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PERCEPTION AND THE EXTERNAL WORLD

A HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL ACCOUNT

1. The views of Locke and Berkeley on sense objects and physical objects.

The distinction between sense-data and material objects is as old as the major tradition of British Empiricism, since it arises from the notion of the distinction between «subject» and «object»: that is, the perceived sense-object is different from the original physical object. This distinction results from the fact that the subject adapts itself to the object so that it becomes identical with the sense-organ at each new perception, since the subject itself has no permanent qualities. Sense-objects do not exist independently of physical objects, but they come into existence through the act of perception. The subject becomes identical with the sense-organ, and thus, as a perceived concept belongs to the inner-world of private experience, while the physical object as a real object of objective existence belongs to the external world of independent existence.

This is the distinction between «subject» and «object», which derives from modern natural science at the time of Galileo and Descartes, and occurs in such contemporary thinkers as Moore and Russell. The distinction was never made by pre-Cartesian thinkers, such as Democritus, Aristotle and Thomas. The pre-Cartesian scientists lacked the benefit of a refined scientific spirit and were unable to distinguish between the perceived object and the real physical object. Therefore, the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects was made by the British empiricists as a consequence of the development of the modern scientific spirit¹.

For Locke, the full weight of the epistemological explanation of the distinction between sense-data and material objects must come to rest upon the notion of an «idea», a term which he uses for sense-data, for concepts, and even for universal ideas. Locke interprets all thought as the entertainment of

1. A. P. Fotinis, *Cornford on Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (M. A. Thesis, New York University), New York 1967, pp. 9-10.



ideas by the mind. Since all ideas are ultimately grounded upon either external or internal sense, they are derived either from sensation or from reflection upon sensible objects. For Locke, the observation of both the external sensible objects and the internal operations of mind, as perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies all understanding with the materials of thinking².

The sources from whence our ideas spring are the object of sensation and the operations of the mind. Firstly, the senses convey into the mind from the particular sensible objects such distinct perceptions of things as ideas of red, white, heat, cold, hard, sweet, sour, and the other sensible qualities. Thus the senses convey into the mind from the external material objects what produces there those perceptions. Secondly, the perception of the operations the mind within ourselves, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, furnish the understanding with another set of ideas such as perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and other similar activities of our minds. The external objects furnish the mind with the idea of sensible qualities, and the mind furnishes the understanding with ideas of its own operations³.

Locke holds that our thoughts derive from sensible objects, since the qualities of sounds, tastes, smells, visible and tangible qualities, and even imagination, conceptions, and any other possible quality of sense are found and extracted from natural bodies. Thus, the ideas in Locke's epistemology are deduced from the particular accidents and occurrences in the sensible objects of the external world. As such they are not real in existence, but they are only entities of thought, as distinguished so from the material objects⁴.

Finally, Locke argues that both sensation and reflection make up experience and experience becomes the general principle of classical British empiricism. All ideas are conceived as being grounded in and dependent upon experience. There are no innate ideas. Locke subordinates reflection to sensation to the extent that attention is directed first toward external material objects. Therefore, Locke sees quite clearly the distinction between ideas or sense-data and material objects. He recognizes that what is given to us in our perceptions of the external world are ideas or sense-data and not the things themselves.

Another viewpoint on the empirist distinction between sense-data and

2. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Ed. R. Kirk, Chicago 1956, p. 18.

3. Ibid., p. 189.

4. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

material objects will be sought in Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*⁵. Berkeley, himself a lover of the mind, wants to present his argument for immaterialism against Lockian or Cartesian dualism on the grounds of the rejection of all abstract ideas. Berkeley has a tendency to think in words instead of thinking about the things the words signify. He claims that a general name refers not to universals but to several particular ideas. He concludes, therefore, that all ideas are concrete particulars.

Berkeley's denial of abstract ideas has a real reference to the external world since he feels the process of abstraction separates qualities which could never exist apart in the real world. For instance, if time, place, and extension are intrinsic to all red objects it is impossible for us to frame our idea of «redness», since the result is not an object that could ever be experienced. Since «redness» itself cannot be an object of perception apart from some red thing, it cannot be an idea⁶. Berkeley in this way seeks to provide a test for the validation of ideas, namely observability, that is, the ability to be present to the mind in sensible form. He accepts as genuine those ideas which he can observe and discards the objects which are commonly thought to be real entities.

