

# The International Journal for Field-Being

## **Alfred North Whitehead and Language**

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*IJFB*, Vol. 1(1), Part 1, Article No. 14, 2001.

Citation URL: <http://www.iifb.org/ijfb/JMattioli-1-14>

**Spoken language is merely a series of squeaks. Its function is (a) to arouse in the prehending subject some physical feeling indicative of the logical subjects of the proposition, (b) to arouse in the prehending subject some physical feeling which plays the part of the 'physical recognition,' (c) to promote the sublimation of the 'physical recognition' into the conceptual 'predicative feeling,' (d) to promote the integration of the indicative feeling and the predicative feeling into the required propositional feeling ... consider ... 'Socrates is mortal.'**

**—Process and Reality, Part III, Chapter IV, Section VI, 264**

**...the mentality of mankind and the language of mankind created each other. If we like to assume the rise of language as a given fact, then it is not going too far to say that the souls of men are the gift from language to mankind. The account of the sixth day should be written, He [God] gave them speech, and they became souls.**

**—Modes of Thought, Lecture Two - Expression, 41**

- ¶1. The preceding passages reveal not only examples of Alfred North Whitehead's diverse use of linguistic expression, but also clear insight to his attitude towards language and the importance it has in his philosophical project. The unique stylistic prose of the first passage drew sharp criticism from some of Whitehead's peers, on the apparent unintelligibility of his writing, specifically his discourses on metaphysics found in *Process and Reality*.<sup>[1]</sup> In order to understand Whitehead's novel phraseology, one must understand his views of ordinary language, his desire for more precision in philosophical dialectic, and his belief in the need for a revised and enhanced philosophic vocabulary. In this essay, the approach that I will suggest to comprehend and appreciate Whitehead's writings will be the method Whitehead delineated in his book *The Aims of Education*.<sup>[2]</sup> The function of Whitehead's formula in AE is to offer an outline of the progressive developmental levels in a child's education in accordance with the attendant unfolding psychological maturity. The three major stages Whitehead uses for education will be applied to his notions of language. The terms Whitehead uses for the stages in education are romance, precision, and generalization. This essay will attempt to demonstrate that the characteristics in those learning phases correlate to the varied and unique modes of expression in much of Whitehead's philosophical corpus. For coherence and better apprehension of the undertaking of this essay, the categories of romance, precision, and generalization will also be utilized in the explication Whitehead's ideas concerning language.

## The Romance of Language

- ¶2. The three major works used to illustrate Whitehead's writings in the "romance" phase in this essay will be: *Religion in the Making* (RM), *The Aims of Education* (AE), and *Science in the Modern World* (SMW).
- ¶3. In his 1925 Lowell Lectures, compiled in SMW, Whitehead notes in Chapter Five, "The Romantic Reaction," that it is the great literature of the time, specifically poetry, that captures the essence of an era. It also lends a cautionary, and sometimes a reactionary, voice to the almost obscure implications of unfolding social consequences. Whitehead believes the nineteenth century was a time of "muddled thinkers"<sup>[3]</sup> the rays of the Enlightenment were just beginning to dim. According to Whitehead, the poet Matthew Arnold reveals the confused and unsettled characteristics of this era in the last stanza of his poem *Dover Beach*:

- ¶4.           And we are here as on a darkling plain  
              Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
              Where ignorant armies clash by night.[\[4\]](#)
- ¶5.    In a very different vein, Whitehead cites Shelley as a poet not only completely content with the epoch he lived in, but also enamored by the advances of its physical science.[\[5\]](#) Whitehead goes so far as to state that had Shelley been born a hundred years later, he would have been the chemists' version of Newton.[\[6\]](#) The love that Shelley had for the sciences permeates all his poetry, and to illustrate Shelley's captivation with science, Whitehead cites parts of his poem *Prometheus Unbound* to substantiate this claim, especially the imagery of the Earth's declaration, "...the vaporous exultation not to be confined ..."
- ¶6.    Whitehead claims that this is the poetic version of a scientific text that reads, "the expansive force of gases."[\[7\]](#) Whitehead also notes that Shelley proceeds line after line extolling the virtues and beauty of the new scientific discoveries. To miss the role of science in Shelley's works is completely to misinterpret the substance of Shelley's thoughts and works.[\[8\]](#)
- ¶7.    At the opposite end of this spectrum, according to Whitehead, stands Wordsworth. Wordsworth is a poet who is repulsed by science, stating, "... We murder to dissect ..."
- ¶8.    Wordsworth's vindictive remarks towards science are based on his belief that science is "absorbed in abstraction."[\[9\]](#) The rich and full facts of nature, for Wordsworth, cannot be captured by scientific method, for within the "living organism, there is some element that science cannot analyze."[\[10\]](#) Though not a Transcendentalist, Wordsworth seems to hold a similar view of nature as mysterious and transcendent. Whitehead believes that Wordsworth apprehends the "whole of nature" in a "particular instance." Perhaps this is why Wordsworth has the awareness and sensitivity to write such an extraordinary line in reference to a primrose's 'thoughts' as "...too deep for tears."[\[11\]](#) Whitehead considers the first book in Wordsworth's book of poetry, *The Prelude*, not only saturated with the essence of nature, but also a reminder to science that its facts are distortions of the true state of nature.[\[12\]](#)

- ¶9. Whitehead concludes his insightful exposition of the poetry of Shelley and Wordsworth by noting that their works evoke metaphysical questions such as: What are enduring things, and what is the status and meaning of the universe? Whitehead cautions against the historical and rather formulaic answers that have been offered in the past such as God, Brahma, The Absolute, etc.[\[13\]](#) Whitehead ends this chapter by stating that the nature-poetry of the Romantic era was about the extrusion of value in the realm of nature by the science of that epoch.[\[14\]](#)
- ¶10. In the preface of *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead notes that its contents provide an elucidation of the Lowell Lectures (SMW) given the previous year. In these lectures of 1926, Whitehead applies religion to his metaphysical theories, and in particular to his notions of language.
- ¶11. In his first reference to language in *RM*, Whitehead claims that society and language "grew together."[\[15\]](#) It has only been recently, about four thousand years or so, that language had evolved enough to contain an adequate amount of general terms—the type of terms required for higher, or speculative, thought. The medium for preserving and advancing general terms is, according to Whitehead, permanent literature. This literature was able to facilitate the definitions of those general notions, thereby providing "habits" that made generality of thought a viable possibility.[\[16\]](#) Not just "What is that?" but also "Why is that?"
- ¶12. The next observation Whitehead mentions regarding language is radically different from anything else he writes on this topic. It is included in this essay to demonstrate Whitehead's thoroughness of thought on any given topic. In a brief passage, Whitehead examines the ideas of Christ and how they are expressed in his words. Whitehead notes that Christ's sayings are the "lowest abstractions that language is capable of" without them being just the "... fact itself."[\[17\]](#) Christ's words appear more as actions than conceptual assertions, and a "rationalism derived from direct intuition and divorced from dialectic."[\[18\]](#) And, therein lies the power of Christ's words, for according to Whitehead, in their "absence of force" they are imbued with a "decisiveness of a supreme ideal."[\[19\]](#) And thus, the chronological dividing line in Western history, Jesus of Nazareth and his ideas and words, are given, by Whitehead, a cursory yet unique interpretation.

