III.—THE ETHICAL AND ÆSTHETIC IMPLICATIONS OF REALISM.

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METAPHYSICAL theories are usually defended on the ground that they are true; and even when the advocates of a theory expatiate upon its ethical or æsthetic value, they do so because they think thereby to establish its validity. This indirect method of procedure is natural to all those who share the comfortable assumption of the pragmatist or the idealist that there is some sort of correlation between the good and the real—though even for such philosophers the validity of their method presupposes the validity of the theory which it is intended to establish. To the realist, however, it seems neither natural nor justifiable to appeal to the nobility of realism as evidence of its truth. For him, things are what they are, regardless of their power to edify. This may perhaps be one explanation of the fact that the multitudes of efforts made by realists in recent years to explain and defend their theory have included little concerning the ethical and æsthetic implications of realism. It is the question of these emotional implications of realism, considered on their own account and not as an indirect substantiation of the doctrine, which is the subject of the present paper.

By realism we mean the epistemological doctrine that nothing, whether abstract or concrete, whether real or unreal, about which it is possible to discourse, depends for its character or its status upon the mere fact that it is known. In other words, that cognition is always selective and never creative of its objects. The older forms of the realistic doctrine, such as the dualistic realism of Descartes, and the common-sense realism of the Scottish school, were contented to insist upon an objective status, independent of being known, for the concrete world of existence, and tacitly regarded the realm of abstract forms and universals as a creation of the mind. The realist of the present day assimilates to the common-sense existential realism of modern philosophy the profound subsistential realism of Plato. He would emancipate from their supposed depen-

dence upon cognition not only the things of earth and heaven but the totality of laws and forms—all qualities and all relations. More than this. The new realist has discovered that it is impossible to confer independence upon the real and the true without at the same time emancipating the shadow correlates of these—the false and the unreal. For every true proposition has a contradictory which is false; and if the truth of the true proposition depends upon its subject-matter rather than upon the thinking of it, then, by the same token, the falsity of the false proposition depends equally upon its subject-matter rather than upon the attitudes of belief or disbelief which a spectator may entertain towards it. Round squares and mermaids are not unreal because sane people disbelieve in them; they are sanely disbelieved in because they are unreal.¹

It should be noted that realism as thus defined is a purely epistemological doctrine, and as such is not committed to any of the various metaphysical theories as to the nature either of objects or of consciousness. The objects may be one or many, material, spiritual, or both. Consciousness may be the property of a soul, of a transcendental ego, or even a mere form of relation between material things. The essential point is that cognition, irrespective of its intrinsic nature, discovers and does not create the universe of which it is a part. Again, it is necessary to bear in mind that the realist, in holding that the function of cognition is discovery, is not thereby condemning consciousness to an otiose and epiphenomenal rôle. It is of the very nature of discovery to bring about profound alterations in the thing discovered. The lantern that a man carries does not create the obstacles in his path. It reveals them, but in revealing them as they are it enables the man to remove them, and to create new things in their place. The pragmatist has no monopoly of the doctrine that intelligence is practically efficient. Realists are quite in agreement with him, but they hold that the only direct effects of consciousness are upon the organism. Without itself altering the objects known, consciousness enables its possessor to alter them. If objects were changed by the very act of knowing them they could hardly be so effectively changed by action based upon that knowledge. Indeed, under such circumstances, action itself, as distinguished from cognition, would be altogether superfluous.

¹ Thus in a sense the term realism is somewhat inadequate for the theory which it denotes. There is need for a more appropriate name, such as objectivism, for the doctrine that the status of the unreal and the false, no less than that of the real and the true, is independent of whether or not they are apprehended.

Now, while this is true of all action, we propose to confine our discussion to the realistic implications of the types of action involved in the pursuit of the ethical and æsthetic ideals.

I.

