

#### IV.—THE APPREHENSION OF FEELING.

BY HELEN WODEHOUSE.

1. CAN feeling be known?—the word feeling being used as a short expression for pleasure-pain and activity-consciousness and the whole subjective side of experience.

About the knowledge of present feeling in the ordinary sense I have nothing new to say. I have never so far seen sufficient reason to depart from the doctrine taught by Dr. Ward, that feeling and activity-consciousness are elements in experience, but that while they are present we cannot know them. Dr. Stout maintains the first part of this doctrine in his essay in *The British Journal of Psychology*, vol. ii., but in his address to the Aristotelian Society, 1905-1906, he opposes the second part. Whether the knowledge of present activity which he claims in the second paper is or is not the same as the activity-consciousness which he maintains in the first, I am not sure. If it is the same, my difficulty is this: activity-consciousness is characterised by not being knowledge in the ordinary sense, and I cannot see its claim to be called knowledge at all. If on the other hand the two are not the same, I cannot see reason enough for believing in the knowledge. When we desire a thing, says Dr. Stout, we know it as desired, and therefore know our desire. But the primary act, it seems to me, is simply to know-and-desire, to desire the known. To know that we desire is the act of reflexion that follows. It is possible that there is only a matter of words between us; and I am always uncomfortable when I differ from Dr. Stout. I wait to be converted.

2. I hold then that present feeling is not in the ordinary meaning known. Nevertheless I consider that in another sense it can be partly known, even while it still exists. What this knowledge is will become clear in the course of the examination of the second part of our subject, the apprehension of past feeling. If we take a first general glance at this, the arguments which strike us seem to be two.

(a) At first sight we are, I think, inclined to say that we can remember our feelings. I remember a day at school when I was extremely happy, and I certainly seem to remember the happiness. "Do you not," it may be said, "perhaps remember the cause, and the attendant cognitions, and so infer, not remember, that you were happy?" The cause was and is entirely unknown to me; the mood came unexplained. The attendant circumstances were London streets, a fresh wind, and grey roofs shining in grey light after rain. There were organic sensations, I suppose, but I cannot say that I remember them. The happiness certainly seems at first sight not to be inferred but to be directly remembered.

Against this argument that we can remember feelings two different objections have been brought. One is: "This is not a remembrance, a presentation of feeling; it is a revival. You put yourself in the old position, and are again glad." The other is: "You do not remember the happiness; you only remember that you were happy". Both these must be returned to later on.

(β) The second argument is a logical deduction from the fact of our present investigation. "Here are we examining, judging, and investigating feeling. How can it be said that we do not know it? If we judge, we must at least apprehend. Again, we can desire feelings and expect them, and be pleased or vexed with ourselves for having them. In all these cases, is not feeling the object of our apprehension?"

The objection brought against this argument is: "This is not knowing, but knowing about. You do not apprehend your feelings, but only that you did or will feel."

This answer evidently has the same sort of purport as the former statement that 'we do not remember happiness, but only remember that we were happy'. It is certainly very difficult sometimes to know what exactly we mean when we say that we remember. It will be wisest then to examine in the next place a few of the different things that remembering may mean. Or rather, not to tie ourselves to words, we will examine what we can do with a past process.

3. The simplest thing to do with a past process is to repeat it. I can submit myself again to a sensation; can go again through the arguments for my beliefs; can repeat to myself the poem which I learnt. We certainly use the word "remember" with this meaning sometimes. We say not only, "Do you remember that poem?" meaning, "Can you repeat it?" but, in the same sense, "Can you remember it?" This of course is the simplest thing to do with feeling. I can easily be happy again at the renewed thought of a piece of

good fortune; can revive my anger at an old injury. It is possible that sometimes when we speak of remembering feeling we mean only this. "Feeling-memory" in the sense of habit of feeling comes under this account. A cat of my acquaintance, having once caught his leg in a watch-chain and swung by it in the air, swore softly with a true revival of feeling whenever he met the watch-chain afterwards.

