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Introduction to Philosophy

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### Reading Questions Week 2

Descartes, “New Foundations for Knowledge”, pp. 21-25

1. Descartes had three doubts: 1. “...I am now sitting by the fire,”- he had doubts about the fact that what the mind may be seeing can be wrong or right (exist).
  2. “...propositions of mathematics, which seem to be immune from the previous doubts since their truth does not depend on whether their objects actually exist,” - Descartes doubts the fact that the things we are taught in mathematics, how can we tell if they are right or wrong?
  3. “Previous beliefs acquired via the senses are all jettisoned, on the grounds the senses have sometimes proved unreliable.” - he describes this to be deceiving because of things we were taught to believe but how do we know it exists or is real.
2. For mathematics Descartes basically stated, “... but even these are called into question by the thought that an all-powerful God might make me go wrong every time I add two and three.” he also spoke about science as, “... to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable...”
  3. Descartes theory of knowledge is based on the fact that how do you know if whatever you are seeing externally is real or it is just the mind. However, he eventually admits to the fact that we as humans do exist because of the mere fact that we all think.

Locke, “The Senses as the Basis for Knowledge”, pp. 25-31

1. Locke believes, “that there are certain fundamental truths accepted by everyone; but Locke objects, first, that even if universal assent were established it would not prove innateness...” he also believe that, “... these supposedly innate principles are so far from having a universal assent that there are a great part of mankind to whom they are not so much as known...” Locke is Basically saying the human brain is empty at first but because of their senses they begin to develop knowledge about the things around them along with experience.
2. Locke uses ‘idiots and children’ as to emphasize on his point that they are, “... abstract principles of logic and mathematics (often thought to be prime candidates for innately implanted principles). Locke is trying to prove to readers that many people have gone through life without thinking of these things. Therefore if both ‘idiots and children’ had the same body features and are similar then they should agree to the truth. Locke stated, “...since they do not, it is evident that there are no such impressions.”
3. The ‘Tabula Rasa’ is described by Locke as a “blank sheet of white paper devoid of all characters.” This led him asking himself what could possibly make this so and his answer was “experience.”
4. Locke refers to ‘Sensation’ as senses that conveys perceptions to the mind from external objects. He also refers to ‘Reflection’ to be the mind reflecting on its own operations, not external objects.