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Hartmann's Rejection of the Notion of Evidence

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Introduction

Any one fascinated by the problem of evidence, does well to read Günther Patzig's formulation of the problem given in an article on Husserl (Patzig 1971).¹ Either evidence is accessible to consciousness, in which case the evidence of our judgement can give no guarantee for (absolute) truth; or evidence is a guarantee for (absolute) truth, but then it cannot be accessible to consciousness. Possibly Patzig's attention was drawn to the problem of evidence by his teacher at Göttingen, Nicolai Hartmann. Among those who criticized the concept of evidence during the first half of the twentieth century, Hartmann must be credited for having given a clear formulation of the problem of evidence. This paper attempts an evaluation of Hartmann's criticism of the concept of evidence. Any epistemological theory of evidence has to answer Hartmann's criticism on the notion of evidence. Hartmann's epistemology, and his criticism of the concept of evidence, will be dealt with in the first half of the paper. An outline of an epistemology that meets Hartmann's challenge, in terms of an evidence theory of truth, is presented in the second half of the paper.²

¹ 'Evidence' not in the sense of piece of evidence *for* something, but as a characteristic of certain judgements, evidence *of*.

² Göran Sundholm has drawn my attention to Hartmann's rejection of the notion of evidence, and suggested that it might be a suitable topic for the conference on Hartmann at Bolzano.

1. Hartmann's Rejection of the Notion of Evidence as Part of his Philosophy

a. Theories of evidence around 1900 to which Hartmann reacted

Educated at Marburg at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp as teachers, the Baltic German Nicolai Hartmann started as a Neo-Kantian. The Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism was critical towards the concept of evidence.³ A similar criticism is offered by the Göttingen school.⁴ Hartmann's rejection of the notion of evidence is probably a Neo-Kantian influence. Not all Neo-Kantians rejected the notion of evidence, though. Rickert, who was part of the Heidelberg school of Neo-Kantianism, defended a concept of evidence in his youth. For Rickert, evidence is a feeling of certainty that accompanies a judgement, and that presents the judgemental content with a timeless value.⁵ Although, for Rickert, evidence is primarily a feeling, he believes that it gives the judgement a character of non-psychological necessity. The notion of evidence as a feeling is most clearly present in Sigwart's *Logic* (1873), a well known example of a psychologistic logic at the end of the nineteenth century. Sigwart explains truth in terms of evidence, that for him means *a feeling of certainty*. Evidence is the consciousness that we cannot but think in the way we do, he says.

Rejecting the concept of evidence, Hartmann had to criticize not only philosophers that defend primarily the thesis that evidence is accessible to consciousness

³ Cf. Heffernan 1999, 119 and 173, n. 208. Natorp 1887 does not explicitly criticize the concept of evidence; the paper, however, contains the idea that knowledge has to be grounded objectively, and not subjectively (285), while criticizing psychologistic tendencies in Friesian Kantianism (262f).

⁴ A clear criticism is given by Nelson 1908, 124.

⁵ Rickert 1892, 201f.; cf. also Windelband 1884, 44f.

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(besides holding that evidence gives a guarantee for infallible truth), such as Sigwart and Rickert, but also philosophers that primarily defend the thesis that evidence is a guarantee for infallible truth (besides holding that evidence is accessible to consciousness), such as Brentano, in *Vom Ursprung sittlicher Erkenntnis* (1889), and Husserl, in the *Logische Untersuchungen*. For Brentano, evidence is absolute correctness, and has nothing to do with a feeling of compulsion. *Evidence* is part of the *definiens* of the concept truth.⁶ Hartmann refers mainly to Husserl, for whom evidence is experience of the truth. Both Brentano and Husserl hold that error is excluded in the case of an evident judgement. If my judgement is evident, no one else can judge the opposite with evidence. To consider logic as theory of evidence in the sense of a special feeling is the third of the psychologistic prejudices that Husserl mentions in the *Prolegomena* to the *Logical Investigations*.⁷

b. Metaphysics and epistemology

Soon Hartmann came to abandon his Neo-Kantian position, while staying critical towards the notion of evidence. In *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* (1921) Hartmann opposes Neo-Kantianism, and all other forms of idealistic system building. According to Hartmann, epistemology is not a fundamental discipline for philosophy. The problem of knowledge is a metaphysical problem, because the central epistemological question

