

XENOPHANES' EPISTEMOLOGY: EMPIRICIST, GLOBAL SKEPTIC, OR BOTH?

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In this paper, I consider two interpretations of Xenophanes' epistemology – that he is an empiricist and that he is a global skeptic. I argue that two these interpretations are not mutually exclusive, and that Xenophanes should, in fact, be thought of as both an empiricist and a global skeptic.

Key words: Xenophanes, empiricism, skepticism, epistemology, knowledge.

1. Introduction

A proper understanding of Xenophanes' epistemology is crucial for a complete consideration of his overall philosophy. It is only by understanding when, if, and how we acquire true knowledge that we are able to make sense of the various threads of his argumentation.

In this paper, I will consider two interpretations of Xenophanes' epistemology. In Section 2, I will consider an interpretation that claims that Xenophanes is an empiricist. I construe the term 'empiricist' broadly as referring to anyone who thinks that the correct way to acquire knowledge is through sensory experience.¹ In Section 3, I will consider an interpretation that claims that Xenophanes is a global skeptic. By 'global skeptic' I mean one who rejects the possibility of any knowledge. While considering these two interpretations, I will give the implicit reasons why those who give each interpretation seem to believe that Xenophanes' being an empiricist precludes his being a skeptic and vice versa. In Section 4, I will argue that these two positions are actually consistent and that the proper interpretation of Xenophanes' epistemology is that he is both an empiricist and a global skeptic. In Sections 5 and 6, I will consider and respond to an important challenge from Shaul Tor that would undermine my conciliatory position. Finally, in Section 7, I will explain how understanding Xenophanes as both an empiricist and a global skeptic is consistent with a reasonable reading of Xenophanes' notoriously obscure fragment B18.

¹ So, empiricists (on my usage) can disagree concerning whether the knowledge acquisition process can ever actually be completed.

2. *Xenophanes the empiricist*

Hermann Fränkel argues that Xenophanes is an empiricist. While Fränkel does not offer an exact explanation of what he means by empiricism in this context, he argues that Xenophanes ‘confidently bases himself on experience, believing that it alone is reliable’.² As evidence, Fränkel points to Xenophanes’ cosmological explanations offered on the basis of observed evidence. There are many examples of Xenophanes reasoning in this way, but one extended instance will suffice. Consider an excerpt from the testimonium from Hippolytus found in A33:³

Xenophanes believes that the earth is becoming mixed with the sea and that it will eventually be dissolved by the moist. He adduces the following evidence: shells are found inland and in the mountains; in the quarries at Syracuse the impression of a fish and seaweeds has been found; on Paros the impression of a bay-leaf has been found buried in stone; and on Malta there are slabs of rock made up of all kinds of sea-creatures. He says that these came about a long time ago, when everything was covered with mud, and that the impression became dried in the mud.

In this testimonium, it is clear that Xenophanes reasoned from sensory experience. That is, he formed his conclusions on the basis of that which could be observed.⁴ In favor of the claim that the earth is becoming intermixed with the sea, he points to the inland discovery of objects (or evidence of objects) traditionally found in/by the sea (like shells, fish, seaweeds, etc.) Fränkel refers to this explanation (as well as similar naturalistic explanations found in A32, A40, A46, and elsewhere) as evidence of Xenophanes’ ‘blunt empiricism,’ wherein ‘[a]ll things and appearances are explained in terms of everyday experience.’⁵ Fränkel goes on to argue that ‘Xenophanes characterizes as certain and exhaustive only that knowledge that is

² Fränkel 1974:127. This understanding coheres well with my understanding of empiricism as referring to the belief that the correct way to acquire knowledge is through sensory experience. My disagreement with Fränkel is about whether Xenophanes thought we could actually reach the ultimate goal of knowledge.

³ In this paper, I will use the standard Diels/Kranz lettering/numbering system (wherein A indicates that the passage is a testimonium and B indicates that the passage is a fragment). I will use translations of the testimonia/fragments from Waterfield 2009.

⁴ In fact, Xenophanes’ reasoning here seems to follow our modern understanding of inference to the best explanation quite well. See Robin Attfield 2014:125 and Michael Papazian 2016:61 for arguments to this effect.

