

Topic 1: Introduction to Philosophy – Epistemology Knowledge Organiser

Topic	Knowledge
Philosophy & Epistemology	<p>Philosophy is the search and love of wisdom, always asking why and searching for meaning in all that humans do, one part of philosophy is epistemology the study of knowledge and truth, this field of study aims to understand where knowledge comes from, what can really be understood and what, if anything can we say is true. Truth is something that is fact and in unchanging to matter the circumstances. However, this causes problems as people can disagree, misinterpret and make errors when relying on their senses.</p> <p>Truth can be categorised into three types: Historical, Scientific and Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Historical Truth: We know that something happened because we have seen evidence, such as archaeological or films or documents * Scientific Truth: Scientists can only say that something is true if they can prove it by experiment * Spiritual Truth: This is the sort of truth which we find in religion. This sort of truth deals with faith and belief
Descartes & Truth	<p>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 sense can be fooled and tricked, optical illusions such as a stick looking bent in water, or the argument over the colour of 'the dress' 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!</p> <p>Descartes was a French scientist, mathematician and philosopher who lived from March 1596 – February 1650, he wrote many books on epistemology including his most famous called 'Meditations'. He is often known as the father of modern philosophy as he had such an impact on other thinkers, one of his methods is universal doubt, he spent his life questioning everything he believed in.</p> <p>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.</p>
Dawkins & Science	<p>Richard Dawkins is a scientist who rejects all religious belief, he has spent his life researching evolutionary biology and disproving the claims of religion. He claims that we can find out truth and facts by applying the scientific method time and time again to find out what is true or not.</p> <p>The scientific method is a recognised method of proving or disproving theories and ideas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Question: Choose something you are curious about. 2. Hypothesis: Make an educated guess at your questions answer. 3. Experiment: Put your hypothesis to the test 4. Data: Record the outcome of your experiment and observations. 5. Analyse: Review the Results. 6. Report: Show the results of the experiment and consider if your hypothesis is correct. Come to a true / false conclusion <p>Dawkins argues we can learn facts about the world by applying the scientific method. By testing hypothesis time and time again we can come to undoubtable conclusions. For Dawkins if something is true, it must have evidence. He trusts our senses to provide this evidence. Dawkins suggests we should not live our lives doubting and questioning everything, but that we should take the time to find evidence for our beliefs. We can trust our senses to find truth that is tested time and time again, it is clear to see in the modern world that we are surrounded by the wonders and achievements of science.</p>
Plato & Truth	<p>Plato was born in 428/427 BC to a noble family and died in 348/347 BC, he lived primarily in Athens, Greece. He dedicated his life to philosophy and the search of Eudaimonia, his friend and fellow philosopher Socrates was a big influence on his writings and Plato uses Socrates as a character in many of his books. In total he wrote 36 dialogues, all discussions between characters on philosophical issues, most famously The Republic, The Symposium, The Laws, The Meno and The Apology.</p> <p>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!</p> <p>Plato 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.</p>
Kant & Ultimate Questions	<p>Kant was born in 1724 in Prussia to a modest family with little money, they were very religious and strict but Kant is not known to have any religious belief, instead he focussed his life and philosophies on what it means to be a good person. He died in 1804 and is one of the most influential philosophers in the history of Western philosophy. His contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics have had a profound impact on almost every philosophical movement that followed him.</p> <p>Kant was an empiricist, he believed that we could trust our sense to find truth, however he argued there were some things we would never know, some things our senses could not tell us. He claimed the world was divided into two:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Phenomenon: The world we can understand through our senses * The Noumenon: The world we can never understand <p>We cannot access the noumenon as it is beyond our human understanding, answers to ultimate questions such as 'what is the meaning of life' all exist there and can never be accessed by humans using our senses.</p>

Key Word	Meaning
Philosophy	The search and love of wisdom
Epistemology	The study of knowledge and truth
Truth	Something that is fact. It is correct in all times and all places no matter the circumstances
Empirical Evidence	Evidence that relies on our senses
Doubt	To be unsure or uncertain of something, to question if something is true
Universal Doubt	The method of doubting everything you believe in to find out what is true
Anti-Theist	Active opposition and rejection of religion
Scientific Method	The process of finding out what is true by applying 6 steps involving observation, testing and critical thinking
Eudemonia	The term used by Plato when a person finds fulfilment and happiness in their life
Allegory	A story, picture or poem which has a hidden meaning
Ultimate Question	A question with many, or no answer
Phenomenon	The world we experience through our senses
Noumenon	The world we can never understand

Quotes
'I think therefore I am' Descartes
'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