



Chapter Five – Knowledge Sources

Do You See What I See?

Roots of Wisdom
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Chapter Review



The Issue Defined

- What is knowledge?
- What means can guarantee our access to reliable and legitimate knowledge?

Epistemology

- Attempts to establish criteria for legitimate and reliable knowledge
- Examples of knowledge theory include:
Rationalism, Empiricism, Intuition

Rationalism

- Rene Descartes
 - Doubted all things but his capacity for doubt/thought
 - From this was established his existence (“I think, therefore I am”) as well as that of God, and reason in human beings
 - Advocated two substances in the cosmos: matter and mind – differing in every conceivable way and setting up the mind-body problem (how can they interact?)

Rationalism

- Mind-Body Problem
 - Spinoza
 - God is one substance with two aspects: mind and matter
 - Leibniz
 - Monads exist in harmony pre-established by God; no divide between mind and matter
 - Anne Finch
 - Mind and matter exist along a single continuum – material to spiritual
 - Akan
 - Mind and matter exist along a single continuum – material to quasi-material

British Empiricism

- John Locke
 - Distinguished primary and secondary qualities
- George Berkeley
 - argued against viability of distinction between primary and secondary qualities
 - Argued that to be is to be perceived, and that God is the guarantor of things being perceived
- David Hume
 - Formulated a radical skepticism regarding sensory data

Hume's Fork

- By insisting that we cannot know anything about the character of the world as it exists apart from our sense perception, Hume radically restricted the territory in which philosophy can reasonably operate: (1) relations of ideas, and (2) matters of fact.
- *Hume's Fork* leaves us with a choice between: (1) ideas that are certain but do not tell us anything we want to know, and (2) ideas that tell us things we want to know but are not certain.

Broadening Logic

Proverbs and Intuition

- In some African and Asian contexts, other formats complement formal logic
 - African proverbs and art motifs reflect the logic of lived experience and provide a cultural balance to logical abstraction
 - Taoist recognition that logic alone can lead to yang excess; emotion alone can lead to yin excess
 - harmony is the goal

Kant

- Distinguished phenomena (things as they appear) from noumena (things as they are); we can only speak about reality as it appears to us, having been filtered by the categories of perception
- Advocated the active role of the mind in ordering perception and shaping reality for the perceiver
- Created a synthesis between rationalism and empiricism that permitted Western philosophy to move beyond Hume's radical skepticism

Knower and Known

- West
 - Plato and Aristotle thought in terms of a clear distinction between subject and object
- Non-West
 - Some Asian and African approaches deny a sharp subject/object distinction, seeing it as artificial

Key Terms

- Egocentric predicament
- Epistemology
- Cogito
- Solipsism
- Innate
- Cartesian circle
- Substance
- Mind-body problem
- Monad
- Pre-establish harmony
- Okra
- Mogya
- Sunsum
- adwene
- Empiricism
- Tabula rasa
- Skepticism
- Hume's fork
- Logical positivism
- Phenomena/noumena
- Synthetic a priori