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# Revisiting John Locke for Thinking About the Global Age: Knowledge, Politics, Religion, and Education

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## Abstract

Theme of this text: importance of John Locke's thought, British empiricist philosopher, concerning knowledge, politics, religion and education in global age. Question one searches for answering: nowadays, in global age, why is a thinker like John Locke still so important in order to support reflections about epistemological, political, religious and educational questions? Kind of research reported is a theoretical approach. Discourse development has followed these steps: first, considerations about his theory of knowledge; second, approaches concerning his political theory; third, reflections under his ideas on religion; fourth, discussions concerning his thoughts over education. Results of this inquiry: he is one of the most eminent theorists of experience and it is essential to build knowledge; therefore, his thought must not be neglected; he is also very important to reflect about natural rights of mankind, which must be granted by Commonwealth; his ideas over toleration, which reinforce distinction between Church and Commonwealth, are still useful to think about how to deal with several religious beliefs and political opinions; his educational thought outlines that education is a psychophysical process that must equally treat both body and soul. Then, he must be recommended and also revisited in order to think about present global age.

**Keywords:** education, epistemology, John Locke, philosophy, politics, religion

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## 1. Introduction

John Locke (1632–1704), English modern philosopher, is an empiricist thinker whose work has contributed to thinking about the conception of modernity. His ideas concerning knowledge, politics, religion and education, for example, have helped to make a world view based on these values: experience, science, philosophy, freedom, equality, toleration, civility,

reasonableness, virtue and self-domain. Thus, he is one of the most important minds who described the modernity, which has as one of its consequences the global age. So, revisiting him means to look for one of the foundations which makes possible to explain and comprehend the present world, because John Locke's works sum the modernity up.

This text intends to select some of John Locke's works, in order to respectively discuss about his conceptions of knowledge, politics, religion, and education; they are: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *Two Treatises of Government*, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Some of his key ideas inside those works will be brought to this discussion, because they are still profitable to reflection about global age; that is: some questions thought and answered by Locke are also present questions; so, his epistemology still offers elements to think about knowledge in general and, especially, about science and technology; his political theory is useful to treat legal society, state, and property; his ideas about religion are able to argue against the lack of toleration around the world; his educational thought may help concerning how to prepare people to be intellectually and morally virtuous, living according to reason rules.

Revisiting John Locke is an opportunity to think about questions which overcome ages, because he is a philosopher; so, his thoughts are about eternal, general, or universal questions. Moreover, there are problems, which are not definitively solved; thus, his reflections and answers may help to find new ways to deal with new challenges which still stay before the present mankind. As in Locke's times, nowadays one deals with theoretical and practical problems about knowledge, because its increase and expansion bring other challenges; the same may be said about politics, because there are many factors which raise many questions about power, property, and droit legitimacy; concerning political and religious toleration, at the present time, the mixture between politics and religion around the world raises again problems of violence against different viewpoints in matters of both faith and government; under education, the priority of moral formation in relation to intellectual formation outlines the importance of the training conducted in the pedagogical process.

Finally, this text shows, under John Locke's perspective, that it is imperative to rescue the importance of the philosophical tradition, in order to rethink many ways which perhaps are not right, because there are several risks in the global age whose causes are the lack of a philosophical reflection about many ideas, values, and actions; for example: aggression to environment in a world scale; increase of violence around the world because of ethnic, political, and religious causes; life standard in practically all countries based only on economic prosperity. Due to its dangerous consequences, perhaps John Locke's philosophy may help how to find another way to direct the global civilization.

The plan of this text is this: First topic: some of John Locke's ideas about epistemology or theory of knowledge; second topic: some ideas of his political and social theory; third topic: some of his ideas about toleration; fourth topic: some of his ideas concerning education.

## 2. Some ideas concerning epistemology or theory of knowledge, according to John Locke

Because John Locke is one of the most important authors who represent the British Empiricism, his ideas about knowledge must not be neglected. Thus, especially in this topic, some of his epistemological ideas will be treated and his work from which his ideas will be extracted is this: *An essay concerning human understanding*; it is divided into four books; in the first, Locke discusses about notions or principles, both theoretical and practical; in the second, he treats ideas; in the third, he deals with words; in the fourth, he deals with the distinction between knowledge and opinion.

