

“Accepting knowledge claims always involves an element of trust.” Discuss this claim with reference to two areas of knowledge.

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In our pursuit to acquire knowledge, we often face arguments that are either familiar or unknown. These assertions, which are known as knowledge claims, invite multiple perspectives and viewpoints. In these situations, it is our individual thoughts and the collective understanding established in society help us decide whether or not to accept that particular knowledge claim. This link between personal and shared knowledge guides our process of acceptance, which may be influenced by the degree of certainty in a knowledge claim, our relationship with the entity that voices the knowledge claim, and our understanding of the particular area of knowledge that the claim encompasses. It is this link that precisely represents the abstract concept of trust that emerges both consciously and subconsciously in our minds. My position on this title is that I mostly agree that an element of trust is involved during the acceptance process, but it is the degree and nature of the element of trust that vary when substantiated with ways of knowing like faith, language, and reason, which I aim to investigate in the Human Sciences and History. From my understanding, these elements of trust cannot be isolated as an aspect of belief but must be understood as an extension of all the ways of knowing and an essential precedent to the acceptance of knowledge.

In the realm of human interactions and behavior that are the extension of the Human Sciences, trust is involved to a significant extent in accepting knowledge claims because of our faith in the entity that voices the claim. Faith has various connotations, but in the context of the essay title and human sciences, it seems to refer to our ability to accept knowledge from an entity because of the belief we place in them without having any logical justifications or doubt-creation on our part. Interestingly, trust and faith can be considered synonymous in

this situation. This makes the acceptance process much more comfortable as we find familiarity with the source of knowledge, but at this point, does trust blur our understanding of the complete truth of a knowledge claim? In the marketing industry, celebrities' advertisements and endorsements can persuade many consumers to accept their knowledge claims. Celebrities wittingly enhance a brand's claim by anchoring their personality, popularity, and recognized status to the advertisement, capturing the customers' faith and appealing to their emotions by creating a shortcut towards acceptance. When Virat Kohli, one of the top Cricket Athletes, advertised a campaign for a healthy snack of potato chips (Too Yum¹), asserting that they are more beneficial compared to other alternatives of the typical junk food snack, my passion in support of Virat Kohli, who as an athlete maintained a healthy diet and a strict fitness regime, propelled me to accept the claim of the chips brand wholeheartedly. In this situation, I found myself neglecting the need to justify the certainty in the claim due to the powerful trust in the source of knowledge (Virat Kohli). I did, however, learn that my faith does obscure the complete truth of a knowledge claim and the ability to evaluate it before accepting critically.

On the other hand, the element of trust involved changes when we justify our acceptance of knowledge claims through reason and critical thinking. Taking this approach activates our process of evaluating the validity and certainty of a knowledge claim by stepping out of the domain of personal knowledge into shared knowledge to make informed decisions. In economics, experts often establish models and theories that are simplified representations of complex real-world economic behavior. These models consider certain assumptions to make consistent predictions, such as the Latin phrase "Ceteris Paribus-all other things being same." In 1817, British economist David Ricardo proposed the "Theory of

¹ Virat Kohli's Too Yumm! Multigrain Chips Obsession #FriedNotFikarNot. (2018, May 20). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEriyOr8li8>

Comparative Advantage²” to explain how a country can benefit from international trade by producing goods with a relatively lower opportunity cost. Assuming labor as the only factor of production, he deductively demonstrated that since Portugal needed fewer labor resources to make wine and England could produce cloth more quickly, if they both specialized in their more efficient product and imported the other, they would enjoy increased profits. Even though international trade involves complex factors such as technological innovation (capital), trade liberalization, and connectivity, Ricardo's simplified claim is the guiding principle accepted even today by economists and countries due to its justification using deductive reasoning. When we seek to establish the certainty of a claim by seeing how its applied to real-world situations through statistics and data like Ricardo, we build trust in the form of credibility not on the person but the usefulness of the claim and its pragmatic value and thus accept the claim wholeheartedly. However, economists are cautious not to extend too many oversimplified assumptions that may create an unrealistic analysis to mimic real-world economic behavior. Interestingly, this is referred to as the Ricardian Vice³.

