

# Seeking Truth: *Pistis* and *Episteme*, Faith and Knowledge

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“Entrust to the truth whatever has come to you from the truth.  
You will lose nothing.”  
Augustine, *Confessions* IV.xi.16

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## Preface

In my adolescent years, I began struggling with existential questions and problems that still puzzle me. Questions of being—of my own existence—flooded my thoughts, and I could not resolve them. They came in forms of both wonder and doubt. I was both curious about the nature of being—what does it mean to be? what is existence?—and at the same time I was skeptical about the reality of my own existence—I doubted experiences as possible illusions and reality as a possible dream. At the time, I was introduced to Descartes’s *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* and contemplated my own self-consciousness. I began thinking about my own thinking, and I asked myself: How do I think? How am I existing? How do I know that I am? I concluded that my experiences are my own. They make up and influence my thoughts. My self-consciousness recognizes myself as a thinking thing, and that thinking is an aspect of being. Eventually, my existential questioning turned more into philosophical wonder than extreme skepticism. I considered Descartes’s “*cogito ergo sum*,” and similarly concluded that I could not doubt my own existence if I am able to recognize my own self-consciousness. But although I could not doubt my own existence, I also could not *affirm* my existence beyond wondering about it. Is my existence real, or is it an illusion? So, I focused on exploring and attempting to uncover knowledge: How do I *know* that I am? And essentially: How do I *know*?

At first, my existential questioning stemmed from a desire to affirm my experiences as real and true. However now, instead of believing that all reality might be a dream, I rather consider the question whether non-material things, such as my thoughts, ideas, or self-consciousness, may be considered real or true. My body is made of matter and qualify as

real, but my thoughts and ideas are not. May they qualify as real as well? How can I affirm myself and my self-consciousness as real and true? There must be some qualification that allows things that are immaterial to be real. I suggest that all things that are true are also real.

Additionally, knowledge of something true, is also knowledge of something real (just as knowledge of something false, is also knowledge of something that is not real). If I consider my own self-consciousness real and true, I must also consider my place within the universe. If my consciousness is real, how can I know that other consciousnesses are real as well. In order to move forward from wonder and doubt, there must be a better understanding of truth and knowledge itself. A few questions must be addressed: How is truth defined? How does one come to knowledge? How does one know that something is true? Is truth absolute?

Truth and knowledge are uniquely connected. Although one may have both truth and knowledge together, one may also have truth without knowledge, such as a true opinion. The modern standard for truth and knowledge roots itself in the scientific method. One requires a series of questions, hypotheses, tests, and analysis to compile sufficient evidence for determining truth and knowledge about a thing. This method depends on experiential and tangible evidence to form knowledge. In this way, knowledge may be rooted in experience, but to qualify truth by experience may not be sufficient. A number of problems arise such as the inability to attain knowledge of things in themselves, the necessities for absolute truth, and securing certainty of true knowledge against the uncertainty of true opinion. Philosophers have addressed these issues and continuously refine their ideas about truth by exploring how one might gain certainty of truth through knowledge. However, there are limits in the development of knowledge. I have considered the efforts of Rene Descartes, but now I turn to Plato and Immanuel Kant's methods

for giving an account of knowledge. Both suggest that the pursuit of knowledge of an essence is limited; in other words, knowledge of things in themselves may not be possible. In the *Phaedo*, Plato suggests that pure knowledge may never be attained, while in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant denies knowledge and concludes that faith may be the variable that gets one to truth. In the following essay, I examine both Plato's and Kant's account of knowledge in order to reach an understanding of truth. Ultimately, while acknowledging the limits of reason, I present a defense for faith against claims of skepticism. While, I accept that absolute truth and knowledge may never be fully achieved, their pursuit is necessary.

## **Introduction**

Among the 'big questions' for philosophers—What is the meaning of life? What is virtue? What is justice?—the subjects of truth and knowledge remain distinct. When one asks a question, one assumes and desires that there be an answer. Truth and knowledge must then certify that answers exist, and that they exist to fulfill our wonder. As Socrates says in the *Theaetetus*, “Wondering: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else” (155d). This wondering about the nature of the cosmos, curiosity on what makes truth, and inquiry for knowledge are the things that make us philosophers. And to be a philosopher is to tirelessly pursue truth and knowledge. But what is truth? What is knowledge? What does it mean for something to be true? How does one attain knowledge? Is there such thing as *the* Truth? Can one have knowledge of the Absolute?

These daunting questions point to the source of curiosity. The thirst for knowledge moves us to seek certainty and clarity. Wondering is only the first step of philosophy—it is not where

philosophy ends. Questioning demands answers. When no answers exist, nor reveal themselves, might we provide our own answers? Here, I define my use of truth and knowledge, and provide a criterion for characterizing truth and knowledge. Furthermore, I use both Plato's *Republic* and Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to respond to these questions of truth and knowledge by using Plato's Allegory of the Cave and Kant's idea of Objective Validity, respectively, to illustrate truth. Furthermore, I compare the Analogy of the Divided Line and the concept of *a priori* synthetic judgments, respectively, as the development of knowledge. Similar to Plato, Kant describes the process of thought and reasoning through his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In it Kant denies that pure reason can lead one to knowledge of things in themselves. Despite this, Kant does provide an explanation to how *a priori* knowledge is possible; however, he rejects the possibility for knowledge of God, freedom, and immortality. These things require knowledge of the first principles, or things in themselves, which is not possible *a priori*.

Both Plato and Kant suggest a limitation in the pursuit of knowledge, and perhaps that obtaining knowledge of absolutes is impossible. My investigation looks at both philosophers' theories on the development of knowledge. In my criteria for truth, I provide a comparison between true knowledge and true opinion, and the attributes of certainty and uncertainty. In addition, I also compare the use and understanding of knowledge of Forms, first principles, and things-in-themselves.

Many would say the goal in life is to obtain knowledge to have certainty of truth. However, it may be impossible to reach knowledge, thus an inability to have certainty, and ultimately never obtain truth. My response to this conclusion is to find hope and faith, and to

strive anyway. One must not lose pursuit toward the goal of obtaining truth; the striving is essential.

## Definitions

I must begin by defining my terms and explaining what I mean by **Truth** and **Knowledge**. I say **Truth (n)** is something in agreement with reality, or something real; **truth** is a description of being, or something that is. Something that is **True (adj)** is a product of logic and reason; something that is **true** is definitive and absolute. **Truth** in itself is certain, although one may hold something **true** without certainty. **Knowledge (n)** is thought and understanding of truth that agrees with reality. To **know (v)** is to have truth, and to be certain. In addition to these, I say **Reality (n)** corresponds to *things* in the sensible and intelligible universe that are **real (adj)** and existing. Something that is **real** has being; it may be composed of matter, but is not restricted to it<sup>1</sup>.

Additionally, here are some Greek terms I will use from Liddell and Scott's

*Greek-English Lexicon*:

***pistis* (πίστις)** - trust in others, faith , persuasion of a thing, confidence, assurance (1408)

***doxa* (δοκέω)** - expect: hence, think, suppose, imagine; form an opinion; of an object- seem (441)

***episteme* (ἐπιστήμη, ἐπίσταμαι)** -acquaintance with a matter; understanding, skill; professional skill; knowledge, scientific knowledge (660)

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Book VII

***dianoia*** (διάνοια)- thought, intention, purpose; thought, notion; process of thinking; thinking faculty, intelligence; thought expressed (405)

## **Section 1: Truth**

“What, then, do you mean by the assertion that these propositions are true?” - Albert Einstein<sup>2</sup>

If our aim is to obtain truth, we must first understand what we mean when we use the word truth. I have stated my own definition of truth, however there are two different ways the word true is used: the first communicates consistency, validity, and soundness; the second communicates reality, existence, and meaning. It is important to distinguish which meaning of true that we shall investigate further.

