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The Criterion Of Truth

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THE CRITERION OF TRUTH

by

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

"Criteriology is the science of true and certain knowledge," (1) and is mainly interested in the problem as to whether man can know things and have a true and valid knowledge of them as they are in reality. It is concerned with the fact of truth and error in the philosophic and scientific fields, it points out that bases in reality upon which man can build all his knowledge and in virtue of which he can distinguish truth from error. (2) Every problem of philosophy is really a problem of knowledge. We must distinguish truth from error. The study of the criterion of truth will enable us to make this distinction. In practical usage the word criterion is the norm, or yardstick by which we distinguish truth from falsity. In the theoretical field criteriology has a basic value in that if we could not know truth with certitude philosophy and science would be impossible, study would be useless, and man's desire for truth would be futile. In the moral and social fields also, criteriology has a basic value. If we could not know truth with certitude, then no duties and no obligations, no laws, no morality, and no human institutions could legitimately prevail. Hence, although criteriology is technically speaking a speculative science in itself, nevertheless it has an all-important value in both theoretical and practical fields.

(2) Ibidem cf.
Let it be understood at the outset that we are not dealing formerly with the question of certitude, although by implication we meet the problem at every turn, because it is true that the norm of truth will also be the force or power which will determine the mind to its assent; in other words we are concerned chiefly with what the scholastics would call the objective principle of certitude, i.e., that compelling characteristic of a known object which will determine the mind in its distinguishing truth from falsity.

In the following pages we shall in separate chapters treat of:


II. The Test of Truth—the main point in our paper.

III. Examination of Some False Theories Regarding the Test of Truth.

In a word, we shall analyze the notion of truth, reach definite conclusions concerning the test of truth, and point out the errors regarding this latter item.
CHAPTER I

The Nature and Kinds of Truth

"Truth is the conformity of thought and thing." Thought in this definition means a judgment which is a basic thought process, being the pronouncement of the mind on the agreement or disagreement of two ideas in the mind. Judgment is also the pronouncement upon the agreement of an idea with its object."(3) This judgment then is a pronouncement concerning the relation of two things:

1. "Idea and idea.
2. Idea and object."(4)

An idea is the mind's grasp of the essence of an object. The mind penetrates to the very fundamental and necessary notes or attributes of an object and sees there its basic reality. "The idea cannot be called true unless it is brought into comparison with its object and considered with reference to the fidelity or lack of fidelity, with which it represents that object."(5) Truth involves a judgment of the mind. "In ideas truth is found imperfectly because the idea invites the knowing subject to notice it in relation with its object."(5)

In the next part of the definition "thought and thing," "the term thing means the object of knowledge,"(7) or that which is apart from the one who knows it; the reality distinct from the knower and which is the known or becomes known.

"The term thought is frequently used to designate the various intellectual processes such as conception (through the abstractive process) judgment, and reasoning in general.

(3) Glenn's Criteriology, Chapter I, pp. 93-96 and of.
(4) Ibidem
(5) Ibidem
(6) Ibidem
(7) Ibidem
Truth involves three things:

1. "The judging mind."

2. The judgment of the mind.

3. The objective thing judged."(8)

"There are three kinds of truth: ontological, logical, and moral:

1. Ontological truth is the truth of things.

2. Logical truth is the truth of thought or knowledge.

3. Moral truth is the truth of speech, or truth of expression of knowledge."(9)

The ontological truth of a being is necessarily so, because ontological falsity is an impossibility as we can see from the following quote:

"No matter what the appearances of things may be to man, they have an intrinsic constitution which is always ontologically true, at least so far as the mind of God is concerned; for man they may, of course, be the occasion of false judgment. "False diamonds" are "true pests"; "false teeth" are "true porcelain"; "false virtue" is "true vice"; "false gold" is "true pyrite"; "false economy" is "true waste"; "false faces" are true masks": their true nature can be known by man and is known always by God. In an absolute sense, therefore, ontological falsity does not apply to any being; in a relative sense, namely with reference to man, ontological falsity may be said to exist in a limited manner. Ontology, since it views all things from a metaphysical standpoint, treats of things in their intrinsic reality, without regard to the impression they may produce upon a fallible human mind; considered metaphysically, all beings, of whatever kind and nature, are and must be ontologically true under all circumstances. "(10)

