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THEOLOGY AFTER THE PROBLEM OF INTENTIONALITY: A WHITEHEADIAN CORRECTIVE FOR ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT: In this dissertation, I argue that contemporary analytic philosophers of language, particularly John McDowell, presuppose a problematic metaphysics of subjecthood that takes judgment to be the smallest unit of awareness. I propose that analytic philosophers turn to Alfred North Whitehead's aesthetic ontology, as it provides an alternative understanding of how linguistic practices and noetic processes are in touch with the world. In this manner the dissertation enlists Whitehead to develop a new approach to the intentionality of belief, one that avoids leaving the modern subject ontologically "cut off" from ordinary objects. The upshot of this argument extends far beyond questions of ontology or epistemology, as I contend that analytic philosophy's failure to account for the way in which the world constrains our rational processes undermines the effort to translate philosophical reflection into effective social, political, and ethical critique. Moreover, by critiquing the metaphysical premises underwriting the tired binary between classical theism and classical atheism, this project clears the way for reframing theological discourse beyond the binary.

INTRODUCTION

My dissertation proposes Alfred North Whitehead's aesthetic ontology as a constructive resource for analytic philosophy's ongoing problem of intentionality. More specifically, I suggest that a better understanding of Whitehead's critique of early trends in analytic philosophy can help us identify some of the habits of thought that impede it today. My focus is specifically on the work of John McDowell on the problem of relating mind and world.

In the sense that I address it in what follows, the problem of intentionality originated in the latter half of the nineteenth century when the iconic anxiety of modern epistemology about one's ability to know "things in themselves" took on a new tone. The change occurred when thinkers such as Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell began to shift the focus of their philosophy from mind to language. When language (specifically sentences) instead of mind (specifically its ideas) came to be regarded as the bearer of meaning, the problem of how mind relates to world was no longer about how mental entities relate to nonmental ones, but of how linguistic signs can refer to or signify something else—specifically, something nonlinguistic.

What was left standing in place of epistemological skepticism after the linguistic turn was the problem of how to make sense of the directedness of our sentences. And yet, it is the directability or intentionality of our speaking, writing, or thinking that facilitates claims *about* ourselves and the world—what may be referred to as the "objective purport" of our linguistic practices. If we could not account for *how* this intentionality works, for how it achieves what it claims to achieve (e.g., in being *about* something), it wasn't clear how we could identify the determinants or criteria by which to adjudicate between such claims. Moreover, it wasn't clear how we would account for the reality of causality or the responsibility of moral agents if we cannot account for how it is that our thinking gains traction with the state of things.

My project attempts to address this problem by teasing out, with the help of Whitehead's own critique of classical substance metaphysics, the tacit metaphysics assumptions that have contributed to analytic tendencies to spatialize thought and language. The immediate effect of treating thought or language as if they exist in or create ontologically distinct realms of reason is to begin with the premise that mind is some sort of exception to nature.

Instead of beginning with an account of mind or the human subject as ontologically exceptional or distinct from the world, Whitehead begins with an event-based ontology whereby subjectivity becomes by means of the objectification of the past and eventuates its own objectification for the future. By taking the event as the final unit of analysis, he resists spatializing facthood such that objectivity is conceived as on the other side of an unbridgeable divide. Subjectivity and objectivity are modes of relation having to do with the full spatio-temporal continuum that makes up the passage of nature.

How we draw the line between mental and physical experience is a matter of convention, as Whitehead would be the first to acknowledge. There can be no mistake that either is similarly a mode of relation, emerging from and acting back upon one another in ways that resist explanation by way of unidirectional models of causality. For Whitehead, then, mindedness qua mode of experience is emergent and therefore suited to the world it was designed to know in at least some of its perspectives. For Whitehead, in short, subjectivity is not epistemologically at a distance from the world precisely because it is not ontologically so.

Whitehead's thought exemplifies the sort of good sense and effective reframing of concepts that affords any philosopher enduring relevance. Reading Whitehead today is an exercise in reclaiming and elucidating the grounds for our most prudent assumptions about the reality of causation, agency, and understanding.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 begins on a historical note. I examine some of Whitehead's earlier critiques of some of modern philosophy's bad habits. In particular, I investigate his critique of the neglect of temporality and the resultant spatialization of rationality in an intellectual lineage running circuitously from David Hume to Bertrand Russell. This neglect is a symptom of a misreading of Plato and a misuse of Aristotle resulting from hermeneutical importations of the so-called Semitic theory of a wholly transcendent God. To adumbrate the nature of this misreading and misuse, I discuss A. E. Taylor's *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), whose work Whitehead regarded as the primary authority on the subject. Whitehead's alternative reading suggests that the bifurcation of nature so detrimental to modern epistemology—the very one upon which the contemporary problem of intentionality is premised—need never have occurred. Moreover, I argue that this bifurcation survives in the form of tacit metaphysical assumptions that have manifested in recent anti-metaphysical retrievals of Hegelian thought.

Chapter 2 takes a closer look at the recent history of the problem of intentionality in analytic philosophy. In chapter 1, I focus on the intellectual environment surrounding the birth of analytic philosophy, and then fast forward to John McDowell's appeal to Aristotelian naiveté as exemplary of a recurring impediment within this tradition to thinking about the relationship between mind and world. Chapter 2 broadens the prehistory of McDowell's work by examining the post-Sellarsian intellectual environment he inherited. I discuss the writings of Wilfrid Sellars, Donald Davidson, Richard Rorty, Robert Brandom, as well as McDowell's, insofar as they are in conversation with one another and have served to lay the groundwork of the contemporary

exemplification of the problem. In the latter half of the chapter, I suggest how this tradition is open to a metaphysics of the sort Whitehead exhibits.

Chapter 3 marks my shift from historical-diagnostic to constructive-therapeutic. Here, I exposit Whitehead's aesthetic ontology of perception and judgment. I situate his aesthetics in critical contrast to the tacit metaphysics of perception and judgment that fuels McDowell's account of mind and world. It is Whitehead's aesthetic approach to perception and judgment, I argue, that provides the "real togetherness," without which we will continue to struggle to account for epistemological togetherness, i.e., intentionality. This chapter transitions into the next by way of the continuity afforded by Whitehead's account of "symbolic reference." The real togetherness of mind and world depends upon the aesthetics of signification in general, and linguistic signification in particular.

Chapter 4 offers my interpretation of Whitehead's theory of signification. I argue that his account of the concreteness of relations of symbolic reference provides a nonbifurcated view of symbols and meanings, with the effect of demystifying meaning along with his despatializing mentality.

Chapter 5 continues with the subject of symbolism, broadening my interpretation to its efficacy on a social scale. After exploring some implications of Whitehead's aesthetic of symbolism for political philosophy, I place him in conversation with Michael Tomasello's work on the evolution of distinctively human cognition by way of the unique achievement of collective intentionality. I suggest ways in which this collaboration can exemplify the interpretative power of Whitehead's philosophy for contemporary empirical research into the distinguishing features of human cognition. Moreover, I argue that Tomasello's account lends empirical support to

Whitehead's theoretical proposals for the real continuity of nature and normativity—continuity that can facilitate a noncircular argument for the possibility of social and political critique.

My conclusion is of the substantive sort. There I address the question of the status of Whitehead's more theologically inflected propositions. I provide a cursory distinction between my reading of Whitehead's God and those of the Claremont-variety process and relational theologians. I then discuss Whitehead's shifting uses of the word "God," particularly in works immediately preceding *Process and Reality* (1928) and those within a few years after it. Implementing his account of the nature and purpose of social symbols, I draw some preliminary conclusions about how we ought to regard his theological propositions.

A Note on Method

My writing of this dissertation at times proceeds as a steady philosophical exposition, while at other times, it takes on the manner of an historical corrective. Still other times, my approach is openly constructive. The confluence of these various modes of writing strikes me as necessary to any responsible attempt to address a standing problem within a philosophical tradition. One must be able to display both a charitable grasp of the relevant literature and a resourced critique of it. To the extent that I have fallen short of this standard, my reader has every right to challenge my conclusions. No author ought to resist her bettering by way of sober evaluation.

CHAPTER 1

WHITEHEAD AND ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY'S RETURN TO HEGEL

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that we might better understand the recent retrievals of Hegel's thought in analytic philosophy vis-à-vis antimetaphysical or metaphysically minimalist readings, by way of Alfred North Whitehead's antecedent critiques of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Bertrand Russell. More specifically, I argue that Whitehead's critique of modern philosophy's neglect of temporality and the resultant spatialization of rationality remains viable today in light of contemporary efforts—specifically those of John McDowell—to restore the connection between mind and world. Such efforts remain encumbered by spatialized accounts of "the conceptual" due to tacit presuppositions that Whitehead attributes to modern philosophy's misunderstanding of Plato's realism and misappropriation of Aristotle's logic. In addition to elucidating the contemporary need for Hegel, Whitehead's work (both as mathematician and philosopher) helps us to anticipate the way analytic philosophy's return to Hegel will not be sufficient to its own purpose. Specifically, I demonstrate the insufficiency of McDowell's account of second nature and appeal to Aristotelian naïveté in dealing with the problem of intentionality and establishing the normative constraints the world must have upon thought.

Plato's Realism, Aristotle's Idealism, and Modern Philosophy's Bad Habit

In his presidential address for the 1922–23 Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Alfred North Whitehead stated the following: "I do not like this habit among philosophers, of having recourse to secret stores of information, which are not allowed for in their system of philosophy. They are

the ghost of Berkeley's 'God,' and are about as communicative."[1] Although Whitehead had a knack for unearthing incoherent presuppositions, those of David Hume were what he had in mind on this occasion. Whitehead was speaking to the question of the uniformity of nature, which he defined as the problem of whether "any isolated portion of our experience has any character which of itself implies a corresponding character, extending beyond the domain of the immediate example."[2] His point of departure was the implicit versus explicit status of space-time continuity in Hume's *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding;* more specifically, he was concerned with the incoherence of Hume's account of the idea of necessary connection between events, or the inference to causality.

In Essay 12 on "The Academic or Sceptical Philosophy," Hume claims that we acquire the idea of extension (spatiality) through perceptions of the "sensible qualities of objects," qualities which he takes to be "secondary" in the sense of existing only in the mind and not in the objects themselves. The rightful conclusion from this claim is the skeptical one, which asserts no ground for the future to conform to the past. But in the same essay, Whitehead observes, "Hume runs away from his own conclusion."[3] In effect, he says the "Pyrrhonian" must acknowledge that if such skeptical principles were true, life would not be possible because organisms can only survive in dependable environments. But Whitehead wants to know how Hume knows this if in his own philosophy he has yet to account for the reality of space-time continuity as anything other than mere appearance. This discord between the implicit and explicit status of space-time was not specific to Hume for Whitehead but was pervasive throughout modern philosophy. In

[1] Alfred North Whitehead, "Uniformity and Contingency: The Presidential Address," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.* New Series. 23 (1922–23), 13. Read to the Society on November 6, 1922.
[2] Whitehead, 1.
[3] Whitehead, 13.

fact, one of Whitehead's primary critiques of the early philosophy of Bertrand Russell—Whitehead's former student, *Principia* co-author, and close friend—was that he displayed just such "secret stores" of information. Archived correspondence between the two men, which will be treated later on, demonstrates as much.

Commenting on Russell's *Analysis of Mind* (published just a year earlier but drafts of which he had surely seen), Whitehead questions the distinction between theory and practice that Russell relies upon as if it were self-evident, even while his explicit system makes no room for its reality. In Lecture 5 on "Causal Laws," Russell writes, "If, however, we know a very large number of cases in which A is followed by B and few or none in which the sequence fails, we shall in *practice* be justified in saying 'A causes B,' provided we do not attach to the notion of cause any of the metaphysical superstitious that have gathered about the word."[4] Insofar as neither Hume nor Russell allow for any A to rationally justify the mind's expectation of B, each thinker tries to explain the origin of this expectation through appeal to justification "in practice" owing somehow to an observed "accumulation" of instances. But this very appeal to "accumulation" sneaks back in the notion we were denied at the beginning: the so-called external reality of extensiveness and temporality.

The problem, according to Whitehead, is that each thinker operates on the suppressed premise that particular instances or events share no intrinsic character. Here we find the early indications of Whitehead's dismissal of vacuous entities, as evidenced in *Process and Reality* (1929). He insists that we can only escape Hume's difficulty if we admit what is implicitly assumed throughout his whole philosophy of nature: instances are internally related and so "tell the tale" of a world patient for such events. Hume resists his own conclusion, and Russell speaks

[4] Bertrand Russell, chapter 5 "Causal Laws," in *The Analysis of Mind* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921), 96.

of being justified "in practice" because of the tacit assumption that particular instances are significant of something beyond it. This significance is spatio-temporal significance; a uniformity of nature is assumed by Hume's "accumulation" of events or Russell's "sequences."

Albert Einstein had only published his theory of general relativity seven years prior to these proceedings, and Whitehead published his *The Principle of Relativity with Applications to Physical Science* in the same year of this address.[5] In this work, Whitehead critiqued the atomistic theory of space that regarded causal relations as action at a distance, albeit infinitely small distances. He dismissed the notion of infinitesimals. Despite its genius, Whitehead's *The Principle of Relativity* was not well received by physicists because he wrote the bulk of it using the same logical notion he had developed for the *Principia Mathematica.* It is for this same reason that I refer to his own analysis of the work as recorded seven years later in *Process and Reality*. Here, Whitehead laments the treatment of time throughout modern philosophy as merely a fourth dimension of space. Moreover, it is treated as such when causality is accounted for by means of an infinite regress of "spaces." When causality is "spatialized" in this way, it relies on geometric measurements (mainly Euclidean ones) that cannot wholly account for events. Whitehead suggests we stop identifying the units or instances of experience in terms of "distance" and instead understand such integrals in terms of "impetus." Such integrals, then, are no longer particulars in the classical sense, but internally-related events. These are what Whitehead terms "actual entities," and it is because of this intrinsic character that he maintains the ontological principle that the reason for one actual entity can only be other actual entities.

[5] Alfred North Whitehead, *The Principle of Relativity with Applications to Physical Science* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922).

Actual entities, in his words, "atomize the extensive continuum."[6] He writes further that if perception "merely concerns a private psychological field, science is the daydream of an individual without any public import."[7]

The task of showing what the world must be like for inductive knowledge to be possible was at the forefront of Whitehead's mind in his 1922–23 address. Two years prior, his *The Concept of Nature* had criticized the "bifurcation of nature" implied by Hume's "secondary" qualities, Kant's "things in themselves," and the framework of Russell's "acquaintance."[8] In fact, Whitehead had read a paper only four months earlier for the 1921–22 *Proceedings,* titled "The Philosophical Aspects of the Principle of Relativity."[9] In this paper, Whitehead faulted the "standard form"[10] of Aristotelian logic for supplying the "two-termed relation of predication" he found responsible for this bifurcation.[11] The primary significance of the principle of relativity, he concludes, is that it displaces this Aristotelian logic because it forces us to take account of time and not just space when thinking about the relationality of events.[12] As the title of the paper indicates, the "philosophical" aspects of the principle of relativity are its implications for our understanding of ultimate facts in terms of processes (events) instead of vacuous entities.

The misuse of Aristotle (and the misunderstanding of Plato) is one helpful way in which to understand what *Process and Reality* aimed to correct. Whitehead notes that Aristotle's

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[6] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1929), 332.
[7] Whitehead, 333.
[8] Russell had read his "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" for the 1910–11 *Proceedings* of the Society. He published *The Problems of Philosophy* in 1912.
[9] Alfred North Whitehead, "The Philosophical Aspects of the Principle of Relativity." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.* New Series 22 (1921–22). July 16, 1922.
[10] Whitehead is referring to how Aristotelian logic has been received and used in modern philosophy. Towards the end of the paper, he allows for some aspects of general relativity in Aristotle's *own* account of time (223).
[11] Whitehead, 218–19.
[12] Whitehead, 223.

philosophy was responsible both for the overemphasis on final causation in the Christian Middle Ages, and then on efficient causation in the modern scientific period. "One task of a sound metaphysics," he says in response, "is to exhibit final and efficient causes in their proper relation to each other."[13] Whitehead's arguments run quite counter to the dominant contemporary caricatures of Plato and Aristotle. In effect, he suggests that the problems underlying the ignorance of time are a result of the *idealist* treatments of Aristotle's logic and the misunderstanding of Plato's *realism.* The "Semitic theory" is mainly to blame for his account insofar as its notion of a "wholly transcendent God creating out of nothing an accidental universe" made no room for a conception of the evolution of matter. And since "Newton held the Semitic theory," neither the Middle Ages nor the early scientific period could make sense of Plato's cosmogony in the *Timaeus* where "the origin of the present cosmic epoch is traced back to an aboriginal disorder, chaotic according to our ideals."[14] Distinctively, then, there is no bifurcation between a realm of ideas and a world of appearances in Whitehead's reading of Plato. What *is* there is an account of ultimate fact in terms of process, where the actual is always becoming and therefore "never really is."[15]

Whitehead was working with A. E. Taylor's interpretation of Plato and Aristotle. Some consideration of Taylor's exegesis will help us understand Whitehead's argument, especially insofar as Taylor himself alludes to Whitehead's own terminology to explicate what he calls the "correct Platonic view."[16] Like Whitehead, Taylor read Plato's cosmology as more compatible with modern science than the work of Aristotle: "What Timaeus wants to insist on is that, to use

[13] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 84.
[14] Whitehead, 95.
[15] Whitehead, 82. Quoting the *Timaeus.*
[16] A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 60.

a phrase of Dr. Whitehead's, 'passage' is the fundamental fact about 'Nature.' This is why . . . natural science is 'progressive' in a sense in which pure mathematics is not. . . . This correct perception that there is no finality in natural science is one of the things which most markedly distinguishes Plato from Aristotle for the better."[17] Taylor's comment is significant because when readers of Whitehead accuse his doctrine of "eternal objects" as being too "Platonic," they are both correct and incorrect insofar as they do not intend what Taylor calls the "correct Platonic view" but rather an idealist reading, which will not help them as interpreters of Whitehead (or Plato, for that matter).

Commenting on varieties of the "bifurcation" of nature that Whitehead critiques in modern philosophy, Taylor argues that the more insidious variety—those leading to Kant's *noumena*—is nowhere to be found in Plato *or* Aristotle:

> The main point to be grasped is that the *Timaeus* is wholly free from any form of the doctrine which Professor Whitehead calls the "bifurcation" of nature. In Aristotle we find "bifurcation" beginning in the distinction between "substances," which are imperceptible and the "accidents" of the substances, which are what we perceive.
>
> But the very distinction between "substance" and "accident" plays no part in the *Naturphilosophie* of Timaeus. The other two more elaborate forms of "bifurcation" mentioned by Whitehead (*Concept of Nature*, lect. Ii)—the distinction between an unperceived "Nature as cause" and a perceived "Nature as effect," and the distinction between "Nature as she is" and "Nature as she appears to us"—are absent from both Plato and Aristotle.[18]

[17] Taylor, 60. Whitehead himself resisted the use of the term "pure mathematics" because it was liable to misunderstanding. In their collaboration on the *Principia*, Russell was the one who went through Whitehead's drafts and inserted "pure" before Whitehead's use of "mathematics." To paraphrase Victor Lowe in his biography of Whitehead, Russell was more prone than Whitehead to idealize logic, forgetting the distinction between a symbol and its object. Whereas Whitehead and Russell collaborated on the logical notation of the principles of mathematics, they could not have done so on the *philosophy* of mathematics. For Russell, mathematics was simply an outgrowth of logic from which all its principles could be deduced. For Whitehead, logic was simply a critical element to any introduction to mathematics. As Lowe explains it, "Russell the logician was preoccupied with the truth of '*p* implies *q*,' but Whitehead the mathematician retained an interest in the truth of '*q*' which went beyond the use of *q* as a premise in the chain of deductions constituting pure mathematics. If *q* is true, it may also be a premise in a branch of applied mathematics." Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work*, Vol. 1: 1861–1910 (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 284–85.

[18] Taylor, 62.

These passages lay the groundwork for an understanding of why Whitehead thinks modern philosophy mistreats the notion of time and the heuristic role the "Semitic view" played in its appropriation of Greek philosophy. What we see in Taylor's commentary is a rejection of classical theological notions of eternity and absoluteness, which both he and Whitehead argue have been misread into Plato. Taylor writes, "It seems to me a sheer mistake to discover in the imagery by which Timaeus tries to lead up to the concept of 'timeless space' any novel 'later theory of (Platonic) Ideas. We shall see on 51 b ff. that when the Forms are expressly spoken of, it is precisely in the spirit of *Phaedo*."[19] It is this notion of "timeless space" that has been misunderstood as a wholly transcendent realm of ideas outside of the temporal process. If this is not what Plato endorsed, then it is not what Whitehead endorses when he writes of the handful of ways "the organic philosophy only repeats Plato."[20] Taylor continues,

> We must begin by forgetting all about the artificial "materialistic" interpretation of nature which assumes solid bits of "matter" as permanent things. This interpretation of nature has, as it happens, coloured our language so deeply that it is hard for us at first to realize how very artificial an interpretation it is. But we must make the attempt to get back to a condition in which we can look at the "appearances" as they present themselves to an observer not yet biased unconsciously in favour of a "materialistic" theory. Then we shall see nature simply as a great complex of overlapping events of various kinds each with its own duration and volume. (For the point of view compare Whitehead *Concept of Nature* i–ii.)[21]

The doctrine of the non-evolution of matter that Whitehead identified in Newton treats a mathematical abstraction—"absolute space"—that depends on the artificial removal of time for the purposes of Euclidean geometrical measurements. Whitehead, a preeminent mathematician of his day (particularly of geometry), but also passionate about the philosophy of education, had

[19] Taylor, 313.
[20] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 95. See also 82.
[21] Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 313.

critiqued the teaching of Euclidean geometrical principles as if they were *the* axioms of geometry and not merely *our* axioms of geometry.[22]

Whitehead was severely critical of the way primary school students were taught to accept the logical premises of subjects like geometry as self-evident propositions, implying that they are incapable of proof. This tendency is perpetuated by what he calls "fallacious views of logical method."[23] Whitehead regarded Bertrand Russell as exhibiting this fallacious view, which to a large degree contributed to Russell's "Platonism"—that is, his treatment of logic as containing the transcript of reality as opposed to its being simply a tool developed to more efficiently communicate ideas. Whitehead did not see logic as adding anything to our knowledge of the world; Russell did. It was this tendency of the early Russell that would contribute not only to his account of sense-data, which Wilfrid Sellars would critique, but also to his insinuation of a logical "given," which Robert Brandom would critique. As Paul Redding writes, "For Russell, the immediate intuitive apprehension of sense-data was only *one* of the applications of the idea of 'acquaintance.' Our a priori knowledge of logical and mathematical truths were also accounted for by this means."[24] Whitehead avoided both notions of "givenness" because he rejected the concomitant philosophy of space that underwrites them.

For Whitehead, there is a given, but it is not the sort that is liable to post-analytic critiques. It is the sort of givenness he credits Plato with recognizing as the limit of "theory"

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[22] Whitehead, "Mathematics and Liberal Education: An Address" (1912), *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 186. Whitehead made these comments in his inaugural address to the *Association of Teachers in Mathematics for the Southeastern Part of England*, his audience being very much interested in practical pedagogy. See Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work*, Vol. 2, ed. J. B. Schneewind, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 43.
[23] Whitehead, "Mathematics and Liberal Education," 185.
[24] Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58.

insofar as any theory at all presupposes something given to be theorized. Again, deferring to Taylor's interpretation, Whitehead quotes him on the following:

> In the real world there is always, over and above "law," a factor of the "simply given" or "brute fact," not accounted for and to be accepted simply as given. . . . It is the presence in nature of this element of the given, this surd or irrational as it has sometimes been called, which Timaeus appears to be personifying in his language about Necessity.[25]

Whitehead follows the passage by stating that "a clear understanding of the 'given' elements in the world is essential for any form of Platonic realism."[26] Throughout *Process and Reality,* Whitehead speaks about this givenness in terms of "decision," not because it is a conscious activity, but because it is decisive—it is a "cutting off' or an "activity procuring limitation."[27] In his words, "'Actuality' is the decision amid 'potentiality.'"[28] It is a regrettable irony that Whitehead's own metaphysics has been accused of the mistaken Platonism that he intended it to correct.

Whitehead and Conceptual Space

The benefit of getting Whitehead right on Plato is that it affords a clearer appreciation of his notion of conceptual space—a notion that has been spatialized in contemporary analytic accounts of intentionality. Whitehead was particularly moved by William James's image of the "blooming, buzzing confusion." He was insistent upon the fact that in our direct observations, we encounter the whole passage of nature. It is only in analysis that we can construct for various purposes, like those of logic or pure mathematics, notions of "timeless space," or "absolute time."

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[25] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 42. The work to which he here refers is Taylor's *Plato: The Man and His Work* (New York: Lincoln MacVeagh, 1927).
[26] Whitehead, 42.
[27] Whitehead, 43.
[28] Whitehead, 43.

In chapter 5 "Space and Motion" of his *Concept of Nature,* Whitehead begins by naming the topic of his lecture as "the continuation of the task of explaining the construction of spaces as abstracts from the facts of nature."[29] Space and time are ultimately descriptors of relations that make up the structure of events. In chapter 3, "Time," he writes, "The germ of space is to be found in the mutual relations of events within the immediate general fact [of sense-awareness]."[30] Later, he writes, "There is time because there are happenings, and apart from happenings there is nothing."[31] Spatial and temporal extension are modes of relations constitutive of events, of the passage of nature; they are not qualities to be attached to bits of matter. What's more, they are not *additives* of one another because they are nothing except events. We abstract them from one another for the purposes of measurement. It was the recognition of this abstractiveness that Einstein's theory of relativity demanded.

What relativity means is that time is a mode of relation peculiar to an event. For Whitehead, the distinction we are prone to make between mind and nature is ultimately one between two contemporaries in spatial relations pictured through the imagery of inner and outer. Only through such spatialized thinking are we tempted to equate the "immediacy" of sense-awareness ("mental" events) with the "instantaneousness" of nature ("non-mental" events).[32] Whitehead refers to such thinking as "materialist" and includes the idealism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under the same banner insofar as it also shared the belief "that nature is an aggregate of material and that this material exists in some sense *at* each successive member of

[29] Whitehead, *Concept of Nature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1920/1930), 99.
[30] Whitehead, 52–53.
[31] Whitehead, 66.
[32] Whitehead, 70.

a one-dimensional series of extensionless instants of time."[33] He amplifies his critique of materialism in the following passage:

> Furthermore the mutual relations of the material entities at each instant formed these entities into a spatial configuration in an unbounded space. It would seem that space—on this theory—would be as instantaneous as the instants, and that some explanation is required of the relations between the successive instantaneous spaces. The materialistic theory is however silent on this point; and the succession of instantaneous spaces is tacitly combined into one persistent space. This theory is a purely intellectual rendering of experience which has had the luck to get itself formulated at the dawn of scientific thought. It has dominated the language and the imagination of science since science flourished in Alexandria, with the result that it is now hardly possible to speak without appearing to assume its immediate obviousness.[34]

In an exceptionally clear passage, Whitehead describes the speciousness of what those beholden to a materialist picture call the present:

> On the materialistic theory the instantaneous present is the only field for the creative activity of nature. The past is gone and the future is not yet. Thus (on this theory) the immediacy of perception is of an instantaneous present, and this unique present is the outcome of the past and the promise of the future. But we deny this immediately given instantaneous present. There is no such thing to be found in nature. As an ultimate fact it is a nonentity. What is immediate for sense-awareness is a duration. Now a duration has within itself a past and a future; and the temporal breadths of the immediate durations of sense-awareness are very indeterminate and dependent on the individual percipient. Accordingly there is no unique factor in nature which for every percipient is preeminently and necessarily the present. The passage of nature leaves nothing between the past and the future.[35]

The immediacy of perception is not equivalent to the instantaneousness of events in nature precisely because the conflation of the two is premised on a false notion of the present. The present is not one part of the triad of time, but a particular interrelation between the passage of mind with the passage of nonmental events in nature. *Our* present, on a Whiteheadian

[33] Whitehead, 71.
[34] Whitehead, 71.
[35] Whitehead, 72.

description, is best described as "the vivid fringe of memory tinged with anticipation."[36] It is *ours* and no one else's. If we want to speak of simultaneity in terms of "instantaneous spaces," we can only speak of parallel moments in one time-system (which he defines as different families of durations). To do this is to develop the notion of "absolute space," which is the domain of the physical sciences.[37]

Taylor relies on Whitehead's notion of time-systems to explain what he reads Timaeus as having in mind—that is, a notion of "absolute space" that is always derivative of "perceptual space." Both he and Whitehead credit Leibniz's ingenuity in this regard for having defined space in terms of the order of co-existences.[38] It is also, he notes, "what ought to be meant by the modern philosophers when they speak of 'conceptual' space." This last point is Whitehead's, and Taylor credits him for it. Whitehead himself was mystified by what modern philosophers *actually* meant by "absolute space." He notes, "I suppose that it is meant that the space is the conception of something in nature."[39] But when asking about what this "something" may be, Whitehead humorously demands "a definite Habeas Corpus Act for the production of the relevant entities" less we meander into the realm of "pure fantasy."[40] Whitehead's theory of

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[36] Whitehead, 73. It is the capacity for memory and anticipation that defines mentality in Whitehead's 1947 essay "Immortality." There he examines the mutual implications of four notions: life, consciousness, memory, and anticipation. Life without consciousness is not capable of a sufficient degree of novelty to be counted as having the capacity of mind. Life with consciousness that is restricted to the immediacy of the present is unable to pursue possibilities. But conscious life with the capacity for memory and anticipation alone is able to escape the dominate determination of the immediate past that is defining of mental capacity. To speak of life as emerging from a lifeless matter is to speak of the emergence of memory and anticipation as forms of relation. There are not two types of entities in Whitehead's world; there is only one type, with a "variety of recessiveness and dominance among the basic factors of experience, namely, consciousness, memory, and anticipation."[36] If the present is nothing but duration, then when we perceive the present we perceive not something "in between" past and future, but the creative interplay between actuality and potentiality, between efficient and final causation in varying degrees according to varying combinations of factors of experience qua creativeness. See Whitehead, "Immortality" in *Essays in Science and Philosophy,* 1941 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 91.
[37] Whitehead, *Concept of Nature*, 106.
[38] Taylor, *Commentary,* 350.
[39] Whitehead, *Concept of Nature,* 96.
[40] Whitehead, 96.

space, in contrast to those like Russell's, ceases to present space as a collection of brute facts. The nature of explanation is the discovery of interconnection, which is at root the interdependence of the character of space and the character of time.[41] When Timaeus speaks of what is "eternal" in terms of what does not "pass," according to Taylor, he "asserts that it is not 'in' anything except in the sense that it is 'in' itself, it 'fills' itself."[42] Interestingly, both Taylor and Whitehead commend Milton on this point. According to Taylor, "Milton is affirming the eternity of [*nous*] when he says that the mind is its 'own place.'"[43] Whitehead, however, sees Milton's *Paradise Lost* as wavering "between the *Timaeus* and the Semitic doctrine" of the order of nature.[44] Yet both Taylor and Whitehead are in full agreement with attributing to Aristotle the classical isolation of space from time "with all the paradoxes it involves."[45] It was Aristotle's "preoccupation with the notion of volume" that led to this separation, Taylor claims, which is why "the latest philosophical work on the concepts of physics, work like Professor Whitehead's, strikes a reader familiar with Greek philosophy at once as an attempt to get back from Aristotelian positions to the general standpoint of Plato's Pythagorean cosmologist."[46]

This is true to an extent. Whitehead himself only explicitly notes two ways his philosophy of organism "repeats Plato."[47] He also means to modify Plato "so as to avoid the pitfalls which the philosophical investigations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have disclosed."[48] In his 1919 *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*—the manuscript he refused to share with Russell for fear he would run away with his ideas—

[41] Whitehead, 98.
[42] Taylor, *Commentary,* 351.
[43] Taylor, 351.
[44] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 95.
[45] Taylor, *Commentary*, 677.
[46] Taylor, 677.
[47] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 42 and 95.
[48] Whitehead, 50.

Whitehead makes a distinction in his preface between natural philosophy and metaphysics, which suggests such pitfalls.[49] He writes,

> The discussion of the deduction of scientific concepts from the simplest elements of our perceptual knowledge at once brings us to philosophical theory. Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Mill, Huxley, Bertrand Russell and Bergson, among others, have initiated and sustained relevant discussions. But this enquiry is touched by only one side of the philosophical debate. We are concerned only with Nature, that is, with the object of perceptual knowledge, and not with the synthesis of the knower with the known. This distinction is exactly that which separates natural philosophy from metaphysics.

The difference between metaphysics and the so-called natural philosophy of Hume, Kant, and Russell is that natural philosophy asks only about the object of perceptual knowledge and believes this to be the only place to begin. And yet, because of tacit metaphysical presumptions, the epistemologies of modern philosophy lead either to solipsism or contradiction. Whitehead shows the only way to refute the solipsist is to refuse to play his game. He continues,

> Accordingly none of our perplexities as to Nature will be solved by having recourse to the consideration that there is a mind knowing it. Our theme is the coherence of the known, and the perplexity which we are unraveling is as to what it is that is known.[50]

We could read Whitehead here as saying that we set ourselves up for inadequate and inaccurate theorizing if we operate according to the same tacit presumptions that lead one to think they can speak of a conceptual realm with any sense without being able to account for how it coheres with what is "given" in the nonproblematic sense of what is the prerequisite material prompting theorization. It was the neglect of temporal extension in consideration of spatial extension that led to the bifurcation of nature into "primary" and "secondary" qualities. This bifurcation on Whitehead's account precipitated an incorrect view of the nature of physical science. The

[49] The handwritten correspondence between Russell and Whitehead that is archived at McMaster University is quite revealing. In particular, see the letter from Whitehead to Russell from September 11, 1918.
[50] Whitehead, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1919), vii.

Kantian notion of *mere* appearance illustrates this neglect of temporality in its most complete expression.

H. A. Prichard and the Real Problem of Kant's First *Critique*

Whitehead the mathematician cannot be extricated from Whitehead the philosopher. To study his regard for the nature of geometrical and arithmetical rules and the relation of logical notation to them is arguably one of the most elegant routes to appreciating how Whitehead anticipates post-analytic critiques before analytic philosophy had even come of age. As with Plato, however, Whitehead never gives us an extended exegesis of Kant. We must, then, first gain some purchase on the interpretation of Kant with which Whitehead was working in order to appreciate the "Kant" who was the subject of contention not only for Whitehead, but also for Russell. Later in this section, after considering H. A. Prichard's *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (the scholarship on Kant most familiar to Whitehead), I will examine Whitehead's correspondence with Russell where he critiques Russell's putative refutation of Kant for not being "within a hundred miles of Kant's position" in his early drafts of *The Problems of Philosophy.*[51]

Prichard begins with an investigation of the problems of Kant's first *Critique*—not the problem as Kant himself understands it, but the problem of Kant's misunderstanding of what his problem actually was and should have been explicitly. Paraphrasing Kant's own set up of the problem of the first *Critique*, Prichard writes:

> There, in fact, lies the importance to metaphysics of the existence of such judgments in mathematics and physics. For it shows that the difficulty is not peculiar to metaphysics, but is a general one shared by other subjects; and the existence of such judgments in mathematics is especially important because there the validity or certainty has never been questioned. The success of mathematics shows that at any rate under certain conditions *a*

[51] H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909). Prichard notes his indebtedness to Edward Caird's two-volume *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (London: Macmillan Publishing, 1889) as expositor, and to J. M. D. Meikeljohn, Max Müller, and John P. Mahaffy as translators.

> *priori* synthetic judgments are valid, and if we can determine these conditions, we shall be able to decide whether such judgments are possible in metaphysics. In this way we shall be able to settle a disputed case of their validity by examination of an undisputed case.[52]

Insofar as Kant took metaphysics to be making *a priori* synthetic judgments, and insofar as metaphysics is not unique in doing so but keeps company with mathematics and physics, he thought we could investigate the nature of such judgments in the latter cases in order to determine the extent to which we can make them in the former.

Prichard claims that Kant's so-called Copernican revolution only appears as such due to a rhetorical sleight of hand, unnoticed even by Kant. When he claims to reverse the ordinary view of the relationship between mind and objects, Kant is using the "objects" to mean things in the world, or noumena. His alternative is to conceive objects as having to conform to the mind. But in this second use, "objects" now refers to things as they appear to us, or phenomena. As "object" refers to something different in each instance, Prichard argues, Kant's position is only verbally a reversal of the traditional one.

We can notice Kant's mistake if we make explicit the spatial motifs on which he implicitly relies. If the ordinary view is that objects are things outside the mind and ideas within the mind, the former being independent and the latter dependent upon the mind, then traditional conformity lies between something within the mind to something without the mind. "Hence," writes Prichard, "the real contrary of this view is that ideas, within the mind, exist first and that objects outside the mind, coming into existence afterwards, must adapt themselves to the ideas."[53] But Kant does not claim this; he claims only, in effect, that our knowledge of mind must conform to mind. Contrary to Kant's own construal of his position as reversing the ordinary

[52] Prichard, 8–9.
[53] Prichard, 16.

relation of conformity between mind and object, his actual position is "we ought not to speak of conformity at all."[54]

What is interesting about Prichard's claim here is the resemblance it bears to Robert Brandom's claim that what Kant was really doing in the first *Critique* was not asking how representations can be successful, but challenging the semantics of representationalism itself. In his 2006 article "Kantian Lessons about Mind, Meaning, and Rationality,"[55] Brandom claims that Kant is not asking the epistemological question of the Cartesian skeptic, but a semantic question about the nature of representation. Further, he claims that an adequate answer to the semantic question would dissolve the epistemological one—that is, we cannot talk about ideas as true if we are not clear on what it means to believe something to be true in the first place. Brandom thinks Kant nearly succeeds in answering the semantic question, too. "Kant tells us nearly everything we need to know about minds, concepts, and their use and contents," according to Brandom.[56] Of course, he does not explicitly tell us, but shows us. Like Prichard, he is arguing for what Kant was actually doing in the *Critiques* and not what Kant thought he was doing. This is why Brandom titles the piece "Kantian Lessons"—they are Kantian, not Kant's.

To be sure, Prichard does not claim that Kant is asking the "prior" semantic question; he claims that Kant thinks he has made an epistemological move when he has really made an ontological one—one impermissible by his own lights. Kant can both make and miss this move because of a prior oversight regarding the nature of synthetic *a posteriori* judgments or presumed empirical givens. The "problem" he intends the first *Critique* to address is, after all, that of

[54] Prichard, 16.
[55] Robert Brandom, "Kantian Lessons about Mind, Meaning, and Rationality," *Philosophical Topics* 34, no. 1 (2006): 1–20.
[56] Brandon, 20.

synthetic *a priori* judgments because these strike Kant as problematic in a way that analytic *a priori* or synthetic *a posteriori* judgments are not. Prichard, however, thinks that Kant has failed to notice that the difficulty that extends to synthetic *a priori* judgments extends equally to synthetic *a posteriori* judgments. He writes, "It can only be supposed that the conformity of empirical judgments to their objects is guaranteed by the experience upon which they rest, if it be assumed that in experience we apprehend objects as they are. But our experience or perception of individual objects is just as much mental as the thinking which originates *a priori* judgments."[57] In other words, the only reason Kant is able to make a distinction between synthetic *a priori* and synthetic *a posteriori* judgments is because he takes ideas to involve an *activity* of mind in the way perceptions do not. According to Prichard, Kant forgets that perceptions are equally dependent upon the mind and thus equally set up the problem of something within the mind, conforming to something outside of it—at least, we can argue as much using Kant's own presuppositions. Prichard is simply pointing out an inconsistency in Kant's thinking, not endorsing any of the language—particularly the ascriptions of "mental" and "non-mental," "inside" and "outside." These distinctions perpetuate the very bifurcation of nature he would abandon.

The inconsistency owes to a tacit ontological assumption about particulars and universals. Kant assumes that the mind acts as intermediary when the subject relates to universals, but does not act as intermediary when the subject relates to particulars. With respect to universals, it is assumed that because we have to *think* them, "what is related to the subject as the object of its thought must be subjective or mental."[58] This creates a question about the conformity of this

[57] Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge,* 17.
[58] Prichard, 19.

object qua idea to the reality it "represents." Such is not the case for Kant in perception because he assumes some sort of givenness. It is because Kant misconceives the nature of things like geometrical thinking that he takes it to be different in kind from perception and not just in degree.

But Prichard thinks that if Kant is to be consistent with himself, it must be that his concern is not specifically with *a priori* judgments, but with the conformity of all ideas qua activities of the mind—including perception—to things outside of it. Therefore, in claiming that particulars must conform to universals, as he does with respect to geometrical and mathematical rules, he is not actually claiming that we can only really ever know phenomena—he only thinks he is claiming this because of his equivocation on the use of "object" in each rendition of the direction of mind/world conformity. To the contrary, what is shown, on Prichard's analysis, is that the problem of the first *Critique* "reduces itself to the question, 'What is the presupposition of the existence of definite laws of connexion in the world?' And the only answer possible is that reality is a system of a whole of connected parts, in other words, that nature is uniform."[59] If Kant were to deny the law of connection, then he would be unable to claim that particulars conform to universals. He does claim this, however, and is thereby committed to the uniformity of nature.

To sum up thus far, Prichard has accused Kant of getting away with the distinction between problematic synthetic *a priori* judgments and unproblematic synthetic *a posteriori* judgments only because he acknowledges the relation of subject (mind) to object (world) in the former but not in the latter. Kant therefore operates with an ontological distinction between particulars qua things-independent-of-the-mind and universals quathings-dependent-upon-the-

[59] Prichard, 19.

mind. His interpretation of this distinction, however, is informed by an Aristotelian tendency to regard individuals as the only realities, such that universals and the relations between universals are somehow "mere" fictions of the mind. Prichard calls this tendency the "conceptualist attitude."[60] Only because this view underwrites Kant's recognition of the activity of *thinking* in *a priori* but not *a posteriori* synthetic judgments can he find the logical momentum to assume that thinking qua activity, originates something in the former and not in the latter. In other words, thinking originates the object of the judgment in the case of universals, but does not originate the object of the judgment in the case of particulars.

Had Kant not committed the first oversight, he would have noticed that there must be fallacious reasoning involved in the association of reality only with particulars; hence, he would have noticed that since ideas and perceptions are equally mind-involving objects, his problem was not only with the nature of *a priori* but also *a posteriori* synthetic judgments. In fact, he would have been able to make sense of his difficulty in defining the nature of synthetic *a priori* judgments instead of resting content to describe some as self-evident (those of mathematics) and some as requiring demonstration (those of physics). He would have been able to make sense of this difficulty because he would have his mistaken epistemological claim authorized by a mistaken *ontological* one—one concealed by its very operation, and so, upon scrutiny, liable to the critique of performative self-contradiction. Indeed, he would have seen that the real problem of the first *Critique* was, according to the terms of his own discussion, the relationship between things in the mind with things outside the mind. And insofar as he believed the revolution of standpoint to be necessary in order to make sense of the direction of conformity in this relation,

[60] Prichard, 21–22.

he would also need to admit that entailed in the assumption of conformity is the assumption of the uniformity of nature.

But then, the warranted conclusion is *not* that we can only know things as our mind constructs them, because we have rid ourselves of the ontological assumption that only individuals have reality *and* the concomitant epistemological one that mind is only involved when the object is a universal. Kant would not have claimed that what makes the universal judgments in mathematics (e.g., the straight line is the shortest distance between two points) and the singular judgments in physics (e.g., the phenomenal world as demonstrative of the validity of this mathematical judgment) true is self-evident in the first but demonstrative in the second. Short of designating a unique category of judgments, one would say that the "truth of the law of causality is *not* apprehended in the same way that we see that 'two and two are four.'"[61] Rather, if he were to be consistent with what counts as an *a priori* synthetic judgment, it "could then be defined as one in which the mind, on the presentation of an individual in perception or imagination, and in virtue of its capacity in thinking, apprehends the necessity of a specific relation," according to Prichard.[62] It turns out that according to this more coherent definition of *a priori* synthetic judgments, they succeed *not* insofar as their objects are possible items of experience (some version of Kant's *phenomena*), but rather they succeed insofar as their objects are the necessary relations constitutive of the individuals they apprehend. If *a priori* synthetic judgments are not true insofar as their objects are possible objects of experience, then the possibility of mathematics and physics no longer entails the impossibility of metaphysics.

[61] Prichard, 26.
[62] Prichard, 26.

Kant's Spatialization of Thought

The foregoing discussion of Prichard's work on Kant illustrates a problematic tendency as the root of his first *Critique*, a tendency that owes to the very legacy of Aristotle that Taylor delegitimized and Whitehead sought to correct. This is the tendency in Western philosophy to spatialize thought—even to spatialize *time* by conceiving it as an "inner" sense. Prichard argues as much in chapter 5, "Time and Inner Sense," where he questions "whether Kant is, on his own principles, entitled to speak of an inner sense at all."[63] I might paraphrase his argument by saying that Kant is not so entitled as such because he takes sensations to be produced by the activity of things-in-themselves, and so internal sensation must likewise be produced by the activity of something within the mind. But if we cannot know the thing-in-itself, including what *we* are in ourselves, then how are we able to determine if a given sensation is due to *ourselves* and therefore an *inner* sense? If we take Kant at his word, we shouldn't be able to recognize an inner sense at all.[64] But then why does Kant maintain that time is merely the *form* of our internal sense, the form of our self-perception? Kant writes, "Time is nothing other than the form of inner sense, i.e., of the intuition of our self and our inner state. For time cannot be a determination of outer appearances; it belongs neither to a shape or a position, etc., but on the contrary determines the relation of representations in our inner state."[65] Notice that Kant says "outer" appearances, which are distinguished from "inner" sense by reason of the fact that they have shape or position. But if, as Prichard has already argued, we have no grounds to determine whether the cause of our affections is dependent or independent upon the mind, what sense does it make to speak of

[63] Prichard, 108.
[64] Prichard, 109.
[65] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. and eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A33/B49–B50.

