

# A Demonstration of Epistemological Realism

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## I

MY PURPOSE in this essay is to try to demonstrate as precisely and rigorously as possible the minimal elements of realism—in both the technical and the popular uses of that term—which are essential to any adequate or true epistemology. The word “demonstration” I wish here to use in both of its main senses: as *exhibition* and as *proof*. By “demonstration,” that is, I mean both the sharpest possible manifestation or definition of the *meaning* of this essential minimal realism, on the one hand, and also the most rigorous possible proof of its *truth*, on the other. I am of course aware of the fact that any attempt to state and prove a position with precision and rigor is very apt to pay heavily for this result, if it be achieved, and especially in two ways. It is apt, in the first place, to expose flaws in the position which might otherwise remain concealed, as well as to create new and peculiar flaws of its own. And it is liable, in the second place, to present a relatively incomplete account of the subject, to say very little. But it is sometimes better to say a little clearly and soundly than a lot unclearly or unsoundly. Indeed, if a complete account is to be sound, it must start with a core which is incomplete though sound and fruitful. And if mistakes are made or flaws revealed in the establishment of this core, then we can profit from their discovery. Hence I believe that this purchase of rigor—if it be *rigor vitae* and not *rigor mortis*!—at the price of incompleteness and possible error is a bargain; I believe that philosophical truth can best be advanced in this way.

This essay will thus not attempt to present all that “realism” has meant or now means in all its many and varied forms, not even

in philosophical usages, let alone in non-philosophical usages; but it will attempt to present the essence or common core of realism in all its forms, and it will argue that consistency requires that this common core must be defined in the way in which it is defined in this essay. As the title indicates and as the contents will make apparent, it is my belief that this common core of realism is epistemological in nature, that realism is essentially an epistemological doctrine. This does not by any means prevent ontology, ethics, theology, or other branches of philosophy from being realist also. Indeed, it will be briefly suggested in section (6) of Part II that realist epistemology must be ontological; and of course *all* types of knowledge—ontological, ethical, theological, and other types of philosophical knowledge, as well as non-philosophical types of knowledge—must be realist if realism is demonstrated to be true. But the core meaning of realism is, I believe, epistemological.

#### IN WHAT SENSE IS A DEMONSTRATION POSSIBLE?

Realists have paid too little attention, it seems to me, to the question of a demonstration, in the sense of a logical proof, of their realism. There have of course been many presentations of realism, attempts to delineate its essential tenets;<sup>1</sup> but there have been very few attempts at what I should regard as strict logical proofs of its truth. Realists have, instead, generally relied on common-sense for the acceptance of their realism. In spite of the fact that the writings of the American “neo-” and “critical” realists, for example, often give the impression of being quite dialectical, the dialectic is restricted to attempts to refute specific arguments for contrary positions, the positive acceptance of realism depending on common-sense.<sup>2</sup> This common-sense basis seems to me to be

<sup>1</sup> For example, to mention only a very few of these, the “neo-realist” “A Program and First Platform of Six Realists,” *Journ. of Phil.*, VII (1910), 393-401 (reprinted as the appendix in E. B. Holt, *et al.*, *The New Realism*, New York: Macmillan, 1912); John Wild’s “What is Realism?”, *Journ. of Phil.*, XLIV (1947), 148-158, and the introduction to his *Introduction to Realistic Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1948); the platform of the Association for Realistic Philosophy published as the appendix in *The Return to Reason*, ed. John Wild (Chicago: Regnery, 1953); and, of course, several works by Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain.

<sup>2</sup> For example, R. B. Perry’s “Professor Royce’s Refutation of Realism and Pluralism” (*Monist*, 1901-02, pp. 446-458) and W. P. Montague’s “Pro-

also generally characteristic of the English realists, the best illustration of this being, perhaps, G. E. Moore's "A Defence of Common Sense";<sup>3</sup> and it is a strain which runs through many of Gilson's writings on realism.<sup>4</sup> The only passage which I can now recall (though I'm sure there must be others) which approximates what I should regard as an explicitly rigorous logical proof of realism occurs in the last two pages of Moore's "The Refutation of Realism";<sup>5</sup> and that passage is incidental to Moore's main contention in that essay, which is that *one* of the standard arguments for idealism and against realism is invalid. Indeed, it seems to have been rather the anti-realists who have stressed logical proofs; and this paucity of proof for realism lays it open to the charge, which I heard recently, that "whenever you disagree with a realist he always claims that you're either obstinate or blind."

It may be, of course, that a proper logical demonstration of realism is impossible. This often seems to be the opinion of Gilson, for example.<sup>6</sup> The solution to this problem turns entirely on what

fessor Royce's Refutation of Realism" (*Phil. Rev.*, XI [1902], 43-55) attempt only to refute Royce's refutation of realism; and Santayana's "Three Proofs of Realism," in *Essays in Critical Realism*, Durant Drake *et al.* (London: Macmillan, 1920) are "proofs" from common-sense.

<sup>3</sup> In *Contemporary British Philosophy*, Vol. II, 1925, pp. 193-223.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 6 below.

<sup>5</sup> *Mind*, XII (1903), 433-453.

<sup>6</sup> Gilson seems at times even to suggest that logical proof is the first step toward abandoning realism, that logical argumentation is the peculiar terrain of the anti-realist. Thus in one place (*Le réalisme méthodique* as translated by W. J. Quinn and printed in *Philosophy of Knowledge*, ed. R. Houde and J. P. Mullally [Chicago: Lippincott, 1960], pp. 386-394), he says that "The realist must therefore be accustomed, from the very beginning, to refusing any discussion on a terrain which is not his own, and to judging himself in no difficulty because he cannot respond to some questions, surely insoluble, which, for him, are not even posed" (p. 386). "All the strength of idealism comes from the coherence with which it develops the consequences of its initial error. One would therefore be very mistaken to reproach it for its lack of logic [which is what I am going to do]. Quite the contrary; it is a doctrine which can live only by logic, since the order and connection of ideas here replaces the order and connection of things" (p. 389). On the other hand, the logic implicit in Gilson's writing in behalf of realism is very much the same as that of the arguments I shall present. On p. 386 of the work just referred to he speaks as follows: "The first step on the path of realism is to perceive that one has always been realistic; the second is to perceive that, whatever one does to become otherwise, one will never succeed; the third is to ascertain that those who do pretend to think otherwise,

is meant by "realism" and what is meant by a "logical demonstration." As I will suggest in Part II, section (4.1), *some* of the important historical senses of "realism" can *not*, I agree, be demonstrated logically—at least so far as I can see at present. But "realism" as I shall herein define it can, I believe, be logically demonstrated. The question of the meaning of "realism" I shall answer, in short, only by stipulation—although I believe that the meaning of "realism" herein stipulated is, as I have mentioned, the common and essential *core* of whatever else "realism" may mean.

