

THE PROBLEM OF THE CRITERION



**Two
questions**

Two quite different questions of the theory of knowledge are “*What* do we know?” and “How are we to decide, in any particular case, *whether* we know?” The first of these may also be put by asking “What is the *extent* of our knowledge?” and the second, by asking “What are the *criteria* of knowing?”

If we know the answer to either one of these questions, then, perhaps, we may devise a procedure that will enable us to answer the other. If we can specify the criteria of knowledge, we may have a way of deciding how far our knowledge extends. Or if we know how far it does extend, and are able to say what the things are that we know, then we may be able to formulate criteria enabling us to mark off the things that we do know from those that we do not.

But if we do not have the answer to the first question, then, it would seem, we have no way of answering the second. And if we do not have the answer to the second, then, it would seem, we have no way of answering the first.

It is characteristic of “*empiricism*” (but not only of “*empiricism*”) to assume that we have an answer to the second of these two questions and then to attempt to answer the first on the basis of the answer to the second. *Experience*, in one or another of its various senses, is said to be the source of our knowledge; every valid claim to knowledge, it is supposed, will satisfy certain *empirical* criteria; and these criteria, it is then concluded, may be used to determine the extent of our knowledge. Empiricism thus begins paradoxically with a general premise. But if Hume is right, a consistent application of these criteria indicates that we know next to nothing about ourselves and about the physical objects around us.

Hence, it is characteristic of "commonsensism," as an alternative tradition in the theory of knowledge, to assume that we do know most, if not all, of those things that ordinary people think that they know. G. E. Moore has written: "There is no reason why we should not, in this respect, make our philosophical opinions agree with what we necessarily believe at other times. There is no reason why I should not confidently assert that I do really *know* some external facts, although I cannot prove the assertion except by simply assuming that I do. I am, in fact, as certain of this as of anything; and as reasonably certain of it." ¹ If we take this point of view, then we can say, with Thomas Reid, that if empiricism has the consequence that we do not know any of these "external facts," then empiricism, *ipso facto*, is false.

A third point of view, with respect to our pair of questions, is that of "scepticism" or "agnosticism." The sceptic or agnostic does *not* assume at the outset that he has an answer to the first question or that he has an answer to the second. Thus, he is able to conclude: "We do not know what, if anything, we know, and we have no way of deciding, in any particular case, whether or not we know."

Many philosophers, perhaps unwittingly, have taken all three points of view. Thus, a single philosopher may attempt to set out in three different directions at once. First, he will employ what he takes to be his knowledge of external physical things in order to test the adequacy of various possible criteria of knowing; in this case, he begins with a claim to know and not with a criterion. Second, he will employ what he takes to be an adequate criterion of knowing in order to decide whether he knows anything about "other minds"; in this case, he begins with a criterion and not with a claim to know. And third, he will approach the field of ethics without either type of preconception; he will not begin with a criterion and he will not begin with a claim to know. Therefore, he will not arrive at any criterion or at any claim to know.

**Sources" of
knowledge**

One approach to the question "How are we to decide, in any particular case, *whether* we know?" is to refer to the "sources" of our knowledge and to say that an ostensible item of knowledge is genuine if, and only if, it is the product of a properly accredited source. Thus, it is traditional in Western philosophy to say that there are four such sources:

1. "external perception"
2. memory
3. "self-awareness" ("reflection," or "inner consciousness")
4. reason

¹ *Philosophical Studies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1922), p. 163.

("Self-awareness" pertains to what we have been calling the directly evident; and "reason" is said to be that by means of which we have our a priori knowledge of necessity.)

