

At a time of renewed fanaticism and ideological certainties, Whitehead's themes of process and of contrast—ie of complementarity, synergy and of the value of difference—have never been more urgently relevant. Franz Riffert and Michel Weber's remarkable collection of essays, exploring these themes in areas as diverse as psychology and physics, brilliantly exemplifies Whitehead's approach.

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A. N. Whitehead's extensive and impressive philosophical work planted seeds that came into harvest only decades after his death and sometimes even in fields that he himself did not extensively cultivate. The philosophy of the mental sciences (broadly construed) is an example of this. As this collection demonstrates in impressive detail, Whiteheadian ideas and theories can be pressed into useful service to advance our understanding of a wide variety of uses in this area. The twenty papers that comprise this volume deal in this way with a wide variety of issues in neurophysiology, psychology, psychotherapy, and the philosophy of mind. All of them are of a high level of insight and interest and they come here to give a striking demonstration of the scope and fertility of Whiteheadian ideas throughout this wide spectrum of important issues. In reading this book, students of Whitehead will be fascinated by those applications of his thought and practitioners of the mental sciences will be impressed by the relevance and fertility of the work of this great twentieth century philosopher.

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**Searching for New Contrasts**

**RIFFERT AND WEBER (EDS.)**

# Searching for New Contrasts

Whiteheadian Contributions to  
Contemporary Challenges in Neurophysiology,  
Psychology, Psychotherapy and  
the Philosophy of Mind



**WPN STUDIES 1**



**FRANZ G. RIFFERT AND MICHEL WEBER (EDS.)**

the reality of [...] sense-data, and [...] of mental phenomena [...] The [...] salient feature of Buddhist elements is that they represent *dukkha*, a term which has always been rendered by suffering, sorrow, etc. Sufficient as this interpretation may be for popular literature, it is evident that theoretically something else is meant. Such expressions as “the element of vision is sorrow”, “all elements influenced (i.e. influenced by desire to live) are sorrow” [...] the elements described above are perpetually in a state of commotion, and the ultimate goal of the world process consists in their gradual appeasement and final extinction.”

<sup>170</sup> Lao-tzu, 1964.

## The Art of Epochal Change

Michel Weber

To Darsana

*This paper argues that there is a possible cross-elucidation and reinforcement between the worldviews of Whitehead and Watzlawick: Whitehead providing to Watzlawick a theoretical basis that seems as seducing as—if not broader than—the one Watzlawick himself attempted to give to his claims; and Watzlawick giving practical consequences to Whitehead’s theory of novelty and societies, thereby asking for their further elaboration.*

Historically speaking, Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) could not have known any of the actors we will put on stage.<sup>171</sup> The only factual link appears anecdotal: till 1910, Gregory Bateson’s father (Cambridge naturalist William Bateson) owned a house in Grantchester at the time the Whiteheads lived in the “Old Mill House”.<sup>172</sup> For his part, Bateson (1904–1980)—the prominent founder of the “Palo Alto School”—shows some knowledge of Whitehead’s speculative philosophy (he knew of course of PM): for instance, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Bateson 1972, 64) alludes to the fallacy of “misplaced concreteness” (originating in SMW 51), and to Whitehead’s so-called panpsychism.<sup>173</sup> As a result, it seems probable that Paul Watzlawick (1921–), the well-known spokesperson of the therapeutic stream of Palo Alto, must have been aware of the *general* Whiteheadian metaphysical program. However, in the texts we have referred to, he cites only PM.

Since both Whitehead and Watzlawick have a wide range of interest and a huge synthesis capacity, the parallels that could be developed are as numerous as they are fascinating. We will focus on only a very few of them, hoping to suggest how enriching the operationalization of their synergy could be. Our argument proceeds in two main waves: we will argue respectively from the perspectives of Whitehead and of

Watzlawick. Its conclusion eventually speaks for an open joint venture between Whiteheadian process philosophy and Watzlawickian brief therapy.

## 1. A. N. Whitehead

Whitehead entered Trinity College in 1880 with a scholarship in mathematics; in 1884, he was elected Fellow in Mathematics, with a dissertation (now lost) on Maxwell's *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism*, and started teaching mathematics and mathematical physics. In 1910 he resigned his Lectureship and moved to University College London for a year and then to the Imperial College of Science and Technology (London), where he taught the same subjects until 1924, when he was invited to join the Philosophy Faculty of Harvard University. Emeritus in 1937, Whitehead continued to work at a slower pace until his death. Accordingly, the development of his thought can be divided into three periods, which emphasized respectively, on logic, epistemology, and metaphysics. The examination of his three "canonical" epochs reveals that Whitehead respectively contemplates (i) the logico-mathematical field *sub specie totalitatis*; (ii) geometry as a physical science; and (iii) metaphysics under the category of creativity.<sup>174</sup>

Let us first boil down Whitehead's cosmology, as it is mainly disclosed in PR, the acme of the systematic attempts of his "Harvard's epoch" (1924–1947). Subsequently, we will envisage its possible impact on therapy.

### 1.1. Whitehead's Cosmology

The history of Western philosophy displays a recurrent pattern (if not assumption): confronted with the two main facts everyday experience reveals—statism and dynamism, or permanence and change—, every philosopher has to take a position (at least tacitly), right at the beginning of his or her systematization endeavour, in favour of the ultimacy of either one or the other. Then comes the tormenting question of their possible (or even necessary) complementarity. How could such apparently opposed features coexist in one single cosmos or universe? Technically, the most basic conceptual dyad is "substance and event", or sometimes "being and nothingness". The common trend is to pick one of the two concepts and to *reduce* the other to it.

Historically speaking, permanence has been thought quite often as the fundamental dimension, and flux understood (we should say "explained away") from that perspective. The fate of classical metaphysics lies precisely in its impossible task of making sense out of the transitoriness of reality. However, Bergson showed convincingly that one has to start from flux to understand stability and to be able to do justice to the subtle mixture of endurance and lability that is experienced reality. Somehow following this intuition, Whitehead framed concepts enabling him to show the decisive complementarity of the two universal features, while leaving the emphasis on the former.

Let us first see how his eventful ontology destroys the old substantialist paradigm. Since the Greeks, the understanding of the ontological structure of the world has operated with the notion of an individualized particular substance (or "enduring physical body") which undergoes adventures of change: by definition, it retains its substantial form (or "permanent attributes", or "self-identity") amid transition or accidents (cf. PR 55 and 78). Inasmuch as the substance is eternal and its accidental attributes ephemeral, the deepest feature of mundane architecture is stability; and flux receives only a derivative status. For process thought, the opposite is true: stability is just a surface effect of deep fluctuations. Whitehead goes even one step further and introduce (in SMW) atomicity. Where classical ontology was satisfied with the permanence through time of a certain substance, he sees the repetition of the occurrence of a certain grade of actual occasions: "physical endurance is the process of continuously inheriting a certain identity of character transmitted throughout a historical route of events" (SMW 108). Something which is furthermore impossible without a favourable environment (SMW 194) that includes God (SMW 177-178; PR 108, 224...). In conclusion,

there are two principles inherent in the very nature of things, recurring in some particular embodiments whatever field we explore—the spirit of change, and the spirit of conservation. There can be nothing real without both. Mere change without conservation is a passage from nothing to nothing. Its final integration yields mere transient non-entity. Mere conservation without change cannot conserve. (SMW 201)

Whitehead's ontological intuition lies thus in a fluctuating universe (featuring constant changes) that is also an *open universe* (where indeterminism goes together with innovation). The radical eventfulness he sees at work in nature is sealed in the universal capacity of unfore-

seeable novelty which, in its turn, requires a strong concept of liberty and its correlate: atomicity, i.e., ontological discontinuity. The necessary interweaving (or “coherence” in the sense of PR 3-4; see our discussion infra) of these four concepts—eventfulness, novelty, liberty and atomicity—is reflected in the extratemporality (or *duration*) which defines in its turn the independence of concretes actualities and their unison. In other words, process understood radically requires atomicity and the claim is essentially ontological: although substantial clues are provided by Darwin, Planck and Einstein, the decisive arguments were already in gestation in Zeno, Leucippus, Plato, Lucretius, Leibniz, Peirce, Bergson and James.<sup>175</sup>

