Chapter II

The destructive side of Locke’s Theory of Knowledge - Refutation of Innate Principles

II.1. Introduction

Locke’s polemic against the doctrine of innate principles laid the foundation of his empiricist contention that mind derives all the materials of reason and knowledge from experience. At the time of Locke, the doctrine of innate knowledge was held to be necessary for religion and morality. Two forms of the doctrine can be traced back - its dispositional form and the naïve form. Yolton¹ was the first to distinguish between these two forms of the doctrine of innate knowledge. The dispositional form of the doctrine claims that the said principles were only implicit in the soul and require experience to elicit them. According to the naïve form, God himself has imprinted or stamped upon the soul, at the time of birth, certain ideas, and precepts for the guidance of life and the foundation of morality. Although we are not aware of such innate principles until maturity, Locke himself in the ‘Essay’ has recognized this form, even though he did not coin the term ‘naïve’. In the ‘Essay’ Locke² has used metaphors like ‘inscribing’ or ‘engraving’ or ‘imprinting’ or ‘stamping’ of propositions upon the mind, which the proponents of naïve form of innatism have used. He said:

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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 first Being; and brings into the World with it.  

Commentators of Locke are doubtful whether the doctrine of innate knowledge was ever upheld in its naïve form. Yolton said that there exists no clear evidence for the existence of naïve form of the innateness, save its formulation in the writings of some philosophers. Instead, there exist repeated denials of its validity. Locke, who recognized the naïve form of the doctrine without ever using the term ‘naïve,’ has also put forward arguments against both forms of the doctrine.

Innate principles are of two kinds – speculative and practical or moral principles. Examples of innate principles of the speculative type are ‘Whatsoever is is’ and ‘It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be’ while those for the practical innate principle are ‘That one should do as he would be done unto’ and ‘That men should keep their compacts.’

The whole volume of Book I on the ‘Essay’, apart from the introductory chapter, contains Locke’s arguments against the innate knowledge. In the second and the third chapters, Locke has attacked speculative and moral principles, respectively. In the fourth chapter, Locke’s aim was to refute innate ideas. However, the fourth chapter is concerned primarily with the innateness of principles. He discussed the innateness of ideas in order to complete the refutation of the doctrine of innate principles. Therefore, the title of Chapter IV in the ‘Essay’ is ‘Other considerations concerning innate principles, both speculative and practical.’ Before beginning the ‘Essay’, Locke introduced these arguments briefly in his
draft ‘A’ of 1671. In addition, in the beginning of draft ‘B’, Locke used thirteen sections to examine the claim of innate knowledge. The main difference between his ‘Essay’ and draft ‘B’ is that the latter proceeds from practical principle to speculative ones while the former takes the reverse order. Again, Draft C, written in 1685, contains one of the two major arguments against innatism. The other argument does not appear to have been noticed until 1690. ⁵

Locke’s lectures on Philosophy in the early 1660’s are now published under the title ‘Essay on the Law of Nature.’ Locke’s attack on innatism was the main theme of the third and the fifth of these lectures. These lectures reveal one startling fact – that Locke in the beginning of his philosophical career was himself a believer in innate ideas. In the first of these lectures, he held that this law (i.e. the law of nature) is not written but innate. ⁶ In a paragraph in the first lecture, which Locke at some time wanted to delete, he put forward the standard argument for the innate hypothesis, the argument from universal consent. Locke had stated:

_There are some moral principles which the whole of mankind recognizes and which all men in the world accept unanimously; but this could not happen if the law were not a natural one._ ⁷

Barnes, in his paper, thus said:

_At this, doubtless primitive, stage in his thought, Locke upheld by the orthodox argument an orthodox moral innatism._ ⁶

However, in the latter lecture, Locke explicitly attacked moral innatism. Lecture III denied that ‘there are any moral principles inborn in the mind and as it were engraved upon it, so that they are as natural and familiar to it as its own faculties, the will and the
understanding’. Lecture V denies that ‘Law of nature can be known by the consent of mankind’ and rejects the arguments of the expunged paragraph of Lecture I. Barnes held that ‘it is easy to infer that Locke’s juvenile innatism, already modified in Lecture I, was exploded by Lecture III; and this may well be the truth.’

Before Locke, Descartes had taken innatism as a theory of innate ideas. The theory holds that mind’s conceptual storehouse is not empty at birth. Although Locke did not believe in innate ideas, his primary aim was to attack, not conceptual but propositional innatism. He has used terms such as innate principles, propositions, axioms, maxims, and truths.

II.2. Causes behind Locke’s attack on Theory of Innatism

Locke’s main intention behind attacking the theory of innatism was to clear the path in order to establish his empiricism, the doctrine that holds that the mind is comparable to a white paper at the time of birth. It derives all the materials of reason and knowledge from experience. In the ‘Epistle to the reader’, Locke claimed himself to be an under-labourer, engaged in

…Clearing Ground a little, and removing some of the Rubbish, that lies in the way to Knowledge.

The theory of innatism was, no doubt, an obstacle in his way of his main empiricist thesis.

Douglas Greenlee in his paper ‘Locke and the controversy over innate ideas’, however, argued that it would be a mistake to accept the customary historical interpretation of Locke’s polemic against the innateness as an expression of his empiricism. Greenlee contended that we should not regard Locke as an empiricist in the sense spelled out by the
empiricist tenet, the principle that nothing is in the mind, which was not first in the senses. Locke wanted to establish this principle in Book II of the ‘Essay’. The reason, which Greenlee suggested behind this contention, is that according to Locke, there is much in the mind. Greenlee suggested that if knowledge is to be included in this ‘much,’ besides the materials (the simple and complex ideas) which compose it (knowledge) and which was not first in the senses, Locke cannot be said to be an empiricist in the customary sense. In Book IV of the ‘Essay’, Locke has defined knowledge as follows:

...the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas.¹¹

Knowledge, as conceived by Locke, is the perception of the connection between ideas. Perception is the function of the understanding or mind. The definition of knowledge in Book IV of the ‘Essay’ suggests that there can be no knowledge that was first in the senses. Knowledge, as conceived by Locke, is the creation of the mind or understanding as it relates different ideas. Greenlee further held that the customary historical interpretation of Locke’s attack on innate ideas as an expression of his empiricism is not tenable. In this interpretation, empiricism is regarded as a doctrine, which holds that all knowledge is based on experience or that all ideas ultimately spring from experience. In this sense, we cannot consider Locke to be an empiricist for he has admitted self-evident truth or principles. These self-evident truths, according to Locke’s epistemology, constitute a part of human knowledge. However, these self-evident truths or principles are not based on experience or known on the basis of observational evidence. Greenlee argues that in this polemic Locke is not in the usual sense an empiricist objecting to a rationalist doctrine of non-empirical knowledge. He further said that:
...he (Locke) is a methodologist – the word ‘logician’ would once have been the correct one here – advancing a certain methodology which is not immediately tied up with the issue of whether all knowledge is observationally grounded or even with the issue as to whether there is a priori knowledge that is synthetic.\textsuperscript{12}

In answer to Greenlee, we can say - Locke was no doubt an empiricist in the sense that he admitted the mind derives all the materials of reason and knowledge from experience. However, his doctrine encompassed a wide spectrum of concepts, both empirical and rationalistic. Although he embraced empirical viewpoint, he never failed to accept rational views, some of which even owe their origin to other contemporary philosophers like Descartes and other Cartesians. Hence, it is a debatable question whether Locke was an empiricist in the strictest sense.

