

# We Can Know

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1. We can know some things to be true.

Note: Truth corresponds with reality (a matching of thought with what is real). This correspondence view of truth is undeniable since any denial would imply that it (the denial) corresponds to reality.

2. We cannot know all truth (We are not omniscient).
3. Our knowledge is fallible (We have fallible minds and therefore can be mistaken).
4. We can know some truths with personal certainty and some truths beyond a reasonable doubt. (Insisting on logical philosophical certainty for all knowledge demands too much and is not livable). Confidence in knowledge is in degrees. Some things we know more confidently than others. Typically, the more confident we are in a particular belief, the less open we are to consider counter-claims. But being confident (and thus not neutral) does not mean we were not objective in coming to that belief. Nor does a lack of neutrality mean we cannot be objective in examining counter-claims. Being inquisitive, thorough, honest, rational, humble and teachable are intellectual virtues that tend to cultivate true knowledge and minimize the possibility of self-deception.
5. We can know things to be true without necessarily knowing how we know them to be true.
6. Some knowledge is self-evident. These first principles of knowledge are *actually* undeniable and/or existentially necessary to live. For example,
  - a. The existence of the physical world, including myself and other people
  - b. Basic laws of logic (law of identity, law of non-contradiction, law of excluded middle)
  - c. Law of cause and effect

Self-evident truths are a necessary but insufficient test for a worldview.

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7. Knowledge can come through sound reason (using logic)
  - a. Faith and reason can work together (there are good reasons to believe some things).
  - b. Deductive reasoning guarantees the conclusion from the premises, often arguing from the general to the particulars.
  - c. Inductive reasoning makes the conclusion more probable than its competitors, often arguing from the particulars to the general.

Reasoning alone is a necessary but insufficient test for a worldview. Logic can only demonstrate what is possibly real, not what is actually real. (i.e., Logic alone can refute a self-contradictory truth claim, but it cannot validate an internally consistent truth claim). Also, the first principles of reasoning cannot be explained by reasoning. Insisting on a “why” for first principles denies that they are first principles and instead leads to an infinite regress in which no knowledge is possible.

8. Knowledge can come through sense experience (the five senses).
  - a. Our sense perception is generally reliable.
  - b. Natural sciences obtain knowledge from sensory information.
  - c. The scientific method uses the inductive method of reasoning to draw conclusions from particulars observed by the senses.

Knowledge by sensory experience is a necessary test for a worldview. To what extent humans derive knowledge from the senses is debated. (Empiricists believe all knowledge comes through the senses, while rationalists believe that there are universal concepts that are intuitive or innate.) Regardless of how universal concepts get into the intellect, natural evidence does not interpret itself; an accurate interpretation of the data demands honesty and right rules of reasoning. Sense data can also provide knowledge of that which is beyond the empirical realm (e.g., Using the principle of analogy or uniformity, specified complex information and irreducibly complex mechanisms in nature are best explained by personal intelligence versus unguided natural processes; applying the law of causality, scientific data and laws indicating a beginning for the universe demands a transcendent, supernatural cause). Some immaterial things that cannot be grounded or explained by the reductionist view of naturalism are mind, consciousness, life meaning and purpose, free will, laws of logic, the existence and applicability of mathematics, music, love, beauty, humor, moral

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values, principles of justice, human dignity and worth, personal identity and responsibility.

9. Knowledge can come through personal religious experience.
  - a. Awareness of transcendence from ordinary experience (e.g., beauty, goodness, complexity/design)
  - b. Supernatural experience (e.g., transformed life, answered prayer)
  - c. Personal manifestation of divine presence (e.g., a sense of communion, indwelling, gifting, empowering)

Knowledge by personal religious experience is a legitimate but insufficient test for a worldview. Personal experience is not self-interpreting. An independent, objective truth source is needed to understand the meaning of subjective experience. Without an objective truth source by which to judge experience, no experientially-based truth claim could ever be considered wrong.

10. Knowledge can come through a reliable source.
  - a. We cannot reason and experience everything.
  - b. Much of what we know is based on trust in the word/testimony of others (e.g., scientific data, historical events, facts from foreign locations).
  - c. Trust is generally established/strengthened by the prestige of the authority's credentials, number of authorities who hold belief, and persistence of belief.
  - d. We can have objective and adequate knowledge about the past through the testimony of reliable sources.

Knowledge from a reliable source is a legitimate but insufficient test for a worldview. Other knowledge sources must be used to justify the source to be reliable and adjudicate between authorities when they disagree. Historical facts and their meaning are not self-interpreting, but are understood within the context of the interpreter's overall worldview.

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