

Discussions

MUCH ADO ABOUT DUCKSPEAK

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Abstract:

The so-called bifurcation between analytic and continental philosophies is discussed, from the perspective of Whiteheadian process thought, with the help of four questions: what is the scope and goal of philosophy? do philosophical debates require radical empiricism? could or should philosophy become an expertise? how does the analytical divide impacts the democratic ideal?

Key words: Analytic philosophy, Continental philosophy, Process thought, Metaphysics, Anthropology, Politics, Alfred North Whitehead, Bertrand Russell, William James, Pierre Hadot, George Orwell.

For nearly a century now, the ancient debate on the nature of the interplay between philosophy and science has been polarized (and sometimes paralyzed) by the so-called bifurcation between analytic and continental philosophies. The bone of contention is well-known. Does philosophy bring special issues to the front or does it treat only puzzles that are temporarily left out of the scope of mainstream scientific disputes? Is there a philosophical style of inquiry and of writing, with specific criteria of coherence and of adequacy, or should philosophy follow the scientific criteria alone? *Mutatis mutandis*, this is nothing but the old question of the *philosophia ancilla theologia*. Shouldn't philosophy be the mistress of her own house?

This short study argues that A. N. Whitehead's (1861–1947) works can help us to understand the stakes. Two important milestones with that regard are the *Principia Mathematica*'s logicism (1910) and the *Vienna Circle*'s logical empiricism (1929).¹

¹ Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, London, Cambridge University Press,

In the former, Whitehead shared the speculative burden with his previous student Russell,² and in the later Whitehead's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (1919) and *Concept of Nature* (1920) were mentioned as important contributions to the narrow topics discussed. But when the analytic turn had generated various schools, each cruising at a steady speed with figures such as Wittgenstein and Ayer, Whitehead himself was publishing studies crisscrossing all fields and blurring all past and future fashionable distinctions: algebra, mereo-topology, epistemology, anthropology, speculative metaphysics and natural theology and so forth. If we discuss the matter from the perspective of

1910–1913 (the project was launched late in 1900 or early in 1901); *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung: Der Wiener Kreis*, Wien, Artur Wolf, 1929 (written by Rudolf Carnap, Hans Hahn and Otto Neurath but published anonymously).

² “Gertrude Stein and Doctor Whitehead walked endlessly around the country. They talked of philosophy and history, it was during these days that Gertrude Stein realised how completely it was Doctor Whitehead and not Russell who had had the ideas for their great book. Doctor Whitehead, the gentlest and most simply generous of human beings never claimed anything for himself and enormously admired anyone who was brilliant, and Russell undoubtedly was brilliant.” (Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* [New York, Harcourt Brace, 1933] in *Selected Writings*. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes by Carl Van Vechten, New York, Random House, 1946, p. 123. For a less enthusiastic report, see Russell's “Whitehead and Principia Mathematica,” *Mind*, Vol. LVII, N° 226, 1948, pp. 137–138. For an updated assessment of Whitehead's role, see Ronny Desmet's “A Refutation of Russell's Stereotype,” in Ronny Desmet and Michel Weber (edited by), *Whitehead. The Algebra of Metaphysics. Applied Process Metaphysics Summer Institute Memorandum*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Éditions Chromatika, 2010, pp. 127–210.

Whiteheadian process thought, it becomes manifest that the analytical and the continental streaks could work together: they have never been identified or opposed by Whitehead and even less separated in his later works. Let us show this with the help of four questions: what is the scope and goal of philosophy? is radical empiricism necessary? could or should philosophy become an expertise? how does the analytical divide affect the democratic ideal?