### FIRST PRINCIPLES

The problem of the meaning of "logical demonstration" is more difficult, it seems to me, and a full consideration of it would divert me from the purpose of this paper. However, some attention must here be given to this problem. The arguments I shall use to attempt to demonstrate the truth of realism are indirect arguments, arguments, that is to say, that a proposition is true because its contradictory contradicts either itself or else some other proposition already proven true. Such argumentation presupposes the truth of the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle—the latter principle being required in order that the truth may not lie in some third, unspecified proposition. In the course of the demonstration I hope to show that the essential tenets of realism are demonstrated apodictically, given the truth of these two principles plus the definitions of those essential tenets of realism. But how can the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle be proven? They cannot be proven indirectly, by *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, because such arguments presuppose them, as we have just seen. Nor can they be proven directly, I would contend—although this is a more debatable point—since they, or at least the principle of non-contradiction, is definitive of and therefore presupposed by direct, deductive proof. The reason for this is that the very meaning of deduction is that the falsity of the conclusion, taken together with the truth of its premises, involves a contradiction. And even if they could be demonstrated directly, deductively, our problem would not be solved, because such direct demonstration would, by its very meaning, presuppose *other* prop-

think in realistic terms as soon as they forget to act their part. If one then wonders why, the conversion is almost complete."

ositions as its premises; and *these* propositions—and the premises from which they are deduced or the premises from which *those* premises are deduced, and so on, *ad infinitum*—would not be proven true. Hence our demonstration, and any demonstration, must presuppose the truth of at least one proposition which cannot be demonstrated either directly or indirectly. The mere postulation of such ultimate premises without any kind of intellectual support is of no help; this would permit the realism demonstrated from them to be valid, but it would leave it without truth. Nor is verification of these postulated ultimate premises by means of the realist consequences drawn from them of any help, for this would result in a circular argument, the truth of realism being presupposed in order to establish the premises from which it is derived. We are here faced, in short, with the very serious problem of the justification or verification of principles which are, by definition, absolutely first premises. What is to be done?

It is clear that there must be a type of non-demonstrative verification in order that these *first* principles may be known to be true, and therefore in order that all the propositions derived from them may be known to be true instead of being merely valid. Is there and can there be any such non-demonstrative verification, or is this expression itself even a contradiction in terms? This is a very large question to which I cannot even begin to do justice here. I can here only suggest, and without argumentation,<sup>7</sup> that there is such a non-demonstrative verification of first principles, and that at least most realists—and even many non-realists—have agreed that there is. Such non-demonstrative verification is effected by what Aristotle called insight or intellectual intuition (*νοῦς*), the act of that “thinking part of the soul” whose apprehension of the forms of things gives rise to “universal and necessary judgments” and “the first principles of scientific knowledge.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I have argued for this thesis in a somewhat informal lecture (“Insight and Its Value,” to be published in a volume of *Logos* Institute lectures by Holy Family College, Philadelphia), an essay concerned wholly with this question of the intellectual intuition of universally and necessarily true propositions which are absolutely first premises; and I plan to treat the topic more formally and rigorously in a later essay. On this topic see also Henry Veatch, “Matrix, Matter, and Method in Metaphysics,” *Review of Metaphysics*, XIV (1961), 581-600, and also, though concerned with a slightly different aspect of the problem, Oliver A. Johnson, “Denial of the Synthetic *A Priori*,” *Philosophy*, XXXV (1960), 1-10.

<sup>8</sup> *Nic. Eth.*, VI, 1139b 31-1140a 8.

“We cannot know the truth of anything,” he says elsewhere, “without also knowing its explanation. And . . . that is the most true which is the explanation of other truths. Consequently the ultimate principles of the permanent aspects of things must necessarily be true in the fullest sense; for such principles are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any ulterior explanation of their being, but on the contrary *they* are the explanation of other things. And so, as each thing stands in respect of being, it stands likewise in respect of truth.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus I wish to propose that first principles can be established as true without being derived from prior premises, although I must not here try to defend this proposal. In this sense, one must say that realism is, indeed, not logically demonstrable, in the sense that it presupposes first principles which are not themselves demonstrable. Whether or not realism is logically demonstrable thus depends on whether or not these indemonstrable first principles—for my purposes the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle—are part of the definition of realism. It seems clear to me that they are not (non-realists accept them too) and that realism is therefore strictly (though indirectly) demonstrable. This issue may be to a certain extent a tempest in a teapot anyway, since I would suppose that most philosophers would accept these two principles and that most philosophers would feel obliged to accept realism *if* they were convinced that its truth is required by these two principles. But I shall be satisfied in the present essay merely to assume these two principles, to demonstrate merely that realism (as it will be defined) must be true *if* the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle are true. And to this demonstration let us now turn.

## II

The minimal and essential core of epistemological realism which I wish to try to demonstrate (in both senses of “demonstrate”) consists of six propositions ordered as one axiom and five theorems. The number six here is not very important; the principal points constituting what I regard as the essential core of realism might be formulated as somewhat more or somewhat less than six propositions, depending upon the degree to which the items implicit

<sup>9</sup> *Meta.*, II, 993b 24-31.

in this core are explicitly distinguished from each other. And the particular order of these six propositions might also well be different, since (I believe) some of the theorems imply earlier ones and some of the theorems even imply the axiom. All six propositions, that is to say, are, I believe, logically necessary and hence could be regarded as logically coeval. However, these six propositions are the most important ones to explicate and consider, I believe; and the order in which they are here listed seems to me to be the most natural and useful one. Let us now turn to these six propositions.

#### THE AXIOM: AWARENESS OF SOMETHING

(1) The first proposition, the axiom, is: "I am aware of something." This is not merely an "I think" where thinking is only one species of cognition; if it is an "I think" it is so in the very broadest sense which Descartes gave that expression: "What is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, abstains from willing, that can also be aware of images and sensations."<sup>10</sup> "Awareness," then, is here a general term for any and every type of cognition—rational, sensory, imaginative, of the future, of the past, true, false, etc. If I occasionally substitute for the word "awareness" such other words as "cognition," "consciousness," "apprehension," "knowledge," etc., it is only to try to relieve the reader's boredom. This essay, then, is concerned with all types of cognition without differentiation or distinction; it is concerned just with cognition as such. Nor is this an "I think; therefore I am" in the sense that it is concerned to establish the existence of any kind of ego or self. Where Descartes first ignored the question of the nature and status of the something that he thought about, I shall, except for a very tangential reference in section (6), ignore the question of the nature and status of the I that is aware of that something.

