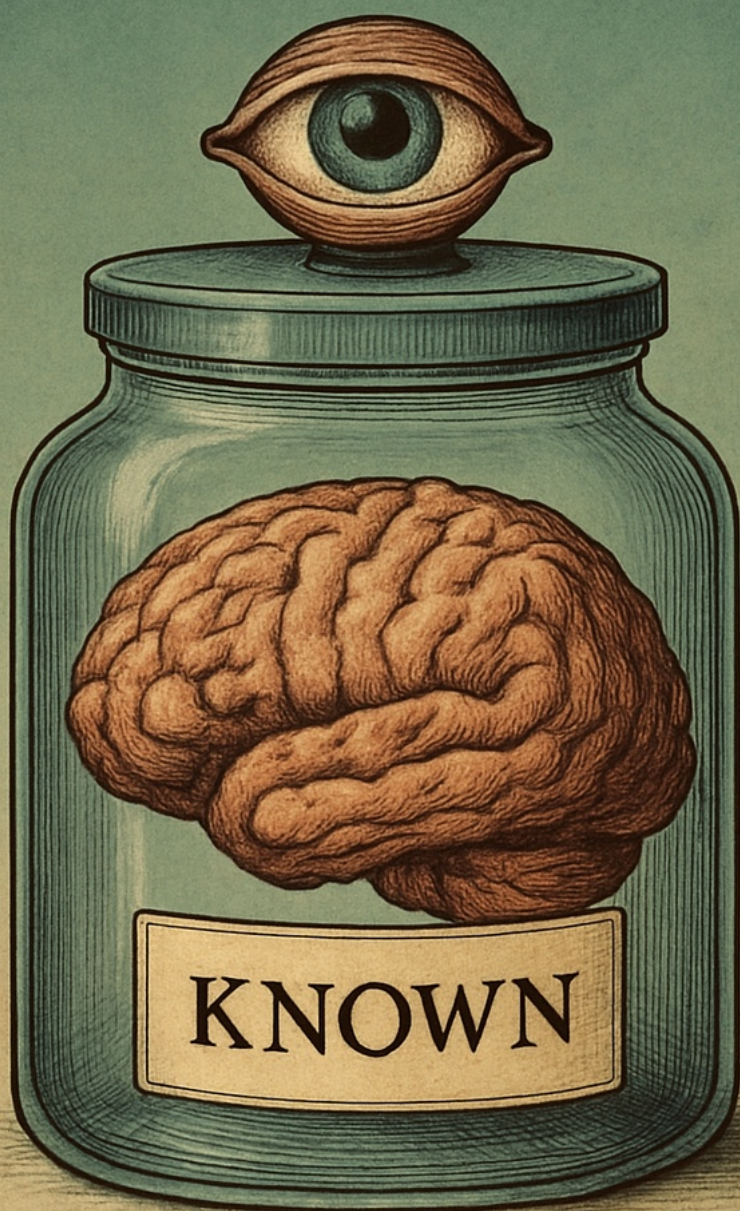


THE PROCESS OF THOUGHT

LIMITED BY KNOWLEDGE



INSPIRED BY J. KRISHNAMURTI

SILENT PERCEPTION

The Process of Thought

Limited by Knowledge

A meditative exploration of how knowledge is limited and the consequences of that limitation.

Inspired by the teachings of **J. Krishnamurti** and the philosophical clarity of **David Bohm**.

INSPIRED BY J. KRISHNAMURTI

Written by Silent Perception

“Experience is limited. Knowledge comes from experience, so knowledge is limited. Thought comes from knowledge, so thought is limited.” — *Silent Perception*

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To contact the author, email: hello@silentperception.co.uk

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INTRODUCTION

In this series we discuss thought: where thought originates from, and how thought determines our behaviour.

We state that knowledge is acquired from perception, and what we perceive is sensation.

The perception of sensation is recorded into memory as knowledge.

We explain that knowledge is the basis for the thoughts we have, and those thoughts determine our behaviour.

The sensations we perceive are the result of our sensuous organs: the eyes, ears, and so on. Our sense organs are limited, so the sensation available to us is limited. The fact that we perceive limited sensation, means that perception must also be limited. We derive knowledge from that quality of perception, so it follows that knowledge must be limited as well. This enables us to conclude that the thoughts we have are created from a limited pool of knowledge.

