

## 8. JOHN ANDERSON - REALIST OR IDEALIST ?

## a. The Philosophical Development of John Anderson

Although the philosophy of John Anderson is typically regarded as a systematic and logical philosophy, a historical treatment of his philosophical development reveals certain subtle changes in his philosophical theories throughout his lifetime. From the time of his earliest writings, Anderson emphasised the *positive* nature of his philosophy which treated all the subjects of human inquiry as *scientific* subjects. This view was particularly evident during the late nineteen twenties in his *doctrinal* conception of philosophy which emphasised the logical development of Realism into Empiricism and Empiricism into Positivism. Anderson's Realism assumed that the relation between Realism and Idealism was one of contradiction, rejecting Idealism as 'unspeakable' because of its logical foundation on the doctrine of internal relations. Anderson's subsequent defence of the doctrine of external relations as the independence of the terms of the relation from each other and from the relation itself implied the distinction between qualities and relations which formed the basis of his entire metaphysical theory. Hence in his epistemological theory, Anderson defended Realism as the doctrine of the independent existence of the object of knowledge, the real and existing relation of knowledge and the qualitative character of mind as emotional. However Anderson's epistemological Realism formed part of a broader empiricist theory of ontology, where every object possesses both empirical qualities and definite categorial forms within the medium of Space-Time, with no object being *both* a quality and a relation. The logical development of Anderson's empiricism was into a positivistic theory of logic which identified propositions with situations and emphasised the existential nature of the copula and the distinct propositional functions of subject and predicate. However after 1931 Anderson's presentation of metaphysical issues was less in terms of the doctrines of philosophy and were increasingly articulated in the context of the history of philosophy. During these early years, Anderson's philosophy was not merely a theoretical pursuit of philosophy but was, through his involvement with the Communist Party of Australia and the Freethought Society, an active engagement in political activity and struggle against social convention and the strictures of censorship. During the nineteen thirties, Anderson's political development was marked by his rejection of Communism which led to his subsequent involvement with the Trotskyist Worker's Party where he defended Trotsky's thesis that Russia was still a worker's state, although at this time he was also actively involved with the Freethought Society and the Literary Society at Sydney University. During this period Anderson was particularly interested with questions in aesthetics, arguing that beauty was a formal quality of things which implied the rejection of subjectivist and relativist theories of aesthetic form and Romanticist and Expressionist theories of aesthetic content. Anderson argued that the formal nature of beauty was exhibited in the

theme of a work of art, which presented the stages or phases of the development of the content of the work of art. Further the qualitative nature of beauty implied that it could not be understood in terms of the relations that it has and that the positive content of beauty was human emotions in social situations. Anderson argued that only a classical account of beauty with its notion of the development of theme, could give an objective account of beauty where the stasis of the aesthetic emotion recognises the work of art in its distinctness and not as any other thing. Anderson held that the classic theme of literature was Joyce's notion of the enslavement of the human soul to the nightmare of history, with redemption only being possible through participation in artistic movements which affirm the 'spirit of man in literature'.

After his return from sabbatical in 1939, Anderson became interested in questions in ethics and during the nineteen forties he defended a Realist ethical theory which treated goodness as a formal quality of objects. Anderson argued that the formal nature of goodness was indicated by the notion of a 'movement' or 'form of activity' with such 'movements' being bearers of certain 'ways of life' which can neither be reduced to individual mental processes nor elevated to the status of social institutions. Anderson argued that the qualitative content of goodness was that of production or the 'producer ethic' which emphasised disinterestedness and the interrelated nature of art, science and industry and which was opposed to evil which he characterised in terms of consumptiveness and interestedness. However Anderson's account of goodness was problematic because of his insistence that goods always assist each other and oppose evils while evils oppose both each other as well as goods, for this argument implied that goodness only existed in its opposition to evil and therefore was to be defined in terms of the relations which it has. Although Anderson's relational treatment of goodness was inconsistent with his Realist premises in treating goodness as both a quality and a relation, it is important to note that when Anderson does speak of goodness as a relation, he defines it as liberty or freedom. The conflict between liberty and servility can therefore be regarded as a historical theory of opposition where man struggles to 'save' himself by becoming free from the servile 'Hell' of bourgeois society through participation in various forms of artistic, scientific and productive activity. Anderson's emphasis on opposition was particularly predominant in his social and political activity and theory at this time where, through his involvement in the Freethought Society, he repeatedly emphasised the ethical importance of a vigorous intellectual opposition for a free and democratic society. With the dissolution of the Freethought Society in 1951, Anderson's intellectual activity entered a period of maturity and his public life was characterised by his independence from any organisational structure and an ongoing defence of the independence of the university from religious, commercial and governmental influence. During this period Anderson's psychological, social and political theories were dominated by an emphasis of the notion of *form*, an emphasis which was also reflected in his philosophical theories. One prominent feature of his

mature philosophical interests was his concern with issues in history and he particularly emphasised Croce's thematic account of history as concerned with liberty, although he also defended a scientific conception of history where history operates in accordance with deterministic laws. In his philosophic theories Anderson defended a *thematic* conception of the history of philosophy as objectivist, where the concept of *form* was the unifying concept of his ethical, aesthetic and logical theories. However Anderson remained committed to a Realist and Empiricist conception of philosophy which emphasised that reality is situational as a theory of spatio-temporal and categorical forms, which was explicated in terms of the forms of the proposition. Finally Anderson's mature philosophical thinking was also concerned with a defence of a classical conception of culture, understood as both a unified theory of culture and an appreciation of the period of philosophical Hellenism as the pre-eminent period of objective, philosophical thought.

The philosophy of John Anderson was a systematic and historical theory of the traditional 'forms' of philosophy - truth, beauty and goodness - and there appears, at first glance, to be a remarkable consistency in his philosophic views throughout his lifetime. Anderson began and ended his philosophical career with a defence of the two main doctrines which are commonly held to constitute the essence of his philosophy - Realism and Empiricism - and between which he extended his philosophic principles (and particularly the Realist principle of external relations) into a wide variety of areas including ethics, aesthetics, logic, social and political theory, education and religion. The systematic and theoretical consistency of Anderson's thinking has been sufficiently illustrated by Baker's two books on Anderson as well as in essays by other students, although the presentation of him as a systematic expositor of certain logical doctrines belies the fact that he was constantly reformulating his philosophical position.<sup>1</sup> He did not, in the words of his wife Janet Anderson, "...wish to retrace his steps - he wanted to press on and on till his intellectual curiosity was satisfied".<sup>2</sup> His theorising was, again in her words, "...thought (or criticism) in action", with him never being satisfied with the final written form of his courses or articles, with his work "...never being stereotyped".<sup>3</sup> This creative tendency was particularly evident in the early part of his philosophical career when, in the words of one of his earliest students P.H. Partridge, he was still developing his 'position', "...accepting, discarding, modifying, relating, reaching out to take in new territory".<sup>4</sup> Although Partridge argued that Anderson

---

1 For the systematic exposition of Anderson's philosophy see Baker [Australian Realism](#) and [Anderson's Social Philosophy](#); Passmore, J. 'Anderson as a Systematic Philosopher' [Quadrant](#) June 1977 pp 48 - 53. For a thorough review of [Anderson's Social Philosophy](#) see Reinhardt, L. 'Olympian Pessimist' [Quadrant](#) April 1980 pp 48 - 52.

2 Anderson, Janet. 'Foreword' to Anderson [Art and Reality](#) p 3

3 [loc cit](#)

4 Partridge, P.H. 'Anderson as Educator' [The Australian Highway](#) Sept. 1958 p 50

was both a creative and critical philosophical thinker, he particularly emphasised Anderson's creative and speculative ability.

At his best he had unusual powers of theoretical imagination, a rare capacity for throwing out novel and illuminating ideas; he was a great starter of theoretical hares. ...His theoretical fertility was, in fact, one of his attractions as a teacher. And, as a thinker, he appeared to be most attracted and stimulated by those who had the same temper and capacity - men like Alexander, Vico, Marx, Sorel and Freud.<sup>1</sup>

This creative aspect of Anderson's philosophising has also been emphasised by John Passmore who has argued that a distinctive feature of Anderson's philosophising was "...his refusal to be confined with disciplinary barriers, his ability to bring out unexpected intellectual connections, without any hint of mere eclecticism, his insistence on the unity of culture".<sup>2</sup> This tension between Anderson as a logical and systematic thinker and Anderson as a creative and speculative thinker is at the heart of the difficulty of understanding him as a philosopher. On the one hand one can emphasise the logical consistency of Anderson's system of philosophy which treats the traditional subjects of philosophy in terms of his Realist principles and assumes an underlying consistency in his philosophical views throughout his lifetime. However one can also emphasise the creative and speculative nature of his philosophising which can reveal new and unexpected connections between various apparently unrelated subjects, his theories on which, as is especially the case in his social and political theories, show marked change and development throughout his lifetime.

This tension in Anderson's philosophy is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the most enduring aspect of his influence as a philosopher and as an educator, the creation of a distinctively 'Andersonian school' of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> However as P.H. Partridge has observed, one result of this educational practice of fostering a 'school' of students was the tendency for the students to imbibe and hold fast to the Andersonian doctrines, an attitude which tended to stifle independent thought and tended to produce a certain 'intellectual uniformity'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly John Passmore has related that Anderson once remarked that he had developed a sketch of a systematic philosophy and left it to others i.e., his 'school', to develop the details, an attitude which Passmore argues is neither Realist in its assumptions nor is not what Anderson himself did with respect to the philosophy of Alexander.<sup>5</sup> However this

---

1 ibid p 51

2 Passmore op cit p 50

3 Partridge op cit pp 49 ff.

4 ibid p 52

5 Passmore op cit p 53

'school' of philosophy cannot be regarded as a monistic entity where all students of Anderson followed him in all respects, but more a plurality of 'schools', each in its own way distinctively Andersonian. For example, if there were a common set of logical doctrines which were characteristic of the 'Andersonian school' it would probably be those listed by John Mackie in 1962.

His (Anderson's) central doctrine is that there is only one way of being, that of ordinary things in space and time, and that every question is a simple issue of truth or falsity, that there are no different degrees or kinds of truth. His propositional view of reality implies that things are irreducibly complex, that we never arrive at simple elements in any field. Anderson rejects systematically the notion of entities that are constituted, wholly or partly, by their relations; there can be no ideas or *sensa* whose nature it is to be known or perceived, no consciousness whose nature it is to know, no values whose nature it is to be ends or to direct action. Knowledge is a matter of finding what is objectively the case; all knowledge depends upon observation and is fallible; we do not build up the knowledge of facts or laws out of any more immediate or more reliable items. Ethics is a study of the qualities of human activities; there can be no science of what is right or obligatory, and the study of moral judgements would belong to sociology and not to ethics. Similarly aesthetics can only be the study of the characteristics of beautiful things, not a study of feelings or judgements and not a source of directives for artists. Minds, like anything else, are complex spatio-temporal things: they are societies of motives or feelings, and there is no ultimate self to which motives belong. Similarly a society is a complex of movements which both co-operate and compete; it has no inclusive social purpose, but neither is it reducible to its individual members. And all things have their regular causal ways of working.<sup>1</sup>

Although Mackie's account of the key doctrinal issues of Anderson's philosophy clearly emphasise the application of his Realist, Empiricist and Positivist doctrines to epistemology, ontology, ethics, aesthetics and his psychological and social theories, such an account of these logical doctrines of Anderson's philosophy needs to be contrasted with the ethical and social consequences of those doctrines and such an account can be found more recently outlined by Eugene Kamenka.

