



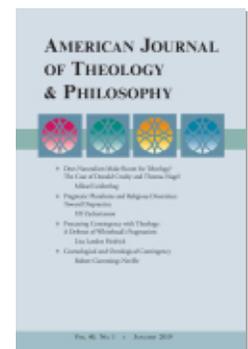
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*The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead, 1924–1925:
Philosophical Presuppositions of Science* ed. by Paul A.
Bogaard and Jason Bell (review)

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The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead, 1924–1925: Philosophical Presuppositions of Science. Edited by Paul A. Bogaard and Jason Bell. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2017. lii + 570 pp. \$230 cloth. (Reviewed by William J. Meyer, Maryville College)

In this expensive but invaluable book, students and scholars of Whitehead's philosophy and those more generally interested in the intersections of philosophy and science will find a treasure trove for gleaning the development, breadth, and depth of Whitehead's thought. This work, which consists of three independent sets of course notes from the previously unpublished lectures that Whitehead gave in his first year at Harvard in 1924–1925, is the first volume in a new and richly important series by Edinburgh University Press: The Edinburgh Critical Edition of the Complete Works of Alfred North Whitehead, overseen by series editors George R. Lucas Jr. and Brian G. Henning. This initial volume, which was skillfully edited by Paul Bogaard and Jason Bell, consists of eighty-five newly crafted lectures that Whitehead gave in his Phil. 3B course (Philosophy and Science) from noon to one on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays between September and May during his first year at Harvard (and he gave the same set of lectures at Radcliffe, though usually trailing one session behind, on those same days from nine to ten in the morning).

The Harvard notes were taken by two individuals. The first was Winthrop Pickard Bell, a Canadian scholar who was an instructor and senior tutor in philosophy at Harvard. Bell earned his PhD under Husserl at Göttingen in 1914 and was interned by the Germans as an "enemy citizen" during WWI, and he was a secret British and Canadian intelligence operative during and after the war, then served as a reader on Charles Hartshorne's PhD thesis at Harvard (xxviii). The second was William Ernest Hocking, a senior member of the Philosophy Department and an accomplished philosopher in his own right. The Radcliffe notes were taken by Louise R. Heath, who was a PhD student in philosophy at Harvard-Radcliffe at the time. Bell's notes are superbly organized, dated, and demarcated, capturing what appear to be detailed accounts of Whitehead's words, diagrams, and mathematical equations. In contrast, Hocking's notes are sparse outlines of each session, but they sometimes cut through with some insightful diagrams or formulations of Whitehead's thought. The two sets of Harvard notes come first in the volume and are arranged in a semisynoptic way followed by Heath's Radcliffe notes. Though Heath's notes are detailed like Bell's, they are not as precisely dated or demarcated, which makes it harder to discern where one day's thoughts end and the next day's begin. Indeed, one of the nice features of Bell's notes and the lecture format in

general is that one can pick up and read one or more of Whitehead's lectures and get pretty much a self-contained discussion. For instance, the reader gets brief and clear snapshots into Whitehead's understanding of key concepts, such as facts, actuality, and the Eternal, of which he says the Eternal is "the ground exhibited in every occasion of Realization = that which is true respecting . . . every occasion because it is an Occasion" (59).

If the substantive reward of reading Whitehead's later monographs, such as *Science and the Modern World* (1925) or *Process and Reality* (1929), is like watching a star athlete play at peak performance in game situations, then the great benefit of reading these course lectures is like having the privilege to watch that same athlete prepare in training camp as he thinks through and develops the intellectual distinctions and lines of argument that will shape his subsequent philosophy. Though I will leave final judgment regarding nuances to longtime Whiteheadian specialists, it is evident that many of the central themes of his later thought are here in the process of formation and articulation. For example, Whitehead is clearly developing here a philosophy of organism over against the dominance of mechanistic and materialistic thinking in modern thought. As he states: the "key to Nature is that of organism and not that of matter" (153). "Mechanism is arguing from parts to the whole. The whole is an aggregate, the concrete fact is in the part. Organism [in contrast] argues from whole to parts: The part being what it is by the way it functions in the whole" (158). "If you once start with materialism," Whitehead incisively observes, "you can never get back to organism" (465). As the editors note, Whitehead uses the term "prehension" and the phrase "eternal objects" for the first time in these lectures (161–62). Though he does not yet appear to refer to "actual occasions," he describes "'Actualities' [as] Being an Occasion of Realisation" (60).

In terms of observing Whitehead still developing his thought, the following passage from Hocking's notes serves as a possible illustration: "When you ask what is the simplest thing, I do not point to a little billiard ball atom, but [rather] to a basic object, an emergence, an enduring entity with a structural plan, essentially a pattern of things,—an organism spread through the whole of space & time, but with its structural key 'there'" (157). At the beginning of the passage, which asks about "what is the simplest thing," it seems as though Whitehead is pointing toward something like an event or actual occasion in contrast to a materialistic billiard-ball view of atomicity. Yet as the passage progresses and speaks of "an enduring entity with a structural plan, essentially a pattern of things," it appears that what he has in mind is something more akin to a society of occasions rather than to an actual occasion as such. Perhaps the apparent ambiguity here stems more from the way that Hocking took notes rather than from Whitehead himself, but whatever the case may be, such

interesting passages add to the value of observing Whitehead's mind at work in real time.

