

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN MIND.

We are so constituted that when an object is brought within the scope of any of the five senses, a vivid mental presentation or appearance from it, through the operation of our nervous organization in conjunction with the mind, is flashed up within reach of the perceptive powers. We call this appearance an objective physical sensation—objective, because it occupies the same relation to the perceptive powers as the object which it presents; and physical, not because it is physical, but because it comes from a physical source. The sensation and the perception are by no means identical; the former occupies the place of the perceived, and the latter that of the perceiver. Both coexist together; and we can be conscious of the sensation only in the act of perception. External objects, in an act of perception, thus invariably present themselves to the attention on a bed of sense, or as objects or impressions in the bosom of a picture. Sensation is just that lap of colour, lap of sound, or of touch, which, bearing the object of scrutiny on its surface, intrudes itself, in the act of seeing, hearing, etc., on the notice of the perceptive powers. This kind of sensation occupies the same relation to the perceiving mind as the object which it introduces to the attention. It is, or it belongs to, the thing perceived, rather than it is, or belongs to, the perceiver. It is an object of sight rather than of feeling.

Definition.—We may then briefly define "Objective Physical Sensation" as that vivid mental presentation or appearance of or from things which, through the operation of the nervous organization or five senses, in conjunction with the mind, flashes up before the perceptive powers.

There is, however, another phase of sensation intimately associated with this, which requires to be distinguished from it, and which we call, for want of a better name, "Subjective Physical Sensation," because, though not physical, it is from a physical source. In looking, for example, at an object of sight, the objective sensation which presents it has more to do with the object than with myself. I see an object on the sense-bed of colour, but it gives me neither pain, pleasure, nor subjective sense of any kind. This sense-bed of colour is an objective physical sensation. The moment, however, that I touch a rough, hot iron, there flashes up before my attention the objective sensation rough-hot-ness, which on perception produces in myself the sensation of pain. The latter kind of sensation associates with myself the subject, rather than with the object; for it is the objective physical sensation, perceived, that produces this subjective physical sensation in myself, the perceiver. The one stands in the relation of cause, and the other of effect; but both are perceived, at the same moment, in the act of perception, the object in the first kind of sensation flashing up in perception, swathed in the feeling of the second kind of sensation. Thus, I just perceive rough-hot-ness with pain, all as one mental conception.

Definition.—We may now define Subjective Physical Sensation as that peculiar sensory or emotive state of the mind which is produced in the perception of particular objects, or objective physical sensations; and which is always perceived coexistently with these objects.*

As we have already seen, sensation and perception, though intimately associated, are very different things.

Definition.—Perception may be briefly defined as that act of the mind by which, directing its cognitive powers, through the attention, to presentations of outward things by the physical senses, or to that inwardly pertaining to itself, a correct conception of that presented is created, with assurance that it is correct.

It must be borne in mind that the thing perceived does not mean the outward object from which a presentation may come, but the very thing, in the sensation or presentation itself. Thus, I may touch a rough, hard object outside of me with my fingers; the thing that I perceive in this case is the sensation of rough-hardness, not the rough, hard thing from which the sensation comes. Again, in seeing the figure of a man before me, I do not pretend that my perception actually touches the man outside of me, but only the figure in the presentation or sensation of colour, which flashes up before my attention. So far, then, as the object perceived is concerned, there can be no ambiguity. The figure actually perceived is the one in the sensation in the mind; and therefore the object that we mean is the one actually perceived in the sensation or presentation in the mind; and being actually perceived, there can be no question that a correct conception of it is formed. It is correct, and we are so constituted that we cannot help being assured that it is correct.

Every man in the act of perception is convinced that he perceives an object, or a sense appearance in a presentation; also, that his conception of that individual appearance or object

* Objective and Subjective Physical Sensation will be discussed more fully at a more advanced stage of this work.