

Empiricism in Britain: Locke, Berkeley, and Hume

Stumpf, Samuel Enoch. Socrates to Sartre.
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Although the school of empiricism came upon the scene in an unpretentious way, it was destined to alter the course and concerns of modern philosophy. Whereas Bacon aimed at "the total reconstruction of . . . all human knowledge," Locke, who was the founder of empiricism in Britain, aimed at the more modest objective of "clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge." But in the process of "clearing" and "removing," Locke hit upon a bold and original interpretation of how the mind works and from this described the kind and extent of knowledge we can expect from the human mind.

The scope of our knowledge, Locke said, is limited to, and by, our experience. This was not a new insight, for others before him had said much the same thing. Both Bacon and Hobbes had urged that knowledge should be built upon observation, and to this extent they could be called empiricists. But neither Bacon nor Hobbes raised any critical question about the intellectual powers of man. Although both uncovered and rejected modes of thought that they considered fruitless and erroneous, they nevertheless accepted without challenge the

general view that the mind is capable of producing certainty of knowledge about nature provided only that the proper method is used. Similarly, Descartes assumed that there was no problem that human reason could not solve if the correct method was employed. This was the assumption Locke called into critical question, namely, the assumption that the human mind has capabilities that enable it to discover the true nature of the universe. David Hume pushed this critical point even further and asked whether any secure knowledge at all is possible. In their separate ways, the British empiricists Locke, Berkeley, and Hume challenged not only their English predecessors but also the Continental rationalists, who had launched modern philosophy upon an optimistic view of man's rational powers that the empiricists could not accept.

