Chapter IV

Definition and Classification of Knowledge

IV.1. Definition of Knowledge

Locke’s aim in the ‘Essay’ was to inquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge. The following lines, taken from the ‘Essay’ crystallize his threefold aim:

This, therefore, being my purpose is to enquire into the original, Certainty, and Extent of human knowledge; together, with the Grounds and Degrees of Belief, Opinion, and Assent.¹

According to Aaron, this threefold aim put forward by Locke is very significant in understanding his theory of knowledge.² He pointed out that if we discovered the origin of knowledge then it would help us to review the opinion that innate knowledge exists as the source of maxims and principles. Aaron further said that understanding the true nature of certain knowledge would determine whether syllogistic method is a true method for gaining certainty. Again, if we know the extent of knowledge it will help us to determine the types of problems our understanding cannot resolve since they lie beyond our capacity.
Locke also wanted to inquire into the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion, and assent, i.e., into probable knowledge. According to Locke, not all knowledge is certain. He wanted to examine both certain and probable knowledge for thereby he might remove certain hindrances to knowledge such as vagueness and imperfections in language, false methods, and meddling with problems that our understanding cannot resolve.

Locke stated that

*Knowledge... the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas.*

He said that knowledge consists only in the perception of necessary relations between ideas. In those cases where this perception is absent, we may dwell in fancy, guess, or belief but always comes short of knowledge. According to Locke, the object of our knowledge is idea. Ideas are essential for forming knowledge, belief, or even doubt. However, it is possible to have idea without having knowledge. Knowledge presupposes ideas but ideas do not presuppose knowledge, since our ideas may be erroneous.

However, knowledge involves more than idea. It also involves ‘perception.’ The word ‘perception’ is used here in the sense of rational intuition, although it has been used in the ‘Essay’ in different senses. Locke has used the word ‘intuition’ in the sense of ‘perception’ of the relation between ideas. When we know that ‘white is not black’, we perceive that these two ideas, namely, white and black, do not go together. Again, when we know that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, we perceive that the equality of two right ones does not necessarily agree to and is inseparable from the three angles of a triangle. Thus, knowledge consists in the perception of agreement or disagreement, i.e. the relation between two ideas. This agreement or disagreement has the following classes:
1. Identity or diversity,
2. Relation,
3. Co-existence or necessary connection,
4. Real existence.

The first type of agreement or disagreement is identity or diversity. The mind, while it perceives its own ideas, perceives clearly and infallibly that each idea is identical with it and is distinct from all other ideas. This activity of the mind is necessary for reasoning, imagination, and procuring knowledge. Without this activity, no distinct thought is possible. According to Locke, mind, by its natural power of perception and distinction, performs this act. A man, without any intervention of any maxim or proposition, knows infallibly that white and round are different from red and square. Every idea is what it is and is different from all other ideas.

Jenkins pointed out that some commentators of Locke said that the relation of identity or diversity is such a rudimentary stage of discernment of relations between ideas that it would be appropriate to describe such an activity as one presupposition of knowledge rather than item of knowledge in itself.\(^5\) Locke himself has admitted this opinion. In the ‘Essay’, he contrasted the knowledge we have from this sort of discernment with what he called positive knowledge. He said:

\[For\ space\ of\ ideas\ must\ externally\ be\ known\ not\ to\ be\ the\ same,\ and\ so\ be\ universally\ and\ constantly\ denied\ one\ of\ another,\ there\ could\ be\ no\ room\ for\ any\ positive\ Knowledge\ at\ all,\ if\ we\ could\ not\ perceive\ any\ Relation\ between\ our\ ‘idea’\ and\ find\ out\ the\ Agreement\ or\ Disagreement,\ they\ have\ one\ with\ another,\ in\ several\ ways\ the\ Mind\ takes\ of\ comparing\ them.\]^{6}
Again, Locke has described this kind of knowledge as trifling proposition:

Let any one repeat as often as he pleases, that the Will is the Will, or lay what stress on it he thinks fit; of what use is this, and an infinite the like Propositions, for enlarging our Knowledge?  

Knowledge arising out of the relation of identity or diversity has its significance. Knowing an idea that it is not identical with other ideas is to know the idea for what it is, and this is witness to a general awareness, a knowledge, that is presumably absent in most animals. When we bring our ideas from the unconscious to the conscious level of our mind, we know what these ideas are, or if they are distinguished from all other ideas. It is one of the distinguishing marks of human being, as opposed to animals, that we have knowledge of the contents of our minds in a way, the animals do not. My knowledge of the idea of redness may sound ‘trifling’ in itself bit it is symptomatic of a general self-awareness that marks us out as distinctly human.