⁶ Brentano 1889. Van der Schaar, *forthcoming*, deals with Brentano's concept of evidence in relation to Sigwart, Neo-Kantianism and Husserl.

⁷ In his enthusiasm for phenomenology as practiced by Pfänder, Scheler and Reinach, Hartmann was not at all critical of evidence at a certain time, cf. Hartmann 1914, 367. He was less enthusiastic about Husserl whom he accuses of a 'philosophy of immanence'. Probably he has Husserl's *Ideen* in mind. Cf. Spiegelberg 1978.

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concerns the grasping of the object (*Erfassen des Gegenstandes*, 15). Critical ontology is that part of metaphysics that is foundational to the problem of knowledge and to philosophy in general. In accordance with this order of disciplines, the first sentence of *Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* proclaims the thesis that knowing is not a creating or making of the object, but a grasping of something that exists before and independent of any act of knowing.

Hartmann's method of philosophy consists in *phenomenology* and *aporetics*, the study of impasses found in the description of the given; finally, a theory can be presented. The term 'phenomenology' is taken from Husserl, but is given a different meaning. *Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* starts with a phenomenology of knowledge: a description of the experienced facts of knowledge, which Hartmann holds to be neutral as regards the question of idealism and realism. We experience the object of knowledge as existing independently of its being known. According to Husserl, such an experience belongs to the natural attitude; but for Hartmann it is an object of phenomenological description. Another phenomenon is that we experience some of our judgements to be evident. After the phenomenology of knowledge (section c below), the aporetics of knowledge is given. Aporetics is the unraveling of philosophical problems given to us by experience. If these problems are metaphysical, such as the problem of knowledge (section d), they are unsolvable. The problem of the criterion will be dealt with in section e; a special case of it is the problem of evidence, dealt with in section f.

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c. Phenomenology of knowledge

According to Hartmann, knowledge is a relation (*Wesensverhältnis*) between subject and object, that are correlative terms. The object is the *Gegenstand* in so far as it is apprehended by a subject (43). The opposition between subject and object is unbridgeable: the object of knowledge transcends the subject. The object is the determining factor towards the subject, whether it concerns *a priori* knowledge of ideal objects or *a posteriori* knowledge of real objects in time and space.

A second concept of knowledge is that of knowledge-product (*Erkenntnisgebilde*, 56). Immanent to the subject is an image or representation (*Bild*) of the object. Its existence is dependent upon the subject (46). This representation or immanent object is 'objective' in so far as it has characteristics of the object. The knowledge-product is such a representation. This immanent object or content is identical with the intentional object (120), where knowledge aims at the real object (*ansichseiender Gegenstand*, 107). In contrast to Husserl, Hartmann says that the intentional object and real object are never the same. The intentional object exists by the grace (*von Gnaden*) of the act (of intention); the real object exists independently of the act (108). According to Hartmann's epistemology there is a doubling of objects: there is a realm of mental objects besides the realm of real objects.

A third concept of knowledge, besides knowledge as relation and knowledge as product, is knowledge as truth: it is knowledge as correspondence between product and object (56). Without such correspondence there is no true knowledge. The correspondence consists in the fact that the characteristics of the object are present in the image or product. It is the knowledge-product that primarily is called true; it is true in its

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relation to the object that is independent of the product. The knowledge-product may turn out to be untrue (408). Apparently, Hartmann uses here the term 'knowledge' in a sense, also present in Kant, in which knowledge may turn out to be false.⁸ Although truth is ontologically determined, it is basically an epistemological concept. The truth of a knowledge-product, a content existing in time and dependent upon a knowing subject, can be abstracted from the actual knowledge of this subject. As an ideal product, truth is beyond time and absolute (409).

