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PAUL A. BOGAARD and JASON BELL, eds. *The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead (1924–1925): Philosophical Presuppositions of Science*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017: liv + 570 pages. [Reviewed by ADAM C. SCARFE, Department of Philosophy, University of Winnipeg, Canada. Email: <a.scarfe@uwinnipeg.ca>.]

This is the very first volume to be published in the Critical Edition series of all of Whitehead’s works, including his previously published books, unpublished manuscripts, available lecture notes, student notes, and academic correspondences. Here, Paul Bogaard and Jason Bell offer to Whitehead scholars and enthusiasts a rare glimpse into Whitehead’s classroom at Harvard. This volume and the Critical Edition project have generated much excitement in the process community in terms of seeing to the publication of so-called “new” primary source material from Whitehead. The Whitehead Research Project is spearheading this publication project, which involves editing his manuscripts up to current scholarly standards, providing substantial indexes, bringing Whitehead’s works out of general disarray, and dispelling aspects of “the myth” that all of Whitehead’s notes had been destroyed by his own decree. George R. Lucas is the

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series's general editor and Brian G. Henning is its executive editor. The executor of the Whitehead family estate, George Whitehead (Whitehead's grandson), has granted the Whitehead Research Project "full permission" (Bogaard and Bell ix) for these future publications.

In his "On the Trail of Whitehead" series published in *Process Studies*, Lucas has already provided a historical account of the events leading up to the discoveries and activities of the project's team, which shed new light on Whitehead's intellectual trajectory following his arrival at Harvard. Lucas's revelations therein, some very interesting and surprising, extend beyond Victor Lowe's authoritative two-volume biography, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work* (1985 and 1990). These revelations supplement, in substantial fashion, the general introduction to the volume that is written by Lucas and Henning in the present volume. I would encourage readers of the present review to take a good look at Lucas's pieces, which provide much additional context and information and about the Whitehead Research Project's future plans and publications.

In the introduction, Lucas and Henning report that a good number of Whitehead's personal correspondences with colleagues as well as collections of notes from those who attended his lectures were found "scattered in libraries and archives across the United States, Canada, and the UK," and that the team has dedicated "considerable time and effort locating, collecting and cataloguing a substantial body of these extant unpublished materials" (Bogaard and Bell ix). The in-class notes are especially important since Whitehead tended to carry out "his original research in the classroom and in public lecture halls, in dialogue with the undergraduate and graduate students in his core classes and seminars, and changed the course content based on the focus of his research at the time" (Bogaard and Bell x). According to Lucas and Henning, "Whitehead did not tie himself to any particular set of topics from year to year, but simply taught his most current thought on whatever he was working on, often months before similar material would appear in print" (Bogaard and Bell xi). Indeed, this is consistent with his philosophy of education, which largely views student learning as instructor-assisted research, the event of education involving the adventurous, intellectual engagement of teachers and pupils in active, thoughtful, imaginative, and critical dialogue on the most topical issues, creatively enabling the mutual intellectual growth of both parties. As Whitehead writes, on the one hand, students, who are generally the bearers of the greatest sense of imaginative possibility, should "crown their period of intellectual acquisition by some contact

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with minds gifted with the experience of intellectual adventure” (*AE* 97). On the other hand, researchers should “explain themselves to active minds, plastic and with the world before them” (*AE* 97), providing them with an occasion for them to throw their ideas “into fresh combinations” (*AE* 1), so as to prevent them from becoming “inert.” As Lucas puts it, Whitehead’s “classes were his laboratory, and his students were his initial ‘sounding board’” (“On the Trail: Part One,” 92). Lucas and Henning further suggest that the in-class notes also “demonstrate how he used his teaching and public presentations as a portrait or drawing board upon which to sketch and re-sketch his evolving thought” (Bogaard and Bell xii). It is precisely Whitehead’s approach to teaching—especially the fact that his classes were occasions of research, and that their content was recorded by those who attended and participated in them—that provides contemporary scholarship with a novel glimpse into the developmental trajectory of Whitehead’s thought. For instance, for Lucas and Henning, one thing that the in-class notes demonstrate is that “the alleged ‘transformation’ of his thought from an ‘early’ (1925) to a quite distinctive ‘later’ version (1929) cannot be sustained . . . instead, what we see is a more subtle ‘evolution’ of concepts and theoretical foundations, captured in a decided transformation in public dissemination and style” (Bogaard and Bell xi).

