

its ideas out of itself.

Q. 2 Discuss critically concept empiricism.

Ans. (According to concept empiricism, sense-perception or sense-experience is the source of concepts.) External perception consists in knowing something directly by the application of our five external sense organs. Internal perception consists in having concepts of the states of our mind, our joys through our mind. (Locke, Berkeley and Hume are the main supporters of modern concept-empiricism)

(Locke first criticizes the doctrine of innate ideas, and then he propounds his own doctrine of ideas) He understands the theory of innate ideas, as being the doctrine that there are in the understanding certain innate principles, some primary notions, characters, as it were stamped upon the mind of man which the soul receives in its very first being; and brings upon the world with it.

According to Descartes there are in born ideas, for example ideas like infinity, eternity, perfection etc. which can never be obtained through sense experience. They remain implicit in the mind and are made explicit by rational thought when necessity arises. (According to Locke, there are no innate ideas in our mind prior to any sense-experience.

(Locke advances following arguments againsts innate ideas : (i) If there were innate ideas they must be equally present in all minds but children, savages, idiots persons are not conscious of any innate ideas, like causality, infinity etc.)

(ii) (If there be innate ideas in the mind they must be the same in all minds. But our experience does not prove it.) The moral principle, supposed to be innate, differ in different societies, in different countries and in different ages.

(iii) (Even if it is taken for granted that there are some ideas which are

universally present in all minds, it would not prove that they are innate.) For example, every man may cherish the same idea about fire but that does not prove that to be innate.

(After refuting the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas, Locke proceeds that the mind of every human being at the time of his birth is a tabula rasa, i.e., a blank tablet or a clear slate. It has no innate idea.) As Locke observes, "Since the mind in all its thoughts and reasoning has no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, It is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them."

(The mind receives all its ideas from experience. Experience is, in itself, two fold—sensation and reflection. The source of our knowledge of the ideas of sense qualities like heat, cold, red, yellow is sensation. The source of our knowledge of the internal workings of the soul, such as thinking, doubting etc. is reflection.) Since we can only think by means of ideas, and since all ideas come from experience, it is evident that none of our knowledge can antedate experience.

(Locke maintains that mind cannot reflect or think before. It has sensations. The mind passively receives sensations which are known as simple ideas. These simple ideas constitute the materials of all human knowledge. When sensations are present in the mind, mind becomes active and by repeating, comparing and uniting even 'to an almost infinite variety' can form complex ideas.) The mind can form concepts or general ideas by generalization from particular ideas.

(According to Locke, there are two kinds of ideas, simple and complex.) Simple ideas may be received (a) from one sense, i.e.; ideas of colour, sound derived through eyes, ears respectively ; (b) from more than one sense, e.g., ideas of extension, figure which can come through the combined activity of sight and touch ; (c) from reflection, i.e., thinking, doubting, believing, (d) from both sensation and reflection, i.e., the ideas of pain, existence, power etc.

Man cannot create simple ideas, but it can form complex ideas (i) by combining various simple ideas, for example, the world, an army etc. (ii) by relating one simple or complex idea with another simple or complex idea, for example, father and son. (iii) by abstracting one idea from another associated idea, i.e., whiteness, manhood. (There are three classes of complex ideas, namely modes, substances and relation.)

Locke defines knowledge as the perception of the agreement and disagreement among our ideas. The object of knowledge is neither ideas, nor the relation of ideas to object, but the relation existing among ideas.

themselves. Our mind can know directly only ideas, its knowledge of objects in indirect. It knows objects through the medium of ideas.

(Locke maintains that ideas are copies of external objects.) Berkeley argues if ideas are like objects, the objects must be ideas. According to Berkeley only mind and its ideas exist. Berkeley does not admit the existence of general ideas. In his opinion, all our ideas are particular ideas, we never experience any general abstract idea. The words by which abstract ideas are supposed to be designated are mere names. Our mind cannot form any abstract idea of colour which is neither blue, nor yellow, nor of any other colour. It is not possible for human mind to form any abstract idea. According to Berkeley the existence of a thing consists in its being perceived. A thing is known or experienced as an idea. Berkeley admits the existence of the spiritual substance or self. If the existence of a thing is determined by perception, the existence of the perceiving mind must be admitted. Berkeley admits the existence of mind alone—of the finite minds and infinite mind, i.e., God, God is the origin of our ideas and He gives us the ideas. All objects of our experience are in the mind of God as ideas.