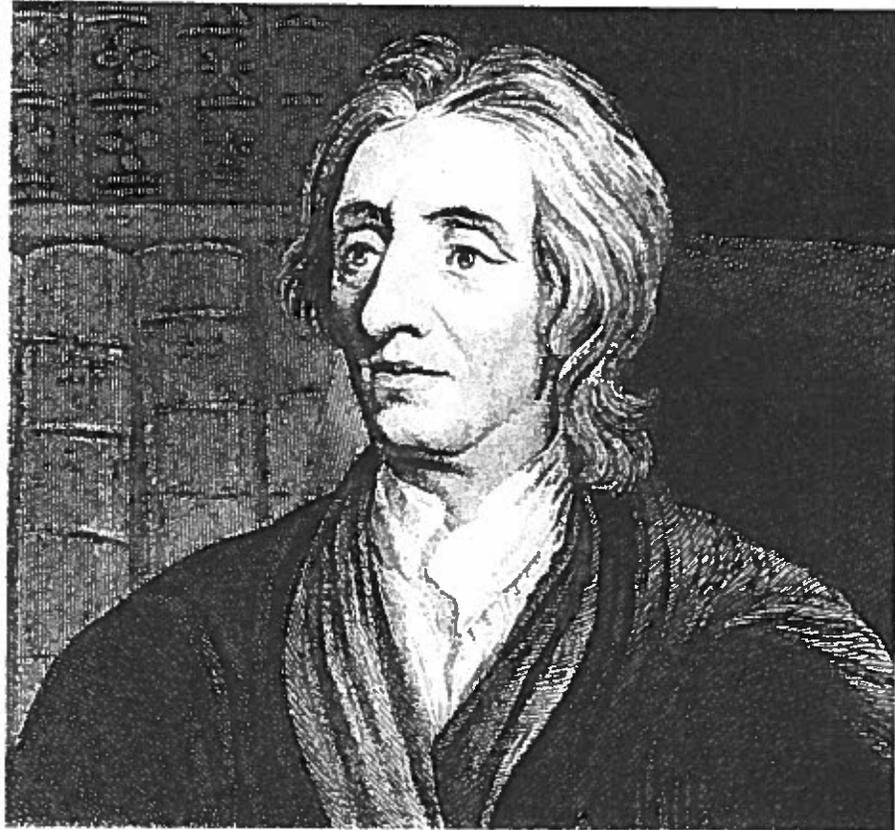
LOCKE

John Locke was born in 1632 at Wrington, Somerset, and died seventy-two years later in 1704. He grew up in a Puritan home, trained in the virtues of hard work and the love of simplicity. After a thorough training in the classics at Westminster School, Locke became a student at Oxford University, where he took the Bachelor's and Master's degrees and was appointed Senior Student and later Censor of Moral Philosophy. He spent thirty years of his life in the city of Oxford. Though he continued his studies of Aristotle's logic and metaphysics, he was gradually drawn toward the newly developing experimental sciences, being influenced in this direction particularly by Sir Robert Boyle. His scientific interests led him to pursue the study of medicine, and in 1674 he obtained his medical degree and was licensed to practice. As he pondered what direction his career might take, there was added to the considerations of medicine and Oxford Tutor an alternative, diplomacy. He actually served in various capacities, eventually becoming the personal physician and confidential adviser to the Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the leading politicians of London. But earlier influences, among them his reading of Descartes' works while at Oxford, confirmed his desire to devote his creative powers to working out a philosophical understanding of certain problems that perplexed his generation. He wrote on such diverse topics as *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, *An Essay Concerning Toleration*, and the *Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money*, indicating his active participation in the public affairs of his day.

In 1690, when he was fifty-seven years old, Locke published two books, which were to make him famous as a philosopher and as a political theorist: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatises of Civil Government*. Although other philosophers before him had written about human knowledge, Locke was the first one to produce a full-length inquiry into the scope and limits of the human mind. Similarly, others had written important works on political theory, but Locke's second of the *Two Treatises* came at a time when it could shape the thoughts of an era and later affect the course of events. The *Two Treatises* and *Essay* indicate Locke's way of combining his practical and theoretic-

cal interests and abilities. The *Two Treatises* were expressly formulated to justify the revolution of 1688. Some of its ideas took such strong hold upon succeeding generations that phrases contained in it, as for example, that men are "all equal and independent" and possess the natural rights to "life, health, liberty and possessions," worked their way into the Declaration of Independence and affected the shaping of the American Constitution. Regarding his *Essay*, he tells us that it grew out of an experience that occurred about twenty years before this work was published. On that occasion, five or six friends met to discuss a point in philosophy, and before long they were hopelessly snarled, "without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us." Convinced that the discussion had taken a wrong turn, Locke decided that before one could move directly into such a subject as "the principles of morality and revealed religion," it was necessary "to examine our own abilities, and see what *objects* our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with." From this examination Locke eventually composed his *Essay on Human Understanding*, which became the foundation of empiricism in Britain.

Locke (New York Public Library Picture Collection)



Locke's Theory of Knowledge Locke set out "to enquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge. . . ." He assumed that if he could describe what knowledge consists of and how it is obtained, he could determine the limits of knowledge and decide what constitutes intellectual certainty. His conclusion was that knowledge is restricted to *ideas*, not Plato's Ideas or Forms, but ideas that are generated by objects we experience. The origin of ideas is *experience*, and experience takes two forms, *sensation* and *reflection*. Without exception, then, all our ideas come to us through the senses, whereby we experience the world external to us, and through reflection upon these ideas, which is an experience internal to us. What Locke wanted to make quite clear was that we cannot have the experience of *reflection* until we have had the experience of *sensation*. For reflection means simply the mind's taking notice of its own operations; but its operations begin when the mind is provided with ideas, and these ideas come from without through the senses. This means that each person's mind is in the beginning like a blank sheet of paper upon which experience alone can subsequently write knowledge. Before he could elaborate these conclusions, Locke felt that he must lay to rest the persisting theory of innate ideas, the notion that in some way we all come into the world with a standard stock of ideas built into the mind.