4. Next, there is another thing we can do with a past process. We can, without really repeating it, play at repeating it. When I cannot look at the blue sky, I may image it. Instead of playing on the violin the tune I played just now, I may go over it in my head. When I have ceased to believe in the premises of my old faith, I may still go over the arguments that followed. Without *reviving* my belief, I may still *recall* it. Where I no longer know, I may still assume. I may project myself back into the old place.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most interesting chapters in recent psychology is that which works out the similar process on the side of feeling. As I recall my sight of past snows, my belief in a lost leader, so can I recall the feelings which accompanied them, and in all these cases to recall is not to revive. As I can act through to myself a scene of youth in which I heard that I had failed in an examination, so can I call up the dull misery of the hour—can feel it in play as I hear the announcement in play. Since I know that this failure, by affecting my plans, really laid the foundation of future success, I am far from being miserable about it now. In the same way I can share every sorrow of a hero of tragedy in the course of a uniformly pleasant evening.

This, I think, is very often what we mean when we speak of remembering feelings; and the failure to recognise the existence of these fancy-feelings has been the source of many of our difficulties of theory. For most people this way of remembering is easy enough—easier probably than imaging past organic sensations. We have only been induced to believe that we cannot recall feeling because we have disbelieved *a priori* in a recall distinct from revival. Whenever we succeeded in the easy task of play-feeling we have thought that we must be having the real feelings again.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Prof. Alexander in *Proc. Aristotelian Soc.*, 1908-1909: "Suppose I am remembering an event as happening to myself. . . . The past object is before my mind, but it is not present. But my past self is present. It is an extension backwards of myself. . . . We find just what we should expect to find if we understood mental events to be mere directions of consciousness. A past direction is a present consciousness."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Prof. Alexander, *Proc. Aristotelian Soc.*, 1908-1909, pp. 35, 36: "Before it can be established that we have emotional or feeling memory

5. The question is, have we here a case of apprehending past feeling? When I first met with this chapter of psychology I thought we had. Now I am fairly sure that we have not.

German descriptions are obscure on this point by reason of their use of the same word, *Vorstellung*, for image and for presentation. Höfler,<sup>1</sup> taking his account of fancy-feelings from an article of Witasek's, makes no distinction between this sense of having feelings *vorgestellt* and the sense in which the psychologist has processes *vorgestellt* when he examines them as objects. Witasek<sup>2</sup> himself seems to take the fancy-feelings as presented. But Meinong,<sup>3</sup> still referring to Witasek, takes them as analogous on the feeling side to assumptions on the knowledge side, and therefore as being still of the nature of feeling, and *not* objects of knowledge. In Meinong's account, that is, they are not presentations but true feeling-images.

I have little doubt myself that Meinong's treatment is right. The *Scheingefühle* are still feelings, though not "actual" feelings, not feelings-in-earnest, just as assumptions are still cognitive though they are not real beliefs. We are not here apprehending our past feelings. We are only playing at feeling them over again.

6. So far as we have gone, Dr. Ward's objection to all presentation of feeling still holds.<sup>4</sup> It is true that what is not originally presentation cannot be made presentation by being repeated, in earnest or in play. The question is, then, whether we can do anything with a past process except do it again. Is there such a thing as contemplation apart from, or over and above, repetition? We shall find that our attempt to answer this question involves the answer to the second of the two objections from which we started, in that it obliges us to think out the connexion between knowing and knowing-about.

we must show that we are not merely remembering the bodily accompaniments, or the attendant circumstances, or the provoking object, of a past emotion, and so reviving that emotion. . . . We feel our present self extending backwards to the remembered event, and the pleasureable tinge in this experience is the ideal pleasure. It is quite distinguishable from the pleasure that we feel in the same object when actually present. . . . It is a pleasure ideally present, referred to the past of myself, which past is called up by the memory of the external conditions under which it occurred."

<sup>1</sup> *Psychologie*, pp. 209, 210.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeit. f. Psych.*, 1901 : "Zur psychologischen Analyse der ästhetischen Einfühlung".

