

CARROLL COLLEGE

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

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Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for academic honors with a  
Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy

by

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For my father, Sigurd M. Brown

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"Disinterested contemplation" . . . is a rank absurdity . . .  
Let us, from now on, be on our guard against the hallowed phil-  
osophers' myth of a "pure, will-less, painless knower"; let us  
beware of the tentacles of such contradictory notions as "pure  
reason," "absolute knowledge," "absolute intelligence". All  
these concepts presuppose an eye such as no living creature can  
imagine, an eye required to have no direction, to abrogate its  
active and interpretive powers ~ precisely those powers that  
alone make of seeing, seeing something. All seeing is essen-  
tially perspective and so is all knowing.

Friedrich Nietzsche, from the  
Genealogy of Morals

## CHAPTER I

### PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTION OF THIS INQUIRY

C. I. Lewis has said that "philosophy is concerned with what is already familiar."<sup>1</sup> I concur with that estimation, even though my conception of familiarity differs in detail from his. Moreover, I think that, properly understood, philosophy terminates with the familiar. But philosophy and the familiar do not simply interact at beginning and end: philosophy is always concerned with the familiar, it cannot be interested in anything else. The two are intertwined at every moment; they exist in symbiotic relation with one another. Both are at once sublime and trivial; both are close at hand and yet far removed.

Before moving on to an investigation of "knowledge", I will indirectly clarify these preceding remarks about philosophy and the familiar by disclosing the conception of philosophy which informs this study. Then I will show more precisely how this inquiry grew out of that conception of philosophy. Thus informed, one will be more apt to comprehend the heart of this inquiry into the concept of knowledge, which begins in Chapter II.

The philosophic impulse arises out of Aristotelian "wonder"<sup>2</sup> and expresses itself initially as dissatisfaction with the appetitive, cognitive and behavioral aspects of one's life. In effect, the Lebenspraxis in which one is engaged appears to be deficient.

Whether this deficiency is genuine or illusory can be determined only by yielding to and refining that philosophic impulse. Aquinas' remark to the effect that "philosophy is all straw" would seem ludicrous had he not first done the work which allegiance to the philosophic impulse demands. Likewise, the nonsensical elucidations of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus cannot be recognized and used as a "ladder" until one has climbed the ladder oneself.<sup>3</sup> This had to be done by Wittgenstein no less than it must be done by his readers.

As with Thomas and Wittgenstein, so it is with philosophically-minded persons in general. For such persons, the world can be seen aright only after having put it to the test of philosophic inquiry.

Commitment to such an inquiry is not the only alternative open to those who have felt the pull of philosophic wonder and discontentment. They may choose not to nurture the philosophic impulse; they may allow wonder and dissatisfaction to "run wild", as it were.

If allowed to go unchecked in this way, pre-philosophic dissatisfaction can have the most pernicious results; first and most obvious of these is uncontrollable turmoil. In other times and cultures, such turmoil would have led to an act of passionate desperation, like suicide. Kierkegaard has shown that in the "present age", however, those who fail to heed the philosophic impulse properly will not succumb to any such desperate act:

Nowadays not even a suicide kills himself in desperation. Before taking the step he deliberates so long and so carefully that he literally chokes with thought. It is even questionable whether he ought to be called a suicide, since it is really thought which takes his life. He does not die with deliberation but from deliberation.<sup>4</sup>

The philosophically-minded person may not divorce himself from philosophy for the same reason that he may not sever himself passionately

and desperately from the springs of life. He must give such matters careful and repeated consideration - it is nature to do so. For such a person, there is no real choice to be made between life and death or between philosophy and blissful ignorance.

The logical term of dissatisfaction - immobility - is more to be eschewed than turmoil because, though it does not deny philosophy or life per se, it makes their position precarious to an intolerable degree. The immobile man, the man "frozen in hell",<sup>5</sup> totters on the edge of life. Moral, rational and emotional inertia are enthroned as his overlords, overlords given to caprice who, at any moment, may send him over the edge.

For this man, action other than the habitual and instinctual is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Solipsism is no longer a mere theoretic pitfall. Rather, it assumes priority among the modes of existence which characterize his life.

Not surprisingly, few persons would deny that such a state is reprehensible. Even those who have courted solipsism in their philosophy retreat a step when the practical results of that courtship become clear. The philosophy of Hume is a case in point and his advice to us illustrates such a retreat: "Be a philosopher but amidst all of your philosophy be still a man."<sup>6</sup>

Too much thought makes the philosopher a mutant, a freak in an ivory tower who dies slowly from deliberation. Too little thought makes the man a beast, a frozen creature who dies unexpectedly from fear of his own passion. For the philosophically-minded person, the middle ground between these extremes, the elusive "golden mean" of Aristotle, can be achieved in only one way:

Thought it is that inflicts the wounds and that heals them too.<sup>7</sup>

Thought can wound our common sensibilities and make it seem that "authentic" knowledge is beyond our grasp and, without allowing such "common sensibilities" undue influence, it can restore our belief in the possibility of such knowledge.

This inquiry into the concept of knowledge can be approached in various ways, some few of which I will specify.

First of all, it was born of my encounter with the familiar aspects of life, an encounter which bears the mark of wonder and pre-philosophic dissatisfaction. The concepts developed herein have enabled me to deal with that dissatisfaction; in a haphazard fashion, I have been able to ward off an encroaching solipsism. To submit to this solipsism more than I already have would be, among other things, a sign of irresponsibility. If by reading this thesis one is aroused to assume responsibility for one's own knowledge claims, I shall be more than gratified.

This thesis also records my efforts to heed the advice of Hume. "Being a man" is thought by some to be the most natural and effortless of activities, whereas doing philosophy is thought to be a deviation from man's true nature, a self-imposed struggle in which negative results far outweigh positive ones.

Nowhere is this dichotomy more apparent than with regard to knowledge. When Socrates first required of his fellow Athenians a justification of their knowledge claims, he supplied raw material for the construction of two types of edifice: the shelter of ignorance which the common man is thought to inhabit and the ivory tower of the philosopher.

Implicit to this thesis is an alternative arrangement, one which has the same origins, but which is more faithful to the Socratic critique of knowledge. Rather than forming two distinct and opposing spheres of influence (i.e. the "common" and the "philosophical"), all epistemic claims and criticisms form the context of "mediate familiarity". The context of mediate familiarity corresponds roughly to what has been called the "social dimension of mind".<sup>8</sup> Hence, one discerns the possibility of uncovering a common epistemological groundwork, one which is not as unduly selective and reductionistic as others in the past have been. The whole range of knowledge claims, from classical mysticism and modern physics to "common sense" would share the same epistemological scheme. The distinction between "common" man and "philosopher" would be seen as it was originally intended, as a difference of degree rather than of kind.

I believe that, in some small way, this inquiry into the concept of knowledge will reveal such a common groundwork. At the very least, it will have helped me attain a modus vivendi with both the problematic and the mysterious dimensions of life. It will have afforded me the opportunity to share what insights I may have with others who are concerned with the concept of knowledge.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

- 1 Clarence Irving Lewis, Mind and the World Order (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), pp. 2-3.
- 2 Aristotle, Metaphysica, A, 2(982<sup>b</sup> 12-16). Stephan A. Skousgaard, "The Question of Origin and Method," Dialogue 13 (May, 1971); 4-13, gives a short, but clear and adequate presentation of "wonder" as the origin of philosophy. Stephen Toulmin, Knowing and Acting: An Invitation to Philosophy (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), pp. 5-13, distinguishes philosophical wonder in the Aristotelian sense from other kinds of wonder.
- 3 "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)" Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, trans., (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1974), p. 74, paragraph 6.54.
- 4 Soren Kierkegaard, The Present Age, Alexander Dru, trans., (New York: Harper and Row Inc., 1962), p. 331. For a contemporary existentialist interpretation of suicide see Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays (New York: Random House Inc., 1955), pp. 3-8 and 21-38.
- 5 A qualified form of "hell" as immobility is found in Sartre's play No Exit. The parameters within which the characters can act have been limited; they are not free to remove themselves from the presence of persons they despise. As I understand it, "hell" would be a generalized form of Sartre's example; it would be the inability to act as such, the inability to remove oneself from any presence. "Frozen in hell" connotes immobility; it is also meant to evoke a recollection of Dante's depiction of the Third Circle of Hell. See The Divine Comedy, Canto VI.
- 6 David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding (New York: The Liberal Arts Press Inc., 1955), p. 18.
- 7 G. W. F. Hegel, Lesser Logic, p. 93 (W., pp. 54-5), as quoted in J. N. Findlay, Hegel: A Re-Examination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 37.
- 8 See especially Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1965), and G. H. Mead, Mind, Self and Society, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

## CHAPTER II

### A SELECTIVE HISTORY OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Descartes made epistemology the central concern of philosophical inquiry; even now, the so-called "problem of knowledge" is a significant feature of philosophy. In describing the why and wherefore of my concern with the "problem of knowledge," I could do no better than to re-echo the words of Bertrand Russell:

Ever since boyhood I have had two different objects which for a long time remained separate and have only in recent years united into a single whole. I wanted, on the one hand, to find out whether anything could be known; and, on the other hand, to do whatever might be possible toward creating a happier world.<sup>1</sup>

The stereotyped "philosopher" of the twentieth century would be uncomfortable with Russell's unification of "creating a happier world" and finding "out whether anything can be known." Recalling the discussion in Plato's Meno, he would acknowledge that ethical and social concerns have long been associated with questions of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, he would probably opt to concentrate on another set of problems which attend epistemological inquiry, problems which became tangible in Plato's formalism and which today receive more attention from epistemologists than do ethical ones.

This more attractive set of problems is purely formal; it has to do with the logic of our "knowledge". As logic became more detached from epistemological issues, it invariably led to questions about the

focus Descartes had given to philosophy: "Should epistemology have a commanding hold on philosophy as it had in ages past?" In response to this question, the idealism of Hegel and the logical realism of Frege may seem to have displaced the Archimedean point of philosophy to areas outside the narrow sphere of epistemology.

For Hegel, traditional epistemology was based on the assumption of opposition between subject and object. Hegel's immanent critique in the Phenomenology of Mind revealed that, quite to the contrary, there is no such opposition and that the critique of knowledge is properly conducted from the standpoint of logic. Epistemology was supposedly overcome by Hegelian logic. While philosophers today will likely accept the stress placed on logic by Hegel, they will be less receptive to his special brand of logic; a circumspect attitude will temper their dealings with the dialectic of Vernunft.

