

## Chapter 1 : Our Knowledge of the External World by Bertrand Russell

*Locke: Knowledge of the External World* The problem of how we can know the existence and nature of the world external to our mind is one of the oldest and most difficult in philosophy. The discussion by John Locke () of knowledge of the external world have proved to be some of the most confusing and difficult passages of his entire body.

One of his important contributions to the field is *Our Knowledge of the External World*, a collection of lectures published in 1918. In this book, Russell continues to struggle with the implications of his Cartesian assumption—that private experience is the proper place to begin philosophical inquiry. Following from *Principles of Mathematics*, one thrust of *Our Knowledge of the External World* concerns itself with the relation of perception and physics. Russell continues to ask, can we come to know things about the physical world through the actions of our senses? And if so, how do we know these things? Sense-data are the characteristics and qualities we primitively, immediately sense about physical objects: Previously, Russell had argued that sense-data were the functions of physical objects. That is to say, physical objects cause sense-data, which we then perceive when we exercise our five senses. A cat exists in the real, physical world, and from that cat we sense warmth, softness, grayness. The problem with this theory, however, is that we are only acquainted with the sense-data of warmth, softness, and grayness—we infer that a cat is causing these things, but we cannot know for sure that such a thing exists. Instead of saying that physical objects create sense-data, he turns the matter around and argues that sense-data construct the physical object. They do so in tandem with what Russell calls *sensibilia*. An important consequence of this theory is the notion that sense-data are not simply images held in the mind but are instead the actual building blocks of physics. Thus, sense-data inhabit the public space of science as well as the private space of experience. In terms of physics, atomism is the theory that all matter in the universe is made up of tiny, finite particles that cannot be broken down into anything smaller. The cup sitting in front of me looks like a solid, whole object but is in reality a swarm of individual whizzing atoms. Logical atomism proposes that the theory of atomism extends to other areas beyond matter—most important for Russell, to the fields of language and of knowledge. In terms of linguistics, Russell showed how seemingly ordinary statements could be analyzed to reveal a string of simpler, more elemental assumptions, which could then individually be judged either true or false see *Logical Atomism*, p. In *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Russell shows how logical atomism applies to the question of knowledge and the physical world. Russell combines logical atomism with empiricism. Our immediate sensory experience is the only knowledge we can genuinely claim, and all other knowledge is inferred or deduced from it. Consider the cat described earlier.

**Chapter 2 : Bertrand Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World - PhilPapers**

*So begins Our Knowledge of the Eternal World, Bertrand Russell's classic attempt to show by means of examples, the natur I believe that the time has now arrived when this unsatisfactory state of affairs can be brought to an end' - Bertrand Russell.*

While distinguishing rigorous knowledge scientia and lesser grades of conviction persuasio , Descartes writes: I distinguish the two as follows: But since I see that you are still stuck fast in the doubts which I put forward in the First Meditation, and which I thought I had very carefully removed in the succeeding Meditations, I shall now expound for a second time the basis on which it seems to me that all human certainty can be founded. First of all, as soon as we think that we correctly perceive something, we are spontaneously convinced that it is true. Now if this conviction is so firm that it is impossible for us ever to have any reason for doubting what we are convinced of, then there are no further questions for us to ask: Replies 2, AT 7: As my certainty increases, my doubt decreases; conversely, as my doubt increases, my certainty decreases. It has also a distinctively epistemic character, involving a kind of rational insight. Yet they raise questions about the extent to which his account is continuous with other analyses of knowledge. Prima facie, his characterizations imply a justified belief analysis of knowledge “ or in language closer to his own and where justification is construed in terms of unshakability , an unshakable conviction analysis. Many will balk at the suggestion. It might therefore seem clear, whatever else is the case, that Descartes conceives of knowledge as advancing truth. Thus construed, to establish a proposition just is to perceive it with certainty; the result of having established it “ i. Truth is a consequence of knowledge, rather than its precondition. What is it to us that someone may make out that the perception whose truth we are so firmly convinced of may appear false to God or an angel, so that it is, absolutely speaking, false? On a quite different reading of this passage, Descartes is clarifying that the analysis of knowledge is neutral not about truth, but about absolute truth: Harry Frankfurt defended such an interpretation in his influential work, Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen. Yet, in a follow-up paper he retracted the view: I now think, however, that it was a mistake on my part to suggest that Descartes entertained a coherence conception of truth. The fact is that there is no textual evidence to support that suggestion; on the contrary, whenever Descartes gives an explicit account of truth he explains it unequivocally as correspondence with reality. A definitive interpretation of these issues has yet to gain general acceptance in the literature. What is clear is that the brand of knowledge Descartes seeks requires, at least, unshakably certain conviction. Arguably, this preoccupation with having the right kind of certainty “ including its being available to introspection “ is linked with his commitment to an internalist conception of knowledge. For he holds that ideas are, strictly speaking, the only objects of immediate perception, or conscious awareness. More on the directness or immediacy of perception in Section 5. This assumption is tantamount to requiring that justification come in the form of ideas. An important consequence of this kind of interpretation “ namely, a traditional representationalist reading of Descartes “ is that rigorous philosophical inquiry must proceed via an inside-to-out strategy. This strategy is assiduously followed in the Meditations, and it endures as a hallmark of many early modern epistemologies. Philosophical inquiry is, properly understood, an investigation of ideas. The methodical strategy of the Meditations has the effect of forcing readers to adopt this mode of inquiry. He wants knowledge that is utterly indefeasible. Sceptical doubts count as defeaters. This indefeasibility requirement implies more than mere stability. A would-be knower could achieve stability simply by never reflecting on reasons for doubt. But this would result in mere undoubtedness, not indubitability. Before jumping to this conclusion, we should put the indefeasibility requirement into context. Descartes is a contextualist in the sense that he allows that different standards of justification are appropriate to different contexts. This is not merely to say the obvious: This example is potentially misleading, in that Descartes appears loath to count mere empirical evidence as knowledge-worthy justification. But upon ramping up the standard to what he finds minimally acceptable, the standard admits of context dependent variation. For Descartes, clarity contrasts with obscurity, and distinctness contrasts with confusion. But he regularly characterizes defeasible judgments at this level of certainty using terminology e. In the context of inquiry at

