Meeting of the Aristotelian Society at 21, *Gower Street, W.C.*1, *on April* 4*th*, 1921, *at* 8 *p.m.*

VI. SYMPOSIUM: THE CHARACTER OF COGNITIVE ACTS.

By JOHN LAIRD, G. E. MOORE, C. D. BROAD, and G. DAWES HICKS.

I. *By* JOHN LAIRD.

I HOPE that our discussion this evening may help to make an obscure matter plainer, and I have undertaken to open it with this object singly in view, Perhaps, therefore, the Society will pardon me for making a personal explanation at the outset. I know that I have simply purloined most of my ideas on this important question, and that I have damaged them in transit and assembled them clumsily. What is more, I feel very acutely that I am confident, often, where I should be cautious, and diffident where I should be bold. It seemed to me, however, that I might achieve my aim by simply exhibiting these shortcomings. A dubious and exposed position offers a very pretty target, and I hope that the rigorous criticism which I am inviting may instruct others as well as myself.

If I were to try to convince a sceptic of the existence of cognitive acts, I should point, in the first instance, to certain palpable matters of fact, and in doing so I should also consider myself able to indicate something of the character of these acts. It is clear, I think, that a man may apprehend things which are not contemporaneous with his process of apprehending. He may think, now, of his late unhappy soldiering, or of something which, like a geometrical truth, is, strictly speaking, timeless. From this and similar evidence, it is plain that our processes of apprehending are events or parts of events. They are always temporal occurrences with a temporal date. It is also plain that these cognitive events may refer to objects

which are not themselves cognitive events at all. Indeed, as it seems to me, unless we adopt the really desperate expedient of supposing that the things of which we think are only "meanings," "aspects," or "modifications" of these cognitive events, or unless we perish miserably in the forlorn enterprise of the "correspondence theory," we are bound to report the facts in this way.

Anyone who grants me this will find it hard, I think, to refrain from assenting to certain further statements to which I now proceed. As we have seen, cognitive events are always temporal, and yet they may apprehend timeless things. Accordingly, when there may be a difference of this magnitude between the process of apprehending and the thing apprehended, it is highly improbable that there need be any close or distinctive resemblance (to say nothing of identity) between cognitive events and their objects. These drivers of fat oxen need not themselves be fat. It is clear, in brief, that a cognitive event might apprehend spatial things if it were non-spatial, or non-spatial things if it were spatial, that it need not be blue or bluish when aware of blue, and so on.

Again, when I chose certain differences in point of time to prove that, in certain cases, the cognitive event is manifestly a distinct existence from its object, I did not mean to suggest that this distinction could be found in these cases only. On the contrary, I took these instances to be peculiarly obvious cases of a quite general type of division, and I have the right to demand, at least, that if this analysis is not quite general, special reason should be shown to the contrary when it is held not to be. I see no reason for holding that act and object are not always different even when they are contemporaneous, and I should not be at all disturbed if this distinction were less obvious in some cases (say in the case of perceiving) than in some others. If anyone were to assert that this distinction holds, let us say, of judgment and not of any other mode of apprehending, I should reply that I see no reason for ascribing

the distinction to judgment and *also* for refusing to ascribe it, say, to remembering or to perceiving. There is no way of showing, I think, that the distinctive peculiarities of judging, or of any other piece of apprehending, imply such a radical and startling difference in this most crucial respect.

This information, to be sure, is exceedingly meagre. On the other hand, it is relevant. Before attempting to supplement it, however, I should, perhaps, attempt to remove certain possible misunderstandings concerning the words I am using. Let me explain, then, that by a "cognitive act" I mean, solely and quite simply, the "cognitive events" or the "processes of apprehending" previously mentioned, and that in particular I do not mean to impute "activity" to these acts in any special sense of that most disputable term. And I mean by an "object" any thinkable entity or connexion of entities—this and no more.

Any inquiry into the character of cognitive acts must consider most scrupulously whether we are directly acquainted with them, or whether we only infer their existence. In the latter case our plight, argumentatively, is very unfortunate. It is very unlikely that such an inference could ever be coercive; and if the very existence of cognitive acts is only a hypothesis divined to explain the phenomena, the ascription of a specific character to the acts is almost certainly an additional, and therefore a less probable, hypothesis. An argument of this kind, consequently, is very cumbrous and very hard to establish; and it is very ill suited to impress anyone who denies the existence of cognitive acts on the ground that they are "mystical" entities, that is to say, non-entities. I shall try to show, then, that we are acquainted with cognitive acts directly.

It is plain, surely, that there may be very different cognitive attitudes towards precisely the same object. For example, we may at different times believe, doubt, and reject precisely the same proposition. *Ex hypothesi*, these differences are not found in the object. For it is the same. These differences belong to

the cognitive attitudes and we are acquainted with them as firmly and as immediately as with the difference between hoping and fearing, or between sour and loud. If this is mystical, let us all be mystics. It is better to be mystical than blind. Again, when we are told, for example, that the clearness of an object varies with the attention that we bestow upon it, what conceivable ground would we have for asserting this (approximately) concomitant variation if we were not directly acquainted with both of the terms which vary?

To be brief, we could not recognize these differences in cognitive acts and attitudes (as we plainly do) without being able to recognize the things which are different, *i.e.*, the acts themselves and some, at least, of their features. The manner of this knowledge, to be sure, raises many controversial issues, and I would discuss these very willingly. But that would be a digression, I think. I am content if it be granted me that we are directly acquainted with our cognitive acts, at least in sufficient measure to distinguish their principal varieties.

This conclusion, I think, should not be flouted or held to be suspect even if it be true that our acquaintance with cognitive acts does not enable us to characterize them very fully. Acquaintance with anything is seldom, if ever, exhaustive acquaintance, and no one should be surprised in any given instance if his acquaintance is less penetrating than he would like it to be. To speak metaphorically, our cognitive acts might very well have a microscopic, or an ultra-microscopic, constitution; and we might have no microscopes for them—only eyes.

On the other hand, it seems reasonable to argue that if our acquaintance with cognitive acts does not reveal any of the properties which we know (on grounds of theory) to be essential for setting about any serious piece of cognitive business, then these acts, for all we can show to the contrary, may be thoroughly useless and otiose existences. Even if cognitive acts exist, I may be told, they have nothing to do with any

genuine problem in psychology or in the theory of knowledge. For, certainly, they do not execute; and they are so dim and spectral that it is impossible to say whether or not they play a part of any importance in the executive process, say, of remembering or perceiving. Indeed, it may be argued with great show of plausibility that we never use them in our explanations, and never mention them except nominally and perfunctorily. All our explanations, we are told, are in terms of objects or presentations, not of acts. Let us, suppose, for example, that I try to make clear to myself why, at this moment, I am thinking of a partial eclipse of the sun. The reason, I may say, is that the sun is setting now in a ruddy sky, and that there was a partial eclipse of the sun on the last occasion on which I observed this peculiarly vivid tint in the heavens. If that is my "explanation," where do acts come in? I see the sun at this moment because of certain physical facts and because of my nervous system, and I recall the eclipse because of the similarity between that particular object in the past and the present fact which pours into my mind. To be sure, I speak of associating these events in my mind, and there would be some point in this explanation if, so to speak, I could see what I was doing. If this act of perceiving and this act of remembering were discernibly similar (and discernibly different from other acts of perceiving and remembering), I could then give a genuine (and not merely a nominal) explanation in terms of my own associative processes. In fact, however, I am quite unable to do anything of the kind. My cognitive acts may *have* these specific differences, but if they have, I cannot discern them.

