

The knowledge for
which we can



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Most philosophers think that you cannot know that something is true without believing it is true. If you do not believe that a fish cannot breathe out of water, then you do not know it. Believing is a requirement of knowing. That said, how justified must our beliefs be to constitute knowledge? How valuable is this knowledge in which we believe in? I suppose in our society today, the value of knowledge at most times is dependent on the justifications that we give it.

It would seem reasonable to believe that knowledge with the strongest justification is the most valuable, but why? Justification is seen to add value to information and is relative to what people believe or think. When we think of justification, we think of it in terms of justifying something to other people. The stronger the justification, the stronger the argument, and therefore, the more value it has, when compared to other arguments. Knowledge that can be justified is more significant because it is more widely accepted. It shows that your case is logical and has reason.

Society greatly values logic and reason as a way of knowing. This makes the information more credible, and gives it more meaning. An example of how this sort of knowledge is respected is to take a look at the foundations of sciences and mathematics, which hold much value in our world today. The theories that they consist of are based on strong justifications that have been refined over decades of study and research.

You may ask, " What makes a justification strong or weak? How are we to decide whether the information is valuable? ". Justification consists of the evidence or proof that supports the information. Scientists provided evidence

for their theories which strengthened their cases. For example, the development of the structure of an electron was based on evidence that proved that they existed.

In 1897, J. J. Thomson found that cathode rays were bent in certain directions by electric and magnetic fields, and therefore, he thought, must be made up of negatively charged particles of some sort. Later, those particles were named electrons. The experiment that J. J Thomson carried out provided substantiation that electrons were negatively charged particles.

This proof allowed people to recognise its existence. The fundamental principle behind what we call science today is the idea that we gain knowledge from evidence. We know something scientifically if we can point to some experience that proves it. The knowledge we have gained from science has enabled us to improve our standard of living and make use of the information to benefit mankind. Therefore, from experience, we understand that having explanations increases the usefulness of the information presented, and therefore more valuable, considering the value of knowledge as knowledge that is more widely accepted.

I have just discussed how the credibility of information can lead to it becoming more accepted by the community, and therefore hold more value. This is because strong justifications make information more believable than weak justifications. Poor justifications are sometimes seen as excuses rather than explanations. Allow me to present an example. I have just spent all of my allowance on a stereo without my mother's knowledge.

If I try to justify my allowance's disappearance to my mother by telling her that my dog had eaten it, she would probably not believe me and see it as an excuse. If I justified its disappearance by telling her the allowance had been stolen, it would be more believable, and she would see it as an explanation. This is because in a way, justification is a defence mechanism to substantiate an argument or case. The more believable the case is, the stronger the defence and the more credible the information. Therefore stronger justifications to actions are more accepted and are of more value.

We tend to have a feeling of security when we can justify our thoughts or actions. As explained earlier, the more believable a case, the more value it holds. Being able to justify our thoughts or actions make it more believable and therefore give it more worth. This can be applied from the justifications that we make everyday to the justifications that lie behind theories.

It can be applied in the courtroom when providing evidence to the decisions we make in our workplace. Valuing justification gives a certain order to things that allows society and its principles to be just and fair. However, there are exceptions. Some knowledge that is widely valued and believed in do not have the strongest justifications. Most religions are based on the existence of one or more Gods.

There is no real evidence that God truly exists, no proof that confirms some of the beliefs of these religions, and yet it broadly accepted. Their belief relies on faith in their knowledge. People who believe that everything in the bible is true have confidence in their knowledge and its authenticity. I find this interesting because despite the fact that we live in a scientifically

advanced, technology-driven society, it is common for an individual to have faith in God and his religion despite its lack in evidence or justification of its existence. Is this because of our need to feel a part of a community, such as a Christian or Muslim community? Or do we really have faith in God? This leads us to question the degree of justification required for knowledge.

In the beginning of this essay an inquiry was posed that questioned how justified our beliefs have to be to constitute knowledge. Probability is the most likely answer. The more probable a piece of information, the more likely it is to be true. If justification were a guide to truth, we would most likely value information that can be substantiated.

If we consider truth to be valuable, then the knowledge we value the most is the knowledge for which we can provide the strongest justifications.