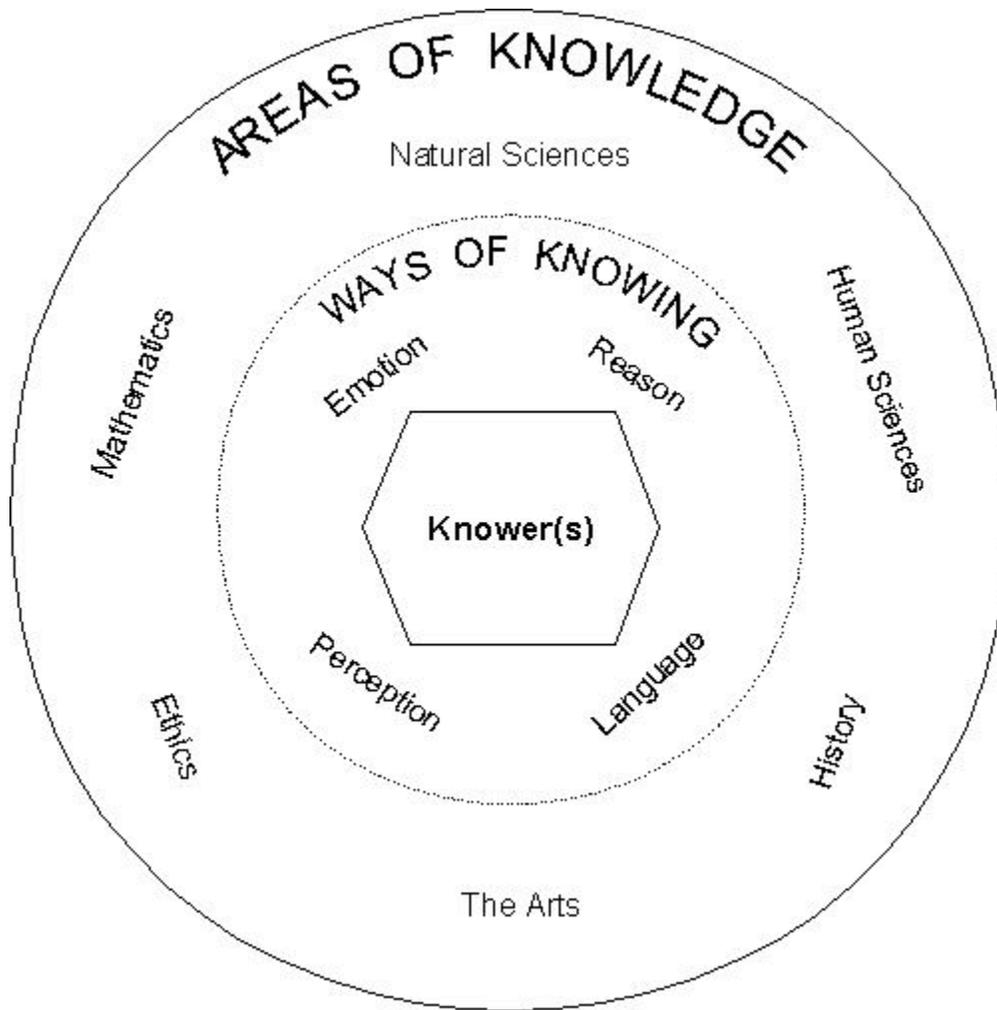


## I.B. Theory of Knowledge: The TOK Diagram



This diagram is only a *heuristic*.

### Heuristic

- *adj.* of or relating to or using a general formulation that serves to guide investigation. (Princeton Word Net)
- *n.* rules, suggestions, guides, or techniques that may be useful in making progress toward a solution of a problem. (<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/elemath/glossary.html>)

Webster's put it this way: "the art and science of discovery and invention." The word comes from the same Greek root (εὕρισκω) as "eureka," meaning "to find". A heuristic is a way of directing your attention fruitfully. (<http://dictionary.laborlawtalk.com/heuristic>)

We **must** realize that this diagram is only a tool – a heuristic tool – to help us conceptualize and think about knowledge. The I.B. TOK powers-that-be decided this was an appropriate way to dissect and understand knowledge and knowing. And so we will use this diagram to structure our course. Memorize it, think about it, and dwell on it because we will *constantly* refer to it.