No Innate Ideas It is obvious that if Locke is going to say that all ideas come from experience, he must reject the theory of innateness. He points out that "It is an established opinion among some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles . . . stamped upon the mind of man, which the soul receives in its very first beginning, and brings into the world with it." Not only does Locke reject this as not true, but he considers this doctrine a dangerous tool in the hands of those who could misuse it. If a skillful ruler could convince people that certain principles are innate, this could "take them off from the use of their own reason and judgment, and put them on believing and taking them upon trust without further examination," and "in this posture of blind credulity, they might be more easily governed. . . ." But there were those whose interest in the theory of innate ideas was not so malignant, as in the case of Cudworth, the Cambridge Platonist, who published *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* in 1678, just at the time when Locke was trying to sort out his thoughts on these problems. Cudworth took the position that the demonstration of the existence of God rested upon the premise that certain principles are innate in the human mind. It was his contention that the famous empiricist formula that "nothing exists in the intellect which was not first in the senses" leads to atheism. He reasoned that if knowledge consists solely of information supplied to the mind by objects external to it, the external world existed before there was knowledge. In that case, knowledge could not have been the cause of the world. Locke disagreed with this view, saying that it was indeed possible to prove the existence of God without recourse to the notion of innate principles. He was particularly concerned to expose the groundless claim for innate ideas in order to keep clear the distinction between prejudice, enthusiasm, and opinion, on the one hand, and knowledge on the

other. He therefore set out a series of arguments against this claim to innate ideas.

Those who argued for the theory of innate ideas did so on the grounds that men universally accept as true and certain various rational principles. Among these are the principles that "What is, is," which is the principle of identity, and that "It is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be," which is the principle of noncontradiction. But are these innate? Locke denies that they are, though he does not question their certainty. These principles are certain not because they are innate but because the mind, reflecting on the nature of things as they are, will not let us think otherwise. To enforce this line of reasoning, Locke suggests first of all that even if it were true that these principles were accepted as true by all men, this would not prove that they were innate, provided that an alternative explanation could be given for this universal consent. Moreover, there is some question whether there is universal knowledge of these principles. "Seldom," says Locke, are these general principles "mentioned in the huts of Indians, much less are they found in the thoughts of children. . . ." If it is argued that such principles can be apprehended only after the mind matures, then why call them innate? If they were truly innate, they must always be known, for "No proposition can be said to be in the mind, which it never yet knew, which it never yet was conscious of." As Locke saw the matter, 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 ideas.

Simple and Complex Ideas Locke assumed that knowledge could be explained by discovering the raw materials out of which it was made. Of these ingredients he spoke this way: "Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas:—How comes it to be furnished? . . . Whence has it all the *materials* of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE." Experience gives us two sources of ideas, sensation and reflection. From the senses we receive into our minds several distinct perceptions and thereby become conversant about objects external to us. This is how we come to have the ideas of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all other sensible qualities. Sensation is the "great source of most of the ideas we have. . . ." The other facet of experience is reflection, an activity of the mind that produces ideas by taking notice of previous ideas furnished by the senses. Reflection 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 our senses. All the ideas men have can be traced either to sensation or to reflection, and these ideas are either simple or complex.

Simple ideas constitute the chief source of the raw materials out of which our knowledge is made. These ideas are received passively by the mind through the senses. When we look at an object, ideas come into our minds single file. Even though an object has several qualities blended together, such as a white lily that has the qualities of whiteness and sweetness without any separation, the

mind receives the ideas of *white* and *sweet* separately, because each idea enters through a different sense, namely the sense of sight and the sense of smell. But even if different qualities entered by the same sense, as when both the hardness and coldness of ice come through the sense of touch, the mind sorts out the difference between them because there are in fact two different qualities involved. Simple ideas originate first of all, then, in sensation. But they also originate in reflection. Just as the senses are affected by objects, so also the mind is *aware* of the ideas it has received. In relation to the ideas received through the senses, the mind can develop other simple ideas by reasoning and judging, so that a simple idea of reflection might be pleasure or pain, or the idea of power obtained from observing the effect natural bodies have on one another.

