

3. "The possession of knowledge carries an ethical responsibility."

Evaluate this claim.

I. Introduction;

A. Using examples from the natural sciences and ethics, I will show that knowledge does carry an ethical responsibility; however it is not useful to hold it back in order to prevent harm since scientific advance has to go on. The quote claims that people who possess knowledge have both the responsibility to use it for good as well as, which is a much more controversial claim, to keep it a secret in order to prevent misuse. **Is this really the only ethical responsibility you can think of? You only think about the responsibility of keeping knowledge to oneself (or passing it on). There are certainly more to discuss.**

B. Knowing about this is important because of the rapid advance in science and the resulting consequences on the environment and the lives of individuals. It has always been important to know whether people who have knowledge are obliged to use it. However nowadays the question has also arisen whether it is justified to keep back knowledge in order to prevent disastrous consequences. **OK. This is one ethical point.** To my mind, this is not justified. **What? To keep back knowledge? NEVER justified? You need to explain. Or are there circumstances when it is more justified?**

However many people might have another view on this topic. For instance older people who have lived in the time of Tschernobyl, Hiroshima and the wars might wish that science had never advanced so far. **I am a bit confused now. What is your point? The keeping back of knowledge or the advancement of science? These are different issues.**

II. Example from the natural sciences;

Einstein's theory of relativity helped scientists to invent the atomic bomb. **OK, but what is the ethical issue here? The use of knowledge for something bad? Or what?**

A. Einstein himself, being a pacifist, was terrified by the effect of his findings. Still he urged President Roosevelt to build the atomic war in order to prevent war. He claimed that the idea of a chain- reaction had never occurred to him. But would it have been better if he had never published his famous formula $E = mc^2$ which indirectly not only led to the unnecessary death of people in Hiroshima but also in Tschernobyl? **References needed here. So what does this example illustrate? Where is your CLAIM? In the next part you talk about a counterclaim, but you do not even mention the claim here. You just give an example and it is not clear what the example should illustrate.**

B. Counterclaim **OF WHAT?:** Einstein's theory also helped scientific advance and was of great help in the field of energy production.

1. If handled with great care, atomic energy helped to improve life- style in the Western world and Einstein's theory also helped greatly in gaining knowledge about physics. Could it be that every great discovery brings harmful as well as beneficial inventions of same impact with it. If this was the case, consequences of discoveries would not have to be considered before publishing and also would not bring responsibilities with them.

2. Another factor is that although Einstein is seen as the father of the atomic bomb, **Actually Fermi and Oppenheimer are the fathers.** there were also other scientists who would have been able to find the necessary knowledge. The fact that discoveries can also be made by other scientists relieves individual scientists from their burden.

You spent so far many lines illustrating only few points. You mentioned that the possession of knowledge in physics can lead to negative consequences (atomic bomb) but that this also has advantages (energy production). But certainly there are also other issues relating to ethical responsibility and knowledge in

science?! These ideas can be covered in only 2 paragraphs and I would look for more ethical responsibilities.

III. Example from Ethics; **Ethical responsibility in the area of ethics?! Interesting. Make this more clear.**

Do people who possess knowledge have the ethical responsibility to pass the knowledge on? **Is this not the same idea as in the science part?** And do they have to use this knowledge to help others?

A. Already Plato and the Hippocratic Oath claim that people have the responsibility to help others to knowledge and to use this knowledge to help others.

1. The allegory of the cave (by Plato) claims that people who possess knowledge are happier. They therefore have the responsibility to educate others in order to make them happy too. Furthermore it is claimed that people have to be educated although they do not want this, for their own good. To my mind, this is still relevant and shows that people have the ethical responsibility to pass on knowledge. **Ok. This point seems clear.**

2. Furthermore it is also important to use this knowledge in order to help other people. The Hippocratic Oath (written late 5th century BC) includes both the vow to pass on knowledge to those who are also physicians and also to help people in the best way possible using their medical knowledge and skills. So it has always been seen as important for the persistence of society to pass on knowledge and to use it for helping. **Ok. But these are two examples illustrating the same idea, the responsibility to pass on knowledge. There are more!!**

C. Counterclaim: The law says that you are obliged to help others or otherwise it is failure to render assistance. However this is only valid if the person helping is not in immediate danger himself. So the ethical responsibility to use knowledge for good is only valid if the person possessing the knowledge is not

in danger when using the knowledge. **Also ok! I can follow this idea and it makes sense.**

IV. Conclusion;

In conclusion I would say that people who possess knowledge have an ethical responsibility. The law says that if you know how to resuscitate a person, you have to do this otherwise you can be punished. So people who have knowledge also have the responsibility to use this knowledge for beneficial purposes. **OK. Why not include this sentence in the introduction?** Philosophers also claim that people have the responsibility to pass on knowledge. I agree with this statement. To my mind it is also not justified to keep back knowledge, even if this knowledge might help to invent disastrous weapons or the like. But the real question is: **HOW DO YOU WANT TO KNOW if your knowledge is used for something bad? Can you look into the future?** It seems that every scientific finding has its beneficial and its harmful consequences. However new knowledge is important for scientific advance.

Sources:

<http://www.doug-long.com/einstein.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory_of_the_Cave

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocratic_Oath

MORE and DIFFERENT ethical responsibilities!!!!