Chapter 1
Introduction

In this thesis we are critically analyzing and also comparing the ontological and epistemological positions of David Hume and Bertrand Russell. It is natural curiosity to ask how comparison is possible between an empiricist (Hume) and a linguistic (Russell) philosopher. Reasons for this are two fold. One, there is a considerable time gap between Classical empiricism and the relatively recent linguistic philosophy. Two, linguistic philosophers are widely known to deal only with language and its various aspects. But we are of the view that Russell in spite of being a linguistic philosopher also has an ontological and epistemological position through which he discusses reality. It is also our finding that Russell's ontological and epistemological assumptions are very much similar to those of Hume. This explains our attempt at comparative study. In our thesis we fundamentally proceed with three methodological assumptions.

1. We are of the view that there is a remarkable difference between what a philosopher claims to be doing and what he actually ends up doing.
2. In a structurally consistent and coherent philosophical system, its ontology and epistemology are logically inseparable.
3. In order to explore a philosopher as to what he is actually doing, it is indispensable for us to trace his ontological and epistemological claims historically.

In order to study anything fruitfully one should proceed systematically. This hints for a method, which will lead us to a correct understanding of the subject apart from helping us in finding out any inconsistencies involved. Our method is historico-analytic. It is our view that theories of David Hume and Bertrand Russell can be historically traced from the philosophies of Rene Descartes, John Locke and George
Berkeley. We also believe in criticizing the claims of the philosophers we are dealing with, so that we will be able to detect any inconsistencies involved. It may be mentioned here that we will be limiting our analysis only to those aspects of the theories of these philosophers, which have influenced the ontological and epistemological views of Hume and Russell.

We begin our analysis with the theories of Rene Descartes since he figures first in the chronological order among the three.

**Rene Descartes (1596-1650)**

Descartes is a rationalist philosopher. He is also a geometrician and mathematician. Descartes claims that his aim is to discover knowledge of existing things that can be gained with certainty. Descartes ambition is to satisfactorily answer the question what is truth? He claims to use skepticism as his method to reach his goal. Through this method he proceeds to doubt everything that it is possible to doubt, so that he may reach what he is absolutely certain since he cannot doubt it without assuming its existence. He writes in the 'second meditation', "Anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, as if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty."\(^1\) This is his methodological skepticism.

Descartes claims that senses frequently deceive us, such as with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance. But, then again there are other instances, the knowledge of which, though supplied by senses are quite certain. He exemplifies such knowledge as follows: "...that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on.

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Again, how could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen...”\(^2\) This means that a madman might doubt the parts of one’s own body. Therefore, for Descartes, it is quite a possibility to doubt the testimony of his senses. He asserts, "Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.”\(^3\)

This way Descartes doubts everything possible including senses, memory, waking thoughts, existence of the external world. He also doubts science of physics, astronomy, medicine and other disciplines which depend on the study of composite things. But he does not doubt arithmetic, geometry and the like which deal with the simplest and most general principles. He is of the view that whether they really exist in nature or not, they contain something certain and indubitable. “For whether I’m awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides. It seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion of being false.” But after considering everything thoroughly Descartes finds it difficult to doubt one thing namely his own existence. "...I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind”.\(^4\)

Now what is this ‘I’ that necessarily exists? What am I? It is a thing, which thinks. That is thinking or thought is inseparable from me. Descartes asserts, “I am, I exist - that is certain...as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist...I am...a thing that thinks, that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason...”\(^5\) Consequently, Descartes comes

\(^2\) Ibid., p.13.
\(^3\) Ibid., p.12.
\(^4\) Ibid., p.17.
\(^5\) Ibid., p.18.
to the conclusion that I exist because I am thinking. In other words 'Cogito-ergo-sum', that is, I think therefore I am. If he wants to doubt the fact that he exists, then he has to admit the fact that he is doubting, which implies that he exists. Because doubting is a form of thinking. I think or I doubt immediately implies I am. Descartes suggests that it is the first and most certain knowledge that occurs to one.

Therefore Descartes concludes knowledge of ‘I’ as absolutely certain, as clearly and distinctly perceived, and so it is true. Thus he also furnishes us with a criterion or test of truth; clearness and distinctness. But, clear and distinct ideas are not derived from sense experience/observations. Their source, according to him, is found in innate ideas. These ideas, Descartes believes, are not in the mind at birth, but are innate in the sense that some diseases are innate in certain families. Babies are not born with them but with adequate facilities to acquire them. Descartes concludes that axioms of mathematics, laws of thought, law of causation, certainty of one's own existence are examples of innate ideas.