Berkeley is forced to reduce sensible things to ideas because he sees that what we mean by «ideas» is nothing other than «immediate objects of the understanding», which cannot exist outside the mind. These sensible things, therefore, are ideas. He claims that what makes a difference is not whether we call them ideas or things, but the name, since whether we accept or reject the name, the sense, the truth, and reality of the thing continues the same. Here Berkeley makes the assertion that these objects of our senses, which we call ideas in common speech, are things. As real things they must be distinct from sensation. What Berkeley means when he speaks of objects as existing in the mind ought not to be taken in the gross literal sense of bodies as existing in a place, but rather in the strict sense that the mind comprehends or perceives these sensible things without any outside affection^{6a}.

Thus, Berkeley asserts that everything that is seen, felt, heard or perceived by the senses is a real being which is recognized as such in the world of common sense. In common sense we experience that only those objects exist which are hard or soft, hot or cold, white or black, round or square and of the similar qualities. He seems, however, to accept the notion of «matter» or material substance, as used by common people to signify the immediate ob-

5. Ed. D. Armstrong, New York.

6. Ibid., pp. 212-213.

6a, Ibid., p. 213.

jects of sense. For, as far as the names of the particular things are concerned, we must retain such terms as «sensible», «substance», «body», and «stuff». The word «matter» finds its naive application in the world of common sense.

Consequently, Berkeley is not denying the existence of bodies understood as stable collections of sensory data. What he is denying is «body» understood as an abstract idea, since abstract ideas are denied any reality. He wants to explain the «universal notion» in terms of the way in which an idea is used, since he feels that the universality is not any special property of the idea, but is rather a relation which it bears to the particulars signified. He does not reduce everything to states of bodies in motion; he talks rather about the relation that obtains among various experiences. These experiences, however, are all on the same ontological footing and are organized on the basis of empirical features of existence and succession and not on a metaphysical relation of material substance to properties.

In conclusion, therefore, one can see that despite himself, Berkeley is an Empiricist. He might have argued that the theory of substance cannot be grasped as a kind of immaterialism, since it can be grasped on the level of common sense. Berkeley acknowledges that when we say that mind comprehends the bodies of external things what we mean is nothing more than perception, that is, sense-data, which account for the material objects. Hence, Berkeley, in reducing his theory of substance from a kind of immaterialism to common sense, sees and makes the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects.

2. Contemporary British Views on Sense-Data and Physical Objects.

Thirdly, a definitive statement for the assertion of the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects can be found in the variety of articles written on the matter by the contemporary British Empiricists. All of these articles seek to employ theories of sensation appearance, and perception as possible resolutions of the sense-data - material object dualism. These theories are found in the studies of some of the outstanding empiricists. On the new interpretation of empiricism they try to improve the theory of perception, so they exhibit in a more modern way the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects.

The first theorist among them is Broad, whose theory of *sensa* is a version of sense-data theory. He observes that the manifestation of sensible appearance through sense-data, as well as the contrast between it and the properties of physical reality, indicate its distinction from physical objects. *Sensa* or sense-data are parts of the existing universe, since its constit-

uents, such as colours, temperature, shapes, sizes and the other qualities of sensation belong to the physical objects which make up the whole universe. Broad, therefore, concludes that *sensa* or sense-data are appearances of physical objects⁷.

Broad clearly makes the distinction between sense-data and material objects. He claims that there is a world of physical objects and a world of sense objects or sense-data. This latter depends on physical objects, reflecting their empirical qualities. This interdependency leads to the conclusion that both of them are parts of the whole of existent reality. But the epistemological and ontological problem regarding the status of *sensa* or sense-data and their relations to physical objects cannot be explained either by common sense or by science. Common sense ignores the problem entirely because it cannot see the distinction between *sensa* or sense-data and physical objects. Science, on the other hand, although it makes an equivalent distinction in theory, in practice ignores *sensa* or sense-data to concentrate only on physical objects and processes. Since physical processes occur in external physical objects and our bodies produce the *sensa* or sense-data by which we become aware of these physical objects, it becomes apparent that sense-data must arise from the interaction of these two distinct processes. Therefore, Broad in his theory of *sensa* sees that the *sensum* is a third kind of entity, neither mental nor physical, but an event.