1. Is Philosophy Worth Living?

Philosophical disputes in general and this one in particular could be settled either by an *analysis* of the foundations and structure of knowledge or *pragmatically* by questioning the consequences of the categories at work. In more mundane terms: one could either compare the consistency and the coherence of the respective arguments or their applicability and matter-of-fact consequences. But whether we choose to follow the uphill path from the facts towards the source or principle (*archē*), or downhill from the facts towards their consequences, in order to do so, one always needs to simplify the thesis of the arch-enemies. We have to navigate between the Charybdis of a too narrow comparison (say between two contemporary books) and the Scylla of a too broad one (between two schools). As Whitehead wrote: we should “seek simplicity and distrust it.”³

Now, since the *ananke stenai* (“we have to stop”) envisioned by Aristotle in the context of a closed and strictly hierarchized world—a cosmos—, in order to prevent an infinite regress, has lost most of its relevance in a chaosmos that is so to speak infinite in all directions (spatial, temporal and consensual),⁴ it makes sense more than ever to treat any

feud pragmatically. (As James claims, pragmatism is but a new name for some old ways of thinking; to a certain extent, it is a return to Socrates.)

A pragmatic settlement involves two complementary stances: first, to acknowledge that there is no need to fuel the hostilities and that different philosophical arguments can co-exist in an open universe (cf. James’ *multiverse* or Blood’s *pluriverse*) and especially in an open society (cf. Popper’s right-wing polemic); whatever way you look at it, dogmatism is a tragic mistake and every thinker is fully entitled to follow her personal path. It seems reasonable thus to subscribe to James’ claim and to link difference in philosophical standpoints to temperamental differences: some readers feel at home with Wittgenstein and some with Heidegger; whatever the reasons, they have to be respected, normalization does not belong on these shores either and yet... Some, comparison is possible in light of the private and public consequences of the respective arguments.

The first criterion to discriminate pragmatically the two approaches is thus temperamental or existential: what kind of philosophical exercise makes sense in the life of a given individual? Which type of philosophy is worth living? The one that accepts all our experiences *prima facie* and attempts to curb the language to deal with all their consequences, speculative or otherwise? The one that renovate the old Greek imperative *athanatizein!* (“seek immortality!”)? Or the one that drastically filters both the experiences that could and should be accepted *and* their acceptable rationalization? Again, although all personal choices are to be respected, a strong argument can be made that, all things considered, the widest standpoint should be encouraged, not the narrowest one. When Hume, at the end of *The Treatise of Human Nature*’s Part I, bluntly confesses that (some of) his philosophical speculations are altogether foreign to his actual life as he lives it, does he not cast serious doubt on its applicability? Yet, the very fact that he continued to philosophize for another thirty years means that this *discipline* nurtured his life...

Moreover, in light of the fact that the philosophical chessboard is not equally occupied by the players, it makes sense to vindicate the besieged part: on the one hand, some analytic schools have taken over the center of the board (from where pieces can access most of the squares) and this was made possible by systematic attacks on other traditions; on the other, most continental schools have

³ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* [1920], Cambridge, 1964, p. 163 ; cf. his *Principles of Natural Knowledge* [1919/1925], Dover, 1982, p. 76.

⁴ The postmodern world is the product of three types of openings; they have been sketched in recent papers of mine: “Vision of Existence and Knowledge of Being,” in Yvanka B. Raynova & Vesselin Petrov (eds.), *Being and Knowledge in Postmetaphysical Context*, Wien, Institut für Axiologische Forschungen, 2008, pp. 13–29; “Pragmatic Anarchy in A. N. Whitehead,” in Peter Hare, Michel Weber, James K. Swindler, Oana-Maria Pastae, Cerasel Cuteanu (eds.), *International Perspectives on Pragmatism*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp. 118–147; “The Urizen of Whiteheadian Process Thought,” Mark Dibben and Rebecca Newton (eds.), *Applied Process Thought II: Following a Trail Ablaze*, Frankfurt / Lancaster, ontos verlag, 2009, pp. 61–73.

retreated and (more or less politely) ignore arguments foreign to their domain.

2. Radical rationalism or radical empiricism?

In order to understand better what is at stake, a short Jamesean digression is welcome. James' insistence on the difference between two basic type of philosophical thinking is well-known: on the one hand, rationalism and its monistic trend; on the other, empiricism and its pluralism. But the exact significance of his *radical* empiricism is often taken for granted. A close reading of rationalist and empiricist arguments reveals that both philosophical streams share the exact same substantialism. Accordingly, James' radical empiricism is designed to overcome *both* rationalism (with its innate general ideas formatted by *calculus*) and empiricism (with its acquired particular ideas put together by *association*). It claims that primitive experience is not equivalent to elementary experience: empiricists have mixed up the source or origin and the element. Experience *qua* experience —“pure experience” as James calls it— does not have at all the simplicity, the atomicity, the individuality that is presupposed by rationalists and empiricists alike: it is vague, confused (neither clear nor distinct, certainly not rational) and above all relational.⁵ Here is Russell's straightforward testimony with that regard:

I began to develop a philosophy of my own

⁵ “Our original sensible totals are, on the one hand, subdivided by discriminative attention, and, on the other, united with other totals, —either through the agency of our own movements, carrying our senses from one part of space to another, or because new objects come successively and replace those by which we were at first impressed. The 'simple impression' of Hume, the 'simple idea' of Locke are both abstractions, never realized in experience. Experience, from the very first, presents us with concentered objects, vaguely continuous with the rest of the world which envelops them in space and time, and potentially divisible into inward elements and parts. These objects we break asunder and reunite. We must treat them in both ways for our knowledge of them to grow; and it is hard to say, on the whole, which way preponderates. But since the elements with which the traditional associationism performs its constructions —'simple sensations,' namely— are all products of discrimination carried to a high pitch, it seems as if we ought to discuss the subject of analytic attention and discrimination first. The noticing of any part whatever of our object is an act of discrimination.” (William James, *The Principles of Psychology* [1890]. Authorized Edition in two volumes, New York, Dover Publications, 1950, I, p. 487.)

during the year 1898 [...]. It was Whitehead who was the serpent in this paradise of Mediterranean beauty. He said to me once : “You think the world is what it looks in fine weather at noon day ; I think it is what it seems like in the early morning when one first wakes from deep sleep.” I thought this remark horrid, but could not see how to prove that my bias was any better than his. At last he showed me how to apply the technique of mathematical logic to his vague and higgledy-piggledy world, and dress it up in Sunday clothes that the mathematician could view without being shocked.⁶

All experiences have to be taken into account and the most significant of them are *not* the ones occurring in the normal state of consciousness (or consciousness-zero).⁷ This double mistake is typical of Modernity and prevalent in most contemporary philosophical schools: it is true that some scholars try to cure this blindness but the nosology they invoke is usually psychoanalytical and the patient dies... In the same way that Locke improperly imported into psychology Boyle's corpuscular paradigm, Spencer wrongly used Laplace's cosmogenetic model of the solar system to understand psychogenesis. In the West, it is only in the process-pragmatic “school” that, thanks to the underground legacy of Myers and Ward, prophylaxis has substituted for the *analytical* cure.

The argument framed by process philosophers does not however amount to a complete rejection of substantialism: substantialism and subject-predicate grammar carve a worldview that is adequate to everyday life —but not to all possible experiences. Substantialism has only a very limited scope and it can be reconstructed from a wider process perspective. We do not prehend parts but the Whole in its complex opacity (what Whitehead calls our “actual world,” which is akin to von Uexküll and von Baer's *Umwelt*). From that prehended Whole, we discriminate parts that are eventually organized by a triple

⁶ Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1956, p. 39.

⁷ “Consciousness and Rationality from a Process Perspective” in Michel Weber and Anderson Weekes (eds.), *Process Approaches to Consciousness in Psychology, Neuroscience, and Philosophy of Mind*, Albany, New York, State University of New York Press, 2009, pp. 345–384.

genesis (onto-, phylo- and koino-genesis).⁸ To put it in another way: our conscious experience emerges progressively as the process of individuation takes place (ontogenesis), together with socialization (koinogenesis) and after a long biological evolution (phylogenesis).

In brief: experience is not *amalgamated* by calculus or by association from simple to complex, but *emerges* progressively from complex to simple. This standpoint opens two new process perspectives: the neutral monism of the pure flux (cf. James' *Principles of Psychology* or Whitehead's *Concept of Nature*) and the neutral pluralism of the bud-like eventfulness (James' *Some Problems of Philosophy* and Whitehead's "epochal theory" in *Process and Reality*). In both cases the pure experience thesis holds: "we" have a direct, indiscriminate experience of "the world" —better: discriminations between perceiving "subject" and perceived "objects" and between "objects" themselves have yet to be made, the silent awareness or acquaintance is first.⁹ The bottom difference between monism and pluralism lies in the assessment of the question of novelty: if processes are continuous, no genuine novelty is possible and we remain in a neutral monism that nevertheless offers the solution to most epistemological puzzles (such as the mind-body problem).

