Chapter 2

Analysis and Examination of the Epistemology and Ontology of John Locke

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we shall expound and critically examine the epistemological and ontological issues in Locke’s philosophy. It is one of our methodological assumptions, as stated in the introductory chapter, that epistemology and ontology are two inseparable aspects of philosophy. Any theory of knowledge involves ontological assumptions about the object and the subject of knowledge. Similarly, any theory of being involves questions about the knowledge of the existing thing. Hence, it is not possible to discuss either of these aspects in complete isolation of the other. In the course of our analysis of Locke’s epistemological and ontological positions, we shall attempt to exhibit the interconnection of these two aspects in his philosophy.

In the first chapter, we discussed the epistemology and ontology
of Aristotle and Descartes. Here, we shall observe their direct bearings on Locke’s position.

Tracing Locke’s philosophy from that of Descartes, we find that though Descartes is a rationalist and Locke is an empiricist, yet, like Descartes, Locke accepts the existence of three separate ontological entities, viz. matter, mind and God. Even though as an empiricist, Locke claims that the sole source of knowledge is sense-experience, yet he accommodates both intuitive and demonstrative knowledge within his epistemological framework. This, again, bears the mark of Cartesian influence. But the most crucial influence of Cartesian thought on Locke is the latter’s acceptance of ‘ideas’ as the only immediate data of our knowledge. Consequently, he defines knowledge as

\[ \text{"the perception of the connexion and agreement or disagreement and repugnancy, of any of our ideas."} \]

In order to consolidate everything concrete and abstract, existent and non-existent, under knowledge, Locke recognises four kinds of agreement and disagreement, viz.

1. Identity or diversity
2. Relation
3. Co-existence, and
4. Real existence

Under Intuitive and Demonstrative Knowledge, he discusses the first two kinds which, according to him, deal only with the logical relations. He explicates the other two kinds, which concern

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the existence of material objects, under Sensitive Knowledge. He brings the existence of self and God, which in his view, are two exceptional cases, under the purview of intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, respectively. Even though, following Descartes he accepts ‘ideas’ as the direct objects of knowledge, he strongly rejects ‘innate ideas’ and affirms the empirical origin of all ideas.

Locke’s doctrine of material substance bears the marks of influences of both Aristotle and the science of his day. He accepts Aristotle’s ideas of ‘substratum’, ‘essence’ and ‘universal’. Again, coming under the direct impact of the Boylean-Newtonian science of mechanics, he introduces some new concepts in his theory of matter, such as the distinctions between primary and secondary qualities, and between ‘nominal essence’ and ‘real essence’. He makes it his objective to justify scientific knowledge through his philosophy. However, Locke’s acceptance of ‘ideas’ as the only direct objects of mind implies his acceptance of three ontological assumptions of Cartesian dualism. Suman Gupta brings them out in the following way:

“1. Mind and Matter are two basic realities which can exist completely independent of one another.

2. ... being separate: they cannot have even causal interconnections.

3. Mind is logically prior to matter.”

From these three assumptions, it logically follows that the mind cannot know matter directly and can know only its own ideas. Locke’s adherence to this mental side of Cartesian Dualism comes in conflict with his commitment to scientific knowledge. This results in a number of inconsistencies which we shall examine in the course of our analysis of Locke’s epistemology and ontology.

In the first part of this chapter, we shall deal with Locke’s account of Sensitive knowledge. It will consist of his views about simple ideas, complex ideas of substance, modes and relations, and knowledge concerning the existence of material objects. In the second part of the chapter, we shall focus on Locke’s account of Intuitive and Demonstrative knowledge which will include knowledge involving the logical relations between ideas as well as the knowledge of Self and God. We shall conclude the chapter with a brief appraisal of Locke’s overall position.

### 2.2 Sensitive Knowledge

As far as Locke’s epistemology is concerned, the term ‘Sensitive Knowledge’ signifies knowledge which is acquired through sense-experience as distinguished from knowledge which is obtained through intuition or demonstration. In this sense, sensitive knowledge includes his entire account of simple and complex ideas, as well as our knowledge of the existence of material objects and the co-existence of their qualities.

According to Locke, the ultimate source of our knowledge is ‘sense-experience’,

"in that, all our knowledge is founded, and from that it"
ultimately derives itself.”

What it amounts to, in Locke’s view, is that the ultimate constituents of our knowledge i.e., ‘the simple ideas’ are always received through sense-experience. As Adam Morton explains Locke’s position,

"His picture of science, and all knowledge, was that it starts with the way things appear to the senses, and then proceeds to more abstract and theoretical representations of things.”

According to Adam Morton, Locke differs from Descartes with respect to this point. Descartes is of the opinion that the ideas which come to us from the appearances of things to the senses are likely to be untrue, whereas those which we know directly through our reason or intellect are true. Locke insists that all our simple ideas are acquired through sense-perception. It is only with simple materials of sense that the mind forms the complex ideas of things through abstract thinking. With this empiricist stand, Locke opposes innate knowledge of all forms, whether they are innate ideas or innate principles, which are supposed to be stamped upon the mind from its very inception. One of Locke’s polemics against ‘innatism’ is the Cartesian view that we can have knowledge of the external world independently of experience, through our innate ideas.

Without mentioning the name of any specific philosopher, Locke attempts to reject the possible claims of innate knowledge. First

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of all, as ‘universal agreement’ is a general mark of ‘knowledge’ as distinguished from belief or opinion, Locke tries to show that we cannot claim any ‘universal agreement’ with regard to the so-called innate truths. Referring to innate principles like “whatever is, is”, Locke maintains,

“it is evident that all children and idiots have not the least apprehension or thought of them.”

He refuses to admit that these principles are implicitly present in the mind, and man becomes aware of them when he comes to the use of reason. Locke’s ground is that on the one hand, to be present in the mind without being aware of them is a self-contradiction, and on the other, empirical evidence shows that most illiterate and savage people know nothing of these principles even at a mature age. If again, ‘innateness’ signifies the innate capacity of the mind, in Locke’s contention, all truths that a man ever comes to know can be regarded as innate.

Even though Locke claims to deny innate knowledge which is independent of experience, yet we find that he himself accepts intuitive knowledge of the existence of Self and demonstrative knowledge of the existence of God, both of which are independent of experience and attained through the reason or intellect. We observe that in the formation of the complex ideas also he recognises the rational activities of the mind. All these actually point towards his attempts to reconcile his empiricism with rationalism. Through the rejection of innate knowledge, what Locke intends to emphasise is that

"Men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge that they have, without the help of any innate impressions."  

It seems to us that by ‘natural faculties’ of men in the above passage, Locke implies both senses and reason. His point is that while man is equipped with the natural powers of knowing, he should try to know everything through the execution of his own powers. This indicates his awareness of individual capacity and his revolt against authoritarianism, which was initiated by Descartes, as mentioned in the first chapter. R. S. Woolhouse also refers to this aspect of Locke’s philosophy in the following words,

“It was of prime importance for Locke that people should seek after truth and see it, wherever it lay, for themselves. Their beliefs should be determined by what they see to be true, not by what is handed down to them.”

Coming back to Locke’s account of sensitive knowledge, we find that in Locke’s view, all that we directly know through sense-experience (which he divides into sensation and reflection) are only ‘simple ideas’. Hence, in order to account for our knowledge of material substances, their different ‘modes’ and their ‘relations’, he introduces the concept of complex ideas. In order to vindicate his theory of knowledge, Locke uses these terms in some specific senses. We shall first try to clarify Locke’s usage of these terms and to show their interconnections.

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First, the term IDEA, which occupies the central place in Locke's epistemology, is defined as

"whatever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought or understanding".\(^8\)

Referring to a snowball, he illustrates that whenever we perceive it, we have in our mind the sensations of white, cold and round, which he calls 'ideas'. From the above definition, we can discern the following points about ideas: first, ideas exist in the mind; second, every idea belongs to an act of perception or thought; and third, in order to distinguish ideas from external objects he calls ideas 'immediate objects' of perception.\(^9\)

SENSATION and REFLECTION, according to Locke, are the two and only two ways through which ideas are received by the mind. Our senses, being affected by external objects, produce ideas in our mind. Locke calls these ideas 'the ideas of sensation', for example the ideas of white, hard, bitter etc. Locke describes the process of sensation in the following terms,

"Our senses ... do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects affect them." \(^{10}\)

From Locke's account of sensation, we can deduce that though, following Descartes, he accepts 'ideas' as the direct objects of per-

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ception, yet due to the influence of his contemporary science, he thinks that all our ideas of sensation are produced in the mind by the action of material objects on our senses. As Descartes does not accept the normal interaction of mind and body, the ideas of sensation for him are only confused ideas.

By Reflection, Locke means

“that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding.”

He explains that once the mind receives the ideas of sensation, it acts on them in different ways, such as doubting, believing, or desiring them, and when it becomes aware of these operations by looking inwards, it receives the ideas of reflection.

From Locke’s version of the ideas of reflection, it appears to us that these ideas stand in quite similar a position to that of his ‘complex ideas’, because for both types of ideas, having the ideas of sensation first is a necessary pre-condition. The mind requires the simple ideas of sensation as the basis of its operation. However, in Locke’s ontology and epistemology, we find these two types of ideas playing two different roles. In order to account for our knowledge of the mental processes, Locke introduces the ideas of reflection, while again he brings in the ‘complex ideas’ with the purpose of explaining our knowledge of material objects and their modes and relations.