We, who called ourselves 'Andersonians', believed in free thought, in criticism and enquiry, in enterprise, in the natural co-operativeness

---

<sup>1</sup> Mackie, J.L. 'The Philosophy of John Anderson' A.L.P. XVIII, 40, 1962 pp 265 - 6

of social and moral goods, in the integrity and independence of universities and academic institutions. We were pluralists. We elevated conflict, rejecting compromise and the illusion of a common interest. We fought censorship as well as government interference. We rejected both bourgeois commercialism and socialist planning. We repudiated obscurantism, the attempt to conceal or to palliate social and intellectual conflict by glossing over differences and distinctions. We rejected 'essentialism' and 'reductionism' as the attempt to reduce complex states of affairs to one fundamental essence, principle, or material base. We rejected 'atomism' as the elevation of 'pure particulars'... and 'holism' as the attempt to make organisms or systems logically primary and what goes in them always subordinate and derivative. We pitted - or thought we pitted - sound logic and good argument against all appeals to the fashionable, the 'accepted', the comforting.<sup>1</sup>

This contrast between the logical and ethical aspects of Anderson's teaching and philosophy reflect the tension between the systematic and creative aspects of Anderson's philosophy and in large part explain the division of the 'Andersonian school' soon after his death, a division which is similar in some respects to the dissolution of the Hegelian philosophy in Germany during the 1840's. The clearest evidence of the continuing influence of Anderson's teaching and philosophising was in the creation of two competing 'sects' of Andersonianism concerned with political and social issues. The 'left' or 'libertarian' Andersonians were strongly influenced by the more radical elements of Anderson's social and political philosophy and had some impact on the social and intellectual life of Sydney in the nineteen fifties and sixties through the activities of the Libertarian Society and later the 'Sydney push'.<sup>2</sup> However this influence has not been permanent, although many of these involved in the Libertarian Society have maintained a continuing interest in philosophy. On the other hand, the 'right' or 'Quadrant' Andersonians were more influenced by Anderson's more conservative political philosophy and have had a more lasting influence on Australian social and intellectual life, due mainly to their involvement with the controversial anti-Communist history of

---

1 Kamenka, E. " 'Australia made me'..but which Australia is mine?" Quadrant Oct. 1993 p 29

2 For the major writings of this group on Anderson see McCallum, D. 'Anderson and Freethought' The Australian Highway Sept. 1958 pp 71 - 5; Baker, A.J. 'Anderson's Social and Ethical Theory' Dialectic 1987 pp 78 -84; Baker, A.J. 'John Anderson and Freethought' Australian Quarterly Dec. 1952 pp 50 - 63; Ivison, D.J. 'Anderson as a Liberator' Dialectic 1987 pp 7 - 11. The subsequent career of the 'Libertarians' and the 'Sydney push' has been most notably traced by Docker, J. Australian Cultural Elites Sydney 1974 pp 131-155 and 'Sydney Intellectual History and Sydney Libertarianism' Australian Journal of Politics and History Vol. VII (1) pp 40 - 47. For a feminist assessment of the 'push' see Morris, E. 'The Patriarchal Push' Quadrant Jan. - Feb. 1979 pp 74 - 77.

Quadrant, although again there has been little written on Anderson in Quadrant.<sup>1</sup> However the most permanent influence emanating from Anderson has come from the so-called 'philosophical Andersonians' - John Passmore, John Mackie, David Armstrong, D.C Stove and Eugene Kamenka - who have extended the implications of a general Andersonian outlook into a variety of areas such as the history of ideas, philosophy of mind, ethics and social theory.<sup>2</sup> However apart from a few isolated articles, this group has not presented a thorough-going reassessment of Anderson's philosophy, confining themselves to an elaboration and development of some of Anderson's original philosophical insights. Finally even that group which could be truly regarded as the 'Andersonian School', those who were bound by an intimate association with Anderson, have published little on Anderson's life and influence, apparently devoting themselves to their teaching activity.<sup>3</sup>

Hence as Anderson's son Sandy has observed, there have been few 'vocal' followers of John Anderson who have attempted to defend and develop the central tenets of his philosophy and such a complaint is not without some foundation.<sup>4</sup> For example in Passmore's A Hundred Years of Philosophy, even though Passmore deals with the historical period from which Anderson arose and in which he was prominent, his treatment of Anderson is consigned to no more than a short footnote.<sup>5</sup> Similarly in Armstrong's The Materialist Theory of Mind Anderson is not referred to at all and the only evidence of Anderson's influence in Armstrong's major works is in a brief discussion of the problem of the 'false proposition' in his Logic, Truth and Knowledge.<sup>6</sup> In fact, apart from Baker's two books, the amount of published material on Anderson would scarcely be enough to fill one volume and this scarcity of

---

1 See Coleman, P. 'No road to Damascus: A Political Formation' Quadrant April 1972 pp ; Horne, D. The Education of Young Donald Sydney, 1988, passim.

2 See Smart, J.C.C. 'The Philosophical Andersonians' Quadrant Jan. 1976 pp 6 - 10; Kamenka, E. 'The Andersonians' Quadrant July 1987 pp 60 - 64. For some of the major philosophic works of these authors see Passmore, J. A Hundred Years of Philosophy Harmondsworth 1978, Mackie, J. Ethics, Armstrong, D. A Materialist Theory of Mind, Kamenka, E. The Ethical Foundation of Marxism 1962. For the assessment of these philosophers on Anderson himself see Passmore, J. 'Anderson as a systematic philosopher' *op cit* pp 48 - 53; Mackie, J. 'The Philosophy of John Anderson' A.J.P. 1962 pp 265 - 282; Armstrong, D.M. 'On Metaphysics' Quadrant July 1977 pp 65 - 69; Kamenka, E. 'On Education' Quadrant July 1977 pp 47 - 54; Stove, D.C. 'The Force of the Intellect' Quadrant July 1977 pp 45 - 46

3 The major writings of this group on Anderson includes Eddy, W.H. 'Ethics and Politics' The Australian Highway Sept. 1958 pp 64 - 68; T.A. Rose 'Logic' The Australian Highway Sept. 1958 pp 57 - 60; Partridge, P.H. 'Anderson as an Educator' The Australian Highway Sept. 1958 pp 49 - 52; Walker, A.R. 'Public Controversies and Academic Freedom' Dialectic 1987 pp 11 - 23; O'Neill, W.M. 'Some Notes on Anderson's Psychology' The Australian Highway Sept. 1958 pp 69 - 71; Anderson, A.J. 'Following John Anderson' Dialectic 1987 pp 129 - 143; Cummings, L. 'Ryle on Logic and Professor Anderson' Dialectic 1987 pp 109 - 116; Doneila, W. 'Anderson's Theory of Education' Dialectic 1987 pp 63 - 77.

4 Anderson, A.J. 'Following John Anderson' Dialectic 1987 p 133 ff

5 Passmore A Hundred Years of Philosophy p 566

6 Armstrong, D. Logic, Truth and Knowledge Cambridge, 1973, p 44 - 48

material presents a problem in assessing Anderson's influence. Hence while it is obvious that some of Anderson's students have had illustrious careers in developing certain aspects of his philosophy, there has been very little critical exposition of Anderson's philosophy by his students which can be regarded as either *refuting* or *developing* his philosophy. However such a situation was undoubtedly a result of the fact that Anderson was "...quite possessive about his philosophy and discouraged or inhibited members of his school from themselves working and writing on core parts of his position".<sup>1</sup> The splintering of philosophical systems into competing and opposed schools of thought is a not uncommon occurrence in the history of philosophy and the effect of such a division is to impede independent exposition, criticism and development of the original philosophy. However a historical treatment of Anderson's philosophy demonstrates a clear *development* of his philosophy from an early commitment to Realism as a *doctrine* of philosophy to a mature view of Objectivism as the *theme* of philosophy. Hence while not denying the importance of a systematic treatment of Anderson's philosophy, it is arguable that there is also an important need to present a historical and thematic exposition of Anderson's philosophical development to illustrate the changes in Anderson's philosophical views throughout his lifetime and to assess the extent to which such changes constitute a *development* of his earlier philosophy. However any historical treatment of Anderson's philosophical development which neglected the raising of logical issues would fail to appreciate the thematic structure of that development and therefore, in the above presentation of the development of Anderson's philosophical views, the emphasis has been laid on the consistency of his treatment of logic, aesthetics and ethics in terms of the Realist principle of external relations and the consequent distinction between qualities and relations. To critically re-assess the philosophy of John Anderson, it is necessary to present an exposition of his views in their systematic form as based upon the Realist doctrine of external relations and concerned with the traditional philosophical 'forms' of truth, goodness and beauty. Anderson's philosophy was largely based on the empiricism of Samuel Alexander who regarded these 'forms' as 'tertiary qualities' and in presenting a *systematic* exposition of Anderson's philosophy, these 'qualities' will be examined in terms of their respective disciplines - metaphysics, aesthetics and ethics - concluding with an examination of his mature philosophical interests - his theory of history and his unified conception of philosophy - and an assessment of his philosophy in terms of a characteristic theme of the history of philosophy, the theme of Realism and Idealism.

#### b. Metaphysics

---

<sup>1</sup> Baker Australian Realism pp xii - xxi



Anderson regarded metaphysics as the 'science of being' and this theory can be divided into three distinct areas: his epistemology, his ontology and his theory of logic. The logical basis of Anderson's epistemological, ontological and logical theories was the doctrine of external relations and Anderson argued that the logical opposition between Realism and Idealism turned on the issue of relations. The British Absolute Idealist's regarded relations as internal with such a view exemplified in the case of T.H. Greer who held that relations are internal to the subject, although this was opposed by F.H. Bradley who held that relations are internal to the object. Both interpretations of the doctrine of internal relations were rejected by Moore and Russell who assumed that the force of Moore's 'refutation of Idealism' implied the positive truth of Realism and the doctrine of external relations and Russell in particular argued that the doctrine of external relations constituted a 'unity' which could only be analysed. However Anderson's view of relations was not based on Russell's theory, but was founded on the doctrine of external relations expounded by the American 'New Realists'. On Anderson's view of external relations, all relations are external to the terms which they relate and the relation between them, with no term having an 'essence' whose nature it is to relate with the logical form of this doctrine being  $a/R/b$ . With the general acceptance of the force, if not the detail, of Moore's 'refutation of Idealism', it has been commonly assumed in twentieth century Anglo-Saxon philosophy, including Anderson's contribution to it, that all relations are external to the terms which they relate, which implied that qualities and relations are distinct and are not to be identified.

#### i. Epistemology

The British Absolute Idealist's regarded the 'Absolute' as a monistic unity of the subject and object of knowledge and in the case of Bradley's philosophy this 'Absolute' was the only true reality or knowledge, with all particular things being 'mere appearances' of, and internally related to, the 'Absolute'. Although both Moore and Russell rejected this view and emphasised the objectivity of the object of knowledge, they, and the analytic tradition inspired by them (a 'tradition' which Anderson had little sympathy for), defended an atomistic or analytic conception of relations. The Realist assertion of the independent existence of the object of knowledge was taken up in a *systematic* fashion by Samuel Alexander who advocated a conception of knowledge as dualistic - as involving both contemplation and enjoyment - and of a faculty view of 'consciousness' as *the* quality of mind as knower. Anderson rejected both of these views when he argued that there are no entities whose nature it is to be known and no entities whose nature it is to know, with such a 'rationalism' being evident in nominally Realist and Idealist theories alike. Anderson's own positive epistemological theory emphasised that both the object and the subject of knowledge exist independently of the relation of knowing, with there being no *entities* whose nature it is to know or be known. In place of

Alexander's 'faculty' theory of mind, Anderson advocated a pluralist and determinist theory of knowing where certain emotions or combinations of emotions seek to know things objectively, whereas other emotions seek to deny or repress the objective knowledge of things. Anderson's epistemological theory was therefore empiricist in the sense that what is known is known as real and to know something as real is to know it through experience. As such, Anderson's epistemological theory is firmly in the tradition of British empiricist and realist philosophy and is unproblematic as a theory of knowledge of *objects*, although, as it shall be argued, such a theory is inconsistent with Anderson's ontological theory.