Descartes wrote, for example, that "in the matter of the cognition of facts two things alone have to be considered, ourselves who know and the objects themselves which are to be known. Within us there are four faculties only which we can use for this purpose, viz., understanding, imagination, sense, and memory. . . ." ² And Thomas Reid said, even more clearly: "Thus the faculties of consciousness, of memory, of external sense, and of reason are all equally the gifts of nature. No good reason can be assigned for receiving the testimony of one of them, which is not of equal force with regard to the others." ³

The principles of evidence that we have tried to formulate may be looked upon as an acknowledgment of the first three, at least, of these traditional sources. The sentence "I think I perceive that thing to be so and so" expresses the content of self-awareness. But we stated conditions under which thinking that one perceives something to be so and so may be said to confer evidence or reasonableness upon the proposition that something *is* so and so; in so doing, we acknowledged *perception* as a source of knowing. "I think I remember having perceived that thing to be so and so" also expresses the content of self-awareness. But we stated conditions under which thinking that one remembers having perceived something to be so and so might be said to confer reasonableness or acceptability upon the proposition that something *was* so and so; in so doing, we acknowledged *memory* as a source of knowing. And we have said that the content of *self-awareness* is directly evident.

But the appeal to such "sources" leaves us with a kind of puzzlement. If the question "How are we to decide, in any particular case, whether we know?" is seriously intended, then the reply "An ostensible item of knowledge is genuine if, and only if, it is the product of a properly accredited source of knowledge" is not likely to be sufficient. For such a reply naturally leads to further questions: "How are we to decide whether an ostensible source of knowledge *is* properly accredited?" and "How are we to decide just *what* it is that is yielded by a properly accredited source of knowledge?"

Let us now consider how this general "problem of the criterion" arises in particular cases.

² "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, I, ed. E. S. Haldane and G. R. Ross (London: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 35.

³ *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, Essay VI, Chap. 4, in *The Works of Thomas Reid*, 4th ed., ed. Sir William Hamilton (London: Longmans, Green & Company, Ltd., 1854), p. 439.

**“Knowledge
of right and
wrong” as
one example**

At the risk of some slight oversimplification, let us begin with one of the controversial questions of moral philosophy. Do we know any distinctively *moral*, or *ethical*, facts? Or what is the status of the claim to such knowledge? The controversies that such questions involve present us with a pattern that recurs with respect to every disputed area of knowledge.

“Mercy as such is good” and “Ingratitude as such is bad” are examples of distinctively moral, or ethical, sentences. It has been held that these sentences express something that we can know to be true; it has also been held that they do not. The controversy that concerns us here arises only after the following point has been agreed upon—namely, that if we start from the kind of empirical fact that we have been considering up to now, we cannot construct either a good deductive argument or a good inductive argument to support such statements as “Mercy as such is good” and “Ingratitude as such is bad.” Proceeding from this fact, let us contrast the positions of the moral “intuitionist” (or “dogmatist”) and the moral “sceptic” (or “agnostic”).

The “intuitionist” will reason in essentially the following way:

- (P) We have knowledge of certain ethical facts.
- (Q) Experience and reason do not yield such knowledge.
- ▶ (R) There is an additional source of knowledge.

The “sceptic,” finding no such additional source of knowledge, reasons with equal cogency in the following way:

- (Not-R) There is no source of knowledge other than experience and reason.
- (Q) Experience and reason do not yield any knowledge of ethical facts.
- ▶ (Not-P) We do not have knowledge of any ethical facts.

The intuitionist and the sceptic agree with respect to the second premise, which states that reason and experience do not yield any knowledge of ethical facts. The intuitionist, however, takes as his first premise the contradictory of the sceptic’s conclusion; and the sceptic takes as *his* first premise the contradictory of the intuitionist’s conclusion. We could say, therefore, that the sceptic begins with a philosophical generalization (“There is no source of knowledge other than experience and reason”) and concludes by denying, with respect to a certain type of fact, or alleged fact, that we have knowledge of that type of fact. The intuitionist, on the other hand, begins by saying that we do have knowledge of the type of fact in question and he concludes by denying the sceptic’s philosophical generalization. How is one to choose between the two approaches?

The logic of the two arguments reminds us that there is still another possibility. For if P and Q imply R, then not only do Not-R and Q imply Not-P, but also Not-R and P imply Not-Q. Hence, one could also argue in this way:

- (Not-R) There is no source of knowledge other than experience and reason.
- (P) We have knowledge of certain ethical facts.
- ▶ (Not-Q) Experience and reason yield knowledge of ethical facts.

