**Essay 2**

**Title:** There are only two ways that humankind can produce knowledge: through passive observation or or through active experiment” To what extent do you agree with this statement ?”

**Introduction**

1. **Define the key terms and concepts in the title**: I believe the key terms here are: knowledge, passive, active, observation and experimentation
2. **Identify the knowledge questions that are central to the discussion**:

**Possible Knowledge Questions**

* Are passive observation and active experimentation the only two ways in which a person can produce knowledge?
* Does the act of researching phenomena affect the outcome of that research? I.e. issue of reflexivity – the position of the researcher as observer/experiementer can colour the results of research (Are we reliable observers?).
* Is it ever possible for our minds to be in a passive state?
* Does the production of knowledge now impede the investigation of certain phenomena in the future?
1. **State a position:**
* I agree
* I disagree
* I agree with reservations
* I disagree to an extent.

It is better to adopt one of those positions that are more nuanced i.e. I agree with reservations. Such a position expresses to the examiner that you have thought deeply about the question, and opens up your discussion to a more analytical focus.

1. **Identify the ways of knowing that are most appropriate to the question.**
2. **Sense Perception** – knowledge we gain through use of our senses i.e physical response of our senses to stimuli. The debate here is between two modes of undertaking research: the constructivist school which prioritises ‘active experiementation’ to gain knowledge as opposed to more ‘ecological research forms’ that use the ‘observational process’ to gain insight into how human beings behave. An interesting area here is the issue of perceptual illusions – can we really trust the knowledge transmitted through our senses?
3. **Emotion** - is a WOK that transcends an accurate definition. Generally emotion is a relationship between your cognitive (thinking) process and a physiological stimulus. In Psychology, that debate is between theories that the cause of emotional response stems from the physiological (James-Lange Theory – passive observation) to those theories that see emotions are being more cognitive driven (Schacter and Singer – active experimentation).
4. **Reason**: it is possible for rationalisation (reasoning) to come about through either passive observation or active experimentation. The hypothetico deductive model (Scientific Method) illustrates this. Inductive reasoning is where observation leads to the discovery of patterns while deductive reasoning sees the researcher generate a hypothesis and test it through active experimentation. You can also extend your analysis to investigate convergent (active experimentation) versus divergent (more passive observation) thinking. In Economics we have the Prisoners’ Dilemma – related to Game Theory. It illustrates how some individuals, through rational reasoning, can work against their own interest through adopting the position of ‘complete selfishness’; a position that goes against the Classical/ New Classical School of Economic Thought. Finally, in Business & Management there is a theory of Motivation called the Hawthorne Effect. What Elton Mayo found in his research that when research participants knew they were being observed their motivation levels increased.
5. **Memory** – a mechanism for carrying the knowledge we have gained – skills; past experiences and the shared knowledge we have gained throughout our life. Through memory we construct our self identity. Psychologists see the function of memory as being either a largely passive observational process (Atkinson and Shiffrin’s Multi-Store Model) versus one that sees memory as a more active experiemental process (Baddeley & Hitch’s Working Memory Model). One could also go into a discussion of the limitations of memory (Elizabeth Loftus has done much research in the area of false memories).
6. **Language**: the WOK of language is very applicable to this question. The discussion here centres around the whole idea of ‘nature versus nurture’ – evolutionary biologists have investigated whether the formation of our personality is dominated by genetic as opposed to environmental factors. Linguistics have long debated the origins of language acquisition i.e. is language innate or do we need environmental stimuli to facilitate the process of learning? The linguists/ social commentators Noam Chomsky (Theory of Universal Grammar & Language Acquisition Device) and Steven Pinker (The Language Instinct) see language acquisition as a passive process while other theorists like Skinner (Behaviourism), Tomasello and Ambridge & Lieven state that more active engagement in your environment is critical to the development of linguistic skills.
7. **Intuition:** a way of knowing and understanding that relies upon the capacity to read signals, clues and patterns, often based on previous experience. In the video we saw, the presenter spoke about how the unconscious mind takes in about 100 million observations at any one time but the conscious mind can only keep track of 40 to 150 observations.

**5: Identify AOKs that are central to the question**

As you can see from the discussion above **Human Sciences** is very applicable to this question. **Natural Sciences** and how experimenters use the Hypothetico Deductive Method in their research is also important. The **Arts** sees the artist constantly innovating and forms new ways of expression (knowledge). We see this in the development of musical forms like Rock-in-Roll having its roots in Blues, and new artistic movements like Cubism and Futurism which derive from the work of Cezanne and Saurat.

1. **Identify the significant claims and counterclaims**

**Claims** – what is your central arguments (perspective/point of view) which should run throughout the essay.

**Counterclaims** – do not fall into the trap of thinking that a counterclaim must be the polar opposite of your claim. A counterclaim can agree with claim but the difference in in terms of intensity i.e. to a greater or lesser extent.