

Example of critical thinking on areas of knowledge

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



It is more important to discover new ways of thinking of what is already known than to discover new data or facts. To what extent do you agree with that statement?

Daniel J. Boorstein once said, " The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance, it's the illusion of knowledge." Life is about discovery; as we move through our days, it becomes important to absorb, synthesize and assimilate knowledge in whatever form we can. In this way, we can understand how better to live our lives and do what we will with our given faculties. There are two ways in which to expand our knowledge and improve on what we 'know': learning more data, or innovating our ways of assimilating that information. While I believe that there are new ways of thinking that can reveal new facets of the information that we already have, there should also be call to discover new data.

In Boorstein's quote, he mentions the 'illusion of knowledge.' Many people assimilate facts and figures, but fill in their context with assumptions and half-formed opinions that are based on their own biases and prejudices. This can be found in many places today; with the advent of a 24-hour news cycle, modern news organizations tend to sensationalize the smallest story in order to fill this larger amount of time. Political pundits are given airtime to spin objective news into opinions that masquerade as fact; the people watching them and investing in said opinions. This gives them the perception that they know everything that they could about a particular subject - the illusion of knowledge - and this stops people from investigating further. The illusion of knowledge, more often than not, is a mask designed to facilitate one's own

point of view and prevent it from being sullied by ignored aspects of a subject.

The discovery of new facts, also, should not be ignored. Darwin, in his discovery of the theory of evolution, opened up a whole new avenue of science that proved to be important for mankind. For the first time, we were exploring in depth exactly what we are, and what we can from, without a religious, dogmatic context. We wished to learn what it was about us that set us apart from other life on this planet. This example of new science and new facts is what should encourage us to keep looking for more: more information, more data, more discoveries, more everything. We cannot simply circle the drain looking for new ways to examine what we have; we have to find new things to examine as well.

This is not to say that new ways of thinking should be ignored either; it is of equal importance to discover new things we did not realize before about existing inventions. The invention of the smartphone was a tremendous innovation; we already had computers that told us a wealth of information, and we had phones we carried with us wherever we went, which we used to communicate. Companies like Apple, with its iPhone, managed to combine the features of a personal computer with the portability of a cell phone to create a wholly new way of keeping information with us at all times. The developers at Apple used new ways of thinking about products in order to develop things we did not even know we needed. In today's world, having a smartphone is almost a necessity; this was not true five years ago. However, now that Apple and other developers have opened up our eyes to these

innovative new ways of thinking, it is impossible to imagine our lives without them.

Familiarity with our old methods of investigation into the world around us can often prevent us from reaching new and vital information about a subject. We are so used to checking out of a subject as soon as we glean as much information as we feel like absorbing. Adam Kahane says, " The new ways we can't see because of our old ways of looking" - the establishment of specific avenues for knowledge can cut us off from learning new ways of looking, different and unique angles that do not come into consideration.

New ideas about thinking, cognition and the nature of knowledge crop up on a regular basis. In an education context, teachers can take advantage of these new ways of learning to inform students and provide them with a better toolbox of skills with which to improve their situative perspective (Putnam & Borko, 2000). The use of authentic activities in a classroom can link education to real actions and perspectives that are held by students; this helps to prepare them for intentional learning, where they purposefully acquire knowledge because of their own desires, not the forced repetition of facts given by a teacher.

Building a knowledge base is absolutely required - one of the biggest problems when representing knowledge is learning the best way " to revise knowledge when new, contradictory information is obtained" (Dalal, 1988). A piece of information that is learned the first time is relatively difficult to change when new data appears to prove the previous information false. As a

result, it can be very difficult to change opinions on a subject; someone can still be wrong, even after being corrected on a subject.

This involves the 'reevaluation of the concrete,' a concept that requires that existing data regarded as concrete should be thoroughly examined in light of the new ideas that have been discovered. It is one thing to find new ways of looking at information; it is quite another to accept the new things that have been discovered. In order to find these new avenues, willingness to change existing and preestablished ideas must be facilitated. This is a difficult prospect for many; one hardly ever wishes to be wrong, and it can get in the way of objective appraisal of one's own knowledge base (Turkle & Papert, 1992).

James Joyce once said, " mistakes are the portals of discovery." Many people are afraid of being at fault, of making mistakes and being responsible for failures. In today's society, this is often deemed as a negative characteristic, and those who fail sometimes see the effort as a waste of time or resources. However, in mistakes, new things are learned that would not otherwise be absorbed or noticed. People must not be afraid to make mistakes, as that is how they learn. This is an avenue of discovery that is cut off from most individuals, due to both their avoidance of mistakes at any cost and their inability to see their mistakes as anything other than negative.

One notable example of mistakes leading to tremendous new possibilities is Christopher Columbus - in 1492, his search for a Western route to Asia led to the discovery of the New World, America. Technically, his mission was a failure, as he did not make it to Asia. He even made the mistake of believing

that he was in Asia, which is where the trend of naming Native Americans "Indians" originated. However, his discovery led to the colonization and creation of an entirely new section of the planet by European society; through his mistake, opportunity rose. It is this kind of bold venture that can breed amazing new discoveries, which is what needs to be exercised more readily in society.

The world economy is in shambles; many people are finding ways to get things they cannot pay for, and as such entire nations end up in crippling debt. Greece is but the latest example; the entire country is trillions of dollars in the red, and there seems to be no way out. Factions disagree on whether or not these solutions come from cutting spending or raising taxes; a combination of both may be required. No matter which way these forces look at it, there may be no way out. However, with the application of new ideas and new strategies, it is possible for the forces in power to find a way to solve these crises. It may require dramatic restructuring of priorities by individuals and governments, but if that is what it takes, that should happen. The mistakes we make now are just the chance to find new ways of doing things better.

In conclusion, I agree with the sentiment that people require new ways of learning and thinking in order to examine all facets of a subject; new things can be learned, and existing information can be understood in new ways. At the same time, to consider the possibility that there is nothing left to learn is a frightening theory, one that has the potential to stagnate humanity to the point where there is literally nothing new under the sun. Efforts must be

made to both learn new information and to find new ways to learn it; in this way, human existence and the pursuit of truth and knowledge can be pursued and continued as long as possible. People must learn how best to learn, and find new things to learn with these different methods.

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