What is, indeed, “radical eventfulness”, if not the occurrence of some completely new state of affairs, i.e., a rupture of the tight, continuous, weaving of past events? But novelty does not only *induce* discontinuity—it *requires* discontinuity: the exercise of freedom necessitates a withdrawal from the deterministic causation of past events. Whitehead speaks thus of momentary events—“actual entities” or “actual occasions” (sometimes simply of “occasions”)—, all sharing an objective (or “physical”) and a subjective (or “mental”) dimension (or “pole”) embodying, respectively, efficient and final causation. (In order to stay away from the bias of the old categories, Whitehead tends to avoid their use and does not hesitate to frame new concepts.) An actual *occasion* comes into being through an experiential process of bringing together its past world (thereby constituting its “physical pole”) and of reacting, more or less complexly, to it (thereby creating its “mental pole”). That constitutive bipolarity has an abstract nature: what matters is the sheer subjective unity of the concreting process; either it happens as a whole, or it does not (cf., e.g., PR 26 and 222-4). Actual occasions have a certain *duration*, they are “vivid” for only a short period of time, after which they “perish”, i.e., lose their subjectivity and become objective. Technically speaking, the concreting actuality is an actual occasion *subject* and the perished one is an actual occasion *object*. For instance, an electron is a “society of electronic occasions” (PR 91), i.e., a historical route of “electronic” actual entities whose last member—and solely this one—is subject. The point of importance here is that the actuality-object is prehended, not prehending—whereas the opposite is true of the actuality-subject. In other words, actualities in concrecence (or actual entities subject) cannot be prehended: although they are, through their physical pole, so to speak deeply rooted in the world, they remain “adherent” to it.

As Deleuze saw (after Leibniz and Merleau-Ponty), the image of the “fold” is tremendously useful to intuit the ambiguous status of mentality.<sup>176</sup> The particularity of our universe is that its continuous restructuring relies upon a unison of becoming: though, by definition, the actualities in concrecence are independent from one another, they are nevertheless “tuned”. This opens Whitehead’s ontology to its theological facet which will be adumbrated later.

So much for the emphasis on flux. The existence of “stubborn facts”—perished actualities (“real potentialities” organized in an extensive continuum) and eternal objects (“general potentialities” dwelling in God)—guarantees the recurrence of patterns amidst change. If things keep changing, it is necessarily within some boundaries. This is true at two levels, macro and micro: on the one hand, without limits, there could be no cosmos (i.e., no *ordered* universe); on the other, determination is the price of value, there is no actualization without choice making. It is the business of the concepts of “transition” and “causal efficacy”—together with the concept of “society”—to denominate this stability. The process of transition is the counterpart of the process of concrecence: the former is responsible for repetition and the latter for innovation. Transition embodies the causation of past (perished) actualities on the contemporary (vivid) ones. We have seen that the notion of substance is replaced by historical routes of actual entities. These “routes” (called “enduring objects”) are the basic figure of permanence—or society—in Whitehead’s cosmos. PR distinguishes many other types of societies to bridge the gap between living and non-living beings: upstream, there are “nexus” and “societies”; downstream, “corpuscular societies” and “living persons”. Whatever the technicalities, the relevant intuition is organic: the perceived macrostructures are built on societies of societies of enduring objects; the world is a *contiguuum* woven by the *transitional* continuity existing between *concreting* events.

Before shifting to the consequences for therapy, we have to conclude by clearly distinguishing the two kinds of novelty corresponding to the two types of process—concrecence and transition—: radical novelty, which is bursting forth of the unprecedented; and relative novelty, which is either the simple re-occurrence of a past cosmic figure, or the mixture of old features. In the following lines, we call the former “innovation” and the later “novation”.

## 1.2. Consequences for Therapy

Let us draw some *a priori* consequences on what therapy should be in a Whiteheadian context. We need of course to focus on the (very) high grade occasions that constitute human experience: a “living person”—a living corpuscular society dominated by the enduring object which is the soul—is the locus where creativity can shine forth with the most vividness and variegation. The difference between innovation and novation is especially relevant here.

Since *innovation* is the keystone feature of Whitehead’s worldview, the emphasis falls on the intrinsic dynamic nature of life. Meaning is directly linked with the capacity of individuals to be born again day after day, i.e., to partake in the cosmic creative advance; hence the pathological ring frozen patterns of behaviour have. Rather than considering a human being as a defined (substantial) character that can be affected only by minor, subsidiary changes, we have to understand it as an ever-evolving structure in search of truth, beauty and peace (themes especially developed in AD). And this is particularly true of its mental configuration. The lack of adventurous propensity of some individuals locked in a painful inertial system should not obliterate the intrinsic zest displayed by every experiential occasion. In ontological terms, the substance-attribute scheme of thought has been destroyed and the “habits of nature” converge in the crystallisation of a wide *temporary* structure of stability Whitehead calls “cosmic epochs.”<sup>177</sup> Now, when human affairs matter, we can analogously speak of “ethical epochs” to qualify the change in the behavioural pattern that occurs, spontaneously or not.<sup>178</sup> The plasticity of the concept allows its generalized use: some individual’s life could be qualified by a single epoch, others by a succession of these. Eventually, the concept could be used to qualify the possibility of a post-mortem career or even a pre-native one.<sup>179</sup>

Considering that *novation* is a capital parameter of our cosmos, we should not diminish its power in natural as well as cultural affairs. It would betray the stubborn facts and their Whiteheadian systematization to disqualify the transitional (continuous) dimension of the World. The irruption of innovation is necessarily buttressed on the stability of facts and values; discontinuity is nourished by the continuous flow of (past) data and (eternal) archetypes. In the case of therapy—where the point is precisely to bring forth *real* change—this is of primary importance. A given society, Whitehead claims, requires for

its durability an auspicious environment. There is no such thing as a solitary event, both internal and external relationships are essential. We are very close to the idea that is explicitly expressed by Watzlawick, Sullivan or Laing: there is no solitary dysfunction perpetuating itself by itself; the “disorder” is inseparable from the environment in which it is *constantly re-actualised*. In conclusion, to work with a single individual in abstraction from his/her intersubjective environment would be a grievous error.

But how to lure change, how to provoke the overthrow of an ethical epoch? Facing a problematic given epoch, how to spur the passage to a new and more satisfactory one? Let us note that this formulation says nothing of the nature of the epochs involved: in some cases surprising patterns of behavior will have to be involved in the new epoch; in others cases, stabilization will be indicated. Since this question does not occur as such in Whitehead’s corpus, we have to start from its ontological counterpart. In that sphere, Whitehead claims that nothing can be directed through coercion: only *persuasion* is respectful of the iota of freedom present in every actual occasion subject. So much so that the coercive power of the past does not lead to innovation, but only to the “essential” repetition of the same, i.e., to bare novation. Whitehead himself explains “innovation” with the help of the concepts of primordial nature of God and of initial aim—the entire question being precisely to know if innovation can be *explained*. Let us quickly look at that puzzle.

