

Sample essay on john locke's belief

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Locke's belief

Introduction

John Locke's attack of the fact that knowledge can come from innate principles is not entirely satisfactory. His argument is, however, convincing. He disagrees with the notion that humans are born with knowledge that is accessed through thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing and willing. Instead, he asserts that an empty mind (such as baby's or lunatics) is furnished with information by experience (Locke 1975). He contradicts the perception that people receive into their understanding through observing in themselves and that the source of ideas is solely and wholly in an individual. The people supporting this school of thought refer to the process of soul searching as reflection instead of sensation. Held by Descartes', the theory asserts that children are born into the world with character in their soul stamped upon their minds. It goes on to imply that moral and practical principles are both innate. Children born are equipped with the entire knowledge and skills unique and relevant for succeeding in their lives without any support or external help. This theory is based on early philosophers and traditional myths of the ancient civilization that mostly cited religious scripts (Leibniz 1981).

Locke's argument does not disagree with the entire theory of innate knowledge. Locke and German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz agree on the fact that receiving knowledge requires sensory stimulation. However, sensory stimulation alone is not sufficient to explain understanding (Locke 1975).

Locke's critique

Locke's first argument bases on the fact that both children and idiots have little or no thought within their minds. They both cannot access the knowledge and information they need to make better choices. He points out that the if knowledge or notions were in the mind and yet the mind were ignorant of it, as the theory of innate knowledge implies, then there is insufficient evidence to prove the mind was ignorant or not consequently proving the ambiguity and senselessness of the idea. Senselessness because man would die ignorant of the truths in his mind yet he accesses the information in his mind. If the ability to know were natural and innate as is the idea in the theory, then all the truths would exist in an individual's mind and there will be no need to search for knowledge or study (Locke 1975). This natural knowledge does not coincide with the realism where for instance, a man cannot gain knowledge without attending school and studying. For any man to acquire knowledge, they must first study or observe it. It is a logical way of explaining how knowledge is acquired.

Locke asserts;

“ By reflection and sensation comes all the information and knowledge that humans posses and has nothing to do with the external objects in the environment”.

The external environment merely contains objects of sensation and the activity of the mind (reflection) the only sources from where our entire origin relies – the perception of the operations of the mind.

The reasoning behind the innate knowledge theory is, according to Locke, insufficient to support the idea of origin of thoughts from in our minds. The

principles supporting the theory are more speculative than they are practical. Once such principle states whatsoever is, is (if does not exist, it does not. It can only exist if it does truly exist) or it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be. Over the years mankind finds solace in believing that what he does not know does not exist. However, with advancement in science and discoveries, the notion is proved to be based on fear of the unknown. If an impression were clearly imprinted in the mind since birth, and the person would be ignorant of the thought to adulthood only means that the impression is meaningless or, in essence, does not actually exist. another such notion is that at birth, babies already have the vital knowledge locked up in their mind and do not need to rely on the environment around them to determine their understanding. In experimenting the principles, if a person were to reason and make a decision (for example a moral decision) and needs to depend on their inner-self for a solution they have no clue about, they will be disappointed or end up making a wrong decision (that will be based on an earlier experience). The theory can only assume that when needed, the thoughts would avail themselves to the conscious mind for use. However, this never occurs in real life.

John Locke's points to the fact that if thoughts were natural and reasoning based on one's inner-self, there would be no way of differentiating mathematicians from socialists. Moreover, one would need their memory they acquired from birth to solve mathematical problem. It is practically impossible for an individual without prior knowledge of mathematics to calculate a problem with their innate perceptions. Moreover, infants would have the ability to make decisions on their own that a grown -up man would do. It is impossible and impracticable for an infant to use their reasoning to

make decisions as to do grown-ups. They need education and experience to attain the knowledge and skills necessary for their judgment of situations around them.

Locke's belief of experience

According to John Locke, all knowledge is founded on experience. The way through which thoughts are enacted in the mind (basic thoughts such as animals, sensitivity or color) is by first experiencing the world. One perceives the external environment and objects either by observing or perceiving our minds and reflects on the thoughts of the mind. Locke's notes that these are the foundations of knowledge and all other ideas that we have (or we think we did have) originate.

Our senses first notice and recognize objects then convey the information to the mind that compares with several distinct object to differentiate and identify them apart. The new object is compared to an already existing object recognized by the mind and figures out how the new object is related to them or affects them. Once it is uniquely identified, then they are remembered and used to identify and distinguish other objects in relation to the wider scope of objects recorded in the mind. This is Locke's reason for concluding that from external objects conveyed to the mind, comes the origin of information initially conveyed to the mind for interpretation.

External objects, Locke affirms, are the great source of most of the ideas that depend upon senses to drive them and he refers to them as sensation.

The innate knowledge theory is, according to Locke bases on Plato and Aristotle's ancient ideas. However, he argues, the mind can be illustrated as

a black white paper that a person begins to fill since birth. By observing and learning from the environment, the paper gradually fills up.

Conclusion

John Locke's attack and criticism is fair and justified. His arguments are based on reliable facts and practical examples. His explanation does not include mere assumptions but real life situations. His evidence is sufficient to disregard the theory of innate knowledge. The mind is better viewed as an empty white page the owner a writer. The more aged a person, the more filled their paper is. This notion is sustainable and provable in real life. The initial theory of innate knowledge does not explicitly explain the human situation. Locke believes in a notion with sufficient evidence to prove its reality and practical illustrations.

Reference List

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G. W. Leibniz. New Essays on Human Understanding (Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain, c. 1704; first pub, 1765). Trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonhathn Bennett (Camridge University Press) p. 44-45.