Complex ideas, on the other hand, are not received passively but are rather put together by the mind as a compound of simple ideas. Here the emphasis is upon the activity of the mind, which takes three forms as the mind *joins* ideas, *brings* ideas together but holds them separate, and *abstracts*. Thus, the mind joins the ideas of whiteness, hardness, and sweetness to form the complex idea of a lump of sugar. The mind also brings ideas together but holds them separate for the purpose of thinking of relationships, as when we say the grass is greener than the tree. Finally, the mind can separate ideas "from all other ideas that accompany them in their real existence [as when we separate the idea of *man* from John and Peter]; and thus all its general ideas are made."

Primary and Secondary Qualities To describe in even more detail how we get our ideas, Locke turned his attention to the problem of how ideas are related to the objects that produce them. Do our ideas reproduce exactly the objects we sense? If, for example, we consider a snowball, what is the relation between our ideas that the snowball engenders in our minds and the actual nature of the snowball? We have such ideas as round, moving, hard, white, and cold. To account for these ideas, Locke says that objects have *qualities*, and he defines a quality as "the power [in an object] to produce any idea in our mind." The snowball, then, has qualities that have the power to produce ideas in our minds.

Locke attempts here an important distinction between two different kinds of qualities in order to answer the question of how ideas are related to objects. He terms these qualities *primary* and *secondary*. Primary qualities are those that "really do exist in the bodies themselves"; thus our ideas, caused by primary qualities, resemble exactly those qualities that belong inseparably to the object. The snowball looks round and *is* round, appears to be moving and *is* moving. Secondary qualities, on the other hand, produce ideas in our mind that have no exact counterpart in the object. We have the idea of *cold* when we touch the snowball and the idea *white* when we see it. But there is no whiteness or coldness in the snowball; what *is* in the snowball is the quality, the power to create in us the ideas of cold and white. Primary qualities, then, refer to solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number, or qualities which belong to the object. Secondary qualities, such as colors, sounds, tastes, and odors, do not belong to or constitute bodies except as powers to produce these ideas in us.

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The importance of Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities is that through it he sought to distinguish between appearance and reality. Locke did not invent this distinction. Democritus had long ago suggested something similar when he said that colorless atoms are the basic reality and that colors, tastes, and odors are the results of particular organizations of these atoms. Descartes also separated secondary qualities from the basic substance he called *extension*. Locke's distinction reflected his interest in the new physics and the influence of the "judicious Mr. Newton's incomparable book" upon his thought. Newton explained the appearance of *white* as the motions of invisible minute particles. Reality, then, is found not in whiteness, which is only an effect, but in the motion of something, which is the cause. His discussion of primary and secondary qualities assumed throughout that there was *something* that could possess these qualities, and this he called *substance*.

Substance Locke approached the question of substance from what he regarded as a common-sense point of view. How can we have ideas of qualities without supposing that there is something, some substance, in which these qualities subsist? If we ask what has shape or color, we answer something solid and extended. *Solid* and *extended* are primary qualities, and if we ask in what they subsist, Locke answers *substance*. However inevitable the idea of substance may be to common sense, Locke was unable to describe it with precision, admitting that "if any one will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what support of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us." Still, Locke saw in the concept of substance the explanation of sensation, saying that sensation is caused by substance. Similarly, it is substance that contains the powers that give regularity and consistency to our ideas. Moreover it is substance, Locke held, that constitutes the object of sensitive knowledge.

Locke was impelled by the simple logic of the matter, that if there is motion, there must be something that moves, that qualities cannot float around without something that holds them together. We have ideas of *matter* and of *thinking*, but "we shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no." But if there is thinking, there must be something that thinks. We also have an idea of God, which, like the idea of substance in general, is not clear and distinct. Yet, "if we examine the idea we have of the incomprehensible supreme being, we shall find that we come by it in the same way, and that the complex ideas we have both of God and separate spirits are made up of the simple ideas that we receive from reflection." The idea of God, as the idea of substance, is inferred from other simple ideas and is the product not of immediate observation but of demonstration. But the idea of substance, being "something we know not what," does raise for Locke the question of just how far our knowledge extends and how much validity it has.

