

## WHITEHEAD'S HARVARD LECTURES

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Paul A. Bogaard and Jason Bell, eds. *The Harvard Lectures of Alfred North Whitehead, 1924–1925: Philosophical Presuppositions of Science*. (The Edinburgh Critical Edition of the Complete Works of Alfred North Whitehead.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. P., 2017. Pp. liv, 570. £150. ISBN: 978-1-4744-0184-5.

*T*his is the first of a projected multi-volume edition of Alfred North Whitehead's works. This volume is devoted to notes from students in his lectures at Harvard in 1924–25, Whitehead's first year as a professor at Harvard. This was also Whitehead's first opportunity to lecture on philosophy

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after a career at Cambridge, the University of London, and the Imperial College of Science and Technology where he lectured on mathematics. The lectures were in two courses for the department: Philosophy 3b, “Philosophical Presuppositions of Science”, which met in Emerson Hall over the two semesters of the 1924–25 academic year; and a “Seminary”, or seminar, also over both semesters. Whitehead repeated each of the 3b lectures at Radcliffe College in a modified form. Notes from Emerson Hall were taken by W. E. Hocking and W. P. Bell, and at Radcliffe College by Louise R. Heath, although it appears that Heath, and other female students at Radcliffe, also attended the Emerson Hall lectures. Notes from the seminary were taken by Hocking. The recent discovery of the extensive notes by Bell has made it possible to have two sets of notes for 3b at Harvard and one for the repetition at Radcliffe.

Winthrop Packard Bell had been sent by Royce to study in Germany in 1910 and, after a period of detention as an enemy alien during the war, returned to Harvard, and in 1924–25 was a lecturer in the Harvard department along with Raphael Demos and Ralph Eaton. In 1927, however, he resigned from Harvard and returned to his native Nova Scotia to a non-academic career. Bell’s detailed and very readable notes are similar in style to the notes that Victor Lenzen made on Bertrand Russell’s lectures in Philosophy 7c, “Theory of Knowledge”, in 1914. The graduate students at Harvard understood their distinguished professors and wrote quickly and accurately, with little sign of any revisions to the notes after class.

Whitehead had published books on philosophical issues in science before arriving in America, including his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (1919) and *The Concept of Nature* (1920), the latter being his Tanner lectures. The move to Harvard allowed Whitehead to turn his mind to issues of metaphysics as informed by physical science and, in particular, to develop his characteristic “Process philosophy” for which he became one of the leading figures in American philosophy by adoption. These early notes are the only record of his developing thought, leading up to the publication in 1925 of *Science and the Modern World*, based on the Radcliffe version of the lectures, and his *Process and Reality* in 1929. The editors argue that these notes reveal elements of *Process and Reality*, refuting the view that the earlier book represents a first, provisional view which was much altered by 1929. Comparisons of individual lectures with passages in the published books are left to the reader and to reviewers who know the progress of Whitehead’s views. Those students of the history of Whitehead’s thought will have ample material to assess the accounts in these extensive notes.

The editors have reproduced diagrams which were copied from Whitehead’s blackboard as he lectured. Footnotes, seldom more than four to a page, comment on matters such as missing notes for particular days, and identify references from the lectures. The notes are numbered by the editors, and

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typographical devices such as the use of underlining rather than italics, marking deleted material with a strike-through, and vertical marginal lines, do not interfere with reading the notes. Instead they give a sense of reading them directly, with the hard job of transcribing handwriting already done by the editors. The notes are organized by lecture. Notes for the “Emerson Hall Lectures, Harvard Yard, 1924–25” start on a new page labelled as “Lecture 29”, with the date “Tuesday, 2 December 1924”. Then follow first a section of “Bell’s notes”, which start with Bell’s own page number “| 55|” taking four pages of print. After that “Hocking’s notes” begin with Hocking’s notation “Whitehead. Dec. 2. 1924” and go on for three pages. The 85 lectures over the year, from Thursday, 25 September 1924,<sup>1</sup> were given during the teaching term on Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays, ending on Tuesday, 26 May 1925. This occupies published pages 1–408. Louise Heath’s notes from the Radcliffe lectures are less complete, and take up pages 411–522. Ten pages of notes that Hocking made in Whitehead’s “Seminary”, Philosophy 20h, follow, along with an appendix of sample scans of the originals from each note-taker.

This reviewer is engaged in editing Lenzen’s notes on Russell’s lectures in 1914 and has found the format and editorial practices of the editors of this volume to be a model to be emulated. We should be grateful that the students at Harvard, such as Bell and Heath, recognized the preparation that went into the works of their new teacher, and were able to make so much out of the lectures, even if they were not intending them to be used by us as a guide to the development of Whitehead’s thought so many years later. We should also be grateful for the work of the editors of these lectures, as such work is long and sometimes tedious, and always seemingly unending. Congratulations to the editors of *The Edinburgh Critical Edition of the Complete Works of Alfred North Whitehead*.

#### WORKS CITED

- WHITEHEAD, A. N. *An Enquiry concerning —. Science and the Modern World. New the Principles of Natural Knowledge.* York: Macmillan, 1925.  
Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1919. —. *Process and Reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1929.  
—. *The Concept of Nature.* Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1920.

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<sup>1</sup> Newly discovered papers by Whitehead include his own typescript for the first lecture. See [whiteheadresearch.org/2019/01/14/on-the-recently-discovered-whitehead-papers/](http://whiteheadresearch.org/2019/01/14/on-the-recently-discovered-whitehead-papers/). Whitehead’s text is to be included in a volume of essays, *Whitehead at Harvard: Whitehead’s First Lectures in Philosophy*.

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