Whitehead argues that nothing could come into being without the bestowal by God of an “initial subjective aim”. The initial aim, which constitutes the best possible goal for a given concrescence, is only *proposed*: the *actual* goal—or “subjective aim”—, which is the fruit of a free decision, will be more or less inspired by it. As Valéry puts it : “the gods, gracefully, give us for nothing a first verse; but it is our task to shape the second, which must be in consonance with the other, and not unworthy of its supernatural elder.”<sup>180</sup> To provide this initial gradation of relevance of possibilities for each concrescing actuality, God establishes the hierarchy of values with regard to that particular occasion. This remorseless (PR 244) creative act has two sides. On the one hand, it consists in the proposition (no pun intended, but appropriate) of a local optimum. In other words, God’s primordial action does not *lure* by love, but (through “hybrid *physical* prehensions”) by *cold reason*. God’s “overpowering rationality” (PR 346) provides the best possible innovation. On the other hand, it grants the compossibilization of

actualities in simultaneous concrescence. Without that novative unison, there would be an end to our cosmos. What juts out here is the *personal* action of the consequent nature.<sup>181</sup> To bring forth innovation and to install its consequences within a given context requires God's constant action to spur the best possible world. However, God's action on the innovatory occasion is not sufficient: the entire environment has to be lured to support it. We rediscover the well-known difficulty evolutionism never really solved: how can a new organ be, by itself, an advantage to a certain individual? Let us take, for example, the random apparition of a single cell possessing some photo-sensibility. Even if this "miracle" could happen, without the entire body adapted to it, it is not an advantage but, indeed, an impairment. Consequently, the disputed apparition has to be the fruit of a long convergent process of microchanges.

Whitehead's vocabulary is ontological, but its meaning can be analogically expanded to "ethical" macro-structures (all the more so since the two realms are not bifurcated): the mystery of innovation that is the toppling of an ethical epoch belongs primarily to the individual's decision. But it cannot be separated from its world<sup>182</sup> and its orientative and restrictive societal pressure. When innovation occurs without destroying its structural cradle, it is because of God's orchestration. Although the divine action is susceptible to many interpretations, we are forced to conclude from the texts that its persuasive *lure* is above all a rational guidance. As a result, a first approximation of Whiteheadian therapy would be the following: the establishment of a curative alchemy between the solitary process of the maturation of "mentality" and the collective soil in which it remains unfailingly anchored (the "physical-societal pole"). The main tool would be rational persuasion, tainted with a benevolence remnant of God's all-embracing love. One can imagine the Whiteheadian therapist explaining how the substantialist ontology imprisons individuals in their past (and their personality); whereas event ontology leaves the door wide open to the best possible world... "The art of persistence is to be dead." (FR 4)<sup>183</sup>

## 2. P. Watzlawick

Paul Watzlawick attempts to give a rational framework to Don D. Jackson's (1920–1968) and Milton H. Erickson's (1901–1980) rather intuitive therapeutical strategies: that is to say, on the one hand, to

give them a theoretical ground; and, on the other, to systematise and to expand the possibilities of intervention that they masterfully practised. The context of his works is the "Brief Therapy Center" that he has created, in 1967, together with Richard Fish, John Weakland and Arthur Bodin. (The *BTC* is a substructure of the reputable "Mental Research Institute" of Palo Alto, created by Jackson in 1959.)

Watzlawick's ultimate background is found in Bateson's speculations, which can be summarized for our purpose in two points. On the one hand, his "double bind" theory; on the other, his generalization of the use of feedback causation. The concept of "double bind" originates in his *Balinese Character*, written in 1942 with Margaret Mead. It shows how a network of paradoxical relations favours—if not generates—schizophrenia. Let us emphasise the carefulness of Watzlawick's late wording: "the double bind does not *cause* schizophrenia. All that can be said is that where double-binding has become the predominant pattern of communication, and where the diagnostic is limited to the *overtly* most disturbed individual, the behaviour of this individual will be found to satisfy the diagnostic criteria of schizophrenia. Only in this sense can a double-bind be considered causative and, therefore, pathogenic." (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 214–215) Progressively, this "weak" principle has been generalized into a "strong" principle designed to deal with *all* creative behaviours: creativity, it says, is based on a reversal of the levels of meaning in the exchanged messages. This is already sketched in the famous 1956 article ("Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia"<sup>184</sup>), where the double bind is no longer considered within a particular system (like a family), but the opposite is true: the particular system is understood from the perspective of the general principle that is the double bind.

From *Naven* (1936) on, we see the progressive categorialization of the old concept of feedback (that, at the same time, Norbert Wiener and John von Neumann were redeveloping as well). Strictly speaking, Bateson is made aware of the concept itself in 1942, during a conference organized by the *Macy Foundation* (see Bateson 1972, xii). Two types of feedback are distinguished: positive feedback and negative feedback. The former describes the conditions of possibility of the destruction of a system through an exponential increase of its divergencies; the latter spells the internal equilibrium some systems achieve through repeated auto-corrections.

## 2.1. Watzlawick's Pragmatics

After this quick prolegomenon, we can address the nucleus of Watzlawick's understanding of human communication and, hence, of therapeutical process. This can be done by questioning, respectively, his *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (1967) and *Change. Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Solution* (1974). In conclusion, we envisage *The Language of Change* (1978) and the status of paradoxes in his thought.

### 2.1.1. The Pragmatics of Human Communication's *axiomatic*

*Pragmatics of Human Communication* attempts to delineate an axiomatic of communication covering both "normal" and "pathological" interactions (no rigid distinction is made between the two). Here are the five interdependent axioms it carves.

First, it is impossible *not* to communicate: "behavior has no opposite [...] there is no such thing as nonbehavior or, to put it even more simply: one cannot *not* behave." (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 48) Every behavior is a form of communication and every communication has an impact on behavior. The implicit statement is twofold: no behavior is understandable outside of its polyadic formative structure (the society in which it occurs), or outside of its fluid polyphony (it has many modes: verbal, tonal, postural, contextual...).

Second, every communication has two aspects: its "content" (data) and its "relationship" (interpretation of the data, metacommunication, i.e., communication on the communication) (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 54). The expression of the message is accompanied by specifications like a facial expression (smile...) or qualifiers like "this is an order", "I'm only joking"...

Third, "the nature of a relationship is contingent upon the punctuation of the communicational sequences between the communicants." (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 59) Each partner punctuates the sequence in a way that easily obliterates the feedback loops: pretending, for example, to simply react to the other's behavior without noticing the retroaction.

Fourth, communication occurs both "digitally" and "analogically" (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 66), the latter covering virtually all nonverbal communications: gesture, posture, facial expression, voice inflection, the sequence, rhythm, and cadence of the words themselves. On the one hand, digital language possess a highly developed logical syntax,

but the meaning it conveys is purely conventional. On the other, analogic language is semantically powerful, but syntactically very weak. As a result, wherever the human relationship is itself the central issue, analogic language is of primary importance. This should be put in parallel with axiom II: the "content" is to be linked with "digital communication", and the "relationship" with "analogic communication". *The Language of Change* furthermore correlates this polarity with the two languages used respectively with the left and the right hemisphere: the language of reason (logical-analytical coding) versus the language of *pars pro toto* (holistic grasping of complex patterns of relationship).

Fifth, "all communicational interchanges are either symmetrical or complementary, depending on whether they are based on equality or difference." (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 70)

### 2.1.2. Change's *bimodal theory*

This axiomatic frame results in the structuration of *Change. Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Solution* around the following pragmatic binomial. First-order change (analogically grounded in the Theory of Groups) is a change occurring *within* a given system—which remains itself unchanged. Second-order change (analogically grounded in the Theory of Logical Types) is constituted by the *alteration* of the structure of a given system—which is thus intrinsically modified, re-structured. That bipartition is obviously inspired by Bateson's Russellian speculations (cf. his concepts of learning and deuterio-learning), and by the idea of "parametric disruption" coming from cybernetics and evoked by the same Bateson in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*.

If a Gordian knot installs itself within everyday interactions, communication only reproduces the pathological frame, i.e., stays confined at the level of first-order change. Within therapeutical processes, the point is to *break* the problematic pattern, and this will not be done by either the common use of language or by a causal inquiry. It is a change *of change* that is required, a second-order change. In the terms of our metaphor, when an attempt to *untie* the knot has proven to be in vain, the only thing to do is to *cut* it (Watzlawick 1978, 118). This does not mean, of course, that second-order change only occurs when a "specialist" is there to spur it. Actually, it happens all the time, by itself; it is only when an individual is stuck in an interactive pattern prejudicial to his/her well-being, that some demiurgical attempts have

to be made to reform the static structure. This is possible if and only if the individual wishes so, despite the fact that change is often seen as too challenging, or even dangerous.<sup>185</sup> To the paradoxical anxiety about change (the subject both looks forward to some improvement and yet does not want to leave the security of the necrosed structure), the therapist can answer by a counter-paradox: to remind the client of the havoc real change will create, and to propose, for example, *not* to induce change “too quickly”... or not to induce it at all.

