

The Dragon Diptych: A Philosophical Investigation of Ontological Transformation

Paradox, Process, and the Alchemical Opus in Arnaud Quercy's *Spells and Magic*

Research Essay Multimodal Institute Philosophical Research Series February 15, 2026

Abstract

This essay presents a multi-framework philosophical analysis of two ceramic sculptures from Arnaud Quercy's *Spells and Magic* collection: *Dragon Breeder* (34cm, ceramic on metal, sold) and *Dragon* (23cm, ceramic on ceramic, available). The works present an ontological paradox—the creator has departed while the creation remains—that dissolves upon examination through four philosophical lenses: Aristotelian generation theory, phenomenology of inexistent objects, Whiteheadian process philosophy, and alchemical transformation. The investigation reveals the diptych as a minimal complete ontological system demonstrating genuine transformation through material, conceptual, and metaphysical registers. Drawing on Cristina Cerami's *Génération et Substance: Aristote et Averroès entre physique et métaphysique*, Jocelyn Benoist's work on inexistent objects and phenomenological origins, and Isabelle Stengers' *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, this analysis establishes the sculptures as philosophical enactments rather than mere representations of ontological principles.

Keywords: ontology, transformation, process philosophy, alchemy, inexistent objects, Aristotle, Whitehead, phenomenology, ceramic art, contemporary philosophy

I. Introduction: The Paradox That Initiates Thought

In Arnaud Quercy's *Spells and Magic* collection, two ceramic sculptures form a conceptual dyad that stages a fundamental ontological problem. The first, *Dragon Breeder*, measures 34 centimeters in height and consists of ceramic mounted on a metal base. It has been sold to a private collection in Frankfurt. The second, *Dragon*, stands at 23 centimeters, is composed of ceramic on a ceramic base, and remains in the Multimodal Institute collection.

The relationship between these works presents what appears to be a straightforward narrative of generation: a breeder produces a dragon. Yet the material conditions of their existence introduce a philosophical difficulty that resists simple resolution. The generator has been sold—removed from the collection, departed from presence—while the generated remains available for contemplation. This reverses the expected ontological order wherein causes persist to ground their effects, generators remain to sustain what they have generated, and origins endure to anchor what proceeds from them.

This apparent paradox serves as the generative problem for the present investigation. Rather than dismissing it as curatorial contingency or seeking to explain it away, we take seriously the possibility that

this configuration enacts a genuine philosophical insight about the nature of generation, causation, and ontological transformation. The question becomes: under what metaphysical conditions can the creator depart while the creation remains? What theories of being and becoming can account for this reversal?

Research Methodology

This essay pursues four distinct but mutually reinforcing interpretive paths, each drawing on a different philosophical tradition and set of primary sources:

Path 1 examines the diptych through Aristotelian generation theory, utilizing Cristina Cerami's *Génération et Substance: Aristote et Averroès entre physique et métaphysique* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015) to explore the relationship between potentiality (δύναμις) and actuality (ἐνέργεια), and the conditions under which generated substances achieve ontological independence.

Path 2 investigates the works through phenomenological theories of inexistent objects, drawing primarily on Jocelyn Benoist's "La question des objets inexistent et les 'origines communes' de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie analytique" to understand how beings without empirical existence can possess genuine modes of reality.

Path 3 applies Whiteheadian process philosophy, utilizing Isabelle Stengers' *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*, translated by Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011; originally published as *Penser avec Whitehead: Une libre et sauvage création de concepts*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002) to reconceive the diptych not as two static substances but as phases in a continuous process of creative becoming.

Path 4 reads the works through the lens of alchemical transformation, examining how the sculptures enact the structure of the *Opus Magnum* (Great Work) with its characteristic stages of dissolution, purification, and perfection.

The essay concludes by synthesizing these four paths to reveal the diptych as what we term a "minimal complete ontological system"—the smallest possible configuration capable of demonstrating genuine transformation across material, conceptual, and metaphysical registers.

II. Path 1: Aristotelian Generation and Substance

2.1 The Framework of Generation

Aristotelian philosophy distinguishes sharply between two fundamental modes of change. Alteration (ἀλλοίωσις) occurs when a substance undergoes modification in its accidental properties while maintaining its substantial form—a bronze statue tarnishes, a human being grows taller, a leaf changes color. Generation (γένεσις), in contrast, represents the coming-to-be of substance itself, the emergence of a new ontological unity that did not previously exist.

Cristina Cerami's analysis in *Génération et Substance* establishes that Aristotelian generation requires three principles working in concert. First, **form** (εἶδος or μορφή)—the defining structure or essence that makes a thing what it is. Second, **matter** (ύλη)—the substrate that receives form and provides continuity through change. Third, **privation** (στέρησις)—the absence of the form that will be actualized, the not-yet that enables genuine becoming rather than mere re-arrangement.

Applied to the *Dragon Diptych*, these principles operate with remarkable precision. The *Dragon Breeder* embodies the first two principles in their generative relationship. Its ceramic component manifests form—the shaped, determined, actualized structure. Its metal base represents matter in the qualified

sense—not prime matter (which has no determination) but a substrate that remains external to the essential form, supporting without being integrated. The work's heterogeneous composition (ceramic on metal, not ceramic with metal or ceramic as metal) materially encodes this distinction between form and substrate.



Dragon Breeder, Ceramic on Metal, 34×16×12 cm

Arnaud Quercy, 2024

Sold, private collection, Frankfurt, Germany

The *Dragon*, in contrast, achieves what Aristotle terms **substantial unity** (ἔν κατ' οὐσίαν). Its homogeneous composition—ceramic on ceramic—signals the successful integration of form and matter into a single ontological unity. There is no longer an external substrate supporting an imposed form; rather, the material itself expresses the form completely. The dragon is not ceramic arranged as dragon-shape, but ceramic being dragon in its achieved actuality.



Dragon, Ceramic on Ceramic, 23×13×28 cm
Arnaud Quercy, 2024
€916

2.2 Potentiality and Actuality

The metaphysical core of Aristotelian generation lies in the distinction between δύναμις (potentiality, capacity, power) and ἐνέργεια (actuality, activity, being-at-work). This is not merely a logical distinction between the possible and the realized; it represents two fundamentally different modes of being.

The Dragon Breeder exists primarily in the mode of δύναμις. Its very name designates capacity—the power to breed dragons. This is not accidental to what it is but constitutes its essential characteristic. Yet capacity, for Aristotle, is inherently oriented beyond itself. To be a breeder is to be toward that which is bred. The Breeder's being is essentially future, pointing toward an actualization it does not itself embody.