"outer" appearances—particularly insofar as "appearances" already implies something *dependent* upon the mind. Kant has once again failed to consistently apply his own distinction, allowing some low-grade affirmation of "facts as they are outside of us" to creep in. As a consequence, he slips back and forth between two meanings of "external": the one, phenomena of which the parts are external to one another, i.e., spatial; the other, phenomena independent of the mind. Time cannot be a determinant of external phenomena in the first sense insofar as it has nothing to do with space or position. But regarding the second sense, it would seem an oxymoron since "phenomena" are distinguished from "things-in-themselves" precisely on the grounds that they *are* dependent upon mind. He goes on to argue the unreality of time on the grounds that we can exhaustively describe the nature of its form by spatial analogy:

> And just because this inner intuition yields no shape we also attempt to remedy this lack through analogies, and represent the temporal sequence through a line progressing to infinity, in which the manifold constitutes a series that is of only one dimension, and infer from the properties of this line to all the properties of time, with the sole difference that the parts of the former are simultaneous but those of the latter always exist successively. From this it is also apparent that the representation of time is itself an intuition, since all its relations can be expressed in an outer intuition.[66]

Kant has seamlessly transitioned from the claim that time is the form of internal states to the assertion that time is how we *perceive* our internal states. In the first, our states *really are* temporally related; in the second, we *perceive* our *perceptions* to be temporally related.[67] (In the previous chapter, Prichard argues that Kant makes a similar transition with respect to space, beginning with the assertion that space is the form of things, and moving to the assertion that space is a form of our perception of things.)[68] The point, Prichard concludes, is that Kant cannot have it both ways:

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[66] Kant, A33/B49–B50.
[67] Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, 114.
[68] Prichard, 38–40.

> [He] is only justified in denying that we know things in themselves if he concedes that we really know our own states, and not merely the appearances which they produce. . . . Hence, since these states are really our states and not appearances produced by our states, these being themselves unknown, time, as a relation of these states, must itself be real, and not a way in which we apprehend what is real.[69]

Prichard concludes, in effect, that Kant cannot performatively sustain his own explicit commitment to the spatialization of time. In *Process and Reality,* Whitehead notes his indebtedness to this reading of Kant. For over a decade before writing his magnum opus, Whitehead had been advocating for the philosophical implications of the theory of relativity and had been correcting Bertrand Russell's neglect of applied mathematics for some idealized version of pure mathematics. It would seem, then, that by the time of *Process and Reality*, Whitehead was already at the helm of what would later become post-analytic philosophy before *analytic* philosophy even had its sea legs.

Whiteheadian Anticipations of Post-Analytic Critique

Pritchard attempted to correct the tacit ontological assumptions in Kant that corrupted Kant's reasoning in order to show how Kant's thought might differently resolve epistemological skepticism with a metaphysics of intentionality. It is noteworthy that these efforts resemble McDowell's rereading of Kant in *Mind and World* (1994). Ironically, McDowell understands his own rereading of Kant's account of intuition to achieve a sort of "Aristotelian innocence" in reference to what Whitehead means by the elimination of the bifurcation of nature. McDowell critiques *both* what he calls the "bald" naturalism of scientific materialism *and* post-Kantian idealist critiques of the supersensible for presuming a sort of "rampant" *Platonism* insofar as

[69] Prichard, 113–14.

each operates with an idea of "nature" as an unbounded "objective" realm that is structured by a "subjective" or "conceptual" realm.[70]

It should be noticed that the "Aristotle" McDowell commends for this innocence is more akin to the "Plato" that Whitehead commends for the same, and that the "Platonism" McDowell seeks to exorcise from Kant is more akin to the "false Platonism" that Whitehead-via-Taylor identifies than the Plato whose *realism* Whitehead prescribes. This is important because McDowell thereby exhibits the very misunderstandings of Plato and misappropriations of Aristotle that Whitehead sought to correct and that unskilled readers of Whitehead continue to uphold. When he expressed mystification about what traditional philosophy had dubbed "conceptual space," Whitehead was talking about the same problematic dichotomy that McDowell seeks to correct with his notion of "second nature." In fact, McDowell calls his corrective account of conceptual capacities a "naturalized" Platonism—a phrase that would strike Taylor and Whitehead as strange, if not redundant.

The retrieval by post-analytic philosophers of Hegel has been rather telling in its urgency to undo the damage caused by assumptions that make intentionality seem problematic. McDowell argues that we need that reading of Hegel that emphasizes his *Aristotelianism* in order to make sense of normativity coming from nature. When Brandom reads Hegel in an anti-Aristotelian way, he ends up unable to account for *perceptual* judgments. What such attempts suggest is that philosophers of the analytic tradition would do well to stop debating whether Hegel was doing metaphysics; such debates are nonstarters because "metaphysics" has no static sense. Rather, they should pay attention to the thinker who anticipated the inadequacy of Anglo-American philosophy's dominant account of experience from the outset. Whitehead identifies

[70] Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, 26.

more completely the same inhibiting factors in this tradition that McDowell points out a century later. When McDowell claims that we need a new conception of "nature" and "objectivity," he would do well to examine Whitehead.

It is one of the great ironies of intellectual history that the general impression among analytic philosophers is that Whitehead's ideas are too Platonist, too metaphysical, and too abstract. In fact, it was all these things that Whitehead resisted in analytic thinkers of his day and the modern philosophical tradition to which they responded. Russell's logical atomism was not, in Whitehead's view, a departure from classical metaphysical ideas, but a particular type of extension of them.

Russell and Whitehead collaborated for a decade on the *Principia Mathematica.* But the collaboration did not extend beyond the project—the relationship of logic to mathematics exhausted the extent of their intellectual agreement. Once the subject became the relationship of logic to ontology, or the philosophy of mathematics, the two thinkers diverged. We see these differences expressed in Whitehead's 1911 critiques of *The Problems,* which was Russell's attempt to work out the philosophical problems that arose in their *Principia* project.

Keeping in mind the Prichard-inspired reading of Kant explored above, we can better understand Whitehead's critique of Russell's draft of *The Problems*, which we have in the form of fourteen handwritten pages dated August 26, 1911. It is difficult to decipher Whitehead's handwriting exactly, but on my best reading, after offering a Prichard-like paraphrase of Kant, he writes:

> Now if this is anything like Kant, you do not touch him. First, you muddle the physical objects (=scientific molecule) in "public space" with his thing-in-itself. Second, you have smuggled away and ignored the phenomenal object with which he starts. Thus the whole point of the "phenomenon" mentioned by you on p. 28 is lost. Third, your "main objection" on p. 29 is that our nature is a fact of the "existing world." What do you mean

> by "existing world!" Apparently something in time, for "tomorrow" applies to it. Kant would certainly have [end page 8] denied this. This would be the "phenomenal ego." The "transcendental ego" is not in time—rather conversely.[71]

The Kant that Whitehead says Russell misses entirely is the Kant that Prichard accuses of maintaining in *practice* the very reality of time that he denies in *principle.* Russell misses this Kant because he makes recourse to those "secret stores of information" that Whitehead accused so many modern philosophers of having in his address to the Aristotle Society in 1922. What these "secret stores" often hold are tacit assumptions about space and time that are either treated as needing no defense, or as explicitly contradicted by their purported principles.

As there is little indication that Russell made any substantial changes to the text as a result of Whitehead's comments, we may use the text as we have it today to examine the parts Whitehead had in mind in the above statement.[72] The first is quite straightforward. Russell writes:

> The physical object, which he calls the "thing in itself," (1) he regards as essentially unknowable; what can be known is the object as we have it in experience, which he calls the "phenomenon". . . . Kant's thing in itself is identical in *definition* with the physical object, namely, it is the cause of sensations. In the properties deduced from the definition it is not identical, since Kant held (in spite of some inconsistency as regards cause) that we can know that none of the categories are applicable to the "thing in itself."[73]

Whitehead has taken issue with what Russell refers to as "the physical object." Earlier in the letter, while commenting on Russell's chapter 2, Whitehead argued that Russell had entirely failed to refute the solipsist because of his loose application of terms. For instance, Russell writes, "The real table, if it exists, we will call a 'physical object.' Thus we have to consider the

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[71] Alfred Whitehead to Bertrand Russell, 26 August 1911, page 8, The Bertrand Russell Archives, McMaster University, Ontario, Canada.
[72] See Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His* Work, Vol. 2, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 20.
[73] Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1912/2001), 48.

relation of sense-data to physical objects. The collection of all physical objects is called 'matter.'"[74] Physical objects are what Russell understands as the objects causing our sensations. As the causes of our sensations, these physical objects exist outside us in spatial extension, which is the "physical space" that Russell understands as the "space of science."[75] We can already see why Whitehead qua Taylorian might have objected to this terminology, on several levels. First, with respect to his treatment of space, Russell is working with the very bifurcated picture of nature that he thinks he is critiquing in Kant. When Russell talks about "the real space" that is "public" versus "the apparent space" that is "private to the percipient,"[76] Whitehead sees that Russell is already playing the game he thinks he is challenging. When Russell says that it is this "physical space" with which geometry deals, Whitehead does not disagree; what he disagrees with is the ontological claim that this space is somehow the "real" one. Again, this explains why Whitehead and Russell ceased to collaborate after the *Principia Mathematica*—while their mathematics were not contentious, their philosophies of mathematics were. For Whitehead, if you are contrasting reality with appearance, you've already played right into the traditional doctrines of space to the neglect of time. Russell is employing the "nature as it really is" versus the "nature as it appears to us" picture, and in doing so, associates Kant's "thing in itself" with the former. Whitehead, however, thinks that Russell has failed to anticipate Kant's rightful reply to this association. Thus, though "you might say, 'At least Reality-in-itself is something'. [Kant] replies 'Yes, but now I am conceiving Reality-in-itself as a phenomenal object, [this] names the counterpart of my phenomenal self'."[77] Russell is wrong, he thinks, in

[74] Russell, 4.
[75] Russell, 15.
[76] Russell, 15.
[77] Whitehead, 11.

making the association he does, because in speaking about "physical objects" as the causes in physical space of our sensations, Russell is applying the notions associated with the categories of the Transcendental Aesthetic: time, space, number, and causation. These notions cannot both apply to the "physical object" as Russell defines it and to Kant's "things-in-themselves."[78]

By equating the two, Russell is not objecting to Kant as much as he is creating a straw man argument for his hypostatization of logic and pure mathematics: "Apart from minor grounds on which Kant's philosophy may be criticized, there is one main objection which seems fatal to any attempt to deal with the problem of *a priori* knowledge by his method. The thing to be accounted for is our certainty that the facts must always conform to logic and arithmetic. To say that logic and arithmetic are contributed by us does not account for this."[79] On Whitehead qua Prichardian's reading, neither is it true to speak of the self-evidence of logic and pure mathematics (this was the critique he gave of mathematics education and the disuse of Euclid's *Elements* for historical context), nor is it true that Kant would have equated "things-in-themselves" with what Russell calls "the facts."

Neither, and for the same reason, would Kant have equated them with "the existing world" as Russell does when he writes, "Our nature is as much a fact of the existing world as anything, and there can be no certainty that it will remain constant. It might happen, if Kant is right, that tomorrow our nature would so change as to make two and two become five. This possibility seems never to have occurred to [Kant], yet it is one which utterly destroys the certainty and universality which he is anxious to vindicate for arithmetical propositions."[80] When Whitehead critiques Russell for thinking that "our nature" and the "existing world" correspond to

[78] Whitehead, 5–6.
[79] Russell, 49.
[80] Whitehead, 49.

Kant's "transcendental ego" and "things-in-themselves," he does so not because he is defending Kant, but because he thinks that Russell's efforts to refute him miss the mark entirely—and he does so because the position he is defending against Kant is also, in Whitehead's estimation, fallacious. Russell is trying to show why if we go along with Kant's view, we cannot make sense of the *apodicity* of propositions like "2 + 2 = 4" or the probability that "the sun will rise tomorrow." But the reason Russell thinks Kant cannot make sense of our certainty in such cases is because Russell wrongly attributes to Kant the view that science deals with things-in-themselves. Russell thinks that Kant must admit "the time-order of phenomena is determined by the character of what is behind phenomena" because even if the possibility of "2 + 2" equaling "5" is *formally* incompatible with Kant's view that "time itself is a form imposed by the subject upon phenomena," this is the logical implication that undermines Kant's hope of vindicating synthetic *a priori* judgments. In order to vindicate such judgments, Russell thinks that Kant must allow the "things-in-themselves" to at least cause the apparent time-order of our sensations. Whitehead holds that Kant need do no such thing because he will simply point out that Russell's "existing world" and "physical space" is not merely Reality-in-itself qua phenomenal object.

For Whitehead, Kant ought to be refuted precisely because he disseminates the very idea that Russell himself employs to critique him. In the same letter mentioned above, from August 26, 1911, Whitehead writes: "My general view of your philosophy is that it is in the same state of transition as that in which Kant unfortunately wrote his *Critique*. . . . You seem to lack the self-confidence (or rather, time) to systematize philosophy afresh, in accordance with your own views."[81] The "same state" to which Whitehead refers to is, on my reading, induced by the

[81] Whitehead, 1–2.

"inconsistent presuppositions underlying [the] inherited modes of expression"[82] from Descartes to Hume, as he writes in *Process in Reality* eighteen years later. Exposing these presuppositions ought to be our means of refuting Kant: "At the end," Whitehead continues, "there should be no problem of space-time, or of epistemology, or of causality, left over for discussion."[83] It is precisely this endeavor to correct that line of thinking that bequeathed to philosophy a group of "problems" that is common to Whitehead and post-analytic philosophy.

In light of the foregoing, it is perplexing to learn that Russell reported to Victor Lowe in a letter on July 24, 1960 that he could say "definitely and with certainty" that "before 1918, [Whitehead] had no definite opinions in philosophy and did not actively combat mine."[84] Lowe wonders if it is a case of protective memory.

What Whitehead Can Tell Us about Analytic Philosophy's Return to Hegel

The preceding discussion examined the sources informing Whitehead's position that the root problem of modern philosophy has to do with misreading Plato and misusing Aristotle. This helps us to understand why he broke with analytic philosophy at its inception, as well as why current retrievals of Hegel attempting to fix the consequences this problem of making sense of intentionality (among other things) are not sufficient. In a statement that anticipates the very sort of move for which McDowell and Brandom are credited, Whitehead writes: "Indeed, if this cosmology be deemed successful, it becomes natural at this point to ask whether the type of thought involved be not a transformation of some main doctrines of Absolute Idealism onto a

[82] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xi–xii.
[83] Whitehead, xi-xii.
[84] Victor Lowe, "Whitehead's 1911 Criticism of Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*," *The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies* 13 (Spring 1974): 3.

realistic basis."[85] Whitehead was very much in conversation with his contemporaries, so we should note that the idealism he had in mind was that of F. H. Bradley, and the realism he had in mind was likely that of T. Percy Nunn, who was President of the Aristotelian Society from 1923–24, the year after Whitehead, and who had been, at least indirectly through years of the *Proceedings,* a conversation partner of Whitehead's.

Nunn was influential for Russell during his early attempts to formulate a theory of perception. But unlike Russell, Nunn was a defender of the reality of secondary qualities apart from perception. In his 1915–16 paper on "Sense-data and Physical Objects," Nunn argues against Russell, G. E. Moore, and G. F. Stout that "the hypothesis of the existence of unperceived sense-data is not only tenable but, on the whole, the most satisfactory theory of perception hitherto advanced . . . ."[86] He continues, "Mr. Russell, in his paper on 'The Relation of Sense-data to Physics,' seems to indicate that my views had some influence in leading him to adopt his theory of 'perspectives.' But although Mr. Russell prefers not to assume the hypothesis of unperceived sense-data, neither he nor, so far as I know, any other writer has directly criticized my arguments in its favour."[87] Nunn's "realism" refers to his affirmation of world as it appears to us, free of the bifurcation of nature that Whitehead critiqued. In his presidential address to the *AS* in 1923, Nunn contrasts his realism to "an unhealthy romanticism" about the nature of scientific objects, which he likely attributed to Russell. Nunn was talking about the nascent theory of general and special relativity when he wrote:

> I own that, as a layman following at a long distance the present heroic adventures and discoveries of physics, I put out of my mind all that I have said in this paper and accept

[85] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xiii. The absolute idealist he had in mind was not Hegel, however, but F. H. Bradley, though British idealism was strongly influenced by German idealism.
[86] T. Percy Nunn, "Sense-data and Physical Objects," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 16 (1915–1916): 157.
[87] Nunn, 157.

> the wonderful tale as it is told. But when the book is set down the obstinate question returns: A wonderful tale it certainly is, but what does it really mean? And the only answer I can find is the one which I have once more tried to formulate and defend. I may summarize it by saying that the real achievement of science is not to have disclosed any reality behind the veil of sensible things, but to have greatly extended and deepened and rationalized the scheme of the world revealed in perception. It is perhaps only a sign of an unhealthy romanticism to be disappointed because it can do nothing more.[88]

Here, just as Whitehead did in *The Concept of Nature* three years earlier, Nunn refuses to treat perception as a "veil" behind which science seeks to peer, while critiquing the view that would beget logical positivism and other forms of scientism. McDowell would critique the heirs of these views for being beholden to a Platonist picture of "Reality as it appears" and "Reality as it is."

In accounts of the early years of analytic philosophy, there is usually a discussion of the intellectual exchanges between thinkers like Russell and G. E. Moore. The relationships between Russell and his other important contemporaries like T. Percy Nunn and G. F. Stout—not to mention Whitehead—are not as well known. In 2014, the Aristotelian Society published a virtual issue aimed at providing more insight into the debates surrounding the emergence of analytic philosophy in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. The issue, titled "The Emergence of Analytic philosophy and a Controversy at the Aristotelian Society: 1900–1916," collected papers from the archives of the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* and the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* that were relevant to the titular controversy. More specifically, this controversy concerned the nature of sense-data (psychical or physical), their reality beyond perception, and how they relate to knowledge of the external world. Special guest editor Omar W. Nasim compiled essays that he thought relevant to a better understanding of the

[88] T. Percy Nunn, "Scientific Objects and Common-Sense Things: The Presidential Address," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 24 (1923–24): 18.

formation of Russell's early thought. Noticeably absent from his list, however, is Whitehead. In fact, in all 487 pages of the issue, Whitehead's name is never mentioned. This is a curious editorial decision considering that other *AS* presidents are incorporated in the collection, including Friedrich Schiller and Nunn, whose presidencies respectively bookended Whitehead's own. The protective memory appears institutionalized.

Whitehead's part in this controversy was sympathetic with Nunn's own, as his later statement about putting Absolute Idealism on a "realistic basis" suggests. What Nunn called "unhealthy romanticism," Whitehead repeatedly identified as a misguided appropriation of Plato—the very one *his* work has been accused of displaying and *Russell's* work was, at least to a larger extent and until recently, regarded as rejecting. As Victor Lowe puts it, "If Whitehead when younger was ever attracted to extreme Platonism [a descriptor I, anachronistically for Lowe, equate to the sort Whitehead deemed illegitimate], the doctrine of evolution and the discovery of alternative geometries—both of which suggest that Nature is patient of many patterns of order—had taken him away from it."[89] It was Whitehead's attention to the process of our thinking rather than just the product that allowed him to identify cases where other thinkers presumed the self-evidence of a product by forgetting the process.

A discussion between Whitehead and Quine is telling in this regard. In his "Whitehead and the Rise of Modern Logic" (1941),[90] Quine criticized Whitehead's account of the fundamental idea expressed by "=" in an algebraic calculus, which Whitehead had treated in his

[89] Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work* (Volume 1), 198.
[90] W. V. Quine, "Whitehead and the Rise of Modern Logic," *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1941), 127–63.

A Treatise on Universal Algebra: With Applications (1898). There, Whitehead claimed "Equivalence … implies non-identity as its general case."[91] He goes on:

> Identity may be conceived as a special limiting case of equivalence. For instance in arithmetic we write, 2 + 3 = 3 + 2. This means that, in so far as the total number of objects mentioned, 2 + 3 and 3 + 2 come to the same number, namely 5. But 2 + 3 and 3 + 2 are not identical; the order of the symbols is different in the two combinations, and this difference or order directs different processes of thought. The importance of the equation arises from its assertion that these different processes of thought are identical as far as the total number of things thought of is concerned. [92]

His emphasis on the processes of thought, for which arithmetical notation stands as a *substitute*, indicates that Whitehead never lost sight of the material conditions in which and for which mathematics is carried out. In calculus, the mathematician is freed from having to think explicitly through concrete inferences in order to focus simply on the rules of interchanging the signs.[93] Whitehead attributes to calculus, then, the task of facilitating our reasoning, not providing a window into "Reason's" own language. Whitehead rejected the logicism of the early Russell's efforts to reduce all mathematical notions to logical ones, and therefore also the Leibnizian enterprise of reducing *all* notions to logical ones.

In 1900, Russell published *The Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, where he attempts to systematize Leibniz's philosophy by way of geometrical deduction. This is two years after Whitehead's *Universal Algebra,* three years before *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), and ten years before the *Principia Mathematica* (1910). Russell credits Leibniz for teaching him the importance of relations while also critiquing him for not fully committing to this importance, leading to his failure to produce a body of systematized thought—something Russell endeavored

[91] Alfred North Whitehead, *A Treatise on Universal Algebra: With Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898), 6.
[92] Whitehead, 6.
[93] Whitehead, 10.

to correct. Indeed, Russell writes in his *Critical Exposition* that, even while Leibniz insisted that all propositions are reducible to a subject and a predicate, which would amount to a monadology, it was Leibniz's "assumption of a plurality of substances [that] made the denial of relations peculiarly difficult, and involved him in all the paradoxes of the pre-established harmony."[94]

It is in the latter work from 1903 that Russell discovers the paradox of set theory that would unsettle Frege and motivate Russell's theory of Types. Inchoate expressions of this paradox existed before 1903 in Russell's work, however, particularly in what he called the "contradiction of infinity" with which "[m]athematical ideas are almost all infected."[95] As discussed at the outset of this chapter, Whitehead did not share the same sort of concern for infinity precisely because, as I have tried to show, he did not commit the same error of spatializing logic and reasoning that Russell did.

We may regard Whitehead's rejection of Russell's logicism, then, as another instance of his insistence on the process qua temporal extension of logic in addition to its product qua spatial-extension visualized by notation, which we find in his disagreement with Quine. Whitehead anticipated his critiques of logicism in *Universal Algebra* when he writes from an arithmetical perspective of equivalence as a *limited* case of identity, "it is tempting to define equivalent things as being merely different ways of thinking of the same thing as it exists in the external world." This is the temptation to think, "there is a certain aggregate, say of 5 things, which is thought of in different ways, as 2 + 3 and as 3 + 2."[96] But Whitehead argues that if we mistake 2 + 3 and 3 + 2 as interchangeable symbols for 5, we treat mathematical notation not as

[94] Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (London and New York: Routledge, [1900] 1992), 18.
[95] Ohad Nachtomy, "Leibniz and Russell: The Number of all Numbers and the Set of all Sets," in *Leibniz and the English-Speaking World*, eds. Pauline Phemister and Stuart Brown (The Netherlands: Springer, 2007), 209.
[96] Nachtomy, 6.

shorthand for our rational *processes*, but rather as corresponding to ultimate realities that exist independent of the processes. The problem with treating 2 + 3 and 3 + 2 as identical insofar as they each represent an aggregate of 5 is that this distinction once again introduces an ontological bifurcation between Reality-as-it-appears to us (2 + 3 or 3 +2) and Reality-as-it-is (5). Only someone with this bifurcated picture could maintain the absolute identity of 2 + 3 and 3 + 2. This is why Whitehead thinks that a "sufficient objection" to those who maintain this identity (as does Quine) is to suggest how this claim of mathematical identity is akin to the philosophical claim to have solved the problem of the distinction between self and world. By this I take him to mean that to claim the mathematical identity 2 + 3 and 3 +2 (which assumes a represented reality, i.e., the aggregate of 5) is to claim that sensory objects are identical with the objects of perception (which assumes a Reality-in-itself like Russell's "Physical Objects"). "As there is no universally accepted solution to this problem," he writes, "it is obviously undesirable to assume this distinction as the basis of mathematical reasoning."[97] Mathematical figures, for Whitehead, symbolize the process of forming a synthesis between two things and then of considering a third thing that is not equivalent to but internally related to the others. He generalizes this emphasis on process in mathematical reasoning into his Ontological Principle in *Process and Reality.*

Each of these encounters with Quine and with Russell demonstrate Whitehead's embeddedness vis-à-vis the "controversy" ensuing throughout the *Proceedings* of the Aristotelian Society between 1900 and 1916. He was very clearly engaged in debates regarding the nature of sense-data and what sorts of ontological and epistemological commitments questions about their reality entail, specifically with respect to the language of "externality." Even more broadly, these encounters indicate how Whitehead understood the need to recast

[97] Nachtomy, 6.

certain doctrines of Absolute Idealism onto a realistic basis. He understood it, in short, as a need to reject both Bradley's doctrine of the absolute qua a-single-experient *and* Leibniz's doctrine of many windowless monads, the two alternatives resulting from a view of experience as in some way illusory.[98] Once we have found ourselves engrossed in this illusoriness, our only recourse is something like Leibniz's "pious dependence upon God," as we see in Descartes. Such a recourse is "repugnant to a consistent rationality," insists Whitehead. "The very possibility of knowledge should not be an accident of God's goodness; it should depend on the interwoven nature of things. After all, God's knowledge has equally to be explained."[99]

Whitehead insists in *Process and Reality* that any metaphysical theory that starts from a commitment to the disjunction between "the component elements of individual experience" and "the component elements of the external world" will encounter two problems: (1) an ontological problem about the nature of the truth and falsehood of propositions, and (2) an epistemological problem about the grounds for judging truth and falsehood.[100] So long as we subscribe to Hume's doctrine of "impressions of sensation," which assumes that experience is analyzable without remainder in terms of universals *and* that experience is composed of "mere" sensations received by a passive subject, we will fail to take account of the necessary ontological togetherness needed to provide the epistemological togetherness that alone can rejoin propositions and judgments by way of the actual entity. We must completely reject the Absolute Idealist's (i.e., Bradley) trust in the subject-predicate mode of expression and transferal of this format onto an account of experience, rendering the datum of experience fully analyzable in terms of universals. Whitehead's philosophy of organism is "in sharp disagreement with Bradley" on these points,

[98] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 190.
[99] Whitehead, 190.
[100] Whitehead, 189.

even if "the final outcome is after all not so greatly different" insofar as their shared goal is to dispute the "doctrine of 'vacuous actuality.'"[101] By taking relatedness to be dominant over quality rather than vice versa, Whitehead brings actual entities to the center of his cosmology: "All relatedness has its foundations in the relatedness of actualities; and such relatedness is wholly concerned with the appropriation of the dead by the living . . .".[102] It is relatedness that has quality, not substances. These qualities or modes of relatedness, when spoken of in abstraction from their realization, he calls "pure potentials" or "eternal objects" insofar as they indicate the various modes by which a subject becomes by objectifying its immediate past. Only when we start with the "experiential togetherness" of actual entities will temporality seem inextricable from spatiality.

It is also the case that we can only make sense of false propositions by recasting our account of them upon the notion of actual entities. Whitehead first considers propositions in their role in the "actual world" and not primarily in their "connection with logic" and some "moralistic preferences for true propositions."[103] He regards propositions, like pure potentials, as "definite potentialities *for* actuality with undetermined realization *in* actuality," but unlike pure potentials, they are not absolutely general but involve one or more actual entities as "logical subject(s)."[104] In short, "The proposition is the possibility of *that* predicate applying in that assigned way to *those* logical subjects."[105] Propositions play a role in Whitehead's cosmology

[101] Whitehead, xiii.
[102] Whitehead, xiii.
[103] Whitehead, 259.
[104] Whitehead, 258.
[105] Whitehead, 258.

beyond the role they play in judgment about their truth or falsehood, enabling him to account for the importance of false propositions, which have "fared badly" at the hands of logicians.[106]

Another way to understand Whitehead's emphasis on relation over quality is to say that Whitehead achieves his recasting of idealist doctrines upon a "realist basis" by allowing Aristotle's notion of "generation" to dominate on subjects where previously his classificatory logic had ruled. I have already noted how Whitehead regarded the philosophy of organism as simply a "restatement" of Plato as well as the senses in which it was decidedly *not*. But it is also the case that Whitehead recognized Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as offering brilliant resources for accounting for the very sense of internal relations among individuals that the long history of European overemphasis on his logic had obscured. The subject-predicate "habit of thought" dominated European thinking on the nature of mentality so extensively, Whitehead believed, that by current standards "probably Aristotle was not an Aristotelian."[107] The Aristotle with whom Whitehead found analogies for his own thoughts was the one who developed the notion of appetition, rather than that of substance.[108]

Rethinking the Return to Hegel with Whitehead

It is relevant for the purposes of this chapter to note that according to Paul Redding, McDowell's reclaiming of Hegel differs from that of Brandom insofar as he emphasizes Hegel's

[106] Whitehead, 259. The early Russell worried about the "existence" of propositions. After reading a draft of his work on the subject, Whitehead wrote in a letter to Russell on May 5, 1906: "I have read over your ms on propositions three or four times with the greatest care. . . . False propositions are a great difficulty to me. You say—and this seems sense—there is only the fact that Caesar is dead, and there is not in addition . . . the true proposition, 'Caesar is dead.' But then what the devil is there in respect to 'Caesar is not dead'?" Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead*, Vol. 1, 280–281.
[107] Whitehead*, Process and Reality*, 51.
[108] Whitehead indicates reliance upon W. D. Ross's 1923 translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics.* See Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 50 and 344.

Aristotelianism and Brandom ignores it.[109] McDowell argues that we must pay attention to Hegel's Aristotelianism in order to find the resources analytic philosophy needs to make sense of the way normativity stems from nature.[110] To be sure, this distinction is seldom explicit; it is Redding who suggests that while both Brandom and McDowell want to recover idealist thought after Russell's dismissal of it as anachronistic,[111] the differences in their readings of Hegel can be accounted for by looking at what they do with Aristotle's work.

If analytic philosophy's return to Hegel is indeed motivated by dissatisfaction with how throughout its history modern philosophy has rejected some motivating concerns of Absolute Idealism and the tacit dogmas that led its proponents to do so,[112] then attention ought to be paid to Whitehead's indictment of those habits of thought in modern philosophy that he foresaw leading to just the sorts of problems with which analytic philosophy now finds itself.

According to Redding, Brandom and McDowell can "link" their projects back to the idealist tradition insofar as it concerns the world as *exhibited* not *represented.*[113] In other words, because Hegel was talking about "the world" as that which is "exhibited rather than represented in thought," he was not, like Kant, looking for "the structure of 'being' from the logical structure of one's assertions about knowable objects or states of affairs."[114] The reason Hegel is so

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[109] Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*.
[110] I would venture to say, albeit prematurely, that McDowell's critiques of Brandom's "transcendental sociologism" gains credence to the extent that Brandom fails to appreciate that one must have positive ontological commitments in order to be an epistemological quietist.
[111] Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 15.
[112] See W. V. Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *The Philosophical Review* 60, no.1 (1951): 20–43; and Donald Davidson's "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1973–74): 5–20.
[113] Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 234.
[114] Redding, 232. Redding explains, "'The absolute', Hegel's way of referring to the Neoplatonic 'one', is not something talked *about* like a finite substance—an idea that even Kant seems to remain committed to with his conception of the type of knowledge that we, finite knowers, are *denied.* Rather, the absolute is to be thought of as something the structure of which is expressed or shown in the logic of our self-correcting attempts to talk about the world."

attractive to McDowell, Redding seems to imply, is because he avoids the mistakes that led to the problem of reconciling normativity and nature: (1) Aristotle's mistake in his *Categories* of trying to derive logical categories from assumptions about "being;" and (2) Kant's mistake in his "Transcendental Analytic" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* of trying to derive the structure of "being" from the logical structures of one's assertions about knowable objects. Hegel, in contrast, is attractive to Brandom and McDowell because he does not start with an ontological gap between mind or "logical structures" and world or "structures of being."

In this way, Redding identifies Hegel's approach as more akin to that of the "Frege-Wittgenstein" than the "Russell-Moore" tradition within analytic philosophy, which is precisely what Brandom and McDowell are eager to point out. By redefining "the world" in expressivist rather than representationalist terms, the point goes, Hegel refuses to treat "the world" as an object generalized from empirical experience; instead, Hegel means by "the world" the whole semantic content of thought accrued by "horizontal" inferential relations, not "vertical" representational relations to things "in" the world.[115] Hegel thereby avoids what McDowell calls the "remnant Platonism" of traditional philosophy by refusing to understand "objectivity" in terms of some "God's-eye" point of view. It was precisely this traditional ontological opposition between human qua finite and divine qua infinite that Hegel wanted to avoid through his neo-Aristotelian theology.[116] The activity of philosophy by which mind takes itself as its object was how Hegel sought to resolve "the lack of self-consciousness of Aristotle's immanent deity."[117] According to this reading of Hegel as a reformed analytic philosopher *avant la lettre,* Hegel's most "metaphysical" claim was actually a response to what he took to be "the most problematic

[115] Redding, 234.
[116] Redding, 234.
[117] Redding., FN. 46.

metaphysical feature of ancient and modern thought"—that is, a Platonic positivism, which may be regarded as "the metaphysical concomitant of the epistemologically conceived 'Myth of the Given.'"[118] For "Sellarsian neo-Hegelians" like Brandom and McDowell, the problem with metaphysics is equivalent merely to the limits of Aristotelian substance metaphysics, but this Platonic positivism is embedded within its appropriation.[119] This is why, the argument goes, Hegel does not "advocate a *negation of* metaphysics," but rather "refashions metaphysics around the primacy of the notion of *negativity*."[120] Hegel's dialectical method exhibits this primacy most prominently perhaps in his notion of "determinate negation" that has become so central to Brandom's inferentialism.

The "Hegel" of Sellarsian neo-Hegelians stands as a corrective to what Richard Watson calls Russell's "shadow Hegel." This shadow Hegel, argues Watson, "is the rock that logical atomism could take as a jumping-off place . . . . The shadow Hegel's system authenticates the philosophy that casts off from and corrects it."[121] It was this shadow idealism that analytic philosophy denied any philosophical viability to at its very inception. And yet, the acceptance of Russell's "shadow Hegel"—and therefore of his rejection of post-Kantian idealism—was so complete that it took three-quarters of a century for the tradition to obtain critical distance from it.

One argument for why Kantian idealism maintained its influence on the analytic tradition while post-Kantian idealism did not is because of the impact of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein employed a version of the "context principle" that

[118] Redding, 20.
[119] Redding, 20.
[120] Redding, 20.
[121] Richard A. Watson, "Shadow History in Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 99; Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 7–8.

Frege had first developed in *The Foundations of Arithmetic*: "Only the proposition has sense; only in the nexus of a proposition has a name meaning."[122] The idea of a word's meaning depending on the context provided by the proposition in which it appears stood in tension with the assumptions of logical atomism, such that Redding argues that this principle "marked a deep distinction separating the approaches of Frege and Wittgenstein on the one hand and those of Russell and Moore on the other, the former pair's approach to metaphysics being more 'judgment based' and, because of that, 'Kantian', the latter pair's, more ontological or 'object-based.'"[123]

Turning to Michael Friedman's analysis of the relationship of analytic philosophy to nineteenth-century idealism, Redding suggests that it was Russell's and Moore's ontologism that separated them from the neo-Kantian logical positivists who, working in a post-Newtonian scientific milieu, "were doing essentially what Kant *would have* done" had he appreciated the historicity of models of knowledge. But Kant, having taken Aristotle to have "definitively established the basic forms of right inference, and Euclid the basic structures of geometric knowledge," also "thought Newton had definitively established the science of the phenomenal world."[124] According to Friedman, "the logical positivists' main philosophical concern did not arise within the context of the empiricist philosophical tradition at all. Rather, the initial impetus for their philosophizing came from late nineteenth-century work on the foundations of geometry by Riemann, Helmholtz, Lie, Klein, and Hilbert—work that, for the early positivists, achieved its

[122] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922), § 3.3; quoted by Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 9.
[123] Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 9. Redding attributes this distinction to Peter Hylton's *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 223.
[124] Redding, 10.

culmination in Einstein's theory of relativity."[125] It was the popularization of non-Euclidean geometries, and thereby the loosening of the apparent ahistorical and apodictic nature of mathematical principles, Friedman argues, that was the primary catalyst for neo-Kantian ("judgment-" versus "object-based") philosophical semantics. In effect, the logical positivists transformed the nature of Kant's *a priori* into the language of the new science, turning away from talk of apriority, but maintaining a claim to some non-empirical structure of knowledge.[126]

Friedman's analysis is worth discussing at length at this point because his framing of the impetus for logical positivism (and the nature of its distinction from Russell's and Moore's alleged ontologism) reveals the centrality of debates about space and time to the formation of logical positivism (with a notable absence of Whitehead's contribution to these debates). There are two main things Friedman wants his readers to understand about the original logical positivists, and therefore, about the origin of the Frege-Wittgenstein line of thought that would eventually lend itself to a reconsideration of Hegel. First, the early nineteenth-century "axiomatization" of the foundations of geometry problematized Kant's claim that our knowledge of geometrical principles is synthetic. In particular, the deductions of Euclidean geometry were no longer taken to depend on "spatial intuitions," and the popularization of non-Euclidean geometries (practically evidenced by Einstein's theory of relativity) made it impossible to say that there was any straightforward empirical way to determine if space was Euclidean or non-Euclidean. Friedman's second point, then, is that the early logical positivists did not replace Kant's synthetic *a priori* with a bald empiricism of physical geometry; rather, they "followed the

[125] Michael Friedman, *Reconsidering Logical Positivism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6. According to Friedman, "Most of the early writings of the positivists focused on these revolutionary mathematical-physical developments." (Fn. 10)
[126] Friedman, 7–8; Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 9–10.

example of [Henri] Poincaré in maintaining that there is no direct route from sense experience to physical geometry: essentially nonempirical factors, variously termed 'conventions' or 'coordinating definitions,' must necessarily intervene between sensible experience and geometrical theory."[127] Redding argues that it was precisely the appreciation for the "plasticity of epistemic structures" that rendered its trajectory open to a Hegelian, rather than a Kantian, rectification.[128]

While I am not here fully endorsing Friedman's rewriting of analytic philosophy's birth narrative—partially because I find the claim that logical positivism originated with an appreciation of the "plasticity of epistemic structures" incompatible with my understanding of the logicism of Russell and Frege alike—I think it is necessary context for understanding Redding's explanation of Brandom and McDowell's return to Hegel. What seems obvious, in any case, is that however we characterize the intellectual lineage within which Brandom and McDowell are working, it does indeed remain "judgment-based" in the sense of taking judgments to be the basic unit of awareness. It is this Kantian ontological commitment that continues to undermine their neo-Hegelianism, and I propose that it is a product of an original failure by the logical positivists. This was the *failure* of the Frege-Wittgenstein tradition of thought to properly integrate the new notions of spatial and temporal extension of the new geometrical thinking. That failure enabled the Frege-Wittgenstein approach to remain beholden to the Kantian "judgment-based" approach to metaphysics—the approach that today characterizes the Sellarsian neo-Hegelians. This failure may (at least in part) be explained by

[127] Friedman, *Reconsidering Logical Positivism,* 6. He notes, further, "This radically new conception of physical geometry—neither strictly Kantian nor strictly empiricist—was formulated by Reichenbach (1920) in a especially striking fashion in his first book, *The Theory of Relativity and A Priori Knowledge.*"
[128] Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 11.

Whitehead's account of the misunderstanding of Plato and the misappropriation of Aristotle through seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European philosophy.

Indeed, notably absent from Friedman's and Redding's treatments of the intellectual catalysts for analytic philosophy is any alternative picture of how the original members of the Vienna Circle might otherwise have understood the irreconcilability of Kantian and post-Kantian idealist treatments of mind and world in light of the mathematical and physical discoveries of the early twentieth century. It is not unimportant, after all, that Whitehead and Russell's *Principia* is considered to have provided part of the intellectual foundation of logical positivism's "unique, innovative scientific culture."[129] Neither, then, should the strikingly distinct philosophies of mathematics of its co-authors be ignored. Insofar as Russell later repudiated his own then-philosophy of mathematics for its naïve Platonism, after his student Wittgenstein convinced him that all mathematics was composed of tautologies, it seems prudent to take seriously the thought of Russell's own teacher, who was not so prone to such extreme positions.[130]

The failure to recollect Whitehead's contributions to the debates surrounding the origins of analytic philosophy has hindered conversations about the (possibility of a) metaphysics of intentionality. This erasure of Whitehead is what enables McDowell to repeat many of the same Whiteheadian critiques of analytic modes of thought to the present day—but to do so without a genuine reconsideration of the unskillful readings of Plato and Aristotle.

[129] Friedrich Stadler, *The Vienna Circle and Logical Empiricism* (New York, Boston, Dordrecht, London, Moscow: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), xiv.
[130] Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead,* Vol. 1, 285.

A Whiteheadian Assessment of McDowell's Revised Kantianism

The fifth lecture of McDowell's *Mind and World* (1994), entitled "Action, Meaning, and Self" presents a reading of Kant according to which Kant had to resort to a transcendental framework in order to preserve some connection between concepts and intuition, a relation he could not find in "nature."[131] According to McDowell, Kant knew very well that this connection ought to be maintained if we were to make any sense of the objective purport of our observations. In refusing both the Myth of the Given and a radical coherentism, Kant was unable to see any other option other than the transcendental one, McDowell argues.[132] But the transcendental solution doesn't really solve the purpose for which it was created because by placing the connection between spontaneity and intuitions *outside* of nature, the connection ends up being one that is between the conceptual, on the one hand, and the world of appearances as distorted by the conceptual, on the other. Rather, what we need is a connection between the conceptual and the ordinary empirical world.

Besides failing to achieve any real connection between concepts and intuitions, McDowell thinks this transcendental framework also prohibits any real connection between consciousness and self-consciousness: "The result of Kant's move is that the subjective continuity he appeals to [the Transcendental Unity of Apperception], as part of what it is for experience to bear on objective reality, cannot be equated with the continuing life of a perceiving animal. It shrinks, as I said, to the continuity of a mere point of view: something that need not have anything to do with a body, so far as the claim of interdependence is concerned."[133] He continues,

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[131] John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 98.
[132] McDowell, 98.
[133] McDowell, 102.

> This is quite unsatisfying. If we begin with a free-standing notion of an experiential route through objective reality, a temporally extended point of view that might be bodiless so far as the connection between subjectivity and objectivity goes, there seems to be no prospect of building up from there the notion of a substantial presence in the world. If something starts out conceiving itself as a merely formal referent for "I" (which is already a peculiar notion), how could it come to appropriate a body, so that it might identify itself with a particular living thing?[134]

McDowell's dissatisfaction with Kant's appeal to a Transcendental Ego is reminiscent of Whitehead's comment to Russell in his letter from August 26, 1911. Paraphrasing his understanding of Kant, Whitehead wrote: "I, by a self-activity which can be analyzed into an application of the pure forms of time and space and a synthetic unity of apperception [to me mysterious (ANW)], weld these relations (experienced in sensation) into perceptions of objects, the phenomenal objects. All my ordinary ideas apply to these phenomenal objects necessarily, because they are merely expressive of an analysis of the process of formation by me."[135] The synthetic unity of apperception *would* be mystifying to Whitehead because he was never tempted to first begin with a notion of experience as separate from "objective" reality (the bifurcation) and *then* try to reconcile it with the "continuing life of a perceiving animal." For Whitehead, it is precisely the *continuing life* that we encounter in experience—the becoming, the process, and the fluency of the world is what is immediate to us, and any notion of experience as composed of bits of sense-data is abstracted after the fact, according to a spatialized picture not only of "objective reality" but also of the "conceptual realm" by which we are said to categorize it. For Whitehead, then, we need never find ourselves in a position where "there seems to be no prospect of building up . . . the notion of a substantial presence in the world." If we never begin

[134] McDowell, 102–103.
[135] Whitehead's letter to Russell, 6–7.

with Aristotle's substances, we can never wind up with a picture of the world as bifurcated into subject and object.[136]

For McDowell, Kant *tries* to avoid Descartes's solipsism, and "he gets to the very brink of success." He continues, "But, [Kant] thinks the only alternative is a transcendental self-awareness, something that has no object substantially present in the world. . . . Kant's insight would be able to take satisfactory shape only if he could accommodate the fact that a thinking and intending subject is a living animal."[137] Significantly, Whitehead's philosophy takes as a guiding insight that "the key to the history of mankind lies in this fact—as we think, we live."[138]

Whitehead resisted in Russell just those habits of thought that led to and created a version of the Myth of the Given that Sellars and his followers would oppose. Russell regarded Kant as having compromised the objectivity of both mathematics and logic by psychologizing, albeit "transcendentally," those two types of knowledge.[139] But, as Redding notes, "having eliminated Kant's way of holding onto the normativity of logic, Russell reverted to the type of Platonic intuitionism that had been espoused by Moore."[140] Russell thereby resorted to the view that "the objectivity of logical laws was a consequence of the way that logical relations were ultimately grounded in ontology."[141] By resorting to the Myth, McDowell would argue, Russell actually embedded himself deeper into the remnant Platonism that sees mind and nature from "sideways on," as presenting a gulf to be bridged. "Bald naturalists," who represent the position that Russell

[136] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 50.
[137] McDowell, *Mind and World*, 104.
[138] Alfred North Whitehead, "The Study of the Past—Its Uses and Its Dangers," in *Essays in Science and Philosophy,* 1933 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 200.
[139] Redding, *Analytic Philosophy*, 59.
[140] Redding, 61.
[141] Redding, 61.

moved closer to in his critique of Kant, also share this "sideways on" view, says McDowell. As Redding explains, Russell

> reverted to a position closer to Aristotle's representationalist interpretation of the logical categories than to Kant's. For Aristotle, it would seem, the categories *reflected in* the logical behavior of our worlds reflect structures properly belonging to *being*, while for Kant the worldly structures—in the sense of the way they are *for us*—reflect the logical structures of our judgments. So for Russell, the *laws* of logic are normative for us in so far as there can be questions of thought's form correctly or incorrectly representing the *world's* form. The laws of thought are made true by an ontology which we must be able to somehow directly grasp *if* we are to apply those laws in our thinking. In fact, the universal principles of logic, and following them, the laws of pure mathematics, must be grounded in a form of acquaintance in which relations between universals are given in a way *analogous* to that in which *sense-data* are given to us in sensation.[142]

In contrast to Russell's recoil back into a bifurcated picture of nature, McDowell takes himself as going a different way with Aristotle. By employing the notion of habituation developed in Aristotle's philosophy of ethics, McDowell seeks to create a new form of naturalism that can connect concepts to intuition without resorting to a transcendental framework. "Second nature" is modeled after the process by which an individual acquires Aristotle's *phronēsis* or (by some translations) "practical wisdom."[143] Although he is somewhat cryptic about it, McDowell relates Aristotle's *phronēsis* to Hegel's forms or *Sittlichkeit*. For instance, when he writes, "The way to correct what is unsatisfactory in Kant's thinking about the supersensible is rather to embrace the Hegelian image in which the conceptual is unbounded on the outside."[144] By seeking to introduce a new conception of nature into Kant's system, McDowell takes himself to have erased the gap between our rationality and our animality, where rationality remains "appropriately conceived in Kantian terms."[145] Rationality, in Kantian terms, means for McDowell

[142] Redding, 61.
[143] McDowell, *Mind and World*, 79.
[144] McDowell, 83.
[145] McDowell, 85.

responsiveness to meaning or rational relationships that is autonomous or *sui generis*, even if it remains (in a way Kant did not allow) grounded in nature.

