

# John lockes philosophy of education philosophy essay



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All the objects of the understanding are described as ideas, and ideas are spoken of as being in the mind. Locke's first problem, therefore, is to trace the origin and history of ideas, and the way in which the understanding operates upon them, in order that he may be able to see what knowledge is and how far it reaches.

In the first book of the Essay, on the subject of innate ideas, Locke points to the variety of human experience, and to the difficulty of forming general and abstract ideas, and he ridicules the view that any such ideas can be antecedent to experience. All the parts of our knowledge, he insists, have the same rank and the same history regarding their origin in experience. All our ideas, he says, come from experience. The mind has no innate ideas, but it has innate faculties: it perceives, remembers, and combines the ideas that come to it from without; it also desires, deliberates, and wills; and these mental activities are themselves the source of a new class of ideas.

Experience is therefore twofold. Our observation may be employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds. The former is the source of most of the ideas which we have, and, as it depends "wholly upon our senses," is called "sensation."

John Locke was a great education on several counts. In an immediate sense he was himself a practitioner and publicist of good education. This writing assignment is concerned with his biography, his philosophy of education, his advice to parents on the upbringing of their children, his philosophy of curriculum.

## Biography

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Locke's father, who was also named John Locke, was a country lawyer and clerk to the Justices of the Peace in Chew Magna, who had served as a captain of cavalry for the Parliamentary forces during the early part of the English Civil War. His mother, Agnes Keene, was a tanner's daughter and reputed to be very beautiful. Both parents were Puritans. Locke was born on 29 August 1632, in a small thatched cottage by the church in Wrington, Somerset, about twelve miles from Bristol. He was baptized the same day. In 1647, Locke was sent to the prestigious Westminster School in London under the sponsorship of Alexander Popham, a member of Parliament and former commander of the younger Locke's father. After completing his studies there, he was admitted to Christ Church, Oxford.

Locke was awarded a bachelor's degree in 1656 and a master's degree in 1658. He obtained a bachelor of medicine in 1674, having studied medicine extensively during his time at Oxford and worked with such noted scientists and thinkers as Robert Boyle, Thomas Willis, Robert Hooke and Richard Lower.

Locke fled to the Netherlands in 1683, under strong suspicion of involvement in the Rye House Plot, although there is little evidence to suggest that he was directly involved in the scheme. In the Netherlands, Locke had time to return to his writing, spending a great deal of time re-working the Essay and composing the Letter on Toleration. Locke did not return home until after the Glorious Revolution. Locke accompanied William of Orange's wife back to England in 1688. The bulk of Locke's publishing took place upon his return from exile - his aforementioned Essay Concerning Human Understanding,

the Two Treatises of Civil Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration all appearing in quick succession.

He died in 28 October 1704, and is buried in the churchyard of the village of High Laver east of Harlow in Essex, where he had lived in the household of Sir Francis Masham since 1691. Locke never married nor had children.

### Philosophy of Education

Although the Thoughts was most immediately concerned with education, by far the most important of Locke's writings, and one which had great significance for education, was the Essay concerning human understanding.

Locke abandoned the attempt to make two unlike things influence each other. He begins his thinking with the thesis that the mind is a sort of blank tablet upon which the world of matter writes by means of sensations. This mind does not have innate or inborn ideas, but it does have the power to arrange impressions in such a way as to produce a consistent system of thoughts. Mind and body, for Locke, exist as real things, but they interact. Bodies act upon the mind and produce sensations.

Ideas or perceptions of some of qualities of external objects are accurate copies of qualities that actually reside in the objects, Locke said. This is what he means. Think of a basketball. It has a certain size, shape, and weight, and when we look at and handle the ball, our sensory apparatus provides us with accurate pictures or images or ideas or perceptions of these "primary" qualities, as Locke called them.

Locke's theory: According to Locke, when we say, we are looking at an external object, what we are really doing is attending to the perceptions or ideas of the object in our mind. Some of these perceptions, such as those of a basketball's size and shape, accurately represent qualities in the object itself. Other perceptions, such as those of the basketball's color do not represent anything in the object.

Locke's purpose was to examine the nature and extent of human knowledge and the degree of assent should be given to any proposition. Locke's alternative image of the mind as a 'white paper void of all characters' (Essay, 2. 1. 2) has often been interpreted as meaning that all human beings start as equals. Locke did not believe this; on the contrary, he was conscious that the differing personalities and mental and physical capacities of individuals were to some extent a product of nature rather of nature.

How was knowledge acquired? How might men come to universal agreement? 'To this I answer, in one word, from experience' (Essay, 2. 1. 2). But experience itself, gained via the senses, was not sufficient of itself for knowledge. That also required the active agency of mind upon such experience.

Follow a child from its birth and observe the alterations that time makes, and you should find, as the mind by the senses comes more and more to be furnished with ideas, it comes to be more and more awake; thinks more, the more it has matter to think upon. After some time it begins to know the objects, which being most familiar with it, have made lasting impressions. Thus it comes, by degrees, to know the persons it daily converses with, and

distinguishes them from strangers; which are instances and effects of its coming to retain and distinguish the ideas the senses convey to it (Essay, 2. 1. 22).

The senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish this yet empty cabinet and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards the mind, proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degree learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the materials about which to exercise its discursive faculty. And the use of reason becomes daily more visible, as these materials that give it employment increase (Essay, 1. 2. 15).

It must be admitted that Locke's derivation of all ideas ultimately from experience is not without its difficulties. Though, for Locke, experience embraced both sensation and reflection, clearly there are substantial qualitative differences between the simple sensations of infants, and the complex and abstract reflections of the mature adult mind. One way of attempting to resolve such difficulties is to recognize that Locke envisaged ideas of different types.

### Parents and children

His medical knowledge contributed to a concern for the physical, as well as the mental and spiritual, well-being of children. He was not only a founder of empirical thought, with all that meant for ways of learning, but he also may be counted as a pioneer of scientific psychology. He believed in the

importance of observing children, and of tailoring education to their needs  
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and capacities. Thus his views on ' plenty of open air, exercise and sleep; plain diet, no wine or strong drink, and very little or no physick' (Thoughts, s. 30) would command general support today, though his advice on toughening the feet by wearing thin or leaky shoes so that gentleman's sons might acquire the ability, if necessary, to go barefoot as the poor do, might seem to be somewhat harsh.

(Thought, s. 8).

Food for children, according to Locke, should be plain and wholesome, with sugar salt and spices used sparingly. From the body Locke turned to the mind. He believe that parents should personally exercise firm and close authority over their children from an early age, with a view to relaxing this as they grow older. ' Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it' (Thoughts, s. 42).

Locke criticized the over-indulgence of little children, and abhorred obstinate crying on their part, but had little use of any form of physical chastisement.

He advised parents and tutors to their children and to note their dispositions and dislikes: ' for a child will learn three time as much when he is in tune, as he will with double the time and pains, when he goes awkwardly, or is dragged unwillingly to it' (Thoughts, s. 74). Toys should be simple and sturdy, possible fashioned by the children themselves, rather than expensive and fragile.

The curriculum

Locke had an overall view of the curriculum which was coupled with teaching methods. He believed in starting with the plain and simple, and of building, as far as possible, upon children's existing knowledge, of emphasizing the interconnections and coherence of subjects.

Children should be taught to read at the earliest possible age-as soon as they can talk. But the learning should not be irksome; on the contrary, Locke believed that it would be better to lose a whole year rather than to give a child an aversion to learning at this early stage. Locke commented upon how much energy, practice and repetition children happily put into play, and therefore suggested ' dice and play-things with the letters on them, to teach children the alphabet by playing' (Thoughts, s. 148). From letters they should proceed to syllables and then to easy and pleasant books, such as Aesop's Fables, preferably in an edition which included pictures. Locke advocated the use of ' pictures of animals with the printed names to them' (Thoughts, s. 156). In recognition of the difficulties inherent in such essential learning as The Lord's Prayer, Creeds and Ten Commandments, Locke recommended that these should be learned not from the printed word but orally and by heart. Locke warned against the use of the Bible as a reading book for children, a most common practice in this day, ' for what pleasure or encouragement can it be to a child to exercise himself in reading those parts of a book, where he understands nothing?' (Thoughts, s. 158).

Writing should begin with correct holding of the pen and the copying of large letters from a sheet. Writing would lead naturally to drawing, with due attention to perspective, a most useful skill for those who would engage in travel, so that buildings, machines and other interesting phenomena might

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be quickly sketched. Locke believed that a good drawing was more useful in conveying an idea to the mind than several pages of written description. Locke also urged the value of shorthand for the purpose of making quick notes. Other subjects which Locke commended for a gentleman's son included geography, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, chronology, and history, and generally in that order.

### Locke's influence on contemporary education in Cambodia

As we have known that John Locke is a great philosopher so his philosophies influences other countries include Cambodia as well. His education that influences on contemporary in Cambodia is that nowadays in Cambodia kindergarten we use John Locke's education such as: we include pictures and fables to teach students. In these stages, teachers teach students by describing and explaining that why Locke recommended. But what we concern is that some Cambodian teachers usually teach students what they have without giving time to students to practice or do the experiment. Moreover, students themselves rarely use their sensations correctly to know the facts. They usually believe that their teachers teach them. It means that what their teachers teach them they just require knowledge from their teachers. These points we should change the bad habit. So teachers have to teach students to use the senses how to acquire knowledge because Locke said that our knowledge comes from experience through sensation. On the other hand, some students are poor they cannot eat healthy food so that why it is a little bit different from what Locke has recommended. Locke purpose is that he wants children to eat healthy food so when children have strong health they will study more effective.

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## Conclusion

In conclusion, Locke's philosophy is very good because he wants all people to know the facts by using experience through sensations. As we have known, something around us is abstract therefore we need to find the truth and reality. As Locke has mentioned above education is very important for all people. So, not only people in other countries but also people in Cambodia parents have to send their children to study at schools. It is a good reason that children are easy to acquire knowledge when they are children because in this stage John Locke held that at birth the human mind is a blank slate, empty ideas. In contrast, if parents don not send them to study it means that their children will be poor at knowledge. At last, Locke said that the goal of education is the welfare and prosperity of the nation- Locke conceived the nation's welfare and prosperity in terms of the personal happiness and social usefulness of its citizens.