THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE MAGAZINE

Published by:

TED ÜSKÜDAR COLLEGE

IBDP STUDENTS

Foreword...

In a world where “acquisition of knowledge” is instant, abundant, and constantly changing, the most important question is “no longer simply what we know, but “how we come to know it”. At TED Üsküdar College, we believe that meaningful education begins with inquiry, reflection, and the courage to question what we often take for granted. The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course lies at the heart of this belief, inviting our students to think deeply about knowledge itself—its sources, its limits, and its responsibilities.

As an accredited IB School, TED Üsküdar College places great importance on developing internationally minded individuals who do not merely accumulate knowledge, but learn to examine it critically and ethically. Through the IB Diploma Programme and TOK, our students come to understand that knowledge is shaped by perspective, culture, language, emotion, and reason. They learn that in a world that is constantly being shaken by international conflicts and wars, “disagreement is not a weakness, but an opportunity for deeper understanding.”

In the context of the 21st century, these matters have become even more pressing. The growing influence of artificial intelligence challenges traditional ideas of authorship, reliability, and trust. “Who produces knowledge today? How do we evaluate truth in a digital age? What responsibilities do human knowers have when machines participate in knowledge creation? Rather than offering simple answers, TOK encourages students to approach these questions with intellectual honesty and curiosity.

This magazine reflects our school’s strong commitment to nurturing IB Learner Profile attributes—students who are inquirers, thinkers, open-minded, principled, and reflective. The voices and ideas within these pages demonstrate that learning and knowing are basically not about certainty, but about engaging thoughtfully with complexity and uncertainty.

As you begin reading this magazine—whether as a student, parent, or educator—I invite you to pause and reflect alongside our students. May these pages inspire you to question, to listen to different perspectives, and to recognise the importance and responsibility that come with knowledge.

“For the future belongs not only to those who know, but to those who understand why knowing matters.”

NEVZAT KULABEROĞLU
TED Üsküdar College General Manager

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Mehmet Erim Özyıldırım

To What Extent Does What We Believe Change Our View On The World?

When one perceives something as the “truth” their view alters accordingly, everyone has their own form of beliefs and truths that they change one's outlook on the world and reality Whether it would be related to someone, like in Black Mirror’s eulogy episode, or related to beliefs, like religion, or related to how something should behave, like color and function, what one considers the truth shapes their world. In Black Mirror’s “Eulogy” episode the viewer sees the main character relive memories with an ai, to nobodies surprise, called Eulogy. In the flashbacks we see him not notice that in one of the memories the girl he likes had a ring, he chose to ignore it believing that her being single was the truth, he shaped his reality, his view, around that truth. Other than that, from the same episode, we see that after their break up the main character has altered the photos of the two of them together to make it seem as if the two of them were never together, altering his own truth to change his view on the situation.

A nonfictional example ofbeliefs altering perception of reality is religion.There are many religious beliefs and each have their own values, rituals and beliefs. Which religion one believes changes their perception of the world. While Christians have their own set of beliefs, rituals and prayers other religions like Islam have different beliefs, rituals and prayers.For example Christianscelebrate Christmas and Easterwhile Muslims don’t,onthe other hand Muslims celebrate Ramadan and pilgrimage to the Hajj while Christians don’t. The differences between the two beliefs change their views on the world since different religions usually don’t perform the same rituals and hold the same beliefs. Since the religious beliefs of one is what they consider the truth, their views change the outlooks one has on life.

Though, examples don’t end there, imagine a child who was born with green-blue colorblindness, who sees green as blue and blue as green, and was told that the grass is green and the sky is blue. The kid will recognize green as blue and blue as green, they will believe it’s that way. How someone recognizes a pattern and believes its use will shape their idea on how to use that pattern, whether it would be opening a banana in a certain way or replying to a sentence in a certain way. Once someone has recognized a pattern that will be selected as the “truth” for them. What's perceived as truth for one may not be acknowledged as the truth for another, hence leading to them having differing views on the world. What one believes in changes their view on the world since everyone's views can never align. “When two people look outside a window, they can never look outside from the same angle at the same time.”

Eylül Türker

Exploring How We Know What We Know

The question “How do we know what we know?” is actually a question that forms the basis of Theory of Knowledge. Knowledge is often underestimated, but when it is examined thoroughly, becomes clear that what we claim to know depends not only on facts, but on the perspectives and tools&methods as well. Our knowledge is shaped by ways of knowing, such as language, senses, and reasoning –which vary according to person–.

One of the most basic ways we acquire knowledge is through our senses. Thanks to our senses, we understand and observe the world. For example, in the natural sciences, experimentation forms the basis of scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, we can not say that senses are always trustworthy. We can give the Müller-Lyer illusion as a great example, where two lines of equal length appear different because of the direction of the arrows at their end. Even when we are told that the lines are the same length, our eyes still perceive one as longer than the other. This illusion shows that our sense perception may be affected by context and mislead us. Therefore, while our senses allow us to understand the world and things happening around us, they are not always certain and often need to be supported by other ways of knowing.

Reasoning is another way to acquire knowledge. It helps us to make sense of the information we gain by thinking rationally and logically. Comparing ideas, finding solutions and drawing conclusions are some examples. We may use reason to decide if an explanation is right and makes sense. In a courtroom, for example, the judge examines the evidence and witness statements before delivering their verdict. Nevertheless, reasoning can not always be perfect. Our way of thinking may be influenced by assumptions, biases and stereotypes. And those can lead us to wrong conclusions. In some situations, misunderstanding or faulty reasoning can pave the way for false judgments. Therefore, while reasoning is a necessary way of knowing, it needs to be used carefully and questioned before fully trusting it.

Language is another key way to come to know. It allows the knowledge to be acquired, shared, shaped, preserved and developed through generations. In subjects like history language plays an enormous role in how events were described and understood. But language does not always share knowledge in an objective way. As I said, in history, language causes some disagreement and controversy. An information about an event from the past may vary according to documents’ language. Also, this subjectivity can be seen in the same language as well. For instance, one news channel may describe a protest as “will of the people” while the other one describes it as a “violent riot”. Even though the event is the same, the way of telling it can shape or distort knowledge.

In conclusion, we know what we know through a tangled interaction between the ways of knowing. Each of them has their own strengths and weaknesses. Knowledge is not fixed or dogma, it is shaped by perception and sense, clarified by reasoning, and acquired through knowledge. With questioning how knowledge is acquired, we may become more aware of its limitations and may be more responsible knowers for our world.

