

**WHOLENESS IDEA AND THE PRINCİPLE OF ALTERNATION
İN PRAGMATIC PHİLOSOPHERS AND THE PHİLOSOPHY OF W.
E. HOCKİNG**

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ABSTRACT

This article tries to examine ‘wholeness’ and ‘alternation’ in the philosophy of pragmatic philosophers and W.E. Hocking. The article tries at the sama time to show the emphasis of ‘wholeness’ in these philosophers. So, it investigates ‘the fallacy of misplaced concreteness’ of A. N. Whitehead, ‘the principle of alternation’ of W.E.Hocking, and ‘wholeness’ with special reference to all these philosophers.

Key Words: Wholeness, alternation, misplaced concreteness, value.

**PRAGMATİK FİLOZOFLAR VE W. E. HOCKİNG FESEFESİNDE
BÜTÜNLÜK FİKRİ VE ALTERNASYON (MÜNAVEBE) İLKESİ**

ÖZET

Bu makale pragmatik filozoflarda ve William Ernest Hocking felsefesinde ‘bütünlük’ ve ‘alternasyon’u (münavebe) incelemektedir. Makale, aynı zamanda, bu filozoflarda ‘bütünlük’ vurgusunu göstermeye çalışmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, A. N. Whitehead’in ‘yanlış konumlandırılmış somutlaştırma hatası’, W. E. Hocking’in ‘alternasyon ilkesi’ ve bütün bu filozoflardaki ‘bütünlük’ vurgusu soruşturulmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bütünlük fikri, alternasyon (münavebe), yanlış konumlandırılmış somutluluk, değer.

This article¹ is an analytical investigation (with special reference to the principle of alternation and the whole-idea and in the light of process philosophy) which based upon the fact that human being is in need of unity and wholeness; every branch of the social sciences examines only one different aspect of him/her and then should take note of the whole of one’s life and

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should not claim superiority over other branches. Every branch of (social) sciences must be pursued in alternation.

The life of human being has the wholeness. Separations about human being and his/her life, like soul-body, sensation-reflection, fact-value, theory-practice, reflection-action are the components of wholeness of human being. For investigation of the person, it is necessary to examine these aspects. Towards this aim, established disciplines, sciences use their own strategies, methods, and technics.

The problem of this article is that it is a fallacy to think one of these aspects with which appropriate branch of discipline or science deal is the representation of wholeness of human being. It would be worse to think this situation with respect to every branch of sciences. This is, according to A. N. Whitehead, the ***fallacy of misplaced concreteness***.

For the mental unity, relation, and coherence it is necessary to organise sciences. This also stems from wholeness requirement. The ***idea of wholeness*** is to take into consideration the whole, the parts of which we deal. This idea is in constant use but easily ignored because it is regularly what we think *with* and not what we think *of*. It is the reservoir of all values. It involves what-is-man-idea and what-kind-of-a-world-are-we-living-in-idea. This idea is important, because it provides a frame for progress and development. To fill in the frame, one should turn to the part and deal with it.

The relation of the part with whole and with the other parts should be borne in mind while we deal with sciences. This is according to ***the principle of alternation*** (of W. E. Hocking). Alternation between whole and part is a quanon of this principle. So, neither is anything without the other.

In this article, as it is predicted, there are two central terms: wholeness and alternation. I will discuss these terms with special reference to their two dimensions; namely theoretical and practical.

In theoretical dimension, we will cover three aspects of this matter. These are (i) the meaning of philosophy; its implications, its content and comprehension, main branches of philosophy. (ii) Philosophical criteria; rationality, consistency, objectivity, and comprehensiveness. (iii) The emphasis of wholeness in pragmatism.

In practical dimension, there are a few points which will be examined and analysed. These are, for instance, the need of interdisciplinary studies, the acute need of the ethics' of various disciplines, the location of ethics versus science in the modern philosophy, the emergency of post-modern situations, the understandings of human being unilaterally in each branch of science, the implications of modern concept of rationality and so on.

Theoretically, philosophy is the study of the nature and meaning of existence, reality, knowledge, goodness, beauty etc. From this, it is obvious that philosophy has some branches and includes them. They are ontology, epistemology, logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics etc. So, philosophy is concerned with the problems about these branches. But what makes philosophy philosophical (qualities) criteria. In other words, philosophy is a point of view which includes rationality, consistency, objectivity, and comprehensiveness. Then we may not say that every point of view is philosophical view. The philosophy of a 'thing' (or a 'sphere') is tantamount to examine the 'thing' with respect to the philosophical criteria, with special reference to the every branch of philosophy; i.e., epistemology, ethics, logic etc.