The doctrine of innate knowledge was accepted in England in the seventeenth century in one form or the other. That man had innate knowledge of God as also of good and evil was a fundamental axiom of religious belief in the seventeenth century. John Edwards, in his work ‘The Socinian Creed’ (1697), argued that

...these natural impressions in all men’s mind are the foundation of religion and the standard of truth as well as of morality.\textsuperscript{13}

John Glanville, a reputed contemporary writer, has also maintained that

...those inbred fundamental notices that God hath implanted in our souls, such as arise not from external objects, nor particular humours and imaginations, but are immediately lodged in our minds, independent upon other principles or deductions.\textsuperscript{14}
These are some examples that we might cite in order to indicate the importance of the theory of innate ideas in the field of religion and morality during that period. Richard Ashcraft, in his paper rightly comments that

\[ \text{The belief in innate impressions sheltered ideas for which no other source or justification could be found. Whenever a doctrinal explanation was met with a challenge the clergy retreated to the fortress of innate knowledge.}^{15} \]

Therefore, we can say that if innate ideas were not supposed, there would be no foundation of our knowledge of religion and morality. Such an appeal to innatism functioned as a substitute for reasoned argument based on experience. Locke thought that once a surer one replaced the old foundation of innate ideas, the superstructure of religion and morality would stand mightier than ever. Locke, with this aim in view, has attacked the theory of innatism and wanted to found religion and morality on arguments based on reason.

Theory of innatism concerns with a process of reasoning involving intellectual meditation and deductive inferences as opposed to experimentation and learning from experience. Scholastic philosophers, for example based all knowledge on maxims, which were supposed to be intuitively known as certain. Their uncritical acceptance of the basic principles of knowledge made the whole system of knowledge superfluous. Yolton remarked that\(^{16}\) Locke was seeking to introduce a new critical attitude towards all knowledge – its conclusions as well as its base. Jenkins argued that.

\[ \text{As one of the new scientists, working within the context of the Royal Society and endorsing its methods, Locke was inevitably an opponent of such a theory.}^{17} \]
The primary intention of Locke was to question the empirical foundation of the doctrine of innatism since he believed that if it could be shown to be empirically unfounded, it would not be possible to use it as an epistemological device to buttress obscurantism and as an instrument of intellectual oppression. However, the question is why was Locke so intent to raise this matter, as twenty-four years before the publication of the ‘Essay’, Samuel Parker had already refuted the epistemological pretensions of the doctrine. The relevant passage from Parker’s writing is the following:

*...But suppose that we were born with these congenite Anticipations, and that they take Root in our very Faculties, yet how can I be certain of their Truth and Veracity? For ’tis not possible but the seeds of Error might have been the natural Results of my Faculties, as Weeds are the first and natural Issues of the best Soyles, how then shall we be sure that these spontaneous Notions are not false and spurious?*

From the above passage, it is clear that Parker actually wanted to say that innateness of the principles could not by itself guarantee the truth of the principle. Wall argued that what was remarkable was that Locke did not make use of this kind of attack in Book I of the ‘Essay’. A possible reason for Locke not refuting the epistemological purpose of innate ideas, as Parker did, was his Psychogenetic preoccupation in Book II. Locke’s main purpose in Book II of the ‘Essay’ was to investigate into how the mind actually obtains ideas. Therefore, he went on to analyze the mental processes. Regarding the origin of Knowledge, Locke’s enquiry was purely psychological. Hence, Locke’s attack on the doctrine of innate ideas did not involve the question as to why those ideas should be taken to be true. The most important explanation, which Wall proposes, is that Locke shared with his opponents the
view that if there would be any innate principle then they would be true. In Chapter III of the ‘Essay,’ Locke said:

*Another Reason that makes me doubt of any innate practical Principles, is,*

*That I think, there cannot anyone moral Rule be propos’d, whereof a man may not justly demand a Reason: which would be perfectly ridiculous and absurd, if they were innate, or so much as self-evident, which every innate Principle must needs be, and not need any Proof to ascertain its Truth, nor want any Reason to gain it Approbation.*  

From the above passage, it is clear that Locke committed himself to the view that if there were any innate principle then they would be self-evident and true. If this is so, then Parker’s argument had little value to him. However, the important question is why Locke accepted this view. One possible answer may be that Locke has accepted this view from his opponents uncritically. Nevertheless, Wall has given a more definite answer to this question. Wall held that at the beginning of Chapter II, Locke said:

*For I imagine anyone will easily grant, That it would be impertinent to suppose, the Ideas of Colours innate in a Creature, to whom God hath given Sight, and a Power to receive them by the Eyes, from external Objects; and no less unreasonable would it be to attribute several Truths, to the Impressions of Nature and innate Characters, when we may observe in ourselves Faculties, fit to attain as easy and certain Knowledge of them, as if they were Originally imprinted on the Mind.*

In this passage, Locke held explicitly that God has given us our faculties. Further, there is an implicit statement that if there were any innate principles, then God himself had
imprinted these in us. In Chapter IV of the ‘Essay,’ Locke admitted this more explicitly. He said:

\[ I \textit{grant That if there were any Ideas to be found imprinted on the Minds of Men, we have reason to expect, it should be the Notion of his Maker, as a mark God set on his own Workmanship, to mind Man of his dependence and Duty...} \]^{22}

Here, Locke stated clearly that God has imprinted innate principles in us. Moreover, Locke did not approve of the God-deceiver problem. According to him, revelations, if they are genuine, i.e. if they come from God, are obviously trustworthy. Locke said ‘we may as well doubt of our own Being, as we can, whether any Revelation from God be true’.\(^{23}\) Therefore, if there were any innate principle imprinted in our mind by God, they would have to be accepted as true. Therefore, it is Locke’s theological conviction, which prevents him from the direct epistemological refutation of the doctrine of innate knowledge.

