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Query concerning the Specifics of the Problematic that Elicits Locke's *Essay*, at I.i.2, 44 and I.i.7, 47

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Abstract: This is a query regarding what and whom Locke refers to in passages from *Essay* I.i.2 and I.i.7.

Keywords: John Locke, *Essay*, persuasions, disputes, skepticism

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A query for all Lockeans from Bruce Merrill regarding a couple of passages in the *Essay*. Please feel free to post answers in the comments below or to direct them to Bruce at merrillbp@gmail.com.

This query concerns the specifics of the problematic that elicits Locke's *Essay*.

In his introduction Locke points to:

those Perswasions, which are to be found amongst Men, so various, different, and wholly contradictory; and yet asserted, some where or other, with such Assurance, and Confidence ... [which then engenders skepticism] That either there is no such thing as Truth at all; or that Mankind hath no sufficient Means to attain a certain Knowledge of it. (*Essay*, I.i.2, 44)

- Can we identify which particular contradictory persuasions Locke has in mind here, as asserted by whom?
- Who are the particular skeptics who then, in the face of all that fractious dissensus, concluded that "there is no such thing as truth"?

Similarly, in the subsequent sketch of the historical matrix for the *Essay* he notes how:

we let loose our thoughts into the vast Ocean of *Being*; as if all that boundless Extent, were the natural, and undoubted Possession of our Understandings, wherein there was nothing exempt from its Decisions, or that escaped its Comprehension. Thus Men, extending their Enquiries beyond their Capacities, and letting their Thoughts wander into those depths, where they can find no sure Footing; 'tis no Wonder, that they raise Questions, and multiply Disputes, which, never coming to any clear Resolution, are proper only to continue and increase their Doubts, and to confirm them at last in perfect Scepticism. (*Essay*, I.i.7, 47)

- Can we identify which particular "enquiries" were extended beyond our capacities, leaving us with "no sure footing"?
- Whose skeptical conclusions are thus provoked?

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