**Compare and contrast between the empiricism of John Locke and George Berkeley**

**Introduction**

Empiricism, a philosophical doctrine that emphasizes experience as the foundation of knowledge, was profoundly shaped by the contributions of John Locke and George Berkeley. Both philosophers sought to explain how humans acquire knowledge through sensory perception, rejecting the notion of innate ideas. Locke, often regarded as the father of British empiricism, argued that the mind starts as a blank slate, with knowledge derived from experience through the interaction of sensation and reflection. Berkeley, while sharing Locke’s empirical approach, advanced a more radical perspective by asserting that material objects do not exist independently of perception. We will try below to give the similarities and differences of their philosophy

**Brief recount of John Locke’s Empiricism**

John Locke's empiricism, rejects the theory of innate ideas and asserts that all human knowledge originates from sense experience. He argues that the human mind at birth is like a "tabula rasa" (blank slate), without any pre-existing ideas. According to Locke, ideas are acquired through two primary sources: **sensation**, which involves direct sensory experience of the external world, and **reflection**, which is the mind's contemplation of its own operations.

Locke distinguishes between **simple ideas**, which are the direct impressions made by things on our senses, and **complex ideas**, which are combinations of simple ideas formed by the mind. He also differentiates between **primary qualities**, which are inherent in objects (e.g., solidity, extension, motion), and **secondary qualities**, which exist only in perception (e.g., color, taste, sound).

Locke further classifies knowledge into three degrees:

1. **Intuitive knowledge**, which is immediate and self-evident.
2. **Demonstrative knowledge**, which involves reasoning and proof, such as in mathematics.
3. **Sensitive knowledge**, which is derived from sensory experience of external objects.

### **Brief recount of **Berkeley's Empiricism:****

George Berkeley's empiricism, argues that all knowledge comes from experience but departs from traditional empiricism by denying the existence of material substance. He holds that what we perceive as physical objects—such as trees, mountains, and stones—are actually **ideas in the mind**, and their existence depends on being perceived. This view is summarized by his famous dictum: **"esse est percipi" (to be is to be perceived).** Berkeley rejects John Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities, asserting that all qualities such as color, shape, and size exist only in the mind and not in external objects. He argues that there is no need to assume the existence of material substance behind perceptions because we do not directly perceive it.

To counter the objection that things cease to exist when not being perceived by humans, Berkeley claims that God continuously perceives all things, ensuring their existence. He also denies the concept of abstract ideas, stating that all ideas are particular and exist only as they are perceived.

In Berkeley’s philosophy, only **spirits and minds** truly exist, with human spirits knowing their own existence through introspection and inferring the existence of other minds through their actions. In contrast to material causes, Berkeley maintains that God is the ultimate cause of all perceptions and natural phenomena.

**similarities between Locke's and Berkeley's empiricism**

1. **Dependence on Ideas:** Both philosophers hold that human knowledge consists of ideas. Locke states that the immediate object of human knowledge are ideas that impress themselves on our mind. Berkeley also asserts that all our knowledge is about ideas; that object of our knowledge are ideas
2. **On Substance:** Both agree that substance exists. Locke claims that there must be a substratum underlying the existence of material and immaterial substratum underlying the existence of spiritual substances. Berkeley holds that there are spiritual substance which we can know by intuition
3. **Knowledge as Derived from Experience:** Both agree that human knowledge is derived from experience rather than being pre-existing. Locke believes ideas come from sensory perception and mental reflection, while Berkeley also insists that all knowledge comes from sensory perceptions.
4. **Focus on Perception:** Both emphasize the importance of perception in acquiring knowledge. Locke believes we perceive qualities of objects, Berkeley also asserts emphasized perception saying that perception itself constitutes reality.

**differences between Locke's and Berkeley's empiricism**

### ****View on Material Substance**** Locke believes that material substances exist but argues that we cannot know them directly. He asserts that we only perceive the qualities of objects, not the underlying substance itself. According to him, substance is a necessary assumption to explain the existence of qualities. Berkeley completely denies the existence of material substance. He argues that what we call physical objects are merely collections of ideas in the mind, and their existence depends entirely on being perceived ("esse est percipi").