Locke designates all ideas of sensation and reflection as *SIMPLE IDEAS*. In Locke’s view, the reason for calling them ‘simple’ is that

"being each in itself uncompounded, contains in it nothing but one uniform appearance or conception in the mind, and is not distinguishable into different ideas."\(^{12}\)

To Locke, therefore a simple idea is a simple, indivisible whole. Another point that he makes about simple ideas is that they are given, and not constructed by the mind. In his words,

"the mind is wholly passive in the reception of all its simple ideas ..." \(^{13}\)

Here, by ‘passivity’, Locke implies that the mind can neither make these simple ideas at its will unless the physical objects act on our senses, nor can it refuse or alter them when they are actually offered to it, as an effect of this interaction. However, it seems to us that though the mind cannot produce these ideas unless they are actually presented to it, it does not mean that the mind is wholly passive in the process of reception. First, the mind has to be attentive for receiving the ideas. Again, the condition and disposition of the mind, at least partially, determine the ideas. In consideration of these facts, it cannot be held that something ‘simple’ is given to the mind.

According to Locke, complex ideas are distinguished from simple ideas with respect to both ‘simplicity’ and ‘givenness’. First, they


are composed of several simple ideas; second, the mind forms these ideas through its various operations. With regard to the formation of complex ideas, Locke holds that once the mind is stored with the simple ideas,

"it can, by its own power, put together those ideas it has, and make new complex ones, which it never received so united."  

Although Locke assumes the possibility of an infinite variety of complex ideas, all of these, he thinks may be subsumed under the three chief heads:

• Substance
• Modes, and
• Relations

Locke refers to three main mental processes as being involved in the formation of complex ideas.

"1. Combining several simple ideas into one compound one; and thus all complex ideas are made.

2. The second is bringing two ideas whether simple or complex, together, and setting them by one another, so as to take a view of them at once, without uniting them into one; by which way it gets all its ideas of relations.

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3. The third is separating them from all other ideas that accompany them in their real existence: this is called abstraction and thus all its general ideas are made.”

We notice a contradiction in the above account. On the one hand, Locke holds that all our complex ideas are formed by combining several simple ideas into one compound one; on the other hand, he maintains that in the case of the complex ideas of relation, the constituent ideas are not united into one.

We observe that Locke lays special emphasis on the mental process of abstraction. This is so because in his view, all our general ideas are constructed through abstraction. Since generality or universality is a fundamental characteristic of scientific knowledge which Locke strives to justify, general ideas are of paramount importance in his philosophy. It is an effect of his being greatly impressed by the Aristotelian concept of ‘form’ i.e. the universal, by virtue of which an individual is a definite kind of thing. According to Locke, though what we receive through sensation are particular ideas, yet we form general ideas(which stand for general features of a number of particular things) through the process of abstraction. In his words,

“the mind makes the particular ideas received from particular objects to become general; which is done by considering them as they are in the mind such appearances,

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Referring to the idea of white, for example, Locke maintains that we receive this idea from several particular objects such as a cup of milk, a chalk, a particular mass of snow, etc. But when we consider that particular feature alone by separating it from all other accompanying features, we make it the general representative of all individual white things. He tries to describe the process more precisely in the following way,

"Ideas become general, by separating from them the circumstances of time and place, and other ideas that may determine them to this or that particular existence." 17

Finally, he makes it clear that by this process of abstraction, we leave out

"that which is peculiar to each and retain only what is common to them all." 18

He exemplifies the method of abstraction in the case of the complex idea of the substance 'Man'. According to him, from all particular 'men' of our observation, when we eliminate all those features in respect of which they differ from each other, such as complexion, height, etc. and retain features like the power of reasoning, the

ability of laughing, and so on, which are shared by all of them, we receive the general idea of ‘man’, which signifies all particular men.

Similarly, in the case of the complex idea of a ‘triangle’ which is an idea of mode, Locke holds that here, the mind fixes a number of qualities such as being a closed figure, bounded on three sides with three straight lines, as the common marks of a triangle. Now, whichever particular figure is found to conform to this group of qualities is called by that general name of ‘triangle’ even though these figures vary from each other in several other respects.

In the context of the complex idea of relation also, Locke contends that it is the common ‘ground’ or occasion by virtue of which all particular cases come under the name of a general relation. Referring to the relation of ‘brothers’, for example, he holds that it applies to all persons who satisfy the common condition of having a common parent. Locke thus attempts to show that all these complex ideas (substance, modes and relation) are formed through abstraction as a result of which all of them stand for general ideas.

With regard to the theory of abstraction, Richard I. Aaron charges Locke with ambiguity. In his words,

“It is possible to distinguish at least three strands in Locke’s argument, which he himself never wholly disentangles.” 19

Aaron’s charge is that from Locke’s exposition of the process of abstraction, it does not become clear whether the general idea is a particular idea representing other particulars, or a part of the

particular idea whose differentiating elements (in relation to others) have been eliminated, or a universal which stands for the common elements of a number of particulars. Hence, the status of Locke’s general idea is ambiguous in Aaron’s view.—

In defence of Locke, J. L. Mackie argues that what Aaron mentions as three different strands are not “really distinguishable” 20 All these three aspects together constitute Locke’s position.

According to Berkeley, particulars alone exist. In his view, general ideas have no ontological existence. Consequently, he rejects Locke’s general ideas which are formed through abstraction. In his view, abstraction involves separation of the inseparable qualities, which is impossible.

Locke’s point is that what he means by abstraction is only partial consideration of some of the features of a complex whole, and not their literal separation. To quote him,

“A partial consideration is not separating. A man considers light in the sun without its heat, or mobility in body without its extension, without thinking of their separation.” 21

J. L. Mackie interprets Locke’s ‘partial consideration’ as

“paying selective attention to one feature in a complex particular object of experience and ignoring the other features which are in fact occurring with it ...” 22

From Locke’s account of abstraction and Mackie’s interpretation of it, it follows that the abstract general idea which signifies only the partially considered (or selectively attended) features of a particular object, has no real existence. In Locke’s words, they are the

“Workmanship of the mind, and not referred to the real Existence of Things.” 23

However, with regard to the general ideas of substances, Locke claims them to be representations of really existing objects. To quote him,

“The ideas of substances are such combinations of simple ideas as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves…” 24

This exhibits a self-contradiction on the part of Locke. Locke’s importance, nevertheless lies in cognizing the role of abstract thinking alongside sense-perception.

James Gibson thinks it to be the the credit of Locke that he recognises the inseparable relation between the general and the particulars through his theory of abstraction. In Gibson’s own words,

“Although there is considerable vagueness as to the psychological process involved, Locke appears to recognise the necessity of a relating activity, by which the abstracted context is thought of in distinction from, and at the

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same time in relation to its particular exemplifications."²⁵

It is due to the influence of Aristotelian thought to a great extent that Locke acknowledges the roles of both the universal and the particular in the knowing process. In Aristotle’s view, we have seen that for knowing an individual, it is essential to compare it with other individuals with respect to their universal characters.

Out of the three complex ideas that Locke advocates, we shall first take up the idea of substance, for critical examination. Substance is the most important of all the three, because while modes and relations depend on substance for their being, substance does not depend on anything else.

2.2.1 Substance

In Locke’s epistemology and ontology, substance has a crucial role to play, because he intends to validate scientific knowledge, which presupposes substance. The aim of scientific knowledge is to unveil the causal connections of objects, and things can be causally connected only if they endure through time. In this section, we shall elaborate and examine Locke’s concept of material substance. We shall discuss his concept of mind or self in the next part of this chapter.

In Locke’s doctrine of substance, we mark the various influences of Aristotle, Descartes and his contemporary scientists, primarily Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle. Pursuing the tradition of Aristotle, Locke presents substance as the ‘substratum’ of qualities

²⁵Gibson, J. Locke’s Theory of Knowledge and its Historical Relations. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1917, p.70.
as well as the ‘essence’ of things. Descartes’ distinction between basic and non-basic qualities of substance finds its place in Locke’s distinction of primary and secondary qualities. In accordance with the scientific ideas of Boyle and Newton, Locke modifies the theories of both Aristotle and Descartes.

Just like Aristotle, Locke claims that substance is the only logical support of the qualities; our ideas of qualities necessarily lead us to the ideas of substance. In his words,

"The mind being furnished with a great number of simple ideas ... takes notice also that a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together ... not imagining how these simple ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some substratum wherein they do subsist ... which therefore we call substance."  

To get the exact implication of this passage, we have to clarify Locke’s distinction between idea and quality. We have already referred to Locke’s definition of an idea as the immediate object of perception, thought or understanding. Qualities, as distinguished from ideas, Locke contends, are powers of material objects to generate ideas in our mind. He says,

"the power to produce any idea in our mind, I call quality of the subject wherein that power is."  

Though Locke considers the ideas to be in the mind, yet unlike

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Berkeley, he holds that the cause or origin of these ideas lies in the outside world. All our ideas, in his view, are caused by the primary qualities of material substances. Hence, Locke has made clear

"the difference between the qualities in bodies, and the ideas produced by them in the mind." 28

However, though Locke first defines qualities as 'powers', later on while distinguishing primary qualities from secondary qualities, he considers the primary qualities as really being in the objects and the secondary ones as only powers resulting from different combinations of those primary ones. J. L. Mackie marks this point in the following words,

"he says that he will give the name qualities to the various powers of objects to produce ideas in us. But immediately afterwards his usage is partly inconsistent with this proposal, for what he identifies as primary qualities ... are not powers: rather they are intrinsic properties of things which may be grounds or bases of powers ..." 29

(We shall discuss Locke's primary-secondary quality distinction in a short while.)