II.3. Opponents of Locke

The question that perplexed all the scholars of Locke was – against whom was the polemic directed. The traditional answer that everybody believed until the end of the nineteenth century was that Descartes and the Cartesians was the main target of Locke. However, this answer became untenable when scholars, after examining Locke’s writings, realized that Locke was very much indebted to Descartes and there were rationalist elements in his writings. Locke himself has mentioned only the name of Lord Herbert of Cherbury\(^{24}\) in his ‘Essay.’ Nevertheless, the way, in which Locke has introduced Herbert, it is clear that he could not have been the principal opponent of Locke. Some commentators on Locke argued
that the Cambridge Platonists were the main opponents of Locke. It is true that though some Cambridge Platonists upheld the theory of innate ideas, there were some who rejected it. Therefore, Cambridge Platonists were not the sole opponents of Locke. According to Professor Gibson, Locke directed his polemic against the University teachers of his day. It is also evident from the closing section of Book I that Locke had the University teachers in his mind. However, Aaron argued that from Professor Gibson’s writings it is hardly believable that University teachers were the only opponents of Locke. Windelband named only Descartes and Cambridge Platonists. Hoffding contended that the sole opponent of Locke was not Descartes but the scholastic philosophers who based all knowledge upon maxims, which are known intuitively. Recently, Rivaud said that Locke directed his polemics at scholastics, Descartes and Herbert of Cherbury. Seth Pringle-Pattison agreed with Hoffding and Gibson. Lamprecht has opined that Locke’s argument against innate ideas and principles were against Cambridge Platonists and enthusiastic sectarians in religion and politics. The difficulty in finding Locke’s opponent led some people to believe that in order to establish his own view firmly Locke had himself presented an opposite view and attacked it. No philosopher actually upheld such views. Cassier argued that Locke really had no one in mind in Book I. Therefore, his opponent was perhaps a man of straw.

Aaron, however, contended that the references to ‘these men of innate principles’ in the ‘Essay’ are of such a kind that it is hard to believe that Locke’s opponents are imaginary against whom he has directed his polemic. He held that it is possible to come to a definite answer to the question regarding Locke’s opponent by affirming once again the traditional answer with some modification. Aaron opined that Locke aimed his attack against Descartes and the Cartesians. Besides, the attack was also against some English thinkers and
teachers, who upheld the theory of innatism, yet were not the direct followers of Descartes. Aaron pointed out that some arguments suggest the necessity of reassertion of the traditional answer.

Aaron said that Leibniz and Voltaire established the traditional answer. In his first short paper on Locke’s ‘Essay’ in 1696, Leibniz admitted that the polemic was against the Cartesians. Again, in the ‘Nouveaux Essais’ published in 1703, he has grouped Locke with Gassendists who were against the Cartesians. The theory of innate ideas is presented here as a matter of dispute between the two schools. Leibniz has admitted here that Locke has also attacked the Cartesians. Voltaire too has expressed opinions that are same as those of Leibniz. In his letter on Locke in ‘Letters Philosophiques,’ Voltaire supported Locke’s viewpoint. He has exclusively pointed out Descartes’s impractical views on innate ideas and Locke’s successful attack upon it. He described Descartes’s view in the following way:

He was certain that we always think and that the soul arrives in the body ready – provided with all metaphysical notions, knowing God, space, infinity, possessing all the abstract ideas and filled with fine thoughts, which it unfortunately forgets when the body leaves the womb.²⁹

Aaron has mentioned that Leibniz and Voltaire, both being intellectuals of the highest level in Europe, their opinion that Descartes and the Cartesians were the target of Locke’s attack in Book I cannot be underestimated.

The question that we must consider here is – did Descartes ever really mean what Locke and Voltaire ascribed to him.
In order to deal with this question, we must examine the passages where Descartes expressed his opinion regarding the theory of innate ideas. In his twelfth article of the ‘Notes against a Programme’, Descartes had given the following answer:

*I never wrote or concluded that the mind required innate ideas which were in some sort different from its faculty of thinking. We say that in some families generosity is innate, in others certain diseases like gout or gravel, not that on this account the babes of these families suffer from these diseases in their mother’s womb, but because they are born with a certain disposition or propensity for contacting them.*

Again, in the same work, in reply to another critic, he remarked:

*By innate ideas I never understood anything other than *that there is innate in us by nature a potentiality whereby we know God’; but that these ideas are actual, or that they are some kind of species different from the faculty of thought I never wrote nor concluded. On the contrary, I, more than any other man, am utterly averse to that empty stock of scholastic entities – so much so, that I cannot refrain from laughter when I see that mighty heap which our hero – a very inoffensive fellow no doubt – has laboriously brought together to prove that infants have no notion of God so long as they are in their mother’s womb – as though in this fashion he was bringing a magnificent charge against me.*

From the above passage, it is clear that Descartes has explicitly denied that children come into the world with some ideas implanted in their mind, for example the ideas of God. The question then is what Descartes actually meant by innate knowledge. Aaron has suggested
two answers. \footnote{32} Firstly, he said that by ‘innate’ Descartes meant ‘innate faculty,’ which he has identified with thinking. If Descartes meant this then Locke would agree with him, for Locke has also admitted the existence of innate faculties.

Secondly, Descartes may have meant that we are prone to think in certain fixed ways and according to certain ‘germs of thought’ in the mind innately. However, children are not aware of this germ in their mother’s womb. It seems that universality and necessity of such truth itself suggested this view to Descartes. Locke attacked this view. Locke did not deny the universality and necessity of such truth. He however denied that universality and necessity make such truth innate. It is true that we do not find such truth in the way we acquire other truths. According to Aaron, it is frequently forgotten that Locke has attacked this view of innate knowledge as well as the cruder kind that the above passages do not express.

Nevertheless, is Descartes’s claim in these paragraphs justified?

Some commentators argued that what Descartes wanted to say is that when the soul enters the body in the womb, it already possesses the explicit knowledge of certain truths in addition to its possession of the faculty of thinking. Voltaire ascribed this view to Descartes. Aaron cited a passage, which he thought commentators of Descartes have ignored. Voltaire might have had this in his mind. This passage is a part of Descartes’s reply to Gassendi who wrote the fifth set of objections to Descartes’s system in 1641. Gassendi objected that it is hard to believe that the mind is always thinking and that it had thoughts in the womb, for there is no evidence in favour of this. Descartes, in his reply to Gassendists, argued that it is not strange to believe that the soul always thinks, as it is a thinking substance.

He said:
You have a difficulty, however, you say as to whether I think, that the soul always thinks. But why should it not always think, when it is a thinking substance? Why is it strange that we do not remember that thoughts it has had when in the womb or in a stupor, when we do not even remember the most of those we know we have had when grown-up in good health and awake. 

Now the question is - are these thoughts, which the soul has in the womb, innate. Do these thoughts include the thoughts of ‘God,’ of extension, etc.?

Aaron held that these are innate but prenatal experiences such as feeling hungry or feeling cold whose existence Locke himself recognized. However, there is no evidence, which shows that Descartes here referred to prenatal experience.

This passage shows that Descartes has admitted the theory of innate ideas in the crudest form. Aaron contended that Locke had also spent some years in the company of the Gassendists and the Cartesians at that time and listened to their arguments. After that he developed an impression that some of the Cartesians, perhaps Descartes himself, held that we are born knowing certain truths. He attacked this view. Therefore, there is very substantial evidence in support of the view that Locke was attacking Descartes and the Cartesians.