"Ontological truth is the necessary conformity of things with the Divine mind. Things depend for existence on the

(9) Glenn's Criticology. Ch. VIII, pp. 96-99
(10) Bittle's Domain of Being, Ch. XIII, pp. 175-177
Divine Mind, and as it knows them they are. For our understanding of this ontological truth we look from the object toward the mind; we see whether the object squares with the judgment.\(^{11}\) The Divine mind knows all things in their entirety, the created mind may be mistaken or in error regarding something and this is logical error but there can be no ontological error because God is all-knowing as well as omnipotent; He is Intelligence Itself.

"Primarily ontological truth is the conformity of the object of knowledge to the perfect knowledge of God.

"Secondarily ontological truth is the conformity of the object to created (human) knowledge.

"Examples of ontological truth are: "He is a true friend"; "this is a triangle," and "he is sincere."\(^{12}\)

"Logical truth is the conformity of thought to the thing, of judgment to object. In discussing logical truth we take our stand at "thought" and look toward "thing". When I learn a thing I conform to that thing and thereby have logical truth which is truth of judgment, truth of thought.

"This is gold", expresses ontological truth when we regard the object as squaring with accurate knowledge; it likewise expresses logical truth when we regard it as the judgment of the human mind which it acquires from the gold what it is, and makes its thought meet the requirements of this object."\(^{13}\)

(11) Glenn's Criticilogy, Ch. VIII, pp. 96-99.
(12) Glenn, Ibidem cf.
(13) Glenn, Ibidem cf.
Moral truth is the name we apply to conformity of man's speech with his thought, since this pertains to the science of ethics, we shall not consider it in this essay.

Once the mind really grasps the nature of a thing it can make judgments about it and knowing things it can define them, and here we think immediately of the Aristotelian doctrine of the predicables.*

"The predicables are the different modes or ways in which a universal can be predicated of its subject." (14) There are five such predicables and only five, no more, no less: genus, species, difference, property, and accident.

"A genus is that part of a universal which expresses that part of the essence which the subject has in common with other species in the same class." (15) An example will help to bring this definition out more fully: When I say that "man is an animal," I express that part of the essence of man which he has in relation to brutes, because they are both animals which have the "species," animal under the wider universal "animal."

"A species is a universal idea which expresses the whole essence of its subject." (16) The example is that "man is a rational animal." In that definition I tell man's nature or define man in his entirety. "Rational animal" tells me the exact "species" of the "idea" man which in turn can be applied to one particular man or all men in general taken

*Actually Aristotle himself listed the predicables as: Definition, genus, difference, property, and accident. (14) Bittle's Logic, Ch. III, pp. 56-57 (definitions) and cf. (15) Bittle, Ibidem, and cf. (16) Bittle, Ibidem, and cf.
as a whole. Likewise, when I say that brutes are animals and plants are organized bodies, I give their complete definition, because I express their essence in its fullness or completeness.

"A difference or specific difference is a universal idea which expresses part of the essence of a subject which distinguishes one species from another under the same genus." (17) The example is given which distinguishes man and brute, in man it is his rationality while in the brute it is irrationality. The species of man is rational animal which makes up the whole essence man. The species of brute is animality which makes up the entire essence of brute.

"Property is a universal idea expressing that which flows necessarily from the essence though not a part of the essence itself." (18) Man's rationality, power of speech, are properties of man because they presuppose man's essence as rational animal. There is an axiom which helps us to understand property more completely. It is that "the property applies to all, to them alone, and always." (19) This is taking "property" in its strictest sense. There are some philosophers who give a wider meaning to property like Porphyry, who in his "Isagoge" gives four interpretations of property:

1. "That which happens to one species alone--healing of a wound in men.

(17) Bittle's Logic, Ch. III, pp. 56-57 (definitiene) and of.
(18) Bittle, Ibidem, end of.
(19) Bittle, Ibidem, end of.
2. "That which happens to a whole species though not to that one alone—man a biped.

3. "That which happens to a species alone at a certain time—man becomes gray in his old age.

4. "That which happens to one species alone and to every member of it and always—man's possibility."

