

Should Some Knowledge Not Be Sought On Ethical Grounds?

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Object 1: Marina Abramović's shocking Rhythm 0 performance

Marina Abramović's shocking Rhythm 0 performance shows why we still cannot trust people in power

In 1974, Marina Abramović dared an audience to use chains, lipstick and knives on her body - and their willingness to abuse her revealed frightening truths about misogyny



Marina Abramović's Rhythm 0 deeply delves into the ToK prompt "Should some knowledge not be

sought on ethical grounds?”. She is well known for her body art, for how she pushes the boundaries and for the relationship she upholds with her audience to make them delve into the possibilities of the human mind. Rhythm 0, performed in 1974, observed Marina standing still for 6 straight hours, letting the audience interact with her body through a range of objects like a loaded gun, feathers, and roses without any interference. As the performance went on, the darkest thoughts of the human mind were observed resulting in exchanges becoming more violent (Museum of Modern Art, n.d.).

Rhythm 0 stands as a dominant example of the “knowledge and the knower theme” in TOK. It reflects upon the question of whether is knowledge always desirable and should particular knowledge be worth acquiring. The performance argues that when it comes to matters of human conduct and power, pursuing knowledge without considering ethical obligations can lead to harm and exploitation of others.

The following performance stands as a warning against pursuing unnecessary knowledge which could result in degrading or harming other individuals. By portraying how information in the hands of authoritative individuals may lead to immortality, the play addresses the question of whether knowledge has limits. As the border between cruelty and curiosity blurs, certain knowledge may not be worth pursuing, especially if it may lead to diminished human dignity.

Rhythm 0, in summary, challenges the assumptions and raises complex questions that knowledge is always beneficial and that leaders would pursue knowledge ethically. In particular, while trying to understand or influence other people, it stresses how important is to consider the ethical obligations of our pursuit of knowledge. When seeking knowledge, especially when the knowledge can be harmful to others, one should observe moral principles; the performance is a strong reminder of this.

Object 2: Article on He Jiankii



Chinese scientist He Jiankui said he modified two babies' DNA before their birth. ANTHONY WALLACE/AFP/Getty Images

Jiankui's 2018 gene-editing experiment, where he modified the DNA of human embryos illustrates the point in the prompt "Should some knowledge not be sought on ethical grounds?". The goal of the experiment was to make them resistant to HIV by editing their CCR5 genes using the [CRISPR-Cas9](#) technology. Nevertheless, this level of intrusion into human DNA raised a global outrage as being conducted without transparency. His actions go past ethical review processes and potentially expose the infants to unknown risks (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019).

The experiment caused intense global debate since it involved germline alteration, which impacts both individuals and their descendants. This makes me wonder about the pursuit of such knowledge when the long-term effects are unknown and might have irreversible long-term implications. Unwanted mutations caused by editing human embryonic DNA might not be noticeable until generations down the road. The uncertainty raises serious ethical concerns about the pursuit of knowledge without the known and perhaps harmful results (World Health Organization, 2021).

Reflecting on the theme "Knowledge and the knower", Jiankui as the scientist and knower held great power and responsibility. The knowledge he sought was not just about delving into human genome but to apply that knowledge in ways to permanently change human biology. This raises severe concerns about whether the pursuit of such knowledge is as ethical and justifiable as working on an experiment without any consent- Since embryos cannot agree and future generations have no say in genetic code changes.

The experiment challenges the question of whether is all knowledge beneficial and worth pursuing. It illustrates how scientific research without ethical obligations can result in more harm than good. Such

knowledge involving such high risk should be left untapped if the ethical concerns are greater than the potential advantage. The pursuit of knowledge must be guided by ethical guidelines to ensure it does not affect humankind and their rights. Also it brings attention to the responsibilities of the knowers to consider the potential consequences of their research on individuals and society. The case serves as a caution about seeking knowledge without addressing ethical implications (World Health Organization, 2021).

Object 3: Tuskegee Experiment



The 1932-1972 Tuskegee experiment was conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service on 399 African men with syphilis who were deceived that they were being treated but the actual aim of the experiment was to observe the disease, its growth and further consequences. The experiment raised severe ethical concerns about the pursuit of knowledge. The researchers prioritized scientific inquiry over the individuals' well-being as they were refused to go through appropriate therapy despite the availability of penicillin. As no consent was taken from the participants, it resulted in demonstrating the serious ethical transgressions of perusing knowledge without morality (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).

About the theme "Knowledge and the Knower", the experiment serves as a clear illustration of how knower-researchers managed to exercise a large amount of authority and responsibility. In their pursuit of knowledge regarding the course of syphilis, they showed disrespect to the participant's health and dignity. The study reflects that when ethical considerations are deeply ignored, the applications of knowledge can be severely affected (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

The study argues the notion that all knowledge is worth pursuing and valuable. It reflects upon the prompt "Should some knowledge not be sought on ethical grounds". The evidence presented here justifies that pursuing knowledge at the price of human rights violations can result in more of causing harm than benefit. For the sake of preventing exploitation and maintaining human dignity, this case serves as an important reminder that the quest for knowledge must always be guided by ethical concerns (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

References

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