Moore, I think, would have gone along with this interpretation since such sensible species as colour, size, shape, and particular percepts which the nineteenth century philosophers call «sensations» he called «sense-data». Moore observes that when we see a particular color or a patch of a color what we perceive are sense-data. For what we mean by «sensations» are the experiences of apprehending certain sense-data. The sense-datum exists as an independently experienced event and my seeing of it as a sensation ceases to exist. The whitish color of the piece of paper, i.e., the sense-datum, is on the surface of the material paper, whereas my seeing of it is within my body. Therefore, sense-data are distinct from the seeing of them, and since they do not occupy space, it is evident that sense-data are distinct from material objects⁸.

Moore sees that the perceiving of a material object is something different from the seeing of sense-data. The seeing of a material object consists partly in directly apprehending certain sense-data and partly in knowing

7. C. Broad, «On Sensa», *Perceiving, Sensing and Knowing*, Ed. R. Swartz, Garden City, New York 1965, pp. 125-126.

8. G. E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, New York 1966, pp. 44-46.

that there exists something beyond sense-data. According to Moore, when we see a particular material object which occupies space, we directly apprehend sense-data; and it is through these sense-data that we indirectly know there exists something other than sense-data. Hence, Moore, by showing that we have direct apprehension of sense-data and indirect apprehension of material objects, makes the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects⁹.

In his article on *The Theory of Appearing*¹⁰ Chisholm holds that a sense-datum is a thing in perceptual experience which is distinct from the objects being perceived. He acknowledges that in perceiving a physical thing, we falsely believe that we also perceive its visual, auditory, and tactual appearances. This is a misconception of the nature of perception, because we only perceive a material thing when the thing as stimulus object has acted upon our sense organs, thereby causing us to sense or experience and not to perceive any appearances. We do not see, hear, or feel the appearances of material things. From the fact that a physical thing appears «white» one might infer mistakenly that the thing presents an appearance which is white, and that both the physical thing and its appearance have the same color. But the point is that «white», in its sensible use, refers to the way in which the observer may sense or experience, not a property of things. It refers to a certain state of being appeared to, or sensing, or experiencing. The term «white» is used to describe the way in which that process occurs: consequently, it is a sense-datum. Chisholm, therefore, in showing that sense-data are independent of the objects of perception reiterates the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects.

In his article *On Sensation*¹¹ Ryle insists that the act of seeing presents us with patchworks of colors which momentarily are occupying our field of view. Hearing presents us with sounds, smelling with odors, and so forth. These momentary occupations of our field of vision, hearing and smelling precipitate a search for sensible appearances of physical things, which, as sensed entities, are sense-data. Ryle holds that sense-data are not fictitious entities; they constitute recognition of the immediate objects of sense. He acknowledges that such expressions as «object of sense», «sensible object», «sensing», «sense-datum», «sense-content», «sense-field», and «sensibilia» have a transitive reference to the external material objects of which we have a direct awareness and acquaintance but without utilizing any linguistic or

9. Ibid., p. 66.

10. See Edition by R. J. Swartz: *Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing*, New York 1965.

11. Ibid.

verbal expression of the reality of that material object. These expressions treat concepts of sensation as if they were concepts of observation. This procedure culminates in the postulation of sense-data as counterparts of the common objects of observation. Ryle, however, sees clearly that there is a distinction between sense-data and material objects, since he experiences such data as independent of ordinary things¹².

G. A. Paul in his question : Is there a problem about sense-data? reaches the conclusion that the term «sense-datum» has a formal use, but the use of the term does not treat «sense-datum» as the equivalent of a physical object. The use of sense-data is connected with the use of certain words which are currently employed in ordinary language. Words such as «looks», «appears», or «appearance», and certain uses of «this», «after-image» and «image» seem to entail the existence of sense-data. The sense-datum is distinguished from the surface of the physical object, because in a round surface of a penny we may see an elliptical sense-datum. For it does not turn out to be true to say that the sense-datum is physical, that is, that it is a part of the surface of a physical object in the ordinary sense. Consequently, Paul draws the distinction between sense-data and physical objects, since he follows the empiricists in differentiating the sensible appearance from the physical object¹³.