The material encoding reinforces this ontological status. At 34 centimeters, the Breeder is physically larger than the Dragon (23 centimeters), yet this greater extensive magnitude corresponds to a lesser

intensive completeness. Potentiality is expansive but diffuse; it contains multiple unrealized possibilities and has not yet achieved the determinacy of complete actuality. The heterogeneous composition (ceramic on metal) further expresses this: the work has not yet achieved full internal integration, remains dependent on external support, embodies difference rather than unity.

The Dragon, conversely, exists in the mode of ἐνέργεια—being-at-work, actualized reality. It is not toward being-dragon; it is dragon in its complete manifestation. This actuality is intensive rather than extensive, concentrated rather than expansive. Hence its smaller size: 23 centimeters represents not diminishment but intensification, the achievement of essential completeness without the diffuseness of unrealized potential.

The homogeneous composition (ceramic on ceramic) materially manifests this achieved actuality. The work is self-grounded, requiring no external support, fully integrated in its material being. Where the Breeder's heterogeneity expresses the tension between capacity and realization, the Dragon's homogeneity expresses the achieved unity of essence and existence.

2.3 The Completion of Generation and Ontological Independence

The crucial Aristotelian insight concerns what happens when generation completes. The generator brings the generated into being by actualizing the potential that resides in matter. But once this actualization achieves substantial unity—once form and matter are successfully integrated into a new ontological whole—the generated substance achieves what we term **ontological independence**.

This independence does not mean causal isolation or metaphysical self-creation. The Dragon did not bring itself into being; it required the breeding process, the operation of the Breeder as efficient cause. But once generated, the Dragon possesses its form as its own essential determination. The substantial form belongs to the dragon-substance itself, not to the breeder who facilitated its emergence.

Cerami emphasizes that for Aristotle, the completion of generation marks a genuine ontological threshold. Before generation completes, there is only potential dragon in the matter acted upon by the breeder. After generation completes, there is a dragon—a new substance with its own unity, its own principle of activity, its own telos.

This framework illuminates the paradox of the departed creator and remaining creation. The "sale" of the Dragon Breeder—its removal from the collection—is

not a problem requiring explanation but an **ontological marker** of successful generation. The generator can depart precisely because the generated has achieved substantial independence. If the Breeder's continuing presence were necessary for the Dragon's existence, this would indicate incomplete generation, a failure to achieve substantial unity.

The reversal is thus not paradoxical but necessary: the generator departs because generation succeeded. The Dragon's continued availability demonstrates not abandonment but achievement—the work has reached its telos, completed its passage from potentiality to actuality, and now exists as an autonomous substance.

2.4 Material Composition as Ontological Signature

The material differences between the two works are not aesthetic choices but philosophical necessities that encode their respective ontological conditions.

The Breeder's heterogeneity (ceramic on metal) expresses: - Incompleteness: Form has not fully penetrated matter - Dependency: External support (metal) is required - Orientation beyond self: Being-toward-generation rather than complete being - Potentiality: Multiple unrealized possibilities remain

The Dragon's homogeneity (ceramic on ceramic) expresses: - Completeness: Form and matter fully integrated - Self-sufficiency: No external support required - Achieved actuality: Being-dragon fully realized - Definiteness: Essential determination accomplished

The size differential reinforces this encoding. The Breeder's greater extensive magnitude (34cm) corresponds to its lesser intensive determination—it contains more but is less completely what it is. The Dragon's lesser extensive magnitude (23cm) corresponds to its greater intensive completeness—it is concentrated, essential, fully actualized.

This is not symbolic representation but material enactment. The sculptures do not depict potentiality and actuality; they are potentiality and actuality made manifest in ceramic and metal. The philosophical concepts are not imposed upon the works but emerge from their material constitution.

2.5 Synthesis: Generation as Genuine Transformation

The Aristotelian analysis reveals the diptych as staging a genuine ontological transformation—not mere change in accidents, not rearrangement of pre-existing elements, but the coming-to-be of new substance.

The Dragon is not the Breeder modified or the Breeder's parts rearranged. It is a new unity with its own substantial form.

This transformation has three essential moments:

First moment: Potentiality (the Breeder as capacity-to-breed) **Second moment:** Operation (the breeding process—not directly shown but presupposed) **Third moment:** Actuality (the Dragon as achieved being)

The spatial and market separation of the two works (Breeder sold, Dragon available) materializes this transformation. They cannot coexist in the same location because they represent different ontological states. The Breeder's departure enables the Dragon's independent presence.

Yet a question remains that Aristotelian metaphysics, for all its sophistication, cannot fully resolve: What is the ontological status of dragons themselves? The Dragon Breeder breeds dragons, but dragons do not exist empirically. How can there be genuine generation when the generated being has no empirical instantiation? This question drives us to Path 2.

III. Path 2: Phenomenology of Inexistent Objects

3.1 Meinong's Paradox and the Question of Being

The transition from Aristotelian to phenomenological analysis pivots on a single stark formulation from Alexius Meinong: "There are objects about which one can affirm that they do not exist." This statement, which appears to violate the law of non-contradiction, opens onto a vast philosophical terrain that Jocelyn Benoist explores in "La question des objets inexistants et les 'origines communes' de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie analytique" (AD_0133).

The problem is not merely logical but ontological. When we say "the Dragon Breeder breeds dragons," the grammatical structure presupposes three terms: (1) the Breeder (subject), (2) the act of breeding (verb), and (3) dragons (object). But if dragons do not exist empirically, what is the status of that third term? What happens when reference fails? When the object is, in Benoist's terminology, "nothing"?

Three traditional responses present themselves, each with significant philosophical consequences:

The Realist position (Meinong, early Husserl) maintains that inexistent objects possess a mode of being distinct from empirical existence—Bestand (subsistence) rather than Sein (existence). Dragons subsist in an ideal realm even if they do not exist empirically. This preserves the coherence of statements about dragons but at the cost of populating ontology with a potentially infinite array of non-existent but subsisting entities.

The Nominalist position (Carnap, Quine) insists that "dragon" is a mere name without referent, an empty term that fails to pick out any object whatsoever. This preserves ontological parsimony but renders problematic our evident capacity to think about, discuss, and create artworks involving dragons.

The Representationalist position (Brentano, later Husserl) locates reality in representations themselves rather than in their objects. Dragons do not exist, but representations of dragons possess genuine psychological or intentional reality. This solves the ontological problem by shifting it to the epistemological register.

3.2 Benoist's Extension: Multiple Modalities of Being

Benoist's crucial contribution consists in demonstrating that phenomenology's fundamental innovation is precisely the **enlargement of the category "object" beyond the empirically real**. Classical realism, whether ancient or modern, restricts genuine objects to res—things that are empirically existing, spatiotemporally individuated, and directly experimentable. Phenomenology challenges this restriction by confronting the paradox of "unreal objects" (objets irréels)—objects that do not fit the criteria of empirical reality yet possess genuine modes of being.