Before Renaissance, philosophy had included the sciences. It seems that the understanding goes back to Aristotle. Philosophy was the general name of scientific knowledge. (The sciences were divided into theoretical sciences and practical sciences. Theoretical sciences/knowledge were subdivided into first philosophy, physics, and mathematics, and practical sciences/knowledge into ethics, politics and etc.).² And the philosophy had implied the 'wholeness' in this way or other. In engaging with these sciences or one of these sciences in taking its wholeness into consideration was seen as an activity of philosophy, activity of science, and activity of virtue (wisdom). After the Renaissance, after the independence of sciences from philosophy, every science has a philosophy or it relies on a philosophy. This means that each science is performed in taking note of philosophical criteria and the branches of it. Then every science implies the wholeness. 'Wholeness' is the result of philosophical criteria, especially consistency principle of philosophy. And every science implies especially ethics. Ethics is an indispensable branch of philosophy.

As for the emphasis of wholeness in pragmatism, the idea of wholeness is sine qua non of this philosophy. Pragmatism is an American approach to philosophy. It is an approach of philosophy. There are three famous philosophers whom we may call pragmatists. They are C. S. Pierce, W. James, and J. Dewey. They are, at the same time, scientists in the full and technical sense of the term. There are also among them Alfred North Whitehead, C. Hartshorne, and William Ernest Hocking.

Pragmatism emphasizes the close relation between theory and practice, and between thought and action.

² Kerferd, G.B., "Aristotle", (in Paul Edwards-Ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 1), Macmillan Comp., New York 1967, p. 154.

The father of pragmatism is *C. S. Pierce*. He is not only the father of the philosophical movement known as pragmatism, but also a logician, a working scientist (he spent thirty years actively engaged in scientific research for the US Coast Survey) and a mathematician.³ There is a close connection between his personal experience of science and his pragmatic philosophy.

According to him, pragmatism is a philosophical method and a means of clarifying ideas. The meaning of intellectual conception consists of practical consequences of that conception. All of these consequences constitute the whole meaning of the conception. The practical consequences in question refer principally to empirical verification, then the conception should be quitted as meaningless if it is not verified.⁴

In Peirce's pragmatism, there exist actual, outer counterparts of our thoughts: otherwise, there would be no feasibility of empirical verification of our ideas. The appeal to realism is fortified by the accomplishment of the empirical sciences which continuously appeal realism in their search for patterns of regularity in the universe.⁵

W. James, like Pierce, was not only a philosopher; he was also engaged in anatomy and physiology. His *radical empiricism*, which may be called his pragmatism, consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalized conclusion. This form of empiricism, as different from traditional British empiricism, widens the scope of experience to include not just individual things but also the relations between those things.⁶ His emphasis on the experience, and the process is concerned with the wholeness. He says "the whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions"⁷, "the entire man, who feels all needs by turns, will take nothing as an equivalent for life but the fullness of life itself"⁸, "we need the whole, and the particulars in the whole"⁹.

The third main figure of pragmatism is *J. Dewey*. He is known as an American philosopher. But he is also engaged in education, social sciences, aesthetics, and political theory and practice. His form of pragmatism is called

³ Potter, Vincent G., "Charles Sanders Pierce", (in Marcus G. Singer-Ed., *American Philosophy*), Cambridge Univ. Press, Melbourne 1988, p. 21.

⁴ Williams, John Reynold, *Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion*, Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, Canada 1977, p. 51.

⁵ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁶ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 54; James, William, *Pragmatism*, Dover Publications, New York 1995, p. 17.

⁷ Jones, Peter, "William James", in Marcus G. Singer (Ed.), *American Philosophy*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Melbourne 1988, p. 48.

⁸ Jones, *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁹ Jones, *ibid.*, p. 68; James, *Pragmatism*, p. 49.

Instrumentalism. This concept is especially and mainly about *operative, active, and instrumental* functions of knowledge.

His philosophy tried to overcome many serious divisions within experience between self and world, soul and body, nature and God, knower and known, experience and nature. His chief goal is to eliminate these divisions. His view is that these divisions which is by way of isolation, are not primary and irreducible.

