

# Why people perceive things differently philosophy essay



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There was one day mom bought a couple of iguanas to be kept as pet. They were cute and adorable to me. I have seen their cousins in the wild at the Discovery Channel. When my sister came down the stairs and saw those two little green creatures, she started to scream and ran off to her room immediately after that. I knew that she was very squeamish towards the lizards. It makes me ponder. Why do different people have different view over the same thing? Are different ways of knowing make them perceive things differently? As a Jewish proverb goes, we see and understand things not as they are but as we are. What do we understand by this quote? This essay will discuss the roles of emotion, perception, language, reason physical limitation in determining how we see and understand things.

To answer this question, we first need to define what does it actually mean by ' seeing' and ' understanding'. According to the dictionary, the word seeing has more than one meaning. One of the most suitable meanings in this context is it to become aware of something or someone by using your eyes.[1]On the other hand, understanding may be defined as a psychological process related to an abstract or physical object, such as a person, situation, or message whereby one is able to think about it and use concepts to deal adequately with that object.[2]Nonetheless, the word seeing can also carry meaning to understand.[3]

However, these two words can hardly be defined accurately as it involves the process of different ways of knowing. Let us take an example of three different persons seeing and understanding a male lion in action preying on a gazelle; an American biologist studying the wildlife of African savannah, a native Bushman in Namibia and a Russian tourist who had just escaped from

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being a hungry female lion's lunch two weeks ago. Would these three different persons 'seeing and understanding' of a lion be the same?

The American scientist would be able to use more logic and reason rather than using emotion or feelings to justify the lion's action. When the male clenched its canine teeth directly below the jaw of its prey, he would quickly notice the significance of blocking the air pipe to suffocate the gazelle and making sure his meal would not run away. Based on science, the prey may be killed when the lion enclosing the animal's mouth and nostrils in its jaws which would result in asphyxia[4]. They sneak up to the victim until they reach a distance of approximately 30 metres or less. Typically, several lionesses work together and encircle a herd from different points. Once they have closed with a herd, they usually target the closest prey. The attack is short and powerful; where they attempt to catch the victim with a fast rush and final leap. The prey usually is killed by strangulation,[5]which can cause cerebral ischemia[6]or asphyxia, which results in hypoxemic, or "general," hypoxia[7].

Secondly, the native Bushman who has been living in the African savannah for decades amidst the wild animals would surely know and understand the lion's behaviour and its capability to hunt not just four legs mammals but also humans. But just as the lions, the Bushmen are also good hunters. They wander around the veld in ones and twos, rest and sleep anywhere, completely unperturbed by lions, elephant or other wild game.[8]Besides, he also has a belief that a lion is not just a lion. The Bushmen of Africa believe that not only plants and animals are alive, but also rain, thunder, the wind, spring, etc. They claim that we see can only see the outside form or body of <https://assignbuster.com/why-people-perceive-things-differently-philosophy-essay/>

something. Inside, there is a living spirit that we cannot see. These spirits can fly out of one body into another. For example, a woman's spirit might sometime fly into a leopard; or a man's spirit might fly into a lion's body.[9]

Lastly, the Russian tourist would have a greater propensity to see and understand the lion's behaviour based on her emotion rather than using logic and language. Emotions affect and are a part of our mood, which is usually a more sustained emotional state. Mood affects our judgement and changes how we process decisions.[10] Being a near-terrorized victim, her memory may recall vividly of the horror event that nearly took her life. This could eventually lead to a psychological disorder, ailurophobia (fear of cats). A previous experience of pain can give rise on a subsequent occasion to the emotion of fear. When she was attacked by a lion, she may have suffered a grievous pain or at least some physical injuries. Subsequently, on seeing the lion, she feels fear. The emotional tone belongs to the present perception because of the previous painful sensation inflicted by the perceived object. The original painful sensation, when it actually occurred, occurred as part of a perceptual activity which was one and continuous in all its aspects. The painful sensation was not merely superadded to the visual perception of the object as a separate and isolated event; it was an integral phase of the same continuous process.[11]

However, we do need to take other factors into account. Although the American scientist seeing and understanding of the lion's behaviour are more towards reasoning the logic of its act, he can also actually see and understand the lion as the other two 'partial understanders'. Perceptually, he can see the atrociousness of the killing and deeply aware of the danger

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that the lion may pose to him. Besides, a scientist is a human. If not much, he would have at least a little bit of pity towards the poor gazelle or scared if the lion may attack him. As Irene Claremont de Castillejo says, “Emotion always has its roots in the unconscious and manifests itself in the body.” He can hardly escape from having a feeling or emotion as other human beings do. Linguistically, the scientist would also use biological lexicons that would help him to reason out the lion’s action in a much more detailed manner. In this field, he would be probably richer in terms of language than anyone else. As for the physical limitation, the scientist is equipped with high speed cameras, sonar tracker and probably sedatives shot to get a closer look with the lion and biological samples from them. This would inevitably enhance the scientist ways of knowing through perception which are unlikely to be acquired by the other two people. Although the Bushmen have a highly sensitive and trained five senses and the tourist is probably equipped with a pair of binoculars, these are just not enough.

We can now say that the seeing and understanding of the scientist is more profound and objective than the others seeing and understanding where it involves limited number of ways of knowing. At one time, the Bushmen used more perception whilst the Russian tourist tends to see things more emotionally and both have a great physical limitation. On the other side, the American scientist ways of knowing incorporates multiple experiences where he sees and understand the lion’s behaviour theoretically, emotionally, linguistically and with the help of technology, an enhanced perception.

Thus, to ‘see and understand things as they are and not as we are’ is

neither easy to be done nor is it impossible. This is because each people  
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have different ways of knowing which could result in different seeing and understanding of the same thing. However, when we bring different ways of knowing together without being inclined towards one way of knowing too much, we could come nearer to seeing and understanding things as they are and not as we are.