



An Analytic Search for the Elements of Naturalized Epistemology in John Locke

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ABSTRACT

Naturalized epistemology is an approach to the theory of knowledge that emphasizes the application of methods, results, and theories from the empirical sciences. It contrasts with approaches that emphasize a priori conceptual analysis or insist on a theory of knowledge that is independent of it. In most cases when reference is made to naturalized epistemology, reference is only made to W. V. Quine, Alvin Goldman and Thomas Kuhn, but this piece argues that John Locke had made enormous contribution to the development of Naturalised Epistemology. The researcher observes that Locke's break away from traditional epistemology as the Father of British Empiricism and his psychology based theory of knowledge was a foundation to the evolution of naturalised epistemology.

Key Words: John Locke, Development, Naturalized, Epistemology, Analytic, Elements.

INTRODUCTION

The development of the concept of Naturalised Epistemology emerged from the attendant progress in the area of naturalism. And naturalism commonly refers to the perspective that the laws of nature operate in the universe and that nothing exists beyond the natural universe, if it does, it does not affect the natural universe. The adherents of this view believe that natural laws rule the structure and behaviour of the world.

The ideas and assumptions of philosophical naturalism were first set in motion in the works of the Ionian Pre-Socratic Philosophers, who sought for the underlying principle of reality, from a naturalistic perspective. The first among this group of thinkers is Thales, the acclaimed father of science. He

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was the first to give explanation of natural events without the reference to supernatural causes, thus indicating the departure of Greek thought from religion and mythology. His predecessors also subscribed to principles of empirical investigation that strikingly anticipate naturalism. According to Thales, the original element and primary stuff of which all things are made, and which explains the continuity in the changes and the underlying unity in the plurality of things, is water. For Anaximenes, it is Air (Omorgebe, 2003). In the 20th century, W. V. Quine, George Santayana among others, argued that the success of naturalism in science meant that scientific methods should also be used in philosophy. Science and philosophy are said to form a continuum, according to this perspective. This has been introduced into the area of metaphysics, giving birth to naturalised metaphysics and also Epistemology, leading to the emergence of Naturalised Epistemology. While this work does not intend to trek all the allies of naturalised epistemology, it focuses on arguing that John Locke made a fundamental contribution to the development of Naturalised Epistemology.

The Man John Locke

John Locke was a man that walked through the stage of England's history at a time that was particularly turbulent, and he was personally associated with some of the dramatic episodes, despite possessing a rather quiet and retiring character (Lowe, 1995). Locke's first works were written at Oxford, but were not published during his life time. These works are *Two Tracts on Government* and *Essays on the Law of Nature*. In the views of Ashcraft (Ashcraft, 1988) and Laslett (Laslett, 1988), Locke is the suspected author of *A Letter from a Person of Quality to his Friend in the Country*. This letter infuriated the government and may have led to his departure to France in 1675 (Iloyd, 1995). He is also the author of *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatises of Government*. He also published a couple of minor works in his later years: *Some considerations on the Lowering of interest and Raising the Value of Money* (1668), *The Second Letter for Toleration* (1691), *Third Letter for Toleration* (1692), *Some thoughts on Education* (1693), and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). He was not just a writer, he played a prominent role in the political life of his country. He was Commissioner for Appeals, Commissioner for Trade. He influenced the repeal of the Acts for the Regulation of Printing in 1695, and also the re-coinage of the debased English currency in the 1690's. Before his death, Locke was not only an international renowned intellectual figure, he had moved in the most influential political circles in England.

Born in August 29, 1632, Locke was the eldest child of a respectable Somersetshire Puritan family. His father was a small landowner, a lawyer and a captain of a volunteer regiment in the parliamentary army (Anoughlogho, 1997). In spite of his family's moderate income, Locke received an excellent education, first at Westminster School, where he received a through grounding in Latin and Greek, then in 1652, he went to Christ Church,

Oxford. His association with the University of Oxford lasted for more than thirty years. He received his B.A degree in 1656, and graduated as Master of Arts in 1658. After his graduation, he remained at Oxford where he taught Greek, served as a reader in rhetoric and finally censor of moral philosophy in 1664 (Iloyd, 1995). He retained this position until he was expelled in 1684 at the instigation of Charles II, the reason being that Locke was involved with a political group that were opposed to the royal policies of the time (Lowe, 1995). His reading of Descartes, Newton, Boyle, Thomas Sydenham and the founding of the Royal Society at Oxford ignited Locke's interest in science, and medicine precisely (Hutchins, 1990).

