

SPAULDING'S RELATIONS AND SUBSISTENT ENTITIES

SPAULDING'S *The New Rationalism* differs significantly from other neo-realistic books known to the writer by its detailed and critical discussions of non-realistic philosophical systems.¹ In truth, Professor Spaulding argues negatively for his own pluralistic and realistic conception of the universe by the attempted refutation of all other metaphysical conceptions. One and all, he holds, they presuppose a "true state of affairs" which is independent of any or all minds that know it—a state of affairs which is, in other words, only externally related to any knower of it. But such a state of affairs, Spaulding points out, is precisely the world as the pluralistic realist conceives it.

The present writer believes that Spaulding's argument for neo-realism—this argument by elimination of all non-realistic systems—is unsuccessful because of the incompleteness of his elimination—more specifically because of his failure to refute, or even to understand, what he calls "objective" (that is, numerically monistic) idealism which he treats as the doctrine of an extra-entity, mediating the relations of other entities outside itself, whereas it really is the doctrine of a complex, including entity which relates its own members. But this brief paper is not written in order to elaborate this fundamental criticism;² it has two less ambitious purposes (only loosely connected with each other): it seeks, in the first place to protest against Spaulding's identification of what he calls "the new logic" with metaphysical realism and, in the second place, it undertakes to disclose certain inherent inconsistencies and idealistic implications in Spaulding's doctrine of subsistent entities.

I. The new logic, by which Spaulding means the theory of relations, is, he holds (in agreement with others of his school) a necessarily realistic doctrine. For idealism, he contends, can admit the occurrence of those traditional relations only—substance, cause

¹ The seriously critical portions of the book, no less than its constructive sections, well repay the careful attention of students of philosophy. It is greatly to be wished that Professor Spaulding would either purge the book of its unnecessary repetitions or else indicate, in the Preface of a second edition, the sections and chapters which might be omitted, without detriment to the basal argument of the book.

² For exposition and criticism of Spaulding's main argument, *cf.* the writer's "The New Rationalism and Objective Idealism" in a forthcoming number of the *Philosophical Review*.

Besides argument the idealist finds in Spaulding's pages many unargued assumptions—in particular the reiterated assumption that a "true state of affairs" is *ipso facto* non-mental (pp. 86¹, 231², 369²) and the unmediated assertion that "knowledge presupposes something that . . . would be a fact were it not known" (p. 384²).

and inclusion—which are, to say the least, of subordinate significance; and idealism is consequently debarred from commerce with the truly important relations of series and order.³

Now, so far as the relation of self to objects is alone at stake, this account of the idealistic doctrine is, in the main, correct. The idealist conceives the self as inherently a relater of objects and not a merely related object; he therefore denies the externality of the relation known as consciousness, or knowledge. Accordingly the ultimate relations of idealistic philosophy are, in Spaulding's terms, "underlying" (pp. 38, 180 ff., 311 ff.) or "modifying" (pp. 37, 182 ff., 236 ff.)—relations of "substance" and of activity, or cause. But this admission falls short of a justification of Spaulding's position. There are in truth three important objections to his identification of the new logic with the new realism.

(i) In the first place, his procedure wholly ignores the position of the spiritualistic (or personalistic) dualist, who holds, with the idealist, that the knowledge relation neither exists nor subsists in independence of selves, but who may well agree with the realist that all other relations, save those of self to self and of self to non-mental object, are completely external to their terms.

(ii) The realist, in the second place, even if he is right in holding that external relations have no place in an idealistic metaphysic, is not thereby justified in excluding the idealist, in his capacity not of metaphysician but of logician, from the study of the relations of series and of order. For, as logician, the idealist might for methodological purpose adopt at will an impersonal attitude; he might regard all save personal objects *as if* related externally to each other. So regarding them, he would be free to deal precisely as the realist deals with the external and "functional" relations—for example, with the relations of series, symmetrical, asymmetrical or non-symmetrical; transitive, intransitive or non-transitive; finite and infinite; discrete and continuous. In a word, the relations of the new logic might be handled according to the strictest rules of the neo-logicians, as well by one who regarded classes and series as counters in a great game as by one who treated them as part of the coin of the realm of metaphysical reality.

