

XIII.—THE BELIEF IN EXTERNAL REALITIES.

By G. DAWES HICKS.

1. THE problem I desire to introduce for discussion is a purely psychological one. It is not concerned with the metaphysical question as to the distinction of appearance and reality, nor, except in so far as the result of psychological analysis may be used in support or otherwise of general philosophical conclusions, has it anything to do with the conception we may form of the ultimate nature of reality. Accepting the view that "phenomenalism is the one rational attitude in psychology," I propose to ask how, within the range of phenomenal experience, we come to the belief that perceived things or events exist or happen independently of the momentary act of apprehension or of the mind, which in and through such acts is conscious? The further problem as to the import or validity of such belief I leave on one side, as being foreign to the particular inquiry I have here in view. The subject is a familiar one; it forms a chapter in every text-book of Psychology; some recent treatment of it, however, by writers of acknowledged authority, makes it worth while to direct attention to it now. Anything like an exhaustive discussion is, of course, precluded; I venture only to touch upon a few points, and to offer one or two suggestions, that have occurred to me in connection with them.

Let me, at the outset, try to express briefly and in psychological terms, what it is we have on our hands, as psychologists, to explain. We begin our inquiry with the relatively mature mental life, as it manifests itself in the process of knowing. We find it capable of drawing the distinction between a content, presented or represented, in whatsoever way, and the act of presenting or representing. Further, we find it constantly

regarding the content presented or represented as indicating or pointing to an existence, distinguishable alike from the momentary act of presentation or representation, and from the content presented or represented. The existence which we ambiguously say is "indicated" by the presented or represented content need not necessarily be that of a so-called external thing; it may be, for example, some phase or phases of the inner life, conceived as an object. But, in any case, the same contrast comes before us of what is immediately contained in the content itself, and of the reference that content bears to something not contained within it. And if the said reference be to a material thing, then the latter is determined as a real object, external to and independent of the inner life of the perceiving subject, persistent, *i.e.*, existing when not perceived, identical, *i.e.*, retaining amid changes a certain unity of being, and as forming part of an interconnected system of similarly real things. Professor Royce, in his lately published work, *The World and the Individual*, designates the contrast between what I have called the content and the reality denoted by the content, as that between the internal and the external meaning of an idea, and our problem is to find the grounds upon which the determinations implied in this external meaning are based.

2. Confining attention for the moment to the process of perceiving, we may take it as a psychological truism that this *reference* of the perceived content to an existence beyond it is a feature that can in no way be ascribed to the sensuous elements of the content as such. As factors there, the sense qualities do not tell the tale of their own origin; they may be impressions, products, reactions on the part of the perceiving subject, or what not, but if they are, their impressed, produced, dependent character forms no part of the account they give of themselves in the perceived content. When, for instance, Dr. Ward describes sensations as "one and all intrusions, interferences, affections, or modifications of the mental series," he is describing them not as elements in actual perception, but as

themselves objects of thought, as occurrences, that is to say, taking place in the real world to which perceived contents refer. Sensations as elements in a perceived content and sensations as themselves real occurrences indicated or referred to by the perceived content are, as Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his own phraseology, very properly informs us, two totally different things.* Or, to put the same point in another way, the relation of action and reaction, if it exist at all, is a relation between the external stimulus on the one hand and the *process* of perceiving on the other, and not a relation between the external stimulus on the one hand and the *perceived* content on the other, in which latter no trace is to be found of any criterion that could reveal the presence of such a relationship. But it is the belief that the *Content* refers to, indicates, a real object, not that the subjective process is dependent upon one, that we require psychologically to explain, and although the latter fact, if it be a fact, may help us in the explanation, it cannot be used, even in psychology, as though its *recognition* were somehow already implied in the sense-presentation. So far as the content is concerned, the marks of reality and externality, ascribed to the perceived thing, are added to, not given in, the sensuous constituents of the content; they are essentially, even for the psychologist, thoughts or notions, not received data; at the most the latter can but furnish the occasion on which the interpreting mind frames, in however rudimentary fashion, the judgment of external existence; they do not themselves convey the assurance of it.