In the first meaning of truth, we recognize that propositions are judgments that are not definitive. A proposition, instead, puts forth an idea that has been constructed and derived from the first principles, or axioms, of a system of thought. For example, geometry, such as Euclid’s *Elements*, is an axiomatic system of thought which uses definitions, postulates, and common notions to derive propositions. These make up the axioms of the system. The propositions within the system, then, must be derived from, be consistent with, and be valid through the axioms. Only in this way may the propositions be considered “true.” Furthermore, one cannot attribute truth to the axioms themselves. The definitions are exact descriptions of an element that are stated, rather than argued; the postulates are statements, assumed without proof, that are taken for the sake of continuing an argument, and the common notions are statements or conceptions that are accepted and shared throughout.

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<sup>2</sup> From *Relativity: The Special and General Theory* (7)

The arbiter of the definitions, alone, creates the boundaries for the system. For geometry, Einstein comments, “We cannot ask whether it is true that only one straight line goes through two points. We can only say that Euclidean geometry deals with things called “straight lines” (Einstein 7). But who is the arbiter? According to Euclid and Einstein, the arbiter creates a system of truth in which definitions, postulates, axioms, and propositions set up a boundary in which one can understand the system. Anyone can be an arbiter for any system of knowledge. For example, logicians may create syllogisms that state two premises, resulting in a concluding third statement. However, one may only judge syllogisms according to their validity, soundness, and logic. There is no object within the system of syllogisms to which we can attribute “truth.”

The second meaning of truth refers to things as real, existing, and meaningful. In this meaning of truth, we are removed from the problem of arbitration; truth is not contrived, nor derived from axioms within a system, nor does it leave ambiguous the authority of the arbiter. Again, the first meaning communicates consistency, validity, and soundness; however its results may not correspond to reality; its conclusions could be absurd; it depends upon axioms and propositions. The second meaning of truth finds its tangible value in experience; it may invoke sensation, belief, or even understanding. In many ways, it stands on its own and is self-evident—it simply is. Additionally, Kant says, “The nominal definition of truth . . . is the agreement of cognition with its object” (Kant 197/A58). This means one’s cognition matches up with a real, existing object through one’s sensible experience of that object. Kant, however, goes on to test the truth of objects of experience by the same criteria of the first meaning of truth. Ultimately, it is best to have both meanings together. What is true is real and consistent, existing

and valid, meaningful and sound. The pursuit of this particular meaning of truth is the topic for the remainder of the essay; I explore this kind of truth through knowledge, belief and faith.

Certainly there may be infinite truth statements, or a variety of true things. But what is the most true thing? What truth encompasses all other truth? Axiomatic systems do not allow one to test for the truth of the first principles in themselves, but they posit those first principles or define them. It then becomes the responsibility of the arbiter to judge the truth of the first principle in the second, essential meaning, i.e., if those first principles are real, existing, and have meaning. Does man have this arbitrating power? If so, then perhaps Protagoras was right: Man is the measure of all things. If not, then who is the *true* arbiter? For this *true* arbiter must exist, and must be the source of all first principles. We pursue the *true* arbiter, the most encompassing Truth, the first principle before all other principles; this Truth, I suggest, is God. It would be best to know the divine, everlasting, and unchanged creator of the universe.

The quest for God remains among the greatest endeavors of philosophy. Ptolemy addresses theology as the highest study of philosophy, and although he says it is unattainable, he refers to mathematics as the best tool to support theology in increasing our knowledge of the divine. Understanding the divine seems impossible, yet Augustine, Descartes, Newton, and Kant all reach out for God; and though they recognize that they may not be able to reach God, they pursue anyway. I, too, pursue God; I, too, yearn for the answers to the grand questions of metaphysics and philosophy—the same questions Kant proposes, God, the soul, and free will. The all-encompassing truth that I qualify as God—omnipotent, omniscient, and creator of the universe—I must also posit as my first principle. But Kant cannot make God his first principle:

Thus I cannot even assume God, freedom, and immortality for the sake of the necessary practical use of my reason unless I simultaneously deprive speculative reason of its pretension to extravagant insights; because in order to attain to such insights, speculative

reason would have to help itself to principles that in fact reach only to objects of possible experience, and which if they were to be applied to what cannot be an object of experience, then they would always actually transform it into an appearance, and thus declare all practical extension of pure reason to be impossible. (117/Bxxx)

In order for Kant to assume God, he would have to deny speculative reasoning from making claims on “extravagant insights,” or grand claims about the very metaphysical questions of desire. For Kant, assuming God is also assuming the possibility to reach an unattainable thing by experience through knowledge; speculative reason, while not holding up to Kant’s pure reason, would claim knowledge of metaphysics—this is not possible for Kant. Nevertheless, I will assume God, but not “for the sake of the necessary practical use of my reason” like Kant states—I will not assume God so that I may reason God’s existence—but rather, for the sake of faith. However speculative my reason may be, its speculation does not eliminate its possibility for truth. Kant continues to say, “Thus I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith” (117/Bxxx). Although Kant reaches this conclusion, he does not elaborate faith’s role in relation to truth. I acknowledge that God may not be an object of possible experience; however, my faith relies on the conviction of the witnesses to God’s revelation, miracles, and grace; this faith is a necessary activity that draws itself from the desire for Truth, for God.

At this point, I should note my own position on truth. If I am to judge truth accordingly, I must remove myself from my own frame of reference. I step back and view the question of truth from a meta-cognitive position. Of the two meanings of truth, the logical and essential meaning, I recognize that any proposition or hypothesis put forth on the origins of knowledge of truth is *only* a proposition or a hypothesis—not truth itself. Perhaps all that I may first recognize are the varying positions of each proposition, then I must distinguish each proposition’s position on

knowledge of truth from the other, and finally test each of their axioms and conclusions accordingly. While each hypothesis may have a conclusion that opposes another, they do not necessarily contradict, nor invalidate each other. They may come from the same first principles, but arrive at drastically different conclusions, or they may begin with different first principles and arrive at the same conclusion. No statement on the truth of any hypothesis may be said, and one may only be able to critique and judge the first principles.

Returning back to the topic, I summarize: there are two meanings of truth, the logical and essential. We desire to obtain the latter; this truth is, ultimately, God. In order to obtain this truth, we shall attempt to know it. To know truth is to obtain it, and likewise, to know God is to obtain the highest knowledge of truth.

## **Section 2: Knowledge**

“ALL men by nature desire to know.” - Aristotle<sup>3</sup>

According to Aristotle, “all men by nature desire to know.” But to know what exactly? Is our desire for the object of knowing or for the activity of knowing itself? Aristotle goes on to say that we seek a particular kind of knowledge: that of the “causes and the principles, the knowledge of which is wisdom” (982a5). I have said the desire for the object of knowing is God; for knowing God would be the highest kind of knowing. Aristotle continues saying,

For the most divine science is also most honourable; and this science alone must be, in two ways, most divine. For the science which it would be most meet for God to have is a divine science, and so is any science that deals with divine objects; and this science alone has both these qualities; for (1) God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle, and (2) such a science either God alone can have, or God above all others. All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better. (983a4)

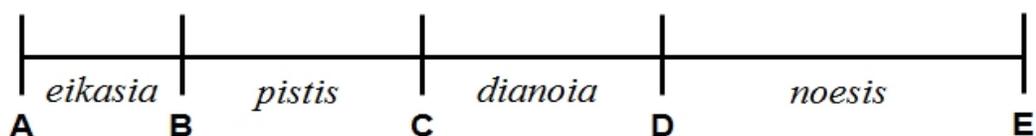
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<sup>3</sup> *Metaphysics* (980a22)

The following section on knowledge will look at both Plato and Immanuel Kant’s development of knowledge. Here I take knowledge as *episteme* or knowing that is scientific, and understanding of a matter. Both authors illustrate what and how it is that we know. I summarize Plato’s Divided Line analogy and the Allegory of the Cave, along with parts of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. Following the two summaries, I compare each author’s account of the development of knowledge and explore how both authors get to truth, and ultimately, God.

