**“Knowledge is nothing more than the systematic organization of facts.” Discuss this statement in relation to two areas of knowledge.**

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“Justified true belief,” is the way Plato defined it[[1]](#footnote-1). It may be the simplest way to define knowledge but it is far from infallible. Plato’s concept of justified true belief states that *in order to know that a given proposition is true, one must not only believe the relevant true proposition, but one must also have justification for doing so[[2]](#footnote-2)*. However, Plato’s definition was questioned by Edmund Gettier, where in his three-page paper[[3]](#footnote-3) he proposed two scenarios which were met by the three conditions of Plato’s definition but the result produced was not knowledge. Knowledge is a more complex phenomenon whose definition has never been able to put into definite words. Knowledge is not simply just fact but anything derived further from it. Defining it by calling it a systematic organization of facts is limiting its value.

Math is merely known as the factual area of knowledge as only a few things are subjective and rest is objective – one correct answer to a problem which no one can argue against. Fact obtained in mathematics is the result of a process in where the knowledge undergoes a rigorous process to be accepted as a fact. 1+1 = 2 is correct 100 percent of the times as it has been tested and logically makes sense. Math is all about reasoning, a conclusion is reached upon from a series of coherent steps that are logical and flow together. If the steps are systematic then the conclusion drawn from it is accepted as truth – a fact. For example, in this problem, 3X – 4 = 5, we can solve the given problem by undergoing a process of adding 4 to each side then diving each side by 3. X comes out to be 3. This answer can be tested against its validity by plugging in 3 for X. By reasoning, I was able to conclude that 3 is the right answer. Mathematics leaves no room for doubts as all of it components can be validated and tested; the knowledge gained from mathematics is objective thus, factual. However, to what extent is math factual?

It can be argued that even in the area of mathematics there is still some “knowledge” that is considered far outside of the definition of fact. The concepts of infinity or the imaginary numbers in mathematics are non-factual knowledge accepted by everyone. The concept of infinity is daily used in the areas of physics and mathematics but it may actually be non-existent. This goes against the simple definition of fact. The square root of -1 does not exist, it is simply imaginary.

Facts in terms of mathematics are a small portion of the subject. While working on a math problem the other day, I was struck by the conflict of using the concept of infinity and rational numbers. In order to solve the problem I had to use the concept of infinity which by definition is non-existent in the factual world. Thus, I came to the realization that mathematics is not always about facts, its putting and using the information to come to a logical solution, in the process using factual and non-factual possibilities.

History is a process of linking events together to create a timeline of the events to get a better understanding of when and why did it happen in history. The knowledge learned from it does undergo a systematic process where historians try to validate the events so that we can learn from them. Santayana is known for famous sayings, such as "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” In mathematics, the main way of knowing used is reasoning whereas, in history it is emotion. Curiosity and reasoning pulls me towards math but anger, honor, pride, emotions compel me to learn history. History is not only a study for past events but an understanding of human beings. I have never found myself angrier at humanity than reading “Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass” or reading about Stalin, Hitler, or Mao in History class. We learn history to keep our pride, honor our ancestors and simply to remember who we are and where we came from.

However, history is an area of knowledge where facts are very rare to find. History defined in simple words in a dictionary is the “study of past events, particularly in human affairs.[[4]](#footnote-4)” To say that knowledge is nothing more than a systematic organization of facts is to deny History. Where in Math the conclusion can be tested, the hypotheses made by historians about historic events can never be tested. History negates the claim above as history is largely depended on knowledge not facts. As opposed to mathematics, history can never be 100 percent accurate as history is a product of skewed perceptions of the victors -- Winston Churchill once said, “History is written by victors.” For to limit knowledge only to the systematic organization of facts is to do injustice with history, history is much farther than that. While Christ is a son of God for some, he is just a messenger for others, while some believe holocaust happened, others choose to reject it as a fact. I believe in God and the Day of Judgment, for me it is the fact that God exists and there is hell and heaven. But for atheists, that knowledge is nothing more than a myth or urban legend. The truth about history can be summed up in one game, the Telephone Game. Just like in telephone game, the sentence or phrase changes from the first person to last person, the history works the same way.

I acknowledge and understand others' perspectives when they say that the fact of World War I starting on July 28, 1914 cannot be denied. But again who started the war? Who should be fully held responsible? -- Answers to such questions become subjective. Facts can also be subjective. To make such statement is to create many confusions but my personal experience has lead me to believe that facts can indeed be a result of one’s knowledge gained through certain experiences. “I do not think Jinnah is anyone’s here” were the words I heard in my History class after watching a documentary on Pakistan and India’s partition after British Raj ended. His words echoed in my ears for the rest of the period, to my confusion and curiosity I couldn’t make myself believe that how can someone make such statement. Muhammad Ali Jinnah is my hero, my idol, father of my beloved country. To him we, Pakistanis, owe our freedom to. For me and many Pakistanis he is our ultimate hero. After the class, I asked him about the statement he had made earlier, he began to tell his story of how after the partition, his grandparents had to move to Pakistan and leave all their land and relatives behind. His grandparents and later his parents hated the partition and hence Jinnah. To my classmate it was factual that Jinnah destroyed many families and that he is *not* anyone’s hero. However, to me “Jinnah is our hero and father of our nation” is a fact that could never be neglected.

It can be concluded that systematic organization of facts plays not just a minor role in acquiring knowledge, but a major role. But there are many more factors such as skills, experiences, that help us gain knowledge. If knowledge was only limited to factual organization then reasoning and logic would be the only ways of knowing. The spectrum of knowledge ranges from emotion to reasoning and enables for us to gain knowledge through many different ways. Many important fields of knowledge would be nothing if we were to limit knowledge to facts, such as the concept of relativity in science, ethical perceptions of what is right, imagination in math and much more.

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