This point is of importance: there is no imposition of a norm from outside; it is the individual who decides what has become unbearable and the therapy will be oriented toward the resolution of *this* very problem. In other words, the therapeutical process is truly centered on the client as an interacting agent: s/he defines, in his/her own language, the problem and the minimum goal. It is through the eyes of the client that the entire scene will be set up. The vague tautological dimension these principles seem to convey can be cleared out by the comparison systemic psychologists often make between their categories and the psychoanalytic principles. Repentant analyst (after his PhD in philosophy, he studied at the “C.-G.-Jung-Institut” in Zürich, and had been in practice for 23 years), Watzlawick has a very harsh judgement of the capacity of orthodox analysis to *cure* anything at all. However, his attitude is not dogmatic: he does not rule out totally any method of treatment, and acknowledges his debt to Freud, Jung and Searles<sup>186</sup> (together with *Gestalt* theory, logic and anthropology). Three main points can describe his indebtedness to Freud: both accept that (i) only some aspects of human communication have access to consciousness (the construction of messages is said to happen with the aid of almost totally unknown primary processes); that (ii) every event has a meaning; and that, (iii) in the therapeutical process, there is something like “transference” and “projection”.

This being said, let us contemplate the difference in epistemological approaches Watzlawick puts forward.<sup>187</sup> According to him, psychoanalysis is first and foremost monadic, intrapsychic, in its essence: it deals with an isolated individual understood from the general perspective of a school (Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian...). The analyst listens (if you are lucky) and shuts up. The complaint of the patient is *transubstantiated* by the diagnostic into one of the well-known admitted nosologic categories. This reduction requires the client to learn a simplified form of the analytic language. The illness is then pictured in terms of a *deficit* that inevitably causes abnormal behaviours. Its origin is to be found in

a trauma whose power induces endless repercussions. Causation is thus understood *linearly* and the treatment requires aetiology in the strict sense: the analysis' goal is the quest for the principle<sup>188</sup> of the pathology in order to allow its destruction, a destruction which, in turn, will stop the causation of disorders. The length of the “treatment”, i.e., of the research for the “why”, is long—most probably years. In fact, it aims at understanding, not at curing; if the insight allows an amelioration of the problem, it is “only” a side effect. Furthermore, communication solely occurs at the level of spoken language and is understood as telegraphic communication (linear and alternate transmission of messages between a transmitter and a receiver).

On the contrary, brief therapy is systemic, polyadic. It deals with an interconnected actor, from his/her own particular point of view. In other words, its emphasis falls on the interactive structure in which the client is inserted; and its (limited) theoretical apparatus is recreated for each patient. The “substantial” perspective of psychoanalysis is replaced by an eventful, interactional, one: the problem is not of the order of a “be-ing”, but of the order of “act-ing” in a specific context framed by interfering feedback loops. The goal of the therapy is a structural selective action. What matters is the present complaint of the patient, and the rapid reform of the symptoms: the inquiry deals with the “how” rather than “why”. The paradigm being here organic (i.e., not mechanistic), causation is understood foremost as retroactive. The origin of the deviant behavior is no more “in” the client, but “in-between” the client and his or her main interacting poles. More precisely, the problem lies in the interactive pattern where its *repeated actualization* occurs. In short, it aims at curing, not at understanding. And this has to be done in a short period of time—say, 10 (negotiable) sessions. Communication is understood broadly: it is a permanent plural process involving various channels (content and relationship, digital and analogical). The paradigm here is orchestral communication (a locus where agents put things in common): “an individual does not communicate; he engages in or becomes part of communication.”<sup>189</sup> After having learned the polyadic language of the client, the therapist *prescribes* new behaviours. Whereas psychoanalysis vigorously denies the role played by suggestion, brief therapy deliberately uses it to *increase the patient's autonomy*.

How exactly can one spur a second-order change? Neither by coercion, nor by persuasion, but by suggestions and injunctions, the more spectacular of which are paradoxical (a question that is treated in the



next section). For the time being, let us schematise the interventional grid of the *Brief Therapy Center* in a “logical” way that is not compulsory: what really matters are the contingent contextual necessities of a given therapy. The gathering of strategically useful information occurs during all the steps described, and this information is spelled out in terms of behavior, *not* of *interpretation* of behavior; “who”, “what”, “to whom”, “how”, “when” are its keywords. The first thing is to make clear *who* is complaining, *who* asks for change. The therapist will work with the complainant, even if s/he is not the designated “ill person”. The second step is the definition of the problem—in the idiosyncratic language of the client—with the help of concrete examples of unsatisfying interactions: *what* is the problem and how did it become a problem. It is furthermore advisable to ask why the client is consulting now, at this time, what special event or context lead to the consultation? (The question “why” is here not historical but contextual.) Thirdly, one lists exhaustively all the past attempts to solve the problem and defines their common figure. Watzlawick’s thesis is striking: “the attempt to effect a first-order change”, he claims, “either greatly contributes to the problem which it is supposed to solve, or actually *is* the problem.” (Watzlawick et al. 1974, 38)<sup>190</sup> Fourthly comes the specification of the “minimal change” which will be the goal of the therapy. What the client considers as a minimum improvement has to be small enough to be feasible, but significant enough to be a relevant sign of change. Fifthly, the client’s reference frame or “position” is probed. The therapist has to circumscribe his/her views, expectations, values, beliefs, interpretation of the problem... everything that led the client to attempt—by definition unsuccessfully—first-order changes.<sup>191</sup> This reference framework will be the Trojan Horse the therapist uses to suggest behavioural changes. It is essential to use the patient’s own verbalisations and style of communication to establish the favourable climate in which to present a new definition of what are naturally the same circumstances. Watzlawick speaks of a “gentle art of reframing” (Watzlawick et al. 1974, 92) that operates at the level of *metareality*; in Wittgenstein’s language, it “*teaches a different game*, thereby making the old one obsolete” (Watzlawick et al. 1974, 104). Eventually comes the (implicit and explicit) uttering of suggestions and injunctions to actualise the wished-for behavioural reform. This happens naturally within the definition of a global strategy of intervention aiming at banning the past attempts to effect a first-order change (responsible for the stagnation). The strategic

approach is utilitarian: to make the most of what the patient is bringing (Watzlawick et al. 1974, 104). Resources, resistances and beliefs of the clients are levers actually used (instead of ignoring the first, confronting the second or modifying the third). There is no way you can change the past; it is ontologically settled. But since it exerts its influence only through the way it is interpreted in the present, and since the present structure can be altered, this is not an insuperable obstacle.<sup>192</sup>

It is now obvious that these two therapeutic streams are almost the exact specular image of one another. Psychoanalysis is built on a large theoretical basis which has the pretension to reveal the “truth” of a given phenomenon. It is a knowledge that could easily justify “discipline and punishment” of individuals outlawed from society for normative reasons.<sup>193</sup> No real falsification, in Popper’s sense, is possible; it is even contrary to the spirit of the profession. As Caillois says, Marx and Freud (whatever the nobility of their respective intentions) have in common the paternity of “churches” that easily anathematise and speciously argue.<sup>194</sup> These movements share the rhetorical temptation of the *petitio principii*: to give beforehand the solution of the problem, simply because, ultimately, the foreshadowed mechanisms *cannot* but reveal themselves. All the rest is necessarily a smoke screen, a deceptive appearance or a pitiful subterfuge.

