On What One Knows

1. I have mentioned in the previous chapter that the same grammatical construction, the familiar noun-clause, is commonly used either to express a proposition or to denote a fact. Yet, as the same chapter shows, there is a very important difference between propositions and facts, corresponding to the difference between the subjective and the objective dimensions of the mental world. It would be surprising, therefore, if our language were as irresponsible to this distinction as the superficial identity of the noun-clauses seems to suggest. This, fortunately, is not the case. A careful analysis will show that noun-clauses are demonstrably ambiguous in this respect, and that, at least in their underlying structure, they discriminate between contexts implying subjective and objective employment.

1 An earlier version of this chapter was read at the Minnesota Center for the Philosophy of Science in 1968, and will be published, with the comments of Professor Bruce Aune and my reply, in a forthcoming volume of the Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science.
**Res Cogitans**

The concept of knowledge, I have claimed, as much as the concepts of truth and causality, involves the objective domain. Moreover, since it is, unlike the other two, a psychological notion, I propose to approach the problem of the ambiguity of noun-clauses as they occur with the verb *know* and, for contrast, with the verb *believe*. This study, then, will not only reinforce the findings of the previous chapter, but will also provide a sample of the detail work still needed for a full understanding of the variety of speech-acts, mental acts, and mental states.

2. In spite of the repeated efforts of so many philosophers—since the time Plato wrote his *Theaetetus* to the present day—to clarify the concept of knowledge, the results achieved are by no means satisfactory. There are a number of fairly obvious features of this concept which are simply ignored by most philosophers, and which, accordingly, cannot be squared with the prevailing theories.

The most persistent, and still dominant, line of analysis tries to understand knowledge in terms of belief, true belief, true belief with adequate evidence, grounds, accessibility, or some other, often very elaborately and ingeniously stated condition. Whether such a claim is advanced as a reduction, or merely as a list of necessary conditions, I think it is still misleading and prejudices the issue. For it is taken for granted by the proponents of this view that knowledge (at least in the sense of *knowing that*) can have the same object as belief—that is, that it is possible to believe and to know exactly the same thing.

This, it seems to me, is a highly questionable assumption. Granted, it is nonsense to say that one knows that \( p \) but does not believe it. It need not follow, however, that in this case one must believe that \( p \). What is known may be something
On What One Knows

that cannot be believed or disbelieved at all. In other words, the incongruity of the sentence \( I \text{ know that } p \text{ but } I \text{ do not believe it } \) may be due not to an implied inconsistency but to a category confusion similar to the one embedded in the sentence \( I \text{ have a house but } I \text{ do not covet it.} \) As one cannot be said to covet or fail to covet one's own property, it may be that one cannot believe or disbelieve what one knows. Again, from the fact that what one knows cannot be false, it does not follow that it must be true and hence that knowledge must entail true belief, if what is known is not a thing to which truth and falsity apply. A picture may be faithful or not faithful, not its object; yet it is the conformity with the object that makes a picture faithful. In a similar way, conformity with things known may render beliefs true, without these things being true themselves. At this point I offer these considerations as mere possibilities; the task remains to justify the analogies I have suggested.

In recent years our comprehension of the concept of knowledge has been enriched by Ryle's distinction between knowing that and knowing how and Austin's recognition of the performative aspect of the verb \( \text{to know.} \) These are valuable insights, but the features they single out do not account for the essence of the concept. Knowing that is distinct from knowing how, as it is distinct from knowing who, what, when, where, why, or whether, and from knowing a story, a house, or one's friend. What is it, beyond the use of the same word, that is common to all these cases, or, at least, what are the interlocking similarities that would constitute a family resemblance? As for the performative aspect, its presence is not sufficient to make \( \text{know} \) a bona fide illocutionary verb; the intuition, moreover, that tells us that this verb, unlike, say, \( \text{declare} \) or \( \text{promise}, \) denotes a mental state and not a speech-act, is too strong to be ignored.
In any case, the performative aspect hardly applies beyond the domain of knowing that; consequently it too fails to account for the unity, no matter how loose, of this concept.

3. What do you know? Things of surprisingly many kinds. There are only a few verbs (among them another philosophers’ darling, see) that display a similar versatility. In the previous section I have mentioned in passing the main categories of the possible verb-objects of know. The verb believe, which is supposed to help us in our task, is much more restricted. In comparing these two verbs, which is indeed helpful, I shall begin at a rather unsophisticated level, restricting my observations to what some grammarians would call the surface structure of the noun-phrases involved. As we go on, the very nature of the investigation will force us to break through the crust and reveal more and more of the underlying structure.

There is a domain which appears to be shared by both verbs. This comprises the familiar that-clauses—that is, nominals formed simply by prefixing that to an unaltered sentence. I know that and I believe that can be followed by any declarative sentence regardless of tense, modality, or structural variation. There is, on the other hand, a domain which is wholly owned by know to the exclusion of believe. One can be said to know, but not believe, birds and flowers, houses and cars, wines and detergents, cities and deserts. Practically any original noun will do, with or without such adjuncts as the relative clause and its derivatives. Names and other phrases denoting people also qualify, of course, but at this point believe re-enters the picture. After all, you can say that you believe Jane as well as that you know Jane. Needless to say that these two assertions have very little to do with one another. Believing a person may require
knowing him (to some extent), but knowing him certainly does not entail believing him: the chief reason for not believing. Jane may be the fact that you know her too well. At this point the reader will protest: "But, of course, know and believe operate in totally different ways in these cases!" In other words, the reader wants to peek below the surface. For the time being I shall thwart his desire.

