

EPISTEMOLOGY AS INTERPERSONAL (How We Know)

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We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith and sight are two ways to know. Sight means knowledge by direct perception; faith is knowledge through the testimony of other people. We know about the past, the future, the distant, and the invisible only by testimony, if at all. In short, most knowledge comes from revelation either by God or some other person. In either case, it is interpersonal—by faith.

The certainty of knowledge depends on the trustworthiness of the one who mediates it to us in the case of faith and on the reliability of sensors (or extensions of them) in the case of sight. Real-world matters (physical) do not involve the absolute certainty possible in logical relationships and functions like $2 \times 2 = 4$ (metaphysical). But the relative ambiguity of the human situation that results from that fact about existence, does not destroy operating in the world. We do not have to have absolute certainty or precise knowledge; we only need relative certainty of sufficient accuracy to operate in the human circumstance, to experience fulfillment, to glorify God, to bring joy to other people.

Knowledge comes from experience as to content (empiricism, nurture), while the forms that contain it come by creation and birth (rationalism, nature). As to content, knowledge derives from rational deduction or personal experience. There is a certain amount of innate knowledge (at least the “forms” of knowledge, which make possible the deep structure necessary for language and reasoning)—something comparable to instincts like how to nurse. Most knowledge, however, comes interpersonally; so epistemology must be figured interpersonally through revelation rather than by anamnesis (recollection from previous incarnations or innate knowledge) or supernatural illumination—direct deposit.

Keeping things in balance we may find difficult. Interpersonalism has the pattern of balance. What occurs in concepts that tend away from each other (unity and truth, e.g.) can be balanced in reality—especially in interpersonal reality—because attitude can bring together disparate entities. That is particularly true when a person is viewing a process. Interpersonal relationship reinforces our ability to think clearly.