From the standpoint of one who seeks to create beauty in the world of things or goodness in the realm of conduct, the primary condition of effective action is an unflinching recognition of the realities of the situation in which this creation is to be accomplished. If the sculptor intends to change a block of marble into a statue of a god, he must recognise the independent objectivity of the marble and of the laws by which he is to chisel it. Similarly, the moral reformer who would change a community that is impoverished into one that is prosperous must recognise the independent objectivity of the poverty which he is to change, and of the economic laws by which he is to make the change. As a matter of fact, the creative artist and the constructive reformer are found to possess a more than ordinary degree of appreciation of the independent reality of the physical world with its blended worth and imperfection. The entire procedure of the artist bears witness to his deeply-grounded belief that ugliness and beauty alike are external to himself and to all beholders. In his own view his significant task is that of discovery. In combating ugliness he feels himself to be combating no mere psychic state either of his own or of another consciousness. In the same way when pursuing beauty he has the sense of recognising something independent both of himself and of his entire audience. As faithfully as the scientist he scrutinises nature and man to determine their inmost essence; and though a dreamer and a harbinger of ceaseless fancies, it is not as a dream or a fancy that he regards the cosmos. Of the objective reality of that cosmos which is his study he is incorrigibly persuaded.

And similarly of the moral reformer. His two most insidious foes are the sentimentalists who see the world as they would have it rather than as it is, and the complacent conservatives whose habituation to the evil in their environment prevents them from recognising its existence. Buddha and Christ, Luther and Lincoln were actuated by a flamingly vivid perception of the evil about them. Familiarity served not to dull but to enhance this perception, and the vision of what they wished to accomplish was never for a moment confused with the ugly reality confronting them. They were

neither sentimentalists nor optimists, but realists, imbued with a grim and poignant appreciation of actualities.

In those other cases in which the religious spirit has been opposed to militant morality, the opposition has been due to the religionist permitting his faith in the ultimate goodness of the universe to blur his appreciation of the actual badness of the world in which he is called upon to act. If God is good, and if God creates all, then all must be somehow good. And if, despite this, things still seem evil, it is not for us to protest, but rather to rest secure in our faith that evil is not real but only good in disguise. This anti-moral passivism to which religious people are sometimes subject receives formulation in technical philosophy in the theory of absolute idealism according to which the realm of finite life, its sins and tragedies, is labelled the world of Appearance—a fragmentary and distorted expression of an absolute Reality to whose internal perfection the misery and discord in our experience actually contribute in much the same way as the discords of a Wagnerian opera contribute to the higher harmony of the whole. The religious attempt to justify the ways of God to man is in essence the same as the idealistic philosopher's tendency to minimise actual evil by relegating it to the realm of "Appearance". In both cases there is an anti-realistic denial of the actuality of evil, and in both cases the intellectual denial of evil engenders a practical indifference to its presence and to the means proposed for removing it. In short, it is only against real evil that it is worth while to contend. And, conversely, all who have contended fruitfully against evil have had a lively sense of its reality. Hence, while realism does not bar the conception of a God or an Absolute, it does bar all forms of those conceptions which involve excuses or denials of the evil which our world contains.

Associated with the recognition of the reality of evil in nature goes a wholesome interest in the laws of nature. It is only by the use of natural law that nature's evils can be ameliorated. And it is interesting to note that the great moral heroes who have preached the reality of evil have also preached very definite methods for its removal; while, conversely, those anti-realists by whom evil is regarded as good in disguise have usually been indifferent and incurious as to the laws of the material world. Magic and thaumaturgy, prayers and incantations, are good enough devices to cope with an evil which has but a shadow existence: and they seem not inadequate to those for whom the laws of nature are only laws of mind. The responsibilities of natural

science need be assumed only by those for whom evil is one of nature's realities.