This proposition—"I am aware of something"—cannot properly be called either a postulate or an hypothesis or an assumption, because it has no consistently assertable alternative. It has, in the first place, no *practical* alternative, and thus it is necessary *practically*, for its denial—the assertion of its contradictory—is self-stultifying and self-destructive. If I assert that "I am *not* aware of anything," where "anything" means "anything *at all*,"

<sup>10</sup> *Meditations*, II (Norman Kemp Smith's translation).

then I contradict myself practically, for I must at least be aware of *this* something, the proposition that I am asserting, just in order to make the assertion. If I make that assertion subconsciously, then I am subconsciously aware of it. If I make that assertion unconsciously, in the usual sense and in the psychoanalytic sense of that expression, then I am aware of it unconsciously; and if I make that assertion unconsciously in the literal sense of having no consciousness at all while I make it, then I am only mechanically venting a sound and not making any assertion at all in any proper sense of the word "assertion." In any case, therefore, there is no practical alternative to the proposition that "I am aware of something." Or, if one wants to say that there is a practical alternative, namely, not to make any assertion at all (which would be Aristotle's renowned vegetative state), then there is at least no *proposition* which is a practical alternative or consistently assertable; and this is what I wish to prove. Thus the proposition, "I am aware of something," is axiomatic in the sense of being practically necessary, or necessary in practice.

It also seems to me to be the case, in the second place, that this first proposition that "I am aware of something" is axiomatic in the sense of having no *logical* alternative, and thus in the sense of being *logically* necessary; for the term "I" means, at least in part, a speaker or writer or person who is aware of something. If that first proposition were phrased objectively, as "There is awareness of something," for example, then it would not be logically necessary (though it would still be practically necessary); its contradictory would not be self-contradictory, for this phrasing contains no subject concept whose meaning is repeated, partly or wholly, in the predicate and whose meaning is contradicted, partly or wholly, in the predicate of the contradictory proposition. But this objective phrasing is like the average man; it is not so much untrue as unreal and not fundamental. It is true, of course, that "There is awareness of something"; but it is true only *because I* am aware of something and *you* are and *they* are—where you and they are also I's. Thus the basic proposition is that "I am aware of something," and I cannot help but think that this proposition is analytic and therefore logically necessary. The relevant and very interesting question here is, of course, "What is the meaning (or use) of the word 'I'?" and I may be mistaken in my belief that its meaning entails the meaning "aware of something." Yet this would seem to be so; "I" is a first person pronoun, and a first person pronoun means a speaker or writer, that is to say a cognizer

of something. If this be so, then the proposition "I am *not* aware of anything" is logically self-contradictory and thus its contradictory, "I am aware of something," is (assuming the principle of excluded middle) logically necessarily true.

Whether this first proposition has only a practical necessity or also a logical necessity, it is in either case inescapable and therefore genuinely axiomatic, of intrinsic cognitive value. As an axiom it is a foundation of all knowledge. But it is also the intellectual articulation of a phenomenon absolutely ubiquitous among phenomena, the phenomenon of phenomena, for it grounds and defines their phenomenality. It is the appearance of appearances. Hence its status may also be said to be genuinely phenomenological. The axiom, or phenomenological protocol, then, is this: "I am aware of something." What, now, are some of its theorems or implicants?

#### FIRST THEOREM

(2) The first theorem is: "I am aware of something *other* than and *different* from my awareness of it." As we have seen, the basic datum is not a bare *cogito*, but a cogitation or cognition *of something*. What we must now see is that this implies that that something is different from the awareness of it. An awareness which is not of or about anything other than itself is no awareness at all. Even in instances of reflexive awareness, ranging from "I" to "being," where the object is itself (wholly or partly) one's very awareness of that object, that object is still other than, a distinct thing from, the cognition *of* it. There is a difference between the I that I'm aware of and the awareness of that I, and between the universal being that I'm aware of and that part of it which is my awareness *of* it. Object and awareness are always correlative, but this correlativity itself implies that object and awareness are always two distinct things. This second proposition, the first theorem, formulates the basic cognitive trait which is often called "intentionality" or "objective reference," which says simply that every cognition is characterized by its "of-ness" or "about-ness." I have a sensation *of* pain, a feeling *of* sorrow, a concept *of* justice, a proposition *about* war being vicious, a proof *of* the essential tenets of realism, etc. This intentionality or objective reference holds true, of course, not only of theoretical cognitive acts but also of practical or conative acts in so far as they are cognitively mediated or articulated, either consciously or unconsciously. I have a desire *for*

peace, a love of my children, the intention of interesting and convincing you. If all interests are cognitively mediated, as Ralph Barton Perry has said, then they share in the objective reference which is the hall mark of cognition. The first theorem, then, is that the something of which I am aware is different from my awareness of it.

#### SECOND THEOREM

(3) The second theorem is: "I am aware of something *itself, identically.*" The contradictory of this proposition is self-contradictory, when taken together with the axiom, proposition 1, whose truth has already been established. If I am not aware of something *itself, identically*, then, since I am necessarily aware of something (the axiom), I am aware of something and yet not aware of *that* something *itself* at all. This is not merely the "essential" identity held, for example, by many classical realists and by such "critical" realists as Santayana, Drake, Strong, and Rogers. It can better be likened to the "numerical" identity of the "neo-realists," except—and this is an important exception—it says nothing at all about the ontological status of the identified objects.

Furthermore, this is not an identity between the thing apprehended and either the apprehending *mind* or the apprehending *person*, as many realists<sup>11</sup> have said it is. A person who knows a horse is not thereby necessarily a horse, not even "essentially" or "formally," nor is the mind of such a person the same as or identical with the horse. Such an interpretation of cognitive identity is just what the first theorem (proposition 2) denies: "The something I am aware of is different from, not identical with, my awareness of it and, *a fortiori*, not identical with my mind or my self." The identity involved in cognition is thus not an identity between the thing cognized and the *mind* or *knower*; it is rather an identity between the thing cognized and *itself*. Indeed, identity just *means* sameness, and it is a logical truth that two things which are different (such as mind and object or person and object) are, just to the extent that they are different, *not* the same, *not* identical. There is, of course, a minimal difference involved in identity, the difference involved in the fact that identity is a *relation*. A relation (excepting

<sup>11</sup> For example, Wm. Oliver Martin in his *Order and Integration of Knowledge* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), pp. 22, 25-26, 122.

