Bocheński and Balance: System and History in Analytic Philosophy

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Appeared in: *Studies in East European Thought* **55** (2003), 281–297.
Reprinted in: Edgar Morscher, Otto Neumaier and Peter Simons,
Ein Philosoph mit "Bodenhaftung": Zu Leben und Werk von Joseph M. Bocheński.
St.Augustin: Academia, 2011, 61–79.

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1 Doing Philosophy Well

I wish to honour Józef Maria Bocheński in a way of which I hope he would have approved, namely by taking his way of doing philosophy as an example of how to do it well. That way

* The conference honouring Bocheński at which this paper was given described him as "Priest, Philosopher, Pilot". As a non-Christian I leave discussion of Bocheński as priest to others. Nor did I ever fly with him, for which I am extremely grateful, since I did hear the odd anecdote about his flying style. The American logician Karel Joseph Lambert, himself a pilot, having been graphically informed of Bocheński's way of flying, told me when once offered a ride with Father Bocheński as pilot, he refused to step into a plane with him and took the longer land route. My former colleagues at Salzburg where Bocheński gave lectures on authority in the 1970s tell me he lost his pilot's licence because he landed at Salzburg airport in the wrong direction, which is one of the worst things you can do. The authorities forced him to re-take the theory test, so during his lectures in Salzburg he had both his lecture notes and the flying theory manual open in front of him, and was learning while teaching. He passed the re-test.

consists – though it does not aim at – finding an optimal balance between system and history in doing philosophy. What that balance is, why it is good, and what evils it avoids, are my main themes. Bocheński is adduced as a model or *Vorbild*, to be imitated, though not blindly or uncritically. If I succeed in this modest aim, then my paper will itself be an instance of the methodological stance it recommends, namely that of using persons and theories from the history of philosophy to help advance our understanding of philosophical issues. This self-application or conscious irony would I hope have appealed to Bocheński's sense of humour as well as his sense of method. For an historian to be himself made the subject of historical research is a neat consummation of his own endeavours.

2 The Cracow Approach

In common with other members of the Cracow Philosophical Circle before the war, particularly Jan Salamucha and Jan Drewnowski, whose 1934 paper 'Zarys programu filozoficznego' served as a kind of manifesto for their efforts, Bocheński's mission was to bring the tools of modern logic to bear on classical theological problems. I will not catalogue Bocheński's contributions though I will cite from some of them. Bocheński's view of theology was moderately rationalist and emphatically cognitivist. Theology consists in propositions with truth-values, and not a ragbag of sayings handed down from Scripture and the Church Fathers, but a structured body of propositions connected in meaning and subject matter, and linked by logical relations of compatibility and incompatibility, entailment etc. The Cracow Circle set about investigating and where possible improving this logical structure with the most advanced logical tools available at the time, namely those of modern mathematical logic, then called 'logistic'. The problems and doctrines came down to Bocheński from the history of theology, but the methods were those developed by 19th and 20th Century logicians, which placed Bocheński and the others firmly in the camp of analytic philosophy and against those backward-looking neo-Thomists who wrongly rejected modern logic as inherently positivist and anti-theological. The lack of success of the Cracow Circle in winning adherents to their way of approaching theological problems is a matter of public record, and I remember hearing Bocheński say so frankly and unsentimentally at a conference in Manchester in 1986. Nevertheless, Salamucha (whom Bocheński acknowledged as the intellectually most considerable of the group), Drewnowski and Bocheński were in my opinion perfectly correct as well as orthodox in their view, and posterity judges them much more favourably than did their theological contemporaries. It is characteristic of the Cracow

approach that it involved a mixture of the traditional or historical, namely the topics, and the modern, namely the logical method.

3 Two Contemporary Extremes

The debate on the proper role of the history of philosophy in philosophy itself is one which has raged back and forth since Hegel introduced the history of philosophy into philosophy in the early 19th Century, and this debate shows little sign of coming to an end or reaching a consensual conclusion. In current philosophy there are two extreme positions, which I call *historicism* and *scientism*.

