

Metaphysics and epistemology

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In the following paper, I would like to dwell on the issue of the two philosophical currents – metaphysics and epistemology. Epistemology is the philosophical investigation into the nature of knowledge and justified belief produced by means which are reliable in the circumstances. Epistemology primarily addresses the following questions: “ What is knowledge?”, “ How can we justify our claims to knowledge?”, and “ What can we know?”

Epistemologists do not concentrate on acquaintance or procedural knowledge but stress upon propositional knowledge. A proposition is a declarative sentence expressing natural state of things / some generally accepted facts, or somebody’s opinion. Propositional knowledge may be a priori or non-empirical and a posteriori or empirical.

The first type exists regardless of any experience, and reasoning serves as a prerequisite for it. Empirical knowledge results from an immediate sense experience. Metaphysics is an area of philosophy that studies existence. It is concerned with the following questions: “ What is existence?”, “ Does God exist?”, “ Is God’s existence a necessary truth?” To prove God’s existence, metaphysics uses ontological arguments. These arguments are based on reason alone, being a priori and analytic in their essence. The primary and most famous ontological argument was offered in the 11th century A.

D. by St. Anselm of Canterbury. He claimed that God’s existence may be derived from the notion of a “ being than which no greater can be conceived.” Critically evaluating both philosophical branches, it may be claimed that epistemology and metaphysics deal with the two different issues: cognition and existence respectively.

Epistemology stresses upon the necessity to combine reason with the senses (thus, emphasizing both a priori and posteriori knowledge). Metaphysics, on the contrary, argues that things are unchangeable and must be conceived on the ground of reason only since empirical experience is unable to cognize the principles and origins of existence.