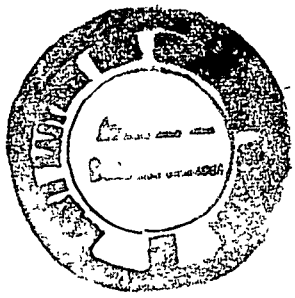
KNOWLEDGE AND CERTAINTY



DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
UTKAL UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

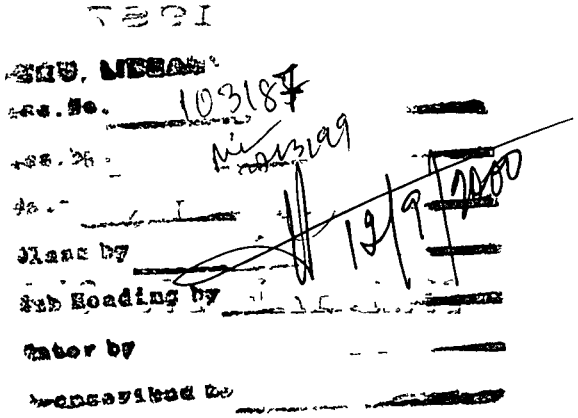
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

IN PHILOSOPHY

1987

By

SRIDHAR PRASAD ROUL



Dr. P.K. mohapatra, Ph.D. (Keele),
Reader, Deptt. of Philosophy,
Utkal University,
Vani Vihar,
Bhubaneswar - 751004.

C E R T I F I C A T E

Certified that the dissertation submitted by Sri Sridhar Prasad Roul is a record of research work done by him under my supervision during the period of his study for the Degree of M.Phil and that to the best of my knowledge the contents of the dissertation did not form a basis of award of any previous degree to the candidate or to anybody else.

31/12/87

(P.K. Mohapatra)

PREFACE

The concept of knowledge has a vital role in Philosophical disscussions. History of Philosophy, the world over, has epistemology as one of its main aspects. In many Philosophical systems the metaphysical contention has been mainly based on their epistemological view point. But a proper understanding of knowledge from any point of view can not be possible without discussing 'doubt' on the one hand and 'certainty' on the other. Problem of knowledge is a problem only for the Philosopher and hardly for the common man. " Do we know what we claim to know?" is a question that calls for a Philosophical justification of all that we say we know. The question of justification leads, in its turn, to questions like what kind of knowledge is certain?, what do we know?, Can we know something that is not certain? and the like. Thus in epistemology the concepts of 'knowledge' and 'certainty' are inevitably interlinked.

I have tried in my humble way to analyse these and the related concepts. Discussions in this dissertation have mainly aimed at clarification of the crucial concepts in question. I can not delude myself into claiming any amount of originality ; but I hope my attempt at analysis and clarification of the relevant concepts and theories is a step in the right direction.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my teacher and supervisor Dr. P.K. Mohapatra, Reader, P.G. Deptt. of Philosophy, Utkal University for his able guidance, constant encouragement but for which this piece of work would not have come to light. I am extremely grateful to my teacher Dr. G.C. Nayak, Professor & Head of the Department of Philosophy for providing me all the facilities and guidance for the completion of the work.

I am indebted to my teachers Prof. (Dr.) K.P.Mishra, Sri S.K.Mohanty, Dr. T. Pattnaik, Sri P.K.Das and others for timely help, guidance and constant encouragement.

I am very thankful to Mr. S.K. Balbantaray, Demonstrator,P.G.Deptt. of Geography, Mr. B.C. Sahoo, Lecturer in Logic, Maharishi College of Natural Law, Bhubaneswar and my friends Mr. P.K.Mohapatra, Mr. P.K. Biswal and Mr. P.C. Behera for their constant encouragements.

My special thanks are due to Sri B.Das, who took a lot of strain to type the manuscript within a short period.

Sridhar Prasad Roul

SRIDHAR PRASAD ROUL 31/12/82

C O N T E N T S

C H A P T E R – I

KNOWLEDGE

1. WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE ?

The word 'know' is used in different senses.

Sometimes 'know' means being personally acquainted with a person or a thing e.g. I know Mr. X or I know that place etc. This differs from knowing about Mr. X or that place from other persons or from books, without meeting and talking to him or going to and staying in that place.

Another sense of knowing is what is called in contemporary terminology the case of knowing how. Knowing how means having an ability to perform some action e.g. I know how to ride a horse or I know how to drive a car etc. Contemporary terminology distinguishes another sense of knowing, especially in contrast with 'knowing how'. This is called knowing that. Knowing that is used in the propositional sense of 'know' when that is followed by a proposition. It is the most important sense of know and is involved to some extent in the preceeding two senses of knowing. Taking P to be a proposition, in order to assert correctly, 'I know p' the following conditions should be fulfilled.

(a) P must be true.

' I know P ' means ' I know that P is true'. So ' I know P ' but P is not true is a self-contradictory statement. This is the objective requirement for the use of 'know'. Know in this sense differs from other verbs like 'believe', 'wish', 'wonder' 'hope' etc. I may believe

or wish or hope that p is true, but, in fact, p may be false. These verbs indicate psychological states, which may be there in our mind, but they do not require that the proposition that follows from them must be true.

It may be noted, however, that there are many true propositions, but we do not know them to be true. So the truth of a proposition is a necessary condition for knowing it to be true, but it is not a sufficient condition for knowing it to be so.

(b) p must be believed to be true : This is said to be the subjective requirement for the use of 'know'. ' I know that p is true, but I do not believe it ', if said sincerely, is also a self-contradictory statement, since knowing necessarily implies believing.

Many propositions are true, but we do not believe them. The earth is round and rotates on its axis ; it was true two thousand years before, but people did not believe it then.

But one can not sincerely say p to be true, but still does not believe it, because sincerely saying p to be true implies believing it ; and so it comes to ' I say and believe p, but still I do not believe it'.

The word' believe', sometimes is used in the rhetorical sense , and we say, 'I know I have won the first prize in lottery, but I can not believe it' or

' I know the answers to all the questions, but I cannot believe that I know . ' Barring such uses of 'belief', it is self-contradictory to say that ' I know p , but I do not believe p'.

It may seem that since the objective and subjective requirement of saying I know p are that ' p must be true' and ' p must be believed to be true', knowledge can be defined as true belief. But it is not so, since all true beliefs are not necessarily knowledge.

Suppose a poor girl believes that she will be one day married to a rich man and after five years she is actually married to a rich man. Did she know it ? Surely she did not know it five years before, it was only a lucky guess. Lucky guess is not knowledge, however, confidently the guess is made. To be considered as knowledge, our beliefs must be based on reason.

c) We must have evidence for p (reason to believe p) when we guessed which tosses of the coin would be heads, we had no reason to believe that our guesses would be correct, so we did not know. But after we watched all the tosses and carefully observed which way the coin tossed each time, then we knew. We had the evidence of our senses - as well as of peple around us - that this throw was heads, that one tails, and so on. Similarly, when we predict on the basis of tonight's red sunset that tomorrow's weather will be fair, we do not yet know that our prediction will be borne out by the facts ; we have some reason to believe it, but we can not be sure.

But tomorrow when we go outdoors and see for ourself what the weather is like, we do know for sure ; when tomorrow comes we have the full evidence before us, which we do not yet have tonight. Tomorrow " the evidence is in " ; to night, itis not knowledge but only an educated guess".

But at this point our troubles begin. How much evidence must there be ? " Some evidence" would not suffice as an answer ; There may be some evidence that tomorrow will be sunny but we do not yet know it. How about" all the evidence that is available"? But this would not do either ; all the evidence that is now available may not be enough. All the evidence that is now available is far from sufficient to enable us to know whether there are conscious beings on other planets. We just do not know, even after we have examined all the evidence at our disposal.

How about " enough evidence to give us good knowledge to believe it?" But the trouble is how much evidence would be"enough evidence"? I may have known someone for years and found him to be scrupulously honest during all that time ; by virtually any criterion, this would constitute good evidence that he will be honest the next time - and yet he may not be ; suppose that the next time he steals someone's watch.

I had good reason to believe that he would remain honest, but nevertheless I did not know that he would remain honest, for it was not true. We are all familiar with cases in which someone had good reason to believe a proposition that nevertheless turned out to be false.

What then is sufficient ? We are now tempted to say " Complete evidence - all the evidence there could ever be - the works, everything"[1]. But if we say this, let us notice at once that there are very few propositions whose truth we can claim to know. Most of those propositions that we claim to know without the slightest hesitation, we would not know according to this criterion. For example, we say " I know that Mr. X 's house is on the corner. I have lived in that block all my life, I have seen the house a hundred thousand times, so I ought to know", although we certainly do not have " all the evidence there could ever be." How could we, since the accumulation of evidence never seems to come to an end? However much we have, we always could get more - it's just that in daily life we do not believe we need more; beyond a certain point we do not consider it necessary, but we always could get more if we wanted to.

We might nevertheless, stick to our definition and say that we really do not know most of the propositions that in daily life we claim to know : perhaps I do not

know that this is a book before me that I am now reading sentences written in the English Language, or that there are any other people in the world. But this needs to be justified. We are all convinced that we know these things ; we act on them every day of our lives. Surely we cannot accept a definition of "know" that would practically define knowledge out of existence? But if not, what alternative have we ?

" Perhaps we do not have to go so far as to say ' all the evidence,' complete evidence', and so on. All we have to say is that we must have adequate evidence"[2]. But when is the evidence adequate ? Is anything less than " all the evidence there could ever be " adequate? " Well, adequate for enabling us to know". But this little addition to our definition lands us in a circle. But once we have dropped the phrase " to know", we are left with our problem once more : how much evidence is adequate evidence ? Is it adequate when anything less than all the evidence is in ? Surely it has happened often enough that a statement that we thought we knew, perhaps even would have staked our lives on, turned out in the end to be false, or just doubtful. But in that case, we did not really know it after all : the evidence was good, even overwhelming, but yet not good enough, not really adequate, for it was not enough to guarantee the truth of the proposition.

These limitations and the once like them are old and familiar. However, like the limitations of any philosophical theory, they do not justify the complete elimination of the concept of knowledge from the philosophical literature. As in the case in with all philosophical endeavours despite the possible limitations the concept of knowledge has been reasonably clearly used by the epistemologists. Far from serving as deterrent factor the limitations have, at different stages of epistemological history, called for sharper definitions of knowledge. Epistemologists at different times have tried with, or without much success to modify the concept of knowledge - perhaps in the face of limitations like these. The result has been the sharpening of the epistemology and the enrichment of enquiry.

2. SOME VIEWS CONSIDERED

It is very important to realise that epistemology is never to be undertaken from a completely naive position. By the time any philosopher comes to reflect on the problem of what human beings can be said to know, he has already acquired a reasonably formidable education and some degree of sophistication. It is impossible for a philosopher to discover what he knows by simply thinking back to the time when nothing was known to him

and then slowly tracing the acquisition of his knowledge.

A great deal of technical epistemology has been developed by philosophers who have subjected the results of their own formal education or official schooling to severe and hostile criticism in an effort to winnow out those claims which will stand against any reasonable doubt. A philosopher may suddenly discover that he knows many things of palpably differing certainty, or even that some of his information is contradictory. An obvious way of proceeding at this point to answer the question of the extent of his knowledge is to pick out from it some examples which he is certain, are most defensible in some intuitive sense. Studing these examples, he can then look for some qualities that distinguish them from examples that he feels can be or should be questioned, if not dropped out right from the information that he wishes to take as defensible knowledge. On the basis of this investigation, a philosopher usually ends by giving a definition of knowledge, as distinct from opinion or belief. Knowledge then constitutes those claims that he thinks are ultimately defensible, while opinion or belief constitutes those claims for which some justification is possible, but not a complete defense. This way of looking at the start of epistemological investigation stress the investigator's feeling of certainty about some of his knowledge claims. Because of this it

would not be surprising that different investigators should select different examples of knowledge as the basis of their definitions. Indeed the notion of reasonable objection is subject to the point that we would expect major philosophers to disagree over the examples that may be accepted as paradigm or model instances of human knowledge. We will look at the basic epistemological problem not as that of discovering the true extent of human knowledge, but as that of deciding which of our ordinary knowledge claims can properly be called examples of human knowledge, and then of investigating the difference between these examples and examples of opinion in an effort to justify the decision. In epistemology one does not try to build up a system of knowledge from nothing, but one tries to select some relatively clear examples of knowledge in order to discover what else may reasonably be considered as knowledge. On such a basis it is possible to create a consistent and useful account of all human information .

Plato attempted to provide a theory of knowledge which sought to separate knowledge from opinion in all the major intellectual controversies of his time. The intellectual controversies of his time were in many cases concerned with problems that are still the subject of intellectual dispute, and to the fact that his

solution of the epistemological problems posed by these disputes is still thought by many people to provide a justifiable and logically consistent position for present day philosophers. Plato was interested in establishing what constituted human knowledge in any area, on the grounds that this would enable a careful investigation to decide which problems connected with some particular political , aesthetic or ethical debate were definitely soluble and which were merely confusions based on conflicting opinion.

It is impossible to avoid assumptions in philosophy, but this does not vitiate philosophical investigation, since it would be unreasonable to demand that everything be proved. What is interesting to the philosopher is the question of which assumptions it would be best to adopt for some given purpose. One of Plato's assumptions seems to have been that human beings do have some knowledge. It is pretty easy to argue that this is a reasonable assumption, and Plato was given to exhibit his assumption as true by pointing out examples of human knowledge. Some of his examples, and these are crucial examples for all of subsequent philosophy, are taken from familiar areas of Mathematics. Consider two simple examples : the pythagorean theorem of elementary geometry and the arithemetic sum " 4 + 4 = 8". It is important tokeep these examples in mind, since Plato uses mathematical examples to make an

extremely important point : that truths of arithematic and geometry seem to be examples of unquestionable truths, the certainty of which is sufficient to prove complete skepticism unwarranted. Plato also used other examples from ordinary skills and he pointed out that crafts like piloting vessels and making shoes involve knowledge, in the sense that successful practitioners of these crafts might be said to know some things that others do not know. The pilot ; for example, knows that certain areas of a harbour are too shallow for certain ships to pass over. Argument about claims made in these areas could be settled by appeal to someone with the appropriate knowledge. A skilled Mathematician, for example, could settle any reasonable argument over whether the pythagorean theorem was true by constructing a proof of the theorem. Plato's problem was whether or not all genuine human disagreements might be resolved by appeal to human knowledge, and in order to answer this special problem he had to consider the problems that we have previously characterised as epistemological.