Dewey applied his pragmatic experimentalism to all aspects of human activity. According to him, although it is latent, there is an idea that the parts of a whole, as in the case of the human organism, are to be examined in the view of their relation and contribution to the whole. In addition that there is a favored treatment of subject matters as composed of interdependent components shaping or guiding to 'organic unity', and there is a powerful intellectual and emotional ardor for unification.¹⁰

Emphasis of process in pragmatism is very important. But there is at the same time a philosophy called process philosophy. The main philosopher of process philosophy is *A. N. Whitehead*. He is also a mathematician, logician and a philosopher of science.

He extended the notion of process to all of reality.¹¹ Whitehead is an empiricist like the other pragmatists. But his form of empiricism is called by himself "*philosophy of Organism*". In his philosophy, all elements of nature, including consciousness, are essentially interrelated and the parts of one organic whole.¹²

Whitehead's "**Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness**" is committed when one ascribes concrete reality to the object of the abstractive process.¹³ It is only the casual error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete. The fallacy is about to accept an abstract belief, opinion, or concept as a physical or concrete reality. Some examples of the specific abstractions to which concreteness has been assigned are substance, the subject-object dichotomy,¹⁴ and the notion of that a

¹⁰ Thayer, H.S., "John Dewey", in Marcus G. Singer (Ed.), *American Philosophy*, Melbourne: Cambridge Uni. Press, p. 71.

¹¹ Williams, *Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 63.

¹² Williams, *ibid.*, p. 62.

¹³ Whitehead, Alfred North, *Science and the Modern World*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge 1925, p. 58.

¹⁴ Williams, *Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Religion*, p. 61.

concrete physical object in the universe can be described simply in a spatial or temporal extension.¹⁵

Hocking, who was influenced chiefly by W. James and J. Royce, engaged in philosophy and studied civil engineering.¹⁶

Hocking agrees with aforesaid philosophers that there is an organic union of idea with feeling. According to him, our idea of the whole is easily ignored since it is not what we are thinking *of*, but it is regularly what we think *with*. However it includes the world-reality and life-reality. His example to clarify is that: if we support Jones for President rather than Smith, it is –we say– because Jones is the better man. And what is the measure of this value? We approve of Jones’ policies; he agrees with our foreign-policy-idea and our what-is-good-for-America-idea. But such agreement inevitably, although unobtrusively, involves our what-is-man-idea and our what-kind-of-a-world-are-we-living-in-idea.¹⁷ In his philosophy our whole-idea is in use constantly and is the source of our values.¹⁸

The idea of the wholeness is a working element in our thinking and we know only the whole-*ness* of our experience. Life necessitates a rough combining in both our thoughts and our actions. Each of us needs whole-*ness* for our moral integrity.¹⁹ Hocking’s idea of whole is closely connected with his Principle of Alternation.

The principle of alternation, so far as daily life is concerned, is not unknown. Hocking’s view is that man naturally deals with each of the various goods which go to constitute a balanced existence in order as if it were an only and adequate object. Man does not attempt to follow them all, or many, immediately. Although all good things belong together doubtlessly, each of them ought to be pursued separately. But deducing from the parts to the whole is difficult. In other words, it is hard to see indispensable alternation between *whole* and the all partial objects. The whole has to become a different object of quest, like a part.²⁰

With this principle, Hocking attempts to overcome old dualisms such as soul and body, form and matter, God and world, reflection and action, form

¹⁵ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁶ Gilman, Richard C., “Hocking, William Ernest”, in Paul Edwards (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 4, Macmillan Co., New York 1967, p. 46.

¹⁷ Rouser, Leroy S., *Within Human Experience The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking*, Harvard Uni. Press, Cambridge, 1969, p. 80.

¹⁸ Hocking, William Ernest, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1950, p. 131.

¹⁹ Rouser, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

²⁰ Hocking, *op.cit.*, p. 405.

and substance. They belong each other but they should be pursued separately and in alternation. Because man can not go on both at once, with success. Each best finds its adequate effect on the other if each has its time of attention cordially. Each have to be obtained in its own way and time, by some degree of distinct attention.²¹

To follow out this theory, Hocking treats of art, and knowledge. There is a difference between technique and the spirit in every art. One cares little for one without the other. However man is aware of the fact that technique have to be cultivated as if for its sake alone, for it has its own right, and that the spirit has its own moment, in the intervals of technical study, and it represents *the whole*.²² In this place the whole alternates with the parts.²³