Paul's theory is unique in that it is based upon the possibility of an unobserved phenomenon. Paul's notion of a sense-datum's existing unobserved finds a good justification in Berlin's distinction between empirical propositions and hypothetical statements. Berlin holds that many forms of phenomenalism rest on the view that the expression which describes the material objects must be translated into sets of sentences about the data of actual or possible direct sensible acquaintance, by real or possible observers. The phenomenalist argues that a material object sentence can be reduced to a sense-data sentence by substituting words denoting sensible appearances for words denoting solid and continuous physical properties. The phenomenologists argue that material object sentences are reduced to sentences describing both what the observers do or did or will observe, and what they would, or would have, and might or might have observed under certain circumstances and appropriate conditions. The phenomenologists approach the fact of sense-data in terms of categorical, psychological and hypothetical propositions or attributes. But phenomenalism itself seems to rest on a mistaken analysis, since existential material object statements state that things or events

12. Cf. on this point : G. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, New York 1969.

13. Cf. on this point : G. A. Paul, *Is There a Problem about Sense-Data?* in *Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing*, Ed. R. J. Swartz, New York 1965.

existed or exist or will exist, or were or are or will be characterized by this or that characteristic; and not that something might exist or would exist, or would have existed. Material object statements are descriptions of existing states of affairs while phenomenal statements, as described here, are perfectly compatible with the non-existence of these states of affairs. Nevertheless, Berlin seems to approach the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects by translating the material object statements into the sense-datum language. His motive, however, seems to be psychological rather than linguistic.

H. P. Grice in his article *The Causal Theory of Perception*¹⁴, argues that the translation of the term «sense-data» into a «sense-datum statement» or a «sense-datum sentence» is in some cases unacceptable. Grice suggests that the thesis of sense-data relies on «perceiving» since perceiving itself involves the fact that some sense-datum statement or other about the perceiver is true. For sense-data depend on the relation between the perceiver and the perceived material object. Thus, a perceiver perceives a physical object only when some present-tense sense-datum statement is true of the perceiver himself. In such cases the perceiver reports a state of affairs for which the physical object is causally responsible. The fact that the perceiver perceives the physical object requires the existence of a physical object if sense-data statements are to have any basis in reality whatsoever. Hence, Grice bases the distinction between sense-data and material objects on the ground that the sense-datum stands for the causal connection between perceiver and the physical object.

H. H. Price, in his article *The Causal Theory*¹⁵, insists that sensation entails sense-data. Since sense-data differ from time to time, they are neither physical nor mental, but only momentary «existents», which are caused by events in substances or material objects. The cause of a sense-datum cannot be the perceiver. The cause of the sense-datum must be outside the perceiver himself, since sense-data are independent of the mind. Sense-data cannot occur as independent entities since to do so would contradict the very nature of a sense-datum. But there is no way of ascertaining the character of the «other» which serves as the cause of the sense-datum. Since sense-data are given as fragmentary, intermittent, and caused by something other than the subject himself, they must be derived from either a set of minds or a spatial entity.

Therefore, the causes of which sense-data are the intermittent and col-

14. In R. J. Swartz, (Ed.), *Perceiving, Sensing, and Knowing*.

15. Ibid.

lateral effects are substances, that is, physical events or material objects, which, since they are extended in space and endure through time, can have all those causal properties which material science attributes to them. However, it is also true that sense-data provide us with consciousness of material things. Price, therefore, in his analysis of the causal theory, reasserts the empiricist distinction between sense-data and material objects.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the status of sense-data as distinct from material objects is approached in slightly different ways by the empiricists of the British tradition. Thus, Locke holds that sense-data must be conceived as entities of thought, that is, as impressions deduced from particular accidents and occurrences in sensible objects. Berkeley, in turn, acknowledges that sense-data must be conceived as sensible forms; that is, as genuine ideas or mental experiences, organized on the basis of empirical relations of existence and succession. Broad, Moore, and Price conceive sense-data as the experience of events occurring in the universe, since sensation is a process which parallels processes occurring in the external world. Chisholm and Ryle look upon sense-data as the qualities of realities grasped by the observer as a definite state of experience through which the observer perceive the underlying subject of those qualities. Finally, Paul, Berlin, and Grice hold that sense-data in its use as connected with the use of certain words is an unobserved existent, translating material object-statements into sense-data language. This is a psychological explanation of the causal connection between perceiver and physical objects. Hence, the above analysts of perception, in describing sense-data, draw the empiricist's distinction between sense-data and material objects.

