V.—KNOWLEDGE AS PRESENTATION.

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THE phrase "presentation-continuum" represents one of the most valuable suggestions in psychology, and one whose values we are still far from having worked out to the full. Especially, it would seem, do we fail to make full use of it in that part of psychology which ought to overlap logic and the theory of knowledge. Yet, the more we explore the conception, the greater bearing does it seem to have on several interesting problems belonging to these sciences; and I propose in the following pages to take a text to which most English psychologists at any rate seem to have no objection, and see how much logical interest can be got out of it. The text is, "Knowledge consists of the presentation of reality in consciousness".

I. Let us take first the term in this which is most obviously momentous for epistemology. We say quite lightly that *reality* is presented, and I suppose that few modern philosophers would explicitly deny the statement; yet our philosophy is apt now and then from sheer habit to slip back into ways of speaking which are inconsistent with it. If what is presented to us is always reality, we must assume no shifting world of intermediaries between us and the real. What meaning, then, can we usefully give to the word "idea"? The answer comes from those psychologists who protest every now and then that an idea is not a thing but a process or event. The primary fact is the presentation of reality; an "idea" will be simply the event of presentation. Its "meaning" will be just that about it which is interesting, *viz.* the reality which is being presented. And the phrase "idea of a thing" becomes a general name for the presentation of that thing in thought-consciousness. "The idea of a Utopia is very old" means that a Utopia (not the idea of it) was first presented in thought a long time ago. "The idea of Charles I. as a successful ruler is absurd" means that these two realities can never be so presented together as to work harmoniously with each other and with the other realities of history and political science.

Reality, then, is not our idea, simply because it cannot be the event of its own presentation. Our ideas are not reality, but only for the same reason. Only with the greatest care as to the meaning of our words may we speak of an idea as a "symbol," or talk of "attributing our idea to reality," or even of "identifying" them or "affirming" the one of the other. In a judgment, for instance, not only is the subject always reality but the predicate is reality too, and the only idea in the case is the judgment itself, the act of apprehending the real.

II. "Knowledge *consists* in presentation." This emphasises the warning of the last paragraph. All we do is to see; judgment is not "the reaction of the mind upon presented contents" in any sense more mysterious than that in which seeing is the reaction of the eye upon the field of sight. It is true that every mental process has its inner side of activity as well as its outside of objectivity; a dead eye cannot see, and without being active I can know nothing. But the activity clothes itself only in the presented contents, and in further streams of these. Nowhere does the most elaborate investigation become anything else than this. Theories and suggestions are made, for instance, but made only in the presentation-field. I do not shape hypotheses behind my back and then bring them out to try on;—I find them in the pattern of what is before me,—literally "invent" them.

III. A small word in the text deserves notice here. Things are presented *in* consciousness. We get too many odd notions of faculties and substances if we speak without due care of an object "of" apprehension or of judgment, or of a thing as presented "to" sense or "to" thought. It is really presented "in" sense and thought, and is an object, not to my consciousness, but to me.¹

IV. "Reality is presented in consciousness." Not in sense only or in thought only, but in all the presentation-fields we have; the real appears in sense, in memory, in expectation, imagery, imagination, intuition, and any other sort of presentation that may be found. Every one of these

¹Dr. Stout (*Analytic Psychology*, i, p. 47) seems to deny this. "When we say that it (an object) is presented, it is better to say that it is presented *to* consciousness, than that it is presented *in* consciousness." This statement, however, is made in opposition to the subjective idealism which describes the object as a mere experience of the percipient's, and I do not think that Dr. Stout would have reason to object to my own use of 'in'. My account would conform perfectly to the first part of his sentence. "We may say, if we choose, that the object itself is *presented*, but we must not say that it is a presentation." His use of "presentation" is rather different from mine, but the statement is true for both meanings.

departments gives the thing room for special manifestations of its nature. Just as the phrase "idea of" an object is a general name for the happenings in thought-presentation which occur when the laws of the object's nature work there, so "the remembrance" of it and "the sensation" of it are names for its appearance in memory-presentation and sense-presentation. All the fields are so closely connected that when an object appears in sense, for instance, it is almost certain to appear elsewhere at once,—in sense-imagery of other kinds, in thought, memory, or expectation. The touch of a friendly cat in a dark room is likely to call up the visual image of it and a good deal of knowledge about it. So strong is the tendency to expand a presentation in this way that when our ignorance prevents the expansion our discomfort may be extreme.