For Descartes since ‘I’ am a thing which thinks other mental activities also can be attributed to it. That is, ‘I’ is, "A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions." It must be a substance, a spiritual-substance whose principal attribute is thought. He argues that there could not be thought without a thinker, nor could such an attribute as thought exists unless there were a substance in which it inheres.

This is how Descartes establishes the distinction between mind and body. He not only distinguishes mind and body but claims that they are two separate and irreducible substances. This position is known as Cartesian Dualism. In Philosophy,

\[6\] Ibid., p.19.

\[7\] The word 'substance' is derived from the Latin word 'Substantia', which in turn is derived from the Greek word 'hypostasis' which means 'Standing under'. Aristotle [384 BC - 322 BC] is the first philosopher in the history of philosophy, who systematically discusses the concept of substance. For Aristotle, 'substance in the trust and the primary and most definite sense of the word, is that which is
dualism is the view that reality consists of two disparate parts. Descartes’ dualism is taken to be the source of the mind-body problem in the history of western philosophy. His dualism also led to the formation of two schools of thought in Philosophy - Idealism and Materialism. Philosophers who try to reduce matter to mind are called Idealists and those who reduce mind to matter are called Materialists.

Since mind and matter are two independent substances, between them they possess two different and independent attributes.\(^8\) As we have seen the essence of mind is thought. Descartes ascribes extension as the attribute of body. This means physical world cannot have any limitations. He finds mind as purely mental and matter as purely material. He sees mind as active and free while matter as passive. Mind is without extension and 'no body' can think. To quote Descartes, "...by a body I understand whatever has a determinable shape and a definable location and can occupy a space in such a way as to exclude any other body, it can be perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste or smell, and can be moved in various ways, not by itself but by whatever else comes into contact with it. For, according to my judgement, the power of self-movement, like the power of sensation or of thought, was quite foreign to the nature of a body; indeed, it was a source of wonder to me that certain bodies were to contain faculties of this kind".\(^9\)

We criticize that though Descartes denies through 'doubting' the existence of body, through the same method he asserts the existence of mind. In fact from the concept of mind he further deduces the existence of the external world and even the

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\(^8\) For Descartes, God is the absolute substance and mind and matter are relative substances. For they need the support of God to exist. But, between them mind and matter are independent.

\(^9\) Ibid., pp.17-18.
separation between mind and body. He claims to deduce the mind on the basis of indubitable premises. It is his claim that in his philosophy he follows the demonstrative method of mathematics. This method has the following characteristics according to Descartes:

1. the certainty about its demonstrations
2. the evidence of its reasoning.

Descartes' philosophy is an attempt to justify the (then) existing scientific knowledge about the world. He therefore fashions his epistemology in such a manner that it should help to separate what is certain from what is probable and what is probable from what is mere superstition. He, being a rationalist, believes that the truth of every sort could be established without observation and experiment. He speaks of two methods of knowing:

1. Intuition: by which he means the conception of an un-clouded and un-attentive mind and immediate intellectual awareness. For example, black is not white.
2. Deduction: this he describes as a correct inference of facts that are known with certainty. For example mathematics and logic.

Intuition, for him, is more valuable than deductions because of its certainty and simplicity. Intuitive knowledge, for Descartes, 'is the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of.' Therefore intuition is the primary source of knowledge. Deduction is treated here, as a method of simplification rather than as a method of proof. Clear and distinct propositions are understood by the mind intuitively. Each separate step in a series of geometrical theorem, seems to be true intuitively at the time that it is established. A series of such intuition constitute a demonstration. Clear and distinct ideas are not caused by sense observation. Their source must be found in innate ideas. Descartes also speaks of adventitious ideas gained through sensations.
For example, we see the sun and experience the sensation of heat. Sensory knowledge includes the knowledge derived from experience, observation and experiment.