İpek Lara
ALTINUÇ

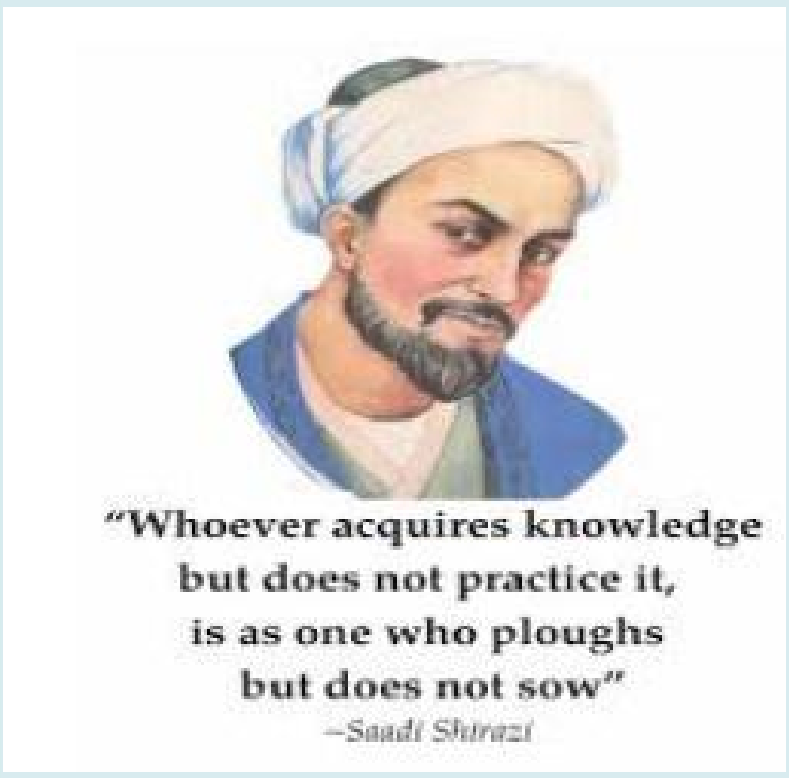
Knowledge and Responsibility

According to Saa’di, a Persian poet and thinker from the 13th century, “Whoever acquires knowledge and does not practise it resembles him who ploughs his land and leaves it unsown.” Saa’di implies that knowledge without action is meaningless, and he compares this to land that is ploughed but left unsown. Having knowledge creates a moral responsibility to act, because knowledge cannot exist independently; it influences people, affects decisions and guides societal developments.

Knowing something creates an obligation to use that knowledge in ways that serve others. Therefore knowledge establishes an ethical responsibility. This idea is strongly supported by the ethical perspective of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas states that simply knowing things about another person creates an unavoidable moral responsibility, arguing that knowledge of someone’s defenselessness requires ethical action. This suggests that once we become aware of other people’s suffering, we can no longer remain morally natural. Likewise, the Hippocratic Oath supports the same idea. Medical workers are obligated to use the knowledge they have to help their patients and to prevent harm. These ideas show that having knowledge creates an ethical responsibility.

However, knowing something does not always mean that a person can act on it. Sometimes people can lack the power or the ability to safely and realistically act on what they know. For example, an employee might know that their boss is behaving unethically, but reporting it can cause them to lose their job. In this case, because the risk is too high, this person's knowledge may not create a clear responsibility to act, since doing so could cause them serious harm.

We often experience how knowledge imposes moral responsibility in a school environment. During group activities, if a student from a group clearly understands a topic that others struggle with, that student feels responsible to also help others to understand the topic, as it feels morally irresponsible to ignore their confusion.



Considering all ideas, having knowledge often creates an ethical responsibility to consider its impact on others. Whether it's in daily life, science, or philosophy, the awareness that comes from knowing something imposes responsibility. Knowledge can only gain truly meaningful value when it is used ethically.

Derin Harman

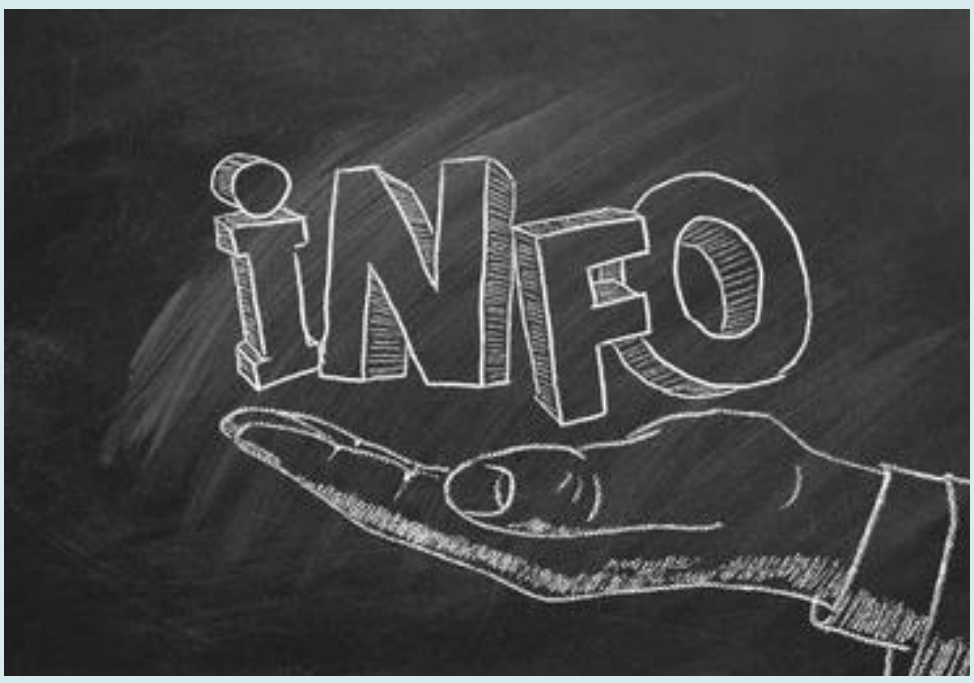
The Nature Of First hand Knowledge

Talking, presenting or telling your ideas in front of many people, especially in front of your boss, teacher or a stranger, is an important first-hand experience.

Because in comparison with whether your idea is true or not, being brave enough to express yourself with confidence in front of all those people will give you the valuable and first-hand experience. Because you get stressed about it and you will think, “What if they just joke about my idea?” or “What if they think my idea is silly?” I would get bullied and could not be confident to look at others’ faces again. So here comes the experience part, which is managing your stress and learning how to be strong and brave and also gaining self-confidence.

I think it is an objective knowledge because everyone can be affected differently from this experience. For example, someone who is so confident to express his thoughts about his ideas to the whole class and the subjects the teachers will come bullied with causing his loss of his all self confidence. But on the other hand, someone who does not believe in himself will express his ideas and get congrats , will gain huge self-confidence and being able to tell his ideas freely and confidently after his whole life, until he gets bullied at some point. So you see it is temporary.

In conclusion, expressing your thoughts in front of an important community will give you first-hand experience. It can affect you in both positive and negative ways depending on their reflection to your idea so we could say it is temporary. That is why it is objective.



Zelal Derin Tekin

How Language Shapes Reality

Language has been the key that shapes reality since the first civilizations.İt has shaped the way people express themselves and helped people understand each other. Alongside its purpose as a tool of communication, it also acts as a filter that helps us experience, categorize and interpret reality. The words and language that we use can change the way we express ourselves or the way that things are understood. These mostly stand out in linguistic practices such as translations, advertising and political discourses. By analyzing these linguistic practices we can understand how language shapes reality and thought.