" The first clarification proposed by Plato was that something could be considered knowledge only if it could be said to be certain"[3].This would rule out all guesses about the future as knowledge, on the grounds that no one can be certain what will happen in future. At the

same time it would preserve the examples given earlier, since it has been, is, and always will be the case, presumably, that " 4 + 4 = 8" as well as that particular ships can not pass over areas which are only of such and such a depth. There may be some doubt about the latter assertion, since we might argue that there might be developed a new system of propulsion which could enable a ship to pass over areas that it could not formerly pass. But then one might argue that the new system of propulsion changed the nature of the ship and that the statement of the Pilot would still hold true of the particular ships that it talked about. Examples from piloting and shoemaking, however, do seem more troublesome than the examples from mathematics with respect to their certainty, and Plato had a tendency to fall back upon the mathematical examples when he was pressed, since they seem to be the strongest examples in support of his contentions. We shall consider mathematical examples almost exclusively on the grounds that bonafide examples that support Plato's philosophy as strongly as possible are to be looked for if any accurate assessment of its final worth is to be made. In short, Plato's claim against skepticism that there is certain knowledge is true if mathematical examples are examples of certain knowledge. In Plato's philosophy, the world " knowledge" will be applied only to a claim that is certain, a claim which

could not be said to be true today but false tomorrow. Mathematical statements of a sufficiently simple kind are obvious candidates for knowledge in this strong sense.

The most influential theory to account for human knowledge in Plato's time was that it was acquired through the senses or by experience. This seems, of course, quite natural, on the grounds that human babies do not seem to know very much, yet learn more and more as they gradually acquire a greater range of experiences. But Plato was able to show that his test case of mathematical knowledge could not have been acquired as a result of experience. There are two arguments which show this convincingly : the first is that experience can never yield certain knowledge, and the second is that the knowledge expressed by mathematical statements is not about experienced objects.

To demonstrate the first point it is only necessary to show that sense experience often leads to unreliable impressions. It seems to follow from the frequent unreliability of sense experience that we can never be certain that sense experience has led to certain knowledge in any particular case . How do we know when to trust our sense impressions ? The answer, in platonic terms, is that we can never be certain when it is that they can be trusted. To express the unreliability of the senses in another way, and a way that has proved influential

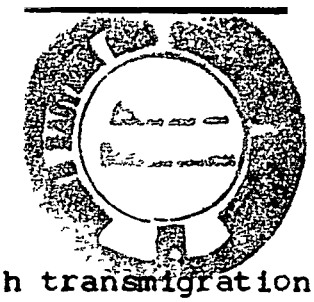
for the history of philosophy, it can be said that senses yield only the appearances of things, but not their reality, so that in order to have knowledge about anything, we must know it through some other means than the senses. The fact of illusion, or conflicting reports from the senses, proves to the platonists that the senses can not be trusted to provide knowledge in their sense.

This conclusion does not quite follow logically , since it might be the case that some sense impressions are accurate and others misleading ; but Plato seems to be right in that no way of distinguishing accurate from inaccurate sense experience is readily available and surely no way that is itself dependent upon sense experiences. If there were some sign associated with every accurate sense experience, like a funny pain in the brain, but this sign was never associated with inaccurate sense experiences, then sense experience might be a reliable guide, yielding knowledge when the ~~xxxx~~ pain was felt. But it is a convincing argument that no such sensed criterion of an accurate sense experience can be found when we analyse the quality of our sense experiences.

The other point in support of the claim that mathematical knowledge is not derived from sense experience is that the subject matter of the mathematical examples

appears as unaccessible to sense experience. Although we see 4 quite often, we never see the number four. It is clear that 4 is not a number four since the expression ' 4 + 4' would show that there are atleast four number fours, but we know from elementary arithmetic that there is only one number four. 4 sometimes refers to the number four, and it is considered by many to be a name for the number four which we use to refer to the number four in the process of constructing mathematical proofs. From arguments like this, it is easy to show that neither numbers nor geometrical figures are the objects of any sense experience. Although we experience circular objects, we can not be said to experience circles. It follows from these considerations that mathematical knowledge, being about non-experienced objects, could hardly have been acquired from sense experiences of mathematical objects.

From the two established points that human beings have certain knowledge and that this is not acquired through the senses, Plato developed an idea that was already present in Greek culture in various religious traditions. This idea, quite simple, is that human beings remember or recollect knowledge from a past life, rather than acquire it in their current lives through experience. Thus it is clear that Plato's ideas are like some of those



which are normally associated with transmigration. Transmigrationists hold that souls are immortal and pass from human body to human body as these bodies die or wear out. Now if we read mind for soul we begin to get an impression of what platonism is like. Historically, it is not entirely accurate to translate the appropriate Greek work as mind, but it seems even more misleading in view of Christian associations to translate it as soul." Plato's view is then that the human mind is the locus of human knowledge, and that the human body, through experience, can only provide the kind of misleading sense impressions[4]. We explain the fact that the human baby becomes more and more sophisticated not by the gradual acquisition of knowledge through experience, but by the mind's gradual remembrance of knowledge due to the product of sense experience.

It is to realise that the platonic explanation is comatible with the observed facts of child development. The fact that a child's knowledge increases as his experience increases does not prove that the two are causally correlated, and it certainly does not show that increasing experience is the cause of increasing knowledge. In fact, when human beings grow senile, their knowledge decreases at the same time that they continue to have more and more sense experiences.

An explanation of the origin of the knowledge that the mind recollects is now clearly required, since denying that knowledge originates in sense experience does not explain the origin of knowledge very satisfactorily. The structure of Plato's position is rather interesting. It is based on the powerful arguments that he can bring to bear to show that we do have knowledge and that it can not be acquired through sense experience if it is to be certain like the mathematical knowledge exhibited in his examples. His theory of ideas is offered as the theory of knowledge that will save knowledge from skepticism or an inadequate grounding in sense experience. When knowledge is taken to be certain or indubitable, and it is shown that the objects in the universe are too changing tobe objects of knowledge, it follows that for knowledge to be possible, unchanging objects like Plato's forms must be the objects of knowledge. This position is supported by the evidence that mathematics is about objects which are not found in the universe but is about ideas or forms. Plato thus proposes a view that which is compatible with our commonsense observations about mathematical knowledge, and he extends his view in proposing that knowledge is only possible where there are forms. Mathematics does not exhaust the possible knowledge of forms, but only of certain mathematical forms, among which is the form of

the number four. If ethical and aesthetic knowledge is to be obtained, it must be founded on the intuited existence of ethical and aesthetic forms.

For Aristotle, " informed opinion is a kind of knowledge".[5] All cases of knowledge exhibited in human claims to knowledge are considered by Aristotle under two classifications, dependent on whether or not the knowledge considered represents what is always true or what is merely true in many cases , yet of value for practical action. Knowledge which represents what is necessarily true independently of human desires and hopes is called theoretical science. True statements of theoretical science are always true, and hence the range of theoretical science is quite similar to the range of knowledge in Plato's defined sense. On the other hand, practical science is the result of studying what is quite often true, but which need notbe true if human beings should desire to bring about some change.

Theoretical science is the study of what is necessarily true independently of human desires." The truths of theoretical science are thus certain; and they may be taken to be those universal truths which may be deduced from what Aristotle called "self -evident principles".[6] Self-evident principles are defined to be those principles which no properly disciplined mind

could deny. This does not mean that everyone understands them and knows them to be true, or even that anyone whose attention has been drawn to them sees them immediately to be true and universal but it means that those who give the matter sufficient attention and take time to learn the techniques of inquiry will come to see their truth . Aristotle concludes " that some knowledge of this kind is available to human beings as certain truth"[7]. This has the consequence that Aristotle is as impatient with "Complete Skepticism as Plato is . A consequences of the differences of approach of Aristotle and Plato is that although Platonic philosophy seems to stand or fall with the acceptability of the theory of ideas, Aristotle 's analyses can often be accepted or rejected independently of one another. In particular, many philosophers accept much of Aristotle's logical speculation and large amounts of his contributions to practical science, while rejecting many conclusions of his discussions of topics in theoretical science.

A comparision of the classification of Aristotle's range of certain knowledge with Plato's range of certain knowledge is sufficient to point up a marked difference between Plato and Aristotle. Whereas Plato felt that the objects of certain knowledge must be unchanging, Aristotle held that we might have certain knowledge about changing

objects. Thus, a crucial difference between Plato and Aristotle is that the latter felt that an adequate philosophy would have to explain knowledge of changing things. Is there such knowledge ? Evidently Aristotle felt that one could know just as certainly that some arbitrary acorn would grow, in proper circumstances, into an oak tree, as that one could know that the arithmetical sum of four plus four is eight.

Since Plato and Aristotle disagree, we might inquire which of them is right and which of them is wrong. The point at issue between platonic and Aristotelian philosophy is that of the definition of knowledge. It is not generally thought that definitions are true or false. As our characterisation of epistemology has shown, a basic problem of epistemology is to decide which of the knowledge claims that we make are philosophically deserving of the honorific term knowledge. Is it as certain that an acorn can not grow into a lion as it is that eight is the sum of four and four. The choice between philosophies which assert and deny, respectively, that the one claim is as certain as the other is somewhat difficult. While one can say that to accept both the platonic and Aristotelian Philosophies is to contract oneself, to say that one of them must be false is to make a mistake. The strongest claim it is reasonable to make is that one or both of them does not define knowledge in a way compatible with what we consider a fruitful way of

explaining human experience.

Knowledge is not knowledge of primary substances but of somethingelse which is developed from an analysis of primary substances. If primary substances are the objects of sense- experience, Aristotle's point can be gathered from his observations that sense experience is not knowledge. On this point, although not on its significance, Aristotle and Plato agree. In an interesting argument which occurs at the beginning of the metaphysics, Aristotle notes that all men have the power of sense -experience and that indeed. they may share this with other animals. Yet knowledge is so unevenly distributed among human beings that it can not be equivalent to sense experience. Memory must be added to sense experience, as well as experience in a broader sense, which enables man to profit by noting similarities between remembered sense experiences and present experiences, in effect making present sense experience more sophisticated than it would otherwise be. This point is supported by the generally superior judgements of humans compared with the judgements that we may impute to animals. Even this kind of human experience, however, is not equivalent to knowledge, for the ability of men is to perform effective action is more evenly distributed than the ability to assimilate theoretical knowledge. The point here is that two men may be equally good artisans of some kind but quite unequal in the degree in which they can explain their art-knowledge is really is

the ability to understand and explain why things are as they are, and knowledge must be knowledge, not of things themselves, but of the causes, principles, etc. which account for the way things are. Knowledge is thus knowledge of the difference , say, between the accidental and essential properties of something. Clearly two men may be able to deal with Socrates's actions with roughly equal practical success, while only one of them can explain Socrates and his actions in terms of Socrates's accidental and essential properties, as well as in terms of the relations of these properties to the properties of other individuals. Thus it is not surprising in Aristotle that the individual$ is not the subject of knowledge , even though only individuals are said to exist the individual can be known only by comparing its properties with the properties of other things. But this is knowing by essential properties, since it is through essential properties that things are compared. The result of this Aristotelian scheme is that what exists is dependent on individuals, or primary substances, at the bottom of the hierarchy. Knowledge, however, is not knowledge of these primary substances, but knowledge is about the hierarchy, that is, the essential properties that link individuals to other individuals.

But Descartes, like Plato, restricts knowledge to what is certain, and by doing this rejects any simpleminded view that knowledge is obtained through sense experience, since

sense experience proves to be misleading. But, like Aristotle, Descartes is interested in bringing all the areas of natural science within the domain of knowledge, and he is interested in various problems of change. Further, he is interested in relating areas of scientific investigation, so that certain more specialised sciences will be dependent on general sciences, in the sense that the laws of the more general sciences will be true in the domains of the more specialised sciences.

We have seen that Plato and Aristotle begin with the assumption that there is knowledge, and that an important philosophical activity is to study its nature, and extent. To do so, plato and Aristotle each start with paradigm cases of indisputable knowledge, and an attempt to answer broader questions by extending whatever results they can get from an analysis of the relatively limited examples of knowledge that they start with. Descartes has observed for reasons not much different from those that had convinced Plato and other earlier philosophers, that in many cases statements that had been thought to constitute knowledge would turn out to be uncertain or false under scrutiny. These examples were usually examples from sense experience reports, but that is not crucial here. In order to show that human beings have some knowledge, so that they can obtain satisfactory axioms for a deductive system of human knowledge, it is necessary to show that not every case in

which they believe themselves to possess knowledge is in fact uncertain or mistake. The proof of the existence of one such piece of knowledge is sufficient to settle this question. Let p be " there is some human knowledge". Its denial, not p, is then " There is no human knowledge". In both the cases, knowledge is to be read in the technical sense of indubitable truth. To prove p, therefore, it is sufficient to show that not p, if assumed, leads to an obvious falsehood. This, in effect, was the way that Descartes argues. It is clear that his argument is not entirely satisfactory, since in order to look for the consequences of some statement, according to the definition of deductive argument, one has to know how to look for consequences, and hence it is difficult to see how one might assume that he knows nothing, and then look for consequences which follow from that assumption. Nevertheless, it is of interest to see whether or not, absurd consequences do follow from such an assumption as the one that there is no knowledge, using only logically valid steps of inference. We might suppose for the course of investigation that we are not human beings. Then, just as the natural scientist, who is not a fish, may think about fish, so we may imagine ourselves temporarily as higher beings who are scrutinising human activity to see whether any of it might lead to knowledge. Descartes removes himself fromthe problem in such a manner by supposing that there is some evil power who has deceived him about everything. The question for

Descartes is then whether or not the existence of such a power can be consistently held.