play in the Meditations, Descartes insists on indefeasibility. Better to have a standard that excludes some truths, than one that justifies some falsehoods. Descartes maintains that though atheists are quite capable of impressive knowledge, including in mathematics, they are incapable of the indefeasible brand of knowledge he seeks: But I maintain that this awareness [cognitionem] of his is not true knowledge [scientiam], since no act of awareness [cognitio] that can be rendered doubtful seems fit to be called knowledge [scientia]. Now since we are supposing that this individual is an atheist, he cannot be certain that he is not being deceived on matters which seem to him to be very evident as I fully explained. Distinguish particularist and methodist responses to the question. The particularist is apt to trust our prima facie intuitions regarding particular knowledge claims. These intuitions may then be used to help identify more general epistemic principles. The methodist, in contrast, is apt to distrust our prima facie intuitions. The preference is instead to begin with general principles about proper method. The methodical principles may then be used to arrive at settled, reflective judgments concerning particular knowledge claims. Famously, Descartes is in the methodist camp. Were we to rely on our prima facie intuitions, we might suppose it obvious that the earth is unmoved, or that ordinary objects as tables and chairs are just as just as they seem. Yet, newly emerging mechanist doctrines of the 17th century imply that these suppositions are false. Such cases underscore the unreliability of our prima facie intuitions and the need for a method by which to distinguish truth and falsity. But such pre-reflective judgments may be ill-grounded, even when true. The dialectic of the First Meditation features a confrontation between particularism and methodism, with methodism emerging the victor. In response and at each level of the dialectic, Descartes invokes his own methodical principles to show that the prima facie obviousness of such particular claims is insufficient to meet the burden of proof. Knowledge of the nature of reality derives from ideas of the intellect, not the senses. An important part of metaphysical inquiry therefore involves learning to think with the intellect. The Fifth Meditation meditator remarks “having applied Cartesian methodology, thereby discovering innate truths within: Elsewhere Descartes adds, of innate truths: All geometrical truths are of this sort” not just the most obvious ones, but all the others, however abstruse they may appear. Hence, according to Plato, Socrates asks a slave boy about the elements of geometry and thereby makes the boy able to dig out certain truths from his own mind which he had not previously recognized were there, thus attempting to establish the doctrine of reminiscence. Our knowledge of God is of this sort. This storehouse includes ideas in mathematics, logic, and metaphysics. Interestingly, Descartes holds that even our sensory ideas involve innate content. On his understanding of the new mechanical physics, bodies have no real properties resembling our sensory ideas of colors, sounds, tastes, and the like, thus implying that the content of such ideas draws from the mind itself. But if even these sensory ideas count as innate, how then are we to characterize the doctrine of innateness? Importantly, the formation of these sensory ideas “unlike purely intellectual concepts” depends on sensory stimulation. This characterization allows that both intellectual and sensory concepts draw on native resources, though not to the same extent. Relatively little attention is given to his doctrines of innateness, or, more generally, his ontology of thought. On the internalism-externalism distinction, see Alston and Plantinga For a partly externalist interpretation of Descartes, see Della Rocca For a stability interpretation of Descartes, see Bennett On the indefeasibility of Knowledge, see Newman and Nelson On contextualism in Descartes, see Newman On the methodism-particularism distinction, see Chisholm and Sosa On analysis and synthesis, see Smith Foundationalism and Doubt Of his own methodology, Descartes writes: Throughout my writings I have made it clear that my method imitates that of the architect. When an architect wants to build a house which is stable on ground where there is a sandy topsoil over underlying rock, or clay, or some other firm base, he begins by digging out a set of trenches from which he removes the sand, and anything resting on or mixed in with the sand, so that he can lay his foundations on firm soil. In the same way, I began by taking everything that was doubtful and throwing it out, like sand Replies 7, AT 7: His method of doubt is intended to complement foundationalism. The two methods are supposed to work in cooperation, as conveyed in the above quotation. Such an edifice owes its structural integrity to two kinds of features: A system of justified beliefs might be organized by two analogous features: Euclid begins with a foundation of first principles “definitions, postulates, and axioms or common notions” on which he then bases a superstructure of further propositions.

Those long chains composed of very simple and easy reasoning, which geometers customarily use to arrive at their most difficult demonstrations, had given me occasion to suppose that all the things which can fall under human knowledge are interconnected in the same way. Discourse 2, AT 6: It would be misleading to characterize the arguments of the Meditations as unfolding straightforwardly according to geometric method. Though the component finds no analogue in the method of the geometers, Descartes appears to hold that this component is needed in metaphysical inquiry. In contrast, metaphysical inquiry might have first principles that conflict with the senses: The difference is that the primary notions which are presupposed for the demonstration of geometrical truths are readily accepted by anyone, since they accord with the use of our senses. Hence there is no difficulty there, except in the proper deduction of the consequences, which can be done even by the less attentive, provided they remember what has gone before. Admittedly, they are by their nature as evident as, or even more evident than, the primary notions which the geometers study; but they conflict with many preconceived opinions derived from the senses which we have got into the habit of holding from our earliest years, and so only those who really concentrate and meditate and withdraw their minds from corporeal things, so far as possible, will achieve perfect knowledge of them. Such mistakes in the laying of the foundations weaken the entire edifice.

Chapter 3 : Bertrand Russell's philosophical views - Wikipedia

*One of his important contributions to the field is *Our Knowledge of the External World*, a collection of lectures published in 1918. In this book, Russell continues to struggle with the implications of his Cartesian assumption "that private experience is the proper place to begin philosophical inquiry."*

Looking at the big picture, Wilson argues that Hume "attempts to offer a rational defence of naturalism and natural science" p. In what follows I shall offer a summary of the book and discuss some of its strengths and weaknesses. The book comprises eight chapters. Chapter Two reaches back to Plato and discusses the long history of the substance tradition in metaphysics, linking it with the epistemological view that knowledge is *scientia*, a kind of absolute certainty that serves as the "Cartesian standard". Although Wilson credits Berkeley with being "the first to propose [an] alternative to the traditional substance-accident account", it is left to Hume to offer a nonsubstantial account of the knower and thus eliminate substances completely from his ontology p. Because according to Wilson *scientia* fails along with substance ontology, the third chapter explains how Hume also provides a fallibilistic account of geometry, the traditional paradigm for infallible knowledge. Wilson argues that, for Hume, "because one must make causal inferences, it is only reasonable or proper that one do so, fallible though those inferences may be" pp. Of course, the fact that we must make causal inferences does not tell us which causal inferences we should make; after all, some causal inferences are good and some are bad. These rules comprise the scientific method, upon which reasonable and epistemically responsible people rely. Chapter Six advances the controversial claim that for Hume "what counts as knowledge is justified true belief" p. Moore and Thomas Reid as a defender of common sense. The final chapter elaborates on the critical realist reading of Hume that puts him in the company of Roy Wood Sellars and the logical atomist phase of Bertrand Russell. According to Wilson, we can characterize critical realism in terms of eight propositions, of which I mention two here propositions 4 and 7 on the list: Relying mostly on "Of scepticism with regard to the senses" Treatise I. To put this critical realist point in more Humean language, he counts the systems of the philosophers and the vulgar as rationally justified p. In short, according to Wilson, Hume is not a radical sceptic who denies that all of our beliefs lack any kind of rational justification but a defender of the rationality of science and common sense. This book displays many strengths. A major one is the way Wilson treats Hume not as a mere historical relic but as a partner in the philosophical enterprise. As the title suggests, he is interested in defending a Humean position using whatever contemporary means that are at his disposal. Here is one passage that makes this strategy explicit: In terms of the history of logic, it is perfectly understandable, and excusable, that Hume suffered from many of the limitations one finds in him. Although Wilson frequently sticks up for Hume in this way, he does not adopt a philosophical position just because Hume did. He is not afraid to claim that, say, Reid is correct and Hume is wrong on some philosophical issues p. Wilson makes many points about Hume interpretation that deserve a hearing. There is much food for thought here. Before turning to what I take to be some weaknesses with the book, let me first describe its tone. He is often disdainfully dismissive of recent commentators, whole research programs in philosophy, and even famous historical figures. Some might find these dismissals amusing; others will find them annoying. Whether you chortle at or choke on his comments, you cannot accuse Wilson of cloaking his philosophical predilections. Now for the problems. Unfortunately, the book is sprawling, laden with extraneous discussions and plagued with too many errors, typos, and misleading or unclear claims. Of course, most of us are guilty of digressions and mistakes, but this book exceeds the usual amount. The sprawling nature of the book is somewhat understandable given that Wilson wants not only to interpret and defend Hume, but also to right numerous historical wrongs: I will not hesitate to refer to non-Humean discussions from scattered points in the history of philosophy if I think such an analysis will help in the exposition and defence of Hume. Nor is it just the illumination of Hume that I hope to achieve; I also hope to give some credit to historical antecedents that have, unfortunately, disappeared into the past p. Attempting to bring together so many "scattered" points will probably elicit narrative vertigo in many readers. More generally, the length of the book provides ample opportunity for meanderings over a broad range of issues and