This text will follow the same division adopted by Locke in his aforesaid work, in order to show his ideas which sum his epistemological thought up. However, before discussing about some of the contents of the four books of his essay, it is also profitable to offer the main topic of that work, that is: the understanding. In *The epistle to the reader*, a kind of general introduction to his work, Locke outlines the importance of knowing the understanding, that is, according to him, the superior power of the soul, due to which, it is possible to look for truth (supposed finality of thinking), as well as to find pleasure (supposed finality of feeling). It means that, by understanding, the human being is able both to think and to feel. Thus, being both reasonable and sensible due to understanding, if he searches for knowing this own understanding, then, he will find self-knowledge.

In the first book of his essay, Locke denies every kind of innate principles in the mind, both theoretical and practical ones. He states that only acquired principles are possible, because, arguing against those who defend innate principles, whose arguments are based mainly on general acceptance, he wrote:

*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, 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 to be done [1].

If there are no innate principles, then, they cannot be supposed by acceptance or appeal, because both are only a matter of convenience and it is just how they decide or want to be, not how things really are or seem. According to Aaron:

We cannot then argue from universal assent to the innateness of the knowledge of the principles. Nor again is it possible to claim for such knowledge any priority in time. Clearly the knowledge of the principles, abstract as it is, comes late. Sensation, recognition, seeing that read is not white, are all prior to our knowledge of the principle of non-contradiction. It is strange that the last named, none the less, should be singled out as a 'native inscription' [2].

There is no way to Locke but this: rejecting all kinds of principles, even those that can be universally accepted or requested. Therefore, there will only be principles, which the mind will conceive by itself, through ideas drawn from experience. Because of his position, Locke became one of the biggest adversaries of the doctrine of innate ideas. Summarily:

According to this doctrine, certain fundamental components of human knowledge are inborn rather than acquired by processes of observation, learning and reasoning – inborn because they are part of the very frame of the human mind as God designed it. In virtue of their supposedly divine source, these components of human knowledge were not to be questioned or doubted, in the view of upholders of the doctrine – many of whom had vested interests of a religious or political character which could, by this device, be placed beyond the scope of publicly acceptable criticism. Locke's fierce opposition to the doctrine of innate ideas was undoubtedly motivated, at least in part, by his hatred for the cloak that it provided for obscurantist and authoritarian dogmas [3].

In the second book of his essay, after denying innate principles, Locke makes his next step against innateness: there are no innate ideas. It is the second moment of his attack on the doctrine of innate ideas. Although the term "idea" was already employed by innateness upholders, Locke assumes it and shows his own definition of that term:

*Idea is the object of thinking.* Every man being conscious to himself, that he thinks, and that which his mind is employed about whilst thinking being the *ideas*, that are there, 'tis past doubt, that men have in their minds several *ideas*, such as are those expressed by the words, *whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness*, and others: it is in the first place then to be inquired, how he comes by them? I know it is a received doctrine, that men have native *ideas*, and original characters stamped upon their minds, in their very first being. This opinion I have at large examined already; and, I suppose, what I have said in the foregoing book, will be much more easily admitted, when I have shown, whence the understanding may get all the ideas it has, and by what ways and degrees they may come into the mind; for which I shall appeal to everyone's own observation and experience [4].

If there are no innate ideas, then, they must have another origin. Like an empiricist philosopher, Locke argues that experience is only fountain of ideas. Summing up, it is both sensation and reflection. Sensation is an exterior sensorial affection (external experience). Reflection is an interior mental operation (internal experience). Together, sensation and reflection provide for the mind every kind of ideas. Surely, experience is not innate, only acquired. Therefore, ideas depend on it, that is: they come from it; they are limited by it; they are changed by it; there are no ideas without experience; that is: no experience, no idea; no idea, no thinking; no thinking, no reason; no reason, no human life; no human life, no human being.