"Accident is a universal idea which expresses something of its subject which is neither connected with its essence nor of its essence, but merely happens to be connected with the essence." (20) An example of accident is that of thinking, writing, walking, color of man, size, and goodness or badness in man.

"A universal idea is an idea that applies to a class as a whole and to every individual in that class." (22) It will be a true idea if it really represents reality, which is to say, if the conceiving mind is truly conformed to the object. The question is: Can we know when the mind is rightly conformed to reality?

We assert that the test of truth is reality. To explain the process whereby the intellect does grasp the essence of the object is really the talk of rational psychology, but let us briefly review this matter.

Abstraction is the term applied to the process whereby the mind seizes upon the essence of an object. As St. Thomas says: "It is from the particular determinations of space and time, and thus completely transcend the scope of sense that the spiritual activity of the intellect is best manifested." (23) Without abstract and universal concepts

[21] Bittle's Logic, Ch. III, pp. 58-59 (definitions) and of
[23] Linenham, De Sensu et Sensato, L. I. (quoted by Linenham, The Rational Nature of Man, etc.)
knowledge would be impossible; consequently, we must have a power capable of forming ideas which are above the senses, because the senses only give us a particular reality with its interpretation.

To establish the intellectual concepts or ideas and their difference from sense images we can only indicate the marks by which they are distinguished, and then appeal to each man's internal experience. The concept represents the essence or nature, in an abstract condition, while the image represents only the concrete determinations. The concept is universal, because it represents every object of that class included in the essential attributes, while the image represents only one individual object of some particular color, shape, size, and the rest. The concept since it merely includes the essential attributes is something fixed, immutable, necessary, eternal not as a positively existing being, but negatively as an intrinsic possibility. It is not limited to a particular time, and there never was an instant when it was impossible. The image, on the other hand, is unstable, fluctuating with respect to many of its component parts, and contingent. There is a real distinction between concept and image, and it will become clear to each one who examines his own consciousness or looks introspectively into himself. The intellectual operation by which the essential features in the particular specimen are apprehended and conceived as standing for "any individual" of the class is
precisely what constitutes the universal conception exactly herein lies the abstraction and generalization productive of the universal significance of the general notion. The higher faculty or intellect seizes the essential attributes forming the common nature of the class, and our consciousness of this common nature as separately realizable in each member of the class is the universal idea. In other words, the universal idea exists only in my mind which forms the universal by a process of abstraction from the particular realities which I come in contact with. Take as an example, men, I know many, distinct, individual men who are all different from each other, nevertheless, I have a universal man in my own intellect which is there because of the process of abstraction which, so to speak, puts every man I know into one idea which is the universal idea. I have a universal idea of men in my intellect and this idea will fit every man in the world whether I know him personally or not. This is simply a fact. Yet the problem as to how the mind performs this uncanny operation has vexed many a philosopher, but even a sensualist like Hume saw the fact, and accepted the conclusion that even the mathematical sciences can afford only approximate truth. Likewise, in chemistry and biology their precision, validity, and experimentality are lost if the reality of general conceptions be denied. Therefore, to get a proper concept of this basic question is of fundamental importance to every man, no matter which field of work he chooses for his life's ambition.
The only acceptable theory is that of moderate realism, an Aristotelian doctrine, clarified during the first period of scholastic philosophy and perfected. Abstraction is the process whereby the intellect draws out the essence from objective reality and holds that essence in the intellect for either immediate or future reference.

The moderate realist maintains that there is in things a potential universality outside of the mind, but is formally conferred on the mind by abstraction.

The other theories regarding this all-important matter of universals are nominalism, conceptualism, and exaggerated realism. Nominalism maintains that there are only names which are attached to things, there is no universality of concept or reality. Conceptualism holds that there is a universality in idea, there is no universality of things. Exaggerated realism holds that the universal exists outside of the mind which is independent of our minds. These three theories are all anti-realistic and cannot be accepted. They deny objective reality. Moderate realism accepts the data of introspection that we do have universal ideas, that we grow in knowledge, that reality plays its part by "being just what it is," that the mind plays its part also through a process by which the universal character of similar realities is seen intellectually and given formal existence in the intellect.

