

## The Perception of the Perception

The subjective nature of perception is an inborn characteristic humanity. However, humans found the ability to still classify knowledge under two categories, objective and subjective. Knowledge in the subjective sense, or subjective knowledge for short, is the individual knowledge that each person gains through personal experiences. Artists often try to portray a scene that has an emotional and psychological effect on the viewer, by drawing on their own experiences and thoughts. However, scientists are interested in developing the former type of knowledge, knowledge in the objective sense. Objective knowledge is subjective knowledge which has passed through public scrutiny and hence can be referred to in a sentence as “It is well known that ...”. Therefore I have surmised that the subjective nature of perception is an advantage for artists, in that it allows the creation of art which has a connection to creator, however for the scientists, it results in much more complicated procedure in order to lift the subjective nature of the knowledge they have gathered and yield objective knowledge.

My first address will be to the problem afflicted by scientists. This problem is well described Sir Karl Popper in his lecture at Emory University, “It happens very rarely that a man first forms a conviction on the basis of personal experience, publishes it, and gets it objectively accepted as one of the things we say ‘It is known that...’.”<sup>1</sup> Instead the growth of scientific knowledge, the knowledge that scientists are primarily concerned with, follows a process of elimination. Scientific knowledge is another name for objective

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<sup>1</sup> Popper, Karl. *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem: In Defence of Interaction*. Pg. 13

knowledge, however objective knowledge sounds less biased so I will use it instead. Sir Karl outlined this process in a tetradic schema illustrated below:

$$P_1 \rightarrow TT \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$$

In this process,  $P_1$  is the original problem, practical or theoretical,  $TT$  is the tentative theory that is offered to solve the problem,  $EE$  is the “error elimination” where it is critically tested, and finally  $P_2$  is the problems that are left over and those which are created by this process.

The problems that scientists face are in the tentative theory stage. In this stage, complications arise when the original problem is theoretical. To provide some tentative solution to the problem the scientist must first make observations formulate a hypothesis, test it under controlled conditions, evaluate whether the tests adheres to the hypothesis, if it does not, then the hypothesis is reformed and the process is repeated, however if it does hold true for that situation, then the scientist may put it forth for critical evaluation by his peers. More often than not, the theory never passes the critical evaluation, thus  $P_2$  is essentially  $P_1$ .

Now the question is, ‘How does all this relate to the subjective nature of perception’, and the answer is quite simple. Subjective knowledge, which was mentioned before, are personal experiences, thus are biased, since they are formed through the perception of the world, which has a subjective nature. Since the knowledge has the subjective nature to it, it must undergo scrutiny by the scientific community till everyone shares the same view. At that point, everyone’s own subjective knowledge of the subject

is aligned, so the theory can be considered objective knowledge. The reason it can be objective knowledge is because it holds true in the reality of the scientific public. I'm sure several more questions arise from this statement about the common reality of the scientific community and its relation to the physical world, at least for the ones who believe in it. This demonstrates Sir Karl's tetradic schema, as I have proposed a theory about a problem, and more problems arise, but that shall be a discussion for another day.

The second and last address of mine will be to the implications of the subjective nature of perception, which is directly related to subjective knowledge, on the artist and his profession. Artists often try to portray a scene that has an emotional and psychological effect on the viewer. Artists can try to accomplish such a goal through different depictions of the subject, composition, colors, scale, symbolism, and setting. However, the subject is often based on some object in the real world, be it a person or a ball and the artist must observe or perceive it for him to become aware of its existence. Some examples given of subjective knowledge, by Sir Karl, fall under the actions that the artist takes before he creates a work of art and are given below.

*'He observed* that the moon was full.'

*'He saw* a yellow fish.'

*'He hit* his shins.'

*'He felt* a chill.'

Each one of the statements is some sort of perception or another, thus all subject to the subjective nature of perception. This is the reason the knowledge of each of the statements is called subjective knowledge. With a perception in hand, the artist then creates the art by manipulating the various aspects of the subject to create the artistic effect.

At this point, a critic of this idea would try to argue for the creation of art with objective knowledge. Sir Karl's view of the connection of the body and mind can be used to deal with this view point.

To put it in short, Sir Karl's view is that of a 3-world system. The first world consists of the physical world, the world that consists of solely bodies matter or our physiological. The second world consists of our mental states. Finally the third world consists of the products of human minds. Works of art are considered as part of this world, however they also exist in the first world.<sup>2</sup> The distinction that Sir Karl makes is that physical things in world 1 are mere representations of the true products in world 3. These representations come to be in world 1 through our mental states, those of world 2, motioning our physical states, those of world 1, to create them. World 2 is the origin of our subjective nature of perception, and Sir Karl states that it is in world 2 where subjective knowledge exists.

Earlier on, it was derived that objective knowledge is knowledge that has been deemed objective through the alignment of the public's subjective knowledge. This means that the knowledge is no longer considered held by the mental states of the public, but as a product of the collective human mind, world 3. The only way anything can reach world 1 from world 3 is for some human, that is their world 2 mental states, to create that

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<sup>2</sup> Popper, Karl. *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem: In Defence of Interaction*. Pg. 5

world 3 product in world 1. Thus as soon as objective knowledge passes through world 2, an impression of the creator's mental state is marked on the world 3 product making it subjective knowledge before it becomes the art.

## Bibliography

Popper, Karl. *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem: In Defence of Interaction*. Cornwall: Routledge, 1944. 1-23.