What is the cash value of all this for the question under debate? Continental philosophy could be said to necessarily aim at a radical empiricism of sorts (remember that we have to deal with broad generalizations of the two camps) while analytical philosophy willingly adopts a radical rationalism.

Radical empiricism postulates that all experiences —and only experiences— have to be taken into account in philosophy. In Whitehead's words:

In order to discover some of the major categories under which we can classify the infinitely various components of experi-

ence, we must appeal to evidence relating to every variety of occasion. Nothing can be omitted, experience drunk and experience sober, experience sleeping and experience waking, experience drowsy and experience wide-awake, experience self-conscious and experience self-forgetful, experience intellectual and experience physical [...].¹⁰

We can relativize some exceptional mental states, but we cannot deny that they were experienced in the first place, and this evidence has to be acknowledged and systematized. Interestingly enough, Whitehead links this question with the temperamental conundrum evoked at the outset of our discussion:

The chief danger to philosophy is narrowness in the selection of evidence. This narrowness arises from the idiosyncrasies and timidities of particular authors, of particular social groups, of particular schools of thought, of particular epochs in the history of civilization. The evidence relied upon is arbitrarily biased by the temperaments of individuals, by the provincialities of groups, and by the limitations of schemes of thought.¹¹

Hence, the task of philosophy is *to recover the totality obscured by the selection*¹²—never ever to add an extra process of selection.

Analytic philosophy tends to foster a radical rationalism that makes a virtue of its two main vices. On the one hand, it chooses to ignore most of the experiential spectrum; on the other, it seeks to embrace all phenomena with a dogmatic rationalism. Only consciousness-zero phenomena understood from the perspective of techno-scientific rationalism are meaningful. The rationalism involved is dogmatic in so far as it defines a priori what is a fact and what is a *rational* fact. Experience drunk or drowsy is not a fact —and if it becomes a fact, it is screened through the categories that made the success of Western technoscience: *in illo tempore*, it was the

⁸ Cf. James' *Essays in Radical Empiricism* [Posthumously published by Ralph Barton Perry], New York, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912, p. 145 and my "Consciousness and Rationality from a Process Perspective", op. cit.

⁹ "Through feelings we become acquainted with things, but only by our thoughts do we know about them. Feelings are the germ and starting point of cognition, thoughts the developed tree. The minimum of grammatical subject, of objective presence, of reality known about, the mere beginning of knowledge, must be named by the word that says the least. Such a word is the interjection, as lo! there! ecco! voilà! or the article or demonstrative pronoun introducing the sentence, as the, it, that." (*The Principles of Psychology*, op. cit., I, p. 222)

¹⁰ *Adventures of Ideas*, [1933], Free Press, 1967, p. 226; cf. p. 222. Accordingly, he defines adequacy as "everything of which we are conscious, as enjoyed, perceived, willed, or thought, shall have the character of a particular instance of the general scheme." (*Process and Reality* [1929]. Corr. Edition, Free Press, 1978, p. 3)

¹¹ *Process and Reality*, p. 337.

¹² *Process and Reality*, p. 15.

substantialism that is correlated to the subject-predicate linguistic pattern; now technoscience works with an uncritical process slant. Neither are all facts acceptable nor are all rationalities, all systems of thought. The logical clarification of thought presupposes the existence of simple constituents, not their emergence from an organic tissue. James' and Whitehead's warnings are totally ignored and philosophy runs its circular arguments in a pre-Copernican way. (*In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni.*)

3. Living ideas versus dead expertise

If we emphasize this new contrast, we find two very different philosophical gestures.

