

The image features a white background with several abstract geometric elements. On the left, there are two vertical teal dashes, a teal circle, and an orange square outline. In the upper right, there is an orange triangle outline and a teal circle. In the lower left, there are four teal dashes arranged in a curved path. A large blue semi-circle on the right side contains the text.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN
TO 'GET BETTER' AT
THE WAYS OF
KNOWING IN RE?



Introduction

The purpose of this document is to offer a model that supports teachers to articulate how pupils are 'getting better' at the ways of knowing in RE.

It focuses on the questions asked and methods used by:

- Theologians
- Human / social scientists
- Philosophers

What does it mean to 'get better' in RE?

Substantive Knowledge

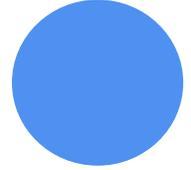
Do my pupils know what I think they should know? Do they understand and remember the content they have been taught? Are they able to draw on prior content knowledge?

Disciplinary Knowledge

Are my pupils handling this knowledge appropriately (using various 'ways of knowing' effectively)?

Personal Knowledge

Are my pupils relating their learning to a critical analysis of their own worldview?



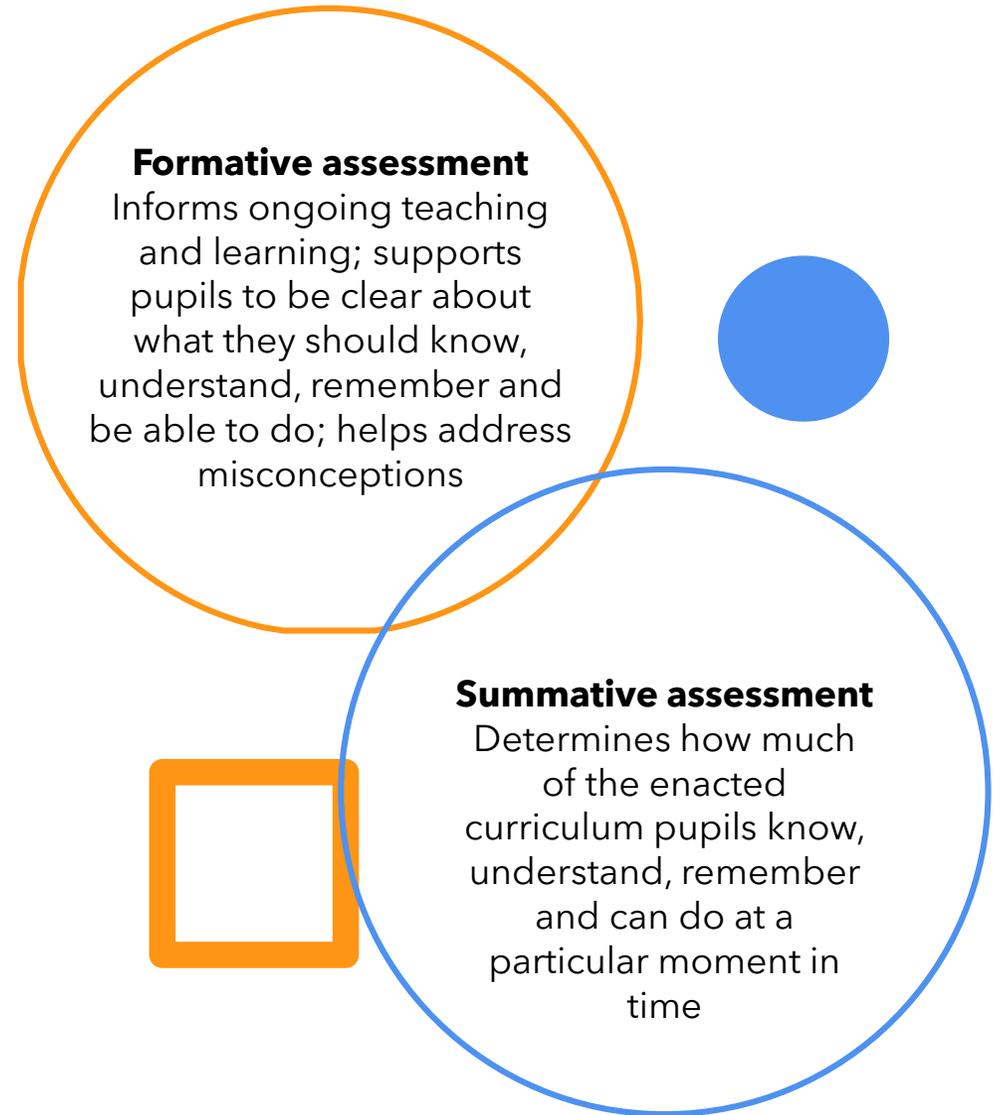
Progress and Assessment

Substantive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge do not equate to a 'knowledge and skills' dichotomy - we need a clear understanding of the different types of knowledge if we are going to be able to support pupils to know how to 'get better in RE' (i.e. make progress)

Pupils can be said to be 'getting better at RE' (i.e. making progress) if they are knowing, understanding, remembering and being able to do more *as a result of the curriculum that has been planned and delivered*

Assessment processes help us understand whether pupils know, understand, remember and can do more based on the curriculum that has been planned and delivered

Tracking progress is not the same thing as assessing progress: many tracking systems rely on generic statements that don't necessarily originate from the planned curriculum. This means that the information gathered is not always meaningful or reliable and so cannot be used to help us make valid judgements about pupil progress in RE



Ways of Knowing in RE

Contextualised for a school setting:

Theology is the study of the things that people believe. This includes exploring where beliefs come from, how they have changed over time, how different beliefs/concepts connect to each other within an overarching worldview and how different people understand and engage with their beliefs differently. A key method used by theologians is **hermeneutics** (textual interpretation).

The **human/social sciences** encompass a range of academic disciplines that explore the ways in which people live their lives. This includes History, Geography and Sociology. Human and social scientists ask questions about how people live and why they live in the ways that they do. They are particularly interested in how context affects ways of living. Key methods used by human and social scientists include **surveys, interviews, ethnographic study** and **analysis of data**.

Philosophy literally means the 'love of wisdom'. This discipline is interested in what we know and how we know it. Philosophers ask questions about how people think or reason about the world around them, and how we can know what is true or real. Key methods used by philosophers include **thought experiments, debate, critical thinking and processes of reasoning**.

WE ARE WHAT WE
REPEATEDLY DO.
EXCELLENCE, THEN, IS NOT
AN ACT, BUT A HABIT.