Scientism is the view illustrated in its extreme form by the notice placed on his door by an undisclosed American philosopher, "Just say NO to the history of philosophy." For those who are unacquainted with the context, this is a conscious parody of a slogan formerly used in the United States of America in the fight against youth narcotics abuse: "Just say NO to drugs." The implicit message is that the history of philosophy, like heroine, is dangerous to the consumer and that young people should be educated to avoid it.

I owe the example to an article by the British philosopher Bernard Williams, who in an article in the *London Review of Books* entitled "Why Philosophy Needs History"[1] writes "a lot of philosophy is more blankly non-historical now than it has ever been. In the so-called analytic tradition in particular this takes the form of trying to make philosophy sound like an extension of science." We could no doubt trace this stance back through Quine and the Vienna Circle to philosopher–scientists of the 19th Century like Mach and Helmholtz. Bocheński however, while embracing modern logic, expressly rejected the scientistic attitudes of positivist logicians such as Carnap. Such logicians convinced not only themselves but also their opponents that modern mathematical logic was not merely scientific but also anti-metaphysical. Bocheński quite rightly adopted Aristotle's instrumentalist view of logic: "La logique formelle comme telle, bien loin de postuler aucune thèse philosophique – n'est qu'un instrument formel, qui aide à déduire en partant de prémisses choisies à volonté."

Scientism flourishes particularly in the USA, and it does so most obviously in those areas most closely connected to empirical science, namely philosophy of science, philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. The vehemence with which it is held reflects not merely a distaste for history as such, but something deeper, some kind of insecurity. I suggest it is

[1] Williams 2002.

because such philosophers suffer from science envy, looking at the (supposed) large grants, teamwork, steady progress and intellectual respectability or even glamour of science. They quite rightly and naturally wish to be associated with science rather than with movements such as New Age spirituality, ufology, Feng Shui and other esoterica, with whose relentless outpourings books on philosophy are alarming often to be found on the shelves of American bookshops. This vehemence is then directed against those fellow-professionals, namely the historians of philosophy, who in scientistic eyes bring the scientific status of philosophy into disrepute by historical relativizing.

4 Historicism

Historical relativism is one species of anti-cognitivism in philosophy and other disciplines. According to this loosely defined view or attitude, intellectual products, including those of philosophers, cannot be assessed and evaluated for their absolute truth or falsity, but have to be seen as developments with local or temporary "validity" only, replacing earlier views and soon no doubt to be replaced in their turn by the next trend. Their variance is simply that and does not indicate some are any more correct or true than others. In its most extreme form, this denies that any theories are genuinely true or false, and indeed tends to return to Sophistic denials that truth and falsity are respectable or applicable notions at all. Often such views run under the banner of "post-modernism", and are accompanied by more or less explicit socio-political agendas which typically accuse "academic philosophy", usually including logic, of some more or less systematic bias, e.g. for men against women, for whites against other races, for Europeans against others, for heterosexual monogamy against other life-styles, for authoritarian states and the military against grass-roots democracy, for cut-and-slash capitalism against conservation, and so on and so on. In this twilight zone of mixed facts and values, logic, science and objective truth are frequent targets of abuse.

Historicism is historical relativism applied to philosophy. Historicists may have less of a blanket world agenda than post-modernists but their influence within philosophy can be more pernicious than the latter because their theses are less obviously silly. Philosophy does after all conspicuously lack the (oversimplified but actual) general progress of knowledge in the natural sciences since Galileo. Bocheński pointed this out himself for the case of logic in his *Formale Logik*, citing the Ancient, Late Scholastic and recent periods as times of advance, with the High Middle Ages and the post-Renaissance and modern periods as times of stagnation and even recession. What is more, Bocheński is right. Further, philosophy's failure

to achieve consensus on solutions to millennia-old questions such as mind–body, universals, freedom of the will, and its lack of consensus on methodology or even its own subject-matter, all make it look much more like sociology or literary criticism, where fashion trends, style gurus and ever new points of view predominate over the modest investigation of facts and logical connections.