Thought is limited.

We discuss the ability for thought to function adequately within that limitation, the ability for thought to function inadequately as a result of that limitation, and the effect the limitation has on how our thoughts are experienced.

STRUCTURE OF INQUIRY

This section provides a basic introduction to each chapter.

Chapter 1: The Source of Thought

In this chapter we discuss where thought originates from.

We provide an example that shows you can only think about something you know, and you cannot think about something you do not know. This enables us to state that the source of thought is knowledge.

Chapter 2: The Origin of Knowledge

In this chapter we discuss where knowledge originates from.

We demonstrate that what we know is acquired from what we perceive, so we state the origin of knowledge to be experience.

Chapter 3: Human Behaviour

In this chapter we discuss the origin of human behaviour.

We demonstrate that our behaviour is the result of the thoughts we have. The chapter establishes a lineage from experience, to knowledge, to thought, to behaviour.

Chapter 4: The Limitation of Thought

In this chapter we discuss the implications of thought arising from knowledge.

We state that experience is derived from perception, and what we perceive is sensation. Sensation is the result of our sensuous organs: eyes, ears, and so on. Our sense organs are limited, so our experience is limited. Since experience is limited, the knowledge we acquire from experience must also be limited. Thought arises from knowledge so, since knowledge is limited, thought must be limited.

We explain that a lack knowledge about someone or something prevents adequate thoughts and behaviour in relation that person or thing. We also explain that the ability to learn more alleviates the issue of insufficient knowledge, over time.

Chapter 5: Thought Functioning Adequately

In this chapter we discuss thoughts ability to function adequately, even when knowledge is limited.

We give the example of a person not needing to know how to make a pair of shoes to be able to tie their shoelaces.

Chapter 6: Thought Functioning Inadequately

In this chapter we discuss thought functioning inadequately as a result of it having limited knowledge.

We give the example of a person trying to fix a burst water pipe, believing they know how to solve the problem, but actually they don't, and end up making the problem worse.

Chapter 7: The Consequence of Limited Knowledge

In this chapter we discuss the consequence of knowledge being limited.

You know what you know, but you don't know what you don't know. This statement conveys a totality in the way we experience knowledge.

The limited knowledge we have produces thoughts that are limited, but because there is no way to be aware that the thoughts are limited, we do not experience them as limited, we experience them as complete.

When you are right, you think your are right.

When you are wrong, you do not know you are wrong.

We do not just think we know something, we think we know all there is to know about it. That gives us a conviction in what we think, irrespective of whether it is right or wrong.

CHAPTER 1

THE SOURCE OF THOUGHT

WRITTEN BY SILENT PERCEPTION

THE SOURCE OF THOUGHT

To begin understanding thought, it is important to uncover where thought originates from.

We can uncover the source of thought by using a simple example. I will ask you two questions, please answer them as we go along.

What is your name?

Please answer this question, telling the answer to yourself.

You will notice that you can answer this question easily, and without much effort. The answer seems obvious to you, and the question seems trivial, but it has significance in understanding where thought originates from.

Now, I will ask you a second question. This time, the question is about me, not about you.

What is the name of my great grandmother?

You will notice that you cannot answer this question. You will also notice that you are not incentivised to think about the question further. You do not know the answer, and you are happy to accept that you don't know the answer, and leave it at that.

To understand the origin of thought, we must understand why you were able to answer the first question, but unable to answer the second question.

Why could you answer the first question?

You could answer the first question because you **know** your name.

Why could you not answer the second question?

You could not answer the second question because you do not **know** the name of **my** great grandmother.

The emphasis is on the word 'know'.

What we can understand from this exercise is that if you **don't know something**, you **cannot think it**. So, you can only think about something you know and, therefore, the source of thought is knowledge.



figure 1. the source of thought is knowledge

Conclusion

The source of thought is knowledge.

CHAPTER 2

THE ORIGIN OF KNOWLEDGE

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THE ORIGIN OF KNOWLEDGE

In the last chapter we stated the source of thought to be knowledge. We must now continue our enquiry in the direction of understanding knowledge by asking the following question:

What is the origin of knowledge?

What we are is the mind. The content of the mind is made up of various forms of sensation.