There is no difficulty in showing that no knowledge obtained through the senses could be knowledge in Descartes's philosophical sense . An interesting argument that Descartes employed to indicate this is the argument from a seeing inability to determine whether or not we are awake. The distinction between being awake and being asleep, which may be clear enough to most of us most of the time, is open to potential confusion. Descartes, as well as most of us, occasionally mixed up some impressions from a dream with those from reality. Surely dreamers often experience terror and other emotions in their dreams and it is clear that some times dreamers suppose that they are awake at the time of these experiences. If the dream state and the waking state are confused occasionally, how can it ever be known by someone with certainty that he is awake or dreaming at any given movement? It appears that he can never know for certain, since a sufficiently evil power might cause him to be confused about the distinction with great frequency. Descartes supposes that a distinction can be made although perhaps he does so in a manner which is not entirely satisfactory. Empiricists will contend that even if one can not know with certainty, there are ways of distinguishing the two states which are adequate for the purposes of scientific investigation,

and hence derivatively adequate for philosophy.

But the results of assuming the existences of evil power at much deeper than obliterating the certain distinction between dreaming and being awake. The significance of being unable to make that distinction is largely that if sense experience is taken as the source of knowledge and if sense experience does not occur during sleep and dreaming although one feels himself to be having sense experiences during dreams, then no feeling having a sense experience can be taken as conclusive evidence that one is having a sense experience. The argument from the evil power is apparently sufficient to show that sense experience can not be the origin of knowledge. But consider any statement of fact, that is , significant statement about the world, which is such that it seems to be certain. Clearly any such statement must refer to some past events, and its certainty must be related to some past observations, sense experiential, or otherwise. To put this another was,ajudgement of certainty rests upon previous knowledge that we have acquired, if for no other reason than that we need to have learned some language in order to express any judgement that we would like to make. But this view raises the question of the reliability or memory. If a present judgement or observation is to be certain, and it rests upon past judgements or observations, then there must be some past judgements where are certain if there are to be any present

judgements or observations which are certainly true.

Thus Descartes seems to have established that certain knowledge can not be satisfactorily justified or explained in terms of sense experience alone, although Descartes seems ~~inclined~~ inclined to allow sense experience a more important role in leading us to this certain knowledge than Plato did. What is important for Descartes is that knowledge is partly mathematical and scientific, and that sense experience can not explain the certainty found in at least these areas of knowledge. It is assumed here that mathematical truths and truths of scientific theorising are certain, a position which is obviously capable of a vigorous defence.

Most contemporary Philosophers suppose that an adequate philosophy must at least justify scientific knowledge, and then religious knowledge, for example, depending on whether or not the philosopher wishes to give religious knowledge significance apart from science. Mathematical knowledge has been taken by empiricists as part of scientific knowledge, and it is not generally treated as a kind knowledge distinct from scientific knowledge, in spite of sound rationalistic arguments to the contrary.

The early attempts at an empirical philosophy which would justify modern science are well represented in the

Philosophy of John Locke, who preceeded Berkeley. Locke's arguments against rationalism are not crushing refutations. He merely noted that there were strong common sense grounds for doubting it, and then contended that since sense experiential knowledge was necessary for scientific knowledge, and hence a necessary foundation for scientific knowledge in any adequate philosophical epistemology, and since all of the functions which innate ideas and intuition had performed in rationalistic philosophies could be handled in an emiricistic philosophy, that it was possible to demonstrate that rationalism was superfluous. Attention to Locke's position focuses on the question of whether or not he can demonstrate his claim that scientific knowledge may be satisfactorily justified on an empirical basis.

Locke's approach was to adopt a kind of commonsense theory of knowledge similar to that which many scientists of his time implicitly adopted. This commonsense theory is no doubt the commonsense theory of many people at present, although it was not commonsense in Locke's time.

Berkeley took as one of his most important tasks that of refuting the theories of knowledge of ordinary people and of past philosophers and scientists. He contended that the refutation of these theories would result in the rejection of false views about various claims of religion and science.

We say that ordinary men know something and that Berkeley was correct in pointing out that we must explain this knowledge in a manner compatible with what the ordinary man might reasonably be said to have at his command in the way of acquired knowledge. A good test case would be young child who knows certain facts, but who could hardly be said to know anything about epistemology. Such a child may know that a book is green, for example, without being able to enunciate a theory as to what green means in sentences about the book's colour. Berkeley's willingness to insist that such cases be discussed by philosophers is, in effect, construing knowledge much more broadly than plato, Aristotle or Descarte did. Plato, Aristotle and Descartes might all say that the child does not truly know anything, and thatthe task of philosophy is to explicate the knowledge that the most informed people have, who do not consider themselves to know something until they understand why that something is what is to be known, and not something else. Berkeley argues that Philosophy must explain. The case of knowledge of the young child, who typifies common sense in being unreflective. In this sense Berkeley considers himself as a champion of common sense.

But Hume, in accepting the empirical theory of the origins of knowledge, drew conclusions ~~knowledge~~ more stringent than those which were drawn by locke and Berkeley. Where Berkeley had taken empiricism to refute the existence of matter, or material substance, Hume took

empiricism to be inconsistent with the existence of material and spiritual substances. For Hume, sense impressions do not yield knowledge of any kind of substance, which is sufficient warning that Hume will prove to be more skeptical than any of the philosophers that we have considered.

One fruitful way of looking at this skepticism is to observe that Hume believed that impressions could only give us probable knowledge, but that probable knowledge was a sufficient grounding for any significant knowledge that human beings might ordinarily be said to be capable of having. Thus Hume is the first philosopher to suppose that certain knowledge was not only a misleading goal for Philosophy, but in fact an unobtainable goal. It is the position that certain knowledge is not possible that distinguishes modern empiricism and to some extent explains Hume's importance in the history of philosophy. The rationalistic philosophers have been right in holding that certain knowledge is not attainable through sense experience, but an adequate empiricistic counter to this must be, not that parts of sense experience are certain, but thatwe have no certain knowledge, so that the philosophical quest for certainty must end in failure. The problem for the empiricist thus becomes that of demonstrating that science does not require certain knowledge for its attainments.

Kant speaks of his philosophy as a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism, but this does not indicate that scientific knowledge consists of bits and pieces each of which can be accounted for either in terms of Pre-Kantian rationalism or of Pre- Kantian empiricism. Kant's point is that all important instances of scientific knowledge are the result of observation and thought, empiricistic and rationalistic elements, neither of which is intelligible without the other. In a way, this may remind us of Aristotle's position, to which Kant owes some historical indebtedness. But where Aristotle took experience to be analyzable into material and formal aspects, and hence into empiricistic and rationalistic components, Kant took the different position that no observation could make sense or be meaningful unless prior thought not based on experience is presupposed. Kant holds that the prior concepts we bring to experience may have the certainty and necessity that rationalists before him had attributed to, what they called knowledge.Kant's analysis of the importance of adequate concepts of space and time is a valuable insight . Kant's view is that space and time are not seen or heard like other empirical properties and he holds that they are not abstracted from immediate sense experiences ; he contends instead that immediate sense experience would be meaning less unless space and time are presupposed to be known in immediate sense experience. We do not see space or time, we see things in space and time. We could not, in fact,

imagining what it would be like to see something that it was not in space and time. This indicates that we must know space and time prior to experiencing objects in them.

Kant says "that space is the form of outer intuitions, time the form of inner intuitions".[8] Intuition was used to refer to the faculty invoked by rationalists to account for certain knowledge about non experienced objects. Kant uses intuition as almost synonymous with sensation, in that it suggests an immediate awareness of something. But it must also be observed that what Kant calls empirical intuition corresponds more strictly to sensation, since Kant held that we can have pure intuitions (immediate awareness) of the apriori particulars space and time.

A problem for Kantian epistemology is raised by consideration of Berkeley's point that a theory of knowledge must account for the knowledge of children who are able to know the relevant area of knowledge in that they can apparently use it . This raises some question as to what it may mean to say that space and time are presupposed in perception, since knowledge of space and time may not be held in any straight forward sense by many human beings who seem able to make accurate reports of their other perceptions. Kant replied to this by supposing that common sense, space and time underlie ordinary perceptions.

Kant calls " sensibility or intuition he regards as a faculty of humans to apprehend particular objects as given in space and time".[9] The matter of these apprehensions is given by empirical intuition of the sensible appearances of things. Sensibility, then, provides us with perceptions. But perceptions do not constitute knowledge. Even the pure intuition of space and time does not give us scientific knowledge. Knowledge arises when judgements about sense objects as given in space and time are made by the understanding, a distinct faculty of human beings, which provides knowledge through objects which are thought, by means of the concepts used to think them.

Knowledge, for Kant, consists primarily of synthetic apriori judgements, which are informative because they are synthetic, yet certain because they are a priori and can not be contradicted by experience. The importance of synthetic a priori judgements in their role of principles of scientific and mathematical knowledge constitutes one of the claims upon which the adequacy of Kantian philosophy must be taken to rest.

Berkeley and Kant agrees that if there are material objects, they can not be the objects of sense - experientical knowledge. But where Berkeley construed the notion of material object to be that of an unperceived object, and hence a contradictory notion, Kant construed material object to be something that if it did exist, could

not be known as it was through human perception because of the interaction between the human perceptual apparatus and the object perceived. Berkeley supposed any apparent order in the world could be accounted for by regular sequences of ideas. But Kant felt that there were more regular sequences in experience than Berkeley's theory could account for. Kant would agree with Berkeley's strictures against an assumption of material bodies on an epistemological basis of passively received ideas that are organised in fairly mechanical ways by the mind. But Kant further argues " that this account of human nature is too poor ; when an active mind is coupled with sense experience, however, we may rationally suppose that there may be legitimate grounds for the assertion of objective empirical judgements".[10]

3. KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF AND OPINION

So far we have been discussing, at some length, the nature and conditions of knowledge and also some of the prominent senses in which the expression'to know is used. It has also been seen that according to the familiar views the idea of certainty has been a normal accompanished of knowledge. However, there are certain mental acts which have a close intimacy with the act that is called knowing. Their closeness with the latter has often resulted in confusing between them and knowledge . Those are the concepts of belief and opinion.

It may be objected here that the confusion between opinion and knowledge is much less explicit than that between knowle ge and belief. This objection notwithstanding it can hardly be denied that they are family words and at least in the degree of certainty there is scope for discussing their connectedness. So any Philosophical enquiry into knowledge must throw some light on its connectedness or otherwise with belief and opinion.

Plato supposed that some estimates about future events in the universe, or evaluations of current events were better than others. But he gave claims about the world of becoming the status of opinion or belief, as opposed to knowledge, because statements of opinion can not be said to be certain. Some opinions may be better than others, but none is certain. Better opinions will be formed by those who compare their mental knowledge of the forms with their sensual knowledge of the universe, for the world of becoming and the world of being are related, somewhat like an image of an object as seen in a distorted mirror may be related to the object itself. Thus, a distorted image of a teapot may enable one to form an opinion about the qualities of the actual teapot that is more reliable than a guess based on no infomation at all, but it can hardly compare with the knowledge that examining the teapot itself can yield . We may now take plato to be effecting a definition of knowledge and opinion in the

following sense : he maintains that all the occasions of someone's uttering 'I know that Z' are to be divided into two large groups. Those utterances which are based on sense experience and constitute an expression of opinion would go into one group and those utterances based on intuitions of the forms or ideas would go into the other group. In this way knowledge and opinion become defined terms for Platonic philosophy, and they are not used in that philosophy in quite the same way that many persons are likely to use them.

Knowledge constitutes those claims that a Philosopher thinks are ultimately defensible, while opinion or belief constitutes those claims for which some justification is possible, but not a complete defense. For Aristotle, however, informed opinion is a kind of knowledge.

" According to the traditional view, which derives from Plato, Knowledge and belief are mental faculties, each sui generis, no more to be defined one in terms of the other than, are, say, love and friendship".[11] Indeed they are allied, as love and friendship are allied. They are more like each other either is to, say, doubt or love or desire. They are alike in that what a man knows he will express in the form of an assertion or denial, and that what he believes he will similarly express. Again, from many of a man's statements

one can not tell without further questioning whether that he asserts is something which he claims to know or something which he claims to believe.

Knowledge and belief resemble each other in that what is known or believed is normally expressible in an assertion or denial which does not contain the words 'know' or 'believe' or their equivalents. On the other hand, the expression of a doubt can not be made without either saying, " I doubt . . . " or without using a phrase which operates in an equivalent way, such as " may or may not," " just possibly,"[12] and so on.

But although they are alike inthat respect, a respect which might roughly be covered by calling them both judging faculties, knowledge and belief have been held to be otherwise different in kind. About the exact distinction between them philosophers who have maintained that they are generically different activities have not always been as clear or helpful as could be wished. To say that in knowing the mind apprehends facts, but in believing it has propositions for its objects is totally uninformative, and is merely a more long-winded way or saying that in knowing one knows, but in believing one believes.

Perhaps the distinction which is mainly adhered to is one which again goes back to Plato : that the only

things a man may know are necessary truths such as the truths of mathematics or of logic , while all else can at best be a matter of belief. I may know that two Euclidean triangles having the same base and between the same parallels are equal in area, and I may know that if A is larger than B and if B is larger than C , then A is larger than C. They are necessary truths which could not conveivably be otherwise, which a man has only to understand to perceive that they must be true. On the other hand, most of what commonly passes for knowledge is strictly not knowledge at all - both singular pieces, as that I am reading a book which I have written, that he had two cups of coffee for breakfast this morning; and general pieces as that stone thrown out of the window fall downwards, not upwards.

These propositions are not the objects of knowledge, not because they are not true (for they well may be, and the theory is not concerned to deny that they are) but because they are contingent truths which might conceivably be false. They carry no guarantee which provides cent percent insurance against their being false ; and if they might conceivably be false, however remote the possibility may be, they can not be the objects of knowledge, for knowledge can not be wrong. Impressed with the uncertified character of contingent propositions, Descartes attempted by a systematic scrutiny to find some strict knowledge which would underwrite them, valiantly but signally failed,

and by his failure led on to Hume's insistence on the uncertain characterof all matter of fact - beliefs, a form of scepticism which recent preoccupation with problems, of perception has done much to perpetuate.

