

Jackson Barwis Materials (Especially "Dialogues Concerning Innate Principles")

Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2022 at 11:56 AM

I have regularly referred to my interest in Jackson Barwis' "[Dialogues Concerning Innate Principles](#)" as potentially relevant to Epicurus' views of anticipations and their relationships to feelings. I won't expand on that here beyond saying that Barwis suggests a perspective in which Nature implants "principles of operation" which ultimately lead to the formation of ideas in particular areas of life, but that Nature does not implant specific ideas at birth. This is directly relevant to such issues as Aristotle's position concerning the "Blank Slate" and John Locke's development of a form of empiricism. The "Dialogues Concerning Innate Principles" is directly aimed at refuting John Locke's views on that subject as expressed in "[Essays Concerning Human Understanding.](#)"

Notes: [Wikipedia](#)

Quote

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding is a work by [John Locke](#) concerning the foundation of human knowledge and understanding. It first appeared in 1689 (although dated 1690) with the printed title ***An Essay Concerning Human Understanding***. He describes the mind at birth as a blank slate (*tabula rasa*, although he did not use those actual words) filled later through [experience](#). The essay was one of the principal sources of [empiricism](#) in modern philosophy, and influenced many enlightenment philosophers, such as [David Hume](#) and [George Berkeley](#).

Book I of the *Essay* is Locke's attempt to refute the [rationalist](#) notion of [innate ideas](#). Book II sets out Locke's theory of ideas, including his distinction between passively acquired *simple ideas*—such as "red," "sweet," "round"—and actively built *complex ideas*, such as numbers, causes and effects, abstract ideas, ideas of substances, identity, and diversity. Locke also distinguishes between the truly existing *primary qualities* of bodies, like shape, motion and the arrangement of minute particles, and the *secondary qualities* that are "powers to produce various sensations in us"^[1] such as "red" and "sweet." These *secondary qualities*, Locke claims, are dependent on the *primary qualities*. He also offers a theory of [personal identity](#), offering a largely psychological criterion. Book III is concerned with language, and Book IV with knowledge, including [intuition](#), mathematics, [moral philosophy](#), [natural philosophy](#) ("science"), [faith](#), and [opinion](#).

This is just to not that today I "upgraded" the JacksonBarwis.com website, and this is to link to that site for future reference.

I can't resist posting one sentence from the first of the Dialogues Concerning Innate Principles which is probably the key to it all, and on which assertion has argument stands (as I think it does) or falls:

Quote

When we are told that benevolence is pleasing; that malevolence is painful; we are not convinced of these truths by reasoning, nor by forming them into propositions: but by an appeal to the innate internal affections of our souls: and if on such an appeal, we could not feel within the sentiment of benevolence, and the peculiar pleasure attending it; and that of malevolence and its concomitant pain, not all the reasoning in the world could ever make us sensible of them, or enable us to understand their nature.

And if true, as I think it is, what would this mean other than that all "Natural" morality is ultimately based on pleasure and pain? The remainder of the Dialogues expands upon this principle.