

A Coherence to Be Created

Common sense, in Whitehead's account, entails brooding over aspects of existence. Common sense does not wait for someone to tell it how to think when it takes to brooding, still less does it wait for someone to choose which questions it has the right to pose and which ones ought to be renounced because the answers would outstrip what can be known. Brooding is characterized instead by a silent insistence, a "yes, but." Yes, we know very well that our modes of understanding are finite in character. But we refuse to accept that what we nevertheless do know is empty of meaning, even if it is outside the boundary defining what we may legitimately claim to know.

We Require to Understand

This form of knowledge, in its silent insistence, concerns "aspects of existence." Existence here is not an object of knowledge. Existence is something we enjoy, something we apprehend concretely as enjoyment. Aspects of existence are thus not readily defined by reflexive or discursive consciousness. On the contrary, they often become conscious only with effort and hesitation, when we wish to push them forward and put them into words. When the words they require are assembled, they often seem to be mutually exclusive. This difficulty characterizes the series of "we require to understand" that appears in *Modes of Thought*.