

How Do You Know?

Seven Stages of Knowledge¹

I. Pre-Reflective Thinking: Truth Is Certain

1. What I See Is All There Is: “I saw it, therefore, it’s true”
2. Authorities Know Everything: “They said it, therefore, it’s true”
3. Authorities Know, *but not everything*: “They said it, therefore, it might be true”

II. Quasi-Reflective Thinking: Truth Is Relative

4. Relative Perspectives: “Everyone sees the world differently, so no way to judge”
5. Relative Paradigms: “There are different types of evidence, so no way to judge whose evidence or conclusions are better”

III. Reflective Thinking: Truth Is Constructed & Evaluated

(also called Rational Thinking, Critical Thinking, and Scientific Thinking)

6. Tentative Objectivity: “There are different sources of data, different methodologies, and conflicting theories; therefore each must be evaluated so I can make a provisional conclusion”
7. Probable Objectivity & Judgment: “There are different sources of data, different methodologies, and conflicting theories; therefore each must be evaluated so I can know the most probable conclusion and take specific action”

¹ Patricia M. King and Karen Strohm Kitchener, *Developing Reflective Judgment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994) 14-16; Deanna Kuhn, *Education for Thinking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) 31. King and Strohm conceptualize seven levels, while Kuhn uses four.