For its part, brief therapy rests against a few simple holistic observations and uses very little theoretical inferences. It makes no pretence of knowing the truth about a behavior. “The chronic problem that still plagues modern psychiatry”, Watzlawick hammers, “is that we have only the vaguest and most general concepts for the definition of mental health, while for the diagnosis of abnormal behavior there exists catalogs perfected to the last details. [...] Here pathology is considered the known factor, whereas normalcy is seen as difficult to define, if it is definable at all. This opens the floodgates to self-fulfilling diagnoses.” (Watzlawick 1984, 105)<sup>195</sup> Rather than to apply the same broad *principles* to isolated individuals, it recarves, each time, new particular *actions* (that share, of course, a family resemblance). It claims that the knowledge of the “why” is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for change—for “real” change, second-order change. “No ultimately unverifiable intrapsychic hypotheses need to be invoked.” (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 44) As a result, the difference between conscious and unconscious phenomena looses its all-embracing paradigmatic value, together with the difference between the normal and the

pathological.<sup>196</sup> To put it another way, the importance of the contextualization dissolves these two rigid distinctions; the state of the patient is not immutable, it varies with its environment and the presuppositions of the observer.<sup>197</sup> For instance, schizophrenia is no longer a progressive, incurable, disease, but the only possible reaction to a context in which communication is absurd and unbearable. One could speak of the theory of the cork (the problem *is* the problem) as opposed to the theory of the iceberg (the problem is only the marginal sign of deeply rooted dysfunctions). The broadness of the systemic view nevertheless embraces far more than the “pathological” field: it aims at understanding how *any* behavior is kept balanced in *any* system. In conclusion, we could (*mutatis mutandis*) establish a parallel between the analytic-systemic debate and the debate between Simplicius and Salviati in Galileo’s dialogue on the world systems: “Galileo keeps harping on how things happen, whereas his adversaries had a complete theory as to why things happen. [...] Galileo insists upon ‘irreducible and stubborn facts,’ and Simplicius, his opponent, brings forward reasons, completely satisfactory, at least to himself.” (SMW 8)

At bottom, the divergence lies in the difference of ontology between the two approaches: psychodynamic theory follows the materialist grammar, whereas the systemic viewpoint is heir to cybernetics and information theory. According to the former, behavior results from conflicting intrapsychic forces assuming the laws of conservation and transformation of energy. According to the latter, what matters is the interactional environment and the feedback data that constantly fashion it. Matter-energy is replaced by information: whereas the former is “naturally” conserved, the latter is not; it needs to be continuously reactualized. One emphasizes deterministic continuity amid change and linear causation; the other, free change amid continuity and retroactive causation.<sup>198</sup>

### 2.1.3. The Language of Change and the status of paradoxes

*The Language of Change* puts the consequences of the continuing argument of *Pragmatics of Human Communication* and of *Change. Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Solution* very straightforwardly: therapy requires the induction of second-order change through the blocking of the logical censorship of the left hemisphere to permit the dominance of the right one. The appeal to the linguistic patterns allowing access to the right hemisphere (condensation of meaning, figurative language, aphorisms, puns, etc.) is not sufficient. Hence, the altering of a patho-

genic structure requires four main complementary tools: (i) Erickson’s *confusion technique* (Watzlawick 1978, 93; cf. Erickson, 1980) in which the uttering of a stream of inane and obscure pseudological argument produces a state of intellectual confusion opening the patient to any further available suggestions; (ii) the *reframing of problems* whose object is to teach a new game (Watzlawick 1978, 118); (iii) the induction of *symptom displacement*, consisting mainly in inducing shifts in time or in space of the symptom, thereby demonstrating (a posteriori) their ductility (Watzlawick 1978, 106); and, last but not least, (iv) *paradoxical behavior prescriptions* through “symptom prescription” (Watzlawick 1978, 101)<sup>199</sup> or “illusion of alternatives” patterns (Watzlawick 1978, 108), to which we will devote the rest of this section.

One of the more astonishing peculiarities of brief therapy is undoubtedly its use of double binding for curative purposes. Whereas fallacies are mere errors of reasoning, a paradox is a logical contradiction ( $\alpha$  and not- $\alpha$  are *both* asserted) that follows correct deductions from (apparently) consistent premises. Watzlawick classifies paradoxes in three categories (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 187sq.)<sup>200</sup>: *logico-mathematical* paradoxes, like Russell’s paradox of the class of all classes that do not contain themselves—a paradox which can be interpreted as a fallacy due to the confusion of logical types—; *semantic* paradoxes like the Epimenides (“I am lying”)—explainable by the distinction of levels of language (see Carnap and Tarski)—; and finally *pragmatic* paradoxes, that are of the utmost importance for our topic. Watzlawick furthermore discriminates between paradoxical injunctions and paradoxical predictions; it will suffice here to address the first, which are of the type “Be spontaneous”, “I want you to dominate me” or “Don’t be so obedient”.<sup>201</sup>

Obviously enough, paradoxical injunctions “bankrupt choice itself” (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 217): to obey such an injunction, you have to disobey it—and vice versa. Hence the untenable position of the victim, who is “damned if s/he does and damned if s/he does not”. The only possible issues lie either in withdrawing, or in meta-communicating, i.e., in showing that the injunction both asserts something ( $\alpha$ ) and asserts something contradictory about its own assertion (not- $\alpha$ ). But both issues are prevented by the strong complementary relationship—involving a “high degree of physical and/or psychological survival value” for at least one of the actors (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 212; see Bateson 1972, 206-208)—in which such a double bind is locked. This is precisely why simple contra-

dictions are (usually) harmless: here the possibility of the choice is preserved; it is not illusory as in the case of paradoxical injunctions. Now, if we contemplate this criterion—that paradoxes bankrupt choice itself—we could argue that the only genuine paradoxes are the pragmatic ones: whereas the philosopher has always the possibility of leaving his/her worktable to reinvest him/herself in everyday interactions, pragmatic paradoxes *alone* prohibit *any* escape... And, *exactly so*, if the philosopher gets stuck in his/her inquiries, s/he will necessarily display symptoms of what the collective consciousness calls mental illness. One can choose to remove oneself from a rational cobweb, not from a pragmatic one.

## 2.2. Impact on Ontology

Two principal implications are worth exploring. On the one hand, the impact of the use of paradoxical binding to induce second-order change on the question of *innovation*—and especially on the concept of initial aim. On the other, the impact of the concept of feedback causation on the question of *novation*—and especially on the concept of society. For reasons of time, we will be able (roughly) to explore the first implication; the second gets only a mention. What should be questioned regarding novation and feedback is twofold: on the one hand, at what price and in which cases Whitehead's concept of "dominant occasion" could be replaced by the more economic principle of "negative feedback" or "homeostasis"; on the other, how far the mundane principle of limitation could also be approximated by these feedback loops. In both cases, retroactivity challenges the usefulness of the—highly problematic—concept of final cause. To come to a decision in these matters would require a sharp analysis of the concepts of function, teleonomy and teleology, i.e., the reassessment of the legacy of Pittendrigh's and Monod's bold claims.<sup>202</sup>

For Watzlawick, second-order change bootstraps itself in everyday interactions; it is only in the case of frozen pathogenic structures that external help is needed. In such eventuality, the radical and most puzzling tool the therapist holds is paradoxical ("homeopathic") behavior prescription. For Whitehead, on the other hand, innovation's practicability is dependant on God's continuous *lure*, which has a rational marrow. The point to be discussed is thus the status of paradoxes. Since the level of technicality of that question is too high to be properly outlined here, we will use a tangential approach. The simplest way of putting

this into perspective is a quick look at Aristotelian logic, which is traditionally defined by three principles: the principle of identity, the principle of non contradiction, and the principle of excluded middle. The principle of *identity* states simply that we come to know all things in so far as they have some unity and identity.<sup>203</sup> It has of course to be linked with the substance-attribute ontology granting permanence amid flux. The principle of *contradiction* is somewhat the negative side of the principle of identity: it claims that the same attribute cannot, at the same time and in the same respect, belong and not belong to the same subject.<sup>204</sup> For Aristotle, it is "the most certain of all principles", the "natural starting-point for all the other axioms": so much so that he does not believe that Heraclitus has ever really maintained that contrary attributes belong at the same time to the same subject. According to the principle of *excluded middle* (or "tertium non datur"), there cannot be an intermediate between contradictories: of one subject we must either affirm or deny any one predicate.<sup>205</sup> There is no third possibility: *either* the cat is alive *or* it is not.

