**“We see and understand things not as they are but as we are.” Discuss this claim in relation to at least two ways of knowing.**

Prompt 7

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**Topic question**: “We see and understand things not as they are but as we are.” Discuss this claim in relation to at least two ways of knowing.

For those who have ever experienced a car accident, dropped an ice cream on the floor, said good bye to dear ones, or passed the driver’s license test for the first time, these moments often come to play a big part in one’s life. Memories, both good and bad ones, brand people into different categories. Each person has their own way of interpreting and processing their memories. Memories are what exemplify how we often remember and understand certain issues and incidents. When considering the quote, “We see and understand things not as they are but as we are” I come to question the accuracy of those memories which play such significant part in one’s life. The knowledge issues that can be brought up through this is the following: “How accurate is one’s memories and experience in determining a situation? How biased can one’s perception be? There are two ways in which this, the accuracy of one’s memories, is conveyed through two different ways of knowing, first sense perception and second, language.

Sense perception is what determines ways in which one understands a situation. It is directly connected to physical and emotional desires. Sense perception refers to the use of our eyes, ears, noses, tongues and our skin. With this, we understand situations, then memorize them accordingly. “Bias” is a large part of how we make memories. There is a saying that people tend to remember only the things that they want to remember. The way we feel and the way we think affects how deeply we bother to understand the issue. For my part, faith is the main source of knowledge. Christianity is like a pair of glasses. I have grown up in church and have been influenced by the example of my parents. My father is a pastor. One thing that he taught me was to live according to God. I tend to interpret almost everything in my life through the lens of my faith. Thus, my view of certain issues would differ from the majority view their world. For instance, there is the incident of 911. To the ones involved in the crisis, one example being the United States, would firmly believe this as terrorism. As Nick Greene states, “The effects of terrorists crashing airplanes…on September 11, 2001 were devastating to…United States.” Opposed to this, the “terrorists” would point to this event as a religious war or patriotism. This signifies that the interpretation of the situation may be rather subjective. As the textbook, *Theory of Knowledge* states, “opinion [is] judged on your experience.”

I have understood things that are not necessarily logical to others, or perhaps that I understand the same issue in a different light. I see things differently, having Christianity as my background. For example, I saw someone experiencing the death of a friend. The friend who died was stereotypically a “good person”. My friend who wasn’t a Christian asked me, “Why would someone like her die? There are far worse people out there.” *I* did not question her friend’s death. I understood that God has a time for everyone, none of it a mere accident. Because I am a Christian, though it does not logically make sense that such nice person would have to die in a young age, I accepted the situation. For someone with a different background, they might ask, “If God loves his people, why should anyone have to die?” This person interprets the situation according to his or her own perspective. Religion is one area where one’s “perceptions” make it possible to become aloof from the logical definition of life. I experience things the way I understand them, according to my faith. Therefore although there may be hundreds of different perceptions in this world, different ways of understanding, and thousands of biases, it would not matter to my standards. I would look at one situation and make it into my own. That is my memory.

The counter argument to subjectivity, of course, is logic. Subjectivity and objectivity are two subjects with a blurry boundary. If everything is essentially dependent upon one’s perspective and bias, I question the root of logic and the ways in which it is acquired. Is there such thing as an objective knowledge? Take a look at what is scientifically and logically proven in this world. Mathematics and most of the natural science exists as facts, not swayed by emotions or biases. There are no other ways in answering this question: 1+1=2 other than the given answer. There is a matter of “Universally” proven facts such as the above equation. Even consider “Emotions” in an objective light. There is no doubt, thus it is universally proven, that everyone has emotions. It’s as basic as acknowledging the fact that oxygen exists in this world, or that the Sun is the center of Universe or that such thing as gravity exists with proven evidence. Thus, how do we explain the way people view subjects as mathematics and science as facts? Is it a matter of how to acquire the information, or is it about whom it is that acquires the information? I realize that there are still topics in science that have not yet been proven as completely factual. For example, human science is vaguely estimated by public assumption. Thus the result may not always be profound for each individual but mostly for the general public. But the “fact” still remains that human science is a part of science in which it is used to view the world into different categories.

Language too, affects the way we view the world. For one, I have learned to speak English, Spanish and some Mandarin as a native Korean. I realize each language has depth in its culture and history as well as the tone, rhythm and arrangements in sentences. Language and the process of understanding a situation takes two forms: 1.We understand and remember things according to what we hear from others, and 2. The way one speaks determines them as an individual.

Taking the first concept, it is proven that one of the fastest ways of news travels is by word of mouth. In my school, as in many other high schools, that is how rumors begin. People believe what others say, thus remembering it according to what he or she has heard. I would think that language is the most biased aspect in the ways of knowing because language gives people the freedom to take a stance according to what they believe to be true. As Abel states, “Language is not logic…nothing in language corresponds within the world or reflects the grain of reality.” What it comes down to is that because people understand things according to their own perspectives, they communicate their beliefs to other people, thus creating different accounts of the same story. From the sidelines, what is interesting about truth is that the accounts are generally similar in connection to one another. I suppose that is one way of distinguishing truth, even considering biases. That is why at times facing truth is difficult, in the case of “betraying oneself”.

The second concept is rather personal and distinct. Each person has a different way of speaking, or in other words, using their language. Variables such as native country, culture, family background, role models and friends affect this. You are better able to understand how a person views and understands an issue from listening to the way they speak and interpret the world. That is why communication is crucial in getting to know someone, and language happens to be one of the major tools in communicating. Language is a tool for the user to identify themselves and how they understand the world. Religion works the same way. Christians spread the Gospel by identifying themselves as a person in Christ, then by communicating their understanding of God. One magical aspect of language is that as you hear more about it and say more about a topic, the topic becomes more familiar and reasonable. Language is powerful tool of persuasion, thus causing not just one person to see an issue from a unique perspective but convincing others to it from their vantage point. That is how common sense originates from people sharing ideas and perspective.

I remember the first day of high school. 60 percent nervous, 20 percent scared and 20 percent excited, I felt a whole range of different emotions, they are still vivid in my mind. I remember what the people I first met said to me, how they greeted me. These memories that remain are filtered by my perceptions. Therefore, “We see and understand things not as they are, but as we are.” It would be a misunderstanding to think that bias does not exist in experiences. Thus, it would be best to use other ways of knowledge in combination, although at times it is possible to see an experience in a subjective manner. My memory of the first week of school is horrible because I saw people stare and laugh at me as a new student. However, it is comforting to remember that those are just my subjective memories. Because I felt new and embarrassed, those feelings may have over impaired my ability to judge the situation objectively. Someone may even have smiled at me that day and I would have taken it as another sarcastic remark. “We see and understand things not as they are but as we are.”

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