so-called transcendental relations, such as potentiality as related to actuality) must have at least two terms, and the twoness is a minimal difference or non-identity. But this merely terminal difference, this difference, that is, between the two identical things merely in so far as they are the two different terms in the relation of identity, cannot be a difference in nature or kind, such as exists between a known horse and the person who knows the horse, for example, for then the two terms could not be said to be identical, which is what the relation says. This merely terminal difference between the two identical things is the difference between the thing *as thing* and the thing *as cognized*. This shows that identity is a relation which entails cognition, that it is not a "real" relation. The thing just as thing, as not cognized, cannot be identical with itself, for to be identical with itself it must first be distinguished from itself, and this requires an act of cognition. The ambiguous word "object" nicely embraces this difference in identity: an "object" is both a thing and a thing cognized, but the thing cognized is the very thing itself. Thus the identity intended in this second theorem, proposition 3, is the identity of *identification*. Cognizing is identifying an object, where both "identifying" and "object" are deliberately meant as unities of dualities. Cognizing is identifying in the ordinary sense, in the sense intended when one identifies the Baltimore coat of arms, for example; and it is identifying in the etymological sense of making a thing the same as itself. And the object identified is both a thing and a thing thrown before a mind. It makes no sense at all to say that the mind is identical with its object (unless "mind" is used, as by some of the American "neo-realists," simply to mean "objects"<sup>12</sup>), but it not only makes sense but is a necessary truth to say that the object of cognition is identical with itself.

Thus every cognitive act is an act of identification. Moreover, a cognitive act always identifies the *whole* of its object, not merely its essence or form but also its existence and matter and any other constituents of the whole of the object. This proposition is frequently objected to on the ground that it says that to know something is to know everything about that thing, every last nook and cranny of it. But this is a misinterpretation. The whole which every cognitive act identifies is the whole of *its object*, and it is a tautology and therefore a necessary truth that every aspect of an

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, E. B. Holt, *The Concept of Consciousness* (London: Allen, 1914).

*object*, of what is apprehended *qua* apprehended, is itself apprehended. True, this object which is wholly apprehended or identified may itself be, and usually is, only a part and not the whole of some *thing* in reality—as for example my wholly identified perceptual object now is in fact only a part of this room. But that part is itself wholly and identically my object. Indeed, as we have just seen, to be an “object” is etymologically and precisely to be identified wholly by awareness.

Finally, this proposition that “I am aware of something itself, identically” does not say that I am aware of that something *truly*—if “truly” means anything more than just “identified” or “apprehended.” As mentioned earlier, we are concerned with all types and cases of cognition indifferently, with cognition as such, and therefore not with the distinction between truth and falsity. This proposition, the second theorem, says only that I apprehend the whole *itself* of whatever it is that I apprehend, whether truly or falsely. This theorem, in short, is simply the epistemological explication (which I think is the only proper explication, though it involves a logical sense of identity which might be distinguished from it) of the so-called law of identity: “My object (its essence, existence, and whatever else it is) is identically my object.”

### THIRD THEOREM

(4) The third theorem is: “I am aware of something *independent* of my awareness of it”—and independent in its totality, its essence, existence, and other components. This seems to me to be the most crucial of the six propositions I am presenting, and I take it to be the heart of all forms of realism, in fact, the very essence of realism in so far as I can find a clear meaning for that term. Hence I shall need to discuss it at greater length than the other five propositions. In discussing this proposition I shall first (4.1) define the crucial term “independence,” second (4.2) attempt to demonstrate the truth of the theorem, the thesis of independence, and third (4.3) discuss the relation of independence to false cognitions.

#### *Meaning of Cognitive Independence*

(4.1) In approaching a definition of this cognitive independence, let us begin by noting some of the things which it does *not* mean.

In the first place, it does not mean that the thing cognized is necessarily independent of *every* cognition or of awareness, cognition, or mind *as such*. Certainly some of the things I apprehend, such as ideas and purposes, are themselves mental in character and thus dependent upon mind (even if mind were considered, ontologically, as material). And while it is true that some of the other things which I apprehend, like rocks and lakes and trees, do not initially seem to be dependent upon awareness or mind, it is possible that a complete understanding of them would show that in the last analysis they are in fact either mental in their own natures or else, while not themselves mental, dependent in their existence upon some mind. In short, the thesis of cognitive independence, and therefore epistemological realism itself, is quite compatible with—though it does not imply—either ontological idealism or panpsychism or personal theism. If it is the existence of irreducibly non-mental entities which is meant by the name “realism,” then, so far as I can now see, I agree that realism is indemonstrable. But independence of cognition in the sense in which I shall define it is, I believe, demonstrable. In the second place, the thesis of cognitive independence does not mean that things apprehended are necessarily independent of the physical conditions of their apprehension; for such things as sensory media, the condition of my sense organs and nervous system, and the physical instruments which I sometimes use to extend the scope or accuracy of my senses all make a difference to what I apprehend—and to many other things in the universe, for that matter.<sup>13</sup> And in the third place, this cognitive independence does not mean that things cognized are necessarily independent of cognitively mediated practical activities. All artifacts, for example, depend on physical actions which are themselves directed and controlled by awareness, so all artifactual objects of cognition are in this sense dependent upon cognition. What, then, is meant by the independence asserted in this third theorem?

This independence means the unrelatedness of a thing cognized to the cognition *of* it. A thing is cognitively independent, in the sense here meant, if and only if it in no way depends upon and is in no way related to that cognitive act which uniquely corresponds to it as being the cognition of it, that specific cognitive act whose peculiar object it is and by virtue of which it acquires extrinsically the status of an object. This point is so easily misunderstood that

<sup>13</sup> The relevance of the uncertainty principle in physics will be discussed in section (5).

it bears repetition and clarification. A statue depends upon the sculptor's idea of it before it is made, but after it is made *it* does not depend upon any subsequent idea of it which the sculptor may have, although a later, altered form of it may. Your thoughts depend upon your mind, and they may (hopefully) even depend to some extent upon my mind; but your thoughts do not depend upon my thoughts *about* your thoughts. And the thought that I am now thinking depends upon my thinking, but it does not depend upon that particular thought which I have *about it*. Each of my thoughts about one of my thoughts is at a different level from that of the thought which it is about. If T1 is one of my thoughts, and if T2 is my thought about T1, then T1, while dependent upon some *other* one of my thoughts (Tn), is independent of T2. And if I then think about T2, I do so with *another* thought, T3; and T2, while directly dependent on T1 and indirectly dependent on Tn, is independent of T3. And so on. Every object, whether or not it is dependent upon some *other* cognition, is independent of the cognition *of, or about, it*. And this is true, as we saw in connection with proposition 2 (the first theorem), even of instances of reflexive awareness where the object is one's awareness of that object. That object is and must be, by the logic of the subject-object distinction, by the logic of intentionality, distinct from the awareness of it; and it is also, according to the meaning of "independence" now being presented, independent of that awareness of it. Once more, in short, the thesis of cognitive independence means only and exactly that an object of cognition is independent of and unrelated to the cognition *corresponding to it*.