When we analyze translations we can clearly understand the power of language. This is because when a sentence is translated by a translator it could either show the literal meaning or the meaning of the sentence. For example the sentence “Il pleut des cordes.” means pouring rain in french. However when we look at the literal translation of the sentence it means “İts raining cords.” which sounds strange and doesn't convey any meaning in English. These kinds of differences could result in misinterpretations and misunderstandings between people which could shape how people understand things.

Another great example of how language shapes reality comes from its vocabulary. Different languages have different vocabulary to express themselves. While in one language, one can use a precise word to explain something another person might need several words or sentences to explain in another language. This also shows the different ways that they may feel emotions and express themselves which shapes their reality and thoughts. This also connects to how language does not simply just label reality but also shape how we understand it.

Advertising shows how language is used to carefully construct things to make an emotional impact instead of literal accuracy. İn advertisements, advertisers carefully craft phrases such as “limited edition” or “natural” to influence consumer perception. A product which has the phrase “natural” written on it might not have anything that differentiates it from other products but the phrase alters with the consumers perception and makes it seem better than the other products.This is because the phrase triggers positive associations which shapes the viewers expectations and emotions. Hence advertising demonstrates how the use of language can manipulate the viewers to buy a product and differentiate it. This also shows the power of language since it can shape thought and emotions.

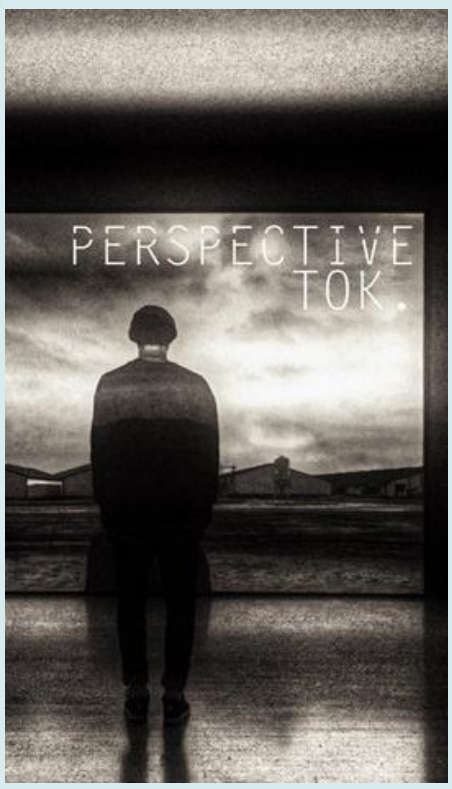
Political discourse offers a wonderful example of linguistic power. Politicians tend to use words that frame people or events in a particular way. For example when describing a policy as “security measures” instead of “surveillence” they direct the perception before people understand the issue. The words contain built-in assumptions in them. This shows how language can influence shared thoughts by what appears acceptable or threatening. In this context language becomes a tool for shaping the reality we live in.

To conclude all that has been stated, language plays a crucial role in shaping how people interpret the world. Translations show the limitations of languages, while advertising shows how language can shape thoughts and political discourse demonstrates how language can frame the reality that we live in. Thoughts are not directly shaped but interpreted, influenced and ultimately constructed according to the use of language. This shows how words shape reality.

Yaman Kaymaz

The Power Of Perspective
“To What Extent Do Our Cultures Change How We Interpret Truth”

The truth is something that has changed throughout the years, decades and even millennia. While we have the means to show the world any knowledge worldwide, there are still factors like religion, tradition and the way we were raised that all fall under culture which changes how we interpret the truth.



How culture affects our interpretation of the truth can vary depending on the subject if the knowledge seen aligns with a culture like religious beliefs that knowledge can be seen as truthful because it aligns with everything that a person has known growing up but a knowledge that contradicts a culture like tradition won't be seen as truthful because it is a truth that contradicts everything a person knew growing up. Truth however is still everywhere and nowhere in the world something is accepted differently in one part of the world and despised in the other. Even culture changes how we interpret how we interpret a part of culture such as religion. Using the bible due to traditions some people interpret the verses and scriptures differently while looking at the same bible. The reason why people cling to culture for their truth is because it is all connected to something that is older than them or it is something that has been done for generations that everyone they know accepts their culture as the undisputable truth. With undisputable truth people can feel in peace as it is human nature to find meaning and the absolute truth while ridding oneself of uncertainty. Hence the truth becoming diverse and up to interpretation was an unavoidable act since if every culture thought they had the knowledge of the truth then that would clash with what knowledge they had. Henceforth an individual should seek out their own individual truth if they wish to come face to face what they will accept as their truth.

In conclusion The extent of our cultures on how we interpret the truth can be substantial while the knowledge we gain from our culture may be something we grew up with it is important to note that cultures that were formed hundreds of years ago shouldn’t prevent an individual from gaining knowledge or seeking truth but our cultures should help seeking knowledge and truth

sources

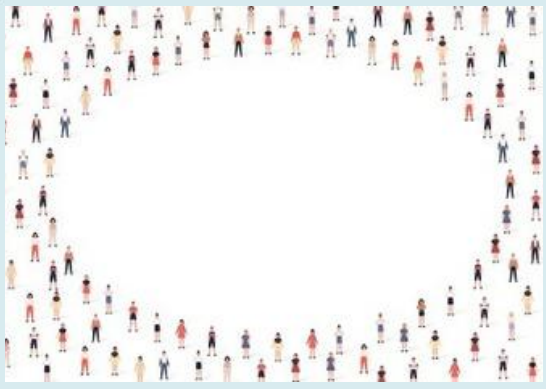
~~https://www.sciencenewstoday.org~~
~~https://www.britannica.com~~

Mehmet Erim Özyıldırım

To What Extent Should A Person's Background Define Their Credibility

When one is met with a difficult to answer question, one may resort to fallacies. Intentionally or not, fallacies are a parasite that finds its way into debates. Fallacies, like diseases, come in many types. A more prominent type of fallacy is “Ad Hominem”, in other words; Attacking the person. Ad Hominem is when one ignores the question at hand and starts insulting the other because of their looks or background.

There are many literary works that put this fallacy into play; The Absolutely True Diary of A Part Time Indian by Sherman Alexie and To Kill A Mocking Bird by Harper Lee are just a few that have instances of Ad Hominem in it. In the book The Absolutely True Diary of A Part Time Indian the main character, Junior, transfers from their reservations school to the School of Reardan. Him being the only Indian at a school full of white people isn’t an easy situation to handle, especially with Mr Dodge. In geology class Mr Dodge was talking about petrified wood and how it was magnificent how a wood could be a rock. Junior then corrected his mistake, telling him how petrified wood wasn’t wood. He told Junior to explain how it works if he knew so much, and he did. Then this explanation was disregarded and Mr Dodge said “Where did you learn this fact? On the reservation? Yes, we all know there’s so much amazing science on the reservation.”. His correct fact was disregarded solely because of prejudice and his background.



In the book To Kill A Mocking Bird a character by the name of Tom Robinson was falsely accused by Mayella for attacking her. The story takes place during the great depression. Tom is a dark skinned person while Mayella is white, because of this difference despite all of Mayella's evidence being proven fake he got the short end of the stick. His background was the deciding factor of his fate, not his innocence. The time period of the book is the times where prejudice is everywhere, backgrounds are being judged and credibility is being questioned according to said backstory.

