

# Epistemology | Islam

YEAR 6 | SUMMER 2



## OVERVIEW

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and how we come to know things. It explores questions like "How do we know what is true?" and "What makes something a justified belief?" Imagine you want to learn about the world around you. You can use your senses, like seeing, hearing, and touching, to gather information. But sometimes our senses can be tricked or we might not have all the information we need. Epistemology helps us think about how we can be sure about what we believe.

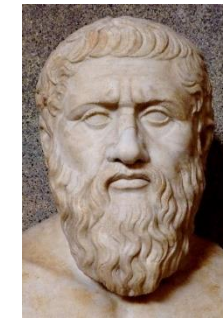
Epistemology comes from two Greek words:

- 'episteme' which means 'knowledge'
- 'logos' which means 'reason'.

In Islam, seeking knowledge is highly valued. Muslims are encouraged to learn, ask questions, and seek evidence to strengthen their understanding of the world and their faith. The importance of wisdom, seeking knowledge, and using critical thinking to gain a deeper understanding of the truth is a significant aspect of the religion.

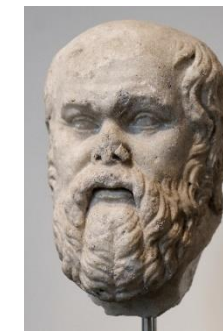


## KEY PHILOSOPHERS



### Plato

Plato (427-347 BCE) was a famous Greek philosopher who believed in the existence of a higher reality beyond the physical world and founded the Academy in Athens.



### Socrates

Ancient Greek. C. 469BCE. His famous phrase is "All I know is that I know nothing." He believed that behaviour that was not virtuous resulted from ignorance and that those who did wrong did not know any better.



### Descartes

Descartes (1596-1650 CE) is often called the "Father of Modern Philosophy." He is known for his method of doubt, in which he questioned everything in order to find certain knowledge.



### Locke

Locke (1632-1704 CE) was an English philosopher who is known for his ideas about individual rights and the nature of knowledge. He believed that all people are born with a blank slate and that knowledge comes from experience.



### Hume

Hume (1711-1776 CE) was a Scottish philosopher known for his sceptical views. He questioned the existence of absolute truths and emphasised the importance of experience and observation in forming our beliefs.



## KEY VOCABULARY



### TRUTH

Something that is fact. It is correct in all times and all places no matter the circumstances.



### DOUBT

To be unsure or uncertain of something, to question if something is true.



### EMPIRICISM/EMPIRICAL

The theory that all knowledge is based on experience developed from the senses (see, hear etc.).



### SCEPTICISM

The theory that certain knowledge is impossible / to doubt the truth of something.



### RATIONALISM

The practice of basing opinions and actions on reason and knowledge rather than religion or emotions.



### SCIENTIFIC METHOD

The process of finding out what is true by applying 6 steps involving observation, testing and critical thinking.



### ALLEGORY

A story, picture or poem which has a hidden meaning.



### PHENOMENON

The world we experience through our senses.