In phrases which may mislead, but which if they do not mislead are excellent, such expansion has been called "interpretation," and the matter presented in the higher fields has been said to be the "meaning" of what is presented in the lower. The furry touch has acquired meaning when we have learnt to expand the presentment over all the fields which are necessary to give us an adequate view of "the cat". We are usually a good deal more interested in the higher extensions than in the simple object with which we began, and in this rather peculiar but interesting meaning of the phrase the sensation may be said to "stand for" or "symbolise" what follows; to be interesting in a "representative" capacity. Acquirement of meaning means increase of possibilities. The law of the thing's nature comes to act more freely and richly; the experience becomes developable, can be rolled out into many others. A small initial presentation comes to stand for more in the sense of deepening its aspect of promise; we see in it the beginnings of much potential experience.¹

The word "symbol," however, is always a little dangerous, and it is especially dangerous in the case of downward expansion. Not only does a sensation spread upwards, but

¹ Dr. Stout's "anoetic consciousness" is, I suggest, just presentation without this tendency to expand. It is still presentation, and therefore I should not care to say that "in regard to it the antithesis of subject and object would be meaningless" (*Analytic Psychology*, i., p. 51). The object, showing itself in the presentation-field, is there, but it has little universality; it is the particular grey of the moment, with no expansion into "greyness" or into "cat". The subjective idealist, however, has no more standing-ground here than elsewhere. The grey is not in the least an experience of mine; simply because it is not the event of its own presentation.

anything presented initially in thought will generally ripple downwards as far as it can go. A cat which we think of cannot usually present itself in sense-perception (though something very like this is apt to happen in dreams), but it presents itself readily in sense-imagery, visual or verbal. Then we are apt to lose ourselves in all sorts of mazes if we begin to speak of this lower presentation, the image, as a symbol of the higher presentation, the idea. For we are led thus to look on the whole appearance as primarily sensuous, naming it an image symbolic, an image with a meaning; and then we naturally consider that the symbol serves instead of what is symbolised, and so come to deny or ignore the existence of the primary higher presentation; and by this time the path from psychology to the theory of knowledge is lost amongst chasms unfathomable.

V. Turning to the theory of knowledge itself, we find that philosophers seem subject to a constant temptation to depreciate some one presentation-field in respect of its power of exhibiting reality. Sometimes it is sense that is thus disparaged; the real, it is said, can be found only in the higher fields of thought, not in the mere succession of sensible experiences. It is true, of course, that thought has a great advantage, yet in the merest sensation we still meet with reality,—for what else is there to meet with? The *esse* of the sensation-event is only its happening; so is the *esse* of any presentation-event, thinking for instance. But the *esse* of what appears or is presented in sense is as independent and objective as that of what appears or is presented in thought. The commoner error, however, seems to be to disparage not sense in comparison with thought but thought in comparison with sense. Only in the sensation or sense-perception of the present moment, it is said or implied, are we in contact with reality; the rest is indirect knowledge, a construction, a shadow, an idea. We must maintain in opposition to this that the contact is just as close, just as immediate, in every field; that the past, for instance, is as really and directly presented to us as the present is; that the eye of thought sees as straight as the bodily eye, and that no veil or delusive mirror comes between it and the real universe.

VI. This may be made somewhat clearer, perhaps, by a closer examination of the nature of that universe. We are hindered in every part of philosophy by the tendency of human laziness to think in the lowest category available instead of the highest, and we often find that a difficulty is removed if we brace ourselves to push our categories one

step up. In epistemology in particular, a very large number of traditional problems disappear when for our habit of thinking of reality as substance we substitute a habit of thinking of it as law. A real thing, whatever else it may be, is at any rate a set of happenings in experience, and it is the way of these happenings and the necessity of it. Let us take its nature, then, to be this complex knot of laws working out in experience, just as the number 5 is a knot of those laws which we call number-relations. Every appearance of the thing, every happening that concerns it, will be a group of events conforming to some of these laws. When I say that the object appears in my presentation-continuum, I mean that the laws which make its nature are working themselves out in this. "I see Birmingham" means that the nature of Birmingham is determining some of the visual sensations which I now experience. The contemplation of a thing in memory, in imagination, or in the most elaborate thought means exactly the same kind of fact;—that the laws which are the nature of the thing are determining certain parts of my field of presentation.