Anderson's defence of empiricism as an *epistemological* theory and his rejection of epistemological dualism or 'rationalism' was based on two separate issues. Anderson argued firstly that there can be no special mental faculty which has the quality of 'knowing' for such a 'faculty' view identified the quality of mind with the relation of knowing. This criticism of 'rationalism' was based on Anderson's argument that if knowing is dualistic then apart from the ordinary empirical experience of everyday events, there must be a special quality of mind whose nature it is to 'know'. Such a quality of knowing Anderson described as 'consciousness' and he concluded that any dualistic theory of knowledge must be rejected in being logically based on the assumption of a faculty view of mind. Secondly Anderson argued that a dualistic theory of knowledge is based on an ontological dualism such that a duality of ways of knowing implied that there is a duality of 'ways' or levels of being. Anderson's general objection to ontological dualism is that if two separate 'realities' are postulated then no account can be given of the relation between these two realities, without assuming that there is in fact only one reality. Similarly Anderson argued that if it is postulated that there are two separate ways of knowing then no account can be given of how we know this to be the case, without assuming that there is only one way of knowing. As Mackie has argued, the real force of Anderson's rejection of epistemological dualism is that it is based on an ontological dualism and that such a 'rationalism' involves a 'search for certainty' and a commitment to the assertion of synthetic, necessary features of reality.<sup>1</sup> This assertion of such synthetic necessary truths will involve a conflation between the doctrine of different levels of reality and the doctrine that the intellect contributes in some positive and independent way to knowledge, doctrines which a "consistent and thorough-going empiricism" will be bound to reject.<sup>2</sup>

However while one can accept, on the basis of the doctrine of external relations, Anderson's criticism of a 'faculty of consciousness' as the identification of a quality and a relation, it is arguable that such a 'faculty' view of knowledge is not implied by

---

1 Mackie, J. 'Rationalism and Empiricism' in Logic and Knowledge Oxford, 1983, p 44 - 46

2 ibid p 53

a dualistic theory of knowing. Hence there is no inconsistency in arguing that knowledge is dualistic - that there are two ways of knowing - and that in either case, such knowing is not the operation of a 'faculty of consciousness'. It could be simply argued, for example, that there are two general classes of things which know - different classes of emotions for example - and that such emotions know things in different ways. Anderson argued that the quality of mind was that of feeling or emotion and if it is held that different emotions or classes of emotions know things in different ways, then such a view would be open to the criticism of the 'faculty of consciousness' only if it is assumed that these emotions *constitute* the knower in some way, an assumption which is not part of Anderson's emotional characterisation of mind nor implied by an epistemological theory of distinct ways of knowing. Anderson's criticism of epistemological 'rationalism' only has force then if one of these ways of knowing is held to be the work of a peculiar 'faculty' of consciousness or rationality which is held to be identical with the general character of mind and it is quite possible that the mind knows things in different ways without assuming that in either case that this is the work of any such faculty.

With respect to Anderson's second criticism of epistemological dualism - that different ways of knowing imply different ways of being - it can be observed that while different ways of being *does imply* different ways of knowing (if we claim that there are two realities, then we must know each 'reality' and that our knowing must be *qualitatively* different in each case) it does *not* follow that different ways of knowing *implies* different ways of being. Hence to assert that there are different ways of knowing does not imply the assertion that there are two different and separate 'realities', for it may simply be the case that they are different ways of knowing the same thing. This is not to dispute Mackie's claim that historically the 'Rationalists' have, in their 'search for certainty', argued from an epistemological dualism to an ontological dualism, but only that a general epistemological dualism (one without the encumbrance of the 'faculty' view of consciousness) does not imply an ontological dualism. However such a theory would still be open to Anderson's criticism that if knowing is dualistic then we must know *this* to be the case and that the two ways of knowing are therefore related, which would in turn imply that there is only one way of knowing. Such a criticism only has force however, if it is assumed that what relates the two ways of knowing must itself be a way of knowing. It is possible that what relates these distinct ways of knowing is itself a non-knowing quality of mind but yet is still related to both ways of knowing. One candidate for such a quality may be that of *memory*. Clearly memory is a *quality* of mind and is one which is related to our knowledge of things and arguably, is also something which is consistent with a dualistic theory of knowing. For example, memory is a quality of mind which is at the heart of Freudian psycho-analysis and it is interesting to note that Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams begins with an extensive outline of current scientific literature on dreams, which is concluded by a

thematic analysis of one of Freud's own dreams and at the conclusion of which he declares the discovery of the psycho-analytic method.<sup>1</sup> On Freud's view the 'scientific' treatment of dreams as a 'somatic process' where the content of the memory of a dream appears meaningless - I dreamt X and Y and Z, but where X, Y and Z appear disconnected and meaningless - is to be rejected and replaced by the psycho-analytic view where X, Y and Z as memories or the content of the dream can be related in an intelligible, thematic structure. For Freud then, the 'scientific' knowledge of dreams is qualitatively different to the psycho-analytic knowledge of them where the content of dreams are memories or sets of memories, which the active process of dreaming forms into certain meaningful arrangements. The importance of this view for a general dualistic theory of knowledge is that memory is a mental quality and not a process or relation, which implies that distinct ways of knowing can be related by a quality of mind which does not itself 'know'. Hence if it is true that there are two distinct ways of knowing things, then it is no criticism of such a dualist theory that we still require a single, common way of knowing that knows both, for either way of knowing could communicate with the other through the non-knowing quality of memory. It is questionable therefore that a dualistic theory of knowing necessarily implies a dualistic theory of existence and it is possible for an account of a dualistic epistemological theory to be given in terms which are consistent with Anderson's emotional characterisation of mind.

However it may still be argued that both sets of emotions still know only through 'experience' and that no decisive objection has been given to Anderson's empiricism and no positive content has been given as to what these different or distinct ways of knowing are. The answer to both of these difficulties lies in Anderson's own theories and particularly in his insistence on the notion of *form*. In his aesthetic and historical theories Anderson appeared to hold some form of epistemological dualism as when he argued that history can be understood both artistically and scientifically and when he argued that the beauty of a work of art can be known in terms of its qualitative character or content but can also be known in terms of its thematic structure or form. Indeed the general distinction between form and content runs through most, if not all, of Anderson's theories and while it is clear that the *content* of Anderson's logical, aesthetic or ethical theories are known through experience, it is *not* clear that knowledge of the logical or thematic *form* of these theories is similarly known in terms of experience. Indeed one of the defining characteristics of Anderson's notion of form was that it was *non-material* - that it does not exist - and if it is asserted that empiricism is the doctrine that what is known is known as existing or real, then clearly the notion of form *cannot* be known in terms of experience. This is the decisive objection to Anderson's epistemological empiricism - that knowledge of form is impossible in terms of experience - and also

---

<sup>1</sup> Freud, S. The Interpretation of Dreams New York, 1965, Ch. 1 - 2.

suggests the positive content of a dualistic theory of knowledge. Hence while it can be argued that the knowledge of objects as *content* is known through experience, it can also be argued that the knowledge of objects as *formal* is not known through experience and can only know through 'reason' which knows the object, in the Kantian terminology, as an object of possible experience. However this is not to be necessarily committed to the 'faculty' view of consciousness for the knowing of the object as formal, can be simply the work of certain emotions or sets of emotions which 'reason' or know the objects in terms of their formal characteristics. Hence while Anderson's criticisms of 'rationalism' in epistemology have substantial force against the assumption of the 'faculty' view of consciousness, they are not decisive objections against a general theory of epistemological dualism, a theory which can be found implicit in Anderson's own philosophy. Anderson's epistemological Realism can therefore be regarded as adequate for a theory of knowledge of objects as objects, although it encounters certain difficulties as a theory of knowledge of the formal characteristics of things.

## ii. Ontology

Anderson's Realist philosophy was not simply an epistemological Realism where the object of knowledge is considered as an existing object, but was also an empiricist ontological theory as a spatio-temporal theory of situations. Anderson criticised ontological dualism as a theory of different levels of existence, on the grounds that if both X and Y are said to be different sorts of existence, then there must be some relation between them which is also 'real', which implies that there is in fact, only one way of being. Anderson concluded therefore that there can be only one 'reality', that of complex and determined objects existing in the medium of Space-Time, with every object having certain formal categorical features. Such a conception of ontology is in the systematic tradition of Realism as exemplified in the empiricism of Samuel Alexander and Anderson 'corrected' certain errors in Alexander's ontology and particularly his 'stuff' conception of Space-Time, arguing that Space-Time is a 'medium' in which things exist and in so existing, possess a formal, categorical structure.

One of the more distinctive features of Anderson's ontological theory was its thorough-going pluralism which he developed in response to the monistic theories of the Absolute Idealist's such as Bradley and the atomistic theories of Russell and Wittgenstein. Anderson argued that there are no 'ultimates' whether 'one' or 'many', with everything existing at the same level, as both complex and simple and John Passmore has clearly brought out the illogicality of the monism of Bradley's Idealism and the atomism of Russell's Realism in attempting to present a coherent theory of

existence.<sup>1</sup> The Idealist stress on internal relations was, according to Bradley, held to imply a monistic theory where all existing things are subsumed under the 'Absolute' conceived as a 'whole', which was held to be in a necessary relation to mind. In reaction to this view, Russell's Realist doctrine of external relations implied an atomistic ontological theory where 'Reality', conceived as a 'bare particular', was held to be in a contingent relation to mind. To overcome these one sided conceptions of ontology from the point of view of either Idealism or Realism, there is the need to adopt a more 'dialectical' approach to the issue of monism and atomism and Passmore has argued that the resolution of these difficulties lies in treating the subject not as a logical entity - a necessary whole or a necessary part - but in terms of a pluralistic theory of contingency.<sup>2</sup> Atomism and monism can therefore be regarded as two forms of the logical error which seeks to either reduce existence to the logically simple 'atom' or elevate existence to the logically complex 'absolute', such conceptions being overcome in a pluralist theory of things which are both simple and complex. Such a pluralistic conception of existence is the treatment of existence as neither a thing nor a relation, but as a theory of things possessing the categorical 'forms' of particularity and universality. Anderson's pluralist ontological theory is therefore a denial of both monism and atomism and in the application of this pluralism to all the major subjects of philosophy, it can be regarded as one of his most significant contributions to philosophy.

Another distinctive feature of Anderson's ontological theory was its thorough-going determinism.<sup>3</sup> Hence in response to the Scottish Hegelian's 'dialectical' interpretation of nature where nature evolves in terms of 'contradictions' and Alexander's 'emergent' theory of nature where all things are in a process of emergence from the original unity of Space-Time, Anderson argued that there is no sense of necessity in nature, whether 'dialectical' or 'emergent' and that all things are governed by contingent and empirical laws of nature. The logical foundation of Anderson's determinism lay in his conception of Space-Time as a medium in which things exist, for on such a conception there could be nothing which resided outside of Space-Time (such as God) and nothing which could be a 'cause' of Space-Time as modern quantum physics assumes, with anything which exists being governed by the same conditions of existence. As Armstrong states, "For Anderson it is part of a thing's nature, including the nature of a human being or a physical particle, that it has perfectly definite and determinate ways of working, governed by necessary and sufficient conditions, in whatever situation it may be found."<sup>4</sup> For Anderson then,

---

1 Passmore, J. 'Russell and Bradley' in Brown, R. and Collins, C.D. (ed) Contemporary Philosophy in Australia London, 1969, p 22 ff.

2 ibid p 27 ff

3 For a fuller account of the pluralistic and deterministic implications of Anderson's ontological theory see Armstrong 'On Metaphysics' op cit p 65 ff.

4 ibid p 66

determinism not only implied the rejection of the 'ultimate' cause of all things, but more particularly implied the rejection of 'voluntarism' in the field of human endeavour. Any theory of ethics, psychology, society or politics which defends the notion of 'free' choice or 'free will', will therefore to be rejected and replaced with a thorough-going deterministic account of human affairs. Similarly any theory of human history which defends the notion of the 'dialectic' as the operation of necessity in human affairs, whether Marxist or Hegelian, will likewise be rejected and replaced with a deterministic theory which stresses the importance of contingency in the field of human activity.