Beyond this precautionary attitude, the Hegelian dialectic has often evoked criticism for violating some fundamental tenets of reasoning. For example, Russell has indicated that the concept of identity-in-difference is based on a confusion of the "is" of predication with the "is" of identity.<sup>3</sup> Since this concept is crucial to Hegel's demonstration that there is no insurmountable distinction between subject and object, Russell was led to serious doubt about the validity of the dialectic itself. Consequently, he had misgivings about Hegel's attempt to supplant epistemology with "logic".

Like Russell, Frege was a philosophic antagonist of Hegel. Yet, like Hegel, he sought to move philosophy away from the Cartesian emphasis on questions of knowledge by refining our conception of logic. Frege saw that psychologistic logics like Hegel's invariably led to epistemological

idealism. Contrary to the trend in logic from Bacon to Hegel, Frege espoused a theory of logical realism in which concepts are said to be "objective," not subject to the mind-dependent notions of "idea" and "introspection".

Instead of accepting the Hegelian identity of subject and object, Frege followed the principle of purity, a procedure which occasioned his improvements in logical theory: "always separate sharply the psychological and the logical, the subject from the object."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he thought that logic was prior to all other branches of philosophy and that epistemology, if not overcome entirely, should at least be relegated to a subsidiary role.

These two dissimilar assaults on epistemology are important though by no means decisive; the need to perform the critique of knowledge is still with us.

Hegel's proposed replacement of epistemology with logic is not convincing. I have already mentioned Russell's objection, with which I agree in part, since it betokens an underlying psychologism in Hegel's thought. While Hegel did concede to an initial distinction between subject and object, the inexorable movement of Vernunft soon prevailed over this distinction. Accordingly, for Hegel there was no difference between the subjective acts by which objective entities are brought to consciousness and these entities as they exist independently. Such entities have no subsistence apart from "self-conscious Spirit"; and logical distinctions, like that between the "is" of predication and the "is" of identity, may be overcome by the activity of that Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Frege's attack on epistemology is hardly more convincing than Hegel's. His logical realism assumes that mathematical thinking and

knowledge are the models whereby we distinguish between true knowledge and mere belief. Relative to many other intellectual disciplines, mathematics may be said to rest on a "secure foundation"; philosophers have often taken note of that fact. Beginning notably with Socrates and Plato, they have sought to pattern all knowledge after purely formal disciplines such as mathematics, logic and geometry. Hence, the basic activity of philosophy - "giving reasons" - is defined primarily in terms of "proof". Frege stands clearly within this formalist tradition initiated by Plato and carried on by those philosophers who still insist that "giving reasons" is "proving". Inevitably, such an approach to philosophy involves problems of its own, problems which Plato himself recognized as having special import for epistemology. For instance, since formal proofs are wholly explicit, all genuine knowledge must be wholly explicit, insofar as it is patterned after formal proofs. Invariably, such a conception of "knowledge" leads to what some consider to be the pivotal question in the theory of knowledge, a question which prompted Plato to formulate his theory of reminiscence: how is new knowledge possible, how is discovery possible? Frege's logical realism is an improvement in the theory of logic; however, insofar as logic and epistemology are inextricably linked, it does little to solve the problems of epistemological heuristics.

Hegel and Frege are representative of those who have tried to redirect the focus of philosophy away from questions of knowledge by making innovations in the theory of logic. Both these innovations lead to a concept of knowledge which is reductionistic. In the case of Hegel, there is a psychological reduction; in the case of Frege there is a formalistic reduction. "Reduction" itself is a procedure under suspicion;

and rather than displacing epistemology from the center of philosophy, the theories of Hegel and Frege occasion questions about the status of epistemology, the concept of knowledge and its relation to logic. These questions are fundamental to philosophy.

The concept of knowledge is still problematic, though not in the same way as it was in the seventeenth century; the Cartesian predilection for questions of "reliable knowledge" has not been transmitted to us in pure form. It has been filtered through Hegel and Frege and numerous other philosophers, perhaps the most notable of whom was Kant. Since his time epistemology has been reserved an even more special, if not controversial, place among the branches of philosophy. With the advent of Kantian Criticism, epistemology became self-conscious;<sup>6</sup> this generated questions about the possibility of valid knowledge in all other cognitive enterprises. Later, through the influence of Hegel, it seemed that this "self-consciousness" implied an infinite regress of self-consciousness and therefore the inability of Kantian Criticism to meet its own epistemic criteria.

In any case, Kant did call into account the epistemological assumptions common to philosophers who preceded him. The main thrust of his challenge is found in the Critique of Pure Reason, a work which was intended as a corrective to knowledge dogmatism: "dogmatism is thus the dogmatic procedure of pure reason without previous criticism of its own power."<sup>7</sup> After Kant, awareness of the presuppositions and implications of knowledge claims was increased. Even if he had been accustomed to giving piecemeal justifications and criticisms of knowledge claims, the philosopher now saw that this was only part of a more comprehensive program. He had to deal with a more radical Kant-like question, "how is

'knowledge' possible?"

Philosophers have disputed the importance and even the possibility of delimiting the conditions of knowledge as Kant claims to have done in answering that question. Be that as it may, it is significant to note that few philosophers have avoided responding to him in some way. The reason for this is two-fold. First, the historical and dialogical character of philosophy seems to preclude that possibility. Secondly, Kant's radical critique has posed a threat to the "traditional" expressions of philosophy which reached what Kant thought to be their culmination in the ontology of Wolff. Philosophers have been inclined to see the Kantian critique as a "threat" from within the ranks which could not be slighted.

Any response to the Kantian paradigm involves at least the rudiments of an epistemological theory. While the philosopher may well disagree with Kant, he has been sensitized by the Critical tradition so as to retain epistemology in its unique status. The critical influence is pervasive to the degree that even those who align themselves with pre-Kantian traditions cannot avoid it. Witness the words of a contemporary Aristotelian, Mortimer Adler: "It is the special task of philosophy to determine the boundaries of natural knowledge and to qualify man's insatiable desire to know with due humility."<sup>8</sup>

An acquaintance with the philosophy of Adler's distinguished mentor is vital to understanding the relation between logic and epistemology (Hegel and Frege), and the conditions of knowledge (Kant). For Aristotle, logic is "paideutikos" - preliminary to the study of philosophy. But insofar as logic presupposes the possibility of such things as "truth," "knowledge" and the like, it is imperative that we correlate the logical preparation for philosophy with an epistemological critique.

We may then escape the dilemma that Kant saw in Plato's philosophizing:

He did not observe that with his efforts he made no advance - meeting no resistance that might as it were serve as a support upon which he could take a stand, to which he could apply his powers and so set his understanding in motion.<sup>9</sup>

Though they had different motives and methodologies, both Hegel and Frege would seem to agree with Aristotle that logic is to take priority over the other branches of philosophy. Under certain interpretations of "priority," I think such a conception to be inadequate. No doubt "logic" as a formal discipline is invaluable to philosophy. However, to imply that it is initially exempt from epistemological critique is intellectually hazardous. And to say that, contrary to Aristotle's intention, logic is "prior to" or "removed from" philosophy in other than a didactic sense, is to precipitate misunderstanding. One does not simply do logic and then give oneself over to philosophical questions. Logic and philosophy arise mutually and are done simultaneously. The two are separable only as the poles of a dialectical relation. The philosophic questions which arise with logic are not of just any sort but are questions of knowledge. Hence, in order to subdue the tendency to expand logic beyond its proper scope, we should interweave logic and epistemology in our preparation for philosophy. Then we may avoid the error which Kant saw in Plato, that of adhering to an uncritical theory of knowledge. Without this procedural caution, a knowledge dogmatism which was evident in Kant himself would be introduced: an inordinate and uncritical attachment to a specific type of logic. Such an attachment among philosophers today would be a severe handicap. From the work of Gödel, the non-Euclidean geometers and especially the later Wittgenstein, it is clear that, rather than having only one or a few members, the class signified by the term "logic" has a non-finite number of members, each of which is

a set of rules.

I would do well now to offer a brief review and to indicate the general direction of what follows. In the introductory chapter I gave a minimal presentation of the concept of familiarity as the starting point for both philosophy in general and this inquiry into the concept of knowledge specifically. This second chapter has been a selective history of epistemology with special reference to the status of epistemology, to Kant's radical critique of the conditions of knowledge and to the relation between logic and questions of knowledge. In the remainder of this inquiry, I will explore the notions of "logic" and "conditions of knowledge" and relate them to the major topic of Chapter I, namely, "familiarity". Hopefully then, as a product of these efforts, a conception of knowledge which is not reductionistic will begin to take form.

In the next chapter, I put logic and epistemology on equal terms through the mediation of the concepts of non-contradiction, relation and familiarity; this reduces the difficulties which arise when either logic or epistemology is accorded some preferential status. Then I take the basic insight of that discussion and apply it to two of the elemental concepts of all theories of knowledge - perception and intellection.

In Chapter IV, I take the renovated concepts of perception (immediate familiarity) and intellection (mediate familiarity) and show how a function theory of mind follows quite naturally from them. Next, in Chapter V, I enlarge upon this function concept of mind in a way that makes clear the actual conditions of knowledge without assuming a substance theory of mind and without attaching myself inordinately to a single type of "logic". Finally, in the last chapter, I will make explicit the concept of knowledge which has been emerging all through this inquiry.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

- 1 Bertrand Russell, Portraits From Memory and Other Essays (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1956), p. 54.
- 2 Marjorie Grene, The Knower and the Known (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), cf. the chapter entitled, "The Legacy of the Meno," pp. 17-35.
- 3 Bertrand Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy (London: Open Court, 1915), p. 39.
- 4 P. M. S. Hacker, Insight and Illusion: Wittgenstein on Philosophy and the Metaphysics of Experience (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 36.
- 5 J. N. Findlay, Hegel: A Re-Examination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 152-153.
- 6 Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press Inc., 1971), p. 3.
- 7 Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Norman Kemp, Smith, trans., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 32 (Bxxxvi)
- 8 Robert B Heywood ed., The Works of the Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 228.
- 9 Kant, op. cit., p. 47 A5 B9

### CHAPTER III

#### THE PRIMITIVE ORIGINS OF SEMIOTICS

#### AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Just as philosophy in general should, epistemology ought to commence with what is already familiar. There seems to be, however, no consensus as to what would best satisfy this methodological criterion; to the best of my knowledge, this has been and continues to be the case within professional philosophy. This lack of agreement among philosophers betrays a misconception about the nature of "familiarity". Many philosophers are inclined to treat familiarity as being susceptible to "quantification". They see it as legitimate to infer that something is "more" or "less" familiar than something else. Thus, while they may recognize and acknowledge that the familiar is irreducible and consequently not "quantifiable," the outcome of their theories implies that the familiar has been quantified and graded all during the course of their arguments.