3. That being so, I proceed to ask, what precisely is the significance for the relatively mature mental life of this predicate "real," which it assigns to the thing perceived? What, from the point of view of the ordinary consciousness, is the meaning of the term "reality"? There can, I think, be no question as to the correctness of Dr. Ward's reply, that its

* *Principles of Psychology*, § 405.

primary use is "in antithesis to whatever is ideal or represented." It is in contrast to something else, which is characterised as fictitious or unreal, that common-sense experience applies the epithet "real," and this something else is the memory-image or reproduction in idea of the previously perceived object.

4. Evidently, then, the opposition between real and ideal would not be reached, nor the notion of reality attained, except by a subject that had arrived at the stage of mental development, in which the distinction between a perceived object and a represented object was in some way recognised. It is difficult to suppose that such recognition could originally come about through any difference in the apprehended contents themselves. A perceived house and a represented house, for example, would be described by us in quite identical general terms, although we should usually characterise with unhesitating certainty the one as real and the other as merely our own idea. But if we were asked to give our reasons for doing so, we should appeal to tests extraneous to what was immediately before us in the act of apprehension. Following Berkeley and Hume, psychologists have, indeed, sought to avoid this appeal, and to discern in the respective contents marks which serve to differentiate the image from the perception. The chief difference relied upon has been that of intensity; the sense-presentation, it has been thought, is relatively "lively" and "vivid," whereas the re-presentation is by comparison "faint" and "weak." It is hardly possible, however, to lay much stress on this contention. In the long run, it would be found that the clearness or obscurity of the content—and that is what "lively" or "faint" really amounts to—depends, apart from varying physical concomitants, which are not here in question, upon the aptitude with which the content fits into or is contrasted with the trains of mental experience in the midst of which it appears. And these conditions are too little affected by the circumstance of its being

presented or represented to enable us to draw, in this respect, any hard and fast line of demarcation. As Dr. Ward puts it, "we can perfectly well distinguish the faintest impression from an image, and yet can hardly suppose the faintest impression to be intenser than the most lively image." As a matter of fact, the cases are not few, when, through concentration of attention the remembered content stands out in more distinct relief than the original presentation, and features unnoticed in the latter are detected in it. Another ground of distinction has been thought to lie in what Berkeley called the superior "steadiness" of the perceived object; it is not liable to the "perpetual flow and flicker" of the memory-image. But here, again, it seems to me, the reliability of the criterion is rendered nugatory by the counterbalancing consideration that it is possible to keep a revived object for a considerable time in the focus of consciousness, whereas such fixity may be altogether excluded in the case of the original presentation. With reference to both criteria, however, a far more weighty objection is this, that however much one may be inclined to allow such differences in mature experience, they would be less and less discernible the lower we descend in the scale of psychical development. The perceptions with which we start genetically would be crude and confused, wanting in sharpness of outline and entering into a mental life but little prepared to receive them. And yet it is in the comparatively rudimentary consciousness that we must conceive the opposition of real and ideal, in dim and vague form, somehow to make its appearance.

5. If, then, the marks that enable such a discrimination to be made are not discoverable in the apprehended contents, to what circumstances in the experience of the conscious subject shall we look for its explanation? In attempting to deal with the problem, two considerations should, I think, throughout determine **our procedure**. In the first place, we should be prepared to **find that** the notion of a real thing will bear

varying significance at successive stages of mental evolution, and that even in the earlier stages it may express an exceedingly complex fact in conscious experience. In the second place, we should be prepared to find that the belief in an external order of real things and events arises and grows in strictest correlation with the rise and growth of the subject's determination of himself as a self-conscious individual. It can only be in contradistinction to the notion of self, however primitive and rude that notion may be, that the conception of what is other than self can come into existence, and the marks by which the latter gradually acquires definiteness will be paralleled by a gradual increase of definiteness in the characteristics of the former. Any advance in clearness and distinctness of apprehension with regard to the nature of the inner life will render possible a corresponding advance with respect to the nature of the outer world. We may expect, therefore, that those mental processes that are instrumental in building up the idea of individual self-consciousness will be instrumental also in building up the conception of external reality.