The final and perhaps most important aspect of Anderson's ontological theory was his insistence on the formal or categorical nature of reality. This aspect of his ontology was an implication from his view of Space-Time as a medium in which things exist, for if all things have the same spatio-temporal conditions of existence, then it will follow from such an account that any thing will also have formal categories such as universality and particularity, causation, order, etc. However although Anderson appears to use the terms 'empiricist' and 'objectivist' interchangeably in referring to these formal elements of reality, this insistence on the 'forms' of existence is problematic for Anderson in several respects regardless of the 'doctrine' which is used to describe them. However although Anderson's Realism is unproblematic as an epistemological theory of the knowledge of things which are 'categorically naked' as it were, there are certain difficulties in interpreting it as a theory of knowledge of things having formal or categorical features. Anderson's epistemological Realism held that the object of knowledge must be real or existent, while his empiricist ontology held that any object has certain formal or categorical features, with the logical importance of the notion of 'form' requiring that form be *non-material* or *non-existent*. The epistemological difficulty which arises in Anderson's ontological theory concerns the nature of the relation which is held to exist between the subject who knows these 'forms' and the 'forms' themselves. For things existing in the world, the relations between the subject who knows them and the objects which exist are external relations, which are not dependent upon the terms of the relation in any way. However if these objects are held to have formal, categorical features which are non-existent, then the relation between the subject of knowledge and the 'forms' which things have, cannot be an external relation (unless such 'forms' exist in their own objective 'reality'), for in not existing, forms cannot be *externally* related to any subject. Anderson is faced with the dilemma of either asserting the Realist principle that the object of knowledge must exist for it to be known but denying that the non-material conception of 'form' can be known, or asserting that the notion of 'form' can be known but denying the Realist principle that the object of knowledge must exist for it to be known. For example, to take the notion of 'Space-Time', Anderson argued that Space-Time is not a 'stuff' which exists but is the medium in which things exist. As such Space-Time cannot be an *object*

which is known in terms of external relations, for in being the conditions of existence, it cannot itself be an object which is real or existent and therefore cannot be an 'object' of knowledge. However in asserting that Space-Time is a medium in which things occur, Anderson is committed to asserting that he does know something positive about Space-time and therefore that Space-Time is in some sense related to the subject of knowledge. However such a relation cannot be an external relation. Similarly with the categories, they cannot be things or objects which exist, for they are the logical conditions for anything which exists. If for example, the category of causation is held to be a categorical *form* of existence, then it cannot be known in terms of the Realist principle of external relations. However if it is asserted that it is known in terms of external relations then it cannot be a *form* of existence and therefore has no *logical* status as a category. A similar argument would apply to any of the categories and the only consistent conclusion to this argument is that Anderson's epistemological Realism as the assertion of the independent existence of the object of knowledge is *inconsistent* with his ontological empiricism as a theory of the formal or categorical features of existence which do not themselves exist.

This dilemma also re-appears in Anderson's attempt to give an account of the relations between these categorical forms themselves. In his Lectures on Alexander's Space, Time and Deity Anderson presented an account of the relations which hold between the various categories.<sup>1</sup> In these lectures Anderson divided the categories into the three general classes of logical, mathematical and physical categories and within which, he discussed the nature of, and the relations between, particular categories such as universality, particularity, identity, difference, existence, etc. However Anderson must provide some account of the nature of the relations between the general classes of categories and an account of the relations between these general classes of categories and the particular categories themselves. The difficulty for Anderson is that the most obvious candidates - universality, particularity and relation - are themselves particular categories and could not be used to explain the relations between the various categories and their general classes. Further Anderson would have difficulty in explaining the precise relations which would hold between the various categories, for the relation between 'universality' and 'particularity' would appear to be more 'intrinsic' than that between 'universality' and 'order' and Anderson appears to lack any theory of relations which would enable him to precisely distinguish between these categories. Finally Anderson would also have to give an account of how the general classes of the categories - logical, mathematical and physical - are related to his general conception of Space-Time and indeed even what the relation between Space and Time

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, J. 'Lectures on Alexander's Space, Time and Deity' Professor John Anderson Archives, Fisher Library, Sydney University. For a discussion of these lectures see Baker, A.J. Australian Realism Ch. 7



could be. To take the problem of the relation between Space and Time, clearly they are different - Space is not the same as Time and Time is not the same as Space - but if they are different then they must be related in some way. However such a relation could not be an external relation and the only alternative would appear to regard it as an internal relation. Similarly, even if Anderson could provide a consistent Realist account of the relations between the general classes of the categories, he would still have to provide an account of the relations of these classes to his conception of Space-Time. However if the notion of relation is merely one category among many others, then *it* cannot account for relation between logic, mathematics and physics and the general conception of Space-Time.

Anderson's general difficulty on this issue is that if the relations between Space-Time and the categories are said to be external relations, then in so far as external relations only hold between *objects*, then Space-Time and the categories must be said to exist while to assert that Space-Time and the categories do exist, is to deny their non-material status as *formal* qualities of things. One response to this difficulty would be to argue that Anderson is solely concerned with *logical* relations, which, apart from assuming that the category of relation is the logically primary category and therefore not an example of the category of logic as he explicitly argues it is, still does not avoid the difficulty that such relations cannot be external relations. Either logical relations are external relations in which case they relate *objects* which by definition categories are not, or they are not external relations which implies that they are internal relations which is inconsistent with his professed acceptance of Realism. Despite his intentions, Anderson cannot give an account of the relations between the various categorical forms in terms of the Realist doctrine of external relations, for he is faced with the dilemma of either upholding the doctrine of external relations but denying the non-material conception of form or upholding the non-material conception of form but denying the doctrine of external relations. The only conclusion which avoids a collapse into a 'crude' materialism is the denial that all relations are external. Although such a conclusion is inconsistent with Anderson's defence of Realism, it appears to be the only conclusion possible in defending his empiricist ontology as a theory of the formal features of things. As noted above, Anderson's empiricist ontology was largely derived from Alexander's empiricism and that one of the more interesting criticisms of Alexander's theory was that it identified the notions of form and quality.<sup>1</sup> Such an identification can also be seen to be the source of difficulty in Anderson's own empiricism for Anderson appears to accept Alexander's view that the categories are in some sense 'qualities' and therefore externally related to objects, while also insisting that the categories are 'formal' conditions of existence and therefore cannot exist and cannot be in

---

<sup>1</sup> See Brettschnieder, B. The Philosophy of Samuel Alexander New York 1964 p 166 and McCarthy, J. The Naturalism of Samuel Alexander New York 1948.

external relations to anything. The only logical conclusion to such an argument would be to deny that all relations are external and it is interesting to note in this respect that Alexander held that relations could be both external and internal (depending on the meaning of the terms) although such a view was never countenanced by Anderson because of its obvious concession to Absolute Idealism. However again it was Alexander who thought that the whole dispute between Realism and Absolute Idealism was largely without meaning, a view flatly opposed by Anderson in his early years although there were some signs of him modifying this view at the time of his retirement when he argued that the real object of Realist attack was not Idealism, but was 'rationalism'.

### iii. Logic

Anderson's logical theory was developed in response to British Absolute Idealism, which was dominated by the logical and epistemological theories of F.H. Bradley. Bradley's logical theory was based upon the identification of act of judging with the judgement or proposition itself and involved three essential components.<sup>1</sup> Firstly Bradley's conception of the 'idea' was that of a universal and logical meaning which was not part of the natural order of things themselves. Secondly Bradley argued that the relation between such 'ideas' cannot be one of contingency and must therefore be necessarily related to other 'ideas' in the judgment. This relation was the synthetic activity of reason or the act of judging itself, which refers to the ideal reality beyond the act of judging. Finally the judgement formed a logical system of judgements which was the 'Absolute' as a single, unified theory of reality. However Anderson never dealt with Bradley's theories in any detail, confining himself to the so-called 'logic' of F.C.S. Schiller. The relativism of Schiller is quite explicit and such a position was an easy target for Anderson. Schiller's 'humanist' relativism denied the existence of the 'Absolute' in determining the truth of the judgement, arguing that truth is determined by the human or individual context of the judgement. Schiller argued that Bradley's 'scepticism' derived from his refusal to recognise the actual procedures of thought and his systematic substitution of propositions for judgements. To avoid this scepticism Schiller argued that it is necessary to distinguish between a 'psycho-logic' which deals with the personal meanings of the person who makes the judgement and a formal logic which deals with the verbal forms of propositions which have no actual meaning. However Bradley's Absolute Idealism was also held to be 'refuted' by the Realism of Moore and Russell, who asserted that the truth or falsity of the proposition was determined independently of any context of judging. Indeed Moore's early view was that true propositions were identical with reality which implied that if we have a true belief then the proposition is real or actual, while if we have a false belief, then the proposition

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. 2

believed is not true or actual.<sup>1</sup> However it was in his 'Refutation of Idealism' where Moore argued that the falsity of Idealism was determined by the self-contradictory nature of the proposition 'esse est percipi', which implied that the truth or falsity of any proposition is independent of the context of the 'Absolute', with there being no necessary relation between the terms of the proposition.

Anderson criticised both the relativism of Schiller and the Absolute Idealism of Bradley in terms of his insistence that the truth or falsity of a proposition is independent from the context in which it was made. Both Schiller and Bradley, he argued, succumbed to scepticism, for on the one hand Bradley identified the judgement or proposition with the act of judging understood as an 'Absolute', while in the case of Schiller, he identified the truth of the proposition with the human act of judging itself. Neither position according to Anderson, gave an account of the truth or falsity of the proposition independently of the context in which it is 'proposed' and therefore both positions lapsed into scepticism. However Anderson appears to have also adopted Moore's early position where the truth of a proposition is identical with the reality of existing events and although Moore soon rejected this view, it was a theory which Anderson was to develop into his own distinctive theory of logic. Anderson's positivist logic can therefore be interpreted as both a response to Bradley's Absolute Idealism and a development of Moore's early identification of the proposition with reality. However Anderson's theory of propositions was also a logical development of Alexander's empirical ontology and insofar as Alexander held 'truth' to be a 'tertiary quality' of objects, it can be assumed that Anderson also regarded truth in this manner.<sup>2</sup> In his criticism of Absolute Idealism, Anderson argued that the Idealist doctrine of internal relations implied a relativistic theory of logic which was based on the identity of the subject and predicate of the proposition and where truth was a relational form or 'idea'. In opposition to this view, Anderson argued that the Realist doctrine of external relations implied a positivistic theory of logic which was based on the copula of existence and the distinction between the subject and predicate of the proposition and where truth was an objective feature or quality of things. Anderson's theory of logic can be regarded as his second major contribution to the development of philosophy and his logical theory can be said to involve three essential components.<sup>3</sup> Firstly there is the contingent and referential meaning of a term where the meaning of any term is determined by its reference to things or qualities. Secondly there is the referential and descriptive treatment of the proposition in terms of the copula of existence and the distinct subject and predicate functions of the proposition, with such propositions having the logical form 'S is (or is not) P'. Finally there was the logical development of this form of the

---

1 See Ch. 3

2 See Anderson "Realism' op cit p 56

3 See Ch. 4

proposition into a theory of syllogistic logic, based on the quantification of the copula. However the definitive feature of Anderson's propositional logic was the identity of propositions with situations and although Anderson's Positivism was a logical development of his empiricist ontology, the tension between his Realist epistemology and his empiricist theory of forms found expression in two key difficulties which are commonly held to confront his logical theory: the 'false proposition' and the 'unspeakability' of the categories.<sup>1</sup> Anderson's difficulty of the 'false proposition' has been succinctly summarised by Baker.

According to Anderson, when someone S believes that A is B and this is a true proposition, he recognises an actual situation, A's being B. That is, true propositions do not 'represent' or 'convey' situations, they *are* situations ...But, given that true propositions are situations, false propositions, of course, are not; in the case where someone S believes a false proposition X is Y, X's being Y is not a situation, though the terms or ingredients X and Y are real (are themselves situations).<sup>2</sup>

The classic criticism of this view on the 'false proposition' is to be found in David Armstrong's Belief, Truth and Knowledge.

He (Anderson) was led to identify true propositions with situations in the world. If you and I believe that the cat is on the mat, then the proposition to which we both have the belief-relationship is just this situation in the world: the cat's being on the mat. But the difficulty for such a view is that propositions can be false as well as true. If you and I falsely believe that the cat is on the mat, *what are we related to* ?<sup>3</sup>

Stated formally this problem can be said to be the view that if all propositions are identical with situations, then all propositions must be true and there can be nothing that a 'false proposition' is related to. However there are two distinct issues in Armstrong's criticism to be clarified here. Firstly there is the epistemological issue of how we are related to a 'false belief' and secondly there is the ontological issue of what sort of *thing* a 'false belief or proposition' would be. With respect to the epistemological issue, Anderson argued that we do not have two classes of propositions - the true and the false - but rather that true and false beliefs are *asymmetrical* and that the difficulty of the false proposition can be resolved in terms of a person *mis-taking* a predicate of a certain subject.

