

KNOWING VS BECOMING IV: The epistemology and ontology of learning.

Unlike Descartes' theory of mind and body, John Locke speaks of *The Self*. A concept that will later lead to contemporary concepts such as identity. For Locke, man is born a Tabula Rasa (a blank page). Contrary to Descartes, He believes that man, born without any innate ideas or concepts, derives knowledge from sensory perception and experience. The construction of the human self for Locke is based on a series of sensory perceptions-continuous consciousness-determined by experience and put to empirical evidence. He wrote "it was necessary to examine our abilities and see what objects our understanding were and were not fitted to deal with" (1975 [1690], Epistle to the reader, p. 7), or "whatever I write, as soon as I discover it not to be true, my hand shall be the forwardest to throw it into the fire".

The self. Locke defines the self as a conscious thinking thing, possessing no innate ideas only through experience, sensations and reflections. Locke perhaps views the self as the compound for both mind and body, material or not it does not matter, that is sensible and conscious of all that it experiences. What makes a man is his *self* that has through time developed its consciousness based on the sensations and reflections (experiences) it has undergone.

The concept of the self and experience in Locke's philosophy is central to understanding the processes by which human learn and acquire knowledge. Moreover, its implications to learning, being and becoming are evident. The mind is an empty box that only experience (learning) makes it an existing (thinking) object continuously developing its consciousness (becoming).

Locke's views are so important as they gave momentum to other ideas, concepts and theories to be born afterwards. David Hume is an example that we will briefly discuss in the next essay.

Stay tuned!