- ARISTOTLE



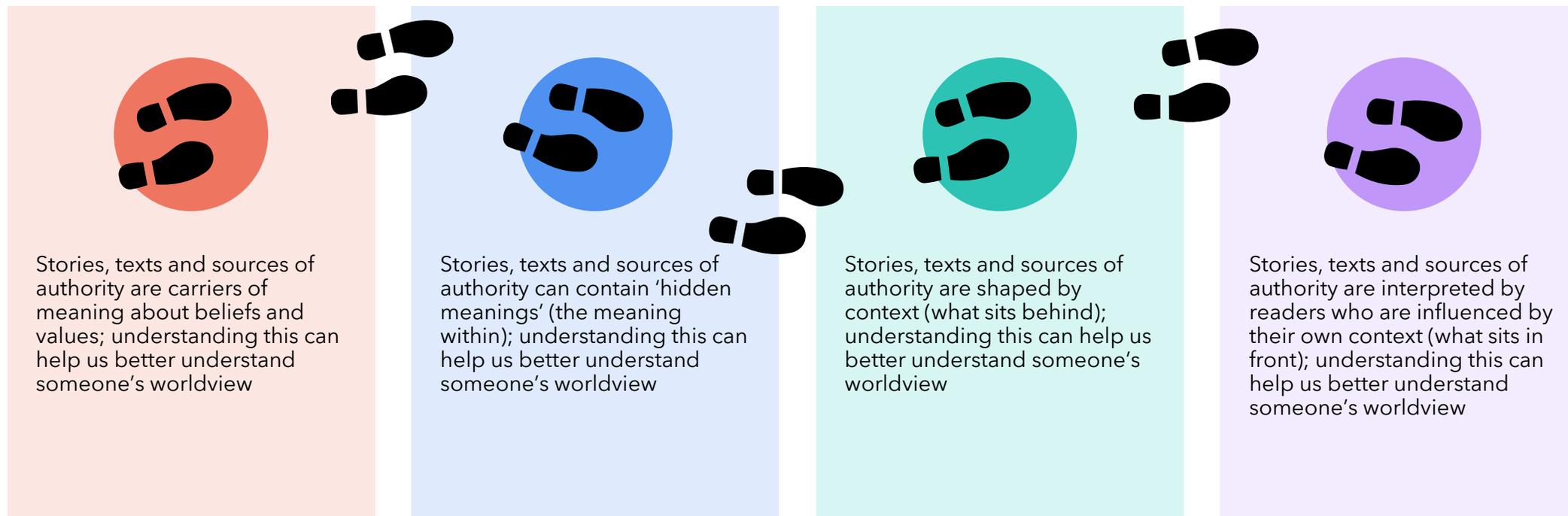


Theology

Engaging with Ways of Believing

Progression of Ways of Knowing in RE:

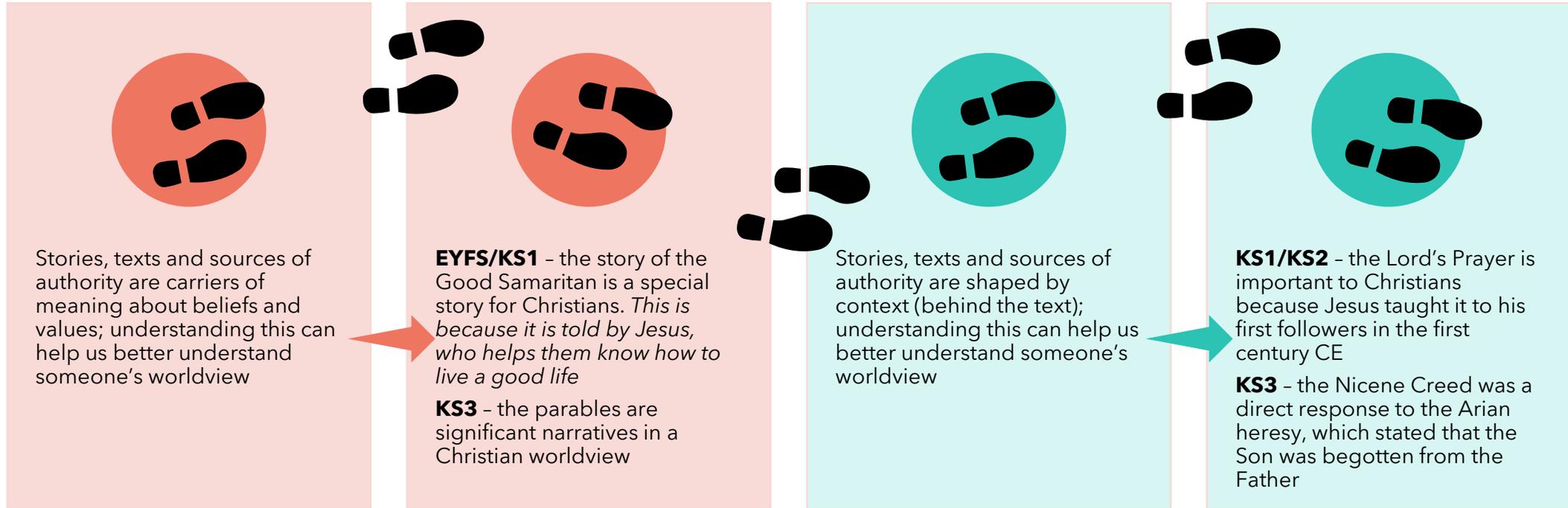
As a **field of enquiry**, Theology is interested in stories, texts and other sources of authority, including influential people and traditions



As pupils engage with learning in RE, they will be supported to have an increasingly complex understanding of theology as a field of enquiry and be able to use theological methods in increasingly complex ways so that they are ready for the next stage of learning. This will involve undertaking more sophisticated enquiries, asking more sophisticated questions and utilising methods in more sophisticated ways. This will look different for each pupil and isn't linked to their age, phase or key stage.

Progression of Ways of Knowing in RE:

As a **field of enquiry**, Theology is interested in stories, texts and sources of authority, including influential people and traditions



This shows some of the ways in which the 'steps' on the journey of progression might look different for different age groups.

‘Getting Better’
at understanding
the field of
enquiry:
The Parable of
the Good
Samaritan

Stories, texts and sources of authority are carriers of meaning about beliefs and values; understanding this can help us better understand someone’s worldview	<i>The story of the Good Samaritan is a special story for Christians. This is because it is told by Jesus, who helps them know how to live a good life</i>
Stories, texts and sources of authority can contain ‘hidden meanings’ (within the text); understanding this can help us better understand someone’s worldview	<i>Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to answer a particular question about how to get to Heaven; different people might find different meanings in this story, e.g. Christians and Jewish people</i>
Stories, texts and sources of authority are shaped by context (behind the text); understanding this can help us better understand someone’s worldview	<i>Jesus is a Jewish teacher sharing a parable in response to a particular question about how to get to heaven; the characters in the parable are chosen by Jesus because they relate to the time and place in which he lived and is telling this story understanding the religious, geographic and historical context helps us understand this better; an understanding of context helps us better understand how this text has been used and interpreted differently</i>
Stories, texts and sources of authority are interpreted by readers who are influenced by their own context (in front of the text); understanding this can help us better understand someone’s worldview	<i>The story of the Good Samaritan is a parable, which is a story with a moral or spiritual lesson; different people can draw meaning differently from this story based on their context (religion, geography, culture, gender, age, etc.)</i>

Progression of Ways of Knowing:

A key **method** used by theologians is textual interpretation (hermeneutics). This is used to understand more about stories, texts and sources of authority.

