



DISCUSSION (CORRESPONDENCE)

In this section we shall publish brief communications commenting on published papers or bringing up special points of interest which can be discussed by correspondence.

FLEXIBILITY OF SCIENTIFIC TRUTH

Dear Sir:

I should like to point out that the "flexibility of scientific truth," discussed in the July and October issues of this journal by Messrs. Zwicky and Marganau, is a corollary of Peirce's Synechism or Law of Continuity which was briefly explained in my article in the October issue (pp. 448ff.). That such flexibility is not at all equivalent to "universal doubt" will probably be clear to anyone who reads Peirce's argument in his *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, pars. 137, 141-175 (see also his article on "Synechism" in Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, which will be republished in the *Papers*, vol. 6, 169-173). Rather than scepticism it is perhaps even better taken as a positive belief in the variety and creativity of nature, which is too full of individuality and novelty to fit precisely any law of repetition or duplication. Mr. Marganau's example of absolute truth states no such law of nature apart from man, and is not an instance of what is usually classified as a scientific *truth*. (It is rather the merest *fact*.) Nor is it absolutely certain, since not all the copies of the July issue can be known beyond shadow of doubt to have been printed from the same type, or, upon any evidence, to be exactly alike in the respect in question.

Peirce did not deny that there are indubitable beliefs. But he showed that they are all vague, commonsense beliefs, not scientific doctrines (5.446 or *The Monist*, vol. 15, pp. 481-99—Character IV). The moment we try to give a precise analysis of anything we cannot doubt we find we *can* doubt whether we have given the right analysis. The only indubitable precision is in pure mathematics, and even there there is always

a slight chance we have made a slip. But this chance is often negligibly small, which is all we need to escape scepticism of the self-refuting kind.

CHARLES HARTSHORNE.

*Department of Philosophy
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Ill.*

SPATIAL LOCATION AND THE PSYCHO-PHYSICAL PROBLEM

My dear Editor,

I have just read Professor Feigl's *Logical Analysis of the Psycho-physical Problem* (this Journal, October 1934) with a mixed feeling of pleasure and disappointment. I was pleased to observe a logical positivist tackle a specific epistemological problem, such as the localization of a sensed patch of color (p. 440), with the promise of either analyzing the problem out of existence if nonsensical or of solving it if significant. My disappointment arose from the fact that, so far as I can see, he did not keep his promise.

In the language of pure descriptive psychology (or "data"), obviously a patch of red is "precisely where I see it" (p. 440) or exactly where it appears to be in "visual psychological space." But, to the epistemologist, the important problem is how to locate the visual sense-datum if not literally in, at least with reference to, physical space. Professor Feigl says that physical space "logically analyzed is a construction and correlation of a manifold of data given in the various psychological spaces" (p. 441), and that is the only hint he gives us as to the place of colors in physical space. Does this mean that, since we speak significantly of colors only in the "language of data," and of physical position only in the "language of constructs," we cannot even significantly ask about the position of a color (datum) in physical space (construct)? If so, I suppose the same is true of positions of "psychological spaces" in physical space. Are we to say that, for example, my psychological space is neither in nor not in physical space, since we cannot significantly even raise the question? Are only physical constructs (compounds of data, not simples) to be located in physical space? I believe that Professor Feigl answers these questions in the affirmative, as for example Phenomenologist Price does in his book entitled *Perception*. But an affirmative answer—besides conflicting with the statement that one language is translatable into the other—raises a problem, which I shall state in conclusion, in the hope that someone will lead me out of the dark into the light of understanding.