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It is clear through the literature that has come to man, that philosophers started being increasingly concerned with the task of justifying the possibility, and therefore, the credibility of human knowledge of the entire world. This is as opposed to the investigation of the latter’s nature. This is true, at least since the time of the Stoics and Epicurus. Possibly, this might have been a matter of gradual change in interests rather than an epistemological revolution. Suggestions are rive that the change should apparently be interpreted as both the cause and consequence of the well known historical development of ancient skepticism.

Moreover, there is a specific feature of their new epistemological trend. The validity of human knowledge was discussed by Hellenistic philosophers by concentrating on the reliability of their criterion as a means both whereby and according to which knowledge of the intrinsic nature of the world would be gained in the long run. Historically, the problem of criterion has concerned a combination of interwoven questions on the nature of knowledge and also on the possibility of establishing its nature without necessarily begging the question. Consequently, it cannot just be equated to, but rather includes the meta-epistemological problem of the diallelus- the vicious circle. In addition, there is a twofold nature of the criterion, that is, as a method according to which one may test knowledge and as an instrument through which one obtains the knowledge in the first place. Therefore, the diallelus was meant to be an argument that was both against the possibility of knowledge and also against the possibility of a theory of knowledge. This means it was meant to be against the knowledge in all its expressions, which include that of an epistemology.

Indeed, the wider context of the problem of the criterion should not prevent us from observing the diallelus challenges the possibility of formulating a theory of knowledge without necessarily begging the initial question. Roderick M. Chisholm is one of the most outstanding American epistemologists. The contribution he made through the various arguments in the problems of philosophy form the foundation of philosophy. In one of the arguments, some of the philosophical issues can be formulated by the use of these two pairs of questions.

In the first pair, one indulges to know what he/she knows and the extent of that knowledge. On the second pair, the point of concern is on how one can decide on what he/she knows and the criteria of knowledge. Apparently, answering one pair of these questions opens the door to answer the next pair. This means that if one is able to know the extent of the knowledge possessed, then deciding on the criteria of knowledge in this case is easier. Moreover, the reverse is also true.

Some philosophers think that they do have the answer to the first pair and, therefore, they can easily figure out the answers to the second pair. Others look at it in the other way round; that is, if they have the answers to the second pair, then it is easy to figure out the answers to the first pair. The former can be called Methodists, whereas the later can be referred to as Particularists.

One can be able to figure out the answers to the second pair by arguing that the way one decides whether belief is or is not a good belief, that is, deciding on whether a belief is possibly to be an authentic case of knowledge, is apparently seeing whether it is in any way derived from sense experience, that one needs to find out whether the belief bears certain relations to one’s senses. Arguably, what these relations to one’s senses might never be clearby. But for a belief to be credible, interestingly, it must bear certain relations to the specific believer’s sensations. Another belief that became widely believed in is known as empiricism in the philosophical sphere. It provides us with a perfect criterion of distinguishing between right and wrong beliefs.

Conclusively, it indicated that any knowledge that does not conform to the empirical criterion should be subjected to the flames. This is a rather judgmental position that overrules all the other arguments and stands to indicate that they all contain nothing but illusions and sophistry. In the realm of knowledge, such a position is not only subjective, but also archaic and limited in its own sense. A critical look at empiricism reveals that it is clearly a form of Methodism. This is because it begins with a criterion that is used to throw out the bad beliefs.

Consequently, there arise two clear objections to this. First, applying the empirical criterion the way it was developed by Hume and other nineteenth and twentieth century empiricists, it becomes clear that even the good beliefs are discarded in the process of discarding the bad ones. One is left with a skeleton of beliefs at the end. No wonder Hume conceded to the fact that for one to be an empiricist, the existence of sensations is the only matters of fact that one will really aware of with certainty. This first objection is largely concerned with empiricism in particular.

The second objection is generally concerned with every form of Methodism. The objection is that the criterion is broad enough and far-reaching with total arbitrariness. Clearly, it is odd that the empiricists who are extremely keen on proceeding cautiously and step-by-step out of experience, starts off with such a mere generalization. One is totally left in the dark concerning the reasons behind choosing this criterion, as opposed to any other. One cannot really know whether any physical things exists, such as bodies, trees or houses, much less whether there exists atoms or any other microscopic particles. Therefore, if empiricism, consistence, chances are that the conclusion could have been that there is no surety of any sensations in the past.

Some ideas could also be considered nonsensical and ridiculous especially taking the side of a particularist, by thinking that there could be answers to the first set of questions and would, therefore, work out the answers to the second pair of questions. Clearly, Chisholm brings out very obvious flaws as it has been shown earlier. We may get it right, therefore, by asserting that in order to know, apparently, there is no need to know that one knows, much less to know that one knows what one knows. There are lots of things that quite obviously, one knows to be true. This means that if one reports the things one sees, hears and feels, chances of the report being correct are very high. One of the most important criterions states that it is more reasonable to trust one’s senses than distrusting them. Whether one has experienced hallucinations and illusions, the best thing to do when everything else seems alright is to accept faithfully the testimony of the senses. If one remembers to have been brainwashed, drugged or hypnotized, then one should have doubts on what he/she sees, feels or hears.

Moreover, it is now clear from the argument that as far as the problem of the criterion is concerned, the most important thing to note is very clear. This is the assertion that when formulating the principles, one will easily proceed as Aristotle did when he formulated his rules of syllogism. This formulation agrees with Cardinal Mercier’s take on the problem. Mercier indicated that if there was any knowledge in the world that bore the mark of the truth, and if the intellect has a way of differentiating between the truth and falsehood, shortly put, if there is any given criterion of truth, then it should dully satisfy the following three conditions. First, it should be internal. This arises from the assertion that there is no rule of truth or any reason whose source is an external authority that can serve as an ultimate criterion that the mind cannot achieve to certainty until it has found within itself a convincing reason for adhering to the testimony of such an authority.

Secondly, the given criterion must be immediate. For the sake of surety, a given certainty may rest upon many diverse reasons, some of which are most likely to be subordinate to others. However, to avoid an infinite regress, one must find a ground of assent that tends to presuppose no other. This is called an immediate criterion of certitude. Thirdly, the criterion should be objective.

This is because the ultimate purpose for believing cannot be a merely prejudiced state of the thinking subject. Apparently, a man is aware that he cannot reflect upon his own psychological states so as to control them. The realization of possessing this ability does not give him the right to be sure, until he has made use of it. Moreover, the ultimate ground of certitude cannot consist in any way to a subjective feeling. However, it can only be found in that which objectively gives out this feeling and is therefore adequate to reason.

In conclusion, the problem of the criterion arguably is one of the most difficult of all the philosophical problems. This means that one has not begun to philosophize until such a time one is faced with this problem. Consequently, one realizes how unappealing each of the possible solutions comes out to be. No wonder, the various arguments propagated by various philosophers have flaws that need to be explored. Methodists, as opposed to Particularists, as explored above, present a classic example on how erroneously, this problem can be confusing. Therefore, this prehistoric dilemma of the diallelus, the crisis of the wheel or the ferocious circle, calls for very clear procedures for distinguishing appearances that are true from those contain falsehood.