some may decide in frustration that the dialectical labyrinth is not worth trying to navigate. Although Smith justifiably believes the true proposition  $a$ , Smith does not know  $a$ . Because only professional philosophers, mostly Hume scholars, are going to wade into this book, it is perplexing in the extreme why space is devoted to belaboring a point a professional philosophical reader should already understand. Wilson correctly notes that Russell proposed a Gettier-like example before Gettier: But then he offers the following assessment of the general debate: None of them, though, seem to have found the resolution of which Wilson speaks. So would Wilson claim that even those who know their history are still condemned to repeat it? In any event, it is not clear to me, after several re-readings of the section, exactly how Wilson thinks that this issue should be or has been dissolved. Here is the general idea: Unfortunately the details seem sketchy at best. As far as I can tell a person is subjectively justified, roughly, when one "is justified according to the information [one] has available" and objectively justified when "the fact known somehow guarantees the knowing of it" p. These notions seem too vague to resolve the Gettier problem, or to make much of the Gettier paradox "disappear". But then why does Wilson write that the results of the "boring" Gettier cottage industry "are not worth surveying" if he relies so heavily on at least some of those results to explain the distinction that he views as vital p. The overall point I think that Wilson is trying to make is that Hume requires subjective and objective justification for knowledge. But he slips up even on his home turf of Hume studies. For example, he appears to provide a misleading description of the lay of the interpretive land. The book begins by claiming that Hume is usually seen as a sceptic. He uses reason to attack reason, and finds that reasoning wanting: That, at least, is the standard picture of Hume" p. These statements are not only featured prominently on back of the book jacket, but also reinforced elsewhere in the book: This is no doubt odd to many: Granted, many commentators in the past, and non-specialists today, view Hume as a skeptic. Nevertheless, for the past few decades the vast majority of Hume commentators have read him as a naturalist and not a radical skeptic, so the naturalists now dominate. As Ira Singer put it in an article from It is easier to attack a view radically at odds with your own than to separate yourself from views that have many similarities. When it comes to debates among naturalists about Hume interpretation, we often encounter cryptic debates about whose Hume is more naturalistic or scientific. Before closing, let me make two comments about the specifics of his Hume interpretation. When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? Commit it then to the flames: Wilson takes this as a decisive text supporting his position, providing the following gloss: Neither is it a scepticism from which he is saved not by reason but by nature" p. It makes no mention of commonsense or what the standpoint of reason might be, for example. And what, precisely, are the principles to which Hume refers at the beginning of the paragraph? Presumably Wilson would point to the rules by which to judge of causes and effects, but dealing with all of the issues raised in that other context is extremely complicated. At the very least, we need to go beyond this paragraph to determine the nature of these principles before we can claim to have found any clear meaning here. Those not already on board will need more convincing. After all, when Hume most explicitly discusses knowledge in the Treatise, it seems to be restricted to relations of ideas I. Strangely, when Wilson explicitly attributes this more modern view to Hume p. As someone who would like to be convinced that Hume held a justified true belief view of knowledge, I was disappointed that I could not find more evidence. Although more work needs to be done to defend this critical realism reading, in general Wilson has developed it to the extent that it is a naturalistic alternative worthy of consideration in the pantheon of Hume interpretations.

Chapter 4 : Our Knowledge of the External World Analysis - [blog.quintoapp.com](http://blog.quintoapp.com)

*out of 5 stars Book Summary -- Our Knowledge of the External World "Our Knowledge of the External World" first appeared as a series of lectures delivered by Bertrand Russell while in Boston in the early spring of*

She acted on that knowledge and quenched her thirst. Your helpful statement expressed a paradigmatic instance of knowledge of the external world. According to Locke there are two main questions to ask about any kind of knowledge, including cases like the knowledge of the external world you shared with your friend. First, what do you know? Second, how do you acquire or achieve such knowledge? The Content of Sensitive Knowledge For now we will simply suppose that you did have some knowledge of the external world to share with your friend. Assuming that you did have some knowledge to share, what exactly did you know and share with your friend? Or, as we might put it in more technical terms, what is the content of your knowledge in this case? More generally, what do we know in cases of knowledge of the external world? Locke argues that we can know three different kinds of things really exist. First, each person can know their own existence at any given time. I can know now that I exist at this time. You can know, as you read this, that you exist while you read this. Second, Locke believes that we can know that God exists. Third, we can know that other things distinct from our minds really exist. When you said to your friend that there was a water fountain over there, the knowledge of real existence you expressed was of this third kind. As you looked at the fountain you knew that there was then something distinct from your mind really existing—the water fountain. Presumably you also knew many other things distinct from your mind to exist at that time: The knowledge you shared with your friend, however, concerned the existence of the water fountain. You knew that the water fountain existed distinct from your mind. How We Come to have Sensitive Knowledge Locke gives a somewhat unusual name to knowledge of the external world. There is something special, according to Locke, about how knowledge of the external world is achieved that sets it apart from how knowledge of other matters, such as mathematical knowledge, is achieved. According to Locke, knowledge of the external world is different than what he calls intuitive knowledge. Intuitive knowledge is knowledge that we grasp immediately and without any need for proof or explanation. For example, anyone who has ideas of the colors white and black and compares those ideas immediately knows that white is not black. This is the kind of knowledge we often have concerning the meanings of words, at least when words are given explicit definition. Locke also holds that knowledge of the external world is different than the kind of knowledge we achieve through proofs or argument. When someone proves that the sum of the three interior angles of a triangle is equal to the sum of two right angles through a proof with multiple steps, Locke calls such knowledge demonstrative knowledge. Locke would say that such a person has demonstrated their conclusion. Knowledge of the external world is not arrived at by any such argument or proof. Knowledge of the external world is not achieved through thinking about the definitions of our terms or comparing ideas that we have already acquired. Instead, knowledge of the external world is achieved in sensory experience. It is through the entrance of an idea into our mind through the senses that we have knowledge of the external world. Suppose that the water fountain you saw was newly installed and had a fresh coat of crimson paint. As you looked at the water fountain and light reflected from the fountain to your eyes an idea of that distinct crimson color entered your mind. According to Locke, as the sensation of that color entered your mind you knew that something crimson existed distinct from your mind by its somehow producing that sensation in you. Your knowledge of the existence of something crimson is therefore acquired in a way distinct from either intuitive or demonstrative knowledge. It does not depend on a proof or on comparing ideas already existing in your mind. The Limitations of Sensitive Knowledge So far, then, we have seen both the what and the how of knowledge of the external world according to Locke. What we know is real existence. How we know it is through sensation—through the reception of ideas into our minds. The what and the how combine to place some severe limits on what Locke thinks we can know about the external world. First, our knowledge of the external world only extends as far as current sensory experience. As you look at the water fountain you know that it now exists. When you look away from the water fountain as you turn back to your friend, you no longer know that it now exists. You only now know that it existed when you were