So historicists prefer the comfort of relativism. Philosophy does not progress because it has no absolute cognitive core; it is rather a succession of attempts by Man (and Woman) to come to grips with His (and Her) Situation in the World. None of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Quine or Derrida is more right or wrong than the other, any more than Goethe is more right or wrong than Shakespeare or Jane Austen. The categories true and false, right and wrong, simply fail to gain purchase.[2] No doubt this description of the role of philosophy causes Bocheński rapidly to rotate in his grave. Bocheński always held that philosophers put forward propositions – albeit sometimes confusedly – and that these propositions can be assessed – albeit sometimes with great difficulty – for their truth-value.

Historicism has absolutely nothing to do with the view that it is pedagogically advisable to teach students of philosophy their subject in part by exposing them to significant figures, texts and theories from the subject's history. Many people who are not historicists think this. Of course a historicist will say that's all there is to philosophy, and that contemporary philosophy is merely history's leading edge. But the pedagogical merits or otherwise of teaching philosophy in part through its history do not determine an answer to the question as to what should be the role of the history of philosophy within philosophy itself.

I must add to forestall another possible misunderstanding that my rejection of historicism in no way implies the slightest disrespect or contempt for the history of philosophy as a subject or for historians of philosophy as a species. On the contrary, as will become clear, I regard the pursuit of the history of philosophy as a valid and noble enterprise. Done properly, with due attention to historical context and documentary evidence, it is a difficult but potentially rewarding branch of intellectual historiography.

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[2] Oddly enough, some historicists lay great stress on *getting the historical facts right* about their favourite figures, but the more self-reflective realise that this is self-defeating, and like Heidegger prefer to "appropriate" or "interrogate" figures from the past rather than trouble to do the history of ideas properly.

Nor can the fact that historians of philosophy are typically housed in the same departments as philosophers, whereas historians of science are typically not housed with scientists (in Leeds we have them as colleagues in the School of Philosophy) be used as evidence that historicism is supported by organisational expedience any more than it is by pedagogical sense.

Before moving on to scientism, I may say that in my view, of the twin evils of scientism and historicism, historicism is by far the greater evil, especially in its extreme relativistic or anti-cognitivistic forms. Without a claim to truth, there is no point to philosophy. If someone could convince me that there was no such thing as absolute and objective truth in philosophy, merely a succession of "movements" and trends, then I personally would quit the subject and do something useful like teach mathematics to schoolchildren. Philosophy which is not informed and motivated by the quest for truth does not merit its name and deserves to die.

5 Scientism

If anti-intellectualism is the chief vice of historicism, that of scientism is arrogance. It is arrogant and arrant nonsense to think that we are, for whatever reason, so much more advanced and better in our techniques than our forbears that we can afford to ignore their efforts, and like a mathematician or pharmacologist confine our reading and citation to works less than five years old. If we are so much better now, why have the perennial problems continued to resist solution? True, some have been solved or at least tamed, but many have not. Philosophy simply is not like an empirical science whose results pass into textbooks and are learnt as facts by the next generation. Science wears its historical heritage lightly, and can afford to do so. Philosophy cannot. The very terms in which philosophers pose their questions are historically loaded. Frege once said that concepts (such as the concept of inertia) have no history.[3] He was a Platonist about concepts. There might be a history of our various more or less confused attempts to *grasp* this or that concept such as that of inertia or that of number. But not only is Frege's concept of concept ahistorical, it is unusable. A concept is not a Platonic entity but an abstraction whose concrete basis lies in the myriad thoughts, utterances and actions of people which together constitute "use of the concept". There is no way to tell whether such an abstraction corresponds well or ill to a transcendent Platonic meaning or

[3] "A logical concept does not develop and it does not have a history". Frege 1984, 133.

idea. Really I think there are no such things as concepts: talk "about them" is an expedient, thought-economizing shorthand. But if we take concepts seriously as entities, then perhaps the best description of them is as Husserlian "bound idealities", tied to space and time through their instantiation in thoughts and utterances. Since the use of terms expressing concepts is both intersubjective and based on a large number of actual occurrences, concepts can and do have a history and change in subtle ways over time. Hence the concepts used by philosophers come with historical baggage attached to them, and it is folly to suppose one can discuss concepts with the depth of reflection required of philosophers without at least being aware of this.

