
The Dependence Of Present Knowledge On Past Knowledge

The process of obtaining information can be done in many ways, taken from different areas of knowledge and is continuously evolving. Through the notion that knowledge production is constant, it is important to recognise that past information has had a huge influence on the development of present knowledge. Thus, present information may be wholly dependent on the past, as suggested by the title. In my understanding, knowledge can be described as the information, skills, and facts that are generally acquired through education or experience. Wholly dependent, on the other hand, refers to the ability to be completely reliant. Taking the natural sciences and religious knowledge will help to expand on the following title. Memory and language will be used as central ways of knowing as the most relevant. During the process of knowledge production in areas of knowledge such as the sciences, it is evident that no knowledge arises from nothing. The concept of knowledge must contain elements such as language that existed in the past. Most of the knowledge possessed today is the result of an amalgamation of past information. However, if you take religious systems, a lot of knowledge present today contradicts the one provided in the past. Therefore the knowledge question here would be, is the knowledge present today wholly dependent on the knowledge obtained in the past?

The natural sciences mostly support the claim that present knowledge is completely reliant on information generated by experts in the past, as it is evident from much of the existing data. Most theories that continue to arise and then are proven as facts are derived from the knowledge that already existed. They are systematic and highly structured, meaning that, in most cases, it is the product of different individuals. Most of this knowledge is bound together within different disciplines where scientists continuously contribute to it as time progresses. Therefore present knowledge is just an improvement of the past. How experts interpret different situations is influenced by their personal experiences, and this information is used to shape the shared knowledge present. Thus, memory as a way of knowing acts as a mechanism that facilitates the development of unique perspectives in the present. An example that highlights this assertion is the instance whereby scientists such as Albert Einstein have contributed a lot to the development of modern physics. The personal knowledge generated by Einstein was used in the later years to explore more fundamental aspects of this discipline. His insights in the early part of the twentieth century, such as his theory of relativity, have been essential in shaping the shared knowledge present today. For example, in contemporary physics, different disciplinary-specific methods are reliant on Einstein's thought. This example illustrates how significant past knowledge has been in the advancement or progression of present knowledge. It shows that present knowledge claims are wholly dependent on past information.

It can also be argued that present knowledge in natural sciences is not wholly dependent on past knowledge to counter the above claim. This is because shared knowledge evolves as time progresses due to aspects such as the continued application of new methods of inquiry. Therefore, through the use of different knowledge frameworks, past knowledge can be deemed inaccurate or irrelevant. During this process, ways of knowing, such as reason and intuition, play a significant role as they influence the paradigm shifts that take place by providing insight on different concepts. As a result, experts within the Natural Sciences often change their

perceptions on what knowledge generates a consensus, and paradigm shifts take place. In most cases, these changes are slow and incremental, and therefore, they eventually possess absolute stability in the long run. For example, advances in the underlying theory can result in revolutionary shifts where past knowledge is discarded. To illustrate this, cell membrane structure theories in biology can be related to. The Davson-Danielli cell membrane model created in 1935, proposed a phospholipid bilayer that lies between two layers of globular proteins. The theory stated that proteins are exclusively on the outer surface of the membrane and do not permeate through. This was the only knowledge existing about the structure of the membrane when a new theory, not depending on the past discovery in any way, came to life in 1972. Singer-Nicholson fluid mosaic theory is the model widely accepted now, which states that integral proteins permeate the membrane and can move laterally along it. This finding completely contradicted the past knowledge and was not at all dependent on it. Therefore, we can conclude that present knowledge is not wholly dependent on prior information.

In religious knowledge systems, it is evident that present knowledge is wholly dependent on past knowledge. This is because knowledge claims within this area of knowledge are reliant on information contained in religious texts such as the scriptures in Christianity. One of the essential purposes of the social structure among human beings is to produce knowledge and transmit it down to other generations. However, for this knowledge to be present, experts need to have acquired it through processes such as observation and interpretation. This is where ways of knowing, such as language and faith, come in. The shared knowledge present within the religious systems is dependent on doctrines and laws that are written in religious texts and passed down from one generation to the other. Eventually, experts prescribe religious practices based on the knowledge claims produced over different periods. The consensus present in the past determines the accepted rituals and doctrines practiced today. An instance that exemplifies this claim is the presence of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa. Missionary activities in the past few centuries were integral to the introduction of Christianity within this region; they influenced the attitudes of the locals in terms of culture and religion. These activities have had a long-lasting effect on the development of religious knowledge. Through aspects such as the promotion of literacy, the missionaries were able to influence the perception of the locals, and this shaped the development of shared knowledge which is still adhered to today. Another example of how past religious knowledge has influenced the present knowledge within this region is the determination of subjects that are taught in the schools. This shows how past religious knowledge continues to shape the present knowledge and how present knowledge is wholly dependent on the past which supports the claim.

On the other hand, as a counter claim, it can also be argued that present religious knowledge is not wholly dependent on past information. The modern world presents different challenges to the progression of religious knowledge in different parts of the world. The media peddles various ideologies hence, religious knowledge begins adopting various philosophies that erode the consensus generated in the past. As these different world views interact, religion begins becoming compromised. Knowledge claims that were accepted in the past are now rejected. Ways of knowing in religious knowledge such as faith are being replaced with emotion and reason in order to generate independent knowledge which is more relevant to the world today. It is now a lot more common to meet Christians who are pro-choice even though the Bible promotes abortion as a deadly sin, because of knowledge that was generated disregarding the past beliefs. This shows that present religious knowledge is not completely reliant on past knowledge. A vivid example that justifies this claim is how the spread of Islam in different parts of the world has led to the breaking down of social ideals that were accepted by the early

Muslim community. For instance, multiple marriages have become an issue within different Islamic communities, even if before it was considered as the norm. This example highlights how present knowledge is ever-changing, and this essentially means that religious knowledge has begun rejecting past knowledge in favour of more relatable ideals. As religion is based on beliefs and not facts, it is a lot easier to change and disregard past knowledge and adjust your faith to a more modern world view, justifying it by changing morale. Therefore, present knowledge is not wholly dependent on past knowledge.

From this analysis, I agree to a certain extent that present knowledge in the natural sciences and religious knowledge systems is wholly dependent on past knowledge. This is because of the factors highlighted that show that knowledge in the two areas of knowledge builds upon claims developed by prior information. For example, a lot of scientific evidence present today would not exist without a base of past knowledge to shape the theories. The claim is also very evident in religion, as it heavily relies on information generated decades ago every single day in different ceremonies. Through the influence of ways of knowing such as memory and language, knowledge claims are passed on from one generation to the next and are used to shape the current knowledge framework present in the different fields. However, it should also be pointed out that this essay has revealed that present knowledge is not always reliant on prior information because of different factors such as paradigm shifts in the natural sciences which discredit past information and influence of the modern world in the religious systems, changing people's beliefs. The final statement made in this conclusion implies that society can effectively use the information generated in the past to develop new ideas and to provide more insight into existing ones, however does not always need to rely on it to do so.