If this be the complaint, it can be met. For the principal assumption of the argument is needless. Logic does not require us to assume that cognitive acts could not perform their proper and peculiar cognitive functions unless they always had some specific qualitative property which corresponded precisely with each specific difference in the object. Our view is that when

anything not only *is* but also *appears*, there is a cognitive event which apprehends it. It does not follow, however, that there are always two acts when there are, in any sense, two objects, or that our acts have the same kind of complexity as their objects, or anything of the kind. On the contrary, cognitive events have their own sort of complexity. Our cognitive attitudes, as we have seen, may differ, although the object is the same; the same cognitive acts, perhaps, may refer to a wide range of objects having very different features, times, and places (or placelessness); and it is possible, even, that what we call "acts" are only the salient *foci* of temporary stress in a continuing process—the sort of process which we commonly call a mind.

In a word, anyone who believes that our acts have the complexity and connectedness which is needful for them in their business of knowing should not hesitate to admit that there is no way of showing by general logical principles how great, or of what kind, this complexity must be. Acts cannot be superfluous things, for the sufficient reason that nothing in the way of knowing goes on without them; and we should not be astonished if it is true, in fact, that all our explanations of association and the like deal with features of the associated objects—with hints, so to speak, on which the mind may fasten. Apprehension is impossible without an object. It tries to follow objects and to interpret them. If we are able to describe its habits when it finds and when it follows up its discoveries, we have done enough to satisfy any reasonable person.

Still, there are other difficulties. It is commonly argued, with considerable pertinence, that the line of argument I have followed hitherto speedily loses grip of realities because it sets out with far too narrow a conception of the case. The cognitive *quale* in a process of apprehending, I may be told, is, after all, only one single element in an enormously complicated psycho-physiological process, and the greater part of our evidence in these matters is derived, not from our acquaintance with

cognitive acts, but from a host of other sources. What we should try to do, therefore (it is said), is to fuse our evidence together into a single working conception, and neglect all the niceties which, as we readily observe, cannot lead us very far towards the solution of this general (and genuine) problem.

I do not wish to deny the legitimacy of this point of view. It is the right way of proceeding, I am sure, in anthropology, or in social theory, or in any other study whose primary purpose is to sweep all the relevant features of human action into its net. For my own part, however, and in this special connexion, I should like to be more patient with the facts, and, as I think, more radically empirical. This attitude surely is *also* legitimate. No one who agrees with me, I am sure, has the least desire to deny the connexion between cognitive acts and the nervous system, or, again, between cognitive acts and the semi-conscious, or the demi-semi-conscious, or the semi-demi-semi-conscious, *et id genus omne* down to plain, drab, blank unconsciousness. None of us, again, is insensitive to the fascination of the "identity-hypothesis," the "insertion-hypothesis," and the rest, but we have the right to hold that we are better able to appreciate the value and the legitimacy of these conjectures if, in the first instance, we describe the facts which we believe ourselves to have found with as much exactitude as we can attain, even to the point of refraining from speculation. If so, it does not matter whether our researches carry us a long or a short way. Perhaps, even, we should be prepared to bury hope as well as prejudice.

Plainly, there is at least one respect in which our inquiry craves for a further step towards completion along its own lines. Our acquaintance with cognitive acts also reveals part of their non-cognitive setting, and, in consistency, we must accept these tidings as well as the rest of our evidence. It is abundantly clear, in a word, that cognitive acts are not alone in their own house. They are *Erlebnisse* among other *Erlebnisse*, part of an experienced tissue in which our emotions, our moods, our acts

of will, our desires, and our strivings also occur. Whatever can be discovered from these sources, therefore, whether by acquaintance or reasonable inference, is open to us without any question in all these inquiries, and I feel that the course of my argument hitherto may have suffered in persuasiveness simply because I have tried to restrict myself to cognitive acts as rigorously as I could.

Indeed, it may even be argued that this source of evidence carries us further than most philosophers have supposed. According to an eminent modern writer, my cognitive acts are really conations. They are a kind of doing, and I am, in fact, acquainted with them in this character. What is more, this doing is a "movement" with a certain "direction," and it is woven into a pattern of other connected doings. These patterns and directions, it is true, have an air of strangeness because I am not acquainted with cognitive patterns and directions in precisely the same way as with other patterns and directions. On the other hand, they are at least spatial and they occur within my head, so that, despite the peculiarities of the way in which they come to me, I am bound to suppose that they are really neural patterns and directions occurring and revealing themselves whenever the neural process within my head becomes conscious. Hence, according to the theory, we can infer two things of immense importance. In the first place, although our cognitive acts do not differ qualitatively in referring to different objects, they have always a specific pattern which varies, appropriately, as the object varies; and this circumstance resolves one of our earlier difficulties. In the second place, just because these conscious patterns are simply and solely neural patterns which have become conscious, the whole psycho-physiology of the process is manifestly one and indivisible. And so we are at liberty to draw upon all the evidence we can collect from this most extensive source.

For myself, I must confess that this account of the facts

does not appear to agree with my own experience. I have tried very hard, but I cannot find any spatial pattern or direction in my cognitive acts; and instead of movement I find nothing but process. According to this theory, most of the movements and patterns which we all find, such as kinæsthetic sensations and certain other organic sensations in the scalp, the throat, and the glottis, are expressly stated to be different from cognitive acts since they are features of my body and not my process of apprehending anything inside my body or outside it. Here I agree. As it seems to me, "internal" sense-data have the same kind of relation to my sensing as "external" ones. I agree, also, that I can detect (although excessively vaguely) something that can be correctly described as movements *within* the head, and distinguished from the sensations on the periphery. I think, however, that the movements at the periphery are simply the continuations of the movements whose beginnings are sensed, very vaguely, within the head; and therefore I cannot believe that their status is radically different. I cannot even imagine how a movement could be cognitive (and, for that matter, aware of distant objects in time and place) so long as it is merely incipient, and yet become an unconscious, irrelevant thing as soon as it acquires sufficient momentum to reach (not distant objects), but the inner surface of the body.

Thus I feel myself compelled to forgo all the advantages that might seem to be attainable along these lines, and if I jib at this bridge I am not very likely to be satisfied with any of the clumsier ferries in the neighbourhood. Frankly, I cannot think that either the character of cognitive acts, or the character of neural process as we know it, enables us to make important deductions in psycho-physiology. Whatever inferences we draw in this connexion, I think, must be based upon similarities and connexions of function. There is no similarity of properties worth the name.

II.—*By* G. E. MOORE.

PROFESSOR LAIRD repeatedly speaks as if the very existence of cognitive acts might be doubted. And that he does so rather puzzles me, because it seems to me that if we use the term in the sense in which, as I gather, he himself intends to use it, then that there *are* entities having the property which he would express by "is a cognitive act" is not at all doubtful, and has not, so far as I know, been doubted by any one. No doubt the term "cognitive acts" may be used in other senses, such that it is really doubtful whether there are such things at all. But, in this particular sense, it seems to me that there can be no doubt at all as to their *existence*; the only possible doubt is as to their nature.

