
A Reprint From

JOURNAL OF THE
HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Volume xxv, Number 3

July 1987

I agree with the editors that the selections contained in this important book constitute the most significant contributions which Dilthey made to poetics and literary criticism. In my opinion, the translations of the essays contained in this book are of very high quality. The translations are accurate. The translators have usually stayed very close to the German original; and yet they have succeeded in expressing Dilthey's reflections in very good, readable English. The book will be welcomed by philosophers and literary critics.

JOSEPH J. KOCKELMANS

The Pennsylvania State University

Victor Lowe. *Alfred North Whitehead. The Man and His Work. Vol. 1: 1861-1910.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. Pp. xi + 351. \$27.50.

Most thinkers come to Whitehead in order to gain insight into the fundamental categorial structures of the world and the divine. The interest in the later writings, roughly those after 1925, has served to locate Whitehead within a particular conception of metaphysical query. The systematic analysis of basic constitutive traits, especially those pertaining to actual occasions and eternal entities, has left a legacy that still promises to bear great fruit for fundamental reflection. Whitehead's sparse treatment of the divine natures has, by its very incompleteness, served to generate a series of further elaborations by those who remain faithful to his general conceptual structure. For many, Whitehead's true historical import lies in his drive to sustain a philosophical cosmology in the face of a profession seemingly addicted to either non-generic or piecemeal pursuits. Conceptual boldness and interpretive richness are combined in a categorial framework which has few equals.

Given the contemporary interest in the later Whitehead, Victor Lowe's masterful intellectual biography is a highly welcome and important event. One of the chief merits of this work is the detailed treatment of Whitehead's years as a student, and later as a Lecturer, at Trinity College, Cambridge. For the first time, scholars are given a chance to reflect on the development of Whitehead's mathematical interests as these relate both to the emerging post-Newtonian physics and the developing systems of symbolic logic. Lowe paints a lively and detailed portrait of the intellectual milieu in and around Cambridge in the 1880s. In particular he traces Whitehead's interest in newer fields of mathematics and their attendant symbol systems. While other Cambridge dons were concerned with elaborating specific problems, and with finding more puzzles to throw at students on the Tripos, Whitehead was driving toward the foundations of a universal algebra which would exhibit the features of inference and of a notation system of general applicability.

Even in the early writings it is clear that Whitehead turned his reflection toward issues of generic import. In his reflections on geometry, always a fundamental discipline in his mind, he pushes toward a new conception of space and time which incorporates non-Euclidean geometry and the new physics. Lowe's detailed account of the 1906 essay, "On Mathematical Concepts of the Material World," shows how

ative impulses manifest themselves in the historical world which is constituted by different human objectifications. Next, Dilthey makes an effort to understand the creativity of the poet by means of descriptive psychology; this effort makes the poetics the first account of his new conception of psychology as an interpretative science. Furthermore, the essay also shows how Dilthey at that time conceived of the relation between psychology and history. Finally, by examining the psychological and historical contributions to the work of art, Dilthey tries to define what is universally valid for aesthetics and what is merely historically conditioned. One of the ways in which Dilthey's search for universally valid laws in aesthetics manifests itself consists in his analysis of six elementary spheres of feeling that are relevant to our aesthetic response to a literary work. Yet the universal psychological laws of aesthetics which Dilthey tried to formulate illuminate only one aspect of the art work. The work must also be examined from a historical perspective. Dilthey distinguishes carefully the aesthetic expression of world views from possible religious and philosophical interpretations. Religious world views attempt to define the meaning of human existence by appealing to an invisible, transcendent framework. Philosophical interpretations of world views, on the other hand, attempt to comprehend the mystery of the universe by means of conceptual, metaphysical systems. In both cases an absolute and comprehensive framework is created for life which distorts its dynamic essence. In poetry our life-experience is not totalized, but rather completed by a typification.