To conclude our discussion of Descartes’ philosophy, we find that the whole edifice of Cartesian system is based upon the assumptions:

1. Mind and matter are two basic realities which can exist completely independent of each other.
2. Furthermore being separate, they cannot have even causal interconnections... they cannot interact with one another.
3. Descartes also assumes that though mind and matter are two independent substances yet mind is logically prior to matter.\(^\text{10}\)

We read the logical implication of the above stated assumptions as mind can know only its own ideas. And to accommodate the knowledge of the external world/matter he introduces the concept of innate ideas in advance. In order to acquire knowledge one does not have to search outside the sphere of pure mind and its ideas. Some of the ideas within the mind are clear and distinct and others are confused. Clear and distinct ideas give us the knowledge of the reality outside the mind. This way in Descartes’ programme of knowledge we find that the subject of knowledge is pure consciousness - a consciousness alienated from its biological and social basis, source of knowledge is mind's own clear and distinct ideas and object of knowledge is material substance/matter having primary qualities. Methodological implication of Descartes’ theory is that it is metaphysical because in this philosophical system the subject, the object and the source of knowledge are all abstractions compared to the real subject, object and source in a valid knowledge situation/system.

\(^{10}\) Suman Gupta, “Metaphysics and the Verification... An Appraisal,” *The Viswabharti Journal of Philosophy*, XXXI(1); Aug 94; 39-49.
We have seen that Descartes in the pretext of reaching the certainty of ‘I’ through the method of doubt, reaches not only the distinction of mind and body but also establishes the supremacy of mind and relegates body to secondary position. For he does not say that I walk, therefore my body exists, but asserts that I think, therefore my mind as pure consciousness exists. This makes it clear that consciousness (mind) and external world (matter) are distinct and separate for him. Thus he splits the consciousness of man from his physical body and considers mind and body in abstraction constituting two separate and unconnected substances. Therefore Descartes interprets substance and its attributes as the conscious self and its different states. It is our view that the problem of mental substance is a problem of personal identity for him. To quote Descartes ‘Everything in which, there exist anything that we perceive, i.e., any property, quality or attribute of which we have idea is called a substance, neither do we have any other idea of substance itself, precisely taken then it is a thing in which this something that we perceive or which is present objectively in some of our ideas, exists formally or eminently. For by means of our natural light we know that a real attribute can not be an attribute of nothing.’\(^{11}\)

It seems to us that for Descartes, substance and attributes are relative terms as he does not make clear what he means by an attribute - a property or relation - through which he can clarify the idea of substance. And we perceive the argument that attributes are what qualify substance and substances are what have attributes, is nothing but a circular one.

We do not find Descartes’ ‘I’ as the corporeal self with a brain and consequently with the quality of thinking, but a pure ego or consciousness of the idealist. We argue that from our discussion so far we have ample evidence to consider Descartes as a subjective idealist.

John Locke (1632-1704)

John Locke is an English philosopher and proponent of empiricism. However, Locke is close to Descartes in many respects. Most significant is his acceptance of Descartes’ dualism. Locke takes up the ontological aspect of Cartesian dualism and combines it with empiricism. Because of this combination, Locke faces difficulties while explaining his theories. We will try to bring out this aspect of Locke in the following discussion.

Locke in his epistemology advocates empiricism. It is Locke's belief that knowledge can be acquired only through sense-experience. He accepts the existence of material reality to a certain extent which it facilitates. His ontological position on materialism. This is, in fact, to promote some interest in the material world and to encourage the development of science and technology which is a necessities in Locke's period.

Though Locke rejects the rationalism of Descartes, he accepts his dualism. That is, Locke also accepts that pure mind can know only its own ideas and mind and matter are two causally independent substances; also mind having the attribute of thinking and perceiving and matter having the attribute of extension, solidity and so on. But, as we have seen, Descartes holds that the nature of these substances is known, Locke considers them to be unknown and unknowable. We may quote Locke as follows: "...therefore when we speak of any sort of substance, we say it is a thing having such or such qualities: as body is a thing that is extended, figured and capable of motion; a spirit, is a thing capable of thinking; these and the like fashions of speaking intimate that the substance is supposed always something besides the extension, figure, solidity, motion, thinking or other observable ideas, though we know not what it is...The same thing happens concerning the operations of the mind, viz., thinking, reasoning, fearing, etc. which we concluding not to subsists of themselves, nor apprehending how they can belong to body or be produced by it, we are apt to think these the actions of some other substance, which we call spirit; ... 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." This way by accepting an independent spiritual substance he makes room for religion in his philosophy.