3. Austin's Critical Analysis of the Doctrine of Perception.

J. L. Austin in *Sense and Sensibilia*¹⁶, a critical analysis of the empirical doctrines on sense perception, points out that all British empiricists are committed to the assumption that we perceive only sense-data and draw the distinction between sense-data and material objects. This distinction, according to Austin, finds no justification in linguistic analysis, since our ordinary words are much more subtle in their use, and take account of the three-dimensional character of physical things. The facts of perception are much more diverse and complicated than their linguistic expression, and consequently sense-data cannot be the direct interpretation of the material objects of the external world.

16. New York, Oxford Univ. Press 1964.

Austin claims that Ayer's position in *The Foundation of Empirical Knowledge* and as well Price's in *Perception* are parallel to those of Locke and Berkeley. Locke distinguishes between impression and external objects; Price, between sense-data and physical occupants. Berkeley argues for ideas only, although through common sense he can speak of bodies, objects, and material things; Ayer formulates a doctrine of sense-data, and excludes the experience of bodies, objects and material things because, as he says, physical objects are not sets of sense-data alone. Ayer is convinced that, in the common-sense view, physical objects exist¹⁷.

The general doctrine about sense-perception in the British empiricist tradition is that we directly perceive or sense only sense-data, that is, ideas, impressions, sense-data, sense-perceptions, sense-contents, percepts, and the like. We never directly perceive or sense any bodies, objects, or material things. Thus Ayer insists that sense-data includes both experiences such as feeling, dreams, hallucinations, and fancies, and all else that is of sense-content. For Ayer's Phenomenalism suggests a neutral term which connotes neither mental nor physical reality. He invents a kind of neutral sense-data which as the ultimate units of experience are the only things given in experience.

Ayer claims that mental and physical substances are not found immediately in experience; and neither one of them is an entity lying beyond experience. Mind and matter are only logical constructs of sense-data. This position implies that both statements about minds and objects may be transferred into sets of statements about sense-data. Ayer approaches sense-perception on linguistic grounds, that is, through a study of language, for sense-data constitute a part of the meaning of our language-statements about physical objects¹⁸.

Austin, however, sees the British empiricist doctrine about sense perception first as an obsession with a few particular words, the uses of which are over-simplified without real understanding and sufficient description; and second, as an obsession with a few half-studied facts which are usually accepted without distinctions. Austin holds that we perceive or sense as separate, things which are different. Whether these things are material objects, sense-data, or the objects of consciousness makes no difference because they are not identical with the other. Because statements about physical objects are about objects of consciousness and not about sense-data, Austin

17. Ibid., p. 21.

18. H. G. Olson, *Introduction to Philosophy*, New York 1967, pp. 34-35.

denies categorically the phenomenals' position that statements about sense-data are translatable into statements about physical objects¹⁹.

Austin, maintaining that «sense-data» and «material objects» are two different terms signifying things, claims that what is spurious is not one term of the pair, but the antithesis itself, which exists between the particular and the universal. Since we perceive things of different kinds, philosophers cannot reduce them to sense-data or material objects by the technique of the phenomenistic approach. From the fact that things are independent of sense data, it follows that they are the real objects of our experiences.

Austin claims that Ayer's difficulty lies in his struggle to find the data, the foundations of empirical knowledge, which he thinks must be something like the «incorrigible», an old doctrine in Plato, reanimated by Descartes, and taken on a long line of successors. Ayer, of course, makes an up-to-date linguistic exposition of this old notion, but, like Price and his other predecessors, he treats what are really questions of language as questions of fact; and therefore, he thus repeats all of the mistakes incorporated in the traditional arguments. Ayer is wrong in holding that evidence-providing types of sentences are always sense-datum sentences. The idea that there is a certain kind or form of sentence which is «incorrigible» and evidence-providing seems to be prevalent enough to deserve more detailed refutation. In principle, there is nothing that can show that we may make a mistake, or our remarks may be «incorrigible». There is no general answer to such questions as «what is evident», «what is certain», «what is doubtful», «what needs evidence», and «what cannot be verified». Therefore, there is no theory of knowledge which consists in finding grounds for such an answer²⁰.

Austin claims that Ayer's assumption that one's references to sense-data are precise, while one's references to material things are vague in their application to phenomena is wrong. «Vague» is itself vague, and therefore there is no unique way of being vague. Austin insists that what we call «vague» is the use of words, and not the words themselves. Let us suppose that one describes a house as having «a chimney on its top». What gives the impression of a vague description is that one has neglected to describe the chimney, not the word «chimney» itself. The reason why many words exhibit features of vagueness, and thus may be called «vague words», is not that they occur in «material-object» language. It is because in ordinary language the speaker does not make the distinctions which are needed for expressions of the exact sciences²¹.