For instance, to those in what we might broadly term the "empirical tradition," perception is the most fundamental and familiar aspect of knowing. On this view what we perceive is known indubitably; common sense attests to the absurdity of radical doubt about what is perceived. To vote in favor of concepts as the basis of knowledge is to neglect the most obvious dimension of our experience. On the other hand, "rationalists" contend that while perception is an integral part of knowing, it is not the most familiar to us. They would say that we are more "at home"

with extra-sensible concepts which are logically prior to perception. It is here that we might attain to truth, but only after having overcome the proclivity to fix our ultimate philosophic loyalty in the region of sense perception.

These two divergent attitudes are inscribed with irony. Each group begins with what is familiar; that is, they accept intellection and perception as necessary components of the knowing process. And yet, after having worked out their theories, they end in either methodological or attitudinal lop-sidedness. The "rationalist" sides with logical priority and concepts; the "empiricist" sides with common sense and perception. A classic example of this is the case of Locke and Leibniz:

In a word, Leibniz intellectualized appearances, just as Locke . . . sensualized all concepts of the understanding, i.e. interpreted them as nothing more than empirical or abstracted concepts of reflection. Instead of seeking in understanding and sensibility two sources of representations which, while quite different, can supply objectively valid judgments of things only in conjunction with each other, each of these great men holds to one only of the two . . . "1

One is asked to believe that, if we are to make sense of "knowledge," we must, from conditions which are familiar per se, derive concepts and accept dispositions that are unfamiliar. This derivation has at least one major prerequisite: the "familiar" must be liable to quantification and gradation. In moving from the "familiar" to the "unfamiliar," one employs grading terms - "more" or "less" - if the argument is to have coherence and continuity.

If one is serious about bringing the familiar and the irreducible into conceptual agreement, I doubt that one would be willing to approve such a line of argument. In order to serve as the foundation for a non-reductionistic concept of knowledge, the familiar must be acknowledged as irreducible: everything which human beings encounter in the activity

of knowing is familiar to the same degree. The efforts of "rationalists" and "empiricists" alike, in which they parcel out familiarity to this or that aspect of knowledge, are odd and unsettling. Kant has shown that, if held consistently, the traditional rationalist and empiricist positions lead to a conception of knowledge that is not human. By itself, my discomfort at the hands of rationalists and empiricists demonstrates nothing about the issue at hand. However, insofar as it is an expression of an underlying, lived paradox - human beings "striving" for non-human knowledge - it signifies the presence of a significant philosophical problem. When the familiar is conceived so as not to allow for gradation and quantification, then the first step will have been taken towards the solution of that problem; then the familiar will more closely approximate irreducibility.

I will illustrate how this may be done by drawing a parallel with a genuinely primitive concept: the familiar is primitive in an analogous way to the law of non-contradiction. Throughout history, philosophers have acknowledged that the law of non-contradiction occupies a unique position with regard to "logic" and "rationality".<sup>2</sup> To leave it at that, however, is to stop short of the genuinely primitive. The law of non-contradiction is the basis for anything, inasmuch as that thing stands in relation to mind. And, without much further deliberation, it is clear that the concept of relation necessarily implies a process of signification in which the mind is directed to a specific object.

Thus, the law of non-contradiction is the basis for all signs, semiotic processes and systems; it is fundamental to all those phenomena which are manifestly sign-dependent, such as natural and artificial languages. Moreover, as C. S. Peirce has indicated, because "we have no

power of thinking without signs,"<sup>3</sup> the law of non-contradiction is essential to thought per se, regardless of whether or not that thought is "logical" or "rational". If this were not the case, then nothing could be written, spoken or thought. Verbal and written utterances and mental images would carry no assertive force since they would exclude no possible state of affairs.

To illustrate this point I will use an example, one which may seem to belabor the obvious but which is really quite revealing. Suppose I write - "X". One will be inclined to see that mark as a sign similar to those of an algebraic formula or a formalized proposition. For the moment, however, I would ask you to suppress that tendency and attempt to see it only as a mark on the paper. Now I will ask you to see that X as a signification of Y. What has taken place? A connection has been established between "X" and "Y" such that the former is said to signify the latter. But what does that mean? The process of signification is the immediate "application" of the law of non-contradiction. To say that X signifies Y is to necessarily imply in the same breath that X does not mean Y. It does not matter which, if either, of these implications is stated explicitly and which is repressed, for they are reverse sides of the same coin. This coin has the same value; it is efficacious to the same degree, no matter which side is visible. In the terminology of Aristotelian logic, the relationship is one of immediate inference; the obverse and obvertend are immediately interchangeable.

This example is not meant to be even a partial representation of what we call "language". In the first pages of the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein has shown that, Augustine notwithstanding, the correspondence of word to object is not an adequate picture of all that

we call language. However, in describing the acquisition of language, upon which our more complex linguistic usages follow, Wittgenstein does employ a theory of correspondence between sign and object, a theory of ostensive definition.<sup>4</sup> By using a "thought experiment," he shows that the law of non-contradiction is indeed primitive, just as I have tried to do in the preceding example.

Given that the law of non-contradiction is the basis for all semiotic systems, a question central to this inquiry follows quite naturally: can all semiotic systems be reduced to a single all-embracing system? The search for an affirmative answer to this question has had the same captivation as did the search for the philosopher's stone; and it is now fairly safe to say, these two searches are equally futile. From an empirical and logical vantage, the later Wittgenstein has exposed the futility of the attempt to isolate the ideal language; W. V. Quine and others have done much the same thing. For example, Quine, and even Carnap, who earlier proposed such a theory, agree that the attempt to construct a sense-datum language into which all significant discourse would be translated is in principle not possible.<sup>5</sup>

A reductionistic conception of knowledge, like that of Hegel or Frege, pretends to accomplish much the same thing as the ideal sense-datum language. All significant discourse about knowledge would be translated into it and it alone; that which could not be so translated would not be "significant". Rather, it would be said to lie outside the realm of knowledge; it would be "nonsensical" or "meaningless" or a matter of "belief or poetry". Is a reductionistic conception of knowledge any more feasible than other "ideal languages" such as the sense-datum language? I have already answered that question negatively; it remains to

be seen why I have done so.

The relation between the primitive concept of non-contradiction and the basic semiotic process affirms the irreducibility of semiotic systems. At the same time, however, it affirms that while semiotic systems are not reducible to one ideal system, all semiotic systems can be translated into one another; in principle, each one is translatable into every other one. Although a detailed demonstration of such a claim is beyond the scope of this thesis, I can show in principle that it is the case. To do this, I must first expound on the terms I have used.

By "translation" I mean that procedure by which any or all designated units of a semiotic system find their equivalents in some other semiotic system. By "reduction," I mean that procedure by which all the designated units of all semiotic systems find their equivalents in a single semiotic system. The clarification of terms complete, the next step is to investigate further the relation between the law of non-contradiction and semiotic systems.

To say that a thing has a signification is to say that, with regard to it, the law of non-contradiction obtains. A sign points to its referent in two different ways, neither of which takes logical or temporal precedence over the other: X means Y and X does not not mean Y. Given the signification of X to be Y, one does not expect to encounter terms of gradation: "X means Y is more nearly the case than X does not mean non-Y"; "X approximates 'Y' in meaning," etc.,. The appearance of a sign involves a clean and distinct classification, a distinction according to kind in which there is no ambiguity, no "shades of meaning" shared between the classes. Now to apply this fact to semiotic systems, we may say that any designated unit of signs within a semiotic system may

be represented by an individual sign. This unit may range from a single member sign to the entirety of the system itself. Thus, any unit may be translated into its equivalent in another system simply because the sign which is stipulated as the representation of a unit always has the same two basic forms - X means Y and X does not mean Y. This may sound like a trivial description of what I mean by "translate"; I would say in correction that it is an elemental description. All I have shown is that, by virtue of what we mean by the word "sign," all semiotic systems are in principle translatable into one another.

Someone might demur at this moment and say that I have misconstrued the conditions which allow for "translation"; these conditions are a matter of syntax rather than semantics since, by my own admission, "translation" is first a matter of structure. Such a criticism misses the point. The basic semiotic quality of language is the condition for both the syntactical and semantical properties of language; as such, this semiotic quality is distinct from, and, logically prior to, these other properties. To clarify this, again I will use a "thought example". Look at the previous sentence not as an arrangement of signs but merely as random markings on paper. Is there any structure present; does "it" have any meaning? "It" cannot have either of these properties; the very ideas of identity ("it"), structure (formal relationships among designated units of language) and meaning (relationship between designated units and their non-linguistic referents) presuppose the existence of relation which in turn presupposes the basic semiotic process. Now look at the same sentence as an arrangement of signs; ask yourself, "viewed in such a way, does this arrangement of signs have 'meaning' or 'structure'?" This question is annoying, not because the answer to it is particularly elusive but only

because it is peculiarly obvious, so obvious that one sees it as unnecessary from the start. The moment one speaks of signs, one necessarily implies formal relationship among signs (syntax) and relationship among signs and non-linguistic referents (semantics). It is, however, not quite as simple as that. The moment I speak of any one of the three - signs, meanings or structures - are not the other two necessarily implied? When I speak of signs, the implication is a necessary one; but when I speak first of meaning or structure, the implication is a contingent one. Whereas "sign" involves relations per se, "meaning" and "structure" involve specific kinds of relation. One can conceive of structure without meaning or meaning without structure; one cannot conceive of meaning or structure without some kind of relation.