Coming back to Locke's definition of substance, we now understand that by simple ideas 'going constantly together', Locke actually refers to the group of qualities producing those ideas in our

mind. Now, the qualities by their very nature, need a substratum to inhere. Consequently, Locke deduces the idea of \textit{SUBSTANCE} as their support. In his view, in relation to the qualities, the idea of substance is a necessity of thought. In his correspondence with Edward Stillingfleet, he emphasises this point,

"the mind perceives their (accidents') necessary connection with inherence or being supported"

and

"the mind frames the correlative idea of a support." \textsuperscript{30}

However, the concept of substance as the pure logical support of the qualities becomes an empty concept having no significant role to play. W. V. Leyden indicates this in the following way,

"The word 'substance' then stands for a logical presupposition i.e., the notion that the qualities characterizing an object require an owner, some peg or hook, from which they may be supposed to hang." \textsuperscript{31}

As we have already mentioned, Locke's concept of material substance is also influenced by the Cartesian as well as the seventeenth-century scientific conception of matter apart from that of Aristotle. He expresses the mechanistic view of matter through his distinction of ideas into those of primary and secondary qualities. While discussing Descartes (in the first chapter), we have found that following Galileo, he draws such a distinction between the two types

\textsuperscript{30}Gibson, J. \textit{Locke's Theory of Knowledge and its Historical Relations.} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1917, p.93.

of qualities of matter. Hence, Locke simply adapts the already existing distinction within his own epistemological and ontological framework. Locke owes the terms 'Primary' and 'Secondary' to his scientist friend Robert Boyle. In fact, through the recognition of this distinction, Locke attempts to incorporate the scientific ideas of his time into his philosophy.

Amongst the ideas, Locke holds that some are produced by those qualities which are

"utterly inseparable from the body, in what state so ever it be"

and he enumerates five of them, viz.

"solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number" 32

He designates these as primary or original qualities of a body.

We also receive ideas of such qualities, Locke maintains,

"which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities i.e., by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts." 33

For example, he names colours, sounds, taste and the like which he calls secondary qualities.

In order to show that primary qualities really belong to matter, Locke claims that not only our senses find them in every bit of matter which is big enough to be perceived, but also that


"the mind finds (them) inseparable from every particle of matter, though less than to make itself singly be perceived by our senses." 34

This amounts to saying that primary qualities are present in matter at all times and in all conditions independently of our perception. Having thus held the primary qualities as inseparable from every particle of matter, he has presented them as the universal properties of matter. This also implies that primary qualities serve as the distinguishing properties of matter. As Martha Brandt Bolton clarifies the point,

"a thing is a body if and only if it has primary qualities: that is having extension, solidity, movability, a size, shape and position are logically necessary and sufficient conditions for being a body." 35

It is by virtue of these qualities that material substances are distinguished from spiritual substances and God.

On the other hand, Locke attempts to prove with a number of examples that there are no qualities in objects resembling our ideas of secondary qualities. He refers to our ideas of pleasure and pain, for example, and contends that even though these ideas are received through sensation and reflection, nobody will admit that there is anything resembling these in these objects. He extends this observation to all our ideas of secondary qualities and maintains


that there are no qualities corresponding to them in the objects. They are merely the effects of primary qualities on our senses. In his words,

"let not the eyes see light or colours, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell, and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds, as they are such particular ideas, vanish and cease, and are reduced to their causes, i.e., bulk, figure, and motion of parts." 36

Locke attempts to show that our ideas of both primary and secondary qualities are produced by the action of the insensible material particles having the primary qualities on our senses and thereby, generating ideas in our mind. To quote him,

"And since the extension, figure, number, and motion of bodies of an observable bigness may be perceived at a distance by the sight, it is evident some singly imperceptible bodies must come from them to the eyes, and thereby convey to the brain some motion, which produces these ideas which we have of them in us. After the same manner that the ideas of these original qualities are produced in us, we may conceive that the ideas of secondary qualities are also produced, viz. by the operation of insensible particles on our senses." 37

However, a relevant question arises: on what ground does Locke claim that the insensible particles of matter possess the primary

qualities only, and not the secondary ones? In this context, we may refer to J. L. Mackie’s comment:

“If the mind discriminates thus it will be because it has already adopted the distinction.” 38

Mackie’s remark hints at the truth, because the actual ground for Locke’s discrimination between primary and secondary qualities is his acceptance of the then existing scientific theory.

During Locke’s time, science was limited by the mechanical interpretation of the material world. Two chief exponents of this theory were Robert Boyle (1626-1691) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727). The chief concern of the science of mechanics was with the quantitative aspects of physical phenomena. Consequently, the qualities of solidity, extension, figure, number, motion or rest (which Locke specifies as primary qualities) were considered to be important and the qualities such as sound, colour, smell, etc. (which Locke regards as secondary) were not supposed to have any role to play in the mechanical process.

This distinction between primary and secondary qualities was particularly prominent in the Corpuscular Theory of Boyle, by whom Locke was immensely influenced. In Boyle’s words,

“There is in the body ... nothing of real and physical, but the size, shape and motion or rest of its component particles ... nor is it necessary that they should have in them anything more, like to the ideas they occasion in us.” 39

We observe that Newton also regards the material particles as

"... solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, movable particles ...

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Newton, through his Law of Attraction (or Gravitation) for the first time, explains how the material particles get connected with each other, and different qualities result from the different manners of their connection. On the basis of this law, Newton also views the secondary qualities as only dispositions of material particles to produce different sensations in us. Colours in things, for instance, Newton holds, are

"nothing but a disposition to reflect this or that sort of rays more copiously than the rest, (while) in the rays, they are nothing but their dispositions to propagate this or that motion into the sensorium, and in the sensorium they are sensations of those motions under the forms of colours." 41

Following the lead of Boyle and Newton, Locke endeavours to explain the origin of secondary qualities in the same way. He also holds that secondary qualities of colours, sounds, etc. are only powers of the objects, resulting from different configurations of their primary qualities, which produce those ideas in our mind. Referring to our ideas of white and red colours in Porphyry for instance, he maintains that they are not in porphyry at all but it

is only its texture which produces those sensations in us. To quote him,

"It has, indeed, such a configuration of particles, both night and day, as are apt, by the rays of light rebounding from some parts of that hard stone, to produce in us the idea of redness, and from others the idea of whiteness." 42

From Boyle’s and Newton’s account of qualities, it becomes evident that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities is an essential part of their theory of the physical world. It is under the profound influence of the scientific thoughts of Galileo, Newton and Boyle that Locke attempts to provide a philosophical justification of that scientific theory of mechanics. As Suman Gupta says,

"The real explanation of Locke’s distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities lies in the fact that Locke tried to retain as objective those material elements which constitute the basis of mechanical materialism." 43

If we compare Locke’s position with that of Descartes in respect of this distinction between two types of qualities, we observe that in the case of both these philosophers, it is the scientific theory of mechanics which is the basis of this distinction. They recognise the same kinds of qualities as primary and secondary. However, there

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is a fundamental difference between them. According to rationalist Descartes, only the ideas of size, shape and motion etc. are clear and distinct because the mind perceives them through the natural light of reason or intellect. Our ideas of colour, pain, smell and so on are confused because the mind perceives them through the senses as something happening to the body. In his view, there is a

“wide gap between our knowledge of those features of bodies which we clearly perceive, ... and our knowledge of those features which must be referred to the senses ...” 44

However, for empiricist Locke, we receive all our ideas, both of primary and secondary qualities, through sense-experience. The difference between our ideas of these two kinds of qualities, in Locke’s view, lies in the fact that our simple ideas of primary qualities are

“resemblances of them and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves, but the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblances of them at all.” 45

What Locke intends to imply by holding that all our ideas are produced by the primary or real qualities of objects is that through the ideas of these real qualities, the mind comes to know about the existence of material objects as the causes of them. To quote Locke,

"It is therefore the actual receiving of ideas from without that gives us notice of the existence of other things and makes us know that something doth exist at that time without us which causes the idea in us ..." 46

This theory of Locke is known as the Causal Theory of Perception. While supporting Locke's causal theory, J. W. Yolton says,

"One of Locke's interest with primary qualities was with the way they play causal roles in perception." 47

Locke's distinction between the ideas of primary and secondary qualities, as well as his concept of matter as the ground or the cause of our ideas have been severely criticised by Bishop Berkeley. We shall deal with his views in the next chapter while discussing Berkeley as a link between Locke and Hume. In this context, we may refer to Gilbert Ryle, who in the process of refuting the very theory of ideas of Locke, comments:

"Even if there did exist such things as 'ideas' were supposed to be, it is almost impossible to describe them as to make sense of the assertion that some of them 'resemble' or 'represent' realities, ... unless it is granted that we can have the same direct knowledge of realities as of the ideas of them." 48