The Sensations

The Physical Sensations

- Visual
- Auditory
- Gustatory
- Tactile
- Olfactory

The Psychological Sensations

- Intellect
- Emotion

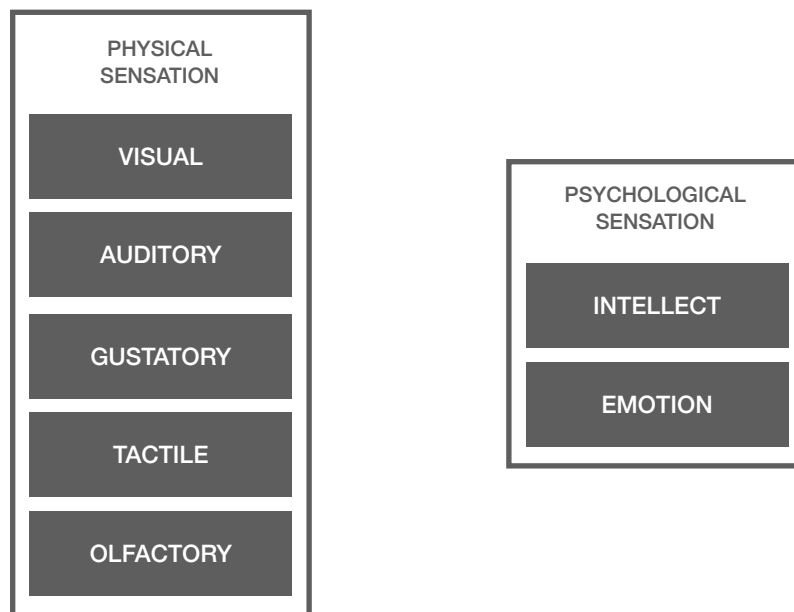


figure 1. physical and psychological sensations

Those sensations are observed and recorded into memory as knowledge, that is how knowledge is acquired.

Example: Auditory Sensation

As I am listening to someone speak, I am simultaneously recording that experience into memory. This enables me to later recite what they said to another person.

Example: Visual Sensation

As I am watching a firework display, I am simultaneously recording that experience into memory. This enables me to recommend others go to the firework display next year.

The sensations we observe are recorded into the brain as knowledge.



figure 2. the process of acquiring knowledge

The **sensation we observe** is referred to by the word **experience**. So, we can simply say, the origin of knowledge is experience.

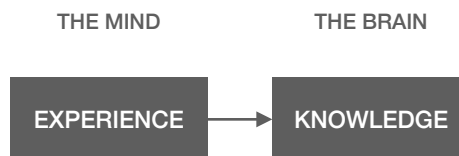


figure 3. the origin of knowledge

Conclusion

The origin of knowledge is experience.

CHAPTER 3

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

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HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

In the previous two chapters, we established two things:

1. the origin of thought is knowledge.
2. the origin of knowledge is experience.

We can represent this process with the following diagram.

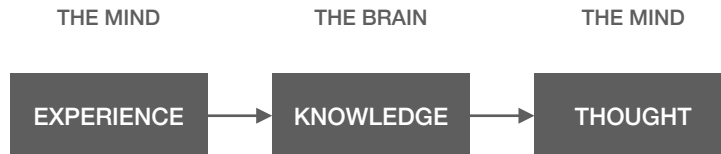


figure 1. the fundamentals of thought

Thought determines our actions (commonly referred to as our behaviour).

Examples of Thought Determining our Actions

Thought makes a plan and acts out that plan:

Example:

You plan to have children between the ages of 28 - 33, so you search for a suitable partner while working on your career and getting a house.

Thought makes a decision and acts:

Example:

You decide it is time to get up and get ready for work, so you get out of bed.

Thought responds to a sensation and acts:

Example:

You feel hungry, so you go get food.

Thought forms beliefs and acts according to those beliefs:

Example:

You believe in the Islamic doctrine, so you wear a hijab.

Understanding that action originates from thought enables us to include action in our diagram.

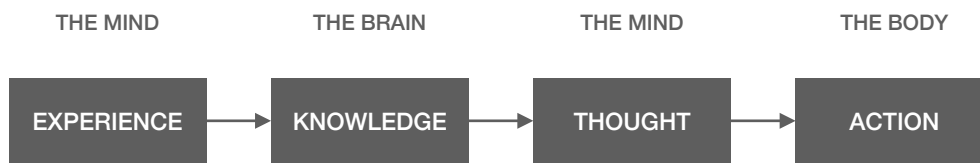


figure 2. the fundamentals of behaviour

As previously stated, we can only **think** according to **what we know**. Since our actions are based on thought, it follows that we can, therefore, only **act** according to **what we know** as well.

