

The Instant Decay of Knowledge Theory

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Definitions

(D1) Experience: Conscious awareness at a given time.

(D2) Concepts: Abstractions of any one or more experience which are created by the brain to learn, interpret, and understand experience.

(D3) Knowledge: Justified true belief

D3.1 Knowledge is therefore comprised of any one or more phenomena, concept, and belief.

(D4) Knowledge*: Justified true belief of the past

Premises

(P1) Experience is solitary.

P1.1 Experience is inaccessible and hence private.

(P2) Experience is transitory.

P2.1 By definition, experience is conscious awareness at any given time. In this sense, an experience is characterized by its place in time (be it T1, T2 or T5). T1 cannot persist into T2. Hence, all experience is transitory.

(P3) One arrives at knowledge in and through experience.

P3.1 Experience has metaphysical and conceptual priority over knowledge. Without experience, one cannot have knowledge.

Introduction

It appears to be a fact of human existence that individual experiences do not persist but instead are replaced by subsequent experiences. Similar experiences often contribute to an intuition that knowledge persists because highly similar experiences result in the creation of highly similar knowledge. Since no single-case experience can be repeated and all knowledge exists within transitory experience, the Instant Decay of Knowledge theory (IDK) argues that knowledge created from experience will decay instantly into knowledge of the past (which renders that knowledge into knowledge*, and knowledge of the future impossible.) The similarities of previous experiences to subsequent experiences can contribute to the creation of new knowledge¹ but once created, it decays into knowledge*. Therefore, knowledge must be created repeatedly to maintain a high probability of being true in the future.

Because we are each alone in our experiences², IDK further argues that communicating any knowledge from past experience is imperfect because (i) Concepts cannot perfectly communicate single case experiences because concepts are abstractions of experience and so not the experience itself³. (ii) Knowledge is comprised of concepts (iii) Knowledge of the past often represents a plurality of experiences (and so is especially concept-rich). IDK concludes that knowledge created from experience will instantly decay conceptually when it is understood

¹ When the brain learns a pattern from experience (e.g. the coffee pot is empty at T1) and then affirms a highly similar pattern (e.g. the coffee pot is empty at T2), it groups the experiences together and so seems to contribute to the intuition that the experience at T1 is the same as experience at T2.

² (P1) Experience is solitary.

³ (D2) Concepts: Abstractions of any one or more experience which are created by the brain to learn, interpret, and understand experience.

(conceptualized by the brain) and communicated.

Knowledge and Knowledge*

When a person says they “know” something, they are in every case expressing a memory of an experience. Whatever that memory may be, it is invariably expressed using a form of language and each language expression utilizes concepts created from other past experiences. It seems therefore that knowledge (at least in part) requires an individual person to associate one experience with another experience. I believe that by investigating the solitary and transitive nature of experience, we can remove some misunderstandings about this associative nature of knowledge. I refer to this investigation as the Instant Decay of Knowledge theory (IDK). Before we move forward with an explanation of IDK, I would like to introduce the assumptions this theory operates upon.

IDK is built on the assumptions that all experience is solitary and transitory. By solitary, I mean in the most existential way, experience is private and directly accessible to whomever is having the experience. Furthermore, experience is our only source of the phenomena, concepts and beliefs that comprise knowledge⁴. Phenomena is the sensory information inputted to our brains (minds), concepts name the relationships in the brain between these inputs (perceptions) and belief is an adherence to particular concepts.

By transitory, I mean that each single-case experience, by definition, has metaphysical purchase on some point in time (e.g. T1 or T2). All experiences are individualized in this way even though the flow of conscious awareness may lead to an intuition that conscious awareness is stationary while the scenery of our experience changes. Hence, each subsequent moment of experience is different (at least temporally) from every other previous moment of experience. Therefore, all experiences are single-case experiences.

Temporal Decay

Taking the position that knowledge decays temporally, IDK argues that all knowledge is created from past experience and is therefore retrospective in the present, and that any cognition of the future always entails uncertainty. This is attributed to the fact that one cannot know the truth about something they have not yet experienced. It follows that strictly speaking, no proposition that entails the future is knowledge. This is not to dismiss the possibility for a knowledge proposition that entails the future may have a high degree of justified probable belief, rather, IDK seeks to reserve the modal “true” for knowledge that has actually been experienced. Knowledge propositions of the past can be created, but creating propositions does not create knowledge of the future.