⁵ Fränkel 1974:120.

empirically grounded.⁶ According to Fränkel, Xenophanes is not a global skeptic. Rather, Xenophanes is skeptical only of knowledge of divine matters.⁷ When it comes to everyday, mundane matters, however, one can have certain knowledge.⁸ And this certain knowledge is acquired through experience.

Edward Hussey also understands Xenophanes as an empiricist. On the basis of Xenophanes' naturalistic explanations of the world, Hussey codified four guiding principles for Xenophanes' cosmological reasoning. These principles go as follows:

- (1) First, that it should always start from individual phenomena, and take the divisions between them to be what they appear to be. Some effort must be made to gather the phenomena [...]
- (2) Second, that everything observed or gathered from informants should be explained.
- (3) Third, that explanations should never postulate the existence of anything not directly observed to exist [...]
- (4) Fourth, that when unobserved states or behaviour are postulated for things, these should be as similar as possible to their observed states and behaviour.⁹

It is possible that Xenophanes did not consistently adhere to such rigorous principles when he reasoned about the world. However, if even some of these guiding principles from Hussey are approximations of Xenophanes' beliefs concerning how he should reason about the world, then it is clear that he is an empiricist in at least some regard if only because he believes that we should reason from sensory experiences and from observations of the world.

However, we should be a bit hesitant to posit a robust empiricism on Xenophanes that asserts that we can actually attain knowledge through empirical means, given the presence of fragment B35, which reads as follows:

Let these things be believed as approximations to the truth.

⁶ Fränkel 1974:130.

⁷ Fränkel acknowledges this specific skepticism of divine matters, while restricting the scope of B34's controversial 'and all the matters of which I speak.' I will take up this fragment both in Section 3 in my discussion of Xenophanes' global skepticism and in Section 5 and 6 when I respond to Tor's challenge against Xenophanes being a global skeptic.

⁸ The phrase 'certain knowledge' here (and throughout the rest of this paper) does not imply that there is also the possibility of uncertain knowledge for Xenophanes. Instead, I use this phrase to underscore the extremely high level of justification that I argue that Xenophanes believed is necessary for knowledge.

⁹ Hussey 1990:26.

As with every fragment from Xenophanes, there is some mystery concerning the context in which any individual claim should be placed. But it is possible that Xenophanes is offering B35 as a general claim concerning all of his assertions. I suggest that he is asserting something along the lines of ‘P, but I do not know that P’. He may be claiming that the evidence we acquire through experience should lead us to believe specific claims concerning the world, but we cannot have certain knowledge of those claims. This interpretation would be quite weak if it were not supported by other fragments/testimonia. However, I will show in Section 3 that passages that demonstrate Xenophanes’ global skepticism support this interpretation of B35.

Hussey argues that B35 indicates that Xenophanes believes that ‘there are more or less useful or reliable opinions.’¹⁰ That is, claims that approximate the truth (or perhaps merely get closer) are better than those that do not approximate the truth. This interpretation of B35 is consistent with global skepticism. There can be better and worse beliefs, even if there is no knowledge. I will address how we can reasonably understand Xenophanes on this issue in Section 7, when I attempt to make sense of fragment B18.

3. *Xenophanes the global skeptic*

James Lesher argues that Xenophanes is a global skeptic who rejected the possibility of certain knowledge. Lesher focuses on B34, which reads as follows:

Indeed, there never has been nor will there ever be a man
Who knows the truth about the gods and all the matters of which I speak.
For even if one should happen to speak what is the case especially well,
Still he himself would not know it. But belief occurs in all matters.

Lesher argues that Fränkel illegitimately restricts the scope of the phrase ‘and all the matters of which I speak.’ Fränkel argues that this phrase refers simply back to the divine matters referred to when Xenophanes speaks of ‘the truth about the gods.’ But Lesher notes that line 4 makes a more general claim in that Xenophanes asserts that ‘belief occurs in *all* matters’ (my emphasis). So, Lesher argues that ‘[i]f Xenophanes meant to deny only knowledge of the supersensible, one would expect him to claim that belief is allotted to *these* things (and not *all* things), and if he did think that men could gain reliable knowledge in some manner, one would not expect him to conclude’ that belief occurs in all matters (original emphasis). In other words, the natural reading of line 2 as referring to everything about which

¹⁰ Hussey 1990:25.

