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"The Sensational Insights of John Locke: Unlocking the Power of Perception"

Philosopher John Locke is widely known for his theory on empiricism, which pertains to epistemology. His emphasis is on the fact that knowledge is acquired through the senses and experiences we have. The philosopher Locke believed that we are born without any innate ideas or concepts within us; instead, we are born with a blank slate upon which we are free to write our experiences when they occur. This paper will use Locke's theory described in "Western Philosophy: An Anthology" by Wiley Cottingham to understand Locke's approach better. There is an essay in the book titled "The Senses of Basic Knowledge: John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*." This essay elaborates on Locke's belief that all knowledge comes from experience. That is the section that I will be refining in this paper. This essay argues that, at birth, the mind has no knowledge and is governed by sensory experience alone, which is the only means by which it can learn new things, which he explains in a more detailed manner.

One of Locke's key concepts is the concept of the tabula rasa, which can be defined as a "blank slate or 'white paper devoid of all characters' (Cottingham 28). His theory is that the mind begins with a blank slate without any preconceived notions or innate knowledge to develop. As we go through life, we slowly build up our knowledge and understanding of the world around us as we learn from each experience. As a result of Locke's theory of tabula rasa, modern psychology and education have been greatly influenced by Locke's ideas. Consequently, it

emphasizes the importance of learning through observation and personal experience rather than simply accepting inherited beliefs or assumptions based on inherited knowledge. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of allowing individuals to develop their cognition through self-directed learning and exploration opportunities available to them.

In Locke's view, there are two types of perception: perception based on sensation and perception based on reflection. As the name suggests, sensation refers to our direct experience of physical objects and their properties, such as color, texture, and shape, that we perceive immediately. Upon seeing something, Cottingham (32) explains to us that "when we perceive something, we automatically think of categories such as 'yellow,' 'white,' 'heat,' 'cold,' 'soft,' 'bitter,' and 'sweet,' which provide us with knowledge of that object's features." As a result, we can get a sense of its features when we perceive something. Compared to these perceptions, reflection is a cognitive process that involves introspection and self-evaluation that is part of our daily experiences that contribute to our understanding of the world.

On the other hand, perception is a part of our daily life that contributes to our understanding of the world. A wide range of mental activities is included in mental processes and reflection, such as thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, and being willing (Cottingham 32). When we reflect, we contemplate our mental processes and perceptions of those processes. In this way, we can better understand our ideas and thoughts about ourselves.

Although Locke's views on empiricism have influenced epistemology throughout history, other philosophers have expressed concern about them. For instance, Immanuel Kant is one of the critics who has raised criticism of Locke's theory, arguing that human understanding results from categorizations derived from within the mind rather than from sensory experience. As a

result, he argued that these categories act as filters, which influence how sensory input is interpreted. The view of Locke is also criticized by George Berkeley, who believes there is no such thing as a material substance and rejects the concept altogether. Berkeley believed that physical matter does not exist, but only perceptions do. In sum, Berkeley disapproved of Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities that Locke had attempted to make. Despite these concerns, it is still essential to recognize Locke's contribution to epistemology. His importance on sensory experience has influenced modern scientific inquiry and what we understand about how we discover things about the world and how we know them.

Even though I understand these objections, I find Locke's theory compelling for a few reasons. One of them is that it emphasizes the importance of sensory experience for acquiring knowledge. Because our senses provide us with direct access to reality, we should consider them a reliable source of information about the world around us since they provide us with direct access to reality. Moreover, Locke's theory also explains how people can form different interpretations of reality based on their experiences due to their extraordinary lives.

John Locke's theory of sensory knowledge is crucial to our understanding of the world around us. His emphasis on the importance of experience and observation in shaping our perceptions and beliefs has significantly impacted modern philosophy and psychology. His ideas teach us that our senses are not infallible but subject to interpretation and influenced by various factors such as culture and personal biases. Furthermore, Locke's belief in human nature's malleability highlights the potential for growth and change through education and learning. Overall, John Locke's insights into sensory knowledge offer valuable lessons on better understanding ourselves and the world we inhabit.

Work Cited

Cottingham, John. *Western Philosophy: An Anthology*. 3rd ed., Wiley Blackwell, 2021.