Embracing all experiences goes hand in hand with the ideal of philosophy *qua* living wisdom or spiritual exercise. A living philosophy is the outgrowth rather than the outcome of a living philosopher. The process of individuation requires that the *cosmopolites*, the citizen of the world, emerges out of the innumerable links, made and in the making, that anchors him in a given spatio-temporal spot. *Experiential philosophy* cannot be taught, it can only be practiced or exercised: this is nothing but the etymological root of asceticism (*askêsis* or exercise). The role of philosophy is to create an *ekstasis*: a standing outside one's self to give individual life perspective and meaning. Pierre Hadot has, for instance, reactualized the spiritual power of the philosophical exercises that haunted the entire history of philosophy until the second Renaissance, when the urgent task for Mersenne (1623), Descartes (1628) and Gassendi (1655) was to crush the social and political reformism of the first Renaissance (say from Ficinus, 1482, to Andreae, 1619) and to provide a new —scientific— foundation to Christian supernaturalism.¹³

Seeking the clarification of propositions (that

common sense has most of the time no problem whatsoever to deal with) leads to a completely different philosophical ideal. The same holds for the definition of philosophy by the practice of thought-experiments and other armchair challenges. *Experimental philosophy* should be taught and leads indeed to the creation of more or less successful schools (where nobody of course ever reads Illich), academic degrees, awards and grants. Philosophy is here far less adventurous: it is only a matter of acquiring by training the proper qualification in pedestrian affairs: decision aids, problem-solving tools and other forms of expertise that are consensual enough not to see the flaws in market democracy and adequate enough to smoothen the production processes and that are thus valued by firms. Let us take an example of such a *useful* skill.

The “brain in a vat” thought *experiment* has become quite trendy. It was first imagined in 1954 by Philip K. Dick (1928–1982) in the context of his staggering science-fiction novels (always outstandingly visionary but sometimes poorly written), then theatricalized by Robert Nozick (1974) and especially by Daniel Dennett (1978) and later conceptualized by Hilary Putnam (1981) and by John L. Pollock (1986). When you boil it down, the question is: do we have an experience of *What is it Like to Be (in) a Vat?* In the eighties, scientists puzzled by the nature of computer processes used to claim “they’re just like big brains;” nowadays, it is the other way around and cognitivists argue that we will soon discover the exact mechanics of brain because it is nothing else than a “big computer” and, of course, we know *exactly* how the computer works (compare Vico with Kevin Kelly). Sadly enough, this is simply the behaviouristic fallacy pushed to the hilt. But what is the use of envisaging absurd scenarios invoking *non-intuitive* experiences in order to be able to clarify features of our everyday, *intuitive*, experiences such as consciousness-zero? The usefulness of such a train of thought is obviously its uselessness. The intellectual gymnast shows strong evidence of her ability to analyze complex matters and to synthesize the immediate stakes (the ones that have not been filtered). The broad-sweeping judgement that is obtained might even sometimes pilot the R&D of a new commercial product or, more likely, of a new weaponry. And even if the discursive efforts lead to no application at all, they still serve the purpose to nurture the image of the independent scholar pursuing totally objective scientific research with no pertinence, for instance, for the current global systemic

¹³ Cf., e.g., Hadot's *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* [1995]. Translated by Michael Chase, Harvard University Press, 2002. Hadot does not treat the question of the two Renaissances; my point here is twofold: one, it is important to discriminate the first Renaissance, that was close enough to worship nature, and the second Renaissance, that condemned the spirituality of immanence and re-established the hierarchical power in society and Church by linking it to a god understood as a Babylonian despot. Two, the turning point between the two schools is neither scientific nor philosophical but political: the new ideas had to be stopped when they started to lead more and more to communist utopias.

crisis. In a nutshell, philosophical training amounts (for only a small fee) to deliberate exercises in *doublethink*.

4. Participatory democracy and totalitarian technocracy

If we dig even further, we discover the political relevance of this debate. Embracing all experiences also means adopting, *protego horribilis*, a left-ish political perspective —let us say a communist one to hammer the nail home: the experience of *hoi polloi*, the experiences of the multitude, the experience of the proles, the alienated, ostracized, tortured and assassinated *also* need to be taken into account.

