

## Ankara Üniversitesi Açık Ders Notları

### PHI 205 Empiricism and Rationalism

#### TOPIC 7:

Locke's Essay:

No Innate Principles:

1. The way shown how we come by any knowledge, sufficient to prove it not innate. – It is an established opinion among some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles; some primarily notions, characters, as it were, stamped upon the mind of man, which the soul receives in its very first being and brings into the world with it. It would be sufficient to convince unprejudiced readers of the falseness of this supposition, if I should only show (as I hope I shall in the following parts of this discourse) how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions, and may arrive at certainty without any such original notions or principles. For I imagine, any one will easily grant, that it would be impertinent to suppose the ideas of colours innate in a creature to whom God hath given sight, and a power to receive them by the eyes from external objects: and no less unreasonable would it be to attribute several truths to the impressions of nature and innate characters, when we may observe in ourselves faculties fit to attain as easy and certain knowledge of them as if they were originally imprinted on the mind.

But because a man is not permitted without censure to follow his own thoughts in the search of truth, when they lead him ever so little out of the common road, I shall set down the reasons that made me doubt of the truth of that opinion as an excuse for my mistake, if I be in

one; which I leave to be considered by those who, with me, dispose themselves to embrace truth wherever they find it.

2. General assent the great argument. – There is nothing more commonly taken for granted, than that there are certain principles, both speculative and practical (for they speak of both), universally agreed upon by all mankind; which therefore; they argue, must needs be constant impressions which the souls of men receive in their first beings, and which they bring into the world with them, as necessarily and really as they do any of their inherent faculties.

3. Universal consent proves nothing innate. - This argument, drawn from universal consent, has this misfortune in it, that if it were true in matter of fact that there were certain truths wherein all mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate, if there can be any other way shown, how men may come to that universal agreement in the things they do consent in; which I presume may be done.

4. “What is, is;” and, “It is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be,” not universally assented to. – But, which is worse, this argument of universal consent, which is made use of to prove innate principles, seems to me a demonstration that there are none such; because there are none to which all mankind give an universal assent. I shall begin with the speculative, and instance in those magnified principles of demonstration: “Whatsoever is, is; ” and “It is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be,” which, of all others, I think, have the most allowed title to innate. These have so settled a reputation of maxims universally received that it will, no doubt, be thought strange if any one should seem to question it. But

yet I take liberty to say, that these propositions are so far from having an universal assent, that there are a great part of mankind to whom they are not so much as known.