Philosophy, according to Locke, consists in knowing the true nature of things. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the origin of ideas to understand the real nature of things and to know what knowledge is certain. What is the source of knowledge? Locke's epistemology suggests that all our knowledge is derived from sense experience. This is the opposite view of Descartes, who derives knowledge from one's ideas. But, Locke points out that innate ideas are not universally present in the minds of all people. Innate knowledge falls into two kinds: self-evident logical principles and moral rules.

Opposing the view that innate ideas are universally present Locke gives the example of the concept of God. It is not an innate idea because, concept of God is different for different people. For some it does not exist at all. Had it been an innate idea, then even savages would have had an idea of God. Further ethical principles are not innate in the sense that we cannot fix up an absolute standard of morality. Ethical principles vary from person to person, society to society and nation to nation. They are not self-evident. Therefore Locke rejects innate ideas in the sense that they are not universally present.

Locke is of the opinion that mind in its first state is a ‘tabula rasa’, ‘a dark chamber’, or an ‘empty cabinet’ devoid of all contents. How does it come to be furnished? When does it derive all the materials of knowledge? ‘Experience’ is

Locke's reply to these questions. In book II, chapter I of *Essay* he writes, "Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas. How comes it to be furnished? Whence can it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has pointed on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this answers, in one word, from experience; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself."\(^{13}\)

Since there are no innate ideas, Locke proceeds to show the manner in which we acquire ideas through experience. By idea, Locke means whatsoever the mind directly comprehends. Ideas are the immediate objects of perceptions. The ideas thus received are simple ideas. The mind has the power to repeat, compare and combine such simple ideas into various varieties of complex ideas. Locke believes that the mind of an infant before it has received any sensation is entirely devoid of ideas. But, once the mind had the material to work upon, it takes an active part in the process of attaining genuine knowledge. Locke regards 'simple ideas' as the units out of which all knowledge is constituted. There mainly are two kinds of simple ideas. Simple ideas of sensation received from only one sense such as colour, sound, taste, touch, heat, cold etc. There are also simple ideas received from more than one sense like space, figure, motion, rest etc. Then there are simple ideas of reflexion which arise from our becoming aware of our own mental processes. Lastly there are simple ideas which we receive both from sensation and reflection such as pain, pleasure etc.

About simple ideas of sensation and reflection Locke writes, "First, our senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them. And thus we came by those ideas we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities; which when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external objects convey into the mind

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p.45.
what produces there those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call SENSATION...By REFLECTION...I would be understood to mean that notice which the mind takes of its own operations and the manner of them, by reason whereof there came to be ideas of these operations in the understanding."\textsuperscript{14}

He continues, "Since the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them."\textsuperscript{15}

This implies that mind can know only its own ideas which are produced in the mind through the action of the external material objects. Therefore Locke claims that the mind, through sense experience cannot know the external material objects themselves. We may note here that the distinction between internal and external itself is arising because of the conception of dualism of mind and body. This is because, as Suman Gupta rightly points out, "...contents of the mind can be regarded internal only when we do not regard the mind as dependent upon and conditioned by the body. If we hold the view that unless there is a body, physiological and chemical processes, a nervous-system etc. there cannot be a mind, then the intestine and the brain are as internal as our ideas."\textsuperscript{16}

Locke makes a distinction between ideas and qualities. The immediate object of our perceptions is ideas and 'that' which is producing an idea is quality. Locke says, "Whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought or understanding, that I call idea and the power to produce any idea in our mind, I call quality of the subject wherein that power is. Thus a snowball having the power to produce in us the idea of white, cold, and round, the powers to

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp.45-46.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., Book IV, chapter 1, p. 291.
produce those ideas in us as they are in the snowball I call qualities."\textsuperscript{17} Locke, then speaks of two kinds of qualities of objects. Locke claims that it is through simple ideas we grasp primary and secondary qualities of objects. It is evident that Locke uses these terms to distinguish the objectivity of properties of things. Descartes calls primary qualities as the ‘essential’ qualities. Locke agrees with Descartes. For him, primary qualities are the real qualities or the fundamental qualities with which the object is constituted. The very moment, we separate the primary qualities from the object, the object ceases to exist. Solidity, extension, number etc. are the fundamental qualities with which the object is made up of. The separation of primary qualities from the objects makes it possible to have a total change in the structure, form and appearance of the object. Primary qualities, quotes Locke, “such as are utterly inseparable from the body, in what state so ever it be…such as sense constantly finds in every particle of matter which has bulk enough to be perceived;…These I call \textit{original} or \textit{primary qualities} of body; which I think we may observe to produce simple ideas in us, viz., solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number.”\textsuperscript{18}

