SAMUEL ALEXANDER

1859–1938

SAMUEL ALEXANDER was born in Sydney, N.S.W., on the 6th of January 1859. His father, also called Samuel, had died of consumption at the age of 38, a few days before the younger Samuel's birth. He was a saddler in a good way of business, and (I am told) had emigrated from England. The mother's maiden name was Eliza Sloman. She came from Capetown of a family that had settled in South Africa about 1820. There was a daughter and there were three sons of the marriage.

When Alexander was four or five years old the family moved to Melbourne, where they lived in the suburb of St. Kilda. Alexander's first teacher was a Mr. Atkinson, who took pupils and later set up a private school. Alexander says that Atkinson was 'quite mad', the evidence being that he issued a poster announcing that the school contained a prodigy (viz. S. A.). In 1871 Alexander went to Wesley College, and later to the University of Melbourne, where he spent two years. He was grateful to Wesley College ever afterwards for the sensible and efficient education it gave him. Both the College and the University had the discernment to see that Alexander was something more than a precocious pupil who won more prizes and exhibitions than any one else they had known. Teachers and professors encouraged him to try his fortune in England without waiting to complete his course at Melbourne. Their only perplexity was whether he should go to Oxford or to Cambridge, his talents for classics and for mathematics seeming to be approximately equal.

Alexander sailed for England, round the Horn, at the age of 18, never to return to Australia. He coached at Oxford (under Arthur Higgs, whom he called 'an excellent scholar but a very odd man'), but also consulted Todhunter at Cambridge. Higgs advised him to enter for a scholarship

at Lincoln. He did so, and didn't get it; but he won the second classical scholarship at Balliol (when Mackail was first) and was placed *prox. acc.* for the Balliol mathematical scholarship. Even then he was rather doubtful whether he should not go to Cambridge after all, and, as an Oxford undergraduate, he visited Cambridge to be coached by Routh. Routh told him that 'he was not certain of doing very well at mathematics'; and that, Alexander said, 'quieted his mind'. But to the end of his life Alexander wondered whether Cambridge would not have suited him the better.

He duly obtained a first in Classical Mods., in Mathematical Mods., and in Classical Greats. Jowett (who had a great liking for him) advised him to read, in addition, for Mathematical Greats; but Alexander 'was tired of being examined and also wanted to do what his friends were doing'. So he read for a fellowship (fearing that, if he failed, he might have to go in for the Bar or something equally dreadful). Jowett encouraged him by reading his essays and by other such intended services. Alexander became a Fellow of Lincoln in 1882. The *Jewish Chronicle* of that year (5th of May) states that he was the first Jew to obtain a fellowship in either University after the Act of 1870 and that 'he should now be welcomed among us as an honour to the whole community'.

Alexander held his Lincoln Fellowship for the next eleven years and was a lecturer of the College for the greater part of that time. There were intermissions, however. He spent the first year of his fellowship largely on the Continent, making trial of German university life, principally in Berlin. (In those days all the 'advanced' eyes in Oxford were cast towards Germany.) In 1888 he went, experimentally, to London, lecturing for part of the time in Toynbee Hall, and he spent the winter of 1890–1 in Freiburg i. B., studying experimental psychology in Münsterberg's laboratory there. But he returned to Oxford.

It would seem that he did not find the climate of Oxford

very kind to him, and that he was rather dissatisfied with a donnish life. The former was a matter of importance. His spirit, deep but glowing, had recurrent but rather serious periods of depression—he called it *accidie* in his later years. Climate had something, indeed much, to do with this, and the palliative that he chose towards the close of his stay in Oxford—namely, to live a good deal out of College at Headington—had no great efficacy. On the other hand, he had very grateful recollections of the years that he spent in College, especially of his friendship with Warde Fowler, then sub-rector of the College. He accompanied Fowler on walking-tours in Switzerland, and there was a time when he and Fowler were the only Fellows of the College who dined together in Hall. (The experiment of breakfasting in Common Room was less successful. Fowler, annoyed about the food, threw a small loaf to the other end of the room, and it was felt that dignity should not be imperilled.)

