

IV.—REALISM AND IMAGINATION.

BY JOSHUA C. GREGORY.

IF Charles Lamb could be induced to discuss "Space, Time and Deity" he would approve of the order of statement in this essay. Its propositions have not been matured but brought "to market in the green ear". It discusses "defective discoveries, as they arise, without waiting for their full development," and, like the minds which Lamb preferred, is "suggestive merely". The arrival of a great system of thought is a time for passing suggestions to and fro. Before it can be fully understood and justly appraised there must be a period of twilight when we perceive dimly and think fitfully. Minerva cannot be "born in panoply": she must be panoplied step by step. Attempts to understand, suggestions arising from these attempts, criticisms hesitatingly based upon these suggestions, are all this essay pretends to give.

Geographical travelling is relatively independent of its starting-point: a circuit of the globe begun at London need only differ in order of visitation from a circuit begun at New York and the same scenes are experienced whatever the order of visitation. Geographical routes are fixed and geographical starting-points merely entries into them. One circumstance connected with geographical travel, however, prepares us for a fundamental distinction between geographical and mental routes. An estimate of London by a Chinaman will differ from the estimate by an American because the two have different mental eyes. Their mental models are different: the one compares London with Oriental life, the other with life in the Western limit of civilisation. Mental starting-points determine the nature of mental routes because they provide for thought its primary models of comparison. Alexander remarks that a theory of knowledge whose point of departure is the mental image will differ from a theory of knowledge which begins with the facts of perception.¹

If the thinker begins with memory and is dominated by the

¹ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book I., pp. 24-25.

circumstances of memory he will incline to a theory of perception which accepts these circumstances as typical; if he begins with perception he will incline to model memory on perception rather than perception on memory.

When an incident or a scene is recalled in memory the mind seems, whatever the truth may be, to REFER to the past through a mental, or memory, image. A dream of the past event or object SEEMS to disclose in the mind a power of referring to it by picturing it. The picturing seems to be done by the mind and the memory-image to form part of it. Since we remember because we have first perceived, perception seems to be essentially a bestowal on the mind of the power to form a mental image to represent what has been perceived. It is then an easy step to suppose that this imaging is also concerned with what is BEING perceived. When the mental route runs from memory to perception, the inquirer naturally assumes that an image, an "idea," stirred in the mind by the perceived object, is the direct or immediate object which he perceives.

When the mental route runs from perception to memory, when perceiving is the primary model and not remembering, a perceived image, so to speak, is replaced by a remembered object: memory is as much an actual interview with the object, though under different conditions, as was the original perception. In perception, our sense of life, remarked James, knows no intervening image.¹ Perception seems to face the physical object directly and if, there is no intervening mental image there, none is available for memory. Modern realism adopts this route, models all knowledge on perceptive experience, and describes remembering as a method of perceiving past events or objects formerly perceived.

Images may be anticipatory as well as recollective. The hesitating realist is troubled by the logical demand to make anticipation a method of perceiving the future: "Forecasts of the future," writes Laird, "are certainly not the future itself . . .".² He condemns realists to maintaining a contrast between images and perceived things which shall not interfere with their identity of status.³ He observes the letter of this law by regarding memory as the mind's awareness of past things themselves;⁴ he seems to fail in this observance when anticipation requires an explanation from him. The realist soon realises that, if remembering is perceiving past things and anticipating is perceiving future things, time and space

¹ *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 12.

² *A Study in Realism*, p. 51.

³ *Loc. cit.*, p. 65.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

must be accommodated to this view. This accommodation seems less urgent for the past than for the future: it is less disturbing to believe that we can continue to perceive events which have happened than to believe in our ability to perceive those which have not yet occurred.

Lossky, whose intuitional theory of knowledge requires the presence of the object in memory and anticipation, realises that, on realistic principles, "Every element of reality, even a fleeting event in the far-off past, remains eternally one and the same, identical with itself".¹ He also realises that ontology must construct a theory of space and time to dissipate the apparent impossibility of events separated from the knower by space and time being present in his acts of judgment.² Alexander, in *Space, Time and Deity*, has attempted to conform space and time to Lossky's ontological demand. He is compelled to this attempt because, like other modern realists, he regards remembering as perceiving past things: "The percept of him and the memory of him are two different appearances of him which in their connexion reveal the one thing, the man, whom we know to be to-day by perceiving, and to have been yesterday by remembrance".³ He is compelled to this attempt because he regards anticipating as perceiving future things: "Expectation is precisely like remembering except that the object has the mark of the future".⁴ The manipulation of space and time to which he is thus forced may be a crisis for realism. A system of thought can usually choose fundamental assumptions which strongly resist criticism but is usually liable to be more open to successful challenge when it is driven into deductions from these assumptions. Alexander's space-time may make the fortune of realism, but it MAY mar it.