1. IDK takes the following positions regarding the temporal decay of knowledge:
 - 1.1 If experience is subject to time, then experience decays into past experience.
 - 1.2. Knowledge exists in and through experience.
 - 1.3 Therefore, knowledge decays into past knowledge (knowledge*.)
2. IDK takes the following positions regarding knowledge of the future:
 - 2.1 If knowledge is true it can not be uncertain.

⁴ (D3.1) Knowledge is therefore comprised of any one or more phenomena, concept, and belief.

- 2.2 The future is uncertain.
- 2.3 Knowledge of the future is not true.

Organized systems of highly probable propositions that entail the future can be described as justified belief systems. One example of such a system is science.

Conceptual Decay

Taking the position that knowledge decays conceptually, IDK argues that because experience is solitary, it cannot be shared. Knowledge propositions do not describe solitary experiences directly. Instead they refer to a solitary experience that has been abstracted into a concept which contains and contrasts with a plurality of experiences. Knowledge is created in effect, by transforming a solitary experience into a concept(s). In other words, our experience (and hence, knowledge) is encoded by concepts that represent a set of (of one or more experiences). This is not to argue that abstractions (concepts) are invalid but that since concepts are abstractions from the experience in itself, once created, they cannot communicate solitary experiences in any direct manner to another person.

- 3. IDK takes the following positions regarding the conceptual decay of knowledge:
 - 3.1 A concept is an abstraction of experience.
 - 3.2 Knowledge propositions are concepts.
 - 3.2 Concepts do not describe solitary experiences (they are utilized to merely try to.)
 - 3.3 Therefore, knowledge propositions do not describe solitary experiences.

Example Case of Conceptual Decay

Imagine a little boy named George who is shown a picture of a toy whistle. His father explains the picture to George and even makes a whistling noise to help George understand the sound a toy whistle can make. Little George lays in bed that evening and comes to believe that if he owned a toy whistle he would make whistle noises all day long. George's belief in the sound his future toy whistle will make comes from his father's description and performance of the sound. Unfortunately for little George, the concepts his father used to try to communicate his knowledge* of a toy whistle was futile from the start. This is because concepts cannot deliver the experience that gives rise to knowledge. All little George has is knowledge* of a picture of a whistle and knowledge* of the noise his father made when he explained the sound of a toy whistle

George has knowledge* that:

- a. He learned several propositions about toy whistles.
- b. He learned a noise that his father proposed as an analogue to a toy whistle.

Based on George's limited whistle experience, he can not claim to know the noise of a toy whistle. He can only claim to know a propositional analogue of the noise of a toy whistle.

Propositions (a) and (b) are knowledge*. George did not have knowledge of the noise a toy whistle makes. Instead he had a conceptual metaphor of the noise a toy whistle makes. Now imagine George a year after he has been given his first toy whistle. He has experienced the

noise his toy whistle makes, the noise other whistles make, perhaps even more propositions about whistles, and he may even be able to decipher differences between whistles according to their sound.

None of his knowledge* has changed but his number of whistle experiences has increased and he has created new whistle knowledge*. He has an extensive series of whistle experiences including: memories of whistles, whistle propositions, and of course many new conceptual metaphors about whistles.

Conclusion

IDK implies that the only valid knowledge an individual can claim is knowledge of their own past (knowledge*), regardless of any belief the individual has in a future state. The transitory nature of experience forces each current experience to move into the past at every moment, replaced by a new and independent experience during every subsequent moment (the present). And each subsequent experience alters the knowledge of the past by either creating new knowledge that confirms or challenges past knowledge or by simply separating past knowledge further in time from experience.

IDK implies that knowledge can be created but never shared. It can exist in some sense with the person who created it, but it can not be given in that same sense to another person. Knowledge is in every case the result of looking back at one or more experiences, as an authentic consideration of phenomena, concepts and beliefs. Knowledge is created continuously because our experience of the world is solitary and transitory. While we can discover the world, we create knowledge while fully aware of its natural decay.