Alexander's temperate dissatisfaction with the system of education to which he loyally adapted himself was at least equally important. The undergraduates, he thought, relied far too much on lectures. In philosophy, with the spell of Green's influence waning, Alexander found the men over-critical and under-constructive. He always counted himself among the beavers, and he believed, like a few people in the eighties, and like many people since, that it was the business of philosophers to mingle science with philosophy and to build in a solid fashion. The greatest gap in the Oxford teaching of the eighties, he thought, was its neglect of experimental psychology, indeed of all psychology except the kind that was included in what was called 'logic' at Oxford 'and nowhere else'. Alexander and Blunt of Christ Church tried to remedy this defect, and Alexander worked hard in Burdon-Sanderson's physiological laboratory for eight years, winning high approval from Burdon-Sanderson. He was also supposed to have invented a pleasure-thermometer,[1] and to have attempted unsuccessful experiments on

[1] Just a plethysmograph, I think, and of course not his invention.

the measurement of fear, he himself, in war-paint, being the affrighting stimulus. In any case, he had a devoted band of students (not all of them undergraduates or all of them male). There was a party that found more life in him than in any other teacher; and that was not confined to his teaching of psychology. Long years afterwards, for instance, he would receive grateful letters from successful men recalling the adroitness and essential fairness with which (they said) he had viva'd them in Greats.

In addition to his varied work as a teacher of different branches of philosophy, Alexander wrote reviews for the *Oxford Magazine*, for *Mind*, and for other journals, always (so far as I know) on books of importance. He became a member of the Aristotelian Society in 1885, and very soon one of its Vice-Presidents and an editor of its published *Proceedings*. He read papers to it (some of them were published) and took part in several symposia, matching himself (or rather being matched) with eminent persons such as Sidgwick and Romanes, and with coming men such as Ritchie, Bosanquet, and Stout. His main interests, even then, were on lines that he later followed up: the nature of activity—principally mental activity—the nature of the ego, the sufficiency of naturalism in ethics, Darwinism in its relation to Hegelianism, a theism based on reverence. His mind was busy about the possibility of a subtle materialism (or what afterwards proved to be such), but of a materialism that winged its way, high-flying, through the regions of the Spirit. Only the Spirit was *not* immaterial and was *not* non-natural.

Alexander's principal literary achievement during this period was his book on *Moral Order and Progress*, which appeared in 1889 and was based upon the Green Prize Essay that its author had won two years before. The book was an attempt to Darwinize the Anglo-Aristotelian-Hegelian tradition in which Alexander had been nourished in Oxford, and was twice reprinted. Dedicated to A. C. Bradley, and read in proof, very carefully, by F. H. Bradley,

it received a rather cautious blessing from Oxford and a heartier welcome from the evolutionary moralists. True, Herbert Spencer wrote to Alexander rather grumpily (although lengthily) about it, but Leslie Stephen (not simply because Alexander was an admirer) entered upon a very friendly as well as upon a sagacious correspondence, and the two saw something of one another (when the *D.N.B.* permitted), Alexander accompanying Stephen on at least one of his walking-tours 'in the North'.

Alexander, after three attempts to be appointed to a professorship in what are called the 'provinces' in academic circles, was elected by Owens College, Manchester, in 1893, and he held the Chair for thirty-one very honourable years. He tried, on several occasions, to return to Oxford as a professor, but (I am as good as certain) never thought of leaving 'dear old sooty Manchester' for any place other than Oxford. What the Public Orator said at Oxford when Alexander received that University's honorary doctorate at the Encaenia of June 1924 was, surely, most fitting: 'Et quid est gratius quam ea studia quae praecipue nostra sunt eo quoque pervenire ubi plerique se negotiis potius quam Musis deditos esse profitentur?'

The philosophy classrooms in Manchester have seldom been thronged, and the number of students proceeding to 'advanced' work in the subject was quite tiny. Consequently Alexander's direct influence as a teacher was not very extensive, although, in the course of years, it spread to many parts of these islands and of the world. In 1905 it was a source of regret to most of the Manchester students that 'Sammy', who was becoming so famous, taught so exotic a subject, and that the man who, for all the shabbiness and the shagginess of his magnificence, was so like an angel could hardly be seen except on a bicycle. Alexander had even fewer students when the subject of psychology achieved its independence in the University. He made lifelong admirers among the students that he did have, and kept in touch with many, being peculiarly gratified when

his two National Broadcasts at a later time brought the tones of his beautiful voice to old pupils in distant places and evoked a 'fan' mail that, for the most part, was a thing of reintroductions rather than of indiscriminating eulogy.

