

## IX.—NOTES.

## PROF. BROAD ON THE EXTERNAL WORLD.

MAY I state a difficulty which I find in Prof. Broad's most instructive paper on the External World in the October *MIND*?

It is, if I understand him rightly, a point which I discussed in my *Logic*, ii., 307. But he does not carry it out to the difficulty which I perhaps wrongly found. The question is whether sensa can be body-dependent in a certain high degree, being partially conditioned by the traces left in the body by past experiences (*MIND*, pp. 391, 395) without being necessarily mind-dependent also.

My difficulty (*Logic*, l.c.) was that a bodily response of this kind, involving the operation of influences from past experiences which are active in present sensation, cannot, so I thought, be got at and exhibited except through the action of an organ of sense, which in practice is necessarily a mental action. I said that if you could get at the response of the eye as modified by the bodily conditions, apart from the visual response, you might find that the mental side of the visual sensation had made no difference to what the bodily conditions gave. But the idea of doing this is surely chimerical. And so, practically, it seems to me, if you let in the bodily traces of past experience as modifying the sensa, you let in all the modification of mental response that has been included under apperception or any such term.

When mere external bodily position is in question (*MIND*, p. 391) I can see that this does not apply. You can tell, I suppose, how the look of the penny must alter as a man first looks at it direct and then steps away to one side. You can separate that bodily effect deductively, so to speak. But the other cases on page 391—must you not take in the mental response to get the result of the bodily conditions?

I have no axe to grind—no subjective idealism to maintain—in this argument. If my thought did create the landscape before my window—a notion to which I can only with the utmost difficulty attach any meaning whatever—still the landscape would be there, and we should have to acknowledge its physical determinations and connexions.

But the point in question did puzzle me, and I should be glad to see it explained.

B. BOSANQUET.

I AM not certain whether I fully understand the point raised by Dr. Bosanquet in his Note on my paper on *The External World*. On referring to the passage (*Logic*, ii., p. 307), which he quotes, I see that he is there arguing against people who hold that, although we perceive external things through the medium of eyes, ears, etc., yet this medium makes no difference to the object perceived. I understand this to be Prof. Alexander's view, but I find it quite as incredible as Dr. Bosanquet himself does, and for much the same reasons.

I take it that Dr. Bosanquet is not raising this point in his Note. I

understand him to mean one or both of the following closely connected things: (i) If bodily traces be part-conditions of our sensa they are no less part-conditions of our sense awareness. Now, if  $x$  determines both  $y$  and  $z$  and always determines both together, you may be able to say that  $z$  does depend on  $x$ , but you have no right to say that  $z$  does not depend on  $y$ .  $y$  is an invariable accompaniment of  $z$  on the hypothesis that  $y$  and  $z$  are both invariable accompaniments of  $x$ . (Cf. Mr. Russell's argument that the parallelist who denies interaction commits an inconsistency.) (ii) After all, the traces are hypothetical; what you can actually observe is the sensa and their qualities and the act of sensing. Hence it is closer to the facts to say that the sensum depends in part on the mental act than to say that it depends in part on the hypothetical bodily trace.

If this be Dr. Bosanquet's contention, I must plead guilty; and I cannot at present offer any satisfactory answer. I purposely omitted the question of the physiological conditions of sensation so far as I could, and no complete answer to Dr. Bosanquet's point could be given till this question has been properly threshed out. At present I find it most puzzling; and I feel that no philosopher, Realist or Idealist, has tackled it satisfactorily. Perhaps I may end by pointing out what seem to me the two chief difficulties: (i) If we treat our bodies as a kind of medium, they are a medium that goes everywhere with us, and therefore we cannot allow for their effects. Thus the supposed sensa in places where there are no living bodies (on such a theory as Russell's, e.g.) are as purely hypothetical as the old physical object conceived as a cause of sensations. (ii) Our bodies seem partly to condition the sensa themselves, and partly to condition what goes on in our minds. Can we draw a distinct line anywhere between these two sets of effects? How far does what happens in my body simply determine that I shall sense one rather than another of several coexisting sensa? And how far does it actually determine the properties of sensa themselves? I imagine that these are the kind of questions that Dr. Bosanquet has in mind. If so, I fully admit their importance, and can only say that I wish I knew how to answer them.

C. D. BROAD.

#### DEATH OF M. ÉMILE BOUTROUX.

By the death on 21st November of M. Émile Boutroux at the age of seventy-six the world is deprived of a philosopher of international reputation and of a personality beloved and respected by all who knew him. Émile Boutroux was born at Montrouge (Seine) in 1848, and entered the École Normale Supérieure in 1865. In 1869 he went to Heidelberg, where he worked under Zeller, the first part of whose *History of Greek Philosophy* he translated later into French. Boutroux took his degree at the Sorbonne in 1874, presenting as his thesis a work entitled *De la Continence des Lois de la Nature*. This work was first published in 1879, when, however, it attracted but little attention. But on its republication in 1895 it was recognised as containing that which had provided the point of departure for the speculation of Bergson and Le Roy, who had been Boutroux's pupils, and it has since gone through a large number of editions, besides being translated into the other principal languages. The volume designated *De l'idée de loi naturelle dans la science et dans la philosophie*, published in 1895, was a continuation of the same theme. Boutroux was the author of many other works dealing especially with the history of philosophy. In 1904 and 1905 he was Gifford Lecturer in