Hume's scepticism is a result of the fact that he limits certain knowledge in a rigorous sense to demonstrable mathematical truth. Whateverelse we know, and this includes all our significant information, we know only probably. This second and more important kind of knowledge has been called belief by empiricists. Belief comprises probable opinion in experimental science, morality, political philosophy, and aesthetics. The application of association to impressions and ideas can not result in certain knowledge.That two ideas are such that they resemble one another, or that they are contiguous, or that one is the cause of the other can not be a necessary result of the nature of ideas, but can only be some function of the way in which experience causes us to frame the ideas. This point assumes special significance in connection with cause and effect since cause and effect is the only relation of the three which could enable us to reason to existence and objects which we have not experienced.

The prima facie theory of belief derived from Cook Wilson[12] begins by distinguishing belief from knowledge. In knowledge, the mind is directly

confronted with a certain fact or with a certain particular. Knowledge is by definition infallible, though of course it need not be exhaustive. But it can not intelligibly be called true, because the alternatives true or false have no application to it. Nor can it be called either active or passive, despite the opinion of the writers on the history of philosophy. For even to ask the question whether it is active or passive (the question which the Rationalists are supposed to have answered in one way and the empiricists in another and Kant in both) is to commit an absurdity, the absurdity of regarding knowledge as a causal relation.[13] Knowledge is something ultimate and not further analysable. It is simply the situation in which some entity or some fact is directly present to consciousness. The fact may of course be of the form 'that p entails q '. The knowledge is then called inferring. But it is none the less direct, though its object is in this case more complex.

Belief, on the other hand, is always fallible . What I believe need not be the case, however firmly I believe it, and however strong the evidence I have for it. Moreover, there is a certain indirectness about belief when I believe truly there is a fact which makes my belief true. But this fact is not itself present to my mind. That which is present to my mind is something else, something which in this case corresponds to or accords with a fact, but in other cases does not.

The distinction between knowledge and belief is obvious. That between knowledge and true belief is sometimes denied or questioned. Perhaps the following examples will make it clear. Suppose I am puzzled about something. Then I myself can know by introspection that I am puzzled. Another man observing my behaviour, and noticing the frown on my face and the groans that I utter, can believe that I am puzzled ; and his belief will be true. But it is obvious that his relation to my puzzlement is quite different from my relation ~~to~~ to it. I do not mean merely that I am the owner of the puzzlement and he is not. What I mean is that the puzzlement is not directly present to his consciousness, whereas it is directly present to mine. Something is indeed present to his consciousness, whatever that something should be called : not, however, the puzzlement itself, but somethingelse which corresponds or accords with it - something which could perfectly well have been present to his mind even if the puzzlement had not existed ~~in the~~ at all.

Further it is said that one is not reasonably said to know a fact unless one is completely sure of it. This is one of the distinctions between knowledge and belief. One may be completely sure of what one believes, in cases where the belief is refused the title of knowledge on other grounds, viz. that it is false, or that although it is true, the reasons for which it is held do not come up to the standard

which knowledge requires. But where it is possible to believe what one is not completely sure of, so that one can consistently admit that what one believes to be true may still be false, this does not apply to knowledge. It can be said of some who makes a mistake that he really knows what he is showing himself to be unsure of, the implication that he ought to be sure. But to say of oneself that one knew that such and such a statement was true but that one was not altogether sure of it would be self-contradictory. On the other hand, while the respective states of mind of one who knows some statement to be true and another who only believes it may be different, it does not seem that there need be any difference between them when the belief is held with full conviction and is distinguished from knowledge on other grounds. As Professor Austin puts it, 'Saying " I know " is not saying " I have performed a specially striking feat of lognition, superior, in the same scale as believing and being sure, even to being merely quite sure " : for there is nothing in that scale superior to being quite sure'.[14] And it may very well happen that even when people's beliefs are false they are as fully convinced of their truth as they are of the truth of what they know.

Thus the result of the foregoing discussions has been that on the score of being sure there is no difference of quality between knowing that p and believing that p .

However, there might be a difference between once feeling of certainty when we have a case of belief and when one have a case of knowledge. This can not however be taken to be true or certainty where ' certainty is taken in the logical sense. In the last sense, it will be generally agreed, only what is called knowledge can be said to be certain and anything outside the domain of knowledge will not be called certain. Scholastic Philosophers, as we have seen have, therefore, reserved the concept of knowledge to be applicable (on the basis of certainty) only to what is logically certain, i.e. statements of Geometry, mathematics and formal logic. Hoever, contemporary epistemology, quite in keeping with standards of common usage, would consider this account as a considerable departure from facts . Indeed, the term " knowledge" is not used and must not be, to apply only to formal statements; we also talk of factual knowledge or knowledge of matters of fact. To describe the last as not knowledge or merely probale opinion would be a " Parody of Philosophical cautiousness". To use a telling expression of A.J. Ayer, thus factual knowledge is a kind of knowledge, though it is characterised not by certainy (logical sense), but by varying degrees of probability. We shall see of course that the idea of probability calls for a discussional evidence, since the varying degrees of probability of factual knowledge is necessarily linked with the varying degrees of strength or adequacy of evidences. To this question, therefore, we turn to the following chapters.

REFERENCE

1. John Hosperse, " An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis", Allied ~~Brothers~~ Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Bombay, 1975,P. 148.

2. Ibid – P. 149

3. Robert Ackermann, " Theories of knowledge ; A critical introduction", Tata Mc. Graw Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1965, P. 15.

4. Ibid , P. 17

5. Ibid, P. 57

6. Ibid, P. 58

7. Immanuel Kant, " Critique of Pure Reason, Max Muller, 1855, P.69

8. Ibid, P. 71

9. Robert Ackermann, " Theoriees of knowledge ; A critical Introduction, Tata Mc Graw Hill Publishing Company Ltd., New Delhi, 1965,P. 228.

10. A. D. Woozley, Theories of knowledge, An Introduction , Hutchinshon & Co. (publishers) Ltd. London, 1957,P.176

11. Ibid, P. 176

12. Cook Wilson,"Statement and Inference", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Part. II, Chapter. III.

13. A. Philips Griffiths," Knowledge and Belief" Some considerations about belief by H.H. Price, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.

14. J.L. Austin, " Other Minds ", Supplementary proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,Vol.XX,P.171.

*****

C H A P T E R - II

KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE

1. PROBABILITY AND EVIDENCE

Knowledge, as we used that concept in concrete situation, is judgemental in nature. It is in the form of a judgement or statement that we express knowledge. In the light of our last discussion it is to be understood that the statements that are relevant to discuss on probability are the statements expressing factual knowledge.

There is widespread view that probability is most properly attributed to statements : and that what is being asserted when it is said that a statement is probable, is that it bears a certain relation to another statement, or set of statements, which may also be described as confirming, or supporting, or providing evidence for it. There are some who maintain that this is the only sense in which it is correct to speak of probability ; that what we 'really mean ' when we assert anything to be probable is always the case that some statement bears the requisite relation to such and such a piece of evidence. Thus Keynes[1] assumes that every significant probability statement can be fitted into this formula 'a/h = p', where a is the proposition which is said to be probable, h is the evidence on which it is probable, and p is the degree of probability that h confers on a , a quantity which may or may not be numerically measurable. And Kneale[2] takes it for granted that probability is relative to evidence : and if this is often overlooked, it is because in talking about probability we seldom bother to specify the evidence on which we are relying : Our probability statements

are commonly elliptical'[3] Other writers, like R. Carnap,[4] distinguish this sense of probability from one in which to speak of the probability of an event is to attribute a numerical frequency to the distribution of some property among events of a given class. Carnap himself allows that we have a use for this conception of probability in terms of observed frequencies, or of the limits towards which they are supposed to tend. He calls it probability, to differentiate it from the other , logical, conception of probability, which he calls probability.[4] It is, however, on the basis of probability, that he develops his inductive logic.[5]

Not all the advocates of this conception of probability would agree with Keynes in regarding probability as an unanalysable logical relation. Certainly Carnap does not suppose his probability to be unanalysable. But he recognises that probability statements come to resemble statements of formal logic in the sense that if theyare true they are analytic. This might be disputed by philosophers like Kneale who wish to hold on to the synthetic apriori, and so to confine analyticity within more narrow limits: but they would at least allow that statements of probability, in this sense, are not empirical. They are necessarily true, if they are true at all. It is characteristic of any view of this type that the existence of a probability relation between statements is made to depend, not on any contingent matter of fact, but solely on the meaning of the statements

concerned. Thus Ayer[6] says, " the advocates of such views treat probability as a logical relation, whether they assent to this form of words or not".

Keynes says that to say that we have sufficient warrant for accepting a given statement must mean or is made probable by another statements or set of statements which we have sufficient warrant for accepting; and then one appears to be threatened with an infinite regress. Keynes meets this difficulty by assuming that there are certain statements which we can know directly to be true ; and it is on statements of this sort that all rational judgements of probability must finally depend. This assumption may be questioned ; but even if it be admitted, original objection still holds. Once we have assembled some trustworthy data by these means, there can be no reason, on Keynes's system, why we should trouble to carry the investigations any further. The addition of more evidence may yield a higher or lower probability for the statement in which we are interested . But unless we have made some logical mistake, this probability can not be said to be more, or less, correct than the one that was yielded by the evidence with which we started. Neither can any sense be given to the claim that it is a better estimate of what is likely to happen.

Carnap has seen that there is a difficulty here, and he has tried to meet it by introducing what he calls ' the principle of total evidence'.'Let c (h, e)', he says ' be the degree of confirmation of the hypothesis h with respect to

the evidence e. Let us suppose that we have a definition of the function c and, based upon this definition, a theorem " c (h, e) ' = q", which states the value of q of c for given h and e . A principle which seems generally recognised, although not always obeyed, says that if we wish to apply such a theorem of the theory of probability to a given knowledge situation, then we have to take as evidence e the total evidence available to the person in question at the time in question, that is to say, his total knowledge of the results of his observations![7]

But why have we to take as evidence the total evidence available to us, whatever that may mean ? What sort of principle is this ? It can hardly be a moral principle . So far as morality goes, we might equally well choose to rely on the evidence which yielded the highest degree of confirmation for the hypothesis in which we were interested, or on that which yielded the lowest, or on whatever evidence we found most pleasing. Unless we miscalculate, the result at which we arrive will in each case be a necessary truth ; and there can surely be no moral reason for prefering any one of these necessry truths to any other . It might be thought that there was a practical reason : and indeed one may suppose that Carnap intended his principle of total evidence to be pragamatic. The suggestion would seem to be that we should trust hypotheses to the degree to which they are confirmed ; and that by taking all the available evidence into account, we diminish

the risk of falling foul on the facts, that is of over or under - estimating the likelihood of the actual occurrence of the event to which our hypothesis refers. This is in accordance with commonsense : but how can it possibly be justicied on Carnap's principles? The event will occur or it will not be to say that there is a probability, of a given degree, that it will occur is to say only that the hypothesis that it will occur is confirmed to that degree by such and such evidence. If this proposition is true, it is necessarily true : but so are all the other true propositions which, on the basis of greater, or less, or partly, or wholly different evidence, assign to the hypothesis a different degree of confirmation. There is no sense in which the proposition which brings in all the available evidence can be superior to any of the others as a measure of probability. And this being so, there can be no practical reason why we should take it as a guide.

Carnap might claim that what we must be understood to mean by saying that a hypothesis is probable in this sense, to a certain degree is just that it is confirmed, to this degree, by the totalityof the evidence which is available to us. But what is this totality ? If it be only'the total knowledge of the results of our observations', then the difficulty will not be met . The probability is to be defined by reference not to the results of all the relevant observations that one happens to have made, but to those of all the relevant observations that one could

make if one chose. The totality of evidence will not as a rule be limited to the evidence.

To say that a statement is probable to such and such a degree will be to say that it is confirmed to that degree by the totality of true statements. There is no need to put in the proviso that these statements must all be relevant, since that the inclusion of irrelevant truths will make no difference to the result . This does indeed yield an objective definition of probability, but it has the fatal disadvantage that the probability of every hypothesis becomes either 0 or I . For the totality of true statements must include either the negation of the hypothesis in question , or the hypothesis itself.

To escape from this predicament, one would have to restrict the range of the available evidence in such a way that it excluded any statement, or set of statement, which entailed either the hypothesis or its negation. And then one might equate the probability of the hypothesis with the degree to which it was confirmed by the totality of true statements that satisfied this condition. One objection to this would be that in assessing probabilities we could never draw an any universal statement of law. For if the event, to which our hypothesis referred were subject to causal laws, the relevant statements of law, when combined with the statements affirming the appropriate initial conditions, would always entail the hypothesis or its negation. We could indeed keep the statements of law if we

excluded the singular statements which joined with them in producing the entailments ; but this would be an absurd proceeding since it is only through establishing singular statements that we ever acquire any evidence at all. And just for this reason, we can afford to forgo the universal statements of law ; for they draw all their support from the singular statements which are derivable from them ; and these we shall have , moreover, statistical laws, with frequencies of less than a hundred percent, will not be excluded, though it may well be argued that they too will be superfluous, if all true singular statements are to be comprised in the available evidence.

A more serious objection to this definition of probability is that it allows us to have very little confidence in any of the judgements of probability that we actually make. For it can very seldom be the case that we in fact know every true singular statement that is relevant to the hypothesis in which we areinterested. But in so far as the evidence at our disposal falls short of the total evidence, we can not infer that the hypothesis which it is supposed to confirm are at all likely to be true. For all that is meant by their being likely to be true is that they are confined, to whatever degree, by the total evidence ; and this is not in our possession. What we want to say is that, even if we can never be sure of having all the requisite evidence, nevertheless by acquiring more evidence, and incorporating it into our calculations, we

bring our estimates of probability nearer to the truth. And clearly thisis the view that Carnap holds. It has been well remarked by Kneale that ' no analysis of the probability relation can be accepted as adequate, i.e., as explaining the ordinary unage of the word " probability", unless it enables us to understand why it is rationale to take as a basis for action a proposition which stands in that relation to the evidence at our disposal.' [8] It is true that one may select a sub class of these necessary propositions and decide to call its members statements of probability ; but in so doing one will beg the question. For the use of the word ' probability ', in this connection, itself implies that it is most rational to act on the basis of the propositions which have thus been selected : and this has not been proved. It is not to be said that probability is in no way relating to evidence. It seems clear that an appeal to evidence is needed to justify the belief that such and such an event is more or less likely to happen ; and also that it is rational in such cases to take all the evidence at our disposal into account, the ground for this being is that experience has shown us that our forecasts are more often right when this is done than what it is not. It does not follow that statements of probability are statements about the relations of hypothesis to their evidence.