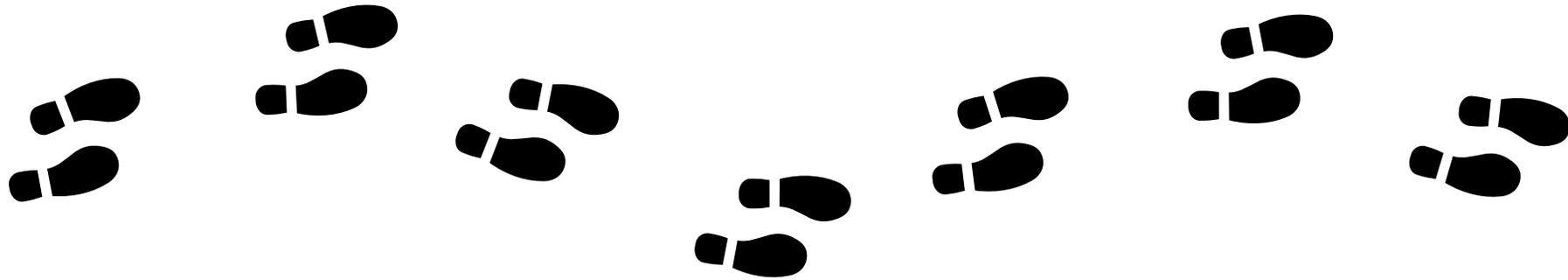
Getting better at theological ways of knowing means that pupils are increasingly confident in generating and asking these kinds of methodological questions, particularly of previously unseen material

There are questions we can ask that help us understand that some stories, texts and sources of authority are important to a group or individual

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the meaning and significance of particular stories, texts and sources of authority

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the context of important stories, texts and sources of authority and the ways in which this might affect its meaning

There are questions we can ask that help us understand how a reader's or interpreter's worldview influences the meaning they draw from a story, text or source of authority



Asking these hermeneutical questions can help us better understand someone's worldview, including our own.

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What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?	What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?	What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?	What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?
<p>Where does this story come from? Is this story important to me? (If not, why not?) Is this story or text important to people? If so, to whom? Why is it important to them? Is this text a source of authority for anyone? If so, how is it used? Is this text a source of authority for anyone? Is its authority widely acknowledged (within and beyond the worldview)? Do some people question its authority? If so, why?</p>	<p>What is the story about? Who is this story about? What happens in this story? Why is this important? How can it help us understand the 'hidden meaning' of the story? What is this text / source of authority about? Who is it significant to? Why is it significant to them? How is this source of authority used? Has the way in which it is used or interpreted changed over time? Is it used differently in differently contexts and if so, why? How (if at all) does it relate to other sources of authority within this worldview?</p>	<p>Who told this story? Who wrote this text? When did they tell/write it? Who did they tell it to/write it for? Why did they tell/write it - what difference did they think it would make? What type of text is this? Is it a particular genre of writing? Where/when/why was this written? Who wrote it? Who was/is the intended audience? What can we say about the origin of this source of authority? Who wrote it? Who was/is the intended audience? Does it matter whether we know this or not?</p>	<p>What does this story tell me? Does everyone draw the same meaning from this text? If not, why not? How might context affect how someone understands the meaning of the text? What genre is this source of authority? How might this affect the way in which it is read/interpreted?</p>

'Getting Better' at Hermeneutics: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

There are questions we can ask that help us understand that some stories, texts and sources of authority are important to a group or individual

*For example:
Where might we find the story of the Good Samaritan? Who is it important to? For whom is it a source of authority? Does anyone question its authority? Why?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the meaning and significance of particular stories, texts and sources of authority

*For example:
What hidden meaning might Christians find in the parable of the Good Samaritan? Why is this parable significant to Christians?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the context of important stories, texts and sources of authority and the ways in which this might affect its meaning

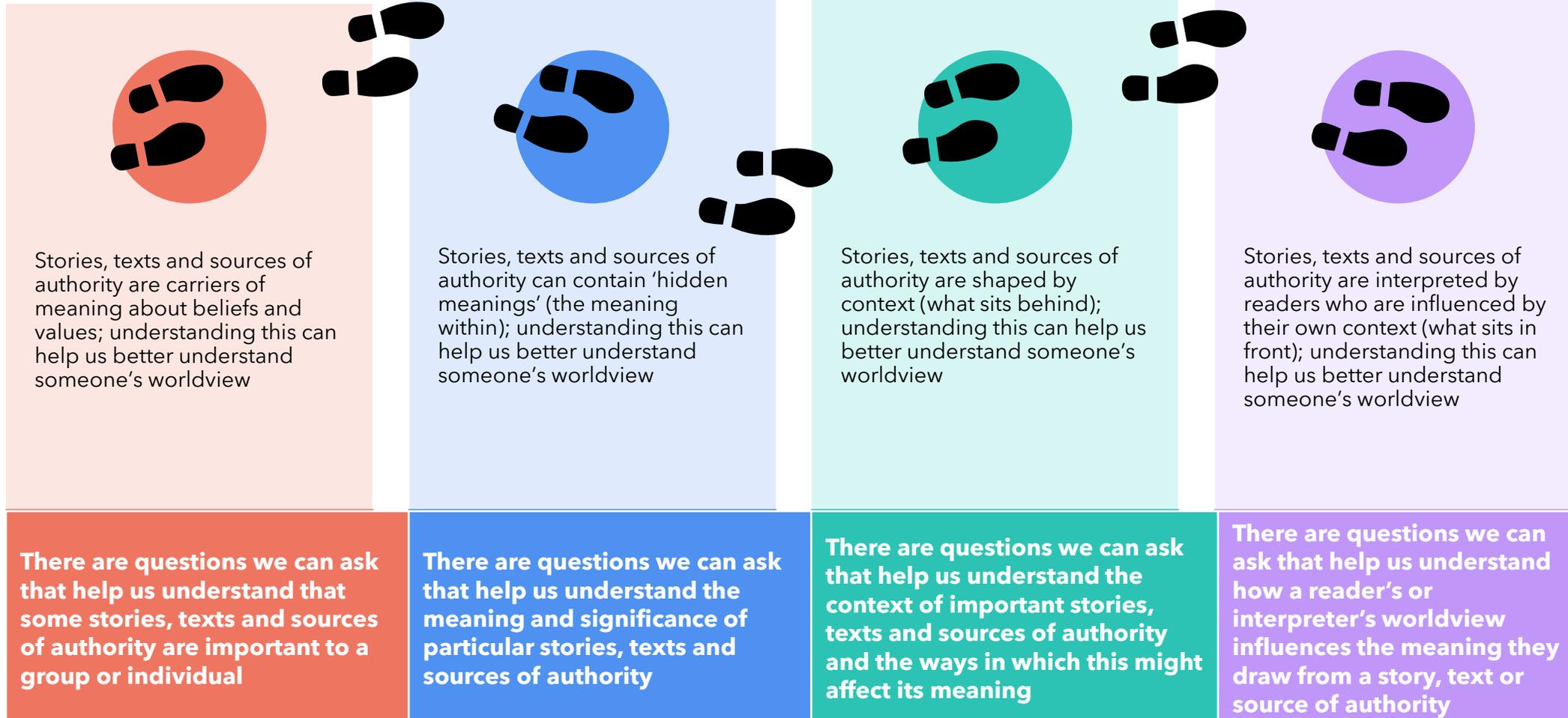
*For example:
When and where was this story told? When and where was this story recorded?
Why did Jesus tell the story of the Good Samaritan? Who did he tell it to? What type of writing is this? Why does that matter?*

