

## Head Knowledge: Summary

(Segment from the [Tin Shed](#) essay)

While certainly much more nuanced than suggested here, Head Knowledge, something most of us are familiar with, is ultimately premised on material reductionism and the Cartesian dualism, and expressed in the scientific method.

This is the story of great men, of the “Godfather’s of Science,” starting with Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC), of René Descartes (1597-1659) and his Cartesian Dualism, of mind/body, of thought/material exclusive binaries, neither reducible to the other, a world of objectivity, and his method of deductive logical reasoning, of John Locke (1632-1704) and his inductive empiricism, this is the story of Galileo (1564-1642), following the lead of Pythagoras, placed emphasis on quantifiable variables and their relationships, a reality of discrete numerically-based chunks, i.e., statistics – “the language of nature is numbers,” of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) seeking to establish universal generalizations – “laws” to describe, explain, predict and ultimately control nature – the “laws of motion,” and this is the story of Francis Bacon (1561-1625) and his utilitarianism, that science holds the keys to unlocking the power over nature. Collectively these stories bring forth the scientific method, a story of dualism that separates us from nature so that we can understand it and ultimately control nature.

Head knowledge reflects a tangible world of discrete, quantifiable “objects” viewed as if behind a glass pane. It is a world differentiated by binary oppositions and hierarchies; a world devoid of spirit.

Thus head knowledge is often associated with rational and empirical modes of thought, all premised on certain ontological principles, such as the Cartesian mind/body dualism and objectification, material reductionism, quantification, gradation and secularization (Frey 1994: 95-104, 123-26, 162-68). Head Knowledge can be equated with scientific endeavors, operating within a positivistic and post-positivistic paradigm. When asked “what is real and knowable through the Head” Alan and Cliff would declare that it’s to be discovered outside Tin Shed, viewed from the wooden bench. Reality is ultimately “understood” as separate and apart from the viewer, as if on the other side of a great “glass pane,” and made up of desecrate, material “objects” interacting together with great regularity and order, devoid of any spiritual animation or significance, all of which are known and verified through deductive and inductive tests of logic, and empirical observation and experimentation that can be measured in terms of reliability and validity (Frey 1994:95-104). While traveling outside the Tin Shed, systematic analysis of variables, anticipatory predictions of cause and effect, and manipulations of the physical world can all be attempted and made. Outside the Tin Shed the essential social construct is that of the “autonomous individual,” the foundation for the articulation of political rights and freedoms, of economic consumption and production, of the diagnosis and treatment of illness, of educational assessment, of athletic achievement, of the pivotal component even within the family, of the stimulus for and attribution of technological and scientific discovery and innovation, as well as of spiritual salvation, of the Euro-American ideal of “rugged individualism.” And between these individuals a relationship of maximizing one’s gains and minimizing one’s loses prevails, in history often expressed as “capitalism.” The human species sits in a very privileged position, unique with its intelligence and volition, above all other

species, as the “caretaker” of its garden, “whose purpose is to benefit the caretaker” (Frey 1994:164). The rock formations along that bend in the Bighorn River were created by certain natural geological process, while a coyote myth was superimposed on them after the fact to help a people give meaning to and explain the formation.