

Knowledge discovered or invented philosophy essay



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Ben Franklin may have discovered electricity - but it is the man who invented the meter who made the money (Earl Warren). Children in school are taught that Benjamin Franklin discovered lightning and Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. Earl Warren's quote may be right, but what is meant by 'discovered' and 'invented'? I believe that discoveries are things independent of humans, like gravity, Pythagoras theorem, astronomy, electro-magnetic rotations etc, and inventions are man-made, like the bible, the electric motor, the internet, the airplane, and even the seedless watermelon. The areas of knowledge discussed in my essay are mathematics and ethics. I will claim that mathematics is discovered and ethics is invented, and discuss this further in my essay using examples of real-life situations.

Mathematics deals with the logic of quantities, shapes, space, and structure. We could argue that maths is invented and that we only discovered how to use it. The simple systems like simple addition e. g. $2+3=5$ are used while inventing solutions to more complex problems. Since mathematicians invent these solutions, they also have the power to invent multiple solutions to get to an answer. When we for instance solve a simple quadratic equation: . We can solve it by factorizing, which gives us $(x+3)(x+2)$, so $x=-3$ and $x=-2$, or use the quadratic formula, , and after putting the numbers into the formula ($a=1$, $b=5$, $c=6$), we get the answers $x=-3$ and $x=-2$, or we can even graph the function and see that it crosses the x axis at $x=-3$ and $x=-2$. We discovered that we can mold mathematics to fit our reality but we did not discover mathematics itself. The problem arises when we come across a number like $\sqrt{2}$, when we define the circumference of a circle we did not invent that when we have a circle with radius 1 that its circumference is 2π .

14159265.... Relationships in math that were discovered by mathematicians would still be the way they were even if they were not discovered. Mathematicians did not decide that something would be the way it is. Take for example the relationship between the three sides of a right triangle, also known as Pythagoras theorem. It does not change, as humans did not make it, humans only recognized this pattern. Pythagoras theorem, first recognized in the year 530 BC by a Greek man named Pythagoras, states that the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the two adjacent sides. History tells us that Pythagoras, while waiting to see Polycrates, the ruler of the city Samos, was looking at the floor's square tiling. He noticed, not invented, that the area of a square straight over the diagonal is double the area of the square straight on an adjacent side. This rewords to the square of the hypotenuse equalling to the sum of the squares on the triangle's two legs. Another simple everyday example, if I have twenty apples and I give you eight, then I am left with twelve apples. Simple subtraction is also math. I do not invent that I am left with twelve apples but discover that after I give eight away I no longer have twenty. The words we created to express numbers which are used to express amounts, differ in almost every country. The verbal language in which math is expressed can be seen as invented. The concept, however, stays the same. The relationship between numbers, triangles, and apples does not change no matter how it is expressed. In Spanish I would have 'veinte manzanas', and after I had given you 'ocho manzanas' I would still be left with 'doce manzanas'. I can change the language but the relation between the apples will stay the same. We could argue that maths is invented and that we only discovered how to use it. We discovered that we

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can mold mathematics to fit our reality but we did not discover mathematics itself.

“ Ethics is not definable, is not implementable, because it is not conscious; it involves not only our thinking, but also our feeling” (Valdemar V. Setzer).

Ethics is different for everyone and is invented in each individual's mind; it has no authority behind it. It is self-created and self-chosen and thereby influences the way we think, act, and perceive things. Ethics involves the discussion of the way we should live our own lives, our own personal morals. Some people invent their own personal system of morals but others follow a system of morals that have been laid out by a system of morals that combine into a religion. As a Roman Catholic I have been brought up with standard morals of the Catholic Church, Catholic perspectives on abortion, stem cell division, contraception, homosexuality etc. This system of morals, invented by one man, is called the bible. The bible is a book that helps a Christian live their life in a Christian way. The New Testament clearly condemns homosexuality as a sin, “ if there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them” (Lev. 20: 13). The belief that homosexuality is wrong is a man-made invented belief. It is also invented that the only way to repent a sin is if one asks for forgiveness and never do it again and they will according to the bible go to heaven. This could not be discovered since it is impossible for anyone that has committed a sin and asked for forgiveness to tell people at earth whether or not they actually came to heaven. And is there a heaven? Ethics is a creation that someone invents in their mind; it cannot be proven to be

correct. Ethics cannot be discovered because it is a creation, which means it is new and so invented, in order for discoveries to be made they must pre-exist. Ethics deals with the good and the bad, and the right and the wrong. In our society 'the bad' and 'the wrong' are rarely tolerated or accepted. The society I live in and the school I go to does not tolerate bad behavior and when I do show signs of bad behavior I discover that I get in trouble.

Although it could be argued that reactions towards certain action may be invented there are certain actions, for instance: murder, which is generally not tolerated, anywhere in the world, if the whole entire world is against the murder of an innocent person is it really an invention or a discovery made that society cannot tolerate such behavior. So is it really the ethics that is invented? Or is it the society we live in that is invented and ethics are discoveries made by trial and error. With exception to some, most people would not tolerate child abuse of any form. Going back to the concepts of right and wrong, and good and bad, when we see such a thing happening we automatically judge the abuser as bad and his action as wrong. I do not think these feelings or thoughts are invented but they are discovered as our emotions get touched.

Regarding the claim that some knowledge areas are invented and others are discovered, I think there is a specific reason as to why the title essay does not state which areas of knowledge are invented and which are discovered. I believe that the essay title states it very clearly, this subject matter is a topic of discussion. For each argument there is a valid counter argument. Some counter arguments might not be strong arguments but if for every argument another one is given many questions arise. Some claims can never be

clarified and I believe that this is the case when discussing the areas of knowledge. I can argue as long as I want that maths is discovered but as my argument is not bulletproof there will always be an argument which will kill it.