Ideas are not fruits of the senses, neither are they innate contents of the intellect, the senses perform their
task, the intellect performs its task. The object of the senses is the singular, concrete individual known in a sensuous way through the image or phantasm, also called a sensible species. The object of the intellect is the intelligible essence of a thing, which is known through the idea or intelligible species. In other words, the senses present the raw material upon which the intellect "works" and conceives the idea. The student of philosophy will immediately recall here the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine of the active and passive intellect.

The active intellect is the ability of the intellect to conceive the intelligible essence through the light of its own intellectual activity. The passive intellect is the intellect viewed in its capacity to receive the product of illumination and express it; i.e., conceive it in what we call the idea. We might note that the active intellect is frequently referred to under its venerable Latin title intellectus agens and the passive or possible intellect as the intellectus patientia or intellectus possibilitis.

In English perhaps this latter is better called the possible intellect rather than the intellect us patient, i.e., as merely being acted upon. At any rate the function of the intellect in conceiving the essence or, which is the same thing forming an idea is engaged in its astounding

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*Thomistic and scholastic philosophy does not accept everything Aristotle said regarding these characteristics of the intellect. Indeed, not every neo-scholastic sees any necessity in holding to a distinction between the active and passive intellect. However, the theory does bring out in bold relief two evident functions of intellect.

quest of existing reality. The two following quotations will help us in understanding the process:

...The senses perceive their respective objects as material, concrete, individual things; and, indeed, it is thus that these objects exist in nature. The sense-findings are retained and held "re-present" in the inner sense called imagination. Recall here that imagination is not the fancy of poet or story-teller; it is an interior sense which, as its first and basic function, faithfully records, represents, retains, and evokes the findings of the exterior senses.

The sense-findings, re-present in imagination with all their concrete individuality and material circumstance, are subjected to the action of the intellectus agent and so are rendered intelligible or understandable. This result is due to the fact that the intellectus agent, like a great X-ray, illuminates the imaged sense-findings and strips away, or renders invisible, their individuating marks and material conditions, and lays bare the understandable essence as such. This understandable essence is called the intelligible species. To illustrate all this: Suppose you have never seen or heard of the reality called triangle. Now you see several pictures of triangle drawn on a blackboard. No two of the pictures are alike in color or location or size; no two are of the same type of triangle (isosceles, scalene; right triangle, equilateral, etc.). Your sight lays hold of the pictures as sense objects; you know then sentiently. The finding of sight is reflected, so to speak, inwardly to the imagination and reproduced there; the pictures are present on the blackboard, and re-present in the imagination. Now the intellectus agent turns its view and its light upon the images present in imagination, and sees that the pictures, despite the differences of size, color, position and type, are all pictures of one and the same kind of thing. To put the point differently: the intellectus agent illumines the concrete and individual pictures re-present in imagination, and in its light concreteness and individuality fall away, and the essence which each picture represents lies revealed as this one kind of thing. The essence triangle (that which triangle itself means, regardless of size, type, color, position) is now an abstracted essence, an understandable essence, an intelligible species. This species is called an abstracted essence because
the intellectus agens, in its operation of illumining or contemplating the images in imagination, neglects to consider the non-essential points in which each image differs from the others and focuses upon the essential point in which all the images are the same; and this operation is called abstracting (or abstraction). The term abstraction is from the Latin ab "away; from" and in Indo-European languages means that the intellect draws away the essence from the individual marks and material conditions in which that essence is, in nature, clothed and expressed. The intellect (i.e., the intellectus agens) draws away or draws out the essence and renders it capable of being grasped by itself, or as such, or formally. In a word, the intellectus agens, by abstracting an essence from non-essentials, renders that essence understandable or intelligible, -- turns it into an intelligible species.

