

In response to Shoko's comments on Akiko's paper, and Akiko's reply, and since both of them ask for more:

I think Moore's paradox does not have much to do with time, nor to me (*pace* Moore and Wittgenstein) is it really very interesting. "I don't believe it is raining and yet it is raining" is much the same as "I believe I am five feet tall and yet I am six feet tall"; the "yet is raining" or the "yet I am six feet tall" can be expressed as "it is true that it is raining" or "it is true that I am six feet tall," or in a subjective mode "I believe that it is raining" or "I believe that I am six feet tall," since "I believe *p*" as usually understood means "I think (or know) it is true that *p*." Whereas someone else saying *p*, or that *p* is true, or that she believes that *p*, we acknowledge, may be wrong: if Jane Bloggs thinks the moon is made of green cheese, she may assert that it is true, yet (we think) it is false. But if Jane Bloggs says "I don't believe the moon is made of green cheese, and yet it is made of green cheese," she's simply contradicting herself; not much of a paradox.

Nor would I agree with Shoko's definition of coincidence. "An unpredictable occurrence, without predetermination by a cause" might be a surprise, or a mystery, but it is not a coincidence until two things come together whose conjunction is not to be expected. Two people meeting by chance and introducing themselves truthfully to the other as "John Smith" is a mild coincidence, and surely happens from time to time; two people meeting by chance and introducing themselves truthfully to the other as "Jedediah Warrington-Pimbly" would be highly coincidental, since the name itself is improbable and the conjunction of their improbabilities meeting must have astronomical odds against it.

I would not agree with Akiko that there is evidence that Armande has helped cause Hugh's death, or that she is in some sense there among the flames.

I think it is crucial for Nabokov that the transparent things of the novel, the ghosts, have a richer, more flexible relation to time than human consciousness does (VN often expresses his sense that the present, for all its bounty, is a prison for human consciousness, and that there is surely some freer access to time outside it), but that nevertheless they cannot see the future, because this would require the future to be predetermined—for humans, and, for that matter, for transparent things, for ghosts: they too would be able to do nothing freely, which wouldn't make for a very interesting eternity (if that's where they are); and nor would humans, so there would be no point in trying to influence Hugh.

Nabokov has a very strong sense of the riches of the past, and the possibilities of discovering patterns within it, once it is past; but even if such patterns do seem to converge on or indicate some apparent likelihood ahead, that might not in fact happen, and if it does not, a different set of past events may then be illuminated by what *does* happen instead.

I recall one of Maurice Couturier's conferences in Nice, where Vladimir Alexandrov was puzzled by what he saw as a contradiction between Nabokov's interest in freedom in time and his interest in fate, in patterns in time. He felt that the more patterns there are in time, the less freedom, the more fate there must be. Robert Scholes refuted that brilliantly by pointing to Joyce's *Ulysses*: there are few novels more patterned than *Ulysses*, and few novels more genuinely open about what happens in the course of the day and about what

might happen after the day is over, and the novel finished, than *Ulysses*. You can imagine the transparent things of VN's novel, if they inhabited Dublin on Bloomsday, to have a sense of the patterns in the course of that day, as events are unfolding, as good as or better than the best re-rereader of the novel; they might predict some outcomes on the bases of the patterns they can see, yet they too might turn out to be wrong, since this world is open.