The Degrees of Knowledge How far our knowledge extends and how much validity it has depend, according to Locke, upon the relations our ideas have to each other. Indeed, Locke finally defines knowledge as nothing more than "the

perception of the connexion of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas." Our ideas enter single file into our minds, but once they are inside they can become related to each other in many ways. Some of the relations our ideas have to each other depend upon the objects we experience. At other times, our imagination can rearrange our simple and complex ideas to suit our fancy. Whether our knowledge is fanciful or valid depends upon our *perception* of the relationships of our ideas to each other. There are three modes of perception, namely, *intuitive*, *demonstrative*, and *sensitive*, and each one leads us to a different degree of knowledge regarding reality.

Intuitive knowledge is immediate, leaves no doubt, and is "the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of." Such knowledge "like sunshine forces itself immediately to be perceived as soon as ever the mind turns its view that way." Instantly we know that a circle is not a square or that 6 is not 8, because we can perceive the repugnancy of these ideas to each other. But besides these formal or mathematical truths, intuition can lead us to a knowledge of what exists. From intuition we know that we exist: "Experience then convinces us, that we have intuitive knowledge of our own existence, and an internal infallible perception that we are."

Demonstrative knowledge occurs when our minds engage in trying to discover the agreement or disagreement of ideas by calling attention to still other ideas. Ideally, each step of the demonstration must have intuitive certainty. This is particularly the case in mathematics, but again Locke thought that demonstration is a mode of perception that leads the mind to a knowledge of some form of existing reality. Thus "man knows, by an intuitive certainty, that bare nothing can no more produce any real being than it can be equal to two right angles." From this starting point Locke argued that since there are in fact existing things that begin and end in time, and since a "nonentity cannot produce any real being, it is an evident demonstration, that from eternity there has been something." Reasoning in a similar way, he concludes that this eternal Being is "most knowing" and "most powerful" and that "it is plain to me we have a more certain knowledge of the existence of God, than of anything our senses have not immediately discovered to us."

Sensitive knowledge is not knowledge in the strict sense of the term; it only "passes under the name of knowledge." Locke did not doubt that things outside of us exist, for, otherwise, where did we get our simple ideas? But sensitive knowledge does not give us certainty, nor does it extend very far. We sense that we see another man and have no doubt that he exists, but when he leaves us, we are no longer sure of his existence: "For if I saw such a collection of simple ideas as is wont to be called *man*, existing together one minute since, and am now alone, I cannot be certain that the same man exists now, since there is no *necessary connexion* of his existence a minute since with his existence now." And therefore, "though it be highly probable that millions of men do now exist, yet, whilst I am alone, writing this, I have not that knowledge of it which we strictly call knowledge; though the great likelihood of it puts me past doubt. . . ." Since experience simply makes us aware of qualities, we have no assurance of the connections between qualities, and in particular sensitive knowledge does not

assure us that qualities which appear to our senses to be related are *necessarily* connected. We simply sense things as they are, and as we never sense *substance*, we never know from sensation how things are *really* connected. Nevertheless, sensitive knowledge gives us *some* degree of knowledge but not certainty. Intuitive knowledge gives us certainty that we exist, demonstrative knowledge indicates that God exists, and sensitive knowledge assures us that other selves and things exist but only as they are when we experience them.

Locke's Moral and Political Theory Locke placed our thought about morality into the category of demonstrative knowledge. To him morality could have the precision of mathematics: "I am bold to think that morality is capable of demonstration, as well as mathematics: since the precise real essence of the things moral words stand for can be perfectly known, and so the congruity and incongruity of the things themselves be perfectly discovered." The key word in ethics, namely *good*, is perfectly understandable, for everybody knows what the word *good* stands for: "Things are good or evil only in reference to pleasure or pain. That we call good which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain in us. . . ." Certain kinds of behavior will bring us pleasure, whereas other kinds will bring us pain. Morality, then, has to do with choosing or willing the good.

