

Knowledge areas
which rely on varying
degrees



Knowledge is commonly thought to be logical and obtained through rigorous methodologies, but knowledge can also be described as any idea, skill, or fact acquired through any way of knowing, whether that be language, sense perception, emotion, reason, imagination, faith, intuition, or memory.

Uniformities in regards to knowledge, are premises one assumes that cannot be proved or absolute knowledge that cannot be questioned. The prescribed title stated above suggests that uniformities must exist in order to produce knowledge, however there are also many forms of knowledge as aforementioned. In the areas of natural sciences and ethics, there are varying ways in which they produce knowledge - the sciences rely on logic and proof, while ethics requires emotion and reasoning (ways we cannot prove). Although contrasting, these two areas which rely on varying degrees of uniformities, are still able to provide us knowledge.

The uniformity in scientific laws allows for the advancement and practice of the natural sciences as it is key to extrapolating into unobserved knowledge. Similarly, in order to study quantum mechanics we must assume that electrons do in fact behave the way they do, for this field is merely an attempt to imagine how our world works at a miniscule scale. German philosopher Moritz Schlick argued for Foundationalism and that "knowledge rests upon a special class of statements - an ultimate premise - whose verification doesn't depend on other beliefs," meaning that they are intuitive and self evident. Scientific philosophers continue to argue about the reliability and need for premises regarding what is known as the Regress Problem in the Scientific Method. This problem states that in an argument, all propositions must be justified, however those justifications must also be

justified as well, leading to an infinite cycle of justifying and questioning beliefs. Schilick believes in the idea that knowledge can be self evident – we are able to understand the proposition without proof .

For instance, take the word energy. We know through our sense perception that energy is what gives us the ability to move objects, play sports, or wake up in the morning, but we have never truly defined what energy is, rather we explain it as some “ force” that allows us to do work. We intuitively feel energy, therefore it can be logically confirmed that the concept of energy is what drives movement in the world, whether that be from us or our surroundings. With that being said, we are able to logically deduce and expand our knowledge through experimentation and the Scientific Method to understand the world around us. If the claim that the existence of energy needed to be justified by other beliefs, the field of natural sciences arguably, would cease to exist because the basic principle it needs to rest upon is considered “ ambiguous,” due to its lack of justification. Without uniformities, knowledge can not be critically deduced from it, because underlying principles are not considered knowledge itself.

That being said, one may argue that accepting uniformities which are not supported by other beliefs is arbitrary. The field of quantum mechanics then can not be accepted as knowledge, for it is only a notion proposed to understand our world. We cannot trust it yet.

Philosopher Otto Neurath argued in favour of Coherentism, stating that there are “ no privileged set of statements that serve as the ultimate foundation of knowledge;” rather, knowledge comes from the coherence among sets of

statements we accept. Therefore, claims and its justification will eventually loop back to the original claim, creating a circle because every claim is justified by other claims. In doing so, it solves the Regress Problem in the Scientific Method by proposing that if beliefs are supported in a circular fashion, every statement that is made will be justified and therefore can be accepted as knowledge without the assumption of uniformities. Furthermore, the initial beliefs are not arbitrary statements; they come from one's experiences, built off of sense perception, similarly to how uniformities are brought up, however, these experiences are sets of statements that can be justified and are coherent and consistent. For instance, if one observes two buses and the first person to exit the first bus is female, the second is female, and the third is female, one may assume that the next person will also be female, based on the experiences (observations) they have so far, however, this belief is still arbitrary as it does not cohere to any other circumstances - nothing clearly justifies such a pattern. Suppose another statement is made: the second bus is seen with male students - one then assumes that the next student from the first bus observed is female. ³ This belief (piece of knowledge) can be made because it coheres to other statements or experiences.

Moreover, these statements are not arbitrary as they are not "self evident." One can not intuitively feel that the first bus is all female because there is a consistency of females coming out of it, but by coherentism, statements can logically justify each other to support the central claim. Thus, ultimate arbitrary uniformities do not necessarily need to be made to produce knowledge. In the area of ethics, though knowledge produced is not

traditionally universal and provable like the natural sciences – everyone has varying perspectives and experiences which gives them different types of knowledge to determine whether an action is right or wrong – it can not be denied that knowledge can be derived from this field. Furthermore, the extent to which uniformities produce knowledge is also argued here. In the area of ethics, uniformities can be thought of as absolute statements for what is right or wrong.

For instance, Philosopher Immanuel Kant argued in favour of a deontological approach to ethics which is a system that “ judges whether an action is right or wrong based on a moral code.” A “ moral code” can be thought of as a source of absolute knowledge or rules that are unquestionable uniformities one assumes and therefore produces knowledge for them to justify whether their actions are right or wrong. For instance, “ certain types of actions – such as murder, theft, and lying – are “ absolutely” prohibited,” therefore if one were to harm others, they should intuitively feel wrong because they deontologically follow an absolute “ moral code” (uniformities) without a question. Ultimately, through a deontological approach, the knowledge that informs our actions will eventually derive back to justifying the ethical uniformities stated by our moral code.

Another example of these self evident and unquestionable uniformities comes from knowledge gained through faith or religion. One’s religion may state that capital punishment is wrong and there is no other way to look at it. One would then justify these beliefs based on the knowledge they accumulate from their experiences with the premise that murder is wrong actively affecting the way they perceive the world.

Therefore, without a certain extent of uniformities in the area of ethics, it would be difficult to derive knowledge to justify the foundation of what is right and wrong in ethics. One may argue that although there are statements that are considered universal, much of the knowledge gained in the area of ethics does not require the assumption of uniformities as ethics is based on one's reason, intuition, and emotion; it is much more complex with various factors to consider. Universal rights and wrongs are always being questioned in ethics as well. Philosopher Jeremy Bentham supported the utilitarian approach to ethics where the "measure.

.. of right and wrong" is based on whether actions "give the greatest happiness" to the "greatest number – of people." In doing so, he implies that there is no need for uniformities to exist as there are different forms of knowledge arise from different situations.

More specifically, ethics does not require uniformities because this area is subjective itself, perhaps they are not even logical when ethics does not adhere to a foundation of principles, but rather a variety of perspectives through differing experiences that knowledge is acquired from. ¹⁰For instance, knowledge formulating a stance on the use of capital punishment largely contradicts the "uniformity" or premise that murder is wrong; different perspectives and experiences will alter the supposedly absolute ethical definition of murder. Though one may be told that murder is absolutely wrong, ultimately the memories of one's experiences and the emotions evoked from them are able to give us knowledge on how "universal" ethical knowledge should be interpreted. To an extent, uniformities are needed for the forward movement of knowledge.

Knowledge must come from somewhere (a starting point). The creation of the Scientific Method would not be possible if self evident uniformities (its foundation) was always questioned. Similarly, in deciding whether capital punishment is ethical, one intuitively relies on their subjective past experiences to support the uniformity that murder is wrong. While considering this, the acquisition of knowledge is also flexible and comes in a variety of forms which may not need to be derived from uniformities as discussed in the areas of natural sciences and ethics. For instance, the natural sciences can be built on the foundation of statements which cohere with one another and ethical knowledge can come from our immediate emotions and intuition. Ultimately, to an extent, uniformities are assumed as a starting point for knowledge so long as they are not ambiguous, however it is important to consider that knowledge is derived from various forms in different areas of knowledge - ethics is not as heavily reliant on provable concepts like the natural sciences - but undoubtedly this knowledge is just as qualifiable.