---

1 See Baker Australian Realism pp 15 - 17, 92 - 3, 106 - 9

2 ibid pp 15 - 16

3 Armstrong Belief, Truth and Knowledge pp 44 - 48 (my emphasis)

The question, then, is not of the occurrence of a state of affairs with the attribute 'falsity' (any more than of a state of affairs characterisable as 'not corresponding to reality'); what is meant by the occurrence of a 'false proposition' is explained by reference to the distinction between subject and predicate, as someone's mistaking X for Y (taking X to be Y when it is not) - the question of this threefold relationship not being one that the person who is mistaken intends to raise, and not arising when he is not mistaken, when he is presenting the single situation X is Y.<sup>1</sup>

In true belief then, the believer is directly related to a single or whole situation, while in false belief the believer is related to the 'constituents' of a situation. For example, if we falsely believe that the cat is on the mat, then the constituents of the situation - the cat and the mat - are not connected as we believe they are, although they are both real 'constituents' of a possible situation. A 'false proposition' then, according to Anderson can be explained by reference to the distinction between the 'proposer' and the 'proposition', where a proposer 'mis-takes' Y as a predicate for the subject X, when in fact it is not predicated of X.<sup>2</sup> However this epistemological issue of 'mis-taking' does not appear particularly problematic. Whatever specific psychological or social account one might give of how we come to have 'false beliefs', of how we come to 'mis-take' a predicate for a certain subject, there does not appear to be any logical difficulty in providing such an account. Regarding the ontological issue, if a true proposition is a proposition which is a situation, then a 'false proposition' must be a 'proposition' which is not a situation. However if, as Anderson himself argued, the subject function of a proposition is to 'locate' or 'place' a term and the predicate function is to 'characterise' or 'time' a term, then the only difficulty with a 'false proposition' is that it attributes a predicate to a subject which in fact does not occur. That is to say, a 'false proposition' is a 'proposition' which distinguishes between two distinct and real terms which occupy the subject and predicate positions in the proposition, but asserts the connection of existence between these terms when in fact they are not so connected. If the difficulty then is that of the ontological status of the 'false proposition', then this status is simply a mental one and a false belief or proposition can be said to have no non-mental independent existence. This difficulty of 'falsity' is that it is an issue of false predication and not of a 'false proposition', for in 'proposing' a proposition we are concerned with a real term as a subject in a proposition, to which we mistakenly attribute a real term as a predicate. For example, to assert that 'the cat is on the mat'

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Studies in Empirical Philosophy p 170

<sup>2</sup> This is also the view taken by Baker op.cit pp 16 - 17 and Birchall, B.C. "John Anderson and 'The False Proposition' " Dialectic 1987 pp 96 - 108

when it is in fact on the chair, is simply to predicate of the cat something which is not true but which could be true. The falsity of the 'proposition', in other words, is simply the falsity of the predicate which is attributed to the subject and the ontological status of the proposition is mental - it is a belief and nothing else but a belief. Although this difficulty of the 'false proposition' does not appear to face any insuperable logical difficulties, in his mature aesthetic theory Anderson suggested a development to his logical theory which has important implications for this problem of the 'false proposition'.

Further developments in aesthetics would take the form of showing more fully what is meant by structure and harmony. In my view the question is similar to that of definition in logic, to the setting out of the 'essential features' of anything. A theme is grasped when we recognise characteristics which together constitute it.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of this passage for the 'false proposition' has been clearly set out by Cullum and Lycos in their introduction to Art and Reality.

The work (of art) is a development of a theme and such development, like the predicate in an assertion, indicates the structure of the theme (the analogue of the subject in a proposition). When the work is a success, it presents us with the various phases of the development of a theme in its true nature. A failed work, however, presents us with a development that distorts or falsifies the actual phases of a theme. Like the predicate of a false assertion, therefore, a bad work of art presents us with the development of a theme not as it is in itself but as it is conceived or fabricated in the author's mind; it presents us with the phases of a fabrication.<sup>2</sup>

A predicate in a proposition which *defines* the nature of a thing can therefore be regarded as a *thematic* predicate, with a 'false' proposition being one which does not have its theme or predicate fully developed or worked out, while a 'true' proposition is one which does have its theme or predicate fully worked out and it is in this way that a false proposition is said to resemble a failed work of art. Something is asserted, but the assertion is a failure in that the predicate is not related to the subject in the way claimed and is no more than the fabrication of the 'proposers' mind and the status of the 'false proposition', as argued above, is merely mental. On this account, the predicate of a proposition expresses the thematic structure of a thing and if, as it will be argued, the notion of theme is relational, then the thematic predicate, in

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Art and Reality p 262

<sup>2</sup> ibid p 17

setting out the various 'phases' or 'stages' of a theme, must be a *relational* predicate. Further in arguing that the 'development of theme' is similar to logical *definition*, Anderson is suggesting that the relation between the subject and the thematic predicate in propositions which *defines* the essential characteristics of a thing, is not simply the copula of existence. Hence Anderson appears to be advocating the adoption of a 'definitional copula' and such a usage is hinted at by Anderson in his own writings when he speaks of 'mind as feeling' and 'Socrates as an educator', where in discussing or defining the nature of 'mind' or of 'Socrates', Anderson uses the definitional copula 'as', rather than the existential copula, 'is'. Although such a usage would be a departure from his constant insistence on the 'unambiguous copula of existence', his usage of the copula 'as' in these contexts and his support of a predicate which is *thematically* related to a subject, lends some support to this view of the copula 'as' in definitional propositions.

The second problem of Anderson's logical theory concerns the 'unspeakability' of the categories' and this problem has its origins in Anderson's formal situational theory. Just as Anderson had argued that there is only one level of situational reality, so too he argued there is only one level of propositional discourse. Hence if all propositions are situational and the categories of situations are not themselves situational, then there is the difficulty of how there can be any propositional discourse of the categories. They must be, to use Anderson's term, 'unspeakable'. This problem has been clearly expressed by Baker.

In Anderson's formal logic and in his account of significant or informative discourse, he holds that propositions must concern real issues and a condition for this is that the terms employed must be real and have real *opposites*. But according to Anderson's theory, whatever is spatial and temporal, exists, is caused, etc., yet there is nothing which is non spatio-temporal, non-existent, non-caused, etc. How, then, can the terms in question (Space, Time and the categories) occur in informative discourse? ....This (problem) is that even though Space, Time and the categories are not in fact propositional terms, nevertheless, in the philosophical statements we make about them we have to treat them as if they were terms (existence, for example, is not a predicate but we have to treat it as a term when we say 'Existence is a category', and so on), and if we could not do this we could not expound a theory of Space, Time and the categories. Similarly, according to Anderson's logic and ontology everything is propositional or situational, but he still has to speak about *propositions* and *situations* in order to present his own theory.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Baker *op cit* pp 106 - 107

This problem is an extension of the difficulty that Anderson faced in his empiricist ontology of giving an account of the relations between the categories in terms of external relations. Hence Anderson must either assert that all propositional discourse is situational but, insofar as Space, Time and the categories are not themselves situations, deny that we can 'speak about' the categories or he must assert that we can have propositional discourse 'about' Space, Time and the categories but thereby deny that all propositional discourse is strictly situational. Given that the first alternative is not a viable one for Anderson with so much of his philosophy concerned with an account of the categories, then he must accept the second alternative. Hence if to 'talk about' categories we must treat them as real or existing terms, which, in being *forms* of situations, they are not, then there appears to be little alternative but to regard them as 'universal' terms. This is the alternative accepted by Baker who argued that we must distinguish between a realist and a categorial logic, with a realist logic retaining ordinary terms as 'sorts of things', such terms being 'real', possessing logical opposites and subject to the rules of formal logic.<sup>1</sup> A categorial logic on the other hand, would employ 'universal' terms which would not imply logical opposites and would be subject to a restricted set of logical rules.<sup>2</sup> However if the categories are 'universal' terms, then there is the difficulty of how we can say that any category is only contingently related to any other category, for if they are terms which cover the class of *all* things then they would appear to be *necessary* features of things and therefore necessarily related to each other. As argued earlier, no account of the relations between the categories can be given in terms of external relations and if this is the case then it would also be the case that no theory of categorial discourse can be given in terms of the contingent copula of existence. For example to assert that 'causation is a category' would imply that its contradictory could be true, which would appear to be impossible. However if we accept the previous account of relational predicates as being concerned with articulating the thematic structure of a thing, then it is arguable that the copula in categorial propositions is not the 'is' of existence but is the 'as' of definition. Hence to avoid the unintelligibility of asserting that 'causation *is or is not* a category', the assertion of 'causation *as* a category' would, as in the case of 'mind *as* feeling', be the definition of the structure or theme of causation.

Apart from these logical difficulties with Anderson's logic, there is the further problem of Anderson's neglect of the question of meaning. Although Anderson never developed an explicit theory of language, he did support the development of an objective theory of language such as Russell's theory of definite descriptions.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 ibid p 108

2 loc cit

3 Anderson 'Realism' op cit p 55



However Anderson also opposed *literalism* in philosophy and culture in general, regarding it as *always* 'ruinous of inquiry' and the general difficulty for an 'Andersonian' theory of meaning is for it to be an objective and referential theory, while being non-literal in its interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Robert McLaughlin has argued that Anderson's neglect of meaning is a direct result of his identification of propositions and situations and that his refusal to countenance semantic relations leads directly to the difficulties of the false proposition and the unspeakability of the categories.<sup>2</sup> McLaughlin suggests that a semantic relation of *representation* is necessary to overcome the difficulties of Anderson's propositional Realism, although he stresses that this is not to be taken to imply an ontological dualism.<sup>3</sup> However insofar as meaning is a 'thing' with definite spatio-temporal characteristics, then it cannot provide a *formal* solution to the problems of the 'false proposition' and the 'unspeakability of the categories' and McLaughlin's emphasis on the question of meaning, important as it may be to Anderson's aesthetic theory, has no formal consequences for his logical theory. Therefore while it may be possible to defend a general Realist theory of meaning as referential, it will be argued that such an attempt is impossible in terms of any aesthetic theory which takes the notion of metaphor seriously.