Here, we may point out that Locke, by accepting on the one hand, that the mind knows its ideas only and on the other, claiming

that matter exists with its primary qualities, tries to reconcile two irreconcilable positions. To hold that the mind

\[ \text{"perceives nothing but its own ideas"} \] 49

contradicts the assertion that some of our ideas are representations of real qualities of matter or that our ideas are produced by matter together with its primary qualities. This contradiction of Locke has been clearly brought out by Maurice Cornforth in the following words,

\[ \text{"if only our own ideas are the objects of our knowledge}
\text{how can we possibly know whence those ideas arise, or}
\text{what they are copies of?"} \] 50

As we have already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, it is under the divergent influences of Aristotle, Descartes and the sciences of his time that Locke's position becomes inconsistent. On the one hand, out of his Aristotelian heritage, he wants to establish substance as the substratum of qualities. However, under the influence of Descartes, he claims that all that we know directly are ideas only. In order to account for our knowledge of substance, Locke holds that all our ideas are caused by the primary or real qualities of substance. His implication is that through the ideas of these real qualities, we come to know material substance itself. But in Aristotelian conception, substance is something distinct from the qualities, which Locke also takes for granted. To quote Locke,

\[ \text{\[50\]Cornforth, M. \textit{Science and Idealism}. (New York: International Publishers), 1947, p.32.} \]
"Substance is supposed always something besides the extension, figure, solidity, motion, thinking or other observable ideas ..." 51

Consequently, it follows for Locke that through our ideas, we become aware of the qualities only and substance, as their mere logical support remains 'unknown'. Hence, he declares substance as,

"only a supposition of he knows not what support of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us." 52

G. W. Leibniz, a contemporary of Locke, criticises him for separating substance from its qualities, because in that case, he contends that substance is left with nothing to be known. In his words,

"If you distinguish two things in a substance - the attributes or predicates, and their common subject - it is no wonder that you cannot conceive anything special in this subject." 53

We find the same line of thought in J. L. Mackie, a twentieth century interpreter of Locke. Mackie says,

"any substratum that underlies all properties and fulfils merely the logical functions of ... holding features to-

gether by being that in which they all inhere, must still be as remote as ever from our view.” 54

The import of the above two comments is that qualities are inseparable parts of substance, consequently any attempt to know the nature of substance, apart from its qualities, is logically bound to fail. Agreeing with the above viewpoints, we also maintain that it is in and through the qualities that substance manifests itself, and vice versa. Hence, the knowledge of qualities implies the knowledge of substance, too. It is Locke’s attempt to know substance as something distinct from the qualities, through the ideas of qualities, which leads him to declare substance as ‘unknown’. To assert the reality of substance, but to consider it as ‘unknown’ at the same time, is self-contradictory.

Having dwelt on Locke’s concept of substance as the substratum of qualities, we now examine his views about substance as the essence of things. According to Locke, since substance stands for the common characteristics of all the particulars of a class, it signifies the class-essence. He fully agrees with Aristotle that

“Essence may be taken for the very being of anything, whereby it is, what it is.” 55

However, as distinguished from Aristotle, he makes a distinction of essence into ‘nominal’ and ‘real’. He claims that things are divided into different classes with respect to their nominal essence only. In order to grasp the full implications of his views, let us first find

out what exactly he means by these terms 'nominal essence' and 'real essence'. Nominal essence for Locke is

"nothing but that abstract idea to which the name is annexed." 56

i.e., by nominal essence, he means all those general ideas which we form through abstraction and to which we ascribe distinct general names. Real essence, on the other hand, he defines as

"that real constitution of anything, which is the foundation of all those properties that are combined in and are constantly found to co-exist with the nominal essence." 57

He attempts to clarify the distinction with his favourite example of 'gold'. To quote him,

"The nominal essence of gold is that complex idea the word gold stands for, let it be for instance, a body yellow, of a certain weight, malleable, fusible and fixed. But the real essence is the constitution of the insensible parts of the body on which those qualities and all other properties of gold depend." 58

Locke's account of 'real essence' clearly points towards the atomic structure of things, advocated by Boyle and Newton. In Newton's words,

"From the very smallest particles bigger ones are formed, and from these largest ones, all in a lattice structure." 59

He also says,

"Depending on the force and manner of coming together and cohering of the particles, they form bodies which are hard, soft, fluid, elastic, malleable, dense, rare, volatile, fixed ... " 60

It means that all the sensible qualities of the body flow from its internal structure. Hence, just like the primary-secondary quality distinction, Locke’s recognition of ‘real essence’ is another mark of his attempt to incorporate the scientific ideas of his day into his philosophy. It indicates, in Suman Gupta’s words,

"Philosophy ... arises in a concrete situation and bears the imprint of the social conditions existing in a particular epoch in history." 61

Analysing Locke’s account of the two-fold distinction – primary and secondary qualities, and nominal and real essence – we discern some interrelationships between the qualities and the essences. First, if we compare the primary qualities with the ‘real essences’ both of which are objective, according to Locke, we notice a difference between the two. While it is by virtue of possessing the primary qualities that all kinds of material objects come under the

category of matter, it is the 'real essence' or the internal material structure of each kind of object which differentiates it from all other kinds. Primary qualities are, thus, more generic than the real essences. Second, from Locke's account, it seems to us that the ideas of secondary qualities and nominal essence have a similar ontological status. In Locke's view, corresponding to the ideas of secondary qualities there are no real qualities but nevertheless, they are produced by the primary qualities of the insensible parts of objects. Similarly, nominal essence signifies only the abstract complex idea formed by the mind but its constituent simple ideas are caused by the real essence or the internal material structure of the object.

In Locke's account, 'real essence' is in the same position with his substance-in-general, as far as our knowledge of them is concerned. As already discussed, substance, as the bare logical support of the qualities, cannot but remain 'unknown'. It seems to us that Locke's 'real essence' is nothing but the supposed support of the insensible qualities of the minute particles, hence it stands on the same footing as substance. To strengthen our view, we may refer to Peter Alexander, who observes:

"After all, if qualities are logically in need of support that must apply to unobservable as well as observable qualities." 62

It is on this ground, therefore, we think that Locke declares 'real essence' just like substance-in-general, as 'unknown'. To quote him,

“as to the real essence of substance, we only suppose their being without precisely knowing what they are.” 63

Even though he holds that ‘real essence’ is unknown, he tries to prove that it is knowable in principle. He argues that it is because of the minuteness of the particles that the ‘real essence’ evades our senses. That is why he says,

“Had we senses acute enough ... ” we “would come nearer the discovery of the texture and motion of the minute parts of corporeal things, and in many of them probably get ideas of their internal constitutions.” 64

However, ideas cannot take the place of reality. Locke, because of his Cartesian assumption that what we know directly are not material objects but ‘ideas’, does not succeed in accounting for our knowledge of objective reality. Both ‘substance’ and ‘real essence’ remain ‘unknown’ for him.

The point that Locke regards both ‘substance’ and ‘real essence’ as ‘unknown’ gives rise to a controversy amongst philosophers as to whether these two are identical or different for Locke. In the words of Michael Ayers,

“Locke does not seem to have thought of the unknown substance and the unknown real essence of anything as identical. This is because he was understandably drawn towards saying that the unknown substance of, for ex-

ample gold and water, or a tree and a pebble, is the same, namely matter." 65

On the other hand, J. L. Mackie holds an apparently opposite view. To quote him,

"Although Locke distinguishes 'pure substance in general' from specific real essences, the former is just an unknown determinable something of which each real essence is a determination or modification." 66

In fact, both these philosophers hit upon the truth, although their language is a bit confusing. Ayers holds that whereas 'real essence' is the principle of differentiation between material substances, 'substance in general' is the principle of unification. Mackie's point is that it is substance as the general substratum of qualities which gets specific forms in different kinds of material substances. What Locke implies through his theory is that though objects differ from each other in respect of their specific 'real essences', all of them are material substances. While from the angle of 'substance in general' all kinds of material substances are identical, from the angle of 'real essence', they are different. Hence, the relation between 'substance-in-general' and 'real essence' in Locke's senses of the terms, may be called a relation of identity-in-difference.

Coming back to Locke's distinction between two kinds of essences, according to Locke, 'real essence' being 'unknown', it is only by the nominal essence of things i.e., by the complex general ideas which we form about them that we classify them into various

kinds. What is essential to any particular thing, he contends, is whether it corresponds to any abstract general idea, by virtue of which it is ranked under a class and bears the class-name. In his words,

"we in vain pretend to range things into sorts and dispose them into certain classes under names, by their real essences that are so far from our discovery or comprehension." 67

Thus, denying the real existence of universals and reducing them to subjective ideas, we find that Locke advocates nominalism. This explains why Locke criticises the Aristotelian view that things are naturally divided into different forms or classes which man comes to know through experience and reason. However, it seems to us that in spite of his view that it is the human mind which ranks objects into different sorts, Locke cannot be regarded as a strict nominalist. In this context, we may refer to the comments of James Gibson:

"while Locke's criticism is directed against what he regarded as an implication of scholastic realism, it must be observed that his own position cannot be identified with that of extreme nominalism." 68

As a reason for not considering Locke as an extreme nominalist, we may quote the following passage from the Essay:


"many particular substances are so made by nature, that they have agreement and likeness one with another, and so afford a foundation of being ranked into sorts." 

Here we observe Locke recognising the objective foundation of generality. Generality, for him, is not simply an abstract idea. However, this contradicts his own statement, namely,

"general and universal belong not to the real existence of things, but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use, and concern only signs, whether words or ideas." 

With regard to the ontological status of a 'universal' therefore Locke's position is not consistent, because of which he cannot be regarded as a strict nominalist.