Bocheński is no Platonist either. In his 1956 essay on universals,[4] he rejected Platonic ideas, saying (contra phenomenologists such as Husserl and Ingarden) that we find not the slightest intuition of them within ourselves, and that their subsistence could be shown at best indirectly, by inferring them from phenomena given in reality.

It is especially of such rich and highly embedded concepts as *person, true, good, know* etc. with which philosophers are professionally concerned that a modest and due appreciation of their historical fluctuations may help us to understand that the way in which we pose problems to ourselves employing those concepts is not immune to historical vagary. For this sort of investigation we can guardedly adopt Nietzsche's 1878 saying "what is needed from now on is historical philosophizing and with it the virtue of modesty". While as a general recipe Nietzsche's view is too historicizing (he is the ultimate post-modern relativist hero), in such culturally complex areas as morality Nietzsche's own genealogy provided a timely reminder that both the form and the content of ethics had been highly variable, and that the Christian supposition of a single true ethics to which we should aspire may be illusory. The same recipe need not apply everywhere. In Bocheński's own specialist subject of logic, he saw no reason in the 1950s to regard logic as anything but a single unified discipline, a view which the explosive development of alternative logics and loss of consensus as to what it should do has since then radically undermined. Hardly anyone today continues to cling to the view that there is a single correct logic outshining all others. In any case, Bocheński's own instrumentalist view of logic is perfectly compatible with the idea that there might be a series of logics suited to different tasks. But that does not mean all are equal. As pure mathematical systems, logics are equal, but as applied canons for evaluating reasoning some are better than others.

[4] Bocheński 1956.

6 Getting the Balance Right: System the Point

So if neither scientism nor historicism is correct, how, with Bocheński's example before us, are we to find the optimal balance between system and history in philosophy?

Firstly, I take it that the point of philosophy is cognitive: it is to put forward theories, connected bodies of propositions (or whatever are your favourite truth-bearers), accompanied by the requisite meta-reflections on the conceptual scheme thereby employed. This view is not historically neutral or wholly uncontroversial. Wittgenstein for example was vehemently against it. But it has the signal merit of being correct. The central cognitive task of philosophy is ontologico-metaphysical: it is to assess and revise as necessary the overall conceptual framework through which we cognize reality and use this to state the most fundamental principles about reality. This much is already there in Aristotle: First Philosophy is the science of being (things, what there is) in general and the first principles of being. Philosophy is unlikely to be the sole author of this framework, which will borrow eclectically from science, common sense and any other cognitively relevant sphere of experience. This dependence on empirical research, which basically means science, is to be expected and welcomed. First Philosophy cannot however duck out of a role of its own: it cannot avoid large, metaphysically uncertain cosmological theses such as naturalism. Metaphysics is about what there is in general, and cannot rest content with being a store catalogue or the mere sum of the special sciences. The formal framework of First Philosophy is to be as exact and rigorous as we can make it, it is to be endowed with ontological principles of combination, semantic principles of analytic containment and exclusion, and logical principles of inference, as well as be equipped to dock with a plausible theory of cognition and linguistic expression. Its stress on formal rigour at the logical, semantical and ontological levels makes it perforce a species of analytic philosophy.