In the second book of his essay, Locke works on describing his theory of ideas. It is an exhaustive discourse about the nature of ideas, which explains with a richness of details the prime matter or the former subject (*materia prima*) of knowledge and also of reason. According to Lowe:

Locke seems at least sometimes to be using the term 'idea' to refer to such experiential features. However, he also uses the term at times to refer to what we would now call *concepts*, that is, the meaningful components of thoughts that we may entertain about the world and attempt to communicate to one another in language – such as the thought that this apple is red and that one green. But, as I also indicated earlier, it would be unfair simply to accuse Locke of a confusion between percepts and concepts, because it is part of Locke's very project in the *Essay* to forge a link between our conceptual resources and features of our perceptual experience. The dual role played by ideas in Locke's kind of empiricism is essential to this project [5].

In the third book of his essay, by dealing with his conception of word, first of all, Locke upholds that language is an essential faculty of mankind, a gift from God, its creator; thanks to it, men can live together in community.

However, as he also adds, language is not simply the ability of producing articulate sounds (words); moreover, there must be ideas to support them; that is: according to Locke, language is an association between ideas and words, whose end is to set communication among people; so, ideas furnish meaning for words, as well as words furnish signs for ideas: that is the nature of their association.

Through language, ideas and words combine in order to make human beings understand one another. It is not only important for their mutual communication and their community life but it also makes possible to share and to spread knowledge among them, although there are risks of misunderstanding, because the communication process is not perfect. It means that:

The purpose of language is to expand the knowledge of each of us by allowing us to communicate our ideas, and especially our general ideas, to others, and to acquire new ideas from them; but as we have no direct access to the ideas of others, and no way of determining upon a scheme of general terms without choosing criteria to define the boundaries of species ourselves, we can have no guarantees that we will use our language to say the same things about the same objects and thus that we will succeed in the communication of ideas at which we aim [6].

In the fourth book of his essay, there is a distinction between knowledge and opinion (also called assent, belief, or faith by Locke); although both seem to be the same thing (because they are no doubt together), Locke occupies himself with separating them, because if there is confusion between them, there will be error and it is opposite to the search for truth, indeed. Moreover, upon the question concerning the difference between knowledge and opinion, there is a difference between science and religion, so precious to Locke, because, according to his thought, they are possible to coexist in harmony. According to Wolterstorff:

Locke held, indeed, that assent always accompanies knowledge; but he denied what has become a fundamental tenet of epistemology in our own day, namely, that knowledge is a *species* of assent. Assent or belief, says Locke, is *taking* some proposition to be true, whereas knowledge is *seeing* it to be true. To know is to be directly acquainted with some

fact, to be immediately aware of it, to perceive it; or, to put the point from the other side, knowledge occurs when some fact is presented directly to the mind [7].

Locke's definition of knowledge reinforces his empiricist perspective, because his conception of knowledge is nothing but the consequence of his conception of idea; that is: from his theory of idea, he comes to his theory of knowledge. Perception is the keyword; it is one of the powers of mind; by making use of perception, mind discovers if there is connection (agreement) or disconnection (disagreement) between at least two ideas inside itself. According to Locke, there are two perspectives of knowledge: one is positive, because it refers to a presence of link between ideas, and another is negative, because it refers to an absence of link between them; however, in both cases, there is mind perception:

*Knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnance of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge. For when we know that white is not black, what do we else but perceive, that these two ideas do not agree? When we possess ourselves with the utmost security of the demonstration, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, what do we more but perceive, that equality to two right ones necessarily agree to, and is inseparable from the three angles of a triangle? [8]*

This sentence sums simply up Locke's conception of knowledge: ideas' agreement or disagreement perception is made by the mind. However, the mind is not always able to perceive both connection and repugnance among ideas. Then, it can resort to its other powers in order to obtain something not necessarily true, but supposedly true: that is just the nature of faith, born from probability, not from certainty. According to those aforesaid explanations about Locke's epistemology, one verifies that it is very useful in order to think about knowledge in the present global age. If Locke argues that experience is unique source of ideas, then, he also argues against innateness; he admits that there are only acquired ideas; therefore, all knowledge is also acquired. That theory is very profitable to combat every kind of dogmatism: if experience is contingent, so are its ideas.