There is another group of nouns appropriate to either know or believe, and which creates a similar situation. I think of story, tale, explanation, theory, testimony, and, perhaps, opinion, suspicion, assumption, and the like. All these things can be known or believed; but even if they are known, the question of belief remains open. It is perfectly normal to say, for instance, "I know the story but I do not believe it." The reader may again protest that this is all very obvious. I shall once more resist the urge to dig deeper, however, for we do not yet know enough to see the reasons for the protest.

In connection with Ryle's knowing how, I have mentioned the other wh-forms, such as what, when, and why, that can introduce the verb-object of know. This move, in general, fails with believe; whereas one can know where the treasure is hidden, one cannot believe where the treasure is hidden. There is one exception to this incompatibility, and that concerns what. I may believe what you said as I may know what you said. Clearly, the relation of these two claims is similar to the one just encountered between knowing and believing stories or people. The knowledge of what one said does not imply belief, but the belief of what one said presupposes the knowledge of what one said. Since the word what, unlike the words figuring in the previous examples, is a purely grammatical word, we can nourish the hope that in this case we shall be able to "disambigu-
ate” the offending phrase on syntactical grounds alone, and then apply the result to the previous contexts to relieve the reader’s frustration.²

4. There are whats and whats. Consider the following three sentences:

(1) Joe lost his watch
(2) I found what he lost
(3) I know what he lost.

Together, (1) and (2) entail that I found Joe’s watch; (1) and (3), however, do not entail that I know his watch. What in (2) amounts to that which (or the thing which)—that is, to a demonstrative pronoun (or a dummy noun) followed by the relative pronoun beginning a relative clause. As always, such a clause depends upon a noun-sharing between two ingredient sentences. The derivation of (2) can be sketched as follows:

(4) I found (a watch)       (4a) He lost (a watch)
(5) I found (the watch)     (5a) which he lost
(6) I found that            (6a) which he lost
(7)                        I found what he lost

(5a) is a relative clause obtained by replacing a watch by which. Since the clause is taken to be identifying, watch in (5) obtains the.³ In (6) that replaces the watch. Finally, in (7), that which is contracted into what.

What in (3) cannot be analyzed into that which. It is not

² By the way, a closer look at that and what will relieve another frustration, voiced by Austin in these words: “My explanation is very obscure, like those of all grammar books on ‘that’ clauses: compare their even worse explanation of ‘what’ clauses” (How to Do Things with Words, p. 71, n. 1).
³ Concerning relative clauses and the definite article, see my Adjectives and Nominalizations, Chapter I.
On What One Knows

do not hallucinate.

the watch he lost that I claim to know, but rather that it is a watch that he lost, although I put my claim in an indefinite form. What he lost, in this case, has nothing to do with a relative clause; it is a sentence nominalization on a par with who lost the watch, when he lost it, how he lost it, and the like. This nominalization operates by replacing a noun-phrase or an adverbial phrase in the original sentence by wh plus the appropriate pro-morpheme. Since the same replacement is used in the corresponding question transformations, the resulting noun-phrases are traditionally called “indirect questions.” This name is misleading, however. Granted that after wonder, or some such verb, these nominals retain their interrogative flavor, but this is not true after know, tell, learn, or realize. This becomes clear as we contrast the sentences:

I wonder what he lost, (namely) a watch or a ring or . . .
I know what he lost, namely a watch.

The strings following namely are not interchangeable. It is easy to restore the underlying sentences from which these two are derived by the removal of redundancy. They are:

I wonder what he lost, namely (I wonder whether he lost) a watch or a ring or . . .
I know what he lost, namely (I know that he lost) a watch.

It appears, therefore, that the what-clause after wonder comes via an earlier step in the process of nominalization, that is

whether he lost a watch or a ring or . . .

whereas the what-clause after know comes via a different intermediate step, to wit,

that he lost a watch.
The same ambiguity can be shown with respect to other wh-forms such as who, when, and why. Those coming through whether can indeed be called indirect questions, but the ones derived from the that-form should rather be called indirect, or indefinite, claims. Accordingly, the correct analysis for (3) will be the following:

(8) I know . . .  (8a) He lost (a watch)
(9) I know . . .  (9a) that he lost (a watch)
(10) I know . . .  (10a) what he lost
(11) I know what he lost.

To repeat, (10a) is not a relative clause but a wh-nominal formed out of (9a). The dots in (8)–(10) indicate the “noun-gap,” characteristic of container sentences, which is to be filled by an appropriate nominal.4

It is interesting to note that wh-clauses after the negation of know do not come through that but whether. The correct analysis of, say,

I do not know what he ate

and of

I do not know where he went

will show

I do not know whether he ate . . . or . . . or . . .

and

I do not know whether he went to . . . or to . . . or to . . .

rather than

4 Ibid., Chapter II.
On What One Knows

I do not know that he ate (fish)

and

I do not know that he went to (Paris).

This is interesting linguistically: it shows that the negation precedes the nominalization in the generative process.