The sense in which I suppose him to intend to use the term, and in which I intend to use it, is this. The expression "is a cognizing" may, it seems to me, quite clearly be used in such a sense, that if it is true of any time that anybody is cognizing anything at that time, then it strictly follows that a cognizing exists at that time. And if we mean by "a cognitive act" absolutely no more than we mean by "a cognizing," in this sense, then it is absolutely certain that there are cognitive acts. For that there are cognizings is something which cannot be denied without denying that anybody ever does cognize. And that people do cognize is something which cannot be denied without denying that anybody ever sees, anybody ever hears, anybody ever remembers, etc., etc.; provided, again, we are careful to use "cognize" in the sense in which what is meant by "I am cognizing" is something which certainly follows from what is meant by "I am seeing," *or* by "I am hearing," *or* by "I am remembering," or by any one of numerous other expressions, instances of which can easily be given by anybody. There undoubtedly is a sense of "cognize" such that what is meant by "I am cognizing" does follow from what is meant by *each* of these different expressions, just as what is meant by

"This is coloured" follows strictly from what is meant by *each* of the expressions "This is red," "This is blue," "This is green," and a large number of other expressions, of which again anyone can easily give instances. That people do cognize (in this sense, whatever it may be) is therefore as certain as that they see, or that they hear, or that they remember, or that they do any one of a large number of other things which they undoubtedly do do. And that people do do some of these things, from their doing of which it follows that they cognize (or, if we allow for the possible existence of solipsists, that at least *one* person does), is not only indubitable, but has, so far as I know, never been doubted by anyone. The only doubts have been as to what exactly is meant by saying that they do them.

The sense in which I am going to use the term "cognitive acts" is, therefore, one in which that a cognitive act exists now is something which strictly follows from the mere fact that I am now seeing this sense-datum. What this sense is, I don't pretend to know for certain; the question what it is, is part of what I am going to discuss. But there is absolutely no doubt upon the point that it is a sense such that in *that* sense cognitive acts do exist. The sort of question as to which there is doubt can, I think, be put in this way. There is absolutely no doubt that I am now seeing this sense-datum; that is to say, that what I express by those words (whatever it may be) is something true. And it seems to me quite clear that to say that I am now seeing it is the same thing as to say that an entity which is *a* seeing of it, and which is mine, does now exist. In this particular case there is no doubt that there is *only one* such entity, which we may, therefore, call my present seeing of it. If I had been seeing double, there might have been a doubt whether there were not two seeings, each of which was a seeing of mine, and each of which was a seeing of the same sense-datum. But I am not, in fact, seeing double. Hence in this case there certainly does exist an entity which can be called my present seeing of this sense-datum. And this entity is

undoubtedly a cognitive act, in my sense of the term, just because it is a seeing. But what sort of an entity is it? That is a question which it seems to me extraordinarily difficult to answer, mainly because it is so difficult to discover exactly what it is that I am knowing when I know that I am seeing this. But I will do my best to say what sort of an entity I think it is, and why I think so.

The first and most fundamental question we have to face is, I think, the question: Is it possible that my present seeing of this sense-datum is just simply identical with this sense-datum itself? This is a question which Professor Laird raises in the general form, "Are cognitive acts always distinct existences from their objects?" and his argument in favour of the position that they always are seems to consist of two steps. He urges first that there are cognitive acts which have objects which are past at the time when the cognitive act occurs, and cognitive acts which have objects that are timeless; and that in these cases it is clear that the object in question cannot be identical with the act which is cognitive of it. And as regards this first step I am in complete agreement with him. But all that this first step proves is that, in the case of objects which are cognized *in certain ways*, the object in question cannot be identical with any act which is cognitive of it *in that particular way*. It does not show that there may not be *other* ways of cognizing, such that an object which is cognized in one of these other ways *may* be identical with an act which cognizes it in that way. A second step is required to disprove this. And Professor Laird's second step seems only to consist in the argument that there is no reason to suppose that any way of cognizing differs from any other way in such a radical respect as this. This second step, I must confess, does not seem to me very convincing. It does seem to me possible that we should have come to call both remembering and perceiving (in the sense in which we perceive sense-data) ways of "cognizing," even if it were true that, whereas nothing that is remembered is ever identical with an

act which is a remembering of it, yet every sense-datum which is perceived always is identical with any act which is a perceiving of it. What does seem to me to be true is that if, in the case of every sense-datum which is perceived we can show that it is always distinct from any act which is a perceiving of it, we may then safely conclude that the same is true of every object which is cognized in any way whatever. In other words, it is only in the case of "perceiving" in this particular sense, that it seems to me at all plausible to suppose that we have a way of cognizing, such that an object cognized in that way always is identical with any act which is a cognizing of it in that way. I shall, therefore, give the only argument which seems to me conclusive in favour of the view that a perceived sense-datum is never identical with any act which is a perceiving of it; and shall assume that what is true, in this respect, of this way of cognizing is true of all others.

My argument is this. It seems to me that, if we attend carefully enough to the facts, it is possible to discover that what we mean by "seeing" in the case of a sense-datum (and the same holds for any other species of perception in the sense we are concerned with), is something such that it cannot be true of any time that I am at that time seeing a sense-datum, unless it is true that I am *also* at the same time cognizing an entity *other* than the sense-datum in question. When I say that I am now seeing *this*, it seems to me I am certainly saying not merely that *this* exists now, but am also saying, with regard to a certain kind of character, that *this* is appearing to me to have *some* character of that kind. I am, for instance, saying with regard to the *kind* of character which we express by "is a colour," that this sense-datum is appearing to me to have *some* character of that kind—that is to say, *some* character which is a colour. One thing which distinguishes what is meant by saying of one sense-datum that it is "seen" from what is meant by saying of another that it is "heard," is, it seems to me, quite plainly this: namely, not

merely that the former actually *is* of some particular shade of colour, whereas the latter has no quality, which is a colour, at all, but only some particular quality of the kind which we express by saying that it is some kind of *sound*, but that there is some shade of colour which the former is actually *appearing to have* or *is given as having*, while of the latter we are saying similarly that there is some particular sound-quality which it is *appearing to have*. For my part, it seems to me that it may reasonably be doubted whether, in order that a sense-datum may truly be said to be "seen," it is necessary that it should actually *have* the particular shade of colour which it is given as having, or indeed should be coloured at all. But the point I want to insist on is that, even if it is necessary that it should *have* some particular shade of colour, this is certainly not sufficient: it is certainly also necessary that there should be some shade of colour which it *appears* to have. In the case of all the other senses similarly, it seems to me plainly necessary that, in order that a sense-datum of any one of them may be truly said to be perceived, there is, in each case, some kind of character, such that the sense-datum must not merely have but must *appear* to have *some* character of that kind.