Luckily, the I.B. – I think – did a pretty good job with it. But there are other ways... (flip over!)

# Alternatives to the diagram

There are a lot of ways we could feasibly put together a TOK diagram.

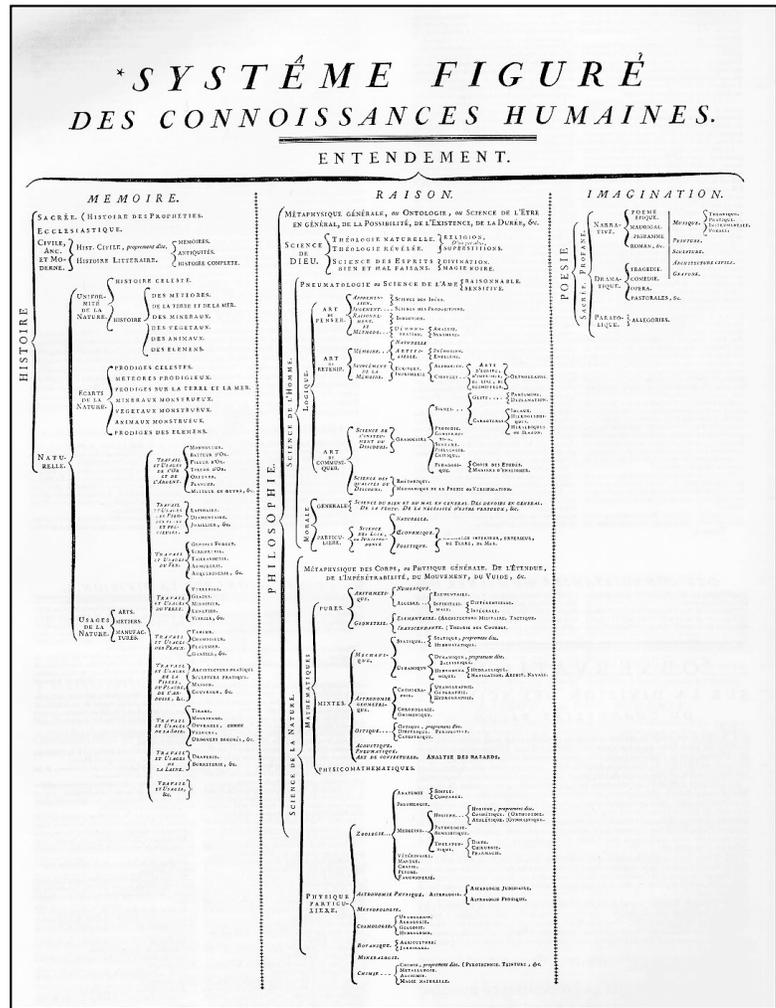
For example, Denis Diderot – as you may know from your study of European or World History – put together the first encyclopedia, the *Encyclopédie*.

To the right is a diagram of Diderot’s “Figurative System of Human Knowledge.”

The “parent” of all knowledge is “understanding” (*entendement*).

There are three “branches” of understanding: memory (*memoire*), reason (*raison*), and imagination. If Diderot designed I.B. TOK, these would be his ways of knowing.

Below the branches of understanding are three kinds of knowledge: under memory, history (*histoire*); under reason, philosophy (*philosophie*); under imagination, poetry or literature (*poesie*). Each of these is broken down into great detail. These would be Diderot’s “areas of knowledge”.



We could probably use Diderot’s diagram to teach TOK instead of the I.B. diagram, and we’d still have a really fruitful course. We would discuss slightly different things, but at the heart of our discussion would be the same problems. Still, it is important to realize that when we make knowledge, we use language (a way of knowing) to categorize things constantly. This may sometimes obscure truth as much as explain it.

You’ll also soon see that on most I.B. documents, Ways of Knowing and Areas of Knowledge are capitalized. This is because they understand very well what I just explained, so they make the terms proper nouns to remind you that they refer to an approach distinct to I.B. TOK.

As we proceed, we will start in the middle of the diagram with “knower(s)”. We will explore what it means to be a knower and how a knower can be. We then move on to the Ways of Knowing and finally on to the Areas of Knowledge. As we progress, we’ll break down each part of the diagram even further and explore the many, many *knowledge issues* that crop up in every possible place... and this is what we will do in I.B. TOK! Enjoy the ride.