Conclusion

The basis for human behaviour is thought.

Explanation:

You can only **think** in accordance with **what you know**.

You can only **act** in accordance with **what you think**.

The basis for **what you know** is **what you have experienced**. So, experience informs your thinking and determines your actions.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIMITATION OF THOUGHT

WRITTEN BY SILENT PERCEPTION

THE LIMITATION OF THOUGHT

In the previous three chapters, we have established three things:

1. The origin of human behaviour is thought.
2. The origin of thought is knowledge.
3. The origin of knowledge is experience.

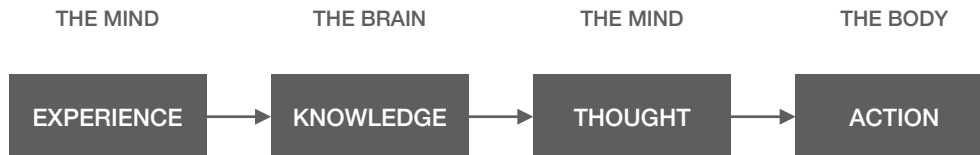


figure 1. The fundamental of human behaviour

The observation of sensation is experience. Sensation is made possible by the sense organs.

Examples:

The eyes of the body enable vision to be possible.

The ears of the body enable sound to be possible.

The sense organs have physical limitations.

Examples:

Your eyes don't see everything.

Your ears don't hear everything.

Because you do not sense everything, it is impossible to know everything. Thus, we make the statements:

Experience is limited.

Knowledge is limited.

Because you don't know everything, your thoughts about someone or something are always partial.

Explanation:

The knowledge you have about someone or something falls into the following categories:

1. Knowledge that is correct
2. Knowledge that is incorrect
3. Knowledge that is partially correct and partially incorrect.

In addition to this, there is also **what you don't know**: the facts about someone or something that you have no knowledge of.

Knowledge, being limited, can lead to inappropriate thoughts and inappropriate actions in regard to someone or something. A lack of knowledge raises an issue, but it is not an unsolvable problem because people can learn more. This enables people to:

1. learn what they don't know.
2. change the incorrect knowledge they hold into correct knowledge.

Only when thought resists learning more, opting to hold on to what it currently thinks to be true, does the limitation become a serious problem.

Conclusion

Experience is limited, knowledge is limited, and so thought is limited. A lack knowledge about someone or something prevents adequate thoughts and behaviour in relation that person or thing. The ability to learn more alleviates the issue of insufficient knowledge, over time.

CHAPTER 5

THOUGHT FUNCTIONING ADEQUATELY

WRITTEN BY SILENT PERCEPTION

THOUGHT FUNCTIONING ADEQUATELY

In the previous chapters we stated that thought is limited because knowledge and experience are limited. The limited nature of thought means that the thoughts we have are put together from incomplete information.

Incomplete information is not always a problem because some tasks only require limited information to complete. This enables thought to function adequately within its limitation.

Example 1: Shoelaces

You don't need to know how to make a pair of shoes to be able to tie your shoelaces.

Example 2: Airplanes

Humanity doesn't have to know everything about the universe to be able to manufacture planes that can fly.

Different tasks require varying levels of knowledge to complete.

Example 1: Communication

For **Person-A** to communicate with **Person-B** successfully, the requirement is that they both speak the same language.

Example 2: Technical Communication

For **Person-A** to communicate with **Person-B** about a technical matter successfully, the requirement is that they both speak the same language and have an understanding of technical issues.

So long as the knowledge we have is sufficient to meet the task, thought is capable of functioning adequately.

Conclusion

Even though knowledge is limited, thought can still function adequately.

CHAPTER 6

THOUGHT FUNCTIONING INADEQUATELY

WRITTEN BY SILENT PERCEPTION

THOUGHT FUNCTIONING INADEQUATELY

In the previous chapters we stated that thought is limited because knowledge and experience are limited. The limited nature of thought means that the thoughts we have are put together from incomplete information.

In the last chapter we stated that incomplete information is not always a problem because some tasks only require limited information to complete.

When we hold sufficient knowledge to complete the task, thought functions adequately.