To this day there are still cases of people’s backstories defining their credibility. In examples from books and in various real life situations this can be seen, even in daily life at times. The extent of a person's background defining their credibility should be related to how they act and not how their stereotypes act. In the book The Absolutely True Diary of A Part Time Indian we see Junior get the answer correctly but due to his background, it was considered to be false by the teacher despite it being correct. In the book To Kill A Mocking Bird Tom Robinson is in the right and is innocent but it’s his background that decides his fate, not what he did or didn't do. One doesn’t mean all, because a few people from somewhere act a certain way doesn’t mean everyone does. One shouldn’t be stereotyped for doing nothing similar to what others did. “Stereotypes give people an excuse to hate people who are different instead of taking the time to get to know them.”

Selin Tunay

The Power of Perspective

How our cultural backgrounds, emotions, and language shape the way we interpret truth

The way people are used to interpret truth has usually varied according to individuals' life experiences, languages, and cultures they are familiar with. Indeed, the influence of these substantial factors plays one of the key roles in forming someone's perception of truth as a whole. Taking into account that truth itself is considered to be something subjective rather than objective, it would be pretty logical to make it dependent on multifarious perspectives. To some extent, this "perspective" word is mostly able to make even frivolous viewpoints true, as the meaning of it partially justifies what it does.

Another great example of how language shapes reality comes from its vocabulary. Different languages have different vocabulary to express themselves. While in one language, one can use a precise word to explain something another person might need several words or sentences to explain in another language. This also shows the different ways that they may feel emotions and express themselves which shapes their reality and thoughts. This also connects to how language does not simply just label reality but also shape how we understand it.

As a great instance of cultural backgrounds and emotions having an immense impact on interpretations of truth, the difference between attitudes of people from the Nordic countries and Eastern countries could be emphasized. For example, Northern Europeans believe that it is not an obligation for them to greet and smile at everyone they meet – this is a truth for them. However, Eastern people's point of view states that it would be extremely rude and a total exposition of the lack of upbringing. Another typical case is the way truth regarding emotions differs from culture to a culture. For instance, Northern Europeans do not find it ethical to reveal emotions to the public and engage in loud conversation, whereas people from the East generally feel free to express themselves without any constraints. When it is looked upon this contrast, the whole idea of truth perception variances brings up a particular realization of how diverse the interpretation of truth can become.

In conclusion, the way we interpret truth is highly affected by the cultural backgrounds, emotions, and languages. These three factors have been shaping distinguishing truth interpretations by forming steady perspectives that make all the ways truth was interpreted not wrong automatically.

Betül Payaslı

The World in the Mirror of the Mind: The Eternal Dance of the Knower and the Known

To understand the essence of the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course, we must first look at its scope. TOK can be viewed as a modern adaptation of Epistemology, tailored for the 21st-century classroom. It equips students with a philosophical "toolkit," ranging from Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" to Descartes' "Skepticism." For instance, by applying Descartes' Methodological Doubt to a contemporary news report, students learn to look beyond the surface. Instead of accepting information at face value, they begin to formulate Knowledge Questions: "What is the source of this knowledge?", "Is there a Power dynamic involved?", and "What Evidence supports this claim?" This inquiry-based approach makes them resilient against the noise of misinformation.

In traditional views, the mind of the "Knower" was seen as a passive mirror reflecting the "Known" exactly as it exists. However, modern philosophy—particularly since Immanuel Kant—has shown that the process is far more dynamic. The Knower (the Subject) brings their own culture, beliefs, language, and past experiences to the act of knowing. The Known (the Object) may be raw data, but it is always filtered through the cognitive categories of time, space, and causality.

In TOK, the Knower is not a spectator but an active architect of knowledge. This aligns with Friedrich Nietzsche's Perspectivism The relationship between the knower and the known depends entirely on one's "vantage point." Consider a tree: a botanist perceives it through the lens of Natural Sciences, a timber merchant through Economics, and a poet through The Arts. While the "Known" (the tree) remains constant, the "Knowledge" produced varies because the Knower's purpose and perspective differ. This highlights that knowledge is rarely entirely objective; it is always situated within a specific Context.

This interaction is even evident in the Natural Sciences. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle suggests that the Knower cannot observe the Known without affecting it. If we apply this to the Human Sciences, a sociologist describing a community through a specific theory may inadvertently influence that community's behavior. Thus, the Knower inevitably transforms the Known.

Concrete Exploration: The TOK Exhibition

The TOK Exhibition—a core component of the new curriculum—brings these abstract concepts into the physical world. Students select three real-world objects to explore a specific Knowledge Prompt.

Epistemology in the Kitchen: Traces of Knowledge from Recipes to Identity

When exploring how Material Culture influences our understanding of the world, objects like a cookbook, a spice jar, or a grandmother's handwritten recipe become "living evidence." In the TOK Exhibition, these are not just items; they represent ho knowledge is preserved through sensory experience and heritage rather than just academic text. The student discovers standardized knowledge in the printed book, but finds personal and emotional Ways of Knowing in the handwritten note. TOK thu transforms a kitchen cupboard into a site of philosophical discovery.

Technology, Algorithms, and Ethics

The optional themes of Technology and Ethics provide students with a "moral compass" for the digital age. By asking, "Do algorithms show us the truth, or merely reinforce our biases?", students explore the tension between Objectivity and Values. Th realize that algorithms are not neutral; they are structures embedded with specific value judgments. This awareness turns students from passive consumers into critical thinkers who understand that "truth" in the digital sphere is often a curated perspective.

The Interdisciplinary Bridge: Mathematics and The Arts

TOK breaks down the silos between subjects. A classic inquiry in the Areas of Knowledge (AOK) is whether Mathematics is a discovered universal truth or a human-invented language. When linked to The Arts through the Golden Ratio, mathematical formulas reveal an aesthetic dimension. This interdisciplinary link helps students see Mathematics not just as abstract calculation, but as a universal language that underpins nature and beauty.

Conclusion: The Five "Superpowers" of TOK

Beyond academic success, TOK fosters five essential life skills.

1-Intellectual Humility: Recognizing the limits of what we know.

2-Rational Argumentation: Using Inference and Deduction over emotional reaction.

3-Empathy: Analyzing the cultural and social Context of diverse viewpoints.

4-Academic Integrity: Taking responsibility for the ethics of knowledge.

5-Critical Decision-Making: Reaching the most coherent Explanation amidst uncertainty.

Ultimately, knowing is not a passive act of reception; it is a courageous act of construction. The bond between the Knower and the Known is the map of our identity. As you move forward, remember: the mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.

Ask yourself: How will the "truths" you hold today shape the world you build tomorrow?

Ilayda Tutar

“Should the pursuit of knowledge be restricted by ethical considerations?”

The pursuit of knowledge is frequently portrayed as an unquestionable good—an activity so intrinsically valuable that any attempt to restrict it is dismissed as irrational, anti-progressive, or even dangerous. Within this narrative, ethical hesitation is framed as an obstacle to enlightenment rather than a condition of moral responsibility. However, this assumption collapses under serious epistemic scrutiny. History demonstrates not merely that knowledge can be misused, but that some forms of knowledge systematically enable harm, consolidate power, and erode human dignity.