However, Descartes and the Cartesians are not the only ones against whom Locke’s polemic is directed. At the time of Locke, some University teachers who followed narrow scholastic tradition believed that our knowledge begins from some indubitable innate maxims from which we deduce other truths syllogistically. Locke believed that these maxims were not doubtful but denied that they were innate. In the final chapter of Book I, Locke has attacked this scholastic view. Some Cambridge Platonists during Locke’s time also upheld the theory of innatism, but not its cruder form.
These lead us to the conclusion that Locke directed his polemic against the Cartesians, certain members of the Cambridge Platonists and others like Herbert who advocated the theory of innate ideas.

Jonathan Barnes has also supported the view of Aaron in his paper. He pointed out that in recent years; historians of philosophy have divided the innatists of the seventeenth century into four groups. The first group consists of the Cartesians. An erasure in one of Locke’s early lectures on moral philosophy suggests that Descartes’s name came to Locke’s mind when he was dealing with innatism.

The English school of Cambridge Platonists that includes Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, and Damaris Masham formed the second group. Cudworth’s daughter was Locke’s correspondent and patron. Locke was also well accustomed with the Platonic view. Therefore, we may say that Locke’s polemic was against the Platonists.

Shaftesbury’s ‘Modern and barbarous schoolmen’ who are known under the title ‘Peripatetic’ may be said to belong to the third group. Some followers of Aristotle belonged to this group. They had undertaken to make him speak Plato’s sense and uphold innatism. Furthermore, many Englishmen also advocated innatism. Among them was Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester, who was Locke’s most celebrated adversary. Yolton says:

*In England, we find that the doctrine of innate knowledge was held, in one form or another, to be necessary for religion and especially for morality from the early years of the century right through to the end and into the beginning of the following century.*
The innate hypothesis was a cornerstone of the major Philosophical and theological systems of Locke’s day, English and foreign, orthodox and heterodox. We can say that it was against this widespread opinion, and not against any particular opinion that Locke directed his polemic. Locke himself said that he was attacking ‘an established opinion among some men.’

II.4. Locke’s arguments against Innate Principles – both Speculative and Practical

The chief argument put forward in favour of the innateness of knowledge is *universal consent*. There are certain principles to which everybody agreed, e.g. ‘whatever is is’ and ‘It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be at one and the same time.’ Everybody regarded these principles as innate; these are originally imprinted on the mind, being brought into the world at birth.

Contradicting this theory, Locke argued that in the first place even if it is true that all men agree to certain principles, the universality of the consent is no proof for the innateness of these principles. Locke opined that there could be alternative explanation as to how men come to this universal agreement. For example, if it is possible to explain the universal agreement about the truth of these principles without the hypothesis of innate ideas then the hypothesis is superfluous.

Jonathan Barnes argued that this rejection is weak for two reasons. First, this rejection is a refutation schema, which needs substantiation. This substantiation is possible only by advocating a new theory. Secondly, it is important to show that this new theory is superior in some manner to innatism.
It is possible to argue against Locke that if the universal agreement about the truth of the principles can be explained without the hypothesis of the innate ideas then the hypothesis cannot be said to be superfluous. The rival hypothesis, put forward in order to explain the universal agreement about the truth of the principle, may weaken the force of the former one but we cannot throw it away.

Secondly, according to Locke, the argument of universal consent for innate principles is not flawless since it is hard to find a principle to which all humankind give universal assent. It is evidently true that children and idiots are completely ignorant of these principles. They do not have the least apprehension or idea about these principles.

Norris, one of the first critics of the ‘Essay’, has shown in his ‘Cursory Reflections’ that Locke’s polemic against innate knowledge is both inconsequent, for it failed to prove what he claimed, and inconsistent, for the denial of innate ideas conflicted with other principles in the ‘Essay.’ Locke has denied the view that any proposition has universal consent in Book I of the ‘Essay.’ However, later on, he has accepted the self-evident propositions that have received universal consent. Locke recognized those propositions as self-evident, which receive ‘ready and prone assent’ of men. Further, Norris has pointed out that the examples of children and idiots were ill chosen for they are not capable of thinking such propositions. Norris said:

‘Now I always thought that Universality of consent had been sufficiently secured by the Consent of all and the Dissent of none that were capable of either.’

Since children and idiots do not even have the capability of assenting to or dissenting from such propositions, they have no bearing on the issue.
Jenkins has also argued, in agreement with Norris, that Locke’s argument did not have the clinching force\textsuperscript{43} for several reasons. The first of these is that the exceptions to the argument for universal assent that Locke refers to, namely children and idiots are incorrect. Jenkins pointed out that idiots and children do not have minds in any representative sense or that they posses mind that are undeveloped. Thus, one cannot argue that there are no innate ideas because undeveloped or damaged minds are unaware of them.

Leibniz has also attacked Locke’s argument. John Harris, in his paper ‘\textit{Leibniz and Locke on innate ideas}’ \textsuperscript{44} said that Leibniz appeared to uphold - there are two causal factors involved in the emergence of innate knowledge into consciousness. According to him, our mind possessed innate knowledge and ideas, which we can extract by sense experience. This serves as the \textit{occasion} or \textit{indirect cause} of the emergence of innate knowledge. Leibniz implied that this is a necessary condition for the emergence of innate knowledge. Reflection and thought, sometimes referred to as ‘attention to what is in us’ by Leibniz, is the \textit{direct cause}. John Harris said that in discussing innate knowledge Descartes has mentioned both the causes.\textsuperscript{45} Descartes maintained that we could extract the innate knowledge of God from the mind by both tradition (explicit teaching) and observation. These are remote or indirect causes. However, these causes are not sufficient. We need a clear and prolonged reflection on the idea of God. This is mainly responsible for the emergence of the ideas and the knowledge of God associated with it into the conscious mind. Harris held that we could assume that Leibniz’s views regarding these causes are similar to those of Descartes. Leibniz, who believed that sense experience is only the \textit{occasion} of the extraction of innate knowledge, contended that children, idiots, and savages do not understand or assent to innate principles because they lack the requisite concentration. Leibniz said:
Innate maxims appear only through the attention which is given to them; but these persons have little of it, or have it for entirely different things. Their thoughts are mostly confined to the needs of the body; and it is reasonable that pure and detached thoughts be the reward of cares more noble.\textsuperscript{46}

Yet if these principles were truly innate, they must be known. Locke argued that it is a contradiction to say that the truths that the mind does not perceive or understand are imprinted in the soul. No proposition is in the mind, which it is not conscious of, since imprinting signifies nothing but making certain truths to be perceived.

Jenkins pointed out that after Freud such a view of the mind is unacceptable.\textsuperscript{47} Now, the Freudian view of an unconscious level of mentality is well established. We would assume that much of the knowledge that the mind possesses is not at a conscious level. However, we can argue that Locke’s contention is acceptable as he was not conversant with the Psychology of this period. Jenkins contended that it is difficult to excuse Locke on this ground since his contemporary Leibniz had made the same point against him without the concept of the Freudian unconscious level of mind to support him.