There are actually two basic understandings of language involved in the feud: on the one hand, so-called continental philosophers are likely to use all the resources of their linguistic sphere and even to shamelessly create new concepts (which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is supposed to be their *fatum*). Thinkers such as James and Whitehead furthermore acknowledge the necessity to satisfy common sense and to reconstruct the basic substantialism of everyday experience. On the other hand, so-called analytic philosophers seek to create an ideal language for philosophical analysis to avoid the use of ordinary language that is so prone to lead thought into contradictions and paradoxes (Russell and Wittgenstein). The parallelism with Orwell is striking:

‘The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition,’ [Syme] said. ‘We’re getting the language into its final shape — the shape it’s going to have when nobody speaks anything else. [...] You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We’re destroying words — scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone.’ [...] ‘Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.’¹⁴

From that perspective, the scenarii evoked earlier seek not only to provide orthodox judgements, they are likely to foster a language in which politics will

be unthinkable.

The testimony of Victor Klemperer, published just before *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, shed some important light on the Newspeak cultural cleansing.¹⁵ Klemperer, a German Jew who survived the Nazi regime because of his marriage with an Aryan German, has described in details how the German people has been lured into Nazi totalitarianism by the manipulation of words, propositions, symbols, patterns of thought and the like. In a nutshell, his interpretation is quite straightforward: on the one hand, he is full of commiseration for the suffering of the German *people* and does not condemn them; on the other hand, he has a deep grudge against the German *intelligentsia*, that had all the data in hand and all the tools to understand the storm ahead... If often they simply did nothing, sometimes they welcomed it warmly. According to his experience, academics, scholars and other intellectuals are the real responsible of the cultural collapse orchestrated by Goebbels.¹⁶

I have shown elsewhere that there are, at the level of the individuals, three conditions of possibility of authentic life (echoing the three functors of the late Whitehead’s creative advance as well as Arendt’s interpretation of classical Greece): individuation (creativity, *archein*, action), solidarity (efficacy, *prattein*, work) and culture (vision, *theorein*, thought). In order to create themselves, individuals have to have some elbow room, some independence, but such a spontaneity never occurs outside of a community providing support and interdependence, and without the fine-tuning of a big narrative (*paideia* or *Bildung*). “Advanced” capitalist societies, that are the necessary precursor of totalitarianism (this is basically Arendt’s argument), are characterized by the negation of these three conditions: conformism has replaced individuation, atomism, solidarity, and terror is now the common narrative.

¹⁵ Victor Klemperer, *LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii: Notizbuch eines Philologen*, Leipzig, Reclam Verlag, 1947.

¹⁶ Klemperer wrote in his August 16, 1936 Tagebücher’s entry: “If one day the situation were reversed and the fate of the vanquished lay in my hands, then I would let all the ordinary folk go and even some of the leaders, who might perhaps after all have had honourable intentions and not known what they were doing. But I would have all the intellectuals strung up, and the professors three feet higher than the rest; they would be left hanging from the lamp posts for as long as was compatible with hygiene.” (Ich Will Zeugnis Ablegen Bis Zum Letzten: Tagebücher 1933–1941, Berlin, Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995, quoted by Omer Bartov in *Germany’s War and the Holocaust*, Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 201)

¹⁴ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [London, Martin Secker & Warburg, 1949]. Introduction by Thomas Pynchon, London, Penguin Books, 2003, pp. 59–60

When a philosophical school demands renunciation of common sense, it undermines solidarity; when it doubts sense-perception, it puts a damper on individuation; and when it claims scientificity by rejecting all forms of political concern, it paves the way to the unquestioned acceptance of a big narrative that is not worthy of that name anymore. Taken together, the three requirements seal the divorce between philosophy and life and lead the philosopher to compartmentalize his professional activities. With that regard, it is worth remembering Orwell's definition of *doublethink*:

It is only by reconciling contradictions that power can be retained indefinitely. [...] The prevailing mental condition must be controlled insanity.¹⁷

Conclusion

Natural language is intrinsically ambiguous, intentional and even emotional; it is far from being a pure logical entity, and its countless equivocations have indeed been very often disparaged. My interpretation of Whitehead has made use of three main categories that can be mobilized to discriminate the philosophical temperaments evoked here: polysemiality, interanimation and style.¹⁸

Some philosophers are not bothered at all by polysemiality—they even actively use it—, whereas others urge the logical destruction of every possible ambiguity. To the question “how to read texts that champion polysemiality?,” they answer that these texts—if they mean anything at all— will *speak* only when straightened by logical analysis. The interanimation of sentences is equally problematic and the philosopher's goal should be the rigid articulation of purely transparent concepts. With regard to style: circumambulation is replaced by linearization, and constructive discrimination by destructive discrimination. Uphill, radical empiricism becomes pure empiricism; and non dogmatism, normative imperialism. Accordingly, nonrationality is forgotten to the profit of irrationality on the point of rationalization.