McDowell is very aware that any attempt to connect our responsiveness to meaning with our natural sentient capacities will not succeed using "naturalistic" terms that presuppose a "realm of law" where causal relations and a "space of reasons" where rational relations obtain. And yet, he is concerned just as much with maintaining the distinctiveness of conceptual capacities as he is with showing the continuity of sapience with sentience. Conceptual capacities are, by definition, defined by a distinctive type of freedom. To review, to account for the connection between the space of reasons and the realm of law, McDowell argues that we must cease to equate the realm of law with what counts as "nature."

By coming to see our responsiveness to meaning as "our way of actualizing ourselves as animals," McDowell takes himself to have removed, like Whitehead, "any need to try to see ourselves as peculiarly bifurcated."[146] Like Whitehead, he even laments the difficulty he faces in trying to offer a re-reading of Aristotle's picture of ethical understanding given the prevalence of baldly naturalistic readings of him. This is a frustration he shares with Whitehead, who himself insisted (as discussed earlier) that Aristotle (*and* Plato!) knew nothing of a bifurcation of nature. Reading Aristotle as presuming "nature" in the scientistic sense is what McDowell calls "a historical monstrosity."[147] But insofar as McDowell believes rationality is "appropriately conceived in Kantian terms," he inherits Kant's mistreatment of time in accounting for conceptual capacities, and therefore remains complicit within a framework built upon those

[146] McDowell, 78.
[147] McDowell, 79.

aspects of Aristotle that Whitehead identified as involving an overemphasis on the static, spatialized view of his categories. Here is the true taproot of the modern bifurcation of nature.

Conclusion

It is an injustice to Whitehead and his intellectual interlocutors that such critiques of anachronistic "naturalist" readings of these Greek sources have, as far as I know, only recently influenced analytic philosophy's attempts to solve the problem of intentionality. And it is an injustice to these attempts that they continue to be such poor readers (if readers at all) of Whitehead. This is particularly the case with respect to McDowell, because unlike Whitehead, McDowell does not appreciate the true extent to which this anachronistic reading of Aristotle—this "historical monstrosity"—has compromised the very conception of the rationality he tries to revive. The corrective reading of Aristotle's "nature" and its relation to Hegel's *Bildung* is insufficient to root out the spatializing account such readings have affected in modern philosophy's conceptions of experience. (This is due, according to Whitehead, to the "Semitic view.") These conceptions continue to suppose the "two-term" relation of predication that Whitehead sees as responsible for the bifurcation of nature. McDowell, then, does not have a sufficiently expansive understanding of the underlying presuppositions that motivated the "baldly naturalist" readings of Aristotle and how those presuppositions persist in Kant's conception of rationality.

Even after McDowell introduces "second nature," for example, he continues to speak of the realm of law and the space of reasons as separate "logical spaces." Rationality "appropriately" conceived in Kantian terms continues to think of events—mental or physical—in spatial terms, as if they occur within rational relations or causal relations, *even if* rational

relations are seen as potentiated out of merely causal ones. In so doing, McDowell fails to take account of what Whitehead, in his paper for the 1921–22 *Proceedings* of the *Aristotelian Society*, calls the "philosophical aspects of the principle of relativity" for the "standard form" of Aristotelian logic. It is this standard form of Aristotelian logic, Whitehead warns, that eventuated into Hume's skepticism and forced Kant's hand when it came to rescuing spontaneity by means of a transcendentalist framework—a rescue that could, by that point, only be achieved by self-contradicting and idealist means (as earlier evidenced by Prichard).

The very terms of discussion, which defined the problem of normativity after Kant, established the framework within which Hegel's solution could count as such. But these terms are precisely what are at issue in Whitehead's work, so that to work with them is already to be compromised by the fallacies upon which they are premised. What this means is, in effect, that despite the many ways McDowell succeeds, his efforts to solve the problem of mind and world will always—so long as he retains a Kantian conception of rationality—be too little, too late.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM OF INTENTIONALITY IN ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

This chapter details how intentionality became a "problem" for philosophy. My first goal is to map the contemporary conversational terrain of the so-called problem of intentionality (specifically, the intentionality of *belief*) among those scholars for whom it has been, in various ways, a central concern: Wilfrid Sellars, Donald Davidson, Richard Rorty, Robert Brandom, and John McDowell. My second goal is to pursue an immanent critique of the discourse about intentionality qua problem, which these thinkers have generated and within which some of them have sought to solve or dissolve this problem. My hope is that if I can achieve this second goal, I will have demonstrated how contemporary analytic philosophy is well disposed for a Whiteheadian interlocutor.

The "Problem" of Intentionality

The goal of this chapter is to introduce and complicate the problem of intentionality in contemporary analytic philosophy and to show how this same tradition of thought permits the sort of speculative philosophy that Whitehead's work exemplifies. Questions about intentionality concern the directedness or aboutness of our thoughts. Intentionality becomes problematic when we cannot make sense of the nature of "aboutness" in the sense of knowing when our thoughts are, in reality, somehow related, in a perspicuous way, to what we take them to be about.

The problem of intentionality is a linguistic inflection on the older forms of Cartesian skepticism. Descartes and Locke, for instance, worried about how our ideas functioned as interfaces with the world. They spoke of ideas as essentially private entities belonging to internal

discourse, which literally re-presented the objects of the world to us. This is not a problem of intentionality because it takes for granted that our ideas match up with things in the world through a one-to-one correspondence. Intentionality *became* a problem when the internal discourse of ideas was no longer seen as a private affair—that is, when analytic philosophy took the so-called linguistic turn. When ideas became something contingent upon language rather than something simply expressed by language, this meant that there were no longer such things as "true signs." Ideas were now derivative, conventional, and incapable of retaining a static meaning.

In what follows, I rely upon Rorty's account of the manifestation and implications of the linguistic turn in philosophy. I then introduce McDowell's contestation of this account. This confrontation between Rorty and McDowell will lead us to two different interpretations of the major conceptual resources funding *both* Rorty's neopragmatist assault on objectivity and McDowell's attempt to rehabilitate the notion of objectivity: the attacks on classical empiricism by Sellars and one by Davidson. Sellars challenged the premises of the so-called framework of givenness, and Davidson challenged the premises of scheme/content dualism. I then move to the work of Brandom who, in many ways, is heir to Sellarsian theory of mind.

In preview, McDowell reproaches Brandom for his "transcendental sociologism" while Rorty accuses Brandom of abandoning his commitment to the priority of social practices by claiming that facts would still have existed had there never been any claimers. Rorty suspects that Brandom has reinstated, late in his career, the metaphysical picture of a world that places demands on us independent of our practices. I discuss how Stout attempts to split the difference between these two interpretations of Brandom, arguing that inferentialism is neither guilty of idealism, nor of abandoning its pragmatism.

This ontology, for which my project will attempt to make a serious case as a salve for the problem of intentionality in analytic philosophy, turns out to reinforce many of the ethical intuitions of pragmatism and its political extension in the form liberalism—intuitions that Stout and others wish to argue are sufficiently grounded without the help of metaphysics. I will argue that Whitehead's metaphysics serves not only to clarify, but also to sharpen the ethical prescriptions attendant to Stout's moderate response to neopragmatism. Building upon the previous chapter, I then suggest how contemporary analytic philosophy permits Whiteheadian metaphysics.

The Linguistic Turn

In 1975, Ian Hacking wrote "the discovery that all names are conventional thunders us into modern philosophy."[1] As Richard Rorty understands this statement, it was the turn away from epistemological questions about the truth of statements and towards pragmatic questions about the rules of language games that constituted the linguistic turn in philosophy.

Once this turn is made, one can no longer speak of "meaning" as something over and above what is said. Semantics becomes answerable to pragmatics, such that conceptual content is composed of conventional uses of a word. When the problems of philosophy are reduced to the problems of language, the analytic argument went, then there is no longer any sense to the question of how we can know that our ideas "line up" with reality. This question no longer makes sense because words are no longer seen to represent timeless ideas; rather, ideas are the negotiated content of linguistic practices that constantly evolve in public discourse.

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[1] Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas about Probability, Induction, and Statistical Inference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 47; Richard Rorty, "Ten Years After," in *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method with Two Retrospective Essays,* ed. Richard M. Rorty (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 367.

Epistemological skepticism was only possible when ideas were understood as veils between the subject and the object. But with the linguistic turn, the meaning of ideas was no longer seen in an atomistic way. Conceptual content was seen to reside in the uses of words in sentences. Words, or the "ideas" they purportedly stood for, no longer lined up with items in reality; sentences as a whole, understood in terms of determinate uses in discourse, became the focus of analytic philosophy.

What was left standing in place of epistemological skepticism after the linguistic turn was the problem of how to make sense of the directedness of our sentences because with the Scylla of classical correspondentism out of the picture, the danger was the Charybdis of idealism. Some philosophers of language, most notably Davidson, wanted to say that to worry about idealism was not to have taken the linguistic turn. Holding on to the idea of a web of ideas that, to speak metaphorically, spins in a frictionless void, Davidson argued, was to cling to a final dogma of classical empiricism: the idea of scheme/content dualism. Such dualism is implicit in the notion that ideas are interfaces with reality.

In contest of this last dogma of empiricism, Davidson argued that meaning could never operate in a self-subsisting system unmoored from the objects of the world. This is because meaning is always indexed to the more basic concept of truth, such that we cannot analyze truth in terms of meaning, but only meaning in terms of truth. We cannot, that is, determine which sentences are true and which are false simply by analyzing their meaning. We cannot do this because the practice of truth-taking is more basic than semantic interpretation, according to Davidson. We cannot even begin to interpret what another person means until we have established a pattern of practices of truth-takings that significantly overlaps with another person; such an overlap is the condition of our being able to recognize an activity as a *linguistic* one. So

the very idea of interpretation presupposes a shared world and a substantial agreement on what two people take to be true. We can begin to talk about meanings only after we realize that they obtain amongst the patterned truth-takings of different individuals.

Davidson thereby shows that linguistic practices become instituted only through a three-way relationship between two speakers and a shared world in continual exchange. Properly understood, on this account, the linguistic turn does not mean a loss of objectivity: "Of course the truth of sentences remains relative to language," he writes, "but that is as objective as it can be. In giving up the dualism of scheme and world, we do not give up the world, but re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics makes our sentences and opinions true or false."[2] This sentiment echoes his 1973 essay "Radical Interpretation" where he argued that what ultimately ties our language to the world is that the truth conditions (and therefore meanings) of our sentences are actually *constituted* by the conditions or ostensive presentations of an object that typically cause us to hold sentences true.

Moreover, the concept of belief requires a grasp of the notion of objective truth, Davidson argues, since belief is basically the concept of a sentence held true that might not actually be so. Truth is not agreement or shared belief, then, because the very concept of belief itself entails the implicit distinction in interpersonal communication between what a speaker takes to be true in contrast to other standards of truth directed towards the same objects. So, whereas truth is not an epistemic notion (as idealized rational acceptability or justification), it is also not entirely divorced from belief. Truth is tied to meaning and belief just because language is a tool used by human beings to talk about a shared world. Truth is unified by the role it plays

[2] Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 198.

in enabling us to interpret speakers of any language and is therefore pre-analytically grasped. Truth, though relative to language, is not conceptually relative—it is relatively expressed, but universally grasped.

My reading of Davidson as defending objectivity in light of the linguistic turn, thereby dismissing the problem of intentionality, is not a standard reading by all accounts. In fact, Davidson has been appropriated by some neopragmatists like Rorty who think that objectivity as such is an obsolete notion once we have made the linguistic turn. According to Rorty, once we come to see meaning in terms of the practical employments by linguistically-initiated human beings, then the idea of sentences being "true" in an objective sense—a sense not reducible to what a particular linguistic community currently agrees upon (and agreement instantiated by the rules of a language game)—becomes nonsensical. To argue that there is a "truth" that somehow floats free of linguistic practices is, he would say, a confusion between the relationships of justification, which hold between sentences, and the causal relationships, which obtain between events. Rorty concludes that we must limit our projects to mere description because there can be no connection between the idea of truth as merely descriptive of certain linguistic practices, and the prescriptive sense of truth as a norm for inquiry.

One implication of Rorty's position is that there is nothing outside of discourse that could put a check on our thinking; there is no wider context or causal matrix that could provide a norm for inquiry. With the loss of such a "world"—a world that was never even threatened in Davidson's estimate—we can no longer appeal to the likes of "experience" or "nature" as extra-linguistic bearings on our beliefs.

If language is no longer seen as a medium of representation, it is because there is no longer anything to represent beyond the brute happenings of aural, oral, visual, and tactile

interaction. Rorty writes, "One cannot be Davidsonian about language and still think of language as an interface, nor as itself having an interface with what it 'represents.' For the behaviorism that Davidson shares with Quine . . . makes language into something people do, rather than something standing between them and something else." He continues, "It can, to be sure, be viewed as a system of representations—but then so can anything—the rings in trees or the grooves on phonograph records. We cannot see representation and knowledge as posing philosophical problems unless we can reinvent something like the seventeenth-century gap between two kinds of reality, and thus reinvent an interface . . .".[3] The skepticism of the seventeenth century was formulated in terms of the relationship between ideas and the world. This skepticism cannot, Rorty thinks, be reformulated in terms of the relationship between language and the world because "asking how languages manage to represent reality seems a bit like asking how it is possible for wrenches to wrench. That is what we *made* them to do . . . ."[4] Fifteen years later, Rorty would regret having said that we "make" language to represent reality. Correcting this formulation of his point, he writes that he should not have said that the idea of language representing reality was unproblematic, but that it was unnecessary.

According to Rorty, Davidson encourages us to give up the idea that certain aspects of the world "make" sentences true or false. This idea of "truth-makers" is central to the realism/antirealism debate in analytic philosophy. In a rejection of logical positivism, Davidson and W. V. Quine both challenged the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. The dismantling of this dualism achieved, in Rorty's estimate, the simultaneous undoing of the dualism between language and facts. Once this dualism is given up, so is the debate between

[3] Richard Rorty, "Ten Years After," in *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method with Two Retrospective Essays,* ed. Richard M. Rorty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 369.
[4] Rorty, 369–70.

realists and antirealists because language is no longer understood in representationalist terms (such that it could *fail* to accurately represent reality). Rather, according to Rorty, once we cease to see sentences "as expressions of experience" or as "representations of extra-experiential reality" and rather as "strings of marks and noises used by human beings" to "achieve their ends" (ends that "do not include 'representing reality as it is in itself'"), we will realize that there *is* no such thing as "'a language' as a structured medium of representation."[5] If language is something we *do* instead of something that can stand in a determinate relationship between us and "the world," then there can no longer be any "problems of language."[6]

The Status of Objectivity: Davidson, Rorty, and McDowell

The issue with Rorty's assessment of the implications of Davidson's thought for philosophy after the linguistic turn is that in denying there is any problematic interface between "us" and "the world," he fails to maintain the distinction between the two. McDowell argues as much when he criticizes Rorty's reading of Davidson for ignoring that part of Davidson that says that the reason there are no problems of language is not just because truth is relative to language and therefore there is no "world" to get wrong; rather, as pointed out in an earlier passage from Davidson, truth and meaning are not separable from "the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false." In other words, Rorty loses the sense in which states of affairs exert a normative force on our beliefs.

Thus, while denying that there is such a thing as the problem of intentionality, Rorty is all the while perpetuating it by saying that there is nothing outside of discourse that makes our

[5] Richard Rorty, "Twenty-Five Years Later," in *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method with Two Retrospective Essays,* ed. Richard M. Rorty, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 373–74.
[6] Rorty, 373–74.

sentences true or false. McDowell recognizes the insidiousness of saying that objectivity can be reduced to solidarity when he points out, "The only authority that meets [Rorty's] requirement is that of human consensus. If we conceive inquiry and judgment in terms of making ourselves answerable to the world, as opposed to being answerable to our fellows, we are merely postponing the completion of the humanism whose achievement begins with discarding authoritarian religion."[7] There is a distinction to be made between the perfectly functional idea of objectivity and the idea that this objectivity is on the other side of an unbridgeable divide. These are not the same ideas, yet Rorty thinks that the former must go along with the latter—or rather, he interprets the former such that the latter exhausts its relevance to discourse. McDowell continues his critique:

> Attacking the vocabulary of objectivity as such, as Rorty does, rather than the conception of the world as withdrawn, distracts attention from a necessary task. If we are to achieve a satisfactory exorcism of the problematic mainstream modern epistemology, we need to uncover and understand the specific historical influences—which, as I have been insisting, are much more recent than the vocabulary of objectivity itself—that led to a seeming withdrawal on the part of what we wanted to see as the empirically knowable world, and thus to philosophy's coming to center on epistemology in the sense of the attempt to bridge the supposed gulf.[8]

The notion of objectivity in and of itself need not be problematic. In "Solidarity or Objectivity?" Rorty makes a helpful distinction between relativity and ethnocentrism that McDowell is invoking here.[9] Rorty argues that the pragmatist is not a relativist committed to the positive theory that everything is relative and nothing can be better or worse. Rather, he argues, the

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[7] John McDowell, "Towards Rehabilitating Objectivity," in *Rorty and His Critics,* ed. Robert Brandom (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 110.
[8] McDowell, 111.
[9] Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation,"* ed. Michael Krausz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

pragmatist is making only a negative claim: that we should do away with the traditional epistemological distinction between "knowledge" and "opinion" because this distinction reinforces a metaphysical picture of truth as one-to-one correspondence with reality, where "knowledge" is such correspondence and "opinion" is a degree of justified belief. "The reason the realist calls this negative claim 'relativist' is that he cannot believe that anybody would seriously deny that truth has an intrinsic nature," writes Rorty.[10] I agree with McDowell, however, that Rorty very quickly collapses this helpful distinction.

On my assessment, the problem has to do with Rorty's blindness to certain assumptions he makes about how evidence works. Consider the following statement: "From a pragmatist point of view, to say that what is rational for us now to believe may not be *true*, is simply to say that somebody may come up with a better idea. It is to say that there is always room for improved belief, since new evidence, or new hypotheses, or a whole new vocabulary, may come along."[11] Of course, what counts as evidence is relative to the terms of the question and the purposes for which it is asked. But the testing of such evidence must always be, at some level, practical—that is, it must have to do with causal interactions illustrative of certain orders of nature beyond what we can debate. This is to reinstate the distinction between knowledge and opinion, but it is *not* to commit us to a "wishful denial of contingency," as Rorty would label it. Another way of saying this is that the idea of being answerable to the world is not the same as a denial of contingency.[12] Speaking "from the midst of the practices of our ethos" is combinable with making ourselves "answerable to the world." To deny this is to deny the distinction between

[10] Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity?", 170.
[11] Richard Rorty, 169.
[12] McDowell, "The Rehabilitation of Objectivity," 114.

relativism and ethnocentrism. As McDowell argues, "The thesis that 'justification is relative to an audience' is, as explicitly stated, relativistic, not just ethnocentric."[13]

To use standard alethiological terminology, Rorty is trying to make a distinction between normative and disquotational uses of "true." Descriptive uses of "true" in the form of Tarskian T-sentences exhaust, according to Rorty, the disquotational use of "true" and must remain purely descriptive. To be clear, a Tarkian T-sentence is a formal sentential structure serving as the basic guide to his semantic account of truth. It follows the form:

"P" is true if and only if *p*

Such that,

"Schnee ist weiß" if and only if snow is white.

In this example, German is the object language of the theory and English is the metalanguage. The formal structure indicated above embodies Tarski's material adequacy condition for the truth of a sentence, also known as Convention T. Tarski admitted that T-sentences only work for formal languages, not natural ones, because a natural language is, so to speak, semantically self-enclosed so there is no way to determine, from without, whether a sentence is properly constituted. Davidson famously inverted Tarski's semantic theory of truth into a truth theory of meaning. Instead of taking meaning as basic, Davidson took practices of taking-true as elemental, thereby developing a theory of interpretation that would work between natural languages.

Rorty reads Davidson as indefinitely maintaining the distinction between the descriptive and normative uses of "true," and this is why he can claim Davidson as substituting solidarity for

[13] McDowell, "The Rehabilitation of Objectivity," 122 n25.

objectivity. But my ongoing argument has been that this is to misunderstand Davidson's understanding of semantics as instituted by relationships of triangulation as well as his account of the irreducibility of normativity by way of the constitutive ideal of rationality. McDowell agrees: "For a given sentence ["*p*"] to be true—to be disquotable—is for it to be correctly usable to make a claim just because [*p*]." He goes on, "Truth in the sense of disquotability is unproblematically normative for sentences uttered in order to make claims."[14] Far from avoiding philosophical dualism, Rorty reinstates a dualism between reason and nature by insisting on the separation between normativity and disquotability in speaking about truth. It is this picture of the separation of reason and nature with which Rorty is covertly operating—all the while taking himself to have deflated the latter into the former—that leads him to miss the radicality of Davidson's account of *radical* interpretation.

For Davidson, the radical interpreter begins from outside of the putatively linguistic behavior and seeks to gain some purchase on the norms that constitute the language; that is, she aims to translate what begins as a disquotational use of language into her own normative use. As McDowell points out in *Mind and World*, "When Rorty suggests that the results of the field linguist's endeavours to employ a notion of truth unconnected with norms, and hence separate—by the supposed gulf between two standpoints—from, for instance, a conception in which the truth is seen as what ought to be believed [. . .], he obliterates the significance of the transition from starting predicament to achieved interpretation."[15] It is fairly clear that Rorty inherits this dualism from Sellars's strict separation of the realm of reasons and the realm of nature. The semantical, for Sellars, strictly operates in the realm of reasons, such that there can be no

[14] McDowell, "The Rehabilitation of Objectivity," 116.
[15] John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 152.

relations between elements in the real order and elements in the linguistic order. He argues that this nonrelational character of meaning is "key" to understanding "the correct place of mind in nature."[16] But to think of mind in this way is not to clarify intentionality, but to problematize it once more. This time, however, it is not the classical metaphysics of correspondence that introduces the gap, but rather a deflationary pragmatism that runs into confusion at critical points.

Language, for Sellars (and for Rorty), can be exhaustively described to reference "rule-governed uniformities" without any appeal to semantics.[17] Meaning-involving relations only obtain from within the conceptual realm. The problem with this sort of isolationist philosophy of language is that it leads, almost without exception, to an inability to account for the constraints reality has on our normative practices. McDowell calls this sort of philosophy of language where there can be no meaning-involving relations with anything outside the linguistic realm, "transcendental sociologism," and he ascribed this label to Brandom's inferentialism.

Social Practices and the Level of the Semantic

McDowell too quickly accuses Brandom's inferentialism of metaphysical idealism. Brandom knows that he ought to make more of the material constraints on our linguistic practices (what he calls "discursive entries" and "discursive exits"). He writes,

> What must not be lost is an appreciation of the way in which our discursive practice is empirically and practically *constrained*. It is not up to us which claims are true (that is, what the facts are). It is in a sense up to us which noises and marks express which claims, and hence, in a more attenuated sense, which express true claims. But empirical and practical constraint on our arbitrary whim is a pervasive feature of our discursive

[16] John McDowell, "The Constitutive Ideal of Rationality," *Crítica: Revista Hispanoamericana de Filosofía* 30, no. 88 (April 1998): 39; Wilfrid Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on a Kantian Theme* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), ix.
[17] Wilfrid Sellars, *Naturalism and Ontology* (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing, 1979), 92.

> practices. . . . [D]iscursive practices as here conceived do not stand apart from the rest of the world.[18]

It is clear that Brandom is aware of the need to account for observation and action in relation to our linguistic practices. He is fully aware that one of the greatest challenges to inferentialism is the need to account for how something like the notion of objectivity or truth beyond mere justified belief could have arisen in the first place—indeed, notions that he himself employs in order to explicate his own theory of normativity:

> For those practices are not things, like words conceived as marks and noises, that are specifiable independently of the objects they deal with and the facts they make it possible to express. Discursive practices essentially involve to-ing and fro-ing with environing objects in perception and action. The conceptual proprieties implicit in those practices incorporate both empirical and practical dimensions. All our concepts are what they are in part because of their inferential links to others that have noninferential circumstances or consequences of application—concepts, that is, whose proper use is not specifiable apart from consideration of the *facts* and *objects* that responsively bring about or are brought about by their application. [19] (emphasis added)

Rorty sees statements such as this as evidence of Brandom conceding, late in his career, to the idea of the world making demands for our practices. One upshot of Brandom's above emphasis on perception and action (discursive entries and discursive exits) is the idea that "facts" exist independently of someone asserting them. It is interesting that Rorty and McDowell seem to be accusing Brandom of opposite things—Rorty, of a degree of realism, and McDowell, a degree of idealism. Whereas I think Rorty is simply wrong in failing to make the distinction between justification and truth, I think McDowell fails to appreciate the grasp Brandom has on this distinction.

Inferentialism, at least in Brandom's view, means that we must look to practices of inference to understand justification. This means that only a belief that can serve as either the

[18] Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 331.
[19] Brandom, 331.

premise or the conclusion of inference can serve to justify other beliefs. There are causal relations between beliefs and the world, but only beliefs can justify other beliefs. The "world," that means, cannot make beliefs correct or incorrect because correctness is strictly a matter of playing by the rules of the inferential games. Such rules are negotiated through practices of giving and asking for reasons. The crucial point that I think McDowell misses in his aforementioned ascription to Brandom's theory is that Brandom is not thereby claiming that states of affairs in the world cannot make beliefs *true.*[20] We need the distinction between truth claims and true claimables.[21]

However, I do not think Brandom makes enough of this last point, and because of this, McDowell's concern doubles as mine. We need more than mere causal relations between the world and our beliefs—we need rational relations. But how do we achieve such relations without falling prey to the Myth of the Given—that is, to the idea that bits of the world line up with bits of language in a relationship of justification? As Brandom puts it, the question asks "why we shouldn't think of our claims as standing in normative relations to facts, which make them correct or incorrect in the sense of true or false."[22] To Rorty's point, conceptual norms exist only because vocabularies exist. So, to speak about facts in the sense of true claimables *is* to talk of something that is conceptually structured and therefore already presupposing linguistic practices. Facts, for Rorty, *are* conceptually structured—they are not the sort of thing that can *make* claims true because they already are claims. He thinks that we will always worry about intentionality—about the success of our thinking and speaking gaining traction with objects in the world, or with

[20] Robert Brandom, "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism," in *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 161.
[21] Brandom, 162.
[22] Brandom, 161.

the world—as long as a merely causal relation is not enough to satisfy us. McDowell is dissatisfied with merely causal relations between the world and our thinking, and for this, Rorty faults him for "keeping alive the pathos of possible distance from the world."[23] All the while, it is this distance that McDowell fears Rorty is perpetuating. McDowell hopes that we can escape Cartesianism once and for all if we read Kant on intuition differently than has been done. He points to the Transcendental Deduction as a key to understanding Kantian intuition in a way that does not lead to the classical divide between appearances and things-in-themselves. Rather than being immediacies that figure into the "framework of givenness," McDowell argues, intuitions have logical structures.

The issue McDowell takes with Brandom's theory is that he gets Kant wrong on judgment and intuition. Brandom takes a judgment as Kant understood it as the basic unit of awareness. Such judgment is always already conceptually structured and is therefore always already caught up in normativity. If awareness *begins* in the normative realm thus conceived, then it is caught up from the beginning in the rules of the linguistic game. As Sellars and Brandom understand it, the rules of this game can be formulated in pre-semantic terms such that they form the structure upon which semantic relations supervene. If we conceive the directedness of thought (meaning, aboutness, or intentionality) as supervening upon rule-governed proprieties, then we will never conceive of spontaneity as having rational relations to receptivity. For Brandom and Sellars, the level of social practices is pre-semantical, and so meaning-involving relations can never obtain between words and things in the so-called real order. But McDowell thinks that this way of viewing meaning-relations is confused. There are no grounds to think, he argues, that the directedness of thought must be constituted by norms that are social but not yet

[23] Rorty, "Response to McDowell," in *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 123–24.

semantical.[24] He writes, "Once we see that the relevant 'oughts' can be as it were on the semantic surface, we can take in stride that meaningful speech, and thought directed at the world, are unproblematically part of our lives—as Wittgenstein says, 'as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.'"[25] My chapters 4 and 5 expand upon McDowell's reading of Kant in greater detail and more explicitly develop the limitations of McDowell's attempt to reestablish the world's rational constraints on our thinking, as I introduced in chapter 1.

For now, we are concerned with getting clear on Rorty's side of the argument in order to provide an outline of the problem of intentionality in contemporary analytic philosophy. To be sure, Rorty and McDowell are united against the empiricist worldview and its attendant framework of givenness. But Rorty resists the temptation to establish something beyond causal relations between our beliefs and the things they purport to be about. By his lights, giving in to this temptation "keeps alive the pathetic Kantian question about the 'transcendental status' of the world."[26] This "transcendental status" attributed to the world strikes Rorty as merely a sugar coating of the "bitter Platonic pill" or just another form of the "Platonic disease."[27] He simply cannot see what is to be gained by making a distinction between trying to express truth claims about the world and aiming to be justified in one's claiming among one's peers: "What, I still want to ask, is so 'mere' about getting together with your fellow inquirers and agreeing on what to say and believe?"[28]

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[24] John McDowell, *Having a World in View Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 218.
[25] McDowell, 218.
[26] Rorty, "Response to McDowell," 124.
[27] Rorty, 124.
[28] Rorty, 125.

Reducing objectivity to solidarity is just that—a reduction. And it is a reduction from what the idea of objective purport means on the face of it and not *mere* intersubjective agreement. So regardless of what Rorty thinks objectivity "really is" all about, what it claims to be about is not that. One of the greatest challenges to theories of language that, like Brandom's, want to focus on discursive practices alone to account for normative authority (the power to determine what counts as a correct inferential move, as evidence, as meaningful, and so forth) is how to account for this very idea of objectivity as something *beyond* discourse in the first place—a notion that has been around much longer than empiricist epistemology and Cartesian skepticism.

Brandom's move is to take a step back from Rorty's way of speaking and to observe that what Rorty is doing by saying that facts only exists when vocabularies exist is employing a *vocabulary* of vocabularies. Hence, he is developing a way of speaking about implicitly normative discursive practices. But applying vocabularies—even to be able to talk *about* our vocabularies—is, nevertheless, something that we *do.* It is the *social articulation* of our linguistic practices of giving and asking for reasons that is the key to understanding how our claims "answer normatively to the facts."[29] To be sure, a pragmatist about norms will hold that nothing can confer normative status other than discursive practices. This means that something can justify a belief only insofar as it serves a role in some actual vocabulary.

This is what Sellars meant when critiquing the idea that certain nonconceptual "givens" in perception could make a belief true; he said that only beliefs can justify other beliefs. This amounts to a critique of sense-datum theorists, or those who want to say that once we have made all the available moves in the space of reasons to justify a belief, we can make one more move:

[29] Brandom, "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism," 166.

we can *point* to something that is simply received in experience, as some brute impact from the exterior that can serve as a reason. McDowell writes that sense-datum theorists thereby give us "exculpations" where we want "justifications."[30] But whereas Sellars thinks we must renounce empiricism altogether in order to avoid the temptation to appeal to empirical descriptions as justifiers, McDowell aims to retain an account of normative authority that has room for both spontaneity *and* receptivity (see my chapters 4 and 5).

The important point—at least for getting clear on the contemporary texture of the problem of intentionality in analytic philosophy—is that we must never treat vocabularies as things that exist out of relation from our actual use of them, such that something like a dichotomy between reason and nature could ever creep back into our thinking. When we speak about vocabularies, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are using a vocabulary of vocabularies to do so, and so are caught up in the very practices we seek to elucidate. But because we can make this observation, we can also point out that we create vocabularies in order to make explicit practices that were implicit in our use of other vocabularies. Through this process of explicitation, we are creating new ways of speaking for new purposes, purposes that were not determined for us by previous vocabularies. And in so creating, we are demonstrating how constraint by linguistic norms makes possible new forms of freedom. We can use our metavocabulary to critique other vocabularies, such as the vocabulary of representation, gaining a historicist perspective on our own normative practices. All the while, however, we are receiving and acting in determinate relations with other discursive partners in a material matrix.

It is *within* these determinate relations that practices capable of normative constraints can arise—practices uninterpretable apart from the material matrix. "Norms," Stout writes, "are

[30] McDowell, *Mind and World,* 8.

initially proprieties implicit in practices." These implicit proprieties are made explicit in the form of "rules and ideals."[31] For instance, if someone makes an observation such as “This violin is made from old-growth cedar from the Italian Alps” after examining the instrument, we recognize her as making a non-inferential report about the object in hand. If she is an expert in wood identification, we will draw an inference from this fact to the one that she has made an informed claim, thereby *endorsing* her claim. Thus, as Brandom writes, "The causal relation [between, for instance, an observation and a claim about it] can underwrite a justification just because and insofar as those assessing knowledge claims *take* it as making good a kind of *inference.*" He continues, "Non-normative causal relations between worldly facts and someone's claims do not exclude normative epistemic justificatory relations between them, since others can *take* the causal relations *as* reasons for belief, by endorsing reliability inferences."[32] I think that this is a very strong aspect of Brandom's theory, and one that complicates McDowell's ascription of "transcendental sociologism" to it.

Relations of Justification and Relations of Causation

Whether or not we think we need to worry about the possibility of "getting things right" in any robust sense turns out to have a lot to do with whether or not we think that an endorsement of reliability inferences is the same as taking the facts (or causal relations) as the reasons. Rorty, for one, doesn't think so.[33] In so rejecting this move by Brandom, I suspect Rorty is doing just what

[31] Jeffrey Stout, "Radical Interpretation and Pragmatism: Davidson, Rorty, and Brandom on Truth," in *Radical Interpretation in Religion,* ed. by Nancy K. Frankenberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.
[32] Brandom, "Vocabularies of Pragmatism," 166.
[33] Rorty, "Response to Brandom," 187.

McDowell has said: He is perpetuating the very dichotomy between mind and world when his entire philosophical career has been dedicated to showing it doesn't exist.

The act of endorsing a reliability inference about an expert reporter will only come to look like taking causal relations as reasons if we can see how pragmatism ought to resist reduction of the social-practical to either pole of the Cartesian dualism—that is, to either mere appearance or absolute reality. In order to see this, I argue, we need to make explicit the metaphysics of pragmatism. As Brandom writes, "Once the metaphysician renounces the adoption of an exclusionary or dismissive attitude toward non-conforming vocabularies, the project of metaphysics modestly understood represents one potentially useful discursive tool among others for getting a grip on our multifarious culture. This is not an enterprise that the enlightened pragmatist ought to resist."[34] If the committed pragmatist is also to be a metaphysician, then she must avoid what was referred to in the last chapter as metaphysics in the pejorative sense.

What the pragmatist cannot coherently claim is that any particular vocabulary has greater cognitive value owing solely to its ontological status or to some ability to mirror the final real things better than another vocabulary.[35] Such a claim would be complicit in classical ontotheology, the pejorative form of metaphysics that was parasitic upon an absolute correspondentist epistemology. Such ontotheology was delegitimized in large measure through modern philosophical critique, culminating in Friedrich Nietzsche's declaration (if not lamentation) of the death of God, with Martin Heidegger delivering a proper eulogy. It is this type of metaphysics that is indicted by Sellars's critique of the framework of givenness. Rorty

[34] Brandom, "Vocabularies," 181.
[35] Brandom, "Vocabularies," 180.

argues that the framework of givenness is a monotheistic hangover from a time when the ontotheological synthesis was still intact. The pragmatist could never pursue metaphysics in this vein.

And yet, per Brandom's description, metaphysics—in the sense of a discursive tool useful for making sense of the multifariousness of the world—is entirely consistent with the pragmatic enterprise. Such a stance with respect to metaphysics speaks to Brandom's desire to navigate between the two self-defeating extremes of postmodernism: on the one side, a deflationary pragmatism that leads to the death of the subject and the annihilation of truth-talk, eventually leading nihilism in through the front door; and on the other side, a metaphysical realism that slips representationalism in through the back door.[36] The former is self-defeating because it ends up denying the very presuppositions that make it possible: the idea of truth, objectivity, and subjectivity in any robust sense. It ends up conceding these notions to philosophy in a Cartesian vein, rendering any rehabilitation efforts trivial. As Stout notes, "What gives impetus to the more extreme forms of postmodernism is the view that ordinary talk of truth and of subjects is wholly vitiated by a form of metaphysical philosophy that runs through the entire culture."[37] Rorty shares this view, and it informs his entire understanding of the ontological status of our dominant vocabularies. He writes, "If one wishes to wed historicism and scientism, then one will marry Hegel and Darwin not by finding a holistic, panpsychist way of describing the relations between experience and nature, but rather by finding a historicist and relativist way of describing Darwin's claim upon our attention."[38] The reference to panpsychism is, I can only presume, a

[36] Stout, "Radical Interpretation and Pragmatism," 51.
[37] Stout, 51.
[38] Richard Rorty, "Dewey between Hegel and Darwin," in *Rorty and Pragmatism: The Philosopher Responds to His Critics,* ed. Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. (Nashville, TN: Nashville University Press, 1995), 7–8.

dismissal of systems like Whitehead's. This presumption is supported by the continuance of Rorty's statement: "[A] historicist way of avoiding this conflict cannot invoke an appearance-reality distinction. Nor can it resort to notions of misleading abstractions and misplaced concreteness, for 'concrete' implies a special relation of closeness to reality for which historicism has no room."[39] The direct target of this statement is undoubtedly William James and (in some cases) John Dewey, but Whitehead is conceivably a secondary target.

As I will expand upon in chapter 4, it is well known that Rorty often accused Dewey of not remaining Wittgensteinian (in Rorty's Rortian reading of Wittgenstein) enough, restraining himself to description without redescription. The Dewey he takes aim at is primarily the Dewey of *Experience and Nature*. Here, Rorty claims, Dewey falls into the representationalist trap of claiming that some descriptions of nature and experience are more or less accurate than others. The only sense that "more accurate" or "more concrete" could have for the consistent pragmatist, Rorty thinks, is "more useful" for purposes of our own design.[40] This is to substitute "expediency" for "accuracy" as a term of epistemological "approbation" such that we can avoid arguing that scientistic vocabularies somehow track better with reality than religious or moralistic ones. The goal of a pragmatist theory of truth is to be able to account for why Darwin has such a claim on our attention without resorting to a representationalist or correspondentist framework.

With respect to James, Rorty thinks that his idea of the "marriage function" of truth—that ideas "become true" insofar as they function to help us get into satisfactory relationships with other aspects of our experience—runs together linguistic entities with introspective entities.

[39] Rorty, 4–5.
[40] Rorty, 4–5.

What this means is that James confuses the relationships of justification, which obtain between sentences, with relationships of causation, which obtain between events. Truth cannot float free of sentences because the only way to make sense of how it could involves a reinstatement of the framework of givenness or of language as the mirror of nature that made intentionality problematic in the first place. But I have argued that Rorty does not succeed in disabusing us of the problem quite as cleanly as he suspects.

Rorty's failure has to do with a sort of tone-deafness to the nuances of pragmatist metaphysics that James assumes, Dewey waivers in developing, and that Whitehead develops to full effect (as I argue in later chapters). The accusation of panpsychism has to do with this idea of running together relationships of justification with relationships of causation that McDowell argues can be done without a framework of givenness, which I will come back to in the next chapter. Here, however, I would briefly like to examine Rorty's accusation of panpsychism because this term is often associated with Whitehead's thought in unfortunate and inaccurate ways.

Rorty's concern is that when we blur the distinction between the propositional and the nonpropositional (the types of relationships that obtain between sentences and the types constituting experiences as introspective entities), it opens the door to thinking of "experience" as nonlinguistic such that a sentient being could "see that" such-and-such is the case without having concepts in any meaningful sense. Dewey does say that sentiency is anoetic, but also that it is the substrate upon which noetic function can arise. But Rorty believes this way of establishing continuity between linguistic animals and other forms of sentient life falls into a sort of infinite regress of attributing proto-intentionality to things like mammals and reptiles, and

eventually protein molecules and quarks.[41] Thus the only acceptable alternative is to construe "thinking" as "simply the use of sentences—both for arranging cooperative enterprises and for attributing inner states (beliefs, desires) to our fellow humans." He concludes, "If we have thinking in this sense—the ability to have and ascribe sentential attitudes—we can see it as something that has nothing in particular to do with 'experience of a non-cognitive sort.'"[42] Allow me to put to bed some unfortunate misconceptions about Whitehead's work right away, lest they fester in the reader's mind.

Dismissing Panpsychism

Many scholars who misunderstand Whitehead's theory of perception—either because they rely on Charles Hartshorne to understand him or for the reasons detailed in chapter 1—have associated his theory with the doctrine of panpsychism. This is exceedingly unfortunate. Hartshorne is much more an idealist in his approach to interpreting Whitehead and in the development of his own metaphysics—an idealism that stands in stark contrast with, and often obscures, Whitehead's pragmatism. Donald Sherburne, a preeminent Whitehead scholar, has written that this term is "the single most confusing, misleading term to be associated with Whitehead's philosophy."[43] I would say that this and the accusations of classical Platonism are both strong contenders for this title, but I share his frustration.

To be fair, Whitehead does write in *Process and Reality*, "In describing the capacities, realized or unrealized, of an actual occasion, we have, with Locke, tacitly taken human experience as an example upon which to found the generalized description required for

[41] Rorty, 7–8.
[42] Rorty, 7–8.
[43] Donald Sherburne, "Whitehead, Categories, and the Completion of the Copernican Revolution," *The Monist* 66 (July 1983): 376.

metaphysics."[44] When elaborating on this quote we must consider another from *Process and Reality*: "But when we turn to the lower organisms we have first to determine which among such capacities fade from realization into irrelevance, that is to say, by comparison with human experience which is our standard."[45] As Sherburne notes, "The key point here is that what quickly fades into irrelevance as we 'descend the scale' is everything even remotely suggestive of 'psyche,' of ordinary human functioning."[46] Whitehead is here (as elsewhere) taking evolution very seriously. He is not trying to account for Darwin's claim upon our attention in relativist terms, as Rorty would have it. Rather, Whitehead thinks that we can wed historicism and scientism by working out a metaphysics that takes as its guiding principles epistemic humility, openness to revision, transcendental reflection, the relativity and instrumentality of linguistic norms, indeterminism, freedom within constraint, and above all, the incessancy of growth and creativity converging into the directionality of temporal process. He develops an entire philosophy of the actual entity that puts mind back into nature whilst breaking with the mirror imagery that arose from Cartesian dualism.[47] What Rorty calls a confusion of the relations of justification and the relations of causation, Whitehead calls another dualism. In contrast, Whitehead more deeply appreciates (understands and elaborates on) the reality of causation at every single level of actuality, both efficient and final.[48] This is why his theory of perception

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[44] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1929/1978), 112.
[45] Whitehead, 112.
[46] Sherburne, "Whitehead, Categories, and the Completion of the Copernican Revolution," 376.
[47] Sherburne, 376–77.
[48] Rorty does not deny that there are causal relations between thinking as a capacity and other entities. He just treats thinking itself as internalized public discourse, as exhausted by rule-governed uniformities owing solely to social practices. For example, he writes, "To be sure, there is a causal continuity between experience as what Dewey calls 'a matter of functions and habits of what active adjustments and readjustments of coordination and activities,' and thinking, but for that matter there is a causal continuity between nutrition and thinking. Such continuity does not require us to find a sort of proto-intentionality in the amoeba." ("Dewey between Hegel and Darwin," 7–8)

rests upon his theory of prehension, a subject I will expand upon in more detail in the next two chapters. In order to quickly discredit this accusation of panpsychism so that we may proceed without bias to examine Whitehead's contribution to constructive postmodernism, let us conclude our consideration of his writings on the topic.

Whitehead distinguishes the causality of a bodily "taking account of the environment" from the awareness of this causality—the former being what we continue to find as we "descend the scale of being." On the relation between causal relations and knowing relations to one's environment, Whitehead aims to distinguish his position from classical empiricism. To do so, he considers the example of a man blinking in response to an environmental stimulus. He writes,

> The sequence of percepts, in the mode of presentational immediacy, is flash of light, feeling of eye-closure, instant of darkness. The three are practically simultaneous; though the flash maintains its priority over the other two, and these two latter percepts are indistinguishable as to priority. According to the philosophy of organism, the man also experiences another percept in the mode of causal efficacy. He feels that the experience of the *eye* in the matter of the flash are causal of the blink. The man himself will have no doubt of it. In fact, it is the feeling of causality which enables the man to distinguish the priority of the flash; and the inversion of the argument, whereby the temporal sequence "flash to blink" is made the premise for the "causality" belief, has its origin in pure theory. The man will explain his experience by saying, "The flash made me blink"; and if his statement be doubted, he will reply, "I know it, because I felt it."
>
> The philosophy of organism accepts the man's statement, that the flash *made* him blink. But Hume intervenes with another explanation. He first points out that in the mode of presentational immediacy there is no percept of the flash *making* the man blink. In this mode there are merely the two percepts—the flash and the blink—combining the two latter of the three percepts under the one term "blink." Hume refuses to admit the man's protestation, that the compulsion to blink is just what he did feel. The refusal is based on the dogma that all percepts are in the mode of presentational immediacy—a dogma not to be upset by a mere appeal to direct experience. Besides, Hume has another interpretation of the man's experience: what the man really felt was his *habit* of blinking after flashes. The word "association" explains it all, according to Hume. But how can a "habit" be felt, when a "cause" cannot be felt? Is there any presentational immediacy in the feeling of a "habit"? Hume by sleight of hand confuses a "habit of feeling blinks after flashes" with a "*feeling of the habit* of feeling blinks after flashes."
>
> We have here a perfect example of the practice of applying the test of presentational immediacy to procure the critical rejection of some doctrines, and of

> allowing other doctrines to slip out by a back door, so as to evade the test. The notion of causation arose because mankind lives amid experiences in the mode of causal efficacy.[49]

Whitehead introduces a distinction between what he calls "presentational immediacy" and "causal efficacy," inverting the classical order. Hume's doctrine of perception, for instance, makes causal efficacy dependent upon presentational immediacy.[50] This means that our awareness of the world begins with clearness and distinctness, with fuzziness around the edges. Whitehead holds the opposite; he holds that "taking account" of one's environment begins with constant and incalculable forms of concrete relations to the environment (and within the percipient).

