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DESCARTES, NEW FOUNDATIONS FOR KNOWLEDGE

List and explain three of the reasons Descartes gives for doubting what he thought he knew.

These reasons included perceptual illusion (sense is unrealistic and deceiving; thus, it can not be the foundation of knowledge), deceiving God and dreaming problem. He claims that he has realized sense is deceiving and cannot be trusted to be the foundation of knowledge (cite the book here). In the dream problem, he claims that his vivid dreams are internally indistinguishable from the experience of waking up, an indication that it is possible that what he perceives to belong to the outside physical universe is fabricated imagination. He further claims that believing in anything, even if it is true, God changes everything to make his belief false.

While still in the realm of doubt, what does Descartes say about general sciences and mathematics and their place in our knowledge?

Descartes argues that sciences and other fields that rely on the composite study of things are doubtful. He further says that arithmetic and subjects dealing with general and simplest things, irrespective of their existence or not, have something indubitable and certain. Mathematics and sciences can be used in reasoning, thus explicating infinite concepts.

What does Descartes ultimately argue is a strong and unshakable basis for knowledge? How does he make his case?

The unshakeable and strong knowledge basis is the reason, according to Rene Descartes. He believes that reason is a human's native gift from which knowledge is gained but not from books. He argued that the information gained through sense is inaccurate. He presented his case through philosophical illustrations and arguments to show doubts about what he thought he knew and especially to show unrealistically of sense as the foundation of knowledge.

LOCKE, THE SENSES AS THE BASIS FOR KNOWLEDGE

Explain some of the reasons Locke believes there are no innate ideas.

Locke claims against innate principles because, according to him, only principles and not ideas can be called knowledge. For instance, he says that he can know God's existence, but he can fail to know that God. He also claims that if innate principles exist, everyone could assent to them, but unfortunately, no such principles can be assented to by people and, therefore, no innate principles.

What is the significance of the 'children' and 'idiots' in Locke's argument?

Locke uses the terms 'idiots and children' to explain his argument that there is no innate knowledge. The fact that idiots and children do not seem to know anything shows there is no innate knowledge. He points out that idiots and children have minds, souls and principles imprinted on them; thus, they cannot assist in perceiving and approving them. Their inability to approve is evidence that principles are not impressed upon their minds innately.

Explain the concept of the 'tabula rasa.'

This concept claims that minds begin out completely empty of information and knowledge and save animal instincts. It suggests that humans learn from information and experience rather than beginning with basic knowledge and building on it (Fritscher, 2022). It shows that we only know because we have learned or experienced and have no innate knowledge or skill. It explains how a person is raised in a particular environment, thus becoming a creature of that particular environment. This concept can be used to understand brain trauma and Amnesia, which wipes the brain's knowledge and experience, thus leaving people susceptible to new information.

Describe in your own words what Locke means by 'sensation' and 'reflection' in describing the acquisition of knowledge.

Reflection and sensation are the main ideas of Locke. Sensation makes us whirl our senses to the real universe and passively obtain ideas and information in the form of touch, smell, sounds and sights. It is simply a kind of corporal cause, a motion or impression created in parts of the body to produce perceptions in understanding. Reflection, in contrast, is an operation performed by the mind. Mind upon reflection, it notices its mental operations then it ends up acquiring the operational ideas. Therefore, according to Locke, ideas and information originates from reflection and sensation.

References

Fritscher L. (2022). Tabula Rasa (Black slate) in philosophy.
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