The intellect, therefore, by its power of abstraction, renders sense-objects intelligible. This done, the same intellectus agens which exercised the operation of abstracting, takes up, so to speak, the intelligible species or abstracted essence and impresses this upon the intellect as understanding (i.e., the intellectus possibilis). The abstracted essence or intelligible species is now the impressed species. The intellectus possibilis reacts to the impression, laying hold of the impressed species understandingly, possessively, knowingly. This reactive, possessive grasp of the intellectus possibilis is said to express the understood essence, and the intelligible species is now the expressed species. The expressed intelligible species is an essence grasped, an essence understood, an essence intellectually known; it is called an idea or concept. Ideas are the fundamental elements of intellectual knowledge, of judging, and of reasoning. (25)

Yet, they do not represent man's highest accomplishments, because they are still immersed in a material context. The most perfect form of human life, of course, is the life of reason, wherein mind reflects upon itself and understands itself. Acts of this sort are utterly impossible to the senses. Towering above the human intellect is the angel's power of understanding, a power that, unlike man's, needs no phantasm or other extrinsic help in order to be determined, but knows itself entirely by itself. Still we have not reached the peak of immanence, because the mental image wherein the angel beholds itself and all reality is not the angelic substance. Were this so, its knowing would

(25) Glenn's Psychology, pp. 305-308
be its very being. We come, then, at last, to the Creator in whom knowledge and substance are one; whose act of understanding is supreme and identical with His very being; who therefore has life in the highest degree, because His action is immanent in the highest degree."(25)

Now at the risk of over repetition let us view the matter from both the metaphysical and psychological points of view. "The object of the intellect is the true, while the object of the will is the good, and since they are different aspects of being; therefore, the true is the good of the intellect."(27) Reality under the aspect of truth is the good of the intellect.

The active intellect illumines the imagination which was stimulated by the findings of the external senses. The active intellect presents the first findings of the external senses to the passive intellect. The passive intellect recognizes the essence presented to it, that essence which was hazy and indistinct for the active intellect now becomes full and exact by means of the passive intellect. The passive intellect is the interpreter of the findings presented to it by the active intellect which in turn were given to the active intellect by the external senses. The passive intellect is therefore the main factor of our knowledge of objective reality. St. Thomas tells us: "This condition of the object is neither singular nor universal, but it can become both."(28)

It is singular if applicable to but one thing in reality;

(26) Brennan, Thomistic Psychology, p. 108
(27) Linehan, The Effects of Immorality on Intelligence, Introduction, p. 11.
it is universal if that essence can be applied to several things in reality which is common to them all. Note the words essence and reality. Abstraction is, after all details and definitions have been considered, simply the mind's way of acting in presenting reality to the knower.

To apply all this to the problem of the criterion of truth: We have not departed one wit from reality by implication; we have asserted that the problem of a criterion is none other than the problem of grasping reality cognitively. We shall see that the evidence given by reality itself testifies to that very reality.
CHAPTER II

The Test of Truth

The word criterion had its beginning in the early Greekian days; the Greek word κριτήριον which for them was a standard, or a definite thing upon which they could always depend for their interpretation of reality. The scholastics took the Greek word κριτήριον as a criterion. For the philosopher the criterion became the norm or means of judging truth. (29) Hence we define the criterion as a standard by which we distinguish truth from error. (30)

There are six different kinds of criteria, internal and external, subjective and objective, proximate and ultimate. The internal criterion or an intrinsic criterion is a standard residing in, indeed, rooted in the very object that is judged. An external criterion is something extrinsic, e.g., an effect, or an authority, that is outside the thing judged. Subjective criteria are my knowing powers of intellect and senses. Objective criteria are the internal and external reflections of reality which are outside the knowing mind. Proximate criteria which are only secondary depend on further criteria for their own validity. (31) The ultimate criterion is the criterion which is, as it were, the court of last appeal. It will

(29) Cf. Glenn’s Criteriology, Ch. III, pp. 125-126
depend on nothing other than itself. The present paper is concerned with this ultimate criterion of truth, and we shall maintain that truth is reality itself, ifidists, pragmatists, traditionalists, etc., to the contrary notwithstanding.

Then we say that the ultimate criterion of truth is reality itself, we mean that it is objective evidence and intrinsic evidence; i.e., it will be found in the very being of those realities existing outside the knowing mind in the external, visible world, independently of myself or of my thinking and will always remain so, whether or not I know anything about it. For example, say that there is a cow out in a nice, green meadow contentedly grazing, and I happen to be riding by in a car and see that cow, which is the first cow I have ever seen, for me my knowledge of animals is increased; but whether I know that cow is grazing or not, I will still get my morning's milk, and the cow will keep on eating. But nevertheless the test of the truth of my judgment about the cow (logical truth) must be intrinsic to the cow. In other words, the criterion of truth is reality and reality itself enjoys a nature and an existence quite independently of me or my thinking--quite independently of any creature's existence or mental activity. We must note that "criterion" is not a magic word of some kind or other. Neither is it a name we apply to a merely subjective state. It is

