

## IX.—NOTES.

### PROFESSOR G. F. STOUT (1860-1944).

GEORGE FREDERICK STOUT, eldest son of George Stout of South Shields, was born at that town on January 6th, 1860. He was privately educated and entered St. John's College, Cambridge, as a classical scholar. He took both parts of the Classical Tripos, being placed in the First Class in Part I in 1881, and in the First Class in Part II, with special distinction in Ancient Philosophy, the following year. He then read Moral Science, and in 1883 was awarded a First Class with special distinction in Metaphysics in Part II of the Moral Sciences Tripos. In 1884 he became a Fellow of St. John's College. He was appointed University Lecturer in Cambridge in 1894. From 1896 to 1898 he held the Anderson Lectureship in Comparative Psychology in Aberdeen, and from 1898 to 1903 he was Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy in Oxford. In 1903 he was elected to the Professorship of Logic and Metaphysics in St. Andrews, and he held that chair until his retirement in 1936.

Stout became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1903, and St. John's College elected him to an honorary Fellowship in 1927. He was Editor of *MIND* from 1891 to 1920, when he was succeeded by Professor Moore. He was Gifford Lecturer in Edinburgh from 1919 to 1921. The first series of his Gifford Lectures was published in 1931 under the title *Mind and Matter*, but the second series has not yet appeared.

In 1899 Stout married Miss Ellen Ker, daughter of a Free Kirk minister. They had one child, Alan, now Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy at Sydney. Mrs. Stout died in 1935, and in his last years Stout made his home in Australia with his son and his daughter-in-law. In his later life he suffered from defective eyesight, and he underwent a successful operation for cataract. He died in Sydney on August 18th, 1944.

The present writer saw much of Stout, and received the greatest kindness from him and Mrs. Stout, when he was in St. Andrews from 1911 to 1920, first as Stout's Assistant and afterwards as Lecturer on Logic in University College, Dundee. A young man beginning to teach philosophy and to write on it could hardly be more fortunately situated than at St. Andrews at that time, conversing daily with two such men as Stout and Taylor, so unlike each other in many respects, but alike in their great learning and acuteness, their high culture, and their unremitting kindness and hospitality.

Stout was a man of very striking appearance. He was below middle height, but strong and well proportioned; very swarthy in complexion; with a mat of coarse, straight, jet-black hair which grew very low on his forehead, and dark, bird-like eyes. He was terribly deaf; but this was less noticeable in a *tête-à-tête* conversation than in company. If one spoke clearly and raised one's voice slightly, there was at that time but little difficulty in carrying on a conversation with him. Probably his deafness added to the bird-like impression produced by his general appearance, since it caused him to make frequent quick movements with his head in conversation in order to catch what was being said. Stout's deafness, like that of his friend and contemporary Alexander, seemed sometimes to be strangely selective. It was amusing to be present when the two philosophers met and engaged in discussion, and to note the difficulty which each found in hearing the strong points, and the ease with which he heard the weak points, in the arguments of the other.

Stout had a reputation for absent-mindedness, and many stories were current in which he was represented as the typical distraught professor of fiction. There was an element of truth in these stories, but, taken in isolation, they give a highly misleading picture of him. My impression is that the outward and visible simplicity was a sign of an inward astuteness. Stout found it rather convenient to be thought helpless and unbusinesslike, for he thus escaped being involved in the intrigues and petty quarrels of university politics and avoided the burdens of university administration. It suited him to cast the cares of domestic life on the very capable and extremely willing shoulders of Mrs. Stout, who plainly enjoyed standing in a half maternal relation to her husband.

However this may be, it is quite certain that Stout was a man of very strong commonsense and great practical wisdom, which he often expressed in extremely astute and pointed remarks. He was a very shrewd judge of a person's character and attainments, and there are few people whose advice I should have preferred to take on any practical problem. I remember one remark of his which has often proved useful, *viz.*, that in reading a testimonial one should concentrate on the omissions, for these are fairly safe indications of the weak points in the person in whose favour the testimonial has been written.

The period when I was in St. Andrews was one of great political tension. It covered the war in 1914-18; and before that came the Parliament Act, the trouble in Ireland over Home Rule, the violence of the women seeking the franchise, and incessant labour unrest. Stout was a fairly advanced Liberal in politics, and Mrs. Stout was an enthusiastic supporter of votes for women. Looking back at the last war and the period immediately before it, I still feel, as I felt then, that England was like a lunatic-asylum conducted by the inmates. In such circumstances it was an immense help and consolation to discuss burning political questions with Stout. He was always so sane, sensible, and decent; and he never allowed the violence and folly of the Left or the Right to divert his Liberalism into reaction, on the one hand, or revolution, on the other.

Conversation with Stout, when one had got used to his deafness, was very pleasant and stimulating. When it was on general topics his wide reading, his capacious memory, and his appreciation of the Greek, Latin, and English classics provided the materials for a rich and varied feast. When he discussed philosophical problems he was brilliant. It seems to me that his published work, important and original as it is, fails to do him justice. I am quite sure that he was a much greater philosopher than even the most favourably disposed reader who had never discussed philosophy with him would suspect. One was certain to be enlightened and stimulated by discussing any philosophical topic with him; and often he would throw out most exciting *obiter dicta* which seemed to imply that he had a fairly complete and very comprehensive metaphysical system not yet revealed to the public.

