate knowledge requires much method and attention and it is not just present in the mind ready-made which the understanding may make use of whenever necessary, and may also recognise it as innate. But, again, Locke questions: does. not the observation of external object or, what Leibniz calls truths. of fact, also require conscious attention of the understanding

Everyone will grant, says Locke, that the principle of contra-diction, namely, "what is is, and it is impossible for it not to be," is the principle of discovery of the so-called innate truths or, what Leibniz calls, truth of reason. Has the mind to discover this truth in order to discover further truths? This principle is supposed to be the first principle of all deduction. From where does mind get this principle? To say that reason discovers it (which is the principle of discovery of all truth) is begging the question. Locke is right in saying that the laws of thought are the basis of all deductive reasoning. But when Descartes says that all ideas are innate, by innate truth he does not understand deductive truth. An innate truth is a "clear" and "distinct" idea known by the "natural light" or intellectual intuition. The principle of contradiction, which is the basis of all deductive reasoning, is an intuitive truth. Discovery of Descartes does not mean deduction, but immediate intellectual intuition. In every act of deduction the step from the premise to the conclusion is a new intuition. In this way all know-ledge, according to Descartes, is both intuitive and deductive. All clear and distinct ideas are

[98] Leibniz, op. cit., p. 170.

innate in the sense of being intuitively known. However, it is an established opinion of all rationalists that deduction never yields any new truth. All deductive propositions are analytical, whose conclusions are already contained in the premises. Locke later on goes to admit that the principle of contradiction is a self-evident principle, or an intuitive truth. After such admission there hardly remains any distinction between Locke and Descartes when he called this and such others as innate.

Locke next argues that children and savages exhibit rational behaviour much earlier than they come to make "use of reason" or become aware of this maxim (i.e. "what is is, it is impossible for it not to be"), and sometimes they never become aware of it. But Leibniz argues that universality or implicit awareness is no criteria of innateness. A truth may be innate in the mind without mind's ever being aware of it, for it may still be there implicitly as the guiding principle of all reasoning. However, Leibniz's explanation may save Descartes to some extent from Locke's attack, but it does not work well to save Leibniz's own position. For Leibniz, the theory of innate knowledge is based upon his metaphysical presupposition, namely, all monads arc windowless, or, what comes to the same thing, all knowledge is internal. Leibniz's metaphysics offers only a deductive system of knowledge according to which all knowledge is analytical. An innate idea in Leibniz can mean nothing more than an analytical truth. If this is so, then Leibniz can find no answer to Locke's question as to wherefrom reason gets the principle "what is is, it is impossible for it not to be," which is the guiding principle of all rational knowledge. When Leibniz claims that it is innate, his claim does not amount to anything more than that it is itself an analytical proposition. To say this is only to beg the question.

Locke next argues that common assent of a maxim, as soon as it is proposed, is no criterion of innateness, for if this were the criterion of innateness, then again all principles must be innate, such as "a square is not a circle," "white is not black," "two and two are equal to four," etc. And if these propositions are innate, the ideas of which they are composed must also be innate, and in this way all our ideas of colour, sound, taste, etc., must also be innate. Locke is here making illegitimate claims. This is true that for Descartes all mathematical truths such as "a square is not a circle," or "two added to two equals four" are necessary. Nor would he deny that the ideas of which these principles are composed are innate. But this is very different from what Locke is claiming. The propositions such as "what is sweet is not

bitter," "what is red is not green," are not at par with the propositions such as "a square is not a circle," "two added to two are equal to four". The former are truths of experience derived from senses, whereas the latter are mathematical truths; they are necessary. Descartes, however, regards ideas of figure, duration, number, etc., as innate. But by idea he understands an intellectual apprehension or a mental concept and not a perception of a particular figure, number, etc. Locke is simply taking benefit of his double use of the term "idea" which he uses both for a percept or an image and a concept or an intellectual apprehension.

Leibniz considers both kinds of propositions as truths of fact which are arrived at by the application of the necessary principle, namely, "A is A, it is impossible for it to be not-A," which is a truth of reason. The ideas of which these propositions are composed are also ideas of reason and are innate. The ideas of being, identity, impossibility, etc., are also innate ideas. These intellectual ideas which are the source of necessary truth are not derived from senses. When Locke admits the presence of, what he calls, ideas of reflection, he should have no difficulty, says Leibniz, in admitting the presence in the mind of ideas of reason which are independent of experience. Leibniz's does not see that Locke's ideas of reflection arc totally different from Leibniz ideas of reason. The former are derived from experience and are grounded in experience. Locke has already pointed out that ideas of reflection are late in experience as compared to ideas of sensation. The ideas of sensation work as the ground for the latter, much in the same way as Leibniz's truths of reason are grounds for truths of fact.

Though Locke emphatically denies the presence of any universal or innate ideas in the mind, and traces all knowledge to experience, yet he admits that everybody immediately perceives truths of certain propositions such as "a square is not a circle," "red is not green" or "what is sweet is not bitter". Locke calls these propositions self-evident. The faculty through which such truths are immediately perceived is called by Locke intuition. In Book IV, Chap. II, Sec. I of the *Essay*[99] Locke gives an elaborate account of intuitive knowledge as distinct from demonstrative knowledge which contains a lower degree of certainty than intuitive knowledge. Locke does not see that after his admission of what he calls self-evident or intuitive knowledge it will be difficult for him to distinguish his position from

[99] Op.cit.