But although the chief business of a professor, after all, is to teach, there are other ways in which his influence is felt both within the walls of a University and outside them. I shall try to indicate some of the directions towards which Alexander directed his gifts and activities.

Interested in causes and not in parties, he was always a left-wing radical or liberal; and so he was in favour of the feminist movement. He was prepared to preside at suffragette meetings and to march behind a banner in these processions. He accepted the feminist belief that women were not given a fair chance to compete with men in any profession, even the profession of letters. As regards University matters, the most urgent business affecting the increasing number of women students was the provision of a suitable women's residence. The men had two residences and the women had none. Along with C. P. Scott, of the *Manchester Guardian* (whom Alexander called the only great man he had ever known, although he had known many big men), Alexander set about to remedy this injustice. The result was Ashburne Hall, which now accommodates 150 women students. Alexander was an honorary (and very diligent) secretary, and (I am told) was the only man to be made an honorary member of the Old Ashburnian Association.

He also took a prominent part in the movement for replacing the Federal University of Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds with independent universities in these places. Liverpool wanted the change, Leeds did not, and opinion in Manchester was divided. Alexander took a prominent part in the movement for separation, in a reasoned way, without bitterness or zealotry, and his pamphlet *A Plea for an Independent University in Manchester* (1902), as well as other writings to the press, were effective steps towards the eventual solution.

The other University activity in which he was a public figure was the presenting for honorary degrees. The earlier system had been to appoint a presenter *ad hoc* for each particular graduand. In place of it Alexander was appointed Public Orator, except in the name (which he declined). Loving ceremonial, and acquiescing without vanity in the advantages that his admirable voice and his distinguished appearance gave him, Alexander spent many hundreds of happy hours in polishing his ceremonial phrases. 'I manage', he once wrote me, '(by stealing my friends' words from their letters) to make sketches of these people. For the rest, my "good voice and pompous manner" of which I told you carry me through towards an excellent ceremony.'

It *was* an excellent ceremony, thanks principally to Alexander, who was never content until he had produced a work of the highest art in each separate case—balanced, accurate, amusing, and characterizing. His elfin malice on these occasions was as delightful as the adroitness of his praise. I suppose it could not be true that quite all the recipients were as delighted with him as the audience was, but he made a host of friends among the laureated with no other introduction. An astonishingly high proportion of them, when Alexander came to have honours showered upon him, would write and tell him how happy their recollections were. Alexander continued in this office for six years after his retirement from his Chair.

Within the University, as a students' magazine said, 'he was to be seen at every College function, from the dance to the charwomen's supper', and he took his fair share in University administration, although he detested the business of administration. Despite his deafness, he was an efficient and sagacious Dean of the Arts Faculty, not at all surprised and not at all hurt at being on the losing side. Every one admired his judgement in the selection of men.

Among his colleagues, and outside strictly business hours, he was always a delightful companion. His conversation in the Common Room (I am speaking now of the early years

of George V's reign) was less robust than Rutherford's, less inundating than Elliot Smith's, and his charm was different from Horace Lamb's; but he brought distinction to a distinguished company. In his home, except for the *accidie*, and often in spite of it, he was altogether lovable.

One of the first things I heard about Alexander before I came to know him well was that a big change in his way of living seemed to have made no difference to him at all. In his first years at Manchester he had lived in rooms in Withington with Edward Fiddes and also with P. J. (now Sir P. J.) Hartog. Then he and S. J. Chapman (now Sir S. J. C.) had kept house together. But after that all was changed, and Alexander (in 1903) became head of a household in which the whole Alexander family resided—his mother, her sister, Alexander's two brothers,[1] and his sister Rosetta. But Alexander remained just as accessible, just as companionable as before, with the same welcome for all his friends, married or unmarried.