His ontological remedy for the realistic affront to common sense, seems, at first sight, to be desperate. Common sense stares when a memory is declared to be as much a physical object as a percept, even with the qualification "in so far as it obeys the laws of physics".⁵ This deduction is enjoined if a past event or object is PERCEIVED in memory, for the image is the event or the object under a different aspect. The homogenisation of percept and image, thus enjoined, is secured in part by composing them both of space-time, which is the stuff of which all things are made, whether as substances or under any other category.⁶ Space and time, even when

¹ *The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge*: Duddington's Trans., p. 272.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 274.

³ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book I., p. 114.

⁴ *Loc. cit.*, Book I., p. 115.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

fundamentally and irrevocably conjoined into one ultimate entity which takes the place of the absolute in idealistic systems,¹ seem to be poor material for constructing a universe, and thus, from the start, the provided ontological remedy seems desperate. Mere ultimate identity of composition out of space-time is not enough to confer the status of a physical thing upon the image, since there are non-mental objects, like universals or numbers, which are not physical though they are composed of space-time.² The remedy seems to become more desperate still when the physical status of the image is connected with its location in the same place as the object of perception: "the image of a town belongs to the actual place of the actual town".³ Forcible hands seem to be laid on space, as they certainly are upon common sense notions of it, when the memory picture of the Sphinx which rises in a mind in London is said, or apparently said, to occupy a place in the Egyptian desert.

Similar location in space need not be similar location in space-time. When two rectangular axes, X and Y, are used to define positions in a plane two points may be equidistant from the X axis and unequally distant from the Y axis. If the X axis represents tridimensional space and the Y axis represents time, the two points represent events or objects located similarly in space but differently in space-time. This seems merely to defer, by one step, the final collapse of the assumption that anything once perceived as present can be perceived as past (remembered), for bilocation in space-time apparently duplicates the object. Obviously, the relations between space and time in space-time cannot be so simple as the above representation implies.

"The real existence is Space-Time, the continuum of point-instants or pure events." These "pure events" are "not qualified": if a qualified event, like a flash of red colour, be stripped in supposition of all its qualities and bared down to space and time there remains the concept of the "pure event".⁴ All other existents are groupings of these bare events, whirlpools within the ocean of Space-Time which they compose, crystals in and inseparable from this matrix, and their qualities are correlated with groupings of these motions.⁵ Now if these point-instants or bare events be regarded as corpuscles stripped of their materiality the bilocation difficulty, the apparent duplication of the object to serve perception and memory, still remains. The grouping of point-instants which

¹ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book I., p. 346.

² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

is the perceived Sphinx with its own location in space-time seems also to be the remembered Sphinx with its different location in Space-Time. The Sphinx, be it noted, can be simultaneously perceived by one mind and remembered by another. The relations between space and time cannot, therefore, merely allow to the point-instant the mode of existence represented by the conceptual baring of a corpuscle down to its space and time.

Laird, arriving at similar conclusions from similar realistic premises, concludes that the Mont Blanc which Smith remembers has its place in Switzerland exactly like the Mont Blanc which he perceived. He indicates the line for ontological revision of space and time when he adds "if the temporal and spatial meaning of imaged things should never be identified with the spatial and temporal meanings of present perception, it is possible to maintain that the 'memory-images' which Smith is said to recollect during his narrative are 'images' whose date is in the past and whose place is in Switzerland. . .".¹ The same object is to have one location in space and more than one date. The dating must in some way be connected with perspectives through which the object can be apprehended as past when the apprehender is not perceiving nor located for perceiving. The object, as before, must not be multiplied, as an object, by its datings. Again it is evident that special relations between time and space are ontologically requisite.