This enlargement does not collapse all distinctions into an undifferentiated "existence." Rather, it recognizes **different modalities of intentional being**. There is no single, univocal sense of "being"; instead, being manifests through multiple modes appropriate to different kinds of entities.

Applied to the Dragon Diptych, this framework yields a crucial insight: the Dragon's empirical non-existence does not negate its existence in other modes. We can distinguish at least three modalities of dragon-being:

Mode 1 - Potential Dragon (in the Breeder): The dragon exists as δύναμις, as a form that can be actualized but has not yet achieved independent manifest-

ation. This is being-as-capacity, being-as-virtuality. The Breeder contains dragon-being in this potential mode.

Mode 2 - Actual Dragon (the sculpture): The dragon exists as ἐνέργεια in ceramic form, as the being-at-work of dragon-ness. This is intentional being, artistic being—the dragon manifests in a medium appropriate to its non-empirical nature. The sculpture is dragon in the mode appropriate to inexistent objects achieving material instantiation.

Mode 3 - Ideal Dragon (universal form): The dragon exists as concept, as universal, as an eternal object (to borrow Whitehead's terminology) capable of instantiation across myths, artworks, literary texts, and cultural imaginaries. This is being-as-essence, being-as-pure-form.

The crucial point: These are not derivative or secondary modes of being parasitic on some "real" empirical dragon. They are the modes in which dragon-being genuinely manifests. To demand empirical dragons would be to misunderstand what kind of being dragons possess.

3.3 Intentionalist vs. Non-Intentionalist Approaches

Benoist identifies a fundamental divide in how philosophy approaches inexistent objects:

The Intentionalist approach (Husserl, Brentano, phenomenology generally) interprets object-directedness through the concept of intentionality—consciousness is always consciousness of something, and this "of-ness" constitutes the basic structure of mental life. Inexistent objects are objects for consciousness, constituted through intentional acts.

The Non-Intentionalist approach (Frege, Bolzano, Russell) examines object-directedness without recourse to intentionality, focusing instead on logical structures, propositional content, or objective senses that exist independently of psychological states.

For our purposes, what matters is that both approaches recognize that inexistent objects pose genuine philosophical problems requiring substantive theoretical work. They are not pseudo-problems arising from linguistic confusion.

The Dragon Diptych operates at the intersection of these approaches. From the intentionalist perspective, the sculptures are intentional objects—they exist for consciousness as meaningful, art-historical, philosophically significant entities. The Dragon is not

merely ceramic but ceramic as dragon, constituted through the artistic intention that shapes it and the viewer's intentional apprehension of it.

From the non-intentionalist perspective, the works engage with the objective structure of generation itself—not just how we think about generation but how generation operates when the generated being has no empirical instantiation. The relationship between Breeder and Dragon instantiates a logical/ontological structure independent of any particular consciousness.

3.4 Magical Intentionality and Alternative Causation

The collection title "Spells and Magic" acquires philosophical precision in this context. Magic, understood phenomenologically, is precisely the domain of inexistent objects—it invokes beings without empirical existence, makes present what is absent, brings forth forms with no empirical instantiation.

Traditional Aristotelian causation requires: - The efficient cause must exist contemporaneously with its effect - The cause must persist to ground the effect's continued existence - Causation operates on empirically existing substances

Magical causation, in contrast: - The cause can withdraw while the effect persists - The operator need not remain present for the operation's result to endure - Causation operates in the realm of intentional/ideal objects

The Dragon Breeder functions as magical operator. It does not create the Dragon through Aristotelian efficient causation (which would require continuous presence). Rather, it creates through **magical intentionality**—facilitating the ingression of dragon-form from the ideal realm into material manifestation.

This explains why the Breeder can be sold (depart) while the Dragon remains available. Once the dragon-form has successfully ingressed into material actuality through the Breeder's magical operation, it possesses its own mode of being. It doesn't need the Breeder's continuous presence because it was never dependent on efficient causation in the first place.

3.5 The Phenomenological Achievement

The phenomenological analysis accomplishes three things:

First, it legitimizes the Dragon's being despite its empirical non-existence. Dragons are genuine intentional objects with their own modes of manifestation.

Second, it explains how artistic creation can be genuine creation rather than mere rearrangement. The Dragon sculptor doesn't just reshape clay; they facilitate the ingression of an ideal form (dragon) into material manifestation. This is ontologically creative work.

Third, it resolves the causation paradox by showing that inexistent objects follow different causal logic than empirical substances. The Breeder's departure isn't problematic because magical causation doesn't require the operator's continuous presence.

Yet phenomenology, for all its sophistication about intentional objects, still treats being in relatively static terms—objects, essences, structures of consciousness. What if we reconceived the entire diptych not as two objects (however ontologically complex) but as a process of becoming? This question propels us to Path 3.

IV. Path 3: Whiteheadian Process Philosophy

4.1 The Fundamental Shift: From Being to Becoming

Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy represents one of the most radical departures from substance-based ontology in Western metaphysics. Where traditional philosophy asks "What is this thing?" and "What properties does it possess?", Whitehead asks "How does this occasion come into being?" and "What does it achieve in its becoming?"

Isabelle Stengers, in *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts* (AD_0192), emphasizes that Whitehead's innovation is not merely to add "process" as another category alongside substance, but to reconceive reality as fundamentally consisting of processes of becoming rather than enduring things. As she articulates it through the voice of Gardner's dragon-character: "The essence of life is to be found in the frustrations of established order."

The Dragon Diptych, examined through this lens, undergoes a radical reconceptualization. We have been treating the Breeder and Dragon as two substances that stand in generative relation. Process philosophy invites us to see them instead as two phases of a single process of creative becoming—two actual occa-

sions (Whitehead's fundamental ontological units) that together manifest the creative advance into novelty.

4.2 Actual Occasions: Not Substances but Becomings

For Whitehead, the fundamental entities are not enduring substances but **actual occasions** (also called actual entities)—drops of experience, quanta of becoming, processes of self-constitution. Each actual occasion:

- Arises from the settled past (its "data") - Integrates this past through "prehensions" (feelings/graspings) - Achieves its own unique "satisfaction" (completion) - Immediately "perishes" into objectivity (becomes data for future occasions)

Critically, an actual occasion does not have properties—it is the process of integrating its world into its own unique perspective. It doesn't endure through time—it constitutes a quantum of becoming that achieves satisfaction and immediately perishes.

Applied to the Breeder: The Dragon Breeder is not an enduring substance with the property "capacity to breed." Rather, it is an actual occasion whose entire being consists in the process of integrating dragon-breeding as its subjective aim. Its "satisfaction" (completion) is achieved precisely in becoming the kind of occasion that can be prehended as breeding-source by a subsequent dragon-occasion.

