

Is it essential to continuously seek knowledge

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Abstract

In this paper, I delve into the intricate dynamics of exploring the phenomenon of seeking knowledge and its potentially counterproductive consequences. I lay the groundwork for an in-depth exploration of hope and morality. I further extend my analysis to the role of religion and diverse sources of hope and morality. I discuss the subjectivity of morality, the need for shared principles in societal cohesion, and the role of diverse belief systems in shaping human values. In the last two sections, I explore the essence of seeking knowledge, connecting it to human evolution, the dynamic nature of knowledge, and its profound impact on society and further probe the concept of Supreme Knowledge, questioning the limits of human understanding and contemplating the interplay between curiosity, cognitive capacities, and recognising the unknowable. Ultimately, I urge humanity to ponder the vital question of whether the quest for knowledge should ever cease.

I. INTRODUCTION

If a person holds a specific opinion or has ideas about something, it indicates active thought. Yet, deep within these thoughts, there exists a point where further contemplation becomes unnecessary and, in fact, counterproductive. Beyond this threshold, excessive thinking hinders one's goals, whether that be living life to the fullest or reaching the point of self-harm. I refer to this state of excessive mental activity as overthinking. While I remain distant from fully embracing or rejecting Descartes's Mind-Body Dualism—holding that the mind is a nonphysical, non-spatial substance. I do align with the identification of the mind with consciousness and self-awareness.

Overthinking should not be mistaken for Analysis Paralysis, which often involves an inability to make a decision due to an overwhelming pursuit of perfection within a limited time frame. For me, overthinking pertains to seeking answers or explanations beyond a rational, emotional, or irrational analysis, aiming to acquire deeper knowledge. I concur with Plato's classical definition of knowledge, requiring a statement to fulfill three criteria: justification, truth, and belief. Consider an instance: a person faces an exam where using a blue or black pen is permitted, but any other pen choice results in negative marking. Case 1 involves Analysis Paralysis—choosing between two acceptable options. Rationally, one should select either color, complete the exam within the allocated time, and move forward. In Case 2, however, overthinking arises when the individual contemplates the reason behind choosing one pen over the other. While this inquiry may not

impact the final exam score, the pursuit of ‘Why?’ remains crucial. Although the pen color won’t affect the marks, understanding ‘Why?’ grants new knowledge, irrespective of its relevance to the individual. Such questioning falls under the Interrogative mood of the Irrealis mood in grammar. Any form of interrogation—why, when, how etc. serves to expand one’s knowledge horizon.

Having distinguished overthinking from Analysis Paralysis, the individual contemplates whether this excessive contemplation is necessary. In this article I will try to understand that Is it essential to continuously seek knowledge, considering that one’s learning only accompanies them until death? The terms defined herein will maintain consistent meanings throughout my all future works unless stated otherwise.

II. ON THE NOTION OF HOPE AND MORALITY

I will begin my discussion by assuming that I am human, having my own thoughts and opinions, who has the will to exist and who is trying to understand reality. In conclusion, we can say that the person is hopeful for his future. There might be several specific sources from which a person can derive hope, but the most common of them is religion. If we analyse it carefully, we will realise that the most common element among all religions is hope. Every religion provides hope to its followers, either as a reward after death or in the next life. Hope need not always be optimistic; it can also be pessimistic. My concept of hope refers to the expectation of certain events that will define the next course of life. Religion primarily concerns events that are cheerful or optimistic. A person who is not hopeful is a dead person (a person with zero expectations). Suffering through all the adversities of life but not ceasing to exist is hope.

If we carefully observe the current state of the world, it resembles a complete dystopia. It is engulfed in chaos, and a significant portion of the population struggles to survive due to societal imbalances. To maintain the will to survive, the general population needs hope to live and behave in particular ways, and religion and other organisations or humans fulfil this role perfectly. Faith helps us overlook the current dire situation and focus on a better future. What could be better than having faith in God? Here, I define God as an entity in nature possessing Supreme Knowledge, implying that this entity comprehends the objective truth. Faith in God is often a beacon of assurance amid the world’s turmoil. This belief in a higher power provides solace and instils a sense of

