

24. How might the context in which knowledge is presented influence whether it is accepted or rejected?

Introduction

The TOK prompt I will explore in this paper is “How might the context in which knowledge is presented influence whether it is accepted or rejected?”. My selected artefacts will provide the context that ultimately resulted in the acceptance or rejection of a knowledge claim. By accepting a knowledge claim, a suspension of disbelief occurs allowing for a paradigm shift or the solidification of a paradigm. Rejecting would imply that there is a lack of trust in the knower, their knowledge claim and/or a lack of justification. By recognising the context in which something is presented, knowers comprehend its influence on whether or not it is accepted. Thus highlighting the ease and power of manipulation versus the stubbornness of the human mind. This essay will explore this topic dealing with WOK such as memory, language, reason, emotion, and AOKs including, religion, ethics, natural sciences, etc.

Artefact 1: Pro-life Pin



The context in which abortion laws and regulations were presented to me was polarised from a young age. The topic was first discussed with me at age 8 when my grandmother gifted me a pro-life pin to which my parents became distressed and disconsolate. My mother deemed my grandmother’s religious views “extreme”, rejecting the religious context through my mother’s word choice, negating the concept of having such strong beliefs and faith in a single religion. At such a malleable and naive age, a knower is easily subjected to the influence of emotive language and authority worship (authority worship refers to the idea that knowers will follow and accept knowledge claims made by those who have power over them). For many alternate knowers, concepts such as religion are exposed at an extremely young age by authority figures such as parents, resulting in a shared belief system that creates structure in a household. political and societal debates on abortion rights in a religious context, often use diction such as “murder” and “killings” to manipulate, cause guilt or distress to another knower or knowledge community. In some cases, this results in a paradigm shift, where knowers are influenced to

reject their previous beliefs and accept new ones. Despite this, there are also many who grow up rejecting their family's belief systems including those raised in a religious environment. In this case, context can influence whether knowledge is accepted or rejected to a certain degree but is not always fixed or definite due to the fact the human mind is not static in its thought processes.

artefact 2: Sibling photo in West Ham United T-shirts



Both my brothers are in West Ham United t-shirts (a football/soccer club that we all grew up supporting). This artefact exemplifies empiricism, in which we acquired knowledge through observation and experience. We grew up believing it is the best team because that is what we were indoctrinated by our family members. Our belief bias emerged from this, providing a base level for a sincerely held belief resulting in the rejection of logic and reason when discussing other teams' statistics and accomplishments. This can be embodied through an example of comparing statistics. If a knower was shown a team's statistics that were generally of high quality, one could acknowledge the team being presented is an objectively good team. By adding the club's name, however, the views of a team can drastically vary as bias and subjective points of view can hinder interpretation. For example, if I were shown the same statistics and were told they were West Ham's, I would use those statistics to support my beliefs, a confirmation bias, continuing to express my views on why they are a superior team. Contrastingly, if I were told they were another team, I would likely reject that they were high performing and find a reason to suggest they had been "lucky" or just refuse to believe the results. The context of a team vs the accomplishments influences whether a knower accepts or rejects the idea of the represented club being a top team. While many recognise their team is not the greatest in the world, if a knower's emotion towards a team is strong enough, they are likely to allow their belief bias to blind them from logic.

Artefact 3: Picture of staff working at Shanghai airport after lockdown



I took this image after returning to Shanghai in the summer of 2021. The image includes 5 members of staff, all of which are covered in medical gear to protect against infection of coronavirus. When the coronavirus pandemic first began, there were contrasting views on the severity of the virus. The original context in which I was presented with the knowledge of a possible virus was in terms of the natural sciences. The extreme lockdown and isolation taken by China when compared to the United Kingdom (where I spent lockdown for 6 months) are far more severe. Though both the UK and China explained the severity of Covid-19 using the same evidence from natural sciences, the outcomes differed. Suggesting that context had less significance on the acceptance/ rejection of worldwide conflicts changes when a countries group of knowers vary. This is likely tied into emotion resulting from past experiences of the country; considering China's past blame for SARS-cov-2, to which they may have attempted to improve from their history. Thereby, it can be implied that context does not stand alone but is acquired by a variety of smaller contexts such as countries, WOK, history, etc.

Conclusion

Depending on the area being examined, the extent to which a change in context influences whether it is accepted or rejected varies. I explored this through three main artefacts however they can each be interpreted differently by different knowers. Encouraging the knowers of society to question whether their sincerely held beliefs would change as a result of a change in context.

Citations

The Catholic Herald at catholicherald@archmil.org. "Precious Feet Doctor Dies." Catholic Herald, 23 July 2019, <https://catholicherald.org/catholic-herald/general/precious-feet-doctor-dies/>.

