

Alex Jacob

Professor Brister

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Assignment 5

Is it possible to know the future? Many have asked this question in hopes of getting a definitive answer, but in return, we generally get pure skepticism. Most of the time when we are asked about the future, we gather prior memories that would assist us in making a reasonable claim for the proposed question. A common situation of this is when your friend asks you if you would like to go to an event, yet you have errands to finish. You always finish your errands before going to anything entertaining, so you can assume that you would finish your errands before you go to the event with your friend. This is a simple situation with a plausible conclusion, yet what about one more drastic. Bertrand Russel provides examples of such a mentality in his short passage *Induction Without a Problem*. He mentions the age-old question of “why we believe that the sun will rise tomorrow”. Most will logically answer based on the past, because each and every day of the individual’s life the sun has risen, therefore it will rise again. Russel then goes deeper to explain the details behind the response by using the law of motion. We believe that as long as the Earth is moving and the Sun exists, day and night will continue. Although you cannot definitively predict the future, if we know enough about what happened in the past, we can form generalizations to what will happen in the future.

Russel asks at what point of evidence will a law have to achieve to always be considered fulfilled. This can be translated as how many times does something have to be proven for it to be

considered a definite. We have witnessed the Sun rise each and every day of our lives, hence we believe that it will always rise. Russel also mentions a similar theory to how domesticated animals behave. A horse who was often driven through a particular road doesn't stray from that road. Most pets expect to be fed by the person who usually feeds them. A similar concept can be related to Pavlov's dog; in which each time Pavlov would feed his dog, he would ring a bell and eventually the dog related the ringing of the bell to food. One could predict the future actions of these subjects based entirely off of their past actions. The horse is very unlikely to stray away, the pets will expect to be fed, and Pavlov's dog will expect food anytime the bell is rung.

Throughout his passage, Bertrand Russel has provided examples on his stance of the science of predicting the future. He dismisses the ability to know all knowledge claims about the future which isn't entirely wrong. Most living beings are beings of habit, as in once they create a habit, they stick to it. Based on this habit you can predict parts of the future, although the level of correctness is not guaranteed, a general thought process can be determined. The main implications of knowing something about the future would mainly remain unspoken, or just as a thought that one has.