Causal efficacy is the primary mode of awareness that bodies experience in the form of spatial definition. This form of awareness is plagued by vagueness. He writes, "These conclusions are confirmed as we descend the scale of organic being. It does not seem to be the sense of causal awareness that the lower living things lack, so much as variety of sense-presentation, and then vivid distinctness of presentational immediacy." He continues with an example:

> But animals, and even vegetables, in low forms of organism exhibit modes of behavior directed towards self-preservation. This is every indication of a vague feeling of causal relationship with the external world, of some intensity, vaguely defined as to quality, and with some vague definition as to locality. A jellyfish advances and withdraws, and in so doing, exhibits some perception of causal relationship with the world beyond itself; a plant grows downwards to the damp earth, and upwards towards the light. There is thus some direct reason for attributing dim, slow feelings of causal nexus, although we have no reason for any ascription of the definite percepts in the mode of presentational immediacy.[51]

[49] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 175.
[50] Whitehead, 176.
[51] Whitehead, 176–77.

Both causal efficacy and presentational immediacy are modes of feeling (or "prehending" as opposed to apprehending) one's environment. There is no bifurcation, for Whitehead, between the tactile feelings of one's surroundings with one's own hands, and the level of awareness of this feeling that arises with self-conscious (indeed, linguistic) beings such as us. This is what it means to attribute "feeling" throughout the actual world. Whitehead's doctrine of prehension is based on "the directly observed fact that 'feeling' survives as a known element constitutive of the 'formal' existence of such actual entities as we can best observe."[52] To use an analogy from physics, Whitehead claims that all physical quantities are vector, not scalar. When describing the motion of an object, a physicist will rely on one of two categories of mathematical representation: scalar or vector.

For example, if I were to describe to you a moving object such as a ball, to tell you how far it has moved without telling you how long it took to get there would not fully describe to you the *motion* of the object. The former would be to give a scalar description of a quantity (e.g., ten miles), whereas the latter would be to give you a vector description of the object (e.g., ten miles per one second). Numerical quantity is not enough to understand relations in a causal nexus; one also needs directionality. It is the same for Whitehead's theory of actual entities at the most fundamental level, but also for his theory of perception at the highest level of human self-consciousness. If we observe the so-called causal nexus without taking account of the interplay with sense-perception, then we will not fully grasp the way the subject is both acted upon by and discriminately receives the objects of its immediate past. It is not enough to understand our experience of "seeing the steam rise off the blacktop" as a clear and distinct presentation if we do

[52] Whitehead, 176–77.

not appreciate the complex substrate of causally efficacious relations and processes upon which that presentational immediacy supervenes.

This is Whitehead's aesthetic ontology: at the more fundamental level, all actual things are forms of feeling past things. "Taking account" of one's environment operates from the ground up, so to speak. This is what it means to attribute experience to the lowest levels of existence: everything is at the same time the subject taking account of past objects, and an object for future subjects. It is *not* to attribute "psyche" throughout existence. We can now return to the primary aim of this chapter, which is to outline the problem of intentionality as it currently stands in analytic philosophy.

Two Uses of "True": Bridging the Descriptive and the Normative

Recall Brandom's earlier-quoted pronouncement that "once the metaphysician renounces the adoption of an exclusionary or dismissive attitude toward non-conforming vocabularies, the project of metaphysics modestly understood represents one potentially useful discursive tool among others for getting a grip on our multifarious culture. This is not an enterprise that the enlightened pragmatist ought to resist."[53] Metaphysics is permissible so long as it has also taken the linguistic turn. This means that the metaphysician must also be a pragmatist in the sense of recognizing relativity without being a relativist; they must operate within a particular cultural starting point—with the conceptual resources presently available—while using those resources to reveal both their own limits and implications. Such a metaphysician will start with this commitment to historicism but will never let ethnocentrism devolve into relativism because she

[53] Brandom, "Vocabularies," 181.

will recognize that to be fallible is not the same as to be incapable of approximating better or worse perspectives on the whole.

Consider this conception of metaphysics in conjunction with a quote from Davidson: "The merit of the method of truth is not that it settles such matters once and for all, or even that it settles them without further metaphysical reflection. But the method does serve to sharpen our sense of viable alternatives, and gives a comprehensive idea of the consequences of a decision."[54] On Davidson's own account of the implications of his truth theory of semantics, one can begin to make a case for better and worse methods of metaphysical reflection. This means that for Davidson, the descriptive use of "true" *is* combinable with the prescriptive use of "true." He writes,

> In sharing a language, in whatever sense this is required for communication, we share a picture of the world that must, in its large features, be true. It follows that in making manifest the large features of our language, we make manifest the large features of reality. One way of pursuing metaphysics is therefore to study the general structure of our language. This is not, of course, the sole true method . . . there is [none].[55]

In this statement, the first instance of "true" could be interpreted as descriptive in the sense that Davidson means that in order to communicate, we must have significant overlap in our practices of truth-takings. However, this first use of "true" could also be normative insofar as for Davidson, truth-taking is not a practice that operates independently of causal relations to the world. He is an externalist about semantics, which means that semantical relations are observable practices, not private psychological entities. Mental contents, because they cannot be truth-bearers, also cannot be meaning-bearers. Truth is a three-way affair between our sentences, other speakers, and the world; it is not a four-way affair between sentences, mental contents, the

[54] Donald Davidson, "The Method of Truth in Metaphysics," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2001), 214.
[55] Davidson, 199.

world, and other speakers. Barring mental entities as truth-bearers from the picture at the outset due to inscrutability leaves us in a domain where truth borne by interpreted sentences must be thought about in noncorrespondentist terms.

At times, Davidson seems to being saying what Rorty thinks: the descriptive use of "true" is all we could ever have. After all, Davidson uses Tarski's Convention T to develop a truth theory of semantics in purely extensional terms in order to avoid inflating the concept of truth as correspondence in the classically realist sense. But he also uses this approach to avoid *deflating* the concept of truth to the idealization of rational acceptability in an anti-realist sense. Truth is the most perspicuous concept we have, Davidson thinks, insofar as we all have a much stronger intuitive grasp of it than we do of, say, meaning or reference (or any other concept we might use to explain them). This grasp of truth is exhibited in any particular language by our readiness to accept such trivial expressions like "'Grass is green' is true if and only if grass is green."

At this point, it seems that Rorty's deflationary reading of Davidson is not entirely off base, even if it exaggerates and misses some nuances of Davidson's later appraisals of his own theory. Though uninformative about what truth is, such trivialities seem unworthy of dispute. Taken together, such undisputed trivialities demonstrate how "is true" works for all the sentences of a language. This is all we could hope of a (purely extensional) definition of truth. It is in this vein that Rorty writes, "the results of interpreting linguistic behavior as Davidson conceives that activity, formulated in theories of truth in the style of Tarski, are 'descriptive,' and as such not just to be distinguished from, but not even combinable in a unified discourse with, any way of talking in which 'true' expresses a norm for inquiry and claim-making."[56] And yet, Davidson also

[56] Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth," in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 213–14.

speaks about his method of truth in a prescriptive sense, such that it "serves to sharpen our sense of the viable alternatives." The second half of this statement is as follows: "Metaphysics has generality as an aim; the method of truth expresses that demand by requiring a theory that touches all the bases. Thus the problems of metaphysics, while neither solved nor replaced, come to be seen as the problems of all good theory building."[57] By developing a behavior-based theory of truth and by showing how one implication of this theory is the rejection of scheme/content dualism, Davidson does not, contra Rorty, invalidate the use of truth in a normative sense and thereby invalidate metaphysics. On the contrary, Davidson (with a seconding from Brandom) shows that the postmodern antipathy towards metaphysics depends upon the very dualism we can now do without.

Conclusion

Davidson and Brandom understand something about pragmatism that Rorty does not: historical situatedness does not mean relativist; fallible does not mean false; and contingency does not mean directionless. Rorty's failure to appreciate these distinctions makes him prone to self-contradiction in advocating for his own understanding. It also deprives any ensuing socio-political critique of its teeth. Awareness of one's fallibility and anxiety about one's contingency need not be merely negative features of one's outlook—they can also be positive, constructive, informative aspects.

I appeal to the work of Franklin Gamwell here because of his eloquent defense of such a stance. In *The Divine Good*, Gamwell provides a defense of transcendental reflection from within contingency and fallibility by way of a distinction:

[57] Davidson, "The Method of Truth in Metaphysics," 214.

> A defense of transcendental understanding might further distinguish between *logical* and *epistemological* certainty, such that understandings claiming to be logically certain are also epistemologically fallible, and only epistemological certainty is impossible. On this account, the distinction between logically contingent and logically necessary claims is a distinction *within* the realm of fallible thought, and transcendental claims no less than empirical ones are never true because someone says they are but, on the contrary, can be validated only by appeal to human experience and reasons as such.[58]

Gamwell's distinction between logical and epistemological certainty helps one to see how, from within an appreciation of contingency and with recognition of the historical and linguistic specificity of one's starting point, we can make claims of greater and lesser certainty. Particularity (of time, place, problems, and tools) provides freedom both within and because of its necessary constraints. Whitehead's metaphysics, beyond being merely permissible by analytic philosophy, can also disabuse it of certain tacit presuppositions that have prohibited thinkers like Brandom and McDowell from providing satisfactory solutions to the problem of intentionality, despite their commendable strides in this direction.

With respect to Brandom, I believe a limitation is his inability to make enough of the way pre-linguistic modes of "taking account of" the world exist not only in nonlinguistic entities, but also "all the while," so to speak. He does appreciate the sense in which our social practices are material prerequisites for making conceptually contentful claims—which is to say he understands that there are causal and not merely logical presuppositions of our ability to make meaningful statements about the world. This means that norms—or the realm of normativity—are always first and foremost the implications of social practices and never objects themselves or properties of objects.[59] Brandom makes explicit the norms in our linguistic practices, one of which is the ideal of objectivity and idea of speakers as capable of both authorizing and

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[58] Franklin I. Gamwell, *The Divine Good: Modern Moral Theory and the Necessity of God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1990), 182.
[59] Stout, "Radical Interpretation and Pragmatism," 50.

recognizing normative authority. This is to say that one of the ideas implicit in the social practices constitutive of linguistic activity from the start is our ability to hold ourselves accountable as subjects. As Stout writes, "The social practices we engage in both constitute us as the self-committing, responsibility-oriented subjects we are and make possible the various ways in which we hold one another responsible and aim for correctness when addressing [certain] topics and deciding what to do."[60] Brandom's variety of pragmatism aims, like Davidson's, to preserve a robust sense of objectivity without falling prey to the realist/antirealist debates that are always predicated upon representationalist epistemology. At the same time, both Brandom and Davidson make possible a variety of postmodern theorizing in which subjectivity is not inherently metaphysical in the pejorative sense—an effort for which McDowell shares concern.

For the pragmatist who wants to avoid both the narcissism of Rorty and the common pitfalls of realist discourse, metaphysics is not only possible; it is necessary. After all, if we are to make a case for why pragmatism has a history of defending democratic practices, we need to make explicit the fundamental ontological, anthropological, and normative commitments implicit to it.

The need to work out these implications warrants the sort of metaphysical claims that Whitehead makes, including the theological ones. Far from ignoring contingency (and the positive aspects of epistemic anxiety about fallibility that follow), Whitehead develops a metaphysics that can account for freedom and constraint at both an ontological and normative level. Key to his system is his rejection of the bifurcation of nature and its underwriter, substantialist metaphysics.

[60] Stout, 50–51.

In what follows, I will argue that this reinterpretation in Whitehead's thought not only helps us to reassess the problem of intentionality by reframing the discussion about the relationship of rationality to causality (and therefore, the contrast of the conceptual, the normative, and the mental to "nature" that seems to persist in analytic discussions), but that it also helps us to see how theological discourse can escape the tired contrast between theism/atheism. The common thread running through all of these arguments is the idea that Whitehead's metaphysics can help us to bridge the gap between the descriptive and the normative categories of analytic philosophy after the linguistic turn.

CHAPTER 3

THE AESTHETICS OF PERCEPTION AND JUDGMENT

Introduction

My aim here is to provide an in-depth analysis of the nature of perception and judgment, according to Whitehead's ontology. This analysis will stand in contrast to the prevailing account of perception and judgment in analytic philosophy of mind. I have already suggested various ways in which McDowell's commitment to a Kantian conception of judgment limits his attempts to reconnect mind and world. This chapter expands on this critique and develops Whitehead's detailed alternative.

A Problematic Assumption

The conception of a judgment as the basic unit of awareness, while it has served as a springboard for analytic accounts of truth and reference such as Brandom's inferentialism, has limited the effectiveness of such projects. The difficulty of this idea becomes acute when we broach the question of the connection between judgments and intuitions. Recall from the previous chapter McDowell's point that Kant does not associate intuitions with the supposed immediate givens that figure into the classical empiricist depiction of "the framework of givenness." For Kant, intuitions are not episodes of sensory receptivity that could so much as operate independently of the understanding. Rather, as they factor into the Transcendental Deduction, intuitions are episodes of sensory receptivity that are *already* structured by the understanding.

Recall also that a problematic conception of freedom arises from such a claim. Indeed, if intuitions have the same logical structure as judgments, then in order to avoid mistaking intuitions as tacit exercises of freedom, we must make a distinction between the different modes

in which we actualize conceptual capacities. In order to continue Kant's purported task of vindicating the "objective validity" of the categories, McDowell insists upon the ineliminable sense in which perceptions are not, so to speak, up to us. What we need, on McDowell's appraisal, is a notion of subjectivity or experience that makes room for the distinction between having conceptual capacities drawn into operation and employing conceptual capacities in judgment. The former accounts for perception in a dominantly causal sense, and the latter accounts for reflection in the dominantly rational sense. It is only in this way, he purports, that we can make sense of our ability to confer or withhold endorsement of empirical observations—for instance, in the difference between "seeing that" something is the case and asserting its merely "seeming" to be the case.

Davidson's solution to the problem of the objectivity of our thought, as we explored in the last chapter, maintained the sense in which the world impinges upon us. Yet, while not forthrightly rejecting the world of Peircean Secondness, he ceased to see any way to account for it. Frankenberry followed suit with her minimalism in wanting to begin in the realm of the linguistically specifiable. The result is that subjectivity and experience cease to have any means of employment, in which case we are forced to understand reference, truth, and "the robust sense of engaging external things" only in terms of our ways of speaking. Furthermore, the category of "experience" is sidelined because the only sense it conceivably could have is that of a "broker" for our in-touch-ness with the world. Davidson sees truth as relative to language, but he also sees language externalistically, as having an "unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false."[1] At this point, however, we begin to lose the

[1] Donald Davidson, "Radical Interpretation," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 198.

distinction between intuitions and judgments. It seems to have suffered the same fate as the distinction between language and experience. As McDowell notes, it is precisely this coherentist frame of mind that made the Myth of the Given so tempting in the first place.

McDowell thinks of perceptual experience as having the conceptual form of a judgment, but as not yet an exercise of the understanding. A perceptual experience is a reflective opportunity to make a judgment. This opportunity arises because of the acquisition of mind through the initiation into a natural language.[2] In *Mind and World*, McDowell says that "the feature of language that really matters" is that it "serves as a repository of tradition, a store of historically accumulated wisdom about what is a reason for what." In this way, McDowell thinks that in "being initiated into a language, a human being is introduced into something that already embodies putatively rational linkages between concepts, putatively constitutive of the layout of the space of reason, before she comes on the scene."[3] In "enjoying an experience," then, we receive *thinkable* content via our initiated conceptual capacity and so become open "to manifest facts that *obtain anyway* and impress themselves on one's sensibility."[4] This point, according to McDowell, provides "all the external constraint we can reasonably want."[5] These facts can so impress themselves on us because meaning already shapes human life. Indeed, our linguistic practices are as much a part of our natural history as nonlinguistic ones.

How is it that we can reflect on the adequacy of concepts drawn into operation? In other words, how is it that we can exercise freedom *even within* the constraints imposed by the conceptual norms available to us? What we need, according to McDowell, is the idea of norms

[2] John McDowell, *Mind and World*, 126.
[3] John McDowell, *Mind and World*, 125.
[4] McDowell, 29.
[5] McDowell, 28.

internal to thought itself. This is how we can have constraint that can come from outside our thinking "but not from outside what is thinkable."[6] Implied here is a shared structure between judgments and intuitions meant to obviate the frame of mind that made it look as if mind could so much as be out of touch with the world. We need to downplay the connection between reason and freedom if we are to "avoid losing our grip on how exercises of concepts can constitute warranted judgments about the world."[7] This is how we avoid, in his terms, "rampant Platonism" and regain a sense of how our thinking can be accountable to the world.

Immediately, however, a problem arises, for not only does McDowell accept Kant's view that judgments are to be taken as the most basic unit of awareness, but McDowell makes the tandem assumption that propositions have the merely logical role of being the content of those judgments. This assumption limits McDowell's account, even after he has replaced "transcendentalism" with "naturalized Platonism." When one makes this tandem assumption, suddenly the very idea of being in touch with "reality" appears as the "confusion between relations of justification, which hold between propositions, and causal relations, which hold between events."[8] We need to be able to make sense of mind as intrinsically related to whatever is not mind.

If, as McDowell does, we attempt to elucidate the nature of thought through a picture of propositions as merely the content of judgments, then the idea of reality as such will continue to look like a creation of the relations of justification. The more promising approach, I think, is to think about how the exercises of conceptual capacities in the form of judgments could arise in the first place. This is to ask the question of what the world must be like in order for traditions of

[6] McDowell, 28.
[7] McDowell, 5.
[8] McDowell, 61.

meaning, as exemplified by the natural languages (to which we are initiated in becoming "minded" in the way McDowell understands mindedness), could so much as get up and run in the first place. I argue that a Whiteheadian understanding of judgment as a complex form of feeling can offer critical resources for getting beyond these problematic assumptions.

Such an approach rejects the idea that judgments are primitive units of awareness, with the implication that awareness is first and foremost linguistic and conscious. In brief, Whitehead's approach is to take feeling (or "aesthetics") as the broader genus of which "judgment" and "belief" are a species. On this model, judgment is only one mode of concrete, internal relation to a proposition, and not all such relations involve consciousness. In what follows, I argue that Whitehead's aesthetic ontology can assist us in making sense of how it is that the thinking subject can "have" a world in view.

Ontological Togetherness

The assumption that judgments are the basic units of awareness presupposes three things: (1) apart from concepts there is nothing to know; (2) concepts are the sole possession of conscious thought; and (3) subjectivity is constructive of objectivity via conceptual employment. These are the premises with which Whitehead takes issue. Whitehead commends Kant for producing the general idea that an experience is the result of constructive functioning. On Whitehead's account, however, it is objectivity that constructs subjectivity. The problematic understanding of intuitions is rooted in what Whitehead calls Kant's "obsession" with the "mentality of intuition." Working with a bifurcated conception of mind, Kant assumes that consciousness is necessarily involved in intuition. Insofar as McDowell makes the same assumptions about the inseparability of intuitions and consciousness because of a fallacious picture of "conceptual space," his attempt

to conceive of intuitions as gaining traction with the world through a passive operation of conceptual capacities will never be able to make sense of how judgment relates a knower to the actual world. I think that it is for this reason that the constructive aspects of his work remain so underwhelming.

Similar to the way that McDowell suspects Kant of taking intuitions as having the same "unity" or structure as do judgments, Whitehead suspects Kant of operating by the "suppressed premise" that "intuitions are never blind."[9] Limited by tacit metaphysical assumptions about spatialized mind, however, this premise remained suppressed. Whitehead's revised subjectivism positions us to understand the perspicuity of intuitions in terms of concrete forms of relation that differ only in degree from those constituting judgments. The key to understanding Whitehead's account is to see ontology as preceding epistemology. For example, we must understand what Whitehead means by "conceptuality" ontologically before we can understand how it relates to human cognition. For Whitehead, ontologically the conceptual is to possibility what the physical is to actuality. Epistemologically, then, our ability to consciously entertain possibilities exhibits a peculiar sort of freedom from established fact made possible by ontologically complex forms of relation constitutive of organisms capable of such cognitive capacities.

Insofar as Whitehead's ontology takes concrete relationships (what he terms "prehensions") as the only means of explanation, it follows that there must be different types of relationships or relational complexes generative of different phenomena. In other words, we must be able to explain the difference between the process constitutive of igneous rock and that of the carpenter's cabinetry designs. And we must be able to do this, per chapter 1, without invoking an ontological distinction between the sorts of things constituted by means of causal relations and

[9] A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 139.

the sorts of things constituted by rational relations—without, that is, the bifurcation of nature, and therefore without the sorts of Platonism about which McDowell worries.

One way that Whitehead's metaphysics avoids such issues is through the distinction between formal and informal constitution. Keeping this distinction in mind will help readers resist unhelpful metaphysical pictures when interpreting what follows in this chapter. Whitehead wanted to account for how "possibility which transcends realized temporal matter of fact has a real relevance to the creative advance."[10] Matters of fact are “actual entities”—they make up the givenness of the past and are causally efficacious for the future. Possibilities are “eternal objects”—they exhibit the indeterminateness out of which determinateness occurs. Actual entities and eternal objects are only separate in their “formal constitutions,” or for the purposes of analysis. Whitehead’s system is emphatically not dualistic. Actual entities are the final real things. But while atomistic, his system is not one of vacuous actualities. Actual entities are internally related to one another in temporal succession, and the manners in which they become, or the quality or character they have and contribute to the future, exhibit the realization of some possibility. Informally, then, actual entities and eternal objects are mutually implicative. He makes explicit this distinction between formal and informal constitution in order to maintain the difference between our ways of speaking for the purposes of metaphysical analysis and lived reality.

This chapter will demonstrate that we need not invoke a bifurcation of nature in order to maintain that our ways of speaking do not re-present ontological relations, even if we can make sense of truth according to a modified correspondence theory—a modification that will become clearer as we go. Whitehead took issue with the ways modern philosophy presumed the

[10] A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 31.

correspondence between subject-predicate linguistic formulations and particular-universal ontological ones. His Ontological Principle eliminated the possibility of such a presumption. It asserts "no actual entity, then no reason."[11] Actual entities are the "final facts," the "final real things" that make up the world. "There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real," Whitehead writes.[12] Unlike Aristotelian substance, however, these entities are event-based, described as "actual occasions" or "drops of experience" that are "complex and interdependent."[13] The only reasons for things are "to be found in the composite nature of definite actual entities," such that explanation can make no recourse but to past actual entities internally related to the event in question.

Events are constituted by means of relations converging to characterize a specific duration in space-time, such that to analyze an event is to analyze these relations. The most concrete way to analyze an event is in terms of these component elements, which will hereafter be referred to using Whitehead's term "prehensions." Whitehead's notion of prehensions seeks to correct the extremes in modern philosophy's dualistic ontology, which emphasized physical bodies, on the one hand, and mental substance, on the other. Between physical and mental, Whitehead writes, "the philosophy of organism endeavours to hold the balance more evenly."[14] What this means is that an event-based ontology in which there is only one final real thing (actual entities), the physical and the mental are not two types of *things*, but two modes of relation.

[11] Whitehead, 19.
[12] Whitehead, 18.
[13] Whitehead, 18.
[14] Whitehead, 19.

Actual entities, unlike substances, have real togetherness. They "involve each other," Whitehead writes, "by reason of their prehensions of each other."[15] The real facts of togetherness of actual entities are called "nexus" (sing.) and "nexūs" (pl.). "The ultimate facts of immediate actual experience are actual entities, prehensions, and nexūs," he writes. "All else is, for our experience, derivative abstraction."[16] As discussed in chapter 1, if we do not begin with ontological togetherness, we will never be able to achieve the epistemological togetherness that is necessary in order to rejoin propositions and judgments. This is the purpose of the actual entity.

The actual entity is how Whitehead makes sense of the way concrete facts relate to one another in constitutive ways without compromising the sense in which they remain individual facts. Each fact participates in various forms in those that succeed it, but these forms of participation do not exhaust it because it is itself a true individual. If this were not the case, then there would be no genuine novelty, no creative advance. The principle of process is that "the many become one, and are increased by one."[17] The process by which novel forms of concrete togetherness come to be constitutes the cosmic passage. Whitehead assigns the term "concrescence" to this process creative of new forms of ontological togetherness. Any attempt to analyze this process, either in terms of the concrete components or in terms of the general forms of their participation with one another, relies upon abstraction. Abstraction for the purpose of analysis is inevitable simply because of the nature of symbolic reference. It is useful for a certain purpose, but as a form of relation, it introduces other novel forms of togetherness capable of analysis. For this reason, Whitehead concludes, in relating to reality at the most concrete level,

[15] Whitehead, 20.
[16] Whitehead, 20.
[17] Whitehead, 21.

"[t]he sole appeal is to intuition."[18] Intuition is a technical term for Whitehead, and its meaning will become clearer after some discussion of the terms involved in its explication.

Whereas we ought to understand actual entities as the final real things and prehensions as concrete facts of relatedness, Whitehead introduces, for the purposes of analysis, eternal objects as the forms of definiteness that facts can take. Recalling the corrective readings offered in chapter 1, eternal objects are not "real" in the sense of having independent existence—actual entities are the only real things, the only final realities. They are, however, the various forms of togetherness that real things have or can take, considered in abstraction from these specific determinations of fact. It is only because these forms are considered in abstraction from any particular duration within the spatio-temporal extension that Whitehead calls them "eternal" or "pure potentials." In other words, to call them "eternal" objects is not to attribute anything positive to them over and above temporal things; it is, rather, to take something away from them, namely, actuality. Their ontological status is one of demotion or privation, not reification. The actual entity is the *real* becoming of many potentialities, or the *becoming* real of many potentialities. Eternal objects themselves do not "become"; there can be no novel eternal objects. It would be a category mistake to claim otherwise.

Propositions

Whitehead uses the term "propositions" to refer to potential matters of fact—that is, to refer to the *particular* forms of definiteness that may or could have occurred. This would be to speak of specific determinations of fact that remain potential and so lack both the generality of eternal objects and the determinateness of actual entities. Whitehead calls potential facts "propositions"

[18] Whitehead, 22.

because they take the form "X is *p*" in analysis. Unlike eternal object, propositions are not pure potentials, but specific ones concerning potential forms of novel togetherness of real things. Propositions concern real potentials, which differ from pure potentials insofar as they are partly composed by the givenness of established fact or the actual world. Whereas an eternal object is devoid of all determination and thereby devoid of actuality, a proposition is a *conditioned* indetermination insofar as it is limited to the forms of togetherness that determinate matters of fact may take given the actual states of affairs. It is in this sense that Whitehead sometimes refers to propositions as "theories."[19]

Propositions involve indeterminateness insofar as they concern potentials in the way of possible predicates, but they involve conditionedness insofar as they concern the potential of specific actualities, or what Whitehead calls the "logical subjects" of the proposition. The logical subjects play the role of "X" in "X is *p*"; they are the element of sheer givenness or established fact.

It is only because of the aesthetically given that propositions can become true or false—*not*, that is, with respect to conscious judgments, but only so far as with respect to the determination of novel facts.[20] On this model, unlike on the logicist's model discussed in chapter 1 (of which Russell was expressive), we can make sense of the importance of not only true propositions, but also false ones. "The fact that propositions were first considered in connection with logic, and the moralistic preference for true propositions," writes Whitehead, "have obscured the role of propositions in the actual world."[21] The result has been that propositions have been treated as the accessories of judgments, so much so that some philosophers fail to

[19] Whitehead, 22.
[20] Whitehead, 258.
[21] Whitehead, 259.

properly distinguish the two at all.[22] F. H. Bradley, for instance, "does not mention 'propositions' in his Logic. He writes only of 'judgments.'"[23] The role of propositions in the actual world exceeds the logical role in which the "one function is to be judged as to their truth or falsehood."[24] On Whitehead's account, judgments are a species of the larger genus of propositional feelings, where "feelings" (or prehensions) are Whitehead's broader aesthetic substitute for the modern mentalistic treatment of judgment as something that the mind does at a remove from the world. To understand propositional prehension, more needs to be said on prehension as Whitehead's language for real togetherness.

The language of prehension stands to correct the dualism between "sensation" and "reflection" in modern philosophy broadly, particularly as it is found in Locke and Hume. This dualism is the result of "two defects," according to Whitehead. The first defect is the confusion of an idea and consciousness of an idea (in Locke's sense); the second is the presumed relationship between the "impressions" of sensation and the "impressions" of reflection (in Hume's sense), where Whitehead reads "impression" as functionally synonymous with "ideas" in the case of both sensations and reflections. These defects contribute to the "sensationalist" doctrine of perception, which presumes that an actuality's awareness of another actuality depends upon the mediation of private sensations. The sensationalist doctrine entails the notion that emotional feelings are derivative from these private sensations. This doctrine relies upon a bifurcated picture of nature.

Whitehead thinks this doctrine is empirically backwards: "If we consider the matter physiologically, the emotional tone depends mainly on the condition of the viscera which are

[22] Whitehead, 359.
[23] Whitehead, 184
[24] Whitehead, 184.

peculiarly ineffective in generating sensations."[25] Emotional feelings or "tones," according to Whitehead, are more primitive modes of real togetherness. Only in more sophisticated organisms does sensation "supervene with any effectiveness" upon this more primitive mode of togetherness.[26] Whitehead's term for this real togetherness is "objectification," by which he means that mode of participation in a subject qua object for feeling. Such feelings are, in turn, constitutive of the subject. These two modes of "direct mediation" with other actualities play a foundational role for any understanding of the possibility of perceptual knowledge in Whitehead's thought.

Temporality is central to the doctrine of prehension. Actualities are what they are because of how they prehend actualities in their immediate past. Actual entities are not Leibniz's "windowless monads."[27] It is only because Western philosophy has, for so long, operated upon substance-quality metaphysics that individuals could be thought of in exclusively spatial terms, such that they could be atomized without relation along a line of temporal succession. For such philosophical thinking, Whitehead argues, the relations between these individuals can only amount to "metaphysical nuisances."[28] Such has been the fate of intentional relations.

Whitehead's philosophy makes the separation between "ideas" and "consciousness" such that one can be conscious without being conscious of the ideas in the conscious mind. The doctrines of prehension and objectification are meant to give metaphysical interpretation to a suppressed principle by which Locke operates: that some sort of perception of "particular existents" is possible.[29] It is the influence this tacit principle has on Locke's philosophy that

[25] Whitehead, 141.
[26] Whitehead, 141.
[27] Whitehead, 48.
[28] Whitehead, 137.
[29] Whitehead, 138.

makes for his "metaphysical superiority" over Hume. Whitehead provides the following reading of Locke:

> He first (I, I, 8*) explains: " . . . I have used it [i.e., idea] to express whatever is meant by phantasm, notion, species, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking; . . ." But later (III, III, 6), without any explicit notice of the widening of use, he writes: ". . . and ideas *become general* by separating from them the circumstances of time, and place, and any other ideas that may *determine them to this or that particular existence*." Here, for Locke, the operations of the mind originate from ideas "determined" to particular existents.[30]

Locke is not the only modern philosopher that Whitehead thinks demonstrates a suppressed premise of this sort, one that remains inconsistent with the wider philosophy of experience. Hume exhibits a similar inconsistency when he writes: "As to those *impressions*, which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and it will always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arrive immediately from the object, or are produced by the creative power of the mind, or are derived from the Author of our being."[31] In each instance, Locke and Hume allow tacit affirmations of "the" object, even while neither of them can justify this demonstrative use. When Hume writes, "There is no object which implies the existence of any other, if we consider these objects in themselves, and never look beyond the ideas which we form of them," Whitehead reads him as mingling an objectivist principle like Locke's about "the object" with one that expressly contradicts it, namely, the subjectivist principle derived from substance-quality metaphysics.

In the same way that Whitehead finds in Kant's "noumena" the ultimate consequence of spatializing mind (as noted in chapter 1), he also finds in Kant the ultimate expression of these conflicting premises. Explicitly, Kant presumed the mentality of "intuition" such that

[30] Whitehead, 138;
[31] Whitehead, 139.

consciousness was always consciousness of ideas. This is why intuitions without concepts are "blind." But Kant's explicit principle is contradicted, Whitehead argues, by his own statement that "thoughts without intuitions are empty." What this statement implies, according to Whitehead, is that intuitions are, in fact, never blind.[32]

"'Actuality,'" writes Whitehead, "is the fundamental exemplification of composition."[33] The actual entity is composed by its modes of real togetherness with other actualities. It is because actual entities are composites that Whitehead refers to the process of composition as a "concrescing" because it is a biological term for the coalescing or conjoining of what was formerly disjointed. This doctrine of actual entities is the inversion of the one to which Hume gave expression above when he wrote that considered "in themselves," objects never imply the existence of other objects.

On Whitehead's account, it is precisely because actuality is fundamentally compositional—in principle, it is real togetherness—that the notion of "a common world" makes any sense.[34] Just how an actuality exemplifies this common world, adding to it in the achievement of this exemplification, is what constitutes it as actual. The possible "hows" in this context are eternal objects qua potentials without respect to any particular determination of fact. Actual entities differ from one another—they are, in a genuine sense, individuals because of how they realize potentials. "Whatever component is red, might have been green, and whatever component is loved; might have been coldly esteemed."[35] Determination occurs by means of incompatible possibilities; something cannot be, in the same way, both red and green, both loved

[32] Whitehead, 139.
[33] Whitehead, 147.
[34] Whitehead, 148.
[35] Whitehead, 149.

and unloved. There is a principle of limitation evidenced by actuality that must constitute the relations among pure potentials. Whitehead describes this principle ordering among pure potentials as a graded relevance of possibility.

Whitehead refuses to use the classical term "universals" for these modes of determination because the term, indexed to substance-quality metaphysics, denies the real togetherness of the particulars to which they purportedly apply. Before Whitehead introduces his peculiar vernacular, however, he offers a rare description of how the old term "universals" might be employed in his revised sense. "Universals" are the terms of which the "definiteness" or determinateness of immediate experience is exhibited. "But such universals," he explains, "by their very character of universality, embody the potentiality of other facts with variant types of definiteness."[36] This is why what is the case always tells us something about what was and may be the case; it is the basis of the continuity of nature presupposed by inductive reasoning.

The ways in which actualities become determinate—the realization of particular relations to actualities of its immediate past—are what Whitehead means by the "ingression" of eternal objects. Ingression is emphatically *not* to be conceived as the transition from nonbeing into being of the Platonic Idea; ingression is, rather, properly conceived as the "evocation of determination out of indetermination."[37] The language of evocation is intentional because Whitehead is concerned to restore a proper balance between efficient and final causation. The creative advance, the passage of nature, is not the brute efficient causality of McDowell's "bald naturalism." Actual entities, the facts constitutive of the "common world," are not sufficiently explained simply by means of causal relation to the immediate past but by purposive relation to

[36] Whitehead, 14.
[37] Whitehead, 149.

the facts. When temporality is written back into the count of ultimately real things—when individual facts cease to be billiard balls atomically strung together in a temporal extension that bears no internal relation to their constitution—coercion and force cease to be the only expressions of power in the world. Appetition becomes plausible as a mode, the self-determination of actualities.

It is only because of the relevance of pure potentials to actual subjects that appetition can enter the picture as a self-generating power. "Appetition is immediate matter of fact including in itself a principle of unrest, involving realization of what may or may not be," explains Whitehead.[38] Actualities, in their becoming or concrescing, are the subjects of prehension or feeling—this is the broader sense of "experience" so far devoid of consciousness or self-consciousness. To experience is to be the subject prehending objects. All subjects become objects for novel subjects—become, that is, part of the givenness of the actual world. "Actuality in perishing acquires objectivity, while it loses subjective immediacy. It loses the final causation which is its internal principle of unrest, and it acquires efficient causation whereby it is a ground of obligation characterizing the creativity."[39] Efficient causation entails the notion of givenness or determinateness, and such givenness is a requisite of the passage of nature. The logical counter-requisite, however, is the element of *un*rest; the indeterminate that is nevertheless in relation to the actual. This in-relation is, again, by way of a nonderivative actuality that is unlimited by its prehensions of (in the technical sense of not being fully determinate by relatedness to) the actual world.[40]

[38] Whitehead, 32.
[39] Whitehead, 29.
[40] Whitehead, 32.

Prehension is an activity, an actualizing. It is not something that happens to a subject, but that by which a subject "effects its own concretion of other things."[41] Whitehead chooses "prehension" to serve as the single term to replace the dichotomy between Hume's "impressions of sensation" and "impressions of ideas" as well as Locke's conflation of an "idea" with "consciousness of an idea." The doctrine of prehension holds that consciousness presupposes experience, but experience does not presuppose consciousness.[42] It thereby resists the "two defects" Locke and Hume identified earlier, as well as Kant's mentalization of intuition—all of which owe to the spatialization of mind by way of substance-quality metaphysics (per the misreading of Plato and the misappropriation of Aristotle).

So far, however, I have only spoken of past actual entities as possible objects of prehension. Prehensions of past actual entities are termed "physical prehension," where physicality indicates those given elements of the actual world that enter into the physical sciences. Physicality stands in creative contrast with what is indeterminate, thus far referred to as pure potentiality or eternal (because unconditioned by any *particular* terms of exemplification) objects. The element of indeterminateness, unrest, and appetition involved in the composition of an actual entity is termed, in contrast to the physicality, "mentality." Whitehead has not reintroduced an ontological dualism here; he has merely re-appropriated the formerly dichotomous terms as co-constituents of novel facts. The distinction between formal and informal constitution should be kept in mind.

We need more than physical prehension to account for appetition because appetition is the yearning for the realization of something not yet realized. The object of yearning is related to

[41] Whitehead, 52.
[42] Whitehead, 53.

by "conceptual" prehension. Conceptual prehensions are "the basic operations of mentality" considered in its formal or "pure" constitution.[43] Informally, however, physical and mental prehensions are "impure" in the sense of being integrated with one another; for instance, "thirst is an immediate physical feeling integrated with the conceptual prehension of its quenching."[44] We return here to propositions because propositions are those entities forming the datum of an integrated or "impure" physico-mental prehension. As entities, however, they aren't in any place or in any time. This is the wrong way to speak of them. They are nothing other than the datum of a specific form of prehension, together only by means of that prehension, with all the particularity of its time and place.

Physical feelings, on the one hand, introduce no significant novelty. Pure conceptual feelings, on the other hand, do not involve the determination of new facts. But if our goal is to make sense of the sorts of experience like conscious awareness, no account will be complete as it is based solely upon efficient causality or all-determining laws of nature because error and confusion have no place in such a scheme. The possibility of error or confusion presupposes an element of freedom, and this freedom Whitehead accounts for in terms of aesthetic abstraction.

Conscious awareness is neither perception without interpretation (purely physical), nor perception of the absolutely indeterminate without respect to any particular fact (purely conceptual). The possibility of being "correct" or "incorrect" in conscious perception or judgments requires a different type of entity to be the object of a subject's prehension. This is because truth and falsehood "are always grounded upon a *reason*," (italics mine) and per the Ontological Principle, actual entities are the only reasons. Eternal objects, in being devoid of all

[43] Whitehead, 33.
[44] Whitehead, 32.

determinacy, cannot be reasons—something isn't red because of redness; something is red because its mode of relation to other real things exhibits redness. But the possibility of *falseness* also means a conscious judgment cannot take the purely determinate (physical) as its object. The possibility of truth or falsehood requires a third entity other than actual entities or eternal objects, which entails an element of determinateness (some particular actualities or "logical subject") and an element of indeterminacy (something predicated of that subject). These are propositions.

Propositions function beyond the role of objects of conscious judgments. They must be understood ontologically before they can have any meaning epistemologically. The truth of a proposition depends upon the actual world being qualified in the way indicated by the predicate, and therefore, on a relation involving some degree of conformity, not of substance, but of feeling. For a propositional feeling qua integrated physico-conceptual feeling, the objective datum involves, on the one hand, a determinate set of actual entities "indicated by their felt physical relations to the subject of the feeling," and on the other, a potentiality conditioned or restricted by those actual entities constituting the logical subject(s).[45] "The proposition," writes Whitehead, "is the possibility of *that* predicate applying in that assigned way to *those* logical subjects."[46] A proposition can be prehended by a subject in varying ways, only one of which constitutes a judgment of truth or falsity; the judging subject of a proposition is a subset of the prehending subject. In a summary statement of the nature of a proposition, Whitehead writes:

> A proposition shares with an eternal object the character of indeterminateness, in that both are definite potentialities *for* actuality with undetermined realization *in* actuality. But they differ in that an eternal object refers to actuality with absolute generality, whereas a proposition refers to indicated logical subjects. Truth and falsehood always require some element of sheer givenness. Eternal objects cannot demonstrate what they are except in some given fact. The logical subjects of a proposition supply the element of givenness requisite for truth and falsehood.

[45] Whitehead, 257.
[46] Whitehead, 258.

Because propositions involve logical subjects and require just those actual entities constituting the logical subjects in order to be *that* proposition, a proposition cannot be prehended by an actual entity (or nexus) if its actual world (its constitutive relations) does not include those logical subjects.[47] Harriet Tubman could not feel the proposition "Barack Hussein Obama was the forty-fourth President of the United States of America" because Barack Obama, as a logical subject, was not part of her actual world. By contrast, Tubman could feel the proposition "Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth President of the United States of America," but her subjective form of this propositional feeling may have been one of affirmation, negation, or indifference. Whereas the proposition is true, it is how she relates to it that renders its truth or falsehood significant—that is, efficacious—for the world. The efficacy of this relation could not be explained by an analysis of propositions in purely logical terms.

What this aesthetic re-appropriation of classically epistemological terms affords us in the way of analysis is the ability to depict propositions, intuitions, and judgments in ontological terms prior to any epistemological problems. This move is in keeping with Whitehead's conviction that the concrete must explain the abstract, and not vice versa. Insofar as aesthetic relations are the most concrete, Whitehead relies upon them to explain how we get logical ones. Rationality is a subdivision of aesthetics. What this means is that we must be able to explain rationality in terms of aesthetics, the latter being the more concrete. When we attempt this, however, we are dealing with a higher level of abstraction and therefore lose an element of exactness. "Language," writes Whitehead, "is always ambiguous as to the exact proposition which it indicates." He continues, "Spoken language is merely a series of squeaks."[48]

[47] Whitehead, 259.
[48] Whitehead, 264.

Inverting the approach of much modern and analytic philosophy, therefore, Whitehead insists that perception and judgment qua varieties of propositional prehensions, require concrete aesthetic description as precursor of logical description. Furthermore, a precursor to accounting for the types of experience we specify with language, we need something capable of consciously "taking account" of the world.

Order and Organism

Organisms emerge through the complexity of a certain type of order among groups of actual entities, what Whitehead calls a "personally ordered society." We ought not conceive this "group" as a unit in space alone because since actual entities are what they are by how they prehend preceding actualities, there can be no internal relation to exact contemporaries. Contemporaries can be related only genetically. This means that to be a group of actual entities that functions *organismically*, the personal order obtains spatio-temporally. This is why Whitehead refers to organisms as "enduring objects with personal order" and refers to the prehended objects constitutive of this society its "historic route."[49] Enduring objects *without* personal order would be aggregate actualities that do not function organismically—namely, inorganic things.

"Order" is a technical term. It is differentiated from mere "givenness." Actual entities and nexūs attain various measures of order out of their actual world (where "actual world" is also a technical term, meaning those past actual entities serving as the subject's objective datum). Order exhibits givenness adapted for the "attainment of an end."[50] The attainment of this end is

[49] Whitehead, 99, 90.
[50] Whitehead, 83.

the exhibited order. Biological order, for instance, exhibits the means for the attainment of an aim specific to that individual. "It is notable," writes Whitehead, "that no biological science has been able to express itself apart from phraseology which is meaningless unless it refers to ideals proper to the organism in question."[51] This is different than saying that there is some "ideal" cow to which all cows biologically aspire. Such a claim falls back upon classical notions: "The notion of one ideal arises from the disastrous overmoralization of thought under the influence of fanaticism, or pedantry. The notion of a dominant ideal peculiar to each actual entity is Platonic," where "Platonic" means the Plato of Taylor and Whitehead.[52] The dominant aim or ideal of an actual entity or nexus is what makes it an ordered thing, something that makes it subjectively unified rather than a chaotic collection of things.

The degree of order within a society is equivalent to the degree to which it is capable of self-sustenance, where something is self-sustaining if it can provide its own grounds for endurance. This counts as "self"-sustenance insofar as the sustenance derives from a "personally" ordered society of actual entities. A society is different from a class because "order" here means something more than it does in mathematics; a society is a group of actual entities to whom a particular class-name applies "by reason of genetic derivation from other members of that same society."[53] The societal nature of each member has to do, in short, with the fact that they serve as the conditions, the reasons or objective datum, for the likeness of future members. What makes my life *mine*, for example, is the fact that my dominant datum for experience in this moment derives from the datum a moment prior to that, and so on, along "my" historic route until the organic order necessary to sustain consciousness diminishes to a negligible amount. The

[51] Whitehead, 84.
[52] Whitehead, 84.
[53] Whitehead, 89.

point at which this negligible amount is reached is what is at stake in any definition of "life" or "death."