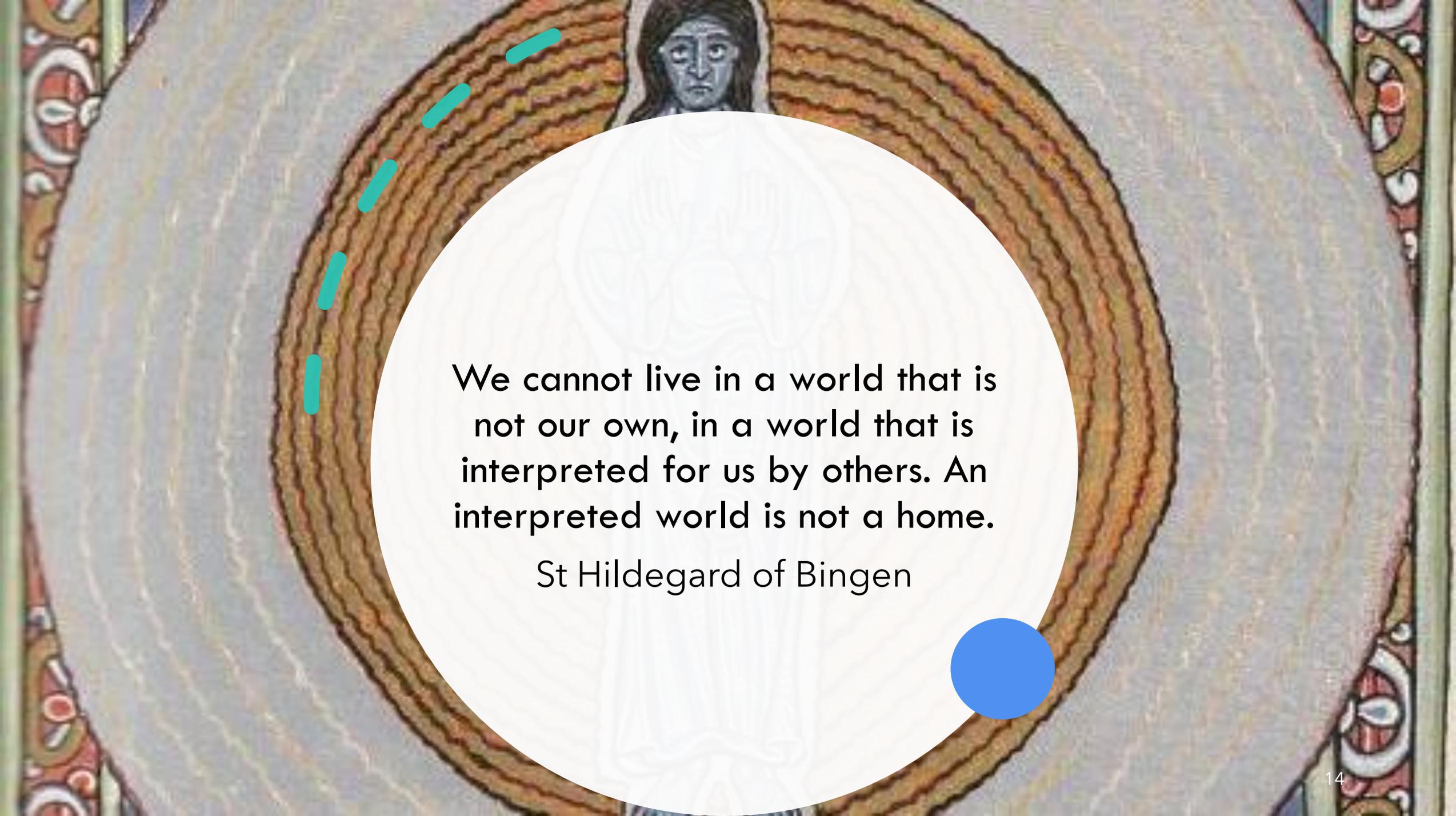
There are questions we can ask that help us understand how a reader's or interpreter's worldview influences the meaning they draw from a story, text or source of authority

*For example:
What meaning do I draw from the story of the Good Samaritan?
Do all Christians interpret this story in the same way? If not, why not?
How might people who are not Christian interpret the meaning of this parable?*

Ways of Knowing: Theology

It is important to consider how the planned and enacted curriculum enables pupils to 'get better' at understanding the field of enquiry and its associated methods



A circular stained-glass window with a central figure, likely a saint, surrounded by a decorative border. The window is set against a light blue background. The central figure is depicted in a white, flowing robe, with a face that appears to be a portrait of a woman. The window is framed by a thick, brown, textured border. The overall style is reminiscent of medieval or Gothic art.

We cannot live in a world that is
not our own, in a world that is
interpreted for us by others. An
interpreted world is not a home.

St Hildegard of Bingen



Human / Social Sciences

Engaging with Ways of Living

Progression of Ways of Knowing in RE:

As **fields of enquiry**, the Human / Social Sciences are interested in how people live, and how context affects this



This shows some of the ways in which the 'steps' on the journey of progression might look different for different age groups.

**‘Getting Better’
at
Understanding
the Fields of
Enquiry:
Hindu Worship**

<p>There is information that can tell us how people live, which helps us better understand their worldview, including objects, places, photographs, videos, surveys, case studies, etc.</p>	<p><i>Comparing photographs of a home shrine with a visit to see the murtis in a mandir can tell us something about how Hindus worship at home and in the mandir in similar and different ways; using different types of information to look at different types of mandir / homes can help us understand how different Hindus worship differently</i></p>
<p>The way in which people live is affected by context, including time, place, culture, gender, etc.; knowing about this can help us better understand their worldview</p>	<p><i>In southern India, many Hindus show devotion to Shiva, whereas mandirs in the UK are more often dedicated to Vishnu and his avatars; understanding more about history, geography and culture can help us understand why Hindus worship in different kinds of ways</i></p>
<p>When we are trying to understand a worldview, it is important to consider the origin of sources of information about how people live</p>	<p><i>Information about Hindu worship from a textbook and a Hindu who worships in a mandir in the UK may provide different information; there is lots of different information we can use to find out about how Hindus worship; we need to be aware of where this information is coming from and how this might impact our understanding of the diversity of Hindu worship practices</i></p>
<p>When we are trying to understand a worldview, it is important to consider how our own worldviews might shape the way we interpret information about how people live</p>	<p><i>It is important to access a range of information about the different ways in which Hindus worship; we need to be aware of where this information is coming from and how this might impact our understanding of the diversity of Hindu worship practices; we need to be aware of how our own worldview might influence the way in which we interact with and understand this information</i></p>

Progression of Ways of Knowing:

A key **method** used by human/social scientists is analysis of quantitative and qualitative information. This is used to understand more about how people live.