This essay argues that the pursuit of knowledge must be ethically restricted, not as a betrayal of reason, but as its highest moral expression. While knowledge undeniably enables progress and autonomy, it is neither neutral nor self-justifying. Through analysis of the natural and human sciences, this essay will show that unrestricted inquiry risks transforming knowledge from a tool of understanding into an instrument of domination. Ethical limits are therefore not optional constraints but necessary safeguards.

Claim 1: Knowledge Has Intrinsic Value and Should Be Freely Pursued

A dominant claim within TOK is that knowledge possesses intrinsic value. In the natural sciences, curiosity-driven research has historically produced breakthroughs with profound benefits for humanity. Medical advancements, climate science, and technological innovation all arose from inquiry unconstrained by immediate ethical certainty. Restricting knowledge on the basis of speculative harm risks epistemic stagnation.

Furthermore, knowledge enhances autonomy. In the human sciences, understanding social systems, power relations, and historical injustices equips individuals and societies to resist manipulation. From this perspective, restricting inquiry appears ethically perverse: ignorance, not knowledge, has historically enabled oppression.

Evaluation

This claim is compelling but dangerously incomplete. It assumes that the act of knowing is separable from its social consequences—an assumption that fails in practice. While knowledge can liberate, it can also entrench asymmetries of power, especially when controlled by institutions insulated from democratic accountability.

Counterclaim 1 : Knowledge Is Not Neutral and Can Be Inherently Harmful

The assumption of neutrality collapses when examined through historical examples. Scientific racism, eugenics, and coercive psychological experimentation were not the result of ignorance, but of systematic inquiry conducted within unjust moral frameworks. These were not accidental misuses of knowledge; they were epistemic projects structured around domination. Michel Foucault’s analysis of power–knowledge relations demonstrates that knowledge production often reinforces existing hierarchies rather than challenging them. In such cases, the pursuit of knowledge does not merely risk harm—it constitutes harm.

Evaluation

This counterclaim exposes a critical weakness in the pro-inquiry stance: it ignores how knowledge reorganizes power. However, rejecting neutrality entirely risks collapsing into epistemic pessimism. The challenge lies not in abandoning inquiry, but in subjecting it to rigorous ethical scrutiny.

Claim 2: Ethical Absolutes Are Necessary in Knowledge Pursuit

Certain ethical constraints must function as absolute limits. From a deontological perspective, inquiry that violates informed consent, instrumentalizes persons, or threatens irreversible harm is morally impermissible—regardless of potential benefits. Research involving non-consensual human experimentation or the deliberate creation of existential risk crosses a moral boundary that outcomes cannot redeem.

Hans Jonas argues that modern technological power demands a new ethics of responsibility—one oriented toward long-term and irreversible consequences. In domains such as genetic engineering or autonomous weapons systems, epistemic freedom without ethical restraint becomes moral recklessness.

Counterclaim 2 : Absolutist Restrictions Stifle Progress and Enable Censorship

A strong counterclaim holds that absolutist ethics risk suppressing legitimate inquiry. Ethical prohibitions can be politically weaponized to silence dissent, restrict controversial research, or preserve dominant ideologies. In authoritarian contexts, "ethical limits" often serve as pretexts for censorship rather than protection.

Additionally, rigid moral rules may fail to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies, where harms and benefits are deeply entangled and unpredictable.

Evaluation

This counterclaim is valid and exposes the dangers of moral dogmatism. However, it does not invalidate ethical limits themselves—only their uncritical application. The solution is not ethical relativism, but transparent justification and continuous evaluation.

Claim 3: Ethical Restriction Is a Form of Epistemic Responsibility, Not Ignorance

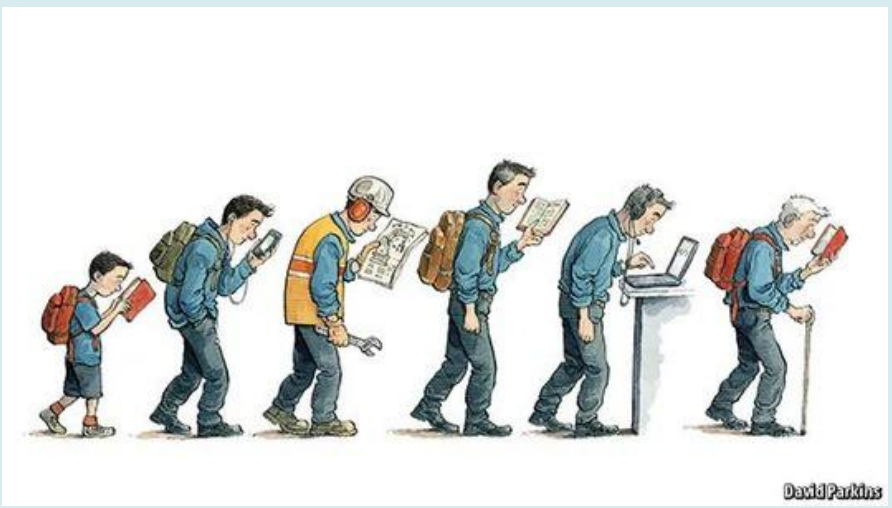
Restricting certain forms of knowledge does not signify fear of truth, but recognition of moral responsibility. In areas such as A surveillance, dual-use biological research, or mass data profiling, the ethical cost of knowing may outweigh epistemic gain. When knowledge predictably enables coercion, erosion of privacy, or catastrophic risk, restraint becomes a moral imperative A society that refuses to draw epistemic boundaries implicitly endorses the logic that anything knowable is therefore permissible—a logic that history has repeatedly proven catastrophic.

Implications for TOK: Knowledge, Ethics, and Power

This discussion reveals that TOK cannot treat knowledge as an abstract good divorced from ethical context. Ways of knowing reason, language, technology—are embedded in power structures that shape who benefits from knowledge and who is harme by it. Ethical considerations are therefore not external constraints on knowledge, but internal conditions of responsible knowing

The pursuit of knowledge is not an unconditional virtue. To insist otherwise is to cling to a naïve Enlightenment fantasy that collapses under historical and ethical scrutiny. While knowledge can empower and liberate, it can also dominate, exploit, and destroy. The critical TOK insight is this: not all ignorance is moral failure, and not all knowledge is moral progress.

Ethical restrictions on knowledge are not betrayals of reason—they are its most demanding expression. A knower who refuse to ask whether they should know is not intellectually courageous, but morally irresponsible. In an age where knowledge increasingly shapes the fate of humanity itself, the willingness to restrain inquiry may be the clearest sign of wisdom.



Core Philosophical & Ethical Sources

1. Aristotle

Aristotle. Metaphysics, Book I.

Use in essay:

Supports the claim that humans have an intrinsic desire to know and that knowledge has inherent value. Useful for establishing the traditional pro-knowledge position before challenging it.

2.Immanuel Kant

Kant, Immanuel. Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. 1785.