## Plato

As I defined at the beginning, truth and knowledge each pertain to reality—reality is corresponding to *things* in the sensible and intelligible universe. I begin this particular inquiry into the nature of both truth and knowledge with the analogy of the divided line in Book VI of Plato’s *Republic*. Here, Socrates begins stating, “In any case, you have two kinds of things, visible and intelligible” (509d). He then describes a line divided unequally into two sections—one section representing visible things and the other intelligible things—with each section having two parts that are also divided unequally according to the same ratio as the first division. The four parts taken together represent a relation: “as regards truth and untruth, the division is in this proportion: as the opinable is to knowledge, so the likeness is to the thing that it is like” (510a). The four parts of this divided line, from shortest in length to longest, are Imagination (*eikasia*), Belief (*pistis*), Thought (*dianoia*), and Understanding (*noesis*):  $AC:CE :: AB:BC :: CD:DE$ . Belief in the visible world corresponds to Thought in the intelligible world.



This line describes a path to knowledge from imagination to understanding. To know anything, then, one must progress through each of these four parts—but is this ascension up the divided line from imagination to understanding actually possible to complete? In Book VII of Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates gives an allegory of men chained to the walls of a cave who only see images of shadows cast upon the walls. These shadows represent falsehood of experience, as they are not the images of the objects themselves, but instead appearances; however to the prisoners, the shadows are not mere appearance—they are reality itself. They have no experience of anything other than the shadows and cannot know anything else. The one who can escape the chains and ascend out of the cave is said to have gained knowledge of truth. This illustration describes the ascension of knowledge according to analogy of the divided line. The pursuit of truth comes about by the development of knowledge from imagination to understanding.

### **Kant**

Similarly, Kant describes the development of knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In it, he describes the things that one can know, through pure reason, as well as the things that one cannot know such as things in themselves<sup>4</sup>. We pursue these particular kinds of knowing although we cannot attain them, and Kant provides an explanation for this limitation. “The real problem of pure reason is now contained in the question: How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?” (146/B19). In order to better understand this question, let us examine what each of these words, *synthetic*, *a priori* and *judgement*, mean. Firstly, synthesis means to put together or to make composite—as opposed to analysis, which means to take apart or break down—so, a synthetic judgment is a combination of ideas. Secondly, *a priori* means prior or coming before

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<sup>4</sup> Kant calls this *dinge an sich*.

experience; a judgment *a priori* is one made without experience. Lastly, according to Kant's critique, a judgment is "nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception" (251/B141); or in other words, it is the consideration of how an object and its apperception match. Apperception is the unity of the perceptions with the concepts already formed in the mind. Altogether, a synthetic judgment is a combination of existing ideas, and when one synthesizes *a priori* concepts, one puts together intuitive concepts, without experiencing those ideas, into a judgment. Synthetic judgements *a priori* might be like reasoning about the first principles of reason itself without experience of them. There must be some faculty or ability that allows man to do this. Kant supposes three ways this may be possible: pure mathematics (e.g. arithmetic, Euclid), natural science or physics (e.g. Newton, Einstein), and "Metaphysics—a wholly isolated speculative cognition of reason that elevates itself entirely above all instruction from experience" (109/Bxiv). In the first example, Kant explains that pure mathematics is a synthetic composition of concepts. He gives the example of  $7+5=12$ , in which the numbers 7 and 5 do not contain within them the concept of 12, but instead they are a unification of each individual number. In the second example, Kant gives an account for Newtonian physics as synthetic judgements *a priori* in the proposition that all quantities of matter remain unaltered, or that every effect of motion has an equal counter-effect. Thirdly, Kant entertains the idea that metaphysics allows for synthetic judgements *a priori* because the study of metaphysics requires understanding of concepts beyond the nature of human reason. However, Kant criticizes metaphysics even though he acknowledges that its aim for God, freedom, and immortality are that which we desire.

We want to know the metaphysical, but we cannot because of our own limitation of reasoning. This limitation is that our most pure mode of cognition, pure reason, cannot make judgments on objects themselves because all objects of experience are only apperceptions of appearances and not those objects themselves. In other words, pure reason cannot allow for knowledge of God as an object, or knowledge of God as God, but rather it only supplies our apperception of God. Nonetheless, Kant reluctantly agrees that human reason has a natural predisposition (*metaphysica naturalis*) toward the study of metaphysics and the desire to know first principles. Plato or Aristotle might consider this philosophical wondering on the nature of causes, but here Kant says,

For human reason, without being moved by the mere vanity of knowing at all, inexorably pushes on, driven by its own need to such questions that cannot be answered by any experiential use of reason and of principles borrowed from such a use. (147/B21)

Kant, however, does not settle at the notion of a mere predisposition to metaphysics, but instead intends to use pure reason as a method to check the “knowledge or ignorance of objects” (148/B22).

From here, Kant gives an account of the development of knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He provides an explanation for the importance of experience to knowledge. Kant divides up all uses of reason into *pure* and *empirical* cognition; he makes a distinction that all cognition begins *with* experiences, but not necessarily that they all begin *from* experiences (136). Those cognitions that come without experiences and do not yet give impressions to the mind are considered *pure*, and called *a priori* cognitions; those cognitions that come after experience and with impressions are considered *empirical*, and called *a posteriori* cognitions. All *a priori* cognitions of the mind—standing apart from experience—make relations between space and

time. Kant argues that the mind necessarily has preconceived intuitions about space and time in order to operate in the natural material world. For example, spatial relation always exists between objects to allow differentiation. Otherwise, all things would exist uniformly, and not as distinct individual things. Time relation exists also to describe a change in sequence, motion, or action; the lack of time relation would result in a constant and a uniformity of motion or action. All *a posteriori* cognitions of the mind—building from experience—formulate concepts by combining thoughts together after being informed by experience.

Kant describes the process of maneuvering through experience by receptions of sensory impressions from an object to a subject. Here, a subject is a thinking thing that receives the sensory information; it is the “I.” The object is an independent thing from which the subject receives sensory information. The mind’s ability to receive sensory information from objects is called sensibility. Entering into experiences, the mind then processes the sensations of objective experience through its faculty of sensibility giving impressions to the subject either as intuitions or as concepts. If the impressions come immediately to cognition, they are *intuitions*; if the impressions bring about thought and understanding, they are *concepts*.

Kant separates the two kinds of cognition—pure and empirical—and examines only those that are pure and without experience. Both pure and empirical cognition allows for intuition; in the former sense, pure intuition *a priori* comes from the mind, and in the latter sense, empirical intuition *a posteriori* comes from sensible objects. “Sensible intuition is either pure intuition (space and time) or empirical intuition of that which, through sensation, is immediately represented as real in space and time” (254/B147). However, it is the form of intuition that

allows for the possibility of experience at all. Through the form<sup>5</sup> of intuition, sensibility allows access to sense objects in the world, it also allows for pure intuition of *a priori* cognition, namely, space and time.

Now what are space and time? Are they actual entities? Are they only determinations or also relations of things, yet ones that would pertain to them even if they were not intuited, or are they relations that only attach to the form of intuition alone, and thus to the subjective constitution of our mind, without which these predicates could not be ascribed to anything at all? (174/A23/B37-8)

Space and time are pure intuitions, independent from objects, and are part of the necessary conditions that makes up experience. Space and time are necessary for objects of experience to have any existence for us. Our faculties of sensibility and understanding allow the mind to sense objects within space and time, and transmit the sensations into thoughts and concepts that the mind understands.

The supreme principle of the possibility of all intuition in relation to sensibility was .... that all the manifold of sensibility stand under the formal conditions of space and time. The supreme principle of all intuition in relation to the understanding is that all the manifold of intuition stand under conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception. (248/B136)

The unification of both sensibility and understanding are necessary for reason. Sensibility alone just gives sensations of objects without putting them into any concepts. Concepts and principles of understanding alone are just thoughts without objects nor meaning. “Thoughts without concepts are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (193/A52/B76). These must be “combined in one consciousness; for without that nothing could be thought or cognized through them” (249/B136). Without a unification of both, reason does not produce any understanding of objects of experience.

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that, here, the form of intuition is not the same as Plato’s use of Form, but operates more like the structure that allows for intuition within the mind.