The function of language is not only semantic, it is also apophantic, power of manifestation of total

anthropo-cosmic experiences.¹⁹ Its multifarious semantic potential is directly correlated with the stylistic managing of polysemiality and interanimation. Only style can make the reader fall under the author's spell and thereby lead him/her at the outskirts of an intuitive vision that is nevertheless bound to remain private. The intentionality opening the propositional entanglement to the world shields language from the danger of barren coherence. For instance, a dictionary does not, properly speaking, define anything; it is just a tissue of mutual cross-references. To the contrary, the efficacy of language comes from its self-effacing ability in front of the vision it lures. The organization of a conceptual network revealing the ontological surplus asks a peculiar gesture made of invocatory repetitions and daring cross-checkings; eventually, it is an art of the *void* that is requested. That evocative capacity is a sort of implosive capacity: language has to die to give birth to meaning. If it remains in-between, like a screen, meaning has not been conveyed. The intuitive grasping of the power of language is a nocturnal experience that sees the revelation of its faculty of making things rise from their absence.

To sum up. Experience teaches us that all forms of philosophical commitments are acceptable if and only if they provide room for *other* forms of commitment. Orthodoxy and dogmatism are speculative constraints that are applicable only to one single individual and that have to be self-inflicted. Unfortunately, most of the philosophers choosing a very narrow cognitive territory promptly lose their sense of community and proudly become sectarian, i.e., philosophers *in partibus infidelium*.

The history of philosophy offers many examples of important conceptual breakthrough in analytical as well as in continental modes of thought. The bracketing of most experiences by all blends of “analytical” philosophy can allow for instance the formalization of the major traits of the “objective” world. The introspective inquiry that fuels “continental” publications brings into the picture experiences that would be otherwise ignored in public.

What really matters is the possible synergy between these two streams—or better: the obliteration once and for all of a polarization that is so clumsy that nobody, certainly not the author of this paper, even bothers to define it straightforwardly. Philosophy is neither the *ancilla domini* nor the subservient servant of technoscience. The philosopher defines

¹⁷ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, op. cit., p. 246.

¹⁸ Michel Weber, *Whitehead's Pancreativism. The Basics*. Foreword by Nicholas Rescher, Frankfurt / Paris,ontos verlag, 2006.

¹⁹ On the concept of “apophansis,” see, e.g., Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1927, p. 33.

for herself the horizon of her questioning and it seems plain straightforward that the wider the horizon the more inclusive the thought. But this shouldn't prevent the philosopher to narrow the scope of his inquiry —provided that the initial horizon is somehow kept in the background.

Whitehead's philosophy is very instructive from that regard. Granted, neither his polymathy nor his complex intellectual development facilitates the work of the interpreter, but perusing *Process and Reality* gives a good idea of his broad gesture. I argue that *Process and Reality* constitutes the acme of Whitehead's speculative philosophy and that the palpitating core of his *Essay in Cosmology* is to be found in the intimate relationship that exists between the systolic Part III, rather "continental," and the diastolic Part IV, rather "analytic." The simplest way to understand this complementarity is to remember that although all events are holistic occurrences that grow by buds or drops (either nothing is coming at all or something bursting into existence "at a stroke," as the late James writes), they can be analyzed in various ways: from the perspective of the contraction of their actual world into a private domain, the concrescence, genetically analyzed in Part III; or from the perspective of the pre-existing world that projects the concrescence and that welcomes its satisfaction: the morphological analysis of Part IV.

My argument against dogmatism and narrow-mindedness has especially targetted analytical schools because of their own conflictual tropisms. It is equally valid for the blends of thomism, phe-

nomenology, cognitive philosophy and the like that reject radical empiricism.

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