From a formal point of view, the difference between a contradiction and a paradox is straightforward enough. A contradiction is a statement that is always false—and *everybody agrees* that it is so because some mistake must have occurred in the chain of reasoning. A paradox, as its etymology shows, is a contradiction that has the appearance of truth. As a result, there are numerous *opinions* regarding the way of understanding them; no consensus prevails. A distinction should be made between those who claim that paradoxes could be solved through a more thorough understanding of their internal dynamic—think of Russell's quest—; those for whom finite reason generates, at least in some (circumscribed) circumstances, paradoxes—think of Kant's antinomies—; and those who claim that reason *is* inexorably paradoxical (and so is Nature)—like Hegel's dialectic. In the first case, paradoxes are nothing but (stubborn) temporary difficulties; in the second, they point to the unavoidable *blind spot* of reason; in the third, they are fully part of the mundane ontological structure. In any case, the decision can be made to try to formalise them, and this can be achieved with or without modifying the three Aristotelian principles mentioned above. The Theory of Types, for instance, proposes a solution involving no real modification of either of the principles: it "simply" uses a sharp distinction between levels of abstraction.<sup>206</sup> But the appeal to a contradictory logic, or the dismissal of the principle of excluded middle are other possible paths that have been variously

taken as well: Graham Priest promotes a *transconsistent logic* where some contradictions are true (he speaks then of “dialetheias”); the *quantum logic*, framed by Garrett Birkhoff and John von Neumann to cope with the advances in microphysics, revokes, for its part, the excluded middle.<sup>207</sup>

Now that this has been specified, we can come closer to the question of the status of the initial subjective aim from the perspective of the knowledge at work in brief therapy. We have already underlined the rational essence of the initial aim; we now have to see how Whitehead approaches paradoxes in his speculative philosophy—and this can be detailed with the help of our three Aristotelian principles. (i) Although identity is challenged in the processual (a-substantialist) universe—“in a sense”, says SMW 201, “the self-identity of a human being is more abstract than that of a crystal. It is the life of the spirit”<sup>208</sup>—, oneness, determinateness and self-identity are present in the four slices of the categorial scheme: in the Category of the Ultimate (“the many become one, and are increased by one”), in the Categories of Existence (actual entities and eternal objects), in the Categories of Explanation (*passim*) and in the Categorial Obligations (the Category of Subjective Unity and the Category of Objective Identity).<sup>209</sup> (ii) Contradictions are not for Whitehead’s speculation a stumbling block: they are “the most gratuitous of errors; and usually they are trivial” (PR6):

A mere logical contradiction cannot in itself point to more than the necessity of some readjustments, possibly of a very minor character, on both sides. [...] In formal logic a contradiction is the signal of a defeat, but in the evolution of real knowledge it marks the first step in progress toward a victory. (SMW 185 and 187)

The criterion of coherence is far more important for locking a categorial scheme: it embodies an ideal of *categorial democracy* allowing both interdependence and independence. No category can be more fundamental than the others. The philosopher’s goal is a strong network similar to a cobweb in which the empirical will be caught.<sup>210</sup> Naturally, that image has to be corrected by another—the quest of adequacy—, because otherwise we might think that the net has simply to be the tightest possible in order to insure the best metaphysical fishing. (iii) The principle of excluded middle is not a burden either in a *metaphysics* that claims: the “law of excluded middle gets us into trouble.” (HL 263) Furthermore, one can easily argue that all his writ-

ings are designed to spark an imaginative leap envisioning an intermediary reality between permanence and flux, continuity and discontinuity, immanence and transcendence...<sup>211</sup>

Eventually, his attitude regarding paradoxes is quite serene; it is similar to his perspective on bare contradictions—with the significant exception of PR 340, where he laments: “the world is thus faced by the paradox that, at least in its higher actualities, it craves for novelty and yet is haunted by terror at the loss of the past, with its familiarities and its loved ones”. As far as we know, this is the only occurrence of the term “paradox” that emphasizes its existential meaningfulness rather than its bare logical character.<sup>212</sup> This utterance brings us close to Watzlawick’s pragmatic paradoxes: there is no escape from “perpetual perishing”, and yet, there is nothing we desire more. We see here the disquieting parallel that exists between the bare fact of our “existence” and the various pathological drifts that are encountered in therapy.

Two last contextual remarks are expedient. One, it is well known that Russell and Whitehead had been exposed to the strong Hegelian tradition prevalent in Oxford and Cambridge in their time (Bradley, McTaggart, Bosanquet) and that both reacted to it: PR is, among other things, a reply to Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality* (1893); and Russell’s analytic philosophy broke with Hegelian ratiocinations. Two, Watzlawick uses Russell’s ready-made “solution” (as redefined by Ramsey) to paradoxes as a vantage point only in order to confine pragmatic paradoxes. From the perspective of our heuristic partition, it means that he considers paradoxes as knots that can be broken once they are understood from an “outsider’s”—or “meta”—perspective; he did not explore the epistemological consequences of the finitude of human beings and does not adopt, strictly speaking, a dialectic viewpoint. But there is something of exceptional importance that stands out in his prose: if one digs further and envisages the justification of the principle of contradiction itself, whose various “proofs” in the Book  $\Gamma$  of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* are either unsatisfying or circular, one discovers that the principle of contradiction does not have a strict logical worth, but only a practical-ethical one. Lukasiewicz was the pioneer here, and more recently Apel has put it very boldly: that *logic presupposes an ethic* qua condition of possibility. This question has of course deeper roots that could be traced back to Socrates.<sup>213</sup> Whitehead, for his part, saw clearly that “logic presupposes metaphysics” (MT 107).

In conclusion, since Whitehead's system is open to the use of pragmatic paradoxes in the conceptual framework of the "initial aim", it would be an elegant way of "personalising" the divine innovative action. God would not propose a rational goal (possibly inflamed by redemptive love) to the (high grade) concrecent actuality, but would *lure* with paradoxical injunctions obliging the actuality to *truly* innovate. (With regard to the question of the category of reversion, we argue that the abolition is a slip of the pen. Abolished or not, reversion is used throughout PR to account for the apparition of novelty in the World. We should not read PR in the light of the abolition, but interpret the abolition in the light of the general atmosphere of the book, as it is created by its idiosyncratic philosophical style.) Of Watzlawick's characterization of the conditions of possibility of double binding,<sup>214</sup> we thus keep the idea of a paradoxical (cryptic, if you want) injunction occurring in an intense relationship of dependence, but we avoid the constitutive impossibility of dissolving the paradox. (This, furthermore, leaves the door open for a reassessment of Manicheism.) By doing so, we definitively drift from the "vicariage atmosphere" allegedly haunting Whitehead (Russell 1991, 130). In this context, it is good to remember that Thomas Aquinas precisely defines the creative act as a relation of "ontological dependence"<sup>215</sup>—a concept that can be easily expanded into a "mutual co-dependence" more suitable to describing the rebalanced God-World relationship process thought installs.