Order is always achieved in greater or lesser degrees of intensity. "Perfection," when applied to actual order, can therefore only be a category mistake. It either implies a moralization of order or it implies a classical notion of staticity, which can only mean out of relation and therefore incapable of change. Societies are no more vacuous actualities than anything else in Whitehead's metaphysics, and indeed, there are societies within societies. It is the nature of an environment to be a larger society.[54]

The relations between societies have social rather than personal order. What constitutes the "order of nature" or "physical laws" has to do with the characteristics applicable to all actual entities forming the "cosmic epoch"[55]—the most general characteristics attributable to the ordering and disordering of societies. For example,

> This epoch is characterized by electronic and protonic actual entities, and by yet more ultimate actual entities which can be dimly discerned in the quanta of energy. . . . [E]ach electron is a society of electronic occasions, and each proton is a society of protonic occasions. These occasions are the reasons for the electromagnetic laws; but their capacity for reproduction, whereby each electron and each proton has a long life, and whereby new electrons and new protons come into being, is itself due to these same laws.[56]

What these laws are at any moment are arbitrary, whether they are those of electromagnetism, the dimensionality and measurability of the spatio-temporal continuum, geometrical axioms, and so on. And they could be otherwise, as the presence of disorder or chaos indicates. "Thus a system of laws determining reproduction in some portion of the universe," writes Whitehead,

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[54] Whitehead, 90.
[55] Whitehead defines a "cosmic epoch" as "that widest society of actual entities whose immediate relevance to ourselves is traceable" (91).
[56] Whitehead, 91.

"gradually rises into dominance; it has its stage of endurance, and passes out of existence with the decay of the society from which it emanates."[57] There is disorder to the extent that there are failures of reproduction, whereby new types of order gradually emerge to dominate older ones. Disorder is, thus, a term of nonrelation, or better, privation; there is disorder when the dominant characteristics of the societies in question exercise a trivial degree of influence upon one another.[58] In this case, those "disordered" societies contribute nothing to the general characteristics of a cosmic epoch making up natural law or the order of nature.

The reason why those philosophies against which Whitehead pits his own conceived of "natural laws" without sufficient appreciation of contingency is because of the understood extensiveness in terms of spatiality alone. Whitehead, whose concern was always the *applied* nature of mathematics, was able to indicate the ways the logical and mathematical investigations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were relevant to philosophy in the way "the cosmological theories of Descartes, Newton, Locke, Hume, and Kant" were unable to do. He argues that in fact, the Plato of the *Timaeus* "seems to be more aware of [this significance] than any of his successors, in the sense that he frames statements whose meaning is elucidated by its explicit recognition."[59] That is to say, in Whitehead's (and Taylor's) reading, Plato's cosmology is such that it is helped, not hindered, by these new discoveries.

Having been uninfluenced by Semitic ideas of absolute transcendence, Plato's *Timaeus* is more metaphysically sound than Newton's *Scholium,* Whitehead purports, insofar as Newton's cosmology was predicated upon a concept of the world as "externally designed" and "obedient," and therefore provided no hint of the limits of its own applicability. For Newton, "nature is

[57] Whitehead, 91.
[58] Whitehead, 92.
[59] Whitehead, 91–92.

merely, and completely, *there.*"[60] Consequently, there was no room for nature *naturing*. Despite its naïvete when read as a statement of scientific exactness, the *Timaeus* at least lends itself to an allegorical reading open to notions of self-production and the sociality of order. "The full sweep of the modern doctrine of evolution," Whitehead says, "would have confused the Newton of the *Scholium*, but would have enlightened the Plato of the *Timaeus.*"[61] Order is a product of sociality, emerging from the ground up; it is not a product of cosmic coercion or divine fiat. Modern science expresses its understanding of the social nature of order in terms of genetics and statistics.[62]

Organisms capable of perception exhibit a more complex social order than those that are merely reactive to an environment. Water molecules excite with changes of barometric pressure. We can appropriately speak of melting ice as a reaction insofar as the events involved can be characterized by the physical transference of energy throughout a given environment. When a cedar stump rots, however, the event may be considered not merely reactive, but in some sense, *motivated* because it is the effect of the metabolic process of a type of multi-celled organism whose dominant characteristic is growing by decomposing other things. Growing fungi exhibit the workings of more complex social order than does melting ice. The gestation of a human fetus is more complex yet, involving the personal ordering of innumerable subordinate societies called "living cells" that interrelate so as to support an enduring personal order that I can eventually identify as "me" or "you." Billions of human organisms have exercised greater degrees of freedom from mere physical inheritance—like the reaction of the water molecules— and such

[60] Whitehead, 93.
[61] Whitehead, 93.
[62] Whitehead, 92.

exercises have significantly altered the character of the world such that we have come to describe this geologic age as the Anthropocene.

We must resist the temptation to think of freedom as floating in from beyond real relations with actual entities—it does not. The freedom to realize potential is never absolute; actualizable potential can only be real potential, or potential by reason of other actual things. Actual entities are the only reasons, which means that the character of a subject depends entirely upon the objects that constitute its datum. "[W]hatever be the freedom of feeling arising in the concrescence," Whitehead reminds us, "there can be no transgression of the limitations of capacity inherent in the datum. The datum both limits and supplies."[63] There are no ontological breaks, no hard-and-fast divisions; all categories of existence are mutually implicative for Whitehead. There are, however, watershed moments—occasions of terminal velocities and critical capacities that issue in the intensification or attenuation of types of social order. Intensifications of social order can create novel entities, whereby a community of individuals creates something beyond the sum of its parts. The primary way to analyze these processes is in terms of the most concrete relations of which we can speak, which are aesthetic ones for Whitehead.

Whitehead thereby relies on aesthetic relations to inform how we understand epistemological ones. He analyzes the creative advance or cosmic passage—the one from reactions of water molecules to technological innovations of human collaboration—in terms of various and multitudinous prehensive phases constituting the extensive continuum of events.[64]

[63] Whitehead, 110.
[64] Whitehead, 117.

Physical relations to other actual entities dominate the coalescence of simpler actual occasions, which means that their inheritance from the past is aesthetically more direct.

Directness of prehension should be understood, as Whitehead uses it, in terms of the vector-theory of physics rather than in terms of modern epistemology and the problematic "Given." When A directly perceives B, A receives from B a definite transfer of energy—or rather, the transfers of energy *is* the nature of perceiving. The transfer is the objectification of the past in the subject, and this objectification, when direct, counts as a low-grade perception from the point of view of a subject. A direct perception, as the simplest form of perception, is more of a reception. The degree of receptivity is propositional to the degree of directness. What A receives from B is a "quantitative emotional intensity."[65] The quality of this energy, apart from its sheer quantity, is termed the "specific form of feeling." This specific form, the qualitative aspect of this reception, is the subjective element of this occasion. In physics, a transfer of energy is not exhaustively described only in scalar terms, which are akin to the quantity of energy. What a full description requires in addition is the quality of the transfer, or a description in terms of its being a vector. I have not told you very much about the race if I say that the winner ran 17 miles—so did everyone who finished. What you really want to know is how fast she ran—say, seventeen miles in 2 hours and 49 minutes. Saying that the winner averaged a six-minute mile—the fastest of any other average achieved in relevant proximity—describes the nature of a race in a way that the sheer distance does not. Speed entails distance in a way that distance does not entail speed. The speed is analogous to the subjective form; it is the full measure of energy from the point of view of the subject. The runner experiences speed; she does not experience seventeen miles separately from the 2 hours and 49 minutes. In aesthetic terms,

[65] Whitehead, 116.

the subjective form is how the experience feels the datum at the most concrete level. It is what Whitehead calls "sensa." Sensa are forms of subjective experience or emotion in the technical sense of the specific quality of agitation or excitement of a subject. When Whitehead describes actual entities as vector-like, he means to correct the scalar descriptions of experience prevalent in thinkers like Locke and Hume, whose metaphysics denied actualities the real togetherness necessary to account for the objective elements of perception.

The interpreter of Whitehead must appreciate the technicality of his vocabulary, for he is not approaching the subject of perception and judgment in modern epistemological terms that treat sense perception as a primitive mode of experience, but as a mathematician and theoretical physicist for whom sense perception is a highly complex phenomenon. This is how he intends to correct the "two defects" found in Locke and Hume that arise from the conflation of ideas and impressions with consciousness. One consequence of this conflation is not only the "mentalization" of intuition discussed earlier, but also of emotion. Considered apart from the dualism of substance-quality metaphysics, however, emotions are not fuzzy psychological phenomena but the specific forms of excitation resulting from the real relatedness (prehension) between actual things. As such, they are entirely independent from consciousness.

Translated into the language of Lockean epistemology, Whitehead's account of direct perception "describes how the ideas of particular existents are absorbed into the subjectivity of the percipient and are the datum for its experience of the external world."[66] Here we understand "ideas" as earlier characterized, without the dualism between sensation and reflection. Whitehead critiqued Locke's confusion of an "idea" with "consciousness of an idea," and Hume's dichotomy of "impressions of sensation" and "impressions of reflection." Whitehead's

[66] Whitehead, 117.

theory of prehension dissolved this dichotomy, analyzing experience in terms of two phases of perception: the first, sense-reception; the second, sense-perception. When sensa are perceived rather than received, the element of directness is lost, and this introduces the possibility of error. This loss of directness manifests in several ways, the initial way being in terms of his "Category of Conceptual Reversion."

Conceptual reversion is a technical term for what might be simplistically described as a feeling of a feeling. When A directly perceives B, A receives a definite transmission of energy or emotional intensity. How this definite transmission is received is the "specific form of feeling," and this form is, as above, the subjective form of the transmission. Since Whitehead is accustomed to speaking of these forms—potential before realized—as "eternal" objects, which are the objects of "conceptual" (because not physical qua actual) prehension, he is inclined to describe direct perception (or sense-*re*ception) in terms of a direct reproduction of form. This is his "Category of Conceptual Valuation," appropriately understood as the category of conceptual reproduction. Conceptual reversion is indexed to this prior category. Whereas the direct reproduction of form constitutes endurance, a reversion alters this direct inheritance, introducing novelty. Whereas a rock endures for a time as a self-same entity of varying degrees, something is living when it is capable of novel responses to established fact. When some measure of an organism's response is "inexplicable by *any* [that is, to any one] tradition of pure physical inheritance," to that degree the organism is "alive."[67] To be alive is to be capable of originating, to some degree, one's response to the past. This origination is an introduction of novelty, or something nonactual, into actuality, and thereby qualifies in Whitehead's vocabulary as a

[67] Whitehead, 104.

conceptual feeling; but this time, it is a conceptual feeling responding to the form of a direct perception and is therefore a sort of reversion.

The degree to which conceptual reversion is possible for an organism is the degree to which novelty is possible. More simply, the degree to which an organism's responses are indeterminate is the degree to which that organism is alive. The human standard for such indetermination or freedom is the capacity for imagination. Imaginative freedom can never be absolute because an actual entity or society only possesses freedom of conceptual production to the extent inherent to the real potentiality available to it by way of the relations constitutive of its actual world. There are no absolutes for Whitehead because his aesthetic ontology prohibits vacuous actualities that lack real relatedness; absolute could only mean absolutely relative. Freedom is therefore a term of relation that presupposes others and stands with them in terms of mutual limitation. Freedom is freedom from something given and freedom for some conditioned range of potentiality.[68] The human standard for such freedom is exhibited most intensely by means of our intellectual capacities.

Consciousness and the Power of Abstraction

So far, I have considered how Whitehead accounts for the real relatedness of an actual entity to its actual world, how this relatedness involves objectification and subjective experience, and how groups of actual entities achieve varying degrees of order. None of these things are enough to give us an account of the type of complex sociality of things capable of explaining consciousness.

[68] Whitehead, 133.

Whitehead does not equate mentality with consciousness. The former is a fundamental aspect of all becoming; the latter depends upon prior phases of experience and arises only at a sufficiently high degree of abstraction to produce a unified sense of the things. The real relatedness capable of such abstraction occurs through a process Whitehead calls "transmutation." "Transmutation," Whitehead explains, "is the way in which the actual world is felt as a community, and is so felt in virtue of its prevalent order."[69] When we are conscious of the world, we are not conscious of every event constituting each cell of our body and its relevant environment. Rather, when we are conscious of the world, we are so by attending to it propositionally—that is, in terms of a determinate set of actualities characterized (rightly or wrongly) in a particular way. In short, consciousness depends on *some* quantity with *some* quality. This focus of the many into one occurs when the simple physical feelings for many actualities become a single complex physical feeling of a nexus in terms of what unites rather than what differentiates its members.[70] Whitehead introduces this new category of existence—the transmuted feeling—to account for how this derivative feeling of a nexus functions as a novel (more complex) entity. With the new category, the communal feeling would amount to nothing more than the sum of its components and would be counted as inefficacious in the world. This was precisely what Whitehead took to be Leibniz's problem in the *Monadology.*

A transmuted feeling arises by reason of the "analogies" between the members of a particular group of actualities. "Analogy" is another technical term for Whitehead, as it here described an ontological reality rather than linguistic device. It describes the shared character of experience between constituents of a group that once isolated from the discrepancies, amounts to

[69] Whitehead, 251.
[70] Whitehead, 251.

something like a dominant characteristic or quality of the group. The analogies are felt by means of a conceptual prehension—that is, in terms of the single eternal object or quality exhibited by each of the members conjointly. If the multiple simple physical feelings amounted only into a single complex physical feeling, this would merely be an instance of causal efficacy involving no transmutation, and no new category of existence would be necessary.

A transmuted feeling, however, is a single direct feeling by a nexus qua subject of the analogy among its constituents. The constituents are analogous insofar as they exemplify the same eternal object and thus shared a quality of determinateness. The emergence out of multiplicity of one dominant conceptual feeling with adequate intensity to constitute a new entity is the occurrence of transmutation. This transmuted feeling of the nexus introduces novelty; the novelty is a new subject that prehends the nexus in a single physical feeling that takes the mutually exemplified eternal object as its datum. A transmuted feeling is thereby a "definite physical fact."[71] It is a new actual occasion of greater complexity and intensity of experience. A novel subject achieves this greater intensity by aesthetic emphasis upon similarity and elimination of discord such that the novelty is at once dependent upon real relatedness and abstraction—it is a concrete abstraction.

Those aspects emphasized in a transmuted feeling constitutive of a subject are ontologically amplified in the novel entity. Whitehead calls this process, whereby there is analogy between the objective data and the subjective form of a physical prehension, "adversion." He contrasts it (somewhat confusingly) with "aversion," which is the process whereby the intensity of certain aspects in the objective data is attenuated.[72] Adversion and

[71] Whitehead, 253.
[72] Whitehead, 253–54.

aversion are types of decision, ways in which a subject becomes actual by foreclosing certain possibilities about how it could have become, how it could have prehended the objective datum of its immediate past. Adversion and aversion are determined by how the subject prehends, and it is therefore determined by the conditioned freedom available to (or constitutive of) the subject. There is such an availability because of the real relatedness of a graduated range of eternal objects—the real potential—that the subject conceptually prehends. This conceptual feeling may be properly understood as the subject's purposiveness insofar as it is the decision that will be causally efficacious for future subjects taking it as their objective datum.[73] (Whitehead calls this aspect of an emergent actual entity—the aspect that has instrumental value—the superjective nature. All subjects are really subject-superjects. "Superjection" is an antiquated term derived from the Latin *superiectiō*. Whitehead uses it to speak of the character of a subject that has relevance beyond itself, becoming part of the causally efficacious past. Superjection is the subjective form of a subject becoming object, but prior to objectification, at which point its subjectivity gives way to "objective immortality.")[74]

Adversion, aversion, and transmutation are only important for high-grade organisms. For the same reason, they provide the conditions for "intellectual" mentality (Whitehead also calls this "intellectuality"), which is the sort of mentality that can support consciousness (though it need not do so). For our purposes, it is important to notice that this approach to intellectuality "consists in the gain of a power of abstraction."[75] Whitehead explains with unusual clarity:

> The irrelevant multiplicity of detail is eliminated, and emphasis is laid on the elements of systematic order in the actual world. In so far as there is trivial order, there must be trivialized actual entities. The right coordination of the negative prehensions [aversions]

[73] Whitehead, 254.
[74] Whitehead, 32. Whitehead here describes the "objective immortality" of actual entities as the "function of creatures" by which "they constitute the shifting character of creativity."
[75] Whitehead, 254.

> is one secret of mental progress; but unless some systematic scheme of relatedness characterizes the environment, there will be nothing left whereby to constitute vivid prehension of the world.

Vividness is the product of emphasis, where emphasis is the dominant relevance that a multiplicity has for the future, dominant because of order is relevant in a way that disorder in principle is not. Whitehead continues to illustrate the nature of emphasis in terms of physical energy:

> The low-grade organism is merely the summation of the forms of energy which flow in upon it in all their multiplicity of detail. It receives, and it transmits; but it fails to simplify into intelligible system. The physical theory of the structural flow of energy has to do with the transmission of physical feelings from individual actuality to individual actuality. Thus some sort of quantum theory in physics, relevant to the existing type of cosmic order, is to be expected. The physical theory of alternative forms of energy, and of the transformation from one form to another form, ultimately depends upon transmission conditioned by some exemplification of the Categories of Transmutation and Reversion.[76]

In physics, energy is the capacity for doing work. It can exist in many forms: potential, kinetic, thermal, electrical, chemical, nuclear, and so on. This is to what Whitehead is referring to when he names the "physical theory of alternative forms of energy." The "transformation from one form to another" can either be one of "transmutation" or "reversion" by which I take him to be giving metaphysical expression to the physical theory of energy in the process of transfer from state to state, or "body to body." "Energy" is not itself "a thing"; it is the work done between actual occasions. Thermal energy is what we call transferred heat. Whitehead generalizes this transfer in terms of prehension, where "heat" exhibits the emotional tone of the subject—how it "feels" the object in simple physical prehensions. Emotional tone is not to be read as "qualia"; not only are we not yet talking about consciousness, but we are rejecting the picture of subjecthood that describes "private experiences" in this way. Prehension is more like radiance

[76] Whitehead, 254.

than the handoff of an object. Emotional tone is how the object radiates by some particular account, or how a subject objectifies it. The radiant-ness is akin to the superjective nature of the now-objectified occasion.

When there is a simple, physical, direct transfer of emotional tone, this is sense *re*ception. For the passage to involve sense *per*ception, the transfer must be more complex. What this complexity affords is greater vividness, and what it costs is directness. Sense perception differs from sense reception in that it involves aesthetic emphasis upon the systematic elements of the world and the disregard of chaotic ones. Again, this "emphasis" and "disregard" are not mysterious; they are concrete forms of relation, partially analogous to the varieties of forms of energy in physical theory. The limits of the analogy have to do with the sorts of phenomena that the physical sciences are methodically designed to exhibit, and the ways in which the history of science relies upon tacit metaphysical assumptions about matter and form—assumptions significantly challenged by quantum theory. Whitehead's actual entities are more like "quanta" than billiard balls, but involve not only quanta but quanta-qualia. "Qualia" in this sense entails a very different metaphysics of experience than it does for its more standard uses in Western philosophy of experience.

Just as a theory based on quanta instead of substances entails degrees of indeterminism for which classical notions of efficient causality cannot account, Whitehead's description of the phases of experience are intended to do justice to the degrees of indeterminacy involved in the creative passage. His description, moreover, avoids bifurcating nature or introducing ontological dualisms. For Whitehead, sense perception or experience "in the mode of presentational immediacy" (for which causal efficacy in the mode of sense reception is ingredient) remains a mode of real relatedness to the world, albeit one that loses some element of directness to the facts

by virtue of enabling consciousness. Indirectness, however, is emphatically *not* synonymous with out-of-relation; it is a different form of relation that involves emphasis by way of disregarding "irrelevant" detail.

Narrowness of attention is the condition of the sort of awareness we would count as consciousness. This is why Whitehead can say that the negative prehension, the ability to disregard the chaotic elements of an environment, is an achievement of understanding, or making intelligible. "Triviality," he writes, "arises from excess of incompatible differentiation."[77] The differences among the actual entities of the nexus, pushed into irrelevance, constitutes the vague background against which a dominant characteristic (or an intensity of quality or forms of energy) can be communally reinforced. "By reason of vagueness, many count as one . . . ."[78] Vagueness is the cost of narrowness; the price of consciousness is a loss of directness. But what narrowness achieves is an abstracted simplicity—what Whitehead calls, again technically, a "massive simplicity"—that makes intelligibility possible. Without abstraction by way of transmuted feelings, what we commonly refer to as "mind" would not be possible, where "mind" is not a separate thing, but a process or mode of relativity achieved by a personally ordered society of actual occasions, or a community of atomic parts, living cells, organs, body, microbiome, ambient environment, and so on. "Mind" is the form of relation acquired by certain elements in this bodily society, which can be achieved to greater and lesser extents, as in the case of gestational states, sleeping states, or vegetative states, among others.

In sum, Whitehead characterizes the possibility of consciousness in terms of the possibility of deriving more abstract and unified feelings out of simpler disparate ones. This is

[77] Whitehead, 111.
[78] Whitehead, 112.

where the Categories of Conceptual Valuation (Reproduction) and Reversion (Diversity) enter into the Category of Transmutation. Consciousness is decisive and evaluative; it filters out trivial detail and focuses by attending to specific forms of determination that are felt as important. "Importance" should be understood also in technical terms as "being of consequence" as much in terms of "importing" as "importance."

Transmutation of feeling is how Whitehead describes how a unified feeling can be abstracted from a community of somewhat identical and somewhat disparate experiences. Aesthetic abstraction is elimination of difference through the emphasis upon a dominant characteristic within a community. It is only by way of transmutation that our intellectual capacities operate (or, rather, transmutation is an intellectual operation) because transmutation makes generality possible in a concrete sense, and this is the very generality entailed in semiotics or the pragmatics of "meaning."

Kant and the Formed-ness of Intuition

While Whitehead contrasts his account of experience with Kant's, he does not think the contrast is complete in all respects. The reason why Whitehead positions himself in conversation with Locke and Hume more often than with Kant is because the "defects" in the latter's thinking are responsible for many of the philosophical premises that Whitehead finds problematic in Kant—specifically, the disconnection between substances (particular existents/things-in-themselves) and data (sensa/impressions/intuitions). But just as there are elements of Locke's and Hume's accounts of experience that remain consistent with or receive emphasis by the philosophy of organism, there are likewise moments in Kant's first *Critique* where Whitehead sees Kant

struggling to introduce the real connectedness between phenomena and things-in-themselves otherwise denied by his system.

What is important for my purpose here is to point out the similarity between what Whitehead identifies as such moments in Kant's first *Critique* with what McDowell identifies as Kant's commitment to the formed-ness of intuitions and therefore to the logical continuity between intuitions and spontaneity. If I am correct about this similarity, it will make my case for the relevance of Whitehead to analytic debates about mind and world in general, and about the problem of intentionality in particular, all the stronger.

Whitehead's critique of Kant thus far has concerned the way Kant "mentalizes" intuition and thereby schematizes "experience" as being the product of the more sophisticated modes of cognitive functioning. The real ontological relatedness between one's intuitions and their purported objects thereby becomes problematic because experience is taken as a mode of thought, and thought is understood on the substance-quality model of reality. On this model, the subject is already ontologically *un*related to objects, and no amount of epistemological construction upon this ontological basis will be able to establish real togetherness. But Kant does not mentalize experience in every instance: "The exception is to be found in Kant's preliminary sections on 'Transcendental Aesthetic,' by which he provides space and time."[79] If Kant had based his *Critique* around the "Transcendental Aesthetic," such that it would have been the *Critique of Pure Feeling* rather than the *Critique of Pure Reason*, then Kant may have anticipated by many years Whitehead's philosophy of organism. It was because Kant followed Hume in assuming "the radical disconnection of impressions *qua data*" that this never occurred. Rather, for Kant, the "Transcendental Aesthetic" amounted to nothing more than "the mere

[79] Whitehead, 113.

description of a subjective process appropriating the data by orderliness of feeling."[80] For Kant, however, the orderliness of feeling did not, on Whitehead's reading, have any ontological togetherness with the datum. This Kant shared with Hume.

Whitehead understands his alternative to have more affinity with Locke's secondary use of "ideas," exhibited in the later portions of his *Essay.* The datum is intrinsic because constitutively it is interconnected with that for which it is datum. As earlier explained, Locke's secondary use exhibited according to Whitehead's interpretation is Locke's "suppressed principle" that allowed for perception of *particular* existents. Locke "speaks of the ideas in the perceived objects," Whitehead explains, "and [he] tacitly presupposes their identification with corresponding ideas in the perceiving mind."[81] The tacit admission of some ontological togetherness between ideas "in" particular existents and the ideas "in" the perceiving mind introduced an inconsistency that keeps Locke's philosophy of experience at least apparently plausible. The inconsistency was not adopted by Hume, and for this reason, ontological togetherness (accounted for only by an ontology based upon causal efficacy) as a fundamental mode of becoming was almost entirely absent. Instead, Hume spoke of "habits" of "constant conjunction" and provided at best only rhetorical solutions to account for their nature and possibility.

Locke's "ideas" in this secondary sense are analogous to Whitehead's "ingression" of eternal objects—that is, to Whitehead's account of how quality can be genetic. "[T]he first stage of the process of feeling," he writes, "is the reception into the responsive conformity of feeling whereby the datum, which is mere potentiality, becomes the individualized basis for a complex

[80] Whitehead, 113.
[81] Whitehead, 113.

unity of realization."[82] This conformity is concrete conformity, grounded in real togetherness. Only on the basis of this real togetherness can any account of the process by which experiential unity is attained avoid epistemological problems.

The difference between Whitehead and McDowell's assessment of the Transcendental Aesthetic lies in the fact that while Whitehead sees it as an inconsistency and a missed opportunity, McDowell sees it as the "clue" to understanding what Kant really wanted to achieve—namely, a defense of the objective purport of our intuitions.[83] In fact, McDowell's insistence upon this understanding of the Transcendental Aesthetic was the basis of his critique of Sellars's variations on Kant in *Science and Metaphysics* (1963). McDowell writes, "Sellars thinks Kant is misstepping by his own lights in failing to discuss forms our sensibility can be taken to possess in isolation from its cooperation with understanding." He continues,

> But this is hard to square with some striking remarks in the second-edition version of the Transcendental Deduction. There Kant explicitly insists on the very feature of the way he handles the *formedness of our sensibility* [italics mine] that Sellars thinks is a mere slip. He insists that our sensibility is not to be seen as having its forms independently of its interaction with understanding. As Kant in effect acknowledges, one might have gathered from the Transcendental Aesthetic that he takes the formedness of our sensibility to be intelligible before we bring the understanding into the picture (B160n.) This is just what Sellars thinks Kant's line ought to be. But in the second half of the B Deduction, Kant makes it clear that he wants us to realize the Aesthetic was not to be read as offering a self-standing account of the forms of our sensibility.[84]

Sellars is wrong, McDowell thinks, to read Kant as saying that intuitions can function independently of the understanding and so involve a sort of "sheer receptivity," the structure of which owes nothing to the categories of the understanding.[85] Sellars thinks that this is the second of two ways in which sensibility "figures in" to an "authentically Kantian account of empirical

[82] Whitehead, 113.
[83] McDowell, *Having a World in View*, 99.
[84] McDowell, 100.
[85] Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics,* 4; McDowell, *Having a World in View*, 98.

cognition," the first being the way intuitions are "already shaped" by the structure of the understanding.[86] What Sellars thinks we need is a way to account for how intuitions are constrained by a reality outside the mind in order to vindicate their objective purport and so defend any robust account of empirical cognition. But Sellars's conclusion is not that the objects present to consciousness in perceptual intuitions are "real" objects. Rather, they are phenomenal objects. This is Sellars's Scientific Realism, according to which the merely apparent ordinary objects of perceptual intuitions correspond to and are constrained in their manifestation by the real objects of the scientific image.

Sellars promotes Scientific Realism as the authentically Kantian account of the external constraints reality exercises upon empirical cognition. His constituents of the "manifest image" are "Kant's" phenomenal objects, and his constituents of the "scientific image" are "Kant's" things in themselves. The warrant for such claims to authentic Kantianism, Sellars argues, comes from what Kant ought to have concluded by his own lights from the Transcendental Aesthetic—namely, McDowell surmises "that our sensibility contributes its own forms, spatiality and temporality, to is cooperation with the understanding."[87] But McDowell thinks Sellars is wrong to claim that the external constraint upon our intuitions can or must only come by way of sensibility operating independently of the understanding.

For McDowell, what Kant says about the Transcendental Aesthetic in the second-edition version of the Transcendental Deduction renders Sellars argument unintelligible:

> Space, represented as **object** (as is really required in geometry), contains more than the mere form of intuition, namely the **comprehension [*Zusammenfassung*]** of the manifold given in accordance with the form of sensibility in an **intuitive** representation, so that the **form of intuition** merely gives the manifold, but the **formal intuition** gives unity of the representation. In the Aesthetic I ascribed this unity merely to sensibility, only in order to

[86] McDowell, *Having a World in View,* 98.
[87] McDowell, 99.

> note that it precedes all concepts, though to be sure it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to the senses but through which all concepts of space and time first become possible. For since through it (as the understanding determines the sensibility) space or time are first **given** as intuitions, the unity of this *a priori* intuition belongs to space and time, and not to the concept of the understanding.[88]

McDowell takes Kant at his word in insisting that space and time are not forms of intuition that sensibility has prior to any cooperation with the understanding, but only that these forms precede all concepts, even while they presuppose the understanding. Sellars, in contrast, thinks that Kant needed to maintain the independence of the forms of intuition in order to vindicate their objective purport.

As I read him, McDowell doesn't see why "phenomenal objects" need be "merely" phenomenal if we assist Kant with a notion of "second nature." McDowell thinks this notion was not a live option for Kant (as discussed in chapter 1) because of the influence of Platonic "idealism" (a phrase that would have confused Whitehead and Taylor). In *Mind and World,* McDowell writes, "From the thesis that receiving an impression is a transaction in nature, there is no good inference to the conclusion drawn by Sellars and Davidson, that the idea of receiving an impression must be foreign to the logical space in which concepts such as that of answerability function."[89] Once we have rejected the bifurcation between mind and nature—the space governed by rational relations and the space governed by causal ones—by way of the idea that rational relations are *sui generis* and yet coextensive with nature, we can no longer associate "nature" with some disenchanted realm of brute causality. McDowell concludes that when this association can no longer be plausibly made, then conceptual capacities "can be operative not only in judgments—results of a subject's making up her mind about something—but already in

[88] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B160–161n. Original emphasis.
[89] McDowell, *Mind and World,* xx.

the transactions in nature that are constituted by the world's impacts on the receptive capacities of a suitable subject; that is, one who possesses the relevant concepts."[90] In effect, McDowell is saying that intuitions and judgments are two sides of the same coin; conceptual capacities can be both passively elicited and actively employed.

To repeat a point from chapter 1, Whitehead could not read Kant in this way because he never read Plato and Aristotle in McDowell's way. The bifurcation of nature isn't to be solved by way of Aristotelian innocence expressed in the notion of "second nature" because any such appeal to Aristotle would only reinforce the substance-quality metaphysics that was the true source of the bifurcation. For Whitehead, the objective purport of our intuitions was always already vindicated by way of ontological togetherness. This is why he reads the Transcendental Aesthetic as Kant's struggle to establish this real togetherness by way of epistemological togetherness. When Kant postulates spatiality and temporality as forms of intuition, Whitehead thinks he is letting good sense rather than systematic coherence inform his thinking.

Whitehead therefore anticipated McDowell's appreciation of the Transcendental Aesthetic and its potential for addressing the problem of intentionality by many decades. Not only did he recognize the longings within modern philosophy for a real togetherness to repair the epistemological rupture with the world—for example, in Kant's speaking of the formed-ness of intuitions—but Whitehead offers a fuller solution to this problem. Unfettered by the suppressed Aristotelianism that informed Kant's "mentalizing" of intuitions by way of the disconnection of substance and data, Whitehead exhibits the necessary ontological togetherness involved in the various phases of experience—from the simply conformal to complex originative phases, in

[90] McDowell, xx.

terms of aesthetic rather than rational relations—and thereby explains the more abstract by way of the more concrete.

From Given to Novel Sensa

Whitehead's aesthetics of experience provides a way to account for how the givenness of history gives way, so to speak, to novelty. It does not give way eventually, but on every occasion, to greater and lesser degrees. What is necessary for our ability to entertain ordinary propositions like "the air is thin" or "the sky is grey" is the concrete (as opposed to classically epistemological) discrimination of details, such that some details of ontological relevance are intensified and others are diminished. This intensification and this diminishment are not mystical; they are the creative interplay between established facts and real potentials. Established fact both "limits and supplies." There is nowhere else for potential to "be" except among actual entities. The individual essence of an actual entity just is its relational essence, and vice versa, but in order for this to be the case, the two must never be conflated. The many do not only become one, but they are increased by one—this is Whitehead's Principle of Process. The "one" by which the many are increased differs functionally from the "one" that becomes of the many. This is why there is a difference between an ordered community and a disordered one; the former is creative, and the latter is mere chaotic proximity.

Whitehead insists that order and chaos presuppose one another as metaphysical principles, as do vagueness and clarity. He thinks we can only epistemologically discriminate between relevant and irrelevant detail, such as to see a "grey sky," if we have for the occasion ignored all other possible loci of attention. The ignored data forms the vague background of irrelevant detail or "massive uniformity" against which positively prehended data come to the

fore. This "coming to the fore" is explained in terms of the concrete emergence of "transmuted feelings." It is only when the ordered relations among a particular group of actual entities is adequately complex and patterned that communal characteristics can be felt with adequate intensity to occasion a "sense" of a broader range of relations—a larger "world," the world of a person as opposed to a cell.

The responsiveness to the past exhibited by a person involves a great deal of sense reception by way of the endurance of form (what Whitehead calls conceptual reproduction). This endurance is the basic conformity of the body from one occasion to the next, such that it counts as an enduring object. But the rock has this, too. What the person has in addition is the adequate complexity of pattern to support a higher stage of experience, which is sense perception or indirect perception. This indirectness enables greater discrimination of detail and therefore broader forms of taking account of one's environment. It is how we get from William James's "blooming buzzing confusion" to the "grey sky." The "blooming buzzing confusion" is the nondiscriminating reception of all real relations; the "grey sky" is the achievement of abstraction whereby some real relations contribute a "general character" capable of serving as a datum in itself (the one that becomes of the many) for a novel, more complex entity (the one that increases the many). This latter "one" becomes the possibility of novel, as opposed to merely given, sensum.

This sensum is novel rather than given because there has been a decision about which details ought to be relevant and which ought to be trivial. "Decision" does not imply consciousness but has a technical definition for Whitehead's aesthetic ontology. It is a "cutting off" or decisiveness that is not fully determined by the past. There can be no decision when there is no diversity of possibility. The indeterminism of decision means that we cannot explain it in

terms of classical notions of efficient cause. Rather, Whitehead attributes it to an element of "appetition." Indeed, one cannot account for the growth of an organism strictly in terms of the limitations imposed by the past; one also needs a principle of unrest luring it towards the future in the form of an ideal aim—but "ideal" only in the sense of nonactual, as opposed to a moral sense.

Whitehead calls the novel sensum created by a community exhibiting a general character a "contrast." Specifically, it is "the nexus, as one, in contrast with the eternal object" constituting its general character.[91] The key point here is that for Whitehead, generality of character does not mean a single universal predicated of many particular substances. In classical metaphysics, the universal is only ever externally related to the particular, while the particular is internally related to the universal. On the classical model, the horizon at dawn is crimson, but crimson is what it is regardless of what it characterizes. One cannot simply substitute eternal objects for universals in the foregoing because an eternal object is only conceivable qua exhibited by relata, and therefore, determinately. They are potential manners of real relation. When a manner of relation obtains, it obtains only by way of the particularity of togetherness among nonrepeatable actualities.

This particularity of togetherness is its own category of existence, which Whitehead terms a "contrast"; it is "a complex unity with this individual definiteness, arising out of determinateness of eternal objects."[92] This emphasis on the particularity intrinsic to a contrast indicates the inextricability of the contrast from its contrasted relata. What this means is that although the contrast itself serves as a novel entity in and of itself, capable of objectification by

[91] McDowell, 27.
[92] McDowell, 228.

future subjects, it carries within it the particularity of its past. It is therefore unlike a universal because it is unrepeatable. The transmuted feeling that makes possible sense perception by way of novel sensa is the introduction into experience of a contrast. Insofar as it relies upon an abstraction, it also introduces the possibility of accounting for the origination of "confusion" in concrete terms—something Whitehead doesn't think Leibniz was able to do.[93] The capacity for confusion or mistaken perception goes hand in hand with the capacity for abstraction.

Judgment qua Propositional Feelings

The running theme of this chapter has been no ontological togetherness, no epistemological togetherness. The actual entity is how Whitehead accounts for the real togetherness of propositions and judgments insofar as both are explainable in terms of actual entities. The only reasons are other actual entities, which means that "a reason is always a reference to determinate actual entities."[94] Propositions are the reasons why judgments can be true or false—they either do or do not reference determinate actual entities. Propositions are potential facts about actual entities. True propositions are facts; the logical subject actually exhibits the predicative pattern constituting the proposition. False propositions are unrealized or foreclosed potentials; the predicative pattern does characterize the logical subjects. It is not accurate to say that we make true or false judgments about propositions; it is accurate to say that we judge true propositions or we judge false propositions.

[93] McDowell, 27. Leibnizian monads lack the internal relatedness requisite for the possibility of real contrasts, and therefore of the complex unity requisite for complex entities capable of perceiving a particular conjointness instead of a disjointed many.
[94] McDowell, 256.

Distinguishing himself from Descartes, Whitehead writes: "Descartes in his own philosophy conceives the thinker as creating the occasional thought. The philosophy of organism inverts the order, and conceives the thought as a constituent operation in the creation of the occasional thinker. In this inversion we have the final contrast between a philosophy of substance and a philosophy of organism."[95] Thinking constitutes a thinker; a thinker doesn't construct thoughts. Likewise, knowing is not something knowers do, it is a form of relation that constitutes a knower. The capacity for judgments is prerequisite for the sort of relations by which an enduring, personally ordered society of actual entities could be said to know its world—or rather, to "have" it.

Judgment is a complex form of prehension, different from and more complex than perception because of the element of indetermination involved. Sense reception accounts for the continuity of objects from moment to moment. Sense perception accounts for the diversity of response to the past that entities can achieve. The latter presupposes the former, but is distinct from it. Likewise, judgment presupposes perception in its various modes and yet differs from it.

The guiding conviction of this chapter is that the mentalizing and spatializing tendencies of modern philosophical accounts of experience have hindered efforts to vindicate the objective purport of perceptions. These tendencies have also hindered efforts to account for the relationship between epistemology, logic, and ontology because the three are pictured as three distinct locations ranging from intimate to remote with respect to the human knower. The very premise of much modern epistemology, however, is that there is a lack of ontological togetherness between knower and known. Upon such a premise, logic is either seen as a tool that links the knower to the real by revealing ontological necessities, or it is seen as merely the

[95] McDowell, 151.

formalization of our ways of knowing. Bertrand Russell and early analytic philosophers exhibit the former position, and Kantians who maintain the hard gap between phenomena and noumena exhibit the latter. A system built upon the tacit metaphysics of modern epistemology will never take subjective experience to reveal reality in its most intimate mode of self-expression.

The early Russell worried about the "existence" of propositions. After reading a draft of his work on the subject, Whitehead wrote in a letter to Russell on May 5, 1906: "I have read over your ms on propositions three or four times with the greatest care. . . . False propositions are a great difficulty to me. You say—and this seems sense—there is only the fact that Caesar is dead, and there is not in addition . . . the true proposition, 'Caesar is dead'. But then what the devil is there in respect to 'Caesar is not dead'?"[96] The early Whitehead worried about how to account for the availability to judgment of negative propositions and struggled with Russell to maintain the distinction between propositions and judgments. We see him conflate propositions to judgments—the very tendency in modern philosophy that he critiques in *Process and Reality*—when he says that true propositions are not actual things like facts. Judgment does not mean here what it means in *Process and Reality*; it is the judgment of formal logic and mathematics, not of metaphysics. In chapter 1, I mentioned that the scholarly collaboration between Whitehead and Russell remained within the strict bounds of mathematics and logic. Any venture into the philosophy of mathematics or the relationship of logic and ontology would have led them in very different directions. We see this tension beginning to build in the 1906 letter, when propositions become a problem that required metaphysical investigation.

By 1928, it is clear that Whitehead understands why negative propositions had so bedeviled him. It was because "proposition" referred, in the context of this bedevilment, only to

[96] Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead* (Volume 1), 280–81.

something that figures into judgments—there is "only the fact" that *P* and not in addition "the true proposition" that *P.* This language no longer makes sense in Whitehead's later philosophy, according to which "the fact" and the "true proposition" are redundant not because the latter refers in some mysterious intentional relationship to the former, but because a "proposition," when true, exhausts the meaning of a fact, and when false, exhausts the meaning of fiction. When speaking of "facts" we are speaking of "true propositions." But we can also speak of fictions, or mistake fictions for facts, and when we do, we are dealing with false propositions. Propositions, therefore, are not facts, but facts are true propositions. Propositions are "potential" facts. This is not an oxymoron. Facts are constituted by past actual entities, and since these actual entities relate with elements of indeterminacy to subjects, there are many potentials for how facts can be prehended. If these prehensions involve elements of confusion introduced by reversion or transmutation, then the prehensions can be nonconformal. The nonconformal prehensions are prehensions of false propositions. There is therefore a necessary distinction between propositions and facts, without which there would be no accounting for the intellectual capacity to be wrong.

Judgments "realize" propositions, but qua realized, the proposition only *is* (does work) by way of the outcome of the judgment. A subject judges truly if the actual entities taken as the logical subjects do, in fact, exhibit the character taken as the predicative pattern. If the predicative pattern is mistaken, then the judging subject stands in a nonconformal relationship to those facts. It is only on the basis of conformal relations, Whitehead insists, that induction is possible.[97] Inductive reasoning is possible only insofar as it is "the derivation of some characteristics of a particular future from the known characteristics of a particular past."[98]

[97] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 200–201.
[98] Whitehead, 204; Whitehead is here quoting his own *Science and the Modern World*, 44.

Conformal relations require the ontological togetherness of actual entities, and thus Whitehead thinks that the substance-philosophy of Descartes cannot account for the possibility of inductive reasoning. Actual entities qua survivals of order, exhibit something of the general character of the universe; discrete substances can tell us nothing of this general character, which is to say that their environment is unknown.[99]

So long as "actuality" means "a substance with inhering qualities," to say that it has "knowledge" of other actual entities will never involve real relations, and accordingly, intentionality will always be a "problem." If "actuality" means a "percipient occasion" emerging as unity (novel event) out of multiplicity (many past events), then an event evidences the actual world essential to its composition.[100] In substance metaphysics, a subject is ontologically distinct from an object. For Whitehead, there are only actual entities. What constitutes the subject-hood of an actual entity is the object-hood of other actual entities in its immediate past. Objectification is the means of becoming, whereby what becomes, while it becomes, is the subject; but once it has become, it is an object constituting the immediate past of further becomings.

Subjectivity is therefore a mode of internal relation to the givenness of the past and the real potentials for the future. Subjects are the moments when causal efficacy encounters final causation—when fact and ideal meet as mutual instruments of creativity constituting conditioned freedom. For Descartes, experience could only mean the "self-enjoyment, by an individual substance, of its qualification by ideas."[101] For Whitehead, experience means the "self-enjoyment

[99] Whitehead, 205.
[100] Whitehead, 145.
[101] Whitehead, quoting Descartes, 145.

of being one among many, and of being one arising out of the composition of many."[102] Experience, for Whitehead, is ontologically perspicacious.

Of course, to say that experience is ontologically perspicacious is to rely in large part upon metaphor. Experience need not involve consciousness on this definition, and it need not involve ocular sensation. But the level of experience involved in our ability to have conversations about it is the human standard. Only the higher phases of experience involve consciousness, but not necessarily and not for all occasions constituting the historic route of an enduring, personally ordered society. To account for the sorts of conscious judgments that are what analytic philosophers have in mind when they use the term requires a further study of Whitehead's aesthetic ontology.

Conscious Perceptions versus Intuitive Judgments

A propositional feeling is any prehension that takes a proposition as its object. A judgment is only one species of this genus, and there is also diversity in the nature of judgment. Whitehead at times refers to propositional feelings as "intellectual" feelings because of the role they play in the emergence of intellectuality of the sort commonly taken as sapience.

Whitehead describes two species of intellectual prehension: conscious perceptions and judgments. Judgments can also be intuitive or inferential. Intuitive judgments can be affirmative or negative, but there are also suspended judgments that provide occasion for inference. Inference is here understood as the work of derivative judgments. It is the suspended judgment, Whitehead thinks, which is the primary tool of scientific progress.[103] Alternatively, it is the first

[102] Whitehead, 145.
[103] Whitehead, 275.

type of judgment that is most nearly analogous to conscious perceptions insofar as it is dominated by an indifference to truth or falsehood. Like conscious perception, it is merely "the feeling of what is relevant to immediate fact in contrast with its potential irrelevance."[104] No strict boundary can be drawn between conscious perceptions and intuitive judgments. They are prone to the same error, which is the definition of the nexus (a mere fragment of the actual world of the logical subjects) by the observed predicate (which is the eternal object). In short, the proposition entertained may be nonconformal, that is, false.[105]

Whitehead understands the difference between the two types of propositional feelings, conscious perceptions and intuitive judgments, as the difference between "perceptive feelings" and "imaginative feelings" (soon to be explained). What makes something a perception as opposed to a judgment is ultimately the complexity of its origination. Conscious perceptions and intuitive judgments are different in degree, not kind—in manner, not matter. A conscious perception is the result of a felt contrast (a “comparative feeling”) between a physical feeling and a propositional feeling. The physical feeling supplies the “logical subjects” of the proposition. If the proposition is true, the perceiving subject has achieved a conformal relationship to those actual entities serving as the logical subject.

An intuitive judgment involves a third element insofar as the logical subjects and predicate (“predicative pattern” issuing in a particular emotional tone) originate from two different physical feelings. The success of an intuitive judgment is not dependent upon the strict conformity between the felt character of the proposition and the felt character of the actualities supplying its logical subject. The intuitive judgment is composed of 1) a logical subject derived

[104] Whitehead, 268.
[105] Whitehead, 270.

from one physical feeling (feeling of the immediate past), called the indicative feeling; 2) a predicative pattern derived from a second physical feeling, called the physical recognition or "predicative feeling"; and 3) the proposition, which is the unique compound of the two. The indicative feeling is "indicative" because it is the indication of particularity, the concrete inheritance by the subject of an object of consciousness, or the physical provocation of attention. The physical recognition is the element of recollection, the importation or associative abstraction of some character from past experience. The physical recognition is also the "conceptual imagination" or "predicative feeling"—the prehension supplying (functioning as) the predicate. Both the indicative feeling and the physical recognition are essential to consciousness. I am not just conscious of the "the mountain"; I am conscious of the mountain *as* P—or better yet, I am conscious because "mountain-as-*P*" is the form of relation constituting "me" in that moment.

