

QUESTIONS ON DESCARTES, LOCKE AND KANT

Descartes

1. What is Descartes' epistemological goal?
2. What are the four possibilities which potentially undermine all truth-claims?
3. What is the one belief which is immune to these four possible skeptical challenges and, thus, indisputably true?
4. What does this one indisputable idea in turn convince Descartes of the 'clear and distinct' existence of? What does the famous Latin phrase 'cogito ergo sum' which Descartes makes mean in this connection?
5. Are there other 'facts' which are as 'clearly and distinctly' conceivable and, therefore, worthy of our trust?
6. What do philosophers mean when they describe Descartes' view of knowledge as a 'foundational' one?

Locke

7. How does Locke define the term 'idea' in general?
8. Are there, according to Locke, innate or pre-given ideas in the mind? Is he in agreement on this point with Descartes?
9. How does Locke debunk the "argument of universal consent" (228) used to support the view that ideas are innate?
10. How does Locke debunk the argument that humans come to recognise the ideas which are innate in their minds only when their capacity to reason is sufficiently developed?
11. What is the main source of the ideas which we have in our minds, according to Locke?
12. What is the precise process, according to Locke, by which ideas are acquired?
13. What, according to Locke, is the other source of the ideas in our minds?
14. Does Locke agree with Descartes' conclusions concerning the nature of the mind?
15. List the several metaphors to which Locke compares the mind of a human being prior to the acquisition of ideas.

Kant

16. Does Kant think that all our ideas derive from 'experience'? To what degree does he agree with Locke and the Empiricists that the mind, prior to experience, is a 'tabula rasa'?
17. Does Kant think that at least some of our ideas pre-exist 'experience'? To what extent does he agree with Descartes and the Rationalists that there exists a pre-given 'Cogito' or 'thinking self'?
18. What is the difference, according to Kant, between an 'intuition' and a 'concept'?
19. What does Kant mean when he writes: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind"?
20. What are the two basic 'forms of intuition' which inform our knowledge of the world?
21. List at least two of the 'conceptual categories' which, according to Kant, shape our knowledge of the world.
22. In what ways, in the light of the foregoing, is Kant's rationalism different from that

- of Descartes?
23. How does Kant conceptualise the self? Is it a social construction or is there a part of us at least that transcends the here and now?