

Enquiry: Knowledge and Perspectives

These are perspectives from famous thinkers whose names have been strategically omitted to help you engage with their thoughts without prejudice. What do the perspectives tell you about knowledge and the person who knows? Is it possible to agree with all of them? How does your idea of knowledge affect your role as a student, researcher, teacher or colleague?

If I think that only my truth is valid, I'll close myself off to others and will not learn anything new. The right way to improve my perception and capacity to think and to hear with respect is to be open to differences and to refuse the idea that I am absolutely right. And if I am not the 'owner of the truth', I need to be permanently open. I need to be open to approach and being approached, to question and being questioned, to agree and to disagree.

Every age, every generation and every 'culture' has its built-in assumptions about reality that are generally unconscious. These assumptions invariably change with time. So, if history is any guide, much about what we take for granted about the world today simply isn't true. But we're locked into these precepts without even knowing it.

Our brain is wired in a way that we only see what we think is possible. The brain matches patterns that already exist within ourselves through conditioning.

Scientific knowledge is objective and neutral. Everything can be known and tested scientifically to produce a universal truth that is complete in itself and universal (something that anyone could see in the same way). Progress and development can be achieved through the use of science and technology to control the natural environment in order to build the perfect society.

Don't believe anything because it is written in books, because wise men say so or because your religious leader tells you to. Believe it only because you yourself know it to be true.

What we observe (even through scientific experiments) depends on the interpretation of the person who 'sees' it. Like a pair of glasses we wear, each of us has different lenses to look through at the world. These lenses determine what we see as real, ideal, true, good and bad. These lenses are constructed in our contexts - produced collectively in social interactions (in families, education, the media, religion, the government) and they are always changing. Therefore, knowledge is never objective - there is no possibility of complete 'neutrality'.