The second type of agreement or disagreement that the mind perceives, is termed ‘relation’. It is the perception of the relation between any two ideas, such as ideas of substances and ideas of modes, etc. Although Locke defined knowledge as perceiving relation among ideas, yet he coined the same term ‘relation’ to the second sort of relation between ideas. Jenkins pointed out that the justification for the use of the term is that Locke thought that this second sort of knowledge was the paradigm use of the term and was responsible for the largest area of knowledge. Jenkins suggested that it would have been better if Locke had described this second sort of knowledge as ‘relation of entailment’ for Locke himself elevated mathematics and geometry as the model for this kind of knowledge.

He has given indication of why he thinks - this kind of relation forms the most extensive
field of knowledge. Apart from the knowledge it provides in the purely mathematical, geometrical, and formal logical spheres, it does, in theory also extend to the spheres of Ethics as Politics and Religion.

The third type of agreement or disagreement is termed co-existence or non-coexistence. The mind perceives co-existence or non-co-existence in the same object. This type of agreement or disagreement belongs particularly to substances by which Locke here meant physical objects. The relation we are supposed to discern in this context is that of belonging together. When we say ‘Gold is fixed’ it means fixedness, or a power to remain in the fire unconsumed is an idea that always accompanies a particular sort of yellowness, weight, fusibility, malleability and solubility in aqua regia which make our complex idea of gold. In other words, knowledge of objects is knowledge of relations between qualities, to know a substance is to know that certain qualities go together.

Jenkins pointed out that the attempt to construe this, as an avenue of knowledge is abortive. Locke also admitted this himself. Locke commented that this area of human knowledge is yet very narrow. He put forward two reasons to show why this area of knowledge is abortive. These reasons are discussed at length in Chapter VI of this work.

However, the question is why Locke, after recognizing these difficulties, acknowledged co-existence as a form of knowledge at all. Jenkins pointed out that Locke accepted everyday assumptions here. In everyday life, our knowledge of an object depends upon grouping together a number of properties. Locke appeared to accommodate this kind of knowledge under the initial definition as a case of discerning relations between ideas. Jenkins also noted that it is only during the process of doing this that Locke realized the difficulty. He said that from this source strictly, we do not have any knowledge. What we have is belief,
based on regular association of ideas. We find from experience that certain qualities group themselves together and our ideas of them associate accordingly. Therefore, we are here dealing with probabilities based on experience. Locke himself has admitted that

...the highest Probability amounts not to Certainty; without which, there can be no true Knowledge.¹²

Aaron has commented - one might think that Locke had propositions in mind expressing predications where a quality is predicted of a subject, when he discussed the two examples of agreement termed co-existence, e.g. ‘Gold is fixed’ and ‘Iron is susceptible of magnetical impressions.’¹³ However, the agreement, which is called co-existence, is not the subject – attribute relation. Here, Locke emphasized on the co-existence of a further quality with the other qualities in a substance, but not on the attribution of a quality to the substance.

The real existence is the last type of agreement recognized by Locke. The mind perceives actual or real existence agreeing to any idea, e.g. God is.

Regarding the fourth kind of agreement, i.e. the real agreement, Locke conveyed that beyond the realm of ideas there is an object corresponding to every idea. The mind perceives actual real existence agreeing to any idea, e.g. God is.

Jenkins pointed out that we cannot recognize this kind of knowledge as a case of perceiving relations between ideas when one side of the relation is clearly not in the realm of ideas at all.¹⁴ The real existence of something is not an idea. The idea of an object can have a relation with the idea of its existence but not with its actual existence.

Frederick Copleston has raised the same objection.¹⁵ He pointed out that if Locke defined ideas as - whatsoever that is the object of the mind when it thinks, it is not easy to see
how we can ever know that our ideas correspond to real existents, in so far as these latter are not our ideas.