At this level Hartmann is still describing the phenomenon of knowledge. Because of the way he describes the phenomenon, Hartmann is confronted with the question how the real object can determine the immanent object, for without such a determination there is no (true) knowledge. The way the question is put forward, presupposes the idea that the real object is independent of the immanent object, and the idea that the immanent object is a kind of picture. Such descriptions are not philosophically neutral. Knowledge is described as a going out, being outside and coming back (44). This description is on the phenomenological level, but it makes use of the not so innocent metaphor of inside and outside. Philosophical problems often arise because of the way our experience is described. Hartmann does not explain knowledge in terms of justification: any true representation of the object is knowledge. Apparently, for Hartmann, it is irrelevant to knowledge whether one is able to give an account; such an idea agrees with an extreme

⁸ Analytic philosophy is now so accustomed to the stricter concept of knowledge that implies absolute truth, that Hartmann is accused of unclearness on this point, cf. Stegmüller 1954, 111. Stegmüller gives an outstanding account of the problem of evidence, including a discussion of Hartmann's rejection of the notion of evidence.

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form of realism.⁹ Hartmann's realism also shows itself in the objective order of concepts, the *ratio essendi*, present in his work. The concept of object is prior to the concept of knowledge, because knowledge is explained in terms of the object, whichever of the explanations of knowledge we take. The concept of *Gegenstand* is even more fundamental than the concept of object, because the *Gegenstand* transcends any possible grasping of an object. For Hartmann, the object of knowledge is merely an aspect of the *Gegenstand*. This order of concepts is different from the *ratio cognoscendi*, the order of concepts for us as knowing beings; for us, in the order of knowing, the notion *Gegenstand* is posterior to the notion object (of knowledge).

d. The problem of knowledge

The description of the phenomenon of knowledge is a preliminary study for aporetics, especially that of the problem of knowledge. The latter starts with the opposition of subject and object (59). How can there be a relation between the two, where both spheres are transcendent to each other? The problem can be formulated from the point of view of the subject, which gives the antinomy of consciousness (60). Its thesis is: consciousness, in order to be *knowing* consciousness, has to apprehend something outside itself. The antithesis is: consciousness, in so far as it is knowing *consciousness*, cannot apprehend anything outside itself; it apprehends nothing but its own contents. Because *a priori*

⁹ "Erkenntnis kann offenbar wahr sein ... überall ... wo sie 'zufällig' das Richtige trifft." [tr.: Knowledge can be true wherever it hits accidentally upon what is correct.] (65). This idea is also present in Bolzano 1837, §36, where a correct judgement, that is, a piece of knowledge (an *Erkenntnis*), is explained as a judgement that contains a true proposition.

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knowledge concerns ideal objects which are as independent of consciousness as real objects, the antinomy also concerns this type of knowledge.

The central question of the problem of knowledge is the problem of being, which is a metaphysical question (101): ‘What is the *Ding an sich*?’ (72). The problem of knowledge, with its consciousness of inadequacy (439), gives us a consciousness of the beyondness of the *Gegenstand*; something goes beyond actual knowledge and knowability. The aspect of the *Gegenstand* that is not an object for a possible subject is the *Ding an sich*, according to Hartmann. It is the unlimited totality behind all objects of knowledge. For us, in the *ratio cognoscendi*, the concept of the *Ding an sich* is a negative, epistemological concept (*Grenzbegriff*). As such, in the *ratio essendi*, it is the primary, ontological concept, the all bearing foundation (73).