Wh-nominals are not confined to the object position; they can occur as subjects too:

Who killed her is uncertain
Why she went there is a mystery.

This possibility permits us to draw another interesting comparison between the structures underlying what he lost.

(12) What he lost is a watch
(13) What he lost is a mystery.

(12) is contracted from

That which he lost is a watch which is an extraction transform of

He lost a watch.

On the other hand, (13) is certainly no transform of

He lost a mystery.

5. These facts enable us to explain the ambiguity of what he said in the sentences:

(14) I believe what he said
(15) I know what he said.

Believe cannot take wh-nominals, consequently the analysis of (14) cannot follow the pattern of (3). The correct analogy is
provided by (2): the object of *believe* is a pronoun (or dummy noun) followed by a relative clause. In full:

(a) I believe (that \(p\))
    He said (that \(p\))
    I believe that
    which he said
    I believe what he said.

Roughly, the object of your saying and my believing is the same thing. Not so in (15). The object of my knowledge is not the object of your saying (\(that\ \(p\))\), but, obviously, an indefinite version of *that you said that \(p\)*. Thus the derivation matches (8)–(11) above:

(b) I know . . .
    He said (that \(p\))
    I know . . .
    that he said (that \(p\))
    I know . . .
    what he said
    I know what he said.

The possibility of *believing what* (\(= that\ which\) or *the thing which*) is restricted to “things” that can be objects of belief. For this reason, such sentences as

* I believe what he lost

are ruled out: the relevant co-occurrence sets of *believe* and *lose*, unlike those of *believe* and *say*, do not overlap. Roughly speaking, *believe* demands *that*-clauses, but *lose* requires object nouns. If so, the intelligent reader will ask, what saves (15) from being given the relative-clause interpretation in addition to the other one, and from consequent ambiguity, since the object range of *say* and of *know* widely overlap in the domain of *that*-clauses? Twist as we might, (15) is not ambiguous. It seems, therefore, that the *that*-clauses following *say* are different from the *that*-clauses following *know*. And since the former are of the kind which is compatible with *believe*, it seems to follow
that the *that*-clauses after *know* are different from the *that*-clauses after *believe*—that *know* and *believe* cannot have identical objects at all. We shall see that this is indeed the case.

To emphasize the point, consider another verb, *tell*. In this case, the phrase *knowing what he told* (*somebody*) is indeed ambiguous. Although the sentence

I know what he told you

most likely will be interpreted in the sense of the *wh*-nominal (*I know that he told you that* *p*), I can elicit the other interpretation by saying, for instance,

I already knew what he just told you.

Here I claim to know that *p* (which he just told you). One cannot play the same trick with *say*. The sentence,

I already knew what he just said (*to you*)

is substandard, and the improved version,

I already knew what he would say . . .

once more selects the path of the *wh*-nominal. *Know*, therefore, is capable of absorbing the dummy for a *that*-clause, provided this latter is of the right kind. Now *tell*, but not *say*, seems to provide such. What, then, is the difference between *say* and *tell* in this respect? I shall take up this problem later on. For the time being, let us remember that just as there are *whats* and *whats*, so are there *thats* and *thats*.

6. It is time to return to the problem of knowing and believing people and stories. First I shall consider belief. It is clear that a sentence such as

(16) I believe Jane
must be elliptical. For one thing, the breakdown of two common transformations (passive and extraction) shows that the sentence is "abnormal" for some reason or other:

* Jane is believed by me
? It is Jane that I believe.

Intuition tells us that what (16) means is this:

I believe what Jane said (would or will say).

What, of course, is that which. This intuition mirrors a general deletion pattern that tends to substitute the subject of saying or doing something for the saying or doing itself:

I refuted him (what he claimed)
I understood him (what he said)
I imitated him (what he did)
I heard him (his voice)

and so on. In a similar way, the sentence

I believe his story (explanation, etc.)

is but an ellipsis of

I believe what his story (contains, says, etc.).

The verbs in the parentheses are not to be taken too seriously. They are but idiomatic crutches to facilitate the move to the deep structure. What is essential is that this latter contains the elements,

I believe that $p$

and

His story (explanation, etc.) is that $p$

and that the two are fused into a relative clause construction by virtue of the identical noun-phrase (that $p$).
It appears, therefore, that all occurrences of *believe* (I am not considering believing in somebody or something) can be reduced to *believe that*.

Nevertheless, this verb retains some latitude, inasmuch as it can take substitutes for the *that*-clauses (*it, thing, what*). This, interestingly enough, is not true of a cognate verb, *think*. This one takes *that*-clauses without discrimination, but refuses substitutes. One can answer, for instance, *I believe it* but not *I think it*, and owing to the exclusion of dummies, it is impossible to think a person, a story, or what one said. This point is obviously connected with the fact that the appropriate pro-morpheme after *think* is the pro-adverb *so* rather than the pronoun *it*: *I think so*. *Believe* can take either, yet with a different emphasis: *I believe so* deals with a proposition on its own merits; *I believe it* reflects upon what someone else has said. *Know*, incidentally, hardly takes *so*. Later on I shall return to this difference between *think* and *believe*.