To repeat: our experience of things comes from things existing in the world, and our faculty of sensibility allows us to perceive them and arrange them into concepts in our mind. “The synthesis of representations rests on the imagination, but their synthetic unity (which is requisite for judgment), on the unity of apperception” (281/B194). The representations of the objects of reality combined with our capacity to sense images through the synthesis of a single object allow the mind to understand that an object exists. The mind uses both sensibility and the principle of understanding in unification to recognize objects of possible experience. Sensibility identifies and unifies our perceptions and impressions of an object as the same. These objects have appearances that sensibility interprets as concepts; this confirms that an object has been interpreted as a part of experience.

Once the mind locates and interprets an object of experience, the next step is to determine the object’s validity. In this way, knowledge of an object of experience is conceived by one’s judgment upon a thing’s objective validity. In other words, to know is to judge. However, this kind of knowing is empirical, not pure. For Kant, objective validity is the agreement between the object of our senses to the concepts of those senses into thought by “the faculty for judging (which is the same as the faculty for thinking)” (213/A81). This process is important in achieving objective validity of an actual existing object apart from mere appearances of a perception devoid of content.

In this way synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible, if we relate the formal conditions of *a priori* intuition, the synthesis of the imagination, and its necessary unity in a transcendental apperception to a possible cognition of experience in general, and say: The conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience, and on this account have objective validity in a synthetic judgment *a priori*. (283/B197)

Judgments are dictated by our senses; our senses are dictated by our sensibility to experience; and our sensibility to experience depends entirely on the possibility for experience through a synthesis of our intuitions and impression of the object. The possibility for experience comes from the empirical data within the *a priori* concepts space and time. “The possibility of experience is therefore that which gives all of our cognition *a priori* objective reality” (282/A156). Kant is still dealing with things that are real and existing, but he needs the possibility of objects to be real and existing even to have the possibility for experience. Those objects’ appearances and their objective validity may not necessarily be true<sup>6</sup>, however those objects in themselves still exist. In this way, experience plays a crucial role in forming knowledge.

Experience therefore has principles of its form which ground it *a priori*, namely general rules of unity in the synthesis of appearances, whose objective reality, as necessary conditions, can always be shown in experience, indeed in its possibility. But apart from this relation synthetic *a priori* propositions are entirely impossible, since they would then have no third thing, namely a pure object, in which the synthetic unity of their concepts could establish objective reality. (282/B196)

Because there is within the mind the faculty to sense and perceive objects of experience (i.e. sensibility and understanding) the mind has empirical knowledge of the existence of those objects. This empirical knowledge, which is a judgment, does not determine the object’s existence; the mind does not make the object real<sup>7</sup>, but rather it confirms that there are objects to be sensed. This kind of knowing—empirical knowing—is judging. It uses empirical data to form judgments that the object matches the conception of the object.

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<sup>6</sup> True in this sense means existing, having content, and relating to something real.

<sup>7</sup> In this case, man is not the measure of existence.

Pure knowing is different. It uses the faculties of the mind to build concepts together without referring to objects of experience. Pure knowing is an awareness of one's self and one's mind at work. There do not seem to be any pure objects from which the mind might draw pure intuitions and concepts. Once the mind gets to a point where it can validate an object, it can only "know" that object in the sense that it judges the appearance of that object, as in it recognizes the sensible experiential data of the object. In this way, one "knows" the object (aside from knowing the categories of the object). One cannot "know" an object in itself and without it as an appearance, i.e. pure objects. Objects of experience are then categorized under objects of phenomena, which allow for empirical knowledge; pure objects are categorized under objects of noumena, which, if accessible, allow for pure knowledge. In this way, experience rules empirical knowledge; experience does not allow for pure knowledge.

In summary, the mind has a form of sensibility that allows for the detection of physical sensations from the world. The mind also has a principle for understanding that takes all sensations or intuitions and translates them into concepts. The mind identifies the objects of the sensations and matches them with the concepts of those objects. When the concept of the object matches with the appearance of the object, brought by sensation, the object is objectively valid. However, because the mind only makes judgments about an object through concepts of an appearance of that object, the mind does not purely know that object as it is in itself, but rather it recognizes the object as an appearance. This concept is important in the pursuit of truth because it shows the limited access the mind has to acquire validity—truth—of an object.

## **Comparison of Plato and Kant**

### **Empirical Knowledge**

At this point, I revisit both authors and compare each of their theories about knowledge to see how each method pursues truth. Both Plato and Kant suggest that certain things can be known, such as empirical knowledge by the use of the senses. However, the current investigation is interested in a particular kind of knowledge—that of the causes, first principles, and things in themselves, or in other words *metaphysics*. Returning to the Divided Line of Plato's *Republic*, the lower levels of knowledge, *Eikasia* and *Pistis*, rely on experience and sensation as primary sources. The faculty of image-making (imagination), or apperception translates images from the realm of sensation into understanding. Similarly, the shadows and imitations in the allegory of the cave provide a similar comparison to a lower level of knowledge. Kant would characterize these things as *a posteriori* empirical knowledge, or knowledge coming from experience. For example, the faculty of sensation allows for the prisoners in the cave to engage in the sensible world, in which the shadows represent a lower understanding of reality. This faculty of sensation connects the physical objects, or empirical representations of the material world into concepts the mind interprets as thoughts and ideas<sup>8</sup>.

### **Pure Knowledge**

In contrast to *a posteriori* knowledge, Kant's *a priori* knowledge by pure reason reaches knowledge of things before experience; because this kind of knowledge does not require the possibility of experience, it points to things as they are and not as they appear. Kant characterizes a dichotomy between the realm of Phenomena and that of Noumena, and as I have mentioned before, Plato makes the same division of the world into the visible and the intelligible (509d).

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<sup>8</sup> There is a question to whether the material objects are mere representations that point to a higher Form, or if the objects themselves are what make up reality itself. This very problem is an example of why *a posteriori* empirical knowledge does not reach understanding of causes and first principles because they first require the possibility of experience.

There are a few inherent qualities both Plato and Kant would agree make up this kind of knowing; it is not a judgment, but rather it is intuitive knowing of things in their most pure form. This kind of knowing includes: space and time, pure mathematics, categories, equality, the self, and recollection.

First, space and time are necessary intuitions in the mind that allow for thoughts before experience. Secondly, Kant gives his account of pure mathematics through arithmetic in his example of  $7+5=12$ . Plato also gives an account of pure mathematics coming *a priori* in his example of the slave boy doing geometry in the *Meno*. In this example, Socrates guides an ignorant slave boy through a geometry problem. At first, the slave boy does not know how to solve for the problem, but after a series of questioning the slave boy figures it out. After the boy solves the problem Socrates says to Meno, “So these opinions were in him, were they not? So the man who does not know has within himself true opinion about the things that he does not know?...And he will know it without having been taught but only questioned, and find the knowledge within himself?” (85d) indicating that the boy had some kind of knowing *a priori*. Thirdly, Kant refers back to Aristotle and supplies the categories<sup>9</sup> as things understood *a priori*. “Now this is the listing of all original pure concepts of synthesis that the understanding contains in itself *a priori*, and on account of which it is only a pure understanding; for by these concepts alone can it understand something in the manifold of intuition, i.e., think an object for it” (213/A80). Plato’s *Republic* also divides and categorizes all things into sensible and intelligible things (although the division is not as expansive as Aristotle). Fourthly, the recognition of

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<sup>9</sup> Kant’s Table of Categories: **Of Quantity:** Unity, Plurality, Totality **Of Quality:** Reality, Negation, Limitation **Of Relation:** Of Inherence and Subsistence, Of Causality and Dependence, Of Community **Of Modality:** Possibility-Impossibility, Existence-Non-Existence, Necessity-Contingency (206/B95).  
Aristotle’s Categories: Substance, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Posture, Condition, Action, and Affection.

