

John Locke

Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book IV

Locke's conception of knowledge

“*Knowledge* then seems to me to be nothing but *the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas*. In this alone it consists” (IV.I.2).

Kinds of connection between ideas:

A1.

A2.

A3.

A4.

Degrees of knowledge (starting with the most certain):

B1.

B2.

B3.

Five limits of our knowledge:

C1. We have no knowledge where:

C2. We have no knowledge where:

C3. We have no intuitive knowledge where:

C4. We have no demonstrative knowledge where:

C5. We have no sensitive knowledge where:

D1. Why are simple ideas real?

D2. Why are complex ideas real (excepting complex ideas of substances)?

Descartes vs. Locke, again

Compare and contrast Descartes and Locke on the following questions:

E1. Are there innate ideas? And what kind of thing would an innate idea be? (Think here of the dialectic about universal consent.)

E2. How do universal ideas—e.g. ideas like UNITY and EXISTENCE that accompany every representation—relate to innate ideas? (Think here of the lecture from Thursday, 19 February.)

E3. What are the characteristic objects of our knowledge? That is, what are the kinds of thing that we know? (Think here of Descartes' and Locke's thoughts on our knowledge of substances vs. our knowledge of modes or qualities.)

E4. Through what faculty of mind do we know the characteristic objects of our knowledge?

E5. What is the root of our knowledge—that is, what form of knowledge is most certain? (Think not of particular claims like “I exist” or “God is infinite,” but the way we know these things.) And: how can we extend our knowledge from the most certain forms to less certain forms?

For each of these questions: do you find Descartes or Locke more convincing? Why?

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding - Part 1. PREFACE by the EDITOR. The person chiefly concerned in improving this edition of Mr. Locke's works, having long entertained an high esteem for that author's writings, and being informed that a new edition of them was preparing, became naturally desirous of seeing one more complete than any of the foregoing; and of contributing his assistance towards it (so far as the short time allowed for. Besides those abovementioned, there is a Common-place Book to the Bible, first published in 1693, and afterwards swelled out with a great deal of matter, ill digested, and all declared to be Mr. Locke's; but whatever hand he might be supposed to have in the original book itself, it is plain he had none in that preface, which is neither sense. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding is a work by John Locke concerning the foundation of human knowledge and understanding. It first appeared in 1689 (although dated 1690) with the printed title An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding. He describes the mind at birth as a blank slate (tabula rasa, although he did not use those actual words) filled later through experience. The essay was one of the principal sources of empiricism in modern philosophy, and influenced many enlightenment philosophers Essay Concerning Human Understanding. John Locke. Study Guide. Perhaps most provocatively, at II.xiii.2 he compares the idea of a substratum to the explanatory tool of an Indian philosopher who, "saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked what the elephant rested on, to which his answer was a great tortoise. Being again pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, he replied, something he knew not what." This mocking analogy seems to suggest that Locke considers "substratum" an entirely empty word, referring to nothing but our own limit of understanding. At the same time, Locke retains the idiom Start by marking "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving | Want to Read. Can the soul think, and not the John Locke wrote four essays on human (or humane) understanding. Here are a few quotes from the book: "I see no reason to believe, that the soul thinks before the senses have furnished it with ideas to think on. The dreams of sleeping men are, as I take it, all made up of the waking man's ideas, though for the most part oddly put together. Chapter I: Of Ideas in general, and their Original. Chapter II: Of Simple Ideas. Chapter III: Of Simple Ideas of Sense. Chapter IV: Idea of Solidity. Chapter V: Of Simple Ideas of Divers Senses. Chapter VI: Of Simple Ideas of Reflection. Chapter VII: Of Simple Ideas of both Sensation and Reflection. Chapter VIII: Some further considerations concerning our Simple Ideas of Sensation. Chapter IX: Of Perception. Chapter X: Of Retention. Chapter XI: Of Discerning, and other operations of the Mind.