

# Reason as a source of knowledge

## Knowledge empiricism (Against rationalism and innatism)

All knowledge of synthetic propositions is a posteriori, while all a priori knowledge is of analytic propositions.

Hume (Hume's fork)	<p><u>Relation of ideas</u></p> <p>A priori / Analytic propositions / Reason / Concepts and ideas rather than physical / Absolutely certain/ True by definition / Known by deduction</p> <p><u>Matters of fact</u></p> <p>A posteriori / Synthetic propositions / Facts and generalisations about the world / Not 100% certain / Reliant on how the world is / Can be denied without contradiction / Not known by deduction</p> <p><u>Causal inference</u></p> <p>Knowledge comes from observation and experience, and what is in our memory / Anything beyond that rests on causal inference. / If we don't have the experience then we can't make the causal inference. / Knowledge only comes from a posteriori experience. / Reason only imposes order on causal relationships.</p>
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## Rationalism



## Knowledge innatism (rationalists)

There is at least some innate knowledge

Leibniz	<p>Sense experiences provide us with knowledge of specific instances.</p> <p>Many instances only confirm a general, rather than universal, truth. Therefore we can't establish universal, necessary truths.</p> <p>Some a priori knowledge can be doubted.</p> <p>Therefore some a priori knowledge must be contingent truths.</p> <p>Therefore not all a priori knowledge is analytic, so there must be some innate knowledge</p>
Descartes	<p>Uses deductive arguments based on a priori reasoning to prove synthetic propositions: The Cogito: Descartes doubts his beliefs until he reaches a point of certainty, the cogito.</p> <p>P1: I am thinking</p> <p>P2: All thinking things exist</p> <p>C: Therefore I exist.</p> <p>Descartes denies this is a deductive argument, and says it is an intuition of the mind as to him it is self-evident. You can only be doubting if you are thinking. He needs it to be an intuition as he is still working under the assumption that a demon may deceive him. I am I exist must be true whenever I assert it or think it, so the truth of the cogito is revealed in performing it as the thought that I do not exist is self-defeating.</p> <p>The cogito seems to be based on reason alone, but it could be said that Descartes learns the cogito by experiencing his own thinking and that it is not possible to think without existing, but if it is a self-justifying thought and can be known independently of experience then it must be a priori.</p>

## Criticism of innatism ( empiricism)

All concepts are derived from experience

Locke	<p><u>Tabla Rasa (blank slate) argument</u></p> <p>Before we experience something we have no ideas, thoughts or concepts.</p> <p>Our ideas come from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1)Sensation – we experience objects outside the mind using our senses. This gives us ideas of 'sensible' or secondary qualities.</li> <li>2)Reflection – we experience our own mind through introspection or awareness of what our mind is doing. This gives us perception, thinking, willing etc.</li> </ol> <p><u>Also:</u></p> <p>Sensation (seeing) yellow isn't the same as the concept (notion or idea) of YELLOW.</p> <p>Seeing (experiencing yellow) is different to the role YELLOW plays in the thought (concept) 'If it is yellow it is coloured'.</p>
Hume	<p>What we are immediately aware of in perception can be divided into impressions (sensing or feeling) and ideas (thinking).</p> <p>Both can be divided into sensation (coming from the senses) and reflection (coming from ourselves).</p> <p>Ideas are acquired by copying from impressions.</p> <p>Impressions:</p> <p>We experience them directly / More forceful and vivid than ideas / Difficult to confuse impressions</p>

## Reason as a source of knowledge

<u>Descartes arguments for the existence of God</u>	
The Trademark argument	<p>P1: The cause of anything must be at least as perfect as its effect.                      P2: My ideas must be caused by something.                      P3: I am imperfect.                      P4: I have the idea of God, which is that of a perfect being.</p> <p>C1: I cannot be the cause of my idea of God                      C2: Only perfect beings can be the cause of my idea of God.</p> <p>Main C: God must exist.</p> <p>He can see this clearly and distinctly – It passes the truth test.</p>
The ontological argument	<p>Descartes considers whether his own existence is enough to show that God must exist.</p> <p>To try and prove this he tries to investigate where his own existence has come from.</p> <p>P1: The cause of my existence as a thinking thing must be either A) Myself, B) I have always existed, C) My parents or D) God.                      P2: I cannot have caused myself to exist for then I would have created myself perfect.                      P3: Neither have I always existed, for then I would be aware of this.                      P4: My parents may be the cause of my physical existence, but not of me as a thinking mind.                      C (by elimination) Therefore, only God could have created me.</p>
The contingency argument	<p>Descartes argues that his intellect can take any intelligible object and work out which features are essential to it.</p> <p>He attempts this with his idea of God, which is the idea of a supremely perfect being. To be perfect God must have all perfections, this includes the property of existence. Therefore, God must exist.</p> <p>P1: I have an idea of God, as a perfect being.                      P2: A perfect being must have all perfections                      P3: Existence is a perfection                      C: God exists</p>