For Locke, secondary qualities are not real or fundamental in the sense that these depend on the perception of the subject. Example, the colour, the taste, the small, etc. of the objects always depend on the perception of the individual. The very same object is viewed as blue, when looked through a blue spectacle. The jaundiced eye sees everything as yellow. When we are suffering from cold, we get a different smell of objects. This shows that the actual colour, taste and small differ depending on the nature, constitution and predisposition of the mind. It also depends on the nature, the physical state etc. of the body. Therefore, secondary qualities are not real, according to Locke.

Locke writes about secondary qualities as, “Such qualities which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us by

\textsuperscript{17} John Locke, Book II, Chap. 8, 1961, p.71.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.71.
their primary qualities, i.e. by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as colour, sounds, tastes, etc. These I call secondary qualities." Now, Locke makes it clear to us the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. He explains, "that the ideas of primary qualities of bodies 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 resemblance of them at all. There is nothing like our ideas existing in the bodies themselves...The particular bulk, number, figure, and motion of parts of fire or snow are really in them, whether anyone's senses perceive them or no; and therefore they may be called real qualities, because they really exist in those bodies. But light, heat, whiteness or coldness are no more really in them than sickness or pain is in man. Take away the sensation of them; let not the eyes see light or colours, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell; 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."

Locke argues that secondary qualities cannot be in the object themselves, because then it would not have caused different sensations and perceptions in us from different perspectives. "Which qualities are commonly thought to be the same in those bodies that those ideas are in us, the one the perfect resemblance of the other, as they are in a mirror, and it would by most men be judged extravagant if one should say otherwise. And yet he that will consider that the same fire that at one distance produces in us the sensation of warmth does, at a nearer approach, produce in us the far different sensation of pain, ought to bethink himself what reason he has to say that his idea of warmth, which was produced in him by the fire, as actually in the fire; and his idea of pain, which the same fire produced in him the same way is not in the fire. Why are whiteness and coldness in snow and pain not..."
Locke’s successor George Berkeley though takes into account Locke’s simple ideas, argues that if simple ideas as the only entities which are given in direct experience, then one cannot draw among these ideas, a distinction between the ideas of primary and secondary qualities. (A further analysis of Berkeley’s position is discussed in this chapter).

We now consider Locke’s concept of substance. It is Locke’s view that we notice certain simple ideas derived from sensation and reflection constantly together; we suppose they belong to one thing and call them, so united, by one name. We cannot imagine how these qualities as ideas could exist by themselves so we suppose that there is a substratum, wherein they do subsist and from which they result; this substratum is substance. To quote Locke, “...not imagining how these simple ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some substratum wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result; which therefore we call substance.”

Locke is of the view that our idea of substance is a complex idea, constructed out of so many simple ideas but together by the mind. Locke speaks of two kinds of substances. Particular and General substances. The complex ideas of a substance consist of combination of ideas of qualities which are supposed to represent a distinct particular thing (This is particular substance) and the confused idea of a support or bearer of these qualities (This is general substance).

22 Ibid., Book II, chapter XXIII, p.148.
23 Locke’s distinction between general ideas of substance and ideas of particular substance are connected with his distinction between real and nominal essences.
24 Particular substance is, “...all the ideas we have of particular distinct sorts of substances are nothing but several combinations of simple ideas, co-existing in such, though unknown, cause of their union as makes the whole subsist of itself. It is by such combinations of simple ideas and nothing else that we represent particular sorts of substances to ourselves (John Locke, 1961, p.150).
25 General substance is “The idea then we have, to which we give the general name substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine can not subsist sine re substante, without something to support them, we call that support substantia,
Therefore finally Locke comes to the conclusion in which he uses the term substance in three ways:

1. An independent physical or spiritual object
2. Complex idea of such an object
3. The unknown substratum in which the observable qualities of the objects exists.

He says, "...body is a thing that is extended, figured, and capable of motions; a spirit, a thing capable of thinking;...These and the like fashions of speaking intimate that the substance is supposed always something besides the extension, figure, solidity, motion, thinking or other observable ideas, though we know not what it is."\(^{26}\)

Locke regards knowledge as the agreement and disagreement of ideas. "Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy, of any of our ideas."\(^{27}\) Like Descartes, there are three kinds of knowledge for Locke:

1. **Intuitive:** Sometimes the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas by direct inspection, without the intervention of any other ideas. This is intuitive knowledge. For example, the knowledge that a circle is not triangle. For Locke, like Descartes, this is the clearest and most certain kind of knowledge.

