

will be truth-entailing. For in actuality alone some people have had clear visual impressions of something false.

The stark implications of Classical Infallibilism are visible in two influential books of the first half of the twentieth century. C.I. Lewis (1929) holds that we have a wealth of empirical knowledge. But to do so, he holds that whenever p is empirical, by “knowing p ” we strictly mean “knowing *that it is probable that p* ”, which does not even entail the truth of p (Lewis, 1929, 324–325), and he understands “it is probable that p ” in a such a way that it can be entailed by one’s sense-data (Lewis, 1929, 331). Hence Lewis embraces a probability-based Idealist reconstruction in order to rescue Dogmatism. Ayer (1936/1990, 19) in effect denies than anything other than tautologies is known: “Indeed, it will be our contention that no proposition, other than a tautology, can possibly be anything more than a probable hypothesis.” He embraces Probabilist Scepticism.⁹⁶

After the Second World War, it was clear among analytic philosophers that Classical Infallibilism leads to full-blown Idealism or Scepticism. In the light of ordinary language philosophy and common sense philosophy, they found these conclusions unacceptable.⁹⁷ That is the context in which they finally rejected Classical Infallibilism. But there are four ways of doing so. One may reject truth-entailment, discernibility or both; one may also maintain both but allow that distinct properties play each role. All options have instances in post-1950 epistemology.

The fall of Classical Infallibilism can tentatively be dated from Malcolm’s (1952).⁹⁸ The paper opens with Prichard’s claim that whether we know is discernible (sec. 3 above). Malcolm investigates it by contrasting five examples of ordinary use of “know”. In the fourth and fifth, one claims that a river is not dry on the grounds that one saw it flowing earlier that day. In the fourth one’s claim is true; in the fifth it is not—the river dried up in the meanwhile. Malcolm judges that we would say that one “knows” in the fourth but not the fifth (Malcolm, 1952, 178–9). He stresses that nothing discernible differs between the two cases and infers that one’s “grounds” are identical between

⁹⁶See also Ayer (1940): in spite of its title, the book hardly mentions knowledge at all. Ayer restates the view that any empirical belief has a merely fallible basis (39, 43). His answer to inductive scepticism is that empirical beliefs can be based on “reasonable”, though not “demonstrative”, inferences (see e.g. 230), not that they can constitute knowledge.

⁹⁷Other factors have undoubtedly played a role, such as the internal difficulties of Idealist programmes. See e.g. Marion (2000b) on the demise of sense-data theories.

⁹⁸It is hard for me to say what is Russell’s conception of knowledge in *Human Knowledge and its limits* (1948). He puts forward the “true belief supported by adequate evidence” account with some reticence (Russell, 1948, 170–1). The thrust of the book is that Humean scepticism is averted once we recognise that there are grades of knowledge and that these grades are degrees of probability. My best guess is that he has a view like that of C.I. Lewis’s in mind. But if it can be argued that his view is that one knows that p provided that one believes p , p is true and made probable by one’s evidence, then he may pre-date Malcolm in defending the Justified True Belief view.