So far we have been considering the necessity for a recognition, by the artist and the reformer, of the *existential* reality of the material world in which values are to be embodied, and of the laws and conditions of that embodiment. But there is an equal necessity for all creators to recognise the *subsistential* reality of the ideals themselves of goodness and beauty. For, irrespective of the definition of the æsthetic and ethical, and irrespective also of the nature of the specific ideal which is to be made real, the one who is striving for its realisation must recognise that the validity of that for which he strives is objective and in nowise dependent upon his discovery of it. Even for a reformer who accepted hedonism as true the essential objectivity of the realm of values would be in nowise diminished. For if the happiness of my neighbour is a good, it will be a good irrespective of whether or not I recognise it as such. The realist conception of value implicit in the attitude of anyone who seeks to create value, be he artist or moralist, is not necessarily of something dissociated from conscious experience, but of something whose essence and nature is independent of the would-be creator's awareness of it. The socialist who believes in the desirability of the collectivist state may be mistaken in that belief, but in order that it should inspire him to action he must regard its worth as something intrinsic and independent. From the individual standpoint, belief in the value of a thing is exactly like belief in its truth. In either case the belief may be mistaken, but the assumption of its independent validity is a prerequisite of all action. The sculptor, the architect, the painter, the musician, when they seek to embody in material form the as yet non-existent objects of their imagination, are inspired to their efforts by their belief in the more than imaginary beauty of those objects. If they supposed for a moment that the worth of what they were to create was merely subjective, and dependent upon or derived from their own attitudes of approval, their motive for creation would cease to be æsthetic and become merely hedonic and selfish. In short, even from the hedonistic standpoint, beauty and goodness are the permanent possibilities of enjoyment as truth is the permanent possibility of apprehension. And as permanent possibilities of apprehension have a nature and structure that is quite independent of whether or not they are actually perceived, so equally the permanent possibilities of enjoyment have a nature and structure that is quite independent of whether they are realised. In neither case

does the status of possibility exhaust the nature of the essence to which it pertains.¹

II.

And now that we have seen the extent to which the realistic standpoint is presupposed by artist and moralist with regard both to the world of existence and to that of subsistent ideals, we proceed to discuss how the realist's interpretation of the universe enhances its beauty and moral dignity. In short, we wish now to show that realism, in addition to being a prerequisite for the creation of values, is also a prerequisite for their appreciation; that it is itself a source of new values, both ethical and æsthetic.

Science reveals to us a universe in which there are no evidences of beginning or end or spatial limit. The span of each human life, though all too brief for the accomplishment of chosen tasks, appears to him who lives it a not inconsiderable duration. It is long enough to permit weary waitings and final defeat of cherished hopes and the passage of hours that seem distended and slow beyond all power to estimate. And yet the extent of even the most prolonged individual existence is to the span of recorded history an almost negligible quantity. In the eyes of man himself the magnitude of that vastly greater temporal period of human history causes his own little biography to shrivel to a point by comparison. But we know that, measured by the incalculable standard of the entire racial history, the time comprehended within the limits of recorded annals is but a moment in an extended day. We are persuaded, though bereft of images to convey the persuasion, that to measure, in turn, the entire duration of human experience, incredibly prolonged though

¹ Considered as permanent possibilities of enjoyment ethical and æsthetic values differ in two respects.

(1) An æsthetic value is a possibility of immediate enjoyment, whereas an ethical value is a possibility of mediate enjoyment. Rhythm and symmetry are æsthetic values because the direct experience of them is pleasant. Courage and kindness are ethical values, not because to contemplate them as such gives direct enjoyment, but because to practice them produces results from which enjoyment is derived. Any enjoyment of ethical ideals as such is not ethical but rather æsthetic.

(2) As the two types of value differ in the manner in which they produce enjoyment, so also do they differ in the kind of subject-matter in which respectively they are embodied. Æsthetic values are embodied in sensory material, such as tone, colour, form, and as such are directly perceptible, whereas ethical values are embodied in rules of conduct and attitudes of will which are to be apprehended only conceptually.

Due allowance being made for these differences, one might be justified in saying that virtue is beauty of spirit, while beauty is virtue of matter.

it be, against the larger dimensions of the tale of life from its beginnings upon our planet, is to render the lesser unit once again almost pitifully diminutive. But consider the incommensurability between the period of moderate temperature, adapted to life, upon earth, and the total duration of that body as a physically distinct satellite of the sun. And according to all evidences we are compelled to regard even that last temporal immensity as but a passing interval against a background of even more unimaginable phases. Compared with the simpler chapters of cosmic evolution, the gestation, birth and adolescence of our mighty solar system is but a syllable—a single pulse in a symphony for which temporal limits may not be predicated.

