

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF DUALISTIC REALISM.¹

THE problem of knowledge has suffered from misstatement to such an extent that it seems hopeless to attack it with any fair prospect of success unless we are willing to present the question free from all encumbrances, historical and otherwise, which have grown up about it. Knowledge is not *per se* a problem of metaphysics or psychology, though it is bound up intimately with both metaphysical and psychological theories. To state it, for example, in terms such as the following: 'Do minds exist?' 'Does matter exist?' or, as is so often done, 'Is human reason able to know things as they really are?' and on the basis of the replies given to classify a thinker as idealist, realist, monist, or dualist, is to close off at the very outset of the inquiry an acceptable way out of the difficulties which beset a problem tremendously complex of its own nature. Unless we wish to involve ourselves in needless trouble, the only sane policy is to start from the right starting point. This elementary rule of prudence is doubly necessary in any discussion of the problem of knowledge, since few questions have been rendered more unnecessarily complex by the intrusion of foreign matter than the epistemological problem.

The problem of knowledge in its primary stage has nothing at all to do with whether mind exists or matter exists. The first question to be asked and answered is, 'What is it that we know?'

¹ Read at the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, at Smith College, Northampton, Mass., December 29, 1925.