

FOUR CATEGORIES OF EPISTEMOLOGY

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In a metamorphical sense, an epistemology is a set of rules for playing a game, where the name of the game is "find a reality". Changing the rules, changes the game and results in a different reality or ontology. And it is not surprising that different players prefer different rules, different games, and end up with different notions of reality. Just as the color of things depends on the tint of the glasses we wear, the facet of the world we accept as reality depends on the epistemology we adopt to know [explore/create] the world. And since there are many epistemologies and many different facets there will be many realities.

Each reality or facet of the world has its own mode of existence. The meaning of existence in one reality is not the same as the meaning of existence in another reality.

Unfortunately, we do not have different words for different modes of existence. We are stuck with the Aristotlian 'exists or doesn't exist']. So, called "proofs" or tests of existence also vary with the epistemology employed. For example, "Seeing is believing" is a test for existence in the reality derived from a sensory based epistemology. But since mathematics cannot be seen, mathematics does not exist in the sensory reality. Where then does mathematics exist? And what epistemology leads to the facet or reality in which mathematics does exist? And while we are at it, we might also ask where does Love exist? where does Beauty exist? Is the flower beautiful if there is no one to see it, smell it, touch it? These are all classical epistemological-ontological questions, and the fact that there are several answers supports the view that humans are capable of experiencing more than one reality. In fact, we have the capacity to experience at least four distinct realities accessible through four different epistemologies. We can thus perceive at least four facets of the "Whole".

However, there is a caveat: Each epistemology leads to a different ontology or reality. Reciprocally, however, an ontology limits the epistemologies it can admit. Without initially remaining open to multiple epistemologies, the epistemological-ontological interplay results in an ever-narrowing set of acceptable epistemologies and accordingly fewer ontologies, continuing until a single facet of the Whole is • isolated and substituted for the Whole. This built in inaccessibility of the Whole cannot be circumvented. It can, however, be mitigated by employing as many epistemologies as possible and accepting the fact that the results may defy our customary intellectual constraint of consistency.

Granting our inability to know the Whole, we ask can the Whole know itself. A traditional monotheistic, "God is omniscient", view of the Cosmos would answer yes, but it may well be that the domain of "knowing" remains always a subset of the domain of "being" and consequently no entity, including God or the Cosmos itself, can ever fully know itself.

What then is the deeper meaning of 'to know'? If there is no knowing is there no being? In order to exist a thing must be known? Is knowing complementary to existence or being, as in wave/particle complementarity? Does the proportion, knowing information: being: energy apply? Are knowing/being and epistemology/ontology possibly dialectic pairs? Or must we conclude

that we are trapped in a semantic cul-de-sac, lacking the terms to describe an essential ingredient felt to be present but so far ineffable.

Four basic categories of epistemology have been recognized:

1) The Serpent: The Epistemologies of Sensory Inputs.

These are the epistemologies processed by our senses and our intellects. Properly termed, epistemologies of the head. These lead to our usual philosophical constructs, our metaphysical models. Rooted in both experience and speculation (imagination), they provide ontologies that are a mix of discovery and creativity. For this reason, such ontologies are neither fully true nor fully false.

2) The Turtle: The Epistemologies of Number

These are the mathematical imperatives rooted in the nature of number. Their expressions provide an isomorphic map of the structure of the physical portion of the world. The limitations of a mathematical epistemology lie both in its symbolisms and in our ability to interpret them.

3) The Pine or Oak: The Epistemologies of Silence

These are the epistemologies of the "heart", the epistemologies of contemplation, meditation, and emptiness. These epistemologies involve a dedication to openness. Their ontologies transcend the grasp of language, the limitations of logic, and the restrictions imposed by intellect. The world they reveal is not of a physical nature but has an ineffable relation to the world of matter.

4) The Egret: The Epistemologies of Recognition

These are epistemologies, not designed by us, but given to us. Recognition (not empiricism) is the way of knowing what is Beauty, what is Love, what is Good, what is True. Through them we know without believing, we understand without articulating, we participate harmoniously without direction. This because when we achieve union, one identity, then identity disappears; for ONE has no-existence.