Use in essay:

Foundational for deontological ethics. Supports absolutist limits on inquiry, especially arguments about:

- **Treating humans as ends, not means**
- **Informed consent**
- **Moral constraints regardless of outcomes**

3.John Stuart Mill

Mill, John Stuart. On Liberty. 1859.

Use in essay:

Represents the strongest counterclaim in favor of intellectual freedom and open inquiry. You can cite Mill to show:

- **Why suppressing knowledge risks harm**
- **Why free exchange of ideas promotes truth**

4.Hans Jonas

Jonas, Hans. The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age. 1984.

Use in essay:

One of your most important sources. Directly supports:

- **Ethical restraint in the face of catastrophic risk**
- **Responsibility to future generations**
- **Limits on technological and scientific knowledge**

Knowledge, Power, and Society

5. Michel Foucault

Foucault, Michel. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings. 1980.

Use in essay:

Supports the argument that:

- **Knowledge is not neutral**
- **Knowledge production reinforces power structures**
- **Inquiry can be a tool of domination**

6.Jürgen Habermas

Habermas, Jürgen. The Future of Human Nature. 2003.

Use in essay:

Useful for:

- **Ethics of biotechnology and human enhancement**
- **Concerns about autonomy, consent, and manipulation**
- **Moral limits of scientific progress**

Historical & Real-Life Examples (RLEs)

7. Allan M. Brandt

Brandt, Allan M. “Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.” Hastings Center Report, 1978.

Use in essay:

A perfect TOK real-life example showing:

- **Knowledge gained through unethical means**
- **Violation of consent**
- **Why outcomes cannot justify immoral inquiry**

8.United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO. Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. 2005.

Use in essay:

Supports:

- **Global ethical standards for research**
- **Human dignity and consent**
- **Institutional limits on knowledge**

9.Nick Bostrom

Bostrom, Nick. “Existential Risks: Analyzing Human Extinction Scenarios.” Journal of Evolution and Technology, 2002.

Use in essay:

Supports:

- **Ethical restraint in high-risk knowledge domains**
- **AI, biotechnology, and existential threats**

10.Hannah Arendt

Arendt, Hannah. The Banality of Evil. 1963.

Use in essay:

Supports the idea that:

- **Atrocities can arise from ordinary, rational systems**
- **Knowledge and bureaucracy can coexist with moral collapse**

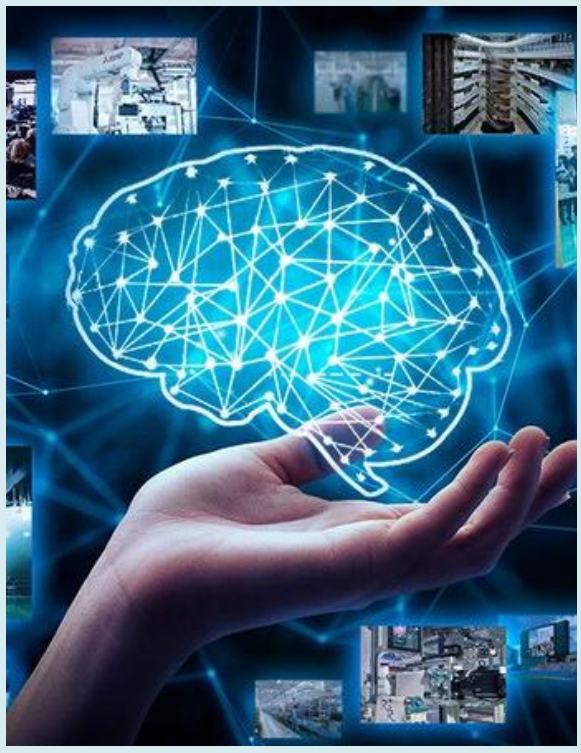
Liya Derin

To what extent does technology enhance or limit our access to knowledge?

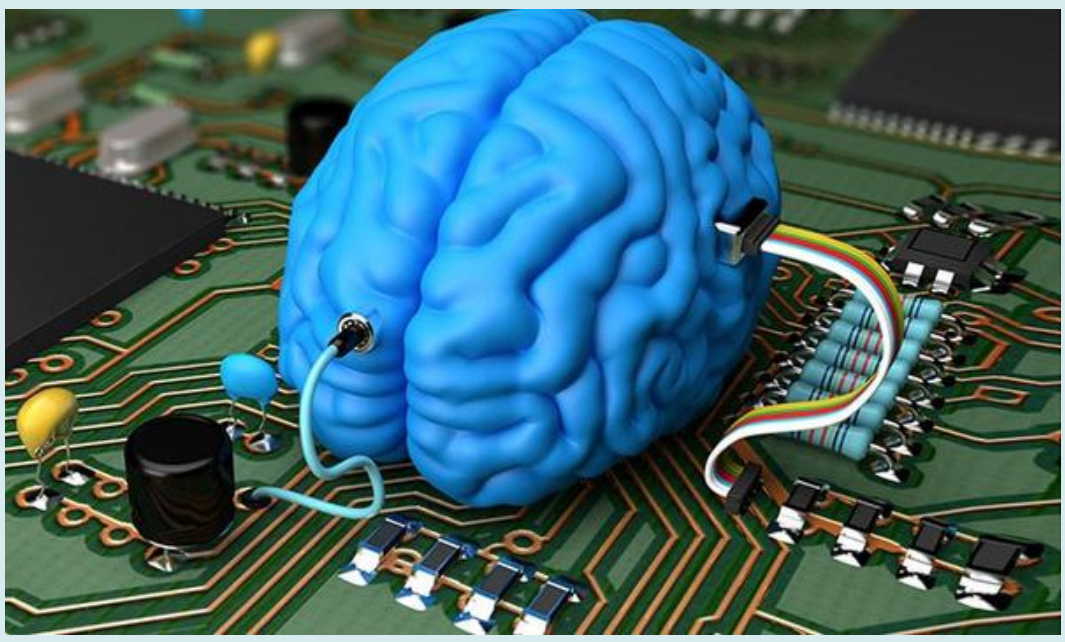
Technology, such as the phones we are often addicted to and the computers we use for school, has revolutionized the way we access knowledge. It has transformed how information is shared, learned, and understood in modern society. Technology itself is neither entirely good nor bad; rather, its impact depends on how people choose to use it

While it offers many benefits that help solve everyday problems, the misuse of technology can also create new challenges that did not exist before. On one hand, technology greatly enhances our access to knowledge. Information is available anytime and anywhere, allowing people from different parts of the world to communicate, discuss ideas, and share perspectives almost instantly. This easy access encourages collaboration and the rapid spread of knowledge, which would have been impossible in the past. In this way, technology acts as a powerful tool that expands human understanding and learning.

On the other hand, technology can also limit our access to reliable knowledge. Because there are few restrictions on what people can publish online, false or misleading information can spread just as quickly as accurate knowledge. This makes it difficult to distinguish between what is true and what is not. As a result, technology can challenge our understanding of knowledge rather than simply enhancing it, especially when individuals accept information without questioning its reliability.