Locke's family had a very strong protestant background, accounting for the continuous influx of religion into his philosophy. He was baptized into the Church of England. He had a very vast and long-lasting interest in religious matters: it never waned but continued until the day of his death. He had a great interest in biblical scholarship, Patristics and Anglican theology. After retiring from public life, Locke occupied himself with biblical studies and wrote a commentary on the Epistles of St Paul. Locke died in October 28, 1704, while Lady Masham was reading the Psalms to him. He was buried in the churchyard of the parish church at High Laver near Oats, where his tomb can still be seen (Anoulogho, 1997).

Although it is difficult to list all the names that might have influenced Locke's thought, the reason being that Locke was a voracious reader. One of the major thinkers whose thought is more conspicuous in shaping Locke's intellectual life and whose influence on Locke can be amply documented is Descartes. From the years 1660-1662, Locke read the following Cartesian books: *The Principles of Philosophy*, *Discourse on method*, and the *Meditations*. As it is already indicated, Descartes ignited Locke's interest in science, and medicine precisely.

The Meaning and Nature of Naturalized Epistemology

Naturalized epistemology is an approach to the theory of knowledge that emphasizes the application of methods, results, and theories from the empirical sciences. It contrasts with approaches that emphasize a priori conceptual analysis or insist on a theory of knowledge that is independent of it. According to the Fredman (2012),

Naturalized epistemology is best seen as a cluster of views according to which epistemology is closely connected to natural science. Some advocates of naturalized epistemology emphasize methodological issues, arguing that epistemologists must make use of results from the sciences that study human reasoning in pursuing epistemological questions. The most extreme view along these lines recommends replacing traditional epistemology with the psychological study of how we reason. A more modest view recommends that philosophers make use of results from sciences studying cognition to resolve epistemological issues. A rather

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different form of naturalized epistemology is about the content of paradigmatically epistemological statements. Advocates of this kind of naturalized epistemology propose accounts of these statements entirely in terms of scientifically respectable objects and properties. In this they seem to contrast with more traditional epistemologists whose accounts make free use of evaluative terms such as “good reasons” and “adequate evidence”. The significance of the claims of advocates of naturalized epistemology can best be appreciated by seeing them as a reaction to the methods and views that have been prominent in much of the twentieth century. (p. 3).

One of the pioneers of this perspective who have ignited much interest in this area is W.V.O Quine through his celebrated work: “Epistemology Naturalized”. He begins his essay by noting that “Epistemology is concerned with the foundations of science.” Thus, our statements about the world around us should be derived from our sense. Given that we are certain about our own sensations, if we could strictly derive our beliefs about the world from our beliefs about sensations, we could then be certain of the derived truths about the world as well. This would create a sturdy foundation for knowledge. This perspective refuses ideas from assumptions, as in the case of Descartes, to be the foundation of knowledge.

Locke’s Investigation of the Powers of Mind

Locke was interested in determining what objects our understanding is fitted or is not fitted to deal with before we engage in an effort to finding particular truths about particular objects. This search for the boundaries of human knowledge is found in the French philosopher, Rene Descartes. It is also an effort that is obviously at work in other European philosophies: in Berkeley, Hume and Kant. For Locke, however, Uzgalis (2007) opines that it is not just knowledge, but probability and faith that interest and distinguish him. He thinks that if we fail in this search, we will find ourselves like him and his friends unable to proceed with our enquiries. It is in this regard that Aarsleff (1994) calls Locke’s labours “an education to humanity” (p. 260). Thus, Locke sets out to discover the mind’s powers, to save mankind from exceeding her limits or acting below her capacity.

In Chapter One of Book Two, Locke begins his search with the claim that everyone is conscious that he or she thinks and that while thinking, the object of our thoughts are ideas. For Locke (1999), ideas occupy a significant place in the process of determining the capacity of human understanding, and the fact that “everyone is conscious of them in himself” (p. 27) moves Locke to begin his *Essays* by defining the concept, and taking, as his first enquiry “how they come into the mind” (p. 27). He defines an ‘idea’ thus:

It being that term which, I think, serves best to stand for whatsoever is the object of understanding when a man thinks, I

have used it to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species, or whatever it is that the mind can be employed about in thinking. (pp. 26-27).

Having defined ideas, another question that still loomed at the horizon of his investigation was, "How does a man come by these ideas?" Locke had a response to this. However, his response was a reaction to the traditional epistemological perspectives of his era.