2. **Demonstrative:** Sometimes the mind, though it is unable to perceive the agreement or disagreement between two ideas immediately, can establish, it

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p.150.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., Book IV, chapter I, p.291.
indirectly by comparing them with one or more other ideas. This knowledge by intervening ideas is called mediate, rational or demonstrative knowledge. For example, mathematics, because its proofs are certain. Locke says, that every step in demonstrative knowledge must have intuitive certainty, in order that the conclusion may be certain.

3. Sensitive: Our knowledge of the particular existence of finite, external things goes beyond bare possibility, and yet does not reach perfectly intuitive or demonstrative knowledge. Locke calls it sensitive knowledge. Unlike other two, this is only probable knowledge.

Therefore we can see that Locke’s division of knowledge resembles Descartes’.

Now to sum up Locke’s philosophy, we argue that in his claim of sense experience as the only source of knowledge, he does not mean by experience the practical activity of man who is a social being. As we have seen, he means by sense-experience, having some abstract, discrete, mental ‘simple ideas’ of heat, whiteness or coldness. The greatest irony lies in the fact that he maintains at the same time mind can directly know only its own ideas and also that these ideas are caused by material substance. He further asserts that since material substance can never be given in sense experience it is bound to remain unknown and unknowable. According to us, Locke is bound to be in this contradiction, because he combines Descartes’ dualism with his empiricism. Suman Gupta criticizes Locke as follows. By making material substances unknown and unknowable, Locke intends to provide room for mysticism and religion. She comments, "He confined knowledge of natural sciences to ideas derived from experience and argued that the real nature of matter is beyond sense-experience and therefore it is futile for science to attempt to probe into it...scientific knowledge does not deal with externally related isolated discrete ideas as Locke assumed but it embodies internally related causal laws of development of natural and social reality."²⁸

We are of the view that knowledge is not simply a theoretical activity, but both its source and criterion of truth depends on the practical activity of social man. Locke fails to see in his theories the inseparable relationship between the subject and object, theory and practice. The fundamental mistake of Locke's theory lies in taking sensations in abstractions, [abstracting sensations from material objects (which he claims in fact to be unknown and unknowable)] as the only source of knowledge and simple ideas which are mental in nature as the object of knowledge. We conclude, therefore, Locke as a subjective idealist who is a true precursor of David Hume.

George Berkeley (1685-1753)

Berkeley is an English philosopher and a clergyman. As an empiricist, he makes good use of the empiricism of his predecessor Locke, and thereby establishes his philosophy of subjective idealism. A consequence of this is his refutation of materialism and also atheism, to defend his religious interest.

Berkeley accepts Locke's claim that all our knowledge is derived through sensations; further all our knowledge is limited to the facts of experience. Berkeley is of the view that the correct reading of Locke's position would mean that all our knowledge is limited to our ideas; we have direct knowledge only of our ideas. Therefore according to Berkeley, the only object of our knowledge is ideas and source is sensations. We may note here that Berkeley's 'ideas' have the same status as 'simple idea' of Locke.

Berkeley questions that if the basis of one knowledge is only our own ideas coming from sensations, then how can we know that there is a world outside, our mind corresponding to our ideas? He claims that since we are limited to our states of consciousness (ideas), we cannot compare our ideas with corporeal substances, we do not know what they are or even that they exist. Thus even if there is matter in terms of Locke's theory, we cannot know it according to Berkeley. And he holds that what
cannot be known cannot exist. Berkeley says, “I do not argue against the existence of anyone, anything that we can apprehend either by senses or by reflection. That the things I see with my eyes and touch with my hands do exist, really exist, I make not the least question. The only thing whose existence, we deny is that which philosopher calls matter or corporeal substance. And doing of this, there is no damage done to the rest of the mankind, who I dare to say will never miss it. The atheist indeed will want the colour of an empty name to support his impiety.”²⁹

From this quotation it is also evident that the reason behind Berkeley’s denial of the existence of matter is not only logical regarding the structure of his theories, but it is also because he wants to obstruct the beginning of atheism (to allow his religion to flourish). This is why he denies matter and also introduced the concept of God, or infinite mind for the existence of anything in this world. Through this Berkeley also shows that in order to comprehend this world in totality, we have to go beyond the empirical – logical framework. This is further explained as follows.