The first premise of this new argument is rejected by the intuitionist and accepted by the sceptic; the second premise is rejected by the sceptic and accepted by the intuitionist; and the conclusion is rejected by both the intuitionist and the sceptic.

With this third type of argument, one might be said to reject the *faculty* that is claimed by the intuitionist and yet to accept the intuitionist's claim to *knowledge*; in so doing, one is led to reject the *assessment* of experience and reason common to the intuitionist and the sceptic. This is the only possible procedure for one who believes that we do have knowledge of ethical facts and that we do not have a special faculty of moral intuition.

But any such procedure leaves us with a Kantian question: In view of the nature of experience and reason, *how* is such ethical knowledge possible? If we cannot derive the propositions of ethics by applying deduction or induction to the kinds of empirical propositions that we have considered up to now, what is the sense in which experience and reason may yet be said to "yield" our ethical knowledge? There are, I believe, only two possible answers.

One of these may be called "reductive." If we approach the problem "reductively," we attempt to show that the sentences purporting to express our ethical knowledge ("Mercy as such is good" and "Ingratitude as such is bad") can be *translated* or paraphrased into empirical sentences that more obviously express the deliverances of experience. Perhaps we will say that "Mercy as such is good" really means the same as "I approve of mercy," or "Most of the people in our culture circle approve of mercy" or "Merciful actions tend to make people happy." But these attempted reductions are entirely implausible; the sentences expressing our ostensible ethical knowledge *seem* at least to express considerably more than is expressed by any of their ostensible empirical translations.

The other type of answer might be called "critical cognitivism." If we take this approach, we will not say that there are empirical sentences that might serve as translations of the sentences expressing our ethical knowledge; but we will say that there are empirical truths which

enable us to know certain truths of ethics. Or to use our earlier expression, we will say that the truths of ethics are "known through" certain facts of experience. The latter will then be said to be *signs*, or *criteria*, of the ethical truths. The evil of ingratitude, for example, does not lie in the fact that I happen to detest it; but the fact that I happen to detest it, or at least the fact that I happen to detest it under certain conditions that can be identified, serves to make known to me the fact that ingratitude is something that is evil. My own feeling is a *sign* of the evil nature of ingratitude, and so it could be said to *confer evidence upon* the statement that ingratitude is evil. This point of view is typical of "value-theory" in the Austrian tradition, where our feeling for what is valuable, *das Wertgeföhle*, is said to be something we know by means of our "inner consciousness," as well as that which makes known to us what is valuable and what is not.

"Critical cognitivism" will hardly be acceptable to the intuitionist or the sceptic, but there are two points to be made in its favor, the first being that it is a consequence of premises, each of which, when taken separately, seems to be acceptable, if not reasonable. For the critical cognitivist may well say: "We do know that mercy is good and that ingratitude is bad. The sentences in which such truths are expressed are not inductive or deductive consequences of sentences expressing our perceptions, our memories of our perceptions, or our own psychological states; nor can they be translated or paraphrased into such sentences. Yet we have no moral intuitions; experience and reason are our only sources of knowledge. Hence, there must be some empirical truths which serve to make known the facts of ethics. And these truths can only be those that pertain to our feelings for what is good and what is evil."

There is a second point that the "critical cognitivist" may make. He may remind us that the analogue of his critical cognitivism is the most reasonable approach to another, less controversial, area of knowledge. He will be referring to our knowledge of external, physical things—for example, to our knowledge, on a particular occasion, that a cat is on the roof.

**"Knowledge
of external
things" as
another
example**

We have seen that from directly evident premises—premises expressing our "self-awareness"—neither induction nor deduction will yield the conclusion "A cat is on the roof." There are at least four different ways in which we might react to this fact. (1) The "intuitionist" will conclude that we have still another source of knowledge, namely, that we know external things not through our "self-presenting states," but by means of some other type of experience. But no such experience is to be found. (2) The "sceptic" will infer that