What, then, about knowing a story, an explanation, or other things of this sort? Knowing these things differs from believing them in exactly the same way as knowing what one said differs from believing what one said. Accordingly, knowing a story is but shorthand for knowing what the story is or how the story goes. And, as the parallel with *how* clearly indicates, this *what* is not *that which*. The same goes for tales, reasons, explanations, excuses, and theories offered by somebody or other. Incidentally, whereas these things, as we recall, can also be believed (but what a difference!), poems, jokes, names, foreign words, tongue twisters, and the like can be known, but not believed. The reason is obvious. The possibility of believing, say, a story is tied to the existence of the sentence

\[
\text{The story is that } p
\]

which makes the relative-clause inclusion possible. Poems,
tongue twisters, and the like, on the other hand, cannot be re-
produced in *that*-clauses; consequently there is no way of con-
necting them with *believe*. Nothing prevents their being known, 
however. Knowing a poem, for instance, is knowing how it goes, 
or, if one is more ambitious, knowing how it is to be under-
stood, interpreted, and what not.

The availability of the inexhaustible variety of *wh*-nominals 
the verb *know* can take makes it a relatively easy matter to ex-
plicate one element of the concept of knowing such things as a 
person, a house, a car, or a city. What, for instance, can you 
possibly mean when you say that you know Jane? There is a 
“minimal” sense of this claim, which is satisfied if you have ever 
met her in the flesh and, perhaps, talked to her. Yet, in spite of 
such an encounter, you may still insist that you do not know her 
(“I have met her, but I do not know her at all”). What is it 
that you disclaim in this case? What would be knowing her in 
this fuller sense? Well, it is an open-ended affair. It might be 
merely knowing what her full name is, where she comes from, 
what she does for a living, and other particulars of this sort. If 
you know her better, if you “really” know her, then you know 
what she thinks, how she feels about various matters, what she 
would do if . . . ; consequently you know how to treat her, 
and the like.

Knowing all these things *about* Jane will not, however, nor-
mally entitle one to claim that one knows her without the per-
sonal acquaintance previously mentioned. I do not know Mao 
Tse-tung, although I know many things about him. Yet, some 
latitude remains in this respect. Churchill could have truthfully 
said, during World War II, “I know Hitler; he would destroy 
his country rather than surrender,” even if he had never met 
Hitler in the flesh. But, one might argue, they at least had some 
dealings with one another, which is not true of Mao and me.
Again, the sentence I used to know him many years ago suggests an interruption of contact rather than of the flow of relevant information.\(^5\)

*Mutatis mutandis,* the same analysis works for knowing houses, cars, cities, and the like. Does the armchair geographer who knows a great deal about Lhasa know Lhasa? Does the little old lady from Dubuque who spent two days in Paris with a guided tour know Paris?

I suspect that the requirement of contact (acquaintance) is a hangover from the ancient sense of *know,* according to which knowing, say, pain and misery meant having these things, and which sense is also reflected in the phrase *carnal knowledge.* We are going to see, toward the end of this chapter, that this element of contact with something actually “there” still pertains to the concept of knowledge throughout the entire domain of its application.\(^6\)

The phrase I just used, *knowing how to treat her,* represents a new construction which I did not mention before among the possible objects of *know.* It is by no means restricted to *knowing how.* I know whom to blame, what to do, where to look, and when to stop in many situations. The transformational origin of these phrases is quite clear. The infinitive, to \(V+\), is generally used in sentence nominalizations to code a noun-sharing between the subject of the nominalized sentence and either the subject or the direct object of the container sentence, provided there is a modal verb in the former sentence. These features can be brought out with greater or lesser grammaticality in appropriate paraphrases; for example:

\(^6\) I am indebted to Professor Paul Ziff for a clearer perception of these two aspects of knowing a person.

\(^6\) In many languages there are two distinct words corresponding to *know,* one for noun-clause objects and the other for simple noun-objects (*wissen-kennen, savoir-connaître,* etc.).
Res Cogitans

I decided to go — I decided that I should go
I persuaded him to go — I persuaded him that he should go
I know where to go — I know where I should go
I know how to solve — I know how I can solve the problem

and so forth. As we see, there is nothing special about knowing how to.

Reviewing our results, we find that the acquaintance-sense aside, all verb-objects of know, other than the that-clause, can be reduced to wh-nominals. Now these, themselves, are nothing but indefinite versions of that-clauses, formed, as we recall, by replacing a noun-phrase or an adverbial phrase in the sentence following that by wh plus the appropriate pro-morpheme. Consequently, whenever I claim that I know wh . . . , I guarantee that I could make another claim in which the wh-nominal is replaced by a corresponding that-clause. It makes perfect sense to say that I know what he did but will not tell you; to say, on the other hand, that I know what he did but could not possibly tell you is absurd.

It will be objected here that in some cases of knowing how it is impossible to tell, in words, what one knows. I know how to tie a necktie, but I could not tell you in words alone. I grant this, but point out that this situation is possible with nearly all the knowing wh forms. I know what coffee tastes like, what the color magenta looks like, where it itches on my back, when I should stop drinking, how the coastline of Angola runs, but I could not tell you in words alone. I must have, however, some other means to supplement words: pointing; offering a sample, a sketch, a demonstration; or saying “now.” By these means I can tell you, or show you, what I know: I know that magenta looks like this (offering a sample), that it itches here (point-
On What One Knows

(ing), that I should stop drinking now. The need for supplementing words with nonlinguistic media affects knowing how, and knowing _wh_ in general, exactly because it affects the corresponding knowing that.\(^7\)

I leave it to the imagination of the reader to account, along similar lines, for the meaning of such phrases as _knowing geography_, _knowing Aristotle_, and _knowing Russian_.