(iii) The preceding paragraph has virtually argued that the idealist, in spite of his metaphysic, has a non-philosophical claim on the new logic. But in truth the idealist need not abjure or ignore his metaphysics when he turns to "logic." To be sure, he will inevitably, in his logical study, abstract from—be relatively inattentive to—the relation of objects to self; he will concern himself

³ *The New Rationalism*, pp. 29 ff., 41, 243, 326. (Page references, unless otherwise indicated, are to this book.)

primarily with the relations of objects to each other. But he need not, therefore, regard these so-called external relations as metaphysically unreal; rather he may conceive the impersonal, external relations as implying the personal. So, for example, after the fashion of Stern, the idealist may hold that the alleged external relation of two terms with each other, presupposes that the two terms are still more ultimately, and directly, related to a self.⁴ It is entirely irrelevant to the present purpose whether or not the idealist can successfully defend this view, whether, for example, he rightly holds that "two things external to each other can be related only in so far as both are included in a third as their common ground."⁵ The point to be stressed is simply this: that the idealist, like the dualist, has a place in his system not only for the relation of self to its objects but for the "external" or "functional" relations of non-mental objects to each other. Obviously, therefore, the study of relations since it can be pursued as well by idealist and by dualist as by neo-realist, should not be harnessed up to one only of these metaphysical systems. To refuse a student who is not a neo-realist the right to concern himself with relations of series and order, is as if one should debar a man from singing Gregorian chants if he does not belong to the Greek church or from breeding guinea pigs if he is not a neo-Darwinian.

II. From this protest against the treatment of the new logic as an exclusively neo-realistic doctrine, I turn to my second topic: the discussion of the difficulties inherent in the theory of subsistent entities. This, however, demands a preliminary statement of Spaulding's doctrine as a whole. He conceives the universe as consisting of entities of two sorts: *existent* and *subsistent*. Of the existent entities, some are physical and some are psychical (p. 494). Physical existents include not only "things, forces, energies" (p. 491³), living beings (p. 445³) and qualities, such as solidity and elasticity, but also "relations such as cause and effect" (p. 491³). All these would exist even if all the psychical existents were annihilated (pp. 384³, 444 *et al.*). *Subsistent* entities belong to two main classes (p. 494): (a) "implied subsistents, discovered by reason;" (b)

⁴ L. W. Stern, *Person und Sache*, a book most profitably read as companion-piece and offset to *The New Rationalism*. Cf. especially, pp. 39-40; p. 167²; the concluding section, pp. 345 ff., on "the deduction of the mechanical-impersonal relations from teleological-personal principles"; and the passage, pp. 255 ff., on the relation between causal succession and personal activity. (It should be added that Stern is more nearly a vitalist than an idealist and that his "person," the unique and complex totality of parts which it relates to itself and to each other, is conceived by him as psychophysically "neutral" and not as necessarily conscious.)

⁵ Stern, *op. cit.*, p. 346³.

“experienced but not implied subsistents; some spatial and temporal and some not.” These last are once more subdivided into three subclasses, (1) “‘false’ hypothetical entities, *e. g.*, phlogiston;” (2) “imagined entities such as centaurs;” and (3) “illusory and hallucinatory objects.” And the “implied subsistents” of class (a) are likewise subdivided into (1) relations, classes, numbers, space, time; logical principles; series, infinity, and continuity; (2) “simples and complexes; terms and qualities;” (3) “ideal entities, contrary to existent fact.” Like the physical existent, all these subsistent entities are entirely independent of the psychical existents, the selves or minds, and would continue though all minds, or knowers, ceased to exist (p. 492²).

Nobody can examine, with any degree of care, this classified list of the entities of the universe without being struck by the fundamental difficulty of the doctrine; its total failure to distinguish unambiguously between existent and subsistent entities. To be sure, Spaulding attempts to differentiate them. Subsistents, he once says, “lack . . . temporal and spatial localization”—whereas physical existents are both spatially and temporally localized and psychical existents “occur at certain specific times” (p. 492²). But in what he calls his “complete classification,” quoted in condensed form in the preceding paragraph, he abandons this distinction by the explicit statement that not merely some of the experienced subsistents but some also of the “ideal” implied subsistents, are spatial and temporal. But if the *perpetuum mobile*, the satyr, and the contrast color (for example), though as truly spatial and temporal as the physically existent aeroplane and goat and lamp-light, are none the less subsistent, evidently space and time quality can not serve to mark off the existent from the subsistent entities. And, in the end, Spaulding admits the dogmatic and unargued character of the distinction since he frankly states that, in differentiating the existent from the subsistent, “one must rely wholly upon the verdict of empirical methods and common sense in which innumerable things, qualities, events, and relations are accepted as existing” (p. 490³) and are contrasted with another group of entities which are “found to lack that full quota of qualities . . . which psychology and physics recognize as essential to objects that exist” (p. 492²). But this bare assertion of an empirical distinction between physical things and conscious minds on the one hand, and, on the other, a heterogeneous collection of relations, series, ideals, images, and illusions is not a philosophy, and least of all a new rationalism. At its face value it is merely the familiar spectacle of realism at bay, taking refuge in the rough distinctions of the “plain man.” But it has not even the advantage of this naïvely