Pre-Lockean Traditional Epistemological Perspectives

In the 17th century, there was a strong debate in the intellectual circles, with which Locke was already familiar as to whether the human mind is furnished with innate ideas (Rickless, 2007). And by innate ideas, Peter (1981) avers that it is meant "Ideas (knowledge, concepts, beliefs) that are not derived in any way from our sense organs (experience) but pre-exist and originate in the mind at birth and that are brought to consciousness under certain conditions; ideas that are present to the mind as a tendency or predisposition to think in a certain way" (p.123). At the epistemological level, innatists held that all knowledge of the natural and supernatural world available to humans is based on fundamental speculative axioms, theoretical principles that neither require nor are capable of proof. These principles include: causal principles, principles of non-contradiction etc. They were taken to be universal and necessary and thus impossible to derive from experience (Rickless, 2007). They are built into the mind *ab initio*. At the moral and religious levels, innatists argue that the knowledge of our duties is innate, or else, there would be moral disagreement and relativism, strong enough to breakdown society.

The rise of this polemic has a long history. It is often traced to Plato who employed the notion as a bridge of the realm of forms. Plato explained how even the untutored can appreciate proofs about geometrical objects never in experience. He conjectured that every soul brings into this life a memory of a previous contemplation of the pure forms of which mundane things are modelled (Sasa, 2003). It is speculated that Plato who gave an earlier and charming account of innate ideas in the 4th century B.C must have probably been influenced by the Pythagorean belief in reincarnation (Donald, 1829). Some ancient thinkers, independently of Plato, distinguished some fundamental ideas and beliefs as especially natural and common. Cicero called them innate. The Epicureans and the stoics, in their argument for the existence of God have stressed this point. Christianity also taught that there is a kind of natural revelation of principles essential to humane existence that God imparts to all peoples. Similar metaphysical and theological uses of the doctrine occur in the work of Neoplatonists like Plotinus, as well as in the works of later philosophers and theologians belonging to the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition, including Augustine in the early period of Christianity, and Ficino in the Italian Renaissance (Sasa, 2003). The doctrine of innate ideas also has an intimate relationship with the Philosophy of Science.

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John Locke, drawing from a better informed anthropology and on common sense, returned to the maxim, no less ancient, that the mind starts as a blank tablet (*tabula rasa*) on which experience does the writing. Scholasticism has long had the maxim, not always strictly observed: “There is nothing in the intellect which has not been in the senses”. The empiricist view of Locke was later to prevail among philosophers and scientist in England and France. Thomas Reid and other Scottish realists made emphasis on the common sense that verged on innatism. George Berkeley denied that ideas are strictly innate.

Locke’s Immediate Proponents of Traditional Epistemology

Although, Locke does not give us the names of the advocates of innate principles he is attacking, scholars have offered a range of possible targets: Descartes, Cambridge Platonists, Scholastic philosophers and enthusiastic sectarians in religion and politics. Uzgalis (2007) contends that there are still others that argue that Locke had no opponents in mind; he was only constructing a position to refute. This is, however, not a popular position because the works of Yolton have shown, with convincing evidences, that many literatures in the 17th century England made use of the language of innate principles. This notwithstanding, Rickless (2007), divides the immediate opponents of Locke on the issue of innate ideas into three groups: 1. Descartes, 2. prominent members of the Anglican Church and 3. Cambridge Platonists.

Rene Descartes’ nativism

Locke was intimately familiar with the doctrine of Descartes. Descartes (1984) argues that ideas are adventitious, constructed or innate. About ideas that are adventitious, Descartes refers to those occasioned by images received by the senses, like the sun. About ideas that are innate, Descartes speaks of scientific constructs: ideas of God, mind, body, soul, triangle and, in general, all those which represent true, immutable and eternal essences. His claim about innate ideas was the bone of contention. Descartes argues that the search for truth requires the rejection of doubtful opinions. He doubts everything. He believes that sense knowledge could be deceptive, geometrical reasoning could be false. In his doubt, however, he discovers that something resists doubt:

But immediately upon this I observed that, while I thus wished to think that all was false, it was absolutely necessary that I, who thus thought, should be somewhat, and as I observed that this truth, I think, hence I am, was certain and of such evidence, that no ground of doubt, however extravagant, could be alleged by the sceptics capable of shaking it. I could that I might, without scruple, accept it as the first principle of philosophy of which I was in search. (p. 30).

The knowledge of himself as a thinking being was gained, not through the senses. It was something inside of himself: innate. The thinking being, he says, is a substance, which is only known through its effects and attribute – thinking (Njoku, 2010). From this realisation, Descartes (1984) arrives at the following conclusion.