Knowledge is made by depending on ideas conceived; it is because there is no reason to conceive absolute truth, in matter of knowledge, which is circumstantial; that is: relative to human experiential capacity and limited by several factors, internally or externally; finally, experience is not perfect yet, although it is perfectible or progressive:

*In the Locke's view, then, though we are fitted to know some things, we are not fitted to know everything. The most obvious and large-scale limitation is the lack of scientific knowledge in natural philosophy, but there are others that Locke cites – all of them standard and frequently cited problems in seventeenth-century philosophy [9].*

Besides, experience is not only individual; it is also social. Therefore, it is generally, relative to culture, age and place; specifically, it is relative to several factors which could be mentioned here. Anyway, according to Locke's perspective, experience is a human production. Mankind

produces its experience along history, but not without difference, diversity, or peculiarity; it means that: several human commonwealths, during their existence, have left behind them their legacy, according to their relations with their world; that legacy is the best proof of their experience. For ages, history has witnessed people after people disappearing, others still subsisting. As the last resort, there is no reason to consider this civilization better than that one. It is only a matter of different experiences, extracted from these approaches about Locke's thought. Then, this apology of his thought, based on his epistemology, shows that his theory of knowledge is helpful to think about and promote respect for the diversity of experiences around the world, because each person and people deserve to be respected according to their peculiarity.

### 3. Some ideas concerning political and social theory, according to John Locke

As a political and social philosopher, John Locke is a thinker whose works make him belong to liberalism. Although that term is to be very equivocal, due to many meanings which has assumed (economically, politically, and religiously), summarily, liberalism is a doctrine, raised in Modern Age, for which the keyword is freedom. According to liberal thought, freedom is one of the fundamental or natural rights of mankind in general, and, especially, of an individual. Locke's liberalism upholds that, as well as freedom, there are other rights by nature, like these: life, equality, and labor; only one word is able to sum them up: property.

In Locke's *Two treatises of government*, there are his main ideas which make his political and social theory. The first part (*First treatise*), is, particularly, a refutation to Sir Robert Filmer (1588–1653), whose book, summarily entitled *Patriarcha*, is an apology to the theory of divine right to absolute monarchy. The second part (*Second treatise*) is, generally, Locke's explanation of his political and social thought, although there is another author, whose ideas are especially refuted, too, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). However, these are not two independent Locke's works, because there is unity between them. Thus, what Locke particularly refuses in his first treatise, by attacking Filmer's ideas, he generally affirms in his second one, by defending his ideas as principles of all rightful government, as well as he especially denies some of Hobbes' ideas. In order to demonstrate it, Filmer's and Hobbes' main tenets and arguments will be shown and after their refutation by Locke.

(A) About Filmer's main tenets and arguments:

First: Freedom is not a natural right, because nobody has been born to be free.

Second: The first kings were also fathers of families; then, their subjects ought to obey them as well as children ought to obey their parents.

Third: All government is absolute monarchy, because it is the base of all kinds of governments.

Fourth: It is unnatural for people to govern or choose their governors, then, only God loyally chooses kings to absolutely rule their subjects: "God must *eligere* [choose], and the people only

do *constituere* [set up]" [10]. Nevertheless, if people reprehend or uncrown their kings, it is not fair, because only God could do it.

Fifth: Positive laws do not infringe natural and fatherly power of kings; they are above them and they are above them because they are before them, by will of God.

(B) About Hobbes' main tenets and arguments:

First: Freedom and equality are the natural conditions of mankind. This is his conception of freedom: "Liberty, or freedom, signifieth properly the absence of opposition (by opposition, I mean external impediments of motion); and may be applied no less to irrational and inanimate creatures than to rational" [11]. It is a negative definition of liberty, indeed, because it only refers to lack of obstacles, but there is also a positive definition of freedom in Hobbes' thought, if one understands that it is right to everything, like this: "For where no covenant hath preceded, there hath no right been transferred, and every man has right to everything and consequently, no action can be unjust" [12]. Concerning equality, Hobbes upholds that men are essentially equal in essence, because their differences are after their creation.