As we step into History, we realize that evidence-based trust is widely incorporated when accepting knowledge claims. Historians study events of the past through historical records such as artifacts, writings and oral narratives. It is these historical evidences that must be trusted when building credible narratives of past events which are then widely accepted by other historians, but to what extent can the certainty of a claim be evaluated in History? Language is one of the ways of knowing in the knowledge acquisition from Historical Documents from the past because it can yield valuable knowledge when combined with our observation through sense perception. By analyzing the hieroglyphic and hieratic texts inscribed inside Egyptian Pyramids that housed tombs of the Pharaohs, historians explained

² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2018, October 12). comparative advantage | Definition, Economics, & Facts. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/comparative-advantage>

³ BEATTIE, A. B. (n.d.). What Is the Ricardian Vice? Investopedia. Retrieved December 7, 2021, from <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/08/ricardian-vice.asp>

the vital concept of Afterlife in the Egyptian Civilization. They could only do this only after discovering the famous Rosetta Stone ⁴, which contained the same text in three different inscriptions, namely Greek, hieroglyphics and demotic text. After extensive work from European Scholars, it was understood that hieroglyphics were a combination of phonetic, symbolic and figurative writing and the demotic text was derived from hieroglyphics. The trust that historians placed in the Rosetta Stone, which was physical evidence, led to the consistent acceptance of how Egyptian Gods such as Osiris and Horus facilitated the journey of a Pharaoh to the Afterlife. Historians' trust in any form of evidence plays a crucial part in establishing claims which are eventually accepted. The methodology in History demands truth checks of coherence to validate knowledge claims, and since the main aim is to construct an accurate understanding of the past, we can accept a claim based on the certainty established through the evidence we trust.

However, to counter the argument above, we cannot ignore that since History is regarded more as an individual effort of various historians rather than the collaborative, multiple perspectives play a role in the construction of knowledge. Preconceived notions and biases as an extension of our personal knowledge are heavily trusted by ourselves ahead of the opinions propagated by other individuals. This makes historians inclined to accept knowledge claims that reflect their social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, inhibiting a neutral perspective. An example that illustrates this argument is Eurocentrism's prevalence in societies of the past and even today. Eurocentrism is a biased historic worldview that positions Western Civilization (Europe and modern America) as the centre of the world and more superior to non-western cultures and regions due to the power they displayed through colonialism and imperialism. In my personal experience, I have realized this perspective in

⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2019, September 18). Rosetta Stone | Discovery, History, & Facts. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rosetta-Stone>

history textbooks that built my foundation of world history in my early education years. I clearly remember the portrayal of Cristopher Columbus's discovery of a "New world" and the representation of the Native indigenous Populations as an alien and inferior race. Evidently, Historians who wrote these books were influenced by the Eurocentric bias they depicted through their language. "New world" neglected the fact that the Indigenous Indian populations had a history of their own and formulated the world from the view of the Europeans. Christopher Columbus' actions are portrayed as heroic and he often symbolizes Europe's advanced status in terms of science, government, religion. This example highlights that Knowledge claims in History can often be skewed due to biased perspectives that historians may relate to personally and eventually accept.

In this essay, I started by exploring how trust as an extension of belief can be compelling in dictating our acceptance personally, but this is contrasted when we need to trust a claim based on logical reasoning like David Ricardo did for his economic model. Through the Rosetta stone, I investigated how historians incorporate evidence-based trust, which helps them build a truthful narrative of the past through language and sense perception. However, the extensive prevalence of biased and skewed perspectives like the Eurocentric narrative often shapes future historians' attitudes and the general public's thoughts, propagating incorrect claims as undisputed, unanimous viewpoints. After investigating these elements of trust, I realized that we must find a balance between trust and truth in the pursuit of knowledge because trust is a ubiquitous concept. It's only when we realize its value to decode the truth in a claim, we are one step closer towards acceptance of valid and reliable knowledge from knowledge claims.

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