

Year 7 - How do we know what is true?

1 How do we know what is true?

Perception is using our 5 senses to find out about the world around us, but our brains also apply ideas, beliefs and thoughts to our senses. **Realism** is the belief that things are true/real whether we are currently sensing them (perceiving them) or not. An **anti-realist** would argue that something is only true if someone is currently perceiving it; the world is only true because it exists in our mind because all of our **perceptions** are in our thinking mind. Truth can be seen as being **absolute** and/or **relative**. **Absolute truth** is the idea that the truth is fixed, and is the same for all people, at all times and in all places. **Relative truth** is where the truth changes depending on the time, the place and the person.



2

How does Theology investigate truth?



Theology is thinking and asking questions from the perspective of a religious believer, often starting from the idea that there is an absolute truth, but it is hidden in some way. Usually there are beliefs about supernatural truth, and how this has been **revealed** to humans. This **revealing** to is called **revelation**, and comes in two types: **General revelation** is the idea that God (or something similar) has revealed themselves to almost everyone in the world, through ordinary ways e.g. the Bible. **Special revelation** is the idea that God has revealed themselves to 1 person (or a small group) in an extraordinary way. For example, through miracles. One big difficulty with **revelations**, is that they are **interpreted** in different ways. An **interpretation** is an explanation or opinion of what something means.



3 How does Philosophy investigate truth?



Philosophy means 'love of wisdom' and is a hunger for knowledge, good judgement (good sense) and excellent insight (seeing 'into' a situation). **Philosopher** Plantinga summarises it as: "Philosophy is thinking hard about something". Some **philosophers** might search for truth through **rationalism**, which involves **logical**, reasonable thinking. **Logic** is using your own thinking to see if something is consistent and makes sense. Other **philosophers** might search for truth through **empiricism**, which involves using experience, observation and experiments. To do this, a philosopher will use a process of **verification** to **verify** (confirm) something as being true once there is enough, good quality evidence through experience, observations or experiments.



4

How does Social Science investigate truth?



Social Science is finding truth by researching people's beliefs, behaviours and interactions. A **Social Scientist** uses **research** methods to collect **data**, which then allows them to form **conclusions**.

Step 1: **Research** - using questionnaires, surveys, studies or experiments, a **Social Scientist** collects information about people.

Step 2: **Data** - the **research** is then used to produce information in the form of tables, charts, graphs, numbers etc.

Step 3: **Conclusions** - the **data** is used to form **conclusions** and will help a **Social Scientist** to understand some aspect of people's lives.

As these are scientific studies of people, they must be **reliable** so they could be repeated and get the same results. And they need to be **valid** so that the **data** actually gives you the answers you were looking for.



5

Where do you stand?

Every person has a **worldview**, which is the way you see and understand the world. This is the **lens** that you see the world with. Your **personal worldview** comes from the way we are raised, the people around us, our culture, our experiences and more. It affects both what we believe, and the way we look at other people's beliefs; 'Nobody stands nowhere.' This reminds us that we all have biases and many of us have things that we feel certain about, even if we haven't thought carefully about it yet. Some people hold a **religious worldview**, usually because they believe in something **supernatural** that is beyond this world or beyond our senses. Others might have a **non-religious worldview** where they only follow ideas if they are about things which are **natural** and in this world.



6

What is religion?

Neolithic humans in Britain perceived **material** things, but because they didn't understand how these **material** (natural) things worked, they came up with **spiritual** (supernatural) explanations. For example, many neolithic people in Britain saw anything that moved as having some sort of **spirit** which was the power/force behind its movement. At burial places such as burial mounds or long barrows for the dead, humans started to 'invite' **spirits** for funerals, celebrations and guidance. The word for 'inviting a spirit' or a 'burial mound' is god. These are the early roots of religion in our world.

Smart came up with 7 Dimensions of Religion; identifying features you would usually find in a religion. 3 of them are: **Experiential/emotional** - a person/group see or feel something so powerful it changes them forever. **Mythological/narrative** - religious **experiences** are sometimes expressed through narrative stories or untrue stories with a powerful meaning called **myths**. **Ritual/practical** - organised religions have practices they follow, do and repeat to remember the **experiences** and the **myths/narratives** of their religion.