I thence concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature consists only in thinking, and which, that it may exist, has need of no place, nor is dependent on any material thing; so that 'I', that is to say, the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter, and is such, that although the latter were not, it would still continue to be all that it is. (p. 30).

For Descartes, the thinking thing is the only mirror through which the world can be seen. It is clear and a distinct idea, and can be conceived with certitude (Njoku, 2003). It is unlike the body which could be denied. *I think therefore I exist*, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by Descartes.

Anglican Church Men

Hobbes (1994) had argued in the *Leviathan* that there are no incorporeal substances. This has some implications in relation to the divine. He said that since God is a substance and all substances are corporeal, it then means that God is a body. The resultant effect of this argument was atheism. For to deny that God is a body was to deny his existence, and to speak of him as a body was to deny him of his perfection and as such, his existence. This called for a response from the Christian elite, and Edward Stillingfleet, bishop of Worcester and the most intellectually gifted and prominent scholars of the Anglican Church of the time responded through the work, *Origines Sacrae* in 1662. In this work, he confuted atheism with the following reasons: God has stamped a universal character of himself upon the minds of men; the reason for this belief being that the whole world has consented to it (Edward, 1962). As such, if we find out that all human beings agree God exists, it is the result of *a natural propensity to religion implanted in them, and founded in the general belief of the existence of a Deity*. The argument of Stillingfleet for God's existence is based on the claim that the idea of God is innate. He defends this claim on the grounds of universal consent.

The Cambridge Platonists

Benjamin Whichcote was the father of Cambridge Platonists. In reaction to Hobbes's work in the *Leviathan* in which he wrote that in the state of nature, the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have no place, and that where there is no common power there is no law, where there is no law, no injustice. Benjamin reacted to this view of Hobbes, quoting Romans 2:15, where scripture speaks of it being written in the hearts of gentiles. From this, he concludes that there is a sense in which moral principles are natural. Thus, when a human being flouts moral principles, he confounds his own principles and must necessarily be self-condemned (Benjamin, 1901). Although

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Whichcote was more of a preacher than a philosopher, his philosophical descendants More (1987) and Samuel (1985) provided philosophical basis for innatism.

From the foregoing, John Yolton divides the polemics of innatists into two: the first, is the naive version that treats innate principles as stamped on the mind at birth. Second, is the propositional version that speaks of innate ideas as those principles that we easily assent to. In the contention of Uzgalis (2007), propositional innate ideas hold that innate ideas are capable of being perceived under certain circumstances. Until these circumstances are met, the propositions remain unperceived in the mind. Having identified the positions of those who advocated for innatism, what was the response of Locke to their arguments?

Locke's Reaction to Traditional Epistemology

In Locke's polemic against nativism, he first undermines the reasons given for nativism and then he provides reasons for thinking that nativism is false. His first attack was on the argument of universal consent of certain speculative and practical principles. For instance, he argues that infants and the weak-minded do not assent to, let alone understand the principle of non-contradiction. As regards the argument on universal consent about doing what is just, Locke thinks that simple observation of human behaviour is sufficient to establish that when outlaws embrace this principle, they do so only as a rule of convenience, ready to be broken at a moment's notice. For Locke (1999), universal consent to practical propositions can be explained as resulting from inculcation, while universal consent to speculative propositions can be explained as the concomitant of intuitive knowledge.

As regards the second argument which says that there are speculative and practical principles to which every human accents when he comes to the use of reason, and if thus, it then means that they are innate, Locke claims that mathematical theorems, no less than mathematical maxims, are such that every human person assents to them when the use of reason first makes them known to him. The reason why they are general, argues Locke, is because general ideas are created by the mental operation of abstraction, a faculty that is not ready to be used until a person reaches the age of reason. In this case, Locke is pointing out that the proponents of this universality are confusing the innateness of the faculty for the mental operation of abstraction with the innateness of the universal ideas which this faculty produces.

Having criticized the arguments for universal consent, Locke (1999) writes: "this argument of universal consent, which is made up of, to prove innate principles, seems to me a demonstration that there are none such: because there are non to which all mankind give a universal assent" (p. 49). First, he maintains that there are no principles to which every human assents, thus, if nativists argue that every human person assents to universal principles, therefore, they are innate; it then means that there are no innate principles. He further argues that there are no principles to which every

human has at some time or other assented. However, if innatists argue that every human has at some time or the other assented to universal principles, thus they are innate, he concludes that there are no innate principles. The nativists argue that human beings would not transgress innate practical principles with confidence and serenity. But Locke argues that every practical principle is such that there are human beings who transgress it with confidence and serenity; he thus concludes that there are no practical innate principles (Rickless, 2007).