As we have seen, for Locke the world exists independent of our perception (Realism). That is, whether we are there to perceive the world or not, the world is real and continues to exist. Implicitly the world is unaffected by the withdrawal of our mind and consciousness. But according to Berkeley, the world of objects is ‘real’,³⁰ but it is ‘real’ only with reference to a mind, it may be a finite mind or an infinite mind. That is the world exists only within the mind, according to Berkeley. To quote Berkeley, “...ideas...subsist not by themselves, but supported by, or exist in mind or spiritual substance. We do not see a man, if by man is meant that which lives, moves, perceives, and thinks as we do; but only such a certain collection of ideas, as directs to


³⁰We may point out here that the expression ‘real’ is used by Berkeley in a sense which is exactly the opposite of what ordinarily we mean by ‘real’. When we use the expression real in the context of a material object, we mean that it is independent of our mind. But, Berkeley is applying the expression ‘real’ to our ‘ideas in the mind’.  

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think there is a distinct principle of thought and motion like ourselves, accompanying and represented by it, and after the same manner, we see God; all the difference is that, whereas some one finite and narrow assemblage of ideas denotes a particular human mind, whithersoever we direct our view, we also at all times and in all places perceive manifest taken of the divinity: everything we see, hear, feel or perceive by sense, being a sign as effect of the power of God."31

That is to say, for Berkeley anything that exists is in relation either to a human mind or in the mind of God. In fact Berkeley used the concept of God or Infinite mind to account for things which we cannot perceive at the same time and thereby giving credibility for his theory. In this context it is relevant to quote Suman Gupta, who rightly says, "to save ideas from disappearing when no one is perceiving them Berkeley introduced in his ontology the existence of God. The concept of God in Berkeley served the same purpose as the material substance served in the epistemology of Locke i.e., saving their systems from landing into skepticism."32

After analyzing Berkeley's position, we argue that some thing on the order of divine intervention again is required to enable us to know that other minds than our own exist, given Berkeley's general views. But, to have to resort to God in this matter is a rather unsatisfactory way of dealing with an issue as important as this. (Moreover, it will lead us to the question whether God exists or not? An atheist will find it difficult to understand Berkeley's argument regarding other minds). We should be able to account for our knowledge of the existence of other minds - or other persons - without having to resort to such extreme measures. And the fact that Berkeley is impelled to do so suffices to raise serious doubts about his general position, even if one has been persuaded by the arguments he gives in support of it.

31 Ibid., p.124.
Berkeley further claims that if we cannot know the external material world, then it is equally good as saying that it does not exist. For him it is contradiction in terms to say that matter exists unperceived (unknown). If it exists, it has to be perceived by some mind. According to Berkeley the table in front of you is real, because you perceive the table. When you perceive the table, the table exists as idea in your mind. When you are not there to perceive the table, then also the table is real because, it is perceived by some other person. When no body is there to perceive the table, then also the table is real because it is perceived by the infinite mind, namely God. Hence Berkeley establishes the point – esse-est-percipi; to be – is to be – perceived. In other words, the essence of an object lies in its being perceived. According to him, we do not see as perceive God. But, we experience God, because there is a power behind universe.

Berkeley’s philosophical position is mentalism, because for him, as we have seen, mind and its contents alone are real. All reality is known through our ideas (of sensation and reflection). Everything that exists is either perceived or it is an idea. That is, it is a mind that perceives the idea. He elaborates, what he means by the word, ‘exist’. “The table I write on, I say exists, that is I see and I feel it; and if I were out of my study might perceive it, or that some other spirit, actually does perceive it. There was an odour, that is it was smelt, there was a sound, that is, it was heard, a colour, a figure and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions.”

He criticizes, his predecessor Locke’s views on primary and secondary qualities of objects. Berkeley is of the view that what we perceive as a material object is nothing but a collection of sense qualities. This is discussed as follows. Matter does not exist, what exist are only qualities. The qualities exist as ideas in the minds of individuals. Berkeley thinks that we make a differentiation between gold and silver on the basis of their different qualities. Qualities of an object exist in the object and it

33 George Berkeley, 1975, p. 78.
is simply because of the qualities we are able to distinguish different objects. Therefore, for Berkeley, mind and its contents alone are real and not matter.