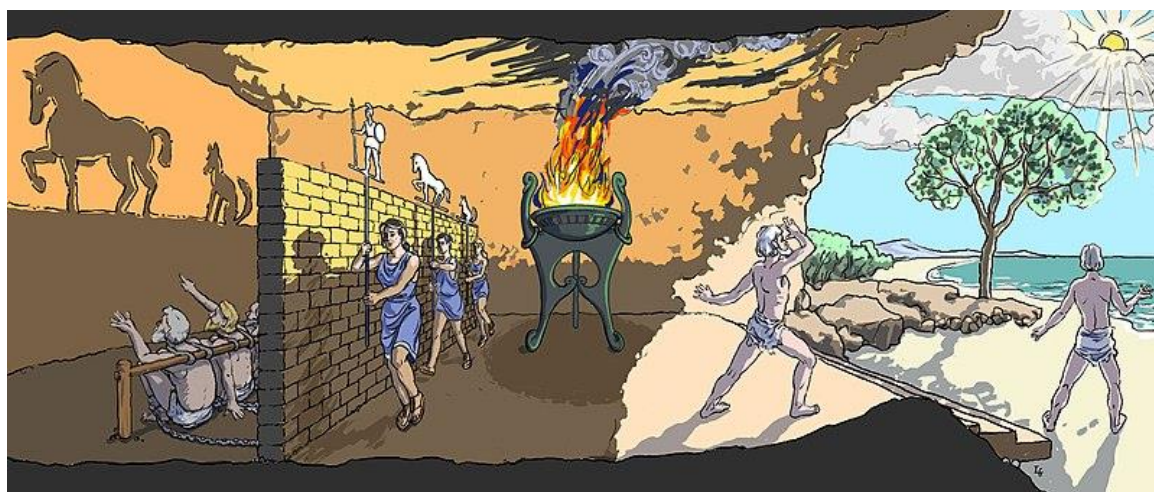
### NOUMENON

The world we can never understand.



## PLATO'S CAVE

- Plato created The Allegory of the Cave, a short story that carried deeper meaning about knowledge, truth and our reality.
- The story starts with three prisoners who have been chained in a cave facing the wall for their whole lives, they have never known anything different. Behind them is a fire that burns day and night, when people and animals walk past the opening of the cave it casts shadows on the wall for the prisoners to see. The prisoners, knowing nothing else, assume these shadows are real, that the shadows are real objects and things and they give them names like 'dog', 'tree' and 'hat'. One day a prisoner escapes the cave and sees the real world for the first time, he is blinded by the sun but eventually adjusts and learns the truth about the world. He runs back to the other prisoners and tells them all about the true world – they laugh and think he's crazy!
- Plato's allegory has a deeper meaning, the prisoners = people, the cave = our reality, the shadows = what we think is real, the sun = truth.
- Plato believed that we could not trust our senses to find out truth, he believed that everything we know and understand are just shadows of the truth, he believed there was another reality (outside the cave) The World of Forms where only real truth can exist, we as humans only see a poor copy, a shadow of that.



## DESCARTES AND TRUTH

- We all have 5 senses, taste, smell, hearing, touch and sight, we use these senses to help us understand the world and find out what is true and false.
- However, our senses can be fooled and tricked, optical illusions such as a stick looking bent in water, or the argument over the colour of 'the black and blue/ white and gold dress' (pictured, right) all question what is true – can we really trust our senses to find truth? If we can't – everything we believe about the world may be wrong!
- One of Descartes' methods is **universal doubt**, he spent his life questioning everything he believed in. His key ideas suggested that we should doubt everything, including our senses as they are unreliable and can be fooled.
- He questioned reality and claimed we could not prove everything wasn't a dream, or if we were being tricked by something evil. However – even though we cannot believe anything our senses tell us, we can be certain that we exist. Descartes stated that as we are doubting, we are thinking – this thinking proves we must exist! We could not be questioning everything if we didn't exist in the first place, it is one of only a few things we can be certain of.



### Epistemology Quotes

*'An experiment done in a lab in New York can be replicated in a lab in New Delhi, and if it's all done correctly in the same way they'll get the same result. Science's belief in truth works'* Dawkins

*'The only reason to believe anything is true is that there's evidence, and everybody should either look at the evidence for themselves or they should trust that the person they're talking to has looked at the evidence in a scientific, logical, rational, critical way.'* Dawkins

*'Reality is created by the mind, we can change our reality by changing our mind.'* Plato

*'All our knowledge begins with the senses'* Kant



Epistemology –  
Encyclopaedia

Article exploring the  
philosophical concept in  
detail



YouTube – Epistemology

Video introducing and  
explaining the concept of  
epistemology



BBC Bitesize -  
5 Philosophical Concepts

Philosophy has bit of a  
reputation for being a complex  
and confusing subject. In reality,  
people make reference to  
famous philosophical concepts  
all the time.



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