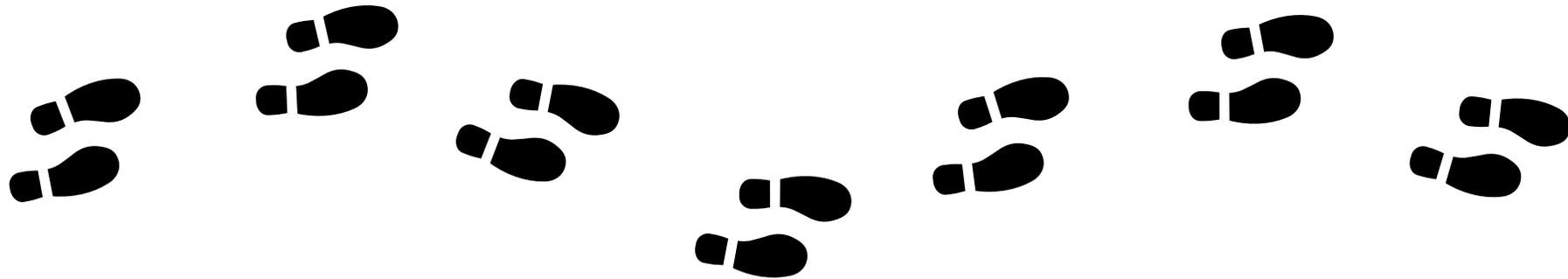
Getting better at human/social scientific ways of knowing means that pupils are increasingly confident in generating and asking these kinds of methodological questions, particularly of previously unseen material

There are questions we can ask when looking at objects, places, photographs, videos, surveys, case studies, etc., that help us understand how people live.

There are questions we can ask that help us understand how context, including time, place, culture, gender, etc., affects the way in which people live

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the importance of considering the origin of sources of information about how people live

There are questions we can ask that help us understand how our own worldviews might shape the way we interpret information about how people live



Asking these data analysis questions can help us better understand someone's worldview, including our own.

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What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?	What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?	What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?	What methodological questions might this generate in the classroom?
<p><i>What is this?</i> <i>How is this used?</i> <i>Who uses this?</i> <i>Where might I find this?</i> <i>When is this used?</i> <i>What is happening here?</i> <i>When is this? How do I know?</i></p>	<p><i>Who does this? How do they do it? Why do they do it like this? Is this done the same way today as it was in the past? Is it done the same way in one place as in another? Is this done the same way by one person as another? What does this tell me about how context affects this activity?</i> <i>Who uses this thing? Do different people use this same thing? How is this thing used? Does everyone use this thing in the same way? If not, why not?</i> <i>Is this thing used the same way today as it was in the past? Is this thing used the same way in one place as in another? Is this thing used the same way by one person as another? What does this tell me about how context affects this thing?</i> <i>What happens here? Would it happen the same or differently somewhere else? Why?</i></p>	<p><i>Where is this information from? Does this matter? How might this make a difference to the way I understand it?</i> <i>How else can we find out about this?</i></p>	<p><i>How might someone's worldview affect the way in which they analyse this information?</i> <i>How might my worldview affect the way in which I analyse this information?</i></p>

'Getting Better' at Data Analysis: Hindu Worship and Devotion

There are questions we can ask when looking at objects, places, photographs, videos, surveys, case studies, etc., that help us understand how people live.

*For example:
What is a puja tray? How is it used by Hindus worshipping at home? How is it used by Hindus worshipping at the mandir? Is this similar or different? Why?
What are people doing in this photograph? What does this tell me about their worldview?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand how context, including time, place, culture, gender, etc., affects the way in which people live

*For example:
What does this survey tell me about how Hindus in the UK celebrate Diwali? Do they all celebrate it in the same way? If not, why not?
What might this video tell me about how Diwali celebrations in Leicester are similar or different to Diwali celebrations in Mumbai? Why might this be?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the importance of considering the origin of sources of information about how people live

*For example:
Who produced this video about pilgrimage to the River Ganges? Why might this make a difference to how I understand the importance of pilgrimage for Hindus?
What other information might be useful in helping me understand the importance and impact of Hindu pilgrimage?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand how our own worldviews might shape the way we interpret information about how people live

*For example:
How do my own views on religion and spirituality influence the way in which I am analysing this case study about Hindu bhakti?
How might my understanding of the word 'god' influence the way in which I am interpreting this diary account about the importance of murtis in Hindu devotional practices?*

Ways of Knowing: Human/Social Sciences

It is important to consider how the planned and enacted curriculum enables pupils to 'get better' at understanding the field of enquiry and its associated methods



There is information that can tell us how people live, which helps us better understand their worldview, including objects, places, photographs, videos, surveys, case studies, etc.

There are questions we can ask when looking at objects, places, photographs, videos, surveys, case studies, etc., that help us understand how people live.



The way in which people live is affected by context, including time, place, culture, gender, etc.; knowing about this can help us better understand their worldview

There are questions we can ask that help us understand how context, including time, place, culture, gender, etc., affects the way in which people live



When we are trying to understand a worldview, it is important to consider the origin of sources of information about how people live

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**...religions are not
separate from our
embodiment and social life.**

Paul Hedges

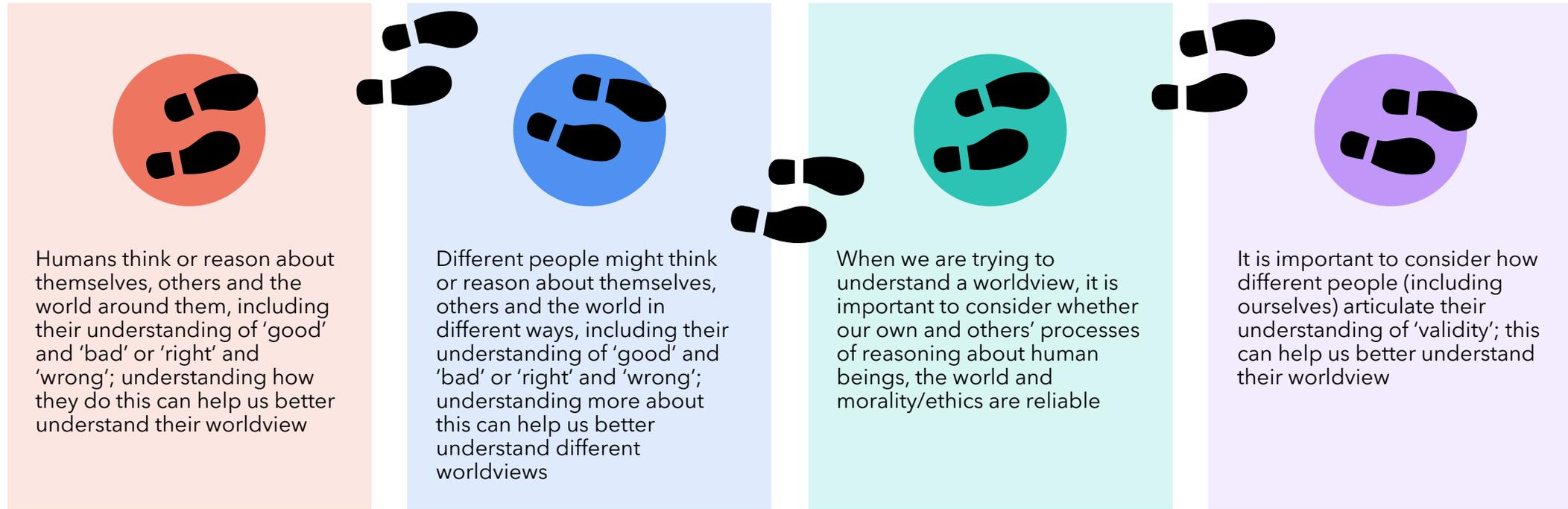


Philosophy

Engaging with Ways of Thinking

Progression of Ways of Knowing in RE:

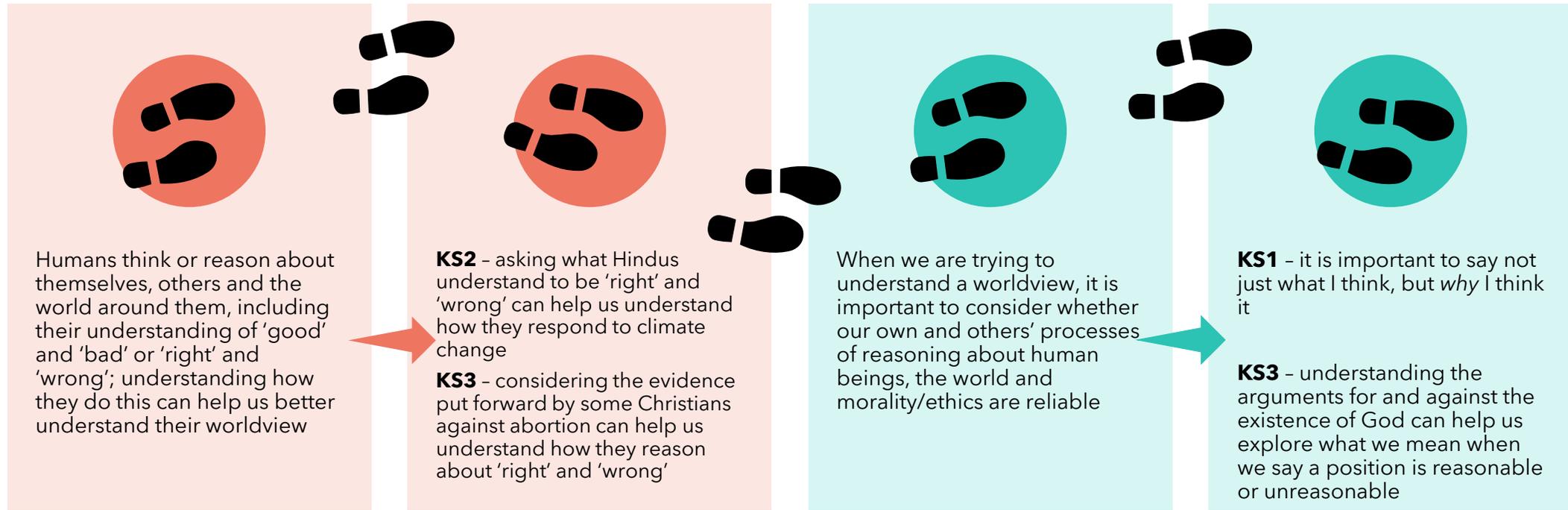
As a **field of enquiry**, Philosophy is interested in how people think/reason about themselves and the world around them



As pupils engage with learning in RE, they will be supported to have increasingly complex understanding and use philosophical methods in increasingly complex ways so that they are ready for the next stage of learning. This will involve undertaking more sophisticated enquiries, asking more sophisticated questions and utilising methods in more sophisticated ways. This will look different for each pupil and isn't linked to their age, phase or key stage.

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This shows some of the ways in which the 'steps' on the journey of progression might look different for different age groups.

‘Getting better’ at Understanding the Field of Enquiry: Non-Religious Thinking about the Origin(s) of the Universe

Humans think or reason about themselves, others and the world around them, including their understanding of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ or ‘right’ and ‘wrong’; understanding how they do this can help us better understand their worldview

Humanists think that the answer to the question, ‘why is there something rather than nothing?’ is rooted in the material world; this is because they reason that all natural things must have natural origins

Different people might think or reason about themselves, others and the world in different ways, including their understanding of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ or ‘right’ and ‘wrong’; understanding more about this can help us better understand different worldviews

Some non-religious people may reason that the universe must have natural origins and others may reason that it is not possible to entirely rule out a supernatural origin

When we are trying to understand a worldview, it is important to consider whether our own and others’ processes of reasoning about human beings, the world and morality/ethics are reliable

Most non-religious people ground their reasoning about the origin(s) of the universe in the premise that only that which is part of the material world has reality; they would challenge the reasoning of people who claim that there is a supernatural reality connected to the origin of the universe

It is important to consider how different people (including ourselves) articulate their understanding of ‘validity’; this can help us better understand their worldview

It is important to problematise the idea that only one form of thinking about the origin(s) of the universe is ‘correct’; we might also consider whether non-religious and religious claims about the supernatural are valid, exploring how different people define ‘validity’

Progression of Ways of Knowing:

A key **method** used by philosophers is critical thinking. This is used to understand more about how people think/reason.

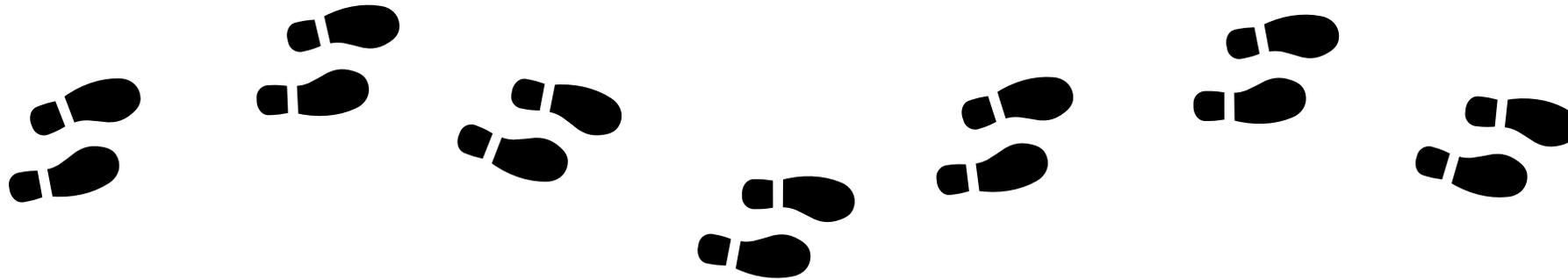
Getting better at philosophical ways of knowing means that pupils are increasingly confident in generating and asking these kinds of methodological questions, particularly of previously unseen material

There are questions we can ask that help us understand more about how humans think or reason about themselves, others and the world around them, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the different ways in which people might think or reason about themselves, others and the world in different ways, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'

There are questions we can ask that help us understand whether our own and others' processes of reasoning about human beings, the world and morality/ethics are reliable

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the importance of considering how different people (including ourselves) articulate their understanding of 'validity'



Asking these critical thinking questions can help us better understand someone's worldview, including our own.

