

In dealing with the matter of definitions, the meaning of

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demands our primary consideration because of its primary importance. How many discussions and writings are tinted by the varied hues given to this one word. One maintains that we can know God, and yet with greatest inconsistency will say, "I believe in God," as though knowledge and belief were convertible terms. Another, who has an equally strong conviction that God exists, as stoutly asserts that we cannot know God, but only believe in Him; and so "we do" and "we don't," "we can" and "we can't," cannon each other into hopeless confusion; and thus after a circle of noisy assertions the assertors end where they began, in real harmony but apparent discord. Before they started on their turbulent tossings they ought to have determined the meaning they would attach to the word knowledge, or what it was to know anything. They would then have seen that knowledge does not admit of any uncertainty, for what we are uncertain about, or where there can be possible error, we may be said to infer, think, or believe, but we cannot be said to know. This, which must be acknowledged, would have led them to ask the further question, "Where can certainty be found?" and the answer must be, in consciousness alone.

As Sir W. Hamilton says, "Of consciousness I cannot doubt, because such doubt being itself an act of consciousness, would contradict and consequently annihilate itself." Elsewhere he states, "It is at once evident that philosophy, as it affirms its own possibility, must affirm the veracity of consciousness. . . . So far there is, and can be, no dispute; if philosophy be possible, the evidence of consciousness is authentic." But even now we are not in a position to define knowledge, because we have further to decide what we are conscious of, as this tells us what we know. Sir W. Hamilton and others think we are conscious of the *ego* and the *non-ego*. That in perception we are conscious of ourselves as perceiving subjects, and also of an external reality as the object perceived. Others think we are conscious of the *ego* only. In other words, that we are conscious alone of our own mental