### Basic Terminology - Epistemology

**Ontology**
- **what exists to be known**
  - Platonic Forms: Ideas which exist independently from the minds which think them, in their own timeless world
  - Reductionism: Ideas and principles can be reduced to something more basic, probably physical events in the brain
  - Necessary Truths: Things which have to be true, in all possible worlds
  - Contingent Truths: Things which happen to be true, but could be false
  - Ship of Theseus: Famous example of a changing ship, illustrating how identity fluctuates, making knowledge of reality elusive
  - Causation: Supposed force or necessity which links each event to the next, shaping reality
  - Maths and Logic: Candidates for parts of reality that are necessarily true, and can be known by reason

**Truth**
- **the measure of success in seeking for knowledge**
  - Correspondence: Truth is when propositions in the mind fit the facts in the world
  - Coherence: Truth is when a large set of propositions fit together consistently and logically
  - Pragmatism: Truth is only a measure of what actually works in practice
  - Deflationary Theories: Truth isn't a big metaphysical idea, but something you say about sentences, like ticking them

**Beliefs**
- **states of mind which are candidates for knowledge**
  - Propositions: Structures of ideas, built from concepts, often expressed in words, which are capable of being true or false
  - Synthetic propositions: Propositions which attempt to say something about external reality
  - Tautologies: Analytic propositions, which are true as definitions, or relations of ideas, or just because of word-meaning
  - Innate Ideas: Concepts or propositions which occur naturally in the mind, without the input of experience
  - Slave boy: Plato's example (in "Meno") of a boy who knows geometry innately, without having been taught it
  - Tabula Rasa: Extreme empirical view (in Locke) that the mind is completely blank prior to experience
  - Natural Beliefs: Hume's idea that we can't help believing some things, such as causation and induction
  - Association: Acquiring beliefs about remote places and times, by generalising from immediate experiences

**Justification**
- **the support which true beliefs need if they are to be knowledge**
  - Logos: Plato's word, meaning 'understanding', 'reasons' or 'an account', for what may turn true belief into knowledge
  - Rationalism: Theory that knowledge (even of events) is a matter of judgement, not just of experience
  - Wax example: Descartes' example to show that we judge molten wax unchanged despite changed experiences
  - Empiricism: Theory that knowledge arises directly from combinations of actual experiences
  - Golden Mountain: Hume's example to show that even very imaginative ideas can be boiled down to their original experiences
  - De re/De dicto reference: Some true justified beliefs aren't knowledge, if luck, misunderstanding or error are involved in the justification
  - Internalism: Theory that knowledge just requires a good mental state of coherent rational understanding
  - Externalism: Theory that knowledge just requires beliefs to be appropriately linked to their external source
  - Reliabilism: Externalist theory that good justification means being linked to a reliable source of information

**Self-knowledge**
- **the special type of knowledge we may have of our own minds**
  - Introspection: Apparent knowledge obtained just by looking into the private theatre of our own minds
  - Behaviourism: Theory that our own minds can actually be analysed entirely in terms of external behaviour

**Foundations**
- **the possibility of a totally secure basis on which to build knowledge**
  - Regress of Justification: The problem that every belief needs another belief to justify it, which never seems to reach an end
  - Basic Impressions: Empiricist foundations, in raw experiences which are just accepted without question
  - Basic A Priori Propositions: Rationalist foundations, in truths self-evident to the natural light of reason (such as logic)
  - The Cogito: Descartes' famous example of a rationalist foundation, in the certainty of his own mental existence

**Appearances**
- **interpreting the experiences we have as knowledge of ‘reality’**
  - Direct Realism: We directly perceive the features of the real world (with no intervening representations)
  - Representative Realism: Appearances give a good representation or model of reality, even though there is a gap between them
  - Primary Qualities: Idea that some appearances show actual features of reality, agreed on by nearly all observers
  - Secondary Qualities: Idea that some appearances totally depend on the observer, varying between species, and even individuals
  - Sense Data: Name of the supposed information which reaches the mind from objects, sitting between thought and reality
  - Anti-Realism: General label for theories which say that reality is unreachable, inexpressible or meaningless
  - Phenomenalism: Theory that objects can be totally analysed down into nothing but actual or possible experiences
  - Idealism: Theory that reality just consists of mental states, with no possibility of meaningful talk of anything external
  - Nomos-Physis debate: Ancient debate over whether knowledge is man-made convention (nomos) or fixed by nature (physis)
  - Relativism: Theory that there is no truth, and hence there is no knowledge, but only beliefs and points of view
  - Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: Theory (based on research with Hopi Indians) that our language is our reality

**Scepticism**
- **doubts about the possibility of achieving knowledge**
  - Methodological Scepticism: Method (devised by Socrates, and used by Descartes) of testing beliefs by systematically doubting them
  - Global Scepticism: Belief that it is difficult or impossible for humans to attain much truth about the physical world
  - Demons and Scientists: Evil forces that might manipulate our minds, thus meaning that we can't trust any of our beliefs
  - Illusions: Mistakes in perception, which are evidence that our minds are not reliable, and can't achieve real knowledge
  - Dreams: Delusions generated by our own minds, showing that we may continually unwittingly deceive ourselves
  - Solipsism: Extreme sceptical possibility, that the whole of reality is a self-generated delusion
  - Relativism: There are just individual opinions, and no such thing as ‘knowledge’, probably because there is no ‘truth’