The example ‘God is’ which Locke has given in the case of agreement, which he called ‘real existence,’ raises a difficulty. It seems that Locke analysed the proposition into two related ideas, i.e. ‘the idea of God’ and the ‘idea of existence.’ In modern logic, ‘existence’ is not considered as a real predicate. To think of God and to think of Him as existing are one and the same thing. No difference is made to the content of the idea by adding existence to it. Aaron has also argued that if knowledge is the perception of agreement between ideas, then existential proposition raises a problem.\(^{16}\)

According to Locke, all knowledge is contained within these four types of agreement or disagreement. All that we know concerning any of our ideas is, that it is, or is not the same with some other idea; that it does or does not always co-exist with some other idea in the same subject; that it has this or that relation to some other idea or that it has a real existence without the mind.

We can say that knowledge of identity and knowledge of co-existence are both relational, regarding Locke’s agreement or disagreement of ideas. Locke has admitted this himself. He said

*Identity and Co-existence are truly nothing but Relational.*\(^ {17}\)

However, Locke recognized that they have their own peculiar features and therefore he considered them under different names. However, he did not explain the peculiar features that the knowledge of identity and knowledge of co-existence possess. Aaron pointed that in one sense, all agreements are relations, for an agreement is a relation.\(^ {13}\) It is only in a special sense that Locke recognized one kind of agreement as relation and the others are not. Aaron
argued that the special sense in which we are to talk of relation in this context is completely obscure.

According to Aaron, Locke’s definition of knowledge is compatible with the empiricist theory of the origin of ideas, since for Locke, ideas that are the object of knowledge, are derived from experience.\(^{18}\) However, Aaron pointed out that Locke’s definition is ambiguous as the meaning of the phrase ‘connection and agreement’ is obscure. The examples of the agreement given in the text are all propositions. Therefore, we can say that the analysis of agreement is the analysis of propositions. However, at the time of Locke, the theory of propositions was not developed. Further, proposition is not the only agreement which Locke has recognized. He has also used the phrase ‘perceiving an agreement between ideas’ which means apprehending an implication. Hence, to perceive an agreement may mean perceiving a relation within propositions or perceiving a relation, such as implication between propositions. Therefore, the term ‘agreement’ comprises both the meanings, i.e. perceiving a relation between the term of a proposition and the implication apprehended in inference.

Locke’s definition of knowledge raises a problem. A.D. Woozley argued that if knowledge consists only of ideas and we could know nothing but ideas, then how we could know anything \textit{a priori} or empirically about the world outside the ideas.\(^{19}\) If empirical knowledge is to be possible, such as, for example, that this is a table in front of me, or that aluminium is rustless, etc., knowledge cannot be characterized so narrowly as the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas. In case of empirical knowledge, the perception of the agreement between our ideas and reality is necessary.
Woozley further pointed out that in Locke’s definition of knowledge, the term ‘agreement’ implies an intimation of something beyond the idea itself. Locke did not say that the perceived agreement must be between two ideas. Therefore, Woozley said that the perceived agreement could be between ideas and things other than ideas, e.g. physical objects. He said that this would account for the listing of co-existence and existence together with identity (or diversity) and relation by Locke. Recently, J.W. Yolton has pointed out that Locke did suppose that the second term of the perceived relation might be something other than an idea. Yolton said:

*the knowledge relation... does not always require two ideas, is not always between ideas but is in some cases a feature of ideas. The perception of any kind of relation between or of ideas can produce knowledge. The term ‘agreement’ signals an intimation of something beyond the idea itself. Sometimes the intimation is of other ideas contingently co-existing with the idea, other times it is of other ideas necessarily connected with the idea, still other times the agreement intimates some physical cause producing the idea.*

Woozley pointed out that Yolton’s use of the term ‘knowledge relation’ is ambiguous. If it means relation of knowing then the knowledge relation is not between ideas. It is the relation of perceiving between the mind as the first term and the relational complex as the second. The latter (i.e. relational complex) consists of the agreement between two terms of the complex. The first term of the complex is an idea and the second term may be anything other than the idea. If taken as the relation known, the knowledge relation is the relation of agreement composing that complex. Woozley said that there is no doubt that Locke believed that the second term of the agreement relation might be something other than
an idea. It is possible to produce evidence from the text regarding this issue. However, it does not follow that Locke believed that the agreement could be perceived in the case where the second term was not an idea. We cannot move over from the first proposition ‘not all agreement are between ideas’ to the second proposition ‘not all perceived agreements are between ideas.’

