

Veronika Krajičková, *The Problem of the Fixity of Tables: Virginia Woolf as a Non-Dualist and Process-Oriented Thinker*, PhD dissertation

Veronika Krajičková's treatment of Virginia Woolf is unique and original, namely in that she makes an attempt to distil some form of personal philosophy from Woolf's writings and juxtapose it with the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Although contemporaries, it is difficult to speculate whether Woolf was actually aware of Whitehead's philosophy and Veronika Krajičková makes no claim that there was any sort of direct influence. This makes, however, her insights and conclusions all the more interesting. She carefully traces the shared beliefs and ideas of the writer and the philosopher: the rejection of dualism, namely in the form established by the modern science built on the Cartesian model: subject-object, animate-inanimate, human-non-human.

In the first part of the thesis, Woolf's philosophy is being discussed as it evolves from a new definition of the notion of things, which are seen as clusters of events, actually not separate from the perceiving subject but interrelated with it. In the second part, attention is paid to Woolf's effort to overcome individual identity and to achieve a more inclusive and collective one. This effort is — quite rightly, in my view — linked to Whitehead's philosophy of organism, which sees the universe as potentially interconnected in the process of concrescence. This idea is examined especially in the penultimate chapter of the thesis, which deals with Woolf's departure from anthropocentrism and her efforts to describe a world perceived without a self. The last chapter of the thesis then focuses on Woolf's outlook on modern society — an analysis that can be well read alongside Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* to provide a plastic picture of cultural discourse in the early twentieth century, a picture that seems to undermine the traditional classification and differentiation between modernism and post-modernism and that seems to suggest a stronger continuity of thought, represented by Woolf's and Whitehead's relevance for our current ways of thought.

In the conclusion, Veronika Krajičková uses Catriona Livingstone's concept of a "feedback loop", which delineates a trajectory in which a concept developed in science or philosophy is borrowed by a writer of imaginative literature, deployed in a slightly different way and then returned to the domain of science in an enriched manner, as it may be applied slightly differently than the original concept (by the way, this "loop" nicely dovetails on Deleuze and Guattari's definition of philosophy as invention of concepts) and the author of the thesis quotes Livingstone's example of modernist fluid identity inspired by the subatomic particles of quantum physics, which are on the one hand self-sufficient particles and, on the other hand, emit waves. It through this feedback loop that she explains the

interconnection between Whitehead and Woolf, adding that Woolf might have known Whitehead's writings through Bertrand Russell.

The thesis has several very strong aspects which I will try to summarise in the following lines. First and foremost, it is a very insightful, original and sympathetic reading of Virginia Woolf. The thesis focuses on several carefully selected texts but the author demonstrates thorough knowledge of Woolf and her interpretation can be applied on the whole of Woolf's oeuvre.

The philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead has seen some revival of interest recently and it is quite understandable why. His legacy has been examined mainly in the fields of theology, ontology and aesthetics. In literary theory and criticism, to my knowledge, the legacy of Whitehead's philosophy has not been examined and used so far. Therefore, the present thesis could serve as a springboard for further scholarly investigation.

What is especially fruitful for discussions of literature is Whitehead's concept of event and his particular take on Platonism, which is something that Veronika Krajičková uses to much benefit in her thesis, namely in the examination of interactions and interrelations, as well as in the emphasis on the constantly changing self.

It is quite laudable that Veronika Krajičková avoids the easy path of applying an interpretation of Whitehead's philosophy on Woolf's creative output and instead opts for a careful examination of several topics (Woolf's concept of things, panpsychism and post-humanism, process-oriented identity, criticism of anthropocentrism) where she uses her knowledge of Whitehead's philosophy. In this she does not limit her scope to Whitehead only but shows awareness of Whitehead's legacy as it has been developed by Deleuze and Guattari (Pierre Bourdieu and Ladislav Hejdlánek could have been mentioned too).

The thesis is well written, arguments well founded and explanation clear and transparent. Reservations I have none, save doubts about the final sentence of the conclusion which states that "Whitehead and Woolf anticipate modern ideas and orient their thought towards a better future and a more just societal organisation". I do not think this is exactly the case and perhaps it should deserve some discussion. Also I would like to ask the author whether she sees a writer, in the post-war British and American fiction, who might be said to develop the concepts and ideas that she identified in Woolf. And my last question concerns the use of Whitehead's philosophy for literary theory: Does the author of the thesis think that the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead could serve as a foundation for some new kind of literary theory?

Práci vřele doporučuji k obhajobě.

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