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<p>What might this look like as methodological questions asked in the classroom?</p>	<p>What might this look like as methodological questions asked in the classroom?</p>	<p>What might this look like as methodological questions asked in the classroom?</p>	<p>What might this look like as methodological questions asked in the classroom?</p>
<p><i>What questions do I have about this thing? What do I think about this? What questions could I ask about this? What are good questions to ask? What are bad questions to ask? How do we know? How might asking questions help us to know more and to think more deeply? How does this way of thinking about [x] tell us more about this person's understanding of 'right' and 'wrong'?</i></p>	<p><i>What questions do I have about this? What questions do others ask about this? Do we all have the same questions? Why do I think this? Do I think the same thing as others? (If not, why not?) How does this person think about what it means to live a 'good' life? Why do they think this? What does this tell us about what they understand 'good' (and 'bad') to be? How might my/someone's worldview impact on the way I/they think about this? Based on what we have learned about [x], how might this person justify that doing this is the right / wrong thing to do?</i></p>	<p><i>How do we know what we know? What evidence do we / I have? Can I give a reason why I think what I think? Is this/your argument/position coherent/reliable? Does this make sense? How do we know? Is this a well-structured argument?</i></p>	<p><i>Is this a valid argument/position? How do you know? What evidence is there to support this? What different types of evidence might there be? Are all types of evidence equally valid? Why/why not?</i></p>

'Getting Better' at Critical Thinking: Non-Religious Thinking about the Origin(s) of the Universe

There are questions we can ask that tell us more about how humans think or reason about themselves, others and the world around them, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'

*For example:
What are good questions to ask about non-religious ways of thinking about the origins of the universe?
How might non-religious ways of thinking about the origins of the universe influence an understanding of right and wrong?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the different ways in which people might think or reason about themselves, others and the world in different ways, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'

*For example:
How do non-religious people think about caring about natural world? How does this connect to their reasoning about the origins of the universe? How does this connect to their reasoning about right and wrong? Do all non-religious people reason about this in the same way? If not, why not?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand whether our own and others' processes of reasoning about human beings, the world and morality/ethics are reliable

*For example:
How do we know about how non-religious people think about the origins of the universe? Is this evidence reliable? How do we know?*

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the importance of considering how different people (including ourselves) articulate their understanding of 'validity'

*For example:
Are non-religious arguments about the origins of the universe reasonable? How do we know? What evidence is there in support of this position? Is there more than one type of evidence in support of this? How valid is this evidence? What do I mean by 'valid'?*

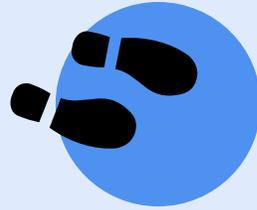
Ways of Knowing: Philosophy

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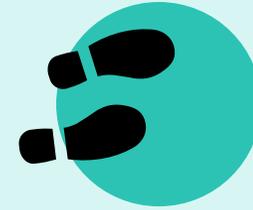
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There are questions we can ask that help us understand more about how humans think or reason about themselves, others and the world around them, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'



Different people might think or reason about themselves, others and the world in different ways, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'; understanding more about this can help us better understand different worldviews

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the different ways in which people might think or reason about themselves, others and the world in different ways, including their understanding of 'good' and 'bad' or 'right' and 'wrong'



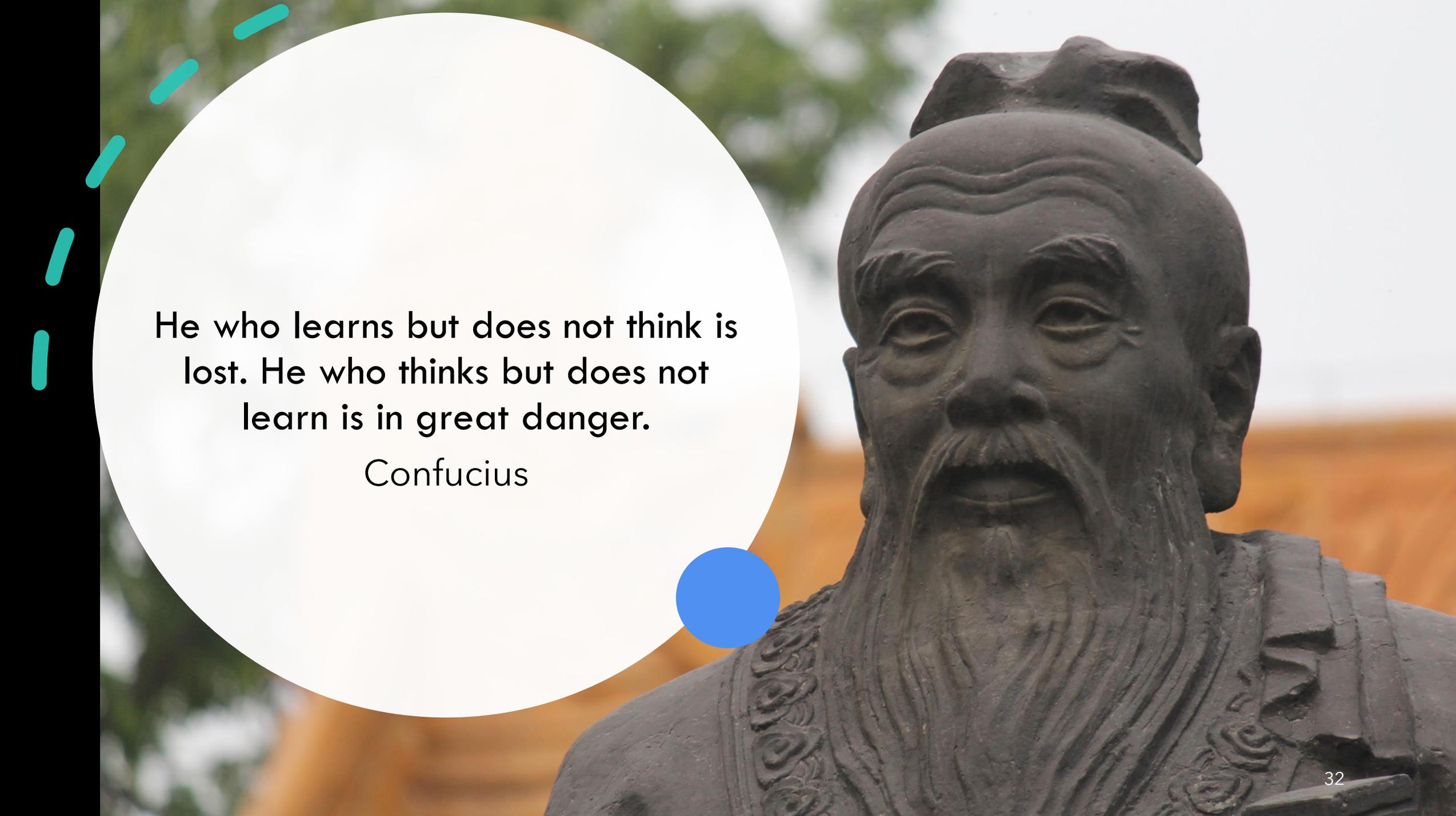
When we are trying to understand a worldview, it is important to consider whether our own and others' processes of reasoning about human beings, the world and morality/ethics are reliable

There are questions we can ask that help us understand whether our own and others' processes of reasoning about human beings, the world and morality/ethics are reliable



It is important to consider how different people (including ourselves) articulate their understanding of 'validity'; this can help us better understand their worldview

There are questions we can ask that help us understand the importance of considering how different people (including ourselves) articulate their understanding of 'validity'



He who learns but does not think is
lost. He who thinks but does not
learn is in great danger.