Xenophanes speaks (i.e. every topic of potential knowledge) is supported by the clear meaning of line 4. Since line 4 clearly refers to all beliefs, we should treat line 2 as also referring to all beliefs. So, it is incorrect to restrict line 2 to a subset of beliefs.

Furthermore, Leshner rejects an understanding of Xenophanes as an empiricist. Leshner's motivations for accepting Xenophanes as a global skeptic and rejecting the idea of his being an empiricist seem to derive from the same source. Specifically, Leshner argued that for Xenophanes 'mankind has no certain knowledge unless the gods impart it to us, or some men succeed in attaining the status of the gods. But the gods do not come among us, and they do not speak to us either in their own voices or through signs and oracles.'¹¹ In other words, Leshner argues that since knowledge is the province of the gods and the gap between the gods and mortals is unbridgeable, mortals cannot have certain knowledge. So, knowledge is in principle impossible for mortals.

Leshner's support for the above argument is a bit flimsy. He does not make clear from which passage of Xenophanes he derives the belief that knowledge is only the province of the gods. It seems as if Leshner is arguing that since Xenophanes rejected divination (see B14, B23, A17, and especially A52) he was rejecting any ability to acquire knowledge. That is, if we cannot get knowledge from the gods, then we cannot get any knowledge at all. But this conclusion does not follow from Xenophanes' rejection of divination. Rather, Xenophanes could have rejected divination without rejecting knowledge wholesale. He could have still allowed for knowledge from non-divine sources. In other words, Xenophanes' rejection of divination is consistent with Fränkel's understanding of Xenophanes as an empiricist. Xenophanes could have rejected knowledge derived from supernatural sources, while still accepting knowledge from natural sources.

But then what are we to make of B34? I agree with Leshner that B34 supports a global skepticism. However, I believe that it points to a different sort of global skepticism than the version offered by Leshner. There are two senses of global skepticism that one might offer here – that knowledge is *in principle* impossible or that knowledge is *in practice* impossible. Whereas Leshner argues that Xenophanes asserts that our acquiring knowledge is impossible *in principle*, I will argue that Xenophanes asserts that our acquiring knowledge is impossible *in practice*. Specifically, while it would be in principle or theoretically possible for us to be in circumstances whereby we could acquire knowledge, it is, practically speaking, impossible for us to actually be in those circumstances.¹²

¹¹ Leshner 1978:16.

¹² An anonymous reviewer raises the interesting issue of what this interpretation means for divine knowledge. While I do not have a firm answer to this question, I think that the

To clarify, the idea that I am offering here is that, for Xenophanes, knowledge is in principle possible, because we could lay out the necessary conditions that we would need to achieve knowledge. But we could never actually satisfy those conditions for reasons presented in the following section.

4. *Xenophanes the empiricist and global skeptic*

We can understand Xenophanes as both an empiricist and a global skeptic by noting that Xenophanes seemed to assert some sort of circumstantial or relativistic understanding of how we form beliefs. Catherine Osborne references fragment B38 in this regard. This fragment reads as follows:

If the god had not made yellow honey, they would have said
That figs were much sweeter.

Osborne interprets Xenophanes as saying, '[W]e would not be well placed to judge the sweetness of figs on an accurate scale, if we had no experience of the greater sweetness of honey. We would overestimate figs, taking them to be the sweetest thing there is.'¹³ In other words, we can only judge the sweetness of things comparatively. But, as Osborne also notes, we are restricted merely to those things that we have experienced. Having not yet tasted cane sugar, we cannot properly understand the sweetness of honey.¹⁴ So, when we make our comparisons between objects, we are stuck with incomplete information. We could only acquire certain knowledge concerning the sweetness of figs, honey, etc. if we had experienced the taste of every object with any level of sweetness. While it is in principle possible to have all possible experiences, actually experiencing all that there is to experience is impossible for mere mortals. So, we can never acquire certain knowledge on this matter.

interpretation of Xenophanes that I offer in this paper is consistent with the gods being able to attain knowledge. I think that my interpretation is also consistent with that knowledge being attained either empirically or non-empirically. The anonymous reviewer helpfully points to B24 as providing some evidence of the gods attaining knowledge empirically, as their experience may be comprehensive.

¹³ Osborne 2004:68.

¹⁴ Henri van Nispen (2018:395) understands this fragment as Xenophanes saying that sweetness is a secondary quality – one that is not inherent to the objects themselves. This interpretation does not adequately account for Xenophanes's focus on a relative comparison between two different sweet substances. If Xenophanes wanted to make a point about sweetness not being inherent to an object, he did not need to draw a comparison between two different sweet substances.

