

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF *Philosophy*

SIR,

In his review of my book Professor Stedman asks me a number of questions to which perhaps I may be allowed to reply.

(1) He asks whether I claim only "linguistic consistence" for some statements he quotes. The answer is that I claim that each one is logically valid in so far as they are all consistent with one another and with a great many other statements which, taken together, form my philosophical point of view. But I do not claim that they are all true in the proper sense that historical and scientific statements are, or may be.

(2) He asks whether I avoid "the vaguities and ambiguities" of the metaphysical writers I criticize, implying that I do not. But surely this question is not to be decided by merely quoting two isolated turns of phrase, since I myself expressly reject the mathematical ideal of accuracy, and claim only that my main arguments do not depend upon equivocation or other linguistic abuse. None of these arguments is examined, or even mentioned, in the course of the review.

(3) He asks "by what right" I speak of "*our* sensible experience," etc. The answer in brief is: the right to speak, since all language postulates the existence of other selves. Professor Stedman seems to hold that the public world of experience is built up by each one of us out of a previous solipsistic stage of consciousness. What 'right' has he to this underlying assumption of the sensationalist epistemology?

(4) The answer to this question is that the mind-body relation is specifically dealt with in chapter iv, section ii, §4, and that my central argument is mainly concerned with the relation of spatial to subjective or existential categories. Professor Stedman disdains this discussion, apparently on the ground that any attempt to define and distinguish the terms 'reality' and 'existence' is mere schoolboy silliness.

(5) The answer to this question is that I do not deny the far-reaching character of Descartes' scepticism. But that this scepticism was combined with a professed orthodoxy and submission of all his opinions to the authority of the Church is common knowledge.

May I add these two further comments on the review:

(1) Professor Stedman condemns my arguments by denying "that the 'reasonable' can be pursued once truth is repudiated." But how do I "repudiate truth" by trying to define the meaning of the term? And must we believe a course of action to be 'true,' if we hold it to be reasonable?

(2) He suggests that I apply the term 'metaphysics' to any philosophy I do not agree with. This is quite incorrect. I do not agree with Locke's philosophy, and I do agree with a great deal of Croce's philosophy. But the latter I call a metaphysical writer, the former I do not.

Yours faithfully,

ADRIAN COATES.

ILMINSTER,
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