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Contributor Now we come to John Locke. John Locke was a huge philosophical influence for centuries, both in political theory and in theoretical philosophy. He was undoubtedly the biggest philosophical influence on the 18th century. So when you come to later philosophers Locke's shadow is there throughout.

He is famous as the first British empiricist, Locke Berkeley Hume.

He was at Christchurch for a long time; he fled overseas to Holland and then came back at the time of the Glorious Revolution, 1688. Very soon afterwards he published his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and his *Two Treatises of Government*, both enormously influential works in their different spheres.

Locke was a friend of Boyle, I've mentioned that Boyle was working in Oxford, Locke was in Oxford, he thought that Boyle's theory of corpuscularianism was the best currently available. If you read Locke it is very useful to have in mind the comparison with Boyle. The terminology is slightly different; Boyle talked about universal matter that is the stuff out of which all the corpuscles are made. Locke talked about pure substance in general. Boyle talked about matter being impenetrable. Locke talked about solidity.

Again he wanted to say that the underlying substance has primary qualities, shape, size, movement, texture and solidity. The secondary qualities, the sensory qualities that we detect through our five senses, they are in bodies only as powers to produce ideas in us. So if I see something that is yellow what's in the body is nothing like my idea of yellow. Rather the body has a corpuscular structure which gives it a power to cause that idea of yellow in me. That's what it is for something to be yellow.

Now Locke's famously an empiricist. The word empiricist is used an awful lot and it can be rather confusing. When you hear people say "Oh well there are rationalists and there are empiricists, so the rationalists are Descartes, Leibnitz, Spinoza and the empiricists are Locke, Berkeley and Hume" this is very, very simplistic.

Essentially an empiricist is someone who puts a lot of weight on experience, experience as opposed to pure reason. But there are different respects in which one can be an empiricist.

Locke most notably is an empiricist in that he thinks that all our ideas are derived from experience. Every idea we have is as it were copied from what we sense or experience. Whereas Descartes thought that some of our ideas were implanted right from the very beginning. The idea of God, the idea of extension, according to Descartes those are there innately in our minds, whereas Locke would want to say that we get the idea of God from experience.

Through experience we get to know other people, we get the idea of power, we get the idea of knowledge, we get the idea of goodness and then we can form the idea of God by extrapolating these and forming the idea of a perfectly good, knowledgeable, powerful being.

So that's one kind of empiricism, another kind of empiricism has to do with where we get our knowledge and that's different. Somebody could say that we have certain innate ideas but all our knowledge about them comes from experience.

Locke is empiricist pretty much in both ways, he thinks that all our ideas are derived from experience and he thinks that virtually all of our knowledge comes from experience too. Whereas

Descartes thought that we have some innate ideas and also thought that some knowledge that we had could come from pure reason without experience.

Locke is characteristically modest. He thinks that because all our knowledge comes from experience it's inherently fallible. We can't look inside our minds and find there a perfect faculty of reason that is going to tell us with certainty how things will behave, we just learn by experience how things behave and obviously that is fallible.

We presume that substances have a real essence, an underlying structure that gives rise to their observed properties but we don't really know anything about that. We just have to make do with what we know of substances, we have to rely on defining them in terms that we can understand.

So for example suppose you try to think what we mean by the word gold. What's gold?

Well we find lumps of gold around the world, rings and so forth and they seem to behave in a similar way both in their weight, in their malleability and their colour, in how they react to other substances. Like dissolving in aqua regia if you are imprudent enough to put your ring in a beaker of it.

So we suppose that there is something that is common to these, some real essence, but in practice we cannot know what the real essence is, we can't penetrate into the nature of substances, we don't have microscopical eyes. So we have to make do with knowing things like the colour and the malleability and the density and so forth, that is how we have to understand substances.

Locke's also a probabilist. Whereas Descartes had an ideal of perfect knowledge, absolutely, incontrovertible certainty, Locke said that most of the time we have to make do with probability.

So one important thing that we will see is pretty important for understanding Hume when we come to the issue of induction, Locke thought that our reason works in two different ways.

Suppose we go through a mathematical proof, we start with certain premises and then by a logical deduction step after step after step we come to a particular conclusion. That's an example of demonstration and the way demonstration works is that using our reason we see the infallible connection between the premise and the intermediate step and then the next intermediate step, we see these connections with our reason.

What about a probable argument? A probable argument is where all we can achieve is probability.

So for example when we are working out what the weather might be tomorrow, we start from certain bits of evidence, we go step by step through the argument in the same sort of way but instead of having infallible connections to guide us we just have probable connections. So our reason enables us to see these probable connections and thus reach reasonable beliefs.

But there are some respects in which Locke goes towards the rationalist side. I've said the simplistic distinction between empiricists and rationalists really can be misleading. Here is an example.

Famous quotation from Locke "If we could discover the texture and so forth of the minute constituent parts of bodies, we should know without trial several of their operations."

In other words if we did have microscopical eyes, if we could look into the microstructure of gold or whatever it is, we could know, without trial, without experiment, the way it was going to behave. He seems to be suggesting that we could have this kind of perfect rational insight into how things behave if only we were able to penetrate their structure.

That is actually quite a rationalistic claim. It's claiming that we can know or it seems to be claiming that we can know some of the laws of how things behave a priori without experience, without experiment.

Another example, a typical example is proof of the existence of God. Locke thought that you could prove the existence of God by a cosmological argument. There must be a first cause of the

universe and because matter by itself can never give rise to thought it follows that the first cause of the universe must be a thinking thing.

But Locke included an interesting speculation in his essay and it was very, very controversial. He speculated that although matter by itself could never give rise to thought, remember this is a very, very important theme at the time. It's the key argument against Hobbes that matter cannot give rise to thought. And Locke agrees with that but nevertheless he speculates that God could make matter think if he wanted to. So although a stone by itself could never just think, if God could implant in the stone the power of thought, why not? God's omnipotent, God can do anything. Why shouldn't he make matter think?

Well this stirred up a hornet's nest. All these people who had been arguing against Hobbs accused Locke too of impiety. This was a monstrous suggestion, the idea that matter could even in principle think, that even God could make matter think. And you can see in the light of what we've said why it's a particularly sensitive issue.

I've mentioned that Locke was very agnostic; he didn't think that we could penetrate the nature of things. We had to rely on their superficial qualities, what we could observe through the senses. That didn't give us knowledge about underlying realities.

You can see that that is a bit of a problem with personal identity. What is it that makes me now the same person as I was a day ago or a year ago or ten years ago?

Well we can't look into the essence of ourselves anymore than we can look into the essence of gold. So this is a major problem, how do we make sense of morality if we cannot understand what it is that makes one person the same person throughout their life. And what about the afterlife? Given that when I die my body will decay, what is it about me that makes me in the afterlife the same person as me now?

Again this was considered a crucial issue because divine retribution, punishment for ills done in this life or reward for goodness is considered a crucial part of the moral and religious world.

So when we come to personal identity which we will do in a later lecture, bear this in mind. It's a particularly crucial issue for someone who takes Locke's sort of view of the universe.

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