I should say that the philosophers for whom Stout had the greatest admiration and by whom he had been most influenced were Plato, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, and Kant. He said to me once that, even if one wrote off Spinoza altogether as a metaphysician, he would still be one of the world's greatest psychologists. Stout also found Spinoza's naturalistic type of ethics to his taste. I fancy that Berkeley was his favourite; for it seemed to me that he would almost descend to sophistry to defend Berkeley against the mildest attack. He had an immense admiration for Plato's *Theaetetus*, which he regarded as still the best introduction to the

problems of the theory of knowledge; and Kant's *Transcendental Deduction of the Categories*, as modified and modernised by himself, seemed to him to be of permanent importance.

It was plain from Stout's casual remarks, and it will no doubt be made plainer in detail if the second series of his Gifford Lectures should be published, that he was a philosophical Theist. My impression is that he was not a Christian unless perhaps in some highly Pickwickian sense. I do not know what his opinions about human immortality may have been. I know that he had reflected and speculated on this topic, and I can recall some very surprising *obiter dicta* thrown out in conversation. But it would not be fair to quote them, since my memory of them may not be correct in detail and they were, in any case, 'off the record'.

It remains to say something of Stout's published work. This may be classified under the headings of Psychology and Philosophy; but this division is rather artificial, for all Stout's psychological writings are permeated with philosophical reflexions, and certain parts of his philosophy are founded upon psychological considerations.

His books on psychology are *Analytic Psychology*, first published in 1896; his *Groundwork of Psychology*, published in 1903; and his *Manual of Psychology*, first published in 1898. The *Analytic Psychology*, an elaborate treatise in two large volumes, went into three editions. On its first appearance it was very fully reviewed in *MIND* by Royce in N.S. Vol. VI. The *Groundwork* is a small book, and one chapter in it—that on "The Sources of Tender Emotion"—was contributed by Shand. A review of it by Mrs. Bosanquet will be found in Vol. XIII of *MIND*. It differs considerably from the *Analytic Psychology* and the *Manual*, e.g., it uses a dichotomous division of mental states into *Cognition* and *Interest*, instead of the common tripartite division into *Cognition*, *Conation*, and *Affection*. The *Manual*, in spite of its repulsive format, became through sheer merit the standard textbook on psychology in English universities. It went into five editions, the second in 1901, the third in 1913, the fourth in 1929, and the fifth in 1938. Stout made very substantial changes from one edition to another, and in the main these were improvements; but it never ceased to be a very difficult book for students, and persons who had to lecture on it were inclined to feel that it was so good that it was a pity that it was not better. The last edition was produced in collaboration with Dr. Mace. An excellent and comprehensive review of the third edition, by Professor Loveday, will be found in Vol. XXIII of *MIND*.

Stout wrote many important articles on psychological and philosophical topics, and he collected what he considered to be the best of those written by him between 1888 and 1927, and published them under the title *Studies in Philosophy and Psychology*. This was reviewed fairly fully by the present writer in *MIND*, Vol. XL.

After the publication of this book Stout continued to contribute important papers to philosophical journals. The following may be mentioned: "Truth and Falsity" (*MIND*, Vol. XLI, 1932), "Self-evidence and Matter of Fact" (read to the Scots Philosophical Club in November 1934 and published in *Philosophy*), "Phenomenalism" (Presidential Address to the Aristotelian Society, 1938), and two articles on "The Philosophy of Samuel Alexander" (*MIND*, Vol. XLIX, 1940). Though Stout was growing very old, there is little if any sign of decay in his mental powers in these later writings.

The first series of Gifford Lectures were published in 1931, twelve years after they were delivered. A long review of them by the present writer appeared in *MIND*, Vol. XLI.

I suppose that in psychology Stout will be remembered chiefly for his analysis of the concept and the experience of Activity, and for his theories of Noetic Synthesis and Relative Suggestion in the *Analytic Psychology*; for his account of the development of our Perception of the External World and his treatment of Instinct and Perceptual Process in the *Manual*; and in general for his doctrine that presentations have a primary unacquired meaning in terms of non-presentations, *e.g.*, physical events and processes or past experiences, which is gradually specified and made determinate in accordance with the varying details of the presentations and their mutual relations. In metaphysics perhaps his most characteristic doctrines are his theory of universals and his theory of judgment. On the borderline of philosophy and psychology he will be remembered for the stress which he laid on internal perception and on the experience of acting and being acted upon in the development of our notions of the self, of physical objects, and of causation.

But, apart from these specific doctrines which one mentions as particularly characteristic of Stout, there is a whole mass of material which has become part of the general background of English psychology and philosophy. Certainly I, and probably most English teachers of philosophy who are my contemporaries, owe far more to Stout and his writings than we realise and much that we could not explicitly formulate.

Stout must be counted happy in his life and fortunate in the occasion of his death. He retained his powers to a great age, and he died full of years and honours in time to see the dawn of victory for his country and her allies. Those of us who are reserved to enter into the Promised Land and dwell in it are likely to have many opportunities to envy their seniors who, like Stout, expired on Mount Pisgah before the vision had faded into the light of common day.

C. D. BROAD.

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PROF. STACE ON "POSITIVISM."

To the Editor of MIND.

SIR,

In a Discussion entitled "Positivism" (MIND, LIV, 213, 1945), which dealt with Prof. Stace's paper of the same title, I claimed that the Principle of Observable kinds, which he put forward, was a tautology. At proof stage I noticed a serious omission; for Prof. Stace expressly applied it in two different fields and I overlooked one of them: he applied it not only to what is observable, where I hold it is a tautology, but also to natural laws, where it is not a tautology but on the contrary offers an attractive criterion of significance. Owing to the slowness of war-time mail, the proof carrying the correction did not reach England in time to prevent the publication of the uncorrected version. I regret that the Discussion, as published, should have contained an unfair treatment of Prof. Stace's proposal.

Yours faithfully,  
J. O. WISDOM.

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Alexandria.