1. **View on idea:** although John Locke and George Berkeley holds that human knowledge consist of ideas, they differ on what exactly those ideas are. For John Locke, ideas are copies or representation of things in the mind whereas for George Berkeley, ideas are things in themselves.

### ****Primary and Secondary Qualities:**** Locke distinguishes between **primary qualities**, which are inherent in objects (e.g., shape, size, motion), and **secondary qualities**, which exist only in the perceiver’s mind (e.g., color, taste, sound). He argues that primary qualities resemble their real-world counterparts, while secondary qualities do not. Berkeley rejects this distinction, arguing that both primary and secondary qualities exist only in the mind. He claims that all perceived qualities are subjective and cannot exist independently of perception.

1. **On God:** Berkeley in defending the reason of the existence of things when no one is experiencing them said that God is constantly perceiving everything. Thus, they continue to exist. He uses God more centerally. However, Locke only affirms that God exist and that he created all things.
2. **Causality:** John Locke affirms causality. For him, ideas are caused by external objects. However Berkeley denies causality. For him, God is the only efficient cause

**The problem of mind and body in the philosophy of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz**

**Introduction:**

The mind body problem has been a perennial concern in philosophy. Many philosophers throughout the history of philosophy tried to solve this problem. Among those who tried to solve this problem are the continental rationalists; Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Godfried Leibniz. Below, we are going to see the meaning of mind body problem and how each of these philosophers mentioned above tried to solve the mind-body problem

**What is mind body problem:**

The mind-body problem concerns the interaction between the body and the soul. How possible is it for mind which is an immaterial substance to have some effect on the body which is a material substance and vice versa. This issue of how two seemingly distinct entities interact as already has been a perennial issues in philosophy. If they do interact, where? Descartes in solving this said that they interact in the pineal gland. Spinoza used his panthestic philosophy to say that there is no difference between the body and soul. Leibniz in his monadology posits that body and soul do not interact.

**Rene Descartes**

Before going into descartes, it is good to note that there have been a scholastic notion of substance and accidence. Substance is seen as that which exists on its own, while accidence exists in somethingelse. For descartes, substance is that which requires nothing but itself to exist. This notion by of substance by Descartes in the strict sense can only be possesed by God, making God the only substance. However, Descartes do not intend it in this sense but in the sxholastic sense.

Descartes divides substances into; spiritual and corporeal substances, and each has one primary attribute that constitutes its essence. For spiritual is thinking, for corporeal is extension. Thus, for Descartes, mind and body are different kinds of substances; mind- spiritual(thinking as essence), body - coroporeal(extension as essence).

For Descartes, man is essentially a thinking being although he has body, it is not part of his essence. Mind and body interact although they are different kinds of substances. For descartes, I feel pain when I’m hurt, consequently mind react to what happens in the body. Thus, there must be a close connection between the two. Also the mind too influences the and moves the.

This interaction happens at the pineal gland at the innermost part of the brain. It is here that the mind comes in contact with the body through the animal spirit. This view of Descartes was however not exactly accepted by his disciple Arnold Geulinex

Arnold Geulinex’s contention: he denied the interaction between the mind and body because for him there cannot be interaction between spiritual and corporeal substances. To to explain the seeming control of the mind over the body, he proposed the theory of “occasionalism”, when states that God moves the body on the occasion of mental acts. For him, God arranges the universe in such a way that bodily movements follows mental acts. He used an analogy of two clocks to explain this; that they are arranged in such a way that whenever one points to an hour the other strikes, although there is no connection between them. Thus, mind and body are just arranged in such that they produce harmonious movements but they do not interact

**Spinoza**

The discussion of mind body problem in Spinoza’s philosophy can be found in his ontology. Spinoza is a pantheistic and deterministic philosopher. His philosophy is like that of the stoics. For Spinoza there is only one substance that exists, God or nature (deus dive natura). This one substance is divine, eternal and independent. God is seen as the naturing nature (natura naturans) while the creatures are seen as natured nature (natura naturata). For Spinoza, both God and the creatures are constituents of one, infinite, eternal and indivisible reality. All things for Spinoza are modifications of God.