> On this point, Whitehead finds agreement (with some interpretive liberty) with Plato:
>
> > Whenever there is consciousness there is some element of recollection. It recalls earlier phases from the dim recesses of the unconscious. Long ago this truth was asserted in Plato's doctrine of reminiscence. No doubt Plato was directly thinking of glimpses of eternal truths lingering in a soul derivate from a timeless heaven of pure form. Be that as it may, then in a wider sense consciousness enlightens experience which precedes it, and could be without it if considered as a mere datum.[106]

Whitehead believes Plate understood that what exhibits consciousness is an element of the abstract in the concrete. The synthesis constitutive of consciousness is the synthesis of determinateness and indeterminateness, of physical and mental operations. It would otherwise be mere physical receptivity. Of course, the language of forms that "linger" in actuality and that are "derivate" from a "timeless heaven of pure form" is, while ripe for sophistication, lacking as a matter of scientific detail. For the contemporary reader, it can read (as it has been read for much

[106] Whitehead, 242.

of modern and analytic philosophy) as a reinstatement of the bifurcation of nature with too strong an emphasis on the enchanted realm of eternality.

The opposite is the case for Hume, whose limitation indeed was the presumption of bifurcation, but by way of an emphasis on the disenchanted realm of brute happenings. Nevertheless, Whitehead sees the same understanding about consciousness in his thought:

> [Hume] maintains that we can never conceptually entertain what we have never antecedently experienced through impressions of sensation. The philosophy of organism generalizes the notion of "impressions of sensation" into that of "pure physical feelings." Even then Hume's assertion is too unguarded according to Hume's own showing. But the immediate point is the deep-seated alliance of consciousness with recollection both for Plato and for Hume.[107]

By substituting "pure physical feelings" for Hume's "impressions of sensations," Whitehead corrects that "defect" in Hume's thought, according to which the causal efficacy of the past entails no real relation to the abstractive generalities employed in perception and judgment. When Hume "remembers to speak in terms of this doctrine" of recognition or recollection, he understands an "impression" in terms of a conscious apprehension of a universal. In such instances, Hume says things like: "That idea of red, which we form in the dark, and that impression which strikes our eyes in sunshine, differ only in degree, not in nature."[108] But if it be the case, as it appears to be according to Hume, that an "impression" of red is only a more vivacious version of our "idea" of red, then we have no means of distinguishing a percept from a concept. This is Whitehead's worry. What Hume lacks is a doctrine of real togetherness that actual entities supply and substances withhold. He thereby denies the real presence of the past in the present.[109]

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[107] Whitehead, 242.
[108] David Hume, as quoted in Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 242.
[109] Whitehead sees this as a violation of his Principle of Relativity, or the Fourth Category of Explanation. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 243.

The indicative feeling introduces a sub-contrast to the physical feeling involved in a conscious perception, diversifying its origination. When this diversity is present, more distance opens up between the actual entities considered by the proposition; this space, created as it is by the lack of directness or physical determination, may be positively described in terms of an increase of "imaginative freedom"—a phrase only superficially similar to Hume's own.[110] The greater the diversity between the origin of the logical subject and the origin of the predicate, the more the proposition becomes an "imaginative notion" that when felt, becomes the object of an "imaginative feeling." In this way, the difference between a conscious perception and an intuitive judgment (or the defining point of a judgment evolving from a perception), is the element of imagination. In simple terms, an imaginative notion differs from a perceived notion when the things it brings together are sufficiently distinct from one another. This is why, thus constituted, the risk of a proposition being false is so much higher. The prehensive capacity to entertain such a high risk of error is what Whitehead calls "imagination." Imagination is the capacity to entertain falsehoods, falsehoods that can bring great enjoyment in art. It is in this way that Whitehead shows how the role of propositions in judgment—in belief, disbelief, or research—fails to exhaust the importance of propositions, specifically *negative* propositions.

It is precisely because in a conscious perception, the indicative feeling and the physical recognition are prehensions of one and the same set of actual entitiess that they involve greater restriction to the facts. The other side of this point is that because in intuitive judgments there is greater diversity of origination, there is both the chance of greater synthetic capacity and the greater risk of error. The more actual entities—and the greater the genetic differences between them—involved in the initial physical prehensions or givenness of awareness, the greater the

[110] Whitehead, 132–33.

possibility of confusion. The possibility of novel syntheses, of greater breadth of awareness, goes hand in hand with the risk of confusion.

This account of propositions thereby entails a "correspondence" theory of truth, but not of the sort supported by substance metaphysics. Whitehead defines truth as "the absence of incompatibility or of any 'material contrast' in the patterns of the nexus and of the propositions in their generic contrast."[111] It is the indicative feeling originative of the intuitive judgment that because it can be relatively disconnected in its origination from physical recollection may have involved conceptual reversion—or conceptual diversity—rather than reproduction. What conceptual diversity means is diversity of origination. If the physical feelings ingredient in an intuitive judgment do *not* involve reversion, then "from each physical feeling there is the derivation of a purely conceptual feeling whose datum is the eternal object *determinant of the definiteness of the actual entity, or of the nexus, physically felt."* The indicative feeling involving only conceptual reproduction has a lower risk of there being a material incompatibility between the proposition and the character of the actual world that it takes as its logical subject. If, however, one of the physical feelings involved in an intuitive judgment involves reversion, then the likelihood of incompatibility or the frustration of the synthesis increases.

It is likewise with conscious perceptions, although the number of physical feelings at risk of involving conceptual reversion is effectively half. Conscious perceptions thereby originate through a process that guarantees the closest possible restriction to the facts, whereas intuitive judgments involve a secondary origination of conceptual feeling. In both situations, truth is defined in terms of correspondence, and correspondence is valuable because it is efficacious. If I

[111] Whitehead, 271.

have consciously perceived the rope as a rope, my relation to it qua rope will be more efficacious (skillful, appropriate to the facts) than if I perceived it as a snake.

When we define truth aesthetically before we define it epistemologically, we can also account for the possibility of error at a more fundamental level. In both conscious perception and intuitive judgment, error "arises by reason of operations which lie below consciousness, though they may emerge into consciousness and lie open for criticism."[112] What we have is, in a way, a metaphysical basis for immanent critique.

The subjective form of a judgment is not always one of belief, nor of disbelief. Whitehead provides three possible cases: definite belief, definite disbelief, and suspension of judgment. If the felt proposition is true (if complete conformity obtains) the subjective form of the judgment is belief. If the felt proposition is false (if no conformity obtains), the subjective form is disbelief. Complete conformity and complete nonconformity are, predictably, rare instances. What is overwhelmingly the case is partial conformity or partial nonconformity. Only derivative judgments, constitutive of the inferential process, can eventuate belief or disbelief in the case of a suspended judgment.

What Whitehead calls an affirmative intuitive judgment (definite belief) and a negative intuitive judgment (definite disbelief) are, along with conscious perceptions, akin to what Locke calls “knowledge” when he writes, “Thus the mind has two faculties conversant about truth and falsehood,— First, Knowledge, whereby it certainly perceives, and is undoubtedly satisfied of the agreement or disagreement of any ideas.” Moreover, what Whitehead calls an “inferential judgment” is what Locke calls “judgment.”[113] Locke writes, “Secondly, Judgment, which is the

[112] Whitehead, 272.
[113] Whitehead, 274.

putting ideas together, or separating them from one another in the mind, when their certain agreement or disagreement is not perceived, but presumed to be so; which is, as the word imports, taken to be so before it certainly appears. And if it so unites or separates them as in reality things are, it is right judgment."[114] Whitehead's broader use of "judgment" owes to the ontological togetherness of actual entities, which occasions judgment by way of an extension of the same kind of processes involved in sense reception and sense perception. Whitehead's use, therefore, entails the possibility of intentional relations.

Implications for Philosophy of Language

I have attempted to show in this chapter how Whitehead's aesthetic ontology enables an account of perception and judgment that vindicates their objective purport. Moreover, I have argued that it does so in a way unencumbered by the tacit assumptions that continue to problematize intentionality in analytic philosophies of mind. I will here provide some concluding remarks about what his aesthetics of judgment entail for a philosophy of language.

In the way of a philosophy of language, Whitehead's alternative enables an account of the real relations generative of the symbol-meaning dynamic in experience. Whitehead understands symbolism as the sort of relationship that occurs between two different modes of perception, a relationship that holds only to the extent that the two percepta have a "common ground." This common ground is none other than the "common world" or shared inheritance of the actual entities perceived. All symbolism thereby entails causal efficacy. This is the very real

[114] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Kenneth Winkler (Indianapolis, IN: Hacket Publishing, 1996), 302; Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 274.

relatedness to the givenness of the past explicitly denied by Hume, complicated by Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic, and coveted by McDowell's appeal to Aristotelian innocence.

It is the absence of this real relatedness that Whitehead calls the "fatal gap" between symbol and meaning. He reads Descartes as anxious to avoid introducing such a "fatal gap" between "mental symbol" and "actuality symbolized." Descartes writes, for instance, "Hence the idea of the sun will be the sun itself existing in the mind, not indeed formally, as it exists in the sky, but objectively, i.e., in the way in which objects are wont to exist in the mind; and this mode of being is truly much less perfect than that in which things exist outside the mind, but it is not on that account mere nothing . . ."[115] I have already discussed how Whitehead sees the same anxiety in Locke by means of Locke's equivocation of the definition of an "idea."

Both Descartes and Locke take recourse to some notion of the actual entity "existing in the mind" itself, but "neither of them live up to these admissions."[116] Instead, "they relapse into the tacit presuppositions of the mind with its private ideas which are in fact qualities without intelligible connection with the entities represented."[117] Whitehead's doctrine of objectification denies the total abstraction of the symbol from the thing symbolized.

The confusion between percept and concept in modern philosophy so evident in Hume's writings made the concept of "experience" highly suspicious for philosophers having taken the so-called linguistic turn. The problem occurred when the conflation of percepts with concepts issued in the extension of the "truism that we can only *conceive* in terms of universals" to the belief "that we can only *feel* in terms of universals."[118] Whitehead's aesthetic ontology argues to

[115] Descartes as quoted in Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 76.
[116] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 76.
[117] Whitehead, 76.
[118] Whitehead, 230.

the contrary—that we do, in fact, perceive particular existents. Our judgments, as complex evolutions of perceptions, retain the real relatedness demanded by Whitehead's Ontological Principle.

Furthermore, when symbolic reference obtains between different modes of experience such that my perception of a pothole (symbol) in the road ahead of me can elicit feelings of frustration recollected from a past experience (meaning), there is no mystery as to how this occurs. Likewise, when the aural or visual (or, in the case of braille, tactile) sign for "brother" stimulates synaptic pathways in my brain that mimic the visual awareness of my own brother, there is no mystery as to how language can refer to him. The "meaning" of this aural, visual, or tactile experience is none other than this effect, and the "sign" is none other than the function of the experience in eliciting that effect. In this way, Whitehead demystifies linguistic reference by rehabilitating the subject without losing the world.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have detailed the aesthetic ontology by which we can account for the sorts of intentional relationships we often believe our thinking to have achieved with its objects. I see this as the first step in accounting for the life of meaning insofar as meaning can be understood as the effect that such relations have for (or upon) us. The next chapter will expand upon Whitehead's account of symbolism and what it entails for contemporary debates in analytic philosophy of language.

CHAPTER 4

SYMBOLISM AND LANGUAGE

Introduction

The challenge of this chapter on symbolism will be to avoid waxing dialectical while not waning insensitive to nuance and recursion. We must maintain an appreciation of the self-reflexive nature of talking about language while resisting the temptation to be mystified by this reflexivity. My challenge, in other words, will be to remain sure-footed while not becoming flat-footed.

In the previous chapter, I suggested how Whitehead's aesthetic, event-based ontology enables ways of "taking account" of things that avoid the bifurcation of nature. I exposited both the distinction and continuity between receptive and "perceptive" modes of this taking account, including how preconceptual ways of taking account not only precede but remain caught-up in conceptual ones. Vital to this inversion of the classical empiricist theory of perception and judgment, with its treatment of the cognitivity of sense-data (Whitehead's "presentational immediacy") as primitive and relations of efficient causality (Whitehead's "causal efficacy") as derived from analysis, is the rejection of its implicit doctrine of simple occurrence or simple location. Taking events rather than substances as the final units of analysis effects such a rejection, and with it, the spatialization of thought and of the conceptual that precipitates from it with the attendant "problem" of mind and world.

On the basis of real ontological togetherness, Whitehead is able to reconceptualize the traditional metaphysical quandary of the one and the many—or how individuality and community relate, or how they are in community with one another at the same time that they are individuated. The mechanisms of community are not antithetical to those of individuality for

Whitehead; they are co-constitutive. The forces that bind, that unite, are (at an ontological level) not external but internal—not coercive but purposive. But so are the forces that dissolve and disunite. This point has obvious implications for discussion about the efficacy of cultural and political forms of community, but the focus of this chapter will be more basic. I will examine the mechanisms of community and individuality, of uniqueness and collectivity, in terms of what Whitehead calls relations of "symbolic reference." This examination will serve the broader purpose of the dissertation by suggesting how symbolism in general and language in particular fit within the aesthetic ontology that I have employed to vindicate intentionality. It will serve the further purpose of extending my analysis of individual intention to one of collective intention, thereby opening the project up to pressing questions about the social vocation of reason.

"Reference" is not an epistemological term for Whitehead; it is an aesthetic one. A relationship is referential when one's experience elicits another not geographically approximate. It is because of this definition that Whitehead wonders why "we say that the word 'tree'—spoken or written—is a symbol to us for trees," as disquotationalists maintain. On his account, both the words "tree" and trees "enter into our experience on equal terms" such that we could just as well say that trees are a symbol for the word "tree."[1] Referentiality is the mode in which symbol and meaning are "together." And this togetherness of symbols and meaning is parasitic upon the real togetherness of durations—a togetherness not afforded by substance metaphysics. To illustrate this fact, I will discuss Whitehead's fixation on the ambiguity of the language of conjunction: "and," "with," "together," and so on. Analysis of their ambiguity exposes the inadequacy of classical conceptions of time as point-like seriality or space as "occupied by" things.

[1] Whitehead, *Symbolism*, 11–12.

It is upon such classical conceptions, for instance, that understandings of "sense-data" have failed to address the skeptic's worries. According to Whitehead, sense-data are intrinsically relational and can "with equal truth be described as our sensations or as the qualities of the actual things which we perceive."[2] They have a double reference, which is the basis of the "whole physiological theory of perception," even while it is explicitly denied by classical empiricists. In other words, there must be a "partial community of structure" for sensation to be possible.[3] Sense-data, properly understood, represent this partial community: I taste the acidity of the coffee, I taste it *with* my tongue. The bitterness of the coffee is not only *given*, it is given *by.*

On Whitehead's analysis, Hume tacitly assumes the necessity of this double reference: "[Hume] writes: 'If it be perceived by the eyes, it must be a colour; if by the ears, a sound; if by the palate, a taste; and so of the other senses.' Thus in asserting the lack of perception of causality, he implicitly presupposes it. For what is the meaning of '*by*' in '*by* the eyes,' '*by* the ears,' '*by* the palate'? His argument presupposes that sense-data, functioning in presentational immediacy, are 'given' by reason of 'eyes,' 'ears,' 'palates' function in causal efficacy. Otherwise, his argument is involved in a vicious regress."[4] Even while Hume tacitly assumes these two modes—presentational immediacy and causal efficacy—he explicitly maintains only the former, taking presentational immediacy or the experience of the givenness of sense-data as the primitive phenomena. He therefore treats causal efficacy as the product of inference or reasoning. This is an "inversion of the evidence" on Whitehead's account.[5]

[2] Whitehead, *Symbolism,* 21–22.
[3] Whitehead, 53.
[4] Whitehead, 51.
[5] Whitehead, 52.

Whitehead argues that the trouble we have with understanding this "taking account" in the form of causal efficacy depends upon the assumption that time is "merely the generic notion of pure succession."[6] To understand symbolism likewise requires us to recognize the untenable nature of the idea of simple location insofar as the fallacies are analogous. Symbolic reference depends upon the quantum of durations messily overlapping in multiple dimensions, and not upon durationless "points" that in principle have no internal relations to their predecessors. Whitehead's concern with this topic preceded his explicitly philosophical works by a decade or more while he was still writing in the capacity of an applied mathematician. Some discussion of these works and the interactions with contemporary interlocutors that frame them will assist our understanding of his theory of symbolism.

Meaning and Physical Explanation

On June 1, 1916, Whitehead published a paper from the 37th session of the Aristotelian Society entitled "Space, Time, and Relativity."[7] This was the same issue where Nunn's "Sense-data and Physical Objects" appeared, which I discussed in chapter 1. The paper, some explanatory notes of which Whitehead had delivered to the Society on January 3 of that same year, was intended to provide an interface for the various working theories of space-time in contemporary scholarship across metaphysics, experimental psychology, mathematicians, and mathematical physics. His concern was to characterize the relation between "mathematical" and "physical" (or phenomenological) concepts of time and space—a distinction often lost by "common sense" assumptions about them.

[6] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 40.
[7] Whitehead, "Space, Time, and Relativity," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series. 16 (1915–16): 104–29.

Whitehead begins by examining the idea of "an infinite unchangeable space."[8] This is the "Absolute Theory of Space" that conceives of "the points of space as self-subsistent entities which have the indefinable relation of being occupied by the ultimate stuff (matter, I will call it) which is there."[9] He continues, "Thus, to say that the sun is *there* (wherever it is) is to affirm the relation of occupation between the set of positive and negative electrons which we call the sun and a certain set of points, the points having an existence essentially independent of the sun."[10] It is not difficult to see the compatibility between the basic tenets of substance metaphysics and the Newtonian conception of "empty space." This idea of space as "a certain set of points" existing independently of the objects "in" space whose distance "between" one another we measure by varying units, is not the space of direct observation, even if we have come to talk of space in this way so routinely that we have come to "see" it in that way. But Whitehead is apt to point out that we never encounter such an absolute space except by imaginative reconstruction for the purposes of mathematical physics.

The common idea of space as an infinite and unchangeable extension of definite points had, however, been recently challenged by Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity. The Relative Theory of Space holds that our concept of space is nothing other than a concept of the "relations between things" such that "there is no such entity as a self-subsistent point." A "point" is nothing more than a name for "some peculiarity of the relations between the matter which is, in common language, said to be in space."[11] Whitehead is not certain that his contemporary mathematicians had yet fully realized the challenge that such a theory posed to their assumption of the nature of a

[8] Whitehead, "Space, Time, and Relativity," 105.
[9] Whitehead, 106.
[10] Whitehead, 106.
[11] Whitehead, 106.

"point," which hitherto had served as "the ultimate starting ground of their reasoning."[12] I suspect that by the phrase "ultimate starting ground," Whitehead is referring to the opening lines of Euclid's *Elements,* the thirteen-book mathematical treatise from fourth century Alexandria that established the logical development of the principles of plane geometry. The first line of the treatise reads: "That which has position but not magnitude is called a point."[13] This is the fundamental idea upon which the principles of Euclidean geometry were to be built; a point is that which cannot be defined in terms of dimensional attributes. It is pure position, pure location. A point is particular, unique, and unchanging. This last descriptor, the point as "unchanging," is perhaps the most significant for my purposes here. To deny change is to define the essence of a point in completely atemporal terms; of course, this is precisely what we commonly think of as "space," namely, *not* time. As Whitehead writes years later in *Modes of Thought* (1938), "The extension of space is the ghost of transition."[14] The fundamental notion of mathematical space, Whitehead argues, depends upon the idea of disconnection—that is, upon the definition of a point as that which has no parts.

This conception of points as the fundamental things of which "space" is composed has a temporal correlate; namely, "instants" of time. These notions are pervasive in our everyday ways of speaking, and yet, Whitehead points out, they are not phenomenologically correct. "We live in durations, and not in points," he writes, and it takes little reflection to realize that "points in space" and "instants of time" are not notions deriving from the "direct deliverance of experience."[15] They are, in short, deductions.

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[12] Whitehead, 106–107.
[13] Euclid, *Elements*, Book 1 "Fundamentals of Plane Geometry Involving Straight-lines," trans. H. M. Taylor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 2.
[14] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1938), 96.
[15] Whitehead, "Space, Time, and Relativity," 107–108.

It is important to note, however, that Whitehead is not so much as dismissing these notions wholesale as putting them into proper context. Whereas it may be true that "no one lives in 'a infinite given whole,' but in a set of fragmentary experiences," it is also true that we need to account for why the ideas of "points in space" and "instants of time" are the "necessary outcome of these fragments by a process of logical building up."[16] In other words, even once we have recognized the distinction between mathematical space-time and what Whitehead calls "physical" space-time, we still need to account for the fact that those notions arise by way of deductive reasoning, and that they are the ones upon which our conceptions of a "common world" depend.

These early considerations by Whitehead of the notions of space and time demonstrate his concern with maintaining a close watch on generality. I stressed in the previous chapter how important it was to Whitehead to explain the more abstract in terms of the more concrete. Even in his early thinking, we can see his conviction that our conceptions of the "real" world ought to do justice to our "apparent" world, and not the other way around. Giving a clear voice to the "directness" of experience and untangling it from the notions we have learned to import in the analytical aftermath is one of the main objectives of this 1916 work. What we do not see in this article is a worry about how conceptual schemes can infiltrate this directness in and of itself, and therefore the worry about language structuring our perceptions of the world. In short, Whitehead maintains a clear distinction between linguistic and nonlinguistic ways of being in touch with the world, and the sense in which we feel more than we know. These metaphysical intuitions became more systematic in his later years, but it is helpful for my purposes to explore further how their early articulations were wrapped up with the theory of time and space. It is helpful insofar as an

[16] Whitehead, 120.

appreciation of his later account of symbolism in general, and language in particular, as nonproblematic ways of "having" a world in view depends upon a prior scrutiny of problematic conceptions of time and space—namely, the conceptions of "points" and "instants" qua expressions of the fundamental disconnectivity of reality.

In 1919, Whitehead led a symposium on "Time, Space, and Material" for the proceedings of the Aristotelian Society that expanded upon his 1916 theme. In his introductory paper to the symposium, Whitehead introduced his critique of the "mathematical" concept of time that had permeated the "general scientific" thought, such that time in the form of disconnected "instants" was regarded as "expressive of the ultimate structure of time."[17] His critique of the "traditional" concepts of space and time would be published shortly after the symposium as *An Enquiry into the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1919). His *Enquiry* begins with a chapter on "Meaning" and its opening line asks, "What is a physical explanation?" The fact that Whitehead begins his discourse on meaning with a question about the nature of a physical explanation indicates to me that he is not starting with any hard distinctions between conceptuality and physicality. What he seems to indicate, rather, is that the semantic is a species of the aesthetic.

Whitehead is not explicitly talking about meaning in a semantic sense in this opening question. Instead, he is asking about what counts as an explanation for the physical sciences. Later, in 1927, when Whitehead gave the Barbour-Page Lectures at the University of Virginia, his topic is precisely upon symbolism and symbolic expression, including but not singularly

[17] Whitehead, "Time, Space, and Material: Are They, and If so in What Sense, the Ultimate Data of Science?" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume* 2, (1919): 44–108.

linguistic expression. Even when the semantic is on his radar, then, a first order explanation of meaning is aesthetic. He is committed to what I will call the physicality of meaning.

Explanation and meaning are conceptually bound up in one another for Whitehead insofar as he understands meaning in terms of effect and explanation in terms of determining cause. To ask about what counts as a physical explanation is another way of asking about the "ultimate facts" for science. Something is explained, on this account, when we have appealed to an ultimate fact. What counts as ultimate facts thereby determine the end of explanation. We say that we have explained the phenomena of conduction, for instance, when we appeal to the excitability of atoms according to the laws of thermodynamics. We can appeal thermodynamic equations to indicate extensive quantities that correspond to physical properties, and thereby allow us to solve for variables unknown by variables known. We explain physical phenomena in terms of extensive quantities—that is, in terms of space and time.

But this is precisely why Whitehead is asking about physical explanations. It seemed to him, in 1919, odd that if he were to ask a scientist what the data of his or her work were, the answer would inevitably be some variation of "the observed universe." And yet, if what the scientist was really in search of was physical explanations—explanations couched in terms of measurable time and measurable space—the data of science are not products of direct observation but are deductive notions of time, space, and the material that is said to be "in" them. What he calls the "orthodox" answer to the question "What is a physical explanation" would without exception "be couched in terms of Time (flowing equably in measurable lapses) and of Space (timeless, void of activity, Euclidean), and of Material in space (such as matter, ether, or

electricity)."[18] But if the "data" of science are deductive notions and not observed entities, why does there seem to be such consensus—popular and scientific—that we *live* in "instants" of time and "points" of space? And what is the consequence of mapping the data of science so uncritically onto our experiences—in short, of *explaining* phenomenological temporality and spatiality in terms of mathematical time and space? Of specific concern for Whitehead on this occasion is the fact that according to the "orthodox" view, mathematical time and space are notions premised upon a metaphysics of discreteness and discontinuity.

The consequence, then, is that phenomenological temporality and spatiality—of lived experience qua durational, continuous, and deeply interrelated—is commonly understood as explainable in terms of a fundamental lack of relation. The ultimate facts being unrelated in principle, meaning qua effect, will always be seen as mystical. We need to scrutinize the assumption that extension means disconnection, Whitehead argues, before we can understand why "events" must replace "things" as the ultimate facts. Whitehead's case for the necessity of this scrutiny is not heteronomous; it is the product of immanent critiques. Science cannot make sense—cannot provide *physical* explanations—of change, duration, velocity, motion, acceleration, and other related notions until it has scrutinized its assumptions about time and space. We live in durations, not instants of time and points in space. Until it is recognized that the latter are deductive notions and not the products of direct observation, we will continue to explain continuity in terms of discontinuity. The consequences of so doing include, among other things, problematic accounts of mind and world, conceptual and physical, past and future, actuality and possibility, efficacy and purpose. What all these have in common is a need for

[18] Whitehead, *An Enquiry into the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1919), 1.

concrete explanation, but so long as our conceptions of explanation depend upon misplaced concreteness with respect to "instants" of time and "points" in space, our explanations of the former will be found wanting. I suspect, then, that the reason Whitehead began his chapter on meaning with the question about what counts as a physical explanation is because meaning or significance is nothing if not the contiguity of the past with the future—and this is a contiguity that is felt more than it is known.

"Absolute Time" and "Absolute Space"

Meaning will always remain mysterious so long as what counts as explanation is predicated upon discrete units of extension that render this contiguity problematic at the quantum level. So long as the principle governing our account of explanation is that extension expresses disconnection, there will continue to be inconsistencies in our accounts of "matter" or "material" (or whatever we take to be extended). On the one hand, Whitehead argues, "This principle issues in the assumptions that causal action between entities separated in time or in space is impossible and that extension in space and unity of being are inconsistent."[19] On the other hand, he argues, "This governing principle has to be limited in respect to extension in time. This concession introduces the many perplexities centering around the notion of change which is derived from the comparison of various states of self-identical material at different times."[20] What we are left with is a picture of an ultimate fact as being "a distribution of material throughout all spaces at a durationless instant of time," where each additional ultimate fact would be *another* such timeless distribution in temporal succession. But then, what are we to make of change? We can make

[19] Whitehead, 1.
[20] Whitehead, 1.

nothing of change if temporal extension is not itself ingredient in ultimate facts. In different language, we cannot account for velocity, acceleration, momentum, or kinetic energy *at all* without temporal extension—without, that is, "some reference to the past and the future."[21] It was on this basis that Einstein's general relativity theory was, or ought to have been, particularly devastating to the fundamental assumption of science that its "facts" are to be found in durationless instants of time. This is because, among other things, his theory proved that the gravitational field is not *distributed throughout* space; the gravitational field *is that space* itself. The earth's orbit is not caused by some invisible force acting at a distance to "attract" it; the earth continually falls towards the sun because the sun's mass bends space around it so that the earth circles the sun as a marble in a funnel.

Our grammar presents some difficulty here, for the sun doesn't really "bend" space; the mathematical equations developed by Bernhard Riemann demonstrate that the properties of a curved space are *equivalent* to the energy of matter. After all, Einstein's $E = mc^2$ demonstrates that mass and energy are the same physical entity. What this means is that "space" is the relation between two things, not what they are "in." But it is not only space that bends, but time too. So these "things" are events with no absolute space or absolute time; space and time are relative according to what an event is in reference *to.* It was in 1919 that Einstein's prediction that the sun causes light to deviate in its course was confirmed—the same year Whitehead published his *Enquiry*.[22]

[21] Whitehead, 2.
[22] This account of the implications of Einstein's equations is assisted in large measure by the work of physicist Carlo Rovelli. See his *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2016) and *The Order of Time* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018).

Whitehead suspected that change could not be accounted for on the traditional view of space and time, and Einstein's reconsideration of Newton's notion of "absolute space" in order to account for the force of gravity without action at a distance expresses similar suspicion. For Whitehead, the problem was with what counts as "points of contact" in causal relations. To account for change on the assumption of serially ordered distributions of matter in space—in short, "substances" as ultimate facts—causal relations must be described in terms of "the transmission of stress across the bounding surface of contiguous materials."[23] But if the contiguous materials are essentially disconnected, what "contact" could mean is unclear. The orthodox view, therefore, forces us into an infinite spatial regress—the "infinitesimals" whose possibility Whitehead rejected, as discussed in chapter 1. But there are no "infinitely small volumes"; only "smaller and smaller volumes." If this is the case, then we not only have to reject the idea of internal relations, but external ones, too.[24]

His point is, in effect, that in the process of trying to make sense of "stress" in light of ultimate facts as "continuous distribution of diverse (because extended) entities through space," we will be forced to define the nature of that unity "under stress" *in terms of that stress*—that is, in terms of the relation qua stressful. This is why we need a philosophy of organism because the concept of an organism "cannot be expressed in terms of a material distribution at an instant."[25] Organisms are defined in terms of biological function, and "functioning takes time."[26] They are none other than a unity with spatio-temporal extension.

[23] Whitehead, *An Enquiry*, 2.
[24] Whitehead, 2–3.
[25] Whitehead, 3.
[26] Whitehead, 3.

Biological phenomena are not different in kind from other sorts of physical phenomena for Whitehead. It is just that at the level at which biological sciences operate, the necessity of bringing time back into definitions of ultimate facts becomes more apparent; or, rather, the inconsistencies of *not* doing are more glaring. Whitehead therefore states that his "fundamental assumption" in the *Enquiry* is that "the ultimate facts of nature, in terms of which all physical and biological explanation must be expressed, are events connected by their spatio-temporal relations, and that these relations are in the main reducible to the property of events that they can contain (or extend over) other events which are parts of them."[27] So "space" and "time" are understood as the deductive notions we use to express the properties of events, and the properties of events are how events interrelate. "In other words," he continues, "in the place of emphasizing space and time in their capacity for disconnection, we shall build up an account of their complex essences as derivative from the ultimate ways in which those things, ultimate in science, are interconnected."[28] Demonstrating the *mathematical* origins and therefore the *mathematical* utility of the orthodox conceptions of space and time while also demonstrating the problems with letting them replace physical or phenomenological ones is the "constructive task" of his *Enquiry.*

While extremely useful for the "logical purposes of mathematicians" working on the "foundations of geometry" in the nineteenth century, the assumption that points are "ultimate given entities" is nevertheless "a metaphysical fairy tale."[29] In *The Concept of Nature* (1930), he writes, "Instantaneousness is a complex logical concept of a procedure in thought by which constructed logical entities are produced for the sake of the simple expression in thought of properties of nature. Instantaneousness is the concept of all nature at an instant, where an instant

[27] Whitehead, 4.
[28] Whitehead, 4.
[29] Whitehead, 5–6.

is conceived as deprived of all temporal extension."[30] He continues, "For example we conceive of the distribution of matter in space at an instant. This is a very useful concept in science especially in applied mathematics; but it is a very complex idea so far as concerns its connexions with the immediate facts of sense-awareness."[31] The theory of absolute space only works so long as we are still working with Euclidean geometry, within which we need to be able to define what a point is. Without a definition of points, we cannot account for the "space" between them. Euclid began his *Elements* by defining a point so that he could then define a straight line, and then a plane. Euclidean geometry, as plane-based geometry, therefore requires the assumption of space as absolute and nonrelative, because if it weren't, then the notion of measurability "between" points—in short, of geometry—is nonsensical. The concept of absolute space, as the concept of "persistent ultimate material distributed among the persistent ultimate points in successive configurations at successive ultimate instants of time,"[32] is an intellectual construction.

The problem is that it hasn't been treated as such. Hume assumed that what we perceive are just such "durationless instants," and he was therefore led to conclude that we do not perceive connection, but disconnection. Whitehead isn't saying that points are not "real"; only that they have been misconceived by the general scientific community and that this misconception has been encouraged by the tacit assumptions of substance metaphysics that have permeated Western intellectual history. In any case, the consequence of relativity is that "spatial relations must now stretch across time."[33] It is precisely this point, that spatial relations do not

[30] Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature,* 56–57.
[31] Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature,* 57.
[32] Whitehead, *An Enquiry,* 5–6.
[33] Whitehead, 6.

exist in a temporal vacuum, that informed the account of perception and judgment of the previous chapter. Accordingly, the ultimate units of perception are not points or instants, but durations; what we perceive, when we perceive, is the continuity of existence. Events are "those immediate deliverances of observation," the relations between and the characters of which we express in terms of concepts of space, time, and material. We will properly regard these concepts only if we can express them "as issuing from fundamental relations between events and from recognitions of the characters of events."[34] And insofar as significance is nothing if not the contiguity of the past with the future, it follows that significance is not detachable from experience in the way Hume assumed. In other words, perceptions are not "in the mind" and nature "outside the mind." If one begins with experience and then tries to discover its significance, skepticism will be unavoidable.

We do not perceive discrete instants and then try to determine their significance for one another; we perceive the relatedness of things, which is to say, we perceive significance. "Certainly if we commence with a knowledge of things, and then look around for their relations," Whitehead quips, "we shall not find them."[35] In what sounds like a description of what will be termed "eternal objects" by the time he writes *Process and Reality*, Whitehead writes that the "so-called properties of things" is nothing other than "relatedness to other things unspecified."[36] Science operates with an "entirely incoherent philosophy of perception so far as it restricts itself to the ultimate datum of material in time and space, the spatio-temporal configuration of such material being the object of perception."[37] The data of science are not

[34] Whitehead, 8.
[35] Whitehead, 12.
[36] Whitehead, 12.
[37] Whitehead, 14–15.

things in space in serial order—the theory of relativity exposed the limits of the absolute theory of time and space. What relativity theory means for our understanding of the ultimate data of science, which Whitehead was concerned to indicate, is that the percipient event is of and within nature, with the further implication that notions of "the common world" or "all of nature" are not only deductive, but shot through with notions of "absolute time" and "absolute space" that are equally deductive.

As encountered in the *Enquiry,* Whitehead's concern to maintain a careful watch on abstraction so as to not commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness challenged the prevailing understanding of what counts as "physical explanation," according to which meaning could have no part. Redefining the ultimate data of science—and therefore the terms by which we express physical explanations as durations that are in principle, spatio-temporally extended—writes meaning back into the very nature of experience. Meaning is no longer mystical, supervening, or merely "conceptual" in the classical sense; it is the basis of efficacy. With the foregoing critique of orthodox views of time and space and its implications for our understandings of the data of science, the nature of physical explanation, and the reality of meaning, we are in a position to better appreciate the nature of symbolic reference.

Extensiveness

In *Symbolism,* Whitehead defines symbolic reference as the "organic functioning whereby there is transition from the symbol to the meaning . . . ."[38] As discussed in the previous section, "meanings" are the direct deliverances of perception insofar as each event expresses, in aesthetic terms, the significance of prior events. This "priority" is not an absolute character but a relative

[38] Whitehead, *Symbolism*, 8.

one—it is best understood in terms of filial rather than universal order. Meaning is not separate from experience; it is of the very nature of experience qua perceptive event.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Whitehead makes distinctions in his later work between different "modes" of experience. In this 1927 work he details precisely three. The first two modes of experience are familiar to us; they are the "perceptive modes" of presentational immediacy and causal efficacy. The third he calls experience in the mode of "conceptual analysis." It is important to remember that these "modes" are never "pure" in experience. In *Process and Reality*, he writes, "When human experience is in question, 'perception' almost always means 'perception in the mixed mode of symbolic reference."[39] The modes of perception compound, and when they do, they become caught up in feedback loops, augmenting the intensity and clarity of, but also the possibility of error in, experience. This is what Whitehead means when, as I mention later on, that synthesis and analysis require each other.

Perceptive experiences "introduce into human experience components which are again analyzable into actual things of the actual world and into abstract attributes, qualities, and relations, which express how those other actual things contribute themselves as components to our experience." He continues, "These abstractions express how other actualities are component objects for us."[40] It is an important point for Whitehead that symbolic reference is not the product of conceptual analysis, even while it is "greatly promoted by it."[41] Before an organism can be capable of experience in the mode of conceptual analysis, it must already be capable not only of perceptive experience in the mode of causal efficacy and presentational immediacy, but also of complex syntheses of the two modes into a single experience. This synthetic activity is

[39] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 168.
[40] Whitehead, *Symbolism*, 17.
[41] Whitehead, 19.

symbolic reference. When symbolic reference occurs, there is a relation between the more abstract and the more concrete—that is, between a symbol and a meaning. The hearing of the word "tree" is concrete, and the consequent abstract recollection of what trees look like follows. Likewise, the perception of a tree—the roughness of its trunk or the rustling of its leaves—may effect the recollection of the word "tree." Aural events of speech and visual events of writing are equally immediate experiences as the touching of the bark or the listening to the wind through the branches. What makes something a symbol and something a meaning is the role each plays in the relation under consideration. The more complex and derivative the relations of symbolic reference, the less the syntheses rely upon geographical proximity.

When signs become communal, they can be inherited or taught. With ready-made and explicit relations of symbolic reference, it becomes possible to experience things as tokens of a type, and therefore to work with classes of abstraction or genera. Genera, despite being (and precisely because they are) highly abstract, promote a standardization or normativization of symbolic reference. Moreover, qua explicit, they make possible a new mode of experience in the mode of conceptual analysis, whereby experience is increasingly unconstrained by the immediacy and particularity. With language, we can refer to broader durations—we can even conceive of the *broadest* duration or to the least broad duration, formulating conceptions of infinitely large or infinitely small spatio-temporal extensions. The former enables us to speak of universal laws, and the latter, of the quantum of explanation.

And yet, such conceptions are abstractions because there is no atomic structure of durations. As Whitehead writes in 1930, "the perfect definition of a duration, so as to mark out its individuality and distinguish it from highly analogous durations over which it is passing, or

which are passing over it, is an arbitrary postulate of thought."[42] In *Process and Reality,* he defines a duration as "a locus of actual occasions, such that (α) any two members of the locus are contemporaries, and (β) that any actual occasion, not belonging to the duration is in the causal past or causal future of some members of the duration."[43] The key word in the foregoing is *some.* A duration is held together by the fact that its constituent occasions share a time-system with at least one other occasion, but not all. In other words, durations are polythetic, not monothetic. The polythetic constitution is sufficient to count as a "unison of becoming" or a "concrescent unison."[44] This means that within a duration, some events could constitute one occasions past, while the same event could constitute another occasions future, and still this would count as the present duration. Presence is specious.

Whitehead was keenly aware of the entanglement between the conceptual and the perceptual, and therefore of the ways our language influences our perception. "[M]uch of our perception," he writes, "is due to the enhanced subtlety arising from a concurrent conceptual analysis."[45] Indeed, it was because of this concurrence that Whitehead observed no strict line between "physical" and "mental" phenomena and acknowledged that it was purely by convention that he preferred to reserve the term "mental" for experiential activities involving "concepts in addition to percepts."[46] But because he emphasized concurrence and not an overhaul of the conceptual, he did not draw coherentist conclusions from this entanglement.

[42] Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, 59.
[43] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 320.
[44] Whitehead, 320.
[45] Whitehead, *Symbolism*, 20.
[46] Whitehead, 20.

Rather, he emphasized the "miracles of sensitiveness" that it occasions.[47] Entanglement does not mean that language is a "filter" of perception—there is a mutual qualification.

Whitehead was keen to emphasize that just as much as conceptual analysis enhances perception by contributing an exactness of attention precisely by way of generality (such that sense-data can be tokens of types), it contributes in *equal measure* to the expression of experience the critiquability of those expressions. "Symbolic expression first preserves society by adding emotion to instinct," he writes, "and secondly it affords a foothold for reason by its delineation of the particular instinct which it expresses."[48] By adding "emotion," Whitehead means that symbols, when conventionalized, function to elicit common emotions or shared meanings that serve to bind societies together. But these emotions, as symbolically conditioned actions, can become reflexive, effecting uncritical loyalties and prejudices. This happens, Whitehead argues, when "the response of action to symbol . . . [becomes] so direct as to cut out any effective reference to the ultimate thing symbolized." The result is an "elimination of meaning," and such action or reaction to symbols without meaning he terms reflex action.[49] Prejudice is, no doubt, one of the strongest forces for binding groups together. But this elimination of meaning is the result of a failure to express the instincts to which emotion has been added by symbol. The second function of symbol—a function that I do not understand as *additive* but *co-constitutive*—is occasioning immanent critique. More can and should be said on the contributions Whitehead can make to understanding the social vocation of reason, but that is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

[47] Whitehead, 87.
[48] Whitehead, 69–70.
[49] Whitehead, 73.

For my purposes here—namely, the articulation of Whitehead's philosophy of language—the relevance of foregoing is primarily the point about conceptual analysis as a promoter of symbolic reference, and therefore, of greater sensitivities of both detail and expanse (including the amended accounts of time and space central to the aesthetics of these sensitivities). Whitehead's rejection of notions of "absolute time" and "absolute space" is helpful for getting a grip on his accounts of these various modes of experience and the syntheses between them by means of symbolic reference. This is because there is a directly proportional relation between the complexity of an organism's mode of experience and its freedom from the immediacy of its local environment. Causal efficacy is disclosure of the immediate past, and presentational immediacy is disclosure of the contemporary actual world.

"Contemporary" here means actualities of overlapping durations or of the same time-systems. To speak of the "contemporary external world" or "contemporary organisms" is, according to the abstractive nature of presentational immediacy (relation by way of the dual reference of sense-data), to speak in terms of spatial relations alone—where "space" is defined à la Leibniz as "the order of co-existences."[50] In *The Concept of Nature* (1930), Whitehead uses the language of "families" to describe different time systems. He writes, "The measurableness of time is derivative from the properties of durations. So also is the serial character of time. We shall find that there are in nature competing serial time-systems derived from different familiarizes of durations."[51] Describing time-systems by appealing to analogies with generational or filial orders is still part of quantum physics' best practices. As one contemporary physicist describes, order established by filiation is called "partial" order, distinct from "universal order":

[50] A. E. Taylor notes that both he and Whitehead credit Leibniz for first articulating this understanding of "space." Taylor, *Commentary*, 350.
[51] Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, 55.

"A partial order establishes a relation of *before* and *after* between certain elements, but not between any of them. Human beings form a 'partially ordered' set (not a 'completely ordered' set) through filiation. Filiation establishes an order (*before* the descendants, *after* the forebears), but not between everyone."[52] He continues,

> Special relativity is the discovery that the temporal structure of the universe is like the one established by filiation: it defines an order between the events of the universe that is *partial*, not *complete*. The expanded present is the set of events that are neither past nor future: it exists, just as there are human beings who are neither our descendants nor our forebears.[53]

And further,

> Every event has its past, its future, and a part of the universe that is neither past nor future, just as everyone has forbears, descendants, and others who are neither forbears nor descendants.[54]

I'll venture an example: Man A has two sons, Man B and Man C. Man C has a daughter, Woman A. Man B and Woman A have a son, Man D. With whom does Woman A share a filial "generation"? Is it with Man B, because they together created a descendant? This would mean that Woman A would be of the same generation as her father, Man C, since brothers (Man B and Man C) share a filial generation. But then Man B and Woman A would constitute a generation not identical to the generation constituted by Man B and Man C, which would mean that Man B was of multiple generations. Just as Woman A has no fixed generation affiliation, a duration has no "true" contemporaries. Contemporaneity is relative all the way down.

This view of contemporaneity is at odds with that of Newton who, in *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica,* defines "true" time not as experienced temporality, but that

[52] Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018), 47.
[53] Rovelli, 48.
[54] Rovelli, 50.

which is indicated in his equations of motion as *t*.[55] Contra Newton, Whitehead rejects the idea of an "absolute clock" that can be mathematically represented by a constant. In his 1916 paper, Whitehead had insisted that no single space-time concept can be "right" and that "even estimates of order" depend on the observer's standpoint.[56] The simultaneity of events might hold for one partial order, but not another—there is no universal order of durations by which to measure absolute simultaneity.