How does this analysis show that the basic process of signification precludes the possibility of reduction and consequently, the possibility of a reductionistic concept of knowledge? Reduction would occur if all designated units of semiotic systems were translatable into only one primary system. The concept of translation I have outlined allows that all semiotic systems can have their equivalents in every other semiotic system. To elucidate the distinction between "reduction" and "translation" and to show that, given the nature of language, the former is not possible, it would be helpful to borrow a notion from metaphysics, a notion which mirrors the relation between "reduction" and "translation".

According to certain metaphysicians, every individual entity somehow "contains" every other individual entity; recently this position has been articulated by Whitehead when he emphasizes "prehension" and internal relatedness in his cosmology.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, metaphysical

reductionism would allow only that a single, "privileged" entity can "contain" every other individual entity; this position is represented in the thought of some Christian philosophers who maintain that while "God" is only conceptually related to creatures, creatures are really related to him.<sup>7</sup> The nature of this privileged entity, in this case "God," is necessarily and radically different from that of all other entities. Otherwise there would be no rationale for saying that "God" is sui generis.

Similarly, the nature of the "privileged" semiotic system would have to be radically different from that of all other systems if it is to fulfill the expectations one has of an ideal system. The ideal system could therefore not be rooted in the law of non-contradiction. What could that possibly mean? It would be inconsistent even to mention the ideal semiotic system (as I have just done) just as it would be inconsistent to talk about a metaphysical entity that is "wholly other". In short, for reduction to be possible, the ideal semiotic system would have to be composed of signs which are not governed by the law of non-contradiction; in effect, that means it must be composed of signs which are not signs. Likewise, as Kant has demonstrated in different and more exhaustive terms, a consistently held, reductionistic concept of knowledge would be unintelligible to human beings. It would not have meaning or structure as we know them because there would be no such thing as "relation".

I shall now reiterate the reasons for discussing the primitive concept of non-contradiction and the bearing it has on the relationship among semiotic systems. To conceive of familiarity in a way that deletes all references to gradation is the first stage in uncovering a concept of

"knowledge" that is comprehensive without being reductionistic. The law of non-contradiction was analyzed in the hopes of attaining a suitable model. Through the use of this model, I want to be able to conceive of the familiar in a way that sufficiently unifies all epistemic claims and criticisms without making them subject to one conceptually explicit knowledge paradigm.

Semiotic systems possess this desired type of unity because the law of non-contradiction does not initially involve gradation - "X" does not "more or less" mean "Y". Similarly, whatever falls under our sensible and intellectual purview is not "more or less" familiar. The law of non-contradiction assumes a clear separation of kinds: "If you wish to make rational sense of the world, then initially the sign and its referent should be plainly distinct." The familiar aspects of knowing should be conceived in a similar way, as a separation according to kind: "If you wish to expose a comprehensive yet non-reductionistic concept of knowledge, then thought and perception must be plainly distinct even though they are both irreducibly familiar." Because of this classificatory innovation, the same relationship obtains between intellection and perception as obtains between semiotic systems. Knowledge exists only as a relation between what is perceived - the "known" - and what can only be thought - the "knower". This relation exists only when perception and intellection are conceived as being distinct; they cannot be reduced to one another, but they can be translated into one another, by virtue of the fact that they are both "familiar".

Today the devotees of pure rationalism and empiricism are numbered. Nonetheless, the tendency to at least implicitly grade the familiar remains latent in most of the theories of knowledge with which I have

had to do. Those who can imagine no other possibility than that of grading the familiar would empathize with William James:

We are thus led to the conclusion that the simple classification of things is on the one hand, the best theoretic philosophy, but is, on the other, a most miserable substitute for the fullness of truth,<sup>8</sup>

However, these same persons would not be so benignly disposed to my position. The rationalist and empiricist epistemological classifications are not even "inadequate substitutes for the fullness of truth" because they are not yet truly simple. They both assume a complicated and gratuitous miscegenation of perception and intellection. As the first step in dispelling this superfluous complexity, I suggest the following to be an accurate representation of what is the case. Both intellection and perception are irreducibly familiar; but, even so, they symbolize different kinds of familiarity. Perception is the "immediately familiar"; intellection is the "mediately familiar". By explaining what is meant by mediate familiarity in the next chapter, I will develop a theory of mind; this too is indispensable to any inquiry into the concept of knowledge.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

- 1 Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 283 A271 B327
- 2 While it is possible to dispute the precise role which the law of non-contradiction plays with regard to logic, most philosophers are agreed that it is somehow very important. See Aristotle, Metaphysica Γ, 3(1005<sup>b</sup> 19-23); "The firmest of all first principles is that it is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong to the same thing at the same time in the same respect." See also Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B191 A152: "The principle of contradiction must therefore be recognized as being the universal and completely sufficient principle of all analytic knowledge . . . ." And finally, see J. S. Mill, A System of Logic II, vii, 5; "I consider it to be, like other axioms, one of our first and most familiar generalisations from experience."
- 3 C. S. Peirce, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" in Philosophical Writings of Peirce, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1955), p. 230.
- 4 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Co., Inc., 1968), I, #2.
- 5 W. V. Quine, From a Logical Point of View (New York: Harper and Row Inc., 1963), p. 40.
- 6 Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper and Row Inc., 1960), Part III. See also, for example, p. 528: "It is as true to say that God creates the World as that the World creates God."
- 7 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 13, a. 7, c. "Since therefore God is outside the world order of creation, and all creatures are ordered to Him, and not conversely, it is manifest that creatures are really related to God Himself; whereas in God there is no real relation to creatures, but a relation only in idea . . . ."
- 8 William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality" in Essays in Pragmatism, ed. Albury Castell (New York: Hafner Publishing Co. Inc., 1974), p. 7.

## CHAPTER IV

### GROUNDWORK FOR A FUNCTION

#### THEORY OF MIND

In the introduction, I stated that a comprehensive yet non-reductionistic concept of knowledge revolved about the "context" of mediate familiarity. The analysis of this context will be the point of departure for exploring the concept of mediate familiarity; this analysis will be undertaken from two directions. First, in this chapter, I will indirectly elucidate the meaning of this "context" by describing its raison d'etre: its functions as the conceptual support for the class of things called "thoughts". This description involves a discussion of what is meant by "thought" and a subsequent treatment of how "thought" and "function" may be combined to generate a conceptually advantageous "function theory" of mind. Secondly, in Chapter V, I will unpack the meaning of "context" of mediate familiarity by saying directly what it is and how it operates. This will be done by showing how mediate familiarity and its context join to form a function theory of mind; this in turn makes clear the actual conditions of knowledge claims.

By "mediate familiarity," I mean all those things which Descartes subsumed under the category of "thought" (cogitatio, pensee):

everything that exists in us in such a way that we are immediately aware of it . . . thus, all the operations of will, intellect, imagination and of the senses are thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

For Descartes, these "thoughts" had a corresponding "substance" for which they were the essential attribute; this was the res cogitans, "thinking

thing," or as we are more apt to call it, "mind".

Even though he responded unfavorably to the Scholastics, Descartes' philosophy is laced with Scholastic terminology; even a philosophy premised on "methodic doubt" is not done in a vacuum. For example, Descartes equated res with substantia, thus initiating the task of trying to comprehend what cogitans can mean when it is said to inhere in substantia. For Scholastics like Aquinas, the term substantia was applicable to concrete and spiritual entities, not to abstractions. For Descartes mind was plainly not a concrete entity; thus, his appropriation of the concept of substance from the Scholastics<sup>2</sup> leads us to believe that he understood mind to be a "spiritual" substance.

The concept of "spiritual substance" has fallen into disrepute, partially because of the sociocultural cleavage which separates Descartes' milieu from our own. More importantly, however, the philosopher who feels compelled to search for something like a substance is led to propound theories which are needlessly complex and logically circular:

It is very manifest by the natural light which is in our souls, that no properties or qualities pertain to nothing and that where some are perceived, there must necessarily be some thing or substance on which they depend.<sup>3</sup>

In the final analysis, the philosopher who subscribes to such a position commits the fallacy of petitio principii; "it is very manifest" that mental phenomena are dependent on a substance, only when we assume they must be dependent on something. By simply attending to the mental phenomena themselves, one can generate theories of mind which obviate problems of adequacy and conceptual economy; models of this type of theory are evident notably in Buddhist philosophy<sup>4</sup> and in Husserl's Logical Investigations.<sup>5</sup>

The concepts of "mind" and "thought" have become increasingly divorced from the substantive connotations which Descartes gave them. For example, phenomenology has surmounted one of the primary difficulties which attend the Cartesian res cogitans; it has found a way out of the ego-centric predicament without resorting to what Sartre might call a "digestive" theory of mind.<sup>6</sup> This improvement is the result of the replacement of a substance theory of mind by a function theory of mind; this function concept finds its genesis in Brentano's "intentionality of consciousness," which he revived from the Scholastics.

Analytic philosophy has its own function theories of mind, the exemplar of which is contained in Gilbert Ryle's The Concept of Mind. According to Ryle, the official doctrine of the "ghost in the machine" arose from the attempts of Descartes, Galileo and others to fit everything into the mechanistic schema which was then in vogue.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the Cartesian conception of mind may be thought of as a para-mechanical hypothesis. The mind is a "thing" like extended substance, and yet it can be described only via negativa. It does not have the defining characteristics of physical things; and still somehow it is a "thing". Ryle corrects this theory by substituting mind as function for mind as substance. "Mind" is to be treated as a hypothetical base; through the use of it as such, one can establish an inferential system which makes possible "explanations" and predictions of overt behavior. In this respect it is similar to certain scientific devices, such as the law of gravitation.

Ryle's comparison of the functional quality of mind with a "law" from physics was a trenchant move. No single discipline is more important to understanding the problems of knowledge than is physics in general

and mathematical physics in particular.<sup>8</sup> Kant's first Critique, the relevant works of Russell and Whitehead and Heisenberg's philosophical thought were all stimulated by the need to conciliate epistemology with the findings of physics.

The situation in modern physics lends credence to function theories of mind. I have indicated obliquely the meaning of the context of mediate familiarity by describing that for which it functions as a context, namely "thought" in the extended Cartesian sense of that word. Then I showed the general direction that philosophy of mind has taken since the seventeenth century: from the substantive connotations that Descartes gave to "mind" to the functional nuance given to that concept by contemporary philosophies. Now I will show how function theories of mind are indeed substantiated by theoretical physics, thus further illuminating the ideas of mediate familiarity and its context.