Woozley argued that Yolton has Locke sliding from the first to the second proposition in a way, which is not desirable. Woozley further said that he is convinced that Locke did not believe in the second proposition, as there is no textual evidence that shows that he did. There are many evidences in the ‘Essay’, which show that Locke believed in the first proposition:

*By real Ideas, I mean such as have a Foundation in Nature, such as have Conformity with the real Being and Existence of Things, as with their Archetypes.* \(^{21}\)

and

*All simple ideas are real, ‘all agree to the reality of things.’* \(^{22}\)

Locke further said that all simple things are adequate. He said that

*Being nothing but the effects of certain Powers in Things, fitted and ordained by God, to produce such Sensations in us, they cannot but be correspondent, and adequate to those powers; and we are sure they agree to reality of Things.* \(^{23}\)

Locke has admitted – not only that simple ideas agree to the reality of things, but that we are sure that they do. Here, Locke has accepted the first proposition and might also be taken to maintain the second. However, he does not say that we know that simple ideas agree to the
reality of things, but only that we are sure that they do. Woozley argues that there may be a
difference between knowing and being sure. In Locke’s scheme, at least we cannot assume
that there is not. Therefore, he did not accept the second proposition.

In Book IV of the ‘Essay’, Locke has also said that if existential knowledge is to be
possible, there must be a relation of correspondence or agreement between an idea and ‘the
existence of anything without us which corresponds to that idea.’ The presence of this
relation is a necessary but not sufficient condition of such knowledge. We need also to be
able to infer its presence with certainty. It is important to note that Locke did not here say
that we have to be able to know or perceive this relation or agreement between ideas and
object but that we have to be able to infer it. In addition, for Locke, inferring and perceiving
are certainly not the same.

Hence, we can say that Locke believed in the first proposition that ideas can be
related by agreement to things other than ideas. However, there is no evidence, which show
that Locke believed in the second proposition, i.e. not all perceived agreements are between
ideas. If knowledge consists only in the perception of agreement or disagreement of any two
ideas, it cannot ever consist in perceiving the relations of ideas to non-ideas.

Stillingfleet raised some objections against Locke regarding the possibility of
existential knowledge. In the case of existential knowledge, Locke’s use of the term
‘knowledge’ is not suitable, for the relation of agreement between ideas, and reality of things
that is necessary for the possibility of such knowledge cannot be perceived. Locke himself
has replied to this objection. He said:

\[\text{In the last place, your lordship argues that because I say, that the idea in the}\]
\[\text{mind proves not the existence of that thing whereof it is an idea, therefore we}\]
cannot know that actual existence of anything by our senses: because we know nothing, but the perceived agreement of ideas...Now the two ideas, that in this case are perceived to agree, and do thereby produce knowledge, are the idea of actual sensations (which is an action whereof I have a clear and distinct idea) and the idea of actual existence of something without me that causes that sensation. And what other certainty your lordship has by your senses of the existing of anything without you, but the perceived connexion of those two ideas, I would gladly know.  

According to him, in the case of existential knowledge, the two ideas between which agreement is to be perceived in order to produce knowledge are - the idea of actual sensation (which is an action whereof clear and distinct ideas are produced) and the idea of actual existence of something without me that causes that sensation. Locke thought that in this area nothing else is required to produce knowledge except the perception of agreement between these two ideas.

Yolton has criticized Locke’s response as misleading. Yolton argued that it is not the idea of actual sensation, which carries the agreement with physical causes. It is receiving of sensory ideas that does so. He said that to translate the real existence relation as holding between the idea of actual sensation and the idea of actual existence without me, leaves the nature of agreement ambiguous in this case.

Woozley commented that Locke did not mislead. Instead, Yolton was confused. Locke admitted that it is not the idea of actual sensation, but the receiving of sensory ideas that carries the agreement with physical causes. However, Locke did not translate the real existence relation between idea of actual sensation and actual existence without me into a
relation between the idea of actual sensation and the idea of actual existence. Locke held that these two relations are different. In the case of existential knowledge, we perceive the relation between the two ideas, i.e. the idea of sensation and the idea of existence. This perception amounts to knowledge only when both the cases hold, i.e., the case that other relation between the idea of actual sensation and actual existence without me is there and the case that I am assured that it is there. Locke said in the ‘Essay’:

*Wherever we perceive the Agreement or Disagreement of any of our Ideas there is certain Knowledge: and wherever we are sure those Ideas agree with the reality of things; there is certain real knowledge. Of which Agreement of our Ideas with the reality of Things, having here given the marks, I think I have shewn wherein it is that certainty, real certainty consists.*

### IV.2. Classification of Knowledge into Intuitive, Demonstrative and Sensitive

Locke has classified knowledge in accordance with the level of clarity of knowledge. For him the differences in the clarity of knowledge lie in the different ways of perception that the mind has of the agreement or disagreement of any of its ideas.

