

# Tok sense essay sample



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The Ways of Knowing of sense is related to empirical observation. From empiricism we might get facts, knowledge and truth. In this case, when our senses are reliable, it is defined as trust. Truth can be determined based on the three theories of truth. Although none of them is entirely satisfactory, each of the theories seems to capture a fragment of the “truth about truth”. Pragmatic theory of truth states that a proposition is true if it is useful or works in practice by being direct, obvious and the most practical. Secondly, correspondence theory of truth presupposes that an idea is true if it corresponds with a fact or reality. Thirdly, coherence theory of truth states a proposition is true if it fits in with our overall set of beliefs. Senses allow us to perceive everything around us and it provides evidence to support our knowledge claims. However, our senses can fool us at times for example, in an optical illusion.

The limitation of our senses is that it does not portray the truth but instead trick us into believing what we see is true. From this, the first knowledge issue that will be discussed in this essay is to what extent do our senses give us truth. The second knowledge issue that will be addressed will be in which areas of knowledge are we able to trust our senses and what are the limits of sensory information in these areas of knowledge. Senses are rather objective and we use all of our five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch) to give us truth or what we think is to be true. Senses are usually linked to perception but can we use our senses without perceiving things? We are able to gain knowledge or information from our surroundings based on what we sense followed by the electrical impulses that are sent to our brain. For

example, when we hear a dog barking, we know that it is a dog and not a cat.

This is due to our past experiences in associating barking with dogs. Thus, our experiences shape that information into our set of truths. However, we are not able to trust our senses in every scenario. In 2001, Frederic Brochet, a cognitive neuroscience researcher, conducted an experiment at the University of Bordeaux involving 54 penology (the study of wine tasting and wine making) undergraduates. They were made to taste one glass of red wine and one glass of white wine and write down their response. All 54 of them described the taste of the red wine as having berries and cherries. However, none of them were aware that both the red and white wine was identical. Brochet simply added flavorless food colouring to the white wine to make it red in colour. This is ironic as the more highly skilled the wine drinker is, the more mistaken he gets. This is because they expected the red wine to taste a certain way due to their past experiences of tasting red wine. This experiment shows us that our senses have failed us to give the truth.

Thus, as shown in the schema theory (a theory in psychology that refers to a cognitive theory about expectations we have as to what will happen because of prior knowledge), this outweighs what their sense was informing them and they misinterpreted the taste of the wine. This shows that although our senses are objective, our perception and past experiences are able to control our senses. Hence, as a result of us deducing things and applying that knowledge to everything else, it proves that we are unable to trust our senses completely and that sense and perception coexist with one another. It is probably so that we can trust our senses when it is reasonable to do so

and when we are able to corroborate our findings with others. In the area of knowledge of natural science, our senses play an important role in observing and experimenting so that we are able to determine the truth. An example of a knowledge claim would be that if an acid and a base react, they would be neutralized. We can determine that this is true by observing the formation of a precipitate and water. The precipitate formed would give out a smell but the smell may be different to various people.

A way to minimize this error would be to repeat the experiment or by corroborating our findings with others. Also, as we are influenced by our expectations and past experiences, we may be able to conclude the smell of the precipitate formed. There are problems of using observation in this area of knowledge. One of the problems would be that our expectations could influence what we want to see as discussed above. In the past, some believe that the Sun revolves around the Earth. This was deemed to be true as we can see that the Sun rises in the East and sets in the West. Also, based on the geocentric model, which states that the Earth is the centre of the universe and that other objects revolve around it, people used to believe that this is true. Lastly, due to their overall beliefs in religion, which can be seen in the Bible, causes them to expect what they wanted to see. This shows that we are not able to trust our senses completely.

One reason that this theory is not true is that we as humans, do not feel or sense that the Earth is moving and rotating and thus people in the past assumed that the Earth is at rest and all other objects revolve around it. This was later seen to be false as it was discovered that the Earth does rotate around its own axis and at the same time, revolve around the Sun. Thus, this

shows that our senses can be limited based on one's belief of a knowledge to be true but a theory can be true when it works with the paradigm of sciences that is gathering the findings with fellow peers before determining whether it is true. The next area of knowledge that will be discussed in this essay is history. We are able to trust our senses when we can verify our information with others. Historians would compare their information to see whether it supports each other. There are two main sources that historians gather. They are primary and secondary sources. Primary source is the evidence written during the time under study while secondary source is the second-hand account of what happened and includes the analysis and interpretation of the primary source.

The historical account can be reliable through the use of our senses as the perception of an event causes it to exist, especially when it is justified by many people. However, there are instances in which our senses are unreliable. Firstly, there might be fallible eyewitness. The ways in which people see things might be different due to their expectations, interests and cultural background. This could be the reason why people from warring countries give different accounts to the same events. The historian who then has to record these events would have to decide what to write down, the descriptions and how to link all of the different accounts into one narrative. Thus, some of these events might be exaggerated while other information might be completely neglected. Another problem with primary source is social bias. The source might show the interests of a particular group of people instead of the whole society and this gives us a bias view to the account.

For example, medieval Europe was believed to be a religious place but it was the writers then who recorded everything related to religion. This shows that those who recorded down the events that took place, during that period of time, could reflect their interests at the expense of other social groups. Hence, although we are able to trust our senses, as historians are able to verify their information with one another, there is a limit to which we are able to rely on our senses. In conclusion, the different areas of knowledge determine whether we are able to trust our senses. Also, we can trust our senses when it is reasonable to do so, verifying our information with our fellow peers and if it coheres to our own set of beliefs and knowledge. As our senses provide us with the raw data, there is a limit for us to trust our senses and hence other ways of knowing such as reason and language play a part in constructing our knowledge.

### Bibliography

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