equality seems to be a distinct ability of the understanding. Euclid calls the idea of equality a common notion which is held the same for everyone. The first four common notions in Book I of the *Elements* refer to an idea of equality, “Things which are equal to the same thing are also equal to one another” (Euclid 2). However, Plato elaborates to this idea in the *Phaedo*, “These equal things and the Equal itself are therefore not the same” (74c3). He describes the difference between things that are equal and equality itself, e.g., a stick equal to a stick or a stone equal to a stone are not the same kind of equality as Equality itself. Equality, itself, is distinct only to Inequality. “But it is definitely from the equal things, though they are different from that Equal, that you have derived and grasped the knowledge of equality” (74c5). To experience two things that are equal is *a posteriori* because it is a recognition of two things equal to each other, but the idea of Equality itself is *a priori* because it allows for one to connect two things and understand them as equal. “We must then possess knowledge of the Equal before that time when we first saw the equal objects and realized that all these objects strive to be like the Equal but are deficient in this” (74e). Fifthly, in a similar way that one recognizes the Equal *a priori*, the notion of self-consciousness as the self recognizing itself is the same as an equal thing, as well. The activity of consciousness directs itself toward objects and is different from self-consciousness; however consciousness is the same consciousness that directs inward towards itself as self-consciousness. Kant describes this saying, “Now since for the cognition of ourselves... my own existence is not indeed appearance (let alone mere illusion), but the determination of my existence can only occur in correspondence with the form of inner sense ... I therefore have no cognition of myself as I am, but only as I appear to myself” (260/B157-8)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Hegel further develops Kant’s account of the self-consciousness in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Additionally, This was my troubling experience that I mentioned in the Preface. Am I to myself only an appearance? How can I not know myself as I am?

Finally, the argument for recollection comes about. Plato's theory of recollection proposes that knowledge of things, as they are to themselves (Forms), are within the soul before life in the body begins. Socrates says in the *Meno*, "Then if the truth about reality is always in our soul, the soul would be immortal so that you should always confidently try to seek out and recollect what you do not know at present" (86b). When one comes to knowledge, it is actually a recollection of the knowledge that has already been present within, and not of some new knowledge. Plato says again in the *Phaedo*,

Therefore, if we had this knowledge, we knew before birth and immediately after not only the Equal, but the Greater and the Smaller and all such things, for our present argument is no more about the Equal than about the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, the Just, the Pious and, as I say, about all those things which we mark with the seal of 'what it is,' both when we are putting questions and answering them. So we must have acquired knowledge of them before we were born. (75d)

The theory of recollection, then, is also concurrent with *a priori* knowledge. The faculties of the mind, such as sensibility and understanding, the intuitive concepts of space, time, and the categories are all part of the pure knowledge accessible by the mind before experience. To reiterate, the particular kind of knowing under investigation is that of causes and first principles. Plato's theory of recollection of the knowledge of Forms are synonymous with *a priori* knowledge of things in themselves, or Kant's Noumena.

### **Forms and Noumena**

What does it mean to know something in itself? And how does this knowing get to knowledge of causes, first principles, and metaphysics? Both Plato's theory of Forms and Kant's Noumena are the things in themselves. Plato's Forms describe the highest and most perfect idea of the thing, rather than the imperfect imitations or representations of that thing; it is a thing in itself. The Form encompasses all iterations of an idea and is its essence. In the same way for

Kant, the Noumena is a thing in itself. It is without experience and without an object of the world. This Noumena shares the same root—*nous*—as Plato’s *noesis*, the last portion of the divided line. They are the universal ideas and not the particulars. The example of equals in the *Phaedo* (sticks equal to sticks, or rocks equal to rocks) are the particular equal things and not the Equal, itself. “Our sense perceptions must surely make us realize that all that we perceive through them is striving to reach that which is Equal but falls short of it” (75b). In another example with cats, any particular cat is only an individual representation of the Form of cats; any individual cat would fall short of the Form of cat-ness. Because the Form of cat-ness is the essence of cats, and not of any particular kind, the Form of cat-ness is unreachable through any particular cat. In a similar way, sense perceptions of an object only allow for objective validity to judge appearances; these appearances also fall short of the things in themselves.

The object to which I relate appearance in general is the transcendental object, i.e., the entirely undetermined thought of something in general. This cannot be called the noumenon; for I do not know anything about what it is in itself, and have no concept of it except merely that of the object of a sensible intuition in general, which is therefore the same for all appearance. I cannot think it through any categories; for these hold empirical intuition. (349/A253)

For both Plato and Kant, the Forms and the Noumena are unreachable by the senses, and perhaps even unknowable at all. In the *Republic*, Plato divides the world into the sensible and the intelligible, seemingly similar to a division of Phenomena and Noumena. However to the contrary, Kant says,

The division of objects into *phaenomena* and *noumena*, and of the world into a world of sense and a world of understanding, can therefore not be permitted at all, although concepts certainly permit of division into sensible and intellectual ones; for one cannot determine any object for the latter, and therefore also cannot pass them off as objectively valid.” (351/B311)

Kant cannot divide the world up into phenomena and noumena because noumena are not of the world because they are not of experience, and there are no objects to attribute them; there are only phenomenon in the world. In this way, noumena—things in themselves—cannot be obtained through the world. Although Kant would say that the Forms or the noumena are not part of the world, “Nevertheless the concept of a *noumenon*, taken merely problematically, remains not only admissible, but even unavoidable, as a concept setting limits to sensibility” (351/A256). How does this relate to knowledge of causes, to metaphysics? The limits of pure reason in metaphysics lie in the relation between the noumena and the objects of the phenomena. Experience becomes the starting point to empirical knowledge, but it also becomes the limit. The mind’s inability to relate to non-sensible objects outside of itself is the limit to pure knowledge. Empirical knowledge through experiences does not give access to metaphysics. Pure knowledge, however, in its pursuit of knowledge of things in themselves, if successful, illuminates the knowledge of causes and first principles. Knowledge of the Forms or Noumena allow for access to metaphysics.

### **Knowledge is limited**

Nevertheless, this kind of knowing—knowing things in themselves—is unattainable; thus access to knowledge is limited because it is bounded by experience. Kant says,

with this faculty [of cognizing *a priori*] we can never get beyond the boundaries of possible experience, which is nevertheless precisely the most essential occupation of this science. But herein lies just the experiment providing a checkup on the truth of result of that first assessment of our rational cognition *a priori*, namely that such cognition reaches appearances only, leaving the thing in itself as something actual for itself but uncognized by us. (112/Bxx)

Clearly, one cannot know objects of experience synthetically *a priori* because they are of experience. One can only understand objects of experience analytically. Of the pure concepts *a*

*priori*, one cannot synthesize those concepts into an understanding of an object, i.e. noumenon, because they are not objects. There is no capacity for knowledge of things in themselves, but only knowledge of appearances. However, the limits of knowledge for things in themselves do not eliminate the possibility of things in themselves existing. The appearances of objects presents evidence of some actual thing; that thing, the thing in itself, is just inaccessible.

Still less may we take appearance and illusion for one and the same. For truth and illusion are not in the object, insofar as it is intuited, but in the judgment about it insofar as it is thought. Thus it is correctly said that the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all. Hence truth, as much as error, and thus also illusion as leading to the latter, are to be found only in judgments, i.e., only in the relation of the object to our understanding. (384/B350)

Knowledge, then, is a judgment on an object's validity. This object must be an object of possible experience, otherwise one would not be able to perceive it. There is no such object that does not have qualities of sensibility—unless it is a Form, and its imitations are not the thing itself. These imitations are only appearances—the shadows in the allegory of the cave. Plato gives an account of this statement in his discussion of the definition of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, in which there are three developing definitions. The first account of knowledge is knowledge as perception (177c6-179b5). The result of this definition, from the earlier discussion of Protagoras, says: Man is the measure of all things. If knowledge is nothing other than sense perceptions, then according to Kant, truth and illusion, and objects in themselves and appearances would be considered the same thing. Both Plato and Kant reject this notion. The second account is knowledge as true judgment (187b-201c). If knowledge is not perception, “Then knowledge is to be found not in the experience but in the process of reasoning about them; it is here, seemingly, not in the experiences, that it is possible to grasp being and truth” (186d). However, this account does not have a way to validate whether judgments are true or false. Knowledge as true judgment

seems to be an adequate account, but it lacks the certainty of how judgments may be true. For Kant, objective validity only refers to objects as appearances, and not as things in themselves. Finally, the third account is knowledge as true judgment with an account (201d-210a). This third account seems to supply the necessary conditions that the second account lacks. However, this kind of knowledge is still empirically based, and the account of the judgment must refer to some object of experience. Any single account is only a particular and does not reach the universal. This is different than pure geometry, seen in the *Elements*, in which one account, one particular refers to all cases. For example, Proposition 4, Book 1 says, “If two triangles have two sides equal to two sides respectively, and have the angles contained by the equal straight lines equal, then they also have the base equal to the base, the triangle equals the triangle, and the remaining angles equal the remaining angles respectively, namely those opposite the equal sides,” (Euclid 5) and this applies to any and all triangles, not just a particular. However, the concepts in pure geometry--the triangle--is not an object of experience, but rather an intelligible object of the mind. In this way, the accounts in pure geometry are different than objects of the world.