e. The problem of the criterion

The problem of the criterion for truth has a thesis and an antithesis, comparable to that of the antinomy of consciousness. The thesis is: The criterion has to be a presentation (*Vorstellung*); it has to lie within consciousness in order to be point of comparison for the subject. For the subject can compare his object-image, the representation, only with something belonging to its own sphere. The antithesis is: In order to be a criterion for truth (as correspondence with an object outside consciousness), the criterion has to lie outside consciousness (66). According to the demand of the antithesis, the criterion cannot be a criterion *for a subject*. According to the thesis, the criterion cannot be a criterion for *transcendent* truth. Hartmann’s answer to this problem is that it is not

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possible to give an absolute criterion for truth.¹⁰ Knowledge is fallible; there is always the possibility of error (415). According to Hartmann, it is possible, though, to give a *relative* criterion for truth in the sense that we can compare contents of different fields, of which it is already guaranteed that they are related to the *Gegenstand* (416f). How we get such a guarantee is as problematic as the problem of knowledge, though. The two fields to be compared are that of *a priori* knowledge and that of *a posteriori* knowledge (423), in the case of empirical knowledge, and two different parts of *a priori* knowledge, in the case of knowledge of ideal objects (see the end of section f below).

f. The problem of evidence

The problem of evidence questions the role of evidence as a criterion for truth. It is a variant of the problem of the criterion. According to Hartmann, evidence cannot function as a criterion for truth. The term ‘evidence’ is ambiguous, he says. It may either mean *objective evidence*: evidence as a guarantee for the truth of a judgement, the absolute ideal of certainty.¹¹ Objective evidence contains no error (489). The term ‘evident’ may also mean *subjective evidence*: evidence that is nothing but the conviction of the knowing subject that his judgement is certain, without the guarantee for truth. Subjective evidence is a mere phenomenon of consciousness, that may accompany both real insight and apparent insight (487). According to Hartmann, objective evidence is never as such presented to consciousness, which means that it cannot function as a criterion. In fact, we

¹⁰ Cf. Kant’s *Logik*, A 72.

¹¹ “ ‘Objektive Evidenz’ ist ein Gewissheitsbewusstsein, welches wirklich die zureichende Gewähr für das Wahrsein einer Einsicht leistet. Sie ist das absolute, notwendige Gewissheitsideal aller Erkenntnis.” (486). [tr.: ‘Objective evidence’ is a consciousness of certainty, that really gives the sufficient guarantee for the truth of an insight. It is the absolute, necessary ideal of certainty of all knowledge.]

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need a criterion to determine whether we have objective evidence. Subjective evidence is easy to determine; it is the phenomenon of conviction itself. Conviction, being merely a state of consciousness, cannot function as a criterion for truth. Therefore, subjective evidence cannot function as a criterion for truth, either.

The idea that evidence may function as a criterion for truth, is especially tempting in the case of judgements about ideal objects (488). It is thought that the ideal structures are nothing but structures of intentional objects, *Erkenntnisgebilde*; the realm of ideal objects is thought to be nothing but the realm of intentional objects, that are internal to consciousness. According to Hartmann, such a view subjectifies the realm of ideal objects, where, in fact, ideal objects are as transcendent to consciousness as real objects. Knowledge of ideal objects is as liable to error of evidence (*Evidenztäuschung*) as knowledge of real objects. Possibility of error is not only present in our logical and mathematical axioms, but also in insight into essences (*phenomenologische Wesensschau*, 490). Hartmann accuses the phenomenologist of believing that this insight into essences is infallible, that it is objectively evident (498). Hartmann's position concerning knowledge of ideal objects is that a relative criterion may become a criterion for objective evidence. This relative criterion consists in a coming together of insight into single essences and insight into coherent complexes (523).