Second: Competition, diffidence, and glory are the three main causes of quarrel among mankind, that is: although men are to be free and equal among them, there is a tendency to selfishness, because they put their own interests before others' interests; that is the path to state of war.

Third: Mankind is its own menace, because state of nature's tendency is to become state of war; that is: man perverts into his own danger (*homo homini lupus*): "To speak impartially, both sayings are very true; That Man to Man is a kind of God; and that Man to Man is an arrant Wolfe. The first is true, if we compare Citizens amongst themselves; and the second, if we compare Cities" [13]. Because of the right of each individual to everything, there are some whose inclination is to the same thing, as well as to infringe others' rights. Therefore, spread of violence (*bellum omnium contra omnes*) becomes unavoidable.

Fourth: An artificial man is needed in order to avoid mankind's self-destruction, that is: the Commonwealth. Hobbes compares the State to the biblical Leviathan, the most powerful sea dragon, which, according to the legend, is also described like a big fish or a big snake or a big octopus; it is a symbol of domain, force, and power. Thereby, Hobbes borrows that mythological sea monster in order to offer his Commonwealth metaphor, whose domain must be absolute, whose force must be incomparable, and whose power must not be restricted. It means that, in the last resort, without a supreme and absolute power to restrain mutual menace from each human individual, there is only a state of war among them, indeed. Therefore, men require an unconditional and unrestricted authority over themselves, for their own good, because, according to Hobbes' thinking, it is the very way to reestablish, at last, peace among them and, overall, their mutual conservation; there is no end to Commonwealth but it, whose functions, members, and organs also correspond to those of the human body.

(C) About Locke's main tenets and arguments:

First: State of nature is a condition of liberty and equality among men (against Filmer and according to Hobbes), but it is not a state of war (against Hobbes); it is also a condition of

reasonableness, because everyone is under reason laws, which are, according to Locke, the same nature laws. Thus, freedom, equality, reasonableness, and peace are natural human properties, because, mutually and potentially, everybody was born to be free, equal, reasonable, and peaceful. Therefore, in the state of nature, there is no reason for slavery, superiority, inferiority, or brutality to exist among humanity; they can only be after the state of nature.

Second: There are differences among these powers: paternal (or maternal), despotic, and political (just against Filmer; Hobbes does not develop this kind of power theory, because he is only interested in the absolute power of Commonwealth). Filmer argues that power is only one thing, emanated from God to kings over subjects, as well as the parents' authority over their children or the masters' domain over their servants; under Locke's perspective, if Filmer was right, then, there would neither be freedom nor equality, among people; moreover, the social contract would be meaningless. Thereby, there must be different kinds of powers because there are several ways of relationships among people. Basically, there are three kinds of relations among people, with their respective powers; those are:

- a. Among husband, wife, and children (family); paternal power of parents over their children, due to blood relations; it consists in the right of parents' care, concerning their children's breeding, before they can reach their own independence, thanks to their own reasonableness.
- b. Among lords and slaves (slavery); despotic power of lords over their slaves, due to permanence of state of war; it consists in the right of victorious men (lords) over lives of loser ones (slaves), because, if a man declares war against another and loses it, then, he who wins becomes the owner of his life and there is still a state of war between them; thus, it is a part of the right of self-preservation.
- c. Among citizens (citizenship); political power of citizens over themselves, due to social contract, set under explicit or tacit consent of free and equal individuals among themselves; it consists in the right of sovereignty concerning making, exercising, and protecting commonwealth laws in order to deal with properties of each member of it, internally and externally. Thus, political power is made of three parts: legislative, executive, and federative.

Third: Formerly, there are three kinds of government: monarchy (elective or hereditary), oligarchy (or aristocracy), and democracy, mixed forms of government also being possible, like a constitutional monarchy, which combines crown and parliament (against Filmer and according to Hobbes). Anyway, supreme power always derives from all citizens, because sovereignty is always theirs and so they can choose how they want to exercise it.

Fourth: Commonwealth is established by social contract, among human individuals, who are also free and equal, reciprocally; therefore, sovereignty comes from them, not from God to kings, because it is really impossible to know whom God has chosen to become some governors and others governed; on the contrary: God has become sovereign for all mankind over creation, according to biblical texts, which Locke makes use in order to support his argumentation (against Filmer and according to Hobbes).