### c. Aesthetics

The aesthetic theory of the Absolute Idealist's, in being based on the doctrine of internal relations, implied that beauty is an ideal form to be realised, while Realist aesthetic theory, in being based on the doctrine of external relations, implied that beauty is a quality of things. In his own aesthetic theory, Anderson held beauty to be a 'tertiary quality' of objects<sup>4</sup> and he distinguished between the form of beauty as thematic and its qualitative content as emotional. On Anderson's view the Realist doctrine of external relations implied a positive and scientific treatment of beauty, which implied the rejection of relativist and subjectivist conceptions of aesthetic form and Romanticist and Expressionist theories of aesthetic content. While much of Anderson's theory of aesthetic content is unproblematic in terms of the Realist doctrine of external relations, his theory of aesthetic form as *thematic* does present several difficulties. Firstly Anderson suggested a rationalist dualism between 'real' and 'unreal' themes when he argued for the need "... for a *real* theme, a recognisable complication whose working out has an objective order".<sup>5</sup> This need for a 'real theme' suggests that one may study or present an 'unreal' theme (if indeed one could study or present an 'unreal' theme) and then progress to the study or presentation of

1 Anderson Studies in Empirical Philosophy p 194

2 McLaughlin, R. 'Australian Realism' A.J.P. March 1989 pp 93 - 95

3 ibid p 95

4 Anderson 'Realism' op.cit p 56

5 Anderson Art and Reality p 45 (his emphasis)

a 'real' theme, which would imply, contrary to his empiricism, that there are several levels of aesthetic 'reality'. A strict empiricist account of theme on the other hand, would insist that all themes are 'real' - that they all exist as part of 'one way of being'. Secondly the notion of the 'development' of a theme implies the any work of art has certain 'phases' or 'stages' which constitute the structure of the work of art. Hence Anderson speaks of a "sequence of phases"<sup>1</sup>, the "development" of one phase into another<sup>2</sup> and in his article on Dostoevsky he speaks of a work of art being "...*historical* only in the way in which in which it shows how one phase of a work passes into another".<sup>3</sup> In general terms Anderson identified this notion of the 'development of theme' with the *structure* of a work of art<sup>4</sup> and this identification of theme with structure was most clearly presented in his article 'Realism' where he referred to the theory of the beautiful as "...articulated structure (or worked-out theme)" which he also described as a *formal* theory of beauty.<sup>5</sup> Although Anderson went on to state that such a theory of beauty avoids relativism, he offered no reasons for this claim and it is difficult to see how the 'development of theme' does in fact avoid the criticism of relativism.<sup>6</sup> If the 'phases' or 'stages' of a work of art can only be exhibited as 'successive' or 'sequential', then they are exhibited in relation to each other and the beauty of the work of art is essentially relational and not qualitative as a strict Realist theory would demand. Finally Anderson's notion of the development of an aesthetic theme implies that some works of art are more 'fully' developed than others. Hence Anderson's criticism of 'bad' works of art is based on his view that they fail to present a coherent and 'fully' worked out theme while his defence of 'good' works of art is in terms of such works having a theme which is 'fully' worked out. For example Anderson criticises Shaw for his failure to have a "properly worked out theme"<sup>7</sup> and praises Joyce for the "thoroughness" with which he works his themes out in their successive phases<sup>8</sup>, while he elsewhere refers to literary criticism as "the working out of a theme".<sup>9</sup> However such a view of the full and complete development of a work of art implies an 'ideal' standard of attainment for a work of art. A work of art can only be 'fully developed' if there is an ideal standard to which it can attain and be completed in, although such a 'ideal' standard is inconsistent with his criticisms of Idealism where he rejected the view that anything has an 'ideal' to which it can aspire to.

---

1 ibid pp 47, 96, 169, 264

2 ibid p 262

3 ibid p 225 (my emphasis)

4 ibid pp 262, 265

5 Anderson 'Realism' op cit p 56

6 loc cit

7 Anderson Art and Reality p 130

8 ibid p 97

9 ibid p 257; 260

However the limitations of Anderson's aesthetic theory are most clearly illustrated by his treatment of the question of meaning. In Anderson's logical theory, there is a general ignoring of the question of meaning and while in general terms he defended a referential account of meaning based on Russell's theory of definite descriptions, he didn't develop an adequate account of aesthetic meaning. Certainly in his aesthetic theory, there is a general denigration of the role of 'meaning' as when he asserted that "The doctrine of meaning not only leads logically to the denial of all forms of art but, as it stands, is opposed to aesthetic theory, since theory must deal with what things are and not with what they 'mean'...".<sup>1</sup> However Anderson also opposed 'literalism' in aesthetics when he asserted of the critic Arnold Bennett that "He wants a book to tell him what it is all about, not realising that *Ulysses* is not *about* anything. It speaks for itself; it *is* Hell...".<sup>2</sup> However while Anderson insisted that the treatment of aesthetic themes could not be literal, he did not explain what a non-literal treatment of meaning would involve. This neglect of the question of meaning is particularly problematic in terms of the meaning of metaphor in aesthetics. On a general Realist or objectivist theory of meaning, the meanings of words would be objective things which stand in external relations to other meanings of words. However on these Realist principles, the meaning of metaphor must be externally related to its object, a view which contradicts the apparent meaning of metaphor that it is not 'about' anything at all. If for example, we take Anderson's interpretation of *Ulysses* to be the claim that 'Society is Hell', it is obvious that the notion of 'Hell' is meant metaphorically and not literally. However insofar as it is meant in this way then the metaphorical meaning of 'Hell' must stand in some relation to the literal meaning of 'Hell'. If this relation is treated as an external relation, i.e., of the logical form a/R/b, then this would imply that the predicate 'Hell' consists of two terms - 'Hell' in its literal sense and 'Hell' in its metaphoric sense with an external relation between the two. This however is demonstrably not the case. In the assertion 'Society is Hell' there is only one term which has two meanings, a literal and a metaphoric. The only alternative to this difficulty appears to be to treat metaphoric meaning as being internally related to its literal meaning. On this account the meanings of the term are internally related such that there is a duality of meaning which in certain cases can only be recognised in terms of the context of the utterance. This is not to say however, as Schiller did, that *all* meaning is context dependent, for as Anderson argued, if that was the case then no communication would ever take place. However this is to argue that in some cases the meaning of an assertion cannot be separated from the context in which it appears and such a view does lend some support to McLaughlin's claim for a theory of semantic relations which in some cases are inherently and objectively, dualistic.

---

1 ibid p 33

2 ibid p 53 (his emphasis)

Indeed it can be argued that the very meaning of metaphor itself eludes an objectivist or realist theory of meaning and curiously this issue of metaphor was an issue never discussed by Anderson, even though the main focus in his aesthetic theory was literature. "Metaphor" is a conjunction derived from the Greek "meta" which is usually taken to mean "above" and "ferre" which is usually taken to mean "carrying" as in our modern word "ferry". On a Realist interpretation of metaphor, it could be argued that there is a relationship between what is carried and that which carries it and this can be expressed in terms of the logic of external relations viz, a/R/b. Recurring for a moment to Anderson's discussion of the St. Christopher legend, it could be argued that this discussion is the objectivist treatment of metaphor, *par excellence*.<sup>1</sup> The bearer of the child, St. Christopher, carries the child across the river and sets him down, completed or fulfilled, as a grown man. Similarly a metaphor can be said to carry its implicit meaning through or across a work of art, only making the meaning explicit at the end. The difficulty however with such a treatment of metaphor and indeed perhaps of any treatment of it, is that we cannot speak *about* it as it were, we can only *indicate* it. If 'metaphor' is a word which *carries* its meaning, then the relation between the meaning of the word in its literal usage and the meaning in its metaphoric usage would appear again to be an internal one. It is worthwhile to note in passing Hegel's view in his Aesthetics on the nature of metaphor, which is where "...a word which originally signifies only something sensuous is *carried over* into the spiritual sphere, and many words, to speak generally, which relate to knowing, have in respect of their literal meaning a purely sensuous content, which then is lost and exchanged for a spiritual meaning, the original sense being sensuous, the second spiritual."<sup>2</sup> Clearly Hegel regards the meaning of metaphor to be internally related to its object, with such a relation applying not only to aesthetic terms but also to terms which relate to 'knowing' in general. Although Anderson would regard such an interpretation as 'Idealist', perhaps the difficulty lies not in giving the meaning of 'metaphor' or any other such 'spiritual' term in terms of internal relations, but in the attempt to give a Realist or objectivist account of meaning itself. At any rate, the issues of meaning and metaphor are ones which demand an answer from Anderson's philosophy, but which are issues which are ignored or denigrated by Anderson and the treatment of such issues can only lead to a development of his aesthetic theory and his philosophy in general.

#### d. Ethics

Idealist ethical theory, in being based on the doctrine of internal relations, held goodness to be a relational idea to be realised, while Realist ethical theory, in being

---

<sup>1</sup> ibid p 63 ff

<sup>2</sup> Hegel quoted in Derrida, J. Margins of Philosophy Brighton 1986 p 225 (my emphasis)

based on the doctrine of external relations, held goodness to be a quality of things. In his own ethical theory Anderson distinguished between the form and the quality of goodness with its formal nature being that of participation within a movement while its qualitative content was that of production. This scientific and positive account of goodness implied the rejection of subjectivist, relativist and moralist theories of ethical form and Utilitarian, Christian, Idealist and Socialist theories of ethical content. Anderson's formal account of goodness was in terms of such concepts and phrases as 'movements', 'causes', 'vehicles', 'ways of life' and 'forms of activity'. However although such concepts and phrases are common in Anderson's discussion of goodness, they are not dealt with in any detailed manner and as Sandy Anderson has observed, they are terms which require more precise specification.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless it is clear what Anderson intended to *reject* by the use of such terms, for he argued that the notion of a 'movement' could not to be explained simply in terms of individuals nor in terms of social institutions, for such 'movements' can 'pass through' both individuals and institutions with its nature being both psychological and social. This rejection of individualism and collectivism in his social theory was a consequence of his rejection of atomism and monism in his ontological theory, with the resolution of both difficulties being in terms of a thorough-going pluralism. However since Anderson did not give a precise characterisation of what such movements are, it is worth considering what a 'form of activity' might consist of. If an 'activity' can be regarded as a certain sort of individual action such as artistic, scientific or industrial activity, then the 'form' of such activities could be regarded as such action occurring within a common social tradition, where the action contributes to the on-going development of that tradition. This appears to be Anderson's view when he argued that it is only the 'custodians' of traditions who have an interest in *form*, which would appear to mean that such 'custodians' seek to maintain the on-going activities of their traditions through their interest in the *forms* of such activities.<sup>2</sup> Such a characterisation of these 'forms of activity' would be consistent with Anderson's rejection of individualism in his aesthetic and social theory where he denied that it is the work of the 'individual' which contributes to artistic or ethical endeavour and is also consistent with his rejection of collectivism in his aesthetic and social theory where he denied that it is its place in certain social contexts which determines the value of a work of art or other productive activities. These 'forms' of activity can be described then as the place of that activity within an on-going scientific, artistic and industrial tradition, which Anderson particularly emphasised in his 1955 Lectures on Criticism. As he argued, "...ethics is the study of interest in objectivity, that *ethics is a study of social movements which maintain logic, the sense of what is objective, permanent or formal, contrasted with material*", concluding that the ethical notion

---

1 Anderson, A.J. 'Following John Anderson' Dialectic 1987 p 134

2 Anderson Studies in Empirical Philosophy p 187

of liberty is "...the only thing which exhibits continuity or communication between past and present. *This continuity maintains a certain spirit, enables us to live in a tradition*".<sup>1</sup> Anderson's view here is particularly important in stressing the intimate connection between ethics and logic where ethics is the study of social movements which emphasise objective form, with liberty being the notion which is continuous throughout social traditions, which he elsewhere argued was equivalent to the notion of objectivity in logic.

Anderson's qualitative definition of goodness was in terms of 'production' or the 'producer ethic' with badness or evil being defined in terms of 'consumption' or the 'consumer ethic'. Although Anderson held that there are many distinctive features of the 'producer' and 'consumer' ethic - art opposed to luxury, science opposed to obscurantism, industry opposed to waste - the distinction which definitely characterised the opposition between both was that of disinterestedness and interestedness. Anderson argued that disinterestedness was an interest in things for their own sake while interestedness was an interest in things in terms of the relations that they have, of what they are 'for'. However while Anderson's rejection of 'interestedness' is consistent with his rejection of relativism, his defence of 'disinterestedness' as something, which is valued for its own sake, would seem to imply a standard or ideal to be attained, which would be inconsistent with his Realism. Hence if artistic activity is having an interest in art for its own sake then art would appear to be something which is valued for its own sake. However if art to be valued for its own sake then this would imply that art is an 'ideal' which is realised in varying degrees, which is a conception that appears to be typically Idealistic. Such an argument also appears to be at the basis of Quinton's claim that "If it is none too clear how his committed endorsement of non-utilitarian education is able, on his principles, to pass as a strictly theoretical description of social fact, it is abundantly clear what he himself favours".<sup>2</sup> Although Quinton doesn't provide any argument for his claim, it is clear that while Anderson's rejection of Utilitarianism is consistent with his rejection of relativism - that a thing is not good or valued in terms of the relations that it has - it is not clear how his defence of the disinterested nature of goodness or the non-utilitarian or classical conception of education is derivable from his Realist principles.