To sum everything that has been said, whether technology enhances or limits our access to knowledge depends on human judgment and perspective. Some people view it as an immense pool of knowledge, while others see it as a source of distraction and misinformation. In conclusion, technology significantly expands our access to information, but it also requires us to think critically. While technology provides us with knowledge, it is our responsibility to evaluate and interpret it. Therefore, although technology makes accessing knowledge easier, the human mind remains the most important tool for understanding what is truly meaningful and accurate.



Simge Ada

Think Again: Three Common Fallacies That Trick Us

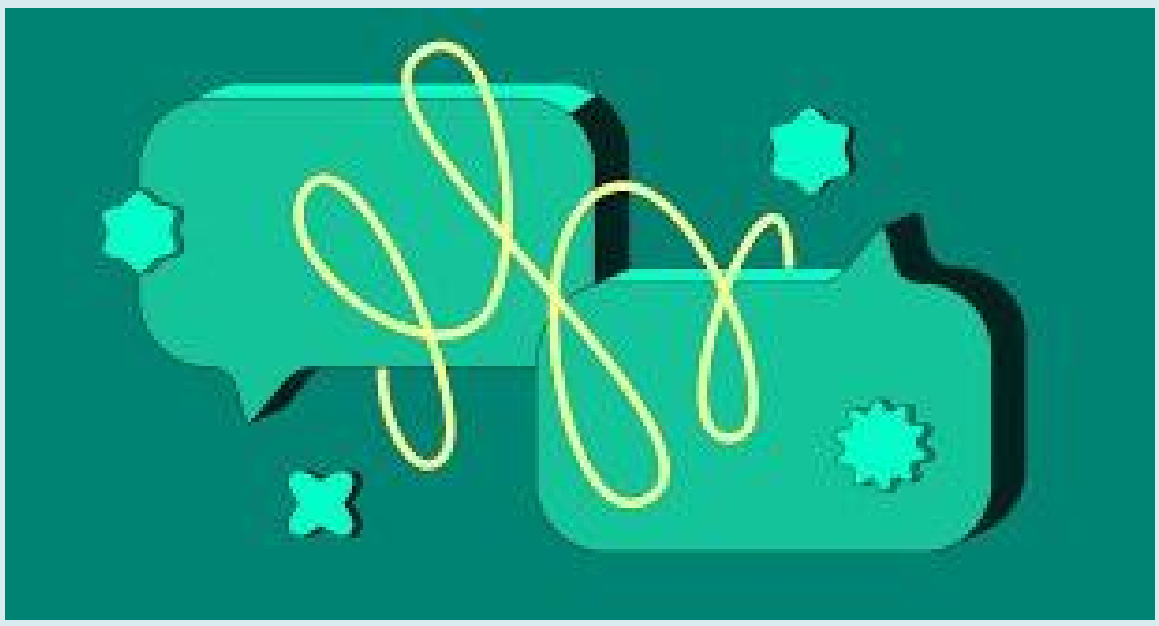
In Theory of Knowledge (TOK), we are encouraged to question how we know what we know. However, in real life, arguments often sound convincing even when they are logically weak. This usually happens because of logical fallacies—mistakes in reasoning that mislead us without us noticing. Three of the most common fallacies we encounter are “Ad Hominem, Non Sequitur, and the Bandwagon Effect.”
Learning to recognize these fallacies helps us become more critical and responsible knowers.

Ad Hominem: Attacking the Person, Not the Argument

An Ad Hominem fallacy occurs when someone dismisses an argument by attacking the person who makes it instead of addressing the claim itself.
Example:
“Why should we listen to her opinion on climate change? She isn’t even a scientist.”
Here, the argument is rejected based on the speaker’s identity rather than the evidence presented. In TOK, this is a problem because knowledge claims should be evaluated using reason and evidence, not personal characteristics. While expertise can be relevant, rejecting an idea solely because of who says it prevents meaningful discussion.
This fallacy is especially common on social media, where personal attacks often replace thoughtful debate.

Non Sequitur: That Conclusion Came Out of Nowhere

Non Sequitur means “it does not follow.” This fallacy happens when a conclusion has no logical connection to the information given.Example:
“He owns an expensive car, so he must be a good leader.”
There is no logical link between wealth and leadership ability, yet the conclusion sounds convincing. In TOK, we are taught to check whether conclusions are logically supported by evidence. Non Sequitur arguments often rely on hidden assumptions that feel believable but are not justified.
This fallacy frequently appears in advertising and politics, where emotional appeal replaces logical reasoning.



The Bandwagon Effect: Everyone Believes It, So It Must Be True

The Bandwagon Effect happens when a belief is accepted as true simply because many people believe it.

Example:

“Millions of people support this idea, so it must be correct.”Popularity is treated as proof. TOK challenges this way of thinking because truth is not decided by majority opinion. History shows many examples of widely accepted beliefs later proven false. Social pressure can discourage individuals from questioning popular ideas.

This fallacy highlights the tension between shared knowledge and independent thinking.

Why These Fallacies Matter?

These fallacies influence what we accept as knowledge, how ideas spread, and how easily we are persuaded. In a world ful of fast information and strong opinions, recognizing faulty reasoning is an essential TOK skill.

TOK is not just about learning theories—it is about learning how to think. Ad Hominem attacks distract us from evidence, Non Sequitur arguments confuse logic, and the Bandwagon Effect replaces truth with popularity. By identifying these fallacies, we become more thoughtful, critical, and responsible knowers.

In the end, a good argument doesn’t just sound convincing—it makes sense.

Doruk Namoğlu

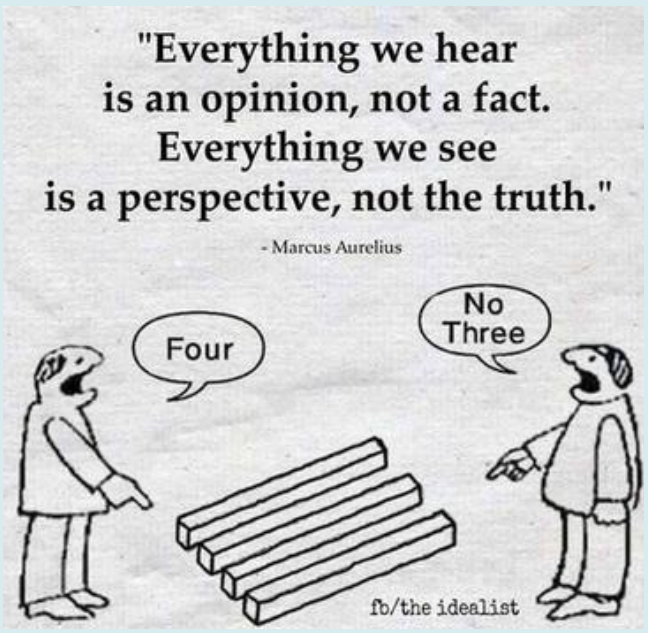
To what extent is our understanding of truth shaped by our perspective?

People often talk about truth as if it is something solid and fixed, like the top of a mountain. But when different people try to reach that “truth,” they end up seeing different things. This makes me think that maybe truth is not the same for everyone. Instead, our own perspective plays a big role in how we understand events around us. In this essay, I want to explain how perspective shapes truth in many areas, but also how some fields, especially science, try to reduce this effect.