But, if this is so, then it seems to me to follow that, in order that any sense-datum may be truly said to be perceived at a time, it is plainly necessary that there should hold, at the time in question, between it and some *character* (that is to say some *universal*), some relation, belonging to that class of relations which can be said to *hold at times*, or (which comes, I think, to the same thing) the class of relations which are such that the holding of any one of them between a set of entities constitutes an event or occurrence: namely, *either the* relation which we express by saying of any sense-datum A and any character p, that A is *appearing to have* p (in the particular sense in question), or *some* relation of a kind such that in saying this we are saying that *some* relation of that kind is holding between A and p. In other words, it seems

to me clear that my present seeing of this sense-datum is an event which consists in the present holding of a relation of a certain kind, between this sense-datum on the one hand and a character on the other: the relation being such that whenever a relation of that kind holds between a sense-datum and a character at a certain time, it follows that *both* the sense-datum *and* the character are (though in different ways) cognized at that time. To say that any sense-datum is seen at a time, seems to me to imply that some relation of this kind is holding at that time between it and a character; and hence the assertion that it is seen cannot possibly be identified with the mere assertion that it exists, nor any event which is a seeing of it with the sense-datum which is seen in that event. But this is the *only* cogent reason I can find for asserting that my seeing of this sense-datum is something other than the sense-datum itself. In other words, the only entity other than the sense-datum itself, which it seems to me must necessarily exist at any time at which a sense-datum is seen, is an event which consists in the holding of a certain relation between the sense-datum and some character. And since a cognitive act, which is a seeing of the sense-datum, must exist in every such case, it seems to me we must identify such a cognitive act with an event of this kind.

Of all cognitive acts without exception I want to maintain what I have maintained with regard to my present seeing of this sense-datum, in the following respect: namely that all, without exception, are events which consist in the holding of some relation of a certain kind between two or more entities, all of which are objects that are cognized in the act in question. Thus my view involves, in the first place, that in the case of no cognitive act whatever is there any object which can be properly spoken as *the* object of the act in question: every cognitive act *must* have at least two objects, and each, so far as I can see, may actually have many more than two. Language is very commonly used which implies not merely the

contradictory but the contrary of this proposition. People speak as if, not merely in the case of some cognitive acts, but in the case of every one, there were some object which could properly be spoken of as *the* object of the act in question. Professor Laird himself, in one place, uses such language, when he says "in certain cases, the cognitive event is manifestly a distinct existence from *its* object." But I do not think he would defend this language; since later on he says "It does not follow that there are always two acts when there are, in any sense, two objects," *i.e.*, he admits that, in certain cases, one and the same act *may* have two objects, and what he admits to be possible in some cases, he would, I imagine, admit to be at least *possible* in all.

But though I hold that every cognitive act is an event in which *some* of its objects are constituents, I do not hold that *every* object of a cognitive act is a constituent of the act in question. I hold, for instance, that some of the objects which I cognize are known to me only *by description*, in the special sense which Mr. Russell has given to that phrase. And in the case of objects known only by description it seems to me quite plain, that, though, so far as I can see, they may possibly in certain cases happen to be constituents of an act which is a knowing of them by description, yet they are not *necessarily* so, and in most cases are, in fact, external to the act. But it follows from the definition of knowledge by description that every act which is a knowing by description is *also* cognitive of other objects, which are *direct* objects to it; and these other objects are, I should hold, all of them constituents of the act.

This view that every cognitive act is an event in which some of its objects are constituents, and an event which actually consists in the holding of some relation of a certain kind between some of its objeects, is, I think, very commonly denied by people, who yet agree with me in holding that every cognitive act is always other than any of its objects. It is, I think,

very commonly held that nothing which is an object of a cognitive act is ever a constituent of the act in question. Thus it would be said that my present seeing of this sense-datum is something which exists at this time, but of which neither this sense-datum itself nor the character which it appears to me to have are constituents, although it is cognitive of them, and although it has a "content" corresponding to each of them. And what I want to urge against this view is simply that there is absolutely no reason to believe in the existence of any such entity. My present seeing of this sense-datum is something the existence of which follows from the fact that I am now seeing it. But, so far as I can see, the only thing which does follow from that fact is the present holding of a relation of a certain kind between this sense-datum and some character. I am willing to admit that the relation in question may possibly be one which consists in their both being related in a certain way to a third entity, which is what I am now calling "I" when I say that *I* am seeing this ; though it seems to me possible that what I call "I" is nothing other than the event which consists in the relation holding between them, on the lines of James's view that the present thought is the only thinker. But even if there is such an entity, other than the event which consists in their being related in a certain way, which is what I am calling "I," I can see no reason for supposing that this entity deserves for any reason whatever to be called "my seeing of this," or to be called a cognitive act, or that it has any "content" corresponding to the objects which I am cognizing; whereas the event which consists in the holding of a certain relation between it *and* this sense-datum *and* the character which this sense-datum appears to me to have, certainly will deserve to be called "my seeing of this sense-datum." It seems to me that Professor Laird, though he says nothing explicit on this point, must have been adopting the view that a cognitive act never has any of its objects for constituents, where he suggests that there is no reason to assume that cognitive acts

"always have some specific qualitative property corresponding precisely with each specific difference in the object." I understand him to mean that where, *e.g.*, a sound appears to me at first very loud and then to die away, there is no absolute necessity to suppose that the cognitive act in which it appears to me to be loud is qualitatively different from that in which it appears to me to be faint. But obviously, if the absolutely specific character which it appears to me to have, in the one case, and the different absolutely specific character which it appears to me to have in the other, are constituents respectively of the two acts, it *is* absolutely necessary that the two acts should be qualitatively different.

III.—*By* C. D. BROAD.

THE form of our question seems to presuppose three points as agreed by everyone: (i) That there are cognitive acts; (ii) That there is some characteristic common to all of them, but presumably not confined to them, in virtue of which all are called "acts"; (iii) That there is another characteristic common to all of them, but peculiar to them, in virtue of which they are called "cognitive" and distinguished from other kinds of "acts." Then we might ask ourselves (*a*) What is understood by an act? (*b*) What is meant by "cognitive"? Is it something that can be analysed and defined or can we merely point to typical instances of it? (*c*) Is there any reason to suppose that there are such entities as "cognitive acts" in these senses of "act" and of "cognitive"? and (*d*) If so can we find any characteristics common and peculiar to cognitive acts beside the fact that they are cognitive?

As regards (*c*) Professor Laird holds that it is possible to doubt the existence of cognitive acts, but that this doubt can be removed by reflection and argument. Dr. Moore holds that in a certain sense of "cognitive act" there can be no doubt that

such things exist. Since no sane person could doubt that cognitive acts, in Dr. Moore's sense, exist; whilst Professor Laird holds that some persons actually have doubted the existence of cognitive acts; it is pretty clear that Professor Laird does not mean by cognitive acts what Dr. Moore means by them. Now I agree with Dr. Moore that it is highly desirable to start our discussion with something that everyone agree exists. And the only way in which we can do this is to define by extension what we are going to discuss. Dr. Moore says that he means by a "cognitive act" something which exists whenever anyone sees or hears or tastes or . . . anything. If we attempt to define or describe cognitive acts by intension, *i.e.*, by stating certain characteristics which we hold to be common and peculiar to them, it is practically certain that someone or other who is as sane as we are will doubt or disbelieve that such things exist.

I think the cause of the apparent difference of opinion between Professor Laird and Dr. Moore as to the possibility of doubting the existence of cognitive acts arises simply because Professor Laird defines them by intension and Dr. Moore by extension. It is perfectly obvious that Professor Laird has at the back of his mind some definition of "acts" by intension, and he holds that some people—I think, *e.g.*, he has the Behaviourists and the Neutral Monists in view—would not agree that anything in the world answers to his definition. If these people could prove their contention to him I take it that Professor Laird would say: "Then there are no cognitive *acts* in my sense of the word." The unfortunate thing is that in his paper Professor Laird never has stated what he understands by a cognitive act; he has told us various things which he believes about them, but has not made it clear whether all of them are additional *truths* about cognitive acts in his sense, or whether some of them are part of what he *means* by a cognitive act.

