

Belief and Value

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Outside the minds of sentient beings, all that exists are things that change over time in accordance with the forces of nature. There are no concepts, no ideas, no abstractions, no models, no fairness, no purpose, no ends, and no value. If you think differently, show where in nature any of these things exist.

Things such as models or abstractions of how things in nature operate, and tools to help manipulate those models such as mathematics, only exist as mental constructs in the minds of sentient beings. Further, things such as morals, feelings, purpose, ends, and values, not only do they only exist in the minds of sentient beings, but they are also exclusively the product of the physical structure of those beings and their relationship to their environment (which includes their culture).

Constructs in the minds of sentient beings are called models. Models that are accepted or affirmed by the being are called beliefs. Belief in a model is caused by a combination of the following:

Type 1. External proof - instances in the external world where examples can be shown with minimum or no counter examples.

Type 2. Cultural forces - if many people around you (the local culture) believe X, and you want to participate in the benefits accorded to members of that culture, it is beneficial to believe X.

Type 3. Self value - if a person is taught that they are a good person if they believe X, and that they are a bad person if they do not, they will believe X in order to affirm their own self value.

Type 4. Personal preferences - often a person will want something to be true and will choose to believe it simply because it makes them feel better. A good example of this is the notion of life after death (e.g. heaven, reincarnation, etc.).

For purposes of this paper, I will call mental constructs, or models, that are valid through Type 1, truth. Although Types 2 through 4 may be helpful in a person's survival, none of those Types make the model hold any truth.

The notion of value is utterly unsupported by Type 1, and very strongly supported by types 2 through 4. Although there may be important reasons to hold a belief based on Types 2 through 4, it is important not to confuse it with truth.

Most people, including those at the highest echelon of academia, can not mentally differentiate Type 1 from Types 2 through 4. This has been the cause of most of the hardships of mankind. It is the source of superstition, religion, prejudice, hatred, and war. Therefore, making the distinction between the Types is very important.