<sup>3</sup> "Über Annahmen."

<sup>4</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, first article on "Psychology," p. 44 b.

7. Suppose that I see, on the dress of a saint in a stained-glass window, a border of a peculiar shade of rose. I can, first, repeat this seeing by going to the church again. Secondly, without going to the church, I may visualise the tint. Thirdly, I may do more. I may remark to myself on the unusual nature of the colour. I may reflect that it occurred only in one other window of the church's magnificent series of ancient glass, and that I do not remember having seen it in any other church. I may wonder what particular process was used to produce it; may judge it to be a shade or two paler than a *La France* rose; may notice its rare harmony with the other colours in the window, and think it gives a tenderness and unexpected delicacy to the whole picture which could not be otherwise attained. In all these judgments I am apprehending that piece of colour which is their subject; and in all of them I am doing something more than merely repeat the process in which I apprehended it before.

Suppose that I have been taught in childhood a certain account of the history of this saint. I may go over it now in undisturbed faith. Or, if faith has disappeared, I may still go over the story as a story, without altering a detail. Thirdly, I may compare it with the histories of other saints, Christian and heathen. I may judge it to be beautiful, to be useful in education, to be fit to be taught as a parable if not as literal truth. I may form theories as to the way in which it arose. In all these thoughts I am apprehending in a new way the story which I used to believe and may still assume. This new apprehension is neither belief in the story nor assumption of it; but it is real apprehension nevertheless.

Finally, take my childhood's feeling towards this saint. If my faith has been retained, I may revive them now, or something near them; or by self-suggestion, even if my faith has been shaken, I may manage to repeat them. If I prefer it, I may without any illusion still play at taking the old place, still feel my old devotion in image though not in actuality. Thirdly, I may use contemplation other than repetition. I may estimate the value of these feelings in moral and religious development. I may note the history of their growth and decline, the way in which surroundings and interests helped them or hindered. I may see what they rested on; remember the commonness of such feelings in the young. In all these judgments I apprehend their subject. In knowing these things I know feeling. This is the true apprehension of past feeling. But further commentary is needed.

8. In examining this whole question of the knowledge of

feeling, I was troubled by the apparent self-contradictoriness of the statement—"Feeling cannot be apprehended". How, I asked, could one make a judgment without apprehending its subject? how could one think about a thing without thinking of it? The last section has shown that I still maintain this objection. But I think now that the original statement, if carefully expressed, may be maintained as well. To examine this, let us as before leave the controversial ground of feeling and deal first with objects cognised.

a. Take first my tint of rose-colour.<sup>1</sup> I can apprehend it in image and sensation. I can also apprehend it in thought,—as produced in the fifteenth century, as similar to the La France roses outside, yet not like them destined to fade; as connected with certain ether-vibrations; as a glory to the church. All this is real apprehension. I know the tint, not know about it. Yet it remains true that a blind man could be taught all this knowledge and still lack that knowledge which I had by sense. Or, to take an example which is much better because it is less likely to lead to irrelevant paths,—if I were not able to visualise colour I could still have in absence all this apprehension of thought, could know in absence all the colour's history and its gloriousness. But the rose-ness of it I could get only by going to the church again.

Sense and thought, that is, know the same object, but what sense sees in it thought cannot see. Green was wrong in holding that perfectly adequate conception needs no sensation to fill it up.<sup>2</sup> Thought knows the object [I insist upon this] but not in its sensational capacity. If the eye of sense is considered as occupying the blind spot in the eye of thought, then we may say picturesquely that thought, in knowing our object, *knows about* that element in it which sense knows. Of course it is most important to remember the other side; that sense is blind to what thought sees, which is by far the greater part of what is in the object. But that does not affect us just here.

b. So far the facts are clear enough. They are rather harder to see and fix when we come to the next level.