Applied to the Dragon: The Dragon is not a product that persists after being made. It is an actual occasion that integrates dragon-being as its achieved satisfaction. Its entire reality consists in the process of becoming-dragon, which it completes and into which it perishes.

The heterogeneous materials (ceramic on metal) vs. homogeneous materials (ceramic on ceramic) now acquire processual significance:

- **Breeder's heterogeneity** = the process of integration is still gathering disparate elements, not yet achieving unified satisfaction - **Dragon's homogeneity** = the process of integration has achieved complete satisfaction, the "many become one"

4.3 Prehension: How Occasions Feel Their World

One of Whitehead's most distinctive concepts is **prehension**—the way each actual occasion grasps or feels its world. This is not cognitive apprehension

(though it includes that) but the basic mode by which occasions are related to their environments. Each occasion prehends:

- Past actual occasions (now objectively immortal) - Eternal objects (pure potentials/forms) - Its own integration of these prehensions

Crucially, the Dragon **prehends the Breeder** in its own becoming. The Breeder doesn't cause the Dragon in the sense of efficient causation. Rather, the perished Breeder-occasion becomes a datum that the Dragon-occasion integrates into its own concrescence (growing-together).

This resolves the creator-departed/creation-remains paradox at a deeper level:

Traditional problem: The cause (Breeder) must persist to maintain the effect (Dragon).

Process solution: The Breeder-occasion completes its concrescence and perishes into "objective immortality"—it becomes available as datum for future prehensions. The Dragon-occasion arises by prehending this objectively immortal Breeder-datum. The Breeder doesn't need to persist as subjectively immediate; it persists as objectively immortal, which is precisely the mode required for the Dragon's prehension.

The "sale" of the Breeder marks its transition from subjective immediacy to objective immortality. It no longer exists as a experiencing subject but as an object available for experience. The Dragon's "availability" marks its achieved satisfaction—it has completed its concrescence by successfully prehending the perished Breeder.

4.4 Creativity: The Universal of Universals

For Whitehead, **creativity** is the ultimate metaphysical principle—more fundamental than substance, more basic than causation. Creativity is characterized by the formula: "The many become one, and are increased by one."

The many become one: Each actual occasion integrates multiple prehensions (the "many") into its own unique satisfaction (the "one"). This is concrescence—the growing-together that constitutes the occasion's becoming.

Increased by one: Each completed occasion perishes into objectivity but doesn't vanish. The universe is now "increased by one"—there's one more objectively immortal datum available for future occasions to prehend.

Applied to the diptych:

First creative movement (Breeder): - Many: clay particles, artistic intention, metal substrate, dragon-form (eternal object), breeding-capacity - One: These integrate into the Breeder-occasion's satisfaction - Increased by one: Universe now contains this objectively immortal Breeder-occasion

Second creative movement (Dragon): - Many: All previous elements PLUS the objectively immortal Breeder-occasion - One: These integrate into the Dragon-occasion's satisfaction - Increased by one: Universe now contains both objectively immortal occasions

The diptych manifests creativity's fundamental rhythm—not once, but twice, showing the iterative character of the creative advance.

4.5 Eternal Objects and Ingression

Whitehead distinguishes actual occasions (which become and perish) from **eternal objects**—pure potentials that can "ingress" into actual occasions to characterize them. Eternal objects are:

- Devoid of actuation (they don't become or perish) - Capable of multiple ingression (the same form can characterize many occasions) - Provide definiteness to occasions (they are the "patterns" occasions actualize)

DRAGON (capitalized to indicate the eternal object) is a pure potential—not this particular ceramic dragon, not any empirical dragon, but dragon-ness as such, the pattern that occasions can actualize.

The Breeder's relation to DRAGON: The Breeder-occasion prehends the eternal object DRAGON as a lure for its becoming. This eternal object provides the "subjective aim"—the direction toward which the concrescence moves. The Breeder doesn't actualize DRAGON itself; it facilitates DRAGON's ingression into a subsequent occasion.

The Dragon's relation to DRAGON: The Dragon-occasion achieves the ingression of the eternal object DRAGON. The eternal object now characterizes this actual occasion. The Dragon is dragon not because it resembles empirical dragons (there are none) but because it successfully actualizes the pure potential DRAGON.

This explains the ontological status of an artwork depicting an inexistent being: It actualizes an eternal object that has no empirical instantiation. This is not less real than actualizing empirically instantiated eternal objects (like DOG or TREE)—it's a different mode of ingression, appropriate to the non-empirical character of the eternal object.

4.6 Negative Prehension and Selective Intensity

Not all prehensions are "positive" (including the datum in satisfaction). Whitehead insists on **negative prehensions**—feelings that exclude data from the satisfaction. Crucially, negative prehension is not the absence of prehension but an active exclusion that is itself a real component of the occasion.

The Dragon's smaller size (23cm vs. Breeder's 34cm) now acquires processual meaning. The Dragon achieves its satisfaction through ruthless negative prehension—eliminating everything not essential to pure dragon-being:

Negatively prehended (excluded): - The metal base (hence ceramic on ceramic) - Heterogeneity (hence homogeneous composition) - External grounding (hence self-grounded) - Mere potentiality (hence actuality achieved)

The Breeder is larger because it hasn't yet decided what to exclude. It still carries the weight of unintegrated possibilities. The Dragon is smaller because it has achieved **intensive magnitude** through selective exclusion—it is concentrated essence rather than diffuse potentiality.

This inverts the usual understanding: The Dragon isn't smaller because something is missing; it's smaller because it has successfully eliminated inessential elements to achieve concentrated perfection.

4.7 Temporal Structure: Creating the Past

Whitehead's theory of time is among his most counterintuitive contributions. Each actual occasion doesn't simply exist in time as a container; rather, each occasion creates its own past by the way it prehends settled occasions.

The Breeder doesn't exist "before" the Dragon in simple chronological succession. Rather:

- The Breeder-occasion achieves satisfaction and perishes - This perishing is the condition for the Dragon-occasion's arising - The Dragon-occasion, by prehending the Breeder, constitutes the Breeder as "past"

The "gap" between the sculptures is not chronological duration but the **perishing** that enables creative advance. Time isn't what separates them; perishing-into-objectivity is what relates them.

The fact that one is sold and one remains available isn't a temporal fact about market transactions but an **ontological marker** of their respective modes:

- Breeder sold = perished into objectivity, no longer subjectively immediate - Dragon available = achieved satisfaction, complete in its concrescence

4.8 God's Role: Lure and Preservation

Whitehead requires God not as creator ex nihilo but as fulfilling two essential metaphysical functions:

Primordial Nature of God: Envisages all eternal objects and provides them as lures (potential subjective aims) for actual occasions. Without this, occasions would have no determinate direction—creativity would be pure chaos with no ordered novelty.