we cannot know, on any occasion, that a cat is on the roof. But we know that he is mistaken. (3) The "reductionist" will infer that "A cat is on the roof" can be translated or paraphrased into sentences expressing one's self-awareness—more particularly, into sentences about the ways in which one is appeared to. To see the implausibility of the reductivist point of view, we have only to ask ourselves *what* appearance sentences—what sentences of the form "I am appeared to in such and such a way"—could possibly express what it is that we know when we know that a cat is on the roof.⁴ (4) And the "critical cognitivist" will take the course we tried to sketch in the preceding chapter. He will say that there are principles of evidence, other than the principles of induction and deduction, which will tell us, for example, under what conditions the state we have called "thinking that one perceives" will *confer evidence*, or *confer reasonableness*, upon propositions about external things; and they will tell us under what conditions that state we have called "thinking that one remembers" will *confer reasonableness*, or *confer acceptability*, upon propositions about the past.⁵

"Other minds" Another version of the problem of the criterion concerns our knowledge of "other minds." Each of us knows various things about the thoughts, feelings, and purposes of other people; we may be able to say, for example, "I know that Jones is thinking about a horse" or "I know that he is feeling somewhat depressed." Perhaps we will justify our claims to such knowledge by reference, in part, to our perception of certain physical facts which we take to manifest or express the thoughts and feelings in question ("I can see it in his eyes and in the way in which he clenches his teeth, and I can hear it in the sound

⁴ The principal difficulty standing in the way of "phenomenalism" (the technical term for this type of reductionism) may be traced to perceptual relativity—to the fact that the ways in which a thing will appear depend not only upon the properties of the thing, but also upon the conditions under which it is perceived and upon the state of the perceiver. Since it is the joint operation of the things we perceive with the conditions under which we perceive them that determines the ways in which things will appear, we cannot correlate any group of appearances with any particular physical fact (say, a cat being on the roof) unless we refer to some *other* physical fact—the state of the medium and of the perceiver. Trying to define the particular physical fact by reference to appearances alone is not unlike trying to define "uncle" in terms of "descendent" alone and without the use of "male" or "female." For further details, see C. I. Lewis, "Professor Chisholm and Empiricism," *Journal of Philosophy*, XLV (1948), 517-24; Roderick Firth, "Radical Empiricism and Perceptual Relativity," *Philosophical Review*, LIX (1950), 164-83, 319-31; and Roderick M. Chisholm, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 189-97. The three articles cited are reprinted in *Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing*, ed. Robert J. Swartz (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965).

⁵ See principles B, C, D, and E, concerning "reasonableness," in the preceding chapter.

of his voice"); or we may even justify them by reference to our own feeling of *Verstehen*, or "intuitive understanding" ("... we know a creature's angry by the way we have felt when we have acted rather as he is acting.")⁶ The philosopher may then ask: What justification is there for believing that if a man looks and acts in such and such a way or if he leaves me with such and such a feeling then he is either thinking about a horse or he is feeling somewhat depressed?

It is common to suppose that such knowledge is yielded by the traditional "sources" listed above. We know about the thoughts and feelings of other people, it is supposed, in virtue of the knowledge that is yielded by (1) our perception of external things, and in particular, our perception of our own bodies and of the bodies of other people, (2) our immediate awareness of our own thoughts and feelings, (3) our memories of things we come to know by means of such perceptions and states of awareness, and (4) the application of "reason" to the things that we know in these various ways. But how, precisely, can this material be made to yield any knowledge of the thoughts and feelings of other people?

One may be tempted to answer this question by appealing to an enumerative induction. "More often than not, when a man makes a gesture of such and such a sort, he is feeling depressed; this man is now making a gesture of that sort; therefore, in all probability, he is depressed." Or, "More often than not, when Jones rides by those fields he is reminded of the horse that he once owned; he is riding by them now and has a look of fond recollection in his eye; therefore, in all probability, he is thinking about his horse again." But this type of answer obviously does not solve our philosophical problem. For the instances to which we appeal when we make our induction ("He made this gesture yesterday when he was depressed" or "The last time he was here he thought about a horse") presuppose the general type of knowledge-claim we are now trying to justify ("What is your justification for thinking you know that he *was* depressed yesterday?" or "What is your justification for thinking you know that he *was* thinking about a horse that day?")