One of the most distinctive features of Anderson's theory of the quality of goodness was the relations which he held existed between good and evil. Hence in several places Anderson asserted that goods *only* exist in their opposition to evils and in their *relations* of assistance to other goods while evils *only* exist in opposition to

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, J. 'Lectures in Criticism' (unpublished lectures) p 23 (my emphasis)

<sup>2</sup> Quinton, A. 'Introduction' to Baker Australian Realism p xvii

both other evils and to goods.<sup>1</sup> However apart from the fact that evils can in fact cooperate under certain circumstances, the more serious difficulty with this view is that it implies that Anderson's ethical theory is relativistic.<sup>2</sup> Hence Anderson regarded the opposition between good and evil as a *necessary* struggle - "It is only in the struggle with evils that goods exist"<sup>3</sup> - which would imply that goodness is both a quality and a relation which would commit Anderson of the error of relativism which he inflicted on so many other theorists. However it is interesting to note that after his early articles 'Determinism and Ethics' (1928) and 'Utilitarianism' (1932), when Anderson does speak of goodness as a relation, he defines it as *liberty*.<sup>4</sup> Hence Anderson asserted that it is goodness as liberty which exists in opposition to the evil of servility and his main point seems to be not that goodness is both a relation and a quality (the error of which would have been patently obvious to him), but that when goodness is defined as liberty or freedom, then it is only found in terms of its relations whereas when goodness is defined in terms of the quality of production, it is only found in things. Anderson's 'relativism' can therefore be explained in terms of the distinction between ethics and history. Ethics as the *science* of goodness, emphasises its *qualitative* nature as production, while history as the 'story' or *theme* of liberty, emphasises its *relational* nature. That is to say, a qualitative account of goodness emphasises its situational place in the world while a relational account of goodness emphasises its temporal element and on such an account, ethics and history would be two different ways of describing the one thing, goodness. While this conclusion appears to be the only consistent way of overcoming the difficulty of Anderson's ethical 'relativism', it is a conclusion which is inconsistent with his defence of epistemological Realism as one way of knowing. However such an account of the integration of Anderson's ethical and historical theories also illuminates his notion of 'movement' and its role in society and history. On Anderson's qualitative account of goodness, art, science and industry formed a unified conception of goodness as production. Hence Anderson regarded artistic activity as both scientific and industrial, scientific activity as both artistic and industrial and industrial activity as both scientific and artistic, all three forming the general conception of social culture. However it is a notable feature of Anderson's intellectual development that whereas during the nineteen thirties, he argued that *artistic* activity involved 'participation in movements' which enabled redemption from the servility of society, by the start of the nineteen forties he had adopted the view that *scientific* activity was also involved the 'participation in movements' which enabled redemption. It is not unlikely then that Anderson also regarded industrial production in a similar manner and if so, then it is clear that these various

---

1 Anderson *Studies in Empirical Philosophy* pp 223, 236, 267, 338

2 See Anderson, A.J. *op cit* 136 ff-141 ff

3 Anderson, J. *op cit* p 338

4 *ibid* p 267, 338

qualities of productive activity are also relations which exist in the struggle with the evils of luxury, obscurantism and waste and provide the means for the redemption from servility. On such an account, a 'movement' or 'form of activity' is not a quality or object, but is a relational process which individuals participate in, in their struggle against servility and towards freedom and liberty.

Anderson's social and political theories formed part of his general ethical theory and it is these theories which most clearly demonstrate the *development* of his views during his lifetime. Hence in his early Communist period Anderson defended the consistency of Communism with his Realist and Empiricist principles of pluralism, objectivism and determinism. Anderson argued that the determinism of Communism was consistent with a general Realist philosophy, although he denied the possibility of the operation of the Marxist notion of 'dialectic' as a social force in history. Anderson also supported the pluralism of Communist theory in its class theory of society, arguing that the co-operative nature of the proletariat enabled it to be regarded as the 'society of the future'. However Anderson was ambiguous as to the importance of political power holding on the one hand that 'revolutionism' would be meaningless without a conception of a 'future society' while also arguing that the revolutionary seizure of power would be unimportant without the recognition of the on-going continuance of struggle. Finally Anderson's objectivism was clear in his rejection of Marx's view that it is only the proletariat which has an objective view of society, arguing that all social forces are equally objective, with none being 'subjective'. However Anderson became disillusioned with the censorial practice of Communist Party of Australia and during the nineteen thirties he supported Trotskyism as an theoretical alternative to orthodox Communism. During the early thirties Anderson supported Trotsky's view that Russia at that time was still a 'workers state' although by the end of the decade he had come to reject this view, arguing that Trotsky had contributed to the failure of Bolshevism by his acceptance of party democracy over social democracy and his use of authoritarian methods in suppressing the Kronstadt uprising. Anderson argued that the basis of the failure of Bolshevism lay in the failure of Marxism to ally itself with pure science and on its insistence with the future of society, rather than being concerned with socialism as a critical force in contemporary society. After 1939 Anderson had no further contact with the Trotskyists and he criticised their notion of the revolutionary seizure of power as 'will o the wisp' arguing that the only true political attitude is one of permanent opposition, an attitude which he argued was not exclusive to the proletariat. During the nineteen forties Anderson came to support the notion of an independent and intellectual opposition as essential to democratic political life. This emphasis on opposition characterised his attitude to Marxism when he argued that the liberal and scientific aspect of Marxism was its emphasis on independence and opposition while the servile and utopian element of Marxism emphasised security and sufficiency, with his view on the relation between the two concisely summarised



in his assertion that "The servile state is the unopposed state".<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on independence and opposition also came to characterise Anderson's mature social and political theories which were explicitly anti-Communist in their content and in which he defended the importance of the participation in movements or traditions which emphasise the notion of form. For example, Anderson criticised democracies for being materialistic and not concerned with the notion of form, which is a notion that only 'custodians of traditions' would be concerned with. Similarly he was critical of Socialism as a concern with ends, its true value being a *form* of social criticism. Anderson also argued that the existence of traditions was essential to the continued existence of civilisation and he particularly defended the importance of intellectual traditions in the maintenance of a liberal and cultured society. The development of Anderson's social and political theories therefore resided in a change from a doctrinal conception of society and politics to a mature view which emphasised the notion of form and which can be regarded as a thematic account of his social and political theories.

#### e. History, Philosophy and Culture.

Anderson's theory of history was developed during the nineteen fifties when he argued that history was both artistic and scientific in its treatment of history as thematic and determined. Anderson defended Croce's thematic content of history as the story of liberty and particularly stressed that history was the working out of a social theme. This liberal account of history was 'immanentism' or 'humanistic idealism' where the liberal or ethical spirit has its own ways of working. As argued above, Anderson's theory of history was intimately connected with his ethical theory and Anderson argued that the notion of a 'movement' as a 'form of activity' was what keeps the historical process 'going' and it is by participation in such 'movements' that man achieves redemption from the servility of society. However Anderson also defended a scientific conception of history as the operation of objective social forces which are governed by deterministic laws, even when such laws are regarded as the operation of 'providence'. Anderson particularly supported Marx's conception of production as having a more positive content than Croce's notion of liberty and he emphasised that it was the *forms* of productive activity which constitute history. These 'forms' of productive activity are not to be regarded as institutional forms of society such as the state, but are on-going movements which are determined in time but are not reducible to the individuals who make them up nor elevated to the status of institutions through which they may pass. Anderson also defended the determinism and objectivism of Marx's theory of history where history is an objective account of social process, although he rejected the 'totalistic' conception of history as a 'single-track process' as found in Marx, Croce and

---

<sup>1</sup> *ibid* p 339

Caponigri. In response to such 'progressive' views, Anderson held a 'historical pessimism' where cultures can decline as much as they progress and he particularly emphasised that the modern period of history had entered a 'barbarism of reflection'. However consistent with his general distinction between philosophy and art, science and industry in terms of the distinction between form and content, Anderson also distinguished between history and philosophy in terms of this distinction, with history being concerned with a human content and philosophy concerned with logical form. Anderson's theory of history then, can be regarded as complementary to his ethical theory and although he treated liberty as the theme of history which would imply that it is a relation which only exists in opposition to servility, he also emphasised the objective and determined nature of the historical process. This contrast between an artistic or thematic and scientific or determined theory of history is again indicative of the necessity of an epistemological dualism in Anderson's philosophical theory, although as argued above, such a dualism is not consistent with Anderson's interpretation of Realism as an epistemological theory of 'one way of knowing'.

In his mature philosophical theory, Anderson argued that aesthetic, ethical or logical questions could not be considered in isolation but that they must all be considered in relation to each other as part of his general objectivist theory of philosophy. In his theory of objectivism Anderson argued that logic, aesthetics and ethics were to be unified under the concept of form where truth, beauty and goodness were to be understood primarily as *formal* features of things. Hence Anderson argued that truth was a formal feature of things expressed by the copula in propositions, beauty was a formal feature of things expressed by the theme of a work of art while goodness was also a formal feature of things found in the participation in movements or 'forms of activity'. Anderson also argued that objectivism was the predominant *theme* of the history of philosophy, thus extending his thematic conception of liberty as the subject of history into the history of philosophy itself. However as argued above, insofar as the notion of *theme* is relational, then Anderson's conception of objectivism as the theme of philosophic history is also relational and therefore relativistic. This relational notion of theme is also inconsistent with Anderson's rejection of Hegel's notion of dialectic for as he argued in his article 'The Place of Hegel in the History of Philosophy', no doctrine of the 'phases' of a thing could exhibit the nature of the thing itself. "The pretended object of philosophical study which remains for the devotees of a progressive logic...merely exemplifies this scepticism, *for its 'phases' have to be taken at random; there is nothing to show that any phase is a phase of its, that any history is its history.*"<sup>1</sup> Anderson is faced with the dilemma of either asserting that the 'development of theme' involves a succession of 'phases' or 'stages', but is then unable to give any

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Studies in Empirical Philosophy p 81 (my emphasis)

reason why any 'phase' is a phase of the thing itself or asserting that there can be such a reason but thereby rejecting his criticism of the Hegelian notion of dialectic as exhibiting the historical 'phases' of logic. However despite the relativist implications of a thematic conception of history, such a conception can be regarded as a positive contribution to an *artistic* conception of the history of philosophy, which can be contrasted to his *scientific* account of philosophy as comprised of particular doctrines such as empiricism and realism.

Anderson's contribution to this scientific or doctrinal conception of philosophy was confirmed in his mature defence of Realism and the doctrine of external relations, where he was particularly concerned to defend the objectivity of the tertiary qualities of truth, goodness and beauty. In criticising Alexander's view that tertiary qualities are the "...amalgamation or union of the object with the mind", Anderson argued that "...it is clear from the very description 'tertiary qualities'...that it is '*the object*', and not the amalgamation of it with anything else, that the 'aesthetic experience' purports to be describing".<sup>1</sup> However this objective account of the tertiary qualities was in contrast to the formal characterisation of them in his metaphysical, aesthetic and ethical theories and this contrast between a qualitative and a formal account of the categories is indicative of a fundamental tension in Anderson's philosophical Realism. Anderson's Realism implied an empiricist doctrine of the spatio-temporality of things and he argued that it is only in terms of the notion of *form*, that situations can be regarded as categorical. However Anderson particularly emphasised that 'form' as a common measure of terrestrial events, could not be something *material* and this emphasis on the non-material and non-existent conception of form is inconsistent with his defence of Realism. Hence Space-Time and the categories cannot be regarded as the objective content of the experience of things, but are the logical *forms* of being spatio-temporal and, as argued above, it not clear how any account of the relations between the various categories can be given in terms of *externality*. Although Anderson's emphasis on this notion of form indicates the extent to which his mature philosophy is a departure from his earlier defence of Realism as the treatment of all issues in terms of the distinction between qualities and relations, in his mature philosophy he argued that the philosophical importance of the doctrine of empiricism lay its emphasis on *continuity* and *coherence*. This is a significant change in Anderson's perception of the importance of empiricism as an ontological doctrine, for if the importance of the notion of form resides not in its objective or qualitative content, but in its coherence and continuity, then it is possible that a formal or propositional account of things is consistent with an *Idealist* theory of reality. The logical development of empiricism into a positivistic logic was based on Anderson's view that situations can only be spoken about in terms of the forms of the proposition and although Anderson argued

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson 'Realism' [op.cit](#) p 56 (my emphasis)

that an account of the categories could be derived from the forms of the proposition, such an account implied that the categories could not therefore function as the *content* of propositions and were therefore 'unspeakable'. Anderson's unified conception of philosophy was also evident in his defence of a systematic theory of judgement where all issues are related to all other issues with none being outside the logical conditions of judgement and criticism. This unified theory of the forms of judgement and criticism was at the heart of Anderson's mature philosophical views and this emphasis on the systematic unity of judgements and propositions can be held to be indicative of an Idealism which was implicit in Anderson's mature philosophy. As P.H. Partridge has observed, Anderson "...retained from his idealist training the notion of a philosophy as being a system or a 'position' - the idea that philosophy provides some fundamental apparatus of understanding and criticism which illuminates all the fields of inquiry: science, politics, morals, psychology, art."<sup>1</sup> Such a view of the Idealism implicit in Anderson's mature philosophy is also supported by his own defence of Hegel's doctrine of the 'rationality of the real' which Anderson argued is no more than the assertion that reality is systematic and thus intelligible.<sup>2</sup> If the 'rationality of the real' is equivalent to the claim that 'reality is systematic' then it is not clear what the precise difference between Hegel's and Anderson's philosophical theories is, for no distinction could be made between them in terms of their systematic or unified conception of philosophy.