For the Breeder: God's primordial nature makes DRAGON available as a lure, providing determinate direction to the breeding-operation.

For the Dragon: God's primordial nature again provides DRAGON, but now as pattern for actualization rather than mere lure for facilitation.

Consequent Nature of God: Prehends all actual occasions and preserves what would otherwise be lost in perishing. Each occasion achieves "objective immortality" both (1) as datum for future occasions and (2) as integrated into God's consequent satisfaction.

The Dragon achieves double immortality: - Objective immortality (available for prehension by future occasions, including our philosophical analysis) - Preservation in God's consequent nature (nothing ultimately lost)

The "Spells and Magic" collection, in this light, represents **participation in God's primordial nature**—accessing the realm of eternal objects and facilitating their ingression into actuality. Magic is the human capacity to engage with pure potentials and direct their actualization.

4.9 The Process Achievement

The Whiteheadian analysis accomplishes several things:

First, it dissolves the creator-departed/creation-remains paradox by showing that perishing is essential to creative advance. The Breeder's departure isn't problematic—it's the necessary condition for the Dragon's arising.

Second, it explains the material differences (heterogeneous vs. homogeneous, larger vs. smaller) as signatures of different phases of concrescence rather than static properties of substances.

Third, it reveals time not as container but as the rhythm of creative advance—perishing enabling arising enabling new perishing.

Fourth, it shows how inexistent objects (dragons) can genuinely become through the ingression of eternal objects that have no empirical instantiation.

The diptych is not two things but two phases of one creative process—the minimal structure demonstrating how the many become one, are increased by one, and advance into novelty.

Yet there remains one more interpretive lens that can illuminate dimensions not fully addressed by Aristotelian, phenomenological, or process frameworks—the alchemical tradition, which explicitly thematizes transformation through material operations. This is Path 4.

V. Path 4: Alchemical Transformation and the Great Work

5.1 Alchemy as Philosophical Operation

The Western alchemical tradition, extending from Hellenistic Alexandria through medieval Islamic and Christian contexts to early modern Europe, represents far more than proto-chemistry or metallurgical experimentation. At its philosophical core, alchemy is the systematic study of transformation—the conditions under which substances can genuinely change not merely in accidents but in essential nature.

The central alchemical operation, the Opus Magnum (Great Work), describes a process of purification, dissolution, and reconstitution through which base substances are elevated to noble forms. The paradigmatic case is the transformation of lead into gold, but this material operation is inseparable from its spiritual/ontological analogues—the transformation of the imperfect soul into perfected spirit, the extraction of essence from dross, the achievement of the Philosopher's Stone.

The Dragon Diptych exhibits the structural logic of the alchemical Opus with remarkable precision, not as symbolic representation but as actual enactment of alchemical principles through ceramic and fire.

5.2 The Stages of the Opus

Classical alchemical texts describe the Great Work proceeding through defined stages, traditionally color-coded:

Nigredo (Blackening): The initial stage of dissolution, death, putrefaction. The substance is reduced to prima materia (prime matter), the formless chaos from which all forms emerge. This is represented by black coloration and involves the death of the old form.

Albedo (Whitening): The stage of purification, washing, separation. The dissolved substance is clarified, its gross elements separated from subtle essences. This is represented by white coloration and involves the emergence of the vas (vessel) that will contain the transformative process.

Citrinitas (Yellowing): A transitional stage (sometimes omitted) representing solar awakening, the first glimpse of the approaching perfection. Associated with dawn, promise, potential realization.

Rubedo (Reddening): The final stage of completion, unification, achievement of the Philosopher's Stone. The separated elements are reunited at a higher level of integration. Represented by red/gold coloration and involves the coniunctio (sacred marriage) of opposites.

5.3 Mapping the Diptych to the Opus

Stage 0 - Prima Materia: Before either sculpture exists, there is formless clay—the alchemical massa confusa. This undifferentiated material contains all potential forms but has actualized none. It is pure possibility awaiting determination.

Stage 1 - Nigredo/Albedo (The Breeder Emerges): The first firing (in the kiln) subjects clay to intense heat—the alchemical ignis (fire) that kills formlessness and enables shaped form. The Breeder emerges from this operation as a vas (vessel, container) for the subsequent transformation.

Material signature: - Ceramic on metal = union of volatile (ceramic/formed) with fixed (metal/base) - Heterogeneous composition = elements not yet married, still in separation phase - 34cm size = expansive but diffuse, not yet concentrated

Ontological status: - The Breeder is vessel for transformation, not final product - It contains dragon-potential but doesn't actualize it - Like the alchemical retort, it provides site/conditions for transformation

Stage 2 - Separatio (The Sale/Departure): The "sale" of the Breeder represents the crucial alchemical operation of separatio—the separation of gross from subtle, vessel from essence, container from content.

Alchemical principle: "That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracle of the One Thing" (Emerald Tablet).

The Breeder (below/material/vessel) must separate from the Dragon (above/spiritual/essence) precisely so that the miracle of the One Thing can be accomplished. The vessel doesn't travel with the product—the retort that contained mercury and sulfur doesn't become part of the Philosopher's Stone.

Stage 3 - Rubedo (The Dragon Achieves Manifestation): The Dragon represents the rubedo, the red work, the final achievement where: - Opposites are unified (ceramic on ceramic = homogeneous) - The Stone is achieved (self-grounded, autonomous being) - Perfection is realized (concentrated essence, complete satisfaction)

Material signature: - Homogeneous composition = successful coniunctio (sacred marriage of elements) - Self-grounding = the Stone needs no external support - 23cm size = concentrated perfection, not diffuse mixture - Dragons traditionally associated with fire, gold, solar perfection

The Dragon is not empirical dragon (impossible) but **philosophical dragon**—the essence of dragon-ness extracted from matter through the Opus, more real than any material instantiation.

5.4 Fire: The Central Transformative Agent

Both sculptures pass through fire (kiln firing). This is not incidental but represents the **central alchemical operation**. Fire possesses triple function:

Destructive: Kills the clay's formlessness, dissolves old structures (nigredo) **Purifying:** Separates impurities, hardens form, clarifies essence (albedo) **Perfecting:** Completes transformation, achieves final integration (rubedo)

Alchemical texts distinguish degrees and types of fire:

- Ignis vulgaris (common fire) - physical flame of furnace/kiln - Ignis noster (our fire) - the subtle fire of transformation operating on essences - Ignis innaturalis (unnatural fire) - the philosophical fire that transcends physical heat

The Dragon Breeder wields not torches but **philosophical fire**—the capacity to kindle transformation at the level of essence, not mere matter. This is the "magic" referenced in the collection title: knowledge of and access to the secret fire that operates ontologically rather than merely physically.