Take a statement in that history of the saint which I formerly believed. I can repeat my belief in it, or I can play at repeating and assume it. Thirdly, in contemplation other

<sup>1</sup> It will be just the same if I take, e.g., a movement sensation, which in popular language "only exists at the moment of sensing". I have not taken trouble to use examples of this sort, because their peculiarity seems to make no difference to my line of argument.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, ii., 190.

than repeating I can apprehend its connexions, history, value, and the rest. This is still apprehension; it is acquaintance, immediate knowledge. I am said to be thinking about the statement, but really I am *thinking it about*. I am pulling it about, making it exhibit itself, putting it in new fields of thought to govern them, making it grow.

I am still apprehending the statement. But so far as I am not repeating my original apprehension, so far as I am not apprehending just that in it which I apprehended before. The exhibition in new fields is new. I still know the object, but it-in-its-original-aspect I know-about.

9. With regard to both my instances, the colour in the glass and the history of the saint, what I am most afraid of is that emphasis may be laid on the second part of the last sentence to the overlooking of the first. I insist with all possible earnestness that if I know about I *know*. If I cannot visualise the appearance of the rose-coloured border, I can still know its position and value and uncommonness, its purpose and its history. I know that its tint is like that of a rose, different from a hyacinth, deeper than the sunset; unexpected, beautiful. My knowledge is not about it but of it. I know nearly all that is in it, that makes it; I know *it*. A man with the window in front of him, but with a concussion of the brain confining him to bare perceiving, would know the border too, but know less of it, less in it. Each of us knows it, and each knows-about that in it which the other knows. We must absolutely reject the plan of giving the titles of knowledge and acquaintance to sense-knowledge alone, and denying it to any apprehension in which only the sense-element is invisible.

It may be said that this is only a matter of words, that if we abstract and limit further, and take "the content of my sensation" for our "object," we shall have to say simply that thought knows about it without knowing it. No, for in this very judgment the "sense-content" has become an object of thought. And a thousand other judgments press in; the sense-content has a history, a place and date in my mental life, and relations to other contents; we can form theories as to its success in revealing the object; theories as to its difference from the sense-content of a colour-blind person looking at the window. The "object of sense" has indeed blossomed and swelled beyond the bounds of sense. No slip of reality can be cut so fine that it will not grow in the thought-field. No object can be made so microscopically small that it will not govern an infinite range of thought.

The difficulty lies indeed in explaining what it is that



thought is debarred from. Did I say that the rose-ness was invisible to it? In that very judgment the rose-ness is apprehended. Fortunately explanation is helped by the fact that nearly every one admits that there is a debarring, and knows the sort of exhibition which the object, rose-colour, gives in sense alone. I need only lay full emphasis on the other side, insisting that rose-colour is *known* not only in sense but in thought.

10. That which sense sees in an object thought cannot see; but is a mistake to explain this as the result of any character of uniqueness or peculiar immediacy which sense may possess. It is simply a special case of the obvious rule that "so far as I am not repeating my original apprehension, so far I am not apprehending just that aspect of the object which I apprehended before". The exhibition in new fields must be new. If I ask a different question, the object must give a different answer. Take a level where sense does not enter at all, and let our object be "the bishop who remodelled Exeter Cathedral, completing the change from the Norman to the Decorated style". This is my first introduction to Bishop Grandisson, but I may deepen and enlarge my acquaintance with him afterwards. So far as I do not repeat my first apprehension of him, so far I do not know him in the original way. It is possible that I may cease to be able to recall that first knowledge. Yet I shall hardly be said to have ceased to know Grandisson because I am obliged to ask, "What was it exactly that he had to do with the Cathedral?" Or it may be that my first introduction was to "a Bishop of Exeter called Grandisson". Returning after some years, I may say, "I know all about the bishop who remodelled the Cathedral, but I cannot remember for the moment who he was"—meaning only, "I have forgotten his name". It will scarcely be denied here that the so-called knowing-about is a better knowing than the original apprehension, but the original is omitted. Once more, let our object be the content of the assertion, "St. Dorothy sent flowers from heaven to the youth who loved her". This exhibition of the object is no more the end of it than the guide-book or passport description is the end of a man. I may think it about; may estimate the place of this incident in the story, its bearing on what precedes and follows, its value for the mediæval or modern story-teller and poet, or for the child who hears it in a Catholic school; I may think of its probable origin and its possible use as an allegory. In all this I apprehend the incident, but not just as I apprehended it to begin with.

