



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Human Mind is a Tabula Rasa

Subhani, Muhammad Imtiaz and Osman, Ms. Amber

Iqra University Research Centre (IURC), Iqra university Main
Campus Karachi, Pakistan, Iqra University

2011

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/34733/>

MPRA Paper No. 34733, posted 15 Nov 2011 16:14 UTC

Published in

INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH IN BUSINESS

Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 1173 - 1176, July (2011)

HUMAN MIND IS A TABULA RASA*

**The Latin term Tabula Rasa equates to the English "blank slate"*

MUHAMMAD IMTIAZ SUBHANI,

HEAD RESEARCH – IURC

IQRA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRE- IURC

IQRA UNIVERSITY – IU, MAIN CAMPUS,

POSTAL ADDRESS: DEFENCE VIEW, SHAHEED-E-MILLAT ROAD (EXT.)

KARACHI-

AMBER OSMAN

ASSISTANT MANAGER RESEARCH – IURC

IQRA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRE- IURC

IQRA UNIVERSITY – IU, MAIN CAMPUS,

Postal address: Defence View, Shaheed-e-Millat Road (Ext.) Karachi-

Abstract

The Latin term Tabula Rasa equates to the English "blank slate" (which refers to writing on a slate sheet with chalk). Tabula rasa is the epistemological study that a human is born with no built-in mental content and that human knowledge comes from experience and perception. Generally exponents of the tabula rasa study favors the "nurture" side of the nature, when it comes to aspects of one's personality, social, emotional behavior, and intelligence.

Keywords: Tabula Rasa, Blank Slate, John Locke, Nurture, Knowledge.

1. Introduction

Tabula Rasa has been referred in different contexts depending upon the mode of work. Different concepts arose from this term to a wider perspective and research studies by different people. Mostly in the 20th century, the swings to this study was attached to character withdrew racism and then follows the gender identity as a communal structure, which is at present most commonly in use.

2. Literature Review

In Western philosophy, traces of the idea called the tabula rasa appeared and came as early as in the Aristotle time when Aristotle (384 BC) writes about the un-scribed tablet, probably the first textbook of psychology in the Western canon (De Anima or On

the Soul, Book III, chapter 4). However, besides some arguments lifted by the Peripatetic and Stoics, the impression of the mind like blank sheet went largely unnoticed for not less than 1,000 years.

The Islamic philosopher, Avicenna (1100) known as "Ibne Sina" in the Muslim world, developed more clearly the concept of tabula rasa. He fenced that the "human mind at birth is rather like a Blank Sheet, that is actualized via education" and that knowledge is come-upon through "empirical familiarity with objects in this world from which one outlines universal concepts" which is developed through a "deducting method of reasoning; observations lead to prepositional statements, which when compounded lead to further synopsis" (Avicenna, 1100, p. 249).

Avicenna (1100) further argued that the intellectualism itself "possesses levels of growth from the material intellect that can gain knowledge and transmit it to the active intellect, the state of the human intellect at colligation with the perfect source of knowledge.

Another study via thought experimentation was written by Tophail (1200) also known as Ibn Tufail or Abubacer in 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan', in which Tophail (1200) impersonated the minacious child's mind development in isolation from society i.e. from tabula rasa to adult hood on a desert – experience alone. The concept of Avicenna (1100) and Tophail (1200) wasn't able to gather much influence.

The modern theory specifically addressed to Locke's (1690) interest i.e. the Essay concerning Human Understanding. According to Locke's (1690) philosophical expression on tabula rasa explained that human mind is a 'clean slate' without any data rules. Once the data is brought into the mind, it is processed and formed by one's sensorial experiences purely. It is assumed that human is immutable but has a free, self-authored mind (Locke, 1690).

In addition to this essay Locke (1690) was basically concerned with the human understanding and the knowledge. The point of comprehension for Locke (1690) is that a human mind starts functioning once it gains some sort of experience else it is a 'blank slate' since birth time which is termed as 'Tabula Rasa'. This principal was the influence on many philosophers such as Berkeley (1710) and Hume (1740).

Yet another known psychoanalysis by Freud (1899) on tabula rasa describes personality traits. According to Freud (1899), the extension of tabula rasa is the personal appeal which is adapted by family dynamics, hereditary and congenital influences on human personality and human brought up.

This study further turned pages and bloom in the 20th century to the concept of 'Tabula Rasa' as the idea of genes one belongs to, which translates individual character to the racist implications.

As per the study by Money (1970), genes involvement is not the actual content on the human 'blank slate' mind but it's the social constructions, which is the root cause of gender identity- social constructions states the actual contents on human blank slate. In this connection Baird and Walter (2008) accentuated that an individual is free to define the cognition content of his/her character but it does not imply that the individual basic identity can be modified.

There are contradictions/criticisms to this study as well by Golding's (1954) in his Novel 'Lord of Flies'. The author wrote to prove that the humans are born with an evil mind and it's the job of humans to contain an evil. Another contradictory verdict by Hobbes (1651) is that humans are born selfish. These two studies signify the negative mind of the human by birth, which is opposite to the philosophy of Locke's (1690) Essay on Human Understanding.

3. Conclusion

One can easily identify the purpose of Locke's (1690) study on tabula rasa, that a human mind is clear since birth. All the ideas are generated only by experience and gaining insights with time. Locke (1690) explained that some ideas are generated by the sensory initiating in the womb, for example, the colors and tastes difference and understanding. If one has a universal understanding of what is sweet or bitter is not because it's an innate idea but that individual gets exposed to it at an early age. Locke (1690) is in versus to the innate ideas. The author believed innate ideas do not exist. He argued on the rationalists attesting the universally accepted truth on the principle of identity that least children or idiots are not aware of these propositions. It's from the fetal development, that the mind is a blank shell, nurtures and responds through series of experiences with time. In short, Beginning blank, the human mind acquires knowledge through the use of the five senses and a process of reflection (Locke, 1690).

References

- Aristotle. (1936). *On the Soul. De Anima Book III, chapter 4*. Hett, W. S. (trans.) Loeb Classical Library, 8, 1–203. London:UK.
- Avicenna. (1954). *De Anima (Fi'l-Nafs)*. Trans. Rahman. London:UK.
- Baird, F., E. & Kaufmann, W. (2008). *From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Freud, S. (1899). *An Outline of Psychoanalysis. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII*.
- George, B. (1985). *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part I. (trans.) Glynn, R. the Mind in Mother, 3, 1–20. London:UK.
- Golding, W. (1954). Lord of the Flies. *Human Nature and individual Welfare*, 1:49-79.
- Hobbes, T. (1651). Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Hume, D. (1740). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Oxford University Press, Oxford..
- Locke, J. (1690). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Ed. Winkler, P., K.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Money (1970). Social constructions state the actual contents on human blank slate. *Journal of Mind Sciences*, 21(2): 23-45.
- Tophail, E. (1708). *The Improvement of Human Reason: Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan (Hayy ibn Yaqzan)*. (trans.) Ockley, S., 1–195. Edm Powell, London: UK.