

Reading Guide #2

John Locke, from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (handout)

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. Boldfaced questions may appear on exams.

Book I, Chapter I

- 1. Why is there no need to think that colors are innate ideas? What does this mean for Locke's methodology?**
2. What is general assent? Why does it not prove that there are innate ideas?
- 3. How does the example of children show that there are no innate ideas?**
4. How is the appeal to reason self-defeating, for those who defend innate ideas?
- 5. How does the mind first get its ideas?**
- 6. When do we start using names for our ideas? How do we get general ideas?**
7. What does Locke mean by 'ready assent'? Why does ready assent not prove that there are innate ideas?

Book II, Chapter I

- 8. What are the two sources of ideas?**
9. When do we start to have ideas?

Book II, Chapter VIII

- 10. "[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..." (§7) What does this mean? Why does Locke think that this distinction is important?**
11. How does Locke distinguish ideas from qualities?
- 12. What are the primary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)**
- 13. What are the secondary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)**
14. How do ideas of external objects get into our minds, according to Locke?
- 15. How do we get ideas of secondary qualities?**
- 16. "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." (§15) Explain.**
17. Do we think that the warmth is in the fire? What does this show?
- 18. "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." (§17) Explain.**
19. How does the example of the porphyry support the primary/secondary distinction?
- 20. How does Locke's discussion of the water support his primary/secondary distinction?**
- 21. How does Locke demonstrate that figure is a primary quality?**