19. Cf. on this point : J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, New York 1966.

20. Cf. on this point : J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*,

21. Ibid., pp. 126-127.

Therefore, Austin claims that Ayer and Price, as well as their predecessors, have begun from the mistaken assumption that, from our resources of sense-data, we construct the world of material things. They have consequently drawn the false conclusion that we directly perceive or sense only sense-data and not material objects. This is because they are concerned with the logical relations between two different languages, the sense-datum language and the material object language, and not with the existence of things. The reason they repeat this mistake is that they reduce material-object language to sense-datum language on the supposition that sense-data make up the whole of our resources.

4. Merleau-Ponty's Evaluation of the Doctrine of Perception.

Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception* appears to the contemporary critic to be one of the most vital criticisms of the doctrine of sense-perception in modern and contemporary British Empiricism. Concerning the Gestaltists' view that psychological phenomena are organized and undivided articulated wholes, Merleau-Ponty claims to show that the only thing that allows physiology itself to explore the material structures of psychological functioning is a direct perception of the whole phenomenal realm. This means that the elementary ingredients of physiological psychology in fact presuppose a subject-object interpretation and so are already taken from the phenomenal order which they supposedly constitute. This is the advantage of the notion of «form», or «Gestalt»; namely, that the organization of a psychic function goes beyond the atomistic conception of nervous functioning and rejects psychological empiricism. Thus, in Merleau-Ponty's view we directly perceive things and not sense-data.

For Merleau-Ponty, perception is not the result of the functioning of the perceptive organs, but a vital human act which the individual performs. According to his analysis, our perceptive organs do not cause our perceptions, but we perceive or sense through our organs of perception. For there are only visible things, not any sense-data referable to material objects as the British empiricists supposedly held on the matter. We directly perceive or sense things, and our bodies do not interfere by creating a screen between them and ourselves. The body is a phenomenon as are other things, but it presents itself to us an intermediary between the world and ourselves²².

Merleau-Ponty holds that the subject of sensation is neither a thinker,

22. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Comportment*, Trsl. A. Fisher, Boston 1963, pp. 234-236.

nor an inert sensing. Rather, it is a power emerging into a certain existential environment. He explains the relation of sentient to the sensible in terms of turning an «ear» or having a «look» with the expectations of sensing some sound or color. The sensible then takes possession of my ear or my gaze, and so I surrender a part of my body or my whole body to vibrating and filling space in that particular manner known as this sound or that color. For that which is sensed is a certain way of being-in-the-world suggested to us from some point in space, and seized and acted upon by our body, since sensation is a form of communication.

The sensation of white is not the knowledge of a certain identifiable quality. Rather, it is something which has a direction in it and has a significance beyond itself. Sensation is intentional because in the sensible a certain rhythm of existence, which brings us into relation with external beings, is put forward. For we enter into a sympathetic relation with them, make them our own, and find in them our «momentary law». A sensation is the sensation of something, that is, of a thing. Things stand out from the amorphous mass of impressions. This mass is put into perspective and co-ordinated by space. All senses, then, are spatial, and give us access to the form of being. Thus, they bring us into communication with sensory beings. For sensation is one of our surfaces of contact with being, that is, a structure of consciousness²³.

Merleau-Ponty insists that the senses are bodily organs which inter-communicate by opening on to the structure of the physical thing. The form of the material object does not consist in its geometrical shape, but stands in a certain relation to its specific nature, and appears to all of our senses²⁴. The problem of the unity of the senses is understood in Merleau-Ponty in terms of their never-ending integration into one knowing organism. The body is a «synergic system», in which all the functions are exercised and linked together in the general action of being-in-the-world. The body is the very actuality of the phenomenon of expression. Thus, the «body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of [man's] comprehension»²⁵.

He sees the body as carried «towards tactile experience by all its surfaces and all its organs simultaneously», and carrying with it the formal structure of the «tactile world»²⁶. For Merleau-Ponty, «the body is a uni-

23. Cf. on this point : M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, New York 1962.

24. Ibid., p. 229.

25. Ibid., pp. 234-235.

26. Ibid., p. 317.

versal setting, a schema of all types of perceptual unfolding and of all those intersensory correspondences which lie beyond the segment of the world which we are actually perceiving»²⁷. Hence, the body perceives things and not sense-data as the British Empiricists argue. On the contrary these things are taken internally, reconstituted, and experienced by us insofar as they are bound up with a world. Therefore, things and the world exist as experienced by man, since they are the concatenation of their perspectives. Yet lead beyond all perspectives.