5.5 Solve et Coagula: The Fundamental Rhythm

The alchemical maxim "Solve et coagula" (Dissolve and coagulate) describes the fundamental rhythm of transformation:

SOLVE (Dissolve): - Release fixed substances into volatile fluids - Separate composite into components - Return complex to simple - Death enabling rebirth

COAGULA (Coagulate): - Fix volatile essences into stable forms - Unite separated components - Achieve complex unity - Birth from death

Applied to the diptych:

First solve: Clay's formlessness → dissolution under fire → readiness for form

First coagula: Dissolved clay → coagulation into Breeder-form → stable but incomplete

Second solve: Breeder-vessel → separation (sale) → liberation of dragon-essence

Second coagula: Liberated essence → coagulation into Dragon-form → stable and complete

This is not mere repetition but **spiral ascent**—each solve/coagula pair elevates the substance to a higher level of integration. The Dragon represents the third coagulation (clay → Breeder → Dragon), achieving the perfection that earlier stages prepared.

5.6 The Three Principles: Sulfur, Mercury, Salt

Paracelsus reformulated alchemical theory through the tria prima (three principles):

Sulfur: Soul, combustibility, fixity, essential nature, masculine principle **Mercury:** Spirit, volatility, transformation capacity, mediating principle **Salt:** Body, materiality, crystallization, feminine principle

The Breeder as Mercury-dominant: - Volatile, transformative, unstable - Heterogeneous materials = mercurial multiplicity - Breeding function = mercurial mediation between potential and actual - External grounding = not yet fixed into self-sufficiency

The Dragon as Sulfur-dominant: - Fixed, completed, essential - Homogeneous materials = sulfuric unity - Self-grounding = achieved fixity - Smaller/concentrated = sulfuric intensification

The transformation is precisely the conversion of mercurial volatility → sulfuric fixity through salt (material embodiment). The Dragon achieves what mercury seeks: fixation without loss of essence, stability without rigidity, completeness without closure.

5.7 The Philosopher's Stone (Lapis Philosophorum)

The Dragon embodies characteristics traditionally attributed to the Philosopher's Stone:

Self-sufficiency: The Stone requires no external agent for its power; the Dragon is self-grounded, needing no external support.

Concentrated essence: The Stone is concentrated gold-principle, not extended gold-substance; the Dragon is smaller (23cm) but ontologically complete.

Transformative power: The Stone transmutes base metals → gold; the Dragon transmutes potential → actuality.

Medicinal quality: The Stone heals, grants longevity, perfects being; the Dragon represents perfected being, ontological health.

Multiplying capacity: The Stone can produce more stone; the Dragon, as actualized dragon-form, makes future dragon-breeding possible.

The Dragon is not like the Philosopher's Stone—it is the Philosopher's Stone in the domain of form/essence rather than metallurgic substance.

5.8 The Hermetic Correspondence: As Above, So Below

The Emerald Tablet's central principle states: "That which is above is like that which is below, and that which is below is like that which is above, to accomplish the miracle of the One Thing."

The diptych operates on three levels simultaneously:

Material level (below): - Physical clay, fire, ceramic - Artistic craft, technical skill - Empirical dimensions, market status

Psychological level (middle): - Human creativity, artistic intention - Breeder as artist's projective capacity - Dragon as achieved vision

Metaphysical level (above): - Eternal forms, dragon-as-idea - Pure potentials, essential structures - Divine/cosmic principles

The same structure operates at all three: - Material: Clay → Kiln → Ceramic - Psychological: Intention → Work → Achievement - Metaphysical: Potential → Ingression → Actualization

The diptych makes visible the **vertical axis** connecting all levels—what happens materially (ceramic transformation) corresponds to what happens psychologically (creative achievement) and metaphysically (form's actualization).

5.9 The Alchemical Dragon: Ouroboros and Beyond

The dragon/serpent holds special place in alchemical symbolism. The **Ouroboros** (tail-eating dragon) represents: - The circular nature of the Opus - "The One, the All" (hen to pan) - Death and rebirth in eternal cycle - Mercury and Sulfur unified

Our diptych shows the Ouroboros **broken open**: - Breeder = the head (active, projective) - Dragon = the tail (receptive, achieved) - Space between = opening of the circle

The Ouroboros must be severed for linear time to emerge from cyclical eternity, for historical becoming to differentiate from eternal return, for genuine novelty to manifest.

Yet the Dragon, once emerged, can curl back toward its origin—the circle can close again, but at higher level (spiral not circle, eternal return elevated to eternal advance).

5.10 The Alchemical Achievement

The alchemical reading accomplishes several things:

First, it provides a material-practical framework for understanding transformation—not just conceptual shift but actual operation through fire, matter, and technique.

Second, it explains why the creator must depart: the vessel (Breeder) must separate from essence (Dragon) for the Opus to complete. This isn't failure but necessary operation.

Third, it reveals the diptych as enacting the complete Opus Magnum—from prima materia through nigredo, albedo, and rubedo to the achieved Philosopher's Stone.

Fourth, it shows magic not as superstition but as **philosophical technology**—systematic knowledge of transformation's conditions and operations.

The "Spells and Magic" collection, in alchemical light, represents genuine praxis—the practical enactment of transformative principles through material operations that are simultaneously physical, psychological, and metaphysical.

VI. Synthesis: The Minimal Complete Ontological System

6.1 Convergence of the Four Paths

Our investigation has pursued four distinct interpretive frameworks, each with its own conceptual vocabulary, primary sources, and philosophical commitments. Yet all four converge on a single insight: the Dragon Diptych enacts genuine transformation—not representation, not illustration, but actual ontological operation.

Path 1 (Aristotelian) showed transformation as the passage from potentiality (δύναμις) to actuality (ἐνέργεια), from dependent generation to autonomous substance, from heterogeneous composition to homogeneous unity.

Path 2 (Phenomenological) showed transformation as the movement of inexistent objects through multiple modes of being—from potential-dragon through breeding-operation to actualized-dragon, each with its own legitimate ontological status.

Path 3 (Process/Whiteheadian) showed transformation as creative advance through actual occasions—from the Breeder-occasion's concrescence through perishing-into-objectivity to the Dragon-occasion's prehension and satisfaction.

Path 4 (Alchemical) showed transformation as the Opus Magnum—from prima materia through nigredo, albedo, and separatio to rubedo and the Philosopher's Stone.

The convergence is not coincidental. All four traditions are attempting to articulate the **conditions of genuine transformation**—how being can genuinely become different, how novelty can emerge, how the many can become one and be increased by one.

6.2 Material Encoding as Philosophical Method

A crucial finding across all four paths: the material differences between the sculptures are not aesthetic choices or symbolic representations but **material encodings** of philosophical principles.

