

In my new module, Origins of Mind, we will attempt to explain how humans come to know about objects, causes, words, numbers, colours, actions and minds.

Questions about how humans come to know things go back to Plato who, in a beautiful myth, suggested that the answer is recollection. Before we are born, in another world, we become acquainted with the truth. Then, in falling to earth, we forget everything. But as we grow we are sometimes able to recall part of what we once knew. So it is by recollection that humans come to know about objects, causes, numbers and everything else.

Other philosophers have offered similarly plausible myths. Most recently, there have been two major scientific breakthroughs, one concerning social interaction and the other concerning something called 'core knowledge' which is not knowledge but a bit like it. These breakthroughs suggest that none of the philosophical myths about the origins of knowledge are right. The findings also raise new philosophical questions.

This is an exciting time to think about the origins of knowledge because we're making lots of new discoveries, discoveries involving controversial methods and that appear to lead to contradiction and paradox. So there is plenty of work for philosophers.

I've explained how the module will work on the handout. If you think you might want to take the module I can also let you have a more detailed outline. And if you have any questions later, please find me or email me.