In this context, we may consider an opposite view as to whether Locke can be called a direct realist or not. We refer to the views of J. W. Yolton, who in his bid to interpret Locke as a direct realist, says,

"The doctrine of ideas as epistemic signs of things is Locke's way of characterizing our awareness of objects." 

Yolton's point is that for Locke to perceive or to know an object means to be directly aware of the object and our having the ideas

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simply shows the mental process or what goes on in the mind while we perceive or know.

However, Locke has clearly stated in the Essay that when we perceive, think or understand what we directly apprehend are 'ideas', not the material objects. To quote him,

"It is evident that mind knows not things immediately, but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them."\textsuperscript{72}

That is why knowledge, in Locke's view, consists in the perception of the connections between ideas. Hence, we cannot be at one with Yolton's interpretation of Locke as a direct realist. Thus, we observe that Locke can neither be interpreted as a nominalist, nor as a direct realist; his position is not a consistent one.

So far, we have dealt with Locke's complex ideas of substances. Now, we move to examine his other two complex ideas: those of modes and relations and their relationship with the complex idea of substances.

\subsection*{2.2.2 Modes}

In order to account for our knowledge of material substances, Locke introduces the complex ideas of substances; similarly, with a view to explaining our knowledge of actions, events, states, conditions etc., he brings in the complex ideas of modes. The point of similarity between these two complex ideas, in Locke's view, is that both of them are formed out of the simple ideas received through

sensation and reflection. Locke makes the difference between the two clear in the very definition of modes:

"Modes I call such complex ideas which however, compounded, contain not in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves, but are considered as dependencies on, or affections of substances ..." 73

With respect to this point, we observe that all the three philosophers – Aristotle, Descartes and Locke – are at one. In Aristotle’s view, we have found that all other categories depend on the category of substance for their being. We find a similar view with Descartes, who holds,

"the nature of mode is such that it cannot be understood at all unless the concept of the thing of which it is a mode is implied in its own concept." 74

But while for both Aristotle and Descartes, modes are objective facts, Locke interprets them (specifically mixed modes) as subjective ideas. According to him, the mind forms these ideas without considering whether there is anything really existing corresponding to them or not. We notice that Locke has not disclosed his position with regard to the ontological status of simple modes. He defines Mixed modes as

"such combinations of simple ideas as are not looked upon to be characteristical marks of any real beings that

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have a steady existence, but scattered and independent ideas put together by the mind"  

For example, he holds that the mind forms the complex idea of 'beauty' by abstracting the ideas of a certain composition of colour, figure, power of causing delight in the observer etc., which he views as 'scattered and independent' ideas of different kinds.

Pointing out the main difference between the complex ideas of substances and those of mixed modes, Locke maintains that the simple ideas, out of which the complex idea of substance is formed, are always such as

"have been discovered to co-exist in nature".

However, the simple ideas which the mind selects to form a complex idea of mixed mode, have no natural unity of their own. To quote him,

"it is plain it has its unity from an act of the mind combining these several simple ideas together and considering them as one complex one"

Hence, according to Locke, the unity of the mixed modes is mind dependent. However, the question is whether the constituent simple ideas themselves are dependent on, or independent of the mind. The answer to this question should be considered in the light of his distinction between primary qualities and secondary qualities. In Locke's view, we have seen that even though

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secondary qualities may be regarded as mind dependent, primary qualities are there in the objects, even when there is no mind to perceive them.

Continuing the discussion of modes as distinguished from substances, Locke observes that in case of modes, nominal essence and real essence are the same. As according to Locke, modes are not

"intended to be the copies of anything", 78

they are their own archetypes. For anything to come under the class of mode, in his view, it has only to conform to that group of ideas which the mind has abstracted (i.e. the nominal essence); and since that abstract idea has nothing beyond to conform, it is its real essence as well. However, in the case of each kind of substance, in contrast, its real essence and nominal essence are different – a point which we have already discussed.

Locke implies that the unity of substance actually flows from its specific material structure i.e. real essence which gives rise to a particular set of qualities. As in the case of modes, this unity is conferred by the mind only, it naturally follows that the modes have no real essence or material structure. Michael Ayers attempts to clarify Locke's point in the following terms:

"If the real essence of specific substance is the determinate constitution of the matter which comprises it, it may seem inevitable that modes which are not composed

of matter should lack underlying real essence" 79

J. R. Milton tries to explain the same point with examples:

"We test our idea of gold by examining a specimen of the metal, but whether a figure in the real world is a triangle, or an action a murder is determined by reference to our ideas" 80

All these interpretations imply that because modes are not material objects like Gold or pebble, they are just subjective ideas.

It is true that modes like beauty, justice, murder and so on are not material objects having material constitutions, nevertheless, they are objective realities of our life. Each of them characterizes or signifies a worldly object or a fact. J. L. Mackie brings out this objectivity of mixed modes with an example. He says,

"the word ‘suicide’, though clearly the name of a mixed mode, is used to refer not merely to the complex idea of someone’s killing of himself, or even to that combination of characteristics alone, but also to suicide as concrete performance, a kind of behaviour, a socio-psychological phenomenon" 81

Similarly, ‘beauty’ is not an abstract ‘idea’ only, it is a particular state of objects or actions which evokes this expression. Hence we find that modes are not subjective fancies but real objective facts of our life. It is only for the convenience of communication that

the mind forms ideas about these objective facts assigning general names to them, but this does not render them subjective.

As in the case of 'substance', in the case of 'modes' also, we notice the same inconsistency in Locke. On the one hand, he declares the mixed modes as mere

"creatures of the understanding." 82

On the other hand, he holds,

"I do not deny but several of them might be taken from observation and the existence of several simple ideas so combined, as they are put together in the understanding" 83

In the above passage, Locke clearly recognises that these complex ideas of mixed modes may be formed on the basis of the existing facts of our life.

2.2.3 Relations

It is now appropriate to dwell upon the third kind of complex ideas upheld by Locke, namely Relations. Here, by 'relations', Locke signifies the relations holding between material substances. Although causal relation is one of the prominent relations holding between material objects, because of its profound importance in both epistemology and ontology, we shall discuss it in detail in a separate chapter (Chapter 4). In this section, we shall deal

only with the general position of the complex ideas of relation as compared with the ideas of substance and modes. The rudimentary difference that he mentions is that while the ideas of substance and modes are formed by combining several simple ideas into one, in case of the ideas of relation, the mind keeps two ideas side by side without reducing them into one and acquires new ideas by comparing them one with another. In his words,

"the last sort of complex ideas is what we call relation, which consists in the consideration and comparing one idea with another" 84

In case of these complex ideas of relation, all his emphasis is on the mental activity of comparing

"upon which depends", 85

he says,

"all that large tribe of ideas comprehended under relations" 86

As these ideas of relation, in his view, are products of the mental act of comparing, he considers them as 'extraneous and superinduced' upon objects. He tries to establish his point through different arguments. First, he contends that relations may come and go without producing any change in the things. For example, he holds that a person by the death of his son no longer stands in the relation

of 'father-son' but he remains the same person. Second, the same thing may stand in contrary relations when compared to different things. Both these facts, Locke argues, confirm the point that relations are

"not contained in the real existence of things" 87

Thus we find Locke's ideas of modes and relations are on the same footing. In his contention, just as the ideas of mixed modes owe their unity to the mind, it is the mind which inputs the 'relations' to the things compared. Locke distinguishes both the ideas of modes and relations from the ideas of substances on the following ground. In his view, ideas of substances are

"intended to be representations of substances as they really are" 88

but the ideas of modes and relations are not copies of anything existing, and because of this fact, Locke regards the ideas of modes and relations as 'real' and 'adequate'; they are real in his sense of the term because they have to conform to nothing but themselves and there is a possibility of something existing conformable to them. He considers them as adequate also, because

"each of them contains in it precisely all that the mind intends it should" 89

Thus Locke, we find, attempts to justify the 'reality' and 'adequacy' of these ideas at the cost of their objectivity.

In the case of these ideas of relations also, we find that Locke contradicts himself. He emphatically says that it is with reference to some ground or occasion that we compare two things. To quote him,

"There must always be in relation two ideas or things
... and then a ground or occasion for their comparison".  

The examples through which he attempts to make his point make it evident that this 'ground' is always an objective reality. For example, when we relate two persons as 'brothers', Locke points out that it is the objective fact of having common 'parent' which serves as the basis of relation here. Similarly, in the case of the 'husband-wife' relationship, the ground is the social objective reality of 'marriage contract'. But if the relationship is founded on some objective ground, it follows that the relationship itself is objective. D. L. Perry brings out Locke's inconsistency in the following words,

"His views commit him to the rather untenable position that extramental things provide a foundation for forming ideas of relation, but lack actual relationships"  

Perry's point is that if the presence of some existing condition between two things provides us a ground for relating them, then

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it means that the things are actually related. In that case, it is untenable to hold that it is the mind which superinduces the relation on the things which are not really related. Hence Locke is inconsistent in considering the ideas of relation as subjective, because in the same breath, he recognises their objective basis.

