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# Systems of Knowledge

# What do you know with certainty?

Abstract

I was faced with a question I thought I could not answer.

What do I know, with certainty?

I know with absolute certainty that every thought I have is based on my belief system. My beliefs may change and when they do, my thoughts will be directly related to my belief(s).

I know ***human thoughts are guided by their beliefs***. The rules they live by are derived from their beliefs, whatever their belief systems may be. An argument may arise in your subconscious due to my previous statement, about how we are all guided by our beliefs. Hopefully when you are done reading my thoughts written down on paper you will get to understand my statement above a little more.

I suggest that you do not bother arguing with my thesis because it is an argument that may never end. If there are people who believe my statement to be false, I will agree with them simply because their judgement is as a result of their belief on the very topic which has one simple answer, ***human thoughts are guided by their beliefs.***

The idea that A's form of 'Knowledge' must be true because B's form of 'Knowledge' is identical will let them, A and B, believe their form of ‘knowledge is good and right. What happens when A’s form of ‘knowledge differs from B’s form of knowledge? The truth may not be relative but knowledge is relative to what some call facts. The arguments about which belief is right or superior will not be won because humans base their knowledge on justification and people have different ways of justifying things based on what they *believe* to be true.

Here is an example some may qualify to be nonsense, stupid or out of place.

A young man after his first english class on singular and plural, goes for his first arithmetic class on addition and subtraction.

His Math tutor writes on the chalkboard

“ 1+1 = 2 / one + one equals two. ”

Amazed by his teachers ‘*stupidity*’, he walks out of the class and heads to his English teacher, complaining about the Math tutor’s “form of knowledge.” He continues to explain why he believes his teacher is wrong.

He writes on the English teacher’s chalk board.

“ 1+1 = 1s / one + one equals ones.”

I choose to end the example here so we can all notice why there can be many belief systems that could all indeed be right.

We have several religions, political views, and so many opinions that will forever cause arguments. Each member of the different sides of the argument will always be biased based on their beliefs, and there will be a point where facts will run out and belief will come into play. The question “What makes fact different from belief when a good informant argues?” is something to ponder on.

In *Social Epistemology: Essential Reading*, Miranda Fricker begins her claims with a quote by Edward Shapin. My understanding of Shapin's claim is, knowledge is a collective good. We get our knowledge from others, and what determines whether we accept the knowledge/information we are given is nothing but trust. My question to you is *how do we measure trust when a good liar stands a chance of being trusted*?

Another example,

*A teacher-student relationship, when a mathematics teacher tells a student that 1 + 1 will always equal 2, given that all the calculations are carried out and explained. It is only normal for the student to trust and believe the teacher even without further explanation. The student with his newly found knowledge is certain that in any calculation that involves 1 + 1, the answer must always equal 2 without any doubt and need to calculate it. This takes us back to the beginning of this very reading where I stated that I know with absolute certainty that* ***human thoughts are guided by their beliefs,*** *which in turn is usually backed with a piece of ‘justified’ knowledge.*

Countering the above example in a different subject is the calculation **1 + 1 equal 1,** which is the calculation in marriage.

All the above examples show and signify that beliefs indeed guide human thoughts.

Another thinker, Boghossian states in *Social Epistemology: Essential Reading*, "If our judgments about what is "rational" to believe are to have any prospect of being true, we should not claim that some belief (e.g. Copernicanism) is justified absolutely by the available evidence (e.g. Galileo’s Observation) but only that it is justified relative to the particular epistemic system that we have come to accept."(41). This helps to state what I am certain about, I know with absolute certainty that ***human thoughts are guided by their beliefs***.

Others may argue that the above quote counters my belief about how ***human thoughts are guided by their beliefs***. To eliminate that argument if it happens to arise, I will use myself as an example in this scenario as a good informant on myself. My belief is justified relative to this particular epistemic system that I have chosen to write and discuss on, I do not see this as an argument but a fact if not a law. If someone was to stand and oppose me, then definitely he/she indeed proves that their belief system is indeed guiding them through their thought process and with their actions .

Fricker in the same book (*Social Epistemology: Essential Reading)* discusses the Traditionalist view and Postmodernist/Reductivist view in detail.

She talks about how Traditionalists see social power as irrelevant to their rationale and how Postmodernist views are reduced to it. She says that the mistake both teams make is assuming that their view is *“an all or nothing situation.”* Their belief system helps to state my claim again that ***human thoughts are guided by their belief,*** even if some people think my claim may be wrong, remember each belief is backed with a piece of justified knowledge based on the language/form of knowledge of each side. The Traditionalist and Postmodernist state their claims but there could be a grey area in this situation. Looking at the names given to both of the groups, what about Modernist? Will their claims and positions be valid? Are their thoughts guided by a certain belief?

In addition, Fricker explains what she believes Craig’s view on practical approach is with her quote in *Social Epistemology: Essential Reading*  "Instead he(Craig) imagines a minimal case of the actual situations in which we employ the concept - an epistemic "state of nature" in which we seek true beliefs in order to survive..." (56). Humans feel the need to believe in something. Once that thirst is satisfied, every thought, action and argument will be based on what they have chosen to believe in.

Based on my personal experience, I believe with absolute certainty that she is right. In August 2008, I had an aunt come straight from my village in Ile-Ife in Nigeria to visit me in London, England and she caught the flu. She believed that a curse had been placed on her by her enemies, who did not want her to enjoy her stay in the foreign land. After taking the right medication she was cured and all her arguments and beliefs about the above mentioned scenario were ‘cured’. This and many more reasons are why I state that ***human thoughts are indeed guided by their beliefs***.

Craig explains how humans feel the need to find "true belief" hence the quest to find good informants, I believe that humans believe that once they find good informants they will indeed know the truth or find the "true belief", but Good Informants will be hard to find because there are so many languages and statements being made on a daily basis on which epistemic arguments are to be argued with and there will be Good Informants in many languages who will make argumentative statements based on their belief system.

After Reading both Boghossian's and Fricker's writings, my belief that human thoughts are indeed guided by their belief still remains constant, if not stronger. Those who have different opinions and belief systems from mine may very well score me low or say my words hold no ground. I could also argue that their words hold no ground because of my belief system.

Just to address some arguments that may still arise after reading my thoughts on paper, one may attempt to use my words against me in saying that if the rules I live by make me believe what I have written is indeed right then it can be argued that since they believe that human thoughts are not guided by their belief, their statement is justified based on their belief system. All I have to say is the arguer has indeed verified my thesis, that humans are guided by the rules they live by. Their rules are made from their beliefs.

If I am certain about anything, I know that my thoughts are based on my belief system & I am a human. This I know with absolute Certainty.

Bibliography

Social Epistemology: Essential Readings