It was just this sort of resistance to nonrelative variables that distinguished his philosophy of mathematics from that of Russell. As Bas van Fraassen notes in *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Time and Space* (1970), "Russell had attempted a thorough logical analysis of the foundations of (classical) physics in his *Principles of Mathematics* (1903). His view on time and space as developed there are basically Newtonian."[57] Russell's views on time and space became more sympathetic to the relational theories of that time in his subsequent work *Our Knowledge of the External World* (1914). Van Fraassen attributes this change to Whitehead's influence, but I think it is more likely because of the influence of the Vienna Circle and its members' consideration of Einstein.[58] But, perhaps to van Fraassen's point, it is noteworthy that Rudolph Carnap references Whitehead's relational theory of space-time in the course of expositing his own in *Abriss der Logistik Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Relationstheorie und Ihrer Anwendungen* (1929).[59] Later, in *Modes of Thought,* Whitehead would write of how the point-theory of space goes hand in hand with a notion of numerosity predicated upon the same

[55] Isaac Newton, *The Principles of Natural Philosophy,* Book 1, Definition VIII, Scholium (New York: Geo P. Putnam, 1850), 77–82.
[56] Whitehead, *Space, Time, and Relativity*, 118.
[57] Bas C. van Fraassen, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Time and Space* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1970), 171.
[58] Van Fraassen notes that along with Whitehead and Einstein's theories of relativity, there was also that of Alfred A. Robb.
[59] Van Fraassen, *An Introduction,* 172.

assumptions of fundamental disconnection. Such a view regards "[e]ach individual thing as devoid of numerosity; whereas a static group is characterized by number. In this way process seems to be absent from our treatments of arithmetic." He continues, "Thus mathematics has been conceived as test case, which is the citadel for a false metaphysics."[60] But it is only when individuality is regarded in terms of disconnection that this false metaphysics can persist. Mathematics, properly regarded, is "simply the greatest example of a science of abstract forms."[61] When the arithmetical notions such as "addition," "multiplication," and "serial form" are understood as forms of process and therefore continuity, the individuals ("numbers") can only be understood as characters of that process.[62] It is noteworthy that Whitehead takes this understanding of arithmetic to be a lesson of Plato's doctrine of "life and motion."[63]

The compositional nature of reality indicated by Whitehead's notion of the actual occasion involves in principle the evaluation of precedent actual occasions with which the subject is affiliated. There can be no *exact* contemporaries except by way of abstraction because there are no "points" at which durations are delimited from the continual passage. When Whitehead says that there can be no relation to contemporary events, I take him to mean "in theory." In reality, what is *now* and *here* is, for Whitehead, simply what *presents* "immediately"—it is what we call the "present," and it is specious. Accordingly, he writes, "Thus the disclosure of a contemporary world by presentational immediacy is bound up with the disclosure of the solidarity of actual things by reason of their participation in an impartial system of spatial extension."[64] "Impartial" is a technical term here. For something to be aesthetically

[60] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought,* 96–97.
[61] Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1929), 74.
[62] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 97.
[63] Whitehead, 97.
[64] Whitehead, *Symbolism,* 23.

partial is to be evaluative or emphatic of what has just preceded it, such that a "partial" system would by definition entail temporal relations. So when Whitehead says that the present discloses an *impartial* system of spatial extension, he is bordering on redundancy—and likely for the reader's sake. Because durations, not substances, are the final realities; consideration of events purely in terms of spatial extension is possible only by contrivance. If space is the "order of co-existences" but contemporaneity is relative, then space qua impartial system is too. "Contemporaries" cannot evaluate or be partial to one another precisely because there can be no *change* in a purely spatial system. In Euclidean geometry, there can only be scalar descriptions. Change requires that there be *rates* of change, but rates require time.

In reality, however, there is no one order or even level of duration. Experience in the mode of presentational immediacy is itself only possible because the overwhelming majority of durations constituting an organism interrelate in immeasurable ways that never rise to the level of conscious experience. Part of the contemporary world disclosed to the perceiver is her own body, and she can direct her attention to different aspects of it. Our manner of speaking is misleading: this grammar implies that her "attention" is somehow at a remove from her body. "Attention" is but another mode of feeling. When we attend to something, we say we are "present" to it. This feeling of presence—Whitehead avoids the phrase apprehension because of the mentalistic connotations—is an *appearance* in an innocuous sense. For Whitehead, it is our conception of the "real" world that should do justice to our "apparent" world and not the other way around.

It is wrong to assert some version of "things-in-themselves cause sensation or appearance" because the sensation or appearance is the thing-for-us. And the ways in which something is *for* others is the thing. This is what Whitehead means when he says, "Synthesis and

analysis require each other."[65] An account of perception that does not face the fate of solipsism must be able to explain how two things can be actually (ontologically) together in a sense *derivative from* the sense in which each thing is actual.[66] Whitehead defines the "present" in *The Concept of Nature* (1930) as "the vivid fringe of memory tinged with anticipation."[67] The rejection of the doctrine of simple occurrence entails that there is no thing "in between" memory and anticipation, past and future. There is just passage. It is thus that he writes, "The fact that our consciousness is confined to an analysis of experience in the present is no difficulty" because perception of the contemporary world is only "one factor" contributing to the datum of the present moment of experience.[68] For Whitehead, the key point is that the datum for conscious thought is the symbolic reference between perception in the mode of causal efficacy and presentational immediacy. Moreover, *this very consciousness*—the aesthetics of consciousness, if you will—is a mode of symbolic reference between perceptive experience and experience in the mode of conceptual analysis. Consciousness of the present is synthesis and analysis in dialogical interrelation.

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[65] Whitehead, 26.

[66] I am at this point in a similar situation to that expressed by Whitehead part way into his lectures on symbolism; namely, that it is impossible to fully argue for an account of the direct experience of the external world without getting too far afield. Whitehead suggests that his reader read George Santayana's *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923) for "conclusive proof of the futile 'solipsism of the present moment' . . . which results from the denial of this assumption." (Whitehead, 28–29). Santayana writes, "Scepticism may thus be carried to the point of denying change and memory, and the reality of all facts. Such a skeptical dogma would certainly be false, because this dogma itself would have to be entertained, and that event would be a fact and an existence: and the sceptic in framing that dogma discourses, vacillates, and lives in the act of contrasting one assertion with another—all of which is to exist with a vengeance." He continues, "For the wayward sceptic, who regards it as no truer than any other view, it also has some utility: it accustoms him to discard the dogma which an introspective critic might be tempted to think self-evident, namely, that he himself lives and thinks. That he does so is true; but to establish that truth he must appeal to animal faith. If he is too proud for that, and simply stares at the datum, the last thing he will see is himself." George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 40–41.

[67] Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, 73.

[68] Whitehead, *Symbolism,* 46–47.

Symbolism is not something one can get "outside" of, as if it were a space or a realm. It is, according to Whitehead "no mere idle fancy of corrupt degeneration: it is inherent in the very texture of human life."[69] By identifying the work that the doctrine of simple occurrence (and its variant of simple location) does to mystify symbolism, Whitehead accounts for the concrete relations of symbolic reference in a way that has no room for worry about the reality of intentional objects or the success of the mind's relation to them. Whitehead has shown us that this is the wrong sort of picture to have.

Error in Perception and Judgment

Symbolic reference must, in general, be veridical if it is to be a fundamental mode of experience by which life advances upon the spectrum of sentience to sapience. If it were not, such life forms would not long survive. "Successful high-grade organisms are only possible, on the condition that their symbolic functionings are usually justified so far as important issues are concerned."[70] If the relations of symbolic reference constitutive of a sense perception are not on the whole correct, an organism will not succeed in its efforts to meet its basic needs.

A particularly elegant example of the necessity of successful attunement to one's environment by means of symbolic reference is a starling murmuration. A defensive tacit, a murmuration of starlings displays just how intricately calibrated each bird is to the others. A flock of thousands adjusts its speed and direction at what strikes the perceiver as exactly the same moment, in a way usually indicative of a single entity. The correlation between their signal processing is so strong that attempts to measure it struggle on account of its approximation of

[69] Whitehead, 61–62.
[70] Whitehead, 6.

simultaneity. Some recent analyses of starling behavior have had to do so by recourse to mathematical equations of "critical transitions" used to describe avalanches and transitions between states of nature (a liquid to a gas, for instance) rather than what might traditionally have been described as strictly biological phenomena. These equations help us to understand how systems can be so readily poised as to incite large-scale pattern changes—in short, how systems can be "poised at criticality." Thierry Mora of the Lewis-Sigler Institute for Integrative Genomic and William Bialek of the Princeton Center for Theoretical Science have suggested that the same principle of criticality exhibited in starling murmurations explains such processes as how genes can determine the function of a cell or how neurons form systems that issue in thoughts.[71] Whitehead's account of the organic function of symbolic reference demonstrates an effort sympathetic with these contemporary scientific efforts to make sense of the aesthetics of self-organizing systems at both the microscopic and macroscopic levels.

It is not too much of a stretch to say that for Whitehead, symbolism is what makes life possible. But Whitehead does not hold that it is for survival power that symbolism persists, or that life continues to develop more complex and recursive forms of it. Not only does he deny to humans the origination of symbolism; he denies it to life in general. Symbolic reference is the structure of experience by which sentience is at all possible—and sapience as a special degree of sentience. It is a strange fact that the creatures whose very existence depends upon symbolic reference for their vital processes would come to regard it with suspicion.

And yet, this is just as it should be for Whitehead. He understands life not as the pursuit of greater survival power, but as a "bid for freedom." Life is "a bid for a certain independence of

[71] Thierry Mora and William Bialek, "Are Biological Systems Poised at Criticality?" *Journal of Statistical Physics* 144 (2011): 268–302.

individuality with self-interests and activities not to be construed purely in terms of environmental obligations."[72] What symbolic reference makes possible—or what it exemplifies by way of the creative advance—is freedom from brute conformation and repetition. It is the structure by which physical relations incite mental ones, or causal relations incite rational ones. This incitation is possible precisely because real togetherness between the actual occasions, or rather the lack of "between-ness" at all insofar as the perception, is the event constituted by this togetherness. This occasion of togetherness is the "double reference" of sense-data mentioned earlier. Whitehead writes, "There are no bare sensations which are first experienced and then 'projected' into our feet as their feelings, or onto the opposite wall as its colour."[73] To assert such a doctrine is to fail to perceive what is right before us all along—namely, what Whitehead refers to in *Process and Reality* as the "withness of the body."[74] We feel *with* our feet, and we see *with* our eyes. Failure to take care with our words or to attend to the implicit work of our grammar can obscure grand incompatibilities in what we say.

Whitehead points out this carelessness on Hume's part when he asserts, "If it be perceived by the eyes, it must be a colour."[75] It is not the working definition of "perception" or of "color" that stirs Whitehead, but the inattention with which Hume uses the words "by" and "must." What these words imply is the very withness and directness of perception explicitly denied while implicitly affirmed.

This withness is not bidirectional. A perception qua instance of symbolic reference is the product of the efficacy of the symbol-meaning event. What this means is that the directionality of

[72] Whitehead, 65.
[73] Whitehead, 14.
[74] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 64 and 81.
[75] Whitehead quoting Hume in *Symbolism*, 51.

attention and intention are fully compatible with ontological togetherness between knower and known; the directionality is not of some universal reaching some particular, but of the confluence of functions issuing in the symbol-meaning event. Reference is unidirectional relationship whereby the incipient is the symbol and the percipient is the meaning, and the roles of "symbol" and "meaning" may be switched on a different occasion.

This occasion, however, is what it is because of this particular relation. The occasion of symbolic reference is just that: one occasion. He writes in *Process and Reality,* "In the transition to a higher phase of experience, there is a concrescence [coalescence] in which prehensions in the two modes are brought into a unity of feeling: this concrescent unity [becoming or actual occasion] arises from a congruity of their of their subjective forms [percepts] in virtue of the identity relation ["common ground"] between the two prehensions [i.e., experience in the mode of causal efficacy and experience in the mode of presentational immediacy]."[76] The symbolic occasion, while singular or atomic, is a unity that holds things together, not apart. There are not two different "instants," one "symbolizing" and one "symbolized." There is only the unified event of symbolic reference grown out of the "natural potentiality" inherent to even the most geologic instances of causal efficacy.[77] By eliminating the fallacy of simple occurrence, Whitehead avoids postulating an infinite temporal regress of symbolism or an interminable chain of signification. The regress is eliminated precisely because symbolic reference must finally originate from a "common ground" between the two modes of experience involved: that provided by the double-reference of sense-data, and that provided by the "locality" or the shared space-time system.[78] All chains of symbolic reference must finally trace back to percepts in the

[76] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 168.
[77] Whitehead, *Symbolism*, 50, 53.
[78] Whitehead, 49.

mode of direct recognition, free of symbolic reference. Whitehead's realism thereby ensures that there is a real element of correlation or correspondence that must be in place for such relations to obtain.

Symbolism is, at its most fundamental level of exhibition in the cosmos, the relational structure creative of novel experiences with no discernible upper limit. At the ontological level (or "cosmological" in Whitehead's words), the symbolic event exhibits two different modalities of space-time, neither of which involves the brute seriality of "instants" or "points." On the one hand, the symbolic event qua instance of becoming is nonextended—it is something entirely new. It is the one that becomes of the many. On the other hand, the symbolic event is nothing but the continuous passage of nature. In *Process and Reality,* Whitehead explains, "The actual occasions are the creatures which become, and they constitute a continuously extensive world. In other words, extensiveness becomes, but 'becoming' is not itself extensive."[79] He continues, "But atomism does not exclude complexity and universal relativity. Each atom is a system of all things."[80] Creatures are the creations of continuity, but they themselves are atomic. We can think of events by way of the analogy to photons: depending on how you look at them, they can be both particles and waves.

And there is the key: *depending on how you look.* Of course, in the photon analogy, "looking" is really another metaphor for measurement. But the principle is the same because *both* ocular perception *and* mathematics are examples of symbolic reference at varying degrees of fundamentality. Whitehead writes, "Symbolism from sense-perception to physical bodies is the most natural and widespread of all symbolic modes."[81] But there is also symbolism of the

[79] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 35.
[80] Whitehead, 36. "Atoms" here means atomic events, not the units of particle physics.
[81] Whitehead, *Symbolism,* 4.

cathedrals of Medieval Europe. Language and mathematics exemplify more "fundamental" types of symbolism than the latter, but less than the former.[82]

When Whitehead picked up the topic for his Barbour-Page Lectures, he did so out of a need to account for how error is possible given the doctrine of direct experience. Or rather, a better way of putting it is why we should be able to err in ways that are not possible for less complex modes of existence. The way of taking account of one's environment in terms of symbolic reference introduces, at once, greater capacity of sensitivity and subtlety, and greater capacity for error. Error here is understood in terms of nonconformity, resulting from symbolic reference, between perception in the mode of causal efficacy (physical relations) and presentational immediacy (sense-data as ways of relating that are internally related only to the percipient).[83] Because the relation between two modes of perception is the relation between symbol and meaning, error is a product of symbolic reference even before conceptual analysis comes into play.

Error in itself is not a negative phenomenon for Whitehead. To the contrary, it is a source of creativity and progress. In the language of *Science and the Modern World,* error is when "the actual includes what (in one sense) is not-being as a positive factor in its own achievement."[84] It is the confrontation of fact with alternatives.[85] Symbolic reference is distinguished from the more elementary modes of perception by the added element of "originative freedom."[86] Whitehead explains in *Process and Reality*, "Accordingly, while the two pure perceptive modes are incapable of error, symbolic reference introduces this possibility." He continues, "Thus, in

[82] Whitehead, 2.
[83] Whitehead, *Symbolism*, 19.
[84] Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 176.
[85] Whitehead, 177.
[86] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 168.

general human perception is subject to error, because, in respect to those components most clearly in consciousness, it is interpretative. In fact, error is the mark of the higher organisms, and is the schoolmaster by whose agency there is upward evolution. For example, the evolutionary use of intelligence is that it enables the individual to profit by error without being slaughtered by it."[87] The educational metaphor is fitting for Whitehead, who was a critique of educational systems that require rote memorization of systems of facts, producing "minds in grooves." The capacity to err and the capacity to realize when and why one has erred is critical to intelligence. This is no mere cliché about there being no bad questions; it is a fundamental cosmological principle that novelty requires the sort of freedom that brings the possibility of error.

In light of the foregoing, we can return to the topic of the previous chapter to see how the aesthetics of perception and judgment are intimately involved in this play of novelty and error by way of symbolic reference. As discussed previously, if our goal is to make sense of the sorts of experience like conscious awareness, no account based solely on efficient causation or all-determining laws of nature will be complete. Such schemes have no room for confusion or error. Conscious awareness, I said, is neither perception without interpretation (purely physical) nor perception of the absolutely indeterminate (purely conceptual). Propositions are the sorts of entities that Whitehead says must be the object of prehension for there to be a possibility of being "correct" or "incorrect" in perception and judgment. Truth and falsehood are always "grounded" upon a "reason" (that is, by way of actual entities).

I can now say, with the added vocabulary of this chapter, that this "reason" is the "common ground" linking symbols and meanings in the single event of symbolic reference.

[87] Whitehead, 168.

Whitehead's "propositions" stand for the unity of this common ground with the possibility of a degree of deviation from fact. They are real potentiality or conditioned indetermination felt by a subject. In plainer words, propositions are the object of perception or judgment that involves in its nature the sheer givenness required for that perception or judgment to be true or false. In the language of the previous chapter, the predicative pattern of the proposition is *that* which is true or false of the logical subjects. The diversity of origination of the logical subjects and the predicative pattern was directly related to the degree of "imaginative freedom" involved in the propositional feeling, which serves to distinguish (in no absolute way) conscious perceptions from intuitive judgments. Conscious perceptions are "perceptive feelings" maintaining a maximal degree of directness to the facts, whereas intuitive judgments (the evolutionary frontier of all judgments) are "imaginative feelings" involving a greater degree of indirectness or nonconformation to the facts (immediate past). Thus, whereas in perception there are sense-data and locality preserving the shared world by which symbolic reference is grounded, intuitive judgments occur by way of relations of symbolic reference between modes of experience of greater contrast to one another in complexity.

I described in the last chapter that an intuitive judgment, in Whitehead's account, involves two separate physical feelings in its composition—the indicative and the predicative—whereas conscious perceptions involve only one. We should not think of the oneness of "one" or the twoness of "two" here in terms of discrete points or instances, but in terms of unity and diversity of locality. "Locality," as introduced in this chapter, implies a common space-time system. This means, in effect, that in perception the logical subject and the predicate of a proposition are derivative of the same space-time system, or duration.

Whitehead's use of numerical and geometric linguistic symbols to describe the emergence of freedom and error within modes of concrete relation is an instance of itself. In other words, he is exemplifying symbolism by way of itself, demonstrating the dialectic of synthesis and analysis. Language, while not the most fundamental example of symbolism, is nevertheless a particularly penetrating exemplification of it. In language, written or spoken, the recursivity of symbolic expression is peculiarly available to us at a conscious level. In the next section, I argue that this availability is tied up with Whitehead's metaphysical analysis of publicity.

Ontological Privacy and Ontological Publicity

In this section, I discuss Whitehead's understanding of the relationship between ontological privacy and ontological publicity. I contend that a sufficient grasp of the reciprocal nature of privacy and publicity is a prerequisite to an adequate account of the relationship between thought and language. I take Whitehead to show that the problematic conceptions of this relationship owe to the prior assumption that extension means disconnection, which is challenged above.

The term "public" is relational. At a metaphysical level, what counts as "public" as opposed to "private" events is relative in a way analogous to "individual" and "society" or "atomicity" and "continuity." For Whitehead, a human person is composed of personally ordered societies of actual occasions. Like the Latin *persona,* "personal" order means for Whitehead something like the capacity to sustain a character. Human individuals are metaphysical societies. Each actual occasion is itself a nontemporal unity, but it is this unity by way of becoming. Becoming, as noted above, is itself nonextended for Whitehead, even if extensiveness itself

becomes by way of it. There is atomicity because there is continuity, and there is continuity because there is atomicity. Neither is reducible to the other.

In his account of perception, Whitehead has maintained this logic. Experience in the mode of presentation immediacy is at one and the same time "public fact" and "private experience." The difference between the public and the private character has to do with whether or not we describe it in terms of significance. On the one hand, presentational immediacy is "barren"; we can describe it solely in terms of its particularity. We can provide, for instance, the definite mathematical relations sufficient to locate it. On the other hand, it would thereby exhibit "that complex of systematic mathematical relations" participative in *all* events of the current cosmic epoch.[88] A single experience discloses the "systematic relations which dominate the environment," while "the environment is dominated by these relationships by reason of the experiences of the individual occasions constituting the societies."[89] It is only because individual experiences do so disclose the "systematic relations" of the environment that scientific accuracy is possible, or what Whitehead calls the "intellectual comprehension of the physical universe."[90]

It is precisely due to this last point that Whitehead takes issue with what he calls "the modern doctrine" of "private psychological fields."[91] The notion is the "logical result" of Hume's theory of perception. The "impressions of sensation" collect to form private experiences or qualia, where "private" does not mean phenomenological privacy but an ontological one. For Hume, the impressions of sensation disclose nothing of public fact. For Whitehead, this is only half of the story. Without the other half, he thinks, Hume would not be able to make sense of the

[88] Whitehead, 327.
[89] Whitehead, 327.
[90] Whitehead, 327.
[91] Whitehead, 326.

possibility of measurement. Whitehead writes, "Measurement depends upon counting and upon permanence. The question is, what is counted, and what is permanent?"[92] *What* we measure are observations, and we measure by means of a relative permanence of instrument. He gives the example of the original yardstick as having only an "approximation to straightness" and measurements against it are approximate themselves:

> Minute variations of physical conditions will make the rod vary slightly, also sense-perception is never absolutely exact. But unless there be a meaning to "exactitude," the notion of a "slight variation" and of a "slight defect from exactitude" are nonsense. Apart from such a meaning the two occasions of the rod's existence are incomparable, except by another experiment depending upon the same principles. There can only be a finite number of such experiments; so ultimately we are reduced to these direct judgments.
>
> However far the testing of instruments and the corrections for changes of physical factors, such as temperature, are carried, there is always a final dependence upon direct intuitions that relevant circumstances are unchanged. Instruments are used from minute to minute, from hour to hour, and from day to day, with the sole guarantee of antecedent tests and of the *appearance* of invariability of relevant circumstances.
>
> This "appearance" is always a perception in the mode of presentational immediacy. If such perceptions be in any sense "private" in contradistinction to a correlative meaning for the term "public," then the perceptions, on which scientific measurement depends, merely throw light upon the private psychology of the particular observer, and have no "public" import.[93]

Appearances, observations, or collections of the single experient are what form the "groundwork of common experience," which science and philosophy alike exists to elucidate. Again, it is the *apparent* world to which our accounts of reality ought to do justice, and not the other way around.

Whitehead can say that the perceptive mode of presentational immediacy is "barren" (the half of the story that Hume tells) in that it is considered "apart from symbolic transference."[94] In practice, the experient subject is never purely receptive. Subjects always maintain the "triple

[92] Whitehead, 327.
[93] Whitehead, 329.
[94] Whitehead, 326.

character" of "recipient, patient, and agent" for Whitehead, as must be the case for an account that emphasizes the vectorial character of relations.[95] "But none of these operations can be segregated from nature into the subjective privacy of a mind." He continues, "Mental and physical operations are incurably intertwined; and both issue into publicity, and are derived from publicity. The vector character of prehension is fundamental."[96] Only in analysis can experience in the mode of presentational immediacy be considered apart from the subject forms it involves: "elements emotional, appreciative, purposive."[97] The subjective form of an experience in the mode of presentational immediacy is its *meaning*, the effect of the symbolic transference involved in the perception. The simplicity of Hume's "impressions" is not originative of experience; simplicity is derivative of complexity, and accuracy is derivative of vagueness. By means of symbolic reference, Whitehead argues, an organism "suppresses the mere multiplicities of things, and designs its own contrasts."[98] To analytically tease out the symbol from the meaning in the perceptive event—an event where symbol and meaning are Janus-faced—is therefore to tell only half the story. It is to reduce a contrast to only one of its elements—that is, to the element disclosing the contemporary world devoid of meaning. It is therefore to tell the part of the story that has no public import, the part that tells us nothing of the cosmos patient of experiences of an "apparent" world.

The full story of presentational immediacy must involve those organisms for which the "presented durations" are important data in their self-preservation and self-realization. Symbolic transference involving presentational immediacy is the means by which the past is "lifted into the

[95] Whitehead, 316.
[96] Whitehead, 317.
[97] Whitehead, 327.
[98] Whitehead, 317.

present" such that "[t]he delicate activities of self-preservation" become possible by "the transference of the vague message of the past onto the more precisely discriminated regions of the presented duration."[99] Symbolic transference is the means by which private experience gives way to public fact, and public fact gives way to private experience, such that information is possible.

Symbolic reference exemplifies the augmentative character of experience; later phases grow out of earlier ones, and then act back upon them in original and generative ways. Symbolic reference is how Whitehead understands how the modes of experience grow recursively. Whitehead writes that presentational immediacy is an "outgrowth" of the "complex datum" supplied by causal efficacy, meaning that presentational immediacy expresses the very same datum as that expressed in the mode of causal efficacy, but it does so "under different proportions of relevance."[100] When Whitehead speaks of "phases" of experience, such that presentational immediacy is "later," I take him to mean this not in a temporal but rather an analytical sense. The later phases are cosmologically unsustainable unless the earlier ones are already presupposed in any genetic account an event. Experiences are never purely in any "mode" designated by analysis. The function of the distinction for Whitehead is primarily to indicate the increasing degree of origination involved in later modes of experience. By "origination," Whitehead means "integrative" or evaluative—even "interpretive." In fact, Whitehead says that when there are sufficiently distinct modes of experience for there to be yet a third mode by means of symbolic reference, we have the "interpretive element in human experience."[101] Language is a unique example of how human experience can be all but

[99] Whitehead, 178.
[100] Whitehead, 173.
[101] Whitehead, 173.

overwhelmed by the interpretive element insofar as for Whitehead language refers "almost exclusively" to interpretations of sense-data: "We say that 'we see the *stone*' where *stone* is an interpretation of *stone-image*" and "we say that 'we see the *stone-image* with our eyes'."[102] "The stone," "the stone-image," and the withness of "our eyes" are all interpretations, but they are not for that reason wrong; the point is that linguistic expression deals with interpretations because it functions symbolically. Symbolism is interpretive in principle; it is the business of effecting meanings.

Whitehead prefers to use the example of language over other types of symbolic expression because its conventionality renders its constitutive elements more evident comparably to other sorts of symbolic expression, as demonstrated by its use here. In his discussion of symbolism, Whitehead deals mostly with two levels: the microscopic level of sensory perception and the macroscopic level of natural languages. He often switches back and forth between these two levels of exemplification without notice, and it can be difficult to know when he is speaking about the nonextended occasion of becoming or the binding forces of national symbols. And yet, the fluidity of these switches is due to the analogy between them. There is a continuity of structure between the simplest causal feelings, the complex integrative feelings of conscious perception, and the inheritable symbolic systems by which social purposes are sustained. Language becomes possible somewhere between the second and the third of these phases, acting back upon the second to make possible the third. What is inadmissible on this account is any view that regards words as "primarily the vehicle of thought."[103]

[102] Whitehead, 173.
[103] Whitehead, 182.

What we hear are sounds and what we see are marks (even while sounds and marks are also interpretive, though in a less refined sense). The hearing of the sound is an experience of presentational immediacy. In order for the perception of spoken sounds or written marks to count as hearing or seeing *words,* on Whitehead's account, the hearing of the word or the seeing of the mark must elicit meanings in the form of relevant past events. But the elicitation of memory is always interpretive because the sounds and the marks are never identical—they are always unique events that bear some relevance to one another in terms of pitch, intonation, accent, rhythm, intensity, and so on. "Thus," Whitehead writes, "a word is a species of sounds, with specific identity and individual difference." This "specific" identity is its species-identity in the technical sense of the word, which is polythetic and not monothetic in composition. The exact composition will be different for each percipient because of each individual's history, but by way of enculturation, the species identity still obtains. The hearing of a sound, for instance, elicits the "contrasts and identities of other percepta" in the same mode of presentational immediacy. If this is the percipient's first time hearing the sound, there will not be many relevant occasions to elicit; hence, the meaning will not be well-defined. But if there is a history of events with this specific identity, then the meaning of the sound will be more defined.

Language depends on specific, recognizable, or functional identity of sounds and marks. This identity is, in the case of natural languages, established by instances of use for collaborative purposes. For the individual percipient, the identity is identi*fied* by the qualitative pattern of emotion it elicits—what Whitehead calls the subjective form. This subjective form is that which is perceived "in its capacity for being a private sensation."[104] We can analyze the subjective form of hearing a musical note, for instance, in terms of the musical qualities it exhibits. This

[104] Whitehead, 234.

analysis—of its timbre, key, overtones, etc.— relies upon the recognizability of tonal (and atonal) qualities. In Whitehead's language, the analysis of a musical note "reveals an abstract qualitative pattern" constitutive of it. Just as a single word is not one definite sound, a musical note is a complex event of fundamental tones and its overtones that each has its own resonance, their individual qualities. The experience of "hearing an A in the key of C" involves a synthesis of these qualities in perception. This synthetic experience is experience in the mode of presentational immediacy, which depends on the relation to the sound-event by feeling abstractive qualitative pattern. To perceive in the mode of causal efficacy is to be so overwhelmed by detail as to be buried by vagueness. There can be no attention in this mode. Presentational immediacy, however, attends by way of abstraction. Being able to identify the note as "A in the key of C" is an interpretation of presentational immediacy by way of symbolic reference.

Whitehead's view contests the hypostatization of linguistic expression. The hearing of a word or the seeing of a mark is not different in kind from the hearing of any other sound or the seeing of any other object. What is different, however, is the element of arbitrariness to the sounds and marks we call words. In the first chapter of *Process and Reality,* Whitehead echoes John Stuart Mill, who wrote, "scientific investigation among the Greek schools of speculation and their followers in the Middle Ages, was little more than a mere sifting and analyzing of the notions attached to common language. They thought that by determining the meaning of words they could become acquainted with fact."[105] What Whitehead adds to this sentiment is a rejection of the idea that verbal expression can adequately express a proposition. To the contrary, language, in Whitehead's account, is thoroughly indeterminate as to its meaning. This

[105] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 12. He cites Mill's *Logic,* Book 5, Chapter 3.

indeterminacy of expression owes to the fact that linguistic symbols persist through convention. In this way, languages sustain systematic presuppositions about the world that are not easily challenged.[106] And yet language is a "triumph" of human ingenuity, whereby mankind "has fabricated its manageable connections with the world into a means of expression."[107] Language is the "systematization of expression"—or better yet, "the civilization of expression."[108]

It is easy to focus on the conventionality of linguistic expression and to overlook the notion of expression itself. But Whitehead's account of symbolic reference starts with expression; it provides an aesthetic description of how symbolism works and how the structure of expressivity is fundamental not only to consciousness but to perception in its simplest forms. It is written into the very compositionality of actuality. Of all the ways that human beings could have evolved to communicate, Whitehead speculates that the reason we refined the voice-produced sound is because it comes from the depths of bodily existence. Sound resonates through bodies and has the power to "excite the intimacies of bodily existence."[109] He writes, "The voice-produced sound is a natural symbol for the deep experiences of organic existence."[110] Whitehead defines a body as a "primary field" of expression. When we are profoundly grieved, our bodies express this in various ways. We may lash out, or wail, or become catatonic. One woman's guttural expressions of grief can stir those around her to the core. The voice-produced sound, Whitehead argues, produces a sense of "reality" that is largely responsible for "the effectiveness of symbolism."[111] Language is one mode of human expression; by means of

[106] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 13.
[107] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought,* 31.
[108] Whitehead, 34.
[109] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought,* 32.
[110] Whitehead, 32.
[111] Whitehead, 32.

conventional sounds and marks, we are able to express—to make explicit or public—what our bodies may or may not have already communicated before, but in a less-defined manner.

The expressive and interpretive function of language is, however, only part of the story. The other part of the story is the way that language enables new ways of experiencing. While it is a mistake to think of language as the "essence of thought," Whitehead argues, it is also true that "apart from language, the retention of thought, the easy recall of thought, the interweaving of thought into higher complexity, the communication of thought, are all gravely limited."[112] It is in this way that language and civilization co-create one another by ever-expanding the limits of their earlier forms. Language augments its possibilities of thought by liberating it from "complete bondage to the immediacies of mood and circumstance."[113] Just as, at microscopic levels, symbolic reference is the means by which the past is "lifted into the present"[114] insofar as it is the synthesis of the disclosure of the past in the mode of causal efficacy and the disclosure of the contemporaneous world in presentational immediacy, the more complex forms or higher syntheses of symbolic reference in the form of spoken or written language expands the breadth of durations informing the "presents" of which we can be mindful.

The difficulty of contemporary discussion of the relationship between thought and language (or experience and language) has much to do with the treatment of either as having an essence wholly distinct from their defining functions. In a way, the difficulty owes to the "spatializing" of thought and language alike. There is no such thing as "pure thought" or "pure language" in Whitehead's account. We struggle to avoid such spatialization with our ways of speaking, however. We say that language "expresses" thought, but this is not quite right. There is

[112] Whitehead, 35.
[113] Whitehead, 35.
[114] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 178.

no thought *without* expression. "Thought is the outcome of its own concurrent activities; and having thus arrived upon the scene, it modifies and adapts them."[115] These "concurrent activities" are emotional, physical, bodily activities that predate and remain caught up in our own modes of thought. Once we have rejected the picture of "points" of space and "instants" of time, we can no longer entertain a picture of thought and language as discrete happenings.

Whitehead provides an apt metaphor for depicting the non-discrete interrelation of thought and language qua physico-mental phenomena: "A thought is a tremendous mode of excitement. Like a stone thrown into a pond it disturbs the whole surface of our being. But this image is in inadequate. For we should conceive the ripples as effective in the creation of the plunge of a stone into the water. The ripples release the thought, and the thought augments and distorts the ripples. In order to understand the essence of thought we must study its relation to the ripples amid which it emerges."[116] By insisting upon the efficacy of the ripples in the plunging of the stone, Whitehead reminds us of the complexity of trying to draw definitive lines between mental and physical, linguistic and nonlinguistic, cognitive and noncognitive events. Indeed, when we think about the function of language in self-communication or so-called internal dialogue, we are no longer referring to the language of sound or of sight. Whitehead finds the phenomena of self-conversation to be striking examples of the "ripples" and the "stone" augmenting one another. What this metaphor communicates is the distinctive way language renders the past in the present. According to Whitehead, this "distinctness" is to "borrow from the well-defined sensa" of the past, present by way of linguistic expression. "In this way," he writes, "an articulated memory is the gift of language, considered as an expression from oneself

[115] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 36.
[116] Whitehead, 36.

in the past to oneself in the present."[117] Moreover, the past experiences constituent of one's articulated memory can be imaginatively recombined, reinterpreted, and narrated by way of communication with another.

Let me provide a bit of an extended example that I hope will be helpful in clarifying the confluence Whitehead describes. In psychoanalysis, the neglect experienced in one's childhood may be treated by a process called "transmuting internalization," whereby a therapist seeks to create in the patient internal structures mimicking those undeveloped by the empathic failures or misattunement of the patient's childhood caregiver. The therapist seeks to establish a presence in the patient's psyche that serves whatever function was ill-fulfilled by the initial caregiver(s), such that they can re-parent the patient. The neglectful caregiver is "present" in the patient's psyche in the form of psychological structures, or enduring psychological functions, that manifest in terms of various psychopathologies. A patient whose childhood attempt at self-expression or communication were repeatedly ignored or punished was never able to internalize healthy social responses to those attempts. The therapist, by helping to create new psychological structures that mimic what the parent or caregiver should have instilled, can enable someone with borderline or narcissistic personality disorder to develop more skillful forms of self-communication. The therapist's relationship to the patient serves as the object of "transmuting internalizations" that gradually establish a new caregiver presence in the psyche. This process of transmuting internalization between therapist and patient exemplifies the complex ways an articulated memory enables one (or another) to have access to one's past in efficacious ways.

Language is a highly complex mode of synthetic experience by way of symbolic reference, and these linguistic experiences are never "pure." On this account, in fact, as instances

[117] Whitehead, 33.

of symbolic reference, linguistic events are in principle experiences in a "mixed" mode. *That* which is synthesized in a symbolic experience can involve events localized to the body or events in the wider environment, including other people. The modes of thought involved in what we typically call "internal discourse" are possible in just that sort of way because of a history of linguistic development that both societally and personally predates the phenomena under consideration. Conventionalized communication is created from the ground-up. Communicative acts are conventionalized by individuals-in-community, and that conventionalization is reciprocally related to the socialization of new generations of language users. As Whitehead is concerned to explain the more abstract in terms of the more concrete, he makes some efforts to indicate how the transcendent characteristics of language themselves evolved. I should note that I mean "transcendent" here not in terms of vertical transcendence, but in terms of the horizontal transcendence of being able to creatively refer to nonimmediate or nonlocal objects or events.

The capacity to refer to more abstract (because nonlocal) objects is an achievement of increasingly generic ways of speaking. Whitehead explains, "Language arose with a dominating reference to an immediate situation. Whether it was signal or expression, above all things it was *this* reaction to *that* situation in *this* environment." He continues, "In the origin of language the particularity of the immediate present was an outstanding element in the meaning conveyed. . . . What language primarily conveyed was the direction of attention to these birds, here, now, amid these surroundings."[118] Before language can enable us to speak in general, it enables us to locate attention to the particular. From "green" meaning merely a particular percept of this patch of moss on this tree at this moment, we can come to think "green" in terms of the shared qualities of diverse events. Thus, "we have to understand language as conveying the identities upon which

[118] Whitehead, 38.

knowledge is based, and as presupposing the particularity of reference to the environment which is the essence of existence."[119] These "identities" are those indicated by our conceptual categories—the types of which there are tokens, or the genera of which there are species. The reality of these identities are what Whitehead is talking about when he says that the "genus *bird* remained in the background of undiscerned meaning" when language was still in its earliest stages and could only be used to direct joint attention.[120] Yet when we begin to speak in terms of genera, this presupposed background entails all the particular birds, or better, all the particular bird-perceiving occasions. Abstract thought, with the creative freedom it introduces, presupposes the particularities of reference to a concrete environment that Whitehead demands of all actuality in the form of his Ontological Principle.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Whitehead's philosophy of symbolism with a specific focus on language. A primary concern of mine has been to elucidate the aesthetic process by which generic modes of thought are possible. I have also drawn some preliminary conclusions as to the implications of a Whiteheadian approach to meaning for our understanding of the relationship between thought and language. The following chapter will provide a more detailed examination of symbolism in the mode of human discursive practices, including a cursory depiction of the possibility of cultural critique.

[119] Whitehead, 39.
[120] Whitehead, 38.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL CRITIQUE BY AND OF SYMBOL

Introduction

The purpose of my first chapter was to disclose tacit metaphysical assumptions impeding contemporary analytic attempts to mitigate the epistemological problem of intentionality. I discussed the way modern philosophy's neglect of temporality has contributed to the spatialization of rationality, such that the "conceptual" or "mental" is taken as being ontologically distinct from nature. Parallel dichotomies follow the bifurcation of mind and world, including the dichotomies of fact and value, efficaciousness and purpose, actuality and potentiality. I argued that contemporary analytic appropriations of Hegel ought to be understood as reactions to the dichotomies symptomatic of the ontological neglect of temporality.

What I did not address in that first chapter, however, was the implication those dichotomies have for social ontology. By social ontology, I mean the account of the nature of collective modes of existence and the sorts of properties unique to collective entities. In the previous chapter, I discussed how the de-dichotomization of time and space has a cascading effect. When we critique the tacit doctrines about absolute space and absolute time, we expose the way these doctrines have contributed to a fundamental understanding of actuality in terms of disconnection. Exposing the practical contradictions of defining actuality in terms of points and instants by restoring the proper scope of function of these notions to the discipline of mathematical deduction, we were able to appreciate Whitehead's notion of the actual entity or actual occasion as the quantum of explanation. Speaking in terms of durations instead of substances permits a definition of actuality in terms of connection, such that individuals and societies are, at a fundamental level, mutually-determining.

My focus has hitherto been on the implications of this redefinition of actuality in terms relatedness has for our understanding of intentional relations. Intentionality in contemporary analytic philosophy is typically regarded as the sort of relation that obtains between a mind and the world. The problem of intentionality, then, is typically regarded as a problem plaguing the individual. And yet, if both mentality and individuality cease to entail ontological isolation, then the problem of intentionality becomes caught up in the nature of relationality. Indeed, the only way to solve the *problem* of intentionality is to demonstrate how intentionality can supervene without remainder upon concrete forms of interrelation. To this end, the previous chapter addressed the role of symbolic reference in Whitehead's aesthetic ontology. I argued that symbolic expression is merely one exemplification of the compositionality of actuality. It is, in other words, one mode of passage in nature, operating well below consciousness, while also being an essential element in the possibility of consciousness.

Symbolic experience exemplifies, for Whitehead, the fact that a unity of experience is nothing other than a subjective appreciation of the many, at the same time that it is one among the many. The two modalities of space-time involved in Whitehead's analysis serve to communicate his Ontological Principle, according to which societies are the nature of individuals, and individuals are the nature of societies. This principle applies at both the quantum level and at the level of human community. Actuality is ultimately to be understood in terms of expression. The one is a particular expression of the many, and that one is a novel constituent of the many. *Symbolic* expression obtains when the one arises only after the possibility of diverse modes of experience, such that a one (qua unity of experience) that becomes might be a synthesis of a many involving this diversity of origination.

I also argued that symbolic expression occurs in varying degrees of complexity resulting from its recursive nature. This recursiveness is not additive, but possible in principle. It is the same potential implicit in causal efficacy that Whitehead argues gives way to increasingly abstractive and indeterminate modes of relation. Indeed, when we cease to think of efficient causality in terms of the unidirectional external action of billiard balls in space, and instead in terms of the real presence of the past in the present, the idea of "real potential" will cease to strike us as oxymoronic. For Whitehead, the form of symbolism productive of natural languages is ultimately only possible on the same physiological basis as is the form of symbolism productive of sense perception. It is a mistake to think of "words" without thinking about the physiological basis of their use. I argued that the demystification of meaning entailed in Whitehead's aesthetic account of symbolism helps to clarify the relationship between thought and language. Linguistic acts and cognitive ones ought to be understood as mutually augmentative.

While Whitehead says little about the mechanism by which this augmentation occurs, his comments about the function of social and national symbols demonstrates an appreciation of the role of intersubjectivity in the evolution of symbolic modes of creation. It is at this point in my investigation of Whitehead's account of language that I think he can benefit from some contemporary work on the history of human cognition. In particular, I suggest that the work of Michael Tomasello can help to put some empirical meat on the rational bones of Whitehead's account. My goal is to show how the social ontology entailed in Whitehead's account of symbolism can contribute to contemporary discussions about the possibility of normativity. A further goal is to suggest some cursory ways in which the conditions of normativity are

themselves internally prescriptive so that we may discern immanent grounds for social or political critique.

To begin, I discuss Whitehead's account of the relationship between symbolism and civilization. I propose a reading of Whitehead according to which the binding and disruptive forces of symbolic expression are best harmonized by way of democratic social structures. I then proceed to creatively interface Whitehead and Tomasello.

Social Symbols

Symbolic reference is abstractive in principle, which is to say, abstraction is the very nature of efficient syntheses. The reciprocality of symbol-function and meaning-function holds for numerous other conceptual contrasts: private and public, individual and community, internal and external, language and thought, physical and mental. What this reciprocality means for our understanding of the relationship between language and thought in Whitehead's account is that we can understand either in one of two modes. On the one hand, we can understand each in terms of the factors composing it. On the other hand, we can understand each in terms of its capacity for affecting its environment. The former is to think of a thought or a linguistic event in terms of the many factors contributing to its nature qua "cognitive" or qua "linguistic" while the latter is to understand a thought or a linguistic event in terms of its capacity for affecting its environment.[1] Appreciating the reciprocal nature of thought and language assists an understanding of the complex ways in which our symbols—linguistic or otherwise—serve to create and challenge social identities and social purposes on a grander scale. By way of the efficacy of symbols, and language in particular, the blind forces of instinct may be made explicit

[1] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 45–46.

and subject to critique, Whitehead argues.[2] With language, communities bound by reasons may replace communities bound by instincts.

Language allows for unexpressed instincts to be made explicit and available for critique. This process of making instincts explicit occasions the increasing reassessment and rearticulation of social purpose. For Whitehead, societies progress by exposing the unsuitability of old instincts to the current social purpose. This exposition occurs by way of a critique of the old symbols that served to reinforce those instincts for a particular group. Whitehead has no romantic notions about the effect a critique of old symbols has on a community. "It is the first step in sociological wisdom," he writes, "to recognize that the major advances in civilization are processes which all but wreck the societies in which they occur;—like unto an arrow in the hand of a child."[3] The arrow is the immanent capacity within symbolism to occasion and effect its own critique.

By "instincts," Whitehead refers to two types of action. At the baser level, "pure" instinctive action means the response of an organism to pure causal efficacy.[4] This is not the sort of instinct that can be rendered available by reason for revision. Rather, the sort of "instincts" that ought to be revised for the maintenance of a society are a secondary form that Whitehead also calls "reflex action." Reflex action is a more complex and second-order form of instinct. It occurs when an organism, capable of symbolically-conditioned action, allows those actions to become mere habit. The symbols induce action as mere second-nature, such that the "meaning" of the symbol is pure effect and implicit. Reflex actions can thereby be termed "instinctive" in a secondary sense because the meaning of the symbols affecting them are essentially lost, in the sense of cognitively unavailable to the agent. The problem with reflex actions is that the relations

[2] Whitehead, *Symbolism*, 66.
[3] Whitehead, 88.
[4] Whitehead, 78.

of symbolic reference blindly informing them may be erroneous. Language is particularly prone to this sort of loss of meaning because conventionalized sounds and marks are by nature typical or generic. The coherence of a language as an organic whole owes to the chains of derivations among its constituent symbols, chains that ultimately trace back to local relations and particular referents serving as an "ultimate" meaning of sorts.[5] When the "intermediate portions of the chain" are suppressed, this ultimate meaning becomes lost, and the actions conditioned by the symbols become Pavlovian.

The sustaining and disruptive power of linguistic expression must be kept in proper balance for a society to adapt to new elements of life without being wrecked by them. He writes, "The art of free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly in fearlessness of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes which satisfy an enlightened reason."[6] The simpler and earlier forms of community (not merely human, but all sorts of community, organic or otherwise) rely upon geographical proximity. But, he notes, the more complex organic communities are held together by systems that sustain symbolic systems that serve to preserve a common purpose. Social symbols in the form of common language, norms of behavior, national icons, canons of art and literature, and so on, all affect systematic actions that sustain a community's identity.

The endorsements of democracy that come from Whitehead's writings on symbolism are in the form of cautionary tales of what occurs when these symbols cease to represent the individuals constituting the society. "As a community changes," he writes, "all such rules and canons require revision in the light of reason. The object to be obtained has two aspects: one is

[5] Whitehead, 83.
[6] Whitehead, 88.

the subordination of the community to the individuals composing it, and the other is the subordination of the individuals to the community. Free men obey the rules which they themselves have made. Such rules will be found in general to impose on society behavior in reference to a symbolism which is taken to refer to the ultimate purposes for which the society exists."[7] Unexpressed instincts sustained by old symbols are the "invisible enemy" against which a society wages war in the dark as it struggles to cope with the diversity introduced by new elements of life. Without the ability to render these instincts explicit, societies would be left to the centuries-long processes of decay and reconstruction that, with reason, occur with comparative speed.[8] As communities evolve, the reasons they exist will change, and it is prudent to allow social symbols to evolve apace. Whitehead warns, "Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision, must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of life stifled by useless shadows."[9] Insofar as Whitehead defines philosophy at the outset of *Process and Reality* as "the self-correction by consciousness of its own initial excess of subjectivity,"[10] I read his warnings as an exercise in self-attunement; it is an exercise in entertaining true propositions about ourselves by means of symbolism in order to bring about the very progress immanent to the forms of life sustained by symbolism. What Whitehead exemplifies in his writings on social symbols, then, is the social vocation of reason.