If we are not to presuppose the type of knowledge-claim that we are trying to justify, then our argument must be an instance of "hypothetical induction." The "hypothesis" that Jones is now depressed, or that he is thinking about a horse, will be put forward as the most likely explanation of certain other things we know—presumably, certain facts about Jones's present behavior and demeanor. But in order to construct an inductive argument in which the hypothesis that Jones is depressed,

⁶ The second quotation is from John Wisdom, *Other Minds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), p. 194.

or that he is thinking about a horse, is thus to be confirmed, we must have access to a premise telling us what some of the consequences of Jones's depression, or some of the consequences of his thinking about a horse, are likely to be. And how are we to justify *this* premise if we are not entitled to make use of any information about Jones's depression or thoughts?

The only possible way of finding the premise that our hypothetical induction thus requires is to appeal to still another induction—this time an argument from analogy. (Those who argue that there is life on Venus appeal to the “positive analogy” between Venus and the earth—the properties the two planets have in common. Those who argue that there is no life on Venus appeal to the “negative analogy”—the respects in which the two planets differ.) Thus, we might argue: “Jones and I have such and such physical characteristics in common; usually, as a result of being depressed, I will speak in such and such a tone of voice; therefore, in all probability, if Jones is depressed he will also speak in that tone of voice; he *is* speaking in that tone of voice.” Or we might argue: “Jones and I have such and such physical characteristics in common; most of the time, when I think about a horse, I will say ‘Yes’ if stimulated by the words ‘Are you thinking about a horse?’ therefore, in all probability, Jones’s thinking about a horse would predispose *him* to say ‘Yes’ if he were stimulated by the words ‘Are you thinking about a horse?’ and Jones, having been stimulated by those words, *does* say ‘Yes.’” We are supposing that the first premise in each of these arguments appeals to a certain positive analogy obtaining between Jones and me. But we must not forget that whoever Jones may be, there is also an impressive negative analogy—difference in background, environment, heredity, physique, and general physiology—and that one could go on *ad indefinitum* enumerating such differences. If we are not entitled to begin with premises referring to Jones’s states of mind, it will be very difficult indeed to assess the relative importance of the various points of analogy and disanalogy. Any such analogical argument, therefore, is certain to be weak. But we are supposing it is only by means of such an analogical argument that we can justify one of the premises of the hypothetical induction we now proceed to make (the premise stating “If Jones is depressed, he will speak in such and such a tone of voice” or “If Jones is thinking about a horse he will say ‘Yes’ if stimulated by ‘Are you thinking about a horse?’”). Our hypothetical induction, in turn, will yield “Jones is depressed now” or “Jones is thinking about a horse” as being the most likely diagnosis of Jones’s present behavior and demeanor.

However, if this procedure is the best that we have, then there is

very little, if anything, that we can be said to *know* about the states of mind of other people.

And this fact leads us, once again, to the characteristic argument of the "intuitionist." Perception, memory, and "self-awareness," he will tell us, do not suffice to justify what it is that we claim to know about the states of mind of other people, for no deductive or inductive argument based upon the data of perception, memory, and "self-awareness" will warrant any claim to such knowledge; hence, there must be another source—possibly the *Verstehen*, or "intuitive understanding," of German philosophy and psychology.⁷ The intuitionist's point would not be merely that in *Verstehen*, or intuitive understanding, we have a fruitful source of hypotheses about the mental states of other people (presumably there is no one who doubts the practical utility of this faculty); the intuitionist's point would pertain to justification. Thus, he might hold, for example, that the fact that a statement expresses one's *Verstehen* will confer reasonableness upon that statement.

The "intuitionist," then, will reason as he did in moral philosophy:

- (Q) We have knowledge of the states of mind of other people (for example, I know that Jones is thinking about a horse).
- (R) Such knowledge is not yielded by perception, memory, or "self-awareness."
- (P) Therefore, there is still another source of knowledge.