It is easier to grasp the necessity for such special relations than to understand how "Space, Time and Deity" endeavours to supply them. The correspondence between points and instants is one-many: one instant occupying many points and one point occurring at more than one instant. These repetitions of time in space and of space in time,² understood as Alexander understands them, may give the first cue to the nature of these special relations. Is the space of the Sphinx, so to speak, spread continuously through time with its earlier and later which are, as it were, the past and future of physical time itself,³ so that it can be either expected as future later, or remembered as past, earlier? Succession from past to future through the present belongs properly to psychical time, but by defining a moment of physical time as present by its relation to an observing mind, physical time, which properly only contains earlier and later, may be spoken of as having past, present and future.⁴ If "in total Space-

¹ *A Study in Realism*, p. 30.

² *Space, Time and Deity*, Book I., p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Time each point is in fact repeated through the whole of time . . ."¹ the grouping of points which is the Sphinx may be mentally interviewed as present (perceived), or interviewed as past (remembered)—the two interviews corresponding to the earlier and later which time can confer on the same object or event. If the later in physical time is the present in relation to the apprehending mind, apprehension of the later is perception and of the earlier is remembering. If the earlier in physical time is the present in relation to the apprehending mind then apprehension of the earlier is perception and of the later anticipation. Alexander illustrates the difference in dates in space, in a perspective from any instant when a human percipient is supposed to be at the point of reference, by our apprehension of Sirius nine years after the event.² "The position of Sirius is occupied by some time or other through infinite time":³ Lossky's "fleeting event in the far-off past" thus seems to be secured in an eternal identity with itself by the perpetuating effect of time. This perpetuating effect seems to depend on the indissoluble union between space and time, on their indispensableness to one another, on the temporality of space and the spatiality of time,⁴ on the supplying by space of a "second continuum needed to save time from being a mere 'now,'" on the converse relation to this, on the presentation of space which we apprehend with different dates,⁵ on space being variously occupied by time as time is spread variously over space.⁷

It is difficult to accept the statement that pastness is a datum of experience, directly apprehended.⁸ It seems inconsistent with it to say that reflection is needed to discover the different dates with which the space we apprehend is presented.⁹ We do not realise directly that we see Sirius as it was nine years ago. If all physical events are anterior to our apprehension,¹⁰ and if, in remembering, the object is before my mind bearing the MARK OF PASTNESS,¹¹ all perceived things should, it would seem, appear to be past. There is, of course, a difference between remembering and dating: in remembering there is conceiving and "in addition the act of remembering it, the consciousness that I have had it before"¹² and Cæsar's death may be dated without being remembered.¹³ We should, however, it would seem,

¹ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book I., p. 81.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

date all physical events in the past if they are actually previous to our apprehension of them and if they bear upon themselves the mark of pastness. Perhaps we simply ignore "pastness" till we are compelled in some way to apprehend it directly. Laird avoids the difficulty by supposing that earlier events are not themselves perceived but signified by the fact which is.¹ Recollection, however, seems to him to be direct acquaintance with the past itself:² we remember the very things we perceived.³ But he shirks Alexander's direct apprehension of pastness: "a dated memory is something that we remember in its context".⁴

One apparently curious consequence of Alexander's version of space and time is an apparent contemporaneousness of past, or future, and present: "In memory or expectation we are aware of the past or future event, and I date the past or future event by reference to the act of remembering or expecting which is the present event".⁵ It appears strange to learn that "The past object is earlier than my present act of mind in remembering".⁶ It is difficult to pass from the conception that the space occupied by the Sphinx confers upon it the unity underlying its appearances, which are then its appearances in perception, to the conception that the volume of space-time occupied by it confers this unity upon it,⁷ when its appearances are in remembrance as well as in perception. It is also somewhat perplexing to learn that in the present act of remembering "both its object and what we may call its mental material (the past act of mind which experienced it) are past".⁸ This suggests that we remember the OBJECT BEING PERCEIVED, which would explain the dependence of recollection upon previous perception. It is, however, apparently inconsistent with Alexander's denial to the mind of any power to "contemplate its own passing states"⁹ to admit to its remembrances past processes of perceiving. Remembrance and perceiving differ, according to Alexander, in their methods of securing the compresence, or togetherness, of the non-mental object and the corresponding mental process in the apprehensive situation: in imaging the act of mind is provoked from within, "in sensory experience compresence with the physical revelation of a physical thing is brought about through the direct operation of the thing upon the senses."¹⁰ Compresence, the togetherness of object and mental process, begins in perception with