2. MUST ALL KNOWLEDGE BE BASED ON EVIDENCE ?

Our evidence for somethings consists of the fact that we have evidence for otherthings. " My evidence that he will keep his promise is the fact that he said he would keep his promise.Must we say of everything for which we have evidence that our evidence for that thing consists in the fact that we have evidence for some other thing ?

In investigating the theory of evidence from a Philosophical point of view, we have to make three general presuppositions.First, we presuppose that there is something that we know and we adopt the working hypothesis that what we know is pretty much that which, on reflection, we think we know.

We presuppose that the things we know are justfied for us in the following sense : We can know what it is, on any occasion, that constitutes our grounds, or reason, or evidence for thinking that we know. If I think that I know that there is now show onthe top of the mountain then I am in a position to say what ground or reason I have for thinking that there is now snow on the top of the mountain. Ludwig Wittgenstein' [9] says : " One says, ' I know' when one is ready to give compelling grounds. 'I know' relates to a positibility of demonstrating the truth whether someone knows something can come to light, assuming that he is convinced of it. But if what he believes is of such a kind that the grounds that he can give are no surer than

his assertion, then he can not say that he knows what he believes. " Of course, from the fact that there is ground for thinking that there is now snow theree from the fact, say, that someone has been there, and seen it, it does not follow that I now have any ground or reason for the belief.

And we presuppose, third, that if we do thus have grounds or reasons for the things we think we know, then there are valid general principles of evidence - principles stating the general conditions under which we may be said to have grounds or reasons for what we believe. C.I. Lewis[10] says: " The nature of the good can be learned from experienced only if the content of experience be first classified into good and bad, or grades of better and worse". Such classification or grading already involves the legislative application of the same principle which is sought. In logic, principles can be elicited by generalisation from examples only if cases of valid reasoning have first been segregated by some criterion. It is this criterion which the generalisation is required to disclose. In esthetics, the laws of the beautiful may be derived from experience only if the criteria of beauty have first been correctly applied."[11] And our concern in investigating the theory of evidence is to find out what these general principles are .

We consider certain things that we know to be true, or think we know to be true, or certain things which we would be willing to call evident. What justification do I have

for thinking I know this thing to be true?" or " what justification do I have for counting this thing as something that is evident ? In beginning with what we think we know to be true, or with what we would be willing to count as being evident, we are assuming that the truth we are seeking is " already implicit in the mind which seeks it, and needs only to be elicited and brought to clear reflection."[11]

There are some philosophers who point out with respect to some things that are quite obviously known to be true, that questions concerning their justification " do not arise " for (they say) to express a doubt concerning such things is to " violate the rules of our language". But their objections do not apply to the type of question that we are discussing here ; for these questions need not be taken to express any doubts or to indicate any attitude of scepticism. Designed only to elicit information, the questions are not challenges and they do not imply or presuppose that there is any ground for doubting, or for suspecting that to which they pertain.[12]

It should be also noted that when we ask ourselves concerning what we may think we know to be true, " what justification do I have for believing this? " or " what justification do I have for thinking I know that this is something that is true ? We are not asking any of the following questions: " What further evidence can I find

in support of this ? " " How did I come to believe this or find out that it is true?" " How would I go about persuading some other reasonable person that it is true?" We must not expect therefore, that answers to these letter questions will be, ipso facto, answers to the questions that we are asking.

In many instances the answers to our questions will take the following form : " What justifies me in thinking that I know that a is F is the fact that it is evident to me that b is G." For example : " what justifies me in thinking I know that he has that disorder is the fact that it is evident to me that he has those symptoms ." Such an answer,therefore, presupposes an epistemic principle, what we might call a " rule of evidence". " If it is evident that he has those symptoms, then it is also evident that he has that disorder". Our justification for counting one thing as evident is the fact that somethingelse is evident. It is a proposition to the effect that if certain conditions obtain, then something may be said to be evident. One could sayof such a rule that it tells us that one thing serves to make another thing evident.

This shifts the burden of justification from one claim to another. For we may now ask," what justifies me in counting it as evident that be is G? " or " what justifies me in thinking I know that be is G ?" And

possibly we will formulate, onceagain, an answer of the first sort : " what justifies me in counting it as evident that b is G is the fact that it is evident that c is H." (" what justifies in counting it as evident that he has those symptoms is the fact that it is evident that his temperature is recorded as being high". And this answer will presuppose still another rule of evidence : "If it is evident that c is H , then it is evident that b is G". But how long can we continue in this way ? We might try to continue ad indefinitum, justifying each new claim that we elicit by still another claim. Sextus Empiricus remarked that every object of apprehension seems to be apprehended either through itself or through another object.[13]

At first considerations, one might suppose that those statements that correctly describe our " experience", or formulate our " perceptions " or " observations", are statements expressing what is directly evidence. But what is expressed by such statements does not satisfy the criteria. In answer to the question, what is my justification for thinking I know that Mr. Smith is here?" One may say, " I see that he is here". A reasonable man will not say. "what justifies me in counting it as evident that I see Mr. Smith is simply the fact that I do see Mr. Smith." We can not say that what we know by means of perception or observation is itself something that is directly evident.

There are those who will say, " what justifies me in counting it as evident that Mr. Smith is here (or that I see Mr. Smith) is simply my present experience ; but the experience itself can not be said to be evident , much less to have evidence conferred upon it."

G.W. Leibnitz points to what is directly evident : " our direct awareness of our own existence and of our own thoughts provides us with the primary truths a posteriori, the primary truths of fact, or, in other words, our primary experiences ; just as identical propositions constitute the primary truths a priori, the primary truths of reason, or, in other words, our primary insights. Neither the one nor the other is capable of being demonstrated and both canbe called immediate – the former, because there is no mediation between the understanding and its objects, and the latter because there is no mediation between the subject and the predicate." [14]

Thinking and believing provide us with paradigm cases of the directly evident. Consider a reasonable man who is thinking about a city he takes to be Patna, or who believes that Patna is in Bihar and suppose to reflect on the Philosophical question, " what is my justification for thinking that I know that I am thinking about a city I take to be Patna, or that I believe that Patna is in Bihar. The man could reply in this way ; " My justification

for thinking I know that I am thinking about a city I take to be Patna, or that I believe that Patna is in Bihar, is simply the fact that I am thinking about a city I take to be Patna, or that I do believe that it is in Bihar.

Our man has stated his justification for a proposition merely by reiterating that proposition. This type of justification is not appropriate to the questions that were previously discussed. Thus, in answer to " what justification do we have for counting it as evident that there can be no life on the moon?" It would be inappropriate - and presumptuous - simply to reiterate," there canbe no life on the moon ". But we can state our justification for certain propositions about our beliefs, and certain propositions about our thoughts, merely by reiterating those propositions. They may be said, therefore, to pertain to what is directly evident.

Borrowing a technical term from Meinong, let us say that if there is something that is directly evident to a man, then there is some state of affairs that " present itself to him," Thus my believing that Socrates is mortal is a state of affairs that is " self - presenting" to me. If I do believe that Socrates is mortal, then, ipso facto, it is evident to me that I believe that Socrates is mortal ; the state of affairs is " apprehended throu-gh itself".

Thus the propositions that are not directly justified may be justified in one or another of three different ways. (1) They may be justified in virtue of the relation they bear to what is directly evident. (2) They may be justified by certain relations they bear to each other. And (3) they maybe justified by their own nature and thus quite independently of the relations they may bear to other propositions.

Looking back to the general principles we have formulated, we may now note the way in which all three phrases of justification are here exemplified. (1) Every propositions we are justified in believing is justified, in part, because of some relation that it bears to the directly evident. (2) The reference to concurrence recognises the importance of the mutual support that is provided, in part, by the logical relations that certain proportions bear to each other. And finally (3) some propositions are such that, by their very nature, they tend to provide a justification for propositions about what one thinks one is perceiving and about what one thinks that one remembers.

In the light of the foregoing discussion we may make the following general observations. Analysis of knowledge is intimately connected with the questions of justifications. And the justification is obtainable in several ways. However, it can not be denied that one important way of justifying knowledge is by pointing to, or citing to, evidences for our knowledge claims. The last is so important that often evidence and justification closely approximate each

other. Our discussion in this chapter, however, has generally tended to reserve to use the conecpt of "evidence" as a species of " justification", which is better regarded as a generic term. In other words, evidence or evidences are supplied, and are sought in case of empirical knowledge. And depending on the nature and strength of the evidences the hypothesis in question can said to be more, or less, probable. We suggest that such evidences are justifications of the knowledge in question. Besides the empirical knowledge, or what can be called the knowledge of empirical hypothesis, or, more technically, a posteriori knowledge ; there is also an important kind of knowlege which is said to be necessary knowledge. As distinct from knowledge of matters of fact, we have the knowledge of relations of ideas. Such knowledge as is well known, does not stand in any need of verification with reference to matters of fact. Naturally, therefore, it is not be justified on the basis of any factual evidences. As stated in the last paragraph such knowledge is evident or rather justified, purely on the basis of relations of ideas. In other words, the justification here comes from reason . Since such knowledge is also known as truths of reason. This is the type of knowledge which Plato and rationalists in general have been aiming at and claiming to be certain. We shall argue later on that this is not the only kind of knowledge that we have and that therefore it is irrational

to claim certainty (in the sense of logical certainty) for all kinds of knowledge. We shall show that it is as irrational as it is to pleade the privilege of sceptic since no knowledge can be certain (in this sense) in the realm of matters of fact. For the present, it is our concern to show that in case of a priori knowledge we can not strictly speak of them being is based on evidence. We have however justification, perhaps a stronger one, for them. Such justifications from reason may also be said to be evidence in a wider sense. But it would be better for the purpose of clarity to speak of evidence only in case of factual knowledge and link the concept of evidence with the concept of probability. Obviously, a priori knowledge, or more appropriately, is not exposed to probability. But obviously also empirical knowledge is not to be downgraded as inferior knowledge or no knowledge properly so called simply because they are probable and not certain in the rationalists' sense. For a general discussion of this question let us turn to the next chapter.

****

R E F E R E N C E

1. J.M. Keyness, "A Treatise on Probability"

2. W. Kneale, "Probability and Induction"

3. Ibid, P.10

4. R. Carnap, "Two concepts of Probability", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Volume V., NO. 4.

5. Vide the Logical Foundations of Probability

6. A.J. Ayer, "The concept of a Person and Other Essays," London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1968, P. 189.

7. R. Carnap," On the Application of Inductive Logic", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Volume. VIII, NO. I.

8. W. Kneale, " Probability and Induction", P.20

9. Ludwig Wittgenstein, " On Certainty", Oxford: Basil Black well, 1969, P.32 e

10. "Mind & the world order", New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929, P.29

11. Ibid, P.19

12. Nelson & Meinong, " Empirical Knowledge ", Readings from Contemporary Sources, R.M. Chisolm & Robert J. Swartz, eds (Englewood cliffs, M.J. Prentice Hall, Inc., 1973.

13. Sextus Empricious," Outlines of Pyrrohism", Cambridge University Press, Book. I., Chapter. VI

14. G.W. Leibnitz, "New Essays Concerning Human Understanding", La Salle, III, Open Court Publishing Company, 1916, Book IV, Chapter. X.

****
*****
***
*

C H A P T E R _ III

QUEST FOR CERTAINTY

1. DOGMA AND DOUBT

" Custom does not breed understanding", says Santayana, " but takes its place, teaching people to make their way contendedly through the world without knowing what the world is, nor what they think of it, nor what they are . When their attention is attracted to some remarkable thing, say to the rainbow, this thing is not analysed nor examined from various points of view, but all the causal resources of the fancy are called forth in conceiving it, and this total reaction of the mind precipitates a dogma ; the rainbow is taken for an omen of fair weather, or for a trace left in the sky by the passage of some beautiful and elusive goddess".[1] Such a dogma is a fresh and additional object in itself. The original passive perception remains unchanged. The thing remains unfathomed. As its diffuse influence has by chance bred one dogma today, it may breed a different dogma tomorrow. We have therefore, always greater confusion. Besides the original fantastic inadequacy of our perceptions a new uncertainty as to whether these dogmas are relevant to the original, or are themselves really clear, or if so, which of them is true.

A prosperous dogmatism is indeed not impossible. We may have such determinate minds that the suggestions of experience always issue there in the same dogmas ; and these orthodox dogmas, perpetually revived by the stimulus of things, may become our dominant, or even our

sole, apprehension of them. We shall really have moved to another level of mental discourse ; we shall be living on ideas. The more perfect the dogma, the more it is insecure. A great high top-sail that can never be refeed nor furled is the first carried away by the gale. Many obviously fabulous dogmas, like those of religion, might for ever dominate the most active minds, except for one circumstance. In the jungle one tree strangles another , and luxuriance itself is murderous. So in luxuriance in the human mind, what kills spontaneous fictions, what recalls the impassioned fancy from its improvisation, is the angry voice of some contrary fancy. Criticism arises out of the conflict of dogmas. Though the criticism may be expressed hypothetically, as for instance, in saying that if any child knew his own father he would be a wise child, yet the point on which doubt is thrown is a point of fact, and that there are fathers and children is assumed dogmatically. Scepticism is a suspicion of error about facts, and to suspect error about facts is to share the enterprise of knowledge, in which facts are presupposed and error is possible. The sceptic thinks himself shrewd, and often is so ; his intellect may have some inkling of the true hang and connection of things ; he may have pierced to a truth of nature behind current illusions. Since his criticism may thus be true and his doubt well grounded, they are certainly assertions ; and if he is sincerely a sceptic, they are assertions which he is ready to maintain stoutly. Scepticism is accordingly

a form of belief. Dogma cannot be abandoned ; it can only be revised in view of some more elementary dogma which it has not yet occured tothe sceptic to doubt ; and he may be right in every point of his criticism, except in fancying that his criticism is radical and that he is altogether a sceptic.

