

And is it not shameless when we do not know what knowledge is, to be explaining the verb “to know”? The truth is, Theaetetus, that we have long been infected with logical impurity. Thousands of times have we repeated the words “we know,” and “do not know,” and “we have or have not science or knowledge,” as if we could understand what we are saying to one another, even while we remain ignorant about knowledge; and at this moment we are using the words “we understand,” “we are ignorant,” as though we could still employ them when deprived of knowledge or science.

— Plato, *Theaetetus*.196e

"There is more to human knowing  
than human knowing will ever know."

— Os Guinness

## Introduction

### A. Definition of epistemology

### B. Key questions

#### 1. Is knowledge possible?

##### a. Agnosticism

##### 1.) Hard

##### 2.) Soft

##### b. Skepticism

##### 1.) Hard/global

##### 2.) Soft/local

##### c. Obstacles to knowledge

##### 1.) Idols of the mind (Francis Bacon)

##### 2.) Prejudice

3.) Propaganda

4.) Authoritarianism

5.) Presuppositions

6.) Personality (melancholy, sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic)

6.) Male or female (not an obstacle but a factor)

2. What are the sources of knowledge?

a. Reason (rationalism)

Continental rationalists: Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza

b. Experience (empiricism)

British empiricists: Locke, Hume, Berkeley

c. Intuition

d. Pragmatism

e. Authorities/testimony

f. Revelation (“for the Bible tells me so”)

3. What is the nature of knowledge?

a. Justified true belief (JTB)

b. Subjective?

c. Objective?

d. Theories of truth

1.) Correspondence theory of truth

2.) Coherence theory of truth

3.) Pragmatic theory of truth

4. Is our knowledge valid, certain, and justified?

a. Foundationalism

b. Coherentism

c. Pragmatism

5. How we know the world

a. Umpire #1: I call 'em like they are! – naïve realism

b. Umpire #2: I call 'em like I see 'em! – critical realism

c. Umpire #3: They ain't nothin' til I call 'em! – creative anti-realism

C. Science and knowledge

1. Scientific method

2. Facts

3. Values

#### D. The Bible and knowledge

##### 1. Biblical/Hebraic Epistemology as Existential

The primary Hebrew term for knowledge, *yada*, means “to know by experience.” including such things as afflictions (1 Kings 8: 38), loss (Isa. 47: 8), disease/grief (Isa. 53: 3), and judgment (Ezek. 25: 14). Also, since both *yada* and *ginosko* also designate sexual intercourse on the part of the husband (Gen. 4: 1, 17, 25; Matt. 1: 25; Luke 1: 34) and the wife (Num. 31: 18, 25; Judg. 21; 12), it implies that “to know” does not simply mean to have theoretical knowledge of an object and its nature. Rather, it refers to a personal relationship between the knower and the object known, a relationship characterized by care, concern, and importance.

2. Biblical epistemology as a matter of the heart. Furthermore, in accordance with the biblical view of humanity as a differentiated totality rather than as a being composed of body and soul, knowledge is an activity in which the whole person—intellect, emotion, will—participates.

Prov. 2:2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom,  
Incline your **heart** to understanding.

Eph. 1:18 I pray that the **eyes of your heart** may be enlightened,  
so that you may **know** what is the hope of His calling, what are the  
riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

##### 3. Biblical/Hebraic epistemology as covenantal

Covenant epistemology may be defined as a way of knowing that connects truth with life, that is, it recognizes that the purpose of the acquisition of knowledge is to engender obedience to the covenant that binds God and His people. Covenant epistemology means knowledge for the sake of responsible action. It connects in a radical way knowing and

doing, epistemology and ethics, belief and behavior, else the consequences be hypocrisy, guilt, and personal disintegration.

1. Matthew 7: 24-27
2. Matthew 18: 19-20
3. Luke 8:21
4. Luke 11:27-28
5. John 13:17
6. Philippians 4:9
7. James 1: 22-25

Conclusion:

“We only know what we act upon; we only believe what we obey.” J. Sire

“Good thoughts are only good so far as they are taken as means to an exact obedience, or at least this is the chief part of their goodness.” J. H. Newman

“Now whosoever supposes that he can know the truth, while he is still living iniquitously, is in error.” St. Augustine

“Only he who believes is obedient and only he who is obedient believes.”  
D. Bonhoeffer

“Knowing and doing, hearing and obeying are integrally connected for people whose convictions are truly and deeply Christian.” Steve Garber