We are, therefore, brought to our question: (*a*) What is under-

stood by an act? Professor Laird seems to me to have a good excuse in the customary usage of language for thinking that there is a more or less agreed definition of "acts" in the sense in which we talk of "mental acts." And he is justified by historical facts in thinking it possible that some persons might doubt whether anything answers to that definition. Of course Dr. Moore has a right to define what *he* is going to mean by cognitive acts so long as he keeps to his definition throughout his argument, as he does. And everyone admits that cognitive acts exist if the phrase "cognitive act" is just a general name for seeings, hearings, smellings, rememberings, etc. But most people would call these admitted entities "cognitions," and would hold that to call them "acts" is to go further and to imply that they can and must be analysed in a certain special way or set of ways. The general mode of analysis presupposed by the use of the word "act" would seem to be somewhat as follows. Taking "my seeing x" as a typical cognition, it is called an act if, and only if, it be analysable into a mental term, a certain dyadic relation, and x. There is a good deal of ambiguity as to how this analysis is to be performed, and this leads to certain further ambiguities in the use of the word act. Some people would analyse "my seeing x" into (I)—seeing—(x). In that case, so far as I can make out, the whole complex bound together by the relation of *seeing* might be called an act. On that analysis and with this sense of "act" the object x is a constituent of the act. But, with the same analysis, I think that some people would call the relation of seeing an act, and not the complex as a whole. With this sense of act the object x is not a constituent of the *act*, though it is a constituent of the *cognition* which is "my seeing x." Again, others would analyse the same cognition into (my seeing)—of—(x); and, of course, there might be endless further differences of opinion as to how, if at all, the apparently complex entity "my seeing" is to be analysed. On this analysis I understand that the entity called "my seeing" would count as the act. And on this view again the object x

would not be a constituent of the act, though it would be a constituent of the cognition. The point of agreement seems to be that we must only talk of cognitive *acts* if a cognition can be analysed in some way or other into two terms, one of which is mental, and a dyadic relation between them. On one analysis the act is either the cognition as a whole or the relating relation of this whole. On another analysis the act is the mental term in the cognition. And it is only on the first of these three alternatives that the object is a constituent of the act. Now, I cannot be certain which of these alternatives Professor Laird has in mind. But I am sure that he takes the possibility of *one* of these modes of analysis as the definition of an act; and, if all such analyses of cognition should turn out to be impossible, he would, I think, say: "Of course, there are *cognitions*, but there are no cognitive *acts*." He would, I take it, say that, if Dr. Moore's analysis of perception be right, then perceptions are not acts. It seems pretty clear from some of Professor Laird's statements that he tacitly rejects one of the three alternatives that I have mentioned, viz., the view which identifies the cognitive act with the cognition. For this view makes the object a constituent of the act; and he apparently rejects this by implication when he says that the same act can have different objects. So I suppose that he either holds that cognition can be analysed into a mind and an object, and calls the relation between the two a cognitive act; or holds that cognition can be analysed into a mental term which is not a mind (something such as "my seeing") and an object, and calls this peculiar mental term an act.

If I am right the statements that Professor Laird makes about cognitive acts will fall into two classes. Where he is trying to prove against possible objections that cognitive acts exist, what he is really doing is trying to show that cognitions must be analysed in one of the ways that agrees with his tacitly assumed definition of acts. Elsewhere, presumably, he is stating further propositions which he believes to be *true* of all

cognitive acts, but not to be a part of what he *means* by them.

Dr. Moore is surprised that Professor Laird should speak as if to every cognitive act there were some one thing that could be called *the* object of it. But this is not at all surprising if Professor Laird tacitly assumes a definition of act such as I have been suggesting. For an essential part of that definition is the analysis of all cognitions into a mental part and a dyadic relation between it and what is called *the* object. Even if this object be complex, it must be the complex as a whole, and not its separate parts, to which the mental factor is related in the cognition; for otherwise the cognition would not be a dyadic complex, and therefore would not answer to the definition of an act. Thus anyone who believes that cognitions are capable of the sort of analysis that is implied by the phrase "cognitive act" will have to hold that there is something that can be called *the* object of the cognitive act.

Professor Laird's arguments to prove that there are cognitive acts consist in showing that in many cases propositions are admitted to be true of cognitions which are incompatible with propositions that are admitted to be true of the objects cognized. *E.g.*, the cognition is mental, whilst the objects may be physical. Again, the cognitions are in time whilst the objects may be timeless or may have a different date. The first argument does not seem to me to be a very strong one, since it is very difficult to be sure what we mean by physical and mental, and it is therefore uncertain whether the same entity might not be both at once. It is harder to believe that one and the same entity could be both present and past. I know, of course, that in modern physics such things are said, and said truly, of events; but this would not invalidate Professor Laird's argument, because such statements are only made true and intelligible by pointing out that when an event is both present and past it is so with respect to two different sets of events. I should therefore agree that these arguments, as a whole, do

prove with practical certainty that cognitions and the objects cognized are not in general identical. I agree, of course, with Dr. Moore that they do not prove or strongly suggest that in no case can the two be identical. But, even if they did prove this, it were a very short step on the way to proving that they are analysable in the mode required by the act theory. It is *necessary* for this theory to prove that cognition and object differ; since it needs to show that a cognition is a complex of which the cognized object is a term, and this is impossible if the cognition be the cognized object. But it is certainly nothing like *sufficient*. If the cognition be a complex of *any* structure whatever with the cognized objects as terms in it, some things will be true of the cognition which are not true of the cognized objects. We are, therefore, in no way tied down to the particular sort of structure assumed by the act theory, viz., a pair of terms, one of which is mental, the other of which is the cognized object, and a dyadic relation between them.

Granted that there is nothing in mere incompatibility of properties to force us to this analysis, is there anything in the particular properties mentioned by Professor Laird which will necessitate the act theory? Let us consider them in turn: (α) The cognition is mental and the objects may be physical. Does this prove that the cognition must contain a term which is mental? Surely not. Why should not a complex as a whole have the property of being mental though it consists of a set of related terms none of which is mental, just as an army has certain properties that belong to none of the soldiers in it? (β) The cognition may in some sense be present whilst some or all of its objects are past. Now it does seem hard to believe that a complex could as a whole be present while some of its terms were past. And this does naturally suggest that it is not really the cognition, in our sense, that is present. It suggests that the cognition is a complex which cannot strictly be called, as a whole, present or past; but that it is analysable into a present part—the cognitive act—and a past part—the remem-

bered objects. Thus the facts of memory do rather favour the act analysis for that special kind of cognition. Now, if we are forced to this sort of analysis by the facts, it seems to me that we shall be forced to a certain definite one of the various act theories: (i) We must reject the theory that act = cognition, because here it was the very fact that something seemed to be present and this something could not be the cognition as a whole,—containing, as it does, a past constituent,—that forced us to analyse the cognition into act and object. (ii) If it is to be the act that is present, it is difficult to see that the act can be the relation between me and the remembered object. If "my remembering x" is to be analysed into "(I)—remembering—(x)" the relation of remembering stretches from present to past, and it is difficult to see why it should be called a *present* act. Thus (iii) if the facts of memory do force us to the act theory at all they would seem to force us to the particular form of the theory which analyses "my remembering x" into (my remembering)—of—(x), and counts the present act as the entity called "my remembering." The question still remains however: Do the facts of memory force on us an analysis in accordance with the act theory? I think it is certain that they do not. In a memory cognition, if it be granted that the objects remembered are constituents of it, we must grant that something is present and something is past. And it is no doubt difficult to believe that a complex whole could be present if any of its terms were past. It is therefore plausible to suppose that such cognitions are complexes containing some terms that are present and others that are past, related by some sort of relation that stretches across time. But it does not in the least follow either that this relation is dyadic or that the term in such a complex which is present is itself mental. As before it may be the complex as a whole, and that alone, which is mental. So the facts about memory do not force us to any form of the act theory; though, if we choose to adopt the act theory,

they suggest one form of it much more strongly than the others.

