

Philosophy argumentative essay examples

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Rationalism and Empiricism

Examining Rationalism and Empiricism

There is quite an argument between the great Philosophers in history about where knowledge is coming from. Empiricists such as Berkeley, Locke and Hume are convinced that there is no innate knowledge, but it is rather something that relates to experience. It could either be by using the mind or the five senses. However, rationalists such as Plato, Descartes, Leibniz and Chomsky shares the idea that knowledge is innate and that it is the product of reasoning and not something that evolves through experience. Both sides has their own theories of where knowledge come from. The theories on the other hand cannot be as certain as they were, there are elements in each theory that needs to be analyzed in order to be understood.

In terms of empiricism, the advance of science is a result of several empiricists principles and that its advancement of science wouldn't have been possible without the principles of empiricism. Therefore, empiricism made the advancement of science possible. The validity of this theory sounds true in the sense that the great science discoveries in human history did not come from sudden realization of the truth as rationalism implies. Remember that one of the principles of testing hypothesis in science is through experimentation. Experimentation process undergoes several trials before a hypothesis is proven correct and the extracted theories are backed with factual evidence derived from the series of experimentation. Basically, science are documented finding and the theories are further developed through re-testing and repetition of earlier experiments.

One of the most fundamental sciences that humans developed through time is mathematics which is referred to as the science of numbers. Its principles were not discovered by sudden realization, but instead by calculations done over and over until it appears universally correct and acceptable. In order to perform experiments and calculations, the mind and the senses have to work together to prove the point of the hypothesis. People cannot make calculations with their eyes closed otherwise they wouldn't know if they are heading to the right mathematical solution. The mind works with vision in the process, whatever the sense of sight perceives are being processed by the brain. A blind man can make calculations based on what he knows about the value of numbers, but they cannot recognize its physical characteristics. Therefore, broad and complex calculations are difficult to be resolved.

For instance, a person working on an engineering project which involves tons of geometric calculations would not be able to distinguish the difference of isosceles from a trapezoid if he cannot literally see its visual characteristics. Therefore, it poses a challenge in terms of calculations because the lack of vision or hearing for example hinders humans from fully understanding the principles of geometry if they don't know what it looks like. Besides, these principles were developed when the people behind its discovery had it visually illustrated first. Not to mention that science itself involves observation, which also applies on mathematics as people observe the changes in geometric values the more they develop new principles because of the observed changes.

On the rationalists side claiming that math and logic are innate and that their principles are created not because of the five senses, but because of connecting ideas. Therefore, the rationalists theory is that mathematics is innate because they are pieces of ideas connected together. Empiricism may suggest that math principles were developed because of experiment, through experienced trial and error and that no human senses involved. Rationalism disagrees to that claim on the grounds that mathematics is a concept formed by reasoning. This theory sounds invalid because first of all, reasoning comes after perception of objects. When Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravity he did not realize its concept because of the greater truth, but instead the concept was formed from his observation of falling apples from the trees.

Logically, one does not realize knowledge because it was the truth that the universe delivers that knowledge is in the very nature of humans waiting to be realized. The awakening of human thought did not just come out or happen to occur by itself, but because of human exploration of his environment and that requires the human senses to be perceived not by innate knowledge.