looking at it. Similarly, you do not know that it existed before you looked at it. Locke does think that it is highly probable for you that the water fountain existed before and after you look at it. Indeed, he thinks that it is nearly, if not completely, impossible for you to avoid believing that the fountain existed before you saw it and continues to exist after you turn away. Your belief that the water fountain exists when you are not looking at it, then, is both rational and psychologically compelling, according to Locke. Our knowledge extends over relatively little of the world we ordinarily believe to exist. We only know to exist the sensible objects of our immediate sensory environment that are currently affecting us. Second, we only know the world as it appears to us through our senses. We do not know its underlying nature as it is in itself. This point can be helpfully illustrated by considering a new case. Suppose, for example, that you go on a field trip to gold country. You and the rest of the class dip a sieve into the river and sift out a few flakes of a yellowish metal. The class then goes into a mine, chips off chunks of rock, crush them up, and sift out more pieces of yellowish metal from the crushed stone. At the end of the field trip the class spreads all of the collected pieces of yellowish metal in front of them. As you survey the spread of hunks of yellowish metal you can know that there now exist several distinct objects that affect your mind by producing certain ideas in it—sensations of yellow, solidity, etc. What you do not know is that there is some underlying nature that now exists in each of these hunks of stuff. Moreover, you do not know that they all have the same underlying nature. We are ignorant, in other words, about both the underlying nature of each individual object as well as whether the objects that appear similarly to us have similar underlying natures. There may be tremendous evidence supporting the theory that describes the underlying microstructure of these hunks of stuff and even explains why a microstructure of that type produces the appearances you now see. Such microstructure or underlying nature, however, is not part of how the hunks of stuff now appear to you. Thus, while it may be overwhelmingly probable that some underlying common nature exists in all of the things spread before you, you do not know that that nature exists before you. The belief that gold exists would be a very rational one to hold, based on all of the evidence we have to support our best physical and chemical theories. Nevertheless, such a belief would not be knowledge. Third, knowledge of the external world does not extend to other minds. Recall that Locke takes knowledge of the external world to be sensitive knowledge. Sensitive knowledge is achieved as a result of things operating on us through our senses. Locke does not think that other minds affect us directly through our senses. Our own mind produces ideas in us through what Locke calls reflection, a kind of inner sense directed at our own mind. Those bodies then affect our minds through our senses. As a result, no other minds directly produce ideas in our minds through our senses. When you saw the water fountain, for example, you knew that a crimson thing, that is a thing with a power to produce a certain sensation in you, then existed. When you saw the water fountain, for example, you knew that a thing produced a certain visual idea in your mind at that time; that a crimson sensation was then entering your mind. Locke begins Book IV with a definition of knowledge. To appreciate the potential tension between the definition of knowledge and sensitive knowledge it is worth quoting the definition at length. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge. This entry will adopt that convention. Foremost is how to resolve an ambiguity in the definition. Second, one may read the definition as stating that knowledge is the perception of agreement between ideas—the perception of agreement of one idea with another idea. As we will see below in section 2. In the margin next to the paragraph following the definition of knowledge, Locke noted in his personal copy of the Essay that knowledge is the perception of agreement between two ideas. To begin, one might wonder: Knowledge of the external world, according to Locke, is knowledge of the existence of something distinct from our mind and so, of course, distinct from the ideas in our mind. Even Locke himself notes that the mere existence of an idea of something does not guarantee the existence of what that idea is an idea of. Merely having an idea of a freshly painted crimson water fountain does not guarantee that a freshly painted crimson water fountain really exists. At this point, if there is to be any hope, we ought to take a step back and ask: It seems clear that if I know the crimson water fountain exists, my idea of it will be one of the ideas. What is the second idea? We might start making progress on this question by considering the

content of sensitive knowledge. As detailed in section one above, we know that a thing exists distinct from our mind. For example, when you saw the freshly painted crimson water fountain down the hall, you knew that a crimson thing really exists. Perhaps, then, sensitive knowledge involves the perception of agreement between the idea of a thing and the idea of real existence. When you look down the hall and know the water fountain exists you perceive an agreement between your idea of the crimson water fountain and the idea of real existence.

Chapter 5 : German addresses are blocked - [blog.quintoapp.com](http://blog.quintoapp.com)

*Our Knowledge of the External World is a compilation of lectures Bertrand Russell delivered in the US in which he questions the very relevance and legitimacy of.*

Introduction The dispute between rationalism and empiricism takes place within epistemology, the branch of philosophy devoted to studying the nature, sources and limits of knowledge. The defining questions of epistemology include the following. What is the nature of propositional knowledge, knowledge that a particular proposition about the world is true? To know a proposition, we must believe it and it must be true, but something more is required, something that distinguishes knowledge from a lucky guess. A good deal of philosophical work has been invested in trying to determine the nature of warrant. How can we gain knowledge? We can form true beliefs just by making lucky guesses. How to gain warranted beliefs is less clear. Moreover, to know the world, we must think about it, and it is unclear how we gain the concepts we use in thought or what assurance, if any, we have that the ways in which we divide up the world using our concepts correspond to divisions that actually exist. What are the limits of our knowledge? Some aspects of the world may be within the limits of our thought but beyond the limits of our knowledge; faced with competing descriptions of them, we cannot know which description is true. Some aspects of the world may even be beyond the limits of our thought, so that we cannot form intelligible descriptions of them, let alone know that a particular description is true. The disagreement between rationalists and empiricists primarily concerns the second question, regarding the sources of our concepts and knowledge. In some instances, their disagreement on this topic leads them to give conflicting responses to the other questions as well. They may disagree over the nature of warrant or about the limits of our thought and knowledge. Our focus here will be on the competing rationalist and empiricist responses to the second question. Some propositions in a particular subject area, *S*, are knowable by us by intuition alone; still others are knowable by being deduced from intuited propositions. Intuition is a form of rational insight. Deduction is a process in which we derive conclusions from intuited premises through valid arguments, ones in which the conclusion must be true if the premises are true. We intuit, for example, that the number three is prime and that it is greater than two. We then deduce from this knowledge that there is a prime number greater than two. Intuition and deduction thus provide us with knowledge a priori, which is to say knowledge gained independently of sense experience. Some rationalists take mathematics to be knowable by intuition and deduction. Some place ethical truths in this category. Some include metaphysical claims, such as that God exists, we have free will, and our mind and body are distinct substances. The more propositions rationalists include within the range of intuition and deduction, and the more controversial the truth of those propositions or the claims to know them, the more radical their rationalism. Rationalists also vary the strength of their view by adjusting their understanding of warrant. Some take warranted beliefs to be beyond even the slightest doubt and claim that intuition and deduction provide beliefs of this high epistemic status. Others interpret warrant more conservatively, say as belief beyond a reasonable doubt, and claim that intuition and deduction provide beliefs of that caliber. Still another dimension of rationalism depends on how its proponents understand the connection between intuition, on the one hand, and truth, on the other. Some take intuition to be infallible, claiming that whatever we intuit must be true. Others allow for the possibility of false intuited propositions. The second thesis associated with rationalism is the Innate Knowledge thesis. The Innate Knowledge Thesis: We have knowledge of some truths in a particular subject area, *S*, as part of our rational nature. The difference between them rests in the accompanying understanding of how this a priori knowledge is gained. The Innate Knowledge thesis offers our rational nature. Our innate knowledge is not learned through either sense experience or intuition and deduction. It is just part of our nature. Experiences may trigger a process by which we bring this knowledge to consciousness, but the experiences do not provide us with the knowledge itself. It has in some way been with us all along. According to some rationalists, we gained the knowledge in an earlier existence. According to others, God provided us with it at creation. Still others say it is part of our nature through natural selection. Once again, the more subjects included within the range of the thesis or the more controversial the claim to