How does knowing as true judgment with an account of an object of experience lead to knowing of things in themselves? It does not seem possible to have an account of a thing in itself, nor to have an account of the Forms. Both Plato and Kant suggest that the most accessible kind of knowing is through judging. As I have said earlier, to know is synonymous with to judge. Kant suggests “the faculty for judging (which is the same as the faculty for thinking)” (213/A81) might be the limit to knowledge. Is knowledge dependent on one’s judgment, then? Is man the measure of all things in this way<sup>11</sup>? No, knowledge is not dependent on one’s judgment because

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<sup>11</sup> Also, is the mind made of matter? But this is a topic of another discussion.

knowledge of this kind is only empirical knowledge. True judgment and false judgment are only appearances of the objects in themselves. There is still access to truth—not by knowing, but rather by judging—as long as there is a mindful separation between perceptions of objects and objects in themselves. If there is no mindfulness for the possibility that objects in themselves exist—being actual on their own, however inaccessible—then all that remains are perceptions, and man may, indeed, be the measure of all things.

If the mind could identify a non-sensible object, would the mind be able to know it, and know it purely? These non-sensible objects must be pure concepts—those coming from intuitions of the mind, free from the limitations of objects of sensation—i.e., Plato’s Forms. Plato says these pure concepts are already within the soul through recollection. However, Kant declines:

Space and time are valid, as conditions of the possibility of how objects can be given to us, no further than for objects of the senses, hence only for experience. Beyond these boundaries they do not represent anything at all, for they are only in the senses and outside of them have no reality. The pure concepts of the understanding are free from this limitation and extend to objects of intuition in general, whether the latter be similar to our own or not, as long as it is sensible and not intellectual. (255/B148)

I said earlier that there is still access to truth, as long as there is a mindful separation between perceptions and objects in themselves. What would happen if God--a non-sensible thing--were to encounter me? Kant would say,

Thus if one assumes an object of a **non-sensible** intuition as given, one can certainly represent it through all of the predicates that already lie in the presupposition that **nothing belonging to sensible intuition pertains to it**: thus it is not extended, or in space, that its duration is not a time, that no alteration (sequence of determinations in time) is to be encountered in it, etc. But it is not yet a genuine cognition if I merely indicate what the intuition of the object **is not**, without being able to say what it then contained in it; for then I have not represented the possibility of an object for my pure concept of understanding at all, since I cannot give any intuition that would correspond to it, but could only say that ours is not valid for it. But what is most important here is that not even a single category could be applied to such thing, e.g., the concept of a substance,

i.e., that of something that could exist as a subject but never as a mere predicate; for I would not even know whether there could be anything that corresponded to this determination of thought if empirical intuition did not give me the case for its application. (255-6/B149)

God is not an object of possible experience. God may be conceived as an intuition, or even as an imperfect concept, but God is not fully intelligible, either. Knowledge of first principles and causes also require an object or predicate to that which the first principle or cause originates. Knowledge must be of a thing<sup>12</sup>. The limit of knowledge is that one can only make judgments about the appearances of the thing or object, and cannot have conception of the thing itself. So where is truth if not in objects? Kant, furthermore, provides the antinomies—a series of thesis and antithesis propositions. The results of the antinomies provide examples where one cannot reach knowledge of the proposition. Both the theses and antitheses result in contradictions to each other, and no conclusion can be found in experience, nor can they be proved to be in agreement with truth.

Accordingly, the antinomy of pure reason in its cosmological ideas is removed by showing that it is merely dialectical and a conflict due to an illusion arising from the fact that one has applied the idea of absolute totality, which is valid only as a condition of things in themselves, to appearances that exist only in representation, and that, if they constitute a series, exists in the successive regress but otherwise do not exist at all. (519/B534)

Kant suggests that the way to escape the antinomies is to accept that the world is only the world of appearances, and not things-in-themselves. The philosopher of Plato's cave has to recognize that he lives in the world of shadows, although he understands that the world outside the cave exists as well. Perhaps Plato used *dianoia* instead of *episteme* in the Divided Line because he

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<sup>12</sup> Whether that thing is made of matter or not is up to discussion.

recognized that Knowledge—things in themselves—was not possible and that it was more important to have Thought or *dianoia* to get to Understanding or *noesis*.

### **Truth and Knowledge**

At this point I shall return to my original investigation. I seek knowledge of causes because I think to know something is the best way to obtain truth about it; to have truth is to know it. However, if truth is the agreement of our cognition with the object, then we can never get to truth if we cannot know objects in themselves. We can only know objects through our sense perceptions and make judgments about those senses. “For pure reason is never related directly to objects, but instead to concepts of them given by the understanding” (406/A335). Through experience, our sensibility dictates our impressions, and our understanding of concepts dictate our judgments. Objects cannot relate truth through pure reason. Judgments with an account (objective validity) are true under a certain condition:

If truth consists in the agreement of a cognition with its object, then this object must thereby be distinguished from others; for a cognition is false if it does not agree with the object to which it is related even if it contains something that could well be valid of all cognitions without any distinction among their objects. (197/B83)

Even with objective validity, there requires knowledge that our cognition of an object actually matches with the object itself in reality. However, because pure reason only relates our understanding of concepts of the object, and never of the object itself (even with it having objective validity), one never fully confirms that the concepts of our understanding of an object actually match up to the object itself. The second meaning of truth—what is real, existing and meaningful—finds its tangible value in experience; that it may invoke sensation, belief, or even

understanding. In many ways, it stands on its own and is self-evident—it simply is. However, Kant defines truth as:

The nominal definition of truth, namely that it is the agreement of cognition with its object, is here granted and presupposed; but one demands to know what is the general and certain criterion of the truth of any cognition...for a cognition is false if it does not agree with the object to which it is related even if it contains something that could well be valid of other objects. (197/A58)

One cannot attribute truth to any object, unless one verifies that the object exists, and has the possibility of existence and experience<sup>13</sup>. Knowledge of truth cannot be found in objects of experience. Knowledge of appearances may not stand on their own because they are mere appearances; however, just because they are appearances does not mean that they do not exist. The objects themselves must first have existence to even give the possibility of appearance. In reference to the allegory of the cave, the images, reflections, and imitations of the objects (those inside the cave) coming from the Forms (those outside the cave) may not be the thing in itself, but they—both the imitations and the Forms—are both still real and existing.

Returning to my definitions, I have said what I mean by **Truth** and **Knowledge**:

- 1) **Truth (n)** is something in agreement with reality, or something real; **truth** is a description of being, or something that is. Something that is **True (adj)** is a product of logic and reason; something that is **true** is definitive and absolute. **Truth** in itself is certain, although one may hold something **true** without certainty.
- 2) **Knowledge (n)** is thought and understanding of truth that agrees with reality. To **know (v)** is to have truth, and to be certain.
- 3) **Reality (n)** corresponds to *things* in the sensible and intelligible universe that are **real (adj)** and existing. Something that is **real** has being; it may be composed of matter, but is not restricted to it<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Here, the question of being comes into play alongside the theory of knowledge. Aristotle provides insight in his *Metaphysics*.

