

## KNOWLEDGE AND COSMOS.

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My former paper on the subject of "Knowledge and the Unknowable" led up to two aspects of knowledge, termed *transitive* and *intensive* respectively. When this distinction was applied to the vexed question of the unknowable, it was seen that "the unknowable" might mean either of two things: (1) the unanswerability of certain definite questions; (2) something *about* which nothing can be known except the bare fact of its existence. The first sense is purely subjective. It means simply that there are certain speculations or pseudo-speculations never to be resolved, because they do not depend for their solution on better methods of investigation, but on the assumed possibility of a mental standpoint totally foreign to that of human experience and understanding. The second sense is objective. It supposes not merely that there may be, in or behind the universe, something whose nature necessarily baffles knowledge, but that there *is* such a something, known to be unknowable in all respects save the one respect of existence.

It is not my intention to attempt to analyze Herbert Spencer's doctrine, in this connection. The perusal of his "First Principles" has left upon me the impression that he does not distinguish the two senses of "unknowable," and hence attempts to establish objective unknowability by arguments which can at most establish subjective unanswerability. This, however, is only an impression, offered for what it may be worth.

It may be well to state distinctly the view here adopted before attempting to justify it. I think, then, that the term in question is a misnomer, which philosophy can well dispense with by substituting "the Unanswerable" for "the Unknowable" and, at the same time, denying the validity of its objective sense.

There are questions which cannot possibly be answered. It is not that we can set any limits to the growth of knowledge in normal ways; but its increase must come through improving, never through abandoning, the methods of science, which adapt themselves to the familiar facts of human experience. The facts of experience, as apart from special courses of experiment, are essentially the same now as they were in the days of Aristotle. Were they essentially different, the experience would not be human. But since the dawn of science and philosophy men have recurrently asked themselves a set of questions which never get any nearer to solution, because they attempt what is impossible—to see behind these ultimate categories of consciousness. (A