Anderson's unified conception of culture was derived in large part from Hegel's Idealism and the cultural and philosophical tradition which Anderson worked within has much in common with the Hegelian Idealist tradition. Although Anderson in his early article on Hegel rejected Hegel's 'pretended' solution to all problems, in his mature philosophy he recognised in Hegel a modern defender of a classical and objective theory of things and that for every major problem in contemporary philosophy there was a decisive Hegelian stimulus. Anderson's historical and classical conception of culture was derived from the period of philosophical Hellenism which emphasised the objectivity of things and a critical apparatus for dealing with issues and he particularly praised Heraclitus, Socrates and Plato for contributing to an objective and critical theory of philosophy. However in this classical theory of culture, Anderson appears to hold a theory of cultural 'ideals' which can not be easily reconciled with his general Realist principles. Hence when Anderson defends a certain period of philosophy, such as the Hellenic period, as a period of cultural objectivity, he appears to be suggesting that the Hellenic period is important because of its objectivist tendencies. However to argue in this manner would imply that Hellenism is an 'ideal' period in the history of philosophy, which can be studied to illustrate general objectivist principles. Similarly in his

---

1 Partridge *op cit* p 49

2 Anderson 'The Western Intellectual Tradition: From Leonardo to Hegel' *op cit* p 283

conception of classicism as a unified theory of culture, Anderson appeared to be defending a conception of philosophy and culture which is typically regarded as Idealistic. Hence if Idealism is understood as a unified theory of culture and philosophy, then although it is this *classical* conception of philosophy which distinguishes Anderson in the history of twentieth century philosophy, it is this conception which most clearly demonstrates the Idealism implicit in Anderson's mature philosophy.

#### f. Conclusion

Anderson's metaphysical, aesthetic and ethical theories all exhibit a common tension between form and quality. Anderson's metaphysical theory exhibited a tension between his Realist epistemology where the object of knowledge to be known must exist and his Empiricist ontological theory as based on a non-material conception of form which therefore could not be known in terms of his epistemology. This tension between his epistemological and ontological theories was reflected in his logical theory where the notion of truth was held to be both an objective 'tertiary quality' and to also have formal significance in terms of the copula of the proposition. This conflicting theory of truth resulted in certain critical difficulties in his logical theory, the resolution of which implied the rejection of the empirical view of the proposition as an existential account of the copula and referential account of the terms of the proposition, in terms of a copula of definition, a universal account of categorical terms and a thematic account of the predicate in the proposition. However the adoption of such modifications to his logic are an explicit departure from the central tenet of his Realist philosophy, the doctrine of external relations, and require a re-appraisal of Anderson as a philosophic Realist. Similarly in his aesthetic theory the tension between form and quality was evident in his treatment of beauty as both qualitative and formal. Hence although Anderson constantly insisted that beauty is a quality of objects, his formal account of beauty as the 'development of theme' implied that 'beauty' can only be understood relationally as a succession of moments or phases. Further insofar as this notion of the 'development of theme' implies an ideal standard of full or complete development of a theme, then this 'ideal' commits Anderson to an Idealist aesthetic theory whereby aesthetic failure is judged in terms of its inability to fully present a theme, while aesthetic success is judged in terms of its full and complete presentation of a theme. While such a conclusion is contrary to Anderson's expressed acceptance of Realism, it does open up the possibility of a more thorough discussion of one of the more neglected areas of his philosophy, the theory of meaning. In Anderson's ethical theory, while the tension between form and quality is not quite so clearly marked, what is evident is the obvious relativism in his ethical theory in treating goodness as both a quality and a relation. Hence while in his early ethical, social and political theories, Anderson defended a qualitative conception of goodness as production, in his mature

ethical and historical theories he also emphasised a relational conception of goodness as liberty. This relational conception of goodness can be explicated in terms of the notion of a 'movement' which Anderson defined as a 'form of activity'. These 'forms of activity' could be either scientific, artistic or industrial and in existing in opposition to the evils of waste, luxury and obscurantism, can be regarded as relational in nature. While this tension can be resolved by treating ethics and history as different modes of experience, it is an alternative which is inconsistent with Anderson's strict Realist epistemology as one way of knowing. In his mature historical theory, Anderson defended an artistic and scientific theory of history and was particularly insistent that form and content were the distinguishing features between philosophy and history. Although these difficulties can be resolved by an epistemological dualism and a relational account of theme, these are solutions which again are inconsistent with Anderson's interpretation of Realism as based on the doctrine of external relations. This tension between form and quality was particularly evident in Anderson's mature philosophical theory where he defended objectivism as a thematic account of philosophy and as a unified theory of goodness, truth and beauty as forms of objects, which conflicted with his previous qualitative treatment of them. Anderson's explicit defence of Realism as the content of his philosophy was in terms of the distinction between qualities and relations and since the treatment of the forms of philosophy as relations was definitive of Idealism, he was forced to treat them as qualities of objects. However to treat these forms as qualities of objects implied that they must in some sense 'exist', although his empiricism as a formal theory of reality treated this notion of form as non-material. Finally in his classical conception of philosophy, Anderson defended a unified theory of philosophy and culture and this emphasis on theoretical and systematic unity was typically held to be a characteristic of philosophical Idealism. This tension between form and quality which characterises much of Anderson's mature philosophy also characterised much of Alexander's philosophy and if Brettschneider's criticism of Alexander that such a tension is indicative of Idealism in Alexander's philosophy is correct, then such a conclusion would also apply to Anderson's mature philosophical views.<sup>1</sup> Although Anderson denied Idealism as a doctrine of 'ideas' as notions whose nature it is to be known and as a theory of 'ideals' which the mind strives after, he recognised R.F.A. Hoernle as one philosopher where "...philosophy is alive in one quarter at least", which is high praise for Hoernle considering Anderson's dismissal of a great many philosophers in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In his book Idealism as a Philosophical Doctrine, Hoernle argued that perhaps the only meaningful sense of Idealism, and indeed even its 'high-water mark', is as a concern with the main issues of human culture.

---

<sup>1</sup> Brettschneider op cit p 166

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, J. 'Proceedings of Sixth International Congress of Philosophy' A.J.P.P. VI, 3, Sept. 1928 p 228

There can be no doubt whatever that there are Spiritual Worlds through participation in, or membership of, which mind attains its own fullest realization. Art, Morals, Economics, Politics, Religion are facts which exist only in the medium of mind. If there were no minds in the world, there would be no works of art, no moral conduct, no economic activities and organizations, no states, no churches. All these are realities in, and through, which minds express themselves. A full knowledge of what mind is and does is impossible apart from a full knowledge of these worlds which mind creates and through which it realizes its nature to the fullest. They are the very substance of its life.<sup>1</sup>

When Idealism is understood in this sense, there is little doubt that Anderson can be regarded as an 'Idealist' with much of his mature historical writing being a defence of Croce's concept of 'immanentism' or humanistic idealism' and his philosophical theories being precisely theories of the various 'spiritual worlds' of art, ethics, politics and religion. However there is also a stronger sense in which Anderson's philosophy can be described as an Idealism. In his mature philosophical theory Anderson argued that all the major branches of philosophy could be unified under the concept of form, although this notion of form could not be considered as something material. However such a conception appears little different to Hegel's conception of Idealism.

The proposition that the finite is of ideal nature constitutes Idealism. In philosophy idealism consists of nothing else than the recognition that the finite has no veritable being. Essentially every philosophy is an idealism, or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is only how far it is actually carried through... The opposition of idealistic and realistic philosophy is therefore without meaning.<sup>2</sup>

If, as Hegel argued, Idealism is no more than the view that the real or the finite is of ideal nature then Anderson's theory of the formal nature of things can also be regarded as Idealistic. Anderson's formal or categorical conception of things was a conception of things as non-material and as non-material, which implied that the notion of form could not be known in terms of his Realism where the object of knowledge to be known, must exist. However such a conception of form can be regarded as an 'ideal' conception of things where the object of knowledge does not have to exist to be known, although such a theory would be based on the doctrine of

---

<sup>1</sup> Hoernle, R.F.A. Idealism as a Philosophical Doctrine London 1924 pp 45-6

<sup>2</sup> Hegel The Science of Logic Vol 1 p 168

internal relations and would imply that the opposition between Realism and Idealism is indeed without meaning. Anderson's sympathy for Absolute Idealism was also evidenced in his defence of Hegel's claim of the 'rationality of the real' which Anderson took to be the claim that reality is systematic, a claim which is the centre of his own philosophy. Although perhaps too much emphasis can be laid on the use of the word 'Idealist' in these contexts, to regard Anderson as an 'Idealist' would be regarded by many 'Andersonians' as a *heresy* to the 'pure' Andersonian doctrines of realism, empiricism and positivism. It is not without point therefore, to refer to Anderson's paper 'Democratic Illusions', where he stated with regard to democracy, although the point could be extended to a philosophical position, even that of Realism, that a *heretic* is a man,

...who on hearing the nth repetition of some familiar and even venerated formula, suddenly sees that it is false. This is merely an illustration of the fact that thinking is an active process, and that if we do not continually wrestle with problems and examine conceptions, we are reduced to saying things from which all or most of the meaning has ebbed away.<sup>1</sup>

Even though Anderson never rejected his definition of philosophy as Realism, if it is 'heretical' to question such a definition, then such 'heresy' can be regarded as no more than the process of examining and criticising those conceptions which have lost their meaning. Such a view of thinking as a *process* is also consistent with Anderson's mature views on other matters such as when in 1951 Anderson said of Freethought that it is not simply the activities of a movement or a set of doctrines, but is a question of "the close study of theory and ideas".<sup>2</sup> If Freethought or philosophy is not simply the adherence to a set of doctrines, but is the 'close study of theories and ideas' then to question whether Anderson's philosophy is in fact a Realist philosophy, is to study the philosophical theories of Realism and Idealism and to come to certain conclusions about them and will not be refuted simply by reference to certain early articles of Anderson where he explicitly defended his Realist conception of philosophy. That Anderson's philosophical thinking went through a period of development during his lifetime has been one of the central themes of this work and the insistent recurrence to the *doctrinal* conception of Anderson's philosophy can only be a hindrance to the *thematic development* of his philosophy. Anderson's philosophy can therefore be regarded as both Realist and Idealist - Realist in terms of its explicit content but Idealist in terms of its implicit form. Although this assessment of Anderson as both a Realist and an Idealist could be regarded as demonstrating a basic inconsistency in Anderson's *systematic*

---

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, J. 'Democratic Illusions' *Hermes* New Issue, 54, 1, 1952, p 16.

<sup>2</sup> McCallum, D. 'Anderson and Freethought' *op.cit* p 75.



conception of Realism, there remains the further question of whether this 'inconsistency' is characteristic of Anderson's systematic conception of philosophy or whether such an 'inconsistency' is symptomatic of a deeper difficulty of the logical relation between Realism and Idealism and, more generally, of the nature of philosophic discourse itself.