have knowledge in them, the more radical the form of rationalism. Stronger and weaker understandings of warrant yield stronger and weaker versions of the thesis as well. The third important thesis of rationalism is the Innate Concept thesis. The Innate Concept Thesis: We have some of the concepts we employ in a particular subject area, *S*, as part of our rational nature. According to the Innate Concept thesis, some of our concepts are not gained from experience. They are part of our rational nature in such a way that, while sense experiences may trigger a process by which they are brought to consciousness, experience does not provide the concepts or determine the information they contain. Some claim that the Innate Concept thesis is entailed by the Innate Knowledge Thesis; a particular instance of knowledge can only be innate if the concepts that are contained in the known proposition are also innate. Others, such as Carruthers, argue against this connection, pp. The content and strength of the Innate Concept thesis varies with the concepts claimed to be innate. The more a concept seems removed from experience and the mental operations we can perform on experience the more plausibly it may be claimed to be innate. Since we do not experience perfect triangles but do experience pains, our concept of the former is a more promising candidate for being innate than our concept of the latter. Two other closely related theses are generally adopted by rationalists, although one can certainly be a rationalist without adopting either of them. The first is that experience cannot provide what we gain from reason. The Indispensability of Reason Thesis: The knowledge we gain in subject area, *S*, by intuition and deduction, as well as the ideas and instances of knowledge in *S* that are innate to us, could not have been gained by us through sense experience. The second is that reason is superior to experience as a source of knowledge. The Superiority of Reason Thesis: The knowledge we gain in subject area *S* by intuition and deduction or have innately is superior to any knowledge gained by sense experience. How reason is superior needs explanation, and rationalists have offered different accounts. Another view, generally associated with Plato Republic ec, locates the superiority of a priori knowledge in the objects known. What we know by reason alone, a Platonic form, say, is superior in an important metaphysical way, e. Most forms of rationalism involve notable commitments to other philosophical positions. One is a commitment to the denial of scepticism for at least some area of knowledge. If we claim to know some truths by intuition or deduction or to have some innate knowledge, we obviously reject scepticism with regard to those truths. We have no source of knowledge in *S* or for the concepts we use in *S* other than sense experience. Insofar as we have knowledge in the subject, our knowledge is a posteriori, dependent upon sense experience. Empiricists also deny the implication of the corresponding Innate Concept thesis that we have innate ideas in the subject area. Sense experience is our only source of ideas. They reject the corresponding version of the Superiority of Reason thesis. Since reason alone does not give us any knowledge, it certainly does not give us superior knowledge. Empiricists generally reject the Indispensability of Reason thesis, though they need not. The Empiricism thesis does not entail that we have empirical knowledge. It entails that knowledge can only be gained, if at all, by experience. Empiricists may assert, as some do for some subjects, that the rationalists are correct to claim that experience cannot give us knowledge. The conclusion they draw from this rationalist lesson is that we do not know at all. I have stated the basic claims of rationalism and empiricism so that each is relative to a particular subject area. Rationalism and empiricism, so relativized, need not conflict. We can be rationalists in mathematics or a particular area of mathematics and empiricists in all or some of the physical sciences. Rationalism and empiricism only conflict when formulated to cover the same subject. Then the debate, Rationalism vs. The fact that philosophers can be both rationalists and empiricists has implications for the classification schemes often employed in the history of philosophy, especially the one traditionally used to describe the Early Modern Period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries leading up to Kant. It is standard practice to group the major philosophers of this period as either rationalists or empiricists and to suggest that those under one heading share a common agenda in opposition to those under the other. We should adopt such general classification schemes with caution. The views of the individual philosophers are more subtle and complex than the simple-minded classification suggests. See Loeb and Kenny for important discussions of this point. Descartes and Locke have remarkably similar views on the nature of our ideas, even though Descartes takes many to be innate, while Locke ties them all to experience. Thus, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz are mistakenly seen as applying a reason-centered epistemology to a common metaphysical agenda, with each

trying to improve on the efforts of the one before, while Locke, Berkeley and Hume are mistakenly seen as gradually rejecting those metaphysical claims, with each consciously trying to improve on the efforts of his predecessors. One might claim, for example, that we can gain knowledge in a particular area by a form of Divine revelation or insight that is a product of neither reason nor sense experience. What is perhaps the most interesting form of the debate occurs when we take the relevant subject to be truths about the external world, the world beyond our own minds. A full-fledged rationalist with regard to our knowledge of the external world holds that some external world truths can and must be known a priori, that some of the ideas required for that knowledge are and must be innate, and that this knowledge is superior to any that experience could ever provide. The full-fledged empiricist about our knowledge of the external world replies that, when it comes to the nature of the world beyond our own minds, experience is our sole source of information. Reason might inform us of the relations among our ideas, but those ideas themselves can only be gained, and any truths about the external reality they represent can only be known, on the basis of sense experience. This debate concerning our knowledge of the external world will generally be our main focus in what follows. The debate raises the issue of metaphysics as an area of knowledge.

