Reconnoitring Epistemological Parameters: Bridging the Gap Between Knowledge and Belief in the Realm of Empirical Reality through Human Cognition

N. Nithila Mary*

Abstract

Epistemological studies employ various methods to integrate the imbalance between perceived reality and actual reality. This article is an in-depth study of the epistemological limits and complex issues of how epistemology is constrained by Empirical reality and human cognition which is filtered through self-control: the cognitive function that contributes to intentional and goal-oriented behavior. This article also attempts to draw the contrast between belief and Knowledge which are the core concepts of epistemology.

Epistemology is the study of Knowledge that delves into the mind's integrated connection to reality. The prime investigation revolves around the question of what it means for this connection to be distinguished as Knowledge. Epistemology is also concerned with the actuality of knowledge and deals with questions like Do humans possess knowledge? How can we acquire knowledge? Is there any boundary to human knowledge? To find the crucial points of uncertainty within these questions, it is essential to track the subtle undercurrent thoughts of humans. In epistemology, when we trace back to the views of classical writers it is evident that they have studied the dynamic relationship among knowledge, belief, and truth but the

thinkers had inherent connections in their views that were located within their intellectual, historical, and temporal context. Moreover, the idea of Knowledge has evolved over the years. Modern society's pursuit of knowledge has led to the identification of unknown phenomena that were not familiar to classical philosophers, which further gives rise to new inquiries and possibilities.

This article aims to explore the field of epistemology, tracing its origins from the early contemplations of classical writers to the intricate challenges posed by modern society. The fundamental essence of epistemology is in the endeavor to elucidate the mystery of knowledge which is intricately intertwined within the tapestry of human existence. This article, exploring the ideology of epistemology, emphasizes the constraints imposed by empiricism and the complications of human cognition. This article also provides a distinction between belief and knowledge precisely, focusing on their respective functions in the field of epistemology. By adopting this multifaceted approach, this analysis of epistemology offers relevant clues to the concepts of understanding, truth-seeking, and the changing nature of epistemological research.

The investigation into the comprehension of the detailed association between knowledge and belief within the scope of the concerned material reality, which is transmitted through human cognition, spreads a variety of dimensions and disciplines. Classical epistemology has been replaced by new approaches such as contextualism and pragmatic encroachment, which take into consideration that epistemic claims are context-dependent (Ichikawa). In addition to this, cognitive science offers a critical understanding of the psychological processes of belief formation and knowledge acquisition during which the influence of empiricism biases, and social factors are explained. Additionally, it focuses on analysing the overlap of perception and reality, as demonstrated by empirical approaches and philosophical discussions that show that humans encounter all of these difficulties when they capture the surrounding world (Cherry). Furthermore, knowledge construction through a social lens underlines socio-cultural backgrounds in the manifestation of an individual's cognitive structures and mental standpoints (McLeod). Altogether, the above-mentioned opinions point to the fact that education and society are increasingly becoming more oriented towards critical thinking abilities, knowing various perspectives, and being curious, all of which are necessary to deal with the challenges of living with this complex understanding of the world.

Contemporary philosophers tend to consider propositional knowledge as the primary epistemological framework. However, they mostly admit a plurality of knowledge types. Contemporary Scholars like Timothy Chappell in his work "Varieties of Knowledge in Plato and Aristotle" developed an idea of a 'variety of forms of knowledge: experiential, proportional, and Knowledge-how', to evaluate the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato and their thoughts on Human Knowledge. Chappell also acknowledges that his distinction between forms of knowledge might not align with the insights of Plato and Aristotle's idea of knowledge since they have made various distinctions among various psychological states and intellectual

virtues (Chappell 145-154). Plato's idea of Knowledge could be captured through his dialogues evidently when he explores the nature of knowledge in "Theaetetus". In "Theaetetus" the dialogue takes place between Socrates and Theaetetus who were aiming to achieve a clear definition of the theory of Knowledge. Theaetetus attempts to provide three definitions of the theory of Knowledge. They are as follows: "Knowledge is perception(A1), knowledge as the true belief(A2), and (A3) Knowledge as true belief which is accompanied with a reasoned account" ("Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus").

Under the patterns of social order, Plato's above definitions of Knowledge (A1) resonate with the traditional empiricist theory which holds the idea that Knowledge is acquired only through individual human experiences and justifies it through sensory perception (Hossain 225-230). Furthermore, it (A2) also corresponds to foundationalism, a concept in epistemological studies that attempts to justify that Knowledge is positioned on self-satisfying beliefs that do not rely on authentic justification ("Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus"). It also raises a dispute on the possibility of individuals interpreting the world through their preconceived notions or beliefs which might influence and shape their perception of reality (Rutjens). In the dialogue, Socrates challenges the above definitions (A1)(A2)(A3) by questioning the implication of perception in attaining knowledge, raising questions about the possibilities of false belief, and discussing the challenges in providing semantic structure to the belief ("Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus"). Socrates' incredulity and inquiry are similar to contemporary philosophical theories and movements that question the established invariable classical views about knowledge, truth, and belief.