We sometimes perceive the agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately by themselves without the intervention of any other idea. This kind of knowledge is termed ‘intuitive knowledge’ by Locke. Locke said:

*...In this, the Mind is at no pains of proving or examining, but perceive the Truth, as eye doth light.*

Our mind perceives immediately that ‘white is not black,’ ‘that a circle is not a triangle,’ etc. Intuitive knowledge is the clearest and most certain knowledge. There is no room for
hesitation, doubt, or examination in intuitive knowledge. All the certainty and evidence of our knowledge depend on this knowledge. In the next degree of knowledge, i.e. the demonstrative knowledge, intuition is necessary in all the connections of the intermediate ideas, without which we cannot attain knowledge and certainty.

Locke called the second kind of knowledge ‘demonstrative knowledge.’ In the case of demonstrative knowledge, the mind perceives the agreement and disagreement of any idea, not immediately but by the intervention of one or more of other ideas. These intervening ideas, which serve to show the agreement of any two other ideas, are proofs. The agreement or disagreement of two or more ideas, which we perceive clearly by means of these proofs, is called demonstration. When the mind cannot perceive the agreement or disagreement between ideas by immediate comparison of these ideas, other ideas are brought to intervene. The mind, for example, cannot immediately understand that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles since there is no scope of a direct comparison. Under such circumstances, the mind invokes other angles, which bear equality with the three angles of the triangle. It is only when these angles are found to be equal to two right angles that the mind perceives that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones.

In intuitive knowledge, the mind perceives the knowledge. However, demonstrative knowledge, that requires the intervention of other ideas before the mind can perceive it, is different. Here, the perception, instead of being immediate, occurs in steps. A steady application of many transient views is required for the mind, so that it can perceive the agreement or disagreement of ideas, it considers. Although this process leads the mind to definite knowledge, it requires proofs and the use of reason.
In demonstrative knowledge, all doubts can be removed by the intervention of intermediate ideas when an agreement or disagreement is perceived. Before the demonstration, there was a doubt. In intuitive knowledge, the mind does not face this doubt.

Knowledge produced by demonstration is clear. However, it is very often and not always, that demonstrative knowledge, unlike intuitive knowledge, is both clear and distinct. In demonstrative knowledge, the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of ideas by the intervention of some other idea that is used as a proof. The mind often does not perceive each step of the proof clearly. Demonstrative knowledge is thus less clear and distinct than intuitive knowledge.

Demonstration is a process involving a long train of proofs. Every step in the demonstration that produces knowledge has intuitive certainty. In demonstrative knowledge, it is necessary to perceive the immediate agreement of the intervening ideas, whereby we find the agreement or disagreement of the two ideas under examination. This intuitive perception of the agreement or disagreement of intermediate ideas must be exactly carried in mind. Therefore, memory is required in order that the mind can recall the steps that enable it to reach the conclusion. However, memory is fallible. So long as we remember the series of steps properly, there can be no doubt about the conclusion. However, our memories are frequently defective and so demonstrative knowledge becomes uncertain.

After describing the nature of demonstrative and intuitive knowledge, Locke said:

These two, (viz.) Intuition and Demonstration, are the degrees of our Knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurances so ever embraced, is but Faith, or Opinion, but not Knowledge, at least in all general Truths. 30
He then introduced another kind of knowledge. This is termed sensitive knowledge. Aaron pointed out that the manner in which Locke introduced the third kind of knowledge reveals his uncertainty as to its precise nature. 31 Locke said:

*There is indeed, another perception of the mind, employed about the particular existence of finite things without us; which goes beyond bare probability, and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of Knowledge.*