6. Now, there can be little doubt that the individualising, self-realising factor in mental development is that to which, in its later stages, the name Will is properly given. It is only in so far as the subject consciously determines himself in volitional activity that he becomes and is fully aware of himself as an individual. For, as Professor Royce, in the work already alluded to, points out, all conscious action has a particular, unique, special aspect; it is a process of selection, whereby our consciousness passes from an indeterminate to a relatively determinate content, growing more and more definite in its aims as it proceeds. And it has been to the conscious subject in its function of exerting movement and of bringing about purposive changes in its environment that modern psychologists have turned for those *Hilfsmittel* that enable the discrimination of physical reality from mental representation to be effected.

There are, however, two radically diverse ways of approaching the problem from this point of view, and it will be well briefly to indicate the line of argument pursued by each.

(a) As representative of the first, I take the bold and carefully executed piece of psychological work of Dr. Julius Pikler,* of whose essay Croom Robertson expressed the opinion that it must be seriously reckoned with in any future treatment of the subject. Dr. Pikler attempts to develop the well-known doctrine, expounded in Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, into a full and consistent theory of what he calls "objectiva." In particular, the interesting way in which he endeavours to subordinate the special question of belief in physical reality to the wider problem of belief in objective existences generally gives to his monograph quite a unique value. Objects are divided by him into the two fundamental classes of those which are capable and of those which are incapable of presentation. Under the latter, he includes belief in substances, such as the ether of the physicist, which are imperceptible to the senses (amongst which, he might have added, as a more striking instance, the atoms and molecules of the chemist), belief in immaterial forces, and especially belief in minds other than our own.† Under the former, he includes firstly what he denotes as "the objective attributes of our presentations" (resemblance or difference, time and space relations, position number, &c.), then, space and time, next the world of material things, further, the objective world of memories and ideas, and, lastly, the objective existence of unconscious mental states. Dealing, then, with the class of presentable objects, Dr. Pikler conceives his task to consist in showing how phenomena, which are essentially phenomena of subjective experience, come to be

* *The Psychology of the Belief in Objective Existence.* Part I.—Objectiva Capable of Presentation.

† One is reminded of Berkeley's distinction that, whilst the *esse* of things is *percipi*, we have not perceptions but only notions of other minds.

regarded as objective facts, that is, as subsisting beyond and apart from the momentary act of apprehension. His solution, summarised quite generally, is this:—Our belief in the objective existence of these phenomena is the expression of our belief in the possibility of obtaining presentations of them through our volition. In contrast to purely subjective presentations, which are relatively independent of our will, presentable objects are those of which, through an act of self determination, we can have presentative experience. “The ‘would be’ of presentation is the ‘is’ of objective existence.” Actual objective existence is conditional subjective existence; it is “presentableness through will.” According to this view, Mill’s definition of matter as the permanent possibilities of sensations was too wide. Only a part of the permanent possibilities of sensation, those, namely, the appearance of which depend upon no other circumstance than our volition, mean objective existence. Dr. Pikler succeeds in giving plausibility to his theory by a skilful application of it to the objectiva other than those of a physical nature. For instance, we are in the habit of saying a person remembers a thing, although it does not happen to be just then present to his consciousness. We express this fact in the form that men *have* certain memories, or that certain memories *are* or *exist* in their minds; that is, they are or exist outside their actual presentations, they are or exist objectively, and “constitute a peculiar world of thoughts.” And we *mean* that such a memory or thought is obtainable by the rememberer, when it is his will to obtain a presentation of it. Thus, by exhibiting objectivity “at the first remove,” to use Croom Robertson’s apt phrase, the author seems to render the transition to an external world natural and easy of accomplishment. And he is equally dexterous in pressing the consideration that the most distinctively “subjective” of our experiences,—our organic sensations, the headaches that afflict us, our good and bad humours,—are precisely those over which we have the least voluntary control.