Theories which postulate an isomorphism between atomic propositions and ultimate empirical constituents of the world have a long intellectual heritage; these theories maintain that, in principle, substantial "objects" are the end-points and foundation of scientific inquiry. From contemporary physics, however, we learn that such models are not necessarily the best representations of what is the case. A substantial conception of "object" is no longer adequate because, in principle, the structure of the world is most precisely described indirectly, through an analysis of the languages in which the world is portrayed.<sup>9</sup> Instead of revealing a one-to-one correspondence between empirical constituents and units of language, increasingly sophisticated experimentation and mathematics affirms that the most basic "physical" relationships are ones which obtain between linguistic entities.

There are some kinds of "objects," for instance electrons, which cannot be described in the way which traditional correspondence theory would allow. Rather than having a definite spatio-temporal location, which is the criterion for determining whether or not something is an "object," an electron is said to be the function of a set of possible locations. Correspondence theories assume that as the methods of inquiry become more refined, the inquiry should approach asymptotically a simple correspondence between unit of language and simple, empirical "thing". Experimentally and mathematically, however, quantum physics shows that as these methods become more refined, a point is reached where this asymptotic movement is reversed; the relation between language and "object" becomes more complex and less determinate.

These scientific discoveries give some experimental credibility to Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena: we are necessarily limited to the experience of objects; the objects themselves are beyond our ken. After Kant, the viability of correspondence theory seemed to hinge on the success of philosophers in giving sense to the concept of "noumena": "do the noumena exist, can they be known?" Two factors - the inability of philosophers to answer such questions satisfactorily and a clarification of Kant's famous distinction by Wittgenstein - expose substantive correspondence theories for what they are.

Perhaps the non-linguistic "object" to which a word supposedly refers does exist, perhaps it does not. In any case, as Wittgenstein has shown, one cannot say that either of these possibilities actually is the case; one can only assume so.<sup>10</sup> To say that we are limited to the experience of "objects" is to say that all experience is linguistic; it is to realize that it does not matter whether or not the noumenon corresponds

to a unit of language. If the Ding an sich does "exist," then the moment we speak about it, it ceases to be non-linguistic, it is no longer disconnected from "experience". And if such things do not exist, the same situation obtains. In any case, our language functions as it does, and it is reasonable to think that it shall continue to do so regardless of metaphysical explanations concerning its "true origins" and "proper use".

From a purely scientific standpoint, it does not matter whether an "object" is a simple, empirical thing or not; regardless, science will continue to function as it does. Though it does not have an "objective" terminus, science does have a methodological terminus in the nexus of conceptual relations:

. . . the new physical view . . . no longer recognizes space, force and matter as physical objects separated from each other, but that for it exists only the unity of certain functional relations, which are differently designated according to the system of reference in which we express them . . .<sup>11</sup>

The physical world is no longer thought to be composed of substantial, externally related "objects"; objects only signify the unity of functional relations. In turn, this unity is "objective," that is, tangible and public, only because it fulfills some methodological criteria. "Objects" are ordering concepts of language; consequently, an object may be said to exist only insofar as it occupies a range of positions in a nexus of conceptual relations:

. . . this object itself, while it transcends the sphere of sensation, gains its existence in conceptual relations, from which its essence and its definition are inseparable.<sup>12</sup>

The obsolescence of talk about substantial objects compels one to re-think many traditional theories of knowledge and of mind. If known "object" and knowing "subject" are not substantial things, then

the groundwork may seem to have fallen out from beneath these theories. The tentative reconciliation of this difficulty provides a new "ground-work" which further validates the emphasis on functional as opposed to "substantial" ways of thinking:

The problem of knowledge, instead of leading us to a metaphysical dualism of the "subject" and the "object," has led us to a totality of relations that contains the presupposition of the intellectual opposition of the subject and object, . . . This totality is objective insofar as the constancy of empirical knowledge rests upon it as well as the whole possibility of objective judgment, while on the other hand, it can only be comprehended in judgment and thus in the activity of thought.<sup>13</sup>

According to Cassirer's scientific view, the world must be conceived as a nexus of conceptual relations from which "objects" and "subjects" derive their meaning as place-holders in the process of thought.

To try to comprehend the knowing subject - the "mind" - by the use of function theory is not to deny that mind is an "object" or a "substance"; the preceding discussion of how function has come to supplant substance in science was not offered as a disclaimer to Descartes' position. Rather, it was an attempt to show that, given the subject matter and scope of this inquiry, it is irrelevant whether or not "mind" is an "object"; knowledge claims are made and are intelligible despite endeavors to give them metaphysical sanctions; such endeavors are extraneous to the question at hand. The "mind" does function; this function is open to investigation indirectly, through an analysis of the language in which it occurs. The "mind" may or may not be a "thing" or "substance"; ultimately such a claim is open to acceptance or denial, based only on an analysis of things-in-themselves. One may describe the mind empirically, as does Hume, or follow the empirical description with a metaphysical axiom, as does Descartes.

Modern physics insists that the irreducible components of the world are best understood by interpreting "object" as an expression of relational convergence rather than as a simple empirical substance. The concepts of mind and knowledge can best be understood by a similar procedure, by interpreting them in a functional way also. In order to situate more precisely the boundary between substance and function theories of mind, I will compare Descartes and Aquinas on this point.

For Descartes, mind was directly accessible to itself, such that introspective awareness becomes the paradigm for authentic knowledge. This left him in the throes of a philosophic conundrum - the ego-centric predicament. Mind was isolated; certain knowledge of the world was unobtainable. In one sense, the philosophy of mind which evolved from Descartes' emphasis on the irrefutable character of mental states was a genuine revolution.

Descartes remapped the terrain of mind-matter, placing sensation in the realm of mind alone, something which medieval Aristotelians like Aquinas had not done.<sup>14</sup> Descartes maintained that mind is more easily known than matter, whereas Aquinas held that knowledge of mind is parasitic upon knowledge of the external world and consequently necessarily posterior to it.<sup>15</sup>

This difference between Aquinas and Descartes makes possible the demarcation between function and substance theories of mind. In the former there is a necessary connection between Cartesian "thoughts" and knowledge of corresponding overt behavior; in the latter this connection is only a contingent one. This contingent relation is patent in all attempts to infer, reconstruct or otherwise guarantee that we do possess real knowledge of overt human activity and the "external" world.

By no means do substance theories of mind appear only in the post-Cartesian rationalist tradition; the British empiricist tradition has inherited it too. Function theories of mind also transcend the frontiers of conventional philosophic schools; the intentionality of consciousness, Ryle's hypothetical base and the Aristotelian notion of intellect are members of this category. And while he formulated no theories as such, the later Wittgenstein may be credited with exposing the logical inadequacy of theories in which the relation between mental state and knowledge of overt behavior is only contingent.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- 1 Anthony Kenny, Descartes: A Study of His Philosophy (New York: Random House Inc., 1968), p. 44.
- 2 Ibid., p. 65.
- 3 Ibid., p. 60.
- 4 See especially the concepts of no ego-self (anatta) in the Majjhima Nikaya, Sutta 72 and dependent origination (paticcasamuppada) in the Samyutta Nikaya (II. 5)
- 5 Angel Medina, "Husserl on the Subject," The New Scholasticism, XLV (1971), 547-548.
- 6 J. P. Sartre, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology," trans. Joseph P. Fill.
- 7 Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, pp. 18-23.
- 8 Ernst Cassirer, Substance and Function and Einstein's Theory of Relativity (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Inc., 1953), p. 298.
- 9 Hans Reichenbach, Philosophic Foundations of Quantum Mechanics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 177.
- 10 Wittgenstein, op. cit., I, #304.
- 11 Cassirer, op. cit., p. 398.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 373-374.
- 13 Ibid., p. 176.
- 14 Anthony Kenny, "Cartesian Privacy" in Wittgenstein" The Philosophical Investigations, ed. George Pitcher (New York: Doubleday Inc., 1966), pp. 352-354.
- 15 St. Thomas, op. cit., I, q. 87, a. 1 c.

## CHAPTER V

### A FUNCTION THEORY OF MIND AND THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

The theory of mind I advocate is functional rather than substantive. If the concept of knowledge is to be unraveled further, if my theory is to elicit support from the discussions of the preceding chapter, I must demonstrate that this theory involves a necessary rather than a contingent relation between mental states and corresponding overt behavior; I must show that it is indeed a function theory. Anyone who adds to the plethora of theories about "mind" has much for which he must answer; thus I must also show how the theory I propose is an improvement over other function theories of mind.

To repeat, "thoughts" are what I mean by the "mediately familiar"; and the context of the mediate familiarity resembles what has been called the social dimension of mind. As a foreshadowing of what is to come, I may now say more precisely that the context of mediate familiarity is the nexus of overt human behavior. Together the mediate familiarity and its context constitute what I call "mind".

The "context" ceases to have a function and therefore may be said not to exist if that to which it is ordered can be shown to be self-sufficient. Judging only from what has been said, it is not evident that Cartesian thoughts require any support from a "context". But, if such a support does prove to be required, the reader may have correctly antic-

ipated that I will not simply relate thoughts to some enduring metaphysical principle, as Descartes did; nor will I seek to unify them by some mysterious "bundling principle," as did Hume. The context of mediate familiarity is necessarily related to that for which it serves as a context; however, it is not clear that this relation is reciprocally necessary. In demonstrating that the relation between mental states and corresponding overt behavior is reciprocally necessary, it will become more clear how the nexus of human behavior is the necessary and sufficient condition for "thoughts".

I have delineated "thoughts" in Cartesian terms as those aspects of experience of which we are immediately aware. And yet, I have also identified "thoughts" as what is mediately familiar; so my terminology must seem incongruous. When alloyed with familiarity, what do "mediate" and "immediate" mean? What rationale is there for describing "thought" as "mediate"? In order to understand what is meant here by "mediation," it is best not to invoke traditional or particularly technical denotations of that term. Rather, one should focus on what thoughts are and how they are used, aside from their inclusion in some metaphysical scheme. So that the difference between the identity of thoughts and their function might be made less cryptic, I would ask the reader to follow along on another "thought experiment".