Rather, in contrast to the many abstractions that are created as pertains to the “compositional analysis” of Whitehead’s texts, e.g., as has been advanced by Lewis Ford in *The Emergence of Whitehead’s Metaphysics* and *Transforming Process Theism*, Lucas and Henning assert the bold claim that they provide a limited record of the

true “compositional history” of Whitehead’s thought not in some hypothetical reconstruction, but in his very own words, during his own presentations, as recorded meticulously by his own students, all wrestling together with the problem of a proper reformulation of the metaphysical picture of nature as presented in the varieties of discoveries constituting modern science (Bogaard and Bell xii).

That said, in “On the Trail of Whitehead: Part One,” Lucas states that, on the basis of the work that has been done so far in putting together the Critical Edition series, the entire issue of Whitehead’s development, whether it was the result of “some sort of disruptive innovation in Whitehead’s thought” during the 1920s, as in Ford’s view, or whether it was “more or less continuous development of a consistent metaphysical

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position,” as Lowe thought, is “quite a bit more nuanced and complex than either [Ford or Lowe] had suspected” (56).

The present volume publishes for the first time the notes of Winthrop Pickard Bell, William Ernest Hocking, and Louise R. Heath, who attended Whitehead’s 1924–25 Phil 3b: “Philosophical Presuppositions of Science” and Phil 20h: “Seminary in Metaphysics” courses at Harvard. The volume’s editors provide brief biographies of these individuals. Winthrop Bell (no relation to the coeditor of the volume), a Canadian citizen, had been a doctoral student under Edmund Husserl from 1911–14 at the outset of the phenomenological movement in German philosophy and was an instructor and tutor at Harvard from 1922–27, having also served as a reader of PhD theses, including that of Charles Hartshorne (who went on to also study under Husserl) in 1923, before moving back to Canada. Intriguingly, as Lucas highlights in his “On the Trail of Whitehead: Part 2,” Bell operated as a British spy during World War I. Hocking was the first-ever American to have studied with Husserl and was a senior member of the Philosophy Department at Harvard. Hocking published “Whitehead As I Knew Him” in the “Whitehead Centennial Issue” of *The Journal of Philosophy* (vol. 58, no. 9, 1961), which was later reprinted in George L. Kline’s *Alfred North Whitehead: Essays on His Philosophy*. Bell’s notes are quite thorough and tend to corroborate and serve to “iron out” some of the discrepancies in Hocking’s notes, especially since Hocking missed a fair number of Whitehead’s lectures. Heath, a graduate student at the time, went on to receive her PhD in 1927. She published a book entitled *The Concept of Time* in 1936, the preface indicating the influence Whitehead had had on her, and she spent her academic career at Hood College and Keuka College.

A vast array of scholarly material is included in this volume. It gives chronologies of events in Whitehead’s life, as well as his publications and addresses. The volume provides some scans of original handwritten notes. The notes also contain faithfully reproduced diagrams, sketches, and illustrations, some of which are representations of what Whitehead may have had on the blackboard (apparently Whitehead made extensive use of the blackboard in class). The scholarly and editorial work, including the provision of helpful, context-providing footnotes, is impressive in its level of detail and meticulousness, and it is to be commended. But, overall, the book cannot be said to be completely successful in providing an unobstructed view of Whitehead’s thinking. This is because it publishes the notes of class attendees, which are intended for the purposes

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of the note-takers. While the volume produces a faithful rendition of the notes, the notes themselves are not the perfect transcriptions of the proceedings that we may be accustomed to today. They are not exact replications of what Whitehead said, as typed by disinterested, professional transcribers in the classroom who are armed with laptop computers. They are not directly Whitehead's words verbatim. Rather, they are attempts to summarize in condensed form Whitehead's assertions, many details being selectively eliminated in the process. They are often very sketchy, at times incoherent, and on occasion render unclear the complex ideas that Whitehead attempted to convey.

To give a sense of what I mean by the volume being only partially successful, I offer the following experience in actively employing it in the context of my own research on the "New Frontiers" of biology, the goal of which is to develop a process-relational definition of life that contrasts with the mechanistic neo-Darwinian orientation in biology (which equates living organisms with machines). Beyond what is portrayed in his published volumes (e.g., *Science and the Modern World*, *Process and Reality*, *The Function of Reason*, *The Aims of Education*, etc.), the course notes seem to demonstrate more fully how Whitehead was remarkably prescient in relation to what basically amounts to *autopoiesis* (Greek for self-creation, self-production, self-maintenance). While the kernel of the notion of *autopoiesis* is present in Kant's Third Critique and in Hegel's *Logic*, it is a concept that was developed by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in the 1970s, the latter adopting a more holistic interpretation of this notion in his later works than the way it was originally formulated. In a nutshell, *autopoiesis* is the idea that living organisms, unlike inanimate entities and machines, organize the production of their own components in a purposive fashion, their members (e.g., cells, tissues, organs) working in interdependent fashion with other members for the sake of the persistence of the whole in the face of entropy.