The material content of this formal framework is to have empirical science as its source, so it will needs be fallibilistic in method and attitude. Nothing, not least the formal framework itself, is to be in principle immune to criticism and, if necessary, revision. It should be accompanied by a metatheory of taxonomic principles as its organizing and unifying principle. The New Analyst should, contrary to his ancestors, welcome and strive for system, interconnection under common concepts and principles, and abandon the piecemeal and quietistic myopia of middle analytic philosophy. That need not entail a holistic Quinean physicalism, but it does enjoin the philosopher to strive to fulfil Whitehead's dream for

speculative philosophy, that "everything […] shall have the character of a particular instance of the general scheme."[5]

7 History Empowers System

So if the *point* of cognitive philosophy is systematic, rather than therapeutic or *merely* analytic, what is the role of the history of philosophy? Do we not just have scientism back again, with a grandiose cosmological twist? No we do not, because unlike the optimists of early analytic philosophy from Frege and Russell to Carnap and Neurath, or early phenomenology from Brentano to Husserl, we do not pretend to have a magic key or formula, whether it be the logic of *Principia*, the Verification Principle, or the phenomenology of intentionality, which will unlock the mysteries of the universe, or more modestly, solve the ancient and recalcitrant problems of philosophy. Analytical systematics has to be modest and fallibilist through and through, while pushing away at those problems. Philosophical problems, known and unknown, remain hard for several reasons. One is our general intellectual limitation. Another is that unlike the case of science, where teamwork and massive funding helps a "can-do" mentality, philosophy is largely carried on by individuals in the time they can spare after university teaching and administration. The "arts and letters" status of philosophy, accompanied by the prejudice that the best philosophers are isolated geniuses and that cooperation and teamwork are somehow cheating, is a more considerable barrier to progress than even most professionals realise. Finally, there is the point that philosophical problems remain unsolved or unresolved in part because they are *hard* – not technically or combinatorially hard, like problems in mathematics, nor hard because they require *outré* and expensive experiments, but *conceptually* hard, because they typically revolve around just those deeply and complexly embedded concepts which make up the crooked backbone of our thinking. Such concepts cannot be isolated and treated separately like a virus in a test-tube. If you pull at one, lots of them move together.

For precisely this reason, knowledge of the history of philosophy can *empower* analytic philosophy to push forward to novel and better solutions and theories, and open up new areas of enquiry. We all tell our first-year students that knowing the history of philosophy can help us avoid repeating old and tempting mistakes such as scepticism, phenomenalism or idealism. But history has broader utility than that of a philosophical road-

[5] Whitehead 1978, 3.

sign saying “No Exit” or “Dangerous Bend”. It can suggest solutions that with modification can be viable today: wheels that were first rolled out centuries ago need not be re-invented. If modern philosophers of mind had read Brentano and Husserl rather than Wittgenstein and Ryle they would have saved their subject years of detour. If Russell had read Paul of Venice he would have realised the Vicious Circle Principle was a tried and tested paradox-blocking solution. If Frege had done so he might even have avoided Russell’s Paradox in the first place. If Wittgenstein had known 18th century botany he would not have though family resemblance classes were a marvellous new idea of his. The list can be extended. It is notable that the single most impressive advance to come out of the Polish school of logic, namely Tarski’s theory of truth, is deliberately set by Tarski in the context of Aristotle and the ancient semantic paradoxes. Tarski was no historian of logic or philosophy, but his teachers Kotarbiński and Łukasiewicz knew their history well. Historical knowledge can help a philosopher (or even better, team of philosophers) struggling with a problem to a less blinkered or restricted view as to what they might do.

In the aforementioned essay on universals, for instance – a perennial philosophical problem if ever there was one – Bocheński with his knowledge of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Russell, Leśniewski and Quine is able quickly to sideline irrelevant issues concerning meaning, and focus on the crucial question, namely whether that *a is F* and that *b is F* require there to be one *identical F*-ness in both *a* and *b* or two *resembling F*-nesses, one in *a* and another in *b*. I think his decision to opt for the former was mistaken, but I might be wrong and in any case that is not the point. The point is that his greater historical knowledge enabled him to cut through the fog engendered by the linguistic turn, to see further than his less historically informed contemporaries, who thought the issue was one of meaning, back to the ancient and medieval truth that the problem of universals is an *ontological* and not a semantic problem. This was almost two decades before David Armstrong made this view more widely accepted. Bocheński was not alone in his stance: Gustav Bergmann and his Iowan students Reinhardt Grossmann and Herbert Hochberg – *voces clamantes in deserto* – were also preaching the primacy of ontology in such questions well before Australia discovered ontology. Yet while Bocheński thought he knew the solution – presumably something close to that of Thomas Aquinas – he had enough historical modesty to say that we still (this was in 1956) lack the logical means to give an exact explication and analysis of the solution. Proper philosophy requires more than just history and sound intuition; it requires the ability to present positions rigorously.