(γ) The next special difference between an act and its object is said to be that the one is a particular event with a date in time whilst the other may be a universal. *E.g.*, at a certain moment I can think about the isosceles triangle and its properties. I take it that the argument here again is that this proves that the cognition must be analysable into a constituent which is particular and a constituent which is timeless and universal, and that the former is an act. As before I agree that the facts probably do force us to recognize that the cognition is a complex in these cases, and that some of its terms are particular and others universal. But I do not see that they force us to suppose that any one of the particular terms is as such mental, or that the relation which binds the terms together into the cognition of a universal must be dyadic.

To sum up. Professor Laird's facts and arguments do strongly suggest that certain cognitions are what I might call "heterogeneous complexes;" but they seem to me to throw no light whatever on the constitution of these complexes, *i.e.*, on the nature of their relating relations. And they give no reason to think that one of the terms in such a complex is mental, or in fact that anything is mental except the whole complex cognition. Thus they do not appear to me to prove the existence of cognitive acts in the sense defined by me, and in the sense which it seems to me that Professor Laird tacitly assumes.

I now turn to certain further statements which Professor Laird makes about cognitive acts. He says that they can be detected by introspection, though he argues quite consistently that this may give us but vague information about their details. And he says that if they were not known by introspection the belief in their existence would be rash and precarious. Now my own view is that acts in Professor Laird's sense are not known by introspection, that the belief

in them is founded on inference, and that it is rash and precarious. It seems to me that if anything is known by introspection it is cognitions, and that we do not know by introspection that cognitions are analysable in either of the ways presupposed by the act theory. If this be so, introspection will not tell us either that cognitions as such are acts, or that they contain certain parts which are acts, or a certain dyadic relation which is an act. It is commonly said that the difficulty of introspecting acts is that acts seem to be "transparent" and that when you look for an act you only find objects. Now I take the truth of this to be that the real objects of such introspection are cognitions, and that these are complexes containing certain non-mental terms. What we become aware of by introspection is primarily the complex, and always at the same time the non-mental terms in it, which are called the objects of the cognition. But we do not seem to become aware of any mental term in such complexes, nor at all distinctly of the relating relation. This of course does not prove that in fact cognitions do not contain a mental term nor that their relating relation is not in fact dyadic. But I must confess that my own introspection leaves me absolutely ignorant on this matter. Certainly in introspection I become aware of *something* mental; but my own introspection does not tell me that this is a certain part of the cognition rather than that it is the cognition as a whole. As far as introspection is concerned I see nothing to choose between Professor Laird's tacitly assumed view of the structure of perceptions and Dr. Moore's quite different view. I do not in the least believe that the act analysis is known by introspection; it is just the simplest sort of analysis, and we naturally prefer to start by trying what can be done with two-term relations before passing to more complex theories. If any decision can be made between the innumerable theories of the structure of cognitions which could be put forward and which would all be equally compatible with anything that introspection tells us, I

imagine that it must be made on epistemological grounds. Examples of what I mean are presented by Mr. Russell's penultimate (unless it be now antepenultimate) theory of judgment, and by the theory of perception put forward by Dr. Moore in the present discussion. Introspection does not tell us in the least whether judgment involves a dyadic or a polyadic relation, but the former theory does seem to lead to difficulties about truth and falsehood which the latter in some measure avoids. These epistemological considerations are, I imagine, the sole grounds on which we could choose between a theory of the structure of judgment such as Russell's and a simple-minded act theory such as that of Meinong and his pupils. The same remarks seem to me to apply to Dr. Moore's present view about the structure of perceptions. Introspection seems to have nothing to say one way or the other, and I imagine that the main motive of Dr. Moore's present theory is that he hopes that it will overcome certain difficulties about the nature of the external world and our supposed knowledge of it which are very pressing on the view that sensation is analysable into a two-term relation between our minds, or some state of our minds, and a sensum.

Professor Laird gives other reasons to prove that we do know cognitive acts by introspection. One is that we recognize that we can have different attitudes towards the same object. Evidently his view is that this implies that in the cognition the attitude and the object are distinct factors and that the attitude can be introspectively recognized. But obviously the facts are equally compatible with the view that all that is ever introspected is the cognition as such, that cognitions consist simply of their objects bound together by certain characteristic relations, that the same objects may be bound together by different sorts of relation, and that the different complexes thus constituted appear different to introspection. They do not necessitate the view that the attitude is a peculiar kind of mental term related dyadically to the object, or that it is a

dyadic relation between the mind and the object. And one or other of these views seems to me to be implied by Professor Laird's use of the word "act." My own view of the whole matter is that I am very doubtful whether there is anything common and peculiar to what we call cognitions, except the fact that they are cognitive. And this characteristic, I think, cannot be defined or analysed but can only be illustrated by example. Each special kind of cognition has to be treated on its merits; most of them are almost certainly complex; but introspection gives us practically no guide as to their structure, and nothing but epistemological considerations will enable us to decide between alternative theories about the structure of each kind of cognition. It is probable that even such considerations only cut out a few alternative theories and leave numberless others standing.

Dr. Moore would go one step further than this and hold that probably *all* cognitions are complex. His position is that what he calls "perceptions" are the only cases that could reasonably be supposed not to be complex, and that even in this case we can show them to be heterogeneous complexes containing at least a sensum and a universal related by a certain peculiar relation. Probably the strongest case that could be taken of a cognition that might plausibly be identified with its object is a bodily feeling like headache or toothache. To most of us it does seem that a red patch and the seeing of a red patch are different, but it seems more doubtful whether there is any difference between a toothache and the feeling of a toothache. It is perhaps worth while to remark that just in proportion as doubt becomes possible on this point we hesitate to use the word "cognition" and prefer to talk of "feeling." I cannot adequately discuss Dr. Moore's extremely interesting theory of the proper analysis of perceptions, which involves the view that there is a fundamental kind of relation between a sensum and a universal, denoted by the phrase "appearing to have some specification of the universal." If there be such a relation it seems

likely that it must be at least triadic, if two people can be aware of the same sensum at once. For a sensum cannot appear to me to have two different specifications of the same universal at the same time, whilst if you and I ever are aware at once of the same sensum, it can appear to me to have one shade of colour, *e.g.*, and to you to have a different shade. Dr. Moore argues that on his analysis, and on that alone, it is certain that a sensum differs from the seeing of it. His argument appears to be that on his view the seeing of x contains both x and a universal, whilst the mere existence of x only involves x. This does not seem to me conclusive, but I may have misunderstood him. I suppose that any sensum, in fact, has some qualities. If so, the existence of x does involve a relation of "participation," or whatever you choose to call it, between x and certain universals. It is a different relation from that of "appearing to have," but it *is* a relation between x and a universal. Thus, even if the seeing of x were identical with the existence of x, the seeing of x would be a complex containing x and certain universals. Hence, to prove that the seeing of x is such a complex does not suffice to prove that it differs from the existence of x. The proof of difference must depend, so far as I can see, on the proof that "appearing to have" is a different relation from "having," and that the former characterizes perceptions, whilst the latter characterizes sensa. But I am very probably talking nonsense, and I have no doubt that Dr. Moore will correct me.