We shall see later that the Divine essence is the basis of all truth as it is the basis of all being.
Bearing in mind what the ultimate criterion is not and what cannot be expected of it, we should now give the necessary attributes of this criterion: Something applicable to all truth, it must be objective; it must be right in the element judged. (32) It is objective truth itself as manifest through attention, reflection, reasoning, experiment, observation, analysis, and synthesis. Evidence, whether immediately or mediately attained, is the light and splendor of truth manifesting itself to the mind.

What is this test? If it is to be an ultimate one, it must not rest on, or derive its force from some other test; since, if it did, this other test would be ultimate or final. Moreover, it must be universal, applying to every judgment whose truth requires testing. That this is so may be seen by supposing that there were some judgments which could be tested and to the testing of which the ultimate criterion was not applicable. If, then, these are to be verified at all, it will be done by some test other than the ultimate criterion. Now this test cannot be something which is prior to the ultimate criterion, from which the latter derives its force; since to suggest this is equivalent to suggesting that the ultimate criterion is not ultimate. Nor can it be a test whose efficaciousness in causing the removal of doubt is independent of the power of the ultimate criterion to do so. If this were so, we should have to say that the one effect—removal of doubt—was due to two entirely unconnected causes. This is plainly impossible, for if one of these causes had the power to remove doubt, the other could not have this power, if they are in no way connected. So it is clear that the hypothesis that the ultimate criterion is not also universal is an impossible one. (33)

Basically, it is utterly true that the human mind would have no concept of error if there were not an ultimate criterion of truth.*

(32) G. Rosebush, Manual of Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, Chapter XVII, p. 248
(33) Phillips', Modern Thomistic Philosophy, Ch. XIII, p. 127

*It is to be kept in mind, however, that the first cause, God, is the ultimate basis of all possibility and of all actual being. Our expression “ultimate criterion is ultimate in the sense...
Our understanding of the ultimate criterion of truth involves two fundamental self-evident principles:

The Principle of Contradiction—it is impossible for a thing to be and not to be at the same time and in the same respect.

The Principle of Identity—being is being, and non-being is non-being; whatever is, is what it is.

Wrapped up in the principle of identity is the principle of causality—everything must have a sufficient reason for its existence and finite being must have a sufficient cause for its existence. This principle of causality will stand or fall with the principle of identity.

The meaning which the scholastics give to the word "criterion" is that by which we are ultimately assured of the truth of any proposition. The only test of this ultimate criterion is that it must be objective evidence, which is an undeniable character of any being and consequently forms the very basis of the above principles which flow, so-to-speak, from being. To deny one or more of these principles is to deny reality, because in reality these principles do exist, and if we deny these principles then we deny that man can know. These principles are concomitantly evident and true, and remain the criterion of truth and the motive of certitude. (34) "A motive of certitude means whatever moves, determines, or inclines the intellect to assent firmly to a judgment as true." (35)

(35) Coffey's, Epistemology, Vol. II, Ch. 23, p. 255
St. Thomas says, "There is never falsity in the intellect if resolution into the first principles be rightly carried out,"(36) because St. Thomas' view of knowledge agrees with the above statement.(37)

"St. Thomas never speaks of objective evidence as the criterion of truth, but only as the motive of certitude; he explains, nevertheless, very clearly what the ultimate criterion is."(38)

According to St. Thomas our primary intellectual cognition is that of being,(39) and in knowing it we know its identity with itself and the impossibility of its being contradictory. We know this immediately; these principles are primarily self-evident and undeniable, so that the question of testing their truth does not arise.(40) In a series of events we can trace out their causes one-by-one until we come to the ultimate cause which is found either in the principle of contradiction or identity, which in turn are the principles given to us by God, who is ultimately the cause of all events. An uncaused principle is impossible. Therefore, St. Thomas called the ultimate criterion of truth "analysis", or "analytic resolution" into the primary principles which express the notion of being.(41)

Such a process of going back to the first principles holds both for our judgments concerning ideas and sense