- ¶13. A little further in RM, Whitehead puts forward his notions of literary genius and what constitutes the nature of that term. Here the importance of literature, in the history of the evolutionary rise of human thought, evolves from expression. Expression is a "fundamental sacrament" or the "outward visible sign of inward grace."[\[20\]](#) That 'grace,' for Whitehead, is the intuitive response between the speaker and the listener, wherein the listener "extends his apprehension of the universe by penetrating into the inner nature of the originator of the expression."[\[21\]](#) Yet, expression is more than an intuitive interpretive response, it is creative. Expression is creative in that it is evocative; it evokes an intuition, which would not otherwise emerge in either the giver or the receiver. Whitehead is careful to note that this creative interpretation is an element already within the recipient of the proffered expression; it can't evoke what is not already there.[\[22\]](#) The example Whitehead offers is a tuning fork and a piano, where the tuning fork elicits a response from the piano, but the piano already has in it the string that responds to that note.[\[23\]](#) The originality of expression is then this literary genius. Very few people over the course of human history have demonstrated this particular 'grace.' The expression these people give to the world is something new "once and for all."
- ¶14. Whitehead names Dante, Socrates, Goethe, and Shakespeare as exemplars of this unique gift. Their genius, according to Whitehead, contains two aspects: first, their milieu was specific-Socrates, Athens, Dante, Florence, etc.-but their worldview was universal, and second, their form of expression was unformularized. Although they dealt with aspects of the human condition all people are aware of, these literary geniuses made those conditions new.[\[24\]](#) There was no new discovery of facts, but in expressing their exceptional apprehension of the world, they left behind for posterity novelty. Whitehead claims that the rest of us can analyze their works, and fuse their expressions with our experiences, or we can develop in connection with these people of genius, but we can never go beyond their achievements.[\[25\]](#) The world will see no repeat of a Socrates or a Dante. We are to consider ourselves blessed to have had them reach their maximization of value and to have left behind the evidence of their greatness.
- ¶15. As in the two books previously cited, *The Aims of Education* is also a compilation of Whitehead's lectures. Whitehead delivered the earlier lectures in 1912 at the International Congress of Mathematicians, and the later ones in 1928 at the Business School of Harvard University. Despite the great breadth of time-sixteen years-and the difference in audiences, the work is cohesive and seamless.

- ¶16. In AE, Whitehead outlines the progressive stages in a child's acquisition and mastery of spoken and written language, and the importance of a comprehensive literary curriculum for a "complete" education. This essay will focus on Whitehead's comments on literature as a factor in a well-rounded education and its implication in other areas of knowledge.
- ¶17. Great art and literature, in Whitehead's opinion, "gives vision to our lives," and also has the importance of being the repository of the wisdom of the world.<sup>[26]</sup> It is in the subtle relation between language and feeling, and the ongoing development of the senses, that imbues a person with aesthetic appreciation. But that is not the only function of the classics; they are also seen by Whitehead as a preparatory device for the mind for the advanced study in logic, history, and philosophy.<sup>[27]</sup>
- ¶18. Whitehead considers every language as an "incarnation of the mentality of the race which fashioned it."<sup>[28]</sup> As a result of the particular genesis of each language, there can be no true synonyms between the differing languages, thus rendering all translation as approximation.<sup>[29]</sup> Every word and phrase embodies the soil, the air, the ideas, and the villages of the people that developed their language. Not only is mentality and language inextricably intertwined, they also appear to be, according to Whitehead's claims of linguistic evolution and development, self-identical.
- ¶19. Whitehead would probably argue against so strong a claim, but his statements regarding the lack of true synonyms between languages and verbal expression as a manifestation of a race's mentality argues in favor of such a claim. If that is indeed the case, then Whitehead's use of language and his revision and development of vocabulary in his metaphysics should prove to be a rare opportunity to "see" into the mind of a great philosopher.

## The Precision of Language

- ¶20. The works by Whitehead that will be used in this essay to illustrate his notions of the precision stage of language are Symbolism (S) and *Process and Reality* (PR). Although PR is considered by most, if not all, Whiteheadian scholars, the primary text of Whitehead's metaphysics, Symbolism, will be used in this essay as the primary source in substantiating his notions on the metaphysical aspects of language.
- ¶21. In the very beginning of Symbolism, Whitehead states that...