According to Hocking, the art of obtaining knowledge does not differ from other arts in this respect. "We know what the tools for intellectual discovery are –facts in infinite variety and extent, measurements, classifications, knowledge of all existing theories: he who would win truth must fill himself as full as possible of science, of history, of social motives, of the immense richness of the cosmos. But we know too that there comes a moment when these very things, his necessary means, become his poisons: this is the moment at which they become *himself*. The man becomes identical with his learning, is nothing but his learning; he cannot use it because he has lost sight of the thing it is *not*, he has forgotten what it is *for*. His technique cannot serve him unless he can see beyond it. That self must be withdrawn and re-oriented: it must turn its back upon itself, and revert to *the whole*."²⁴

This practical requirement is fixed in the very categories of the science. One finds the simplest form of alternation in the psychology of ones knowing processes in which the whole is one member. Knowing, as a process in time, has to work not only between fact and fact, part and part of experience, but also between all such parts and some conception of the whole. There is the work of hypothesis, the alternation between induction and deduction, beside all the work of observation.²⁵ The scientist is engaged in phenomena; but beside the phenomena, there should be the concept of *substance*, as *an other object* of necessary attention, in some form or other (whether of matter, or energy, or law, or soul). Any concrete knowledge of a society, a race, an age, etc., should be acquired by a similar intection of categories: it is necessary to *extend*

²¹ Hocking, *ibid.* p., 406.

²² Hocking, *ibid.* p., 407.

²³ Hocking, *ibid.* p., 408.

²⁴ Hocking, *ibid.* p., 408.

²⁵ Hocking, *ibid.*, p. 408.

knowledge, on the one hand, and to *deepen* on the other; in order to deepen there should be an attempt to grasp the ‘spirit’ of things, their principle, formula, essence, -in brief, their *one*, their whole. This procedure is valid for our knowledge of individual men. If I wish to know a person, I have to pursue acquaintance in two directions: trying to know him in what he does, and trying to know him by the pursuit of his central ‘substance’, by the unity from which all these plural deeds are derived as well.²⁶

Hocking says “the knowledge of the greater whole evidently follows the same principle as the knowledge of these lesser wholes.”²⁷ Person’s world is ‘experience’ and ‘life’ at its circumference; it is ‘substance’ and ‘reality’ at its center. Person have to know both facets in turn, and understand them as s/he can together. His/her total picture of this world is drawn like an artist’s sketch –not by a straight line, but by a series of lines which are wrong and broken in their course by repeating to the (undrawn) idea.²⁸

Hocking’s view is that we find the principle of alternation in its full meaning, in the *history of the will*. Because this principle is best seen in this history. “In all our practical living we human beings are pursuing some total good under shapes and by means which are inadequate to it, and so partly false to it. We are obliged from time to time to reject what we have done, to withdraw our forward-moving efforts, and revert to the whole: not because of the *fact* of error (for there are errors which may be remedied on the spot without change of direction), but because of the *type* of error, - it is an error which involves not only our tools, but our *selves*, the operators.²⁹ We begin to get into our own way and so to defeat our own work. We can find no radical remedy except in getting rid of that self; and no radical way of abandoning that self except by reverting to the whole.”³⁰

It goes without saying that the principle of alternation and the wholeness idea are the key elements in the philosophy of W. E. Hocking.

In practical aspect, there are some facts which show the need of wholeness and the principle of alteration. Some of them are the location of ethics versus science in the modern philosophy, the understandings of human being unilaterally in each branch of science, the implications of modern concept of rationality, the need of interdisciplinary studies, the acute need of the ethics of various disciplines, the appearance of post-modern situations and so on.

²⁶ Hocking, *ibid.*, p. 409.

²⁷ Hocking, *ibid.*, p. 409.

²⁸ Hocking, *ibid.*, p. 410.

²⁹ Hocking, *ibid.*, p. 410.

³⁰ Hocking, *ibid.*, p. 411.