We have seen that Locke was sceptical about innate potential knowledge. Locke accepted unconscious propositional knowledge of memory but disapproved of any knowledge that is unconscious and of which the mind has never been conscious. John Harris referred to this kind of knowledge as non-conscious knowledge. In the later part of Book I of the ‘Essay’, Locke argued that if there were innate ideas in our mind about which our mind is not conscious, they must be lodged in our memory. If they are not in the memory, they cannot be in the mind. Locke furthermore argued that when ideas are lodged in the memory, the memory cannot bring them into actual view (i.e. our mind becomes conscious) through
remembrance, without the perception that the ideas already existed in the memory. However, this does not hold in case of innate knowledge that does not come from normal sources. He said:

*By this it may be tried, whether there be any innate Ideas in the mind before impression from Sensation or Reflection. I would fain meet with the Man, who when he came to the use of reason, or at any other time remembered any of them: And to whom, after he was born, they were never new. If anyone will say, there are Ideas in the mind, that are in the memory; I desire him to explain himself, and make what he says intelligible.*

Therefore, innate knowledge cannot exist in memory. It follows that innate knowledge does not exist in mind at all.

Leibniz however has refuted this argument of Locke. He contended that, firstly, it is not true that all memories are known as such in the mind. We sometimes recall things, yet we are unaware of doing so. A man who believed had composed a new verse may discover that he had read the verse word for word in the past in some ancient poem. Secondly, Locke accepted unconscious knowledge that is stored in memory. If acquired knowledge can be stored unconsciously in the mind then we can also argue that original or innate knowledge, existing non-consciously, should also be stored in the mind.

Norris also, in reply to Locke’s argument, has said that it is not necessary to uphold the view that mind is always thinking. He has shown that Locke has himself admitted in the ‘Essay’ that the mind contains ideas without being aware of them. Locke said:
But all that are born into the World being surrounded with Bodies, that perpetually and diversely affect them, a variety of Ideas, whether care be taken about it or no, are imprinted on the Minds of Children.\textsuperscript{50}

Again, in the ‘Essay’, while discussing perception, Locke himself has taken the same standpoint as that of Norris that mind is not always aware of all of its ideas. He said:

\textit{How often may a Man observe in himself, that whilst his Mind is intently employ’d in the contemplation of Objects; and curiously surveying some Ideas that are there, it takes no notice of impressions of sounding Bodies, made upon the Organ of Hearing, with the same alternation, that uses to be for the producing the idea of a Sound?} \textsuperscript{51}

Later in the chapter on memory, Locke quoted:

\textit{The other way of Retention is the Power to revive again in our Minds those Ideas, which after imprinting have disappeared, or have been as it were laid aside out of Sight:...For, the narrow Mind of Man, not being capable of having many Ideas under View and consideration at once, it was necessary to have a Repository, to lay up those Ideas which, at another time, it might have use of.} \textsuperscript{52}

Yolton contended that what Locke has said in the above passages contradicts his own standpoint.\textsuperscript{53} Locke himself has defined ideas as immediate objects of awareness. Our mind, thus, cannot possess ideas of which it is not aware, as this violates the very definition of Locke’s idea.

As we have seen earlier, Locke has objected to the use of the word ‘knowledge’ to describe the contents of a non-conscious storehouse, as proposed by Leibniz. Locke said ‘for
if these words (to be in the understanding) have any propriety, they signify to be understood.\textsuperscript{54} Locke said that one who possesses knowledge must be aware of it. John Harris pointed out that this objection to the idea of non-conscious knowledge is incidental to that which the opponents of Chomsky have waged against his claim that every user of a natural language non-consciously knows the rules that constitute the grammar of the language.

Harris argued that if the objector wishes we would not call this knowledge until it becomes conscious. The mind may contain non-conscious knowledge in the same sense that a library contains knowledge. We can say that knowledge may be unknown to that which houses it.

Leibniz has for some reason drawn from his metaphysics for not rejecting various notions of the unconscious. Leibniz has recognized ‘petites perception’ which, taken singly, are below the sensory level and hence mind is not conscious about them. He held that the insensible perceptions are eminently useful in pneumatology, as are the insensible corpuscles in physics and it is equally unreasonable to reject the one or the other under the pretext that they are out of reaches of our senses. Leibniz has also maintained that we have an infinite amount of knowledge of which we are not always conscious, not even when we need it. John Harris pointed out that the above remarks of Leibniz seem to refer to monadic perception and not the innatism of common system.

Yolton in his book ‘John Locke and the way of ideas’ has mentioned about an anonymous writer of the early eighteenth century who in a pamphlet named ‘A Philosphic Essay concerning ideas’ (1705) has tried to reconcile with the opposing views of the seventeenth century regarding innate ideas.\textsuperscript{55} He believed that if we assume that thought and ideas are identical then we have to conclude that there can be no mind without some ideas.
As mind is essentially a thinking substance, it contains ideas from the beginning. This is what we mean by innate or connate ideas. This anonymous author has advanced Locke’s reduction of ideas to powers, i.e. power of thinking and Locke’s claim that mind contains no ideas without being aware of them to their logical conclusion, where ideas are identical with thoughts. Moreover, this author argued that if Locke accepted this notion of ideas then he could not hold the view that mind of a man is *tabula rasa* unless he at the same time denied the view that it is the very essence of the soul to think. Yolton however, expressed his doubt regarding Locke’s acceptance of the view that ideas and thoughts are identical.

Woozley, in the Introduction to his abridged form of the ‘Essay’, argued that Locke would not accept the answer that we actually have innate ideas or principles in our minds from the beginning although we may not be conscious of them.\(^{56}\) For, he rejects altogether the notion of the sub-conscious. Therefore, if the notion of having something in the mind, of which it is not conscious of, is to be explained, it can only be explained hypothetically.

Locke put forward two alternatives. Firstly, we could make a general claim that we have a capacity for grasping the propositions, or more specifically, we can be claim that we shall understand these principles with the help of reason. When we come to reason, Locke pointed out that neither the general nor the specific claim is acceptable. According to the general claim, we say that a proposition is innate if we have a capacity to know it. However, this will not serve to differentiate a class of propositions as innate. For, according to this general claim any proposition, which our mind has a capacity to know, can be innate. By holding innateness to be simply a capacity for knowledge, the discrimination between the propositions that are innate and those that are not, is not possible. Locke argued that those
who said that these innate principles are in the understanding cannot claim that they never perceived them and are completely ignorant of them. He says:

...to be in the Understanding, and, not to be understood; to be in the Mind, and, never to be perceived, is all one, as to say, anything is, and is not, in the Mind or Understanding. 57

Locke therefore concluded that if these principles are by nature imprinted in the understanding then all children and infants must know the truth of them, and assent to them. To avoid this we argue that all men know and assent to these principles when they come to the use of reason. It means either that these innate principles are apprehended when people come to the use of reason or that use or exercise of man’s reason assists them in discovery of the principles. If we regard all truths, which we discover by the use of reason or rational thinking, as innate then there will be no difference between maxims of mathematics and theorems we deduce from them. We must recognize all as innate for all are discoveries made by the use of reason. Further, Locke pointed out that if we say that innate principles are present in our understanding before the use of reason, yet we are ignorant of them until they come to the use of reason, then it is a contradiction. This is to say that men know and do not know them at the same time since understanding implies perception as well.

