

Knowledge, truth, belief

Philosophy



Knowledge, Truth, and Belief Word Count: 250 page Imagine that you're having a conversation with someone who has just finished viewing the movie "The Matrix". As soon as the person that you are conversing with realizes that you are taking a philosophy course, they make it a point to ask you whether there is any way that you could prove to them that the world that you both inhabit is real and not an elaborate (but illusory) construct, like the Matrix depicted in the movie. What would your answer be? Explain your position.

To say that the world one inhabits is real and not an elaborate (but illusory) construct, we can deduce this from the fact that death exists. We know that when someone dies, they are gone forever. We don't see the people who have died. They're put in the ground, and we know that there is no possibility of ever seeing them alive again. Death is the ultimate reality that gives life meaning—because we know that once we're dead, there may be some astral traveling to various yugas, but that life is the ultimate experience with realia.

2. One of the more contentious points in Descartes argument centers around the claim that God must necessarily exist because he is a perfect being, and a perfect being would not lack the attribute of existence. When this argument was first posed by St. Anselm in 1078, (almost 560 years earlier) a contemporary of Anselms, a monk named Gaulino, parodied this argument by suggesting that if someone could conceive of a "perfect island" then this perfect island must exist somewhere, since the idea of a non-existent perfect island (much like a non-existent but perfect God) would represent an inconsistency in ones thinking. Is Gaulino correct when he suggests that this kind of argument seems to open the door for the (somewhat sudden)

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existence of all kinds of entities so long as we conceive of them as being perfect? Explain.

Descartes's assertion that all entities exist because they are perfect produces a troubling difficulty that cannot be immediately remedied. As Descartes said himself, even he had doubts about certain issues. "All that I have, up to this moment, accepted as possessed of the highest truth and certainty, I received either from or through the senses. I observed, however, that these sometimes misled us..."¹ He is admitting, then, that the senses can deceive one when conceptualizing philosophical ideas. This doesn't make him an expert, then, when he says that everything that truly exists has to be perfect—because we all know that there are many things in the world that do indeed exist but are imperfect.

3. For Descartes, what is the difference between objective reality and formal reality and how does this particular distinction relate to his discussion of idea that he has in his mind about God?

Objective reality is different from formal reality in the sense that objective reality suspends belief. It is with objective reality, then, that one must take Descartes's ideas about God and place them in focus with that particular viewpoint.

WORKS CITED

Descartes, Rene. *Descartes's Meditations On First Philosophy: Of the Things Of Which We May Doubt*.

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