

## **Philosophy Paper**

The views of Hume and Descartes concerning our knowledge of the world differ in a way that Hume's philosophy is that of empiricism while Descartes is that of rationalism. Descartes' chief work is the Discourse on Method, whose starting point is the rejection of all received knowledge. This leaves Descartes alone with his thoughts: "I am thinking" is the only certainty. For Descartes, one's being is thinking: "it is by thinking that I am. He made human thought the center of reality, subjectifying reality.. From this philosophy, Descartes proceeds to prove the existence of God by saying that I have the innate idea of the most perfect being; but I am not the most perfect being who has put this idea into my mind. As Descartes put into doubt what he receives through the senses, he found probing man's existence with difficulty. There is this question on How does he know that a person has a body? As the body is felt through the senses; therefore, Descartes doubted the existence of the body. As such, the thing that he is sure of is that man is the "soul" and not the physical body. Thus he proves the existence of the world outside himself by the means of the idea of a cause that presumably must be innate too. Man therefore for Descartes is a spirit and a body neatly dichotomized and essentially different. In contrast, Hume believed in sensibility where ideas come from sense experience. If for Descartes, man is a spirit, a soul or a ghost, for Hume man is a bodily being. However, it is his argument that the sensory experience is not adequate to support the beliefs in the existence of causation, matter and the continued and distinct existences. He contends that one cannot make an inference on the basis of perception. As such, for Hume, neither the sense nor reason allows man to discover the certainties about the external world. The only thing that man can see and touch are the qualities of objects and not the property-less on which these objects are made. For him, there is no reason to think that matter and causation are features of the world when these can never be

seen or known. With these thoughts, Hume endeavored to prove that reason and rational judgments are merely habitual associations of distinct sensations or experiences. His rejection of causation is premised on his belief that reason can never show the relationship of one object with another. When a person thinks that he perceives a connection of cause and effect between two events, his supposition is that the person is only projecting to the world a subjective expectation that the first event will be followed by the second. This expectation is the product of mental association between the idea of the first event and the idea of the second; that has been created by past experience of events like the first one always being followed by events like the second through constant conjunction between one sort of event and the other. In terms of Hume's rejection of causation, what can be said is that it is tantamount to rejection of scientific laws. These laws are in accordance to the general premise that one event necessarily causes and will always be predicted. In other words Hume's philosophy states that knowledge of any matters of fact that go beyond immediate experience is impossible. However Hume, freely acknowledge that practically people had to think in terms of cause and effect, and had to assume the validity of their everyday beliefs or else they will lose the sense of direction and go mad. In addition, Hume admitted to the possibility of knowledge of the relationships among ideas, like the relationships between numbers in mathematics. Hume's skeptical method also denied the existence of the individual self; claiming that because people do not have a constant perception of themselves as distinct entities. For him the self is nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions. However, both Descartes and Hume believed that ideas or knowledge come from man. Both agreed that all that exist are given to man in his consciousness, in his thinking; but while for rationalists "thinking" is abstract thinking (rational consciousness), for Hume's empiricism "thinking" is feeling and imagining (sensible consciousness).

Locke's view concerning personal and identity hinges on empiricism believing that there is no reason to go beyond the awareness of man's sensations and perceptions. He founded his philosophical beliefs based in the observable world and not in purely theoretical creations. Locke thought that knowledge should rely on everyday experience, scientific observation and common sense. He portrays each individual as a clean blank slate. Each person's experiences become notations on the slate and make him or her distinct from other people. For him, personal identity can be realized when one consider what person stands for. There is no denying the fact that a person is a thinking intelligent being who has reasons and reflections and who can consider his / her self as his/her self, the same thinking being in different times and places by means of the consciousness that is inseparable from thinking. Locke went on to say that when individuals see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate or will anything, that person know what they do so. For Locke it is always to the present sensations and perceptions wherein one can know his or her self. The self is therefore is only the percipient's stream of perceptions and sensations. This stream of consciousness maintains that the self and personal identity are the same. Moreover, Locke maintains that a person is an identity of an abstraction and the basis of identity is the continuity of memory. He proposes that if a person remembers himself as a child, then he is the child. It means that if one remembers being the president, then he is the president. Locke's definition of self is that the identity of the person becomes the same person as the subject. This self-reflective consciousness of justifies the belief about self as the thoughts and experiences remembered by the person. This also entails some connections with moral or ethics. That a person is responsible or would be held accountable for those actions he or she committed to whom his or her present consciousness extends. In other words, I would be justifiably held morally responsible for the actions that I remember. This is a way of saying that consciousness is the basis of the one's