(37) S. T., I, 17, 3, ad 1; Quodlib. I, VIII, Q. KK, ans. 4.
(41) Cf. Phillips, Modern Thomistic Phil., p.128-9
knowledge, which is that of being. In such a manner we use the very foundation of all knowledge for proving the ultimate criterion of truth which is that of the principles of contradiction and identity.\(^{(42)}\)

From the preceding pages it is clearly seen that the ultimate criterion of truth is and must be an objective one, which is independent of my thinking about it. It can only be based in the very reality itself. If not intrinsic, then it would require an indefinite search back and back which parallels the absurdity of an infinite number of causes as movers; and the ultimate criterion of truth is and must be one that will compel assent, although the question of certitude is excluded from the present paper. The criterion is and must be a definite constant thing, otherwise we would never know whether we possess truth or not.

Summarizing the whole problem from the point-of-view of the validity of knowledge, it is obvious that if we are to make accurate judgments about a reality we must know what the reality is, and only reality can evidence itself.

Summarizing the whole problem from the ontological point-of-view we are led to the Ultimate Criterion of all being and of all truth—God: The criterion of truth is the objective or ontological truth of being which is defined as the agreement of a being with the intellect. Ontological truth resides in the objects, or things outside the mind as they exist in reality; things remain true in themselves irrespective of whether I know

\(^{(42)}\) Cf. Phillips, Modern Thomistic Phil., pp.128-9
that thing or not. For that object to be true for me my
mind must grasp that concept as it exists actually out there
in reality. There are two other types of truth, logical and
moral: Logical truth is the agreement of the intellect with
a thing. Moral truth is the agreement of speech with thought.
My interest is, however, in the objective or ontological truth
because that truth is more basic than the other two.

The ultimate foundation of ontological truth of things
in this world is not found in the human mind, from the fact
that truth varies from mind to mind in each man concerning
the true nature of things regarding several things man has only
a slight knowledge, and of other things man has no knowledge
at all. The ultimate foundation of truth is, therefore, found
in God, who in creating things of the world as well as man
created them to conform to the exemplars or type-ideas which
He had of them before He gave them existence. Therefore, in
God is found the objective or ontological truth of their
being. God is Truth, absolute, eternal, infinite ontological
truth. Creatures have relative, temporal, finite ontological
truth because they are created to conform to the Divine Mind.
Ontological truth, therefore, is an essential attribute of
all being, divine and human, actual and possible, necessary
and contingent.
CHAPTER III

Examination of Some False Theories Regarding the Test of Truth

It shall be our task in this the final chapter of our essay to examine those systems which would offer some other criterion as the ultimate test of truth. These systems may be divided in general into two classes, viz., those of a subjectivistic nature, such as the theory of instinct and those which are for the most part objective Fideism and Traditionalism. We need not follow this twofold division, and, indeed, we shall refrain from answering the thoroughgoing sceptic, the agnostic and the subjectivist because this would bring us straightway into the problem of certitude, which problem we have not included within the scope of this paper. We may, however, profitably examine some of the theories of those who, while they hold to certitude, find the ground for that certitude in something other than evidence.

The first man in point of time to propose a rated modern criterion of truth was Thomas Reid, but it seems better to first consider the hybrid theory of Felicite Robert de Lamennais (1782-1854). We say his system, it were better to say his systems, since his views changed after he defected from the Church, according to De Lamennais, during the first period of his thought.
Human reason is too weak to get along of itself; hence, God gave truths to first men. These truths have been handed down to us.

Faith in God as the Revealer is a pre-requisite for the attainment of truth. He opposes the rationalism of the Revolution, the results of which he keenly felt, and he ardently defended supernatural religion. During this period of his thought and attitudes he argued that the Pope should be or is the custodian of truth. After his break with the Church he assigned this position to Humanity.

Later on he went so far as to demand that mysteries such as the Trinity be submitted to the speculations of reason and pantheistic doctrines and held to the unity of substance.

We see that authority is the criterion of truth whether we regard his system as Fideism or Traditionalism; when De Lamennais made Faith the basis of philosophy, he was a Fideist offering no proof for the existence of God or Revelation; when he viewed the authority of human tradition as the measure of truth he was a Traditionalist (after all, Fideism is a type of Traditionalism).

