

REVIEWS

PHILOSOPHY

CRITICAL REALISM. By G. Dawes Hicks. (Macmillan, 15s.)

The twelve essays in this volume were written at various times between 1916 and 1934, only one of them being published for the first time now. They deal with subjects as varied as Prof. Broad's Sensum Theory, Eddington's philosophy of Nature, and the relation between Spinozan modes and Leibnizian monads. The book consists largely of acute criticism of contemporary views but is so arranged, by departing from the chronological order of the essays, that it gives a coherent picture of the author's own "point of view respecting the relation of mind to nature." Prof. Dawes Hicks appears to have been a little surprised at finding this possible.

His realism claims to be critical in the Kantian sense, for he insists on the necessity of investigating the conditions that make knowledge possible, even for those who see reason to think that "the nature of things is not to be sought primarily in the nature of knowledge." The reasons the author sees are worked out in penetrating analyses of contrary positions, unfortunately too detailed to be summarized. They are fine examples of the Socratic art of bringing on the pangs.

I have played with the idea of stringing together the bare bones of the theory underlying the essays, but any skeleton would misrepresent a book in which a theory is brought into relief more by being seen against a background with which it clashes than by any direct attempt to establish it. Prof. Dawes Hicks does not claim to prove directly that the objects of our knowledge belong to the physical world in the sense that the plain man supposes; but to hold that some of them do is more compatible with facts, and yields a more coherent theory, than to hold the opposite.

The following are perhaps the key contentions of the essays: The relation whereby physical things occasion cognitive acts is to be distinguished from the relation of being an object; the act of knowing is essentially an act of discrimination and comparison, and is directed upon an object distinct from the content of the act—hardness is not the awareness of hardness; "appearances" are characteristics, not existents constituent of things *having* characteristics; reality must not be conceived as co-extensive with existence, or even with possible existence.

Except on a few minor points the author's views are consistent with a Thomist Aristotelianism; Meinong, on whom there is an essay, has influenced him considerably, and some of Meinong's ancestors were Scholastics.

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