- ¶22. There are deeper types of symbolism, in a sense artificial, and yet such that we could not get on without them. Language ... is such a symbolism."[\[30\]](#)
- ¶23. Whitehead goes on to note, however, that symbolism is very fallible, and yet is the primary factor in the way we, as human beings, function. Because of its integral role in human affairs, it is essential to examine and expunge, when necessary, symbols that are found to be ineffective or detrimental.[\[31\]](#)
- ¶24. The fundamental symbol in language is the word, either written or spoken. In both forms, a word is a sort of two-way referent.[\[32\]](#) Whitehead uses the example of the word "tree." The word 'tree' can symbolize the external objects we recognize as trees as the meaning of the word "tree," and the external objects, trees, can become the symbol, and the word "tree," the meaning. For most humans the word "tree" is the symbol and the object, tree, the meaning. Whitehead notes, however, that for the poet and other literary artists, the tree becomes a symbol for the word "tree." They are people for whom words refer "symbolically to the visual sights and sounds and emotions" the writer wants to elicit in his or her readers.[\[33\]](#) This leads to what Whitehead refers to as the double symbolic reference of language, where language goes from objects to words on the part of the speaker or writer, and from words back to the objects for the listener or reader.
- ¶25. The relationship of words to things is for Whitehead a subset of a more general fact: our perception of the world. This begins language's tie to Whitehead's fundamental metaphysical concepts Presentational Immediacy and Causal Efficacy. And since language is so intimately linked to perception, according to Whitehead, perception must be analyzed in order to apprehend the function of language more clearly.[\[34\]](#)
- ¶26. Presentational immediacy and causal efficacy are the two modes of perception Whitehead ascribes to our experiences; they objectify the actual things of our environment. Of the two modes of perception, causal efficacy is the mode present in all entities, including inanimate objects. As a "pure" mode of perception, it does not involve consciousness or life, and it transmits feelings that are vague, inarticulate, and massive. The feelings of this mode pervade the entire physical world, and is experienced in humans viscerally—a headache, or the "brute givenness of memory."[\[35\]](#) Presentational immediacy is a mode of perception that is only experienced by "high grade organisms," like humans, for instance. It is the mode that is usually referred to as sense perception due to the fact that its appearance is affected by qualities such as colors, sounds, smells, tastes, etc. (This is the mode that Whitehead claims most philosophers pay attention to, while they completely ignore the mode of causal efficacy [this notation is not found in Symbolism but in *Process and Reality*, 185].)

- ¶27. Humans experience the mode of presentational immediacy by feelings that are vivid, precise, and barren. It is the mode that is an "elaboration upon certain aspects of what is present already in causal efficacy." The mode of presentational immediacy seizes upon the vague emotional feelings in the causal efficacy mode and transforms them into intense qualities that are then "projected into the contemporary region of that percipient occasion." We not only feel our pain, but we can also locate it, grade it, and precisely describe it. In the mode of presentational immediacy, we begin to objectify things in our experience.[\[36\]](#)
- ¶28. Whitehead claims that causal efficacy arises from without, the vague feelings of this mode of perception disclose the character of the world from which we emerge and around which we form ourselves. Since causal efficacy arises from the past, it is from the experiences in this mode of perception that "enriches with emotion and purpose its presentation of the contemporary world: and it bequeaths its character to the future."[\[37\]](#)
- ¶29. Presentational immediacy, by contrast, arises from within us and arouses "intensifications and inhibitions and diversions" which humans accept or reject.[\[38\]](#) It is only when both modes are present there is, what is commonly called, ordinary awareness. It is in this "mixed" mode that symbols become apparent to the percipient. Symbols not only become apparent, but we also understand their meanings. Whitehead believes that a symbol does not create its meaning; it "already exists for us in its own right."[\[39\]](#)
- ¶30. The two modes of perception, the foundation for our recognition of symbols and their meanings, re-connect with language by way of the impact that the "enveloping suggestiveness and emotional efficacy" of words and phrases have on us.[\[40\]](#) Whitehead also suggests that in language there is a particular vagueness of symbolism. A word carries historical content: its various meanings throughout the course of its existence (the OED always serial dates meanings of words), and its usage and status in literature over the course of its existence. In this manner, words also gather emotional content; its past history is carried over symbolically for its current use. Examples of the rehabilitation words are numerous. It is often a marginalized group in a society that re-appropriates a word that the dominant group has used against them. For example homosexual males now use the word "queer" to describe themselves in slogans to promote their rights. The intent of such a process is to neutralize the negative emotional content of that word.