For Locke, primary qualities are real qualities and secondary qualities are depended on the subject. But for Berkeley both primary and secondary qualities are not real. Berkeley is of the opinion that when we are travelling in a train or bus, the trees and other objects appear to be moving. But, when the train or bus stops moving the various objects also appear to be stationary. Again, the very same object appears to be big in a close perception and small in a distant perception. These two examples prove beyond doubt that primary qualities are also not real qualities. According to Berkeley, two different types of perceptions suggest that the primary qualities are also subjective; they depend on the perception of the subject.

Regarding substance, Berkeley uses the empiricism of Locke to reject material substance. We have also seen that Locke speaks of material substance as unknown and qualities come and ‘inhere’ in a ‘somewhere’, which he calls as the substratum. But, according to Berkeley, an unknown something cannot exist; matter cannot exist, what exist are qualities. Qualities are perceived by us and they exist as ideas in our mind. To Berkeley, a substratum as Locke thinks is something dead, inert and unconscious. Unless it is perceived by the individual, such substratum cannot exist, because for Berkeley, to exist means to be perceived (esse-est-percipi). From this discussion it is clear that Berkeley accepts only mental substance (mind) – both finite and infinite.

We conclude Berkeley’s philosophy as idealism as reality is of the nature of mind. It is also subjective because ideas, for their existence are dependent upon the perceiving subject. Therefore this philosophy is known as subjective idealism. We find that Berkeley’s view suggests that knowledge can be derived only from sensations in abstractions. These sensations exist as ideas in the mind. But it is not the ideas but the spiritual substance, which he regards as the ultimate reality. This is to say that the spiritual substance can exist independently of the ideas, but ideas cannot exist.
independent of the spiritual substance. Therefore, Berkeley has proven himself to be a subjective idealist.

The whole of Berkeley's philosophy is directed towards a refutation of materialism and a defense of idealistic empiricism. As opposed to materialistic empiricism, Berkeley thus advocates idealistic empiricism.

David Hume (1711-1776) directly follows Berkeley's rejection of material substance. Hume denies material substance, because he could not get any impression corresponding to material substance as a persisting thing. Hume is more caustic in his approach that he even denies the existence of mental substance, just because we do not have any proof for the existence of such a substance in us. For Hume, impressions are the only objects of knowledge like the ideas of Berkeley and the source of knowledge is sensations. Though Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) makes his entry to the world philosophy almost two hundred years after Hume, we find that his epistemological and ontological views are similar to those of Hume. Though Russell has different positions regarding his epistemology and ontology, source and object of knowledge remain the same; sense data are the objects of knowledge (this is nothing but impressions of Hume) and sensation is the source of knowledge.

We have shown that both Hume and Russell throughout their theories make the following assumptions: Mind and body are two independent and separate substances and cannot interact with each other; pure ego or 'I' or mind is what is superior and therefore important; social, biological and historical aspects of human beings are relegated or even rejected. This is why both of them try to explain not only material substance, but also mental substance in terms of separate, single, subjective entities called impressions and sense data. Impressions and sense data are the only existents for Hume and Russell respectively. Consequently, these are the only entities we can know in this world. Like their predecessors, by believing sensations in abstractions as the source of knowledge both Hume and Russell show idealistic tendencies in their theories.
In this thesis we have attempted to show that the claims of the philosophers involved are farther from what they actually do. In the second chapter we have done a critical study of the epistemology and ontology of David Hume. Having done that we come out with the opinion that Hume in effect accept every thing what he professes to have rejected. This is especially true in the case of the concepts like mind and material substance. The third chapter covers only some phases of Russell’s vast philosophy. In this chapter we have attempted to bring out the epistemological and ontological assumptions of Bertrand Russell. Though with limitations, we have also tried to criticize Russell’s theories, which are difficult by nature. Russell limits his knowledge only to appearances and particulars, which, in our view, can atmost provide us with partial knowledge. Fourth chapter discusses some of the similarities of the philosophies of Hume and Russell. However, some differences are also pointed out. We have tried to conclude the thesis by showing that there is a large gap between the claims and intentions of these philosophers. Because they combine the mental aspect of Cartesian dualism with their empiricism, they end up exhibiting idealistic tendencies quite contrary to their claims.