

Epistemology 720

Dear grandma,

This week we learnt about one of the ways of knowing: by observation and reasoning. The fancy name for it is the positivist paradigm. Those who practice it gather evidence from everywhere and add things up like a pile of stones. They think "what you see is what you get." And "what you get" would teach you the kinds of questions to ask, no matter where you are. This theory makes you think in layers, because you can't make sense otherwise. And every layer must follow a specific pattern, just like science. But unlike science, stones by themselves don't tell stories. Though we may gather stones, but the use to which we put them might be different. We may build houses with some and haul some at our enemies. That's why many things depend on those who gather the stones.

Or, what do you think, grandma?

The positivists have a hard time agreeing to that kind of reasoning, even though they are all for observation and reasoning. They like to predict and generalize things, and they want to teach me to do the same.

Help me, grandma.