As I have said, he was the best of hosts. It was pleasantest, perhaps, to be the only guest. Then the hours sped as he talked (but never one-sidedly), and was gentle, gay, witty, and shrewd, all in the most effortless way imaginable. But if there were a large company he was still a perfect host, and his Wednesday evenings, to the end of his life, were a beneficent institution. On that evening he would usually invite some one to dinner, a stranger who might be lonely, a new colleague, a former student, or whoever else it might be. Later in the evening a dozen or more people would drop in —colleagues, schoolmistresses from the Withington Girls' School (of which he was a governor), former pupils, perhaps a young author or two. There used to be cakes and coffee and what Alexander called 'pop' (i.e. ginger-beer). Later there was no 'pop'. All was simple and friendly and easy and, in its way, memorable. Alexander moved the guests about, and moved among them, with a benign impartiality,

[1] The eldest brother died in 1903, Miss Sloman in 1908, the mother in 1917.

never trying to please and always pleasing, delighted to hear an argument starting, melting all possible asperities without himself being soft in the slightest degree.

Alexander wrote very little for many years after his appointment to Owens College. He thought he had nothing to say, and so he was the more gratified when St. Andrews gave him his first honorary degree in 1905, a prophetic honour that enabled him to wear the red gown with which his women admirers presented him to the mutual and great satisfaction of all parties concerned. About 1906, however, he began himself to think, as the discerning had thought for a long time, that he had quite a lot to say. And he began to say it.

A brilliant little book on Locke, published in what was then (1908) a shilling series, showed that Alexander could excel in a field in which it was his habit to disclaim proficiency, the history of ideas and the appraisal of master minds. Alexander's discussion is still very valuable despite the marked rise in the level of Locke scholarship that has subsequently occurred in this country. The book, however, was only a parergon. For Alexander was bent upon a constructive philosophy.

Although his main interests were always ontological he began, ostensibly at least, with epistemological theory, and developed his own form of the theory of knowledge that was then called the 'new realism' in England. His friends thought that he had 'surrendered to Moore', that is to say, had swallowed and assimilated the principle of Moore's 'Refutation of Idealism' (in *Mind* of 1903). There was some truth in this prevalent impression, but not enough. Alexander accepted the existential distinction between 'act' and 'object' in all sensing, perceiving, remembering, and other such processes, pretty much as Moore's disciples did. But his interest lay in the development of the distinction along lines that he had been following all his life. On the one hand he used the distinction to support the thesis that in all knowing a non-mental object was 'contemplated' and,

being contemplated, was 'revealed'. That, for him, may have been a relatively new idea. On the other hand, his analysis of the 'act' chimed in with his older speculations on mental activity, on the ultimate identity of a mental act with a neural movement, on the indefeasible verity (as he thought) that mental acts are felt but never inspected, 'enjoyed' but not 'contemplated'.

He elaborated some of these views in the three presidential addresses he gave to the Aristotelian Society in consecutive years from 1908 onwards, and, about 1912, developed his theory of the 'tertiary' qualities or 'values' in some articles in *Mind*. In all this he had an ulterior purpose. It was his settled belief that any philosopher who had a serious theory to propound must begin as a matter of course by 'plunging' in the philosophical journals and so should invite the criticism of his peers. Likely enough, if Alexander had taught, say, in Oxford, instead of being, philosophically speaking, almost a hermit in Manchester, he would have conversed instead of corresponding about his fermenting ideas, but, whatever the reason, the fact remains that few constructive philosophers have ever been eager to submit to so prolonged a period of preliminary testing and trying. This eagerness was rewarded by long and patient private criticisms on the part of several eminent philosophers. But even that was not enough for Alexander. He became a propagandist, lecturing to many universities, attempting the reconquest of Scotland to a realism that in a few respects was reminiscent of Thomas Reid, gratefully filling two columns in the *Glasgow Herald* (in 1910) with technicalities that did not seem such. 'The difficulty', he said in this article, 'is due to our prejudice that things which we know must somehow be dependent on us. We will still be intruding our dear minds into objects. Whereas if we describe faithfully what happens when we perceive, we recognize that the object is . . . entirely distinct from us and that consciousness is only another thing along with it.'