If, as regards duration, the universe which constitutes the subject-matter of science is thus staggering, its spatial extensity is no less so. There again we encounter a series of magnitudes which may be arranged in a hierarchy. Beginning once more with man, we find that his body is of dimensions which, by comparison with certain orders of existence at least, seem to himself of considerable dignity. But if, by contrast with the microscopic, the cubic contents of a human body bulk somewhat large, in what terms are we to describe the magnitude of our earthly globe, measured by the same standard? But even the earth itself proves of little account with regard to the space it occupies, when compared with the proportions of the solar system. When the magnitude to be envisaged transcends the limits of that already unimaginable immensity of the sun with its attendant satellites, imagination is completely paralysed, and the mind is compelled to resort to indirect means of naming and mapping those extra-solar distances. Of the proportions of the milky way and the yawning abyss of space beyond the uttermost stellar system we can make no approach to comprehension. And yet of such inhuman vastnesses does science tell; of such kind is the universe with which the intelligence of mortals grapples.

But the anti-realist, be he pragmatist or absolute idealist, is set upon belittling this cosmos which he is privileged to inhabit. He would take advantage of the intricacies of the epistemological problem to reverse that process of increasing scientific knowledge by which man has emancipated himself from the thrall of his own vanity. Belief that the world and all therein was made for man's behoof and that its events are to be explained by their bearing upon his weal and woe, that the sun and the stars are set in the sky as lanterns to light his path—that man, in short, is the centre about which all things revolve—all such belief serves indeed to feed the

vanity and soothe the fears of the race in its infancy. But chastened by the austerities of physical science, we have made some approach to a decent humility: and the glories of anthropocentricism are no longer more than the bells and paper crown with which the fool was wont to play at royalty. But no sooner has the plain man abdicated from the throne constructed by his own vaingloriousness than philosophers approach and tempt him in new and intricate speech to resume his rôle of legislator for nature. We can learn of things only through their often distorted impressions upon our senses; we can conceive the world only under conditions by which it is related to our minds; and the newer anthropocentricism bids us interpret the relativity and egocentric limitations of our experience as a relativity and egocentric dependence of the world which we experience. In the older view man recognised that the world at least existed independently of his knowledge, even though the origin of its existence and the character of its laws were motivated by his needs. But the anthropocentric philosopher surpasses in arrogance the old-time theologian; for with his slogan, no object without a subject, and his claim that the meaning and existence of things are inseparable from the experience of them, he reduces a whole vast cosmos to the status of a mental construct. Our own experiences are, to be sure, the world's *ratio cognoscendi*. The idealist would conclude that they are therefore its *ratio essendi*. Whether, as pragmatist, he teaches that reality changes with the changes of human opinion, that there is no objective truth, but only as many truths as there are beliefs, or whether, as absolute idealist, he invents a transcendental or universal Self which functions through each of our finite centres and thus sustains the world—in either case the anti-realist belittles the things of nature by relegating them to a false and unnecessary dependence upon experience, and denying them their ancient privilege of existing in their own right irrespective of their status as objects of any experience, finite or absolute.

If common-sense realism is outraged by the reduction of the visible and existent universe in all its vast extent to mere mental content, with a consequent belittlement in power and magnitude, the new or Platonic realism of the present day is still more outraged by the idealist's relegation to the status of subjective dependence upon consciousness of the even vaster realm of abstract subsistence. For the invisible region of the subsistent comprehends the infinite totality of essences and values—of truth, beauty and goodness—and the laws of its structure possess a kind and degree of validity which, to the

realist, far transcends the validity of the transitory and contingent sequences and coexistences which obtain in the world of the concretely existent. Plato, who was perhaps the first clearly to proclaim the objective reality of abstract forms and relations, was strongly influenced by Pythagoreanism, and it is natural that the clearest illustrations of the nature of the subsistent should be afforded by the subject-matter of mathematics. Consider the kind of reality to be attributed to the properties and relations of numbers if those relations and properties are regarded as in no way dependent either upon the concrete objects by which they may be exemplified or upon the consciousness of the mathematicians who discovered them. To the realist it is clear that the truth that 7 and 5 are prime numbers and that their sum equals 12 would be totally unaffected by the annihilation of all existing objects and all existing consciousness.