The contemporary critic of this theory of sense-perception will find Merleau-Ponty's viewpoint a great improvement on the British doctrine of sense-perception. This advance consists in Merleau-Ponty's view that whatever «sense-data» there may be are perceived within a perceptual field, the body, and therefore the fundamental *p e r c e p t u m* is lived already in a bodily-founded context. The perceptual functions of the body are forms imposed on a received matter. They exist for the sake of knowing things, since the data and the bodily knowing apparatus stand in a mutual relation to one another. There is no way to place the form on one side of the relationship and the formed object on the other.

In conclusion, therefore, Merleau-Ponty sees that it is body rather than our sense-perceptions that plays a role in structuring the world of our experience. This makes it easier to explain the penetration of our projects through the body's mediation into the intersubjective world of things. Here are deposited our words, our gestures, our expressions, our arts, our sciences, and everything that incarnates our institutions. A perceived thing, not a sense-datum, is what we directly perceive or sense, since it is spatial, temporal, or colored. It is a certain «coherent deformation» of the permanent lines which unite us to sensorial fields and to a world.

ΑΝΤΙΛΗΨΗ ΚΑΙ ΕΞΩΤΕΡΙΚΟΣ ΚΟΣΜΟΣ

ΜΙΑ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗΣΗ

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η.

Ὁ συγγραφεὺς τοῦ ἄρθρου ἐπιχειρεῖ μία σύντομη ἱστορικὴ καὶ κριτικὴ ἐπισκόπηση τῶν θεωριῶν, ποὺ διατυπώθηκαν ἀπὸ μετακαρτεσιανοὺς φιλοσόφους καὶ κυρίως ἀπὸ Βρεττανοὺς ἐμπειριστὰς σχετικῶς μὲ τὴ διάκριση

27. Ibid., p. 326.

μεταξύ υλικών πραγμάτων (material objects) και δεδομένων των αισθήσεων (sense-data). Τα φυσικά πράγματα έχουν αντικειμενική υπόσταση στον εξωτερικό κόσμο, ενώ τα αντικείμενα των αισθήσεων, αν και εξαρτώνται από τα φυσικά πράγματα, αποκτούν υπόσταση μέσω της αντιλήψεως. Η διάκριση αυτή απορρέει από τη γενικότερη διάσταση υποκειμένου - αντικειμένου και εμφανίζεται παράλληλα με την ανάπτυξη επιστημονικού πνεύματος.

Για τον Locke τα δεδομένα των αισθήσεων, οι «ιδέες», που βασίζονται στην εξωτερική και εσωτερική αίσθηση και αποτελούν την εμπειρία, είναι νοητικές οντότητες και παράγονται από τα συμβεβηκότα των αισθητών πραγμάτων. Ο Locke, που δεν δέχεται *a priori* ιδέες, υποστηρίζει ότι αντιλαμβανόμαστε όχι τα πράγματα καθ' εαυτά, αλλά τις «ιδέες», δηλαδή τα δεδομένα των αισθήσεων. Ο Berkeley θεωρεί τα δεδομένα αυτά των αισθήσεων ως αισθητές μορφές μέσα στο νοῦ, δηλαδή γνήσιες ιδέες ή νοητικές εμπειρίες, οργανωμένες βάσει των εμπειρικών σχέσεων υπάρξεως και διαδοχής.

Την επεξεργασία και τη βελτίωση της δυϊστικής αυτής θέσεως ανέλαβαν σύγχρονοι Βρεττανοί εμπειρισταί. Οί Broad, Moore και Price δέχονται τα δεδομένα των αισθήσεων ως εμπειρία των συμβάντων του σύμπαντος, ἐφ' ὅσον τὸ αἶσθημα εἶναι μία διεργασία ἀντίστοιχη πρὸς τὴν διεργασίαν τοῦ ἐξωτερικοῦ κόσμου. Ἀποτελοῦν δηλαδή τὰ δεδομένα των αισθήσεων ἐκφάνσεις των φυσικῶν πραγμάτων καὶ μέσα ἀπὸ αὐτὲς ἀντιλαμβανόμαστε ἑμμεσα τὰ φυσικὰ πράγματα.

