How We Distinguish Knowledge From Belief and Opinion

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Spoken language often obfuscates the differences between knowledge and belief or opinion. Spoken language is vague, ambiguous and biased. These features lead knowledge and belief or opinion to become intertwined and thus, knowledge is often disguised as belief or opinion (or vice versa), intentionally or not. Thankfully, spoken language is not our only method of communication. This exhibition will highlight how the object communicates this distinction without the ambiguity of spoken language and how it represents knowledge in contrast to belief or opinion. *object, earliest known scale (3100 B.C, Egypt) The ancient Egyptians invented the scale to measure the value of goods and standardize trade. The scale allowed them to communicate value objectively and differentiate between knowledge, beliefs, and opinions. In a preliminary form, the ancient Egyptians used the scale to differentiate their beliefs and opinions about the value of goods from objective knowledge. If someone were to say that an object feels heavy to them, this would be an opinion, as it is based on their individual perspective and is not supported by objective evidence. In contrast, if the same object were placed on a balancing scale and measured to be a certain weight, this would be knowledge, as it is based on objective evidence and can be proven through experimentation or observation. The scale is verifiable and refutable through unbiased experimentation and is logically consistent, which are characteristics of knowledge. Contrary to opinion and belief, which are based on personal perspectives and unproven hypotheses. Even if you could not speak the same language as an ancient Egyptian merchant, you would be able to trade using the universal language of mathematics with the aid of a scale. Mathematics represents the evidence and logic behind knowledge. It is verifiable and minimizes the ambiguity and bias of spoken language, making it useful for conveying objective knowledge. Mathematical language is a precise and systematic way of expressing logical ideas and concepts, making it an effective tool for communication of knowledge and ideas between various fields and spoken languages. It is widely accepted as a core method of communication for many subjects because of its ability to clearly and concisely convey complex ideas, an ability which makes it incredibly useful to determine objective knowledge. Spoken language is often ambiguous and subject to bias, often leading to confusion between knowledge, beliefs, and opinions. For example, someone might say “According to a recent study, 70% of the population supports stricter gun control laws.” In this statement, the word “stricter” is left entirely ambiguous, participants in the study might have entirely different definitions of “stricter” within this context. The statement is vague and open to interpretation, the knowledge behind it is still true although presented poorly by ambiguous language. The potential for falsely reached beliefs is a fault of the inaccurate framing of the statement, not the objective knowledge behind it. The potential falsely reached beliefs of the audience or researchers of the study is a fault of the inaccurate framing of the statement, not the objective knowledge behind it. For example, if we understand that the survey is knowledge and the word “strict” is an opinion, we could ask the person who made the statement: “What range of responses to the survey are you defining as strict?” The person who understands the results of the survey as knowledge questions the vague language behind the statement, clarifying the difference between knowledge and belief. However, the infallibility of the

survey assumed for the previous example is rare. In a different version of this example, the survey may not be infallible and failed to have addressed factors which could have skewed the results. The concept of knowledge is complex and multifaceted. As represented by the scale, the capability of knowledge to be verified or refuted is supported by its relationship to empirical evidence and logical consistency. Systems of logical consistency are required for evidence to be verifiable and subsequently for a belief or hypothesis to be proven as objective. Empirical evidence, such as the results of a survey, can be both used to support or refute knowledge. However, the reliability of this evidence too can of course be affected by factors of sample size and methodology. Thus, knowledge is always open to revision and change if new evidence or arguments contradict it. This is in contrast to beliefs and opinions, which can still be open to change, but not always as the result of objective evidence. An individual may change their beliefs or opinions based on a personal experience that challenges their previous views. The first scale however, like knowledge, was/is not affected by anyone's beliefs or opinions.