8 Two Bocheńskian Examples:

Bocheński's example shows that the merits of historical knowledge are not confined to the merely negative one of preserving us from falling into old pits. We can bring to bear a wider palette of alternatives from which to select in attacking a particular problem. Let's look at each sort of benefit in action. First we see Bocheński avoid the pitfall of assuming that modern logic had to be coupled to the metaphilosophical views of its leading proponents:

> "Les objections du deuxième groupe sont fondées sur une confusion de la logique formelle avec les vues philosophiques de certains logiciens modernes, en particulier de ceux de l'Ecole Viennoise; mais ces philosophes, pour autant qu'ils usent avec compétence de la logique contemporaine, n'ont aucun droit de prétendre à l'usage exclusif de cette logique."

In other words, logic is philosophically neutral. Here is Bocheński defending against the second objection:

> "La connexion trop étroite, comme on dit, de la logistique avec les mathématiques est, elle aussi, un malentendu. Jadis les logisticiens prétendaient faire "l'algèbre de la logique"; aujourd'hui ils s'en sont bien libérés. Reste que la logistique use du symbolisme et d'une méthode rigoureusement déductive, propre aux mathématiques. Cependant il faut remarquer, que le symbolisme (les variables) fut inventée par Aristote pour la logique, et probablement transporté de ses oeuvres dans les mathématiques; la logistique ne fait qu'étendre l'invention aristotélicienne."

Here is Bocheński using his historical knowledge about the invention of variables to show that far from copying mathematicians, modern logicians are merely extending the invention of Aristotle, which was first applied in logic and only much later taken over by algebraists in mathematics.

9 Three Personal Examples

I wish to beg the reader's indulgence by mentioning three examples from my own work where I have found historical knowledge positively helpful in understanding that there are

more alternatives available in tackling problems than those our immediate contemporary debates might lead us to suppose.

a. Truth-Making

In considering the largely modern issue of truth-making and what items in the world may act as truth-makers, I have been led repeatedly to historical precedents. As Gabriel Nuchelmans has argued, Aristotle had a rudimentary conception of states of affairs as the unified things or *pragmata* which are the reasons why true beliefs are true. Individual quality instances, accidents, moments or tropes, which frequently serve as truth-makers for simple judgements, are to be found abundantly, not just in Aristotle and the Scholastics, but also in Leibniz, Locke and others. I learnt about them through a contemporary philosopher, Bocheński's Fribourg successor Guido Küng. That *contra* Armstrong not all truths have truth-makers was something which can be discerned from a critical but sympathetic reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. For example, the negation of a false atomic proposition is on this view true not because it has its own (negative, universal or other) truth-maker, but simply because there is no truth-maker for its contradictory opposite, the atomic proposition; a universal proposition is true because nothing exists that makes its contradictory particular opposite true. And so on. The crucial role in truth-making is played by propositions which the orthodox contemporary view stemming from Frege and Russell often does not even recognize as well-formed, let alone atomic, namely singular existential propositions. But this role was recognized (for all existential propositions) by Brentano in the nineteenth century.

b. Classification

The second example concerns the role and importance of a proper theory of classification in philosophy. Unlike the truth-maker case, this importance has not been widely recognized by philosophers. Here modern philosophy is blinkered because of its undue reliance on set theory as a formal tool. Set theory is less than useless for explicating the finer points of metataxonomy. It is not just of no use: it is positively harmful, because its use in mathematics and the understandable prestige mathematics enjoys among philosophers leads philosopehrs to suppose it is the only game in town. True, the formal theory of taxonomy is not developed. But because set theory is both iterative and extensional it imposes conditions on classifications which are irrelevant to the needs of science and real life. Some wisdom may be

