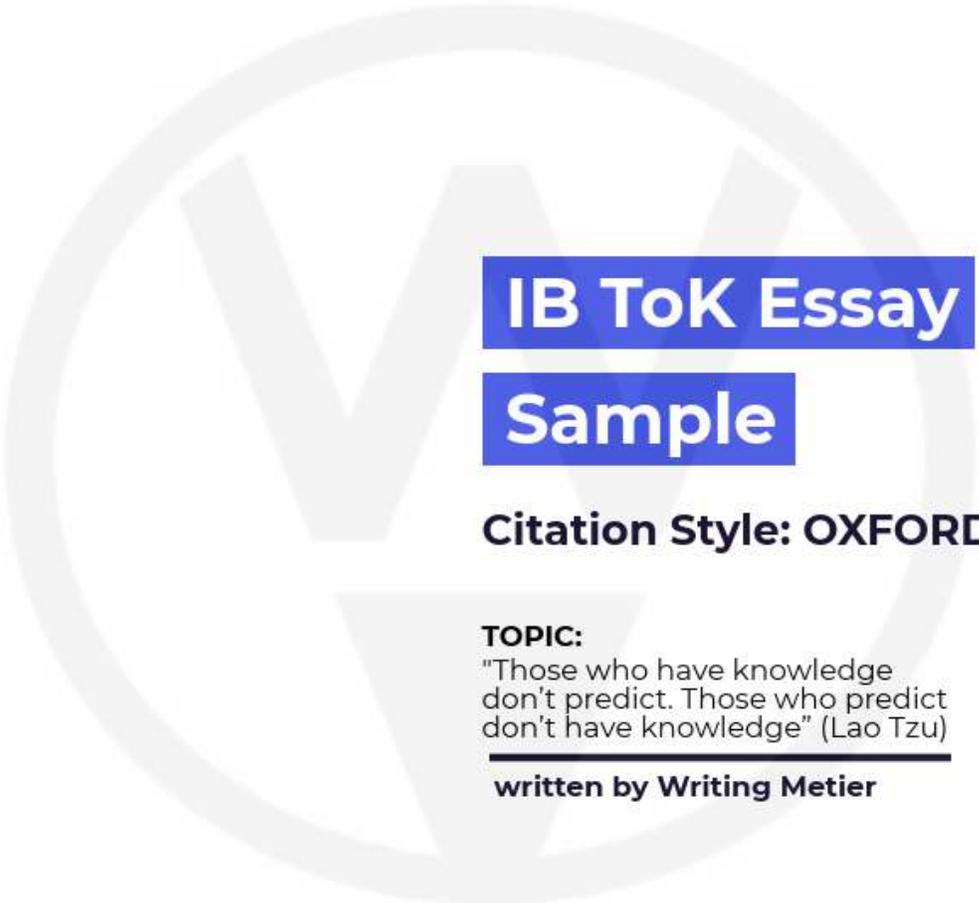


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IB ToK Essay

Sample

Citation Style: OXFORD

TOPIC:

"Those who have knowledge
don't predict. Those who predict
don't have knowledge" (Lao Tzu)

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TOK 1

“Those who have knowledge don’t predict. Those who predict don’t have knowledge” (Lao Tzu).

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"Those who have knowledge don't predict. Those who predict don't have knowledge" (Lao Tzu).

This quote by the famous Chinese philosopher and writer Lao Tzu is still valid and operational in today's complex world. The statement is widely studied in theology and philosophy. However, this statement has a contradictory nature and carry different perspectives that are poles apart. In this paper, the primary focus is going to be on the two crucial elements discussed in the quote, which are, prediction and knowledge. An in-depth analysis will showcase that the quote is reflecting a relationship between knowledge and prediction. The knowledge issue identified in this prompt is that this statement has two viewpoints which are quite dissimilar to one another.

The underlying thesis for the prompt is that people or intellectual beings that have broad horizons of knowledge to predict or forecast events. To understand this claim in more detail, it is important to understand what knowledge is and how it is linked with prediction. This gives rise to our knowledge question: what is the knowledge that is attributed to Tzu in his renowned quote? Did he talk about knowledge in general or did he referred to a specific kind of knowledge? Lastly, can this quote be applied in today's era in which the concept of knowledge is entirely changed?

According to Plato, knowledge is defined as "justified true belief." Another modern definition of knowledge states "Knowledge is information and understanding about a subject which a person has, or which all people have." By observing both of these definitions it is seen that the definition of knowledge has been alerted and changed with the passage of time. Similarly, the mediums of acquiring knowledge have also been changed. In past, people relied on

word of mouth and books but in today's era of science and technology knowledge is acquired differently. Today is the era of knowledge economy where every kind of information is available and ready to use by the masses. Therefore, it is not appropriate to rely on the premises of this quote. The judgment about the validity of prediction should not be limited to this quote.