7. In the previous section we have concluded that the basic form of the verb-object for both _believe_ and _know_ is the _that_-clause. Yet, at the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that these verbs cannot have the same verb-object. These two claims need not conflict, of course, if _that_-clauses can be ambiguous. And, indeed, we have already encountered one reason for thinking that they are: roughly, the object of _say_, a _that_-clause, can be the object of _believe_ but not the object of _know_. In this section I shall present the remainder of the evidence that points in the same direction.

My main argument involves a group of nouns that are normally joined to _that_-clauses by means of the copula; for example:

His suggestion is that _p_
That _p_ is his prediction
That _p_ is a fact
The cause of the phenomenon is that _p_.

Clearly, there is a need to subdivide this class. Words like _suggestion_, _prediction_, _statement_, _confession_, _testimony_, and _ex-

\(^7\) In view of what we discovered about the role of the imagination in certain mental states in the previous chapter, it is not surprising that in many cases of saying something we make use of such nonlinguistic media as pointing, drawing, and imitating. As understanding often involves imagining, so saying often involves showing.
Res Cogitans

case on the one hand, and belief, opinion, assumption, view, theory, and suspicion on the other, are derivatives either of performative verbs or of verbs of mental states. This is shown in the typical transformation exemplified by

He suggested that \( p \) — His suggestion is that \( p \)
He suspects that \( p \) — His suspicion is that \( p \).

The that-clause, accordingly, is tied to a person, and this tie is specified by the words just listed, which I shall call “subjective” P-nouns. This class is to be distinguished from the class of “objective” P-nouns, which includes fact, cause, result, outcome, upshot, and a few others. Facts, causes, and the like do not belong to anybody, and the transformation just given has no parallel. Some P-nouns cross the line—for example, reason and explanation. One can speak of Joe’s reason or Joe’s explanation versus the reason or the explanation.

These two groups behave quite differently with respect to know and believe. Subjective P-nouns can follow either verb, but the analyses of the resulting sentences go along quite different lines. If, for instance, someone’s prediction is that \( p \), then believing his prediction is believing that \( p \); knowing that prediction, however, never means knowing that \( p \), but rather knowing what that prediction is—that is, knowing that the prediction is that \( p \). It appears, therefore, that that-clauses marked by subjective P-nouns are per se compatible with believe but not with know. The latter verb cannot take these that-clauses except in a roundabout way, via the wh-nominal.

In view of what we found before, it is easy to give the analyses of the two sentences involved:

(c) I believe (that \( p \)) His prediction is (that \( p \))
I believe that which is his prediction
On What One Knows

I believe what is his prediction
I believe his prediction.

(d) I know . . . His prediction is (that \( p \))
I know . . . that his prediction is (that \( p \))
I know . . . what his prediction is
I know his prediction.

The sentence with believe cannot follow the second pattern, since, as we recall, this verb cannot take wh-nominals. What is more interesting, and indeed decisive, is that the sentence with know does not conform to the first pattern. The clause that \( p \), insofar as it is marked as a prediction—that is, as something subjective, something produced by an illocutionary act—is not an appropriate object of know.

The situation is quite different with objective P-nouns. They naturally follow know, but only with great strain believe. You may know the facts about the crime, the cause of the explosion, the result of too much publicity and the outcome of the trial. But what could possibly be meant by such a sentence as I believe the cause of the explosion or I believe the outcome of the trial? It might be objected that results are said to be believed or disbelieved: it makes sense to say I do not believe the results of the autopsy. We quickly realize, however, that in this case one speaks of the results submitted by some experts; they are “their” results. If no human authorship is involved, then believing or disbelieving results is impossible; it is nonsense to say, for instance, I do not believe the results of the inflation. In a similar way one may believe or not believe the “facts” submitted by the police, but not the facts about the crime.

The analysis of a sentence like I know the cause of the explosion is interesting. It goes via the wh-nominal: I know what is the cause of the explosion, that is, I know that the cause of
the explosion is that \( p \). This, of course, entails that I know that \( p \). If I know that the cause of the explosion was the overheating of the wire (that the wire got overheated), then I know that the wire got overheated. The words cause, result, outcome, and so forth are relative, inasmuch as they are followed by a genitive structure in non-elliptical sentences: causes, results, outcomes, and the like are causes, results, and outcomes of something or other. Hence knowing the cause of the explosion is not merely knowing that \( p \), which is the cause, but knowing that that \( p \) is the cause, that is, knowing what is the cause.

Facts are not relative in this respect. Consequently these two paths merge into one. Indeed, I know that that \( p \) is a fact or I know for a fact that \( p \) are but emphatic forms of I know that \( p \). Of course one can relate facts to something or other and say, for example, I know the facts about the crime, which means I know what are the facts about the crime, that is, I know that the facts about the crime are that \( p \) and that \( q \), etc. This, naturally, entails that I know that \( p \), that \( q \), and so on.