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Book VII

Metaphysics, or the study of causes and first principles, is the main topic in the investigation of knowledge. If knowledge of the metaphysical is possible, then truth will be attainable by knowledge—truth will be knowable. Similarly, if as Kant says, I require objective validity on objects of experience to verify the concepts of that object with the object itself, then my understanding of knowledge as an agreement with objects of reality produce truth. However, objective validity in Kant’s method only produces apperceptions of appearances, and not knowledge of the thing in itself. Here, I have created my own criterion for truth. As I said in Section 1, there are two meanings of truth: 1) valid, consistent, and sound; 2) real, existing, and meaningful. Both of these definitions are definitive, unchanging, and independent. To get to knowledge of metaphysics, then, it is important to focus on the second meaning of truth—truth as real, existing, and meaningful. The real and existing qualities have been argued and demonstrated by both Aristotle and Aquinas<sup>15</sup>. The meaningful quality of truth seems to be more difficult to decipher. Some have proposed that meaning is decided upon each subject—the individual, and not from the object—the thing itself. If knowledge of the thing itself is inaccessible, the individual may have to create or put forth the meaning. In any matter, my criterion for truth has three parts: is it real? is it valid? is it definitive? Again, I will only focus on if it is real (as this most closely attempts at metaphysics). If it is real, it has being (as opposed to not-being<sup>16</sup>); it is existing; and it is a thing. If it has being, it may be made of matter or not made of matter. If it is made of matter, it is an object of experience, it may be perceived by sensation, and it has form. If it is not made of matter, it is a thing in itself, or it is a Platonic Form. But these things cannot be known because they are not of experience. And although there are intuitions and

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<sup>15</sup> Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*

<sup>16</sup> *Parmenides*

concepts knowable without experience, these things cannot be known by experience. And so, there are three options: the only matter exists (whereby one would have to disprove the non-existence of non-matter); both matter and non-matter exist (whereby one must prove the existence of non-matter); and finally only non-matter exists (whereby one must disprove the existence of matter). These non-material things are the metaphysical, Plato's Forms, and the immortal Soul.

At this point, Kant denies knowledge; however the desire for knowledge is undeniable. Kant cannot prove the existence of God; he cannot prove the non-existence of God. However, his argument refutes the proposition for the non-existence of God by demonstrating the limits of knowledge through experience. If God cannot be known by experience, then one cannot disprove God's existence by the lack of experiencing God. If God were real and existing, then one still cannot know Him, at least by means of thought and understanding. If God is inaccessible through knowledge by experience, then what may one hope? Kant responds saying, "all hope concerns happiness" (677/B833). In this case, happiness is in the satisfaction of our desires for knowledge. Both Plato and Kant essentially say similar, if not the same, things. In the *Phaedo* Plato says, "for if it is impossible to attain any pure knowledge with the body, then one of two things is true: either we can never attain knowledge or we can do so after death" (66e). Plato has a certain belief that knowledge will be attainable in the soul after death. Similarly, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant denies knowledge "to make room for faith," although it is not clear why. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he says, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me" (133/5:162). The desire for

knowledge—even more, the desire for Truth—is still present within. If knowledge is denied, then how else might one obtain Truth? Perhaps in belief and faith.

### Section 3: Belief

If not knowledge, then belief may be the closest way of obtaining truth. Both opinion and belief have been closely used throughout and it is not clear how they differ. From *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant provides three definitions for opinion, belief, and knowledge.

Having an opinion is taking something to be true with the consciousness that it is subjectively as well as objectively insufficient. If taking something to be true is only subjectively sufficient and is at the same time held to be objectively insufficient, then it is called believing. Finally, when taking something to be true is both subjectively and objectively sufficient it is called knowing. (686/B850)

Kant defers to faith instead of knowledge, yet it is not clear how one arrives at faith. Is it from opinion? belief? or somewhere in between? Plato uses *pistis*, which has been translated as belief in the divided line analogy, but he also uses opinion throughout multiple dialogues. In a closer examination of opinion and belief, there are two distinct words: *doxa* (δοκέω) and *pistis* (πίστις). According to Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, *doxa* means: “expect: hence, think, suppose, imagine; form an opinion; of an object—seem” (441). Here, *doxa* may be taken as a common opinion, a true or false notion, or a judgment. Additionally, *pistis* means: “trust in others, faith, persuasion of a thing, confidence, assurance” (1408). It may be taken to mean belief, faith, trust in others, or that which gives confidence. These two words and their respective meanings might be used interchangeably, but it is important to understand the difference between them and their uses. Essentially, both opinion and belief do not have objective sufficiency because truth is held only according to the subject. However, belief has deeper conviction than

opinion because it holds onto the claim of truth whereas opinion is openly uncertain. Plato seems to emphasize *pistis* over *doxa* in his divided line because of this very reason. There may be a lack of objective certainty in both cases, but the confidence and conviction within one's own thoughts, as either opinion (not confident) or belief (having confidence), is an important step towards the certainty of knowledge. One could not get to knowledge by merely having uncertain opinions and without believing in one's own thoughts. Nevertheless, Plato gives account for how both opinions and belief may still be able to obtain truth—even if knowledge cannot. True knowledge is a true judgment with an account based on experience, whereas true opinion and true belief may be coincidentally true, or true by chance while not needing actual experience. These true opinions and beliefs may, in fact, be true just by luck and not from any evidence—evidently, these opinions and beliefs are uncertain (in the sense that knowledge provides certainty).

Before returning to opinion and belief, let us turn to knowledge briefly. The general use of the word knowledge here has been referred to as *episteme* (ἐπιστήμη) which is defined in the *Greek-English Lexicon* as: “acquaintance with a matter; understanding, skill; professional skill; knowledge, scientific knowledge” (660). This word refers to knowing in general and not just of the knowing of causes and first principles. While knowledge of that sort seems limited, *episteme* or general scientific knowledge is accessible (or at least not as limiting). Plato uses *dianoia* (διάνοια) in his divided line analogy; it is defined as: “thought, intention, purpose; thought, notion; process of thinking; thinking faculty, intelligence; thought expressed” (405). It is interesting that Plato chooses *pistis* over *doxa* and *dianoia* over *episteme* in his analogy. Perhaps Plato was aware of how knowledge is limited and decided that it was better to use Thought in the

development to Understanding. Perhaps *noesis* (Understanding) includes the recognition of the limitation of knowledge, while still requiring *dianoia* (Thought) to achieve wisdom. But what role does *pistis* play? I shall return to this momentarily.

Again, both opinion and belief do not provide certainty of their conclusions—this is a huge problem, especially for theology and any argument for the spiritual or metaphysical. In the case of the existence of God there is nothing but uncertainty, but there are four options of belief available. Here, I list all four along with each of their implications:

1. Doubt that God exists, and doubt that God does not exist.  
(Then, do not choose an option)
2. Do not doubt that God exists, and do not doubt that God does not exist.  
(Then do not choose an option)
3. Doubt that God exists, and do not doubt that God does not exist.  
(Then believe God does not exist)
4. Do not doubt that God exists, and doubt that God does not exist.  
(Then believe that God exists)

In *Pensées*, Blaise Pascal writes about the necessity of choosing an option as he presents his famous Wager (Pascal 123). Pascal essentially wagers the existence of God against the non-existence of God to a flip of a coin. If one wagers in favor of God's existence and win, then potentially all of heaven is to gain; however, if one loses then there is nothing to lose—if in fact there is no God. Consequently, if in fact there is a God and one wagers against God's existence and wins, then there is no need to strive towards Heaven nor any threat of Hell. However, if one loses, and there is in fact a God, the threat of eternal punishment looms. This is Pascal's Wager—he proposes that it is better to believe in God and be wrong than to not believe in God and be wrong, while it is best to believe in God and be right. In contrast to this Wager, as doubt plays a large role in developing belief, the opposite affirmative action of doubt is faith.