Now this substitution of law for substance should, I think, make it easier to see the truth of our thesis that all kinds of knowledge are equally immediate. The category of substance tends fatally to carry with it some association of restricted position in space or time or something analogous to these. A substance, we feel, cannot be here if it is somewhere else; it cannot be now if it was once and has ceased to be. Therefore if we cognise such a thing we are cognising what is outside our mind, what is away and separated from us; therefore our knowledge of it is roundabout, not immediate; we cannot really be seeing the thing; what is here is not that thing but something else. But under the category of law an object is present wherever the laws of its nature rule, and that is the only meaning which presence has. These laws are not restricted in the least to governing sense; they can work in any kind of presentation-field. Hence it is literally true to say that the past or the future or the non-existent can be "present with me," or that the friend I think of has "entered into my thought," or has been "much in my mind". I can no more think of a thing which is outside thought than I can obey a law which is not obeyed, or see a thing which is out of sight. What is presented to us in any field is quite truly and literally in our presence, and what is only presented in thought may be "nearer than hands and feet".

VII. For completeness, we must end by looking at the negative side of our text. If all knowledge is presentation,

then what is not presentation is not knowledge. With this we enter upon thorny regions indeed.

1. In the first problem raised our substitution of the category of law for that of substance will help us again. Many philosophers have been inclined to deny that presentation is of the essence of knowledge, through thinking of a kind of perfect knowledge in which the object would cease to be presented to you because it had become you and you would cease to look upon it because you were being it. We must maintain that this is a mistake, and yet with the lower category a natural mistake. For when reality is looked on as a substance, odd associations of physical grasp and resistance and strain seem to enter into one's thoughts about knowledge. One pictures the subject and object as somehow interlocking and pulling each other together; the tighter and closer they can get the better the knowledge will be. So for perfect knowledge, one thinks, they would have to break in and coalesce and interpenetrate and become one. Now this seems to be a mistake, for under the category of law the whole tendency vanishes. When we cognise an object it appears in our field of presentation, inasmuch as its laws determine the features there. The better we know it, the more elaborately and freely and variously do these laws exhibit themselves; their field of show becomes wider and more delicately detailed; its shading is more differentiated and gets a larger range of tint. But there is not the least tendency for the continuum to come any nearer. As the mists clear away, the landscape only becomes more and more something which is not the spectator. In the determination of the concrete experience, *its* laws stand out more and more distinct from the laws of his vision.

This may be seen in a special way where the object to be known is the experience or the personality of an individual, — another self or one's own. A nature taken as law is capable of an indefinite amount of complexity and doubling on itself. To have a thing presented in thought is not the same as to have the-presenting-of-that-thing presented in thought, for here a new clause of the law comes in. The knowledge is just and "immediate" and real, but one stage less "direct," in the sense that the law has an additional twist in it; — the light is the same, but reaches us after polarisation. Similarly, and more evidently, an event of feeling or will is not the same as the apprehension of that event. Hence to know anything thoroughly, say a friend or a friend's life, is definitely not the same as to repeat or be that life. No doubt it would often be useful to repeat it *in order* to know; it is hard to find out

a man's inmost thoughts unless you can be the man for a while. But this repetition would no more be the knowledge than the performance of an experiment is the watching of that experiment. The knower has not intrinsically the slightest tendency to become the thing he knows.

2. Certain other claims for the existence of a knowledge not presentational in the ordinary sense have been put forward by psychologists rather than logicians, but logicians have been so eager to accept the claims that it is in every way philosophically important to clear up or to clear away the evidence for them. Perhaps the most important, and the least often explicitly questioned, has been the assertion of an awareness, or (cognitive) "feeling," accompanying all mental process. One of the most careful accounts of such knowledge is found, if I have not misunderstood him, in Brentano's explanation of inner awareness (*Wahrnehmung*). Inner observation (*Beobachtung*) he rejects; "es ist ein . . . psychologisches Gesetz, dass wir niemals dem Gegenstande der innern Wahrnehmung unsere Aufmerksamkeit zuzuwenden vermögen;"¹ there can be no introspection in this sense except of what we remember. Yet, he insists, it is contrary to common sense to deny that we are aware of every psychical process. This awareness will of course be itself a process, and in order to avoid an infinite regress Brentano maintains that this secondary process is simply a special aspect of the original one. "Die Vorstellung des Tones und die Vorstellung von der Vorstellung des Tones bilden nicht mehr als ein einziges psychisches Phänomen. . . . In demselben psychischen Phänomen, in welchem der Ton vorgestellt wird, erfassen wir zugleich das psychische Phänomen selbst, und zwar nach seiner doppelten Eigenthümlichkeit, insofern es als Inhalt den Ton in sich hat, und insofern es zugleich sich selbst als Inhalt gegenwärtig ist. Wir können den Ton das primäre, das Hören selbst das secundäre Object des Hörens nennen."² This oneness holds not only of the "Vorstellung," but of the part of awareness which Brentano distinguishes from this, *viz.*, recognition, assent, or belief. This also accompanies every psychical process, in the degree of complete conviction. When feeling is added, we get as complex an occurrence as any one ever insisted on calling "one". "Der einfachste Act, in welchem wir hören, z. B. hat als primäres Object den Ton, als secundäres Object aber sich selbst, das psychische Phänomen, in welchem der Ton gehört wird. Von

