

Belief and Knowledge

Any discussion of knowledge must begin with beliefs. A belief is a will, or a sureness reality exists in a particular state. There are beliefs which are co-existent with reality, and there are beliefs which are contrary to reality. For example, I believe I can pick up a baseball with my hand from a table in front of me. If I act to reach over to the baseball, I can pick the ball up with my hand. My belief and my acting upon that belief is co-existent with reality. However, if I believe I can levitate the baseball with my mind alone, the baseball remains inert despite my will to do so. In this instance, my belief and the results of my acting upon that belief are contradictory.

Reality can therefore be defined as what results despite a belief being applied. It is better for one to apply a belief that one is certain will be co-existent with reality, and not contradicted by reality. This is the question of “knowledge”.

Knowledge expects a consistency. It is both the belief in something, and a further belief that “the something” is co-existent with reality. Yet how can one be certain one’s belief is co-existent with reality? We must start with the idea that knowledge is when one’s belief is not contradicted. A contradiction from reality may be direct or indirect. A “direct contradiction” to a belief is a “contrary existence”. For example, I claim the sky is red while I clearly experience it as blue. The contrary existence of the blue sky negates my belief that it is red. An indirect contradiction is an inability to apply one’s belief to reality. For example, if I believe in an invisible and unsensible unicorn, there is nothing by reality with which we may apply this belief. Therefore such a belief could also not be knowledge.

There are two ways to attempt to convince oneself or another that a belief is not contradicted by reality. The first is an inductive application of the belief. Generally we call this a “belief”. The second is a deductive belief. A deductive belief is that which cannot be contradicted by what one is experiencing. To know that such a belief exists, I must apply this belief to reality.

Such a belief was famously sought by Descartes in *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Descartes begins to question all of his assumptions about the world. Is he dreaming? Are math and science real representations of the truth? Of what can anyone be certain? At the end of Descartes’ journey of self-doubt, he arrives at a belief which appears he cannot doubt and requires no further justification in his mind, “I think therefore I am.” Here Descartes stops, but I want to explore this further. What is “I am”?

I see, hear, smell, taste and touch. And yet this is still not basic enough. I sense. But even if I did not sense, “I” would be different from “everything else”. In recognizing a self, I am able to create two “experiences”. That is the self-recognized thinker, and everything else.

Why should I have this capability? I cannot answer this. What I can realize is I may sense, but I find I can focus on different parts of that sensation. I can see a field of grass. Now I create the identity of a blade of grass. Now a piece of that blade of grass. I part and parcel my sensations as I wish. I do not know what “I am”, or “everything else” is, but I do know that reality cannot contradict my ability to focus, create identities where I wish, and essentially “discretely experience”.

A discrete experience is not a claim about the truth of reality. It is the act of creating an identity within the sea of one’s experience. A camera can take a picture, but cannot attempt to put any identity to any of the colors it absorbs. I can take a picture, look at portions of it, and make “something” within the “everything else”. It is the ability to part and parcel what one experiences as one chooses.

If I try to let existence contradict that I discretely experience, I find I must be able to experience discretely to comprehend the idea of “discrete experience.” For if I could not create identities, I could not create the idea of identities. Therefore, I do not simply believe that I discretely experience, I deduce that I discretely experience. Therefore, I know that I discretely experience.

Thus, my first deductive belief, or bit of knowledge is not, “I think therefore I am,” but simply, “I am a discrete experienter.” With my base established, I can now build more knowledge. I noted discrete experiences in regards to the senses, but what about discrete experience absent those senses? Closing off my senses such as shutting my eyes reveals I produce discrete experiences I will call “thoughts.” If I “think” on a thought that would contradict the discrete experience of “thoughts” I again run into a contradiction. As such, I can deductively believe I have thoughts absent the senses as well.

I open my eyes and ears and realize the discrete experience of my senses and the discrete experiences of my thoughts can mix. I look at a table in front of me as I open my eyes and I think, “The table is still there.” I am claiming two points. First, I am claiming I have memory, a thought which recalls itself as a prior experience. Second, I am attempting to apply this memory to the reality of my other current discrete experiences, that of the “table” before me.

Can I deductively believe I have memories? A memory is a thought of a prior discrete experience. I find at this time, I cannot deductively justify that memories of a past discrete experience are accurate or inaccurate representations of that original discrete experience. I may believe they represent past experiences without contradiction, but this belief is indirectly contradicted by reality. I can never go back in “time”. Believing that a memory is not contradicted by past experience is currently something I cannot deductively believe, therefore it is an inductive belief. What I can deductively believe, is that I have the discrete experience of memories. Without memories, how could I remember my claim to what a memory is and think to deny its reality? The denial of experiencing the discrete experience of a memory is again a contradiction by reality, and I deductively believe, and thus know I have memories.

End Part 1

Part 2 is here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CrX8zMpD9cdZ47Zw4RDhsS7VUzyb4xCdhIbEfcV10oA/edit?usp=sharing>