

CRITICISMS AND DISCUSSIONS.

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL TERMS.

It is generally admitted that one of the principal needs of philosophy at the present time is a precise and satisfactory terminology. Without such a terminology philosophers are liable to be inaccurate in presenting their own views and to misunderstand the views of others. The present diversity is due in part to the existence of different schools of philosophy, and in part to the use for philosophical purposes of several different languages, one of which, the German, has but little affinity to the rest. I have no intention now of entering on a general discussion of philosophical terms, but I wish to criticize a few of the terms now in use and to suggest a few others.

To begin with, I want to know what philosophers mean by "experience." The word is in constant use by thinkers of all schools and shades of opinion; but I have sought in vain for a clear elucidation of its meaning. I have sometimes used it myself in criticizing other writers, because they used it, and then I understood it in the vague sense which it bears in common speech and general literature. But when I tried to ascertain more precisely what those writers meant by it, I was completely balked. One school of thinkers maintains that all our knowledge is derived from experience; another school vehemently denies that, and affirms that we have knowledge independent of experience and transcending experience. From those expressions one would naturally think that experience must be a faculty, or power, of the mind, which it uses to obtain knowledge. But I cannot find such a faculty in my own mind, nor any sign of its existence in the minds of others.

Locke, who held that all knowledge is derived from experience, defined it as the observation of external objects, and of the operations of our own minds. But that is a very insufficient account of it; for, surely, feeling and action are parts of experience. When a man says that he has had experience of shoemaking, he does not mean that he has observed other men making shoes, he means that he has made shoes himself; and when I had experience of toothache, I certainly thought it was a feeling. But perhaps Locke or his followers would say that all acts and feelings that are results of observation

are parts of experience. But what criterion have they for distinguishing such feelings from those that arise from other sources? They are not entitled to beg the question and say that all acts and feelings result from observation alone. Moreover, if experience is nothing but observation, the theory that all knowledge is derived from experience is untenable; for a large part of our knowledge is the result of reasoning, and observation is not reasoning. And how about imagination? is that a part of experience? Most people, I think, would say that it is; but it is very different from observation, and contains an element which observation does not. Locke's definition is quite as obscure as the thing he undertook to define; yet I have not found any other that is more satisfactory.

Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* defines experience as "consciousness considered as a process taking place in time." But if experience is the same as consciousness, it is a mere platitude to say that all knowledge arises from experience. Of course, all knowledge arises from consciousness; nobody ever thought otherwise. But then what becomes of the famous dispute about the origin of knowledge?

It seems to me that experience, far from being an elementary faculty or function of the mind, is a highly complex activity, and therefore that it is unphilosophical to speak of it as a primary source of knowledge. Yet philosophers and psychologists habitually use the term in that sense, and as if its meaning was perfectly well known. If some of the knowing ones will tell me what it does mean, I shall be much obliged.

Another term about which I want information is "positive," as applied to the philosophy of Auguste Comte. I have never seen a definition of it, and have not the least idea what it means, or whether it means anything. To my mind it is nothing but a proper name to designate Comte's philosophy; as if he had called his system the Parisian philosophy or the Clotilde de Vaux philosophy; and whether it had a meaning for him or not, I have never been able to find out. Of late years, too, I often meet with the term "positive science," which is just as enigmatical as "positive philosophy." Is there any such thing as negative science? If not, what does "positive" mean?

Among the philosophical terms now in use none are more common than "subjective" and "objective." Their meaning is of course too well known to require elucidation here. "Subjective" means pertaining to my thought or consciousness; "objective" pertaining to the things I think about. My mind is for me the only subject, and all other things, including other minds, are objects. These words have had a great vogue, and it has been thought that the distinction they express, and which is admitted to be important, can be expressed in no other way. Hamilton expressly says so, and he illustrates their meaning by the following example:

"Suppose a lexicographer had to distinguish the two meanings of the

word 'certainty.' 'Certainty' expresses either the firm conviction which we have of the truth of a thing, or the character of the proof on which its reality rests. The former is the subjective meaning, the latter the objective." (*Metaphysics*, Lecture 9.) Ruskin, on the other hand, declares that these are "two of the most objectionable words ever coined by the troublesomeness of metaphysicians," and that they owe their introduction to "German dullness and English affectation" (*Modern Painters*, Part 4, ch. 12.)

I confess myself strongly disposed to agree with Ruskin. I particularly object to the use of the term "subject" to denote the mind, as it is needed in a wider signification. A subject is anything that has attributes. That is the original meaning of the word, and is essentially the same as the grammatical and logical meaning. I have sometimes used the adjectives "subjective" and "objective"; but I have never liked them and have tried to find substitutes for them. A few years ago it occurred to me that the terms "noetical" and "factual" would express essentially the same distinction, and express it better and more intelligibly. "Factual" needs no explanation; it means pertaining to fact. "Noetical" from the Greek verb *νόω*, to think, to have in mind, means pertaining to thought or to consciousness in general. The latter term is not quite synonymous with "subjective" which means pertaining to my thought only; "noetical," pertaining to any body's thought; but I maintain that the latter meaning is much the more important. In the example given by Hamilton, "noetical certainty" is our firm conviction of the truth of a thing, "factual certainty" the character of the proof on which its reality rests. Other examples might be given. In ethics, for instance, an act may be wrong though the agent thinks he is doing right, and in such cases we all agree that the agent is blameless. Such an act I call "noetically right" but "factually wrong"; and these terms express the distinction far better than "subjective" and "objective" do. So in the Greek language the negative *οὐ* is factual, *μη* noetical, and the same distinction appears in the Greek moods. I commend the terms here suggested to the attention of thinkers and writers.