Locke accepts the Cartesian assumption of ‘ideas’ as the direct entities of knowledge on his empiricist ground. Consequently, the ultimate constituents of knowledge i.e., the simple ideas, according to him, must be furnished through sense-experience – a fact which he thinks assures us about the existence of objects corresponding to our ideas. Now, in the case of the ideas of substances, the constituent simple ideas are experienced as united together, but in the case of the other two complex ideas, the ‘unity’ is not experienced but provided by the mind. It is on this account that he regards the ideas of modes and relations as subjective. But out of the scientific trend of his mind, he cannot but acknowledge that modes and relations have their foundation in objective reality. The clash between these two opposite influences - Cartesian and scientific - makes his position inconsistent.

If we review Locke’s position with regard to all the three complex ideas, we notice some other inconsistencies also. First, while introducing the ‘complex ideas’, Locke distinguishes them from the ‘simple ideas’. He claims that whereas mind receives the simple ideas, it forms the complex ones by uniting several simple ideas

"which it never received so united".92

But in course of describing the formation of the complex ideas of substances, he holds,

"a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together"\(^9\)

To hold that the mind receives simple ideas as conjoined together, amounts to saying that the mind receives complex ideas as 'given'. It involves self-contradiction.

Second, Locke also claims that it is through the mental operations of combining, comparing and abstracting that all our complex ideas are formed. But if we focus on the complex idea of substance as the substratum of qualities we observe that no such activities are involved in its formation. There, we deduce the idea of substance as the logical support of the qualities which we experience as clustered together. Moreover, through his account of 'primary qualities', Locke implies that our ideas of these qualities make us directly aware of the material objects.

As to the other two complex ideas, namely those of modes and relations, Locke attempts to show them as products of the operations of the mind. On the part of an empiricist, as Locke claims himself to be, laying so much stress on the rational activities is no doubt a sign of inconsistency.

With regard to all the three complex ideas of Locke, we have observed that two opposite influences, working simultaneously on his thought, have led him to inconsistency.

To recapitulate the main points of Locke, discussed thus far in the realm of sensitive knowledge: Locke strongly objects to

any kind of innate knowledge. All our knowledge he views as being derived through sense-experience which he further divides into sensation and reflection. What we directly receive through sense-experience, in Locke’s view, are simple ideas of primary qualities and secondary qualities. Out of these simple ideas, he maintains that we form complex ideas through various operations of mind. He enumerates three sorts of complex ideas, namely substance, modes and relations. In case of the complex ideas of substances, Locke claims that the unity of the idea is ‘given’ in nature but the unity of the other two kinds of complex ideas, is only provided by the mind. However, all these simple ideas and complex ideas, according to Locke are only the materials of knowledge and knowledge arises from the perception of the agreement or disagreement between these ideas. We have already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter the four kinds of agreement or disagreement advocated by Locke and have stated that out of these four kinds, Locke has brought out two, namely, ‘co-existence’ and ‘real existence’ under the province of sensitive knowledge.

We shall now deal with Locke’s account of these two kinds of connections between ideas which involve existence and observe, how far in Locke’s view, they yield knowledge.

**Co-existence and Real Existence**

By ‘co-existence’ Locke here signifies the co-existing of the qualities of a particular kind of material substance in that substance. Citing the example of “Gold is fixed,” Locke holds that here we perceive the agreement between the idea of ‘fixedness’ and and the other ideas constituting the complex ideas of ‘gold’ i.e., we perceive that
the quality of 'fixedness' co-exists with all other qualities of 'gold' like yellow colour, malleability, fusibility etc. Locke contends that about such co-existence of qualities of a substance we cannot attain any certain knowledge, because we do not perceive any necessary connection between the ideas, which in his view, is the essential condition of certain knowledge. According to Locke, all our ideas of a particular kind of substance flow from the internal material structure or 'real essence' of that substance. This 'real essence' being 'unknown' for Locke, it is not possible to know the exact set of qualities which necessarily co-exist in a particular kind of substance. Our complex idea of a substance, in Locke's view, consists of those simple ideas only which have been observed to co-exist, but these are very few in number and we cannot have any certain knowledge as to whether any other simple idea has agreement or disagreement with those. Our complex ideas of substances, in Locke's words,

"are such combinations of simple ones as carry not with them any discoverable connexion or repugnancy but with a very few other ideas." 94

As we cannot discover any necessary connection between the ideas, we depend entirely on experience for that matter. As far as our experience goes, we always have found 'malleability' to co-exist with the other qualities of gold, but in Locke's view, experience of the past cannot guarantee the future. Hence, our knowledge regarding 'co-existence' is only probable.

Let us now turn to the other kind of agreement or disagreement which Locke includes under Sensitive knowledge, namely ‘real existence’. By this, Locke means

“actual real existence agreeing to any idea.” 95

For example, to say “Gold exists” imports perception of the connection between the idea of ‘gold’ and its actual existence in the world. Here, Locke faces a grave objection. How can he call a connection between idea and existence as a connection between ideas? Michael Ayers puts forward the objection in the following way,

“Presumably both ideas must be before the mind if they are related, and yet there seems to be nothing in sense-experience to count as the idea of existence.” 96

Ayers’s point is that according to Locke’s analysis, all that we receive through sensation are ideas of qualities and powers, but not of existence, over and above these. In that case, there cannot be a perception of connection between an idea and its existence, which is not an idea. Locke himself is aware of the gulf between idea and existence. We find him acknowledging,

“the having the idea of anything in our mind, no more proves the existence of that thing, than the picture of a man evidences his being in the world.” 97

Hence, the problem before Locke is: How, ideas in our mind ensure the existence of things in the outer world? Unlike Berkeley, Locke does not reduce reality to ideas but seeks the explanation in terms of ideas themselves. He contends that in receiving the simple ideas we immediately become aware not only of the ideas but also of the existence of objects which acting on our senses produces those ideas in our mind.

In his words,

"Simple ideas are not fictions of our fancies, but the natural and regular productions of things without us, really operating upon us, and so carry with them all the conformity which is intended or which our state requires..." 98

According to Locke, when we perceive through our senses, the senses assure us of the existence of things by which they get affected. Locke attempts to confirm this point through several arguments. First, the fact that in the absence of a sense-organ, we cannot have the corresponding sense-ideas and that the sense-organs themselves cannot produce them, indicate the action of external objects on our senses. But Locke, in this argument, by taking the existence of sense organs for granted begs the question. Secondly, Locke refers to the fact that neither can we create the simple ideas at our will, nor can we refuse or alter them when they are actually offered. This, he emphasises, points towards

"the brisk acting of some objects, without me, whose efficacy I cannot resist, that produces those ideas in my

mind, whether I will or no” 99

Again, our actual sensations are often accompanied by the feelings of pleasure or pain, which also, according to Locke, suggests the action of objects. Finally, he argues that the report of one sense can be verified by those of others. Through all the arguments what Locke attempts to establish is that in our sense-perceptions there is an element of direct awareness of the existence of material objects. However, in Locke’s own view, this awareness amounts to be nothing more than

“an assurance that deserves the name of knowledge”, 100

because there is no necessity of thought to connect the sense-ideas with the external objects. Moreover, this assurance concerning the existence of material objects, in Locke’s view, lasts only as long as the sensation lasts. To quote him,

“this knowledge extends as far as the present testimony of our senses, employed about particular objects, that do then affect them, and no farther.” 101

In this context, we may point out that it seems quite likely that Hume picks up this ‘mental assurance’ of Locke and tries to prove that our belief in the existence of material objects is nothing but a matter of mental feeling. But while Locke emphasises that

it is objective reality which gives rise to this assurance of mind, Hume’s attempt lies in denying objective reality.

Coming back to Locke, he holds that to assert the existence of an object when it is not present to the senses, is only probabilistic, not certain. According to him, only when we perceive a necessary connection between the ideas either intuitively or demonstratively, we acquire knowledge. However, whenever the connection is only probable we pass beyond the realm of knowledge to that of belief, faith or opinion. To quote him,

"Intuition and Demonstration, are the degrees of our knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these with what assurance so ever embraced, is but Faith, or Opinion, but not knowledge." 102

Hence, neither in the case of the ‘real existence’ of material objects, nor in the case of the ‘co-existence’ of their qualities, in Locke’s view, can we have knowledge. Is it not then self-contradictory on the part of Locke to regard sensitive knowledge as ‘knowledge’? It seems to us that it is because sensitive knowledge satisfies the condition of being indubitable, that Locke considers it as a degree of knowledge. About our knowledge concerning the existence of material objects, he says,

"here, I think, we are provided with an Evidence, that puts us past doubting." 103

However, when he calls only Intuition and Demonstration as 'knowledge' and brings sensitive knowledge under the level of Faith or Opinion, he takes both the criteria of 'indubitability' and 'certainty' into account. He views knowledge, in the strict sense of the term, as that faculty of the mind

"whereby it certainly perceives, and is undoubtedly satisfied." 104

Hence, it seems that it is only on the criterion of going beyond doubt that Locke ascribes the name 'knowledge' to sensitive knowledge, even though here in his view, we do not perceive any necessary connection between the ideas. We find that D. L. Perry supports this point:

"in the case of knowledge of external things immediately present to one's senses, Locke relies (as he must) upon the psychological criterion of indubitability without appealing to necessary agreement between ideas." 105

Knowledge of the external world means exploring the causal connections of objects. Now, these causal connections according to Locke (which we shall discuss in the fourth chapter) are based upon the 'powers' of objects which emanate from their specific internal structures. These internal material structures, in Locke's view, being 'unknown', we cannot have any certain knowledge regarding the causal connection of objects. In his contention, what we constantly observe are only the sensible effects such as 'fire warms',

'loadstone draws iron', and 'animals are nourished by food',

"but the causes that operate, and the manner they are produced in, we can only guess and probably conjecture." 106

Hence, our sensitive knowledge concerning the material world, according to Locke, is only probable. He defines probability as 'likeliness to be true'. The mind receives a proposition for true,

"upon arguments or proofs that are found to persuade us to review it as true, without certain knowledge that it is so." 107

He elucidates the point in the following way. When such propositions conform to our own constant and never-failing experience and are confirmed by the testimony of others, we believe them to be true. In Locke's words,

"These probabilities rise so near to certainty that they govern our thoughts as absolutely and influence all our actions as fully as the most evident demonstration; and we make little or no difference between them and certain knowledge." 108

His point is that objectively speaking, sensitive knowledge is only probable, but subjectively, we feel them as certain. Locke also points out that since the scope of universal and certain knowledge

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is very limited, we depend upon probability to a great extent for our survival on this earth. He makes his message evident in the following words:

"He that, in the ordinary affairs of life, would admit of nothing but direct plain demonstration would be sure of nothing in this world but of perishing quickly." 109

This trend of Locke may be counted as pragmatism in its germinal form. This pragmatic element, we shall find, is present in Hume's philosophy also.