Fifth: Governors, even kings, are people's, not God's, chosen ones, in order to accomplish their interests, that is, summing up: to protect their properties. It means that they are not owners of sovereignty, only citizens are its rightful owners, but they carry it out under their consent. Thereby, governors are just civil officers and then they can be dismissed according to the citizens' will, as well as it is rightful that subjects may resist their sovereigns, if they do not accomplish laws endorsed by social contract members, because there is nobody above any laws (against Filmer and according to Hobbes, who is, like Locke, a social contract philosopher).

Locke allows concluding that there is no utter power over subjects, but over sovereigns, being exercised by subjects. It is just opposite to Hobbes, whose thinking upholds that, once established, sovereignty is unconditional, that is: it is not beneath changes of interests of subjects; so, insurrection is not lawful and civil war is like Commonwealth death, which signifies the return to state of war. Every government, according to Locke, gets into a tyranny, if it does not preserve properties of its citizens, because, on doing so, it diverts finally to which it has been made and there is no way for people except rebellion:

The end of government is the good of mankind: and which is best for mankind, that the people should be always exposed to the boundless will of tyranny; or that the rules should be sometimes liable to be opposed, when they grow exorbitant in the use of their power, and employ it for the destruction, and not the preservation of the properties of their people? [14]

There are two columns that support Locke's political and social theory: state of nature and state of society; upon them he bears his tenets. If there are both natural and social dimensions inside every human being, then, he belongs both to nature and to society. Like a natural being, he has natural properties (such as aforesaid: liberty and reasonableness), which belong to him all his life, unless he may infringe some laws that could make him unworthy of them (for example: if he unfairly makes an attempt on somebody's life, he will lose his freedom), or even when something happens to him that results in the loss of some of his faculties (for example: if he achieves some kind of madness and so his reason will be unavoidably lost). Like a social entity, he has social rights and duties, which function to preserve his natural properties, as well as those of the rest of the limbs of political body. There is more than a concrete, economical, or material perspective into Locke's political and social thought, because property is also an abstract, immaterial, or moral question, derived from the natural state and granted in the civil state. According to Ashcraft:

One of the purposes of Locke's employment of the concept of the state of nature, however, is to undermine the force of the presupposition that political authority is simply derived from and reflective of the social relations of property ownership by showing that political authority must be linked with the consent given by persons who are equal and independent. Hence, there is a moral autonomy to the realm of politics. The latter, for Locke, could never be understood merely as the protective outgrowth of the interests of property owners [15].

As much in natural state as in the civil state, each person is into morality, due to rationality, which is universal. Nature, society, moral, reason, and property are mutually linked and considering them utterly disconnected would be a mistake. Thus, Locke's political and social theory is still profitable in order to think about the global age, because henceforth property is not only a national matter anymore, as well as relations among commonwealths wrap questions up, which, directly or indirectly, may affect the rest of the world, both environments with their resorts and people with their cultures.

#### 4. Some ideas concerning toleration, according to John Locke

Discussing about Locke's thought concerning toleration is really a current debate, because his context was not so different from the present day. During the seventeenth century, religious wars and political persecutions caused by intolerance were common. Nowadays, unfortunately, intolerance is still a real menace. It can be explicit or implicit. Very often, it appears when some people, under the name of their beliefs, commit disrespectful acts against other people who do not share them, such as physical or moral aggressions. Rarely, there are churches or sects that do not promote recrimination of other ones for self-profit. The same could be said of political ideologies or opinions. Therefore, dealing with intolerance, politically and religiously, is a continuous challenge; Locke's ideas about it are very useful in order to clear and to distinguish some aspects of politics and religion; it is because this one of his works, entitled *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, is able to provide arguments to those who intend to treat that theme. Just three of Locke's arguments are enough to sum up his thought about political and religious toleration.