At the moment I shall refer to "thoughts" not in the full-blown Cartesian sense but only insofar as "thought" signifies cognition. Now then, I engage in the observation of my own thoughts; I notice that thinking is done in words or, what amounts to the same, it is done in concepts. Moreover, it seems that whenever I attend to my own thinking I am aware only of words; invariably these words are isolated from one

another. But isn't this odd? When I say that I am "observing" my own thinking, reference is being made to a process, a dynamic sequence of internally related things, in this case a sequence of internally related words. And yet, I never see the relations which are implied by terms like "process" and "activity"; I see only autonomous and self-contained things.

The point is this: I never observe the "relations" between words; at most, it seems that I can only think relations. And this is possible only to the extent that thinking is unlike perception; that is, insofar as thinking is other than passive receptivity. Kant's distinction between what can be known and what can only be thought is particularly instructive in this case.

Knowing has an element of passive receptivity whereas thinking does not. Hence, for example, the empirical ego can be known while the pure ego can only be thought.<sup>1</sup> Frequently philosophers admit that they find it extremely onerous to conceive of things which are only thinkable, such as Kant's transcendental unity. Little wonder that this is so, since to say that a thing can only be thought is to say that it cannot be pictured, that it cannot impinge on one's faculty of mental receptivity, either as a concept or as an imaginative construct. To transfer this principle to the question at hand, one would say that inasmuch as they are embodied in words, relations can be known. However, relations per se can only be thought.

This situation recurs even more vividly when I observe thoughts transcribed on paper as words; here again there is no perceptual evidence of relations between words. Such relations can only be thought; again, I am conscious of words as discrete rather than conjoined entities, I

can extrapolate from the case of "thoughts - words" and come to a rather provocative conclusion: relations cannot be captured in either observation or thought. Either there is nothing which is present to the faculty of receptivity (perception and knowledge); or, by definition, relations are unavailable to consciousness (Kant's "thinking").

Thus, without recognizing his metaphysical premises, we find ourselves mired in the delima of Cratylus. By accepting the Heracleitean epigram, panta rhei, and by saying that all knowledge comes by the senses, Cratylus was led to the conclusion that we cannot use language intelligibly. By inspecting the receptive element of perception and thought, which is the only element available to consciousness, I can find no sanction for the way we do use language; rather, I simply see it on the physical level as unrelated "things". Contrary to Cratylus, however, I do not choose a life of self-imposed silence and finger-wagging; for, as a matter of fact, we do use language intelligibly. Nevertheless, I am still left with some perplexing questions, the answers to which will show that the relation between "thoughts" and overt behavior is a necessary one: how is "language" possible; how is it possible that we use "language" as we do; and, more generally, how are "relations" possible insofar as they find their origin in the basic process of signification?

These reflections on relation are by no means novel; anyone who is acquainted with Hume's analysis of causality will see a marked resemblance between it and what I have just said. Besides the fact that Hume's analysis is more incisive and extensive, the two analyses differ only in one principal way. Whereas Hume spoke in terms of causality, I have spoken of relation in a very general way so as to bring "causality" within the compass of "relation": "If causality is once understood as

relation, all questions as to the causality of relations in general disappears."<sup>2</sup> In order to better appreciate the presuppositions and implications of these two analyses, insofar as they are pertinent to the question at hand, it would be well to trace the philosophic attitudes to which they are a response.

Hume's analysis of causation revealed the incongruity which accompanies the confusion of intellection with perception; to illustrate this I shall cite some historical examples. For instance, Duns Scotus was party to this confusion when he exaggerated the analogy between sense perception and intellectual knowledge; Scotus accepted no fundamental difference between the modes of intellectual and sense knowledge.<sup>3</sup> And yet, since he was intent that the distinction be preserved in some respect, he had to postulate a difference in the objects to which the respective modes are ordered. Hence, intellection and perception were not different in virtue of a distinction in kind but only because they had dissimilar objects. Descartes adopted much the same attitude, though not without making certain alterations in it; his objects of intellectual knowledge were private cogitationes rather than the quasi-subsistent universals of Scotus. Both these men construed "intellection" in largely passive terms.

Hume demonstrated that, given this miscegenation of intellection and perception, one can neither observe a Cartesian-like "ego" nor the causal relations said to subsist between natural entities. When intellection is modeled after perception to such an excessive degree, "knowledge" becomes mere passive receptivity to an intellectual object. Having assumed, for the sake of argument, this confused relation between intellection and perception, Hume could not "see" the necessary connections

between the particular objects of a causal sequence:

When we look about us toward external objects and consider the operation of causes, we are never able in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connection, any quality which binds the effect to the cause and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other.<sup>4</sup>

In an effort to compensate for this lack of necessary connection, Hume treated the "necessity" of causal connection as a psychological phenomenon, a mental habitus. Our understanding of causality rests not upon a connection perceived in objects but upon one instituted by the mind, operating in accordance with the principles of association. Hume's approach to "causation" is a sequel to the obfuscation initiated by Scotus and sustained by Descartes. For Hume, we think as if there were a necessary connection between cause and effect; but we cannot say why this should be so in any metaphysical sense. It is a brute fact which defies any further explanation; we cannot understand the necessity of causal connections. Accordingly, causation is best understood as involving conjunction rather than connection. In effect, Hume was delivering a message that was to be reiterated in broader terms by Wittgenstein:

Explanation must come to an end; it does in fact come to an end if it is actually an explanation.<sup>5</sup>

My inspection of the "relation" between "words"/"thoughts" may be interpreted from two antithetic viewpoints. Either one may assume an extensive analogical overlap between intellection and perception, as did Scotus, Descartes, and Hume; or one may minimize the impulse to analogize and say, after the manner of Kant, that intellection and perception are cleanly and distinctly separated. In the former case, a description of relation would strongly resemble Hume's characterization of causality; "Relation is the psychological imposition of necessity on temporally juxtaposed, contiguous events." To use the latter assumption

as a base for interpretation requires that we review part of Kant's philosophy.

Noting that for Kant judging and thinking are almost the same,<sup>6</sup> we see that his assumption about the association of intellection and perception is markedly different from that of his empiricist and rationalist predecessors. Unlike rationalists, for whom perception was a shadow of intellection, and empiricists, for whom the assimilation of thinking to perceiving was second-nature, Kant stressed that thinking and perceiving are irreducibly distinct. In keeping with this assumption, Kant conceded to Hume that the concept of causation is not derivable empirically. In other words, Hume's attempt to explain causation solely in terms of sense perception showed that "causality" is not an a posteriori concept. As Kant states in the Transcendental Deduction, we cannot "see" the necessity of causal relations:

I need not insist upon the fact that, for instance, the concept of cause involves the character of necessity, which no experience can yield. Experience does indeed show that one appearance customarily follows upon another, but not that this sequence is necessary, nor that we can argue a priori and with complete universality from the antecedent, viewed as a condition, to the consequent.<sup>7</sup>

Our idea of cause-effect does entail some type of necessity; this necessity must be antecedent to sense perception in particular and to experience per se in general. Although the concept of causation is applicable to what is perceived, it is not abstracted from what is perceived. Rather, it is an a priori category of the understanding which holds universally and with apodictic necessity. It is one of the very conditions of experience.

Hume and Kant symbolize divergent attitudes concerning the relation between intellection and perception: Hume blurs the distinction

between the two while Kant marks it out more clearly.<sup>8</sup> Each of these attitudes has a correspondent rendering of causality. For Hume, causality as a matter of habitual association; for Kant, causation as an a priori category of relation involves rules rather than habits.<sup>9</sup>

Having outlined and contrasted Kant's alternative to a heavily analogical understanding of intellection and perception, I can now address myself to some important questions. Does the Kantian option allow for an interpretation of relations which avoids the perplexities inherent in Hume's position? May one side with Kant and speak of "relations" as more than psychological phenomena? Will one be able to discover some basis for our use of thoughts apart from what they are?

I recognize that Kant's epistemology is "self-reflective" and critical and that, as a matter of fact, it assumes an image of intellection and perception different from that of Hume. Nevertheless, it does little if anything to dispel the perplexities generated when one tries to get hold of "relation" by observation or thought. Assuming both a Kantian interpretative base and my inspection of relations, I am left with an oddly familiar definition of relation: "the imposition of necessity on temporally juxtaposed, contiguous events." Kant is often thought to have solved the riddle of causal relations posed by Hume; how is it then that I can say that Kant makes only a negligible advance towards the solution of this riddle?

In The Knower and the Known Marjorie Grene deals with the Kantian notion of "mind as agent"; the exposition and criticism of her ideas on this matter will make clear the point I am trying to establish. Grene insists that Kant successfully met Hume's skeptical challenge by accent-

ing the rule-giving agency of "mind".<sup>10</sup> Contrary to what might be expected, however, this achievement is not foreshadowed in his arguments, many of which have since been appraised as inadequate. Rather, this achievement is the result of "his demonstration that the existence of mind as agent is presupposed in the very analysis of experience itself"; this "very analysis of experience" is the Critique of Pure Reason. Thus, by doing a critique of pure reason, Kant indirectly substantiated the existence of an active mind. True to her historical, existential bent, Grene specifies what "activity" means when it is related to "mind":

The activity of mind is not like the activity of a strong acid, it is not a bare event, but a doing and it must be done by someone.<sup>11</sup>

And with regard to the identity of this "active mind" she arrives at the following conclusion:

The Kantian agent, however, the I of the transcendental unity is an agent with no identity, no individuality, no destiny.<sup>12</sup>

Grene is unduly selective when she chooses to accept the Kantian emphasis on "mind as agent" and yet refuses to approve a more fundamental element of the Kantian program upon which the "mind-as-agent" thesis is based. Specifically, she finds fault with the "emptiness" of the Kantian "I think". To say, as Grene does, that it is a concrete, historical person which is responsible for the agency of mind is admissible only if one can justify emphasis on the agency of mind in other than a Kantian manner. If one does not portray the "mind as agent" in terms of the pure self and opts instead for an historical interpretation of mind, then the Kantian attempt to legitimate necessary relations in the face of Humean skepticism fails. The doing of a critique of pure reason, that is, a metaphysical critique of the possibility of experience, is possible only

upon assuming something like the empty "I think". Without this assumption, the contingencies of the empirical world infiltrate the critique, making it a critique of empirical reason in which, as I have indicated, it is impossible to grasp "relation" by either perception or thought.

