

ToK Essay

Sample

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Can there be knowledge that
is independent of culture?

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Can there be knowledge that is independent of culture? Discuss with reference to mathematics and one other area of knowledge.

From birth, human beings have elementary mental functions, which later undergo changes due to the influence of culture. In that sense; learning is not the same, each culture contributes elements that activate different functions. This is why no culture is better than another in the same way that no set of cognitive abilities is necessarily more "advanced" than another.

Different cultures represent alternative forms of reasoning or "ways of knowing", which have evolved because they allow young minds to adapt successfully. People have a very good opportunity to influence the development of intelligence, through culture. From the point of view of the sociocultural perspective, it refers to the exposed cultures that there is a variety of them and that they all differ from each other, given that the customs, traditions and values are different in each context, with which the development of intelligence will not be the same product in every sense.

This viewpoint gives rise to our TOK title which states "Can there be knowledge that is independent of culture?" To discuss the TOK title, the essay will take into consideration two areas of knowledge - mathematics and economics.

The first area of knowledge under discussion is mathematics. Mathematical thought today represents a very influential component in practically every aspect of human culture, but its spirit is going to have an even more important impact in the near future. In recent decades this has become more and more evident through the growing presence of the computer and its invasive style in our culture. It is becoming urgent to try to analyze in-depth the opportunities and risks that human culture faces in this situation, in order to promote the correct forms of development and to try to avoid before it is too late, the dangers in which our culture can be immersed.

Having said that, there is a common claim in mathematics that states - mathematics is independent of culture.

Mathematics is viewed as the "science of number and extension". Math was born as a response to the attempt to master the complexity of multiplicity. And with this, the path to mathematical infinity was also opened, given the obvious possibility of manipulatively confronting increasingly larger crowds, which, as we will see, will constitute the aspect that provides its depth to the work of the mathematician.

We could initially say that mathematics is an exploration of the complexity of certain structures of reality. Mathematical work is distinguished by the peculiar way in which it approaches its own objects. If one examines, throughout the economics of mathematics, the successive extensions of its field of action that have taken place, it is clear that this description of its work has roots in arithmetic and geometry but culture has little to no role in the explanation of mathematical concepts.

For example, let us take the example of the Pythagoras theorem. This widely popular theorem is accepted across the globe and culture has no influence over this theorem. A person sitting in India will learn the concept in the same manner as a person sitting in the USA will. Hence, it is safe to say that mathematical concepts are universal and cultural variations of math does not exist.

A counter claim also exists in mathematics which states that culture has an influence over mathematics. During the last decades, research on the learning processes of mathematics has emphasized the role of beliefs and attitudes towards mathematics. More recently, a socio-constructivist view has given rise to socio-cultural perspectives on mathematics that have

emphasized the relationship between culture and mathematics and the way in which both influence each other in the construction of beliefs and knowledge.

For example, it is seen that even though the mathematical concepts are same across the globe but the processes or steps taken to learn those concepts differ to a large extent. For example, a child in USA might use macbook and youtube to learn tables but a child sitting in Nigeria might only have one teacher as a learning tool.

The second area of knowledge under discussion is economics. There is a common claim in economics that states - culture enhances economics and broadens the horizons of knowledge.

Throughout the last decades, UNESCO has deepened the idea that, in a desirable model of development, Culture occupies a central place. Not only because it is a vector that fosters development, but it is also a reference that guides the way in which societies are designed. Any society is a complex model, in which the presence of culture is found, transversally, together with the economy, politics and religion. Each of these elements can be dominant and structure the others; but we can also find different forms of articulation in which there is no predominance of any of them.

At present, Culture has proven to be an element that contributes, in a significant way, to a composite economy that is, in turn, an economy of knowledge, creativity and digital. An economy made of texts, audiovisual content, websites, books, movies, games on digital platforms; an economy that includes music, theater and dance; made up of artistic markets, design, architecture, copyright and the entire field of intellectual property, heritage, cultural tourism, etc.

What the economy of culture represents in economic models and the percentage it represents of the GDP of the most developed countries is growing and relevant.

Culture is manifestly a factor of social cohesion, of identity and the basis for pluralism and quality of life. The understanding of these data validates its role as a stimulating element of societies, as a useful element at the service of politics, economy, religion or as an integral, correlated and directly linked part of a development model.

A counterclaim also exists in economics which states that culture may hinder the growth of economics. If we do not let go of our cultural glasses (“it is not what you see, but what you perceive”), it is easy for the disadvantages of operating in multicultural spaces to emerge when we do not know how to manage cultural diversity.

For example, consider the example of tradition among culturally different countries. North Korea and Russia may not want to trade because of cultural differences. Hence, the global economy will get affected. Here, we are not only talking about challenges in terms of language barriers. It is also necessary to be aware of the communication style (direct or indirect) of each culture, if we want to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.

In this sense, in each culture there are socially accepted guidelines for expressing certain feelings, feedback, or persuasive messages. Of course, the more cultures interacting, the more likely these kinds of misunderstandings and miscommunications will occur. However, in today's incredibly globalized world, we have a wealth of information and strategies to help us overcome these challenges.

By examination of different areas of knowledge along with their claims and counterclaims, it is safe to say that culture and knowledge go hand in hand and affect each other to some extent.

People who acknowledge different cultures benefit from it. Cultural theorists, usually look very carefully at the books or writings of their colleagues, and from there they get even more theory (more contemplation and more spectacle, which is what 'theoria' also means in Greek), and they usually observe very little the banal and very modest habitual functioning of people and words. We should follow, however, the advice of Sir Francis Bacon, founding father of the empirical method, who recommended reaching knowledge of forms or essences starting from the facts and through induction: observe, verify, compare, and only at the end Draw, if possible, some conclusion and definition.

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