This realist faith that universal truths are independent of the particular subject-matter in which they are exemplified by no means conflicts with the realisation that we attain to a conceptual knowledge of the universal through a perceptual knowledge of the particular. In the teaching of arithmetic or geometry it is pedagogically necessary to use concrete diagrams of particular shape and size which are experienced at particular times and places. It is by attending to the generic aspects of such diagrams that one comes to appreciate the abstract and universal relations of number and space. This initial psychological dependence of the universal upon the particular prevents many from arriving at a clear conception of the logical and ontological independence of universals. In other words, the fact that the particular is the *ratio cognoscendi* of the universal produces upon the immature or philosophically confused the illusion that it is also the *ratio essendi*. Just as the mind of the child in its early development depends for its knowledge of universals upon their concrete embodiment so do the minds of men in the early stages of culture. In both cases alike we find the same anti-realistic identification of the abstract and universal with its particular manifestation. To one who is emancipated from this confusion the realm of number and geometric form appears in its abstract purity, freed from all limitations of matter and place and from every vicissitude of temporal change. It is because of this freedom from the bonds of locus and date that not only numbers but the entire realm of essences possess a richness and an immensity in comparison with which even the infinities of the existent world are dwarfed to insignificance. For our actual universe is but

one from the limitless store of spatio-temporal systems ; any given existent world is but a cross section of this absolute or subsistent totality. For the Pythagorean, the domain of the subsistent appears to have been restricted to number and geometric form ; while in Plato's philosophy it received the somewhat different limitations of high logical generality and ethical and æsthetic value. Neo-Platonism was more consistent in that it recognised that any individual, such as Socrates or Cæsar, possessed an eternal archetype. It is perhaps only in the neo-realistic philosophy of to-day that the domain of the subsistent has been seen to include every character whatsoever, quantitative no less than qualitative, specific no less than generic, valueless no less than valuable, fragmentary no less than integrated. From this standpoint we might be tempted to define the world of subsistence after the manner of Leibnitz as the totality of possible or thinkable objects. There would, however, be two drawbacks to this seemingly simple definition. First, the term possibility would have to be paradoxically broadened to include its negative, the impossible, for the subsistent must include not only such empirically impossible objects as centaurs and mermaids, but also such logically or intrinsically impossible objects as round squares. While, secondly, though any subsistent may be termed thinkable or conceivable, yet it is at least uncertain whether this relation to thought is intrinsic to the nature of the subsistent.

What are the ethical and æsthetic implications of the transcendental universe of subsistence as thus realistically conceived ? At first sight it might seem that we had upon our hands a vast incoherent heterogeneity of miscellaneous essences promiscuously related. And the fact that this wild totality was regarded realistically as independent of consciousness might seem quite insufficient to confer upon it value of any kind. But to condemn the subsistent in this way would be to overlook the most significant of its characters. For the realm of the subsistent is not merely an aggregate of terms. It is also a system of propositions, that is, identity relations between these terms. These propositional relations do, to be sure, include the false no less than the true. It is, however, from the true propositions that the universe of subsistence derives not only its unity and structure but the ethical and æsthetic values with which this paper is concerned. While the round square fills honourably its humble rôle of illustrating the meaning of impossibility, it is the obverse aspect of this impossibility, namely, the proposition that squareness and roundness are reciprocally incompatible, that

is really significant. Here is an eternal truth whose status is independent of its recognition by any mind, divine or human. Moreover, while such eternal truths are also independent of the world of concrete existence, the world of concrete existence is by no means independent of them. Whatever thing would exist as square must forego the joys of roundness. An eternal truth is indeed an identity relation based solely upon the abstract natures or essences of the terms related, and however varied the temporal and spatial collocations of an existent system they can never be such as to violate the relations that obtain between essences. A square thing may be red or blue, but it cannot be round; an event can be past or future in reference to some given event, but it cannot be both; a thing may be black or non-black, but it cannot be a black that is not the opposite of white; seven electrons may or may not combine, but their number can never be evenly divisible by two.