It is a fair presumption that when people try to solve a problem in order to know something, the result will be either its discovery or a confession of non-discovery and of its non-apprehensibility or preservance in the search, perhaps this is the reason why in philosophical research some claim to have discovered the truth, while others find it as impossibility, and others still continue seeking it.The sceptic is neither of the first type nor of the second one but belong to the category who goes on searching and are not satisified with the results of both. For this reason they are called the seekers.

Scepticism is no selection of dogmas. It is not a preference for certocin propositions, but only that which leads or directs us to live rightly or think correctly. It is in this way rather a method or manner by which unversal modes of that oppositions are shown. Everything that is felt or thought in order to show this is not what is implicitly contained in it but only in relation to one another. So, it thus appears in another and allows this

other to appear in it.

In the sphere of knowledge, no knowledge is possible without its being certain because they are co-relative in nature. One without the other is an impossibility. So also, in case of certainty and scepticism. If there is no certainty which is the foundation of something basing upon which one cannot doubt that thing, then one can not doubt anything at all. In the popular sense of the word, a sceptic is one who doubts or questions what are usually called truths. One may doubt very few things or may doubt all things or may doubt certain kinds of opinion. But the term scepticism in its philosophical sense means something much narrower than as it is used in the popular sense.

It is the attitude which can be called to kind lead the way to more accurate and scientific knowledge. It always goes against dogmatic way of doing anything and simple acceptance of facts without proper justification. This type of scepticism starts with the question , how do I know that it is true? Sufficient evidences and justifications ends the process of dounting. The characteristic mark of scientific scepticism is that it is practical in nature and the doubt can be settled by experience and facts.

" That scepticism should intervene in philosophy at all is an accident of human history, due tomuch unhappy experience of perplexity and error".[2] The brute necessity of believing something so long as life lasts does not satisfy

any belief in particular ; nor does it assure me that not to live would not be far safer and saner. To be dead and have no opinions would certainly not be to discover the truth ; but if all opinions are necessarily false, it would at least be not to sin against intellectual honour.

The philosophy of the common man is an old wife that gives him no pleasure, yet he can not live without her, and resents any aspersions that strangers may cast on her character.Of his homely philosophy the tender cuticle is religious belief. People are not naturally sceptics, wondering if a single one of their intellectual habits can be reasonably preserved ; they are dogmatists angrily confident of maintaining them all. Integral minds, pupils of a single coherent tradition, regard their religion as certain, as sublime, and as the only rational basis of morality and policy. Yet in fact religious belief is terribly precarious, partly because it is arbitrary, so that in the next tribe or next century it will wear quite a different form ; and partly because, when genuine, it is spontaneous and contunually remodelled, like poetry, in the heart. That gives it birth. A man of the world soon learns to discredit established religions on account of their variety and absurdity, although he may good - naturedly continue to confirm to his own ; and a mystic before long begins fervently to condemn current dogmas, on account of his own different inspiration. Without philosophical criticism, therefore,

mere experience and good sense suggest that all positive religions are false, or at least that they are all fantastic and insecure.

The postulates on which empirical knowledge and inductive science are based - namely, that there has been a past, that it was such as it is now thought to be, that there will be a future and that it must, resemble the past and obey the same laws - these are all gratuitous dogmas. The sceptic in his honest retreat knows nothing of a future, and has no need of such an unwarrantable idea. The world present to the sceptic may continue to fade into these opposite abysses, the past and the future ; but having renounced all prejudice and checked all customary faith, he will regard both as painted abysses only, like the opposite exits to the country and to the city on the ancient stage. The sceptic is not committed to the implications of other man's language ; nor he be convicted out of his own mouth by the names he is obliged to bestow on the details of his momentary vision. Scepticism is not concerned to abolish ideas ; it can relish the variety and order of a pictured world, or of any number of them in succession, without any of the qualms and exclusions proper to dogmatism. Its case is simply not to credit these ideas, not to posit any of these fancied worlds, nor this ghostly mind imagined as viewing them. The attitude of the sceptic is not inconsistent ; it is merely difficult, because

it is hard for intellect to keep its cake without eating it very voracious dogmatists like Spinoza even assert that it is impossible, but the impossibilityis only psychological, and due to their voracity ; they no doubt speak truely for themselves when they say that the idea of a horse if not contradicted by some other idea, is a belief that the horse exists ; but this would not be the case if they felt no impulse to ride that imagined horse, or to get out of its way .

2. PHILOSOPHY AND KNOWLEDGE

The world in which we live is facing unprecented problems. Philosophy ought to deal with the pressing intellectual problems of our time, and it ought to be relevant to everyday human situations. For most of its history philosophy has been thus concerned, but in recent decades many philosophers in the western world have turned their attention almost exclusively to past philosophizing or to a discussion of the terms and language through which thoughts maybe expressed . A knowledge of the past is crucial, since he who neglects the past is likely to repeat the mistakes of the past and to forget that the present has grown out of the past. A knowledge of terms and the structure and uses of language is also important, but we must not substitute the study of instruments - logic, semantics and linguistic analysis - for the study of the basic problems - the perennial problems of philosophy. As Philosophers of the past have turned away from the world, the world has ceased to look to Philosophy

for guidance in facing its new and pressing problems. " In the hour of peril, the watch man who ought to have kept us awake was himself asleep, and the result was that we put up no fight at all on behalf of our civilization".[3]

Every individual has a philosophy, even though he may not be aware of it.We all have some ideas concerning physical objects, our fellowmen, the meaning of life and nature, death, god, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, and the like. Of course these ideas are acquired in a variety of ways, and they may be vague and confused. Especially, during the early years of our lives, we are continuously engaged, with varying degrees of consciousness, inacquiring views and attitudes from our family, from companions, and from various other individuals and groups. These attitudes may come to us through custom and tradition as expressed by behaviour in home, school and place of worship. They may largely be the result of some thinking on our part ; or they may be largely the result of convention and emotional bias.

It is by its methods and subject matter that Philosophy can be distinguished from other arts or sciences. Philosophers commonly rely on arguments both to support their own theories. They also rely on arguments to refute the theories of others. The proof of the statement is not like the proof of a mathematical statement. It is not like the proof of a statement in any of the descriptive sciences. Philosophical

theories are not tested by observation. They are neutral with respect to particular matters of fact . This does not mean that philosophers are not concerned with facts. All the evidence which bears upon their problems is already available to them. It is not further scientific information that is needed to decide such philosophical questions . Philosophers are given to asking such questions as what is mind ? What is the nature of self ? What sort of a relation is causality ? It must not be supposed that a Philosopher who asks what sort of a relation is causality ? is looking for the kind of information that a sociologist might give him. His problem is not that he is unable to explain them. It is not as if Philosophers do not understand how words like 'mind' or (causality' or ~~how words~~ self are actually used.

We may discover the sense of the Philosopher's question by seeing what further question it incorporates, and what sorts of statement the attempt to answer it leads him to make . Thus he may enquire whether the different cases in which we speak of knowing have any one thing in common ; whether they are alike in implying the presence of some special state of mind.He may maintain that there is no difference in kind between knowing and believing, or, alternatively, that knowing is a special sort of mental

act. If he thinks it correct to speak of acts of knowing, he may go on to enquire into the nature of their objects. Does knowing make a difference to what is known? Is it necessary to distinguish between the sorts of things that can be known directly and those that can be known only indirectly ? It is Philosophically misleading to talk of knowing objects at all. It maybe possible to show that what appears to be an instance of knowing some object always comes down to knowing that something is the case. In this sense what is known must be true, whereas what is be believed may very well be false . It is also possible to believe what is in fact true without knowing it. Surely someof our claims to knowledge must be capable of being justified. But in what ways can we justify them? The question is whether the various sorts of knowing have any one thing in common and the suggestion is that this common feature is a mental state or act. Very often we have no way of saying what is common to the things to which the same word applies except by using the word itself . How should we describe the distinctively common feature of red things except by saying that they are all red ? It might be said that what the things that we call ' games ' have in common is just that they are games ; The Oxford English Dictionary defines a game as'a diversion of the nature of a contest, played according to rules, and decided by superior skill, strength, or good fortune'. But not all games are diversions, in the

sense of being played for fun, games of patience are hardly contests, though they are decided by skill and luck ; children's games are not always played according to rules ; acting games need not be decided. Wittgenstein,[4] from whom I have taken this example, concludes that we can not find anything common to all games, but only ' a complicated net work of similarities' which' overlap and crisscross' in the same way as the resemblances between people who belong to the same family. "Games", he says, " form a family." The point which Wittgenstein's argument brings out is that the resemblance between the things to which the same word applies may be of different degrees. It is looser and less straightforward in some cases than in others.

It can not be held that knowledge is always knowledge that something is the case. A dog knows its master, a baby knows its mother, but they do not know any statements to be true. There is a sense in which knowing something, in this usage of the term, is always a matter of knowing what it is ; and in this sense it can perhaps be represented as knowing a fact, as knowing that something is so. Much the same applies to the cases where knowing is a matterof knowing how. Certainly, when people possesses skills, even intellectual skills, like the ability to act or teach, they are not consciously aware of the procedures which they follow. They use the appropriate means to attain their ends. There are a great many things that people habitually

do well,without remarking how they do them. This does not mean that their performances are unintelligent . As Professor Ryle has pointed out,[5] the display of intelligence lies in the manner of performance, rather than in its being accompanied or preceded by any conscious recognition of the facts. The performer does not need to tell himself that if such and such things are done, then such and such will follow. He may do so, but equally he may not : and even when he does it is not because of this that his performance is judged to be intelligent. This point is convincingly established by Professor Ryle. It may be taken to imply that the resemblances between the different ways of having, or manifesting, knowledge are closer and neater than they really are.

For the most part the things that we claim to know are not presented to us in an aura of revelation. We learn that they are so, and from then on we unquestionably accept them. But this is not a matter of having any special feelings. It is a not certain that to have a feeling of conviction is even a sufficient condition for being sure ; for it would seem that a conscious feeling of complete conviction may co-exist with an unconscious feeling of doubt. But whether or not it ever is sufficient, it clearly is not necessary. One can be sure without it . And equally its presence is not necessary for the possession, or even for the display, of knowledge.

The fact is as Professor Austin has pointed out[6] that the expression' I know', commonly has what he calls a ' Performative ' rather than a descriptive use. To say that I know that something is the case, though it does imply that I am sure of it, is not so much to report my state of mind as to vouch for the truth of whatever it may be . If I teell you that I believe something which I do not I am misinforming you only about my mental attitude ; but if I tell you that I know something which I do not, the chances are that I am misinforming you about the truth of the statement which I claim to know, or if not about its truth, then about my authority for making it.

Unless some states of mind are cogni-tive it maybe said how can we come to know anything. We may make the truth of some statements depend upon the truth of others, but this process can not go on for ever. There must be some statements of empirical fact which are directly verified. And in what can this verification consist except in our having the appropriate experiences ? But then these experiences will be cognitive : to have whatever experience it may be will itself be a way of knowing something to be true. And a similar argument applies to a priori statements, like those of logic or pure mathematics. We may prove one mathematical statements deducing if from others, but the proof must start somewhere. There must be at least one state-ment which is accepted without such proof, an axiom of

some sort which is known intuitively. Even if we are able to explain away our knowledge of such axioms, by showing that they are true , by definition, we still have to see that a set of definitions is consistent. To conduct any formal proof, we have to be able to see that one statement follows logically from another.

The base of this argument is sound. We have to see that certain proofs are valid, and it is through having some experience that we discover the truth or falsehood of any statement of empirical fact . In the case of some such statements it may be that our having certain experiences verifies them conclusively. But in any such case what verifies the statement, whether conclusively or not, is the existence of the experience, not the confidence that we may have some description of it. This is the ground for saying that if I have such an experience, I know that I am having it. But in this sense my knowing that I am having experience is just my having it and being able to identify it . It maybe still correct if it is a way of saying that the experience is recognised for what it is by the person who is having it, though, such recognition can be mistaken. It is not correct if it is taken as implying that the experience either consists in or includes a process of infallibility apprehending some statement to be true.

Similarly, what makes it true that the conclusion of a syllogism follows from the premises is that the

inferance exemptifies a law of logic. There will come a point when we are reduced to saying some logical statement simply that itis valid. Now to say that such a statement is valid is to see that it is so, but it is not made valid by our seeing that it is. It is valid in its own right. If someone thinks that he may have been mistaken in accepting some logical statement which had seemed to him evidently true, there may be nothing for him to do but just look at it again. And if this second look confirms the first, his doubts may reasonably be put to rest . But the truth of the statement does not logically follow from the fact that it continues to strike him as self-evident. Truths of logica make no reference to persons, they can not be established by any mere description of some person's mental state.

This is not to say that we do not know the truth of any a priori statements, or even that we do not know some of them intuitively. If to know them intuitively is to know them without proof. An a priori statement means a statement which is necessarily true which needs no verification by further experience. It holds true everywhere and always, without investigating all the various cases to which it applies. For example if some one is at Bhadrak we do not need to investigate further to discover whether he is also at Balasore. If we know that something is red, we do not have to investigate further to discover whether itis coloured. Our argument no more implies this than it implies that we

can not know any empirical statements to be true. Existentialist Philosopher have gone to deny the law of identity and even to speak of ' the nothing' as if it were a special sort of agent, one of whose functions was to divide consciousness from itself. It depends upon the initial mistake of assuming that a naive analysis in termsof act and object yields an account of knowledge. Besides, existentialists, other Philosophers have made the mistake of treating knowledge as though it consisted in the possession of an inner search light. Some Philosophers have held that moral and aesthetic values can be objects of knowledge. Numbers and abstract entities have also been included. Plato indeed seems to have thought that these were the only things that could be really known. It is taken for granted that whatever the searchlight can illuminate must in some manner exist . Followers of Plato are apt to make such pronouncements as that ' the perfectly real can alone be perfectly known ;[7] but Ayer points out, " it is not clear even what this means unless it is merely a portentaus way of saying that one can not."[8] Know what is not the case for example the fact that historical statements can be known does not conclude that the past is real, unless to say that the past is real is just a way of saying that there are historical statements which are true".

