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### Reading Questions: Descartes & Locke

Descartes

1. List and explain three of the reasons Descartes gives for doubting what he thought he knew.

- Anything that may be questioned and doubted, according to Descartes, ought to be removed as well.
- He added that nothing certain could be established on such shaky foundations because science borrows its principles from philosophy.
- His goal was to disprove all of his views and opinions in order to raise some doubt and reach a more solid conclusion.

2. While still in the realm of doubt, what does Descartes say about the general sciences and mathematics and their place in our knowledge?

He asserted that it is dubious since physics, astronomy, and medicine all depend on the study of composite objects. They asserted that mathematics or geometry is certain since it deals with the most basic concepts, whether they are related to the presence in nature. He continues by saying that such obvious realities are just that—obvious—and cannot be questioned.

3. What does Descartes ultimately argue is a strong and unshakeable basis for knowledge? How does he make his case?

I am and I exist, and that is the unbreakable foundation of knowing. He argues his argument by claiming that since he offered it and he thinks it to be true, it must be real. His reasoning is that if he keeps having doubts about something, he will set them aside. He will carry on in this manner until there is no longer any uncertainty and it cannot be shaken.

Locke

1. Explain some of the reasons Locke believes there are no innate ideas.

The mind learns from experience through sensation and/or later thought, Locke contends that there are no intrinsic concepts. Even if there were general consensus of opinion, they would still need to have that memory activated by sensation.

2. What is the significance of "children" and "idiots" in Locke's argument?

The importance is that they are not highly understood or thought of by children or fools. They therefore cannot possess inherent knowledge since it is inaccurate to possess knowledge of something that is "imprinted" on one's soul or intellect but which one is unable to comprehend or sense.

3. Explain the concept of the "tabula rasa".

It is the concept of a blank white paper representing people's mind before they have inherited preconceived notions or beliefs.

4. Describe in your own words what Locke means by "sensation" and "reflection" in describing the acquisition of knowledge.

I think that feeling refers to how our five senses come to life when we recall a memory. The odors from that event are still present, as are the sounds from the time it occurred and the emotions we felt at the time. In essence, we are able to relive previous events as if they were still taking place. I believe that reflection is founded on what happens after an event. How we rejoiced or grieved and how it later influenced their lives.