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Knowledge

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Abstract

Knowledge is largely experiential, and as such it can be shared in various degrees of formality and detail.

1 The beginnings of knowledge

'To know' (Table 1) denotes awareness through observation, inquiry, and/ or information. Knowledge is largely experiential — whether formally, through education or research, or non-formally, through participation in events or social interaction — and can be transmitted or shared (albeit in different degrees of richness) as explanations, lessons, or facts (Perdicoúlis, 2013a).

Source	Meaning	Derivatives
γιγνώσκειν [Gk]	to know	gnosticism, agnostic
cognoscere [L]	get to know, experience	cognition, acquaintance
kennen [De]	to know	knowledge

Table 1 Obtaining knowledge

2 Science/ episteme

Both *science* and επιστήμη — its Greek counterpart — denote knowledge of 'principles and causes' (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1913), as in history.

Source	Meaning	Derivatives
ιστάναι [Gk]	to know	επιστήμη , history
scire [L]	to know	science, conscience

Table 2 Deep, systematic, and trustable knowledge

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Over the centuries, both science and episteme have narrowed down their meaning from the more general 'knowledge' to a special activity and its content: study, exploration, or formal attempts to explain phenomena (Perdicoúlis, 2013b). To this end, Science formally employs *research* — from *re-*, expressing intensive force + *cerchier* [OF], to search (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010) — as a means of collecting what each specialist knows, bringing it all together, and thus taking the next step forward in the intended direction (Perdicoúlis, 2013a).

3 The mystery of the vanished sciences — or was it arts?

It is common practice in Greek that a set of a noun plus its descriptive adjective undergo an abusive simplification: the adjective alone itself represents the pair. For instance, νεαρόν ύδωρ [Gk], fresh water, becomes just 'water' through its adjective: νε(α)ρό(ν)/ νερό [Gk], water. That is, the original noun (ύδωρ) disappears completely, to the extent that future generations may even lose trace of the original root, or confuse the meaning of the adjective.

Terms such as mathematics, physics, or optics are technically adjectives. In each case, the respective noun (ουσιαστικό [Gk], substantive) is missing. Trying to reconstruct the pair of adjective + noun, we could guess from a variety of options for each context — for instance: φυσική ιστορία [Gk], natural history; μαθηματική επιστήμη [Gk], mathematical science; οπτική τέχνη [Gk], the craft of optics, such as making lenses.

The case of mathematics deserves a particular attention, as the adjective points to 'learning' itself (Table 3) — not just to the content of a particular knowledge, such as an επιστήμη . Thus, mathematics could very well refer to an art, or μαθηματική τέχνη [Gk], the art or lessons. All this is arguable, as there are many functions attributable to the adjective (mathematics), and also there is significant ambiguity as to the original use of the term.

Source	Meaning	Derivatives
μανθάνειν [Gk]	to learn	μάθημα (lesson)
τέχνη [Gk]	art, craft, skill	technique

Table 3 Learning — abstract and applied

4 Telling

Terms such as biology, anthropology, or otolaryngology, sharing the common suffix '-logy', refer to specialities in which only a few people can speak about with confidence — from λόγος [Gk], speech (Table 4).

Source	Meaning	Derivatives
dicere [L]	to say	dictionary, index, indicator
λόγος [Gk]	speech	biology, logic

Table 4 Speaking in Greek and Latin

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Since knowledge is so closely associated with λόγος, we should consider the many uses of the Latin version of logos (*dicere*, Table 4) in science. One example is *dictionaries*: indispensable for anyone in need for the right word, for an accurate and precise expression (Perdicoúlis, 2012). And a great deal of scientific information is communicated through *indicators* and *indices*, which are selective representations of the complex reality (Perdicoúlis, 2012a; Perdicoúlis and Glasson, 2011), although these alone do not manage to reconstruct — and much less substitute — knowledge itself (Perdicoúlis, 2013a).

Documentation

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Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913) — public domain