The cognition and the cognizer are, however, dependent upon the thing cognized, at least for the cognition of it. And from this it follows that the cognitive relation is necessarily a *non-mutual* one. The knower is related to the known; but the known, though perhaps really related to the knower, as well as to numerous other things in the universe, in many other ways, is not really related to the knower *by* the *act* whereby it is *known*. The relation "apprehended by," "cognized by," "known by," is not a real relation but a mental relation created in reflection by back-tracking the real, cognitively independent relation, "knower of." That independence means unrelatedness (in the given respect) can be shown indirectly. If an entity which is independent of the cognition of it bears at the same time a relation, such as "known by," to the cognition of it, then that entity *depends* upon that cognition for that relation and hence is *not* independent of it at all, which is self-contradictory. The

unrelatedness of things to the cognitions of them was recognized and expressed by the American "neo-realists" in their concept of "external relations," in contrast to "internal" ones; but this concept in effect states also that the *knower* is not related to (is "external" to) the *known*, and this implies that a person is unchanged by what he knows. The concept of the cognitive relation as non-mutual, the cognizer being related to the cognized but not *vice versa*, retains the virtues while avoiding the vices of the concept of "external relations."

#### *Demonstration of Theorem*

(4.2) So much for the meaning of cognitive independence. A demonstration of the truth of the third theorem, that "I am aware of something independent of my awareness of it," should be prefaced by noting its *apparent* truth. While I am contemplating Hamlet for example, and in so far as I am doing so, my contemplation premisses Hamlet's cognitive innocence. True, a given cognition may witness the dependency of an entity upon some other cognition, as when, in reflection, I think of Hamlet as a creature of Shakespeare's imagination. But in so doing the witnessing cognition presents the witnessed cognitive complex as independent of *it*, the witnessing cognition. Thus all awareness reveals something as quite untouched by *its* revelation; all cognized entities have an apparent cognitive independence. But this appearance of the truth of this theorem is not a demonstration of its truth, and to such a demonstration we must now turn.

The proposition to be demonstrated I have stated above as "I am aware of something independent of my awareness of it." Since the first part of this proposition, that "I am aware of something," has already been demonstrated as proposition 1, the proposition to be demonstrated in the present section is that this something is independent of my awareness of it. Is it *all* or only *some* objects of cognition which are independent of the cognitions of them? This is a point whose importance will be noted in section (4.3). What the following demonstration will prove, if it proves anything, is that "*Every* object of cognition is independent of the cognition of it." The reason for this is that this demonstration, like the whole essay, is concerned with cognition as such and thus with every type or mode of cognition, not just with certain types. The demonstration is an indirect one, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the contra-

dictory, that "Some objects of cognition are dependent upon the cognitions of them." Since theories which maintain this contradictory proposition frequently universalize it, however, the following argument will speak as well to the proposition that "All objects of cognition are dependent on their cognitions." The demonstration will, in short, attempt to prove that "Not even one object of cognition can be dependent upon the cognition of it." This will imply that "All things cognized are independent of the cognitions of them." The argument begins (4.21) with a refutation of the proposition that apprehended entities are only *partially* dependent upon the apprehensions of them and concludes (4.22) with a refutation of the proposition that cognized entities are *totally* dependent upon the cognitions of them.

(4.21) The form which is, to my knowledge, most frequently taken by the opposition to the realist thesis of independence is the theory that the object of cognition is dependent upon the mind and its activities by virtue of the fact that it is constructed by the mind's cognitive processes out of what is independently given, the raw materials in sensation. Let us call this the "constructivist" theory, the theory that maintains that cognition consists in the transformation of the independent given into a phenomenal object. If this constructivist theory maintains that the independent given is an object of cognition, then the contradiction results that cognition of the independent given is *not* cognition of the independent given because cognition consists, according to the theory, in the transformation of that independent given into something else, the phenomenal object. The cognition of  $x$  (the independent given) would not be the cognition of  $x$  itself at all, but rather of  $x'$  (the phenomenal object, where the prime represents the part of the object which is dependent on being cognized). But this is surely self-contradictory, as well as contradictory to the principle of identity (proposition 2).

However, the constructivist will not, of course, grant that the independent given is an object of cognition because that would concede the realist thesis of independence from the start. As Peter Bertocci has put it, "it makes no sense to talk about being aware of  $x$  itself,"<sup>14</sup> the antecedent, independent given;  $x$  is only the material for an object of cognition. It is rather  $x'$ , the constructed

<sup>14</sup> "The Nature of Cognition," *Review of Metaphysics*, VIII (1954), 49-60. Part of this article is devoted to a criticism of the present author's "Realistic Epistemology," pp. 152-176 in *The Return to Reason*, ed. John Wild (Chicago: Regnery, 1953).

object, the “phenomenon,” which is the object of cognition; and as soon as this fact is seen the contradiction vanishes. Be it so. But then, according to this constructivist theory, in what way is the phenomenon, the mentally constructed, cognized? Since it is the constructed and therefore mentally dependent object which is, by hypothesis, the object of cognition, and since cognition is regarded by this theory as a process of altering or constructing, then this theory is forced to say of the constructed, phenomenal, dependent object ( $x'$ ) that it too is altered and constructed—or, better, *re*-constructed—by the act of cognizing *it* into a new and *different* object,  $x''$ . But then, as before,  $x'$  cannot be an object of cognition as it was asserted to be, because it no longer even exists. It must be  $x''$  which is the object of cognition. The theory's asserted apprehension of  $x'$  is, then, not the apprehension of  $x'$  but of  $x''$ . But this, again, contradicts the principle of identity (proposition 2) previously established and thus also contradicts itself: “I am aware of  $x'$  and yet not aware of  $x'$ .” And if this contradiction is escaped by the assertion that  $x'$ , like  $x$ , is not an object of cognition but only the material for an object of cognition, then the same process is repeated all over again. The cognition of  $x''$  must, according to the constructivist theory, consist in the alteration of  $x''$  into  $x'''$  so that the cognition of  $x''$  is not the cognition of  $x''$  at all, but rather of  $x'''$ —which is, once more, self-contradictory. And so on, *ad infinitum*. The attempt to avoid the contradiction only produces a new contradiction in an infinite series of contradictions. The theory that objects of cognition are cognitively dependent constructed phenomena can in consistency have, in short, no object of cognition at all. Every attempt to cognize its object only pushes it beyond the reach of cognition.