- ¶31. Whitehead ends his treatise on symbolism by stating that no highly evolved and complex society of "high grade organisms" could exist if their systems of symbols were not effective; symbolic systems that range from works of art to codified law. He also exhorts that community to not just carefully preserve their symbolic systems, but to constantly revise and re-examine their code.[\[41\]](#)
- ¶32. *Process and Reality*, published in 1929, is Whitehead's primary metaphysical work. It is considered by Whitehead scholars to be the cornerstone of his entire corpus. It is also the primary target of the criticism leveled at Whitehead, specifically the style of his prose. For those reasons, it will be used as a source for a deeper understanding of Whitehead's approach to language.
- ¶33. In the preface of PR, Whitehead lists nine "myths and fallacious procedures" that he believes most characterize nineteenth century philosophy. His intention is to "repudiate" these habits.[\[42\]](#) The second "myth" Whitehead cites is the "...trust in language as an adequate expression of propositions."[\[43\]](#) This statement not only points out the problem of language as a medium for doing philosophy, but also sets the foundation for Whitehead's approach towards language.
- ¶34. Whitehead acknowledges that language is the necessary tool for philosophy. Although this tool works admirably in literature, it "breaks down" exactly at the point where metaphysics begins.[\[44\]](#) Language, as tool, is almost incapable of expressing the required generalities of terms that metaphysics demands, and therefore, Whitehead believes, philosophers cannot and will never be able to formulate complete metaphysical principles.[\[45\]](#)
- ¶35. Scattered throughout PR Whitehead highlights and illustrates language's role as a hindrance in the philosophic process, specifically the metaphysics. He also delineates how most metaphysicians fall into language's traps. In Part Two, chapter seven of PR, Whitehead states that the Greek philosophers only used common language in its generalizations and became victims of some of language's many errors. An example Whitehead uses to illustrate the flaws inherent in language is the statement, "the stone is grey." From this simple proposition, the Greeks evolved a generalization that the actual world is a collection of primary substances that contains universal qualities such as, greyness, largeness, etc. Whitehead claims that this notion of substantiality and its participation in universal qualities has always influenced speculative thought and unfortunately continues to.[\[46\]](#)

- ¶36. There are two misconceptions inherent in the proposition "the stone is grey": first, there is the "concept of vacuous actuality without subjective experience," and second, the concept of a universal quality inherent within a substance. Whitehead agrees that both misconceptions have "pragmatic" use and that this is what language was primarily formed to do-give expression to such concepts. It is for this reason that Whitehead states that, "language ... penetrates but a short distance into the principles of metaphysics."[\[47\]](#) The chief reason for language's inability to pierce the depths of metaphysical thought adequately is its almost exclusive reference to the perceptual mode of presentational immediacy in its attempt to interpret symbolic reference. Whitehead uses the proposition "We see the stone" as an example of language's difficulty. "Stone" is really an interpretation of stone-image. If we say "We see the stone-image with our eyes," it is then an interpretation that integrates the causal efficacy of the "antecedent eye in the vision," the presentational immediacy of the stone-image itself, and the presentational immediacy of "the eye-strain."[\[48\]](#) Here, Whitehead, in an effort to clarify ordinary language, is using "words and phrases ... foreign to their ordinary usage."[\[49\]](#) His primary purpose is to lessen the inherent ambiguities of language.
- ¶37. Whitehead believes that propositional ambiguities are so deep-rooted in language; it is completely futile to make a claim for a single meaning of any verbal statement. "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" is used by Whitehead to illustrate this point. The words "Caesar" and "Rubicon" are actual entities in the actual world, and the word "has" can be viewed from numerous perspectives of the judging subject, such as, a retired soldier who fought with Caesar and is now reflecting on a past event, or a modern traveler reflecting on that past event while standing near the Rubicon, a small stream in Italy.[\[50\]](#) (The phrase "cross the Rubicon" has its own independent meaning in modern usage-to take the "final step," a limit, or a boundary line.) Whitehead further states that a proposition has no "particularity of feeling." Instead, a proposition is a "datum for feeling, awaiting a subject feeling it." In other words, the proposition "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" could never have been "felt" by Hannibal, or anyone else who died before Caesar crossed that stream.[\[51\]](#)
- ¶38. To end this segment of Whitehead's considerations on language in metaphysics, it seems appropriate to quote a passage from Section One, Chapter One of PR"
- ¶39. But no language can be anything but elliptical, requiring a leap of the imagination to understand its meaning in its relevance to immediate experience ... no verbal statement is the adequate expression of a proposition... deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably.[\[52\]](#)