First: The argument of the care of one's own soul about religious matter: it consists in affirming that, each person, like a free and reasonable being, is able to deal with his own spiritual and secular destiny; that is: under a religious perspective, eternal happiness (redemption or salvation) supposes a belief that each individual adopts for himself; it becomes faith and intimate forum matter, because it can only be considered as one if the person in question is convinced of it; so, nobody can exercise his own faith for nobody; thus, none should impose it to none, no matter what his condition or intention. Church, according to Locke, is a kind of society that results from the rights both of association and of expression in matter of beliefs:

Let us now consider what a church is. A church then I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls [16].

Church and Commonwealth are distinct societies, not in relation to their principles, because both should suppose freedom and equality among men; however, their finalities divert, because it is supposed that the end of Commonwealth is to preserve property, as well as it is supposed that the end of Church is to deal with spirituality. Moreover, religious imposition does not take

part in social contract; it would be opposite to individual natural freedom; therefore, there is no reason for public powers to occupy themselves with imposing beliefs on citizens.

Second: The argument of the exclusion of the civil or political authority in matter of religion: it consists in both enlargement and deepness of the aforesaid argument, because Locke reinforces that religious or spiritual questions overcome the jurisdiction of the public power; civil authority is just able to deal with questions in matter of preservation of properties of citizens. Commonwealth has no end but protecting interests of their members, but extension of its power does not reach spiritual human dimension; however, Commonwealth must neither allow nor promote religious intolerance, much less make use of violence in order to do it, because it would become a social problem due to the tendency to religious fanaticism of some citizens; on the contrary: all religions must be considered equal before it; summing up: Commonwealth should only make use of external force (coercion) in order to keep the social peace; Church should only make use of internal force (persuasion) in order to keep the spiritual peace.

Third: The argument of the inefficacy of the coercion of the civil or political authority in matter of religion: it consists in this reasoning: if somebody is not persuaded concerning whether a religion is really the best for him, among the several ones that are at his disposal, then, why sovereigns would be rightful about repressing who is not adept of his personal religion or even of the official religion of his country, for it is just out of use? Locke outlines the personal responsibility that each one has about his own beliefs, adding that all legislation that may incite religious intolerance is as unnecessary as useless. Besides, it would be as lawless as unreasonable, for being opposite to reason. Because reason is before social contract, civil, political, or social laws have no end but to enlarge and to deepen and to reinforce natural, reasonable or universal laws to which all mankind is subjected.

According to Locke, intolerance, politically and religiously, is opposite to: freedom, equality, and reasonableness; then, it is also opposite to property. Thus, if Commonwealth makes use of political and religious intolerance, it will be not lawful. However, there is a way to justify intolerance, that is: when Commonwealth turns to it in order to avoid or to stop social chaos, nurtured by political or religious fanaticism. Therefore, intolerance is paradoxically lawful, whether it is at service of reason, in order to preserve every member of social contract; that is:

If an individual as the result of his religion does positive harm either to another individual or to the state, then he cannot be permitted to practise his religion. For instance, a religion having human sacrifice as part of its ritual could not be tolerated in any modern community [17].

Although Locke's thought was concentrated on his contemporary questions concerning religion, due to dissents among seventeenth century English Christians, which were already divided into Papists (Catholics) and Protestants (Anglicans, Calvinists, Lutherans etc.), his ideas still allow thinking about ways to be found in order to promote dialogues among different believers, because, in order to live in a global age, the respect for humans is necessary and, indeed, it also means the respect for his beliefs.

## 5. Some ideas concerning education, according to John Locke

Locke's thought about education, at the first sight, seems to be exclusively an elitist proposal, because he is only interested in gentleman's breeding. His main aforesaid work about education (*Some Thoughts Concerning Education*) is made of his correspondence with one of his friends (Sir Edward Clarke of Chipley, Esquire), a British nobleman to whom Locke wrote letters in order to help him to train his children. Thus, it is very clear that Locke practically thought about how to breed a child born into nobility. However, his educational ideas may be rethought under another angle, if one understands that his ideal of individual is someone whose training is to be able to make him the best possible human being. Thereby, the importance that he attributed to education is unquestionable, because, according to him, due to their education, people are able both to their own improvement and to their own ruin. Therefore, in order to train human beings, education is an activity that deals with both the body and the mind; that is: education is a psychophysical process.