Jonathan Barnes makes a similar point in relation to our inability to understand divine matters. Barnes points to B14, B15, and B16 as evidence that our beliefs 'are explicable [only] in terms of our circumstances; they do not, therefore, amount to knowledge.'¹⁵ These fragments indicate that we draw the gods in our own images. Humans draw the gods as humans, but cows (if they could draw the gods) would draw the gods as cows, horses as horses, lions as lions, and so on. Furthermore, different humans draw the gods in different ways. The Ethiopians make the gods appear to be Ethiopian and the Thracians make the gods appear to be Thracian. This difference in how humans draw the gods differently is important, as it makes clear that the circumstances in which we find ourselves can differ even from person to person. If the sweetest thing that you had experienced was honey, but I had experienced the much sweeter cane sugar, we would come to different beliefs concerning the sweetness of honey. And since neither of us has had every possibly relevant experience, neither of us has knowledge.

Aryeh Finkelberg reaches a similar conclusion as those reached by Osborne and Barnes. Finkelberg claims that Xenophanes' position is that the empirical data that we acquire is not itself faulty. Rather, when we attempt to interpret/combine that data, we are unable to verify the data in any way. This interpretation coheres well with the interpretations offered by Osborne and Barnes. Our inability to verify our empirical data (and so our inability to interpret/combine that data properly) could be explained in terms of our not having experienced everything to which our data should be compared.¹⁶

We could blend these interpretations of Xenophanes' epistemological claims concerning our inability to acquire certain knowledge from experience into the following formalized argument:

1. Experiences can be understood only in comparison to other experiences.
2. In order for us to derive certain knowledge from some experience, we must have experienced every other relevant experience.
3. But it is actually impossible to have experienced every other relevant experience.
4. So, we cannot derive certain knowledge from experience.

The conclusion in 4, taken along with Xenophanes' empiricism, implies that we cannot have any certain knowledge.

¹⁵ Barnes 1979:111. I added the word 'only' as a friendly amendment to Barnes' brief argument, as without this addition Barnes' conclusion does not follow from his premise.

¹⁶ See Finkelberg 1990:133–134.

There is another plausible interpretation of Xenophanes' motivation for his global skepticism. Specifically, one might reasonably claim that Xenophanes' global skepticism derives from our inability to be justified in believing that we have had the relevant experiences needed for our belief to count as certain knowledge. One who offers this interpretation would understand Xenophanes in B34 as claiming that even if one believes a true claim, they are in no position to know that claim, as they have no reason to think that they have had all of the relevant experiences.

So, in the formalized argument above, relevance is important in that we must have every relevant experience in order to acquire certain knowledge. And on the alternate interpretation offered immediately above, relevance is important in that we never have good reason to believe that we have exhausted all relevant experiences.

Which of these two interpretations of Xenophanes' motivation for his global skepticism should we adopt? I am unsure. However, both interpretations are consistent with Xenophanes' being both an empiricist and a global skeptic. So, I do not need to settle this interpretive issue. Instead, I will leave it as an open question.

Still, one might wonder what sense it makes to say that Xenophanes is an empiricist if he believes that we cannot acquire certain knowledge from our experiences? My suggestion is that Xenophanes could remain committed to empirical investigation as the proper way to investigate the world around us, even if we can never actually fully complete that investigation. He could also maintain that empirical investigation allows us to move closer to certain knowledge, even if we can never actually acquire it. I will consider these points in more detail in Section 7.

5. *A challenge from Tor*

Shaul Tor offers a noteworthy challenge to my understanding of Xenophanes as both an empiricist and a global skeptic. Tor astutely notes that B38 begins by claiming that god had made yellow honey. According to Tor, 'Xenophanes' point is that if god had not enabled us to taste honey, we would have formed different beliefs concerning figs and concerning sweetness.¹⁷ Furthermore, Tor asserts that:

In B38, Xenophanes is not simply observing that judgements are constrained by the available evidence. The fragment reflects a broader point concerning the relation between the range of experiences with which the

¹⁷ Tor 2013:266, original emphasis.

divine presents us and the beliefs and conjectures we form on the basis of these experience. Had god not facilitated for any mortal the particular experiences he did, or had he facilitated different experiences in addition, that mortal's judgements might have turned out otherwise.¹⁸

So, according to Tor, there is actually divine disclosure, but not in the sense that Leshner asserts that Xenophanes denied. That is, the gods do not disclose knowledge to mortals through divination. Rather, the gods disclose knowledge to humans through creation/existence in general by ensuring that mortals have the proper experiences by which they can accurately compare and judge those experiences in order to arrive at knowledge.