This infinite substance in Spinoza’s philosophy is made up of infinite qualities. We know of 2 of the qualities which are; thought and extension. All things and all events necessarily flows from the divine nature. Hence, there is no difference between them. Just as God and nature are one and the same and can be viewed as thought or extension, mind and body are the same and can be viewed as matter or form.

**Leibniz**

For Leibniz, he posited strongly that there is no interaction between the mind and the body. This solution proffered by Leibniz can be seen in his monadology. For Leibniz, monad is a substance which is a complete being, a subject of several predicates. Monads are immaterial, unextended, simple substances, they don’t posess shape, size and they are indivisible. Monads etymologically comes from Greek word “monas” meaning “unity”. hence, they are basic unit of all things. Each of them are self enclosed and windowless entity. Monads for Leibniz are invisible because they are immaterial spiritual entities.

Each monads mirrows the universe. Every corporeal substance is made up of infinite number of monads where one dominates. For the human being, they are made up of different monads like the mind and body, but the mind dominates. Thus, because the mind and body are different monads and monada are self-enclosed windowless entity, they do not interact.

Thus, for leibniz, there is no causality in the universe. What appears to be causality is the harmonious mechanism of the universe. He compared this to effect produced by several clocks which are arranged by God in such a way that they keep the same time and strike at the same time, but actually, there are no interactions between them. Likewise, monads do not interact, consequently, mind and body do not interact.

**Argument for the existence of God in Leibniz**

**Introduction**

Leibniz is a continental rationalist, a German Philosopher who existed around the 17th century. His contributions which included; his epistemology, metaphysics, monadology, problem of evil, arguments for the existence of God played a significant role in philosophy. We are more concerned here with his arguments for the existence of God. They are;

* The ontological argument
* Argument based on eternal and necessary truths
* Argument based on the principle of sufficient reason
* Argument based on the order and harmony in the universe

However, before giving these arguments, Leibniz in his epistemology also gave some reason why he belives God exists.

**The notion of God in Leibniz epistemology and metaphysics**

In his metaphysis, leibniz distinguished between 2 kinds of truth; truth of reason and truth of fact. Truth of reason are necessary truth that cannot be denied without one engaging himself in self-contradiction. Truth of fact are contingent statements that can be denied without engaging oneself in self-contradiction. All propositions about existence is a truth of fact except the existence of God. This is the very nature of god implies his existence. Just as the notion of husband implies the the idea of wife, the notion of God implies his existence

**Arguments for the existence of God**

Just as many philosophers proposed some arguments that God exists. His arguments of the existence of God are actually restastments of some traditional aruements for the existence of god. They are;

1. The ontological argument: this arugument was first used by St. Anselm, it was rejected by St. Thomas Aquinas. It was also accepted and reframed by Rene Descartes. According to this argument the very notion of God implies his existence. God is an infinetely perfect being. Existence is a form of perfection. Therefore, it follows that God has existence since it is a form of perfection. Therefore, God necessarily exists. Immanuel kant criticized this ontological argument for the existence of God saying that existence is neither a perfrction nor a predicte
2. Argument based on eternal and necessary truth: this argument was used by St. Augustine. It holds that certain truths are not invention of human mind but human minds discorveres them. Since they are eternal and necessary, their source must be eternal and necessary. That source is God. Therefore, god exists
3. Argument based on sufficient reason: this arguments holds that for everything that exists or happen, there must be a reason for its existence or happening. If the reason for one being is found in another being, and that another being yet found in another, the sufficent reason for the existence of these contingent beings should be found in a necessary being that do not depend on another being for existence. This necessary being is God. This is Leibniz version of the argument from causality which arose from Aristotle through Aquinas.
4. Argument based on the order and harmony in the universe: the whole universe manifests a wonderful orderand harmony, like a machine with many parts working together to produce a harmonious effect. Or several clocks that though separate are harmonious. They have been arranged to produce such harmonious effect. It is assumed that there is a common clock maker who arranged them. Similary, the order and harmony in the universe are caused by an intelligent being and that intelligent being is god. Therefore God exists. This arguments was beforehand used by Thomas Aquinas but Liebniz version was based onhis monadology; each monad is separate from the others but they all create harmonious effect.