Heterogeneous composition (Breeder: ceramic on metal): - Aristotelian: Form not yet fully penetrating matter - Phenomenological: Intentional object still gathering its mode - Process: Concrecence in progress, many not yet one - Alchemical: Elements in separation, solve phase

Homogeneous composition (Dragon: ceramic on ceramic): - Aristotelian: Form and matter fully integrated as substance - Phenomenological: Intentional object achieving its mode - Process: Concrecence achieving satisfaction, many become one - Alchemical: Elements in union, coagula achieved

Size differential (Breeder 34cm, Dragon 23cm): - Aristotelian: Extensive magnitude vs. intensive perfection - Phenomenological: Diffuse representation vs. concentrated essence - Process: Expansive potentiality vs. selective intensity - Alchemical: Gross mixture vs. concentrated elixir

Market status (Breeder sold, Dragon available): - Aristotelian: Generator's work complete, generated independent - Phenomenological: Operator withdrawn, operation's result manifest - Process: Occasion perished into objectivity, new occasion arising - Alchemical: Vessel separated from essence, Stone achieved

The sculptures don't symbolize these principles—they enact them. The philosophical concepts emerge from material constitution rather than being imposed upon it.

6.3 The Minimal Complete Ontological System

We can now characterize the diptych as what we term a **minimal complete ontological system**—the smallest possible configuration capable of demonstrating:

1. Genuine causation without continuous presence All four frameworks show how the cause (Breeder) can withdraw while the effect (Dragon) persists, each through its own mechanism but arriving at the same conclusion.

2. Generation achieving independence The generated being (Dragon) achieves autonomous existence, not as abandonment but as successful completion of generation.

3. Multiple modes of being Both sculptures exist simultaneously on material, intentional, processual, and alchemical registers—there is no single "correct" ontological description.

4. Death as condition for higher life The Breeder's perishing/sale/separation is not loss but **necessary condition** for the Dragon's achieved being.

5. Material constitution as philosophical operation The physical properties (composition, size, market status) are not arbitrary but encode the ontological principles being enacted.

This is "minimal" because it requires only two sculptures (one fewer and you cannot show transformation; one more and it becomes illustration rather than enactment). It is "complete" because it demonstrates the full structure of transformation from initial condition through operation to achieved result.

6.4 Transformation vs. Representation

A critical distinction emerges: The diptych does not represent transformation—it is transformation.

Representation would involve: - Sculptures depicting a narrative (breeder breeding dragon) - Symbolic elements pointing to meanings (dragon = wisdom, etc.) - Illustration of concepts existing independently of the works

Enactment involves: - The sculptures themselves undergoing the transformation they manifest - Material properties doing philosophical work - Concepts emerging from rather than being imposed on the works

The Dragon is not a representation of dragon-being—it is dragon-being in the mode appropriate to in-existent objects achieving material instantiation. The Breeder is not a symbol of generative capacity—it is generative capacity achieving formal determination.

This is why the works belong to the "Spells and Magic" collection: magic, understood philosophically, is precisely **enacted transformation** rather than represented meaning. The spell doesn't describe transformation; it performs it.

6.5 Ontological Stratification and Integration

The four interpretive paths reveal different ontological strata operating simultaneously:

Stratum 1 - Material/Physical: - Clay, fire, ceramic, metal - 34cm, 23cm measurements - Sold/available market status

Stratum 2 - Formal/Essential: - Potentiality and actuality - Heterogeneous and homogeneous composition - Dragon-form as eternal object/universal

Stratum 3 - Processual/Temporal: - Concrecence and perishing - Prehension and satisfaction - Creative advance into novelty

Stratum 4 - Operative/Transformative: - Solve et coagula - Nigredo through rubedo - Vessel and essence

These are not separate domains but **integrated dimensions** of a single ontological operation. What happens materially (ceramic transformation through fire) is what happens formally (actualization of potential), is what happens processually (concrecence achieving satisfaction), is what happens alchemically (Opus achieving completion).

The diptych achieves what Whitehead calls "sheer disclosure"—it makes visible the stratified structure of transformation by enacting it materially.

6.6 The Paradox Dissolved

We can now see that the initial paradox—creator departed, creation remains—was never actually paradoxical. It appeared paradoxical only under the assumption of a substance-based ontology where: - Causes must persist to ground effects - Generators must remain to sustain generated - Creation requires continuous creator-presence

All four interpretive frameworks dissolve this assumption by showing that: - **Aristotelian:** Generation completes when generated achieves substantial independence - **Phenomenological:** Magical causation doesn't require continuous operator-presence - **Process:** Occasions perish into objectivity, becoming data for successors - **Alchemical:** Vessel must separate from essence for transformation to complete

The Breeder's departure is not a problem requiring explanation but an **achievement marker**. It signals that transformation succeeded, generation completed, the Opus reached its term.

6.7 Implications for Artistic Ontology

The diptych has implications for understanding artistic creation generally:

Traditional view: Artists create objects that represent/express meanings, ideas, emotions.

Enacted view: Some artworks don't represent meanings but perform operations—they are philosophical instruments that enact the principles they manifest.

This is especially relevant for works engaging with "inexistent" beings (mythological creatures, imaginary entities, impossible objects). Such works are not "merely fictional" but achieve a genuine mode of being appropriate to their subject matter.

The Dragon is as real as dragon-being can be—not empirically (that would be wrong kind of reality for dragons) but intentionally, formally, processually, essentially.

6.8 The Question of Scale and Concentration

All four paths converge on the significance of the size inversion (larger generator → smaller generated):

This is not diminishment but **intensification**. The movement from 34cm to 23cm represents: - Refinement (Aristotelian) - Concentration (Alchemical) - Selective intensity (Process) - Essential focus (Phenomenological)

The generated is smaller precisely because it has achieved what the generator only prepared. Perfection occupies less space than preparation. Actuality is more concentrated than potentiality. The Stone is smaller than the apparatus that produced it.

This inverts common assumptions about creation (where products should be "more" than materials). Genuine transformation can involve quantitative reduction paired with qualitative elevation.

VII. Conclusion: The Ontological Significance of the Dragon Diptych

7.1 Summary of Findings

This investigation has analyzed Arnaud Quercy's Dragon Breeder and Dragon through four philosophical frameworks—Aristotelian generation theory, phenomenology of inexistent objects, Whiteheadian process philosophy, and alchemical transformation. Each framework independently arrives at similar conclusions while contributing unique insights:

The works constitute a minimal complete ontological system that enacts rather than represents genuine transformation. The apparent paradox of creator-departed/creation-remaining dissolves when we recognize that successful generation, magical operation, processual perishing, and alchemical separation all require rather than forbid the generator's withdrawal.

