

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Week- 04
Lecture 16: John Locke

Welcome in lecture 16. Today we are going to discuss about John Locke's idea of idea where he has argued that whatever we have idea is just a product of experiences. So today we will be discussing the nature of knowledge from Lockean perspective and then also we will be discussing the notion of self that what Locke believed about and argued about the self. As we have discussed in the last class that the main problem of Locke was to talk about the idea or knowledge. So, if you have knowledge then what is the main source of this knowledge? So, Locke always has been argued that the experiences are a source of this knowledge. So, this world is what we are experiencing the many different objects and then we are getting some idea. Now this idea is what we have discussed in the last class can be divided in two groups. One is simple ideas and complex idea. Simple ideas we are perceiving, getting and then our mind is in the capable of combining these ideas in different order or in a many different ways and that makes a complex idea. This is how John Locke had rejected many ideas or rejected the Descartes idea of innate idea and he argued that we are coming in this world with blank slate. So, when we are coming in this world, we have no idea of anything. We do not have anything like innate idea. So, we are coming this world with blank slate and then we are experiencing and then we are getting an idea. So, this experience is a main source of the knowledge. So, whatever we have this knowledge is not just a product of our experiences. So, for John Locke he has explained all the idea of knowledge in terms of experiences. Now we also have discussed what are the simple idea and complex idea and then based on this idea simple idea and complex idea John Locke argued that there is nothing called substance. So even we have an idea of substance that is a complex idea that is not a simple idea. Like for example idea of the causation of cause and effect where we are saying that is this is cause effect right fire smoke relation. John Locke will argue that this is again it is a complex idea. So, John Locke basically is a person who is always talking about the knowledge in terms of experience. So, you have to understand in this way that your experience is first right. So, you are coming in this world and then you are experiencing an object and then you have an idea of an object right. Now you have a different idea for example this idea of substance right. We are discussing we have been discussing last many classes that substance what is the main primary cause of this world and so on and then again what is the substance right. Descartes has defined substance differently. Spinoza has an own way to define. So, idea is what is substance is. John Locke will argue that the substance is a complex idea and we have many similar kinds of idea which are a complex idea. So therefore, his main argument is whatever we are getting, whatever we are experiencing that is a product of our experiences. So, we are

experiencing and getting the idea. Now let us understand how this idea of substance is complex idea right. John Locke argued that idea of substance leads consists of this supposed or confused idea of bearer. So, we are getting some idea simple idea as a quality. Now for us we believe that this quality cannot exist by themselves or if there are many qualities, we wanted to give it the name and still we are thinking of there is something which is inherent in this all these qualities. So, for example we perceived quality X quality called T and another quality is P, C and L. Now we have this set of qualities and we believe that there is something some object call like for example N, N object and if this all this quality is there it means that this quality is something is there is a substratum of this all this quality. It only means that there is something which is there and which all the quality belongs to this object, and therefore what we did what we are doing we are thinking that something is there and now that is called substance. So, when you are perceiving any object, you are getting simple idea the qualities as John Locke have argued. Now these qualities we believed that this quality cannot exist by themselves. Therefore, what we are arguing that there is something there or substratum of all these qualities and at least something is there which this quality belongs to them that right and then we have idea of substance. For example, we perceive we have a simple idea like P, P, C and L and we are believing that this all these qualities are belonging to someone else something else that is called N object and this object is called substance. So, the idea of substance which you have is in a complex idea right. So, he argued that an experience thing like an apple or mango is simply subtotal of these qualities right. So, if there is an object for us, we are not accepting this subtotal of this qualities itself is an object right. So, ours is like we believe that there is an object called T or for example this mango and there are many qualities right P, S, L, N right. So, John Locke will argue that the subtotal of this quality itself is an amount and we have an idea of substance or we are arguing for the substance the idea of substance because we believe that these qualities cannot exist by themselves and therefore there is something and we need something and we believe that and this all this quality belongs to that object. Therefore, we are always arguing for the substance right. So, the idea of substance for the John Locke is a complex idea. Similarly, John Locke also argued for the idea of the cause and effect. The idea of cause and effect is in a complex idea. We have this idea that everything that has a beginning must have a cause and therefore John Locke argued that by contemplating our ideas and perceiving that the idea of beginning to be is necessarily connected with the idea of some operation and the idea of operation with the idea of something operating which we call a cause. The idea of causality is not necessarily connected with uniformity.

