



EPISTEMOLOGY : CAN YOU KNOW GOD? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

June 6, 2017

Knowledge is a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge>)

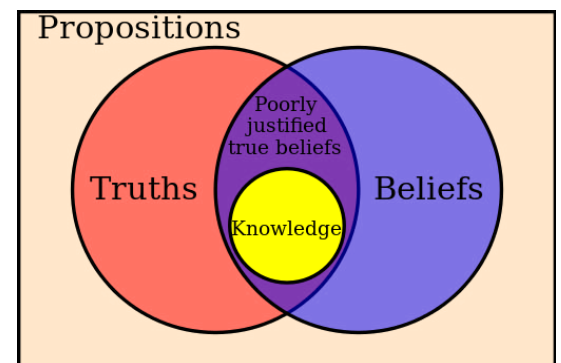
Epistemology is the study of knowledge. The philosopher Plato famously defined knowledge as "justified true belief": a definition of knowledge that gained approval during the Enlightenment, 'justified' standing in contrast to 'revealed'. There have been attempts to trace it back to Plato and his dialogues. The concept of justified true belief states that in order to know that a given proposition is true, one must not only believe the relevant true proposition, but also have justification for doing so.

In the Bible, knowledge is seen as a gift, a nearly God-like characteristic. "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil..." (Genesis 3:22)

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." - Jesus in John 8:32

René Descartes is famous for saying cogito ergo sum (English: "I think, therefore I am"). He is often regarded as the first thinker to emphasize the use of **reason** to develop the natural sciences.

Nihilism is a philosophical doctrine that suggests the lack of belief in one or more reputedly meaningful aspects of life. Most commonly, nihilism is presented in the form of existential nihilism, which argues that life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. Moral nihilists assert that there is no inherent morality, and that accepted moral values are abstractly contrived. Nihilism may also take epistemological, ontological, or metaphysical forms, meaning respectively that, in some aspect, knowledge is not possible, or reality does not actually exist.



A Venn/Euler diagram which grants that truth and well-justified belief may be distinguished and that their intersection is knowledge

How do you know what you know?

- Do we know from our experiences? If so how do we know that the observation we make isn't strictly limited to a particular situation, historical time, or cultural condition?
- Do we know from transmission (being told by someone else)? If so, how do we know that person has had a true observation or knowledge?
- Do we know from our senses, what we subjectively perceive or observe? If so, how do we know that what we perceive is not simply a construct of our senses? Say a person sees the world as black and white, and yet is unaware that he is color blind.
- Do we only know things partially, in that our knowledge is incomplete? If so, how do we know what we know?

Questions for discussion

- How do you know that you're alive? Or that you're at the Golden Squirrel?
- How do you know that there is a God)?
- How can you know who God is, or what God is like?
- How do you know that you know what you know about God, others, the world, yourself?
- Can you make someone else, or help them, to know God based on what you know? Why? Why not?
- What does this spark in you and your imagination?