The three statements constituting this argument also yield the "sceptical" argument of the philosophical behaviorist:

- (Not-R) There is no source of knowledge other than perception, memory, and "self-awareness."
- (Q) Knowledge of the states of mind of other people is not yielded by perception, memory, or "self-awareness."
- ▶ (Not-P) We do not have knowledge of the states of mind of other people.⁸

⁷ The emphasis upon *Verstehen* as a source of knowledge may be traced to Wilhelm Dilthey's *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* (Leipzig: Tuebner, 1883), and to the writings of Max Scheler; see Alfred Schuetz, "Scheler's Theory of Intersubjectivity," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, II (1942), 323-41.

⁸ Cf. J. B. Watson, *The Ways of Behaviorism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1928), pp. 3, 7: "The behaviorist has nothing to say of 'consciousness.' How can he? Behaviorism is a natural science. He has neither seen, smelled, nor tasted consciousness nor found it taking part in any human reactions. How can he talk about it until he finds it in his path. . . . Behaviorism's challenge to introspective psychology was: 'You say there is such a thing as consciousness, that consciousness goes on in you—then prove it. You say that you have sensations, perceptions, and images—then demonstrate them as other sciences demonstrate their facts.'" The consistent behaviorist, of course, would also attempt to avoid the facts of "self-awareness."

As in the dispute about moral philosophy, the intuitionist and the sceptic agree with respect to the second premise; the intuitionist takes as his first premise the contradictory of the sceptic's conclusion; and the sceptic takes as *his* first premise the contradictory of the intuitionist's conclusion. There is one more possibility:

- (Not-R) There is no source of knowledge other than perception, memory, and "self-awareness."
- (P) We have knowledge of the states of mind of other people (for example, I know that Jones is thinking about a horse).
- ▶ (Not-Q) Perception, memory, and "self-awareness" yield this knowledge.

Once again, we are presented with the question "How do perception, memory, and inner consciousness yield this knowledge?" and as before, we may choose between two answers.

The "reductivist" will tell us that sentences ostensibly concerning the thoughts and feelings of other people ("Jones is thinking about a horse") can be translated or paraphrased into sentences about the bodies of these people. But "reductivism" is no more plausible here than it was in the other cases. To see that this is so, we have only to ask ourselves: *What* sentences about Jones's body could possibly express what it is that we know when we know that Jones is thinking about a horse?

And the "critical cognitivist" will tell us that there are things we can know about a man's body and his behavior that will confer evidence, or reasonableness, upon propositions about these thoughts and feelings; he may add, in deference to *Verstehen*, that certain mental states of our own, which come into being when we are in the presence of others, confer reasonableness, or acceptability, upon propositions about the thoughts and feelings of others.

According to Thomas Reid's version of critical cognitivism, "certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind." Reid's view is, in part, a view about the genesis of our knowledge (he refers, for example, to the way in which children acquire their beliefs). But it is also a theory of evidence—an account of what it is that confers evidence upon statements about other minds—and as such, it is worth quoting in detail:

"When we see the sign, and see the thing signified always conjoined with it, experience may be the instructor, and teach us how that sign is to be interpreted. But how shall experience instruct us when we see the sign only, when the thing signified is invisible? Now, this is the case here: the thoughts and passions of the mind, as well as the mind

itself, are invisible, and therefore their connection with any sensible sign cannot be first discovered by experience; there must be some earlier source of this knowledge. Nature seems to have given to men a faculty or sense, by which this connection is perceived. And the operation of this sense is very analogous to that of the external senses.

"When I grasp an ivory ball in my hand, I feel a certain sensation of touch. In the sensation there is nothing external, nothing corporeal. The sensation is neither round nor hard; it is an act of feeling of mind, from which I cannot by reasoning, infer the existence of any body. But, by the constitution of my nature, the sensation carries along with it the conception and belief of a round hard body really existing in my hand. In like manner, when I see the features of an expressive face, I see only figure and colour variously modified. But by the constitution of my nature, the visible object brings along with it the conception and belief of a certain passion or sentiment in the mind of the person.

"In the former case, a sensation of touch is the sign, and the hardness and roundness of the body I grasp is signified by that sensation. In the latter case, the features of the person is the sign, and the passion or sentiment is signified by it."⁹

**A final
example**

Knowledge, or ostensible knowledge, of God and of what some take to be theological truths, provides us with a final illustration of the problem of the criterion. Perhaps we are now in a position to understand the type of impasse to which the various possible points of view give rise; therefore, perhaps we can express these points of view much more simply than any of their proponents can.