## The Generalization of Language

- ¶40. To elucidate Whitehead's generalized views of language that integrate his metaphysical notions of language in PR and S we now turn to *Adventures of Ideas* (AI) and *Modes of Thought* (MT). These two texts are also collections of lectures that follow, in chronological order, Whitehead's previously cited works. In AI, Whitehead expounds upon his philosophy of language in a more generalized way than in PR. In MT, he brings to a close his dialogue on language's impact not only on philosophy, but its role in the rise of human development and evolution.
- ¶41. In the section entitled "Philosophic Method" of AI, Whitehead writes that he has reached the "heart of the topic," and the topic is the "...methods that can be usefully employed in the pursuit of speculative philosophy." Before he begins this discussion, he poses a question:
- ¶42. What is the store-house of that crude evidence on which philosophy should base its discussion, and in what terms should discussion be expressed?[\[53\]](#)
- ¶43. This "crude" evidence is found in three main sources: language is the first source, the second is social institutions, and the third source of evidence is found in action.
- ¶44. According to Whitehead, language delivers the evidence for philosophic discussion in three major ways; first, there is the meaning of words, second, there is the meaning of words in grammatical forms, and finally, meanings that go beyond individual words and grammatical forms-the "meanings miraculously revealed in great literature."[\[54\]](#) After considering language's integral role in the philosophic endeavor, Whitehead in the next sentence restates the usual warning about language's inadequacy due to its incomplete and fragmentary nature, and he then goes on to write that language "merely registers a stage ... beyond ape-mentality."[\[55\]](#) This comment, taken superficially, appears extremely harsh, but viewed in the context that language's strength, which resides in the mode of presentational immediacy-a mode of perception that can only relay information that is precise, vivid, and barren-Whitehead's description of language is in keeping with his metaphysics.

- ¶45. Whitehead notes that Plato too acknowledged the limitations of language in his dialogue *The Sophist*. The mark of the sophist for Plato is "mere dialectic"; linguistic discussion should only be a tool in any philosophic enterprise, never a master. Whitehead then reiterates his claim that one of the errors of the philosophic method is that an "uncritical trust" is the adequacy of language. Whitehead also states that to hold the belief that there is a stable and set philosophic vocabulary is absurd.[\[56\]](#) He continues by noting that other sciences constantly revise and append their various vocabularies. Philosophy should be no exception if it is to thrive or be relevant within the operations of civilization.[\[57\]](#)
- ¶46. To illustrate the point that philosophy has no closed set of technical terms, Whitehead explains the reasoning and etymology behind a new philosophic word he originated, "conrescence." It is a word derived from a Latin verb that means "growing together." Conrescence also suggests the participle "concrete," which ordinarily connotes a complete physical reality. Therefore, conrescence is able to convey to the recipient a notion of "many things acquiring complete complex unity." What that word does not convey is the creative novelty involved in Whitehead's new use of the word. It omits the notion of the discrete character emerging in the "conrescence" of the original data.[\[58\]](#)
- ¶47. To illustrate the problem of how ordinary words fail in the task of advancing philosophic discussion, Whitehead takes a close look at the word "together." Whitehead charges that "together" is a generic term used to denote an "endless variety of species," and as such is one of the most misused words in philosophy. To claim that there is only one true definition of this word, regardless of the diverse contexts in which it is employed, is "sophistical." To lessen the ambiguities of the terms for a philosophic generalization, (a final actuality in the "guise of a generalization of an act of experience"), Whitehead offers a solution, which superficially appears as an overabundance and confusing set of terms-together, creativity, conrescence, prehension, feeling, subjective form, data, actuality, becoming, and process. Whitehead states that whatever ambiguities are inherent in each one of these terms, when used together the terms will correct "each other."[\[59\]](#)
- ¶48. In MT, Whitehead continues his criticism of language's general terms as used in philosophic discussion. The word "and," and any other word used as a conjunction, is a "nest of ambiguity" and a "death-trap" for reasoning. Any sentence containing a conjunctive word must be very closely read, and re-read. Whitehead notes that there are also certain words not formally considered conjunctions, but convey conjunctive meanings, such as the word "class."[\[60\]](#) These words also warrant close attention.