2. Defense of a Phenomenological Notion of Evidence¹²

a. The order of concepts reversed

Given the objective order of concepts in Hartmann's philosophy, where *object* is a notion in terms of which knowledge is explained, the question rises how the object is able to determine the mental act such that it is an act of knowing. Given, further, that Hartmann holds that consciousness can merely apprehend its own contents, he is at once confronted with the problem of knowledge. Is there a coherent solution to the problem of knowledge, if the order of concepts, the *ratio essendi*, is reversed? One can take *act of knowing* as the primary concept, while the notion of object is explained in terms of the act. Whereas Hartmann's order of concepts implies an epistemological realism, the order of concepts proposed implies an epistemological idealism: the object of knowledge is dependent upon the act of knowing; it is created by the act of knowing. Below I will show that such a philosophy is not only able to answer the problem of knowledge (section b), but also that it has a coherent answer to the problem of the criterion and the problem of evidence (section c): evidence may function as a criterion for truth. One has to pay a price, though. One has to face the problem of error (section d): If objects are created, how is error possible?

¹² The theory presented here is inspired by the work of the mathematical constructivist Per Martin-Löf; cf. Martin-Löf 1985 and Martin-Löf 1987.

I thank Göran Sundholm for giving an entrance into Martin-Löf's writings, and for many valuable discussions on related topics. This part of the paper can be seen as a preliminary, short version of a joint paper.

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b. Knowledge as evident judgement

Knowledge, in the sense of a piece of knowledge (an *Erkenntnis*), is the product of an act of knowing. *Knowledge* in this sense is explained here as *evident judgement*. This explanation of knowledge is a variant of the explanation of knowledge as justified true belief. *Being evident* and *being justified* are not meant to be different concepts. It is merely their associations that are different, because the term ‘evident’ in the expression ‘evident judgement’ suggests intuitive knowledge, direct insight or perception, whereas the term ‘justified’ suggests discursive knowledge. The term ‘judgement’ is preferable to ‘belief’, because ‘belief’ contains two concepts: *acceptance with the aim of truth* and *being convinced*. The customary readings of ‘knowledge as justified true belief’ take truth in an absolute, transcendent sense. The common notion of knowledge is thus a transcendent notion. It is preferable to have a non-transcendent concept of knowledge, a concept of knowledge on a human scale. Such a concept can be obtained by using an epistemic notion of truth in the explanation of knowledge. *Truth* is explained in terms of *evidence*. A judgement is true, if it can be made evident.¹³ The notion of truth is present in the explanation of knowledge as evident judgement, because *evidence* implies *truth*. *Evident* and *true* are related as *actual evidence* and *possible evidence*, where *actual evidence* is a concept primary in relation to *possible evidence*. Truth, in so far as it plays a role in the explanation of knowledge, is truth as a characteristic of judgement.¹⁴

¹³ An explanation of truth in terms of evidence is given by Brentano around 1915, cf. Brentano 1930, 135 and 139. Hartmann’s criticism applies to Brentano’s position, because for Brentano evidence is both a guarantee for absolute truth, and accessible to consciousness, cf. Van der Schaar, *forthcoming*.

¹⁴ *Judgement* is here taken in the sense of judgement-product, the result of an act of judging. Besides the epistemic role of truth, a non-epistemic role of truth is needed, in order to prevent relativism; more on this

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A judgement is made evident by an act of judgement, which is called an *act of proof* or *demonstration* in mathematical constructivism.¹⁵ Such an act of proof is either an immediate act of judging or a mediate one. The mediate act of judging is a discursive act; it draws a conclusion from known premises. Ultimately, there must be premises that are not conclusions of other acts. These premises are the result of an immediate act of judging, that is an intuitive act of insight or of direct perception. An act is always an act of someone. Because a judgement is made evident by an act, a judgement, similarly, is evident *to someone*. The concept of knowledge explained in terms of evidence is a first-person concept.

How does the concept of evidence presented above relate to Hartmann's concept of evidence? The term certainty (*Gewissheit*) plays a central role in Hartmann's formulation of the problem of evidence: objective evidence is consciousness of certainty; subjective evidence is merely the conviction that such a consciousness is present.