But if the world of material objects does not exist, how will it be possible to explain the origin of ideas? We find that some ideas are dependent on our will, while others are not. We can clearly distinguish between the ideas of sensation and the ideas of imagination. The ideas of imagination are not creations but as regards ideas of sensations their origin does not depend on our will. We ourselves can create the ideas of imagination but ideas of perception, according to Berkeley, are produced by God alone. (God then is the origin of our ideas. Ideas are produced by God in finite minds according to fixed laws.)

According to Hume, the content of the mind is a perception. All perceptions may be divided into impressions and ideas. By impressions Hume means external and internal sensations. These constitute the original materials of knowledge. They are the immediate data of experience. An idea is a faint copy of an impression. The impression is more vivid and lively than an idea. Ideas originate out of impressions.

Both impressions and ideas may be simple or complex. A simple idea is a copy of a simple impression. When a man perceives a colour, his perception will be a simple impression. If that man recalls this afterwards, his perception will be a simple idea exactly similar to the original impression except that it will have less vividness. A simple idea differ from a simple impression only 'in appearing later and in being more faint in the case of idea of memory and fainter still in the case of imagination.' A man stands upon a mountain

and perceives a city with its big buildings, high roads etc. Then that man will have a complex impression of that particular city. Now, if he recalls of it afterwards, his perception will be a complex idea. In this case the complex idea is the copy of a complex impression. But the complex idea need not be always a copy of a complex impression.

Hume concludes that no person can form a simple idea for which he has not previously had a corresponding simple impression, nor a complex idea for which he has not previously had simple ideas. This implies that all ideas are derived from impression. How can the truth of any simple or complex idea be determined? For this, one is required to trace its origin to the impression or impressions from which it has come.

(The theory of ideas or concepts, advocated by the empiricists, has many shortcomings. Some of which may be stated below.)

(a) According to Locke mind is passive in the reception of simple ideas, and becomes active while it forms complex ideas. But psychologically mind is active even at the time of receiving simple ideas.)

(b) According to Locke, 'Knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas'. Again Locke holds that mind has no other immediate object but its own ideas. Russell observes, "From this it would seem to follow immediately that we cannot know of the existence of other people or of the physical world, for these if they exist, are not merely ideas in my mind.) Each one of us accordingly, must, so far as knowledge is concerned, be shut up in himself, and cut off from all contact with the outer world."

(c) Locke does not believe in the existence of innate ideas. There may not be innate ideas, but that there are innate capacities, and inborn abilities and aptitudes in the new-born children cannot be denied.) That is why two children living in the same environment develop different traits of character.

(d) If all the external objects of all world are nothing but ideas in mind, as Berkeley holds, then the sun, the moon, trees etc. all will be reduced to the ideas of our mind and as such they will be nothing but mere illusory or imaginary objects. Berkeley argues that he does not admit the unreality of external objects. They are real in this sense only that they are being regularly and systematically produced by God in our mind. But this means to solve the problem with the help of the idea of God.

(e) If all objects are nothing but ideas, then it becomes difficult to distinguish between different objects. Berkeley refutes this objection by saying that a distinction between a real object and its idea is unnecessary.

(f) Berkeley holds that the existence of a thing consists in its being perceived. But he admits the existence of soul-substance and God, though they are not perceptible. Berkeley says, we can have no idea of self, we can have notion of it. But Berkeley does not clearly explain the distinction between notion and idea.

(g) According to Hume an idea is a faint copy of an impression. The difference between an impression and its idea consists in the greater force, liveliness and vividness of the former. But that imagination has a part to play in case of perception, is a fact, which has escaped the notice of Hume. For that reason Hume's explanation of complex impression does not appear to be satisfactory.