IV.—*By* G. Dawes Hicks.

We are supposed to be discussing the *character* of cognitive acts, but so far the discussion has largely turned on the question whether there are such things. Dr. Moore has, however, attempted to determine what it is that we are entitled to describe as a cognitive act. If I correctly follow his acute and

interesting analysis of perception, I am prepared to go a long way with him. He employs phraseology, it is true, which I should not employ. Where, for example, he speaks of a "sense-datum," I should speak, in conformity with ordinary usage, of a sense object, and the characteristics of such object I should not call objects; but this after all is a matter of little consequence. I have consistently maintained that in an act of perception the object is always complex; that it consists not only of parts but of qualities or properties which are related to it in a specific manner; and this, I take it, is what Dr. Moore is also saying when he insists that "every cognitive act *must* have at least two objects, and each may actually have many more than two." I do not imagine he would contest Professor Broad's assertion that "any sensum has, in fact, some qualities," or that the existence of a sensum involves a relation between it and certain universals. I agree with Dr. Moore likewise that in order that a sense-datum may be truly said to be perceived there is some kind of character which it must not merely have, but must *appear* to have; and I regard his strong insistence upon this point as by far the most significant feature of this symposium. Once more, I do not imagine he would dispute Professor Broad's contention that "appearing to have" is a different relation from "having"; although I, at any rate, would disclaim what Professor Broad seems to think is implied that while the former relation characterises perceptions it is the latter which characterises sense. I see no ground for holding that there is any mode of sense-apprehension other than perception.

My analysis begins to differ from Dr. Moore's when he proceeds to identify a cognitive act with an event which consists in the holding of a certain relation between the sense-datum and some character. In short, I am one of those people to whom he alludes who hold that nothing which is an object of a cognitive act is ever a constituent of the act in question. And, before dealing with the criticism contained in the last

paragraph of his paper, I had better perhaps re-state as concisely as I can the position to which he takes exception.

We are agreed that in the whole situation we are calling perception the cognitive act is always other than any of its objects. But, unlike Dr. Moore, I think this implies that the cognitive act is one term of the relation, and that this term, no less than what I should describe as its object, is an existent entity—whether a state or phase of an entity called "I" or a "thought," in the sense in which James asserts that the present thought is the only thinker, seems to me, so far as the issue before us is concerned, immaterial. Both these entities—the mental term and the object—not only exist but have some qualities or characters,—what it has been customary to name "content." And, in perception, what happens, so far as I can discover, is that the mental term is engaged in discriminating the features or content of the object, and in thus becoming aware of those features or of that content. It is, it seems to me, in virtue of its fulfilling the function of discriminating the content of the object that one is entitled to describe the mental term as an "act." The discrimination attained is, however, never complete; and, consequently, it is, at the best, only a portion or fragment of the content of the object that "appears" or is apprehended. This portion or fragment I denote, for want of a better name, as the "content apprehended." The content of the act, on the other hand, is not apprehended in the same way; it is "lived through," or *erlebt*, or, in Alexander's phraseology, "enjoyed." Hence the difficulty of deciphering it, especially at the incipient stage; but what it becomes as the function of discriminating proceeds may, I think, be designated, not inappropriately, as *awareness* of the content apprehended. I should like to point out that in all these connexions one is using the phrase "content" quite consistently. The "content" of the object consists of the qualities or characters of the object; the "content" of the mental act consists of the quality or character of that act; and the "content apprehended" consists of such

qualities or characters as the object appears, either truly or falsely, to have.

Dr. Moore's main objection to an analysis of this kind I understand to be that he can find no reason for asserting the existence of what I have been calling the content of the mental act; that, indeed, a mental act of the nature I have indicated, would be a superfluous addition to his own simpler rendering of the facts. I can scarcely expect to convince Dr. Moore; but I may perhaps bring out the sort of reasons that convince me by stating very briefly why I cannot accept what I take to be his account of awareness. (*a*) The sense-datum and the character it appears to have are both described by Dr. Moore as "objects." Now, "object" is a correlative term; where, then, in the analysis which he offers, is the term with which it is correlative? My seeing of a sense-datum that appears to have the character of red and my seeing of a sense-datum that appears to have the character of blue have evidently a feature, the seeing, in common. And the one common feature which Dr. Moore's analysis seems to reveal is the holding of a relation between the sense-datum in each case and the character which it appears to have. But, in the first place, I have failed to discover in what he says any argument which tends to show, even remotely, that the holding of this relation *is* the seeing; and, in the second place, I would urge, that the holding of this relation is no less an object, in Dr. Moore's sense, than either the sense-datum or the character, so that it would seem, after all, that, according to the view in question, a cognizing is identical with one of the objects cognized by it. (*b*) It seems to me that a "way of appearing" presupposes, as the ground of its possibility, not only something that appears but also some entity, other than itself, *to* which it appears,*

* *Cf.* Lotze, *Mikrokosmos*, 7, ii. "Um verständlich zu sein, setzt der Begriff der *Erscheinung* nicht nur ein Wesen, welches erscheint, sondern gleich unerlässlich ein zweites voraus, dem diese Erscheinung zu Theil wird.... Und sie ist nie etwas Anderes als das Bild welches diese auffasende Wesen sich seiner eignen Natur gemäss von dem andern entwirft."

or, as Professor Laird expresses it, "when anything not only *is* but also *appears*, there is a cognitive act which apprehends it." The cognitive act cannot, I should argue, consist merely in the holding of a relation between a sense-datum and a character which it appears to have, because a sense-datum cannot *appear* to have a character save to a cognitive act. The cognitive act must first be there before there can be any appearing. Earlier in his paper Dr. Moore himself uses language which seems to imply as much. He speaks repeatedly of a sense-datum as appearing "*to me*" to have some character of a certain kind. It is true that in the later paragraph, to which I am now referring, he tells us that if, as he admits *may* be the case, both the sense-datum and the character it appears to have are related to a third entity, the entity called "I," he cannot find any reason for supposing that this entity deserves to be designated "my seeing of this sense-datum." But what can be meant by a sense-datum appearing *to me* except that *I* am the entity that, in these circumstances, is seeing? If a relation holds between the entity called "I" *and* this sense-datum *and* the character which this sense-datum appears *to* the entity called "I" to have, is not that virtually admitting that the entity called "I" *is* the entity which is aware of the sense-datum and the character which it appears to have? A something labelled "I" that is distinct from and other than the acts which we invariably attribute to what we call "I" would be, so far as I can make out, a perfectly barren and otiose entity, in the existence of which we have no reason whatsoever for believing. (*c*) The way in which one awareness is related to another in so-called inner experience is totally different from the way in which one sense-datum with its characters is related to another in so-called outer experience. There is, for instance, nothing in the latter, so far as one can discover, corresponding to the links of association and suggestion that hold in the former. In that portion of the *Principles of Psychology* where he propounds the

view that the present thought is the only thinker, James calls attention to the perplexities that result from confusing between "the thoughts themselves taken as subjective facts, and the things of which they are aware," and points out that there is an "affinity" between one thought and another that has absolutely no counterpart in the comings and goings and contrasts of the things thought about.