At this point in the argument, however, the constructivist may object that for any object of cognition the constructing process occurs only once, and that after it occurs once so as to produce a constructed, cognitively dependent object or phenomenon, then that cognitively dependent object is just simply cognized. This stops the series of constructions and avoids the contradictions, the constructivist concludes. And (to relate this position to history) this is just what Kant's view seems to be, though he remains significantly silent on the act of just simply apprehending the antecedently constructed phenomenon. Now this modified position does indeed stop the regress and avoid the contradiction in the earlier, unmodified position; but—and this is the point to be noted—it does so only by conceding the realist thesis of independence. For the object

that is properly speaking *apprehended*, though constructed by and hence dependent upon *antecedent* mental acts, is not constructed by and is quite independent of that specific act whereby it is apprehended. Whether or not any mental construction is involved in *preparing* an object *to be* cognized—and, as we saw in section (4.1), this point is not at issue here—consistency demands that the very act of awareness does not itself construct or alter its own proper object and that therefore that proper object is quite independent of the corresponding act of awareness of it. And this is what the realist thesis of independence means, as it has been defined above.

While this modified constructivist theory does avoid—by conceding the point—the type of contradiction just discussed, there is another contradiction which the theory does not avoid, not even when it modifies itself to concede the thesis of independence. This other contradiction is that of having knowledge of something which is declared to be in principle unknowable. To say (as this modified theory does) on the one hand that only mentally constructed objects are knowable and yet, on the other hand, that these mentally constructed objects are constructed out of an antecedent given, the raw materials in sensation, is to lay claim to knowledge of something which has been declared unknowable. For a position like Kant's which maintains that these sensory raw materials for constructed objects are caused by or due to some transcendent, meta-physical *Ding an sich*, it is this meta-physical *Ding an sich* which is both declared to be unknowable and also known to be the source of the material for phenomenal objects. It is sometimes argued that Kant here escapes contradiction by maintaining merely that we don't know *anything at all* about the *Dinge an sich*. While Kant's intention on this point is not clear to me, his actual words more than once claim knowledge of at least certain properties of the "unknowable" things-in-themselves. ". . . things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given," he writes, "but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves, knowing only their appearances, that is, the representations which they cause [*sic*] in us by affecting our senses. Consequently I grant by all means that there are bodies without us, that is, things which, though quite unknown to us as to what they are in themselves, we yet know by the representations which their influence [*sic*] on our sensibility procures us."<sup>15</sup> So far

<sup>15</sup> *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p. 289 of Volume IV of the edition by Bruno Erdmann, *Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1911, Lewis White Beck's revision of the Carus revision of Mahaffy's translation.

as I can see, this is a flat contradiction. For real things-in-themselves to be completely and in principle unknowable would be for no one to be aware of or to express that fact. Hume, Kant's predecessor, knew this, and so did Fichte, his successor. For a position like positivism which refuses—as Kant also would have refused, had he been consistent—to speak of any transcendent, unknowable, meta-physical source of the sensory raw materials for phenomenal constructs, it is these sensory raw materials themselves which are both in principle unknowable and also known to be the materials of phenomenal constructs. This fact is manifest in the controversy engaged in by positivists and other analysts over the cognitive status of reports of sense data.<sup>16</sup> Whether or not, then, the sensory raw materials for constructed phenomenal objects are asserted to have any meta-physical source, there is a contradiction in asserting that the phenomenal objects are constructed out of unknowable sensory raw materials. If, on the one hand, we know that there is sensory raw material, and possibly also a meta-physical source of it, for the constructed objects of knowledge, then surely we know something about that material (and its meta-physical source). And if, on the other hand, we know *only* the phenomenal objects constructed out of that material, then surely we cannot consistently say that there exists any such material from which those phenomenal objects are constructed, or any source of such material.

One attempt which is frequently made to escape this contradiction of knowing an unknowable is to declare that while we cannot “know” these cognitively independent raw materials or their meta-physical sources, we can *infer* them, with greater or lesser probability, from the cognitively dependent objects which we do know. One who, like Professor Bertocci, makes this attempt maintains that “the epistemological object of which he is *aware* is the basis for his *inference*” that such materials and “metaphysical objects” exist independently.<sup>17</sup> The impossibility of this escape through inference is surely patent, however, for inference is itself a mode of cognition. Thus when Professor Bertocci says that he “simply holds that the knowing agent is in metaphysical interaction with the metaphysical x, and knows it as x' (epistemological object),” and yet says at

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, A. J. Ayer, “Basic Propositions,” *Philosophical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1954), pp. 105-124; and also the contributions of Nelson Goodman and C. I. Lewis to a symposium on “The Experiential Element in Knowledge,” *Phil. Rev.*, LXI (1952), 160-167 and 168-175.

<sup>17</sup> “The Nature of Cognition,” *op. cit.*, p. 60.

the same time that "he never said that he was aware of . . . the metaphysical x, as it is, to start with,"<sup>18</sup> it ought to be crystal clear that he either concedes the point of knowing the independent reality or else contradicts himself—for he has asserted that he knows that there is an independent entity and that it interacts with him. It is not just a matter of its being difficult on the basis of empirical evidence to infer the nature or existence of this independent thing-in-itself. It is rather in principle logically impossible to infer, signify, demonstrate, conceive, believe in, taste, smell, conjure, or in any other way cognize an entity which has been declared to be cognitively out of bounds.

This fact should by now be second nature to us because of the lesson taught us by Locke and Hume. When Locke assumed that "the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate," his reason told him clearly that "our knowledge is only conversant about them,"<sup>19</sup> though his common-sense insisted that we do, after all, have "sensitive knowledge" of "the particular existence of finite beings without us," or at least "of the actual entrance" into the mind "of ideas from them."<sup>20</sup> His successor, Hume, however, heeded only the voice of reason. "The mind has never anything present to it but . . . perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connection with objects. The supposition of such a connection is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning."<sup>21</sup>

If, on the other hand, it is insisted that we do actually infer independent entities, then we inferentially cognize *them*, themselves, as *independent*. But this concedes the proposition we are proving. The situation is as simple as this: Given such an inference, we either apprehend those independent entities or we do not. If we do not, they are still beyond the pale of any assertion whatsoever. If we do, then we cognize independent entities. Hence it makes no sense to say that, while we do not know, we infer independent things.