As a further definition of ethics, Locke says that "moral good and evil, then, is only the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law," and he speaks of three kinds of laws, namely, the *law of opinion*, the *civil law*, and the *divine law*. The real issue here is to ask how Locke knows that these laws exist and also how he understands the relation of all three of them to each other. Bearing in mind that he saw no difficulty in demonstrating the existence of God, he now wants to draw further deductions from that demonstrative knowledge, saying that ". . . the idea of a supreme being infinite in power, goodness and wisdom, whose workmanship we are and on whom we depend, and the idea of ourselves as understanding rational beings, being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued, afford such foundations of our duty and rules of actions, as might place morality amongst the sciences capable of demonstration: wherein I doubt not but from self-evident principles, by necessary consequences, as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out to anyone that will apply himself with the same indifference and attention as he does to the other of those sciences."

Locke is here suggesting that by the light of nature, that is, by our reason, we can discover the moral rules that conform to God's law. He did not elaborate this program into a system of ethics, but he did indicate what relation the different kinds of laws should have to each other. The law of opinion represents a community's judgment of what kind of behavior will lead to happiness: conformity to this law is called virtue, though it must be noticed that different communities have different ideas of what virtue consists of. The civil law is set by the commonwealth and enforced by the courts. This law tends to follow the first, for in most societies the courts enforce those laws that embody the opinion of the people. The divine law, which men can know either through their own reason or

revelation, is the true rule for human behavior: "That God has given a rule whereby men should govern themselves, I think there is nobody so brutish as to deny." And "this is the only true touchstone of moral rectitude." In the long run, then, the law of opinion and also the civil law should be made to conform to the divine law, the "touchstone of moral rectitude." The reason there is a discrepancy between these three kinds of laws is that men everywhere tend to choose immediate pleasures instead of choosing those that have more lasting value. However ambiguous this moral theory may seem to us, Locke believed that these moral rules were eternally true, and upon the insights derived from the divine law he built his theory of natural rights.

The State of Nature In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke begins his political theory as Hobbes did, with a treatment of "the state of nature." But he described this condition in a very different way, even making Hobbes the target of his remarks. For Locke, the state of nature is not the same as Hobbes' "war of all against all." On the contrary, Locke says that "men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth with authority to judge between them is properly the state of nature." According to Locke's theory of knowledge, men were able even in the state of nature to know the moral law. He said that "reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions." This natural moral law is not simply the egotistical law of self-preservation but the positive recognition of each man's value as a person by virtue of his status as a creature of God. This natural law implied natural rights with correlative duties, and among these rights Locke emphasized particularly the right of private property.

Private Property For Hobbes, there could be a right to property only after the legal order had been set up. Locke said that the right to private property precedes the civil law, for it is grounded in the natural moral law. The justification of private ownership is labor. Since a man's labor is his own, whatever he transforms from its original condition by his own labor becomes his, for his labor is now mixed with those things. It is by mixing his labor with something that a man takes what was common property and makes it his private property. There is consequently also a limit to that amount of property one can accumulate, namely, "as much as anyone can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils, so much he may by his labour fix a property in. . . ." Locke assumed also that as a matter of natural right a person could inherit property, for "every man is born with . . . a right, before any other man, to inherit with his brethren his father's goods."

Civil Government If men have natural rights and also know the moral law, why do they desire to leave the state of nature? To this question Locke answered that "the great and chief end of men's uniting into commonwealths and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property." By the term

property Locke meant men's "lives, liberty and estates, which I call by the general name, property." It is true that men know the moral law in the state of nature, or rather they are capable of knowing it if they turn their minds to it. But through indifference and neglect they do not always develop a knowledge of it. Moreover, when disputes arise, every man is his own judge and tends to decide in his own favor. It is desirable therefore to have both a set of written laws and also an independent judge to decide disputes. To achieve those ends, men create a political society.

