

THE WORLD
An Effort of Comprehension

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IT takes indeed all sorts of people to make the world. As a department store carrying a diversity of goods so is the world a storehouse of our total variety of knowledge, of facts and explanations, often incoherent and conflicting. The presentation of all this variety is a task of all life, so what a man knows about it is very little and very abstract, while even the most complete encyclopaedias are bound to ignore vastly more than they include. To comprehend the world in a short article is therefore possible only by a most extreme abstraction. However, it pays at times to give such an account for what is in the world, for better management of life, just as a department store does in order to meet and promote its business.

The world is all that exists whether we know it or not. Only a part of it is human *experience*, and only a part of this is known in *facts*. Of these some are not known beyond the person to whose experience they belong, while some are known indirectly through signs, language and memory,—we know about them. Strictly speaking *all facts are subjective, though an indirect fact is in a way objective to our knowledge about it*; objective used in this way is practically the same as meaning. We refer in the same manner from fact to experience and existence never known as fact, but only as a supposition of what is. In both cases it is clear that any objective world conceived is based on the subjective facts in mind. That two or more persons have the same kind of facts cannot alter the *fundamental subjectivity* any more than repetition of a fact in the same mind, but such *psychic agreement*, naturally emphasizes it both directly and indirectly, increasing both its subjective and objective importance. We are most apt to believe that the most common facts are most real, not only in mind but also to the extent that we

objectify them beyond; while where such psychic agreement is lacking we are more or less in doubt. When a person has a sensation, a thought, a feeling, which nobody else under any circumstances has, we call him mad, suffering from hallucinations, etc. He may have it repeatedly and consider it most real, but we don't, because we lack it. On the other hand we do not consider a blind man as authority about the reality of our visible world. Fundamentally the world which we know and know about is therefore founded on the psychic phenomenon which we call a fact, and next on psychic agreement of one fact with another. This agreement is indicated by its *degree* of comparative identity, by its personal frequency, and by its popularity. For these reasons *mathematics* are of such fundamental importance in our understanding of the world. And it will also be seen that the degree of agreement is relative, ranging from two to infinite. Far from being absolutely real the so-called objective world is a mathematical function of subjective psychic agreement; and far from being exact it is a matter of convention, depending on who and how many are giving the measure. It is also far from being complete, because even in the case of all life together it excludes what we do not know, and within its grand total there are many mutually exclusive worlds. Nevertheless, we find a *normal* world based on great averages containing the most important facts of life. *The material universe* is undoubtedly a predominant construction in such a world, based on normal sensations and thoughts developed by scientific means and methods. But this common sense and scientific creation of the world suffers after all from all the above mentioned weaknesses. Quite artificially, for instance, it excludes all feeling and human interest, and all the forceful facts of life in that connection. The material world is therefore not the world we live in but only perhaps a part of this. It does not cover even the normal facts of life, far less the abnormal, human experience beyond knowledge or existence at large; so we must deny it the worldwide authority it has been trying to assume. As a matter of scientific democracy ruled by a majority of mind it may be a powerful conception, but it has not a priori validity and its laws are subject to other facts.¹ It is really not scientific to treat emotion and thought as negligible, unreal, half-values, as faded and

¹ Compare my statement in *The Journal* p. 100, 1929: "That what we think is in existence must agree with what we know is in experience."

frothy sensations, as fancy values in contrast to the real it of matter. This fallacy is making the world of life too narrow and is leading to mistakes which may be fatal, through opinion, conviction, attitude, and action. Much degeneration of modern life is based on such popular science.