Having dealt with Sensitive Knowledge, we now focus on Locke's account of Intuitive and Demonstrative knowledge.

2.3 Intuitive and Demonstrative Knowledge

As we have already stated in the introduction to this chapter, Locke, under the influence of Cartesian thought, recognises 'intuition' and 'demonstration' as two main sources of knowledge, in addition to sense experience. He not only considers them as sources of knowledge, but also holds that we attain certainty only through intuition and demonstration. It is again through intuition and demonstration, respectively, Locke claims, that we know the existence of ourselves and that of God. To quote him,

"we have the knowledge of our own Existence by Intuition; of the Existence of God by Demonstration." 110

We observe that Locke defines Intuitive and Demonstrative knowledge in exact conformity with his general definition of knowledge. To quote him,

"sometimes, the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other: And this, I think, we may call intuitive knowledge." ¹¹¹

In the case of intuitive knowledge, Locke holds that the mind perceives the truth directly and stands in no need of proof. He cites the example, “A circle is not a triangle”, where the mind perceives the disagreement between ‘circle’ and ‘triangle’ immediately. However, when the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement not immediately but only

"by the intervention of other ideas(one or more, as it happens)”, ¹¹²

Locke calls it Demonstrative Knowledge. For example, he maintains that we cannot perceive directly the equality between the three angles of a triangle and two right angles, but when we find some other angles which are equal to these both, we come to perceive the equality of the two i.e., three angles of a triangle and two right angles. In his view, demonstration also yields certainty, provided the intuitive certainty of each step is ensured. Hence, he says,

"It is on this intuition, that depends all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge." 113

On this account, in the gradation of knowledge, Locke ascribes the highest position to intuitive knowledge, demonstrative knowledge coming next to it, and sensitive knowledge he places at the lowest rank. This is clearly self-contradictory on the part of an empiricist.

According to Locke, the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas intuitively only when the agreement or disagreement is either of the following two kinds: 'identity or diversity' and 'relation'. By the first kind, Locke means that every idea is identical with itself and is different from every other one. For example, white is white, and white is not black. What Locke means by this 'identity or diversity' seems to be the same as what Descartes signifies by the 'clarity and distinctness' of ideas. In Descartes' view, an idea is 'clear' when we understand what exactly it means, and 'distinct' when we can distinguish it from other ideas. According to Locke, in the case of 'identity or diversity', the mind perceives the connections between the ideas immediately and with certainty because here, the relation between the ideas follows necessarily from the ideas. From the very meaning of the words 'white' and 'black', it follows that white is only white, not black. Locke points out that these propositions, though absolutely certain, are only verbal or tautologous, which he terms as 'trifling'. Even those propositions where the predicate is contained in the subject, Locke views as 'trifling'. For example, 'Gold is metal' does not provide us with any new information.

this type of proposition has been named by Immanuel Kant as 'Analytic propositions'.

The other kind of agreement or disagreement which Locke calls 'Relation' actually stands for relations holding between mathematical ideas. Locke claims that although the ideas used in the mathematical sciences are ultimately derived from experience (such as the ideas of unity, space, etc.), yet it is only after being completely abstracted from all conditions of existence that they are applied in mathematics. They do not have to conform to any external existence for their truth. Consequently, the agreement or disagreement of these ideas depends entirely on the ideas and can be ascertained through the intellectual operations of the mind i.e., intuitively or demonstratively. To quote him,

“All the discourses of the mathematicians ... concern not the existence of any of those figures; but their demonstrations, which depend on their ideas, are the same, whether there be any square or circle existing in the world or no.” 114

While discussing Hume's 'Relations of Ideas', we shall find that he adopts essentially the same theory. Unlike Hume, however, Locke advocates the absolute certainty of the mathematical propositions. Each step in mathematics is properly recorded with precise symbols which can be checked off and on. Hence, Locke believes that there is hardly any chance of error in it due to lapse of memory. As distinguished from identical propositions, mathematical propositions, he claims to be informative. For instance, he refers to the proposi-

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tion "The external angle of all triangles is bigger than either of the opposite interior angles." Locke's view is that though this truth follows necessarily from the complex idea of 'triangle', yet it is not contained in the idea of 'triangle'. Hence for Locke, mathematical sciences furnish us with certain and informative knowledge.

Locke, through his account of intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, attempts to show that though these are rational activities of the mind, the ideas on which they operate are ultimately derived through sense-experience. At this point, he differs from Descartes, for whom the objects of intuition are always non-sensuous innate ideas. But Locke, we find, does not stick to his empiricist standpoint. He cites our knowledge of the existence of self and that of God as instances of intuitive and demonstrative knowledge. These are clearly not cases of connections between ideas derived through experience. Let us enquire into his account of the self first and then that of God.

2.3.1 Self

The existence of the self, according to Locke, is a unique case, because it is only in the case of the self that we become directly aware of its existence without the intervention of ideas. Locke is completely at one with Descartes with respect to the point that our awareness of the self is immediate or intuitive; it is implied by each of our conscious activities. He just echoes Descartes when he says,

"I think, I reason, I feel pleasure and pain: can any of these be more evident to me than my own existence?"
If I doubt of all other things, that very doubt makes me perceive my own existence.”

All this amounts to saying that consciousness implies self-consciousness. Though in the footsteps of Descartes, Locke accepts the existence of the self or spiritual substance, he differs from Descartes as to our knowledge of its nature. For Descartes, just as the existence of self is self-evident, so is its nature. In Locke’s view, the nature of the spiritual substance is unknown and on this account he considers it at par with the material substance. Ironically, he says,

“We have as clear a Notion of the Substance of Spirit, as we have of Body; the one being supposed to be (without knowing what it is), the substratum to those simple Ideas we have from without; and the other supposed (with a like ignorance of what it is) to be the substratum to those Operations, which we experiment in ourselves within.”

Like Descartes, we find that Locke accepts the existence of mind or spirit as the substratum of our mental operations. However, he denies the Cartesian view that thinking constitutes the nature of mind. He refers to the fact of dreamless sleep which, he thinks, is an evidence against the perpetual thinking of the mind; all that we know by experience is only that the mind sometimes thinks. Locke’s point is that we are not in a position to know the nature

of a substance; we simply suppose its being as the substratum of the simple ideas (i.e., the accidents). That is why about the nature of the mind or spirit, he holds,

"We must content ourselves in the ignorance of what kind of being it is ... " ¹¹⁷

This ignorance about the nature of the spirit, according to Locke, implies the impossibility of deciding whether it is material or immaterial. Locke argues that just as it is hard to grasp how a material thing can think, it is equally hard to understand how an unextended thing can exist. This line of thought that only extended things exist, or that matter cannot have thinking, seems to indicate the influence of mechanistic materialism on Locke’s thought. This observation gets strengthened from the following comment of Locke:

"God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking ... " ¹¹⁸

In Locke’s view, as we are absolutely in the dark about the nature of the soul, we also do not know whether the soul is indivisible or not. However, this scepticism about the indivisibility or continuity of the soul gives rise to the problem of personal identity for Locke. If we do not know whether the soul is indivisible or not, then we cannot be sure whether it is the same identical self or not. Henry E. Allison expresses the problem of Locke in the following terms:

“if we do not know that our soul is indivisible, how do we know that it persists through time? And if it does not persist, in what sense can we talk about the person remaining the same?” 119

While discussing Descartes in the previous chapter, we find that he accepts the soul as indivisible. Hence, the problem of personal identity does not arise for him. Locke attempts to solve the problem through his special account of self, or ‘person’. In his view, identity depends upon that to which it is applied. Locke considers neither the continuity of the human body, which for him means only the continuity of an animal life, nor the continuity of a spiritual substance sufficient or necessary to account for the identity of a person. In Locke’s view, a person is a

“thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places . . . ” 120

A person does all this through his consciousness, which alone is inseparable from thinking. Hence, in Locke’s view what is essential for a person is his ‘consciousness’. It is through consciousness that a man becomes aware of himself as well as of his difference from other men. To quote Locke,

“since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that that makes everyone to be what he calls self,


and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things: in this alone consists personal identity i.e., the sameness of a rational being." 121

Citing different instances, Locke attempts to show that neither the identity of the body, nor the identity of the soul has anything to do with the identity of a person. The soul of a man may be reincarnated in another man without the latter having any consciousness of the previous man’s thoughts and actions as his own. In that case, Locke is of the opinion that inspite of the soul being the same, the bodies are different, and different are the persons. If again, the unity of a man’s consciousness becomes separated due to a memory lapse, Locke argues that here there are two separate persons with the same body and soul. Therefore, Locke’s point is that

"self is not determined by identity or diversity of substance, which it cannot be sure of, but only by identity of consciousness." 122

According to Locke, it is this reflective consciousness which unifies all our sensations, perceptions, thoughts and desires under one self. Through memory, one becomes conscious of one’s past thoughts and deeds as one’s own and thus present consciousness gets linked with the past, forming a continuous self. In his words,

"as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity

We shall observe that like Locke, Hume also resorts to memory in his theory of self. However, in Hume’s theory, the purpose of its use is different.