If we consider Locke’s opinion, it seems that intuitive and demonstrative knowledge are only two kinds of knowledge. The sensitive knowledge, which is the perception of the real existence of particular things in the world, is merely something, which passes under the name of knowledge but does not actually deserve the name. Locke argued that sensitive knowledge is more than probable, but does not have the transparent assurance associated with the other two kinds of knowledge (i.e. intuitive and demonstrative). However, a conflict appeared when Locke pointed out that when we have perceptual experience of external objects in sensitive knowledge, we also have ideas corresponding to those physical objects. Locke’s view was that in this context we are provided with evidence that eliminates our doubt. Now, if sensitive knowledge is beyond doubt then it cannot be different from intuitive and demonstrative knowledge. Jenkins pointed out that it is true that the means by which we arrive at this knowledge is different from the other two classes of knowledge but qua knowledge claim that it is surely on a level with the other two. 32 He further suggested that Locke had perhaps refused the term ‘knowledge’ to mean what the senses provide us with since he had taken to mathematics as the paradigm sphere for knowledge. In the mathematical sphere, the truths are described as necessary, for one follows analytically from
another, i.e. we are discussing relations between ideas here. Therefore, if we have an idea of a triangle, our knowledge that it has three sides and that the angles add up to $180^\circ$ is drawn out of our concept. Nevertheless, sensitive knowledge does not fit into this model and therefore does not constitute knowledge proper.

At present, our aim is to consider why Locke thought that the senses provide us with ‘an evidence which puts us past doubting.’ He said that there are people who may express doubt regarding existent things that correspond to our ideas, but added that we are provided with evidences that helps to remove the doubt. Locke contended that there is a difference between an idea revived in our mind by our own memory and an idea actually coming to our mind by our senses. When a man sees the sun during daytime, his perception is different from his thought of the sun during the night. Similarly, there is a difference between actually smelling and recalling the scent of a rose. Locke held that to every idea in our mind, there is a corresponding physical object. We must define objects in order to explain the occurrence of the perception we have. According to Locke, in case of sensory knowledge, the cause of our perception must be external objects, for a person who has lost one of his senses, or for some reason cannot use it, will not get the ideas naturally corresponding to that sense. Locke held that senses themselves could not produce the relevant ideas, for if they did, we could expect the eyes of a man in dark to produce colours.

Jenkins pointed out that this is not an acceptable argument since it follows from the above argument that a person who has lost or does not use one of his sense organs has no sensory experience corresponding to that organ. He said that this argument requires another argument to show that he does have sensory experiences because of the use of his senses that these are caused by external objects. That is the very question at issue, namely whether the
occurrence of sensory experience demonstrates the existence of external objects. Jenkins commented that instead of arguing an answer to that question, Locke simply begged it.

Beside this, there is a second argument. According to Locke, there are some ideas, which unlike the ideas of memory, are forced upon us. We cannot resist in having them. If I turn my eyes towards the sun, I cannot avoid seeing its light. On the other hand, we have complete control over our ideas of memory. We cannot invoke or lay off the ideas of sensation aside at will. Locke therefore said that the ideas of senses have objects corresponding to them outside our mind. He said that:

…it must needs be some exterior cause, and the brisk acting of some objects without me, whose efficacy cannot resist, that produce those Ideas in my Mind, whether I will, or no.36

Jenkins pointed out that the second argument is more attractive than the first but it has some defects.37 He held that there are some imagined experiences, which are forceful and irresistible though there is no external object to cause them. Again, a coherent dream is somewhat similar to the situation when we turn our eyes towards the sun. The former case will yield perceptions that will be forced upon us like the light of the sun when we looked towards it. However, for this, no one will think that dream experience has objects corresponding to them.

Locke himself has recognized the force of this argument. He has considered the thesis that sensory experience may have the character of a dream.33 but the strongest argument he could offer against this thesis is that there is a manifest difference between dreaming that one is in a fire and actually being in it. Jenkins said that this argument is nothing more than a reiteration of the claim that sensory experience has the ‘feel’ of being forced upon us and
therefore he does not advance his argument. Locke has himself realized this, for he argued that his opponents might believe that being in fire is no different from dreaming that one is in fire. Therefore, we cannot know with certainty that fire exists without us. Locke said:

\[
\text{But yet if he resolved to appear so sceptical, as to maintain, that what I call being actually in the Fire, is nothing but a Dream; and that we cannot thereby certainly know, that any such thing as Fire actually exists without us.}^{33}
\]

Jenkins pointed out that Locke himself has observed the challenge but he has not answered it philosophically. He said there are certain objects upon the application of which, pleasure or pain follows. Therefore, we know with certainty that external objects exist outside us. This certainty is like the certainty of perception of our own pleasure and pain.

We should now consider two general comments made by Jenkins on Locke’s sensory knowledge.