It may be said that the difference between mathematical demonstrations and other truths that are innate lies in the fact that the latter are assented to as soon as they are proposed while the former are not. Locke pointed out that the actual difference between the two lies in the fact that the mathematical demonstrations have the need for reason or using of proofs to make them out and gain our assent. However, in case of innate principles no such proofs are required. As soon as we understand the principles, we give assent to them. Nobody will
accept that the maxim ‘that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be’ is a
deduction of out reason. Locke said that in the discovery of these innate principles no use is
made of reasoning at all. These principles, which we take as the foundation and guidelines of
our reason cannot need reason for their discovery. Locke contended that if by saying that
men apprehend and assent to these innate principles when they come to the use of reason,
meant that the use of reason assists us in the knowledge of these maxims, then it is utterly
false.

We may argue that people apprehend and assent to innate principles when they come
to the use of reason, i.e. when they reach to a certain determinate age. Locke did not believe
that there are any principles that a person necessarily apprehends when he attains a certain
age. He said that a great part of the illiterate people and savages cross their rational age
without apprehending these more general and abstract truths, which are called innate. Locke
pointed out that our mind apprehends these principles in the same way and discover them by
the same steps as other propositions that are not innate.

Locke argued that if it were true that we knew and assented to these innate principles,
when a faculty of the mind, called reason, begins to exert itself, it would not prove them
innate. Locke agreed with those who believed in innate principles that we have no knowledge
of these principles before the exercise of reason. However, he denied that coming to the use
of reason is the time when we are first aware of them. Locke pointed out that the proposition
that men assent to innate principles when they come to the use of reason, means - forming
general abstract ideas and understanding general names about which these maxims are, are
not possible without the assistance of the faculty of reason. However, this does not prove in
any way that these general maxims are innate.
There are certain propositions, Locke held, whose truth we can grasp immediately; i.e. as soon as we know the meaning and significance of the terms of the proposition. However, Locke did not admit that the ready assent given to a proposition upon first hearing and understanding the terms to be a mark of an innate principle. This would be to confuse a proposition being necessary with it being innate. Many propositions of mathematics, natural philosophy and all other sciences are self-evidently necessary proposition. For example ‘Two and three are five’, ‘Two bodies cannot be in the same place’, ‘White is not black’, ‘It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be’, etc. are seen to be true as soon as we learn the meaning of the terms of these propositions. They are self-evident propositions. Self-evidence and necessity do not argue in favour of propositions being innate. If it were the mark of innate principle then people will find themselves plentifullly stored with innate principles. Either these truths are also innate or self-evidence in itself is no proof of innatism. According to Locke, self-evidence is not a mark of innateness. He said, ‘no proposition can be innate unless the ideas about which it be innate.’ Nobody could deny the proposition that ‘White is not black’ but nobody could claim it as innate for the ideas involved in this proposition are themselves empirical. Once we understand by experience as to what is to be white and black, and to be different, we can see that the propositions are necessarily true. Therefore, the argument from self-evidence and necessity is as weak as that from universal assent. Locke held that there was no need to presuppose any peculiar, mysterious kind of knowing in order to explain our knowledge of these innate principles. We sense them just as we intuit mathematical truth, i.e. two and two are four.

According to Locke, we have no innate principles explicitly. However, we can argue that understanding has an implicit knowledge of these principles. To this, Locke’s reply is
that if a principle is imprinted in the understanding implicitly it implies that the mind is capable of understanding and assenting firmly to such principles. Consequently, all mathematical propositions would then become innate for mind is capable of understanding and assenting to such propositions.

Locke argued that moral principles, like the speculative principles, do not enjoy universal assent. He pointed out that it is difficult to find out a moral rule to which everybody would agree. Therefore, it is evident that moral principles are not innate. Justice and keeping of contracts are the most common rules that everybody accepts generally. Even those who infringe these rules accept them for their own interest. Locke pointed out that we cannot say that those who generally infringe these rules have accepted them as innate principles. They practice them, as rules of convenience within their own communities, for justice and truth are the common ties of society. They keep faith and rules of equity among themselves for their own existence, not because they observe any absolute authority in moral rules or possess innate principles of truth and justice.

We may argue that the people who do not observe these rules in practice may accept them in their thoughts. Locke further pointed out that the actions of men are the best interpreters of their thought. Most people deny these principles in practice, which shows that it is impossible to establish a universal consent in favour of these principles. Hence, we cannot say that these principles are innate. It is very strange and unreasonable, Locke argued, to suppose that innate practical principles should terminate only in contemplation (thought) and do not operate or influence our actions. We have, no doubt, some natural tendencies. People desire happiness and avoid pain. This is true for all persons and of all ages universally. However, these are natural tendencies or inclinations and not innate principles.
regulating our practices. Locke pointed out that if there were certain characters imprinted by nature on the understanding as the principles of knowledge, we could perceive them constantly operate in us and influence our knowledge.

Locke argued that varieties of opinions concerning moral rules show that they are not innate. That men should keep their promise is a great and undeniable moral rule. Regarding this moral rule there are different opinions. A Christian, who believes in another life, thinks that God, who has the power of eternal life and death, requires it of us. However, a Hobbist would say that the society requires it and the Leviathan will punish us, if we do not keep our promise. Again, a philosopher would opine that if we do not keep our promise, it would amount to dishonesty, below the dignity of man and opposite to virtue.

Different countries practice different moral rules. This shows that moral rules are not innate. Locke has cited different instances of enormities practiced without remorse. There are certain places where at a certain age they killed or expelled their parents without any remorse. In a certain part of Asia, sick persons were carried out and laid on the earth before they were dead, exposed to wind and weather, to perish without assistance or pity. In Peru, among people professing Christianity, there was a practice to bury their children alive without scruple. There are places where people eat the flesh of their own children. These instances of enormous brutalities show that there is no innate principle of justice, piety, gratitude, equity, and chastity. Lack of universal consent concerning rules proves that these principles are not inbred.

Locke has contended that arguments from universal assents, put forward to sustain the innateness of moral principle, are useless. He argued that there is no universal agreement regarding the moral principles. Jenkins however has said that we can maintain the
universality of moral principles by distinguishing between a principle and its application. He pointed out that the variation in the moral principle is due to its varied application. There is a sharp distinction between a principle and its application. He has illustrated this fact with an example. There are certain primitive tribes who kill their parents when they become unable to look after themselves. It appears that this infringes upon the principle that it is wrong to murder and one should honour one’s parents. Jenkins however argued that the tribal people would deny that in the circumstances taking life is a case of murder. They would argue that in the act of taking of life they were honouring their parents. In fact, their parents would expect such act as of duty after they have lost their self-sufficiency. Jenkins contended that moral ideas are not variable; what varies is their application. He further said that it is doubtful whether by this means one could demonstrate sufficient uniformity to support the innatists’ case. It is a weakness in Locke’s arguments that he did not give the question adequate scrutiny.