In the perspective of Locke, the doctrine of innate ideas was superfluous because it contained nothing that he could not explain in terms of his empirical account of the origin of knowledge. His criticisms hit the mark, thereby shaking one of the reasons being commonly given in favour of nativism by his opponents. Some of them rank as powerful indictment of occurrent nativism; some are inconsistent and less powerful. However, none of his arguments can reasonably be read as a knockdown argument against dispositional nativism.

A cursory glance, further reveals that Locke's polemics against innatism unveils anti-authoritarian elements. Uzgalis (2007) contends that Locke sees innate ideas as an instrument for controlling and governing the minds of those who accept them; as such, those who teach the doctrine of innatism constitute a barrier to enquiry and questioning. In this regard, he opines that the scholastic curriculum of the universities, which enhances the concepts of master and teacher are responsible for blocking rational enquiry. The scholastic model of science, which is based on syllogistic argument, and which proposes that principles are innate and which the scholastics used to argue from innate first principles to the rest of knowledge, for Locke, are of little use in the discovery of truth. In the areas of natural philosophy and morality, Locke lists a couple of Ancient Philosophers: Polemo, Anaximenes, Aristippus, Antisthenes, Plato and Archelaus, who operated on false principles, revealing how students might be deceived by accepting certain principles as innate

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Having objected to innatism, Locke saw it as a primal responsibility to explain the source of the ideas in the human mind. He writes:

...It is past doubt that men have in their minds, several ideas,- such as are those expressed by the words whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness, and others: it is the first place then to be enquired, how he comes by them. (p. 86).

Locke (1999) avers that knowledge could be explained by discovering the raw materials out of which it was made. He writes that "The soul begins to have ideas when it begins to perceive. To ask, at what time a man has first any ideas, is to ask, when he begins to perceive;- having ideas and perception being the same thing" (p. 90); and experience gives us two sources of ideas:

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sensation or reflection. He avows that these are the origins of all our ideas; thus, we have no need for the hypothesis of innate ideas.

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas:- how comes it is furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring. (p. 87).

By sensation, on the one hand, Locke means the faculty of the human person that receives into our minds several distinct perceptions that help us become conversant with the objects that are around us. From sensation, Locke (1999) states that,

we come by those ideas we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities; which if I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external objects convey into the mind what produces there those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas we have.... I call sensation. (p. 87).

Notwithstanding the possibility of acquiring genuine knowledge through sensation, its problematic nature raises a couple of questions. There is a sceptical challenge to what we can know about the external world. Michael Montaigne, the greatest of the French sceptics, argues that perception only gives us a subjective opinion and not knowledge. This pattern of thinking was taken over by Descartes in the *Meditations* when he set aside the senses as reliable sources of knowledge and the claim that there are objects (Uzgalis, 2007).

Reflection, according to Locke, is another fountain through which experience furnishes the mind with ideas, on the other hand; it involves perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing and all those activities of the mind that produce ideas as distinct as those we receive from external bodies affecting the senses. Locke calls it reflection, because when we perceive or doubt, we are aware that we are engaging in such an activity; our awareness that we are doing x reflects, as it were, x (Uzgalis, 2007). This comes out clearly in Locke's definition of the persons as they that know themselves to be themselves at different times and place through consciousness. In the *Essays*, he states that "It being impossible for anyone to perceive, without perceiving that he does perceive" (p. 319). From the foregoing, we can argue that reflection in Locke goes with the process of thinking, through which the mind comes to have ideas about her own

operations. These two fountains of knowledge: sensation and reflection are for Locke (1999), “the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings” (p. 88). He further asserts that, “the understanding seems to me not to have the least glimmering of any ideas which it doth not receive from one of these two” (p. 88).