While there is significance in this capacity of the eternal truths of essences to exercise a selective veto upon the world of existence, the ethical and æsthetic significance of the realm of the subsistent follows even more directly from those intrinsic characters of eternity and immensity of which we have spoken. In the present day, particularly, when the omnipresence of change and the stirring implications of creative evolution are for the first time accorded the recognition that is their due, it is something of a relief to realise that, though Heraclitus was right in his belief that all things changed, he was no less right in his vision of the changeless *logos*, a system of invariant forms and laws by which the flux of existence is measured and defined. However invigorating and splendid the experience of the flowing aspect of reality may be, there is after all a universal craving for the permanent. To participate vicariously through contemplation in the eternal order that transcends existence brings quiet to the mind and permits the conscious ego to transcend its own limits and to rise to a kind of Nirvana—a Nirvana which is, however, attained through expansion of consciousness rather than through its suppression.

That one of Plato's insights which was most important for ethics was also the one most neglected by his disciples, particularly by Aristotle. We refer to his conception of the superiority of ideal good to any existential power, even that of the divine creator. Ideals of right and justice, according to Plato, do not derive their validity from God. On the contrary, it is God who must derive his worth from them. In short, right is above might and independent of it in the

Platonic universe. Which means that religion depends upon ethics, not ethics upon religion. The whole history of religious ethics has been corrupted by failure to realise Plato's discovery of this supremacy of the ideal. The barbarous notion that moral values derive their significance from the will of a heavenly being, that living nobly means nothing more than conforming one's action to the commands of such a being—in short, the doctrine that obedience is the cardinal virtue, and disobedience the cardinal vice, these are the notions, as false as they are degrading, which characterise the ethical traditions of those who reject Platonic realism. For the realist, ethics is an affair of ideals, not of commands, and it is rooted not in the contingencies of existence, but in the necessities of subsistence. If courage and mercy are excellences of character, they do not become more excellent if there happens to exist a power which wills them, nor less excellent if there be no such power. The ethics of realism, because it is based upon eternally subsistent ideas, cannot be corrupted or shaken by anything that may happen to beliefs about the merely supernatural.

The conception of a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness has undergone many changes in the past, and will probably undergo as many in the future. Belief in the existence of such a power has its consolations and its dangers. We may regard it as supported by the facts of science or as refuted by them, but in no event should the primary sanctity of the sense of duty—reverence for values as such—be put at the mercy of anything so precarious and irrelevant as existential supernaturalism. Ethics—the science of what is noble and beautiful in the way of living—should be freed from all vestiges of authoritarianism. The evil notion that one needs to apologize for the good or to justify the claim of the ideal upon the heart by translating it into the mandates of political or theological authority should be for ever repudiated. This does not at all mean that the realist should forgo the use of any empirical method in his attempt to discover the specific ideal which is applicable to a given situation. The truths of essence are as difficult to discover as the truths of existence, and the realist's assurance of the absoluteness of duty is in no way incompatible with a dubiousness as to what is his specific duty in a given situation. Nor should we fail to realise that the content of duty may change and evolve—that rules of conduct were suitable for yesterday which may not be suitable to-day, and that a change in the situation of an individual will call for a corresponding change of the means used to attain the ideal.

Modern realism is cosmocentric in its outlook rather than anthropocentric or egocentric, with regard to the Platonic world of subsistence no less than with regard to the existential world of common sense and science. It would deny to the individual the pseudo-creativity attributed to him by the philosophy of idealism and pragmatism. It would accord to him no transcendent powers of legislating for nature, or of supporting by his consciousness the infinities of space and time. But in depriving the individual of these illusory powers to constitute reality by his thought, realism gives back to him the increased responsibility of membership in the independent and self-existent order of nature. To be alive in a world that is not of our own making is after all a noble adventure. And to have the privilege of contemplating existent nature in all its vastness, to feel that each new scientific law is not a mere résumé of our impressions but a veritable conquest of the objective universe, gives to the realistically emancipated a high and serious elation which is quite beyond the reach of those who would subject nature to a status of dependence upon mind. And when to the tumultuous and inexhaustible welter of things existent, realism adds the quiet and infinitely greater immensities of the realm of subsistence, the mind gains access to new and imperishable sources of joy and peace. The comprehension that the whole universe of essence and existence, though not created by us or dependent upon us, may nevertheless be mastered through contemplation, induces an emotion of pride freed from the petty arrogance of subjectivism. It is this pride in a universe that is independent yet controllable, and external yet progressively knowable, which is the ground for all sound appreciation of the beautiful and the sublime.