

## Epistemology (Study of Knowledge)

**Question:** How do we know that we know what we think we know?

**Answer:** The discipline of epistemology is one that intrigues the religious and non-religious alike. Our decisions, convictions, and expectations are largely based on knowledge. Therefore, the validity and origin of knowledge is an important pondering not just for the philosopher but for every thinking person—which, necessarily, would include every person, although some would not make good models of rational beings.

Within a short treatment of “How do we know what we think we know?” two main paradigms surface: a closed system, and an open system. For the most part, one can relegate the naturalist (i.e., the anti-supernaturalist) to a closed system of epistemological origins and the supernaturalist (i.e., the theist) to an open system of epistemological origins. In other words, the naturalist believes that all knowledge originates from within the universe. No knowledge exists outside of material reality. However, to the supernaturalist, knowledge is not limited to the “here and now” but can also come from outside the material realm, namely, the divine realm. This is typically termed “revelation” within religious and, particularly, Christian circles.

The naturalist’s origin of knowledge boasts of scientific enlightenment and a final debunking of religious superstition—but at what cost? For in order to preclude any and all supra-human deposits of knowledge, the naturalist embraces evolution as true in regards to not only the development of species, but also in every other matter, including knowledge. Thus, in the final analysis, the naturalist must succumb to the realization that every postulate, theory, formula, and fact is merely the refined fumbling of a turbo-charged ape brain. It is this manner of doubt, so intrinsic to an evolutionary model of epistemology, that eventually gave rise to nihilism—the ultimate negation of knowing.

In contrast, the supernaturalist (the Christian) experiences no such epistemological quagmire. For though he may have to bear the brunt of taunts accusing him of being antiquated and unscientific, the worldview he holds provides a straighter line between the two “How do we know stuff?” points. These two points could be described as 1) humans seem to know stuff and 2) how can this be? Within an open system framework, the response is clear: We know stuff (e.g., universals such as morals and mathematics) because a Power/Person (God) outside of the system has either imbued us with the knowledge or revealed to us the knowledge. In this manner universals have a comprehensive origin. Furthermore, the reason something is universal—whether universally moral or universally effectual—is because the Bestower of these universals has made them self-authenticating, so that their contradiction is revolted against and perceived as absurd. Thus, knowledge has its ultimate source not in the shifting sands of scientific enterprise or in the fragile mind of man, but in One immune from error. Therefore, knowledge can be tested and then trusted.