In this work Dilthey subscribes to Schleiermacher's idea that the *iter hermeneuticum* is the reverse of the *iter geneticum* and, thus, that the effort to understand a work of art should try to lead to a re-experiencing of the mental processes of the work's author. In his *Poetics*, however, Dilthey does not proceed from the perspective of the interpreting observer, but rather from that of the author and tries to give an account of the aesthetic process which will allow one to appreciate artistic genius without having to idealize it; yet he obviously does not neglect the side of the observer.

The second essay, "The Three Epochs of Modern Aesthetics and Its Present Tasks," dates from 1892 and contains analyses of the main conceptions of aesthetics characteristic of seventeenth-century Rationalism, eighteenth-century Empiricism, and the nineteenth-century German transcendental and historical approaches to aesthetic phenomena. In this essay Dilthey tried to develop a new conception of style which was meant to overcome the oneness of each of the three earlier approaches mentioned.

A short third essay, "Fragments for a Poetics," written in 1907-1908, contains notes which Dilthey hoped to use for a revision of "The Imagination of the Poet"; it provides us with important information on meaning (*Bedeutung*) as a basic category of life. The last two essays are devoted to studies on Goethe (1910) and Hölderlin (1910). They appeared for the first time in *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, together with essays on Lessing and Novalis. These essays give the reader a very good impression of what Dilthey understood by literary criticism.

In addition to a translation of the essays mentioned, the book contains also a very fine introduction to these essays, a glossary of the most important technical expressions, and an Index.

Whitehead moved beyond classical accounts of "points" and "instants" toward a relativistic understanding of space/time.

Lowe is cautious about reading too much of the later thinking into the pre-1910 writings. Whitehead's interest in philosophy was satisfied mainly through his discussions with fellow members of the Cambridge Apostles who met regularly to discuss issues of a general nature. Among the Apostles McTaggart stands out as having had the most important influence on Whitehead's philosophical development. McTaggart's staunch neo-Hegelianism served as a stimulus to Whitehead but he retained an independent outlook throughout. Readers of *Process and Reality* will be interested in Lowe's treatment of Whitehead's flirtation with Roman Catholicism and his subsequent agnosticism during the last decade of the nineteenth century. By 1925 he had regained his theism and found a place for it in his system.

Much care is given to the collaboration with Russell on *Principia Mathematica* during the first decade of the new century. Lowe corrects the oft-held belief that Whitehead let Russell do most of the work on the text. By a careful study of the correspondence, Lowe shows that Whitehead continually guided the joint enterprise toward more detailed proofs and elaborations. Russell frequently remained content with truncated arguments for his fundamental logical principles. Whitehead demanded that each argument receive sufficient articulation so as to enhance the pedagogical value of the work. Russell's atomic pluralism, which insisted that all relations were external to their relata, never appealed to Whitehead. During the period of the *Principia*, Whitehead chose to ignore that aspect of Russell's perspective.

One difficult dimension of this decade-long collaboration is Russell's alleged affair with Evelyn Whitehead. Lowe argues that this relationship was never consummated even though Evelyn was and remained one of the three great loves of Russell's life. Whitehead somehow managed to overlook what must have been an obvious threat to the integrity of his marriage.

Lowe's brilliant and definitive account in this first volume of a two-volume work brings us to the Whiteheads' move from Cambridge to London. Difficulties with University officials and a need for larger horizons compelled Whitehead to emerge from the cozy atmosphere of Trinity College where he had spent thirty highly creative years working on the frontiers of mathematics and logic. The second volume will take us from the years in London to Whitehead's life at Harvard, and should, no doubt, be as rich and insightful as the first.

ROBERT S. CORRINGTON

The Pennsylvania State University

Allan Janik. *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger. Studien zur Österreichischen Philosophie*, Band 9. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 1985. Pp. 161. Paper, \$18.95.

In 1973, Allan Janik and Stephan Toulmin published *Wittgenstein's Vienna* in which they explored the intellectual atmosphere of the city in which Wittgenstein grew to intellectual maturity. Both Toulmin, who had been a student of Wittgenstein's at