In 1913 Alexander was immensely heartened by his

election to the British Academy, the only one of his distinctions, he used afterwards to say with some exaggeration, for which he cared two straws. Here is what he wrote to an old friend at the time:

7.7.13

Erubesco referens the terms of the recommendation (which I suppose I ought not to have seen). So I send them as they reached me. Only return them for my private solace on wintry days. Well, I am very glad anyhow: thank you warmly for your congratulations. What they say about my not having time to write is rot—I hadn't anything to say till 5 or 6 years ago. And the statement about my 'knowledge' is fearful exaggeration. I am, as I told you, a damned amateur. But I humbly accept the general substance of the statement and I am delighted to think that they thought the general quality of my stuff good enough.

He read a long and choicely worded paper on 'The Basis of Realism' to the Academy in January 1914 (i.e. on the basis of 'contemporary realism and for the most part my own form of it'). This, I think, was the best statement he ever made of the epistemological part of his theory, and of the 'temper of realism, to de-anthropomorphize'. By this time, however, the little world of philosophy was eager to hear what he might say in a big book, and his appointment in 1915 to give the Gifford Lectures in Glasgow was felt, in all knowledgeable quarters, to be a peculiarly happy choice.

The War did not stop their composition, although Alexander's silvery tongue was employed to persuade some young men to join the colours (and made the mothers of some of them almost the only women who ever wavered in their admiration for the speaker), and although his wide and sympathetic correspondence with young men at the front cost him pains and much sorrow despite his knowledge that he could help them in some small degree. It also did not prevent the delivery of the lectures, in 1917 and 1918, or reduce the audience to a handful. (He had a steady 50 to 70 auditors for the first series.) And it did not prevent him, between the two series, from working as a

half-timer in a government department on urgent problems regarding the Jews.

The War over, Alexander set to work to prepare *Space, Time, and Deity* for publication, following the syllabus of the Gifford Lectures with the same title but rewriting very extensively. When the proofs began to come in he was, for a time, too depressed to go on with them. But that mood passed, and the book, in two stately volumes, appeared in the autumn of 1920.

The labour of fourteen strenuous years was accomplished. Speaking, I hope, after due reflection, I should say that no English writer had produced so grand a system of speculative metaphysics in so grand a manner since Hobbes, in 1655, completed his metaphysical journey with the publication of *De Corpore*. Epistemological realism still formed an important part of the adventure. Alexander's metaphysics (i.e. his ontology) required his epistemological 'realism' and was in a way supported by it. It was still essential for his attempt to 'de-anthropomorphize' philosophy. But the thing, he now believed, had to be done in another way, and his epistemological realism had become an incident (admittedly rather a stubborn and wordy incident) in a much more comprehensive undertaking. The place of mind 'among other things' had to be shown to be a consequence of an adequate survey of the universe, its matrix in space-time (= the stuff of movement where time was the 'mind' of extension), its generation of 'emergents' of a higher order, its pervasive habits (or 'categories'), its 'empirical' (or non-pervasive) eddies in the ocean of space-time, the 'tertiary' qualities of its conscious minds, its travail towards a growing God, the highest of space-time's creatures that human conjecture can adumbrate.

It would not be proper for me, I think, to attempt either an epitome or a criticism of an undertaking so magnificently conceived and so strenuously executed. What Alexander had to say to his critics is given in substance in the preface he wrote to the second impression of the book

(1927). He was grateful to his critics (who were numerous and able) although he thought that none of them had appreciated the importance of the central part of the book, its discussion of the categories. He was anxious to make it clear that his views about space-time were the result of independent *metaphysical* inquiry, that is to say, of intellectual experiment with ultimates, and were not borrowed from the sciences. The similarity of some of his conclusions in this matter to Minkowski's was just an uncovenanted mercy, and so was the similarity of his 'naturalism' as a whole to a Spinozism where *tempus* replaced *cogitatio*. But, in substance, Alexander was content to leave the book as it stood. It was his contribution to the philosophical ferment of his time, a time, he thought, of infinite promise. If others excelled him (as later he believed that Whitehead had done) there was no occasion for jealousy. If it became his fate to be unread, there was no occasion for melancholy. But when he said and thought these things he forgot one of his greatest services, namely that, whether or not he had succeeded, he had actually constructed and had not merely suggested a system of metaphysics. At the present moment that science may be in eclipse, but it is not more transitory than the human intellect and it needs system even more than inspired sketch-work. No one can say, now, what a later age will think of Alexander's work, or whether, if his work goes out of fashion, the fashion will also desert the truth; but any one who thinks he has little to learn from Alexander's genius for the architecture of metaphysics is not a serious philosopher.