11. The case of feeling is now probably clear enough. I



can apprehend it, and I do so whenever I make a judgment about it. But, as with sensation and belief, my apprehension does not give me just that element, or aspect, or exhibition of it which I had before. So far as I do not repeat a process, so far I do not get just what that process gave. Everything—everything in the widest and vaguest sense—is a law-complex which works inexhaustibly, and works differently in every field. Thought cannot exhaust what enters in sense, but neither can sense exhaust it; and feeling cannot exhaust feeling. My conclusion is, then, that feeling and activity-consciousness are in just the same position with regard to after-apprehension as are the presented elements in consciousness. For each we may use either repetition, or play-repetition, or apprehension-other-than-repetition. So far as we do not repeat, so far we do not get the same exhibition of the thing as we got before.

The sense in which I suggested that we might know present feeling will now be clear also. We know it when, and only when, our present act is *to think of our present feeling*. In that sense I know it while I write this passage. But in an ordinary act of cognition we cannot know present feeling any more than we can see our own face: it is not invisible, but we happen always to be looking the other way. As in a ghost story, I leave my past selves all along the road, and when I like I can turn and see them. Nevertheless, I cannot see what they saw, nor can I feel what their attitudes felt like, except by getting into them again. This is a perfectly possible proceeding, but it is a revival or recall of past process and not an apprehension of it. Between repetition and apprehension I have to choose.

NOTE.—Our relation to the feelings of others will obviously come under the preceding account. I may share them in genuine sympathy: or I may play at sharing them, in imaginative *Einfühlung*: or I may apprehend them in that in thought I perceive what they are. That is, they may supply me both with primary or imaged feelings, and with objective contents of knowledge.

The investigation contained in this essay was occasioned by the study of Prof. Alexander's most suggestive and provocative paper on 'Mental Activity in Willing and in Ideas'.<sup>1</sup> I have come to agree with a good deal of its doctrine, but with one passage I am bound to disagree even more completely than I did at first reading of it. It appears

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Arist. Soc.*, 1908-1909.

on page 27 of the paper: "To me, I myself cannot be a *cognitum*, I can only be a *cognitum* to a being who stood outside both me and physical things, in the same way as I myself stand outside physical things and life. Life is an individual thing to the liver. But I can contemplate another being's life though I cannot live it. Now it is as impossible for me to contemplate my own mind as for an animal to live another animal's life. There is no reason, however, in the nature of things why a race of beings should not arise or be now in existence who can contemplate minds. Such beings would be of a higher order of mind and for them minds would be objects of knowledge."

I hope it is clear from the foregoing pages what my comment on this would be.

(1) I can and do contemplate my own mind as I contemplate physical things, and life, and anything else that I like in the universe. Prof. Alexander proves it by writing papers about his mind.

(2) But to contemplate is not the same as to live through. My contemplation of an animal's life is a qualitatively different experience from the animal's, and my contemplation of my own life is a different experience from the living of it; hence I can only contemplate the part which I am not engaged in living.

(3) As for the higher race of beings, they will have the advantage of being able to contemplate any part of my life they choose, since they are not engaged in living any of it; and they will presumably have the disadvantage of a much more limited access to what they want to know. So far they are in the same position as my next-door neighbour. If they are able by some means to share my feelings and thoughts, they may overcome the limit of access by living my life as well as contemplating it. They will then be in the same position as myself. Of course if they are cleverer than myself they will be able to do much more with that position. And if they can "enter into" my beliefs and feelings without being actually possessed by them, as I do fitfully with my past self and with other people, they will keep a calm and detachment of mind which will enable them to understand me much better than I understand myself. But I cannot imagine any other way than this. They can contemplate heaven and earth and myself and themselves, and so can I. And for all of us "seeing life" is a different thing from living it.