

Knowledge vs. Opinion.

The man sat drinking his second cup of morning coffee and used his phone to refresh his memory about the definition of both knowledge and opinion. He read that knowledge is defined as the understanding of, or information about, a subject that one acquires through experience or study. In contrast, opinion is defined as a belief or attitude about something that isn't necessarily based on facts.

So he kept thinking: I thought the internet was going to level the field of knowledge for the majority of people, and I thought people would flock towards that knowledge. Anyone with a computer and an interest in knowing the truth would have access to the collective knowledge of every dictionary, encyclopedia, medical and scientific white paper, as well as the insights of psychiatrists, psychologists, intellectuals, poets, writers of all kinds, and the list goes on.

Then, along came phones with internet access, and there was no longer a reason not to distinguish between knowledge and opinions. Anyone with a phone, and most people have one, can verify the factual content of anything they hear, read, or are curious about.

Whether people aren't taking advantage of this free information due to ignorance, laziness, time constraints, or a lack of interest in facts, he didn't know. He did know, from lifelong personal experience, that being a member of a group often requires agreeing with the collective opinions, and that disagreeing can lead to censure or expulsion.

A silly comparison is if you grow a flower garden and never weed, then soon you'll have a weed garden with only a few flowers. Or, if you listen to gossip, you'll soon know a lot of gossip, and perhaps no facts.

There was a time, long ago and even recently, when the circulation of information was rich in facts, and therefore, knowledge was disseminated. Not everyone believed the information they

heard, of course, and information that circulates randomly should be considered, dissected, and verified for accuracy before it is accepted and passed on to others. Additionally, all knowledge needs to be considered so that it can be expanded or trimmed to maintain its factual accuracy.

For instance, there was once a broadly accepted opinion that the Earth was flat. Since then, knowledge has, for most people, replaced that opinion.

As he finished his cup of coffee, he decided to spend the rest of the morning tending to his garden.

Written by Peter Skeels © 3-26-2025