## Section 4: Faith

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”  
(Hebrews 11:1, KJV)

What exactly is faith? how is it different from belief? The difference between *doxa* and *pistis*, opinion and belief, is noticeable, however the Greek word for faith is the same word as belief—*pistis*. There seems to be some subtle differences. I understand the use of *pistis* to change from belief to faith in the pursuit of God (which I also take to mean Truth). This kind of *pistis* is a trust, confidence, and assurance in another; it is a much more personal relationship one has in another. Belief alone does not convey the same kind of assurance in an unknown thing. For example, I may never see for myself that light particles bend through the air, yet I believe that they do—based on other people’s work—or even more, I believe that the sun will rise the next morning even though I cannot be certain (barring any extraordinary events). On the other hand, faith is a kind of confidence in an unknown thing that allows for one to participate in the activity and pursuit of truth. If one denies knowledge, how should one continue to live? Toward what shall man pursue if not knowledge of truth? Faith allows for the continuation to pursue truth by a different means that is not knowledge. I revise what I said earlier in Section 1 by replacing knowledge with faith. I think that the particular kind of truth we seek is the highest, most complete truth. Again, God is this highest, most complete truth for God is the cause of all causes, and the first principle of all first principles. The particular kind of faith (instead of knowledge) we seek is that which gives access to that truth—the kind of faith that allows for the participation and continued pursuit of first principles, causes, and things-in-themselves, even though it is understood that they are unattainable by knowledge. Our desire for Truth is then found in faith

instead of knowledge. We desire truth of first principles so that we may be able to access the primary cause that is God, or Truth; this requires the activity of faith.

Is faith an activity of the intellect? of the will? perhaps both? Kant purposes that the faculties of mind such as sensation and understanding allow for the possibility of experience. I hope to extend this thinking to include that there are faculties that allow for the possibility to reach metaphysics, however not by means of knowledge; I take these, by grace, to be faith and hope<sup>17</sup>. The Book of *Hebrews* takes faith and hope together, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, KJV). The original Greek reads: “Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων. Here, the noun *pistis* together with the verb *elpizomenon* produce the evidence. Faith alone is not an activity if it is not coupled with hope. My use of faith then will imply this dual faith and hope activity.

While faith alone might not be an intellectual activity in the same way as knowing, it wills itself towards truth. The willing activity finds value precisely when one denies the possibility of knowing truth. If knowledge of truth is inaccessible, then to give up knowledge is to give up pursuit of truth, and in effect, to give up truth altogether<sup>18</sup>. Faith allows one to continue forward in the pursuit of truth, but it does so while first requiring the understanding of the limitation of knowledge. Kant says, “Thoughts without concepts are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (193/A51/B75). The limitation of knowledge does not allow for the conception of God; faith is this blind intuition for God. Furthermore, there are some other similar practical uses of this kind of faith-willing activity. I take the postulates of Euclid’s *Elements* on

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<sup>17</sup> Hope will be a topic of another discussion.

<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that Truth might not, in fact, exist independently of man’s acknowledgement of it. Ignoring the possibility of Truth does not necessarily mean that man is the measure of all things.

the same grounds as a proposition of faith and will. Euclid needs the postulates in order to continue his geometry. He may construct his geometry without them, but only to a limit; and when he finds that he cannot prove the postulates, he must take them as true and carry-on. Similarly, Newton presents a kind of postulate for God as the *One* intelligent and powerful being capable of creating the universe in his General Scholium<sup>19</sup>. And moreover, Kant recognizes that he must rely on faith at his conclusion that he denies knowledge.

Does God create within us the faculty for faith and hope? According to both Aristotle and Augustine, perhaps so. Again, Aristotle says, “All men by nature desire to know” (980a22). What is this nature? And why does it make men desire? Saint Augustine provides a response for this nature, a purpose for the desire, as well as an end to this knowing. He points to God in the beginning of his *Confessions* saying, “because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (3). All men by nature have been made, and made especially by God; all men desire with restless hearts; for as God has made men for Himself, all men desire with restless hearts to know and rest in God. For God is the Truth that man seeks. This Truth is eternal, never-changing, and constant. Man seeks constancy because he seeks completeness<sup>20</sup>, and the pursuit for Truth is the pursuit to become complete again. It is the condition of man as mortal—human-beings destined for death—to seek out completion in the immortal nature of Truth and God. Even though man is pre-equipped with the *a priori* concepts such as space and

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<sup>19</sup> Isaac Newton refers to this God as the *Lord God Pantokrator* in his *Principia* (940-942).

<sup>20</sup> Augustine’s *Confessions*: “For wherever the human soul turns itself, other than to you, it is fixed in sorrows, even if it is fixed upon beautiful things external to you and external to itself, which would nevertheless be nothing if they did not have their being from you. Things rise and set: in their emerging they begin as it were to be, and grow to perfection; having reached perfection, they grow old and die. Not everything grows old, but everything dies...But in these things there is no point of rest: they lack permanence. They flee away and cannot be followed with the bodily senses. No one can fully grasp them even while they are present. Physical perception is slow, because it is a bodily sense: its nature imposes limitations on it. It is sufficient for another purpose for which it was made. But it is not adequate to get a grip on things that are transient from the moment of the intended beginning to their intended end.” (Book IV.10.15)

time, man seeks its opposites in unity and eternity. This is found in the One<sup>21</sup> and in Being<sup>22</sup>—who is God, the One-Being. The temporal nature of our mortality points to the desire that we seek in completeness of the divine and eternal; this is the duality of change and constancy. Hope, coming after the acknowledgment of the limitations of knowledge (evidence in the word ‘acknowledge’), brings together the duality of change and constancy that our nature might be fulfilled in the eternal. Faith keeps man fixated towards Truth in a way that allows man to continue striving for an irrational end.

## **Conclusion**

“And ye are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:48, KJV)

It may seem like knowing God is impossible, thus it may seem that we can only wish to know God. William James gives three definitions of wishing, desiring, and willing<sup>23</sup>. Wishing is wanting something impossible, desiring is wanting something possible, and willing is making something possible. Wishing to know God may be desiring something impossible. However, God may make revelation part of our experience. Based on the accounts of others (which is the foundation of religious faith), an experience of God may carry more conviction than any knowledge of God. At the end of the Gospel of Luke, the resurrected Christ Jesus appears to the apostles. At first they do not believe what they have experienced; they spoke to and dined with Jesus, and even saw the holes in his hands and feet. Jesus replies to them, “And ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48, KJV). Through the accounts of these witness—that God has revealed Himself to man—the foundations of faith and the desire to know God, like those

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<sup>21</sup> Plotinus

<sup>22</sup> Parmenides

<sup>23</sup> Psychology: The Briefer Course, Chapter 17 p282.

witnesses, begin to grow. If one denies both wishing and wanting, and instead try to will God, then man puts himself in place of God. This is Protagoras' argument that man is the measure of all things. Friedrich Nietzsche in his Third Essay in the *Genealogy of Morals* says, "Man would rather will nothingness than not will" (Nietzsche 163). If there is no access to truth, then does man have to make meaning? Does man have that power or right? I return back to my first premises. The empty uncertainty of faith does not eliminate Truth, nor does it exclude the possibility for God's existence. Faith is part of the will, although the will does not produce Truth, nor God; faith, along with hope, allows for the continuation of the pursuit. This process is similar to Plato's process—to constantly return back to the beginning at the conclusion of every discussion in order to evaluate truth and knowledge. Socrates returns to the beginning question to modify and refine his understanding. He is never satisfied with an answer. This same process and activity allows for the essence of truth to remain pure and unbounded by definition. It is never fully achieved. Likewise, in science, there is always a constant refining of understanding. Theories are constantly challenged and refined. We are in the pursuit of understanding. The Allegory of the the Cave shares the story of how one philosopher achieves this understanding. However, this understanding is not for that one philosopher alone. Because he is a witness to the realities outside of the cave, he must return back into the cave and share his new insight. Those being outside the cave may see that the shadows are false, but have a responsibility to go back into the cave and release the others from their chains (Republic 516e).

I began this inquiry by bring forth the 'big questions' of philosophy—What is the meaning of life? What is virtue? What is justice?—however, perhaps the most pressing question of all is that of *Why*? Perhaps in wondering about the answers to the *Why* questions allow us to

engage in the pursuit of truth. Perhaps *Why* is an insatiable question, for how could one ever sufficiently answer the *Why* question? The responses to this question might only point to causes of things. Perhaps God has created within us the desire and ability to ask the *Why* question by instilling within us the faculty for faith and hope. And it is through faith and hope we might reach God.

Signum Fidei

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