History shows very clearly how perspective changes truth. If you look at something like the Crimean War, you see that two countries can tell two completely different stories. One side may explain it as protecting religion, while the other describes it as a fight for power and land. The basic facts, dates, who fought, what happened don’t change. But the meaning people attach to those facts changes a lot. The same thing happens in modern media. One news channel can call a protest the people’s voice, while another calls it dangerous chaos. Even small things like word choices, photos, and short video clips can shape how we see the event. These examples show that truth is not something we just discover, like picking up a rock. It is shaped by how people present it.

Still, real evidence, documents, and physical proof put some limits on interpretation.Science is usually seen as an area where personal perspective does not matter much. Scientists use observation, testing, and repeated results to avoid bias. But even here, perspective can still appear. Thomas Kuhn explained that scientists think inside “paradigms,” meaning they share certain common ideas that shape what they see as a good question or a good answer. When these paradigms change, like when physics moved from Newton’s ideas to quantum theory, scientists did not just learn new facts, they started to see the world differently. So even scientific truth is influenced by both evidence and human thinking.The real challenge is finding a balance between perspective and objectivity. One helpful idea comes from Habermas, who says that open and honest communication allows people to understand each other better. When people listen instead of trying to win, their perspectives can come closer together.

In daily life, this simply means noticing that our view is limited and being willing to what others think, whether in class or at home.In the end, truth is not fully fixed or relative. It is shaped by perspective, but also supported by evidence. Understanding balance helps us think more clearly and avoid assuming that our view is the only co one.



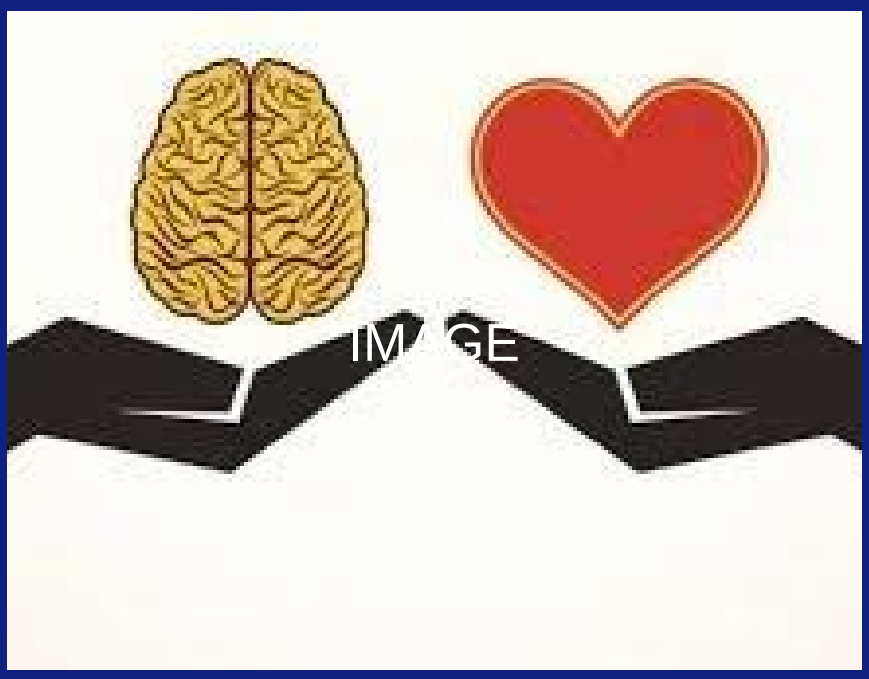
Elif
Asya
Keleş

To what extent is knowledge subjective or objective? How do you decide?

First-hand knowledge is the information we obtain by our own experiences. For example, we know fire can burn our hand if it is too close. This is objective knowledge. No one can deny this fact since it is basic science. Based on this example, we can say our experiences lead to objective knowledge. But is it impossible to obtain subjective knowledge? Supposing this as something impossible would be wrong.

Let’s assume you started to learn playing the cello. After some time, you found cello boring and a waste of time. This doesn’t mean cello is a bad instrument, that is just your opinion, many people in the world play it. This is subjective. So, what extent is knowledge subjective or objective? It is not wuite possible to give a definite answer to this question, because we decide if knowledge is considered objective or subjective by our experiences.

In conclusion, in order to answer “to what extent”, looking back at the experiences, observations and lessons learned from them can be done. Different experiences open a door for new knowledge, whether subjective or objective .



Ali Erdem

The Certainty Illusion

Humans almost always look for certain answers, certain truth regarding knowledge, especially in natural sciences, where this truth is dependent on “sufficient evidence” and therefore considered to be objective and final. Even though we perceive science as the “undoubtable truth,” the history of scientific development partially disproves this ideology, it suggests that the certainty we believe to have may be more of an illusion than the absolute truth. Starting from Newtonian physics and ranging to quantum mechanics, “absolute and undoubtable facts” have been continuously disproven, making us question our undoubted belief in the so-called truth that the “objective and trustable” empirical sciences provide.

To start off with an example, Newton’s law of motion and law of gravity were once accepted to be the definite and absolute truth universally and were considered to be undoubtable, they were backed by experiments, observation and precise mathematical formulas which gave them this universal credibility. For tens of years they were sufficient enough, and successfully explained planetary motion and everyday physical phenomena. This success created an illusion of certainty that science had fully figured out the precise laws of nature, but still, during the early twentieth century, Einstein’s theory of relativity proved that Newton’s laws are only accurate to a certain extent, that they break down at extreme speeds and gravitational fields. Further down the line, quantum mechanics further challenged assumed knowledge by introducing concepts such as uncertainty, probability and the observer effect at a subatomic level.

Evolutions in knowledge like in this case don’t necessarily mean that scientific evidence is unreliable, more so that it suggests scientific knowledge is adaptable and not always true and undoubtedly trustable. Evidence is always interpreted through existing technologies and assumptions. As these frameworks improve, our understanding of reality follows. Science does not aim to or progress by finding final truths, rather by redefining what we already know according to newer technologies, observations and evidence.

Therefore, trust in scientific/empirical evidence shouldn’t be undoubted, but also believed in to a certain extent, we should value scientific knowledge for its power and usefulness while still recognizing that certainty in science doesn’t exist and if it does its an illusion. The ”certainty illusion” further reminds us that knowledge is dynamic and that doubt plays a crucial role in advancements and refinements of currently accepted knowledge, alongside our understanding of reality.

Utku Dumanlı

The Weather Through My Eyes: Knowledge from First-Hand Experience

Weather is something that I know from first hand experience. When I step outside I feel the wind or notice the rain. I gain knowledge about the weather.This knowledge can be considered as objective and subjective at the same time

Subjectively, my opinions shape my knowledge.For instance I might feel cold at 5 degree celsius when someone else is comfortable. My experience is guided by clothing health and tolerance which makes it special to me

Objectively, weather can be measured with technological devices such as thermometers that show the exact temperature.These measurements are objective and can be proved by anyone.

In conclusion, first hand knowledge of weather can be combined of subjective thoughts and objective data

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