On the other hand, Aristotle's views about knowledge resonate with empirical reality. In his work, he discusses that knowledge is a specific form of understanding that encloses essential and universal truths about the subject, and in the latter part of the work he brings a distinction between Knowledge and Opinion. He introduces the idea of rational Institutions and says that they play a vital role in the distinction between Knowledge and opinion and in the conversion of opinion into knowledge. He also points out that the differences between knowledge and opinion are linked since both are concerned with the act of a person's thinking. Knowledge and Opinion are initiated in the mind and they revolve around the subjects or the ideas that the person is thinking about. It underscores the significance of what is being contemplated or considered as a subject in the act of thinking shapes the nature of Knowledge and opinion (Olesiak 170-184). Correspondingly, Althusser was not interested in knowing the specific ways in which humans think, instead, he studied the ideological mechanism that gave rise to the human thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs of individuals. He says people create and use ideologies for their own benefit. Ideologies are inherently embodied in individuals and they play a vital role in shaping ideologies. Althusser only studied the subject and how it plays a vital role in constructing ideologies excluding the influence of the external political dimensions in the creation of ideologies. For contemporary Epistemologists, it is important to

acknowledge these epistemological limits for understanding the formation of ideologies (William 60-64).

Contemporary Epistemology is not a static field rather it undergoes constant shifts and progresses over time. The progress is driven by the scholars as they bring improvement to the existing epistemological theories by addressing the emerging challenges. The significant epistemological shift that has occurred thus far is the shift from concrete entities like facts, evidence, and a shift from the archetypes of science to theoretical frameworks like substantive or essentialist theories, encompassing religious substances defining faith by addressing the connection between the divine and the human (Niessen et al. 32-34). Concurrently, in the later part of the twentieth century, epistemology was refined and renewed to make it suitable for Marxism. Clifford Geertz introduces a symbolic approach to study the contemporary political dimension of epistemology. He analyses religious beliefs and symbols. He acknowledges that those symbols establish values inside a community (Henninger-Rener). He gives grounds for the above with an example using the Christian cross:

> The Christian cross, which is associated with both the death and resurrection of Christ, demonstrates ideas about sacrifice and putting the needs of others in the community first. The cross also symbolizes deeper ideas about the nature of life itself: that suffering can have positive outcomes and that there is something beyond the current reality. (Henninger-Rener)

Geertz says that analysing religious beliefs as a form of 'text' or 'performance' can open opportunities to be interpreted by outsiders. Greetz also talks about the drawbacks of the symbolic approach since it has the possibility of misinterpretation (Henninger-Rener). The gap between the emic and etic descriptions for religious beliefs highlights the limitation of human knowledge. The gap acts as a cue that human knowledge is shaped by individual perspectives, innate biases, and cultural conditions emphasizing the occurring challenge of attaining an absolute and widely acknowledged understanding of beliefs within the society's conventional framework. Correspondingly, Althusser talks about the empirical reality that holds back individuals from attaining the actual reality. He defines it as follows:

> a conception of a divided subject split between mind and body, thought and affect. Similarly, it relies upon dualisms between essence and appearance, the visible and the hidden. All of these dualisms, particularly the sovereign antinomy between truth and fiction, are wholly internal to the structure of ideology. (William 63)

Significantly it is also noted that numerous philosophical traditions employ diverse approaches to refining the existing theories of epistemology. The downside of this refining process is that it leads to a cyclic pattern of disruption or overturning of perspectives, and beliefs (Van Rullen et al. 1-3). This cyclical perspective is different from the linear idea of steady progress in that it creates a repetition of

events over time and causes disruption reflecting the ongoing nature of time. The contemporary shifts in epistemological studies might be part of the cyclic process rather than an abrupt occurrence. This can be justified through Hegel and Paulo Freire. Hegel's Philosophical Framework discusses the 'expressive totality' within which all the elements are interconnected to create an inclusive whole. The moments or the progress within the totality is underscored through the dialectic process, which involves continuous evolvement in ideas by addressing and finding solutions to the arising conflicting elements putting forward a self-contained system that cyclically repeats patterns of ideas. This dialectic process moves according to a linear time sequence which Althusser confronts as a "homogenous continuity of time" (Williams 56-61). Paulo Freire in his "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" introduces the concept of "Circles of Certainty" within which the actuality is imprisoned (Freire 38). He discussed that in the following lines:

> The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a 'circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side.

