

## II. *By* C. D. BROAD.

1. Mr. Loewenberg has explained very fully and fairly the general position of the Critical Realists, so far as they have developed it; and I can take what he has said as an agreed starting-point. It is admitted that the Critical Realists mean by an "essence" a universal and not a particular. It is admitted that they hold that, when we are said to "perceive" an object, we are always intuiting an essence and doing something further; that intuiting and perceiving are different kinds of mental acts, of which the latter is based on the former; and that we can neither intuit a physical object or its spatio-temporal parts, nor perceive an essence. I shall take all this as an agreed basis of fact, and shall not at present question its truth; and I shall at once raise certain questions of detail with which the Critical Realists do not seem to have dealt adequately.

2. Suppose that I am looking at a straight stick which is half in air and half in water, and which therefore looks bent, what precisely is the essence that I am intuiting and what precisely am I doing with it? Am I intuiting the characteristic "straight," which I believe to belong to the stick? Or am I intuiting the characteristic "bent," which I believe that the stick seems to have? Or am I intuiting both? And does the answer to this question depend at all on the beliefs that I happen to have? Suppose, *e.g.*, that we take a grown man and a baby looking at this stick. And suppose the baby believes that the stick is bent, whilst the grown man believes that it is straight though it looks bent. Are we to say that the baby is intuiting only one essence, viz. "bent"; and that the grown man is intuiting only one

essence, viz. "straight" ? Or is the grown man intuiting two essences, viz. "straight" and "bent," and simply basing two different mental acts on his two different intuitions ? I can find no clear answers to these questions in the writings of the Critical Realists ; and yet they seem to be vitally important questions for anyone who professes to be dealing with the external world and our perception of it. On the whole the impression that I get is that they would say that the essence which I am intuiting in any case of perception is that characteristic which I, in fact, ascribe to the physical object at the time. On that interpretation the baby is intuiting the essence "bent" and that alone ; and the grown man is intuiting the essence "straight" and that alone.

The first part of this proposition seems reasonable ; the second does not. If the grown man judges, not only that the stick *is* straight, but also that it *looks* bent, there would seem to be just as good grounds for supposing that he is intuiting the essence "bent" as for supposing that he is intuiting the essence "straight." In fact the best solution would seem to be to hold that in such cases two different essences are intuited and that a different kind of judgment is based on the two intuitions, viz. "This *has* the characteristic *x*," and "This *seems to have* the characteristic *y*." In many cases both kinds of judgment may be based on the same intuited essence ; *e.g.*, a grown man, looking at a straight stick wholly in air, might judge both "This *is* straight" and "This *looks* straight." But in many cases the two kinds of judgment are concerned with a single physical object and two different intuited essences. The man looking at the stick which is half in water may judge : "This *is* straight but looks as if it were not" and "This *looks* bent, but really is not." Let us call judgments like "This *is* straight" *perceptual judgments*, and judgments like "This *looks* straight" *phenomenal judgments*. Then what I assert is that both kinds of judgment certainly take place ; that they are certainly different ; and that, if it be reasonable to

hold that either is based on the intuition of an essence, it is reasonable to suppose that both are.

3. The next point to notice is that perceptual judgments are almost certainly more primitive than phenomenal judgments. When a certain essence is intuited under the ordinary conditions of sense-perception, the primitive tendency is to assert "This *has* the characteristic so and-so." Phenomenal judgments arise at a more reflective level, and the stimulus to their formation would seem to be the discovery of conflicts between perceptual judgments. *E.g.*, in the case of the stick half in water, the essence intuited when we first look at it would lead to the perceptual judgment: "This is bent." But we may feel it as well as look at it, and the essence intuited in consequence of feeling it would lead to the perceptual judgment "This is straight." These judgments are inconsistent with each other, and the situation is saved by substituting a phenomenal judgment for one or both of the perceptual judgments. "This looks bent" is consistent both with "This feels straight" and with "This *is* straight."

But, although phenomenal judgments first arise when we are forced by conflicts to distinguish between the characteristics which things have and those which they *only* seem to have, their application, once they have arisen, is not confined to such cases. We recognize that a thing can both have and seem to have the same characteristic; and, on reflection, we see that our only evidence for supposing that a thing *has* a certain characteristic is that it *seems* to have it under certain standard conditions.

Before leaving this matter I should like to point out the difference between "not seeming to have the characteristic *c*" and "seeming not to have the characteristic *c*." I think we say that "this thing seems not to have the characteristic *c*" when and only when it seems to have some other determinate characteristic *c'* under the same determinable *C* as that under which *c* falls. (I use Mr. Johnson's expressions "determinable" and "determinate.")

Thus we should say of the half-immersed stick, not merely that it does not seem to be straight, but also that it seems not to be straight; meaning that it seems to have a certain determinate shape other than (and therefore inconsistent with) the determinate shape called "straight." When we should merely say that "this thing does not seem to have the characteristic *c*," I think we mean that it is not at present presenting *any* determinate value of that determinable *C* under which the determinate *c* falls. When I am merely looking at a block of ice I might fairly say that it "does not seem to be cold," but not that it "seems not to be cold." It does not seem cold to mere sight, simply because the determinable "temperature" does not present itself to sight at all.

