

QUESTION 2: EVERY THEORY DESTABILIZES AS MUCH AS IT SOLIDIFIES OUR VIEW OF THE WORLD

Imagine living in the context where people believed that the world is flat. The scientific discovery that the Earth is round would have made significant destabilisation in your realm of knowledge because you are forced to choose between these two. Due to conflicting ideas present, some theories are unable to coexist together. A knower may or may not accept the new theory; however, it is certain that the knower must choose which to believe in. If the knower rejects the new theory, their understanding and view of the world will not be destabilised. If they accept the new theory, the prior knowledge of the earth being flat would have to first be rejected before the new knowledge can be accepted and subsequently solidify our view of the world. This leads me to question the extent to which a theory can either destabilise or solidify our view of the world.

On an individual level, our view of the world is a collective sum of all of the knowledge and theories we have ever acquired and accepted. Theories are a system of ideas and knowledge that seek to explain phenomena and they form the bulk of our view of the world. Destabilisation of a knower's view of the world is defined here as the rejection of prior knowledge and thus can only occur when new knowledge displaces prior knowledge. It shakes a knower's understanding because it is in conflict with the knower's prior knowledge and creates confusion, which leads the knower questioning their prior knowledge. Solidifying of a knower's view of the world is quite the opposite; it is the acceptance of new knowledge that is coherent with prior knowledge. It verifies the knower's existing knowledge and enhances understanding as it offers multiple perspectives that arrive at the same conclusion.

The areas of knowledge chosen for this essay are natural science and religious knowledge systems (RKS), chosen for their relatively large impacts on the way we view the world. The

extent to which a theory can destabilise or solidify our view of the world is dependent on how far a new theory or the modifications challenge the prevailing knowledge, the implications of the new knowledge and how far the knower accepts the new theory as truth.

Natural sciences seek to generate laws and theories to explain the physical universe based on empirical evidence. The natural sciences are shared knowledge and the scientific community accepts or rejects a theory as a community, leaving little room for personal interpretation.

In natural science, there are often updates to scientific theories as a result of new discoveries or falsification. One of the most modified theories to date is the atomic model, which is a visual representation of an atom. The earlier model showed a round solid sphere with both positive and negative matter¹. In comparison, the current model is different as there is a nucleus centre containing positive and neutral matter and orbiting electron (negative matter) shells around the nucleus². This was found by the gold leaf experiment that proves the existence of the nucleus where most of the atoms mass is concentrated³. This has since given rise to a number of other discoveries, such as nuclear fission to make nuclear power, thus solidifying knowledge. While it has destabilised prior knowledge, it has solidified more than it has destabilised the scientific community's view of the world because the present ideas are more coherent and is a definite development of existing ideas that accelerates the creation of new knowledge.

However, in the case of a paradigm shift, the destabilisation would be significantly greater than the solidification of our view of the world. In natural sciences, there are some fundamental theories that other theories are built upon. When the fundamental theories have been falsified, all theories that are built upon the fundamental theory stand to be subsequently falsified. Take

¹ "BBC - GCSE Bitesize: Development Of Atomic Theory". Bbc.co.uk. N.p., 2014. Web. 22 May 2017.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/science/add_ocr_gateway/periodic_table/atomstrucrev5.shtml>

² Ibid

³ "The Gold Foil Experiment". Myweb.usf.edu. Web. 22 May 2017 .
<<http://myweb.usf.edu/~mhight/goldfoil.html>>.

for example the concept of a geocentric universe. The idea that the earth was the centre of the universe and all other planets including the sun revolved around it, originated from ancient Greece⁴. The Ptolemaic theory included a sun that is much smaller than it actually is, and during the medieval period, Christian texts were integrated into the model, with the separation of the universe into the heavens and the Earth⁵. When the theory was disproved by Nicholas Copernicus with a heliocentric universe⁶, the Ptolemaic model of the universe, theories of the sun and the heavens and the Earth were naturally falsified because the base concept that these theories were built on was false. In this example, we see that the destabilisation is greater than the solidification of the knower's view of the world because it not only displaces the concept of a geocentric universe, but also all other relevant theories built upon it. Hence there is greater destabilisation than solidification of knowledge. Yet over time, this destabilisation of knowledge can eventually solidify our world view as there is a more accurate theory that other theories will be built upon and facilitates the progress of science.

