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TOK ESSAY " There are no absolute distinctions between what is true and what is false". Discuss this claim. The complexity of this simple claim can be easily underestimated due to its simple nature, however to completely understand the true intricacy of the statement would require close analysis of its meaning and an understanding of the process that we go through in order to obtain knowledge. Definitions of truth can only be interpreted so far, however an understanding of how knowledge is obtained through the ways of knowing in each of the areas of knowing can provide further insight into the accuracy of the claim. Distinctions can be made between true and false in the definitions of truth. Truth can be defined in various ways, from the neo-classical correspondence theory, Tarski's recursive definition of truth, to even simplistic dictionary definitions. The correspondence theory is the idea that something is true as long as it corresponds with the way things factually are.[1] This theory is the recursive definition of truth, which reduces the factual ambiguity of a sentence, a colloquial example of a sentence with such characteristics is " snow is white if and only if snow is white".[2] This definition highlights that truth is only true in the relation to the facts. A less complex dictionary definition allows for the generalisation of the term, aiding in how applicable it is, for example truth can be defined as being " consistent with fact or reality; not false" (Princeton university, 2010)[3]. By examining these definitions of the concept of truth, it can be seen that there is a certain extent to which it conforms to objectivity; however, to define a distinguishing line between what is true and what is false is near impossible. Truth also holds its own definition in each of the areas of knowing, each definition overlapping with a generalised definition of truth. In the natural sciences and mathematics, truth is apparent, also in history and human sciences, both in <https://assignbuster.com/tok-essay-there-are-no-absolute-distinctions-between-what-is-true-and-what-is-false-discuss-this-claim/>

which information is based on factual information. However in these areas of knowing, there can be information that is not based on factual information such as theories. Also Paradoxes provide confliction between the definition of what is true and what is false. It is apparent that what is true and what is false can clearly be distinguished in areas of knowing that utilise objective methods of gaining information. In the natural sciences truth can be anything that is consistent with the facts that have been obtained through the use of the scientific method. These facts or laws have been produced by examining the relationship between variables and it is the establishment of the relationships which create certain laws which are perceived to be true. Similarly, mathematics also relies upon the experimental testing of theories in order to establish their truth. For example, a statement which can be explicitly stated as true is that the acceleration of gravity is 9.8 meters per second per second.[4] This has been both scientifically tested and also proven by mathematics which are both based on laws, which are considered facts meaning that this statement is consistent with factual information, and is therefore is true. The way that the facts have been obtained is by reasoning. Other areas of knowledge that don't utilise objective methods of gaining information, such as history and human sciences help us to establish a distinction between what is true and what is false. History provides us with factual evidence about the past which is considered to be true by the majority of people. Historical evidence such as books or journals written by historians is considered factual, which therefore makes sentences easy to define as true or false. For example the claim that captain cook came to Australia can be supported by several accounts of historical evidence which can be considered factual, therefore the claim is true. The claim that captain

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cook did not come to Australia can be refuted by various means of research, which therefore means the claim is false. This displays the clear distinction between what is true and what is false. So far, we have established that there is obviously a distinction between what is true and what is false in certain areas, however, in these same areas and by using the same ways of knowing a distortion in the line between what is true and what is false is created. History which we have used to establish truth in statements concerning past events, may not actually be true, which blurs the difference between the truth and what is false. For example if I were to say, " I ate a peanut yesterday" according to the correspondence theory of truth, would only be true if I did actually eat a peanut yesterday, however what if I was unable to distinguish between peanuts and cashews? Is the statement still true? As there is no factual evidence that can support it, or any evidence to refute it, it becomes difficult to determine whether the statement is true or false. Therefore, sentences without factual information cannot be defined as either true or false by using the theory of correspondence. A Paradox is a piece of information which leads to a contradiction of facts, or knowledge. An example of a paradox is the liars paradox: " This statement is false. " If we were to consider the statement as true, we would therefore consider the statement to be false, as the sentence states that it is false. However, having reasoned that, we are lead to believe that because it is false the truth is therefore the opposite of the sentence and since the sentence states that it is false therefore it must be true. This is a continuous cycle in distinguishing whether the statement is true or false, and cannot be labelled as either true or false. This allows us to make the assumption that there is no definite line between what is true and what is false in some cases. In conclusion the claim <https://assignbuster.com/tok-essay-there-are-no-absolute-distinctions-between-what-is-true-and-what-is-false-discuss-this-claim/>

that there are no absolute distinctions between what is true and what is false can be refuted by some examples of objective evidence, in areas of knowledge such as mathematics and natural sciences. Also the definite factual evidence of history can be clearly defined as truth, which adds to the argument that there are absolute distinctions between what is true and what is false. However, the very same way of knowing, such as reason emotion, that we rely upon to provide us with factual information also provide the supporting evidence for the claim that there are no absolute distinctions. Paradox's are a perfect example of how the line between what is true and what is false can be distorted. The fact that there is any evidence that supports the claim at all proves that there cannot be any absolute distinctions between what is true and what is false. This then leads us to believe that the claim that there are no absolute distinctions between what is true and what is false is completely relevant as it is true. Word Count: 1400. References [1] Truth, Stanford encyclopedia of knowledge, 2006, Michael Glanzberg, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth/#NeoClaTheTru> [2] What is tarskis theory of truth?, Gila Sher, 2003, <http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/gsher/WTTT.pdf> [3] word net search 3. 0, Pinceton university, 2010, <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=true&Search+WordNet&o2=&o0=1&o7=&o5=&o1=1&o6=&o4=&o3=&h=00000> [4] Sir Isaac Newton: Universal Law of Gravitation, Astronomy 161, The Solar System, 2001, <http://csep10.phys.utk.edu/astr161/lect/history/newtongrav.html>