If this extremely original and sustained piece of argument does not convince, it is through no lack of ingenuity on the author's part. Several criticisms have been urged against it. It has been contended, for example, that it is a reversion of the genetic order to treat certain attributes or phases of subjective presentations, as though they were the primary features of conscious experience to which a character of relative independence and fixity comes to be ascribed, the truth rather being that only after apprehension of physical reality has somehow been acquired is recognition such as Dr. Pikler assumes possible.* Again, it has been pointed out that the formula he uses is applicable to two radically distinct groups of cases, and that when voluntary effort not merely conditions the perceptive process, but actually brings into existence what is afterwards perceived, by altering the environment, presentability at will neither constitutes nor implies actual existence. Although we may break a glass, in order to obtain the presentation of broken glass, we do not believe the glass to be really broken merely because we can break it if we like.† Both these objections seem to me perfectly valid. But the line of reflection pursued above enables us unhesitatingly to reject the view in question on a much more fundamental ground, on the ground, namely, that it assumes precisely the distinction it set out to explain. In appealing to voluntary effort in the problem before us, there is constantly the danger of committing a *ὑστερον πρότερον*; it is especially noticeable, however, in this case. "It is," says Dr. Pikler, "the very characteristic of will that it realises an idea." Exactly; it is only when recognition of the difference between the ideal and the real has, in some way, already been attained that the theory is at all workable. It is true that the author, anticipating apparently an objection of this kind, tries

* Croom Robertson in *Mind*, xvi, 102.

† Stout's *Analytic Psychology*, vol. ii, 246.

at the end of his treatise, to break the force of it, by assuming that volition *κατ' ἐξοχήν* is preceded, in mental evolution, by desire, which is not accompanied by a belief in the possibility of its realisation. But by thus transferring the genesis of the belief in external reality to a stage, prior to the emergence of will as he has been using it throughout, he cuts away the support on which he has been resting, and is found after all to be virtually advocating a position which he had previously regarded as diametrically antagonistic to his own.

(b) "The presentation of external objects," says Dr. Stout, "takes place through those experiences to which the subject must adapt itself if its action is to be efficient for the attainment of practical ends." * The use Dr. Stout makes of the phenomena of mental activity, or attention, is almost the reverse of that we have just been considering. The primary meaning of "object" is not for him "presentability at will," but resistance to such presentability; it is, for the primitive consciousness, just "obstacle" or "obstruction," or rather, it is the interpretation which the individual percipient is constrained to put upon such obstacle or obstruction in the flow of its ideas, in order to render them coherent and consistent. "Were it always possible to attain any given perception by first passing through a series of others in a fixed order, beginning with those that follow constantly upon volition . . . the difference between the physical and the mental would for our consciousness be non-existent." † The cleft in our experience, resulting ultimately in the differentiation of the self from the not-self, is to be traced back to the conflict that would arise when two presentations of contrary content tend to appear in the same relation to an identical content. In such circumstances the conflict would only be removed by an act of conscious re-construction, which, in the course of development,

* *Manual of Psychology*, p. 326.

† *Mind*, xv, p. 26.

would amount to a more or less definite reference of the presented content to an object existing in space and persisting in time. For example, "as I sit absorbed in study, I am rudely interrupted by the sounds from a barrel-organ in the street," and, although the antithesis between the continuous flow of inward activity and sensuous presentation may be usually less violently impressive than in this case, it is never wholly absent. "In so far as the mind becomes definitely aware of the limitations and interruptions of its own activity, it finds itself confronted by a problem, which it can solve only by reference to an activity other than its own." "Process within consciousness, in so far as it is not traceable to antecedent process within consciousness, must be traced to antecedent process, which, at the time when it is represented as taking place, *ex hypothesi*, did not form part of the content of consciousness." * This act of constructive interpretation seems to Dr. Stout "an indispensable moment in the development of the perception of physical reality." But it is "only one step," and it is necessary to show not only how we come to posit some agency separate from and independent of our own private experience, but also "how the contents of tactile, visual, and other presentations come to be apprehended as existing independently of individual thought and perception." In explanation of the latter fact, he points to "the changes within the field of consciousness," which are "uniformly attendant upon our own motor activity," and to the "similar changes," which "take place of themselves apart from any action of ours." "In order," he concludes, "to make our experience self-consistent, we are constrained to interpret the involuntary variations by the analogy of those which are initiated by ourselves. We are constrained to regard these variations as due to something not ourselves exercising a motor activity analogous to our own." †

* *Mind*, xv, p. 26, *sqq.*

† *Ibid.*, p. 34.