Kant does not quibble about the status of alternatives offered to his apriorism. As an example, he says that the concept of cause "must either be grounded completely a priori in the understanding or must be given up as a mere phantom of the brain."<sup>13</sup> Aside from the rhetorical garb with which Kant dresses the latter alternative, what difference is there between "phantoms of the brain" and a priori concepts which are "located" in the understanding? Obviously, Kant does not "locate" the categories in any crude spatio-temporal way. Nonetheless, he does speak as if the categories were conceptually locateable; he tells us "with in" which concepts we will find the categories. "Containment" and "location" refer to the conceptual entailment between category and mind or "understanding"; invariably then, Kant says that the categories are in the understanding or in the mind.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the Critique of Pure Reason, most especially in the "Transcendental Deduction," Kant refers to the "application" and "employment" of the a priori categories. The words "employ" and "apply" suggest some type of agent; or (more precisely, so as not to imply a substantial agent such as a person) they connote a locus of agency. Assuming this locus of agency, I will show by a reductio ad absurdum that Kant's epistemology involves solipsism, and that as a consequence, it does nothing to dispel the confusion which arises when one tries to understand relation by appeal to the analogically linked notions of perception and intellection.

Three interpretations of this locus of agency readily come to mind, the first of which is identical to Grene's interpretation. Let us assume that the locus of agency is a concrete, historical person; if this person decided reflectively whether or not to apply the categories, the apodictically necessary "application" which Kant needed to insure the possibility of experience would be a foregone impossibility. Deliberation is not simply a matter of logic, and the admixture of anything but the strictest "logical" inference would defeat Kant's purpose. And, if the concrete person applied the categories not reflectively but spontaneously, as it were, the result would be no different. Empirical factors would influence the person "unconsciously" such that the application of the categories would depend on those factors. (For instance, the "possibility of experience" might become a matter of proper nutrition). Hence, Kant would have had to reject the historical person as the locus of agency since that would make the application of the categories a matter of ineluctable contingency and thus contradict his earlier more fundamental assumptions, upon which his entire program rests.

Secondly, we might ascribe this agency to the "mind" itself; but what would this "mind" be? In order to deal with this question, it would be helpful to recall Kant's distinction between the empirical and the pure "self". One might equate "mind" with the empirical or "phenomenal" self, the self insofar as it is a knowable empirical object. Such an interpretation would be subject to the same criticisms as the interpretation which sees the locus of agency as a historical person; in the final analysis there is no important distinction between a "phenomenal self" and a historical person. On the other hand, we might conceive of the mind in terms similar to that of the pure self; this line of reasoning

would be no more productive than the first, for the pure self is not knowable. In Kant's terminology, it can only be "thought," we can only apprehend its bare existence; this means that we cannot attribute activity to a "pure mind" because we cannot know that it acts, but only that it is. Since possible attributes cannot be distinguished from actual attributes, the "pure mind" is without an identity.

One might interpret the Kantian locus of agency in still another way; one might say that it is the center toward which a set of logical relations converges. It would be an "object" in a way similar to theoretical physics' conception of "object". Accordingly, the logical relations which are Kant's first Critique converge on a point which, it turns out, is non-descript and beyond the ken of human knowledge; again, this point of convergence is the "I think". By not calling this point a "person" or a "mind," a previously unexplored option comes to the fore: the agency of mind could be very much like the activity of a "strong acid". If we conceive logical relations after the manner of Frege, as being independently real rather than only intentionally so, then the activity of mind occurs of itself, without being personified or in other ways linked to empirical contingencies.

In order to give substance to this interpretation and, as it happens, to expose its deficiencies, call to mind the original context in which I introduced the notion of agency: the "application" of Kantian categories implies a locus of agency. Now under the present interpretation, it would be incorrect to say that a "person" or a "mind" applies the categories. Rather one would simply say that the category is applied. This would be roughly analogous to saying that hydrochloric acid acts on zinc. One does not say that a chemical law "causes" a chemical reaction;

rather it describes a specific de facto instance of the reaction in a way that is publicly intelligible. Likewise, the "person" or the "mind" does not cause the action of category application; rather it describes that application in an empirically accessible way. Of the three interpretations offered thus far, the last is the only one which can account for both the activity involved in the application of categories and the necessary relations which are so integral to Kant's epistemology.

At a crucial juncture, the analogy of chemical reaction and mental agency seems to break-down. Whereas it is necessary for Kant that the categories be applied with strict regularity, it is conceivable that the combination of "acid" and "metal" will lead to a result that is not predictable given our present scientific framework. The application of categories is a matter of deductive necessity; chemical reactions are subject to the vicissitudes of the empirical realm. This supposed "break down" in the analogy oversimplifies the relation between the logically real and the empirically real and between the various kinds of "necessity". Given a certain axiomatic system which in this case was a composite of Aristotelian logic and Newtonian physics, Kant claimed that it necessarily followed that the "I think" applied the categories, as specified, without variance. Likewise, given our present scientific framework, it follows "necessarily" that acids work on metals in such and such a way. If the anticipated reaction did not occur in a significant number of instances, we would probably alter the scientific framework, which might involve a change in the meaning of such terms as "acid" and "metal". And if momentous changes occurred in the Newtonian Weltanschauung, it would be reasonable to expect a corresponding change in such terms as "logic," "necessity," and the like.

Since the time of Kant, much has occurred to dispel the myths which attend an inordinate confidence in axiomatic systems. The ideal of completely impersonal, permanent knowledge is beginning to fade; the type of philosophy which is compatible with this ideal, namely, philosophy as a facsimile of geometry, is following a similar course. This decline has not occurred because it has been shown that to model philosophy after axiomatic systems is itself an unreasonable and self-defeating procedure; rather it has taken place because the inherent "drawbacks" of axiomatic thinking have been uncovered. They are no longer worthy of the short-sighted and excessive respect paid them in the past. Non-Euclidean geometries and the hypo-deductive model of science have revealed that there is not one axiomatic system which is the paradigm for all "knowledge". And from the work of Gödel, we see that it is impossible to establish both the completeness and consistency of an axiomatic system.

Given Kant's attempt to fix the possibility of the Newtonian world on a stable foundation by demonstrating the necessary application of rules in the knowing process, it is clear which of the three interpretations is most consistent and sympathetic with this attempt. The locus of Kant's intellectual agency cannot be conceived in an empirical way, either as a concrete person or a mind, without eroding his "firm" foundation. But even if agency is interpreted in the third way, as "located" in an impersonal and independently real "I think," there is a difficulty which leaves us in solipsism. If we accept the view that no axiomatic system is both complete and consistent, then it is logically possible that the categories are not applied with apodictic necessity. And if we accept the Kantian system as both complete and consistent, that is to say, if we acknowledge that it is metaphysically true, then it is nonsensical

to ask who is knowing. Kant claims to unveil the necessary conditions for human knowing; and yet the pivotal concept of his analysis is necessarily devoid of personality and even of identity. Because of his methodology, Kant cannot speak of knowers in the plural; and consequently, he must remain silent on the communication of knowledge. He cannot even consistently assume the existence of other knowing agents, for to do so would involve demonstrating that more than one transcendental unity exists. This is impossible, since by definition the transcendental unity has no identity; Kant systematically excludes everything that might serve as a principle of individuation. The entire transcendental deduction, and with it Kant's epistemology, can have significance only for me. In The Essence of Philosophy, Dilthey comments that the starting point of one's philosophy determines the character of the resultant philosophy.<sup>15</sup> It seems that because Kant was especially intrigued with the logical problems of human knowledge, he minimized its more human aspects.

I am still in a quandary; Kant's answer to Hume yields that same familiar definition of relation: the imposition of necessity on temporally juxtaposed, contiguous events. Granted, the imposition is not psychological as it was with Hume. Regardless of the type of imposition, however, the aftermath is still solipsism; one is still unable to justify the concept of relation in a satisfactory way.

Admittedly, I have sided with Kant on the question of the relation between intellection and perception; I maintain that one should depreciate the analogical overlap between how we think and how we sense. However, as has been indicated, I espouse a function theory of mind, something which neither Hume nor Kant did. Both of them could admit no more than a contingent connection between mental state and corresponding knowledge of

overt behavior and the external world. The imposition of categories leads to a solipsism in which it is not even possible to speak of overt human activity because one cannot know that there are other "human," intellectual agents; there would be no appreciable difference between human activity and the tumbling of water down a mountain conyon. What I plan to do is take the best from Hume and Kant and fuse it with the appropriate function theory of mind.

Hume and Kant thought they could justify and explain the concept of relation by imposing, either psychologically or logically, certain conditions on the world as perceived. As a matter of fact, their programs are extraneous to the task they assumed; the categories of intellection do not precede or antedate experience. Epistemology becomes blind metaphysics when a reflective equilibrium between the ethical and logical dimension of human knowledge is not maintained. To say that the conceptual foundations of human knowledge are located in a priori or a posteriori abstractions is to upset this balance. The categories of intellection, which philosophers from Aristotle to Kant have recognized as the foundations of human knowledge, are coincidental with "experience"; they are extended into human activity in all its irreducible forms. That is to say, human activity and the conditions for making knowledge claims are coextensive; thus, knowledge is a specific doing. Instead of saying with Aristotelians that the intellect and the intelligible are one in act, I would say that any human person who possesses knowledge is one in act.

Perhaps the most noteworthy philosophers who implicitly advocated a similar conception of knowledge were the Buddha and the later Wittgenstein. I think a case might be made for the claim that Wittgenstein's central concept is human activity; "forms of life," "language games" and

"language acquisition" seem to have human activity as their primun analogotum. Multifarious human activities are somehow irreducible to one another and to what is unperceived. Wittgenstein possesses extraordinary philosophic significance precisely because his actions seem to have been commensurate with his claims to knowledge.

Buddhism as a philosophy is premised on the coextension of human knowledge and human activity. This indicates a primary reason for the frequent intellectual discord between Oriental and Occidental; popular concepts of "knowledge" are widely divergent and appear to be almost antithetical. In order to "prove" one of his knowledge claims, it is incumbent upon the Buddhist philosopher that he do. It seems that, for the majority of western philosophers, to prove a knowledge claim it is sufficient only to think; at the very most, he may resort to a minimal type of activity like writing. In a significant sense, the justification of the Buddhist philosopher is more demanding and rigorous than that of the stereotyped western philosopher;<sup>16</sup> and, much to the chagrin and embarrassment of "tough-minded" western philosophers, it has fewer speculative presuppositions.