¹ *A Study in Realism*, p. 48.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 52.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book I., p. 95.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*, Book I., p. 114.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

the physical object, which is then joined by the mental process; in remembering it begins with the mental process which is then joined by the object. This preserves the dependence of remembrance upon previous perception, but a serious difficulty seems to arise at this point. No action of the mind is possible without its object.¹ There is an object in perception; there is also an object in remembering. The provoking of the act of mind from within is obviously conditioned by the existence of the object, without which there can be no process of remembering. This may simply appear strange because of the common sense prepossession in favour of the mind's private power to recollect when it is out of perceptive range of the object. But constructive imagination appears to be impossible if, like all mental processes on realistic assumptions, it must have non-mental objects and if there can be no action of the mind without its object. Error is a crucial problem for realism because it seems to involve apprehension of non-mental objects, independent of the apprehending mind, which are not there. Human inventiveness, analogously, seems to involve the contemplation of objects which reality does not provide. Laird regards the "imaged Gorgon as a combination of elements which the mind has put together".² This seems to stir the mind from the contemplative rôle assigned to it by realism into a somewhat startling manipulation of reality. This manipulation, perhaps, must not be too rigorously compared with the constructive hand which arranges bricks into a house. It is more a selective apprehension of reality which corresponds in conscious contemplation to combining and separating things in physical manipulation: "Images, in a word, are parts of the physical world imaged, and that is what we discover through the fancy".³

Alexander says of the illusory object that it is non-mental and chosen from the world of things.⁴ Constructive imagination or invention resembles illusion in its contemplation, common to both, of objects which are not directly supplied by an independent reality. When Alexander adds "The object, with which the mind is brought into compresence by virtue of an act initiated by itself, is transferred from its place in the world into a place to which it does not belong,"⁵ though he is speaking of error, he describes the cognate operations of constructive imagination. Imaginative construction like "The illusion is a transposition of materials".⁶ Realism cuts out

¹ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book I, p. 25. ² *A Study in Realism*, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book II., p. 214. ⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ *Ibid.*

the causal action of the object on the mind and apparently replaces it by a causal action of the mind on its objects. Fancy, Alexander adds, distinctly including invention with illusion, HANDLES physical things in thought.¹ Again, however, the strict comparison of mental procedure to a fashioning hand is avoided: illusory appearances, and also, presumably, fanciful combinations, are perspectives of the real world seen under abnormal conditions.² The "dislocation of elements in reality," illusion in its naive form of misinterpreted perception, is "a mentally distorted perspective of the real".³ It seems, at first sight, to be possible that "the mind squints at things and one thing is seen with the characters of something else,"⁴ but it also seems curiously complaisant of non-mental reality to submit to perspective views which misrepresent it.

Homer describes the Chimera as a monster with a goat's body, a lion's head and a dragon's tail. In imagining (imaging) this composite creature, on Alexander's principles, processes are stirred in the mind corresponding to these three separate portions of it as objects. The perspective of the apprehending mind unites for it these three objects into one, as the tip of a distant spire might appear to protrude from a chimney when an observer sees them in line. Now, such perspective combinations as that of the chimney and spire are limited by the relations of the objects combined, and, as an observer at any point of space is limited to certain possible appearances, an observer situated anywhere in space-time is presumably limited to certain illusory appearances or imaginative combinations. If, however, there is an infinity of perspectives,⁵ there is, in principle, no limitation upon possible imaginative combinations. In practice, there would seem to be such a limitation upon a finite human individual because he cannot indulge in the whole infinite range of perspectives. This limitation may exist, though it offends our sense of freedom in imagining.

There seems, however, to be a more serious difficulty in the realistic account of imaginative combinations. The chimney-spire combination is only possible in certain very sharply defined lines of vision: it is not possible to see the spire protrude from the chimney when the observer moves out of these lines. The Chimera, on the other hand, seems to be permanently possible as an object of imagination. It seems as though either we were able to assume the necessary perspective with great ease or that the combination of images constituting the

¹ *Space, Time and Deity*, Book II., p. 221.

² *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Chimera were presented as an appearance in all our perspectives. The difficulty may be apparent and not real. Failure to realise the full significance or nature of our perspectives of the world may be responsible for a failure to realise the truth. We are not always thinking of the Chimera and doubtless our mental preoccupations may actually prevent us, at certain moments, from thinking of it. But a suggestion so easily brings the Chimera before the mind when that mind is familiar with it that it seems to be an appearance presented by many of its perspectives. If this be so it is not conclusive against realistic interpretations of fancy or imaginative combinations but it is a point which requires discussion and elucidation.