Now let us talk about the nature of knowledge from John Locke perspective. John Locke as his predecessor talked about the clear idea and then he argued that the idea should be clear and distinct because confused and obscure idea make the use of worth uncertain. He argued that simple ideas are real because they are all the effects of powers outside of our mind. John Locke argued that sometime the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement

of two ideas immediately by themselves without the intervention of any other and this I think we may call Intuitive knowledge. This for the John Locke the intuitive knowledge is in a higher position or let us say genuine knowledge. So intuitive knowledge for John Locke is that when we perceived the agreement or disagreement for example we perceived and realized that for example B is not C, black is not for example white, white is not black. So, there is disagreement and this disagreement this idea we are getting immediately by themselves without there is no intervention from the other side. We are not comparing with someone and then saying B is not C. So, what he is arguing that this kind of knowledge is called intuitive knowledge. There are second type of knowledge is called Demonstrative knowledge in which we perceive the agreement or disagreement between two ideas by the mediation or intervention of other ideas. So, when you do not need this intervention then it will call intuitive idea where you do not need any mediation or immediately you are getting this idea of this agreement or disagreement. But if you need some intervention then it is called demonstrative idea. For example, you know that B is C and you also know that C is D. Therefore, B equal to D. So, you are saying that B is equal to D, because you have some other intervention. So, you knew about and you have idea of B D is because of the C. So, this intervention was required to know the agreement or disagreement and this kind of knowledge is called Demonstrative knowledge. John Locke argued that demonstrative knowledge consists in series of chain of intuition. I mean to say that when you are saying that B is C and C is D. So, this is what you are getting from the intuition. Now you are concluding that B equal to D it up to the intervention. So even for this you need the intuitive knowledge. John Locke argued that the knowledge gained by the demonstrative method is certain but it is indirect because you need intervention requiring proof depending on the thickness and sagacity of the mind. John Locke argued that demonstrative knowledge requires the memory of previous steps or intuition. However, memory opens a door to the possibility of error and mistake and therefore the demonstrative knowledge is inferior to intuitive knowledge in degree of certainty. So, there is an intuitive knowledge because we do not need an intervention you are getting immediately this idea of agreement and disagreement and for demonstrative knowledge since we need intervention or mediation which is based on memory and therefore John Locke is arguing that there is a possibility of error and mistake and that is the reason that he argued that demonstrative knowledge is less certain. Now the third category let us say or in the terms of certainty or degree of certainty it comes Sensitive knowledge. John Locke argued that anything that comes to acquire the certainty of intuitive or demonstrative knowledge is knowledge and anything which comes thought of it it is not knowledge but it is just an opinion.

Now let us talk about the notion of self from the John Locke perspective. He also has argued about the body and soul but if you see this Lockean idea of body or soul it is a very similar to the Cartesian idea of body and mind. Now John Locke argued that a body is a substance those attributes are extension, solidity and mobility or the power of being moved. These are its primary qualities which we receive through our senses. So, as I said that is

similar to the Rene Descartes, it does not mean that the way the Descartes had concluded John Locke also is doing that. John Locke has a different way to talk about the notion of body and notion of soul but his conclusion is very similar to the Rene Descartes idea of the body and mind. So what John Locke is arguing that if you use these experiences those senses then you will realize that the substance body is attributes are extension or the power of being moved. Now there is a kind of vacuum pure space without body. The fact that we can conceive the space without solidity and motion proves the existence of the vacuum and therefore he argued the existence of spiritual substance or souls. He argued the souls are real being and its qualities are thinking or the power of perception and Will or the power of setting the body in motion. This quality we know through the reflection. Now I form an idea of soul substance by reflecting upon the operation of my own mind such as thinking, understanding, willing, knowing and the power of bringing motion.

Now the John Locke also has argued about the God and he argued that the pure spirit or God is active only. However, matter is passive only but man's soul is both active and passive. Now what does it mean when saying the active? So active means the power to move the body and passive means it is a passive in relation to the bodies outside which produce changes in soul. So all our ideas are due to the action of body on the mind. This is a "theory of interaction." So, there is a body and mind where it is because of the mind is putting this body in like in motion. This is how John Locke has talked about the interaction. John Locke argued that mind and body exist as a real being and interact. So, we have been like discussing about the mind-body problem and we are finding that it is difficult from the Descartes philosophy of body and mind that the body-mind it is not possible to interact right. I mean the way that Descartes has argued about the notion of body and the notion of mind, we have discussed that that interaction between this body and mind not take place because the body and mind are two different things. In the John Lockean understanding, he is arguing that the body and the mind is a real being and they interact. So, interaction between the body and mind is possible. John Locke has an idea that we have an idea. So, we are like we are sure about the mind and mind is a thinking thing and it interacts with the body.

So, thank you and this talk was based on the two books, The Critical History of Western Philosophy and History of Philosophy. Again, this is from Stanford Encyclopedia. Here we have done with I mean we have discussed this, John Locke. In the last class we have discussed what is the John Lockean idea of idea, simple idea, complex idea. Today we also have tried to understand more in detail about the complex idea and the notion of self. So, thank you for your kind attention. Thank you.