

Jada Hamilton

Professor Sanchez

PHI101

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Reading Questions: Locke & Berkeley

Locke, “Qualities and Ideas” (Essay . . .) – pp. 86-90

1. Explain in your own words what Locke means by a "quality" of matter.

The quality of matter has the ability to produce an idea in our mind. It does this when our senses are activated by matter. A brownie can produce the sweet smell of chocolate in your mind, the soft crumble of the brownie can activate our physical touch senses, and so on.

2. Give three examples of Locke's Primary Qualities, and three examples of Secondary Qualities. How does Locke explain the key differences between Primary and Secondary Qualities?

The difference between primary and secondary qualities is that primary is the senses that involve touch and texture. Secondary is insensible parts like tastes and sounds. Three examples of primary qualities are the roundness of a bowling ball, the yellowness of the sun, or the brown in a tree's trunk. The secondary qualities of those items could be the loudness of a bowling ball if it hit the ground, the heat that radiates from the sun, and the fresh scent of a tree trunk.

3. Present an example from Locke's writing that describes a material object in terms of its fundamental primary qualities versus its secondary qualities, and how Locke's distinction makes sense of the reality of that object.

Snowball is an example Locke used. He described it as white, cold, and round. These are obviously primary qualities because everyone can have the power to produce these ideas when it comes to a snowball. Locke helped me determine that with excellent explanation and examples so my mind can differentiate primary and secondary.

Berkeley, “Nothing Outside the Mind” (Principles . . .) – pp. 97-102

4. Explain Berkeley's criteria for "existence" - what does he think we mean when we say something is "real" or that it "exists"?

Berkeley's criteria for existence is something that has to be perceived to exist. Something that is real is perceived meaning it is thought about in a person's mind. An idea that runs through the operations of someone's mind and is connected to their passions is considered being perceived and real because of it.

5. Based on his definition of existence, why does Berkeley think we should not believe in the existence of independent Primary Qualities? What does this mean about the existence of matter?

Only independent primary qualities would cause resemblance to many things in life. Matter is understanding a senseless substance.

6. As a result of his critique of materialism, explain what Berkeley has to say about the ultimate source of all the sensory experiences we receive.

The ultimate source is our ability to have an idea, it to be perceived, and it produces substance or matter. Our biggest sensory experience is in our mind and the controller of the whole thing.