To begin with, as for placing ethics against science, trade, art, civilization etc., in the history of philosophy, remember Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*, which Adam Smith owed much, with its slogan "private vices, public benefits."³¹

Although his economic tenets are certainly more thoroughly developed than his moral theories, his philosophy has an important outcome against ethics and strengthens egoist-hedonist tendencies. Mandeville presented his economic doctrines in his moralizing poem, "The Grumbling Hive". The bees in the poem have many vices, however their society is a prosperous one. Mandeville's notion of vice is a threefold one. "First, he has in mind such character traits as envy, vanity, love of luxury, and fickleness in diet, furniture, and dress... Secondly, Mandeville calls vice that behaviour which is necessary to profitable trade... Third, Mandeville counts crime as a vice that provides public benefits. Thieves are valuable... Mandeville may therefore conclude, "The worst of all the Multitude / Did something for the Common Good."³²

Secondly, each branch of science which is concerned about human being directly or indirectly, examines and explains (developes theories about) the human being in its own aspect. This is not unnatural and abnormal. What which is unnatural and abnormal is to forget this fact (this limited aspect) and to generalize this aspect to all of human being. For example, understanding of human being as *homo economicus* is the only one of the sample of this limited standpoint. Because, for instance, human being is not only *homo economicus* but also *homo ludens*.³³ 'Play' is accepted as one of the basic human goods in the natural law theory of John Finnis whose formulation is one of the main natural law theories.³⁴

Thirdly, modern concept of rationality has some weak points. Two of them are divisionism (between, for instance, spirit and matter, self and world, soul and body etc.) and reductionism (for example, spirit into matter, soul into body etc.). These two elements damage the interconnectedness of life's basic elements and their interrelatedness. This may be due to use of rationality only in descriptive sense. But it has prescriptive sense as well. Rationality in the

³¹ Sprague, Emler, "Mandeville, Bernard", in Paul Edwards (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, Macmillan Comp., New York 1967, p. 148.

³² Sprague, *ibid.*, p. 148.

³³ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Post Modern Etik*, Translated (into Turkish) by., Alev Türker, Ayrıntı Yay, İstanbul 1998, p. 207.

³⁴ Finnis, John, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, Oxford University Pres., Oxford 1980, p. 50; Türkeri, Mehmet, "Etik Tarihindeki Temel "Doğal Yasa" Anlayışları Ve Bu Anlayışlardaki Dini Unsurlar", *Review of The Faculty of Divinity*, Published by Divinity Faculty of Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir 2005, Vol. 22, No. 22, p. 15.

sense of wisdom has this double meaning. But this form of rationality has become less and less important especially in the last few centuries. This problem may be solved by Aristotle's understanding of soul.

Aristotle says "the states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number, i.e. *art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, intuitive reason*."³⁵ The object of *scientific knowledge* is of necessity.³⁶ *Art* is concerned with coming into being in variable (not necessary) things.³⁷ *Practical wisdom* is about sorts of thing lead to the good life in general.³⁸ *Wisdom* is intuitive reason integrated with scientific knowledge.³⁹ These five states of soul is equally important for the life of human being and neither of them is excluded. All of these states are the **virtues** of the **rational** part of the soul, namely of **human being**.⁴⁰

Finally, the need of interdisciplinary studies, the acute need of the ethics of various disciplines, the coming of post-modern situations, global factual problems (like global warming, ecological problems, absolute poverty in which a fifth of the world's population lives) etc. which we will not cover here, display the need of the standpoint of wholeness and the function of principle of alternation in accordance with the principle of relativity.

Here is some concluding remarks. We should construct our 'philosophy of wholeness' which relies upon the idea of wholeness. Although easily ignored, our whole-idea is in use constantly, and is the source of our values. We have to constitute or, say, scrutinize our whole-idea without disregarding every part. We should construct whole-idea with the formulation of not 'either... or' but 'both... and?'. For pursuing the whole and the part/s at the same time successfully is very hard, we have to alternate between them and to take into consideration the principle of alternation. Every thing has a relation with other thing, then we ought to take into account the principle of relativity.

Human being is a being of value. This is tantamount that s/he is a being of morality and ethics. This shows that s/he has a philosophical aspect. (Then, it is not right to think human activity without value.). We already know he has scientific aspect as well. Then we say that the life of human being contains all sorts of activities. These include all science (although some of which concerned with inanimate nature), philosophy, literature, art, religions, leading laws,

³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in Richard McKeon (Ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, "Nicomachean Ethics" Translated by, W.D. Ross, Random House, New York 2001, 1139b, 15.

³⁶ Aristotle, *ibid.*, 1139b, 20.

³⁷ Aristotle, *ibid.*, 1140a, 5-20.

³⁸ Aristotle, *ibid.*, 1140a, 25.

³⁹ Aristotle, *ibid.*, 1141a, 15.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *ibid.*, 1139b, 10.

created institutions, the thoughts and acts of individuals, hopes and fears etc. We experience life in its whole distinctive complexity, variety and wealth. It seems that the experience of man is an energetic and integrated whole in which everything is eventually interconnected.

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