If Tor is correct that knowledge can be acquired in the way that he suggests, then Xenophanes could not be a global skeptic. Rather, he would be the sort of empiricist that Fränkel argued him to be. On Tor's interpretation of B38, Xenophanes would be an empiricist who believed that certain knowledge was possible through the facilitation of the gods.

In line with this understanding of Xenophanes, Tor interprets B34 as referring to divine matters and 'non-everyday, non-pedestrian, *non-experienced* matters.'¹⁹ So, on Tor's understanding, Xenophanes' skepticism extends only to non-experienced matters, including divine matters. Tor argues in favor of this interpretation of B34 by noting that the phrase 'about the gods' makes it clear that the phrase 'and all the matters of which I speak' does not refer to all claims, in general, as this latter phrase 'is unlikely to signify "all statements" unqualifiedly, since, if 'all things' *includes* the gods, their separate mention becomes curious.'²⁰ Tor's argument here is that it would be strange and unlikely for Xenophanes to have separated out divine matters if he were going to then say that we could not have knowledge of claims concerning *any* matters. Put formally, Tor asserts that it is unlikely/strange for Xenophanes to have asserted something of the form: 'All A are unknowable and all B are unknowable, and all A are B.' Rather, Tor believes that the interpretation wherein A and B are referring to separate things (and one does not subsume the other) is more likely. So, we should treat 'all the matters of which I speak' to refer simply to non-experienced matters.

6. *Responding to Tor*

In this section, I will challenge Tor's ascription of four assertions to Xenophanes. First, I will challenge Tor's assertion that Xenophanes believes that the gods

¹⁸ Tor 2013:266.

¹⁹ Tor 2013:261, original emphasis.

²⁰ Tor 2013:261, original emphasis.

created those things that we experience. Second, I will challenge Tor's assertion that Xenophanes believes that the gods use creation/existence in order to disclose information to us. Third, I will challenge Tor's assertion that Xenophanes believes that we can acquire certain knowledge if the gods disclose information to us through experience. Fourth, I will challenge Tor's assertion that Xenophanes is referring merely to non-experienced matters in B34.

7. *Making sense of B18*

B18 appears problematic for those who claim that Xenophanes is a global skeptic. This fragment reads as follows:

The gods did not intimate all things to men straight away,
But in time, through seeking, their discoveries improve.

On its surface, it seems as if B18 is suggesting that we can acquire knowledge of some sort. Though the gods did not reveal all things to us at the beginning, we can acquire knowledge by seeking it.²¹

This passage, however, is not as simple to understand as it might seem. Leshner notes that there are at least four ambiguities in this passage. It is ambiguous what Xenophanes means in regards to (i) when/if the gods revealed anything to humans, (ii) whether our improvements come with divine intervention or not, (iii) what exactly 'in time' (sometimes translated to 'at length') refers to, and (iv) what it means for our discoveries to improve.²²

Let us focus on this fourth ambiguity, as it is about the portion of the passage that seems to most clearly indicate that humans can possess at least some knowledge.²³ The phrase 'their discoveries improve' could refer to our acquiring knowledge, our getting closer to knowledge, or perhaps simply our improving our knowledge-seeking process. The first interpretation is unlikely, given what I have argued above concerning Xenophanes' global skepticism.

Leshner adopts the third interpretation, claiming that our discoveries improve in the sense that our process for seeking discoveries improves. We no longer seek answers from divine sources. Rather, we seek answers from 'inquiry through travel

²¹ This seeking would, of course, mean empirical investigation.

²² See Leshner 1991:230.

