

# Epistemology



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What Do You Think About Epistemology Whenever we study philosophy there is always room for debate. Epistemology is an area where we have to look closely to understand what the individual philosophers have to say. This area as any area of philosophy has some validity but it amazes me that people can sit around and make decisions based on a few ideas. In many respects, we have gained knowledge from a variety of sources and we really cannot say that it is " true" or " false." Many people think that if they read it in a book, see it on television, read it on the Internet or hear it on the news that this information is " true." Chances are that this information can always be debated by any one person. A good example was the challenges that people had back in the 50s when the radio program, " The War of the Worlds" was played. This was a popular novel back in 1938 and on Sunday, October 30, 1938 at 8 p. m. this radio broadcast was done. Because people relied on the radio to give them the " correct" news, they believed that the broadcast was " true". This created a panic across the nation and people called radio and television stations to find out what they should do (Rosenberg 1). This example shows how it is difficult to know what is " real" and what is " not real" when we are talking about knowledge.

Descartes had a lot to say about knowledge and it is difficult for us to truly understand what knowledge is and how it is used in the world. On the one hand, we can say that someone " knows" something but we cannot really say how the individual knows what they know. In thinking about knowledge we have to go deeper and wonder whether knowledge is a belief or it is something that we learn. Descartes tells us that we must look at reality and determine what that is first before we can say what knowledge is and we must understand it without doubt. Descartes ideas seem rational although

they are somewhat difficult to explain.(Newman par. 1). He believed that if any thought could be subjected to any doubt then it was false (Skirry par. 2). Although this idea has some validity it is this researchers opinion that his idea does not go far enough. If we were to categorize thoughts it would be difficult to tell which ones were " true" and which ones were " false" because there is always room for doubt. In fact, most people would suggest that their way of thinking was " true" no matter what it was and therefore our thoughts would be different on a variety of issues. Descartes had some of the information but not all of it (although we do have to think about what was available to him during his time period).

The challenge for us who are reading about these philosophers is that we probably never thought about knowledge and how we acquired it. This is not something that happens in general conversation. If I had to choose one of the philosophers I would say that John Locke had more of an understanding of knowledge; it is not so much what we learn as to how we take in the knowledge and what we do with it later. Locke said we accumulate knowledge as we go about our life. He suggests that when we are born, we have a " clean sheet of paper" and as we experience life, we accumulate knowledge. He said that we must be conscious of something before we can have knowledge of it (" The Philosophy"). This makes the most sense to me because I know that I have accumulated knowledge over many years and I still have much to learn.

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