**Chapter 6 : Rationalism vs. Empiricism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)**

*EMBED (for blog.quintoapp.com hosted blogs and blog.quintoapp.com item tags).*

We cannot rely on the common-sense pronouncements of popular superstition, which illustrate human conduct without offering any illumination, Hume held, nor can we achieve any genuine progress by means of abstract metaphysical speculation, which imposes a spurious clarity upon profound issues. The alternative is to reject all easy answers, employing the negative results of philosophical skepticism as a legitimate place to start. The key principle to be applied to any investigation of our cognitive capacities is, then, an attempt to discover the causes of human belief. This attempt is neither the popular project of noticing and cataloging human beliefs nor the metaphysical effort to provide them with an infallible rational justification. According to Hume, the proper goal of philosophy is simply to explain why we believe what we do. His own attempt to achieve that goal was the focus of Book I of the *Treatise of Human Nature* and all of the first Enquiry. Since every idea must be derived from an antecedent impression, Hume supposed, it always makes sense to inquire into the origins of our ideas by asking from which impressions they are derived. The apparent connection of one idea to another is invariably the result of an association that we manufacture ourselves. Enquiry III We use our mental operations to link ideas to each other in one of three ways: This animal looks like that animal; this book is on that table; moving this switch turns off the light, for example. Experience provides us with both the ideas themselves and our awareness of their association. All human beliefs including those we regard as cases of knowledge result from repeated applications of these simple associations. Hume further distinguished between two sorts of belief. Enquiry IV i Relations of ideas are beliefs grounded wholly on associations formed within the mind; they are capable of demonstration because they have no external referent. Matters of fact are beliefs that claim to report the nature of existing things; they are always contingent. Mathematical and logical knowledge relies upon relations of ideas; it is uncontroversial but uninformative. The interesting but problematic propositions of natural science depend upon matters of fact. Abstract metaphysics mistakenly and fruitlessly tries to achieve the certainty of the former with the content of the latter. Matters of Fact Since genuine information rests upon our belief in matters of fact, Hume was particularly concerned to explain their origin. Such beliefs can reach beyond the content of present sense-impressions and memory, Hume held, only by appealing to presumed connections of cause and effect. But since each idea is distinct and separable from every other, there is no self-evident relation; these connections can only be derived from our experience of similar cases. So the crucial question in epistemology is to ask exactly how it is possible for us to learn from experience. Enquiry IV ii Here, Hume supposed, the most obvious point is a negative one: In order to learn, we must suppose that our past experiences bear some relevance to present and future cases. But although we do indeed believe that the future will be like the past, the truth of that belief is not self-evident. In fact, it is always possible for nature to change, so inferences from past to future are never rationally certain. Clearly, this is a matter of fact; it rests on our conviction that each sunrise is an effect caused by the rotation of the earth. But our belief in that causal relation is based on past observations, and our confidence that it will continue tomorrow cannot be justified by reference to the past. So we have no rational basis for believing that the sun will rise tomorrow. Yet we do believe it! Belief as a Habit Skepticism quite properly forbids us to speculate beyond the content of our present experience and memory, yet we find it entirely natural to believe much more than that. Hume held that these unjustifiable beliefs can be explained by reference to custom or habit. When I observe the constant conjunction of events in my experience, I grow accustomed to associating them with each other. Enquiry V ii Although many past cases of sunrise do not guarantee the future of nature, my experience of them does get me used to the idea and produces in me an expectation that the sun will rise again tomorrow. I cannot prove that it will, but I feel that it must. Remember that the association of ideas is a powerful natural process in which separate ideas come to be joined together in the mind. Of course they can be associated with each other by rational means, as they are in the relations of ideas that constitute mathematical knowledge. But even where this is possible, Hume argued, reason is a slow and inefficient guide, while the habits acquired by much repetition can produce a powerful conviction independently of reason. Our beliefs in

matters of fact, then, arise from sentiment or feeling rather than from reason. For Hume, imagination and belief differ only in the degree of conviction with which their objects are anticipated. Although this positive answer may seem disappointing, Hume maintained that custom or habit is the great guide of life and the foundation of all natural science. Necessary Connection According to Hume, our belief that events are causally related is a custom or habit acquired by experience: But something is missing from this account: Even if this belief is unjustifiable, Hume must offer some explanation for the fact that we do hold it. His technique was to search for the original impression from which our idea of the necessary connection between cause and effect is copied. Enquiry VII The idea does not arise from our objective experience of the events themselves. All we observe is that events of the "cause" type occur nearby and shortly before events of the "effect" type, and that this recurs with a regularity that can be described as a "constant conjunction. Nor do we acquire this impression as Locke had supposed from our own capacity for voluntary motion. Here the objective element of constant conjunction is rarely experienced, since the actions of our minds and bodies do not invariably submit to our voluntary control. And even if volition did always produce the intended movement, Hume argued, that would yield no notion of the connection between them. So there is no impression of causal power here, either. Still, we do have the idea of a necessary connection, and it must come from somewhere. For a non-justificatory explanation, Hume refers us back to the formation of a custom or habit. Our non-rational expectation that the effect will follow the cause is accompanied by a strong feeling of conviction, and it is the impression of this feeling that is copied by our concept of a necessary connection between cause and effect. The force of causal necessity is just the strength of our sentiment in anticipating efficacious outcomes. The Self In a notorious passage of the Treatise, Hume offered a similar account of the belief in the reality of the self. Here there is the ordinary human supposition that lies behind our use of first-personal pronouns. Upon this relatively simple foundation, philosophers have erected the notion of an immaterial substance, a mind or soul that persists through time on its own. No matter how closely I attend to my own experience, no matter how fully I notice the mental operations presently occurring "in my mind," I am never directly aware of "I. Although these relations may be extended through time by memory, there is no evidence of any substantial ground for their coherence. The persistent self and the immortal soul are philosophical fictions. To suppose otherwise, Hume held, is to commit a category mistake: Our idea of a persistent self is simply a result of the human habit of attributing continued existence to any collection of associated parts. Like our idea of the necessary connection of cause with effect, belief in our own reality as substantial selves is natural, but unjustifiable. External World Another perfectly ordinary feature of human cognition is our belief in the reality of the external world. As I write this lesson, I readily suppose that my fingers are touching a keyboard, that the sun is shining outside and that the radio is playing a Clapton song. The primitive human belief, Hume noted, is that we actually see and hear, etc. But modern philosophy and science have persuaded us that this is not literally true. According to representationalists, we are directly aware of ideas, which must in turn be causally produced in our minds by external objects. The problem is that on this view we can never know that there really are physical objects that produce our sensory ideas. We cannot rely on causal reasoning to convince us that there are external objects, Hume argued, since as we have just seen such reasoning arises from our observation of a constant conjunction between causes and effects. But according to the representationalist philosophy, we have no direct experience of the presumed cause! If we know objects only by means of ideas, then we cannot use those ideas to establish a causal connection between the things and the objects they are supposed to represent. In fact, Hume supposed, our belief in the reality of an external world is entirely non-rational. Enquiry XII i It cannot be supported either as a relation of ideas or even as a matter of fact. Although it is utterly unjustifiable, however, belief in the external world is natural and unavoidable. We are in the habit of supposing that our ideas have external referents, even though we can have no real evidence for doing so. Mitigated Skepticism Where does this leave us? Hume believed himself to be carrying out the empiricist program with rigorous consistency. Locke honestly proposed the possibility of deriving knowledge from experience, but did not carry it far enough. Bayle and Berkeley noticed further implications. Now Hume has shown that empiricism inevitably leads to an utter and total skepticism. According to Hume, knowledge of pure mathematics is secure because it rests only on the relations of ideas, without presuming anything about

the world. Experimental observations conducted without any assumption of the existence of material objects permit us to use our experience in forming useful habits. Any other epistemological effort, especially if it involves the pretense of achieving useful abstract knowledge, is meaningless and unreliable. The most reasonable position, Hume held, is a "mitigated" skepticism that humbly accepts the limitations of human knowledge while pursuing the legitimate aims of math and science. Enquiry XII 3 In our non-philosophical moments, of course, we will be thrown back upon the natural beliefs of everyday life, no matter how lacking in rational justification we know them to be.