The equation of knowledge with doing does not involve the "is" of predication, but rather the "is" of identity. Some philosophers would be able to rest easy with a predicative relation between knowing and doing, taking it almost as a matter of course; however, I am sure not a few would be disturbed when I say the relation is one of identity. Such a statement seems to make short work of some of the inviolable conventions of western philosophy, such as the distinction between "inner" and "outer" worlds; some of these conventions are hold-overs from Cartesianism and from an inordinate confidence in axiomatic systems. In comparison with the more

traditional conceptions of "knowledge," mine will appear unconscionable. It is, however, the "extremeness" of my conception of knowledge which makes the notion of relation intellectually viable. Also, it allows one to dispatch certain undesirable tendencies found in most function theories of mind without giving up function theories altogether.

For instance, though the phenomenological conception of the intentionality of consciousness is a function theory, it lends itself to interpretations which bear the stamp of a confused Cartesianism. In this theory, consciousness is a pure activity necessarily directed toward an object. The active nature of consciousness is not mirrored in its object, for "objects" are passive. One is unable to grasp this activity of consciousness directly, for when "thinking" is inspected, one is only aware of the objects of thought. As I have implied, the capacity of "mind" to reflect on itself does not help one lay hold of "relation" or "activity"; however, I can give meaning to the directed activity which is "consciousness" in another way. I know what it means indirectly; it is intelligible by an abstractive inference. Yet, as Wittgenstein has shown, the criteria for determining the status of conscious acts, or of consciousness itself for that matter, must be independent of conscious acts. And, as I have tried to show, these criteria and the acts of consciousness must be enough alike to allow for the applicability of criteria to act. "Human activity" supplies these criteria, but try as I might, I can discover no such criteria in the theory of conscious intentionality.

As of yet I have not given a concise and explicit rendering of the concept of "knowledge"; I have only exposed a conceptual network in which a certain understanding of "knowledge" remains latent. By adopting a standard outline for any concept of knowledge and filling it in with

the important details of the preceding chapters, I will develop the concept of knowledge explicitly, and consequently will make the presuppositions and implications of my equation of "knowledge" with "doing" more palpable. Thus I have adopted C. I. Lewis' idea that every conception of knowledge must take into account three factors: intellection, perception and the act whereby the latter is interpreted by the former.<sup>17</sup>

Intellection is familiar to us in an irreducible way; it is genuinely primitive. Thus, it cannot be explained in terms of passive receptivity, which means that, like knowledge itself, it cannot be reduced to perception. However, neither can it be explained in terms of itself; such an "explanation" would prove as barren as the attempt to verify the stories in a newspaper by comparing it with a second copy of the same paper. This much is evident from my consideration of the basic semiotic process and the extensive analogical overlap between intellection and perception. Just as the basic semiotic process - the "application" of the law of non-contradiction - necessarily involves a clean distinction of kinds, so too intellection is cleanly and necessarily separated from perception in a way first suggested by Kant. The use of the word "necessity" is dictated by a proper understanding of the concept of relation which finds its genesis in the basic semiotic process. If semiotic systems are to exist as organizations of related things and not simply as dissevered entities, there must be an initial, abrupt separation of kinds; this separation is the basis for any relation. Likewise, if intellection and perception are to be truly related in the act of knowing, which, according to Lewis, is an indispensable part of any concept of knowledge heretofore expounded, they must be separated distinctly from the start.

The very attempt to explain intellection in terms of perception attests that one does not recognize intellection as familiar, for the familiar requires no sanction from what is equally familiar. One may, however, describe how intellection is possible by depicting how it is unlike perception. (While intellection and perception are both familiar, they are not the same, there must be some aspect that differentiates them). The notion of "thoughts" does not demand support from some metaphysical substance (Descartes); nor are thoughts given unity by some inscrutable "bundling principle" (Hume). This is the case because "support" from any mind which is only contingently related to the world inevitably leads to solipsism. Despite the machinations of some philosophers, men do not live as if they were solipsists. By all rights, Descartes and Hume should have joined Cratylus, as should all those who espouse a substance theory of mind.

"Thoughts" need only be shored up by human activity, to which they are necessarily related; as I have said, the dynamic relation of thoughts, which is thinking, is possible only when supported by the context of mediate familiarity. Thus, thoughts are supported by a mind which is not self-contained and simply "subjective"; the human mind is both thoughts and overt human activity. This mind is not simply my own; I do not "own" a mind as I might own a material commodity. "My" mind is shared as one shares any lived context, any cultural milieu;

If the mind is socially constituted, then the field or locus of any individual mind must extend as far as the social activity or apparatus of social relations which constitutes it extends; and hence that field cannot be bounded by the skin of the individual to which it belongs.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, this socially-constituted mind does not apply the law of non-contradiction as one applies a general principle to a specific

state of affairs. Rather, to say that the mind applies the law of non-contradiction is to say, without pleading guilty to a charge of redundancy or "poetic usage," that human beings act as they do. Consequently, whenever we wish to know another mind, we must attend to the overt activity which is part of that mind itself:

Overt intelligent performances are not clues to the workings of minds; they are those workings,<sup>19</sup>

Thus, by retaining Kant's separation of intellection and perception and by dispensing with his substance theory of mind in favor of a functional one, I come to a conclusion similar to that of Charles Renouvier: the "conditions" of knowledge are derivable empirically, not transcendently as Kant would have us think. But beyond that I would say that this derivation is possible only when we focus on the human element of the empirical.

Perception is familiar to us in an irreducible way; it is genuinely primitive. Unlike intellection, it needs no real or intentional buttress; thus I have said that it is "immediately familiar". But if thoughts require some type of guarantee that they are actually related in the process of thinking, should not "percepts" require a similar guarantee since they seem to be related in the process of perceiving? This question is best answered in the negative because "percepts" are not the elemental components of perception - notice that not once during this inquiry have I made reference to "percepts" or "sense data". The legitimacy of the classification I have introduced between mediate familiarity and immediate

familiarity depends upon my ability to show that "percepts" are not simply a matter of perception. Indeed, if percepts were "units" of perception, I would not be able to distinguish perception and intellection - both would be mediately familiar. I would have succumbed to the tendency to assume an extensive analogical overlap between intellection and perception. To illustrate this point, I shall address myself to the question, "Do I ever simply perceive an object?"

As indicated before in the chapter on theories of mind, the word "object" signifies a bounded relational convergence. Already it has been pointed out that one never "sees" relations. Since an object is necessarily dependent on relations, how may I be said to "see" an object? I look at this page before me - can one simply look at this page? I think not, for looking at involves a specific location which is itself a convergence of relations which cannot simply be sensed. I may say that I see an object, I may write or talk about it but I never simply see an object. Perception is not a sequence of related things; rather, it is closer to being a "pure awareness" than anything else - hence my use of the word immediate in contradistinction to mediate.

The preceding analysis may seem to have cancelled the possibility of making clear the last of the three parts of any concept of knowledge, the act whereby what is perceived is interpreted by what is thought. After all, if there are no units of perception, then there is no definite "what" to be interpreted. This only shows that we are not dealing with a simple isomorphism between thought and unit of perception, just as in theoretical physics one no longer contends that there is a simple one-to-one correspondence between "object" and empirical referent. Rather, as in theoretical physics, the relationship is one of complex correspondence;

it is not a relation between the two worlds of "thought" and "object," "inner" and "outer". It is a triadic relation between thought, human activity and perception. The necessary relation between thoughts and human activity (mind) is mirrored in the relation between perception (not percepts) and mind.

Now that the mechanisms behind "knowledge" have been described, I may reiterate the conception of knowledge which they imply. Because thoughts are necessarily related to overt human activity, "thoughts" which are not expressed overtly are not actually thoughts; metaphysically they may be anything or nothing, but epistemologically they are not thoughts. Thus, insofar as knowledge is traditionally conceived to be a matter of "thoughts,"<sup>20</sup> the only authentic knowledge is that which comes to fruition in overt human activity. The common philosophical ideal of detached, contemplative knowledge is no longer tenable; as Nietzsche put it rather more poignantly, the idea of contemplative knowledge is a "rank absurdity".<sup>21</sup>

The concept of knowledge is familiar to us insofar as it is a state of mind. Through an analysis of relation, we have seen that "mind" is not adequately conceptualized by appeals to substance. Rather, it is best understood as one function among many, a function which necessarily connects "private" and public states. Like Kant, we see that this connection is a conceptual one in which concepts function as rules. Through the use of these rules we order experience, we set things in relation to one another. Unlike Kant, however, these rules are not applied by a mind or the mind for, as Wittgenstein shows,<sup>22</sup> the concept of applying a rule is intelligible only if we apply that rule. Thus, knowledge must necessarily come to fruition in overt behavior.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER V

- 1 Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, pp. 168-169 B 157-158.
- 2 Ernst Cassirer, Substance and Function and Einstein's Theory of Relativity, p. 129.
- 3 Anthony Kenny, "Aquinas and Wittgenstein," The Downside Review, 77(1959), 232.
- 4 David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding (New York: The Liberal Arts Press Inc., 1955), p. 74.
- 5 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, I, #87.
- 6 S. Korner, Kant (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1972), p. 27.
- 7 Kant, op. cit., p. 139 A112
- 8 Korner, op. cit., p. 27.
- 9 Kant, op. cit., pp. 44-45 B5
- 10 Marjorie Grene, The Knower and the Known, pp. 120-121, 134-135.
- 11 Ibid., p. 143.
- 12 Ibid., p. 143.
- 13 Kant, op. cit., p. 125 A91 B124
- 14 Ibid., p. 143 A119
- 15 Wilhelm Dilthey, The Essence of Philosophy, trans. Stephen and William Emery (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 26.
- 16 See the Anguttara-Nikaya, IV p. 232: "This is not a doctrine for the sluggard but for the man who puts forth virile effort."
- 17 C. I. Lewis, "The Pragmatic Element in Knowledge," Howison Lecture for 1926, University of California Publications in Philosophy, Volume 6, p. 205.
- 18 A. Strauss, ed., The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead (Chicago: Phoenix Books Inc., 1956), p. 257n.
- 19 Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 58.
- 20 G. M. A. Grube, Plato's Thought (Boston: Beacon Press Inc., 1968), pp. 140-141.

- 21 Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, trans. F. Golfing (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Inc., 1956), p. 255.
- 22 Wittgenstein, op. cit., I, #202.