If what I have said under (*b*) has legitimacy, I believe a consequence follows which indicates, I am inclined to think, the fundamental difference between Dr. Moore's view and the view which I hope Professor Laird shares with me. I believe it follows that the way in which a thing appears is not itself an existent, in the sense in which either the thing or its characters may be said to be existents. If there be any contrast between the characters which a thing has and the characters which it appears to have, there can, so far as I can see, be only one ground on which it could be claimed that the latter are distinct and separate existents,—on the ground, namely, that appearances are effects resulting from the relation of the actual characters of the thing either to the bodily organism or to the mental entity, whatever it is. I can, however, find no reason whatever for such a hypothesis; on the contrary, there seem to me to be very strong reasons against it. Dr. Moore regards it as doubtful whether, in order that a sense-datum may be truly said to be seen, it is necessary that it should actually have the particular shade of colour which it appears to have, or indeed should be coloured at all. If, then, A appears to *have* the character *p*, and if *p* be an existent, it is obvious, I take it, that the relation which A appears to have to *p*—the relation, namely, of *having*—is not an actually existent relation; and that, if A is related to *p* at all, the actual relation is different from what it appears to be. In any case, therefore, Dr. Moore would have to allow that there are some appearances which are not existents; and I do not see what intelligible explanation he could give of these on the view he has presented to us. Moreover, if *some*

appearances be not existents, is it not, following a line of reasoning which he himself adopts, at least *possible* that all are not?

If the argument (*c*) be valid, it can, I should suppose, hardly be disputed that a cognitive act must have a specific "content," or character, of its own. The conception that blue is a constituent or part of the awareness of blue, or that what is attended to is a constituent or part of the attending, is, I confess, a conception to which I can attach no definite meaning. I should have thought that even if a complex of non-mental terms and relations gives rise, as Professor Broad suggests, to the property of being mental, yet still the relation of this "property" to its objects would *not* be the relation of whole to parts. And when Dr. Moore contends that there is "absolutely no reason to believe in the existence" of a cognitive act's content, I should reply that there is, in the first place, the same kind of reason which he gives for believing in the existence of the entities which he takes to be cognized in perception,—namely, that, if we attend carefully enough to the facts, it is possible to discover that what we mean by the awareness of x is not something of which x itself is a constituent, however true it may be, and is, that x is related to the awareness. But I should urge, in the second place, that the psychological facts of association, assimilation, retentiveness, memory, and imagination, to say nothing of the considerations which James emphasises in his chapter on *The Stream of Thought*, supply reasons in abundance for the view which Dr. Moore would so summarily dismiss.

Professor Broad allows that if the phrase "cognitive act" be just a general name for seeings, hearings, smellings, rememberings, etc., there can be no question as to the existence of "cognitive acts." He thinks, however, that most people would call these admitted entities "cognitions," and would hold that to call them "acts" is to go further. But would they? It would seem, at any rate, a curious perversity of

ordinary speech that the active participle should thus be consistently employed and yet without the implication that the entities so denoted are "acts." And why "cognitions'? The substitution looks suspiciously like getting over the force of an admission by what Mr. Bradley has somewhere decried as "the sliding use of a word" The woeful ambiguity of the term "cognitions" is only too strikingly illustrated by Professor Broad's own employment of it in his subsequent argument. It signifies for him sometimes cognizings, sometimes objects cognized, sometimes complexes comprising both, and sometimes complexes which as wholes are cognizings. And the consequence is that for Professor Broad the only sense of the term "cognitive acts" in which there can be no doubt that such things exist is a sense in which it is doubtful whether these things are "acts."

Three alternative modes of analysing "cognitions" are indicated by Professor Broad as possible for those who are serious with the notion of cognitive acts; and he is sure that Professor Laird takes the possibility of *one* of these modes of analysis as the definition of an act in this context. I cannot speak, of course, for Professor Laird, but I am fairly certain that, so far as he is concerned, no trouble need have been expended upon the first two of them. Professor Laird will agree, I think, (i) that the object is not a constituent of the act, and (ii) that, although there must be a relation, or relations, between the act and the object, the act itself is not a relation. But I should equally reject the third alternative according to which "cognition can be analysed into a mental term which is not a mind (something such as 'my seeing') and an object," the peculiar mental term being an act. Doubtless the cognitive act is not, even during the time of its occurrence, the whole mind; but those who maintain what Professor Broad calls the "act theory" would certainly say that it is a state or condition of the mind, and I do not know that any one of them has ever supposed that the mind is one thing and its states or conditions

something separate from it. That, however, is not all. Professor Broad repeatedly represents those whom he is opposing as pledged to the position that a cognition is to be analysed into two terms, one of which is mental, and a dyadic relation between them. Even if the object cognized be complex, it must, he urges, be the complex as a whole, and not its separate parts, to which the mental factor is related in the cognition; and it must be so because otherwise the cognition would not be a dyadic complex, and would not, therefore, answer to the definition of an act. And it would seem to be his main objection to the "act analysis" that a simple dyadic relation is not adequate to the facts. I should contend, however, not only that the view I am defending is uncommitted to any such assumption but that a simple dyadic relation is inconsistent with that view. The object of every act of cognitive apprehension is, I have urged, *always* complex; the act is an act in virtue of fulfilling the function of discriminating the parts and characteristics of that complexity. How, then, can it be other than a polyadic relation that subsists between the act and the object?

Professor Laird raises the question whether we are directly acquainted with cognitive acts, or whether we only infer their existence. I agree in the main with what he says on the subject; but, in view of Professor Broad's remarks, it is important, I think, to emphasise that direct acquaintance with cognitive acts is, in any case, essentially different from introspection of them. We may be conscious of (or, more accurately, conscious in and through) mental acts without making them objects of inner observation. The latter process no doubt implies the former as its indispensable condition; but it is no more identical with it than in the case of outer observation, the observing is identical with the object observed. That we do experience mental acts directly I take to be indisputable; it is not only in introspection that we become aware of something mental, we become aware of something

mental in and through being aware at all. But it seems to me a total mistake to say that in this primary awareness, the awareness is "identified with its object." No; primary awareness, in the sense of feeling or *Erlebnis*, has no object; its being consists simply in the awareness. When, however, we make, or attempt to make, this primary awareness an object of inspection, when, that is to say, we direct another mental act, an act of attention, upon it, then, of course, we are seeking to discriminate its features, and are bringing to bear upon it general ideas which may or may not be appropriate; so that in regard to it, as in regard to all other objects, there arises the contrast between the character which it has and the character which it appears to have. Now, I take this to be the explanation of what Professor Broad declares is the result of his own efforts at introspection. He has framed a hypothesis of the nature of mental acts; and, imbued with that hypothesis, it appears to him that he is not aware of any mental term in his cognitions. Yet he admits that "to most of us it does seem that a red patch and the seeing of a red patch are different"; and I presume he will also allow that ordinarily an individual would have little hesitation in reporting that the latter is a process taking place "within his head," while the former is an object outside his head. It becomes, then, a question whether in a matter of this sort, the unsophisticated observer is not the more reliable witness of the two.