These moral principles, like the speculative principles, are true but not equally evident. Speculative principles, e.g. the whole is bigger than a part, carry their evidence with them. However, moral principles require reasoning, and discourse and some exercise of the mind to discover the certainty of the truth. In other words, they are capable of demonstration, not like natural characters engraved on the mind and visible by themselves. Ignorance of moral rules and the delay of their apprehension prove that they are not innate. We cannot propose a single moral rule that need no proof to ascertain its truth. If they were innate, they would need no reason to gain approbation.

Nobody requires a reason for the proposition ‘it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be.’ It carries its own light and evidence with it and needs no other proof. He who
understands the terms accepts it as true. Locke, however, has pointed out that a person who has the capacity to understand the meaning of the most unshaken rule of morality and has the foundation of social virtue ‘that one should do as he would be done unto,’ need a proof to ascertain its truth. This shows that rule of morality is not innate. The truth of all these moral rules plainly depends upon some other antecedent to them from which they are deduced. Therefore, they are neither innate nor self-evident.

Locke pointed out that people generally accept several laws of morality without knowing or admitting the true ground of morality. This ground of morality is the will and law of God. God himself joined virtue and public happiness together for the preservation of society. We generally approve the virtues not because these are innate but they are profitable. Locke pointed out that everyone would recommend only such rules to others that are convenient to him. People become unsafe and insecure in their social life whenever they transgress these rules. People do not accept the rules of morality inwardly in their own minds as the inviolable rules of their own practice. We find that self-interest and conveniences of life make us approve of such laws of morality. The outward acknowledgement that people pay to them proves that these laws are not innate.

Locke argued that people have no internal veneration for the moral rules. They have no belief or conviction of certainty and obligation of rules either. He pointed out that our conscience restrains us from the violation of these moral rules. Locke contended that conscience is no proof of any innate rule. Moral rules are not innate. We receive these moral rules in the same way as we receive the knowledge of other things and convince us of their obligation. Locke claimed that the source of our moral rule is our reason or our education or opinion of friends around us or customs of our country. These sources serve to
set our conscience at work. This conscience is our own opinion or judgment of the moral
rectitude of our own action. Locke contended that conscience is no proof of innate moral rule
for some people with the same bent of conscience accepts the moral rules that others avoid.

From the practices followed by different communities, we find that moral principles
or rules of virtue, practiced by one community, are generally condemned by another, that is
governed by opposite practical opinions and rules of living.

We may argue that if a law is broken it does not prove that it is not known to all or is
not an innate principle. Locke argued that it is impossible to conceive that everybody
knowing a law to be certain and infallible, publicly reject and renounce it. Locke pointed out
that ‘Whatever practical Principle is innate cannot but be known to everyone, to be just and
good.’ So, it is contradictory to suppose that all people in their professions and practice
unanimously and universally reject that which is known to them to be right and good. No
practical rule, universally transgressed, can be supposed to be innate.

Here, Jenkins raised an objection. He said that Locke has failed to distinguish
between the acknowledgment of a principle, on the one hand, and obedience to it on the
other. He said that in order to establish the innatists’ doctrine, what is required is only the
acknowledgement of moral principles and not the obedience to it. However, the distinction
was not unknown to Locke. He remarked

*The breaking of a Rule, say you, is no Argument, that it is unknown. I grant
it.*

However, the argument, which he put forward against the innatists, is that as breaking of a
rule is widespread in case of moral principles, it (breaking of a rule) constitutes an argument
against it being known. Jenkins contended that this argument however, would not fulfil
Locke’s intention unless it is admitted that obedience to a rule is a condition of knowing or being acquainted with a rule, all other conditions being equal.

According to Locke, ‘parents preserve and cherish their children’ is not an innate rule. If this was an innate rule, it must, on all occasions, excite and direct the action of people. As an innate rule, it must also be imprinted in the minds of all people as a true principle, and everybody should accept it. Locke pointed out that in neither of these senses is it innate. In the first place, it is not a principle that influences actions of all people. In Peru, we find instances of such neglect and abuse of children. Secondly, it is not an innate truth known to all. As it is a command and not a proposition, it cannot be true or false. In order to assert it as true or false, this command must be reduced to a proposition, such as ‘it is the duty of parents to preserve their children.’ However, we cannot understand the concept of duty without a law. Again, what a law is remains unclear without the supposition of a lawmaker, or without reward or punishment. Hence, it is impossible to treat this practical principle as innate without considering the ideas of God, of law, of obligation, of punishment, etc., as innate. Nevertheless, Locke contended that none of these ideas is innate.

Locke pointed out that if a practical rule is in any place generally transgressed, we cannot describe it as innate. We cannot transgress upon a rule confidently without shame or fear, after knowing that God imprints it and He would certainly punish the transgressor. Again, it is impossible for a person to trample upon a moral law that is an imprinted edict of an omnipotent lawmaker. Lastly, Locke pointed out that when a person bids defiance to the innate law and the supreme lawgiver, it shows that the supreme lawgiver imprinted this law in us without assessing our likes or dislikes. This is impossible.
According to Locke, moral laws are not innate. They are set as a curb and restrain to our exorbitant desires. Although Locke denied innate laws, he admitted of laws of nature. He said that there is a great difference between the two. Innate laws are imprinted in our mind but laws of nature are known to us by the use of due application of our natural faculties.

If innate principles are stamped on our minds, we would easily be able to distinguish them from other truths that are learnt afterwards and deduced from these principles. On the other hand, we could easily determine the number of these innate principles. Locke argued that as nobody has tried to make a catalogue of these principles we could not blame those who doubt these principles. Moreover, those who believe in innate principles do not tell us what they are.

Locke has mentioned the name of Lord Herbert in his ‘Essay.’ Herbert, in his book ‘De Veritate’ has stated six marks of innate principles or common notions. These are (i) Prioritas, (ii) Indepentia, (iii) Universalitas, (iv) Certitudo, (v) Necessitas and (vi) Modus Conformationis. Herbert believed that God has imprinted the innate principles on the mind of man. Herbert has also set down five innate principles in his book ‘De Veritate’ for which he identified the marks.

Locke argued that these are clear truths, and if correctly explained, any rational creature will accept them. However, these innate principles or common notions cannot be innate. Herbert failed to prove them innate. Locke argued that the five innate principles or common notions, which Herbert has stated in his book, are not all, for there are many other propositions that carry within themselves the marks of innate notions.

Secondly, not all these marks mentioned by Herbert, can be found in any of his five propositions. Moreover, the third proposition, viz. virtue joined with piety, is the best
worship of God, cannot be an innate practical principle since the term ‘virtue’ is difficult to understand. Let us consider the meaning of the proposition ‘virtue is the best worship of God.’