¹ *Psychologie*, Bd. i., p. 36 (references to edition of 1874).

² *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

diesem zweiten Gegenstande ist er in dreifacher Weise ein Bewusstsein. Er stellt ihn vor, er erkennt und fühlt ihn. Und somit hat jeder, auch der einfachste psychische Act eine vierfache Seite, von welcher er betrachtet werden kann."¹

Now some such intricacy as this must arise for any one who feels obliged to assume that we necessarily know our own mental processes. It looks a natural assumption, and yet it leads us into the strangest mazes, and also it is certainly inconsistent with the description of knowledge with which we began. Any mental process involves an object, but, as Brentano says, the process cannot (probably) be itself an object at the same time. Are we bound nevertheless to say that it is somehow known? I believe not. The burden of proof seems to lie with those who uphold such knowledge, and I believe the proof is lacking, or rests only on ambiguity of words. Take a case of sight, for instance. "Do we not," it may be asked, "at every moment *know what we are seeing*?" Yes, "what we are seeing," the thing that we are seeing, is just what we do know. We know it, moreover, in its aspect as an object of sight; we know its visible qualities. This piece of knowing is the process that is now going on in consciousness. I am conscious "in" it, not "of" it. The event of apprehension is not itself apprehended; we do not, in the ordinary sense of the word, know the knowing. And I see no reason for asserting that we know it in an extraordinary sense. It seems probably true that we can know it in the ordinary sense whenever we choose; the event of presentation can quite well be presented itself the moment after it has occurred. But there I stop short again, and deny that this new process further involves our knowing the knowing of the knowing. I incline to think that assumptions such as Brentano's are partly maintained by an ambiguity in the phrase "conscious process". When this name is applied to a *bodily* event it implies that the event is known, that we are "conscious of" it; it is presented in sensations motor or visual. But when it is applied to a mental event "conscious" seems to be the mere equivalent of "mental," and nothing of this sort is implied. "Process of consciousness" and "process presented in consciousness" are strictly incompatible terms; they cannot be applied to the same thing at the same time; nevertheless we are in the habit of using "conscious process" indifferently as the equivalent of either.

3. Finally, from the same statement, that what is not pre-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 202.

sensation is not knowledge, it will follow of course that pleasure-pain and desire and impulse and will are not ways of knowing. (In this use it is metaphysicians rather than psychologists who have claimed that they are.) An event of feeling may perhaps form the content of a presentation, as any other event perhaps may do, but it is not itself an event of presentation. Feeling and will add nothing to our knowledge, except in the sense that they form fresh material which may be known. The laws of an object's nature do work in feeling and will,—it is no doubt a statement about an object to say that it is desired; and similarly the laws of its nature work in its chemical and material action; nevertheless all these workings are *manifestations* of the nature only when they are manifested; *i.e.*, when they are made into the content of a presentation. The writer fully believes that feeling is simply the consciousness accompanying the working of a disposition, and varying as the working is hindered or successful. But how far it is from being consciousness of that working, knowledge of it, is shown by the way in which we can be ignorant of the grounds of our happiness or unhappiness. The dispute is not simply a matter of words, though it sometimes looks like one. Of course if one chooses arbitrarily to cling to the definition of knowledge as presentation, then feeling and "immediate awareness" are by force of words not knowledge. But I believe, beyond this, that there is nothing of the nature of knowledge there, no mysterious process which deserves to have the definition extended to cover it. The burden of proof is on those who hold that there is.

VIII. To sum up: There can be no knowledge, even the highest, without presentation, and presentation is all that is necessary. There are many parts of the field, but in every one what is presented is the real. Perhaps this is the most important moral of all. We have no need to attach special importance to the immediacy of the moment's sense-perception, for reality lies immediately before us whichever way we look. If we only see it "through a hole,"¹ at all events the hole is nothing worse than the pupil of our eye.

¹ Bradley, *Principles of Logic*, p. 70.