For De Lamennais as a result of the handing down by word of mouth of the tradition, the ultimate criterion of truth is the agreement of all men, nothing is true unless every man can see, know, and understand the proposed truth. This is an impossibility and results in a vicious circle.
Furthermore if we will but introspect, we can see the futility of his argument. It is inadequate because it is not ultimate. As for divine faith: We must know that God exists, that He has revealed, and that our mind can know of His existence and of His revelation.

A species of Traditionalism was also the theory proposed by De Benald (1754-1840), which maintains that all certitude rests on an act of faith. Man by his reason alone cannot come to the knowledge of the existence of God; in fact he bases his theory on the incapability of the human intellect to know anything with a definite certitude. All man's actions depend finally on an act of faith; language, reason, and man's intellectual powers come from that act of faith, the content of which was handed down by man to man from our first parents. And note that speech is regarded as a necessary medium for intellectual activity and moral life. The short-comings of this theory: It will result in scepticism since it denies the proper use of human reason. His argument from language is inconsistent because of the multitude of languages that are used today, and furthermore God would have to be acting all the time so that man could know. The very basis of his theory is utterly impotent to manifest anything. Again, how prove the existence of God? How show that God has revealed? How show that the mind can know the truths revealed?

(43) Cf. Barron's, Epistemology, Ch. XVI, p. 187
(44) Mercier's, Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy, Vol I, Ch. III, p. 304
The instinct, or "common sense" theory, as it is often called started with Thomas Reid (1710-1796). He said that the only basis of our certitude was in nature, also that this force or compulsion by nature was due to a blind instinct inherent in every man which forces man to accept things as true.\(^{(45)}\) The only acceptable point which Mr. Reid accomplished was his stress on self-consciousness or introspection.\(^{(46)}\) His theory is false because it is anti-intellectual; goes counter to reason and experience, perverts the notion of truth; it is subjective, therefore illogical; the intellect is not a blind faculty, and we still must account for the "instinct."

Pragmatism is the theory advanced by William James (1842-1910) which holds that which works is true and that which does not work is false. The usefulness of a thing determines whether or not it shall be true or not; if it can be used fine; if it cannot, then throw it out and find something that will work. Truth in this case becomes relative, and changes with each man. This theory is false for the following reasons: Every truth does not depend on utility; the theory is not an ultimate theory, and it destroys the abiding character of reality, making it possible for a judgment to be true and false at the same time.

\(^{(45)}\) Cf. Glenn's, Criticology, Ch. III, p. 132
\(^{(46)}\) Cf. Turner's, History of Philosophy, Ch. LXVII, p. 597
THE CONCLUSION

We began our treatment of the problem of the criterion of truth by reviewing the importance of true and certain knowledge and the need of some tangible and unchanging yardstick by which truth could be recognized. We indicated in preliminary fashion that this yardstick could only be the evidence of reality itself. We then analyzed the notion of truth and saw the intimate connection between logical truth and ontological truth. In our second chapter we discussed the ultimate ground of all truth, i.e., the objective evidence of known reality.

We limited our investigation to the objective phase of this ultimate ground, thus excluding a formal treatment of subjective certitude. In the final section of our essay we criticized certain variant theories. To bring our work to a close we submit the following succinct quotation:

"We have asserted that objective evidence is the ultimate criterion of truth. We believe that reality presented to the mind is the ultimate court of appeal in the decision between the true and the false. But this does not mean that cogent evidence is the only kind of evidence and that assent is to be confined to judgments for which we have such evidence. Most of our judgments are not irresistible. Our motives for adhering to them are not cogent although they may be sufficient. We recognize the existence and value of a number of secondary criteria. In practical life we cannot document every statement, analyze every theory, or inquire into the evidence of every fact, nor do we try to do so. We admit, for example, that the pragmatic..."
criterion is useful, that it establishes a presumption in favor of the truth of a judgment. But we maintain that secondary criteria, while helpful, are but secondary, and that they give us probability. The supreme, ultimate criterion must ever be evidence; it alone can give us certitude. We may appeal to as many secondary criteria as we like but in the end we must come back to evidence as the only criterion that can safeguard us against error. *(47)*

*(47)* Barron's, *Epistemology*, Ch. XVI, pp. 193-194
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