7. With the greater part of Dr. Stout's exceedingly valuable exposition, most modern psychologists would, I take it, concur. It is the first step in his analysis that seems to me the least satisfactory, and with regard to which I venture to offer a few words of criticism. That the process of constructive interpretation, described by Dr. Stout, represents accurately enough what we may conceive as a familiar occurrence in the relatively developed consciousness, I entertain no doubt, but I find it hard to imagine that it at all corresponds to anything we are entitled to assume as possible for that early stage of the mental life, to which the first dim recognition of a distinction between self and not-self must be ascribed. The almost insuperable difficulties in the way of expressing in suitable language the simpler phases of mind make one hesitate in raising objections that are sure to appear captious, but I cannot help thinking we are here concerned with an issue more vital than one of terminology. So far as I can gather, the process analysed with so much care by Dr. Stout involves the presence of factors that already imply the discrimination he seeks to explain by means of them. In particular, I cannot understand how a subject, that has not yet arrived at a consciousness of what is other than self, can be aware of the flow of its own ideas when they are not interrupted, or of its own activity when it is not impeded. Or, in other words, I fail to see how a subject, at this stage, can have attained that notion of its own motor activity, to which, according to the theory, it *afterwards* regards the agency, which it posits as giving rise to the impediments it encounters, as analogous. Consciousness of resistance to movement and consciousness of motor activity seem to me strictly correlative experiences, and, if any priority is to be claimed for either, the balance of advantage in this respect would seem to lie with the former rather than with the latter. For, as Dr. Stout himself informs us, the primitive mental life is marked by "the overpowering predominance of external over internal conditions," or, as he elsewhere expresses it, "there can be no doubt"

concerning its "predominantly or purely perceptual character." The anthropomorphic tendencies upon which stress is laid are undoubtedly phases in mental evolution; but that they are instrumental in *giving rise* to the notion of physical reality seems to me more than doubtful. "The anthropomorphism of primitive man is," as Dr. Pikler says, "of such a nature that with every individual it must be unavoidably preceded by the belief in the objective existence of things." The child, in learning to talk, is at least as apt to speak of itself after the analogy of material things as to speak of material things after the analogy of itself.

8. But, if we reject this portion of Dr. Stout's solution of our problem, we may fairly be called upon to substitute in its place an explanation not liable to the objections we have urged against his. I would suggest, then, that we should look, for the *primordial* marks by which the distinction we are trying to account for comes about, neither to the cognitive nor to the volitional side of our nature. Not to the former, because, as we have seen, a presented content as such furnishes no reliable criteria by which it can be certainly distinguished from a re-presented content. Not to the latter, because, although the active, striving element in mind undoubtedly comes to be a main element in the development of the opposition between the self and the not-self, yet we do not begin by recognising our own voluntary activity, the recognition of which only being possible when there has grown up at least a rudimentary conception of self, and consequently a corresponding conception of the not-self. There is left, therefore, the sphere of feeling, and within it, I think, a source of the differentiating marks of which we are in search lies readily to hand. Many reasons would appear to justify the assertion that in primitive states of mind a relatively greater preponderance of feeling would be met with than is recognised later. And equally assured may we be that the experience of a subject, prior to the stage of any recognition of self as an individuality, would be made up of a relatively

much larger proportion of the vague organic sensations and feelings connected with them than would be the case subsequently.* Now, in every stimulation of the sense organs, there results not merely a content presented, but a diffused excitation or disturbance of the nervous system, a temporary change in the equilibrium of the vital energies, which undoubtedly has its equivalent in the mental life in the form of sensuous feeling. These feelings play a large and important part in sense-perception as we experience it; the probability is they play a relatively larger part in sense-perception as the primitive subject experiences it. They coexist, then, with a content, when it comes about through stimulation of the senses; they cannot be revived, or at least only indirectly and to a very limited extent (and such indirect revival would probably be excluded altogether in the rudimentary consciousness) when the content occurs in the form of a representation or a memory-image. It seems to me that in this difference we have the fundamental ground, on the basis of which the bi-partition in conscious experience, that ultimately takes the shape of opposition between self and not-self, is begun. Moreover, I believe that to this realm of sensuous feeling, and not to the presented content, we must look (at least, in the early stages of mental life) for an explanation of the fact expressed by Dr. Stout in the form that "images do not *strike* the mind in the same way as percepts" do.† The "shock," which "the whole organism" may receive from sensation would be, for the primitive consciousness, almost entirely a matter of feeling. So far as the mere content was concerned, there could be for an experience in which percepts largely predominated over images, few occasions for surprise. But the feelings would

* I am thinking here of feeling, not in Mr. Bradley's sense of an immediate experience, before distinctions and relations have been developed, but in the sense in which it is now customary to speak of "feeling-tone."

