

1. The problem of the criterion

To know whether things really are as they seem to be, we must have *a procedure* for distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. But to know whether our procedure is a good procedure, we have to know whether it really *succeeds* in distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. And we cannot know whether it does really succeed unless we already know which appearances are *true* and which ones are *false*. And so we are caught in a circle. (Chisholm, section 2)

2. Methodists, particularists, and skeptics

A: What do we know? What is the extent of our knowledge?

B: How are we to decide whether we know? What are the criteria of knowledge?

Skepticism We can't answer either A or B; we don't know anything.

Particularism We have an answer to A, and we can use it to answer B.

Methodism We have an answer to B, and we can use it to answer A.

3. Methodism

Methodists include Descartes and empiricists like Locke and Hume, who thought that the correct method for forming beliefs is to rely on sensory experiences alone.

4. Particularism

G. E. Moore would raise his hand at this point and say: "I know very well this is a hand, and so do you. If you come across some philosophical

theory that implies that you and I cannot know that this is a hand, then so much the worse for the theory.” (Chisholm, section 9)

A valid skeptical argument doesn’t force us to reason “forwards” rather than “backwards”:

A		
B		
C	<i>versus</i>	not- D
Therefore, D		Therefore, either not- A , or not- B , or not- C

Also, sometimes we know an argument has a flaw even if we don’t know what it is:

$x = y$	(suppose)
$x^2 = xy$	(multiply both sides by x)
$x^2 - y^2 = xy - y^2$	(subtract y^2 from both sides)
$(x + y)(x - y) = y(x - y)$	(factor)
$x + y = y$	(cancel $x - y$)
$y + y = y$	(since $x = y$)
$2y = y$	
$2 = 1$	(cancel y)

5. Convincing versus resisting the skeptic

6. Chisholm’s criteria

Having these good apples before us, we can look them over and formulate certain criteria of goodness. Consider the senses, for example. One important criterion—one epistemological principle—was formulated by St. Augustine. It is more reasonable, he said, to trust the senses than to distrust them. Even though there have been illusions and hallucinations, the wise thing, when everything seems all right, is to accept the testimony of the senses. I say “when everything seems all right.” If on a particular occasion something about that particular occasion makes you suspect that particular report of the senses, if, say, you seem to remember having been drugged or hypnotized, or brainwashed, then perhaps you should have some doubts about what you think you see, or hear, or feel, or smell. But

if nothing about this particular occasion leads you to suspect what the senses report on this particular occasion, then the wise thing is to take such a report at its face value. In short the senses should be regarded as innocent until there is some positive reason, on some particular occasion, for thinking that they are guilty on that particular occasion.

One might say the same thing of memory. If, on any occasion, you think you remember that such-and-such an event occurred, then the wise thing is to assume that that particular event did occur—unless something special about this particular occasion leads you to suspect your memory. (Chisholm, section 10)

Chisholm's criterion Perception and memory are innocent until proven guilty. That is, you are justified in trusting your senses and memory unless in the particular circumstances there is some positive reason to doubt them.

7. Chisholm and skeptical hypotheses