If the word ‘virtue’ signifies what is in its own nature ‘right’ and ‘good’, then the true meaning of the word will be ‘actions conformable to God’s will’ or ‘actions conformable to the rules prescribed by God.’ The proposition that ‘virtue is the best worship of God’ then will amount to ‘that God is pleased with the doing of what he himself commands.’ This proposition is no doubt a true and certain proposition but it has little use in our practical life. A man may certainly know the proposition as true without knowing what God actually commands us. Again, the word ‘virtue’ will signify different meaning to different people. Hence, this proposition cannot be any rule of his action. Locke contended that there are many other propositions that, likewise, we cannot regard as innate principle. Locke further argued that Herbert’s fourth proposition, i.e. ‘Men must repent of their sins’ cannot be considered as an innate practical moral principle. For, it is a proposition containing a word of uncertain meaning. The word ‘pecata’ or ‘sin’ denotes general ill actions that will draw punishments upon the doers. The principle only tells us that we should be sorry and cease to do that which will bring mischief upon us. However, it is not much more instructive since it does not say which actions are generally called ‘sin’ from which human beings should refrain. Again, ‘virtue’ and ‘vice’ signify different things to different people. Therefore, the proposition containing a word of uncertain signification cannot be said to be an innate principle.

Locke argued that there is no moral rule to which everybody agrees. One may say that the innate principle of morality may or may not be blurred or altered by education and
custom, and the general opinion of those among whom we converse. Locke pointed out that if these moral rules are not blurred and blotted out by education and custom, we must find these moral rules to be alike in all mankind. However, if these principles vary from man to man, due to the impact of education and custom, we must find them clearest in children and illiterate people who are not influenced by education, custom, and opinion. Locke contended that whichever side they take, they would find it inconsistent with visible matter of fact and daily observation.

After giving his arguments against innate principles, Locke explained how we commonly derive these principles. These practical moral principles are not innate. They are derived from the superstition of a nurse or the authority of an old woman. They grow up to the status of ‘principles in religion’ and ‘morality’ from the approval accorded to them by people over a long period.

In Chapter IV of Book I of the ‘Essay’, Locke’s primary aim was to refute innate ideas from which we form both speculative and practical principles. According to Locke, no principle can be innate if the ideas out of which they are formed are not innate. If the ideas were not innate, then there must have been a time when the mind was without those principles. Therefore, these principles cannot be innate. They are derived from some other sources. If we consider newborn children, we shall find that they bring with them some prenatal experiences, such as hunger, thirst, warmth, and pain that they may have felt in the womb. They have no ideas within them that make up those universal propositions. Afterwards, they receive all the ideas from experience and observations.

We say that the proposition ‘it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be’ is an innate principle. However, no one can admit that ‘impossibility’ and ‘identity’ are two
innate ideas, which all men possess and children bring with them. If they are innate, they must necessarily be so.

According to Locke, the child does not have the idea of identity and impossibility before it receives the idea of white or black, sweet or bitter, from experience. Experience teaches him to distinguish between his mother and a stranger. No innate principle helps him to draw this conclusion. Locke argued that it requires great care and attention to form the ideas of impossibility and identity. Hence, these are not innate ideas.

The practical principle ‘God is to be worshipped’ cannot be an innate principle. This cannot be an innate principle unless the ideas of ‘God’ and ‘worship’ are innate. However, the ideas of God and the idea of worship are not present in the mind of children from the beginning. Even among the grown-ups, very few have a clear and distinct idea of worship. If the idea of worship were to be innate, it would have been present in the minds of both the children as well as the grown-up to the same extent.

The innatists thought that the idea of God is an innate idea since without the innate idea of a deity there could not be any innate practical principle. We generally conceive God as a ground of morality, a lawmaker. Therefore, without the notion of lawmaker, it is impossible to have a notion of law and an obligation to observe it. However, we find that apart from the atheists, people living across several regions like Brazil and the Caribbean islands have no notion of God. In civilized countries, many people do not have a clear impression of God in their mind.

Locke argued that even if all mankind had a notion of God, it would not follow that the idea of Him is innate. The idea of fire or sun, heat or number, etc. are universally received and known to mankind but no one would admit that these ideas are innate. Again,
the absence of such a notion in our mind does not constitute an argument against the existence of God, for a great part of mankind has neither a notion nor a name for any such thing. Therefore, they have no argument to prove that there are no distinct species of angel or intelligent being above us, for we have no idea of such distinct species or names for them. Those who have the idea of God, have a disagreement regarding the nature of their conception. Locke contended that it is impossible to have disagreement among people regarding the notion of God, since this idea is already claimed to be imprinted upon the minds of men from the beginning. Therefore, there is no innate idea of God. If there is no innate idea of God, it is unlikely we have innate ideas of anything.

We can hardly claim that Locke has established the non-existence of innate ideas. Jenkins has argued that many commentators on Locke who have pointed out the arguments put forward by Locke, in order to refute innate ideas, do not show that there are no innate ideas but have only shown that there are no good arguments in their favour.

However, in recent years Professor Noam Chomsky has contended that we must presuppose innate knowledge in order to explain the acquisition of language. According to Chomsky, language acquisition is an extraordinarily complex activity that we cannot explain by normal learning methods. A child, he argued, can learn a language within a very short period. Here, the child needs only an exposure to the language; he does not need explicit instructions. His acquisition of language, Chomsky pointed out, is completely independent of his intelligence. All these led Chomsky to conclude that a child has an innate knowledge of the rules governing learning acquisition.

Jenkins has argued that Chomsky’s arguments are indeed very persuasive in favour of innate ideas but added that if we consider these arguments in conjunction with other facts,
then the force of the arguments is reduced. \(^{69}\) Jenkins maintained that as the mind of a child is fresh and unencumbered, he is more receptive to the learning of language and other human activities. Chomsky said that a mere exposure to a language would suffice to explain the acquisition of a language by a child, as he possesses the innate knowledge of the rules governing language acquisition. Jenkins contended that the child’s capacity for imitation is the strongest at the age of four to six years. Therefore, a mere exposure explains all. However, Chomsky may argue that the complexity of language is such that imitation will not be adequate to explain its acquisition. Therefore, the question remains as to how far a child really acquires a language at such an early age. We can argue that if the child has not actually mastered the language by five or six years of age, he masters it gradually over a long period of time, when the initial imitative process is reinforced by reasoning and generalization. Going by these arguments, the ‘mere exposure’ turns out to be crucial and the ‘remarkably short period’ turns out to be rather long and unspectacular.

According to Chomsky, there is no correlation between intelligence and language acquisition. Jenkins argued that from one point of view this supports Chomsky’s hypothesis that a child has an innate knowledge of the rules governing language acquisition. However, we may also argue that it is the process of imitation, along with the gradual development of the abilities to generalize, and not an innate knowledge of the rules, that facilitates the acquisition of a language. Chomsky’s contention about the lack of a correlation between intelligence and language acquisition to support the hypothesis of innate knowledge, falls apart, judged from the latter point of view.
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ibid.; Book I, Chap. III, sec. 22, p. 81.

ibid.; Book I, Chap. IV, sec. 1, p. 85.

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