

EPISTEMOLOGY

The subject term '**Epistemology**' comes from two Greek words: episteme meaning "knowledge" and logos meaning "study – account – theory." Thus, 'Epistemology' is "the philosophical study of knowledge" and a chief concern of Epistemology has been the development of an adequate "theory of knowledge."

Epistemology asks the questions:

"What is 'knowledge'? – What do you possess when you possess 'knowledge'? – What are you claiming when you claim to possess 'knowledge'?" (see "the Standard Analysis of Knowledge")

"HOW do we know?"

"WHAT do we know?" – What kinds of thing are we able to know?

What do we not know – What kinds of things might we not be able to know?

– "What are the LIMITS of knowledge?"

The issue is not: "DO we know anything at all?"

Radical Skepticism ('global skepticism') would undermine itself and one cannot even get started claiming / asserting that we cannot know anything. (See "A Refutation of Radical Skepticism" also on this webpage)

However, '**Local Skepticism**' – doubt about the ability of particular methods or areas of inquiry to provide knowledge, and doubt about particular claims as being instances of knowledge, is very much possible and appropriate to the critical enquirer.

There are two Major Traditions in epistemology in the western intellectual tradition:

Rationalism

and

Empiricism

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. "Inside-Out" knowing | 1. "Outside-In" knowing |
| 2. affirms 'innate ideas' | 2. rejects 'innate ideas' |
| 3. rejects mind as a <i>tabula rasa</i> | 3. affirms mind as a <i>tabula rasa</i> |
| 4. affirms <i>apriori</i> knowledge | 4. rejects <i>apriori</i> knowledge – all knowledge is <i>aposteriori</i> |
| 5. Mathematical model / Deductive logic | 5. Induction model / Inductive logic |
| 6. Certainty the standard for knowledge | 6. (High) Probability the standard for knowledge |

Examples:

Plato (427-347 bce)

Rene Descartes (1596-1650 ce)

Aristotle(384-322 bce) - 'sort of'!!!

John Locke (1632-1704 ce) and **David Hume**

(1711-1776 ce)