moral accountability. He or she is answerable for all of his conscious thoughts in as much as those consist his or her self and personal identity. Reid came up rejecting Locke's view of self and personal identity. He tended towards substance-based view of self and personal identity. For Reid, Locke's theory is something that is absurd and logically contradictory. It is absurd to accept the idea of sense and perception as basis for identifying self. He says "to say that my remembering that I did such a thing makes me to have done it" is a great absurdity. It is Reid's understanding that Locke's theory is an insistence that the self and the contents of memory or consciousness are one and the same. He proves that identity fails as such Locke's theory fell through his research on a person who before was able to recall being punished for stealing and who after many years later has lost recollection of the boy punished from stealing. Reid's argument is that the external world exists independently of the act through which it is perceived, and he maintained that the judgment of the mind regarding the causality of phenomena are true and reliable. He maintained that self and personal identity is the foundation of all rights and obligations, and of accountableness following a belief that the notion of self is fixed and precise. He contends that Locke confused primary evidence with reality that supposedly consists the identity of a person. Reid has a differing view on the definition of a person in contrast to Locke's. A person is an intelligent being with both reason and consciousness and that person may have still to go through process of development both physically and mentally and not retain a true identity. While for Locke, a person is a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places. In response to Reid's rationalist belief, Locke maintained that the principles of knowledge are intuitively self-evident, arguing that all knowledge is derived from experience, either from experience of the external world, that stamps sensations or ideas on the mind, or from internal

experience, in which the mind reflects on its own activities. Human knowledge of external physical objects, he claimed, is always subject to the errors of the senses, and he concluded that one cannot have absolutely certain knowledge of the physical world.

Mill's utilitarianism is a belief that actions are right when these foster happiness. Using the utilitarian principle, happiness means intended pleasure and the absence of pain, while unhappiness means pain and the privation of pleasure. John Stuart Mill defines morality as the rules and precepts for human conduct, by the observance of which an existence such as has been described might be to the greatest extent possible, secure to all mankind; and not to them only, but, so far as the nature of things admits, to the whole sentient creation." This is a notion that beings never really want or need a lower level of existence as they tend for more. To aim for a high quality life is a very humane attributes. Morality for Mill is considered therefore as the attempt to bring about as much happiness in the world entailing people to choose the best over all consequences for everyone. Mill's notion of utilitarianism therefore recognizes distinctions of quality in addition to those of intensity among pleasures. Mill contended that some pleasures are higher or more valuable than others. The higher pleasures are those associated with activities that realize specifically human capacities such as art, science and philosophy. The lower pleasures are those that human beings share with animals. Mill illustrated this distinction between different kinds of pleasures with this statement that it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied. For Mill, the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the criterion of morality. In contrast, Kant's moral law is the categorical imperative wherein one must do what he is ought to do. They are universal and necessary as they are meant to be valid for anyone in whatever situation. His moral principles are objective and signify the existence of God who rewards and punishes, or otherwise there would be no necessity in those categorical

imperatives and the soul as both free and immortal, since virtue is not always rewarded in this life, and vice not always punished and so the soul must survive the body. The merits of Kant's categorical imperative are said to consist in this: that it firmly establishes the reign of reason; elevates the dignity of man by subjecting in him sensibility to reason and making rational nature free, supreme, and independent; overcomes egoism by forbidding action from self-interest; and upholds morality by the highest authority Deontology. In this theory, the moral rightness or wrongness of human actions should be considered independently of the consequences of the action. It is not the consequences that make an action right or wrong but the principle of motivation on which the action is based that determines right or wrong. The key factor in Kant's ethics is never using people as a means to an end but to see people as ends-in-themselves. The fundamental humanity of people should always be respected. From these two theories, Kant's Moral Law of categorical imperatives is preferably better than Mill's Utilitarian of greatest happiness. There seems to be nobility of ideals with Mill's theories. What can be discerned from his discussion is a distortion of morality, whereby man's ends tend towards physical pleasure and material happiness. Everything is justifiable as long as it is for the happiness of the greater number. This notion is dangerous as it tends towards socialism whereby people have to act for the benefits of the many people. There is no individualism and most significantly, there is no sense of God. Mill's utilitarianism only satisfies the physical aspect of a person and not his spirituality. It is very much at variance with the theological view that right and wrong depend on the will of God, and with the hedonistic view that it depends on the pleasure produced by an act for the individual alone who performs. It opposes the natural law theory that hinges on the belief that there are criteria for evaluating acts as good or bad. These are the laws that are given by

God. It is indeed preferable to believe in the truth of man as both body and spiritual being, than in the distorted notion of man being a bodily person alone.