The "dogmatist" or "intuitionist" will argue that (P) we do have knowledge of the existence of God and of other theological facts; but (Q) this knowledge is not yielded, or significantly confirmed by, anything that is yielded by reason or experience; hence, (R) there is a source of knowledge in addition to reason and experience. Thus, Hugh of St. Victor held, in the twelfth century, that in addition to the *oculis carnis*, by means of which we know the physical world, and the *oculis rationis*, by means of which we know our own states of mind, there is also an *oculis contemplationis*, by means of which we know the truth of religion.¹⁰

Finding no such contemplative eye, the "agnostic"—the religious

⁹ *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Essay VI, Chap. 5, in *The Works of Thomas Reid*, pp. 449-50. Of the types of "sign" distinguished in the first two sentences of this passage, the stoics called the first "commemorative" and the second "indicative"; Sextus Empiricus, as a sceptic, held that there are no "indicative signs." See Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, Book II, Chap. 3, in Vol. II of *Sextus Empiricus*, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), pp. 313-97.

¹⁰ See Maurice De Wulf, *History of Mediaeval Philosophy*, I (London: Longmans, Green & Company, Ltd., 1935), 214.

sceptic—argues that (Not-R) reason and experience are the only sources of knowledge; (Q) reason and experience do not supply any information, or significantly confirm any hypothesis, about the existence of God or about any other theological facts; hence, (Not-P) we have no knowledge about God.

And the third possibility is to argue that (Not-R) there is no source of knowledge other than experience and reason; (P) we have knowledge of the existence of God and of certain other theological facts; hence; (Not-Q) experience and reason do supply us with information about the existence of God and about other theological facts.

Before taking refuge in “reductionism” or “critical cognitivism,” the theist may explore the possibilities of using induction and deduction in order to derive the truths in question from the deliverances of the *oculis carnis* and the *oculis rationis*. We will not try to evaluate the relative merits of (1) proving the existence of God from the facts of nature, (2) proving the existence of external things from the ways in which we are appeared to, and (3) proving the existence of other people’s states of mind from facts about their behavior. But many theists who are not sceptics have doubts about the traditional proofs, and for them, the alternatives are “reductionism” and “critical cognitivism.”¹¹

“Reductionism” seems to be exemplified in contemporary Protestant theology. The cognitive content of such sentences as “God exists” is thought to be expressible in sentences about the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of religious people. To see the implausibility of reductionism, we have only to ask ourselves, as before: *What* sentences about the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of religious people can possibly express what it is that the religious man thinks he knows when he thinks he knows that God exists?

Finally, “critical cognitivism” would be the view that what we know about God is “known through” certain other things in precisely the way in which the content of other types of knowledge are “known through” the directly evident, or known through what is itself known through the directly evident. Just what the facts are that may be said to confer reasonableness, or acceptability, upon the ostensible truths of religion would seem to be problematic. But given such facts, whether they pertain to sacred writings, the sayings of religious teachers, or one’s experience of “the holy,” the critical cognitivist may distinguish, as theologians do, between *exegesis* and *hermeneutics*, the former being an account of just what these facts are, and the latter, an account of the types of proposition upon which they may be said to confer evidence, reasonableness, or acceptability. Our account of the directly evident in

¹¹ Cf. chaps. 2 and 6 in John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, Prentice-Hall Foundations of Philosophy Series.

Chapter 2 might similarly be said to be a matter of exegesis, and our account of the indirectly evident in Chapter 3, a matter of hermeneutics.

It may not be surprising, then, that the general problem of the criterion has created impasses in almost every branch of knowledge. I am afraid that I can throw no further light upon the problem itself; but if we can appreciate its difficulties, perhaps we will better understand some of the controversies that are involved in the topic of our next chapter—that type of knowledge that is said to be *a priori*. For there, too, philosophers are divided with respect to basic “criteriological” issues.