Descartes who also bases all certain knowledge on "clear" and "distinct" perception which comes from the Iight of reason or, what is the same thing, intuitive apprehension. The only difference between Descartes and Locke is that Descartes goes one step further and calls all intuitive knowledge innate. However, by innateness he understands nothing other than the presence of a faculty of true knowledge called "natural light" (intuitive reason), whose ability to render truth is ensured by an eternally veracious God Who is the creator of this faculty in me and of everything else. Locke bases all knowledge on experience. But he does not tell what kind of "idea" this intuitive knowledge is. It is certainly not an idea of sensation, for all ideas of sensation are derived from sensible objects, which only imprint impressions on our mind without telling what they are. It is not an idea of reflection either, for ideas of reflection are the result of mind's operation upon itself. It seems to be a priori knowledge then which. is over and above his "new way of ideas" which he claimed earlier as the only source of knowledge.

Whatever may be the logical consequences of Locke's admission of particular self-evident principles, Locke firmly adheres to it. Locke anticipates Leibniz's answer that these particular principels are the application of the more general necessary principle such as "A is A and it is impossible for it to be not-A". Locke makes a public appeal and pleads that these particular principles are known more readily and commonly than the so-called necessary innate principles. But this argument of Locke's certainly cannot stand firm before Leibniz's reply that the necessary innate principles need not be readily and commonly known, and that it requires some attention and method to find them out as the ground of particular principles. It is interesting to note here the difference between Descartes and Leibniz on the one hand, and Locke on the other, on the question of self-evident principles. Both Descartes and Leibniz maintain that the self-evident truths are known to be self-evident after some reflection or methods, whereas Locke holds that self-evident knowledge does not need any attention and method. But Locke seems to be confused on this issue. He is not able to draw a distinction between (1) a self-evident truth and (2) the knowledge that a certain truth is self-evident. A self-evident truth may be known readily and without reflection, whereas the knowledge that it is self-evident requires some reflection and attention. Beside a self-evident truth there may be, as Locke says, some-thing that needs no proof, but this is something very different from the question: what is the source of such knowledge? Locke

seems to agree with Descartes that the source of such knowledge is intuition or, what Descartes calls, "natural light". Whereas Leibniz strongly holds that the so-called self-evident principles have their basis in a more general necessary truth, and the former is only the application of the latter, which is not immediately known.

Locke again anticipates Leibniz's next objection that the general necessary truths are implicitly present in the mind without our being conscious of them at a given time or at any time. Locke's interpretation of such knowledge is that to say that there are innate truths in our mind which are implicit is to say that the mind is capable of knowing them, and nothing more. And in this sense all principles and demonstrations of mathematics are innate. Leibniz repudiates Locke by adding that being innate does not simply mean that mind is simply *capable of knowing them, but also that it is capable of finding them in itself and has a disposition to approve them*.

As for Locke's point that children know particular truths much before they come to the apprehension of general necessary principles, such as the law of contradiction. Leibniz's reply is that it is not necessary that the general necessary truths should be known before particular principles. The necessary principles constitute the framework of mind without which it will not be possible for mind to perceive any particular truth, much in the same way as without legs it is not possible for a child to walk, but a child may not know the specific function of different muscles and bones of his legs as they help him in walking.

The main burden of Locke's attack on innate ideas can be summarised in two points: (I) that there are no universal principles or ideas in our mind on the basis of which it can be said that they are innate; (2) there is an identity between truth and thought. Whatever ideas or knowledge mind is capable of attaining, it does attain it as a matter of fact and it exists in the mind as a thought or idea. Liebniz subjects these two points of Locke's to a destructive criticism by establishing (1) universality is no criterion of innateness; (2) there is no indentity between truth and thought. A large amount of our knowledge is present within us implicitly which forms the basis of our knowledge of particular truths. These implicit ideas and principles are innate, yet every-body may not be able to discover them. They do not cease to be innate if they are not explicitly .known. Leibniz's criticism of Locke follows from his new psychology that (1) a large part of our thoughts is subconscious, (2) knowledge means unfoldment of the monad of

whatever is present in it. It is in this sense that all knowledge for Leibniz is innate and analytical.

When we recapitulate all the points advanced for or against innate ideas by Descartes, Locke and Leibniz, we still wonder what this controversy is about. Why is Locke, who acknowledges man's indebtedness to his faculty of reason, out to refute the innate idea theory? What are the relative claims of Locke and his opponents concerning this faculty of reason which is the point of dispute? If we look deep into the matter we find that both parties glorify the faculty of reason, and yet both dispute about its function. Descartes claims that the function of speculative reason (intuitive reason) is enlightenment and understanding of God-given truths; for Leibniz its function is unfoldment and discovery of concealed truth which is within the soul. But, does this *enlightenment*, *unfoldment* or discovery of truth require any specific labour? Both Descartes and Leibniz give a positive answer to the question. Descartes' method suggests the need of conscious labour for the attainment of truth. Leibniz also emphasises the need of method and order. Locke makes a radical departure from Descartes in maintaining that the function of reason is not discovery or unfoldment of truth. Its function mainly consists in *sifting*, *indentification*, *making distinctions*, *classification*, *judgment* and *association* of data of knowledge provided by experience in the form of ideas. Knowledge, then, is a co-ordinated function of data of knowledge received from outside world and from within mind itself. Experience itself is nothing more than reception by the mind of certain sensations and feelings in a certain determinate manner. But the question is: are there any determinate ways of mind's acceptance of internal and external data? Locke does not specify it; were he to do it, much of the misunderstanding concerning nature of knowledge, whether acquired or innate, would have been clarified. Nor do his opponents expressively lay down the role of experience and external data. Were they to clarify the contribution of sensible data and experience in knowledge, there would have been a fairly good possibility of a compromise concerning nature and origin of knowledge.