The mistaken doctrine that knowing is an infalliable state of mind may have contributed to the view

that the only statements that it is possible to know are those that are themselves in some way infallible. The ground for this opinion is that if one knows something to be true one can not be mistaken. There is a necessary transition from being known to being true ; but that is not to say that what is true ; and known to be true, is necessary or certain itself. If we are not to be bound by ordinary usage, it is still open to us to make it a rule that only what is certain can be known. That is not to use the word 'know' except with the implication that what was known was necessarily true, or, perhaps certain in some other sense. The consequence would be that we could still speak of knowing the truth of a priori statements, such as those of logic and pure mathematics ; and if there were any empirical statements, such as those describing the content of one's present experience, that were certain in themselves, they too might be included : but most of what we know correctly claim to know would not be knowable, in this alleged strict sense. Every school boy knows that is is possible to be unsure about a mathematical truth whether there are any empirical statements which are in any important sense indubitable is a matter of dispute.

3. QUEST FOR CERTAINTY : AN ATTEMPT IN FUTILITY

If a man knows that a proposition is true, then he is justified in believing that there is no truth that could disturb the cause that he has for that proposition. Scholastic philosophers have put this point by saying that, if a man knows a proportion to be true, then his grounds for the proposition are " sufficient to exclude all prudent fear of error; " the man need not fear that anything will show the proposition to be false. A.J. Ayer has said, similarly, that knowledge implies " having the right to be sure".[9]

But does not this lead to a kind of dogmatism and infallibilism that is inconsistent withthe spirit of free inquiry ? Thus John Dewey said that, since knowledge gives us the right to be sure, it " terminates inquiry"; if a man knows a proposition tobe true, then, so far as that proposition is concerned, he may regard his inquiry to be closed. " That which satisfactorily terminates inquiry is, by definition, knowledge ; it is knowledge because it is the appropriate close of inquiry.[10] In other words, if we know, we need not inquire any further and there is no need for us to consider any evidence indicating that we might be mistaken in thinking that we know. But Dewey took this fact to show, not that we ever do thus have the right to terminate inquiry, but rather that there is very little, if anything, that we ever really know.

If we know that a certain proposition is true , then we have the right to use that proposition, along with the other things we know, in calculating probabilities. We have a right to be sure that, to the extent that we rely on that proposition as a basis for calculating the probabilities of other propositions, our d ecision will be reasonable ones.

But to say that we have this right to be sure is not to say that we have the right to terminate inquiry or to disregard any future evidence that seems to tell against what it is that we are now justified in thinking that we know. For it is one thing to have the right to use a certain proposition in calculating probabilities ; it is another thing to have the right to close one's mind to the possibility that one might be wrong.

It is possible to be completely sure of something which is in fact true, but yet not to know it. The circumstances may be that one is not entitled to be sure. If someone were fully persuaded of a mathematical proposition by a proof which could be shown to be invalid, he would not be said to know the proposition, even though it was true. People may be credited with knowing truths of mathematics or logic if they are able to give a valid proof of them, or even if, without themselves being able to set out such a proof, they have obtained this

information from someone who can. Claims to know empirical statements may be upheld by a reference to perception, or to memory, or to testimony, or to historical records, or to scientific laws. But such backing is not always strong enough for knowledge. Whether it is so or not depends upon the circumstances of the prarticular case.

There is epistemic praise that is even higher than " beyond reasonable doubt". For example, we may say of a proposition , not only that it is beyond reasonable doubt, for a man at a certain time, but also that it is certain, or absolutely certain , for that man at that time. We could say that a proposition is certain if it is beyond reasonable doubt and if it is at least as reasonable as any other proposition.

It is assumed that without a basis of certainty all our claims to knowledge must be suspect unless somethings are certain nothing can even be probable.

The word " certain" isoften used as a synonym for 'necessary' or for' a priori'. No empirical statements are certain.Because they are not necessary in the way that a priori statements are. They can all be denied without self -contradiction. An a priori statement is that whose negation is self contradictory. So some philosophers take a priori statements as their ideal.

like leibnitz some philosophers put all true statements on a level with those of formal logic or pure mathematics. All empirical statements are contingent. Even if they are true they can be denied without self contradiction. Empirical statements would not be descriptive of anything that happens if they were certain in the logical sense. " In demanding for empirical statements the safeguard of ligical necessity, these Philosophers have failed to see that they would rob them of their factual content".[11]

This is not the only way in which their ideal of a priori statements fails them. Such statements are unassailable, because if they are true there are no circumstances in which they could be false. However, from the fact that a priori statements , if they are true, are unassailable in this sense, it does not follow that they are immune from doubt . It is possible to believe an a priori statement to be true when it is not. On the other hand, it is possible to make mistakes in mathematics or in logic. It is vain to look for an infalliable state of intuition, which would provide a logical guarantee that *no mistake was being made. It may be objected that* the only reason for any given a priori statement is false is that it contradicts some other which is true, as we can discover our errors shows that we have the power to correct them. If we find ourselves sometimes to be mistaken in accepting an a priori statement it is because

all that we accept are false, is incompatible with it.

There is no special set of a priori statements of which it can be said that just these are beyond the reach of doubt. The doubt would not be serious in some instances. If it be suggested that the Proof of the validity of some ' logical principle is suspect, one may obtain reassurance by going over it again." When one is satisfied that there is nothing wrong with it, then to insist that it may still not be valid, that the conclusion may not really have been proved is merely to pay lip-service to human fallibility."[12] The doubt is maintained indefinitely because nothing is going to count as its being resolved. And just for this reason it is not serious. To say that it is not serious is not logically to exclude it . There may be doubt so long as there is the possibility of error. There must be the possibility of error with respect to any statement, whether empirical or a priori, which is such that from the fact that someone takes it to be so it does not follow logically that it is so. In the case of a priori statements there maybe no other ground for accepting them than that one sees them to be true.

Philosophers look to a priori statements for safe because they assume that in as much as these statements may themselves be certain, in the sense of being becessary, they can be certainly known. It is maintained that only

what is certainly true can be certainly known. But a priori statements canbe known not because they are necessary but because they are true and because we may be entitled to feel no doubt about their truth. The reason maybe that we can prove them, or even just that we can see them to be valid ; in either case there is an appeal to intuition, since we have at some point to claim to be able to see the validity of a proof. If the validity of every proof had to be proved in its turn, we should fall into an infinite regress. To allow that there are times when we may justifiably claim the right to be sure of the truth of an a priori statement is not to allow that our intuitions are infalliable. One is conceded the right to be sure when one is judged to have taken every reasonable step towards making sure : but this is still logically consistent with one's being in error.

The discovery of error refutes the claim to knowledge ; but it does not prove that the claim was not, in the circumstances, legitimately made. The claim to know an a priori statement is satisfied only if the statement is true. It is legitimate if it has the appropriate backing, which may incertain cases, consist in nothing more than the statement's appearing to be self evident. Even so, it may fail : but if such claims were legitimate only when there was no logical possibility of error, they could not properly be made at all .

Descartes regarded mathematics as the paradigm of knowledge. He was aware that its a priori truths are not indubitable in the sense that he required. He allowed it to be possible that a malignant demon should deceive him even with respect to those matters of which he was the most certain. The demon would work upon his reason so that he took false statements to be self evidently true. Then Descartes raises a question whether, of all the propositions which we think we know, there can be any that escape the demon's reach. His answer is that thereis one proposition : the famous cogito, ergo sum : I think, therefore, I am . Even allowing that the expression 'I am doubting whether I am thinking' describes a possible situation, the doubt must be unwarranted. If I believe that I am thinking, then I must believe truly, since my believing that I am thinking is itself a process of thought, Consequently, if I am thinking, it is indubitable that I am thinking, and if it is indubitable that I am thinking, then, Descartes argues, it is indubitable that I exist, at least during such times as I think.

That I think and consequently, I exist is not a question for psychology. It is not the statement that I am thinking itself the expression of a necessary truth. If it seems to be necessary, it is because of the absurdity of denying it . To say ' I am not thinking' is self stultifying. I am now thinking but I might easily not

have been. And the same applies to the statement that I exist. It would be ansurd for me to deny that I existed. If I say that I do not exist, it must be false. It is a fact that I exist, but not a necessary fact.

As Ayer strongly points out[13] neither 'I think' nor ' I exist ' is a truth of logic : the logical truth is only that I exist if I think. Even if they were truths of logic they would not for that reason be indubitable. The sense in which I can not doubt the statement that I think is just that my doubting it entails its truth : and in the same sense I can not doubt that I exist. There was therefore no need for Descartes to derive ' sum' from ' cogito' ; for its certainty could be independently established by the same criterion. Descartes' argument does not prove that he or anyone, knows anything. It simply makes the logical point that one sort of statement follows from another. What do you mean, how do I know that I exist? I am here, am I not, talking to you ? If a ' Philosophical answer were insisted on, it might be said that I proved that I existed and that I was conscious by appealing to my experience. Any feeling or perception that I cared to instance would do equally well. When Hume looked for an impression of his self, he failed to find one : he always stumbled instead upon some particular perception. He allowed that others might be luckier, but in this he was ironical.

It is not that to have an experience of one's self is to perform a remarkably difficult feat of introspection : it is that there is nothing that would count as having an experience of one's self, that the expression ' having an experience of one's self is one for which there is no use. It is that the consciousness of one's self is not one experience among others, not even, as some have thought, a special experience which accompanies all the others. It is a matter of logic but not psychology.

If there is no distinctive experience of finding out that one is conscious, or that one exists, there is no experience at all of finding out that one is not conscious, or that one does not exist. For this reason it is tempting to say that sentences like ' I exist', ' I am conscious, ' I know that I exist', do not express genuine propositions. That Mr. X exists or that Mr. X is conscious is a genuine proposition ; but it may be argued that it is not what is expressed by ' I exist' or ' I am conscious, even when I am Mr. X. Although it be true that I am Mr. X, it is not necessarily true . The word 'I' is not synonymous with ' Mr. X ' even when it is used by Mr. X to refer to himself.

We see that certainty of one's own existence is not the outcome of some primary intuition, an intuition which would have the distinctive property of guaranteeing the

truth of the statement on which it was directed.It is indeed the case that if anyone claims to know that he exists, or that he is conscious, he is bound to be right. It is simply a consequence of the purely logical fact that if he is in any state it follows that he exists, if he is in any conscious state it follows that he is conscious. He might exist without knowing it ; he might even be conscious without knowing it ; as is presumably the case with certain animals : there is at any rate no contradiction in supposing them to be conscious without supposing them to be conscious of themselves. But if anyone claims to know that he exists or that he is conscious, his claim must be valid, simply because its being valid is a condition of its being made. Knowing that I exist, knowing that thisis here, is having the answer to a question which is put in such a form that it answers itself. The answer is meaningful only in its context, and in its context the condition of its being meaningful is its being true. This is the ground for saying that statements like ' I exist ' are certain, but As Ayer, rightly says"it isalso the proof of their degeneracy : they have nothing to say beyond what is implied in the fact that they have a reference".[14]

It follows from the above discussion that no empirical statements are certain. They are not necessary in the way that a priori statements are. It is possible to believe an

priori statements to be true when it is not . There is no special set of a priori statements of which it can be said that just these are beyond the reach of doubt. There must be the possibility of error with respect to any statement, whether empirical or a priori. I have discussed why the sentences like ' I may exist'. ' I am conscious ' do not express genuine propositions . Mr. A exists or Mr. A is conscious is a genuine proposition. Statements like ' I exist' are certain. Thus quest for certainty is an attempt in futility.

******
****
*

R E F E R E N C E

1. George Santayana," Scepticism & Animal Faith", Dover Publications, INC, 1955,P.6

2. Ibid, P. 9

3. Albert Schweitzer, " The Philosophy of Civilization", Newyork : Macmillan, 1949,P.8

4. L.Wittgenstein, " Philosophical Investigations," Tr. by Anscombe and von right Basil Blacknell edition Oxford, 1968, Part. I,P.31- 32 .

5. G. Ryle," The Concept of Mind," Penguin book Series, 1976,Chapter. II,P.28

6. J.L. Austin," Other Minds", Supplemtnary Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,Vol.XX, P.171.

7. Dean Inge," Philosophy & Religion", Contemporary British Philosophy,Ist Series,P.191

8. A.J. Ayer," The Problem of Knowledge," Penguin reprint, 1980, First Published in 1956,P. 21

9. Ibid, P.35

10. John Dewey, " Logic,the Theory of Enquiry", Newyork : Henry Holt & Co., 1938,P.8

11. A.J.Ayer, " The Problem of Knowledge," Penguin reprint, 1980, First Published in 1956,P. 42

12. Ibid, P.43

13. Ibid, P. 46

14. Ibid, P.53- 54

****
******
******
***

C H A P T E R – IV

CONCLUDING ESTIMATE

Epistemology has been one of the major concerns of any philosophical system through ages. Philosophy has been variously described as love of wisdom, quest for knowledge etc. It has been observed more often than not that systems of metaphysica have been neither based on, or closely connected with, a systematically developed theory of knowledge. Analysis of knowledge, therefore, is an inevitable feature of philosophic enquiry. I have tried, in the foregoing, to make a specific attempts to analyse knowledge in its various facets. What has caused a puzzling problems in the history of Philosophy was the definition of knowledge in terms of certainty. It is not that the idea of knowledge and that of certainty are alien to each other. On the contrary, it makes perfectly good sense to say that every knowledge is certain. Moreover, to say that something is known, and yet one is not sure of it is a very odd way of talking if not, a straight forward contradition. However, the sense of certainty is in need of a more elastic interpretation and understanding than what tradition has made it out to be. This is the way in which, following, the lead of recent day functional analysis, pioneered primarily by Wittgenstein in his later writings, I have tried to interpret the idea of knowledge and certainty in the above discussion. Perhaps a more elaborate account of certainty is still

necessary. This I propose to do in this chapter. In the light of my discussion on certainty the concept of knowledge as analysed in the previous chapters will be elucidited more pointedly.