- ¶49. The greater portion of MT, however, reviews language in a broader and more generous light. In it Whitehead states that language is the most efficacious way to express thought, and without its aid, retention, and recall (memory), the entwining of thought into intricate complexity would be severely limited. Language also empowers freedom of thought which "releases" the human being "from the bondage of the immediacies of mood and circumstance."[\[61\]](#) Whitehead also states that a philosophic outlook is the very foundation of thought and life itself-"as we think, we live."[\[62\]](#) Whitehead goes on to state that the development of this philosophic thought is an appeal to human experience. It is human experience found in law, moral and sociological habits, literature, the arts, and the sciences.[\[63\]](#)
- ¶50. To conclude Whitehead's generalization phase of language, its importance and interconnectedness with human mentality, the opening quote of this essay from MT best captures Whitehead's view. He states that mentality and language of "mankind" created each other, "... the souls of men are the gift from language to mankind ... He [God] gave them speech, and they became souls."[\[64\]](#) Despite the many severe limitations of language that Whitehead exposed within philosophy, he concedes that language is the condition, or gift, that makes us human.

## A Brief Conclusion

- ¶51. The attempt of this essay was to discover Whitehead's philosophy of language embedded throughout his works, and present them in a cohesive and an "intelligible" way. The approach was to separate Whitehead's various notions regarding language, and place them within the appropriate stages of his philosophical project. The explications and illustrations of his notions of language within the context of those different stages was to understand, what would otherwise seem, apparent discrepancies regarding his view of language and its role in philosophy. Perhaps, with the background information regarding Whitehead's vision of language, together with the understanding of his purpose in redesigning and re-visioning language, the difficulty in comprehending Whitehead's concepts and prose in PR and his other works, will have been slightly mitigated for those who plan to begin a study of Whitehead.

## END NOTES

1. One of Whitehead's sharpest critics is Professor Wilbur Urban of Yale University. See Wilbur Urban , *Library of Living Philosophers* , New York: Tudor Publishing Co. (1951), 303.
2. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* , New York: Free Press (1967), 17.
3. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* , New York: Free Press (1967), 82.
6. *ibid.*, 84.
4. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* , New York: Free Press (1967), 82.
5. *ibid.*, 84.
14. *ibid.*, 95.
7. *ibid.*, 83.
8. *ibid.*, 84.
9. *ibid.*, 83.
10. *ibid.*, 83.
11. *ibid.*, 83.
12. *ibid.*, 83.
13. *ibid.*, 92.
19. Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* , New York: Fordham University Press (1996), 57.

- [15.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* , New York: Free Press (1967), 34.
- [16.](#) *ibid.*, 35.
- [17.](#) *ibid.*, 57.
- [18.](#) *ibid.*, 57.
- [23.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* , New York: Fordham University Press (1996), 133.
- [20.](#) *ibid.*, 131.
- [21.](#) *ibid.*, 132.
- [22.](#) *ibid.*, 133.
- [24.](#) *ibid.*, 135.
- [25.](#) *ibid.*, 134.
- [26.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* , New York: Free Press (1967), 58.
- [27.](#) *ibid.*, 63.
- [28.](#) *ibid.*, 66.
- [29.](#) *ibid.*, 66.
- [30.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect* , New York: Fordham University Press (1985), 2.
- [31.](#) *ibid.*, 88.
- [32.](#) *ibid.*, 10.

- [33.](#) *ibid.*, 11.
- [34.](#) *ibid.*, 57.
- [35.](#) Donald W. Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, Chicago: Chicago University Press (1981), 236.
- [36.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect*, New York: Fordham University Press (1985), 21.
- [37.](#) *ibid.*, 58.
- [38.](#) *ibid.*, 58.
- [39.](#) *ibid.*, 57.
- [41.](#) *ibid.*, 87.
- [40.](#) *ibid.*, 10.
- [42.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, New York: Free Press (1978), xiii.
- [43.](#) *ibid.*, xiii.
- [44.](#) *ibid.*, 11.
- [45.](#) *ibid.*, 4.
- [46.](#) *ibid.*, 158.
- [47.](#) *ibid.*, 167.
- [48.](#) *ibid.*, 173.
- [49.](#) *ibid.*, 11.

- [50.](#) *ibid.*, 195.
- [51.](#) *ibid.*, 259.
- [52.](#) *ibid.*, 13.
- [53.](#) Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* , New York: Free Press (1961), 226.
- [54.](#) *ibid.*, 226.
- [55.](#) *ibid.*, 226.
- [56.](#) *ibid.*, 228.
- [57.](#) *ibid.*, 229.
- [58.](#) *ibid.*, 236.
- [59.](#) *ibid.*, 236.
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ISSN 1548-6001

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