

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE FROM THE
STANDPOINT OF VALIDITY.

I.

THE first and most obvious difficulty in the way of any satisfactory theory of knowledge is a want of clearness and uniformity of judgment as to the necessity and legitimacy of the inquiry. The problem in itself gives occasion for a suspicion of some such fallacy as that to which Representative Perception must succumb, and the suspicion is allowed to acquire almost an a priori force by writers who on general grounds deny the possibility of such theory. Hegel's refutation of the Critical Philosophy in the *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* is a case in point. Here the writer, either misconstruing or misrepresenting Kant's actual method, proceeds to direct against him a polemic based on the internal contradictoriness of the critical attitude. The substance of Hegel's objection is indicated by the simile in which he compares the aim of Criticism to "the wise purpose of the schoolman to learn to swim before venturing into the water."¹ Kuno Fischer's reply, endorsed by Vaihinger,² that the question is not one of learning to swim but of explaining the act of swimming exposes the pointlessness of the analogy; but the essence of Hegel's error lies in the attempt to turn the specific purpose of Criticism into a general responsibility for knowledge. He accuses Kant of requiring that we should "learn to know the instrument (our power of knowing) before undertaking the work to be done by it"; whereas the truth is that Kant assumes knowledge as revealed in certain

¹ *Encycl. d. philos. Wiss.*, § 10.

² *Comm. zu Kants Krit. d. rein. Vern.*, Vol. I, p. 45.