In Locke’s exposition of the self or person, we notice that on ultimate analysis, it turns out to be nothing other that the Cartesian self, which is pure consciousness. The only difference lies in the fact that Locke divests the self not only from the body, but also from the mind. What does he actually want to signify by his ‘person’? The answer seems to come at the end of Locke’s discussion of personal identity. There, he defines ‘person’ as

\[\text{a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit, so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness and misery.}\]

From the above passage, it follows that Locke’s ‘person’ stands for a rational being who is responsible for his actions and can be rewarded or punished accordingly. That is why he thinks that the identity of a person consists in his consciousness only. A person is accountable for his actions only so far as he is conscious of his acts. Hence, for Locke the main significance of personal identity is ethical; he does not mention about its epistemological importance. It is essential for a person to continue through time for acquiring knowledge. Moreover, even for ethical purposes, Locke’s concept of ‘person’ is inadequate or incomplete. It is a complete

\[\text{of that person.}\]  


biological, socio-historical man who acts and enjoys or suffers the consequences.

Locke’s theory of self has been criticised by several philosophers. Thomas Reid, for example, comments,

“It may be observed that in this doctrine; not only is consciousness confounded with memory, but which is still more strange, personal identity is confounded with the evidence which we have of our personal identity.”

125

Reid’s point is that the identity of a person cannot be equated with consciousness or memory. It is a normal fact of human beings that they often forget things but they do not become different persons on that account, which proves that identity is not the same as memory. Reid also contends that it is true that through consciousness, one becomes aware of one’s identity. However, that only means that consciousness is the evidence of personal identity. Locke confounds this evidence with personal identity itself. Almost on the same ground, Bishop Butler accuses Locke of arguing in a circle. In his view, while consciousness of our past experiences presupposes personal identity, Locke defines the latter in terms of the former. As D. G. O’Connor explains Butler’s point,

“For I would not be genuinely recalling them had they not happened to me.”

126

It is only because the self which is now recollecting, is the same identical one which had the experiences that it can recollect them as his own.

Jonathan Bennett points towards the inconsistency of Locke while Locke denies the requirement of either bodily or mental substantiality for the identity of a person. To quote him,

"Locke implies that persons are not substances. Yet, his basic meaning for substance is just that of 'thing' and he says firmly that a person is a thinking thing." 127

What Bennett attempts to show is that Locke, through his own definition of 'person' implies that it is an enduring entity, a 'thinking thing', which means that it is a substance. Hence, Locke has no point in denying the substantiality of person. Thus, we observe that all these objections are directed against Locke's abstract concept of the self as pure consciousness. This separation of consciousness from the concrete biological person bears the mark of Cartesian influence. Now, we shall probe into his views about the existence of God as a case of demonstrative knowledge.

2.3.2 God

Like Descartes, Locke also accepts the ontological being of God, but as to the proof of God's existence, he differs from Descartes. According to Descartes, we have a clear and distinct idea of God, inscribed in our mind (i.e., innate) and God's existence follows necessarily from the very idea of him as an All Perfect Being.

We have discussed this in the first chapter while dealing with Descartes. However, Locke wants to make his argument acceptable to the modern scientific world, where the basis of belief is concrete certainty. He objects to Descartes' view on the ground that the idea of a Perfect Being may include the idea of His existence but that does not entail His real existence. Locke clarifies his point in a paper entitled *Deus* in the following terms,

> "Any idea, simple or complex, barely by being in our minds, is no evidence of the real existence of anything out of our minds answering that idea." 128

In Locke's view, real existence can be proved only on the basis of real existence. He attempts to show that we can deduce the existence of God demonstratively from the existence of self, of which we have certain intuitive knowledge. He argues as follows:

> "If therefore we know there is some real being and that Non-Entity cannot produce any real being, it is an evident demonstration, that from eternity there has been some thing . . . " 129

What he means is that since I exist, there must be some cause of it because the real being cannot come out of nothing. Locke claims the ultimate cause to be eternal because otherwise, it would be produced by something and that again by something else and so on, *ad infinitum*. We come across a similar argument in Descartes' philosophy. To prove the existence of God, he holds,


"something cannot proceed from nothing ... what is more perfect ... cannot proceed from the less perfect." \(^{130}\)

Locke further argues that the cause of finite selves must be a cognitive being because in his view, it is

"impossible that incognitive matter should produce a cognitive being" \(^{131}\)

As far as production is concerned, neither Descartes nor Locke seems to take into account the possibility that in the process of change and development, a new quality may emerge which was not there in its cause. Hence, the very ground of Locke’s argument for proving the existence of God does not seem to be adequate to us. Moreover, though Locke, as distinguished from Descartes, claims to prove the ‘real existence’ of God, in actuality he does not do so. All that he proves through his argument is that we cannot conceive of a real being coming into existence without there being a cause of it from eternity. This amounts to saying, in R. I. Aaron’s words, that

"the idea of real being carries with it the conception of its necessary existence." \(^{132}\)

Therefore, Locke’s argument for the existence of God does not seem to be any special case of demonstration following from the


real existence of self. It is just like any other demonstration holding between two ideas.

Thus, we observe that Locke does not succeed in proving the existence of God demonstratively. The existence of God as an Eternal, Infinitely Powerful Being cannot be directly related to any concrete real existence. The existence of such a non-sensuous Being can be conceived through reason, but then it turns out to be a conceived existence, not real. In fact, the existence of God is a matter of faith which Locke attempts to present as an object of reason, and remains unsuccessful in his bid.

2.4 Conclusion

Having discussed different aspects of Locke's epistemology and ontology, we now intend to have a brief examination of his position as a whole. We have found that Locke accepts the ontological reality of matter, mind and God. However, his account of the knowledge of their existence contradicts his very definition of knowledge. The connection between an idea (whether of matter, mind or God) and its real existence cannot be termed as a connection between ideas only. As far as our knowledge of the existence of self is concerned, Locke shows that it is a case of direct intuitive knowledge. In his view, knowledge of the existence of God is deduced from this intuitive knowledge of the self. With regard to our sensitive knowledge of the existence of material objects, Locke seems to imply that we receive some direct awareness of their existence as long as our actual sensations last. Hence, in all the three cases of our knowledge of existence, Locke implies that an element of direct mental aware-
ness is necessary, not perception of connection between ideas.

It is also self-contradictory on the part of an empiricist to declare intuitive and demonstrative knowledge as proper knowledge and knowledge which is gained through sense-experience as only 'faith or opinion'.

We observe that in respect of intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, Locke applies both 'certainty' and 'indubitability' i.e., logical necessity and mental assurance as the criteria of knowledge. However, when it comes to sensitive knowledge, he takes only the psychological criterion of 'indubitability' into consideration. since 'Sensitive knowledge' provides us with mental assurance, he designates it as 'knowledge'. This shows his inconsistency.

In his view, we cannot go beyond our 'ideas' and grasp the nature of substances, whether material or mental. As far as material substance is concerned, this claim reduces his whole theory of matter based on scientific findings, into inconsistency. In the realm of mind, it generates the problem of personal identity. In order to resolve this problem, he reduces the self to pure consciousness.

Let us now focus on the positive aspects of his philosophy. Through his refutation of innate ideas and principles, he emphasises that all our knowledge is acquired. He attempts to show that the entire range of our knowledge can be comprised under sensation, intuition and demonstration. However, from an analysis of his views about 'knowledge', we notice that in his account, sensation does not provide us with as much knowledge as the materials of knowledge.

In his exposition of the three complex ideas of substance, modes and relations, Locke clearly recognises the role of reason. Unlike
Berkeley and Hume, Locke's recognition of this joint contribution of experience and reason takes him a long way towards the possibility of knowledge. Having recognised the rational activities of mind as well as intuitive and demonstrative knowledge, Locke embraces rationalism to a great extent in his so-called empiricist system. It also seems that Locke, by acknowledging the importance of both experience and reason, as well as by declaring material substance as 'unknown', anticipates the position of Kant, the eighteenth-century philosopher.

From Locke's analysis of knowledge in terms of the four kinds of agreement and disagreement, it has been found that while two of them ('Co-existence' and 'Real existence') deal with 'existence', the other two ('Identity or Diversity' and 'Relation') involve only the logical relations of ideas. Hence, it can be held that Locke's analysis of knowledge prepares the ground for Hume's division of knowledge into 'Matters of Fact' and 'Relations of Ideas'. This point will be clear from the detailed study of Hume's epistemological and ontological positions.