Τῇ διάκριση μεταξύ των δεδομένων των αισθήσεων καὶ των υλικῶν πραγμάτων υποστηρίζουν ἐπίσης ὁ Chisholm καὶ ὁ Ryle, οἱ ὅποιοι χαρακτηρίζουν τὰ πρῶτα ὡς ιδιότητες των πραγματικῶν αντικειμένων, πού ὁ παρατηρητής συλλαμβάνει ὡς μία ὀριστική κατάσταση εμπειρίας. Τὰ δεδομένα των αισθήσεων αποτελοῦν πανομοιότυπα των κοινῶν αντικειμένων τῆς παρατηρήσεως. Τέλος οἱ Paul, Berlin καὶ Grice εἰσάγουν μία ψυχολογική ἐρμηνεία τῆς αἰτιατικῆς σχέσεως μεταξύ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πού ἀντιλαμβάνεται καὶ των φυσικῶν πραγμάτων καὶ μεταφράζουν στή γλῶσσα των δεδομένων των αισθήσεων τὴν προτάσιν πού ἀναφέρονται σὲ υλικά πράγματα. Τὰ δεδομένα των αισθήσεων μποροῦν νὰ ἔχουν ὕπαρξη καὶ χωρὶς νὰ γίνονται ἀντιληπτά (unobserved existents).

Ὁ Austin ἀσκεῖ κριτικὴ στὶς ἐμπειριοκρατικὲς θεωρίες τῆς ἀντιλήψεως καὶ ἰδιαιτέρως στὶς ἀπόψεις τοῦ Price καὶ τοῦ Ayer. Ἡ διάκριση δεδομένων των αισθήσεων καὶ υλικῶν πραγμάτων στηρίζεται κατὰ τὸν Austin στήν ἀρχικὴ λανθασμένη ὑπόθεση, ὅτι τὰ δεδομένα των αισθήσεων αποτελοῦν τὴν μόνην πηγὴν, πού διαθέτομε, καὶ βάσει αὐτῶν κατασκευάζομε τὸν κόσμο των υλικῶν πραγμάτων. Ἐτσι φθάνουν στὸ συμπέρασμα, ὅτι ἅμεσα ἀντιλαμβανόμαστε μόνο τὰ δεδομένα των αισθήσεων καὶ ἑμμεσα τὰ φυσικὰ

πράγματα. Κι αυτό γιατί αναφέρονται στις λογικές σχέσεις μεταξύ δύο διαφορετικών γλωσσών, της γλώσσας των δεδομένων των αισθήσεων και της γλώσσας των υλικών πραγμάτων, και όχι στην ύπαρξη των πραγμάτων. Τέλος ο Austin απορρίπτει τη θέση της φαινομενοκρατίας, ότι οι προτάσεις για τα δεδομένα των αισθήσεων μπορούν να μετατραπούν σε προτάσεις των αισθήσεων, αυτά είναι τα πραγματικά αντικείμενα της έμπειρίας.

Έποικοδομητική τέλος είναι η κριτική του Merleau-Ponty στη θεωρία της αισθητηριακής αντίληψης. Ο Γάλλος φιλόσοφος υποστηρίζει, ότι αντιλαμβανόμαστε απ' ευθείας τα αντικείμενα και όχι τα δεδομένα των αισθήσεων, γιατί τα αντιληπτικά όργανα είναι μέσα και όχι αίτια της αντίληψης· οι αντιληπτικές λειτουργίες υπάρχουν για να γνωρίσουμε τα αισθητά αντικείμενα, γιατί τα δεδομένα των αισθήσεων και ο γνωστικός μηχανισμός του σώματός μας βρίσκονται σε αμοιβαία σχέση. Η αντίληψη είναι μία ζωική ανθρώπινη ενέργεια. Το αίσθημα είναι μία μορφή επικοινωνίας με το υπαρξιακό περιβάλλον, μία δομή της συνειδητότητας και χαρακτηρίζεται από αναφορικότητα (intentionality), γιατί έχουμε πάντα αίσθημα ενός πράγματος. Το σώμα μας ως «συνεργικό» σύστημα, που όλες του οι λειτουργίες συνδέονται στη γενική πράξη του «είναι-στον-κόσμο», διαδραματίζει περισσότερο από την αισθητηριακή αντίληψη ένα ρόλο στη δόμηση του κόσμου της έμπειρίας μας.

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