Alexander retired from his Chair in 1924, a tired man of 65 but hale 'in the physics of him', and ready after a holiday in Italy to return to a freer but active life in Manchester. 'I propose to go on for 20 years', he wrote. 'Time for many philosophers, many suns, to rise and set. If only enough brains remain.' The brains did remain; and although Alexander found the 'blue devils' of his temperamental despondency rather harder to exorcize in age than in

maturity, his life, until near its close, was very nearly happy and sometimes almost debonair. The sudden death of his sister in 1923, it is true, had saddened him very much, and the barbarities of a cruel world distressed his later years. But, in the main, he was in good heart.

Honours came to him. It would be tedious to enumerate his numerous academic decorations, but there were two honours that moved him very much.

The first was the presentation of his bust by Epstein in 1925. I shall quote some parts of the dignified and graceful speech that he made on that occasion:

> I hardly recognize myself in all these kind and honorific words. But a man must accept with gratitude the opinion of his friends; and it is sweet and heartening to me to know that they think these things of me. . . . I owe to the University the long 31 years that I was proud and happy to be a professor here, during which I tried to do my part, according to my lights, as a teacher, and otherwise as opportunity presented itself, and to contribute something to my subject, which also is a part of our duty. . . .
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> I rejoice too and am grateful that my bonds with the University are still unbroken; and I hope in closing one long chapter of my life and beginning another chapter that it may be true of me what a member, real or imaginary of my race said of himself: 'The best is yet to be.'
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> It is a great thing, I feel, to have secured the affection of my pupils and my colleagues and my other friends in Manchester and elsewhere. . . . I cannot tell how I have won this affection; unless it be that I have a fair stock of affection myself, which extends to all children and to dogs and cats and other animals. Apart from that, after careful self-examination, I can only conclude that there must be something in me which in the 18th century they used to call a *je ne sais quoi*. . . .
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> Yet I reflect that my position of eminence here is less a tribute to me than to the artist. . . . In the future when I am forgotten this bust will be described among the university's possessions as the bust of a professor, not otherwise now remembered, except as an ingredient of the ferment which the earlier years of the 20th century cast into speculation; but it will be added that it is an Epstein. I have heard the remark by some friends who had seen the photograph of the bust which appeared some time ago, that it would have pleased them more if it had been less in repose, less serious.

But after all, during the greater part of my waking life I am in repose; and though I shall be glad if it is said of me 'He was known for a certain gaiety of speech' I prefer to have it said of me, 'He contrived for some years to persuade people he could think'. For, my Lord, in spite of appearances to the contrary I am really and truly and fundamentally a very serious man; it is only that I find it difficult to be dull.

The second was the conferment of the Order of Merit on him in 1930. His attitude is sufficiently indicated by the following letter:

I've only just begun to answer my friends, quailing before a mountain of letters. . . . I think you know I entertain quite a modest opinion of myself. And ever since I got the letter from the King's Secretary (the most charming and gracious sort of formal letter) I have been feeling myself unequal to what *ought* to be the big tradition of the order. The pleasure it excites among my friends reconciles me to it. And to-day I got a telegram from Whitehead himself (unquestionably better fitted as a representative of philosophy) approving warmly. That only means that Whitehead is a dear, but it comforts me enormously. . . . I hope the vanity of my new honours won't damage my work and prevent me (through over-care for my reputation) from plunging as I have done hitherto.