At this point we should recall what we said about the relevant difference between say and tell. If you said that \( p \), and I believe what you said, then I believe that \( p \): knowing what you said, however, does not mean knowing that \( p \), but knowing that you said that \( p \). Tell works differently: if you told me that \( p \), then knowing what you told me may mean, in a suitable context, that I know that \( p \). This seems to suggest that tell, but not say, is an objective P-verb. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that one can tell, but not say, the facts about the crime, the cause of the explosion, the outcome of the trial, and so forth. Tell belongs to the family of know; say to that of believe.

The urge to find symmetries makes us ask why it is that one cannot say suggestions, predictions, opinions, and the like. The
answer is simple. *Say*, like *think*, can take *that*-clauses, but not their substitutes: you may believe that *p*, think that *p*, or say that *p*; but if I predict that *p*, then you may believe my prediction, but not think or say my prediction.

But—it may be objected—I can surely tell you my prediction or opinion, and this move seems to cross the line between the subjective and the objective. No more, I reply, than knowing opinions or predictions. The *wh*-nominal—bridges—over the gap. Telling your prediction or knowing your prediction is telling, or knowing, what that prediction is (and *what*, here, is not *that which*). Telling your prediction is not the same thing as predicting or making a prediction. A prediction is a subjective entity. That one has made a prediction, however, is something objective; it may be a fact.

*Wh*-nominals in general belong to the objective domain. We have seen that they are compatible with *know* but not with *believe*. Similarly they can follow *tell* but hardly *say*. I can tell you where I went yesterday, what I did there, and why. Putting *say* for *tell* in such a context will yield ungrammaticality or at least substandard speech:

?He said where he went ( . . . what he did . . . why he did it).

Notice, however, that negation changes the picture. There is nothing wrong with the sentence

He did not say where he went ( . . . what he did . . . why he did it).

We know, of course (from Section 4, above), that the presence of negation means that the subsequent *wh*-clause is to be derived not from *that* *p* but rather from *whether p or q or*. . . . It seems, therefore, that such *wh*-clauses are not objective in
our sense. Yet know takes them, as we recall, at least in its negative form. Consequently negation must strip know from its objective force. Is this the reason for the oddity of sentences like

?I do not know that Joe stole the watch

in which the quality of the clause is left up in the air?

A comparison with P-nouns will round out the picture. Sentences such as

*His suspicion is why she did it

and

*Who killed her is my opinion

are ungrammatical. On the other hand, it is easy to pair wh-clauses with objective P-nouns:

What he did was the result of despair
How he said it was the cause of the scandal.

It will be helpful to consider a very common verb, state, at this point. From our present point of view it is like tell, rather than say, since obviously one can state a fact or the cause, result, or explanation of something or other. What one states, therefore, is something objective. One’s statement, on the other hand, is not. For whereas what one states may be a fact, one’s statement, even if true, is never a fact. Accordingly, knowing your statement cannot be anything but knowing what the statement is; knowing what you stated, however, may amount to knowing that \( p \), which you stated. Believing your statement, on the other hand, necessarily means believing that \( p \), which you stated.
On What One Knows

A little exercise for amusement’s sake. What do the following sentences mean?

(17) I believe what you believe.
(18) I know what you believe.
(19) *I believe what you know.
(20) I know what you know.

The first, (17), means that you and I share a set of beliefs; (18) means that I know what your beliefs are; (19) is deviant; and (20) is ambiguous: it means either that I know what it is that you know, or (with a stress on you) that you and I are both acquainted with the same relevant set of facts.

All these differences can readily be accounted for by the following simple hypothesis. There are two kinds of *that*-clauses, the subjective and the objective. They are distinct because, first, they have entirely different co-occurrence restrictions: one kind fits subjective P-nouns and subjective verbs such as say and believe, the other kind fits objective P-nouns and such objective verbs as tell and know; second, their transformational potential is different: objective *that*-clauses are open to the wh-nominalization, but subjective ones are not. Thus we see that the seemingly trivial and unexplainable “accident” of grammar that, for instance, it is possible for me to know what you ate, but not to believe what you ate, is, in fact, an important clue to the discovery of a fundamental distinction in linguistic structure and in our conceptual framework.

We have seen that *that*-clauses (or their pronoun substitutes) are incompatible with certain contexts as a result of their being embedded in a more immediate context. Since the incompatibility works both ways, we have to assume that the immediate context imprints a mark on the clause, and this mark, subjective
or objective, then decides its further cooccurrence restrictions and its transformational behavior with respect to the wh-nominalization. Take the phrase believing what one knows. Since believe rejects wh-nominals, the what must be that which. That is a pronoun substituting for a that-clause governed by the objective verb know, which clause, accordingly, bears an objective mark. This, however, precludes the context believe. The phrase, therefore, is ungrammatical; one cannot possibly believe what one knows.