²³ My list of the potential ambiguities of the phrase 'their discoveries improve' is a bit different from Leshner's list. I offer my list in order to offer a more exhaustive taxonomy of what Xenophanes could mean by this phrase.

and direct observation' and through 'an understanding of nature superior to one which regards events occurring in nature as cryptic messages from the gods.'²⁴

This understanding of 'their discoveries improve' is problematic in that it would be strange to think that one process for seeking discoveries is better than another if the former never actually produces better results than the latter. That is, when it comes to investigation of the world, on what grounds would it make sense to say that Process A is superior to Process B if A never produced better results (i.e. actual instances of knowledge) than B?

A more natural understanding of 'their discoveries improve' is the second potential interpretation above – that by seeking we can come closer to knowledge.²⁵ As argued above, we can only acquire certain knowledge through an empirical comparison of all relevant experiences (i.e. relevant to the issue at hand, whatever the issue might be). Though we can never experience every relevant experience, by seeking – by acquiring more experiences – we can get closer to knowledge. So, although we can never achieve certain knowledge, our discoveries can improve through empirical investigation. We can get closer to certain knowledge. We see evidence of this process in A33, wherein by acquiring more and more experiences wherein evidence of sea-faring beings/objects are found inland, Xenophanes offers claims that more and more approximate the truth.

One might contend that this argument implies the possibility of at least partial knowledge and thus undermines the claim that Xenophanes is a global skeptic. Perhaps the progress that is made is one where we acquire knowledge but do not acquire all knowledge.²⁶

In reply to this, I would note that the progress made is better understood as progressing in our justification – not progressing in our knowledge. It is not partial knowledge that is being acquired, but partial justification. We can gain more reasons for our beliefs, increasing our justification, without reaching the threshold to actually be justified in our beliefs. This is the interpretation that most readily squares with B34, where Xenophanes appears to forestall the possibility of certain knowledge.

²⁴ Lesher 1991:246.

²⁵ Karl Popper (1962:226) draws a similar conclusion from Xenophanes, claiming that we can reason, along with Xenophanes, 'that we have no criterion of truth, but are nevertheless guided by the idea of truth as a *regulative principle* [...] and that, though there are no general criteria by which we can recognize truth – except perhaps tautological truth – there are something like criteria of progress towards the truth.' Papazian (2016:73) also concludes something similar when he asserts that Xenophanes argues 'that those who engage in careful and protracted research are in a better position to discover the truth'.

²⁶ Thank you to an anonymous reviewer who helpfully raised this objection.

Even if we were not committed to this robust interpretation of B18, we might also assume a weaker position in regard to the fragment. Given all of the ambiguities present in the fragment, we might simply assert that any interpretation of Xenophanes that one offers must be consistent with a reasonable reading of the fragment. At the very least, this consistency is a necessary condition for an interpretation of Xenophanes being a reasonable interpretation.

It is clear that my understanding of Xenophanes as both an empiricist and a global skeptic is consistent with a reasonable reading of B18. This fragment is consistent with Xenophanes being an empiricist, as we could reasonably understand the fragment as referring to empirical investigation improving our understanding, even if it never allows us to achieve certain knowledge. And B18 is consistent with Xenophanes being a global skeptic, as it makes clear that the gods did not reveal all things to us (if they had done so, then we could have knowledge) and we could reasonably understand ‘their discoveries improve’ as referring to our getting closer to certain knowledge (even if we can never acquire it).

8. *Conclusion*

In this paper, I have argued for specific claims concerning Xenophanes’ epistemology. It is clear that Xenophanes denied the possibility of certain knowledge of divine matters.²⁷ It is also clear that he made many claims about the natural world that could plausibly lead one to think that he espoused some sort of empiricism. I have argued that Xenophanes believed that certain knowledge can be acquired only through empirical investigations wherein we compare all relevant experiences. And since it is actually impossible for mortals to have all relevant experiences,²⁸ we cannot acquire certain knowledge. But we can get closer to certain knowledge through empirical investigation. By having more experiences that we can use to compare with our other experiences, we can gain a better understanding of all of our experiences. So, Xenophanes ultimately argues for global skepticism, while maintaining empiricism as the proper way to investigate the world. The only road to certain knowledge is paved with experiences, but we can never fully traverse that road.

²⁷ Though I do not treat divine matters in depth in this paper, my interpretation of Xenophanes’ epistemology illuminates why we cannot have knowledge of divine matters. If (i) our knowledge must come from comparative experiences and (ii) we cannot experience the divine, then we can have no knowledge of the divine.

²⁸ Or at least it is impossible to know that we have had all of the relevant experiences.

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