Locke put great emphasis on the inalienable character of men's rights, and this led him to argue that political society must rest upon the *consent* of men, for "men being . . . by nature all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his consent." But to what do men consent? They consent to have the laws made and enforced by society, but since "no rational creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse," these laws must be framed so as to confirm those rights that men have by nature. They consent also to be bound by the majority, since "it is necessary the body should move that way whither the greater force carries it, which is the consent of the majority." For this reason Locke considered absolute monarchy as "no form of civil government at all." Whether in fact there was a time when men entered a compact is considered by Locke to be of no great consequence, for the important thing is that logically our behavior indicates that we have given our consent, and this Locke calls "tacit consent." For if we enjoy the privilege of citizenship, own and exchange property, rely upon the police and the courts, we have in effect assumed also the responsibilities of citizenship and consent to the rule of the majority. The fact that a person stays in his country, for after all he could leave and go to another one, confirms his act of consent.

Sovereignty Locke gives us a different picture of the sovereign power in society from the one we find in Hobbes. Hobbes' sovereign was absolute. Locke agrees that there must be a "supreme power," but he carefully placed this in the hands of the legislature, for all intents the majority of the people. He emphasized the importance of the division of powers chiefly to ensure that those who execute or administer the laws do not also make them, for "they may exempt themselves from obedience to the laws they make, and suit the law, both in its making and execution, to their own private advantage. . . ." The executive is therefore "under the law." Even the legislature is not absolute, although it is "supreme," for legislative power is held as a *trust* and is therefore only a fiduciary power. Consequently, "there remains still in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them." Locke would never agree that men had irrevocably transferred their rights to the sovereign. The right to rebellion is retained, though rebellion is justified only when the government is *dissolved*. For Locke, government is dissolved not only when it is overthrown by an external enemy but also when internally there has been an alteration of the legislature. The legislative branch

can be altered, for example, if the executive substitutes his law for the legislature's or if he neglects the execution of the official laws; in these cases rebellion against him is justified. Whereas Hobbes placed the sovereign under God's judgment, Locke stated that "the people shall judge."

BERKELEY

George Berkeley was born in Ireland in 1685. At the age of fifteen he entered Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied mathematics, logic, languages, and philosophy. He became a Fellow of the College a few years after he took his B.A. degree and was also ordained a clergyman in the Church of England, becoming a bishop in 1734. Beginning his famous literary career in his early twenties, his most important philosophical works include, among others, his *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713). He traveled in France and Italy, and in London became friends with Steele, Addison, and Swift. While in London he sought to interest Parliament in his project of creating a college in Bermuda, whose purpose would be "the reformation of manners among the English in our western plantations, and the propagation of the Gospel among the American savages." With his recent bride he sailed in 1728 for America and for three years stayed in Newport, Rhode Island, making plans for his college. As the money for his college was never raised, Berkeley returned to London, leaving his influence upon American philosophy through frequent associations with Jonathan Edwards. Shortly thereafter he returned to Ireland, where for eighteen years he was Bishop of Cloyne. At the age of sixty-seven, he settled down in Oxford with his wife and family and a year later, in 1753, he died and was buried in Christ Church Chapel in Oxford.

It is ironic that Locke's common-sense approach to philosophy should have influenced Berkeley to formulate a philosophical position that at first seems so much at variance with common sense. He became the object of severe criticism and ridicule for denying what seemed most obvious to anyone. Berkeley had set out to deny the existence of matter. Dr. Samuel Johnson must have expressed the reaction of many when he kicked a large stone and said about Berkeley, "I refute him thus."

Berkeley's startling and provocative formula was that "to be is to be perceived," *esse est percipi*. Clearly this would mean that if something were not perceived, it would not exist. Berkeley was perfectly aware of the potential nonsense involved in this formula, for he says, "Let it not be said that I take away Existence. I only declare the meaning of the word so far as I comprehend it." Still, to say that the existence of something depends upon its being perceived does raise for us the question whether it exists when it is not being perceived. For Berkeley the whole problem turned on how we interpret or understand the word *exists*: "The table I write on I say exists; that is, I see and feel it: and if I were out of my study I should say it existed; meaning thereby that if I were in my study