This same contradiction of knowing an unknowable appears in a different location if the constructivist theory maintains that there is more than one cognitively constructive agent or mind. In the first place, this theory of a plurality of minds each of whose objects

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. IV, Ch. I, section 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, Bk. IV, Ch. II, section 14.

<sup>21</sup> *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section XII, Part I.

is dependent upon itself implies solipsism, since the objects of no one of these minds, as constructed by and dependent upon that mind, can be the same as the objects of any other such mind. In the second place, this solipsistic theory is self-contradictory (as is solipsism as such, by definition, in so far as it asserts that one can know *only* one's own ideas), since it implies that at least one of these minds (that of the theorist in question) maintains that it knows something, namely, that there are other minds with their idiosyncratic objects which are different from all the objects of the mind that knows this, which it cannot know because, according to its own theory, its knowledge is restricted to its own idiosyncratic objects. Hence the constructivist version of the thesis that objects are cognitively dependent is driven by its own logic to the view that there is, in truth, only one mind which can properly be said to cognize or know—like Kant's *Vernunft überhaupt*. In order for the theorist to say this, of course, that single, general mind must be his own. And, as we have already seen, that single, general mind must either fall into an infinite series of contradictions, unendingly pushing its object beyond its reach by the very attempt to know it, or else concede the realist thesis of independence by knowing, at some point, an object unaltered by and independent of *that* cognitive act.

To summarize the argument so far: the proposition that things apprehended are dependent upon the apprehensions of them by virtue of the fact that they are mental constructs out of the raw material of the independent given—whether or not this independent given is caused by meta-physical things-in-themselves—contradicts itself both by making the cognition of a thing not the cognition of *that* thing and by knowing things which are by hypothesis unknowable.

(4.22) These contradictions might lead the non-realist to adopt a more extreme form of the thesis that cognized objects are dependent upon their being cognized, a form which says that apprehended objects are *totally* dependent upon the apprehensions of them. According to this position the sensory material for objects of cognition is mind-dependent just as much as is the form which this material receives. Thus, according to this view, cognition does not merely construct its objects; it *creates* them out of itself. This more extreme view, which we may call the creativist view, may be seen, however, to involve essentially the same contradictions as the constructivist view just discussed.

To begin with, this creativist view, like the constructivist view, cannot consistently maintain that there is more than one cognitive

agent or mind, for to maintain this would be to have a knowledge of something unknowable. Two such minds would be different, at least minimally; and this difference would mean that their created, cognized objects would be different, at least minimally. But then the second mind as cognitively creative, as *not* cognitively created by the first mind, could not be an object of the first mind's cognition. This creativist view, like the constructivist view, is therefore driven by its own logic to maintain that there is only one properly cognitive agent, only one genuinely knowing mind: the absolute mind. Nor can this view maintain, as Berkeley does, that there are other minds ("finite" minds) which are not creative, for then these other, non-creative minds either apprehend by constructing their objects—which is ruled out both by the present hypothesis and also by the arguments just given in section (4.21)—or else they apprehend realistically, leaving their objects unaltered and independent—which concedes the thesis of independence. On the contrary, then, there can only be one cognitive agent, according to this view, and its cognitive acts must completely create their objects.

This view, however, contradicts both the previously established principle of identity (proposition 2) and also itself, and it does so in essentially the same way as the constructivist view. Since, on this creativist view, there exists no object to be cognized until after the cognitively creative act has occurred, *that* still non-existent object cannot be what is cognized. But may it not be apprehended *after* it has been cognitively created? No, since this would require a second cognitively creative act, but the object of this second cognitively creative act is *subsequent* to that second act and hence not the same as the first cognitively created object. Put differently, the cognitive act corresponding to that first object is no longer existent, and any second cognitive act is the cognition of and corresponds to, not that first object, but rather a second and different cognitively created object. Once more, it can now be seen, we are at the beginning of an infinite series. For a *third* cognitively creative act aimed at apprehending the *second* cognitively created object would only produce a *third* cognitively created object which would need to be apprehended by a fourth act which would only produce a fourth object—and so on, *ad infinitum*. On this creativist view, in short, when there is a (creative) act of cognition there is no corresponding object cognized, and when there is a (created) object to be apprehended there is no corresponding (creative) act of apprehending it. Once more, therefore, we are in an infinite series with awareness always pushing its object away from itself. Or,

to put the same situation in terms of the contradiction involved, what is once more implied is the proposition that "The awareness of  $x$  is not the awareness of  $x$ ".

At this point, however, the creativist may try to escape the infinite series of contradictions in the same way in which the constructivist did. He may, that is, insist that for any given object of apprehension the creating process occurs only once, and that once it has occurred, then its created object is just simply apprehended. Once more, however, this escapes the infinite series of contradictions only at the cost of conceding the realist thesis of independence, for the specific act whereby the object is "just simply apprehended" does *not* create *its* object but rather finds it and leaves it unaltered and independent.

The essential point in my argument that the denial of the cognitive independence of the object involves an infinite series of contradictions is, it may have been noted, that cognition *means* being confronted with an object *already there*. It is the logically implied denial of this essential point which makes both the constructivist and the creativist versions of the denial of cognitive independence fall into an infinite series of contradictions. That the logic of the concept of cognition *does* in fact entail being presented with something already there has been manifested in the argument by the obvious oddity of having a cognition *without* any object. It has been further manifested in the fact that the concept of cognition has actually been used by both of these versions of cognitive dependency to imply that there is already an object there to be cognized, in the fact, that is to say, that they lapse back into realist language and concede the point that the once constructed or created object is then cognized just as it independently is. As Gilson has said, "those who pretend to think otherwise, think in realistic terms as soon as they forget to act their part";<sup>22</sup> and I would add only that they *must* forget to act their part because the very logic of the cognition they are trying to enact contradicts their enactment of it.

Hence the proposition that an apprehended object depends, partly or wholly, upon the apprehension of it contradicts the previously established principle of identity (proposition 2) and also contradicts itself. Hence *its* contradictory, the third theorem, the thesis that things cognized are independent of the cognitions of them, is demonstrated to be true.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in footnote 6 above.

*Relation to Erroneous Cognitions*

(4.3) If the immediately preceding arguments have proved cognitive independence at all, they have, I believe, proved it for the objects of erroneous cognitions as well as for the objects of veracious ones. But can this be true, that the object of an illusion, delusion, or hallucination is independent of that erroneous cognition of it, that the pink snakes seen by a person suffering *delirium tremens* really exist independently of that vision which he has of them? To this question I am compelled to give an affirmative answer, even though certain forms of realism, though not all forms, of course deny this.