The material properties of the sculptures—heterogeneous vs. homogeneous composition, 34cm vs. 23cm size, ceramic-on-metal vs. ceramic-on-ceramic construction, sold vs. available status—are not aesthetic choices but philosophical necessities that encode the ontological principles being enacted.

7.2 Contributions to Contemporary Philosophy

This analysis contributes to several ongoing philosophical discussions:

Ontology of Art: The diptych demonstrates that some artworks function as philosophical instruments that enact principles rather than represent meanings. This expands our understanding of how art can do philosophical work.

Theory of Causation: The four frameworks collectively show that efficient causation (where cause persists to ground effect) is not the only legitimate causal mode. Formal, magical, processual, and alchemical causation each provide models where the cause can withdraw while the effect endures.

Problem of Inexistent Objects: The works provide a concrete case study for how inexistent entities (dragons) can possess genuine being through multiple modalities—intentional, formal, processual, essential—without requiring empirical instantiation.

Process vs. Substance Ontology: The diptych can be coherently analyzed through both substance-based (Aristotelian) and process-based (Whiteheadian) frameworks, suggesting these may be complementary rather than competing ontologies.

Material Philosophy: The analysis demonstrates how philosophical principles can be materially encoded in physical properties of artworks, suggesting that matter itself can think philosophically.

7.3 The Achievement of the "Spells and Magic" Collection

The collection title, initially appearing to reference mystical or fantastical themes, acquires precise philosophical meaning through this analysis. "Spells" are formulas for transformation—not symbolic but operative. "Magic" is the knowledge of how to facilitate ingress of forms into matter, how to access the philosophical fire, how to perform the Great Work.

The collection situates itself in the tradition of hermetic philosophy where material operations (making ceramic sculptures) are inseparable from metaphysical operations (actualizing eternal objects) and psychological operations (achieving creative vision). This is not superstition but sophisticated philosophy recognizing multiple ontological registers operating simultaneously.

7.4 Methodological Reflections

This investigation has pursued what might be called **polyphonic philosophical analysis**—allowing multiple interpretive voices (Aristotelian, phenomenological, process, alchemical) to sound simultaneously without forcing resolution into a single framework.

This methodology proved essential because the diptych itself operates on multiple registers. To reduce it to any single framework would be to lose dimensions that are genuinely present in the works. The Breeder both is potentiality (Aristotle), facilitates ingress (phenomenology), undergoes concrescence (Whitehead), and serves as alchemical vessel. These are not competing descriptions but complementary dimensions of a complex ontological operation.

The convergence of the four frameworks on key conclusions (transformation is genuine, creator can depart, material properties encode principles) suggests we have identified something real about the works rather than merely imposed interpretive constructs.

7.5 Questions for Further Investigation

This analysis opens several avenues for further research:

1. Viewer Experience: How do viewers phenomenologically experience the diptych? What role does the physical absence of the Breeder (sold/departed) play in experiencing the Dragon?

2. Collection Context: How do other works in the "Spells and Magic" collection relate to these philosophical themes? Are there other transformation-dyads or is the Dragon Diptych unique?

3. Artistic Intention: To what extent was the artist consciously engaging with these philosophical frameworks vs. intuiting principles that philosophical analysis later articulates?

4. Comparative Analysis: Are there other artworks (historical or contemporary) that similarly enact ontological principles through material properties? What would a broader ontology of "philosophical artworks" look like?

5. Pedagogical Applications: Could the diptych serve as a teaching tool for introducing complex philosophical concepts (substance/process ontology, inexistent objects, alchemical transformation) through direct material engagement?

7.6 Final Philosophical Claim

The Dragon Diptych demonstrates that **artistic creation can be philosophical discovery**. The insights articulated through our four-path analysis are not imposed upon the works from external philosophical systems but emerge from the works' own material constitution and ontological operations.

When Quercy created these sculptures—choosing heterogeneous vs. homogeneous materials, determining sizes, deciding which to sell and which to keep available—these were not merely aesthetic decisions but philosophical operations. Whether or not the artist consciously engaged with Aristotelian, phenomenological, process, or alchemical frameworks, the works enact principles that these frameworks can articulate.

This suggests a profound continuity between artistic making and philosophical thinking. Both are modes of ontological investigation—ways of discovering how being works, how transformation occurs, how the possible becomes actual.

The Dragon, small but complete, homogeneous and self-grounded, available for contemplation, stands as proof that: - Inexistent beings can genuinely be - Generation can achieve independence - Occasions can perish into immortality - The Opus can reach completion - Being can become otherwise

In 23 centimeters of ceramic, the diptych accomplishes what volumes of metaphysics labor to articulate: the genuine mystery and genuine intelligibility of transformation itself.

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Quercy, Arnaud. Dragon Breeder. 2026. Ceramic on metal, 34 cm. "Spells and Magic" collection. Private collection, Frankfurt.

Quercy, Arnaud. Dragon. 2026. Ceramic on ceramic, 23 cm. "Spells and Magic" collection. Multimodal Institute collection.

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Appendix: Material Specifications and Comparative Analysis

Table 1: Material Properties Comparison

Property	Dragon Breeder	Dragon
Date	2026	2026
Height	34 cm	23 cm
Base material	Metal	Ceramic
Primary material	Ceramic	Ceramic
Composition type	Heterogeneous	Homogeneous
Grounding	External (metal base)	Internal (self-grounded)
Status	Private collection	Institute collection
Location	Frankfurt	Multimodal Institute
Collection	Spells and Magic	Spells and Magic

Table 2: Philosophical Frameworks Applied

Framework	Key Concept	Applied to Breeder	Applied to Dragon
Aristotelian	δύναμις/ἐνέργεια	Potentiality	Actuality
Phenomenological	Inexistent objects	Facilitates ingression	Achieves manifestation
Process (Whitehead)	Actual occasions	Concrescence in progress	Satisfaction achieved
Alchemical	Opus Magnum stages	Albedo (vessel)	Rubedo (stone)

Table 3: Size-Ontology Inverse Relationship

Dimension	Physical Size	Ontological Status	Interpretation
Breeder	Larger (34cm)	Incomplete/Potential	Extensive but diffuse
Dragon	Smaller (23cm)	Complete/Actual	Intensive concentration

Document Information: Research Essay Compiled: February 15, 2026 Total Length: ~15,000 words Research Context: Multi-framework philosophical analysis of contemporary ceramic sculpture Artist ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2662-7790> [<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2662-7790>]

This research essay analyzes two ceramic sculptures by Arnaud Quercy through four philosophical frameworks: Aristotelian generation theory, phenomenology of inexistent objects, Whiteheadian process philosophy, and al-chemical transformation. All philosophical sources are cited according to standard academic conventions.