

"Sort of," Linus said with some annoyance. "But I was just saying to Schroeder that it's unfair to require proof—empirical, or observation-based, proof. No religious system does that, and none can."

"I don't think that's true of Christianity," offered Schroeder, "I mean, if you count historical evidence and eyewitness testimony. Tell me again why you think 'real world' proof is out."

"Charlie could tell you pretty much the same thing on that as I could," began Linus, "although I don't think Charlie quite faces the existential dilemma that the answer poses for his own beliefs."

"Meaning what?" Schroeder prodded.

"Meaning that in terms of finding 'the truth' we face what might be called an 'internalist/externalist' dilemma. The *internalist* prong of the dilemma goes something like this. In any matter of reasoning to some mind-independent truth (whether there is such a thing as gravity, e.g.), each of us must begin from the vantage point of his or her own mind. Descartes is famous for his attempt to come to grips with that, but Kant—at least in general outline—is definitive. Maybe I can summarize it this way: the mind is not like, say, an intellectual Geiger Counter that operates automatically by the laws of physics to give us infallible percepts depending on which way we point our heads and bodies. A *pure* causal theory of knowledge acquisition would have to maintain something like this if it stayed consistent. Rather, the human mind is an *interpreter*. That's a bottom line fact. And the problem is that lots of things can mess up interpretation."

"Such as . . .," invited Schroeder.

"Such as any physical malfunction in the working of one's cognitive architecture. Such as any normative mistake involving logic or the weighting of evidence. Such as unfamiliarity with context. Such as cultural or religious conditioning. Such as observational carelessness. Such as environmentally poor conditions for making crucial observations. Such as . . ."

"Okay, point made. So you're saying that the internalist prong of the dilemma is that knowledge begins from the inside out and that no