**Chapter 7 : Descartes' Epistemology (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)**

*2 PREFACE The following lectures[1] are an attempt to show, by means of examples, the nature, capacity, and limitations of the logical-analytic method in.*

Russell begins with the famous opening lines, "Philosophy, since the earliest times, has made greater claims, and achieved fewer results, than any other branch of learning. Ever since Thales said that all is water, philosophers have been ready with glib assertions about the sum-total of things; and equally glib denials have come from other philosophers ever since Thales was contradicted by Anaximander. I believe that the time has now arrived when this unsatisfactory state of things can be brought to an end. The "truth" can only come from science and mathematics. Bertrand Russell, of all people, should have realized that. Chapter 2 "Logic as the Essence of Philosophy": Twentieth Century Philosophy wasted so much precious time on philosophical logic. Part of a steady stream that goes all the way back to Aristotle. I mean, how many times do we have to hear about Socrates and mortality. Russell explains all the details of logical statements. Things like, "Person A is my brother. Once again, philosophy beats a dead horse. Is the world out there really out there? Do the Red Sox really have Red Sox? Does anyone give a shit other than those having a good time in a philosophy class or discussion? The funny thing about this one is that things are really NOT out there. But the rockness of the rock comes from our senses. The tableness of a table comes from our senses and from our cultural upbringing. Put a table with a group of humans who lived in the jungle, and the table could be turned over and covered with an animal skin and used as a tent. It loses its tableness and gains some tentness. But if we continue down this path, nothing is real. We end up in a Slough of Despond. We fall into the Abyss of Nothingness. We must therefore stop and get a grip. We conclude with the two most important words ever: We live life AS IF it had meaning. Physics seems to follow the belief of Parmenides that there must be something that never changes. This goes back to the atomists who believed there was something called atoms that could not be cut. Again, however, physics provides no such certainty. Chapter 5 "The Theory of Continuity": In this chapter he takes on the paradoxes of Zeno. Is there such a thing as continuity in a line or in a succession of events in regards to time? Zeno tried to disprove all of this using his magnificent sophistic reasoning. Again, just a philosophical game. My wild and crazy guess is that it probably is really moving. Chapter 6 "The Problem of Infinity": In this chapter, Russell takes on the history of infinity. He criticizes Kant and Pythagoras in an effort to prove the existence of infinity. A useless gesture in my view. Pythagoras was a great mathematician, but he also was part of a religious cult. Thus his followers believed eating beans was a sin. A bean resembles a fetus. Hippasus of Metapontion was killed by Pythagoreans for pointing out that the square root of two was an irrational number. That problem has been solved in modern math. My favorite infinity story is by Cantor. He imagined an infinite number of hotel rooms filled by an infinite number of guests. What does the owner do if another person needs a room? He would disrupt the sleep of an infinite number of people to make sure one person would have a room. Russell rightly criticizes Parmenides here. Parmenides said that whatever we can think of and speak of must necessarily exist. Russell says, "An infinite number cannot be increased by adding one to it or by doubling it. If we wrote out an infinite number so that it went on an infinite number of spaces to the left and to the right and we looked at it from any point, what would the digits be? Would they be all nines? None of those digits work because you could add one to any of them. To conclude, infinity exists only in math and even there it is only a theoretical infinity. Chapter 7 "The Positive Theory of Infinity": In this chapter he discusses what a number is and what counting is all about. He also justifiably praises the work of Gottlob Frege. My second favorite story about infinity is from the comedian Bob Newhart. He tells about the story that an infinite number of monkeys typing on an infinite number of typewriters. Eventually, one of them would produce Hamlet. So he imagines workers checking on how the monkeys are doing. One worker picks up the paper of a monkey and reads, "Eflhughitsy worhlllewwdi. He shouts out with excitement, "Hey, Joe, listen to this. Like the foliage on a tree. But I respectfully disagree again. All things have a beginning. All things have an end. Including you and me. We have no free will. The answer comes from science and science alone. And

that is the direction science is heading in. If you want to learn about free will, study the brain. Not the mind, but the brain. The so-called mind is only a function of the brain.

**Chapter 8 : Locke: Knowledge of the External World | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy**

*The significance of Our Knowledge of the External World is that it proposed a new method for philosophizing. Although the method suggested was not strictly novel (it had been previously used by.*

Moore, Russell was shown to be partly responsible for the British revolt against idealism, a philosophy greatly influenced by G. Hegel and his British apostle, F. Russell argued that this would make space, time, science and the concept of number not fully intelligible. Russell, in particular, saw formal logic and science as the principal tools of the philosopher. Russell did not think we should have separate methods for philosophy. Russell thought philosophers should strive to answer the most general of propositions about the world and this would help eliminate confusions. In particular, he wanted to end what he saw as the excesses of metaphysics. This work was heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant. Thenceforth, he rejected the entire Kantian program as it related to mathematics and geometry, and rejected his own earliest work on the subject. Peano defined logically all of the terms of these axioms with the exception of 0, number, successor, and the singular term, the, which were the primitives of his system. Russell took it upon himself to find logical definitions for each of these. He became convinced that the foundations of mathematics could be derived within what has since come to be called higher-order logic which in turn he believed to include some form of unrestricted comprehension axiom. Russell then discovered that Gottlob Frege had independently arrived at equivalent definitions for 0, successor, and number, and the definition of number is now usually referred to as the Frege-Russell definition. The Cantor Paradox in turn was shown for example by Crossley to be a special case of the Russell Paradox. This caused Russell to analyse classes, for it was known that given any number of elements, the number of classes they result in is greater than their number. This in turn led to the discovery of a very interesting class, namely, the class of all classes. It contains two kinds of classes: Consideration of this class led him to find a fatal flaw in the so-called principle of comprehension, which had been taken for granted by logicians of the time. He showed that it resulted in a contradiction, whereby Y is a member of Y, if and only if, Y is not a member of Y. The first volume of the Principia was published in 1903, and is largely ascribed to Russell. More than any other single work, it established the speciality of mathematical or symbolic logic. Two more volumes were published, but their original plan to incorporate geometry in a fourth volume was never realised, and Russell never felt up to improving the original works, though he referenced new developments and problems in his preface to the second edition. Upon completing the Principia, three volumes of extraordinarily abstract and complex reasoning, Russell was exhausted, and he felt his intellectual faculties never fully recovered from the effort. This was largely an explication of his previous work and its philosophical significance. Philosophy of language[ edit ] Russell made language, or more specifically, how we use language, a central part of philosophy, and this influenced Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, J. Austin, and P. Strawson, among others, who used many of the techniques that Russell originally developed. Russell, and GE Moore, argued that clarity of expression is a virtue. Ramsey described this paper as "a paradigm of philosophy. Frege had argued, employing his distinction between sense and reference, that such sentences were meaningful but neither true nor false. Russell argues that the grammatical form of the sentence disguises its underlying logical form. This addresses a paradox of great antiquity e. Otherwise, how could we say of it that it is not? What is the "logical form" of definite descriptions: Definite descriptions appear to be like names that by their very nature denote exactly one thing, neither more nor less. The proposition as a whole then says three things about some object: If the object does not exist, or if it is not unique, then the whole sentence turns out to be false, not meaningless. However, Russell still held Wittgenstein and his early work in high regard, he thought of him as, "perhaps the most perfect example I have ever known of genius as traditionally conceived, passionate, profound, intense, and dominating. Logical atomism[ edit ] Russell explained his philosophy of logical atomism in a set of lectures, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", which he gave in 1918. Logical atomism is a form of radical empiricism, for Russell believed the most important requirement for such an ideal language is that every meaningful proposition must consist of terms referring directly to the objects with which we are acquainted, or that they are defined by other terms referring to

