



Subject-Philosophy


Class-Ba 2nd year


Paper-4

Topic-Locke part-2

Subtopic-Primary and secondary

-:Dumrendra Rajan

- 
- ▶ **John Lock** was an English philosopher and physician, widely regarded as one of the most influential of Enlightenment thinkers and commonly known as the "Father of Liberalism.
 - ▶ Locke's monumental *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) is one of the first great defenses of modern empiricism and concerns itself with determining the limits of human understanding in respect to a wide spectrum of topics.
 - ▶ Locke, when presenting his theory of representative realism, focused on the differences that existed between the primary and secondary qualities.
 - ▶ His work on this subject is basically a rectification of the naive mindset of the people. It is because of this naive nature that the people tend to confuse the two qualities together.

- 
- ▶ Locke while explaining the human psyche said that the images of the items present in the real world are formed in our minds as ideas and are only symbolic representations of what is actually present.
 - ▶ He is of the opinion that all the items and things present in the external world are analysed by our mind on the basis of having two types of qualities either primary or secondary.

Let's discuss these qualities in detail.

Primary Qualities

- ▶ The primary qualities are the ones that have a direct relation to the object's being. This means that if the object's picture that is in our mind is not having the primary quality then the picture would remain incomplete and the true sense of the object would not be formed in the mind.
- ▶ These qualities are utterly inseparable from the object. It means these qualities are the ultimately qualities of the ultimate constituents of matter, and not ones that themselves get "explained away" in terms of more fundamental qualities.

Secondary Qualities

- ▶ The secondary qualities are merely the additional features that add variety to the object if anything. Locke says that the secondary qualities only exhibit themselves when they come in contact with the primary qualities.
- ▶ The perfect example of a secondary quality is colour. Even if the colour of an object in our mind is different from the object's colour in reality it would have no bearing on the physical being of the object.

Difference between these qualities

- ▶ Locke is very clear in his mind about the differences that are present in between the primary and the secondary qualities
- ▶ The difference between primary and secondary qualities can be described in terms of differences in the ideas that they produce in our minds. The primary qualities of objects produce ideas in our minds that “resemble” the corresponding qualities in the objects that caused us to have those ideas. While the secondary qualities of objects produce ideas in our minds that do **not** resemble the corresponding qualities in the objects that produced those ideas in our minds.
- ▶ He even has come up with classifications of the qualities in terms of being secondary and primary. In the secondary category he has listed the colour, sound and taste while in the primary category he enlists solidity, figure, size and number.

DISCREPANCIES

Locke's theory is not free from discrepancies like:

- ▶ Many argued that solidity is temperature dependent so it cannot be a primary quality.
- ▶ Number is not a quality of an object it is a man-made concept so its inclusion is baffling to say the least.
- ▶ According to Mackie it is not necessary that the secondary qualities would have an effect on only one sensory organ. He presents the example of sensory organs like nose and tongue responsible for the sense of smell and taste.

Conclusion



- ▶ In spite of several discrepancies of Locke's theory does not make the entire theory flawed.
- ▶ Although the case put forward by Locke about the differences in between the primary and secondary qualities is very strong and has reasonable proofing accompanying it still it fails to connect with the audiences because of the complex nature of his explanation.
- ▶ However, if the case is viewed through methodical analysis, as is the case, the argument does become easy to understand.

THANKYOU