### 3. Conclusion

We have seen that our two authors share a processual perspective that leads them to reject mechanicism and materialism, and to relativize strongly the three correlated Aristotelian logic principles. Both their systems can be articulated around a similar binomial, setting in motion novelty of type one (novation or first-order change) and novelty of type two (innovation or second-order change). Watzlawick redefines the role of reason in second-order change, and Whitehead could be reinterpreted in this way. Each gives support to, as well as calling for reform of, the other. The contemplation of process ontology suggests its recommendation as a theoretical basis to Watzlawick's systematisations—which would improve its coherence—; and the awareness of brief therapy achievements suggests improvements to fundamental parts of Whitehead's thought—with the expected result

of better applicability. The circularity of these respective enrichments is, in itself, the sign of a strong synergetic possibility. A gain in coherence in one field should indeed have repercussions on the coherence of the other, and the same should be true of their respective applicability. The technical core of our argument lies in the radicality of genuine novelty and in the abruptness of change, as sealed by atomicity. The blossoming of innovation is abrupt because its alchemical processualization occurs in the sepulchre of the mental pole. If concrecence gives birth to *true* novelty, there, strictly speaking, is no "reason" for it: the "reasons" that will be given will always be *a posteriori* and fragmentary, i.e., they could be endlessly pursued. In this context, the laws of nature are mere habits of its constituents, the outcome of the social environment (PR 204): everything is a temporary pattern amidst the flux. Flux is all-embracing; it is stability that requires *explanations*.

Our inquiry has inevitably put some emphasis on language questions (actually one can read Whitehead's entire corpus as a meditation on the "weakness of insight and deficiencies of language"<sup>216</sup>): first when we saw its divergent uses in psychoanalysis and in brief therapy; second, when we discussed the nature of the initial aim. We spoke of a cryptic dimension to point to the old disputes about the way God "speaks" to us. It seems obvious—especially for believers—that God does not enter into dialogue with human beings in the same way these beings relate with each other. But this so-called evidence is transformed by the impact contradictions and paradoxes have on everyday life. As the Greeks had already seen, God *indicates, signifies*, i.e., makes a sign, points out in a rather *ambiguous* way. The understanding of the power of language is a nocturnal experience where one intuits the capacity of language to give rise to things in the womb of their absence. Heraclitus spoke of the semantical character of a language: the propositions expressed in a language are "semantikos" [σημαντικός], meaning-giving (the words, in themselves, are neither true nor false).

With regard to the historico-conceptual link we have just suggested, it is of exceptional importance to notice that Whitehead's concept of "lure" seems to have the exact same semantic territory as the Greek *απατη*. If this is the case, it means that, indeed, God's action belongs to a sphere veiled with mantic ambiguity, an ambivalence more enveloping than the simple contradiction between what is true and what is not.<sup>217</sup> It belongs to the contingency of an ever-fluctuating World

rather than to the necessity of a purely divine one; it is a kairic reason rather than an epistemic one. Here is what FR 10 claims:

There is Reason, asserting itself as above the world, and there is Reason as one of many factors within the world. The Greeks have bequeathed to us two figures, whose real or mythical lives conform to these two notions—Plato and Ulysses. The one shares Reason with the Gods, the other shares it with the foxes.

For the philosopher, brief therapy is of peculiar importance because it constitutes, so to speak, the antidote to archical speculation (i.e., the quest for the principle). When the metaphysician asks “why” there is something rather than nothing, or when the analyst begins the regression in order to identify “why” the pathology has the form it has, we see at work the same quest for the principle. The philosopher has to learn, through an awareness of the presuppositions of this—possibly endless—quest and through the example of “practical” disciplines, when—and at what price—to stop it. Traditionally, it has been done with the help of a concept of God, but this is neither the only solution, nor the preferable one: it could be argued that it weakens the autonomy of reason, as well as the feeling for the sacred that human beings all share.

For the psychologist, the demands of philosophy are primordial if one wishes to avoid the Charybdis of syncretism and the Scylla of normativity. Both create a gangrenous structure of no therapeutical usefulness. There should be oneness of *Weltanschauung*, but real plurality of its particularisations. The conception and manipulation of categories should be exceptionally careful in a matter where one expects to reform the experiential core of a human being. Ockham’s razor should be part of the toolbox of the therapist, especially since it is proven that labelling leads to depersonalisation. William James saw it, and systemic therapists did as well. Let us not forget their warning. “Based in part on theoretical and anthropological considerations, but also on philosophical, legal, and therapeutic ones, the view has grown that psychological categorisation of mental illness is useless at best and downright harmful, misleading, and pejorative at worst.”<sup>218</sup>

The art of epochal change is crucial not only for *therapeutical* purposes, i.e., for punctual monitoring required by contingent relational networks, but also for *hygiological* purposes, i.e., for global actions necessitated by the management of the pure trajectory that is our being-in-the-World. The former has similarities to *poiesis*, the latter to

*praxis*. In both cases, we see that our destinies can be bent as well as deflected. Better: that hiatus is the law of—spiritual—transformation. In the very same way that biological evolution goes through fits and spurts, spiritual enfolding is kairic.

Could it be the case that the password for both therapeutical and hygiological gates is of the type “Become spontaneous!”? And that, in turn, we have here a decisive clue with regard to the essence of the creative advance itself? Whereas spontaneity cannot decide to become free, liberty can choose to obliterate itself in spontaneity...

## Footnotes

<sup>171</sup> The Author wishes to thank Pierre Rodrigo and Anderson Weekes for their useful comments.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Whitehead's "Autobiography" (first printed in Schlipp, 1941/1951; later reprinted in ESP) and Lowe 1985, 206-207), who cites a letter of Gregory Bateson to William Coleman in which the former mentions his family's acquaintance with Whitehead at Merton. Later Bateson mentions visiting the Whiteheads in the U.S. Lowe's material is now housed by The Special Collections of the Milton S. Eisenhower Library (as a matter of interest, the "Box 2.3" shelters some correspondence between Whitehead and "Bateson, William & Family").

<sup>173</sup> Bateson 1972, 472. See also the allusion to Whitehead's "Mathematics and the Good" (first printed in Schlipp, 1941/1951; later reprinted in ESP) in Bateson 1987, 152.

<sup>174</sup> For a sketch of the development of his thought, see Bradley, 1997 (and his 2002 paper), McHenry, 2002 or Weber, 2002; for a full account, see Lowe, 1962, 1985 and 1990.

<sup>175</sup> The list is of course unexhaustive; it names the main authors who have had—most probably—a decisive influence on the philosophy of organism. PR 68 refers itself to James (1911) on Zeno; PR 42 and AI viii refer themselves to Bailey (1928); Lucretius (1910) belonged to Whitehead's personal library; as did most probably the *Parmenides* in Taylor's translation (see the concept of εἰσαφῆς in 156c)—anyway, he made a constant use of Taylor 1926 and 1928—; the discrete presence of Leibniz cannot be refuted; the (direct or Hartshornean) impact of C. S. Peirce on Whitehead is, for its part, difficult to assess (UA exploits Benjamin Peirce's *Linear Associative Algebra*); for Bergson, see esp. Cariou, 1978. Capek's works are very good on this developmental topic: cf., e.g., Capek, 1961/1969, 1971, 1991. See as well Code, 1985.

<sup>176</sup> Deleuze, 1988. However, one should not seek here a Whiteheadian use of Whitehead's categories. (Stengers' last opus (2002), still not available when writing these lines, might provide some interesting clues with that regard.)

<sup>177</sup> "Thus a system of 'laws' determining reproduction in some portion of the universe gradually rises into dominance; it has its stage of endurance, and passes out of existence with the decay of the society from which it emanates." (PR 91)

<sup>178</sup> Before indicating "moral" dimensions, the word "ethos" [ἦθος] means habit, custom.

<sup>179</sup> In this case like in many others, Whitehead's (just like James') attitude would be critical and open: see his remarks in RM and in his essay "Immortality" (first printed in Schlipp, 1941/1951; later reprinted in ESP).

<sup>180</sup> Valéry 1957, 482 quoted by Ladrière, 1999. (Of course, there is no supernaturalism in Whiteheadian process thought.)

<sup>181</sup> One remembers that the introduction of the consequent nature transforms the primordial nature into an abstraction of God as a "full actuality". To set the record straight, a careful study of the development of the concepts of God would of course be needed.