purpose and direction. It guides individuals through adversities, offering a narrative that extends beyond the struggles of the present, giving them the will to live and persevere. The concept of God embodies more than just an omnipotent being. It represents an anchor for morality, offering a framework for ethical conduct and accountability. This belief in a divine overseer reinforces the idea of justice prevailing in the end, fostering hope for a balanced and fair existence. Moreover, the idea of God as the possessor of Supreme Knowledge implies access to an ultimate truth. This truth, often sought by humanity, is a source of enlightenment and guidance. It becomes a compass in navigating the complexities of life, assuring adherents that there is a purpose to the chaos and an understanding beyond the visible realm. Belief in God shapes human existence, regardless of religious affiliation, influencing morality and expectations. It is a guiding principle for those seeking answers to fundamental questions or pursuing supreme knowledge. Adherents structure their lives based on the teachings inscribed in their respective texts, operating under the presumption that the existence of God is not subject to falsification. However, what about individuals who do not find hope within religious contexts? What embodies their concept of God? What constitutes supreme knowledge for them, and where do they derive hope? For some, hope and guidance stems from philosophical ideologies such as Humanism, Stoicism, and Rationalism, or beliefs centred around nature or reason, serving as their concept of God. These systems foster hope by advocating for human potential, emphasising human values, ethics, and the resilience of the human spirit. Others might find solace and purpose in everyday activities like fishing or engagement in professional pursuits, discovering hope without necessarily engaging in deeper philosophical contemplation. These activities offer a sense of fulfilment or direction, providing a unique form of hope without explicitly addressing broader existential truths. Ultimately, an individual's faith defines their aspirations and moral compass, with morality as a driving force behind their actions. Hope and morality emerge as crucial values for individuals to navigate and function. Moreover, it is crucial to recognise that while religion provides a framework for many, diverse sources of hope and moral guidance exist outside religious paradigms. These alternate philosophies, activities, and belief systems offer individuals distinct paths to find hope, derive meaning, and shape their morality, showcasing how humanity seeks fulfilment and purpose. From this discussion, it becomes apparent that the source of hope is subjective, varying among individuals and implying different answers to the same question. Therefore, within this framework, objectivity does not prevail. There is no singular objective truth, morality, or set of rules. Different gods, sources of hope, and moral principles coexist. In light of this, pursuing an objective truth may seem paradox-

ical within a realm where subjectivity prevails. The diversity in beliefs, values, and perceptions suggests that seeking an objective truth might not align with the inherent nature of this diverse human experience.

Our conversation advances as we assert or presume, “For an individual to function within society, they must harbour hope and possess some form of morality.” As discussed earlier, the concept of objective morality appears unattainable if we look beyond the framework of organised religions. However, to evade chaos and ensure the smooth functioning of society, we necessitate universally agreed-upon rules that everyone must rigorously adhere to. Moreover, a shared morality ideally contributes to societal well-being to a certain extent. Therefore, we require standardised motivations for our actions—a semblance of standard or objective morality within this inherently subjective realm. Perhaps we might conceptualise morality as a function guided by varying constant values in different regions. Consider this: upholding certain fundamental principles becomes imperative to maintain societal harmony. Despite the prevalence of subjective morality, agreeing upon common principles that guide actions and interactions is crucial. These principles serve as societal guidelines, ensuring predictability and fostering mutual understanding among individuals. Even in regions with diverse beliefs or cultural practices, a set of universally acknowledged values could form the moral foundation, fostering unity amidst diversity.

In essence, recognising the inherent subjectivity of morality and establishing a common ground in a collective set of moral guidelines becomes indispensable for societal stability. These shared principles provide a framework for acceptable behaviour, aligning individual actions with the societal good. Despite being rooted in subjective viewpoints, this agreed-upon framework is a pragmatic approach to maintaining harmony within diverse communities, effectively becoming a form of objective morality or truth. Anything deviating from these accepted standards would be considered false and potentially subject to consequences.

Furthermore, this standardised morality acts as a reference point, enabling individuals to evaluate their actions against widely accepted standards, emphasising their truth and the imperative to follow them. However, a crucial challenge arises when different groups possess conflicting objective moralities. From the above discussion, morality is a set of moral values that leads to all your actions. In simple terms, we can say that it is a driving force behind all your actions. This

conflict poses a significant dilemma: Can we establish an objective morality? If such consensus is unachievable, what alternatives exist? What other essential factors unite and uphold society? The absence of a universally agreed-upon objective morality leads us to explore alternative means of societal cohesion. Among these, cultural norms, legal systems, shared values, and a sense of belonging or collective identity emerge as pivotal factors that bind societies together. Pursuing justice, equity, education, and mutual respect contributes significantly to societal harmony. While objective morality may remain elusive amid differing viewpoints, these shared norms and values serve as a foundation for societal cohesion, fostering unity and enabling diverse communities to coexist harmoniously. The above discussion in this section will provide a framework for our question.

III. ESSENCE OF SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

Before we start exploring, when should we cease seeking knowledge, or, in layman's terms, when should we stop asking questions? We must delve deeper and ask why we seek knowledge and its effect on humanity. I will be using seeking knowledge and asking questions interchangeably throughout this article and in my future works. We must insist on the fact that seeking knowledge has a profound effect on humanity it has transformed homo sapiens from Early modern humans to modern humans in 20st century. To further our understanding, we must embrace Darwin's theory of evolution and that humans have evolved from a certain point in the space-time continuum on Earth. It is more than a survival instinct assuming that seeking knowledge is part of human evolution. It stems from curiosity, desire for improvement, the pursuit of meaning, and a better understanding of nature and us, all integral components of our quest for knowledge.