† *Manual of Psychology*, p. 399.

undoubtedly possess the most varying degrees of strength or intensity, and so from them there would repeatedly result those moments of interruption or arrest in the even flow of the subject's experience, that seemed to Dr. Stout so indispensable in the development of the perception of physical reality.

A strong confirmation of the view that sensuous feeling plays the part here ascribed to it is afforded by the familiar phenomena of Sense - Hallucinations. In such cases, for example, as when we seem to hear a sound though actually sound there is none, the two components, apprehended content and corporeal feeling, coexist, although they do not arise in the normal manner through stimulation of the sense-organ. And by reason of their coexistence, and of the subject's misinterpretation of the abnormal feeling, what is merely a memory image comes to have assigned to it all the characteristics of a real object.

9. Thus may we conceive the foundation laid for the psychological genesis of the distinction so fundamental in later mental history. I say foundation only, for I do not conceive that by this means alone the distinction could be drawn. But other and more complicated criteria readily associate themselves with the combination of presented content and sensuous feeling above described. In particular, every complex state of the inner life which has a fairly marked degree of pleasurable or painful feeling tends to incite bodily movement. Amongst the sense organs, two especially, the eye and the organ of touch, are pre-eminently mobile, and naturally close and intimate relations come to be established between tactual and visual presentations on the one hand, and muscular and motor sensations and feelings on the other. It is, then, not difficult to trace the line of sequence that connects the presented content with those experiences of resistance to bodily movement, which have rightly been fixed upon as of primary significance in the psychological theory of belief in an

external world. I agree with Mr. Bradley that to find in Resistance the one manifestation of reality is unreasonable, and further that it is impossible to assume the consciousness of effort or of exerting force as an original element in subjective experience. Could we do so, there would be, so far as I can see, no psychological problem to solve; these assumptions would be tantamount to accepting the distinction we are endeavouring to account for as given from the outset. Not until the consciousness of self has been fairly well established and there has been gradually formed in connection therewith the phenomenon of the individual will, can such an experience as "the putting forth of energy" become a factor in the inner life. But elementary sense experiences connected with the initiation and carrying out of movement would certainly be amongst the first constituents of consciousness, and in the way I have indicated I think we can understand how they would early become associated with presented rather than with re-presented contents. In accordance with the view suggested, we should have to conceive of resistance not as we now, with our highly-developed will and definite consciousness of individuality, experience it, but strictly as the correlate, or if you will, as the sequence, of bodily movement, as just one of those features which combine to differentiate a percept from an image.

The course of development would then proceed along the lines that bring about the severance in consciousness of the body from the extra-organic sphere. Dr. Stout's insistence upon the fact that in all primitive perception of the Self, it is apprehension of a particular object, viz., the bodily organism, which is implied, cannot be too strongly emphasised. A large variety of circumstances give rise to the severance in question. The constancy of the group of presentations resulting from the body and their uniform presence with the presentations that come and go; the regularity of the experiences resulting from its movements as compared with the irregularity of the

experiences that come about as their consequence; the prevalence of organic sensations, gradually forming a background to all our experiences; the feelings and motor sensations, closely allied with the organic; these, and other elements, would be involved in the building up of the "embodied self," or of the selfed body. And the fact that the body comes, particularly through the sense of touch, to be itself an object of perception as well as the organ of perception contributes, in no small degree, to the formation of the distinction between the apprehended content and the apprehending process, so familiar to later experience.