According to Locke, the knowledge that we have from sense experience generally implies present tense experience of particular objects. The existence of a man in front of me can be verified by my sense. However, Jenkins pointed out that if he is no longer before me, the certain knowledge of his existence is not possible even though it is probable that he still exists somewhere. However, probability does not amount to knowledge. We have seen that sensory knowledge does not meet the very rigorous definition of knowledge contained in Locke’s account of intuition and demonstration. However, Jenkins said that sensory knowledge may not meet the high standard set down by Locke earlier but that he must at least be careful to speak out what he meant by such knowledge.

Secondly, according to Locke, the knowledge we have from the memory of the sensory knowledge is indubitable.
And thus, we have knowledge of the past experience of several things, where of our senses having informed us, our memories still retain the ideas; and of this we are past all doubt so long as we remember well.  

Here, Locke did not acknowledge that memory is not an infallible faculty even when we claim to be remembering ‘well.’ However, in other places in the ‘Essay’, Locke is aware of the fallibility of memory claims. It is on this basis of the awareness that Locke has distinguished demonstrative knowledge from intuitive knowledge. Demonstration proceeds by steps and anything that proceeds by steps requires memory to retain the earlier steps for comparison with the later ones. However, memories are frequently defective and so demonstrative knowledge sometimes becomes uncertain.

We may ask the question whether we know more than the existence of particular objects, independent of us, in sensitive knowledge. Aaron suggested that what Locke asserted is that we know more than the mere existence of particular objects around us and the whole of natural philosophy is based on this extra knowledge. We know particular co-existence of certain powers, which produce sensations in us. Although we do not know these powers directly, we receive sensory experiences of secondary qualities, which come together in regular patterns. Aaron held these experiences give us knowledge of the structure of things themselves. Therefore, we do not merely know that things exist in sensation, but we know particular co-existences in things!

Let us now make a few general comments regarding Locke’s distinction between the different classes of knowledge. It appears that there was a conflict in Locke’s mind over the status of demonstrative knowledge. He has suggested that demonstrative knowledge is a perfectly proper source of knowledge, its only drawback being that it takes more time and
trouble to derive compared to intuitive knowledge. However, having accepted this, Locke went on to claim that demonstrative knowledge is less perfect than intuitive knowledge. Jenkins has argued that Locke was not justified to make such a claim. Jenkins pointed out if the knowledge that is provided by demonstration is ‘certain’ knowledge, then Locke cannot argue that it is more imperfect than intuitively derived knowledge on the ground that it takes longer to reach. If we claim to assign the label knowledge to demonstrative knowledge, then the means by which we arrive at it should not come in the way of the claim to that label.

Jenkins has argued further that Locke has on the one hand, recognized the intrinsic pitfalls of demonstrative knowledge, and on the other, held that the basic presupposition of his ontology, namely God’s existence, had its base upon this class of knowledge. When Locke discussed God’s existence, he made no mention of the intrinsic doubt that must belong to demonstrative knowledge. Locke claimed that our evidence for divine existence is equal to mathematical certainty.

According to Locke, intuitive knowledge is the most certain knowledge. However, Jenkins has said that there is ground for believing that in particular cases it may not be so. Many of the things that we intuitively know turn out to be false. The earth was supposed to be flat in the past based on immediate sensory experience. We now know that this concept was false.

Jenkins held that these examples are unfair to Locke since these examples are empirical, employing the senses. It is possible that Locke did not have these kinds of examples in his mind. He was talking about logical or conceptual entailments.
Morris in his book ‘Locke, Berkeley, and Hume’ said that Locke’s account of sensitive knowledge is not very detailed or careful because Locke thought that his business as a philosopher was to give his attention primarily to knowledge proper.41
Notes and References


7 ibid.; Book IV, Chap. VIII, sec. 3, p. 610.

8 Jenkins, J. John; Understanding Locke, Edinburgh University Press, 1985, p. 189.


10 ibid.; Book IV, Chap. III, sec. 18, p. 549.


23 *ibid.*; Book II, Chap. XXXI, sec. 2, p. 375.

24 *ibid.*; Book IV, Chap. II, sec. 14, p. 537.


28 *ibid.*; Book IV, Chap. II, sec. 1, p. 531.


30 *ibid.*; Book IV, Chap. II, sec. 14, p. 536.


34 ibid.; Book IV, Chap. XI, sec. 2ff, p. 630.


