

Introduction plato
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Introduction

Rationalism is a branch of epistemology which studies people's opinions applying to reason as a foundation of knowledge and justification. It is the theory in which the principle of truth is not sensory but academic and deductive. There are varying degrees of emphasis on rationalism.

This has led to a variety of rationalist perspectives from the average position that reason has priority over other ways of gaining knowledge. Rationalism is thus similar to philosophy and the Socratic life of query. It is normally related to the introduction of mathematical techniques into philosophy. It takes into account issues such as knowledge and the difference between knowledge and belief (Barneskole 215).

It also considers whether certainty is different from knowledge and whether knowledge is possible in reality. Rationalism claims that knowledge in contrast to opinion is only possible if founded on clear principles. Such principles are not gained via experience but are implied through reasoning.

In rationalism, sense experience cannot offer the assurance needed to guarantee that what people know is factual. As a result, rationalists have to depend on reason itself as the ground for establishing whether people's opinions are rationalized true beliefs and that is knowledge. This paper will compare and contrast Plato and Descartes versions of rationalism and the strengths and weaknesses involved in both approaches.

Discussion

Similarities between Plato and Descartes Versions of Rationalism

Though Plato and Descartes lived hundreds of years apart from each other, there is a number of similarities in their versions of Rationalism. Plato argues that justification is by reason and not senses while Descartes goes ahead and shows that these senses are not trustworthy. Both ascertain that the most primary knowledge is a priori. Another similarity is seen where both Plato and Descartes argue that Mathematics is very essential and is like a foundation for knowledge. Their goals in rationalism are finding the permanent order that lies beneath the knowledge flux (Guvier 138).

Differences between Plato and Descartes Versions of Rationalism

Plato and Descartes lived in two distinct ages and societies hence the reasons for their differences. Plato is viewed as an Intellectus rationalist while Descartes is considered a ratio rationalist. According to Plato, sense experience does not provide people with assurances that what they experience is in reality true. He argues that the message people get by depending on sense experience is continually changing and frequently unreliable. This can however be rectified and assessed for dependability only by appealing to rationales that do not change. These fixed principles are the foundations of what it means by reasoning in the first place. Plato further argues that all knowledge is vulnerable to doubt.

He emphasizes that the source or reason for anything must have as much precision as its effects. Descartes on the other hand begins with a cynical view of human knowledge and hopes to provide experience that people can do without doubt. He adds that something cannot be derived from nothing

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and believes that God has an essential role in human knowledge (Oakeshott 301).

Descartes and Plato's Downplaying of Sense Experience

Many traditional theorists have downplayed the importance of the function of the five senses in human life. To downplay the importance of sense experience, Plato and Descartes show that sense experience can never be a cause of experience since the objects captured through it are vulnerable to change.

Humans therefore obtain knowledge by going beyond sense experience to discover constant objects through reasoning. For Plato, sense data simply provides people with shadows that they take for reality. Truth cannot however be found in the unsatisfactory world of time and space.

Relatively, it must be taken hold of by the sensible part of our soul.

According to Plato, there are two unreasonable parts of the soul which are closely linked to our bodies. These can only provide us with passing and imperfect images of things. Descartes down playing sense experience is demonstrated in his first, second and third meditation. Descartes does not accept that sense experience has a significant role in human life.

He undermines a human being to a thing that thinks. His first meditation is based on doubt. Descartes was hit by how many wrong things he had trusted and by the uncertain structure of his beliefs. Descartes second meditation deals with the character of the human mind and how it is better known than the body. Descartes assumes that everything he sees is untrue. He supposes

that his mind only tells him lies. Here Descartes talks about a piece of wax from a honey comb.

It still has the flavor of honey and the odor of flowers it was obtained from. At this time, it can be easily handled and if rapped, it makes a sound. However, if this wax is held close to the fire, its taste and smell disappears, the color changes, the shape changes, size increases and the wax becomes fluid and hot. Descartes in this case however argues that this is still the same wax. Descartes third meditation talks about the presence of God. He believes that God has an essential role in human knowledge.

Strengths and Weaknesses involved in Plato and Descartes approaches

Weaknesses involved in Plato's approach are related to where knowledge comes from while the weakness involved in Descartes approach is related to whether it's true that God, the divine being, really exists.

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