To be fairly sure of Whitehead's remarkable prescience in relation to the basics surrounding this concept, first the in-class notes suggest that, for Whitehead, the "idea of an organism [is one] in which whole-parts are parts for the whole" (Bogaard and Bell 155—Emerson Hall Lecture 35, Saturday, December 20, 1924, Bell's notes). Second, Whitehead appears to have asserted that

mechanism is arguing from parts to the whole. The whole is an aggregate, the concrete fact is in the part. Organism argues from whole to parts. The part being what it is by the way it functions

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in the whole. . . . The mechanist is materialist: starts with part as concrete & sufficient to itself. To understand say the human body, must divide into its ultimate parts. Organism asserts you must bring the whole into your argument. . . . Can you get a decision between them by observation, functioning of parts to preserve the character of the whole. Cells of body adapt themselves to preserve health of body, perform miracles to that end (Bogaard and Bell 158—Emerson Hall Lecture 36, Tuesday, January 6, 1925, Hocking's notes).

Third, Whitehead seems to have spoken about “a particular embodiment of an activity of self-perpetuation. There is that purpose of self-perpetuation” (Bogaard and Bell 362—Emerson Hall Lecture 76, Tuesday, May 5, 1925, Bell's notes, 36). Fourth, Whitehead is claimed to have raised the notion of

some element entering into an organism which issued from the organism as a whole. Could not build up the functioning of an organism by considering the physical forces acting & that aggregate was simply way body does act. . . . The idea of the organism is undoubtedly something in which instead of constructing the whole of parts the parts cannot be fully determined without reference to the whole (Bogaard and Bell 465—Radcliffe College Lectures, sec. 127, January 6, 1925, Heath's notes).

Fifth, Whitehead is recorded as discussing the notion that

what is important is pattern arising from its own endurance, inherited from its own past. But even here the environment enters as part of the inheritance. In self-endurance of an individuality . . . there is an underlying activity that realizes itself into individuality under limited modes. You see at once that the essence of the idea of organism & you see that the whole is to some extent determinative of the whole. . . . Calls pattern of life a rhythm. Have whole pattern determining the part & an immense responsiveness to the outside (Bogaard and Bell 468–69—Radcliffe College Lectures, sec. 134–36, January 6, 1925, Heath's notes).

The notes seem to indicate a remarkable prescience on the part of Whitehead in relation to the *autopoietic* conception of life. However, the usefulness of these quotes is somewhat marred by the facts of their sketchiness and, at times, incoherence, as displayed above. A great deal of the content of this volume is in a similar form. Furthermore, even though the overlaying of the different sets of notes helps to corroborate claims about what Whitehead truly said in class, Whitehead scholars employing the volume in their work must be careful to remember that the status of the

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notes is that of an indirect representation of the proceedings—namely, what Whitehead *appears* to have said or discussed. As such, researchers and scholars who may choose to employ the notes that are contained in this volume as support for their claims will still have to corroborate almost any assertion Whitehead seems to have made therein with more direct statements contained in his more polished, formally published works. That said, the notetakers are “prehending subjects” who were *there* in the classroom—in Whitehead’s presence on those occasions, valuating, and selectively appropriating from, his various philosophical thoughts.

All in all, this is a truly revelatory volume that helps to put more of the various pieces of the puzzle that is Whitehead’s philosophical thought together, although one might be slightly more hesitant than Lucas in relation to his statement that “a more direct, unmediated access to Whitehead can now be made available” (“On the Trail: Part One,” 91), since readers are here experiencing Whitehead as mediated through Bell, Hocking, and Heath’s interpretations and notes. Nevertheless, it is certain that Whitehead scholars and enthusiasts all stand together in welcoming this valuable contribution, and in eagerly anticipating the publication of the next Critical Edition volume. As Lucas reports (“On the Trail: Part One,” 91), the next volume, scheduled for release in 2019, is projected to deal with Whitehead’s post-*Science and the Modern World* (1925–27) attempts to address what he termed the “General Metaphysical Problems of Science.” Additional information about the Critical Edition series, which is being published by Edinburgh University Press, is available online at <http://whiteheadresearch.org/research/critical-edition/>.

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