<sup>182</sup> Whitehead's ontological concept is the "actual world"; it could be here connected with the phenomenological *Umwelt* (expression that could be translated into "world-around", "world-about").

<sup>183</sup> The subsidiary question is the one of the nature of what is called nowadays "philosophical counselling": what could the health pretensions of a philosophical practice be exactly?

<sup>184</sup> Bateson et al., 1956 (reprinted in Bateson 1972, 201-227). On the topic of the extension of the "weak principle", see especially "Double Bind, 1969", reprinted as well in Bateson 1972, 271-278.

<sup>185</sup> We will not examine here the various alternatives consisting of clients consulting because they are made to, because they wish to help someone else, etc.

<sup>186</sup> See, e.g., the archetypal role and function of ritual delineated by Watzlawick 1978, 154-157 and Searles 1959 famous "Effort to Drive the Other Person Crazy". Watzlawick does not show any sign of awareness of the radicalization by Deleuze and Guattari (1977) of Foucault's critique (1972).

<sup>187</sup> *Passim*; see, e.g., Watzlawick et al. 1967, 28-30 and Watzlawick et al. 1974, 112, 125.

<sup>188</sup> In the sense of "arche" [ἀρχή]: see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Δ, 1.

<sup>189</sup> Ray L. Birdwhistell as quoted by Watzlawick et al. 1967, 70.

<sup>190</sup> Freud himself claimed that illness should be understood as a curative attempt (see also Laing). Ironically, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1977), Freud should be understood as actually trying to make people sicker.

<sup>191</sup> For the impact on values and beliefs on diagnosis, see the work of Fulford, e.g., in Fulford et al., 1993, 801-810 or Fulford and Jackson, 1997.

<sup>192</sup> Anderson Weekes has attracted our attention on the fact that, "on the contrary, Freud claims that the past does not exert its influence only through the way it is interpreted in the present. It is almost the opposite: the present presents itself the way it is interpreted for us by our past. This is, in a way, also one of the major claims of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960): to exist historically means *not* to be the agent of our own interpretation, but to be always already interpreted in ways that necessarily always escape us, at least in part. Watzlawick may thus be opening himself up to the kind of critique often aimed at Husserl. Is all meaning really anchored in (constituted by) the mean-

ing conferring activity of a present (and potentially self-present) subject? If not, does that affect our ability to change the present?"

<sup>193</sup> See the various analyses of Michel Foucault, e.g., in Foucault, 1972 and Foucault, 1975.

<sup>194</sup> Caillois, 1950. See also, e.g. Jaspers, 1913/1963 or Chertok, 1989.

<sup>195</sup> One will find plenty of argument in this direction in Rosenhan's essay "On Being Sane in Insane Places", reprinted in Watzlawick 1984, 117-144. Szasz, 1961—and especially its ideological antidote Laing, 1971—deserve of course a mention.

<sup>196</sup> Besides Rosenhan's essay, see Don D. Jackson, "The Myth of Normality", in Watzlawick and Weakland 1977, 157-163.

<sup>197</sup> For a puzzling parallel established between similar premises and the measurement problems disclosed by quantum mechanics, see Wolfgang Pauli's archetypal speculations.

<sup>198</sup> For an complementary broad assessment of that debate, see Lincoln & Guba 1985, 15-46 and Denzin & Lincoln 1994, 105-117.

<sup>199</sup> "If someone is asked to engage in a specific type of behavior which is seen as spontaneous, then he cannot be spontaneous anymore, because this demand makes spontaneity impossible." (Watzlawick et al. 1967, 237)

<sup>200</sup> Watzlawick is following Charles Morris (Morris, 1938; cf. Morris 1946, 217-248. Morris is somewhat completing Ramsey, who has shown that the Theory of Types actually falls into two parts: one dealing with logico-mathematical paradoxes and the other with semantical paradoxes (Russell first thought it possible to reduce all paradoxes with one single theory).

<sup>201</sup> To contrast Watzlawick's perspective with a less *pragmatic* understanding of the difference between pragmatic paradoxes and semantic paradoxes, see for instance Ebersole (1953).

<sup>202</sup> Cf. C. S. Pittendrigh in Roe and Simpson (1958); and Monod, 1970.

<sup>203</sup> *Metaphysics* B, 4.

<sup>204</sup> *Metaphysics* Γ, 3; *Posterior Analytics* I, 77a10-22.

<sup>205</sup> *Metaphysics* Γ, 7; *Posterior Analytics* I, 77a22-25.

<sup>206</sup> Whitehead actually questions this in one of his last papers—ICNV (1934), reprinted in ESP. See, e.g., 288 (ESP 321) and Grattan-Guinness 2000, 527-528.

<sup>207</sup> Priest, 1987; Birkhoff and von Neumann, 1936 (cf. Jammer, 1974 and, from a more "classical" perspective, Hartshorne, 1965); see as well the Rescher-Brandom (1980) theory of inconsistent worlds and Zadeh's fuzzy-set theory. All this debate occurs of course within the territory of Western philosophy and its Quinean legacy. It would be very instructive to seriously question Buddhist logic: shouldn't we expect—at the very least—a strong relativization of the Aristotelian tripartite?

<sup>208</sup> Also: "[...] there is no general metaphysical reason why the distinct routes of *a* and *b* should not intersect in at least one occasion. [...] There is no difficulty in imagining a world—i. e., a cosmic epoch—in which arithmetic would be an interesting fanciful topic for dreamers, but useless for practical people engrossed in the business of life." (PR 199)

<sup>209</sup> It has to be remembered of course that Whitehead—and especially Russell—have steadily ridiculed the subject-predicate logic underlining Aristotle's philosophy. With that regard, let us pin point two things. First of all, Russell's own reformulation of the three famous principles: "Whatever is, is"; "Nothing can both be and not be"; "Everything must either be or not be." (Russell 1912, 40) Second, to achieve a more technical account of Whitehead's understanding of these matters, the idea of "equivalence" should receive some special attention. It is first specified in his *Treatise on Universal Algebra* (1898), and consistently used in all his works.

<sup>210</sup> The criterion of coherence, as Whitehead understands it, imposes a double constraint on the institution of a categorial scheme. On the one hand, it asks the interdependence of the categories, it is a co-presuppositional requirement: each systematical concept has to *presuppose* the others so that in abstraction from the scheme it would be meaningless. In other words, a category is operational *only* within a certain configuration. On the other hand, the criterion of coherence asks the independence, i.e., the non-reciprocal deductibility of the categories: categories should not be definable in terms of each other (PR 3). It is akin to what logicians call in their ethereal sphere *contributiveness*. In conclusion, the demand of coherence embodies an ideal of categorial democracy allowing both interdependence and independence: no category can be more fundamental than the others. The principle of coherence asks that the categorial co-belonging is not simply the one of the logical axiomatic, of the mythological constructs, or of the simple categorial interdependence: expressibility is just one facet of a categorial architecture worthy of the name. But it is true that the democratic request has preferably to be qualified by logical consistency.

<sup>211</sup> See, e.g., PR 348 "antithesis".

<sup>212</sup> PR 208-209 proposes a very close contextualization with his comment of the verse of a famous hymn of William Henry Monck (inspired by a poem of Henry Francis Lyte) "Abide with me; Fast falls the eventide".

<sup>213</sup> Cf., e.g., Arendt (1978).

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Watzlawick et al. 1967, 195 and 212 evoked supra.

<sup>215</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, q. XLVI art. II.

<sup>216</sup> PR 4; cf. his various principles and fallacies: fallacy of misplaced concreteness, dogmatic fallacy, fallacy of the perfect dictionary.



<sup>217</sup> We owe this valuable insight to Pierre Rodrigo, who exploits it as well in his included paper. On the semantic connection between *lure* and *απατη*, compare the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Liddell-Scott* (1968). Relevant literature includes Vernant et Detienne, 1974 and especially Detienne, 1967.

<sup>218</sup> Rosenhan in Watzlawick 1984, 118.

## Part IV.

# Philosophy of Mind