According to the aforesaid quote, Locke is really persuaded concerning the powers of education, which, summarily, consists in teaching body and mind habits to child. Like a psychophysical process, he divides education into two main dimensions; these are:

1. Physical dimension: it refers to body cares; it is also divided into parts like these:

- Hygienic dimension: it consists in teaching habits that may provide a very good bodily health.
- Nutritional dimension: it consists in teaching habits that provide a suitable selection of drinks and food to be consumed.
- Sporting dimension: it consists in teaching habits that, by practicing some kind of sport (for example: swimming), may provide body skills and health improvement, too.
- Manual dimension: it consists in teaching a manual ability, profession, or trade.

2. Psychological dimension: it refers to mind cares; it is also divided into parts like these:

- Behavior dimension: it consists in teaching good manners or etiquette in order to suitably or wisely behave in social relations.
- Intellectual dimension: summarily, it consists in teaching everything knowable; methodically, elementary skills (like reading and writing), foreign and vernacular languages (classical and modern), and scientific disciplines in order to train the mind, intellectually; to inspire good feelings about knowledge, emotionally; to promote self-improvement, personally.
- Civic dimension: it consists in teaching civil laws in order to be aware of citizenship, belonging to social body as a member with both rights and duties.
- Moral dimension: it consists in teaching virtue, that is: intellectual and moral excellence.

- Religious dimension: it consists in teaching things concerning the existence of God (summarily, Absolute and Supreme Being, Author of the Universe, and Giver of All Gifts), as well as everything concerning him (Revelation); moreover, according to Locke, God is the foundation of virtue.
- Playful dimension: it consists in reinforcing the importance of entertainment to teaching and learning process or to affirm the pedagogical worth of games.

Summarily, Locke conceives education like a process that turns mainly around these four aspects, especially concerning gentlemen's training: virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning. They sum up all the aforesaid dimensions and their subdivisions. In fact, without them, there is no education. Therefore, they are things that every gentleman must desire for himself, as well as for his descendants, because they must be part of his legacy: "That which every gentleman (that takes any care of his education) desires for his son, besides the estate he leaves him, is contained (I suppose) in these four things: *virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning*" [18].

## 6. Conclusion

Although Locke belongs to a different age from the present one, he treated questions that, nowadays, are still present and he did very well, because his arguments are still worthy. Therefore, Locke's thought is very useful to think about how to find ways in order to make a global age. His epistemological ideas suggest that several kinds of knowledge should be respected, because experience can be made in several ways; it means that: if, on one side, Locke supports that experience is the only way to achieve knowledge, on the other side, however, it does not mean that everybody follows or must follow the same way to reach their knowledge. His political and social ideas offer a lawful way to set a society based on freedom and equality among its members; surely, they must not be overlooked, if one understands that democracy is the best possible way of living in a commonwealth. His religious ideas are a very powerful antidote against the poison of intolerance, because his demonstration reveals that choosing a religion should only be a matter of persuasion, not of imposition. His educational ideas reinforce the importance of conceiving education like a human psychophysical activity in order to breed both body and mind, because it is just a way to arrive to the best human being possible, whose example is a gentleman.

The global age is not only a presence or a reality, yet; it is an ideality or a project, too. Thus, there are many challenges and hindrances to be overcome in order to include the most possible part of people around the world. Surely, it is a time of rethinking many values, such as: educational, intellectual, moral, political, and religious ones, because the present times are also times of crisis or lack of hopes, due to several factors, such as: increase of poverty, ascension of terrorism and, environmental aggression. Thereby, the temptation to fall into dogmatism is very great. In a global age, it is imperative to combat any kind of dogmatism, educationally, epistemologically, politically, and religiously, because it is the root of lack of toleration, violence, and every kind of physical and moral aggression. Education, knowledge, politics, and religion are questions that must not be overlooked, because they are ways for citizens to be aware of

the present worldwide situation and thus they may work on the necessary changes in order to establish values that can promote human development, without disrespect for people and environment: that is why, nowadays, John Locke's ideas are still so important to be revisited.

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