<u>Criticisms</u>	
The Trademark argument	<p>Our minds can easily create better versions of real objects. Hume argued that our idea of God is derived from considering virtues in other people (you experience these virtues, so come up with the idea that there must be a God, hence how we can come up with better versions of things ourselves.)</p> <p>Hume says we need experience of causes and effects conjoined before we can learn of their connection, so, from, knowing the effect, idea of God, we cannot deduce what might have caused God. But can God be too great for us to understand.</p> <p>Some would argue that we do not have a clear idea of a perfect God or of infinity. If these concepts are not present in our minds, then how can we possibly have an idea of God in our minds?</p>
The contingency argument	<p>Why must we have been created by a perfect being?</p> <p>I may have been created by an evil scientist or an angel or even the process of evolution?</p> <p>Why does our author have to be myself, my parents, or a perfect being? These options are not the only ones!                      Both of the arguments Descartes presents to prove the existence of God both start from observations about the world, e.g. having an idea of God, so they are a posteriori deductions.</p> <p>They are abductive, this means that the arguments eliminate all other possibilities, they attempt to 'deduce' the only possible cause.</p>
The ontological argument	<p>Gaunillo: we can imagine things that are perfect e.g. an island. Everyone has different perceptions of perfection. So anyone can prove anything is perfect.</p> <p>Kant: Existence is not a property of something. We are not describing God when we say he exists, we are not adding to the idea of God by saying this. The idea of God does not change whether he exists or not.</p> <p>Hume: Can only establish the existence of God through experience. The existence of objects is only true through experience. Objects can contain existence but that does not mean they will always exist.</p>

Descartes responses to the criticisms of the ontological argument

The idea of an island is not like the idea of God.

An island is not an intelligible object in the same way a triangle is, so we cannot discover its features just by thinking.

The idea of a perfect island will differ between minds.

CRITICISM: But it can also be argued that the idea of God can differ between minds.



**Rationalism**



**The existence of the external world**

Russell	Locke	Descartes	Reliabilism
<p>We cannot conclusively prove the existence of the external world, but we cannot prove it does not exist either.</p> <p>Russell says that there are two possibilities, (hypothesis), that the physical world exists and so do physical objects and they cause my sensations, or the physical world does not exist. He concludes it is better to believe that the external world exists.</p> <p>The physical world hypothesis is by far, for Russell, the best option. This is an abduction - an inference to the best explanation.</p> <p>The existence of the physical world can explain why our sense experiences behave in regular and predictable ways. An apple in a drawer that has been forgotten will be found months later rotten. This is because the apple physically exists and has transformed whilst not being observed. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the external world exists.</p>	<p>Our knowledge is confined to the world as it appears to our senses, and we cannot penetrate through the veil of perception to reveal the essence of reality.</p> <p>We cannot conclusively prove the existence of the external world, the possibility of doubt is not a good reason for giving up on a set of beliefs.</p> <p>Scepticism about the external world is not possible on a practical level only on a theoretical level. The practical business of living is what really matters to us.</p> <p>Perceptions are not subject to my will and therefore it must come from an external source, the external world.</p> <p>Our sense cohere with each other, Cockburn says we learn to associate the way objects appear, feel etc to predict how things will look or what I will perceive next, if I am writing on paper I can predict what the words will say even if my eyes are shut. The sense suggest that there is one external world causing perceptions.</p>	<p>Sensations of objects cannot come from inside him (internal) and must be caused by the external world.</p> <p>P1: The will is part of my essence  P2: sensation is not subject to my will  C: Sensations come from outside of me (external)</p> <p>P1: My nature or essence is unextended (not broad, stretched out)  P2: Sensations are ideas of extended things (broad things)  C: sensations come from outside of me.</p> <p>Sensations for Descartes therefore originate in matter.</p> <p>P1: Two possible sources for the origin of sensations, God or matter.  P2: I have a strong natural inclination to believe they come from matter, and I have no faculty by which to correct this belief.  C1: So if their origin were in God, God would be a deceiver.  P3 God is not a deceiver  C: Sensations originate in matter</p>	<p>Knowledge is reliably produced true belief. So a person can have knowledge even if they cannot give justification for the belief.</p> <p>Justification seems to be a weakness in most knowledge, as in, I see a red car, my justification for this is my eyes, but can our eyes deceive us? So the skeptical argument fails in regards to reliabilism as we do not need a justification for our beliefs. If the belief is reliably produced then there is a car there.</p> <p>Beliefs can count as knowledge even if we cannot provide a defence of our belief.</p> <p>Even though I cannot tell that I may be a brain in a vat, this does not show that I do not have knowledge of the world, as if I am in the normal world, then my beliefs about it are produced by a reliable process and so are knowledge. If I know there is a red car in the road then it must be the case that the material world exists. So we can have knowledge of the world, despite global skepticism, but we may not be able to know that we have knowledge.</p>
<p align="center">Criticisms</p>	<p align="center">Criticisms</p>	<p align="center">Criticisms</p>	<p align="center">Criticism</p>
<p>Because it is a hypothesis we cannot be certain of the conclusion. There can be no deductive proof of the nature of a material reality.</p> <p>There maybe other explanations of the existence of the external world.</p>	<p>They are not deductively valid arguments. Just because I cannot control my sense experiences does not mean they are external caused.</p> <p>Dreams, I cannot always control my dreams, but they do not always correspond to a material world.</p>	<p>Sensations may come from a part of me I am not aware of, like dreams, they are within me even if they are not subject to my will.</p> <p>Perhaps God feeds the ideas of material things into our minds (Berkeley's view)</p> <p>It relies on his proof of the existence of God, if his arguments for the existence of God do not succeed then there is no guarantee that we are not being radically deceived, and the world may be very different from the way it appears.</p> <p>Other philosophers theories on the existence of the external world.</p>	<p>If I believe that I am holding a penis justified in the real world, then, given that the experience is exactly the same, it seems right to say that the belief I am holding a pen is justified in the brain in a vat scenario, it just wouldn't be true. In replacing justification with reliability, reliabilism can account for our lack of knowledge in a brain in a vat scenario, but, it does not seem to give an adequate account of the relationship between our beliefs and justifications.</p>