objects with which we are acquainted. Russell excluded some formal, logical terms such as all, the, is, and so forth, from his isomorphic requirement, but he was never entirely satisfied with our understanding of such terms. Once he shed neo-Hegelianism in his early years, Russell remained a philosophical realist for the remainder of his life, believing that our direct experiences have primacy in the acquisition of knowledge. For a time, Russell thought that we could only be acquainted with our own sense data — momentary perceptions of colours, sounds, and the like — and that everything else, including the physical objects that these were sense data of, could only be inferred, or reasoned to. Philosophy of science[ edit ] Russell claimed that he was more convinced of his method of doing philosophy than of his philosophical conclusions. Science was one of the principal components of analysis. Russell was a believer in the scientific method, that science reaches only tentative answers, that scientific progress is piecemeal, and attempts to find organic unities were largely futile. Russell held that the ultimate objective of both science and philosophy was to understand reality, not simply to make predictions. Russell held that of the physical world we know only its abstract structure except for the intrinsic character of our own brain with which we have direct acquaintance. Russell, Russell said [19] that he had always assumed copunctuality between percepts and non-percepts, and percepts were also part of the physical world, a part of which we knew its intrinsic character directly, knowledge which goes beyond structure. His views on science have become integrated into the contemporary debate in the philosophy of science as a form of Structural Realism, people such as Elie Zahar and Ioannis Votsis have discussed the implications of his work for our understanding of science. Ethics[ edit ] While Russell wrote a great deal on ethical subject matters, he did not believe that the subject belonged to philosophy or that when he wrote on ethics that he did so in his capacity as a philosopher. In his earlier years, Russell was greatly influenced by G. Along with Moore, he then believed that moral facts were objective, but known only through intuition; that they were simple properties of objects, not equivalent to. In time, however, he came to agree with his philosophical hero, David Hume, who believed that ethical terms dealt with subjective values that cannot be verified in the same way as matters of fact. Notwithstanding his influence on them, Russell himself did not construe ethical propositions as narrowly as the positivists, for he believed that ethical considerations are not only meaningful, but that they are a vital subject matter for civil discourse. Indeed, though Russell was often characterised as the patron saint of rationality, he agreed with Hume, who said that reason ought to be subordinate to ethical considerations. In terms of his normative ethical beliefs, Russell considered himself a utilitarian [20] early in his life. Religion and theology[ edit ] For most of his adult life Russell maintained that religion is little more than superstition and, despite any positive effects that religion might have, it is largely harmful to people. He believed religion and the religious outlook he considered communism and other systematic ideologies to be forms of religion serve to impede knowledge, foster fear and dependency, and are responsible for much of the war, oppression, and misery that have beset the world. In his speech, "Am I an Atheist or an Agnostic? As a philosopher, if I were speaking to a purely philosophic audience I should say that I ought to describe myself as an Agnostic, because I do not think that there is a conclusive argument by which one can prove that there is not a God. On the other hand, if I am to convey the right impression to the ordinary man in the street I think that I ought to say that I am an Atheist, because, when I say that I cannot prove that there is not a God, I ought to add equally that I cannot prove that there are not the Homeric gods. Well, my position is the affirmative position that such a being actually exists, and that His existence can be proved philosophically. Perhaps you would tell me if your position is that of agnosticism or of atheism. I mean, would you say that the non-existence of God can be proved? No, I should not say that: For two or three years I was a Hegelian. I remember the exact moment during my fourth year [in ] when I became one. I had gone out to buy a tin of tobacco, and was going back with it along Trinity Lane, when I suddenly threw it up in the air and exclaimed: However, elsewhere in his autobiography, Russell also mentions: About two years later, I became convinced that there is no life after death, but I still believed in God, because the " First Cause " argument appeared to be irrefutable. There is no logical impossibility in the hypothesis that the world sprang into being five minutes ago, exactly as it then was, with a population that "remembered" a wholly unreal past. There is no logically necessary connection between events at different times; therefore nothing that is happening now or will happen in the future can disprove the hypothesis that the world began five minutes ago. Philosophy,

Norton, , p. As a young man, Russell had a decidedly religious bent, himself, as is evident in his early Platonism. While he rejected the supernatural, he freely admitted that he yearned for a deeper meaning to life. The book also contains other essays in which Russell considers a number of logical arguments for the existence of God, including the first cause argument, the natural-law argument, the argument from design, and moral arguments. He also discusses specifics about Christian theology. Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly, as I have said, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. While others were also influential, notably Frege, Moore, and Wittgenstein, Russell made analysis the dominant methodology of professional philosophy. He led him, for example, to conclude, much to his regret, that mathematical truths were purely tautological truths, however it is doubtful that Wittgenstein actually held this view, which he discussed in relation to logical truth, since it is not clear that he was a logicist when he wrote the Tractatus. Philosopher and logician F. Ramsey would later simplify the theory of types arguing that there was no need to solve both semantic and syntactic paradoxes to provide a foundation for mathematics. I wanted certainty in the kind of way in which people want religious faith. I thought that certainty is more likely to be found in mathematics than elsewhere. But I discovered that many mathematical demonstrations, which my teachers wanted me to accept, were full of fallacies I was continually reminded of the fable about the elephant and the tortoise. Having constructed an elephant upon which the mathematical world could rest, I found the elephant tottering, and proceeded to construct a tortoise to keep the elephant from falling. But the tortoise was no more secure than the elephant, and after some twenty years of arduous toil, I came to the conclusion that there was nothing more that I could do in the way of making mathematical knowledge indubitable. However, Norman Malcolm tells us in his recollections of Wittgenstein that Wittgenstein showed a deference towards Russell such as he never saw him show towards any one, and even went so far as to reprimand students of his who criticised Russell. Quine, John R. Searle, and a number of other philosophers and logicians. There is a marked tendency to conflate these matters, and to judge Russell the philosopher on what he himself would definitely consider to be his non-philosophical opinions. Russell often cautioned people to make this distinction. Beginning in the s, Russell wrote frequently for The Nation on changing morals, disarmament and literature. In , he wrote that the magazine " From his adolescent years, he wrote about 3, words a day, with relatively few corrections; his first draft nearly always was his last, even on the most complex, technical matters.

## Chapter 9 : Hume: Epistemology

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David Hume “ wanted to find out how we come to this ingrained belief in the external world. If I close my eyes for a while and look outside the same window again, I believe to see the same houses, trees and cat. This constancy is, however, not perfect. But even in these changes, the perceived bodies maintain coherence. Constancy We are, according to Hume, predispositioned to regard successive impressions as constant, which leads us to regard interrupted perceptions as the same because we ignore the numerical differences, such as time and place, between them. The interruption we perceive is contrary to a perfect, ongoing, existence. This is a difficult concept for the human mind and we resolve this by supposing that these interrupted perceptions are created by a real existence. The effects of constancy can, according to H. Price, be described in two stages. We therefore refer to our perceptions usually in the genitive form. Hume argues that the mind postulates external objects in order to explain this regularity in our experiences. Hume gives the example of him hearing a squeaking sound and after a short while seeing a porter with a letter for him. From these two facts his mind deduces that the porter opened the front door, walked up the staircase and entered his study. He believes these events to be facts, although he has not actually perceived them. Hume argues that the perceived events only make sense if he assumes that the door exists, even when he does not perceive it: The mechanism of constancy and coherence, as described by Hume, has been verified through experimental psychology. Hume, in line with Cartesian thinking, believes that rational reasoning is by definition error-free and the inferences from constancy and coherence are thus not rational. This does, however, not solve the problem of whether there exists a world outside our consciousness. I have argued in a earlier paper that this question lies beyond the purview of philosophical reasoning. Whether the universe is material, or consists of images in our mind is from this point of view not important. Worth Publishers, , p. It arises from notice of nature's order, the same principles of coherence and constancy. It looks like Hume implicitly states that rationality is transcendent entity, not bound and consequential to this world. It is usually overlooked that those principles are older than rationality itself.