

Descartes, "New Foundations for Knowledge", pp. 21-25

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

- Our senses can be deceptive-Descartes believed that our senses can sometimes give us false information, which can lead us to believe things that are not true.
- Our memories can be unreliable-Descartes also believed that our memories can be unreliable because they are influenced by our emotions and imagination.
- We can be deceived by powerful illusions-such as dreams or hallucinations.

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

Descartes believed that by using reason and logic we can develop both a complete and accurate understanding of the world. He thought that mathematics and the general sciences were essential tools in the quest to achieve this goal.

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

Descartes believed that logic and reason were the strong and unshakable basis for knowledge because they can lead us to certain truths that are beyond doubt even in the face of potential deception or uncertainty. To support his argument, he used his famous experiment called "evil demon" or "evil genius" where he imagined a powerful demon was deceiving him and making him believe things that weren't true. Even so, he believed that he could still be certain of his own existence because he was the one thinking. "I think, therefore I am."

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

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

- He argued that if there were innate ideas, everyone would have them. Yet people from various cultures and backgrounds have different beliefs and ideas, therefore these ideas are learned and not innate.
- Locke believed that even the most basic concepts like color or taste could not be innate because they are different for everyone.
- If there were innate ideas, then we wouldn't need to learn anything more because we would just know things from birth but this isn't the case. Therefore, we need education such as mathematics, language etc and these are acquired through experience.

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

The significance of this argument is that it challenges the idea that there is some kind of universal knowledge that all humans possess from birth. He believed that our minds are more like a blank slate and that we acquire knowledge through experience and education. He argued that if there were innate ideas, then even children and people with mental disabilities, who have not had the opportunity to learn would possess these ideas, which he observed they did not.

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

The term means "blank slate" in Latin. It's a term Locke used to name his concept of the human mind being like a blank slate from birth. Only through experience and education did he believe humans could gain knowledge.

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

Locke believed that we learn by experiencing things and thinking about those experiences using:

- Sensation-the physical experiences we have through our senses, such as seeing, hearing and touching.
- Reflection-our ability to think about our experiences and to make sense of them. Through these experiences through our senses we reflect on them and draw conclusions.