realistic position. For surely no scheme of classification can be much further from the "verdict of common sense" than one which groups together, even under its most general heading, so heterogeneous a manifold as logical principles, ideal beauty, space, phlogiston, and "the snakes of tremens" (p. 494), and which brings together in one of its sub-classes such sharply contrasted entities as ideal justice and a *perpetuum mobile* (p. 494).

The preceding paragraphs indicate the basal defect of Spaulding's doctrine of subsistent entities judged by its own standards. This which follows will suggest the idealistic implications of the doctrine. One of these is found at a point at which Spaulding certainly draws a real distinction between his two main classes of subsistents. The one class, that to which belong the relations, series, classes and ideals—is, he says, "implied," that is "discovered by reason." The other class—that which includes the false hypothetical entities, the illusions and the images—is "experienced." Here we have clearly an observed distinction—but in terms of consciousness; the contrast between the inferred and the imagined (as perceived). A further study of the tabular view of the "entities of the universe" (p. 494) discloses a more significant instance of this reference to consciousness. In the only passage in which Spaulding instead of enumerating existents and subsistents describes them, this description (which one may note, *en passant*, once more fails utterly to distinguish between the two) is again in terms of consciousness. Existents are said to be "perceived and inferred, remembered and imagined." And "non-existent subsistents also" are "perceived and inferred, remembered and imagined." These terms, it must be reiterated, are not casually used but constitute the basic descriptions alike of existents and of subsistents. Of course, the realist understands always, after "perceived" or "inferred," the word object; and always assumes that the object is or may be non-mental. But apparently he altogether overlooks the significance of the fact that his only *descriptions* of the lavishly enumerated existent and subsistent entities are in terms of the mental.

The consideration of the failure of the subsistent entities to justify their position in the metaphysical scheme of reality sets the reader to speculating on the psychological genesis of the doctrine. It is, in truth, not difficult to guess how neo-realists have been led to invent, or to adopt, the conception of entities at once non-physical and non-psychical. They have recognized the inadequacy of the old materialisms and dualisms—the too exclusive concern with sensuous objects and the crude disregard of relations, and "values." And at the same time they have rejected the idealistic account of these non-physical entities. Thus this world of the non-mental yet non-

physical entities has been forced upon them; and some of them have sought to enhance its actuality by appropriating for its use the term "subsistent." Since, however, as has just been pointed out, Spaulding never succeeds in defining the world of non-mental yet non-physical realities (unless in terms of consciousness) he can hardly hope by the repeated assertion of its non-mental character effectively to defend it against the assaults of the idealists, strengthened as they are, at just this point, by the adherence of those who, while they shy at pure idealism, none the less insist on the mental or ideal nature of all that does not belong to the world of the physical sciences.

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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

Troubles Mentaux et Troubles Nerveux de Guerre. GEORGES DUMAS. Paris: Alcan. 1919. Pp. 225.

This volume claims more general interest than naturally attaches to a treatise on military psychiatry. It consists principally of articles contributed to the *Revue de Paris*; and has the quality of its origin, of precision without pedantry. It is concerned most with the neuroses, not the psychoses of war, the latter being briefly dismissed as not essentially characterized thereby. A following chapter takes up confusional symptom-complexes associated with physical or mental shock. Some interpretative stress is here laid on toxic factors. Interesting types of amnesia, and other accidents in motor and sensory fields, are exemplified with profuse clinical observation. Successive chapters are devoted to the organic and emotional features of war neuroses, as well as those in which suggestion by self or others is the chief factor. Organic factors are thought to be especially prominent in auditory disorders; a limited group of symptoms also is referred to "emotion which has become unconscious." Practical measures in suggestive therapeutics are described; mutism yields the most readily thereto. The rôle of electricity in these procedures appears to have been considerable. Symptoms responding to suggestive treatment are facilitated through increased suggestibility the direct or indirect result of shock. Attention is invited to the generally passive character of autosuggestive symptoms arising after shock, *e. g.*, paralyzes as opposed to contractures. A following brief account of administrative experiences in military psychiatry forms the most interesting, even entertaining portion of the volume. Anaphylactic effects of shock are observed; there appears only the normal heredity for mental disease; on the other hand, previous emo-