10. The notions we come later to form of the things thus distinguished from the body gradually emerge and become explicit *pari passu* with the gradual emergence and explicit recognition of the self as an object. We ascribe to things, for example, a persistent and permanent mode of existence, independent of our existence and of our momentary acts of apprehension. Out of the mere experience of resistance alone it would be impossible to get a notion of that sort. The experience of resistance may be, whilst it lasts, an experience of persistence, but it is not necessarily an experience of a persistence that must be regarded as independent of us. An idea may both resist and persist, as Mr. Bradley says, and show every sign of stubbornness; so may a headache, so may the feeling of sleeplessness, but these are not held to be external facts. The notion of external persistence is to be traced, I think, to a far more complex origin. Briefly, the determining grounds seem to be these. The subject must have reached the stage in which he can recognise a momentary act of apprehension as a transient phase of his own persisting inner life. In the way already shown, he would regard each one of a series of presented contents as referring to an external existent. Now, suppose he is able to recognise a sameness in all these contents, and also a difference (of time at least) in the acts of apprehending. The inference, if we may call it

so, would be easy from the consciousness of his own persistence to that of the thing's. In other words, the reference of a series of similar contents to a persisting object is the exact counterpart of the reference of a series of acts of apprehending to a persisting self. To take another example. The recognition of a thing as one or as a unity amid a variety of changing qualities is the precise counterpart of the subject's recognition of his own unity and identity amidst a variety of changing states or activities. And so I conceive we might go on, finding for each of the notions by which we determine the nature of external things a corresponding notion by which we determine the nature of the self. The cleft in consciousness may widen, and the distinction between the self and the not-self become more and more pronounced, but the two factors never cease to be reciprocal and parallel sides of one and the same development. No doubt what Professor Royce calls the "social consciousness"—recognition, namely, of other mental lives than the individual's own—plays a most significant and important part in that development, for it enables perceived things to be looked upon as the one common object of all minds, and these minds again to be regarded as transitory in reference to it. But when Professor Royce attempts to derive the individual's notions of the externality and persistence of things from this social consciousness, he is oblivious of the fact that we have no *a priori* knowledge of the existence of other minds than our own, and can only arrive at the assurance that there are mental lives distinct from ours and resembling them, through the help of the same means by which we attain to a belief in the independent and permanent existence of things.

11. I have said that the individualising element in conscious experience is the conative, and in nothing I have been arguing since do I wish to be understood as retracting that assertion. When the primitive impulses and strivings begin to centre round the rudimentary conception of self, and will, in the strict sense of the word, appears upon the scene, a new determination

is given to our primitive conception of external reality. At first the apprehension of self is little more than the apprehension of the relatively enduring subject of organic sensations and feelings and crude desires. But so soon as, through perfectly intelligible steps, this centre of reference acquires a certain stability and fixedness, and there becomes possible the mode of conscious activity which manifests itself, on the one hand, as that of forming conceptions beforehand of what shall be, as we say, *realised*, and of bringing about the realisation, and, on the other hand, as that of choosing or selecting among a number of motives, then our notions of the external world undergo a corresponding modification. On the one hand, it becomes for us, in a way it would certainly not have been before, dynamic. Bodies are regarded as exerting force, as standing to one another in the relation of cause and effect, and later as even acting upon us, and producing by their action the presentations in and through which they are perceived. On the other hand, there takes place what we perhaps may call a differentiation of our environment, a singling out of individual things from what was before a vague and indefinite collection. No part of Dr. Stout's account of the perception of external reality, in his last book, is more admirable than the extremely suggestive way in which he has shown how a thing detaches itself from its surroundings, and comes to be regarded as separate and distinct from other things, through becoming a centre of *interest* for the percipient. Nothing that has here been urged at all militates against that view. All that has been insisted upon is that, just as we do not start with a conception of reality as made up of isolated, defined, and definite parts, but as a vague and confused manifold, just as isolation of parts is not originally given, but has to come about in our experience, just so do we not start, on the other side, with an individual definitely aware of its own individuality and conscious of its own voluntary effort, but with a subject that has not as yet any more a conception of itself than of what

is not itself, and to whom individuality or voluntary effort is not given, but has to be found. And the whole point of the argument has been to show that these are not two processes, but two sides of one and the same process.

12. I set out with the intention of bringing these considerations to bear upon Professor Royce's theory, recently worked out with great originality and skill, that the whole distinction between what he calls the inner and outer meaning of an idea, or between what I have called the content and that to which it refers, is due to the difference between a partial and a complete embodiment of a purpose. But thoughts no less than sense perceptions are sometimes beyond voluntary control, and I have already exceeded the limits of the Aristotelian *μεσότης*.
