Locke: *Essay* I.i, I.ii.1-8, 15-16, 22

**Chapter I**

- Purpose: Find out what we can know and where it comes from

- Doesn’t care about metaphysics of mind at this point

- Method: Inquire into origin of ideas, show what knowledge comes from those ideas, inquire into degrees of belief

- Wants to define extent of our comprehension so we don’t deviate from rigorous discussion to baseless speculation about things we can’t possibly understand

- “Knowing the extent of our capacities will help us know what we can reasonably answer,” “We only want to know what concerns our conduct”

**Chapter II**

- Goal is to show that we don’t have innate ideas

- Can show this by proving that natural faculties lead to all possible knowledge, making it redundant to have innate ideas

- Wants to address the nativist arguments for “universal principles,” namely that “whatever is, is” and “It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be”

- Argument 1: There are certain principles that everyone assents to

- Counterargument: Some people don’t assent to these: children and cognitively-impaired individuals

- Argument 2: People assent to these principles when they acquire reason

- Counterargument: If reason discovered these things, they are not innate. Then they must all be “theorems” that become evident when they are thought about for the first time – all knowledge would already be in mind

- Argument 3: These principles are assented to as soon as they are proposed

- Counterargument: This is not implicit knowledge, the idea comes from perception and so is not innate

- Mind attains truths by generalizing from experience. The first distinct ideas that the mind is able to develop are related to the most common subjects of their senses.

**Questions**

Since Locke believes that all knowledge is derived from the senses, is it safe to assume that he wouldn't believe in the concept of instincts?

Instinct: undergoing action for self-preservation (evolutionary)

Here Locke would say that this knowledge is purely biological and not an idea, which he says is the object of the understanding when someone thinks. By definition, an instinct is not something that is consciously thought about, so it does not follow Locke’s conception of an idea.

How does Locke deny the complexity of language learning as an innate truth?

The ability to learn language is not an idea; it is a capacity. This is what Locke would say that we are born with, as opposed to an understanding of specific languages. Chomsky’s language acquisition device.