Most of the 'plunging' about this time was into the thickets of aesthetic theory. Alexander had always taken a keen and a delicate interest in most of the greater forms of art, and himself had a fine and exacting taste in literature. In his later years he became something of a slave to aesthetic problems, and exploited what he was pleased to call his heresies in many lectures in many places. His Adamson Lecture on 'Art and the Material' in Manchester in 1925 was his first important contribution to the subject and led to further investigations into the psychology of artistry, such as his Herbert Spencer Lecture on 'Art and Instinct' in 1927. He never regarded himself as a creative artist, thinking he was only a craftsman, even in philosophy. 'Lord bless you,' he wrote, 'I don't know what artistic creation is unless making jests is artistic.' But he had seen Epstein at work, he had had the benefit of C. E. Montague's

introspective reports, and he had a wide acquaintance with the biographies of poets and musicians and architects. So he believed he knew what happened to artists when they created, and he hoped that 'Art and the Material' would elicit support for his thesis that an artist did not try to embody a preconceived image but tentatively and half-unwittingly wrung its secret from the material and brought 'magic' or 'enchantment' into it by the impress of his own personality. The response to Alexander's overtures was neither very extensive nor altogether encouraging. Nevertheless, it was not negligible.

By 1933 Alexander thought that the time had come for uniting his various heresies on aesthetic subjects into a 'single clotted heresy', but also, like Kant in his third *Critique*, for showing that aesthetics was one of the portals of high metaphysics. So *Beauty and Other Forms of Value* appeared in that year.

The book may have suffered from its divided purpose, and it certainly reached a divided audience, for many of its readers had little interest outside the first and longest part of it (on aesthetics), while the philosophers were discouraged by the length of the aesthetic prologue and by the brevity of the second and more especially of the third parts.

While the first part was smooth it was also rather condensed, and in certain ways was less effective than some of the earlier 'plunging'. But it was not unworthy of its author, and would not have been unworthy of Alexander at an earlier period, than which there is little room for higher praise. The second part pursued what Alexander himself called 'damned clichés', such as the art in science, the science in morality, and the morality in science. Alexander had written and lectured on these topics also, extracting honey very skilfully from what seemed to be drooping flowers. To vary the metaphor, he dismantled and anon reassembled the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. The third part was much too short, but it was meant to be the

pulse of the affair. Alexander was rewriting the 80-page chapter on value (or the 'tertiary qualities') in *Space, Time, and Deity*. There was, he held, a 'subjective pole' in everything and in that sense a 'value'. For everything mattered to something else and indirectly to the Whole. But '*our* precious values' should either be de-anthropomorphized or else denied to the Whole. The higher 'values' of truth and beauty and goodness were relative to 'objective' *human* satisfaction. The Whole could not *be* a 'value' since value was a relation, and the idealists as well as many theologians were mistaken in their desperate efforts to establish the ubiquity of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good.

The book was not quite the end of Alexander's philosophical activities. He wrote a few more reviews for the *Manchester Guardian*. He read more new books than most practising philosophers, and read them with zest if they gave him the opportunity. He lectured occasionally. In the more solid way he produced, among other pieces, an essay on 'The Historicity of Things' in a volume of essays presented to Ernst Cassirer (1936). (This he called 'minor stuff with nothing excellent about it except the title'; but lesser men might well have thought it rather near to being major stuff.) After twenty-seven years, in the spring of 1937, he gave another presidential address to the Aristotelian Society. He was diligent about the business of the British Academy, always one of his greatest interests. Indeed, his friends, till within a year of his death, rejoiced to see how strong he seemed. They knew from his letters that he was too often very despondent. They knew that his heart was weakening. They knew that he had abandoned the idea of living to be 85. But the old glowing temper that came close to gaiety seemed to return when he met them. He had ceased to attend philosophical congresses, and so he deprived these occasions of what for so long had seemed to be their great prescriptive charm; but we all thought of him in terms of vitality and scoffed at his view that a man should be silenced (and, incidentally, compulsorily retired from

the Academy) at 75, or 76, or 77—he had a habit of postponing the year.

At the time of Lord Rutherford's funeral it was evident that Alexander had become very old, and in the summer of 1938 he knew his hold on life must soon be dropped. On the 21st of August he wrote to one of his oldest friends:

> My case is bad—I don't know how long it is going to last—it looks like a prolonged illness. . . . I hope my friends will just hope I may go as soon as possible. Only otherwise I am strong. So I must make the best of it, and not talk about it lest I should be too sorry for myself. . . . I fear we shall not meet again. But if you see the report of my departure, don't grieve for it's what I most want. There's no pain. Only discomfort in writing.

He died on the 13th of September 1938, having loved and helped his fellow men with a generosity as beautiful as it was rare.

J. L.