It has been fashionable, amongst the rationalists in particular and metaphysicians in general, to emphasise a distinction between what is certain and what is probable . It can be easily seen that this distinction is based on another familiar dichotomy that has been made by Philosophers between the analytic and synthetic statements or between the necessary and contingent truths. The property of certainty was specifically reserved for attribution to the formar. In another words, only " truths of reason" i.e. truths of mathematics, geometry formal logic and the like ones were allowed to be called certain and truths regarding matters of act were only to be described as probable hypothesis. This was not merely a legacy of logical empiricism of the type advocated by logical positivists and earlier by Hume . This stringent idea of certainty was also idealised by the rationalists and Platonists. The traditional rationalists were so much obsessed by this idea of certainty that they refused to call anything, that relates to a matter of fact obtainable through sense perception ; knowledge properly so called. All knowledge must come through reason and reason alone and thus truths of reason are only to be called as knowledge. In this tradition anything that is knowable must

be certain in the sense of ' absolutely certain'. Of course they considered that besides reason there is another source of knowledge, i.e, sense perception, but they deliberately describe such knowledge as knowledge improperly so called. To these philosophers that which is absolutely certain can only be knowable. Consequently the word knowledge was used in this limited sense to be applied within the confines of the necessary truths or the truths of reason. The empiricists, on the other hand, were not to lag behind. The empiricists, insisting that the only source of knowledge is sense perception can give us probable hypotheses, no knowledge is possible. In this thay were displaying the same quest for certainty which their rationalist adversaries were after. Both of them, in effect, were looking for logical certainty as the standard of certainty as the standard of certainty and both were also making this the touchstone of knowledge. As a result, the one ended in scepticism and the other in onesided view of knowledge. We have seen in the last chapter that the sceptic's achievement was a vacuous triumph. Following A.J. Ayer, we feel like declaring, not only with respect to sceptic as Ayer did, but also with respect to rationalists as he did not, that the philosophers set their standards too high.[1] Ironical though it may sound, it was irrational on their part to look for certainty (logical certainty) where certainty is not obtainable, We know pretty well, and the empiricists were right in this, that factual

knowledge is one and all probable hypothesis. As such it is absurd and futile to declare that, since none of this is logically certain, there can be no knowledge regarding matters of fact.

By contrast it can not but be admitted that neither 'knowledge' nor 'certainty' is used in this strict sense as the philosophers – rationalists and empiricists alike – have deluded themselves into thinking as we have seen in the discussion above. It makes perfect sense to say that one know that 2 + 2 is equal to 4 as well as that the earth goes round the sun. It will be a parody of philosophical cautiousness that the first is called knowledge and the second is not. Scientific knowledge is as good knowledge as the knowledge of mathematics and formal Logic . Plato was only displaying one sided theory of knowledge in claiming that the only thing that can be known are those that are logically certain. The use of words, as Wittgenstein has convincingly shown is not something fixed and unchanging nor is it something that is absolute . If ordinary language analysis has anything to teach us it is the lesson that words may and do have various senses as applied in various contexts. If the idea of 'open texture ' has anything teachable it is the relativity of the function of our words as relative to the contexts of their use. The word 'know' is no exception to it. It is a familiar fact of language and common knowledge of every educated user of language that 'know' and 'knowledge'

are applied with perfect sense to both the contexts of formal truths and material truths. It is also a familiar feature of such words that they do not make the matters of fact knowable in any inferior way than the facts of mathematics and formal logic. It is perfectly in keeping with the practice of ordinary usage that we know matters of fact. We know them despite our conscious awareness that they are highly probable hypotheses, purely contingent truths and can be denied without self-contradiction. We also know it fully well that these truths, fallible as they are, do not constitute a body of inferior knowledge. On the contrary our knowledge of the external world is rich with contents, is full of significant information and aids the progress and development of human knowledge. In this respect perhaps they are autonomous in their own field, superior, in some sense, to our knowledge of mathematics and formal logic. It is superior because the knowledge of the last is factually empty. As Ayer has pointed out in his otherwise famous book Language, Truth and Logic[2], our knowledge of mathematics and formal logic, indeed of all analytic truths, is a body of tautologies. They are either obvious or explicit tautologies or implict tautologies. In many case they do not give us any knowledge of fact. No information is added, no progress in knowledge is achieved. As Wittgenstein so tellingly put it in his Tractatus, Logico-philosophicus,[3] tautologies and contradictions

say the same thing, i.e., nothing. Because while one includes all possibilities the other excludes them all. Factual truths tell us nothing. So their being logically certain or absolutely certain becomes epistemically unhelpful as a body of knowledge. Therefore they can be very well described as a degenerate knowledge, to borrow that interesting adjectives ~~for~~ from Ayer[4]. All this makes it clear that at least in some sense we can speak of the knowledge of matters of fact as knowledge proper - in sharp contrast to the rationalists' description of them as knowledge improperly so called. It is interesting how a proper descriptive analysis of the concept of knowledge reveals utter vacuousness of the metaphysicians' description of knowledge. It also enlightens us regarding the justification of the concept of knowledge as applied to the cases of matters of fact. We do not say, it would be indeed very odd to say, we have merely probable opinion about the external world. We do say, and we are justified in saying, that we have knowledge of our [external] world, that we know the external world beyond any reasonable doubt.

But do we know the external world really ? It may be objected. Can we have the knowledge of external world which obviously is not certain ? Are our knowledge of the external world, probable, as they are, not to be called certain ? Can we use the word 'knowledge' in a context where we can not use the word certain. This brings us to the crux of the problem. They reply to this is

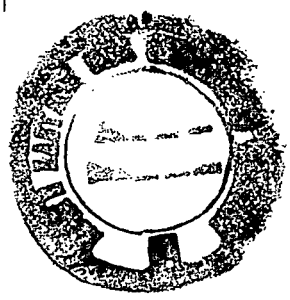
that we may not and need not have to be that circumspect. We can still stick to the philosophical requirement that to know something is to be sure of it - To know X is to have the right to be sure of it. An uncertain knowledge is certainly not to be knowledge proper perhaps the two words 'knowledge' and 'certainty' are afterall family words. Perhaps they must go together. Surely to say that I know that p but that I am not sure of it is self - stultifying. How then can we describe this situation ? Are we to look for absolute certainty in the realm of matters of fact and end in scepticim in default thereof? I suggest that the situation is not as depressing as it appears. As we have seen above in the last chapter, it is a dogmatism that leads to scepticism. The dogmatism is the belief that all knowledge must be absolutely certain.[5] This is the dogma that found expression in Plato's claim that one can know only that which is absolutely certain. It is easy to see that this dogma is a myth and that the knowledge situation can be properly explained by exploding the myth. The myth can be exploded by putting pressure on the concept of certainty. Wittgenstein said that the proper task of philosophy is to bring words back from their metaphysical use to their everyday use - which is there original home.[6] Our task here would be precisely this with regard to the word 'certain.' It has to be brought back from its metaphysical use to its every day use. It can be said without much difficulty that the word certain is used in several senses. " Logically certain'

is only one of its uses,not its only use. It is once again a familier fact of ordinary usage that we are certain that nature is uniform, that under similar circumstances the same cause will give rise to the same effect – that the sun will rise tomorrow that the earth goes round the sun and so on. These are called certain or we are certain about them despite our awareness that they can be possibly othersiee.But regarding such truths there are reasonable grounds for doubt and the mere theoretical possibility of doubt need not be taken seriously. This is how 'certainty' can be applied without hesitation to factual knowledge ; for this is the rule of this language game. Wittgenstein had this in mind when he said that the kind of certainty is the kind of language game.[7] Thus, the word 'certainty' is more elastic in its use than Philosophers have made it out to be. In the languageof the formal sciences " certainty" has one use and in thelanguage of science and commonsense, ithas another use. Similarly, perhaps in the language of religion, ' certainty' has likewise a different use, as when itis said that God is certainly good. It is not that the uses of ' certainty' display radically different senses of the word. It is father the same word having three different uses each of which is a part of our language. There is no one model of certainty namely, the mathematical certainty. To run after this model as Philosophers – rationalists and empiricists alike– have done and consequently to plead the privilege of the sceptic as Hume

did with regard to matters of fact or to plead that matters of fact are not knowledge properly so called is a serious philosophical mistake based on a gross misunderstaning of the logic of the words " certainty " and "certain".

Considered from this point of view factual knowledge is as much certain as the knowledge of mathematics and formal logic. Thus we are not required to say that there can be knowledge (e.g. of matters of facts) which is not certain (logically certain). So our original requirements that knowing means having ~~to be~~ the right to be sure is retained without much alternation Philosophy, here, has not changed facts. It has only described them.

******
****
**
*



R E F E R E N C E

1. The Problem of Knowledge,Chapter. II

2. Penguin Books, 1982, Fist Published 1936.

3. Tr. by Pears & Mc Guinness, R & K, Paul Ltd. Newyork, 1961

4. Cf. The Problem of Knowledge,P. 52

5. Theories of Knowledge , A Critical Introduction,P.16

6. Philosophical Investigations, Tr. by Anscombe and Von right Basil Blackwell, Edition, Oxford, 1968, Part. I

7. Ibid

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

BOOKS

1. Ackermann, R, Theories of Knowledge, Bombay and Delhi : TMH Publishing Co. Ltd. 1965

2. Ammerman, R, Classies of Analytic Philosophy, Bombay and Delhi : TMH Publishing Co.Ltd.1965

3. Anscombe and Vonright, Wittgenstein On Certainty Newyork, Harper, 1972

4. Ayer, A.J. The Concept of a Person and Other Essays, (Macmillan and Company Ltd. First Edition, 1963.

5. Ayer, A.J. Origins of Pragmatism, (Macmillan London, 1986)

6. Ayer, A.J., The Problem of Knowledge, (Penguin reprint, 1980, First published in 1956)

7. Ayer, A.J. Central Questions of Philosophy, (Macmillan, Lond on, 1973)

8. Ayer, A.J. The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, (Macmillan and Company Ltd., London, 1940)

9. Ayer, A.J. Thinking and Meaning (H.K. Lewis, London, 1947)

10. Ayer, A.J. Language Truth and Logic, (Penguin Books, 1982, First Published, 1936)

11. Berkeley, George : The Principles of Human Knowledge: (Edited T.E. Jessop, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1945)

12. Black, M. Language and Philosophy, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1949).

13. Chisolm, R.M. Theory of Knowledge, New Delhi, Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., 1977

14. Dewey, John, Logic, the theory of enquiry, Newyork : Henry Holt & Co., 1938

15. Empiricus Sextus, Outlines of Pyrrohism, Cambridge University Press

16. Griffiths, A. Phillips, Knowledge and Belief

17. Hosperse, J. An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, California, Allied Brothers Pvt. Ltd. 1975

18. Inge, Dean, Philosophy and Religion, Contemporary British Philosophy

19. Kant, Immanuel, Critique of Pure Reason, Maxmuller, 1855

20. Keynes, J.M. A Treatise on Probability

21. Kneale, W. Probability and Induction

22. Mohapatra, P.K. Personal Identity : Santosh Publications, Cuttack, Orissa, 1983

23. Nayak, G.C. Essays in Analytical Philosophy (Santosh Publications), Cuttack, 1978

24. Ryle, G. The Concept of Mind, London: Penguine Books Ltd., 1976

25, Santayana, George, Scepticism & Animal Faith, Dover Publications, INC, 1955

26. Schweitzer, Albert, The Philosophy of Civilisation Newyork : Macmillan, 1949

27. Wittgenstein, L On Certainty Basil Blackwell Edition Oxford, 1974

28. Wittgenstein, L Tractatus - Logico -Philosophicus, Newyork ; The Humanities Press, 1961

29. Wittgenstein,L : Philosophual Investigations
Basil Blackwell Oxford, 1953

30. Woozley, A.D, Theory of Knowledge : An Introduction
Hutchinshon & Co. (Publishers)
Ltd., London, 1957.

J O U R N A L S

1. Ambrose, A : Finitism and The Limits of
Empiricism,Mind, XLVI, 1937

2. Annis, David. B : "Knowledge,Belief and Rationality,
The Journal of Philosophy, Volume
LXXIV, 1977.

3. Ayer, A.J : Can there be a private language"
Pass, XXVIII(1954)

4. Bambrough, J.R: "Universals and Family Resemblances"
Proceedings of the Aristotlean society
LXI (1960- 61)

5. Carney, J.D : "Private Language : the Logic of
Wittgenstein's Argument"
Mind, Vol. LXIX, 1960

6. Castenoda, H.N, : " The Private Language Argument,
in Knowledge and Experience" (ed)
C.D. Rollings (Pittaburgh)
University of Pottaburgh Press(1962).

7. Cherry, C, & Robinson, G. Scepticism about Scepticism"
Proceedings of the Aristotlean society
Supplementary Volume - II(1977).

8. Dingle, H : " Solipcism and related Matters",
Mind, Vol. 64, (1955).

9. Findlay, J.N : " Wittgenstein's Philosophical
Investigations", Review International
de philosophic, Vol. VII,(1952)

10. Harvesonm H.A : " Evidential Necessity and other Minds", Mind,Vol. 75 (1966)

11. Hervery, H " The Private Language Problem" Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. VII, (1957)

12. Keith, Lehrer & Thomas Paxon, " Knowledge : Undefeated Justify true Belief", Journal of Philosophy Volume, LXVI(1969)

13. Malcolm, N. " Wittgensteins Philosophical Investigations P.R., LXIII(1954)

14. Malcolm, N. " Knowlege of Other minds" The Journal of Philosophy.,LV (1958)

15. Manley Thomson " Who Knows", Journal of Philosophy Volume, LXVII, 1977

16. Mellor,W.W. " Knowing, Believing and Behaving", Mind, Vol. 75, (1966)

17. Thomson, J.F : " The Argument from Analogy and Our Knowledge of Other Minds", Mind, vol. 60 (1951)

18. Narveson, Anne H: "Evidential Necessity and Other Minds", Mind Vol. LXXV,(1966).

19. Shapers, D ., " Philosophy and Analysis of Language" Inquiry, III (1960)

20. Shinner, R.A., " Wittgenstein and foundations of Knowledge" Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,Vol. LXXVIII,(1977-78)

21. Stern. K., " Private Language and Skepticism" The Journal of Philosophy, IX(1963)

****
****
****
**