Confucius

‘Getting better’ in RE: The interplay between ways of knowing and subject content

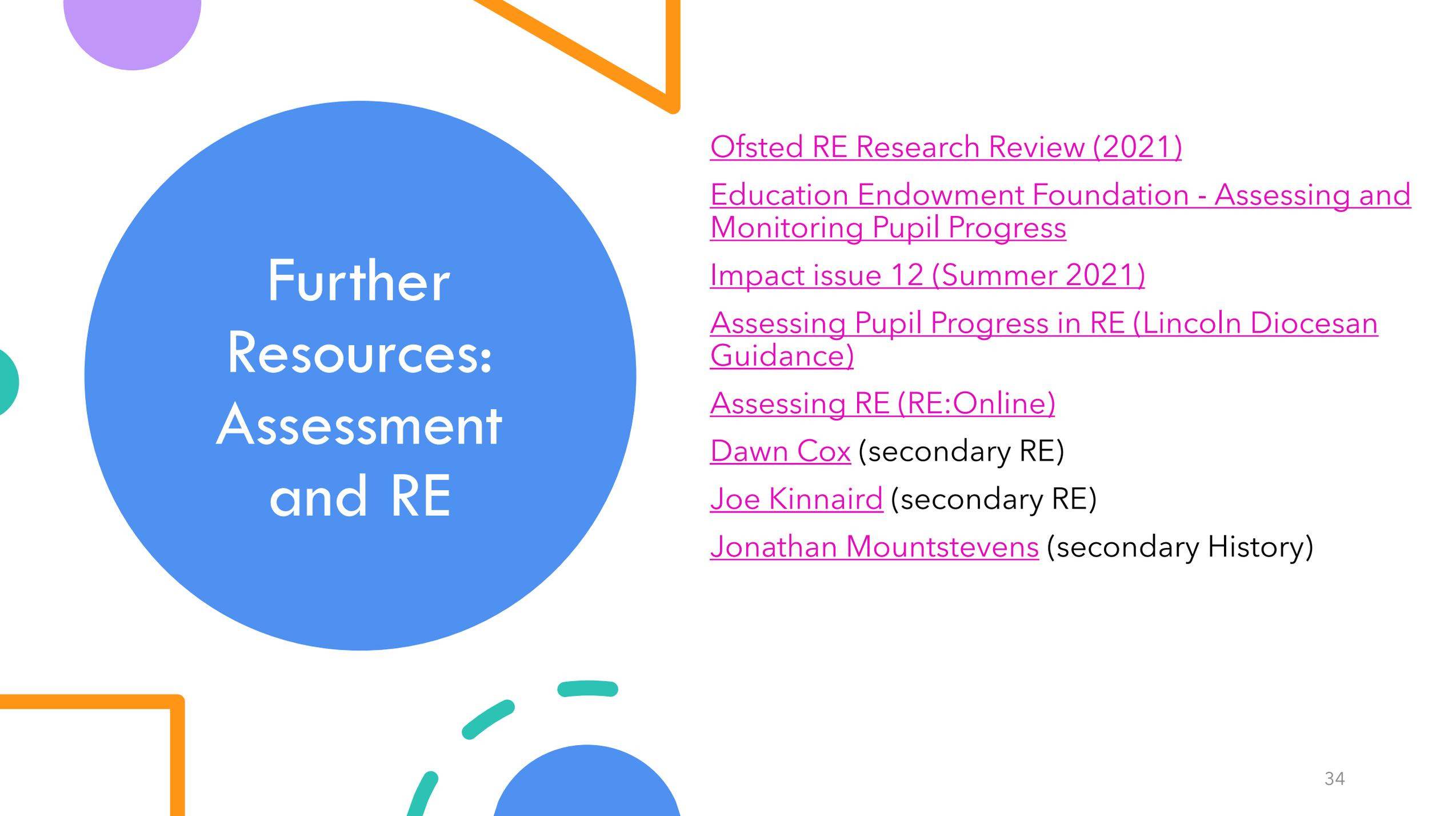
We cannot divorce the ways of knowing from the substantive knowledge that is being taught.

The RE curriculum should be designed to enable pupils to develop an increasing depth and breadth of substantive knowledge - those golden threads of content that run through the phases and key stages

It is important to ensure that any conversation about ‘getting better’ in RE recognises the interplay between ways of knowing and substantive knowledge and doesn’t treat them as entirely separate things

Further guidance on this will be available in due course





Further Resources: Assessment and RE

[Ofsted RE Research Review \(2021\)](#)

[Education Endowment Foundation - Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress](#)

[Impact issue 12 \(Summer 2021\)](#)

[Assessing Pupil Progress in RE \(Lincoln Diocesan Guidance\)](#)

[Assessing RE \(RE:Online\)](#)

[Dawn Cox](#) (secondary RE)

[Joe Kinnaird](#) (secondary RE)

[Jonathan Mountstevens](#) (secondary History)



Further
Resources:
Ways of
Knowing -
Theology

[The Visual Commentary on Scripture](#)
[Writing Like a Theologian](#) (Joe Kinnaird)
[Cambridge in Your Classroom](#)
[Teachers and Texts](#)
[Bible Gateway](#)
[The Qur'an](#)
[The Hadith](#)
[Tanakh](#)



Further
Resources:
Ways of
Knowing –
Human / Social
Sciences

[BBC World Service: Heart and Soul](#)

[A World Map of Religions](#)

[Teachers' Access to Census Data](#)

[Christianity in the UK](#)

[The World as 100 Christians](#)

[Global Christianity over the last century](#)

[Virtual Tours of Places of Worship](#)

[Inclusive Judaism Image Library](#)

[Bayt al Fann: Islamic Art and Culture](#)

[Everyday Muslim](#)



Further
Resources:
Ways of
Knowing -
Philosophy

[Philosophy in KS2](#) (John Semmens)

[Thunks](#)

[Cambridge in Your Classroom](#)

[The Philosophy Foundation](#)

[Philosophy4Children](#)

[Royal Institute of Philosophy YouTube Playlist](#)

[BBC Ideas](#)

[Open University 60-Second Adventures in Thought](#)



Glossary

Context: the circumstances (place, time, culture, gender, age, etc.) that form the setting for an event, interpretation, object, and so on, and can help us better understand it

Ethnography: the systematic study of peoples and cultures

Hermeneutics: interpretation of texts, especially sources of authority (*see below*)

Natural: existing in or deriving from physical matter

Sources of Authority: a text, person, tradition or object that provides guidance, wisdom or knowledge

Supernatural: a manifestation or event that cannot be attributed to the physical world

Valid: a position, argument or point that has its basis in evidence, fact and/or logic

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