Although the concept of evidence as presented in this half of the paper is a primitive notion, we may elucidate what an evident judgement is by using the concept of certainty. The term 'certain' in the expression 'certain judgement' contains three different concepts. As a literal translation of the French *certain* or the Latin *certus*, the term 'certain' means *decided* or *determined* (One of the examples in the *OED* is: "We ... have no certaine dwelling place"). The concept *certus* was strengthened at the time there was a need for the concept of infallible knowledge, and thus of infallible or *absolute certainty*.

in section d, 'on the problem of error'. On different roles of truth, including truth of a proposition, cf. Sundholm, *forthcoming*.

¹⁵ Cf. Martin-Löf 1987.

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Secondly, we say that a judgement is certain, if the judgement is sure (Latin: *securus*), that is, if I am convinced; this is *subjective certainty*. Thirdly, my judgement is certain (German: *gewiss*; Latin: *exploratus*; in the English language there is no special term for this concept), if I have grounds for it (or if it is self-grounding). This concept of certainty we may call *objective certainty*, because the grounds are thought to be grounds for any judging person.

Hartmann's concept of objective evidence is a combination of objective certainty (*Gewissheit*) and absolute certainty; his concept of subjective evidence is the same as that of subjective certainty.

Absolute certainty is excluded from the epistemology presented here. The concept of knowledge explained is less strict than that of transcendent knowledge: knowledge is fallible. Objective certainty is considered to be the most relevant concept of certainty. The act of proof confers (objective) certainty upon my judgement by grounding it. If the act is immediate, the judgement is self-grounding¹⁶, in the sense that no other judgements are needed to make it evident; everything needed is contained in the judgment itself. Thereupon my judgement is subjectively certain, because my judgement's being grounded brings conviction to me. If my judgement is both objectively and subjectively certain, it is evident to me; that is, I have knowledge.¹⁷

¹⁶ I prefer to avoid the term 'self-evident' here, since it suggests *obviousness*.

¹⁷ Cf. Kant's *Logik*, Ch. IX, where knowledge (*Wissen*) is explained as judging from grounds that are subjectively and objectively sufficient. Grounds that are subjectively sufficient lead to conviction (*Glaube*), in which case I am willing to make a bet. If my judgement is also objectively sufficient (*gewiss*), I should be willing to take an oath.

c. An answer to the problem of the criterion and the problem of evidence

What is the answer to Hartmann's problem of the criterion? Hartmann is correct in saying that we cannot have a criterion for absolute truth or absolute knowledge. Because knowledge as it is explained here is not a transcendent notion it is possible to give a criterion for judgemental truth or knowledge. Evidence is not a criterion for absolute truth, but for judgemental truth. It is somewhat artificial to say that evidence is a criterion for truth, because truth is defined in terms of evidence. We may also ask for a criterion on the level of the act of proof, because a judgement is made evident, and thus, true, by a proof-act. How do I know that my proof-act is a valid proof-act? It is a valid act of proof, if it is clear (fully present) and distinct (from other proof-acts).¹⁸ Again, a valid proof-act is not a transcendent, unattainable ideal. The evident judgement is precisely fallible in so far as the act that makes it evident is fallible (see next section).

What is the answer to the problem of evidence? Evidence is accessible to consciousness, and a criterion for knowledge and judgemental truth at the same time. This is possible because *knowledge* and *judgemental truth* are construed as being not transcendent to consciousness. If I have grounds for my judgement, that is, if I am objectively certain, and if I am thereby convinced, my judgement is evident, so that I have knowledge. This is all that is needed for knowledge. As here explained evidence is no guarantee for *absolute* truth. But, evidence is not a mere feeling; being convinced is not enough for evidence. Evidence is a rational property of judgement: the grounds for judgement are supposed to be grounds for any judge. This concept of evidence and

¹⁸ Cf. Descartes 1644, 22. The proof-act that Descartes discusses is the act of perception.