Benjamin Franklin, when investigating current, posited that current flowed from the positive end of the battery to the negative end⁷. Decades later, it was proved that current flowed from the negative terminal to the positive⁸. The new discovery had no significant impact on the progress of science because it held little implications on other theories. The science community at the time did not even correct this mistake because the error was not significant enough to rewrite textbooks. Instead, they merely acknowledged the mistake and continued using the previous convention. The theory did not destabilize the existing knowledge much as the amount of conflicting ideas are little, yet knowledge is solidified because it is more accurate. Hence

⁴ Williams, Matt. "What Is The Geocentric Model Of The Universe? - Universe Today". Universe Today. N.p., 2016. Web. 22 May 2017 . <<https://www.universetoday.com/32607/geocentric-model/>>.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Stern, David. "The Direction Assigned To Electric Currents". Wwww-spof.gsfc.nasa.gov. N.p., 2003. Web. 22 May 2017 . <<https://www-spof.gsfc.nasa.gov/Education/woppos.html>>.

⁸ Ibid

the theory destabilises as much as it solidifies as the new knowledge only displaces what it can replace.

RKS is largely shared knowledge, and the principal objective of all religions is to explain the purpose of human existence. It includes principles of spirituality, morality and concepts of afterlife formulated by a religion that it expects its followers to adhere to. However, personal knowledge plays a significant role in this AOK as the independent understanding and personal interpretation of religious knowledge by the individual and different communities may shape the knowers' world view.

In RKS, the extent to which a theory destabilises or solidifies an individual's view of the world is entirely dependent on the individual's acceptance of the theory into their personal realm of truth. This is seen from the different denominations and sects of any religion due to conflicting interpretation of doctrine. For example, the split of the Catholic Church in 1054 into Eastern Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics was due to different interpretations of theology⁹. The Eastern Orthodox Christians did not agree on Augustine's teachings of original sin that the Roman Catholics subscribed to, and it is one of the many theological disputes circling the split¹⁰. Individuals and communities are personally convinced of their stand in the interpretation of theology. It is clear that each party believes that their ideas are more accurate, so it cannot be said that because of conflicting interpretations of doctrine that people lose their faith. As such, there is no proof of destabilisation or solidification of faith here in a personal context because knowers choose which theory they place their faith in and reject notions that are in conflict with their personal beliefs. Yet as a whole, the RKS is destabilised as there is no one unified doctrine, reducing the soundness of the religion as a community.

⁹ "The Split That Created Roman Catholics And Eastern Orthodox Catholics - Dummies". Dummies. Web. 22 May 2017 . <<http://www.dummies.com/religion/christianity/catholicism/the-split-that-created-roman-catholics-and-eastern-orthodox-catholics/>>.

¹⁰ McGrath, Alister E. Christian Theology. 1st ed. Newark: Wiley, 2017. Print.

However, religious knowledge is solidify an individual's view of the world when religious theories are substantiated by personal encounters. Malala Yousafzai, a follower of Islam, got shot in the head by Taliban on October 9, 2012 on the skull for standing for girls' education¹¹. The incident activated prayers from around the world for her life. Malala, is personally convinced that Allah has saved her from death and that the prayers from around the world have been heard by Allah¹². Her faith in Islam is solidified because her personal near-death encounter and miraculous survival are consistent with the Islamic theory that life and death are in Allah's control¹³. This theory is consistent with her personal encounter and causes her view of the world to be solidified. From the above examples, it is clear that destabilisation or solidification an individual's world view in RKS can only occur if an individual accepts a theory.

In natural sciences perhaps the extent to which a theory can destabilize or solidify our view of the world is dependent on the importance of the prior knowledge and implications of the new knowledge, as well as how far the new theory challenges the prevailing knowledge. In RKS it is largely dependent on whether the individual accepts the religious theory or interpretation. This suggests that the extent to which a theory can destabilize or solidify our view of the world is dependent on the nature of the area of knowledge (AOK). More objective AOKs will have emphasis is placed on the importance of the theory; more subjective AOKs will have emphasis placed on the individual's acceptance of a theory into their realm of truth. For all AOKs, it is certain that the destabilisation of our view on the world is dependent on how contrasting the new theory is compared to the prevailing theory. This essay concludes that not every theory

¹¹ Hussain, Mishal. "Malala: The Girl Who Was Shot For Going To School - BBC News". *BBC News*. N.p., 2013. Web. 22 May 2017 . <<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24379018>>.

¹² Meikle, James. "Malala Yousafzai: God Has Given Me A Second Life". *The Guardian*. N.p., 2013. Web. 22 May 2017 . <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/04/malala-yousafzai-god-second-life>>.

¹³ "Allah Grants Life And Causes Death". *Quranictopics.com*. N.p., 2008. Web. 29 May 2017 . <<http://www.quranictopics.com/tp1ch6e-Allah-Grants-life-&-Causes-Death.html>>.

destabilises as much as it solidifies our view of the world as different theories hold varying degrees of significance.

(Word count: 1600)

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