Example: Thought Functioning Adequately

I have enough knowledge of my lawnmower to successfully cut the grass without any problem.

Incomplete information causes a problem when we have insufficient knowledge to complete a task, but proceed on the basis of believing we have sufficient knowledge to complete the task.

When we do not hold sufficient knowledge to complete a task, thought functions inadequately.

Example: Thought Functioning Inadequately

There is a water pipe leaking in my house. I am convinced that I know how to solve the problem, so I make some changes. Following those changes, I accidentally make the problem worse and create some minor additional problems.

Conclusion

The limits of knowledge can cause thought to function inadequately.

CHAPTER 7

THE CONSEQUENCE OF LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

WRITTEN BY SILENT PERCEPTION

THE CONSEQUENCE OF LIMITED KNOWLEDGE

In the previous chapters we stated that thought is limited because knowledge and experience are limited. The limited nature of thought means that the thoughts we have are put together from incomplete information. We stated that each task we do has a knowledge requirement to complete.

When we hold sufficient knowledge to complete the task, thought function adequately.

When we do not hold sufficient knowledge to complete a task, thought functions inadequately.

Thought functions inadequately when it **believes** it has **sufficient knowledge** to complete the task, but actually has **insufficient knowledge** to complete the task. Thought acting in ignorance of what it does not know, is the consequence of limited knowledge. It is that which we explore in this chapter.

The limited nature of knowledge produces two problems with thought.

1. The knowledge we have is incorrect, yet we believe the thought (it produces) to be correct.

Example:

I come home to find a broken plate on the floor. My son tells me the cat did it but, in actuality, it was my son who broke the plate.

2. The knowledge we have is limited, yet we believe the thought (it produces) it to be complete.

Example:

The power goes out in my house. I assume the power is out for the whole neighbourhood, so I wait for the power to come back on.

Later, I discover the neighbourhood has power and the issue is localised to my house, requiring me to do something.

In both cases, the problem with one's thinking arises from limited knowledge and thought presenting itself as complete.

Clarification:

The notion of correctness implies completeness.

Explanation:

You can only think your opinion is correct if you believe you have all the information.

Here we have brought out a distinction between **completeness** and **correctness**, but stated that they are actually the same thing: correctness implies completeness, and completeness implies correctness.

The Consequence of Limited Knowledge

The danger inherent in our thinking is the fact that our thoughts are formed from limited knowledge, yet present themselves to the mind as complete: thought presents itself as **knowing all there is to know**.

Example:

You believe you have the most amazing husband in the world... until you find out he has been cheating on you for the last 6 months.

When thought presents itself as knowing all there is to know, it generates a degree of conviction in our opinions and beliefs. The conviction held in what we currently know has the potential to resist the learning of what we don't know. Not all new information is resisted, only information that contradicts what we currently think is resisted.

Example: Receiving Similar Information

Conviction does not impede the receiving of information that is coherent with what we currently think, it is freely accepted.

Example: Receiving Contradictory Information

Conviction does impede the receiving of information that is incoherent with what we currently think, it is actively resisted.

Conviction does not create a resistance to learning **totally**, it only creates a resistance to learning that you are wrong.

Contradictory information may be correct, so conviction must be kept on a leash. An intense sense of conviction is an inappropriate attitude towards what we think. For thinking to operate properly, we must always have a degree of humility towards our own thoughts, and leave open the possibility that we are wrong.

Completeness is the culprit of conviction because when you truly believe you know all there is to know, you also truly believe that any contrary opinion must be wrong and not worth listening to.

Example:

Someone tells you they saw your husband with another woman and you think to yourself 'No, they must be mistaken, my husband would never do that'.

Knowledge is everlastingly incomplete, but the mind is continually learning and acquiring new information. The process of learning is the solution to this limitation. As one learns more, one's thoughts and actions become more coherent with what is actually true in the world.

The issue with thought (produced by limited knowledge) is that believing we know all there is to know about a person, or a thing, not only presents a false appearance to the mind, but that also prevents the learning which is the solution to the problem.

Example:

One who has a conviction to a particular belief will not listen to a contrary belief.

Understanding the limited nature of thought enables us to make this statement:

What you think does not take into account what you do not know.

Conclusion

Thought is limited, but presents itself as complete. Completeness generates a conviction that distorts learning through resisting contradiction.