

Reading Guide #4

John Locke, from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

These questions are provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you first to read the material through, then go back to answer the questions. You are not expected to hand in written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Page numbers refer to the Ariew and Watkins collection.

Book I, Chapters I-II (AW 316-322)

1. What is Locke's goal? How does he plan to achieve that goal? Be specific.
2. "If we disbelieve everything because we cannot certainly know all things, we shall do quite as wisely as he who would not use his legs, but sit still and perish, because he had no wings to fly" (I.I.5). Explain.
3. What is an idea?
4. Are colors innate? What does Locke infer from the answer to this question?
5. What is general assent? Why does it not prove that there are innate ideas?
6. How does the example of children show that there are no innate ideas?
7. What is reason? Why do appeals to reason not support innate ideas?
8. How does the mind first get its ideas?
9. When do we start using names for our ideas? How do we get general ideas?
10. What does Locke mean by 'ready assent'? Why does ready assent not prove that there are innate ideas?
11. Does implicit knowledge support the doctrine of innate ideas? Explain.

Book II, Chapters I-VIII (AW 322-337)

12. Describe and differentiate the two sources of ideas.
13. When do we start to have ideas?
14. "The perception of ideas [is] to the soul what motion is to the body - not its essence, but one of its operations" (II.I.10). Explain. Who disagrees?
15. How does Locke argue against the view that our souls are always thinking? Why is this argument relevant to Locke's work?
16. Distinguish simple and complex ideas. Why does Locke say that simple ideas can be neither created nor destroyed?
17. What is solidity? How do we know of it?
18. How are bodies different from space?
19. How can a positive idea come from a privative cause?
20. "[I]t will be convenient to distinguish them *as they are ideas or perceptions in our minds; and as they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions in us...*" (II.VIII.7). What does this mean? Why does Locke think that this distinction is important?
21. How does Locke distinguish ideas from qualities?
22. What are the primary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)
23. What are the secondary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)
24. How do ideas of external objects get into our minds, according to Locke?

25. How do we get ideas of secondary qualities?
26. "The ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves, but the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblance of them at all." (II.VIII.15) Explain.
27. Do we think that the warmth is in the fire? What does this show?
28. "Take away the sensation of them; let not the eyes see light or colors, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell, and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds, as they are such particular ideas, vanish and cease, and are reduced to their causes, i.e. bulk, figure, and motion of parts." (II.VIII.17) Explain.
29. How does the example of the porphyry support the primary/secondary distinction?
30. How does Locke's discussion of the water support his primary/secondary distinction?
31. How does Locke demonstrate that figure is a primary quality?
32. How are powers different from primary and secondary qualities?

Book II, Chapter XXVII (AW 367-377)

33. How do we determine identity? How is our determination relative to a kind of thing?
34. What is the difference between a mass of matter and the plant or animal made of that matter?
35. What, generally, makes us the same people over time?
36. Why is an account of personal identity based on the soul not tenable?
37. What is the relationship between consciousness and personal identity? Consider the role of memory.
38. Distinguish 'soul', 'man', and 'person'. What are their different identity conditions?
39. Describe the case of the prince and the cobbler. What does it show?
40. How is personal identity independent of questions of substance?
41. How is the problem of defining personal identity a moral question?
42. What is the problem of lost memories? How does Locke solve this problem?
43. Describe the case of the day and night man. What does it show?

Book III, Chapter III and Chapter VI (AW 377-386)

44. How does the particularity of things contrast with the generality of words?
45. What are names? Why do we need general names?
46. How are general words made? For what do they stand?
47. Do general terms refer to real things? Explain.
48. Distinguish real and nominal essences. Relate this difference to the primary/secondary distinction.
49. How are essences related to abstract ideas?
50. Why are real essences unknown to us?

Book IV, Chapters I-IV (AW 386-405)

51. According to Locke, what is knowledge?
52. What are the four kinds of agreement of our ideas?
53. Distinguish actual knowledge from habitual knowledge.
54. How does mathematics require habitual knowledge?
55. What is intuition? What is reasoning? How do they differ?
56. How are the individual steps of a proof justified?

57. Is mathematics the only subject whose propositions admit of proof?
58. Can we know that we are not dreaming? Explain Locke's answer.
59. What are the three degrees of knowledge?
60. How is our knowledge short of the reality of things?
61. How does Locke justify his claim that it is possible for matter to think?
62. Why is it hard to account for colors and sounds and pleasures and pains? What does this show about the soul?
63. In what two ways do philosophers err about the relationship between mind and body? What error do both positions share?
64. "The connection between most simple ideas is unknown" (IV.III.10, AW 395a). Explain.
65. How are we ignorant of the connection between primary and secondary qualities?
66. Are moral claims demonstrable like mathematical ones? Explain.
67. To what three causes does Locke attribute ignorance?
68. Is knowledge of our ideas purely psychological? Explain.
69. How do we know that simple ideas are veridical? How do we know that complex ideas are not misrepresentative?
70. Are mathematical claims certain? What are the objects of these claims?
71. Are our ideas of substance veridical? Explain.