Locke (1999) observes further that the ideas that come into the mind are of two kinds: simple ideas and complex ideas: “One thing is carefully to be observed about the ideas we have; and that is, that some of them are simple and some complex” (p. 101). Simple ideas constitute the chief source out of which our knowledge is made; Uzgalis (2007) refers to them as “the building blocks of knowledge” (p. 25). He says that “the mind cannot make one to itself, nor have any idea which does not wholly consist of them” (p. 46). These ideas are received by the senses, and in this process, the mind is passive in its operations. For instance, when we see a stone and touch it. Two senses are involved here: the sense of sight and the sense of touch. Sight and touch take their ideas into the mind single file from the same object. The eyes see the colour, while the hand feels its hardness. In this sense, different ideas are perceived at the same time about the same thing. These ideas perceived in their uncompoundedness and uniform appearance are what Locke (1999) calls simple ideas. These ideas are furnished to the mind only through sensation and reflection: as objects affect our sense, so also are our minds aware of the ideas we have received. From here, when the understanding is fed with these ideas, it now has the power to repeat, compare and unite them, even to an almost infinite variety and so can make new ideas out of the simple ideas given.

On the other hand, complex ideas are born when our minds repeat, compare or unite simple ideas that are received. Complex ideas are of three kinds: modes, substances and relations. Ideas thus made up of several simple ones put together, I call complex; such as are beauty, gratitude, man, an army, the universe; which, though complicated of various simple ideas, or complex ideas made up of simple ones, yet are, when the mind pleases, considered each by itself, as one entire thing, and signified by one name (Locke 1999, p. 147). In the process of putting simple ideas together, the mind becomes active and exerts its power on the simple ideas received. Locke says, “...so it exerts several acts of its own, whereby out of its simple ideas, as the material and foundations of the rest, the others are framed” (Locke 1999, p. 146). The mind exerts its power on simple ideas to generate complex ideas in three ways:

- Combining several ideas into one compound one. This is how complex ideas are made.
- The second is by 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 this way, the mind arrives at her ideas of relations.

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- The third way the mind exerts its power on simple ideas is by separating them from all other ideas that accompany them in their real existence. This is called abstraction.

Thus, we see how the mind joins the idea of whiteness, hardness and sweetness to form the complex idea of a lump of sugar; how the mind brings ideas together but holds them separate for the purpose of thinking of relationships, as when we say the house is whiter than the car. And finally, how the mind can separate ideas from all other ideas that accompany them in their real existence, as when we separate the idea of woman from Juliet and Paulina. Through abstraction, general laws are arrived at.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The primary energy that has driven the wheels of this piece is to show that John Locke had contributed to the development of naturalized epistemology. A cursory glance at his theory of knowledge, which began as a reaction to innatism, and out of the passion to develop a more sure foundation for knowledge, one would discover that after the Ionian Pre-Socratic philosophers, the Medieval Scholastic thinkers of the Renaissance of the twelfth century naturalists like Jean Buridan, the sixteenth and seventeenth century naturalists like the Italian Roman Catholic Galileo Galilei, the paramount figures of the Enlightenment like Francis Bacon and Voltaire, Locke's contribution to the development of naturalised epistemology cannot be undermined. He questioned the basis of the assumptions proposed by the traditional epistemologists of his time as the foundation of knowledge. As regards Descartes, he questioned the foundation of his assumption of himself as a thinking being. He questioned the Anglican Church Men's assumption that there is knowledge of God innate in everyone without reference to experience. He criticised the Cambridge Platonist's assumption that there is a sense in which moral principles are innate. Borrowing from the science of his time, he argued that all knowledge comes from experience. Thus, he navigated epistemology from principles grounded on assumptions to a theory of knowledge that called for the employment of sensation, as advocated in the natural sciences. His scientific perspective was later to prevail among many philosophers and scientist in England and France. This has gained him the name: the Father of British Empiricism.

This notwithstanding, Naturalistic Epistemology, based on the principle that we are certain about our own sensations, if we could strictly derive our beliefs about the world from our beliefs about sensations, we could then be certain of the derived truths about the world as well is problematic. Just as there are sceptical challenges as regards what we know through the extra-sensory world, there are also sceptical challenges to what we can know about the external world. Michael Montaigne, the greatest of the French sceptics, argues that perception only gives us a subjective opinion and not knowledge. Sometimes what a thing appears to be is not always what it really is. For instance, the sun appears to move round the earth, rising in the East in

morning and setting in the West in the evening. This is the appearance to the senses, yet we know that it is the other way round. When we walk on the tarred road in a sunny afternoon, it appears that there is a pool of water at some distance ahead, but when we get closer we discover that there is no water on the road. When we look into the sky, we see the clouds as thick smoke, but in reality, they are evaporated water. This raises questions as to the sturdiness of the foundation for knowledge proposed by the Natural Epistemologists. By insisting on the senses, they make the same mistakes as the traditionalists. True knowledge, in general, goes beyond a particular instrument of knowing.

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