In his book Religion Explained, Pascal Boyer tries to explain the origin of religion from an evolutionary point of view. Continuing this exploration of the significance of seeking knowledge and its impact on humanity, we must understand its nature and inherent characteristics. Agreeing with Plato's definition of knowledge, we must also establish that knowledge is not static but dynamic and evolves and expands over time. The questions vary over time and place and stem from various sources; it is an ongoing process and shapes our future. The notion of morality and hope plays an essential part in deciding the questions and aspirations to acquire knowledge. New insights are constantly unearthed in academia and often open doors to distinct set questions. Looking

carefully, we realise that knowledge across various domains is interconnected; a breakthrough in one field can catalyse advancement in another. For example, Econophysics, an interdisciplinary research field, applies theories and methods originally developed in physics to solve problems in economics, and there are countless other examples like this. The consequences of knowledge, ripple through the fabric of humanity, shaping cultures, influencing policies, and defining the course of history. In the realm of religion, as hinted by Pascal Boyer, seeking knowledge has played a pivotal role in shaping belief systems and practices.

IV. SUPREME KNOWLEDGE AND THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

Having discussed the profound consequence of knowledge, we now contemplate when pursuing knowledge should cease. To further comprehensively address this inquiry, we need to delve deeper into the context and essence of this question. In section II, I have explored the concept of supreme knowledge, an objective truth that stands as the ultimate quest for any form of existence. It is essential to recognise that all other forms of knowledge can stem from this overarching and foundational knowledge.

To embark on the journey towards ultimate knowledge, we must scrutinise the very existence of nature, extending beyond the scope of human existence. It becomes crucial to shift our focus from questions solely relevant to humans and broaden the horizon of our inquiries to encompass the entirety of nature. With its intrinsic value, nature extends its significance across the vast expanse of the universe, the complexities of the solar system, the sophistication of Earth, and the richness of diverse living organisms, from ducks and seahorses to towering trees. If nature does not differentiate in its value, why do we, as humans, persist in asking questions that are restricted to our species alone? Could it be a limitation inherent to our human perspective, surpassing the comprehension of our cognitive faculties, or is it a limitation on our values? Will the awareness of this supreme knowledge separate us from nature or bring us closer to it?

The pivotal question emerges: Can we comprehend this supreme knowledge, or is it beyond something that the human brain can comprehend? If we attain this supreme knowledge, how will we know that this is the supreme knowledge? Does this supreme knowledge lie in the complexi-

ties of mathematics and physics, or is it something simpler or even more complex? Does nature put some limitations on us, and we can not understand it beyond a certain point? If this is the case, when should we, as humans, acknowledge the limitations of our understanding and accept that there are realms of knowledge beyond our grasp? Is there a point where we must embrace the humility of recognising what is unknowable? This contemplation invites us to confront the boundaries of our mental capabilities and reasoning and ponder whether certain aspects of nature will elude our awareness.

In order to continue seeking supreme knowledge, we need to make a basic assumption that we will be able to recognise it when we attain it. It is only worthwhile to seek it if we can spot it. The other fundamental question arises: Could our insatiable curiosity push the boundaries of our cognitive capacities, leading us to a point where the attainment of supreme knowledge becomes a reality? Throughout history, various religious and philosophical traditions have claimed the ultimate truths, yet these proclamations often reflect a human-centric bias. These narratives prioritise human significance over the broader spectrum of nature, constructing an artificial hierarchy that may not align with the essence of supreme knowledge. It raises the crucial distinction between knowledge shaped by human perspectives and the unadulterated, universal truth that transcends anthropocentrism.

This introspective journey prompts us to scrutinise the very foundations of our understanding. Are our attempts to comprehend supreme knowledge tainted by a narrow focus on our species, or are we genuinely on the path to unravelling the mysteries of nature? The notion of nature imposing limitations on our comprehension adds another layer to this contemplation. If there exists a point beyond which our understanding stutters, when do we acknowledge this threshold as seekers of knowledge? Is it a humbling realisation that certain aspects of the universe will forever remain beyond our grasp? This recognition prompts us to embrace the humility required to confront the unknowable in the vast tapestry of existence.

The dialogue between human curiosity and the limitations of our understanding necessitates ongoing reflection. Can we envision a future where our relentless pursuit of knowledge transcends the confines of our current cognitive abilities, allowing us to grasp the elusive concept of supreme knowledge genuinely? Or, conversely, does our journey drive us to assume that there are aspects of nature forever beyond human comprehension?

This is an important question that we as a species should ponder. We must seek answers to

these questions to decide whether we cease continuously seeking knowledge.

V. CONCLUSION

In navigating the intricate realms of overthinking, hope, morality, and the pursuit of knowledge, this article invites readers to ponder the profound consequences of human understanding. It weaves through philosophical nuances, addresses the complexities of belief systems, and delves into the dynamic nature of knowledge as a driving force behind human evolution. In order to attain knowledge, we find ourselves at the crossroads of ambition and humility, challenging our perspectives and acknowledging the potential existence of realms of knowledge that may forever remain shrouded in mystery. As we continue our intellectual journey, we are confronted with the profound realisation that pursuing knowledge is not merely a conquest but a perpetual hop between the known and the unknowable, inviting us to explore the depths of our curiosity while humbly recognising the vastness of the nature's enigma.

VI. REFERENCES

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