It is of the greatest importance to render a truer account of the world we live in, than rendered by what a special scientific group senses, thinks of or pays attention to. We must therefore *count with all facts and find the essentials in which they agree, and then draw our conclusions and make our suppositions about what exists beyond our accumulated knowledge.* We may agree upon that *facts are* personal experience registered in the knowing mind, they stick to a person as his skin, as Schopenhauer said. Facts are but passing knowledge, temporary and local signs of life. Whatsoever they say they tell us about some thing we do not know, and while most of the world is unknown we are trying to live by what we know, an effort the success of which can be tested only by further living and later facts. We interfere with existence by our knowledge, but unless this fits existence and foster life it will be a science in vain. This fundamental if of all science is a weakness of the human mind; *we are*, as it were, *only experiments in living*, and what we know about existence is bound to be hypothetical. Beyond explaining one fact by means of the rest we get to a point where we must try to explain the origin of any fact, whatsoever its content. *Why is a fact* at all? Not only because it exists as indicated by its content, for facts remain when this disappears. We find that a naive acceptance of the reality of the fact at its face value, does not explain the changing content of knowledge. Instead of identifying a fact with its content, we are therefore led to think that it indicates a reality beyond itself with which it is connected and to which it corresponds; in other words we are forced to admit that beside what we know there is also something that we do not know. Discarding the theory of identity we admit not only a difference between a fact and a non-fact, but find it most probable that a fact instead of being self-made, developed from nothing, is owing its existence to something which we do not know, a non-fact better called a factor. In making this supposition we necessarily try to describe or explain it by other facts, by what we know. Thus we find the factors presented in terms of facts, and easily confused with these. One theory forgetting the essential dif-

ference makes it appear that one fact is caused by other facts, which is about as impossible as a moving picture being caused by another. We may all agree that there is a continuity and connection between facts, but we can not admit that one fact is sufficiently explained by any or all other; even in the most microscopic and minutely presented succession there is a missing link, which makes it impossible to determine one fact from what we know. There is always an unknown factor, a guess coming. In some cases this guess allows a free play of imagination while in cases of systematic science, for instance the theories of mechanics and even of evolution the explanations fit almost to perfection. However the finest minds in all cases still leave room for doubt. Whether we consider a fact caused by other facts or by specific factors only indicated by the specific facts, we are bound to explain it by at least two or more different elements: whatever we think most fitting and the remaining *x*. One fact cannot lead to another without this link which is the most essential factor of mind. It is also proper to consider this same element not only as a connecting link between the facts, but as the common and necessary factor in any and all facts, whatsoever its specific content and cause. According to this theory a fact appears when and where this *vital factor* is combined with certain specific factors, to a mental constellation. The *general* factor of mind must be supposed as a common quality of variable quantity in order to explain the different strength, volume, span, vividness, intensity, extensity, etc., of the facts. This understanding still leaves room for discussion of the *particular factors*: are they identical with the content of the fact but for this mental differential? Or is there no more likeness or comparison between a fact and its factors than between a sign on the road and the town it indicates, or between a word and the thing it suggests? Is it a question of coexistence and coincidence and not of quality or form. We are inclined to answer this according to the particular facts, supposing things more or less like sensations, but making little or no comparative background for thought or emotional facts. Even a thing is far from the sensations and thoughts from which it is constructed, and is rather a mental drawing, a construction, a picture with a purpose of explanation, rather than being something beyond mind. As all other facts it is a *sign of life* and of importance to life,—a *sign registering the*

vital position and disposition of man. That is the main feature of the world in which we are interested.

We are talking about the world we don't know in the language of facts we know; these supply our information about the world we live in and the position we are in. To exclude sentimental and intellectual words from this talk would be to tell less than we know. From studying this language we may assume that only a limited vital factor is available through a person under the particular conditions. A person is a fluctuating concentration of vitality developing facts according to disposition and position. Facts are personal signs in the course of life, and mean much to us but may be rather insignificant in the world at large, they may mean little beyond. Even the stars may not exist beyond our frame of life, though we have reason to believe that if nothing like stars exists without us anyhow there is something indicated thereby, whatsoever that is in itself. After all, stars or no stars, their value is *as directives of life*; not their absolute character but their consequences as measured in life is what counts. Matter may not exist beyond our imagination, it was a factor fit to figure with in mind, but so is any factor fit to explain our sentiments and thoughts; neither may be ignored without more or less serious detriment to life. Material values may be more substantial but not necessarily more essential than the spiritual. The main meaning of the world we learn in facts is after all, life, and still more life. It is not the particular content but *the vital content of a fact* which makes it interesting to us. We must learn to emphasize this general factor and gauge it by scientific means and try to increase the personal vitality, instead of losing ourselves in the particular contents of a fact. With a proper *strategy of life* we may then even succeed in surviving the stars.