I am compelled, in the first place, to conclude that the objects of erroneous cognitions are just as independent of the cognitions of them as the objects of veracious cognitions are of the cognitions of *them* by the arguments just given. The reason for this, as noted earlier, is that these arguments are completely general, pertaining to the concept of cognition as such and therefore to all instances of cognition, whether veracious or erroneous. These arguments hinge, as has been pointed out, just on the meaning of cognition (plus the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle); and an erroneous cognition is just as much a cognition as a veracious one is. If an erroneous cognition were not a cognition, it could not be erroneous. And I am also compelled, in the second place, to reach this conclusion of the independence of the object of an erroneous cognition from the cognition of it by other arguments which I have presented in detail elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> The essence of these other arguments is that the denial of the independence of the object of an erroneous cognition from the cognition of it is the denial of that object itself, and hence of the erroneous cognition of it, because the cognitive independence of that object is ineluctably a feature of that object itself. To say, to a person who genuinely sees a writhing snake in the real, independent room where you see only a bedpost, that there isn't any real snake in the bedroom and that it's only in his mind is precisely to tell him that he isn't seeing what he is seeing, and that therefore *he, now*, isn't seeing anything *at all*. This thesis of the cognitive independence of erroneously apprehended objects needs more defense than I can give it here, however. It must therefore

<sup>23</sup> In "On the Being of Falsity," pp. 290-316 of *Philosophy of Knowledge* (see footnote 6 above). Pp. 308-311 of that essay contain an earlier and briefer version of the arguments just given in section (4.2).

suffice for this essay merely to suggest that the arguments in section (4.2) imply the cognitive independence of *all* objects of cognition, and not merely the objects of veracious cognition.

It should be pointed out, in addition, that this means that the distinction between truth and falsity cannot be the distinction between being independent of and being dependent upon cognition, as many realists have apparently maintained. As has already been mentioned in section (4.1), it may of course be true, so far as my argument is concerned, that all objects of erroneous cognition are cognitively dependent or mind-dependent, since my argument maintains only that every object of cognition is independent of that precise act *corresponding to it* whereby *it* is cognized. But then it may also be true, so far as my argument goes, that the objects of veracious cognitions are likewise cognitively dependent, mind-dependent, or mental in the sense of depending on mental states *other* than the cognitions *of* them. Once more, it is independence of the *corresponding* cognition which I have tried to establish, not independence of *other* cognitions or of minds; it is *epistemological* realism, not ontological "realism" or non-mentalism, which I wish to try to demonstrate, even though it should be repeated that I find such epistemological realism to be the only feature clearly held in common by all the types of philosophy which are recognized as realisms. Hence cognitive independence in the sense in which I have defined it cannot be the peculiar or definitive characteristic of truth, of the objects of true cognition, though what the definitive characteristic of true cognition may be I cannot here undertake to say.

#### *Fourth Theorem*

(5) The fourth theorem is this: "Cognition is an *immanent* activity," that is, non-transitive and non-constitutive with respect to its objects. This follows from the third theorem, for to say that a thing is independent of the act whereby it is apprehended is to say that that apprehending act neither creates nor influences that thing. And this is to say that cognitive activity, in itself and by itself, produces its results only within the cognitive agent. I am altered by my awareness of independent entities, but they are not. Of course knowledge once acquired may be used to alter other things, even the thing which is the object of the knowledge. But this alteration is not by that cognitive act whereby the thing is originally

apprehended, and strictly speaking it is not even an act of cognition at all—it is rather an act of conation. The efficacy of cognitive activity—aside from these conative acts which may be telically caused by it—is therefore restricted to the knower. Unlike physical action, it is not transitive; it does not flow over into the entity known (in so far as it is known). If it did it would alter that entity and thus make it cognitively dependent.

A comparatively recent objection to this proposition that cognition does not alter its objects arises from the uncertainty principle in modern physics. If this principle is interpreted as asserting or implying that the very act of awareness itself alters the minute particles of which the physicist is aware (and, by extension, all bodies), then we would be in the predicament of having to admit either that the fourth theorem, the immanence of cognitive activity, is false or else that microphysics is false. But such an interpretation is unjustified, because the uncertainty principle, so far as I can tell, asserts only that certain *physical conditions* of awareness alter the particles observed, and not that the awareness itself does. Indeed, the uncertainty principle *cannot* assert that cognition *itself* is transitive, altering its objects, without falling into the contradictions which section (4.2) argued are involved in the denial of the independence of objects from the cognitions of them.

#### *Fifth Theorem*

(6) The fifth and last theorem follows immediately from, and is hardly distinct from, the fourth: "Cognitive activity is, in itself, *immaterial* or *non-physical*." It seems important to me to explicate this proposition from the fourth theorem in view of the predominance of theories which regard cognition as a physical or quasi-physical action. Awareness itself, on the contrary, as distinct from any instruments or preparations connected with it, is wholly immanent, making no mark whatsoever on its objects. But physical action is always transitive; it flows from the agent over into an entity which is for it only a patient for its transforming power. When I light a fire the energy of my act is realized in the wood. But when I know a fire the energy of my act is realized only in my mind. If I then act out of this realization, some *other* entity will depend on my physical act as mediated by my knowledge. But this will not be the entity that I know, and if I also know that entity which I

act upon, then still it too will depend not upon my awareness of it but rather upon the physical action which I perform upon it.

This immanent, immaterial, cognitive mode of being is not *non-natural*, though it is incurably *non-naturalistic*, in so far as the naturalistic is identifiable with the physical or transitive. The neglect of this immanent, cognitive mode of being, the inveterate tendency in idealists as well as materialists to treat all activities after the pattern of transitive, physical actions, is, I believe, at the root of the difficulties contained in many historical theories of knowledge. If my arguments have been cogent, then the most basic requirement of any sound epistemology must be the recognition and theoretical utilization of this immanent, immaterial mode of activity and being. Anything approaching a full understanding of this mode of being would, of course, require considerable ontological investigation.

### III

This is my demonstration of the meaning and truth of the essential core of epistemological realism as I now understand it. The demonstration presupposes the truth of the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle, and it consists of five propositions. First, I am aware of something. Second, I am aware of something *other* than and *different* from my awareness of it. Third, I am aware of something *itself, identically*. Fourth, that which I am aware of is *independent* of my awareness of it (though it may be dependent upon other acts of awareness or be an act of awareness itself). This independence, not necessarily of cognition or mind as such, but of the precise act of cognition of and corresponding to that object, is, I believe, the most fundamental and even the defining property of realism. Fifth, cognition is an *immanent*, or non-transitive, activity, changing only the cognitive agent and not his object. Sixth and finally, cognition is, in itself and apart from its instruments, a non-physical, *immaterial* mode of being.