4. This last example forms a natural transition to another question which I want to raise about Critical Realism. This concerns the extreme ambiguity of the words "datum" and "given," which the Critical Realists constantly use. The one thing that I can elicit on this subject from their writings is that when I am said to "perceive" a physical object neither this object as a whole, nor any spatio-temporal part of it, is "given"; whilst the essence which I intuit and ascribe to the physical object that I am said to be perceiving is, in some sense, "given." This does not carry us very far. The one common factor which seems to be present in all senses of "given" is "not reached by conscious inference." That, however, cannot be the whole meaning of "being given." For the Critical Realists believe in the existence of certain things; deny that they reach these beliefs through a process of conscious inference; and also deny that these things are "given" to them. It is asserted by them that our beliefs in the existence and properties of chairs and tables are not reached by conscious inference; and it is denied by them that such things are "given" to us. There must therefore be some other factor or factors involved in "givenness"; and no attempt is made to

explain what they are, to see whether they are the same in all cases, or to analyse them.

I will now illustrate the extreme ambiguity of the notion of "givenness" by taking an example. Let us again consider a man seeing a stick half in water, believing that it is straight, and admitting that it looks bent. When we see a stick, or anything else, we always ascribe to it without any conscious process of inference many characteristics which are not strictly "visible" at the time or even at all. We believe it to have an inside as well as an outside, to extend in time further back than the moment at which we began to look at it, to have some temperature, some weight, some hardness, and so on. I do not pretend that we make explicit judgments about all these characteristics. But then it seems to me equally certain that we often make no explicit judgments about characteristics which we literally are seeing. I may, in some sense, "literally see" that the stick is brown, and yet not make the explicit judgment: "This stick is brown." But it is certainly true that, in whatever sense we ascribe "brownness" to a stick when we see it, we do also ascribe to it other characteristics like hardness, weight, persistence, etc., which we do not and cannot literally "see." Thus these are parts of the total essence which we ascribe to the stick when we see it. Are they "given" to us? And, if so, are they "given" in the same sense in which the colour is "given" when we see the stick? Certainly our belief in them is not reached by conscious inference. But do they answer to the rest of the Critical Realists' criterion for "being given"? I do not know, because I cannot find out what this is.

Next let us consider the shape of the stick. I am assuming that the percipient who is looking at the stick believes it to be straight but recognizes that it looks bent. Is the straightness "given" to him in the same sense in which the bentness is given; or is it "given" to him only in the sense in which hardness,

temperature, and weight are given ; or is it perhaps “ given ” in some third sense ? It seems plain to me that the first alternative must be rejected. It would be felt to be paradoxical to say that we “ see ” that the stick is hard ; though we do sometimes use such expressions as “ ice *looks* cold ” or “ the pillow *looks* soft.” It would, however, be quite in accordance with usage to say that the observer “ sees ” that the stick is straight. Nevertheless, most people would admit, if you pressed them, that under the given circumstances the straightness of the stick is not *literally* “ seen.” If any shape can be said literally to be “ seen ” at the time it is “ bentness.”

I think it is doubtful whether, in this case, the straightness which is ascribed to the stick is “ given ” in any different sense from that in which the temperature, hardness, etc., are “ given.” In so far as straightness is “ given ” at all at the time, it is given as a consequence of past experiences and the traces which they have left. And this is exactly how the temperature, hardness, etc., are being “ given ” at the time. The only relevant difference would seem to be that straightness *could be* literally seen under suitable circumstances in exactly the same sense (whatever that may be) in which bentness *actually is* being seen. Temperature, hardness, etc., *could not* be literally seen in this sense under any conceivable circumstances. But this does not seem to be an important distinction in reference to the mode of “ givenness ” in the case under discussion.

If we consider what actually happens when some characteristic is “ given ” in the way in which straightness and temperature are “ given ” in our example, it seems to reduce to one or a mixture of the following three alternatives : (i) There may be actual images of what it would feel like to touch the stick, to see it out of water, and so on. (ii) There might conceivably be explicit judgments, like : “ This is straight,” “ This is heavy,” and so on. (iii) Much more often there will merely be automatic adjustments of the

body in ways which *would be* reasonable if we had made such judgments. These adjustments will of course be accompanied by characteristic bodily feelings, which will form part of the sensational side of the experience.