Of the many things that I found illuminating in these lectures, the crystalizing moment came when I recognized that Whitehead's philosophy might be summed up in terms of its affirmation of *atomicity without discontinuity* (419, 421–22). Along these lines, these lectures, including Whitehead's diagrams, helped me to gain a better grasp of his understanding of time. For instance, as Heath succinctly records: "Start with Becoming or Process as fundamental. Process at an instant is nonsense. Process is essentially transition to otherness. Idea of 'at an instant' is pushed into the background as derivative. A slab or duration of time becomes the most concrete fact. Transition during a duration is event & is fundamental" (422). Bell amplifies this: the "only type of Event which could enclose a Duration would be another Duration. . . . If two durations of same kind intersect, they intersect in a duration" (235). Hence, for Whitehead, "The instantaneous moment is a high abstraction" from this series of intersecting or overlapping durations of past actual events and anticipating future events (311). Furthermore, the present moment "is the relationship not any one of Past to Future but particular concrete relatedness of that past to that future" (306; see diagrams on 298, 306, 308). "The moment," Whitehead remarks, "is only a relation between events" (320). Thus, the image that comes to my mind in trying to grasp the *abstract* character of the *present moment* is of a swimmer doing the front crawl or freestyle stroke: the back kick of the feet represents the influence of past events, the forward reach of the hands represents the anticipation of future events, and the present moment is an abstraction somewhere in the middle of this perpetually moving swimmer, somewhere in the midst of this overlapping series of events. So one can begin to see that Whitehead affirms atomicity (distinct events / "you've got to take your Time in chunks" [309]) without discontinuity (since there is the intersection or overlap of distinct events). The present moment, like a point, is an *abstraction* from the ongoing process of intersecting events (a vectorial trajectory of overlapping durations).

Other notable observations include the following: Whitehead's informative discussion of his one-on-one meeting with Einstein in 1921 in London (185–87); Whitehead's intriguing description of an electron as a "complex organism or pattern" (149–50); and my surprise at his apparent emphasis on the concept of the Eternal (not eternal objects per se but a "ground of becoming" [103]) and on Spinoza (59–61, 446). To be sure, one can still see in these lectures, as in his later books, Whitehead's critique that "Spinoza never explains why his Eternal should have any affections [modes], at all. It's there you get that

haunting contingency” (61). Furthermore, unlike Spinoza, he speaks of how particularity “enriches the eternal” (446).

In sum, this richly packed and stimulating first volume portends well for the future of the Edinburgh series as a whole: future volumes will include unpublished lecture notes from Whitehead’s subsequent years at Harvard; some of his newly discovered correspondence with students, intellectuals, and political figures; and new critical editions of his published works. This first volume is—and forthcoming volumes will be—an essential research tool and intellectual treasure for every scholarly library and for every serious student of Whitehead.

Gabriel Marcel and American Philosophy: The Religious Dimension of Experience. David W. Rodick. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017. 152 pp. \$90.00 cloth. (Reviewed by Dwayne A. Tunstall, Grand Valley State University)

In *Gabriel Marcel and American Philosophy*, David W. Rodick investigates Gabriel Marcel’s relationship to classical American philosophy—more specifically, to Josiah Royce’s idealism, William James’s radical empiricism, William Ernest Hocking’s empiricism, and Henry G. Bugbee’s experiential naturalism—to provide Marcel scholars and scholars of classical American philosophy with a fruitful perspective for understanding Marcel’s thought (x, 18–19). He also seeks to capture Marcel’s dynamic and concrete approach to philosophizing along with examining its “relevance to the contemporary world—a world in which philosophy, confined to the ivory tower, remains at risk of becoming somewhat of a caricature of itself” (xi). In addition, Rodick contends that “Marcel’s most important legacy is his sustained commitment to unity of Christian philosophizing” (13). By *Christian philosophizing*, he means conducting philosophical inquiry in the spirit of “seeking truth wherever it may be—searching for insights wherever authentic intellectual experience is found” (45). Such philosophizing aims to “[reach] a level of understanding sufficiently universal to be appreciated by non-Catholics and even by non-Christians, so long as there is a commitment to what is essential” (13).

Rodick begins this monograph by briefly summarizing in chapter 1 the content to be presented in chapters 2–7. In chapter 2 Rodick characterizes Marcel as a Jamesian radical empiricist who sought to better understand the presence of *l’inverifiable*, the unseen and unverifiable, at the heart of our intersubjective experience (19–21). He then explains precisely why Marcel was disappointed