8. Thus far, surprisingly enough in a discussion of knowledge and belief, we have barely mentioned truth and falsity. What we have just said about subjective and objective P-nouns and other propositional containers makes it possible to fill this gap. If one asks what terms paradigmatically cooccur with true or false, the answer will be the sets of subjective P-nouns: statement, assertion, testimony, and the like on the one hand, and belief, assumption, suspicion, and the like on the other. Turning to objective P-nouns, we find that although the adjective true can be ascribed to them, the resulting compounds require a rather special interpretation. Compare, for instance, true statement and true result. The analysis of the former phrase is simple and straightforward: a true statement is a statement which is true. The phrase true result, however, suggests a different interpretation: a true result is not a result which is true; but something which is truly (“really”) the result of something or other. In this sense true (like real) contrasts not with false but with alleged. In the same way, the true facts of the case will be contrasted with the alleged facts, true causes with alleged causes, and so forth. In all these contexts true can be replaced by real without any loss of meaning. False, moreover, hardly applies at all; what would a false fact, false cause, or
false result be? Of course, we know from elsewhere that true in this adverbial sense is not the opposite of false: such phrases as true fish or true North do not have false fish or false North as opposites; nor, for that matter, do false teeth and false hair have true teeth and true hair for opposites. To argue, therefore, that since there are no false facts, false causes, or false results, all facts, causes, and results must be true, is to commit the same blunder as to conclude that since there are no false fish all fish must be true, or to insist that all hair must be false, since true hair does not exist. Insofar as true is opposed to false (i.e., is used in an adjectival sense), facts and causes, results and outcomes, are neither true nor false.

We have found, however, that it is exactly these things that are the immediate objects of knowledge. It follows, then, that what is known is not something that can be true or false. What I say or what I believe is true or false, not what I know.

"But surely"—you object—"what I know must be so, must be the case, or even must be the truth. Now do these phrases not mean the same thing as must be true?" No, they do not. Consider, once more, the verb state. We have shown that the two derivatives, his statement and what he stated are very different. The former belongs to the subjective domain: his statement may be true, but his statement cannot be a fact. What he stated, however, can be; people often state facts. And, I add now, what he stated may be so, may be the case, or may be the truth. His statement, on the other hand is never the case or the truth. For the same reason, whereas it is possible to ask somebody to tell the truth or tell what is the case, it is not possible to ask people to say the truth or say what is the case. Tell, as we recall, is an objective verb, say a subjective one.

The phrases is so, is the case, and is the truth are near synonyms for is a fact. The phrase is true, on the other hand, does
Res Cogitans

not belong to this set. The thing which is true is not a fact; it only fits the facts, corresponds to what is the case, and, perhaps, agrees with the truth. Consequently, what I believe or what I say may fit the facts, in which case it is true; or it may fail to fit the facts, in which case it is false. What I know, however, is the fact itself, not something that merely corresponds, or fails to correspond, to the facts.

"We make to ourselves pictures of facts." 8 We form, conceive, or adopt beliefs, opinions, and the like. And we issue such pictures for the benefit of others in making statements and suggestions, in giving testimonies, descriptions, and so forth. These are subjective things, human creations; they belong to people: we speak of Joe's beliefs or Jane's statements. Facts, results, and causes are objective: they do not belong to anybody. They are "there" to be found, located, or discovered.

A picture is affected by the imperfections of the painter. Accordingly, beliefs, statements, and other subjective things, even when true, bear the marks of human ignorance: they represent the facts from a certain point of view, in a given perspective. This, as we know from the previous chapter, is manifested in the referential opaqueness of such contexts. Even if it is true that Joe believes that A. S. Onassis married Jacqueline Kennedy, it may be false that he believes that Onassis married the widow of the thirty-fifth President of the U.S.A. Yet these two possible beliefs are true together, because they correspond to the same fact. Given this, we are faced with a serious difficulty. If the object of knowledge is not a subjective replica, but the objective fact itself, as we have claimed, then why is it that not only belief contexts, but also knowledge contexts are referentially opaque? For even if Joe knows that Onassis has mar-

8 Wittgenstein, Tractatus, 2.1.

114
ried Jacqueline Kennedy, it is possible that he does not know that Onassis married the widow of the thirty-fifth President of the U.S.A.

This is a very difficult problem, the solution of which requires the utmost care. Let us return to the picture analogy. Given two pictures of the same thing, say of a rose, my claim that I see this or that picture of the rose does not entail that I see the rose itself. I do, of course, see the rose "in the picture," but seeing something "in the picture" is not the same thing as seeing something *in rerum natura*. Therefore, seeing two pictures of the same thing does not entail seeing the same thing. Now consider seeing the rose itself from two points of view. Do I see the same thing? Yes and no. Yes, if I focus my attention on the object seen; no, if I focus my attention on the aspect (appearance) presented to me in the two glances.

I claim that the situation is similar with respect to belief versus knowledge. Two persons may hold different beliefs mirroring the same fact; they have, as it were, different pictures of it. If, however, two persons know the same fact, what they know, in one sense, will be the same thing, although what they know may appear to them in different perspectives. The person who knows that Onassis married Jacqueline Kennedy and the person who knows that Onassis married the widow of the late President, without either of them knowing that Jacqueline is that widow, know the same fact, namely *whom Onassis married*. A parallel move, as we recall, is impossible with believe. I cannot claim that two persons having beliefs that mirror the same fact, but which differ in the referential apparatus, have the same belief—for example, in our case, that they both believe *whom Onassis married*. The *wh*-nominal transcends referential opaqueness. It is not surprising, therefore, that its
application is restricted to objective contexts. The possibility of *wh*-nominalization marks the objective domain of the language.9

9. Now the intuitive pieces fall into a consistent pattern. The widely different ways in which we think of knowledge and belief, the difference in their conceptual setting, enhances the importance of the grammatical distinctions just established. I shall select a few salient points for brief discussion, but the list could be continued and the details worked out to the extent of one's patience and curiosity.