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knowledge may be called a *phenomenological concept*, because it excludes transcendent notions in its explanation, and appeals directly to the notion of (mental) act.

d. The problem of error

The final question remains: How is error possible? For Hartmann, this question is easily dealt with. If the object of my judgement is an intentional object that does not correspond to a real object, whereas I have subjective evidence that it does correspond, there is error. Either one is confronted with the problem of knowledge, namely if one presupposes that subject and object are independent of each other. Or, one is confronted with the problem of error, if one holds that there is not such an independence. If one holds that the mind has an openness towards Reality, or, that the world of objects and states of affairs is created by the mind, one has to answer the question: How is error possible?

We are never directly aware of our error, for such an experience would immediately nullify the error. The experience of error is a subsequent experience. I may once have judged with what I then thought was evidence, that is, I have judged upon what I took to be a ground. I come to doubt my judgement, because, for example, I am confronted with someone else's judgement that contradicts mine; accordingly, one of us makes a mistake. After reconsidering the ground of my judgement, I may come to doubt that it is a ground for that judgement, in which case I withdraw my judgement. My judgement is no longer evident (to me), and I will have to withdraw my claim to knowledge. The fact that I consider one of the judgements that contradict each other to be a mistake presupposes a distinction between real knowledge and apparent knowledge, between real evidence and apparent evidence. The fact that such a distinction makes

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sense, indicates that there is a role of truth besides that of judgemental truth. This further role of truth is that of a transcendent norm: it is truth as Reality; truth not opposed to falsity, but opposed to *appearance*. Reality is to be distinguished from the non-transcendent world of objects and states of affairs created by our acts of knowing. Truth as Reality is precisely what makes the distinction between real evidence and apparent evidence possible. The distinction between real evidence and apparent evidence is dependent upon the distinction between real ground and apparent ground, that is, upon the distinction between a real proof-act and an invalid proof-act. The point is not that the real proof-act is unattainable – unless we live in truth for the most part, mankind would, since long, be extinct: we cannot determine whether we have such an act. The use for a transcendent notion of truth is limited; we are unable to determine whether our proof-act is *really* valid. There is no criterion for absolute truth. In a negative sense, pragmatic criteria and criteria of coherence try to capture something of this transcendent notion of truth.¹⁹ If my judgement is contradicted by the rest of the system of knowledge, I withdraw it, because of a coherence criterion. If part of my system of knowledge does not work, I might withdraw this part, using pragmatic criteria. But again, whether these improvements are real improvements cannot be determined.

Conclusion

Every epistemological theory of evidence has to take Hartmann's criticism of the notion of evidence into account. It is not necessary to reject the notion of evidence, though, as Hartmann proposes. Hartmann's epistemology is *not* philosophically neutral. By

¹⁹ Cf. Sundholm, *forthcoming*.

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reversing Hartmann's order of concepts, sense can be made of a less strict notion of knowledge and evidence. Evidence can thus be taken as a criterion for knowledge and (epistemic) truth. The notion of evidence defended in the second part of my paper differs considerably from Hartmann's notion of objective evidence, which has to guarantee absolute truth. The problem of evidence is answered by rejecting half of it: evidence does not guarantee *absolute* truth. Evidence that functions as a criterion for knowledge is evidence for me. This concept of knowledge is thus both a phenomenological and a personal concept of knowledge. In order to resolve the problem of error, that is, to prevent relativism, a transcendent, non-epistemic, notion of truth is required. Although such a notion of truth in one's philosophy implies a form of realism, namely, a non-epistemological realism, it is different from Hartmann's realism. For Hartmann, the *Ding an sich* is the all-founding notion. The all-founding notion of the philosophy presented above is that of *act of judgement*, or *proof-act*, and the notion of *rightness* is *sui generis*. Hartmann obtains the rightness-notion for acts from the ontological notion of *Ding an sich*. His philosophy and the philosophy explained here could not be farther apart.

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