I propose to say that the "bentness" is "sensibly given" and that the straightness, temperature, hardness, etc., are "mnemically given." But there remains one other kind of givenness to be noted. I said that, when we perceive, we always ascribe some persistence to the object which we think we are perceiving. We also assume that it has an inside as well as an outside, that it is independent of our perceiving it, and so on. These I will call "categorical characteristics." They are not like temperature, hardness, etc., which *can* be sensibly given, even if they *are not* being so given at present. They are part of what we mean by a physical object. And it seems to me plain that they are not reached by inference, but are presupposed whenever we claim to be perceiving. I shall say that they are "categorically given" in every perception. I think it likely that there are many other distinctions to be drawn under the general notion of "givenness"; but I have perhaps said enough to show how ambiguous this notion is, and how useless it is to throw it at us without analysis as if it were a kind of pass-word to the problem of external perception.

5. There remains one other question at least to be raised about "givenness." In the case of the half-immersed stick a man might only make the perceptual judgment "This is straight" and might not actually make the phenomenal judgment "This looks bent." In this particular case, no doubt, anyone *would* make the judgment "This looks bent" if his attention were called to the question, even if he *does not* actually make it. But there are other cases where a person not only does not make a certain phenomenal judgment, but also might not make it if the question were raised. Ordinary men, looking at pennies from the side, certainly do not

as a rule judge that they look elliptical, and it is often very hard to persuade them to make such a judgment. Thus the following question arises: In order that an essence may be given to us must we *actually* make a perceptual or phenomenal judgment about it and a physical object? Or is it enough that we *shall be* prepared to make such a judgment at once if the question be raised? Or is even this much not necessary? Is the essence "elliptical" given to a man who views a penny from the side even though he stoutly denies that it looks elliptical to him? I must confess that I have not the faintest idea what the Critical Realists would answer to these questions. Yet surely some treatment of them may fairly be asked from people who talk so much about "essences" and "data," and profess to be throwing new light on the problem of perception by this means. If it be said that an essence is not given unless we *actually* make a phenomenal or perceptual judgment about it and a physical object, it seems to me to follow that there are plenty of perceptions in which it is doubtful whether any essence is given to us. For I am sure that there are plenty of cases where we should be admitted to be perceiving and where it is extremely doubtful whether we are actually making any judgment at all. In many such cases it seems to me that all that we are doing is to adjust our bodies in ways which *would* be reasonable *if* we had made certain judgments about the physical object which we are said to be perceiving at the time.

6. This brings me to the last question that I wish to raise. Granted that in every perception an essence is in some sense given to us, and that we ascribe this essence as a characteristic to a certain physical object, is this an *adequate* account of perception. Granted that the Critical Realists' analysis contains nothing but the truth, does it contain the whole truth? I cannot believe that it does. On the Critical Realists' view, if I do not misunderstand it, we are acquainted with nothing but essences, and

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essences are pure universals. We are therefore asked to believe that no one ever is or ever can be acquainted with anything but universals, which, for all that we *know*, may have no instances. If so, how have we arrived at the notion that there are particulars at all? Is the notion of a particular a purely *a priori* notion which we import (rightly or wrongly) into our interpretation of the universals which alone are given to us? Of course it may be so. Anything is possible. But I should certainly want a good deal of persuasion before I accepted any such theory. It does not seem to have struck the authors of *Critical Realism* that there was anything here to need explanation or defence.

We need not of course confine ourselves to this general objection. I sometimes say that I am perceiving two precisely similar red spots at once in different places. I suppose, if essences be the universals which I ascribe to physical objects in perception, that there is only one essence in this case. Why do I ascribe it to *two* objects, and judge perhaps that they are a certain distance apart from each other? On another occasion I may ascribe the same essence to a single object. The difference then cannot lie in the essence itself. I cannot conceive how such facts can be accounted for without supposing that we are acquainted with *particulars*, which stand in spatio-temporal relations to each other and which are different *instances* of the same essence. Such particulars are, of course, what I call "sensa." Thus I should say that we must distinguish (a) *sensa* and physical objects; (b) the sensible qualities and relations of *sensa*; (c) the qualities and relations which *actually belong* to physical objects; and (d) the qualities and relations which *we ascribe to* physical objects when we sense *sensa* having such and such sensible qualities and relations. Essences, in the sense in which the Critical Realists speak of them, seem to be either the sensible qualities of *sensa* or the qualities which we ascribe to physical objects on the basis of our *sensa* and their sensible qualities. It is no

doubt *necessary* to recognize essences in this sense ; though I do not think that anyone has ever failed to do so. But it is certainly not *sufficient*.

7. We were asked to say whether the notion of essence can “overcome the difficulty of affirming a Nature independent of mind.” The answer is that of course it cannot ; and that the Critical Realists, to do them justice, never pretended for a moment that it could. They recognize quite clearly that, by deserting Naïve Realism, they lay themselves open to this difficulty. But they find the objections to Naïve Realism insuperable ; and, being honest men, they admit the difficulty of being certain of the existence of physical objects on their view of perception, and say “*Ich kann nicht anders.*” Here I heartily agree with them. My only quarrel with them is (a) that they have given a most inadequate analysis of the notions of “essence” and “datum” ; and (b) that, however thoroughly they might have analysed these notions, something more than universal essences must be “given” if a satisfactory account of perception is to be reached.