

PRESENCE : QUALITY : IT

1

For the “pragmatist”¹ it is good enough that we call the same things red. That we react productively to the same “pragmatically red” things. The “who of everyday Dasein” — the harried Anyone — doesn’t have time enough (doesn’t have money enough) to bother with the foolishness of ontology.

I speak as an ex-instrumentalist. An ex-radical-pragmatist. A sophisticated view. The articulation of the spirit of our times. The owl hooting in the twilight. Time is money is technology. The “objective” value of money. Clock time. The time-money-quantity of the gloriously empty Anyone. Headpiece filled with straw.

One can afford to forget presence. “One” can. And indeed One does. The One of Dreyfus, taken from Heidegger. For One is busy, piling up coins beneath the clock that strikes Everyone’s Time.

2

Uncanny. Ineffable ? Almost. And yet we speak of CONSCIOUSNESS. What must this word mean if our loved ones are real ?

Purple smoke in the skull of the other ? Or does your spouse HAVE YOUR WORLD from THEIR point of view ?

Dear reader, I cannot prove that you “HAVE” the world — that the world “shines” and “screams” for you. I can tell you that it shines and screams for me. But will my signs compute if you don’t also have the world as I do ? My signs indeed are part of the screaming and shining. Will they radiate for you ? Are these inscriptions THERE for you right now ? I trust that they are, or I would not bother to write.

Pragmatically-red doesn’t cut it. The rose is not pragmatically-red for me. Yes, I know that people call such roses “red.” But that doesn’t say it. “It.” The present redness of the radiant rose. The rose is what I call “red” in what I call my “experience.” But my “experience” is WORLD. I believe that this red rose is also in your world. That your world is my world. Though you have it differently, usually (strangely) from over

¹I’ve read just about all of Rorty’s work, much of it several times.

there, wherever you are. Is the rose “red” for you as it is for me ? In everyday life, I trust that it is. Even here I don’t express an anxious doubt.

I mean it when I say that I’m a “logical positivist.” In some weird new sense. I want to save the empirical object **as** genuinely empirical. But “experience” is elusive, non-trivial, if we take off our pragmatist blinders. Yes, we can afford to evade the issue. Can we afford to face the issue ? Maybe not. I don’t mean it’s a grand spiritual terror. I mean that facing this issue is useless. It is indeed a fool’s game. And ontology is this very foolishness, this “needless” detour into the weeds and thorns.

But also into the wildflowers.

3

Does the sign “presence” ring for you as it does for me ? Aren’t people trying to say it when they speak of qualia ? But this concept of qualia assumes already that real things are devoid of quality, un-present.

Perhaps you tell me that real things are present **THROUGH** qualia. Then why call this presence of real thing “qualia” ? Why not just speak of the quality of the thing, which is there, even if always from a point of view ? For Jack or Jill or Joe or Jane ?

Yes, the same one rose, present for each. Present in the same way ? Pragmatically in the same enough way. Is there a rose behind the rose, just because the rose is always from this or that point of view ? Or this the rose manifested genuinely if only partially in each such showing ?

4

I understand the rose as far more than this red shape before me. The rose endures. The rose is for others too. The rose is **THERE**. Not “in here.” Not like my relatively silent monologue is “in here.”

Some things are indeed relatively “inside.” Yet I can talk about them. I “hear” in a strange way my “internal” “monologue.” Often as a rehearsed speech for others. What I might say. What I should have said. I “hear” it, like the memory of speech. It too is present. It too has quality. It is not there for others (as far as I know !) in the same way that the rose is.

5

Jack and Jill got married after the bucket incident. As the years rolled by, they found (to their shock and wonder) that they were dreaming the “same” dreams. At first, it was just the same themes. But eventually they both dreamed, night after night, of a conversation with the other.

They’d wake up and each write down (where the other couldn’t see) what had occurred in their individual dreams. Then they’d let the other read. Amazing ! The same conversation.

After a week or two of this, the shock wore off. They’d wake up, not bother to compare dreams, make coffee. As they sipped their cups of coffee, they’d pick up right where the conversation in the dream left off.

This has never happened to me. The point is that one learns from talking with others what is “internal” or “private.”

If someone could reliably quote my “internal” “monologue”, then it wouldn’t be either internal or a monologue. I’d stop thinking of it that way. I’d understand that it is also (somehow !?) present for others, just like the rose.

6

I’m trying to point out that indirect realism — and dualism in general — forgets presence. Forgets the from-a-point-of-view “being” of things. The “hard problem of the physical” is a phrase I use for this forgetting.

The rose is transcendent. Beyond-me. “In” or “of” the world. But what do I mean by that ? To me it means that I can discuss it with others, that others can see it, smell it, and so on. But weirdly I can’t see it with their eyes, smell it with their nose.

Presence too as a “concept” (“intended” with help from signs) is transcendent. Is your presence my presence ? We will both perhaps say that the world “is there.” Or perhaps “here.” Yes, my friend, the world is also here. Over here where I am. Over here *as* what I, in another sense, **am**.

“I don’t have experience. Experience has me.”

Yes, I answer, and the witness is given in the witnessing.