According to the claim, the people who have knowledge do predict events. This claim will be further explained using two areas of knowledge which are human science and natural science. The way of knowledge discussed is the reasoning. The claim emphasizes that prediction is healthy and needed for our survival and learning. It reduces the uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Prediction helps us to identify, organize and control the things around us.

Knowledge is a vague term which cannot be explained in a concise form. Knowledge is further divided into major subcategories including Sophia, episteme, and phronesis. Each category has its own set of beliefs, facts, and figures which are very different from each other. The statement by Tzu was formulated in ancient times and the creator of the quote did not have any sort of knowledge about modern knowledge. That is why it is absurd to generalize this equation in the modern era. We do not know for sure what sort of knowledge he was referring to and what definition of the prediction he had in his mind.

The claim, as mentioned earlier, states that people who have knowledge have the ability and the capability to predict things. To build the case, the paper will focus on natural science, biology to be specific.

Doctors and medical specialists spend endless hours to gain valuable knowledge about human anatomy and its physiology. They use their precious knowledge to treat the patients. It

does happen that a doctor's initial course of action is primarily based on predictions. It is safe to say that medicine and biology is the type of knowledge that predict events.

To further explain the point, I would like to quote an example from my personal life. My aunt felt a lump near her breast one day. In the start, she ignored the lump, assuming that they are nothing but fat bodies beneath her skin. But when her lump increased in size, she did research on the internet. Through surfing on the internet she came to realize or she rather predicted that she might have cancer. She rushed to the doctor. The doctor checked her and "predicted" that she might have cancer. To see the accuracy of his prediction, the doctor ran some tests on her which confirmed that she actually has breast cancer. The doctor used reasoning and memory as a way of knowledge to deduce the event. His memory regarding the medical science and his ability to reason helped him to make inferences about the patient's condition.

From this incident, I came to question knowledge and prediction and how closely linked they are. The doctor was able to predict the condition of the patient because he had known about that subject. A layman would not have been able to diagnose and treat my aunt. That means knowledge and predict go hand in hand. Moreover, this example showcases a disagreement between Lao Tzu and modern language.

The power of prediction has been overlooked and ignored in the quote. According to research, some medical conditions cannot be identified accurately. Some conditions can only be seen indirectly through symptoms. Moreover, developing predictions is not an easy task. It is a tedious task which requires utmost attention and experience and most importantly, knowledge. The prediction has many advantages as well. It gives a viewpoint about the issue and it also helps in the decision making process. A research study was conducted in medicine that polished the

process of prediction by using a scientific model called a Bayesian network (BN) model. The model was used to predict acute traumatic coagulopathy (ATC), a disorder of blood clotting that significantly increases the risk of death following traumatic injuries. The researchers used expert knowledge, data, and facts and figures to construct the model. This shows that prediction is not limited to intuition only. It also involves abstract thinking and reasoning. A research was conducted that concluded that prediction is innate in human nature. Predictions also reflect accurate knowledge of the distributions of real quantities. The research also suggested that the prediction is not simply domain experience itself, but the explicit experience of relevant quantities.

However, a counterclaim also exist according to which people who have knowledge do not predict. This holds true at times. In the same area of knowledge, that is natural science, the prediction has failed badly. For instance, when I was ten years old I got sick. The doctor predicted that I might have malaria. He did not run any test and gave me medicines. I took the medicines for two days but I did not recover. When I visited another doctor he told us that I was not suffering from malaria, I just had a high fever. The previous doctor 'predicted' my condition wrongly.

The second area of knowledge discussed is mathematics. In this subject, mathematicians make predictions by studying the past patterns and events.

For example, in the forecasting techniques such as trend analysis, the mathematicians study the past trends and predict or forecast future events. This is a method that is widely used today.

I would also like to quote a real life example here. I did not receive my electricity bill this month. I was not sure about the total amount so I decided to “predict” the amount. I took out my budget planner and saw the previous bills. The previous pattern helped me predict that if I used the same amount of electricity last month and the bill came out to be 150 dollars that means that I will get the same or almost same bill this month. I received the bill the next week and I was amazed to see that I was able to predict the bill accurately because I had the knowledge about the previous trends.

By keeping in view the above-mentioned arguments and viewpoints, it is safe to say that both claim and the counterclaim exist. The quote should be viewed open-mindedly. The evidence suggests that the claim and counterclaim are both crucial. Knowledge and prediction are phenomena that cannot be isolated from each other. Knowledge does help in prediction and predictions can be beneficial as well. But is it also crucial to use knowledge wisely in order to make sound predictions? Knowledge broadens our horizons and gives us the grounds to predict things. Knowledge improves our intellectual abilities and reasoning power which in turn, develops our predicting power.

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