gleaned from older, pre-mathematical logic books such as that by H. W. B. Joseph, much criticised by Russell and therefore unduly ignored since. But much more can be learnt from the one science of which principles of taxonomy are an integral part, namely biology. It suffices to read Ernst Mayr's masterly history *The Growth of Biological Thought* to become convinced that most philosophical views of classification from Plato to Wittgenstein are simply gauche and uninformed. (The exception is of course the greatest ancient biologist, Aristotle.) Here it is the history of biology rather than the history of philosophy which is helpful, because getting classification right was never of vital importance to philosophers, though for a proper account of ontology, language and much else, it ought to be.

c. Systematicity

Finally I mention the inspiration I have derived, much of it admittedly through gritted teeth, from battling with Whitehead's speculative cosmology *Process and Reality*. It is gratifying to discover that Bocheński held Whitehead's metaphysics in high esteem,[6] and regarded him as the most significant metaphysician of the 20th century, a view I share. It is however not the content of Whitehead's metaphysics, interesting and novel though it is, that I find admirable, but his method of doing metaphysics systematically, and of understanding that philosophy should strive for system even though complete system will remain a probably forever unrealized ideal.[7] Once again, a writer whom analytical philosophers have largely written off as eccentric, barbarous and useless for their interests turns out to be able to lift us out of our deepest prejudices and embody lessons we can learn today. I should say that Bocheński was himself too mistrustful of system, sharing the distaste felt by many 20th century philosophers for *a priori* system-building in the style of Hegel, to have as much sympathy with system as I do, but one may, as Whitehead demonstrated, be systematic, or at least aspire to system, while remaining modest, fallibilist, and *a posteriori*.

10 Final Reflections and Thanks

Against historicists: Of course finding that some past philosopher had a good idea does not obviate the need to give a solution or conceptualization which is adequate by present-day standards. In this regard philosophy has to perpetually review and renew itself. For example I

[6] Bocheński 1990, 171 ff.
[7] Simons 1998.

might think the correct solution to the problem of universals is basically in Locke (rather than Aquinas, say). The basic position of abstractionist conceptualism would need to be brought up to date by jettisoning Locke's defective theory of ideas and replacing it by a more adequate theory of abstraction, the process, and the nature of abstractions, the products. The work of Bocheński himself which has most guided my own thinking is his historical survey of logic, and it is not specific doctrines or positions so much as the general open-mindedness to thinkers of the past that I have found congenial.

It is another nice historical irony that Bocheński's concern to balance history and system is one which he shared with many of his Polish contemporaries. Most notably outside the Cracow Circle, it was Jan Łukasiewicz who integrated his knowledge of the history of logic with his own advances in the subject. So not only was Łukasiewicz one of the supreme innovators of modern logic, he was also the father of the modern history of logic. But Bocheński shared this attitude to history with other Poles not least because the founder of modern Polish philosophy, Kazimierz Twardowski, was himself a student of one of the most historically informed and yet innovative of modern philosophers, Franz Brentano. Brentano's own views were advanced against the background of Aristotle and the British empiricists in particular. The other philosopher to strongly influence Twardowski was Bolzano, and it is no surprise in this context to note that Bolzano's big logic book *Wissenschaftslehre* was subtitled *Versuch einer ausführlichen und grösstentheils neuen Darstellung der Logik mit steter Rücksicht auf deren bisherige Bearbeiter.* The use of historical knowledge to assist and inform new theoretical philosophy was passed down strongly through Twardowski to the Poles including Bocheński, who in addition knew and valued past philosophy through his Thomist training.

I should like finally to put on record my personal gratitude to Father Bocheński for the warm words of encouragement with which he welcomed my 1987 book *Parts*. He remarked at this time that the work of the Manchester Group, Kevin Mulligan, Barry Smith and myself, made him feel he had been transported back to the thirteenth century. A scientistic philosopher would have considered such a remark a rank insult, while a historicist philosopher would see it as a mere value-neutral comparison. We knew that it was meant as a sincere compliment.

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