I begin with the well known difference in the form of the relevant questions: *Why do you believe* . . . ? and *How do you know* . . . ? Why demands reasons, but how asks about the key to an achievement. Forming a belief, like painting a picture, or imagining something, is a human act, which can be recommended or discouraged (*You ought to [or should not] believe it*), praised or censured ( . . . *reasonable or foolish belief*), and for which one can and should have reasons. One does not say, on the other hand, that one has reasons for what one knows. Knowing something is not the kind of thing a man can choose to do, believing something very often is. One may try to believe, but not to know. We may, of course, try to learn or find out things, and for doing or not doing these actions one might have reasons, and might incur praise or blame, not

9 The restriction imposed by the *wh*-nominal is so strong that I cannot say, under the penalty of ungrammaticality, things like, "I believe where the treasure is hidden," even if, semantically, this is exactly what I want to say (e.g.: I believe that the treasure is in the second cave; I want you to know that I have an idea where it is; I do not want to tell you yet—till you promise a share, etc.). What can I say? "I think (or believe) I know where it is. . . ." *Know* here is a grammatical dummy used to crack the protective shield of the *wh*-nominal.
directly for the resulting knowledge or ignorance. If belief is like forming an image in one's mind, knowledge is like seeing what there is in reality. As looking is a voluntary action, but seeing is not, so trying to find out something is subject to the will, but knowing is not. The relevant question, *How do you know . . . ?* asks for the secret of a success; more often than not for the source of the claimed enlightenment: how did you find out, "whence" do you know? ¹⁰

Then compare wanting to know with wanting to believe something or other. The first difference that meets the eye is the grammatical one: *X wants to know* is normally followed by an indirect question (*whether . . . , what . . . , who . . . ,* etc.); *X wants to believe*, however, normally requires the *that*-clause for an object. This second point is not surprising (we know that *believe* does not take *wh's*); the first one is. Whereas it is perfectly normal to say that I do, or do not, want to believe that Joe is guilty, it is slightly odd to say that I do, or do not, want to know that Joe is guilty. It looks as if in the case of belief one were considering a particular proposition with a view of adopting it or not; one tries to choose, "make up one's mind," and in doing so one is motivated not only by reasons, but also by preference, prejudice, or caprice.¹¹ Indeed, the attitude of *I do not want to believe . . .* is like a struggle against a compulsive image. The posture of *I do not want to know . . .*, on the other hand, reminds one of closing one's eyes: one refuses to see what is there, or what might be there. Think of the accompanying gestures and words: *Don't tell me!* Correspondingly, wanting to know is like looking around (*whether . . . , what . . . , who . . .*) to see what is there.

¹⁰ "Unde scis . . . ?" asked the Romans, and "Wovon wissen sie . . .?" ask the Germans.

¹¹ Etymologically, *believe* is related to *love, know to can.*
Wanting to know is the sign of curiosity, wanting to believe is often the sign of credulity, and these two have nothing to do with one another.

Again, contrast the unbelievable with the unknowable. The unbelievable is something utterly unlikely, unexpected, or outrageous. The unknowable need not be any of these things; something may be quite simple and ordinary and yet unknowable, because we have no access to it. There is nothing unbelievable about Caesar's having had a birthmark on the small of his back, yet it is unknowable to us. Think of the parallel contrast between what cannot be imagined (that defies the imagination) and what cannot be seen. Knowledge, once more, is access to what is given; belief is the holding of an image, more or less freely chosen.

This is the reason why people can share beliefs but not "knowledges." The immediate object of believing is a belief, a picture of reality, and many persons can have the "same" belief, the "same" picture. The immediate object of knowing, however, is not a "knowledge," a ("true") picture of reality, but reality itself.

X knows that \( p \) in most cases entails that X has learnt and has not forgotten that \( p \). Now, is it forgetting that terminates beliefs? That X no longer believes that \( p \) does not indicate that he has forgotten that \( p \). He might be aware of that proposition while disbelieving it; he just has changed his mind about it. Needless to say that no changing of one's mind turns knowledge into ignorance.

In view of all these arguments it is hard to see how the traditional account of knowledge in terms of belief could have enjoyed the favor of so many protagonists. This view, as far as
On What One Knows

I can see, has no explanatory value at all. What, then, is its attraction?

It must be of the same nature as the lure of the phenomenalistic analysis of perception. As the sense-datum theory is an attempt to satisfy the skeptic about sense-perception, so the belief-theory is an attempt to appease the skeptic about knowledge. The questions, *How do you know that you really see when you think you see . . . ?* and *How do you know that you really know when you think you know . . . ?* are analogous. And the attempted answers, starting from the subjective, from sense-data and from beliefs, are also analogous.

Unfortunately, epistemology is one thing and conceptual analysis is another. Moreover, if the epistemologist wants to know what he is talking about, he should try to get his concepts clear before and not after answering the skeptic. Then, perhaps, the answers will turn out to be better.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18} Concerning the matters mentioned in this last section, I greatly profited by some conversations with Professor Gilbert Ryle.