> (Freire 39)

Further, Paulo Freire's examination of critical consciousness, fear-induced resistance, and freedom that humans might possess resonates with the concept of the "false nature of fabricating human perception" which is enriched by self-deception and a narrowed understanding of one's circumstances. Paulo Freire exposes the rigidity of narrow-mindedness and encourages an engaged dynamic approach to understanding the misinformation, cognitive bias, sensory illusion, and false memory that give shape to human perception of the world (Freire 45-52). In terms of Derrida, Empirical reality requires the human cognizant and perspective structure, as they assist in identifying objects and attaining self-awareness by comprehending the nature of the object (William 102). The concept of the "false nature of fabricating human perception" highlights that there are limits to epistemological studies to perceive and understand the reality that exists beyond human understanding.

The study of Mysticism and the concept of transcendentalism together provide perspectives advocating different ways of knowing, giving importance to direct experience and interconnectedness with the transcendental being. They seem to bridge the gaps in contemporary epistemological studies. In the context of theology, Belief in the divine and transcendental reality has persistently grown throughout human history. Epistemology plays a vital role in inquiring how knowledge about

timelessness and eternal realities is attained. For instance, transcendentalism insists on transcending the material world through the spiritual realm; which is evident in interpreting John 3:16 in the bible, as it explores the human condition and provides a remedy to escape the limitations caused by false perspective. It shows transcendental life is possible through uncorrupted belief. It can also be seen as an expression of transcending the temporal world to understand actuality. In mystical studies of Christianity, the notion of revelation implies the exposure of divine knowledge to humans. From an epistemological point of view, this gives rise to an inquiry about the means through which humans can attain the absolute truth that transcends beyond an individual's temporal experience (Baron et al. 45-47).

The perspectives of mysticism and transcendentalism frequently acknowledge the limitations of epistemology. By recognizing the limitations of human cognition James Van Cleve promotes "epistemic humility" that could respond to the epistemological limitations by promoting the consciousness that absolute truth lies beyond human temporal experience. Similarly, Kant understood the empirical limits and sought to create a transcendental system that could respond to the contingency. James Van Cleve in terms of the Kantian version says that individuals cannot comprehend the inherent nature of things on their own since our understanding is limited to their connections and interactions to the material world (Van Cleve 63-65). James Van Cleve in his work "Problems from Kant" describes Langton's argument as follows:

> Receptivity: Human knowledge depends on sensibility, and sensibility is receptive: we can have knowledge of an object only in so far as it affects us.

> Irreducibility: The relations and relational properties of substances are not reducible to the intrinsic properties of substances. Therefore, Humility: We have no knowledge of the intrinsic properties of substances. (Roessler 83)

Resonating with the idea of James Van Cleve, Katherine Dormandy in her work, "Does Epistemic Humility Threatens Religious Belief" states:

> Dogmatic belief, which is highly confident and resistant to counterevidence, may fail to exhibit epistemic virtues such as humility and may instead manifest epistemic vices such as arrogance or servility, but if this is the price of secure belief in religious truths, so be it. I argue, however, that even in a world full of misleading evidence against true religious beliefs, cultivating epistemic humility is the better way to achieve believers' epistemic aims. The reason is that dogmatic belief courts certain epistemic dangers, including to the true religious beliefs themselves, whereas epistemic humility empowers believers to counter them. (Dormandy)

According to Althusser and Spinoza, Knowledge that is found in dualism empowers imagination leading to the construction of false perspectives and repetitive patterns of ideas (William 63) they further insist that:

> Knowledge of the 'true' is not the result of a philosophy of reflection, whose mast is always empiricist, rather it is derived according to conditions internal to the production of knowledge. (William 63)

The researcher after a prolific examination of the perceptions in the realm of epistemology is of the assessment that the exploration of false perception, truth, boundaries of human knowledge, and transcendental grounds provide insight into the complexities of the empirical reality within which human thoughts are immotile. The realm of empirical reality also encounters the paradox of false perception juxtaposed with the search for truth. Human perceptions are often deceptive and influenced by culture, and societal norms which seem to provide a glimpse of the actual reality that leads us to question the accuracy of human perception. Amidst the uncertainty, transcendental arguments delve into finding the necessary conditions to explore human thoughts and experience. They seem to link the complex human cognitive structure and the fundamental principles of philosophical inquiries and understanding. However, as we traverse the realm of human understanding we face inherent boundaries, mysteries, and phenomena that are beyond human comprehension.

Currently, in the field of epistemology, the definition of Knowledge is still shifty when it is interpreted through empirical reality which becomes an ongoing process. Acknowledging epistemological gaps requires a fusion of individual curiosity, open dialogues on transcendental reality along with moral consideration, introducing interdisciplinary studies like theology, and fidelity to consistent learning about transcendental reality will help individuals overcome epistemological limitations.

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