Another philosophical term in common use for which I have no affection is "aesthetics" as a name for the science, or philosophy, of beauty and the ideal arts. This meaning of the word is not in accordance with that of the Greek word from which it is derived, which meant sensation or sense-perception, and had no relation to beauty. It is an ill-sounding word too, and this is still more true of some of its derivatives, especially "aesthetician." The proper name for the science of beauty is "calonomics," formed on the analogy of "economics" from *καλός* and *νομικός*. The Greek word *νόμος* does not denote what we call a natural law, or law of nature. It means a rule, norm or standard to which we ought to conform, and hence is specially fitted to use in naming a normative science, which the science of beauty admittedly is.

The same etymology gives the adjective "calonomic," which will enable us to distinguish the calonomic arts from the economic arts; and we can also form a personal noun "calonomist," like "economist." I doubt if I ever have occasion to use these terms myself, and perhaps others may not think them worth having; but they are at least worth considering.

I have another word to suggest of much greater importance than any of the preceding. English philosophical writers have often felt the need of a word to designate the intuitive element in perception. Locke used "sensation" for that purpose, but he also used it in other senses, thereby causing great confusion. Reid employed "perception," distinguishing it clearly from "sensation." But "perception" includes an element that is not intuitive. When I perceive the table before me, I not only perceive the thing, but also perceive that it is a table; and that involves the general idea of a table which I have acquired by generalizing from previous observations.

The Germans, as is well known, have a word for the very purpose in question, namely, *Anschauung*. I am not a German scholar; but I know the meaning of *Anschauung*, and have noticed the difficulty which English writers have had in translating it. I have read two lives of Pestalozzi, in one of which that word is rendered "sense-impression," and in the other "sense-perception"; both of which are wrong. The former is the worst, for *Anschauung* is an act, not an impression. Meiklejohn, in his translation of Kant, called it "intuition," and Max Müller called it "perception," neither of which is correct. Yet the word they wanted had been in the English language for three centuries, as it had previously been in the Latin language, and I am surprised that none of them had the wit to find it. The word I mean is "aspection." This word, with the verb "to aspect" and other cognates, was often used by English writers of the seventeenth century, but for some reason they have all passed out of use except the noun "aspect," which everyone knows. The following definitions and quotations, which I take from Dr. Murray's *English Dictionary*, will show how these words were used in the seventeenth century.

Aspect: To look at, behold, survey, watch. Gwillim, 1610: "As if they were worn by two persons aspecting, or beholding, each other." Dareil, 1625: "Those which aspect the beames of the sunne think a long time after they behold still a sunne before their eyes."

Aspection: The action of looking at, beholding, viewing. Sir T. Browne, 1646: "That this destruction should be the effect of the first beholder or depend upon priority of aspection."

Aspectable: Capable of being seen, visible. Raleigh, 1614: "God was the sole cause of this aspectable and perceivable universal."

Besides the three forms above given there is an adjective "aspectual," which will be useful in philosophy and psychology from its resemblance to

"perceptual" and "conceptual," and several other adjectives. Adverbs, which are not given in the Dictionary, can be readily formed from the adjectives, and there is a personal noun "aspector."

I propose to revive all these words for philosophical purposes. In a work on the elements of philosophy, which I have begun to write, but may never be able to finish, I am using "aspection" to denote the intuitive element in perception, defining it as the immediate knowledge of concrete things, whether those things are external or internal, material or mental. The word is the more necessary to me because I maintain the doctrine of natural realism, and could not express my views properly without it. I first thought of the word about twelve years ago, and did not know then that it had ever been used in English. I speak of aspection by touch and all the other senses as well as by sight; and also of self-aspection, which is the same as introspection.

The Germans use *Anschauung* to denote the aspection of an object by the "mind's eye" in imagination; but, if we are to follow their example, we ought to call that act imaginative aspection, and not confound it with anything so radically different as real, or intuitive, aspection. The Germans use the term *Weltanschauung* to denote the view of the world and its properties which a philosopher forms for himself. But that term is not strictly correct, for a philosopher's view of the world is partly the result of reasoning, and therefore contains an element of conception. Nevertheless, "world-aspection" has a vividness which "world-conception" has not, and, if properly understood, there is no objection to its use.

It seems to me that the importance of this group of words for philosophical purposes can hardly be overestimated, denoting, as they do, one of the most important faculties and functions of the human mind, and one for which we have hitherto had no name in English. And philosophers will not be the only persons to profit by them; writers on science, art, and education can use them also. They can be used in French and Spanish as well as in English, but not, perhaps, in Italian, which employs *aspettare* with the meaning of watch for, or wait for. In time, I hope they will all become a part of the popular speech.

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DIFFICULTIES IN PHILOSOPHICAL NOMENCLATURE.

Mr. James B. Peterson's article on "Some Philosophical Terms" is very suggestive and contains valuable hints. His propositions concerning *Anschauung* and esthetics we deem especially worthy of consideration.

As to his complaints concerning the apparent carelessness prevalent in the use of the terms experience, subjective and objective, and positive, we