Whitehead uses the term "reason" in a variety of ways. At times, he uses it to mean the final units of explanation, as when he argues in *Process and Reality* that actual entities are the only reasons.[11] This is his Ontological Principle, according to which "reasons" are both efficient

[7] Whitehead, 88.
[8] Whitehead, 69.
[9] Whitehead, 88.
[10] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 15.
[11] Whitehead, 24.

and final. Actual entities become by way of fact and purpose. Elsewhere, however, he uses "reason" to articulate philosophy as the discipline of "the speculative Reason"[12] or the "method of imaginative rationalization."[13] In this sense, reason means that freedom of thought provides the systematicity that direct observation lacks. Metaphysics qua speculative philosophy is Janus-faced; it must have both an empirical side and a rational side. It is the former that makes a metaphysical scheme adequate and applicable, and the latter makes it coherent and logical.[14] Reason is the means by which the ambiguity of the empirical is transformed according to the demands of the rational. It is how we move from what is the case to what could be the case; in Whitehead's words, speculative reason is how we entertain that which "communicates with immediate matter of fact," where communication is used in the fundamental or aesthetic sense of ontological communion or relationship.

In yet another sense, Whitehead uses reason to indicate a process of making explicit facts and purposes informing belief and action by way of linguistic expression, followed by the evaluation of those facts and purposes according to shared standards of propriety. In this sense, reason means the *reasonable*. This latter sense is, in fact, the genus of which "speculative Reason" is a species. The "reason" of speculative reason "appeals to the orderliness of what is reasonable," he writes, "while 'speculation' expresses the transcendence of any particular method."[15] Reason in the sense of reason*able,* then, appeals to the shared standards of use by which a common language evolved. The philosopher, Whitehead thinks, gains her creative license by means of the intellectual freedoms possible precisely because of normative

[12] Whitehead, *The Function of Reason*, 51.
[13] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 5.
[14] Whitehead, 3.
[15] Whitehead, *The Function of Reason,* 66–67.

constraints. In a sense, the speculative game can only be played because the expressive powers of language have been honed by generations of societies sustained by its efficacy. The speculative reason as "in its essence untrammelled by method" operates at the highest grade of abstraction to analyze the generic notions operative in all the various modes of thought involved in human endeavors.[16] And yet, it analyzes these generic notions for the purpose of elucidating concrete experience. "Speculative" is not a pejorative for Whitehead; he uses it in the sense of a higher vantage point.

My purpose in reviewing the polyvocality of "reason" for Whitehead is to be clear what I mean when I speak of the "social vocation of reason." In no sense do I (or does Whitehead) mean "reason" as an ahistorical or transcendental agent. To speak of the social function of reason is merely to speak in more specific terms of the function of symbolic reference. It is to speak of making explicit, by means of shared symbols, the purposes for which those symbols are shared. When Whitehead says that societies bound by instinct can, by means of language, become societies bound by reasons, he is not introducing a picture of irrational "Nature" and rational "Man." The difference between instinct and reason is the difference between causally effected action and symbolically conditioned action. And insofar as symbolic reference arises out of the real potentiality of causal efficacy as the modes of experience expand, diversify, and act back upon and through one another, the difference is one of degree. To speak of "reason" at the level of human society is to speak of that mode of life occasioned by the expressive power of cooperativized sounds and marks make "connected thought possible by expressing it."[17] Reason is means of self-attunement immanent to relations of symbolic reference. Symbolism is itself just

[16] Whitehead, 65.
[17] Whitehead, *Symbolism,* 66.

one exemplification of the compositionality of actuality—that is, "of the fact that a unity of experience arises out of the confluence of many components."[18] Symbolic expression is therefore one mode of creative advance, one mode of passage in nature. Reason names that function inherent to symbolic expression by which it can become self-elucidating—or, perhaps, self-expressive. The composition of a symbol is not a "structureless collection indiscriminately brought together," but a unity in which "[e]ach component by its very nature stands in a certain potential scheme of relationships to the other components."[19] This is how Whitehead describes the coalescence of the past into a novel occasion, and it is equally descriptive of those occasions whose subject form is symbolic. The symbolic form of an experience is realized out of the potentiality inhering in the datum of the past. The reason that the percept of the tree has meaning for us is because this reason is inherent to the very structural potential of the perception itself. The only reasons are, after all, other actual occasions.

At the highly refined level of human linguistic expression, novel forms of expression emerge out of a history of precedent ones. This emergence can take recursive form whereby a linguistic event becomes analyzable in terms of itself, for instance. This is the recursive function of symbolic expression made possible by the inter-subjective conditions creative of shared symbols. And not just any shared symbols, but the sort produced by our own bodies. Gestural symbols, vocal symbols, and eventually marked or written ones, represent tools by which thought processes can be coordinated—that is, by which persons can communicate with one another. Norms of rationality or standards of reasonableness make explicit those conditions of

[18] Whitehead, 86.
[19] Whitehead, 86.

coordination such that, when violated, communication breaks down. We cease to be able, for example, to reason about what someone else could be thinking.

A Natural History of Social Symbols

In *A Natural History of Human Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), Michael Tomasello argues that we need to account for the possibility of types of thinking generative of culture before we can account for the cultural origins of language. Unlike classical theories of language that focused either upon 1) the ways individual thinking depends upon cultural artifacts (i.e., C. S. Peirce), or 2) the processes of social coordination involved in producing such artifacts in the first place (i.e., Wittgenstein), Tomasello is doing a third thing. Empirical research of the last several decades has shown great apes to possess "human-like" ways of understanding their "physical and social worlds, including the causal and intentional relations that structure those worlds."[20] He is therefore critical of the "radical discontinuity" view of thought, whereby the "intermediate step" between when there is no thought and when there is thought is merely "defined away."[21] This view, represented by some analytic philosophers like Davidson, is predicated on the idea that thought can occur only in the medium of language—an idea Whitehead rejects.

According to Tomasello, it was possible to maintain this view in his 1999 book *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (HUP) because the empirical data comparing humans to apes was sparser. It was possible because of the relative simplicity of this early research, he writes, to say things like: "Only humans understand others as intentional agents, and this enables

[20] Whitehead, 2.
[21] Michael Tomasello, *A Natural History of Human Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 149.

human culture."[22] Statements like this beg the question of human "uniqueness" because they have not explained, only proclaimed, the possibility of intentional thinking. It is no longer possible to define distinctively human cognition or culture in terms of the ability to recognize others as intentional agents: "Great apes appear to know much more about others as intentional agents than previously believed, and still they do not have human-like culture or cognition."[23] The primary difference is no longer that humans can identify others as intentional agents, but that they can achieve a *collective* intentionality. It is shared intentionality, Tomasello argues, that makes possible "everything from concrete acts of collaborative problem solving to complex cultural institutions."[24] What this means is that we can no longer use "culture" or "language" to explain distinctively human thinking because both culture and language were themselves "made possible by an earlier evolutionary step" made by the advantages of collaborative modes of living. In short, previous theories could not account for the distinctiveness of human thinking without begging the question because they presupposed, rather than explained, the social aspects of the process by which language arises—aspects that are, in reality, evolutionary achievements and not givens.[25]

Tomasello's more specific claim is that individuals coordinating with others for the purposes of collaborative foraging made this step.[26] This detail, however, is accessory to point. Instead of focusing on collaboration *per se*, Tomasello examines the intentional thinking that makes it possible in the first place. More specifically, he focuses on the components of the thinking processes involved in collective intentionality. These processes, which thus far appear

[22] Tomasello, ix.
[23] Tomasello, ix–x.
[24] Tomasello, ix–x.
[25] Tomasello, 4.
[26] Tomasello, ix–x.

to be distinctly human, include cognitive representation, inference, and normative self-monitoring.[27] Even pre-linguistic infants, he reports, have been shown to "operate with some cognitive processes that great apes do not . . . for example, via joint attention and cooperative communication."[28] His conclusion is that distinctively *human* cognitive processes must arise "from some deeper and more primitive forms" of social arrangement that are unique in degree but not in kind to humans.[29] In other words, instead of presupposing the social arrangements that are actually evolutionary achievements and then trying to explain individual thinking in terms of it, we must explain the species-unique forms of interaction that both require and create individual capacities for discursive thought. In short, so as not to beg the question of human cognition, we must appeal to a social ontology that is just as much ontogeny—that is, we must appeal to a metaphysics of creativity.

Whitehead's aesthetic account of symbolic reference examined in this chapter can help elucidate just how these "deeper" and "more primitive" forms of community could occur. Moreover, it can facilitate a better understanding of the evolutionary achievement of the social dimensions of human thinking by which collective intentionality becomes possible. However, I also see Tomasello's work as a trove of empirical data that can serve as just the sort of experience that Whitehead himself would invite to check the adequacy of his scheme. Thus, on the one hand, I argue that an appeal to Tomasello can help fill out Whitehead's understanding of how individual symbols become shared symbols, while on the other hand, I argue that an appeal to Whitehead can suggest ways persistent ideas about the fundamental disconnectedness of actuality can frustrate Tomasello's appreciation of just how deep sociality goes. In the end, when

[27] Tomasello, x.
[28] Tomasello, x.
[29] Tomasello, x.

Tomasello says that the newer research enables a fuller picture of the social dimensions of human *thinking,* there need not be any wonder about how this new dimension is possible because we will have abandoned the spatialization of mentality and language that makes intersubjective achievements mysterious. Moreover, by bringing together the rational and empirical elements of an account of how human discursive thinking is possible by means of the coordination and normativization of symbols, we will be in a better position to draw some cursory conclusions about the possibility of grounding social and political critique.

The way Whitehead situates symbolic reference in pre-cognitive and pre-linguistic modes of relation provides a promising alternative to those question-begging theories that posit cultural or linguistic origins to human thought processes. By accounting for the real togetherness of symbol and meaning in a single event, it becomes possible to vindicate the objective purport of intentional attitudes. Reference or aboutness no longer implies a mysterious correspondence between universals and particulars, but rather names the manner in which the present expresses the past. When symbolic events are made public—for instance, when individual intention is made explicit—there is the possibility of a jointness of attention.

According to Tomasello, most classical theories about the evolution of cognition fall into two groups: behaviorism and ethology. Both groups focus on overt actions. While contemporary varieties of these theories take cognition into account to a greater extent, they still fail to provide systematic theoretical accounts of cognition sufficient for explaining human uniqueness.[30] While it is of course true that all organisms have some degree of reflexive reactions that are "organized linearly as stimulus-response linkages," behaviorists take all forms of animal behavior to be

[30] Tomasello, 7.

varieties (sometimes learned ones) of stimulus-response.[31] As noted in the previous chapter, Whitehead objects to behaviorist theories when he points out that "no biological science has been able to express itself apart from phraseology which is meaningless unless it refers to ideals proper to the organism in question."[32] Tomasello voices a similar observation when he writes, "There is no way that a spider can spin a web using only stimulus-response linkages. . . . Instead, the spider must have goal-states that it is motivated to bring about, and the ability to perceive and act so as the bring them about in a self-regulated manner."[33] In other words, we cannot explain biological function without being able to make sense of the attainment of an end. According to Whitehead, it is the very definition of *biological* order that it exhibits an aim specific to that individual.[34]

I have already discussed how Whitehead's aesthetic ontology enables us to make sense of purposes at a metaphysical level. I have not, however, addressed the subject of intentional action at the level of conscious and self-conscious organisms. The latter is the level where Tomasello defines "individual intentionality," and it is the primary scope of his concern.[35] He defines individual intentionality as what enables organisms to live in (develops because of) increasingly unpredictable environments where "natural selection crafts cognitive and decision making processes that empower the individual to recognize novel situations and to deal flexibly, on its own, with unpredictable exigencies."[36] An organism with individual intentionality, then, is depicted on a self-regulation model, where an organism counts as "thinking" when it attempts

[31] Tomasello, 8.
[32] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 84.
[33] Tomasello, *A Natural History,* 8.
[34] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 84.
[35] Tomasello, *A Natural History,* 9.
[36] Tomasello, 8

"to solve a problem, and so to meet its goal not by behaving overtly but, rather, by imagining what would happen if it tried different actions in a situation—or if different external forces entered the situation—before actually acting."[37] This "imaging" is an "off-line simulation of potential perceptual experiences."[38] The computer-processing metaphors upon which Tomasello relies in articulating intentionality have limited utility, however, and I would argue we must appeal to something like Whitehead's aesthetic ontology for an attempt at more concrete descriptions of just how these "simulations" could be possible. We would need to account for imagination in terms of the same concrete symbolic relations originative of the whole spectrum of perception and judgment. And, we would need to reintroduce the discussion about propositional feelings and the ontological importance of false propositions. After all, Tomasello adopts Donald Davidson's view that talk of the locations and/or objects of desire is only a shorthand way of speaking about intentionality; wants and desires are, in truth, directed at propositional contents. One does not want the apple; one wants "*that* one has the apple in hand."[39] But rehearsing these resources in Whitehead's thought exceeds the scope of the present section. Our current appreciation of Tomasello's insights does not require it.

The point to notice here is simply that biology in general is inexplicable without reference to individual goal-states, and that these instances of individual intentionality have the potential to become collaborative. Language is an example of the sort of collaborative tools developed by (and supportive of) the collectivization of intentionality. Its very existence, therefore, exhibits the product of a long history of actions taken for shared purposes. Hence shared meanings need not be any more mysterious than individual meanings. This is the point

[37] Tomasello, 9.
[38] Tomasello, 9.
[39] Tomasello, 9.

that I take Whitehead to be after when he writes, "The symbols do not create their meaning: the meaning, in the form of actual effective beings reacting upon us, exists for us in its own right. But the symbols discover this meaning for us. They discover it because in the long course of adaptation of living organisms to their environment, nature taught their use. It developed us so that our projected sensations indicate in general those regions which are the seat of important organisms."[40] To be sure, to speak of the process by which nature "teaches" a species the use of symbols is a highly abstractive and metaphorical way of speaking. But the point is that what *actually* occurs is the only effective force shaping what *may* occur—this is the Ontological Principle. Tomasello makes a similar point when he explains that the success or failure of behavioral decisions informed by sense perception hone the cognitive processes that underwrite them. He writes, "Cognitive processes are a product of natural selection, but they are not its target. Indeed, natural selection cannot even 'see' cognition; it can only 'see' the effects of cognition in organizing and regulating overt actions (Piaget, 1971). In evolution, *being* smart counts for nothing if it does not lead to *acting* smart."[41] The reality of success and failure with respect to symbolically conditioned action is the only reason it persists.

Grammaticalization, Discursive Freedom, and Critiquability

Consciousness is first made possible by means of symbolic modes of experience. All perception occurs by way of symbolic reference in Whitehead's account. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a critical transition from conscious perceptions to intuitive judgments only when suitably complex forms of symbolic experience arise. Once judgments arrive on the scene, there

[40] Whitehead, *Symbolism,* 57.
[41] Tomasello, *A Natural History,* 7.

is the possibility of what Whitehead calls "suspended" judgments. It is the suspended judgment that Whitehead understands as the occasion for inferential processes to emerge. Tomasello also posits *individual* intentionality and inferential processes as prior to collective forms of the same. What this means, then, is that both Tomasello and Whitehead hold that intentionality and inferentiality are precursors to linguistic events. As Tomasello notes, we have observed both these forms of cognitive process in other primates.

For example, studies of great apes' use of tools demonstrate that they are capable of assessing the causal effects of their manipulations. Tomasello describes these "assessments" as examples of "protoconditional" (forward-facing inferences; from cause to effect) and "protonegation" (backward-facing inferences; from effect to cause).[42] The inferred cognitive processes are called "proto" condition and "proto" negation because the sort of "necessity" cognized by the animal is causal and not logical (where logical necessity requires the ability to make reasons explicit). For example, a chimpanzee manipulating causal relations via tools may involve thought processes that exhibit a basic 'if-then' proto-logic such as: "if A happens, then B happens (because A caused B)."[43] On another occasion, the processes inferred from the chimpanzee's behavior may reflect the ability to make inferences by means of contraries like presence-absence or noise-silence, such that its cognitive process would exhibit a kind of proto-negation: if B didn't happen, then A must not have happened (because A would have caused B).[44] "Our general conclusion," he writes, "is thus that since the great apes in these studies are

[42] Tomasello, 17.
[43] Tomasello, 17.
[44] Tomasello, 19. Tomasello gives an example: "Call (2004) showed chimpanzees a piece of food, which was then hidden in one of two cups (they did not know which). Then, depending on condition, the experimenter shook one of the cups. . . . In condition 1, an experimenter shook the cup with food. In this case the chimpanzee observed a noise being made and had to infer backward in the causal chain to what might have caused it, specifically, food hitting the inside of the cup. This is a kind of abduction (not logically valid, but an 'inference to the best explanation')."

using cognitive models containing general principles of causality, and they are also simulating or making inferences in various kinds of protological paradigms, with various kinds of self-monitoring along the way, what the great apes are doing in these studies is thinking."[45] Moreover, these apes are able to think in these ways without humanlike forms of sociality. In other words, thinking about causality and making inferences is not primarily a linguistic or explicit enterprise.

What Tomasello readily admits, however, is that this research lacks data that can inform how these cognitive capacities, as candidates for rational thought, surpass that threshold below which they would not count as such.[46] For Whitehead, conscious thought is explicable in terms of the aesthetics of symbolic reference between perception in the mode of causal efficacy and presentational immediacy. This consciousness itself becomes a novel occasion capable of being a relatum in symbolic reference, so that experience in the mode of conceptual analysis can emerge by means of the recursivity of symbolic experience, creating something approaching the phenomena of conscious *thought*. Whitehead never asserts that consciousness as it exists in our particular cosmic epoch *necessarily* arises because of symbolic modes of prehension; it does arise, however, by way of the real potential inhering past actualities. There is therefore a strong continuity or analogy between the forms of relation realized by way of relations of symbolic reference, from those observed in the sorts of large-scale attunement of starling murmurations to the phenomena of self-organizing systems at the neurological level where neurons firing have the subjective form of a conscious thought.

[45] Tomasello, 19–20.
[46] Tomasello, 149.

The deep structures of sociality observed in human infants, who exhibit cognitive capacities exceeding those of other primates even before acquiring language and culture, are possible because the relations of symbolic reference are actually formative. Symbolism, on Whitehead's account, is not epiphenomenal; it is ontogenic. This is the missing step of Tomasello's account.

While many animals make "simple causal and intentional inferences about external events," Tomasello writes, "only humans make socially recursive and self-reflective inferences about others' or their own intentional states."[47] We can account for this recursivity and reflectivity, on a Whiteheadian account, on the same physiological basis that perception and judgment are possible. Put otherwise, for Whitehead, perceiving a noise and hearing a word are interpretive events insofar as they involve symbolic reference. Another person can both grunt and say "help," and both events produce sound waves that hit the eardrums of both the speaker and the listener and are therefore audibly perceived, barring any hearing impairments. The difference between the two sounds, from the perspective of the listener, has to do with what each elicits from past experiences. For Whitehead, a word is a species of sound, and a sound is recognized as a specific word only when the hearer is able to identify the species-identity. The "meaning" of the word is the experienced elicitation of the "contrasts and identities of other percepta" that the hearer experienced in her past. All of the hearer's past encounters with sounds of this species polythetically proscribe what it "means" to the hearer. Tomasello articulates a similar account of how one recognizes patterned identities between experiences when he speaks about how an individual "saves" particular elements of experience in the construction of cognitive "types" as fodder for abstract thought:

[47] Tomasello, *A Natural History*, 4.

> In terms of representational format, the key is that to make creative inferences that go beyond particular experiences, the organism must represent its experience as types, that is to say, in some generalized, schematized, or abstract form. One plausible hypothesis is a kind of exemplar model in which the individual in some sense "saves" the particular situations and components to which it has attended (many models of knowledge representation have attention as the gateway). There is then generalization or abstraction across these in a process that we might call *schematization*. . . . Recognizing a situation or entity as a token of a known type . . . enables novel inferences about the token appropriate to the type.

He goes on,

> Categories, schema, and models are nothing more or less than imagistic or iconic schematizations of the organism's (or, in some cases, its species') previous experience (Barsalou, 1999, 2008). As such, they do not suffer from the indeterminancy of interpretation that some theorists attribute to iconic representations considered as mental pictures, that is, the indeterminacy of whether this image is of a banana, a fruit, an object, and so forth (Crane, 2003). They do not because they are composed of individual experiences in which the organism was attending to a relevant (already 'interpreted') situation. Thus, the organism "interprets," or understands, particular situations and entities in the context of its goals as it assimilates them to known (cognitively represented) types: 'This is another one of those.'[48]

Tomasello does not detail the means by which this "saving" of particular situations and components of past experiences occurs, and on this point, it is profitable to refer to Whitehead's aesthetic ontology to fill in the explanatory gaps. For example, Whitehead has no trouble accounting for the real presence of the past in the present occasion(s). His account of the present as "memory tinged with anticipation" is far better suited to explaining how a person can hear a sound *as* a word.

The difference between a nonlinguistic sound and linguistic one according to Tomasello is the degree of arbitrariness of connection between the symbol and the meaning. More primitive communicative noises are "iconic," and more complex ones are purely conventional. I argued

[48] Tomasello, 12.

earlier that symbolism is a means by which relationships obtain that are not limited by locality—that is, whereas in causal efficacy the relations involve no degree of abstraction, symbolic reference is what allows relations to obtain involving high degrees of abstraction and thereby indetermination by the immediately precedent events. Similarly, Tomasello observes, "arbitrary signs open up novel possibility of symbolizing aspects of relational thematic, or narrative organization of human cognition . . . which expands the range and complexity of human thinking immensely."[49] Generic thinking, or the ability to designate complex situations with a single sign, is a critical aspect of the step from gestural iconic acts to linguistic ones. This "step" was only possible because of a shared context or common ground, much like the one Whitehead describes at a quantum level as functioning as the physiological basis of perception. Thus, while we can infer that great apes "schematize cognitive models for the various types of situations that are recurrent and important in their lives," humans who began to engage in collaborative foraging, Tomasello's argument goes, honed the ability to schematize not only typical situations important for their individual purposes, but also to schematize "a collaborative structure comprising a joint goal with individual roles and joint attention with individual perspectives."[50] Schematization is how Tomasello refers to the process of abstraction and generalization driven by a variety of what he calls in earlier work "domain-general," cognitive pattern-recognition skills. Consider, for example, analogy and distributional analysis. These skills contribute to the "grammaticalization" of communication.

"Paradigmatic categories" of grammar (like nouns and verbs) "are formed through a process of functionally based distributional analysis in which concrete linguistic items (such as

[49] Tomasello, 97.
[50] Tomasello, 69.

words or phrases) that serve the same communicative function in utterances and constructions over time are grouped together into a category."[51] I take this process of grammaticalization to involve the aesthetics of what Whitehead calls species-identity recognitions. Like Whitehead's model whereby the more sense data elicited by a symbol, the more a meaning will be polythetically defined by those contrasts, Tomasello's model of how categories arise or are learned by infants depends not on the learning of abstract rules, but on the frequency of encounter with similar visual and aural patterns. He writes, "In general, in usage-based models the token frequency of an expression in the language learner's experience tends to entrench that expression in terms of the concrete words and morphemes involved." But the frequency is not only of the sequences or patterns of words, but also of the patterns among sentences, and so forth. The "abstractness" of a word or category, he thinks, is directly related to the "number of different forms in which the language learner experiences the expression or some element of the expression"—that is, the "frequency of a class of expressions" is directly propositional to the "abstractness or schematicity" of that construction.[52]

This quantification of abstractness in terms of frequency of exemplification is compatible with Whitehead's description of how the "generalities" with which a metaphysician works are determined in the work of philosophical "assemblage."[53] So he writes at the outset of *Modes of Thought*, "The first chapter in philosophic approach should consist in a free examination of some ultimate notions, as they occur naturally in daily life. I am referring to the generalities which are inherent in literature, in social organization, in the efforts towards understanding physical

[51] Tomasello, *Constructing a Language*, 301.
[52] Tomasello, 106–107.
[53] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought,* 2.

occurrences."[54] For Whitehead, the frequency of exemplification of these ultimate notions is directly related to the frequency with which they will show up, so to speak, in our linguistic expressions. In other words, these ultimate notions are not themselves arbitrary but are exemplified by our languages precisely because language originated by means of a world characterized by them. Again, analysis is possible only by means of synthesis, and synthesis is the object of analysis. In the creative passage of nature, the two are inextricable for Whitehead.

Tomasello admits that "we know very little" about how this progressive "entrenchment" or cumulative "saving" of tokens to form a type works.[55] But he writes that this process is, evolutionarily speaking, quite similar to "a number of basic processes of animal learning" such as habit-formation or routinization (not unlike what Whitehead calls reflex or simple symbolically-conditioned actions).[56] After there is a "critical mass" of arbitrary communicative conventions, he argues, new inferential processes emerge. First of all, individuals can then inherit a large inventory of communicative conventions that are related in complex ways, with varying degrees of abstraction. For example, an individual inherits the ability to refer not only to *that* gazelle, but also to a "gazelle-in-general," to an "animal-in-general," and so on. Secondly, this inventory of communicative conventions, precisely because it is arbitrary, forms a system wherein there is a mutual limitation of referential ranges. What counts as "gazelle" cannot also count as "giraffe," and so on.[57]

As I stated earlier, Whitehead describes life as a "bid for freedom," or "a bid for a certain independence of individuality with self-interests and activities not to be construed purely in

[54] Whitehead, 1.
[55] Tomasello, *Constructing a Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005), 300.
[56] Tomasello, 301.
[57] Tomasello, *A Natural History*, 98.

terms of environmental obligations"[58] It is symbolic reference that makes possible this freedom from brute conformation and repetition, and it does so increasingly in the form of higher degrees of abstraction. I find this element in Whitehead to be, at least to some important degree, compatible with Tomasello's declaration: "Cognitive evolution does not proceed from simple associations to complex cognition, but rather from inflexible adaptive specializations of varying complexities to flexible, individually self-regulated intentional actions underlain by cognitive representations, inferences, and self-monitoring."[59] The flexibility indicative of cognitive evolution is possible because of the high-grade forms of symbolism that Whitehead says frees organisms from environmental obligations. He takes language to be the quintessential exemplification of this.

For Tomasello, these systems of conventional communicative acts, as the explicitations of conceptual content, are what count as languages. With language, discourse is possible.[60] "And what happens in discourse quite often is that the recipient responds to an utterance by signaling noncomprehension, requesting clarification, and so forth," according to Tomasello.[61] The speaker must then attempt to make explicit a process of reasoning that was formerly only implicit and cognitively unavailable to the speaker. And when an individual engages in this explanatory effort for a listener, the speaker's own communicative acts become available to the speaker. When a speaker can perceive her own communicative acts, Tomasello conjectures, the conceptual content that was formerly only implicit "in some original communicative act" becomes "ripe for self-reflection."[62] The capacity to evaluate one's own communicative acts

[58] Tomasello, 65.
[59] Tomasello, 26.
[60] Tomasello, 104.
[61] Tomasello, 104.
[62] Tomasello, 104.

according to shared standards of intelligibility gives rise to what Tomasello calls normative self-monitoring, or the ability to reason "objectively," not in the sense of a "view from nowhere" but rather in the sense of a "view from anyone." It is on the basis of the "communicative pressure in normal discourse" imposed upon the speaker by the listener's signal of noncomprehension, then, that the possibility of "logical pressure" in "argumentative discourse" arises, whereby the disputants are forced "to make explicit in language the logical operations that until that time were only procedural and not representational at all."[63] Speakers must therefore make explicit their own background and/or shared assumptions in order to facilitate comprehension.[64]

These communicative and logical pressures, while social facts, are no less real than other sorts of environmental pressures. This is important for Tomasello because it means that facts can be both "objectively real and socially created."[65] However, the fact that this is not only important but "absolutely extraordinary" for Tomasello signals the residual effects of the bifurcation of nature so deeply embedded in contemporary thought.[66] Indeed, according to Whitehead's aesthetic ontology, there is framework within which "socially created" could mean "less real."

The key point for Tomasello is that discourse only arises in the first place because of the shared purposes, i.e., collaborative foraging. There is no incentive within this cooperative infrastructure, then, for being *un*reasonable: "Critically, in this context, neither of us wants to convince the other if we are in fact wrong about the location of antelopes;" he writes, "each would rather lose the argument and eat tonight than win the argument and go hungry."[67] He continues,

[63] Tomasello, 107.
[64] Tomasello, 108.
[65] Tomasello, 91–92.
[66] Tomasello, 91–92.
[67] Tomasello, 111.

> And so a key dimension of our cooperativeness is that we both have agreed ahead of time, implicitly, that we will go in the direction for which there are the "best" reasons. That is what being reasonable is all about.
>
> An appeal to "best" reasons invokes what Sellars (1963) calls "common standards of correctness and relevance, which relate what I do think to what anyone ought to think." Our cooperative argumentation in the context of joint or collective decision making is thus premised on a shared metric that we both use in determining which reasons are indeed "best." . . .
>
> The cooperative infrastructure was thus decisive in determining what it means to reason at all. The natural world itself may be totally "is"—the antelopes are where they are. However, the culturally embedded discourse processes by which we determine what "is" in fact is—in the space of reasons, to use Sellars's evocative phrase—are fraught with ought.[68]

What counts as a "reason" in Tomasello's account is that which serves to maintain the cooperative infrastructure of a society. The critical point that Whitehead enables us to make, however, is that while "reasons" are relative to the systems of conventional symbols by which reason qua norms-of-discourse emerge, this very relativity is inherent to the nature of symbolism—to the nature of symbolic reference that predates even consciousness. In short, Whitehead's account of symbolic reference presents a way we might ground the critiquability of symbolically-conditioned action in the very contingency of language.

As noted above, Tomasello admits at the end of *A Natural History* that the problem of accounting for the "intermediate step" between when there is "no thought" and when there is "thought" remains.[69] While Tomasello's work can add empirical detail to Whitehead's account of the binding and disruptive aspects of social symbols—specifically through his explication of the shift from iconic to arbitrary communicative acts and the emergence of discourse—Whitehead's aesthetic ontology can fill in the gaps in explanation at both the quantum and cosmic levels. His doctrine of the actual entity as a fundamental unit of connection, his

[68] Tomasello, 111.
[69] Tomasello, 149.

explication of aesthetics of symbolism, and his de-spatialized depiction of mentality, among other aspects of his thought, all conspire to elucidate what theorists like Tomasello are looking for in this "intermediate step" between no thought and thought. Moreover, it is precisely the aesthetics of this step, occasioned by the self-augmentative character of symbolic modes of experience, which exemplifies the real togetherness of nature and normativity.

Conclusion

It is just this real togetherness of nature and normativity that we require if we are to develop a noncircular argument for the possibility of social and political critique. It is by understanding the nature of symbolism that we can come to critique its inadequacies.

Otherwise put, in becoming attuned to the process of creative advance that conditions our very ability to ask about it, we open ourselves to that which calls us, lures us towards better possibilities. Whitehead foresaw the efficacy of such attunement, writing that

> [t]he creation of the world . . . is the victory of persuasion over force. The worth of men consists in their liability to persuasion. They can persuade and be persuaded by the disclosure of alternatives, the better and the worse. Civilization is the maintenance of social order, by its own inherent persuasiveness as embodying the nobler alternative. The recourse to force, however unavoidable, is a disclosure of the failure of civilization, either in general society or in a remnant of individuals. Thus in a live civilization there is always an element of unrest. For sensitiveness to ideas means curiosity, adventure, change. Civilized order survives on its merits, and is transformed by its power of recognizing its imperfections.[70]

It is in the more progressive societies—those built on persuasion rather than force—that Whitehead says a stronger "bond of sympathy" arises. I understand this "bond" to be one built upon a reciprocal sensitivity made possible by those very norms of reasoned discourse that both

[70] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 83.

arose *by means of* and *for the sake of* the articulation of collective purposes enabling collaborative forms of life. It is by means of these norms that we can develop "reverence for that power in virtue of which nature harbors ideal ends," including the power by which individuals achieve the capacity for "conscious determination of such ends."[71] It is by means of an intellectual attunement to that process that we achieve not only individual, but also collective, intentionality, that we can better achieve the ends determinable by it.

[71] Whitehead, 86.

CONCLUSION:

THEOLOGY

Reclaiming Whitehead's Theology

This project took root as an endeavor to develop an alternative to contemporary analytic responses to the epistemological problem of intentionality. My focus on Whitehead's epistemology rather than on his theology has been a conscious attempt to correct the undue emphasis that American interpreters of Whitehead have put on the latter at the expense of the former. The mistake, however, has not only been one of emphasis. Indeed, in the process of appropriating Whitehead for the purposes of liberalizing theology, these interpreters—for most among them belong to the Claremont School—have in turn domesticated Whitehead. One cannot properly interpret his theology, after all, without having first realized the seismic conceptual shifts he has affected.

I have explicated Whitehead's account of perception and judgment by way of his aesthetic ontology. The aesthetic is the baseline of physical explanation for Whitehead; it is the lowest level of abstraction of which we are linguistically capable. In terms of aesthetics, he thinks we have minimized metaphor and kept careful watch upon our chosen concepts. To take account of the aesthetic order of the cosmos is the first step in taking account of the others: the moral, the political, the religious, and so on. All order is ultimately aesthetic order for Whitehead. "[T]he moral order," he writes, "is merely certain aspects of aesthetic order."[1] And yet, in my exposition of Whitehead's aesthetic ontology for the purposes of demystifying the sense in which our thoughts can be "about" the world—in de-problematizing intentionality—I

[1] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* Lowell Lectures (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1996), 105. Originally published in 1926 by MacMillan.

have minimized recourse to his explicit uses of "God." I have done this so as to avoid hijacking the reader's mind by the very metaphysical picture from which Whitehead intends to emancipate us. I have picked—or delayed—my battles, so to speak.

If this avoidance strikes the reader as irresponsible, it is likely because a classical presumption about the role "God" ought to play in a cosmology lingers still. On the contrary, if the reader wishes I had said "good riddance" to Whitehead's theology, it is likely because of the same. Whitehead's God is not a metaphysical imposter, knowledge of whom or which would introduce some form of heteronomy or exception to his metaphysics. Whitehead's God is introduced by a metaphysical necessity: to account for the possibility of an order in nature. If the moral order is an aspect of the aesthetic order, the aesthetic order is derivative of what Whitehead calls "the immanence of God."[2]

Preliminary Remarks on Whitehead's Theology

My focus in what follows is how Whitehead's use of "God" may be interpreted in light of his metaphysics of symbolism. This discussion will serve to map the possible ways that "theology" may be reimagined in light of Whitehead's metaphysics as well as a contrast to the ways process theologians *have* imagined it. My analysis will have two levels: the first will be a cursory description of the function "God" serves in Whitehead's thought; the second will be an interpretation of his choice of theological language.

In beginning any description of Whitehead's God, it is important to recognize the evolutionary character of his thought. The "God" that appears in *Process and Reality* (1928) is not quite the "God" that we find in *Science and the Modern World* (1925), nor the "God" of just

[2] Whitehead, 105.

two years earlier in *Religion in the Making* (1926). The difference is not the product of retractions, but of transformations, afforded—and even required—by his own account of symbolism. In the foregoing, I have used scare quotes in order to draw attention to how his use of the term shifts according to the need and permissibility of a divine function rather than to refer to something or someone metaphysically auxiliary to his aesthetic schematization of reality. It is central to my aim in this conclusion to maintain a pragmatic account of meaning as use because I take the theological contributions of Whitehead's thought to be performative rather than dogmatic. Demonstrating how this is the case will serve my broader goal of reflecting back upon the work achieved in this dissertation in order to suggest a new conception of theology and its task.

What remains consistent in Whitehead's evolving theology—and what will therefore serve as our entry point—is its relation to the rationality, and therefore comprehensibility, of the cosmos. The divine function consistently appears when he needs to explain both the principle of unrest and the principle of limitation that together drive the passage of nature, a passage that exemplifies certain patterns of becoming rather than others. Moreover, the divine function appears when Whitehead attempts to account for this order in light of the quantum indeterminacy, moral agency, and the creative power of ideals, rather than in terms of unidirectional causality, strict determinacy, and power defined solely in terms of coercion or imposition. Before discussing the theological language of Whitehead, then, it is necessary to gain some purchase on how he himself regarded theological language as genera.

As a generic phenomenon, theology has a definitive history and ought not itself be hypostasized in analysis. The logic of the Greek *Theos* is not the logic of the Latin *Deus* or the Semitic *El,* nor of the Hindi *Bhagavān,* the Turkish *Tanri,* or the Persian *Khuda.* Nor are any of

these others self-same entities. Theology as an academic discipline is constantly negotiating the scope of its subject matter, which ensues amid debates about the origins of meanings and the meaning of origins. When he makes claims like "God made his first appearance in religion under the frigid title of the First Cause, and was appropriately worshipped in white-washed churches,"[3] we must read him as speaking of the Christian appropriation of *Theos*. Moreover, we should read him as speaking of the adventure of an idea whose unity is not absolute but characterized by some community of meaning, polythetic in nature, and ever changing.

As should already be abundantly clear, this is not to say that Whitehead was a historicist. He found nineteenth century historicism to be premised upon a "curious delusion" that "historical investigation" could be the sole veridical informant of belief, such that there could be no need for metaphysics. The historicist enterprise is itself founded upon a metaphysics—one which understands the present, from which the historian always begins, as capable of disclosing general principles in order to interpret the past.[4] By no means was Whitehead a reductionist about the meaning of theological or religious expression, in any mode (linguistic or otherwise).

Quite to the contrary, Whitehead understood all description to entail a metaphysics, and described metaphysics itself as description,[5] though to be sure, not *merely* such (indeed, the doctrine of *mere* description supposes its own metaphysics). He was neither a historicist nor an essentialist—a fact that might best be communicated anecdotally. Indeed, Whitehead was intensely fond of John Henry Newman, and even attempted a pilgrimage of sorts to meet him

[3] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* 123.
[4] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* 84. Whitehead continues, "It can be objected that we believe in the past and talk about it without settling our metaphysical principles. That is certainly the case. But you can only deduce metaphysical dogmas from your interpretation of the past on the basis of a prior metaphysical interpretation of the present."
[5] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* 89.

sometime around 1889, though this date is contested.[6] Newman's *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) profoundly impacted Whitehead, who at one point in his life while still a member of the Anglican Church, contemplated joining the Roman one instead. My guess is that Whitehead admired the way that Newman challenged the nineteenth century historicist standards for what counts as evidence and what constituted warranted belief. This challenge was not in the name of some fideist appeal to faith alone, but a challenge to the metaphysics of what counts as "proof" and an effort to understand faith as a rational activity— in short, to rationalize faith. This rationalization is not the reductive sort, but the sort that seeks to reconcile incompatibilities and exemplifies the hope that our thinking is not in vein.

No doubt with Newman's notion of "development" in mind, Whitehead writes of dogma with great sensitivity and nuance to its function for a community. Dogmas need not—indeed, ought not—become synonymous with dogmatic intolerance.[7] Dogma is a system of social symbols that function as "precise enunciation of a general truth" for a community, and can therefore serve as a binding force.[8] And yet, because it is a precise statement, it is abstract. Lest one's adherence to it becomes an instance of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness (the cosmological version of idolatry, perhaps?) a dogma must grow, must develop. Its adequacy is measured in terms of "its adjustment of certain abstract concepts."[9] Such is the measure of adequacy for all thought: "Progress in truth—truth in science and truth in religion—is mainly a progress in the framing of concepts, in discarding artificial abstractions or partial metaphors, and

[6] Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead,* Vol. 1, pp. 141–42.
[7] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 76.
[8] Whitehead, 126.
[9] Whitehead, 130–31.

in evolving notions which strike more deeply into the root of reality."[10] Progress, in short, is defined in terms of the adequacy of symbols to the reality they purport to express.

"Expression," writes Whitehead, "is the one fundamental sacrament."[11] Our responsibility to the adequacy of our symbols—to curating their expressiveness—is inherent to symbolism itself. The very expressiveness of our actions (linguistic or otherwise) is defined as such because they are interpretable; there is some common ground (elucidated in detail in chapters 6 and 7) between the one who expresses and the one who interprets. Apart from conditions of interpretation, our "modes of expression remain accidental, unrationalized happenings of mere sense-experience."[12] In short, they remain the arbitrary moans of uncivilized creatures. To be rational, as Tomasello suggests, is to use (implicitly or explicitly) agreed upon standards of thinking, according to which something can count as a *reason*. Properly understood so as to avoid coherentist problems, this account of rationality is compatible with Whitehead's aesthetics of symbolism, according to which rational communication in the form of reasoned discourse is a highly complex mode of real togetherness. How we think and how we speak, in short, has real effects, in the fullest sense of "real." Expression is the one fundamental sacrament, because it is the fundamental means of community in nature.

As discussed in chapter 6, symbolic reference is a single event; there is not first the symbol and then the meaning. Symbols disclose their meanings to us; symbolic reference is at once the expression and the evocation of meaning. A symbol "elicits the intuition which interprets it."[13] The symbolic event therefore needs to be creative. If it is not, it is because it has

[10] Whitehead, 131.
[11] Whitehead, 131.
[12] Whitehead, 132.
[13] Whitehead, 132.

lost its meaning; it has failed to elicit the intuition that serves as the common ground by which interpretation is possible.

Symbols that are not creative become impediments to progress insofar as they cease to facilitate understanding and serve only to condition uncritical action. It is no different with respect to dogma: "The dogma which fails to evoke immediate apprehension stifles the religious life."[14] In a religious inflection of his more general account of symbolism, Whitehead asserts, "Idolatry is the necessity product of static dogmas."[15] The idolatrous symbol is the symbol that fails to signify and therefore stifles creativity by conditioning blind obedience. When the conservative forces of symbolism are not kept in check by the disruptive elements, communities that should be held together by reasons degrade into communities held together by blind instinct.

The primary point of the foregoing analysis of dogma is that theology is no less in need of the constant reframing of concepts than any other linguistic genera of human expression. What we count as theological symbols is a process with historical precedent. To ask about Whitehead's "theology," then, is to ask about this history. For Whitehead, this history is inexplicable without consideration of a broader history of cosmological thinking, which sought to reconcile reality as permanent with reality as fluent. The next section will examine the categories Whitehead employs to interpret this broader history so as to properly situate his own thought within it.

Theology, Cosmology, and History

Whitehead's historical interpretation of the origin of theology, cursory as it is, depicts it as auxiliary to cosmology. More specifically, he suggests that "God" first makes an appearance in

[14] Whitehead, 137.
[15] Whitehead, 147.

order to fill an explanatory need presented by the source of order in nature—that is, its lawlikeness or even its rationality.

A "law" for Whitehead's is "explanatory of some community in character" permeating "the things which constitute Nature."[16] We should understand this "community" in terms of the real ontological togetherness maintained throughout this exposition. This definition of law therefore entails a doctrine of internal relations and rejects ontological essentialism; it is a doctrine of immanence. For Whitehead, when Plato in his later thought put forth the definition of being as power, he in effect provided the "charter" for the doctrine of Immanent Law.[17]

The immanentist explanation of the order of nature stands in tension with an account of law as imposed from without nature. The doctrine of "Imposed Law" always requires its adherent to at some point appeal to some metaphysical exception—namely, to a transcendent deity imposing divine will upon a world composed of externally related beings. Therefore, the doctrine of imposition "very naturally follows from Descartes notions of 'substance.'"[18] Imposed law entails an exact conformation to it: "When [God] said, Let there be light, there was *light* and not a mere imitation or a statistical average."[19] An explanation of statistical averages can only be attempted, according to the view of Imposition, in terms of our confused perception of the facts. And so, we get Newton's absolute laws.[20] In contrast, law as immanent means that the laws of nature depend upon the things constituting nature—things that change.

Each account of the lawlikeness of nature has its limitations leading to very different theologies. The doctrine of imposition leads to "the extreme monotheistic doctrine of God, as

[16] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* 112.
[17] Whitehead, 129.
[18] Whitehead, 114.
[19] Whitehead, 114.
[20] Whitehead, 113.

essentially transcendent and only accidently immanent," while the doctrine of immanence leads "to the pantheistic doctrine of God, as essentially immanent and in no way transcendent."[21] The fusion between immanence and imposition—between the later Plato and the Semitic doctrine—is the "great conception which reigned supreme till the beginning of the seventeenth century."[22] What Whitehead means is that Christianity exhibited an amalgamation between imposition and immanence until the rise of modernism. With Descartes and Newton, then, we see a move away from immanence and towards imposition.

Yet modernism does not exhibit the same notion of imposition as did the Semites. Modernism, Whitehead holds, is a fusion between imposition and early trends of positivism. The atomic theory systematized by Epicurus, having been first adumbrated by Democritus and elaborated by Lucretius, provided a rival cosmology to Plato. "According to Lucretius," Whitehead writes, "the world is an interminable shower of atomic particles, streaming through space, swerving, intermingling, disentangling their paths, recombining them. For this doctrine qualitative differences are merely the statistical expression of geometrical patterns of intermingled paths, the outcomes of swerving, combined with a finite number of diversities of shape."[23] This atomic theory strikes Whitehead as a fusion of law as immanent and law as description—or better, the view of law as *mere* description of early positivism. It is the atomic theory, Whitehead believes, that took new form in modern thought, when cosmological questions of what we know became epistemological ones of how we know.[24] This view of law as mere description is resident in the positivism of Hume. And, insofar as Whitehead has argued that

[21] Whitehead, 121.
[22] Whitehead, 121.
[23] Whitehead, 122.
[24] Whitehead, 125.

skepticism is inevitable within the metaphysical framework tacit in Hume's thought, he sees the doctrine of law as mere description to be just a few steps away from the doctrine of law as "conventional interpretation."[25] I would argue that this step is the one that history witnesses between early and late analytic philosophy—the very one that moves from post-Kantian anti-metaphysics to coherentist worries about the possibility of vindicating the objective purport of our thinking.

As discussed in chapter 1, Whitehead demonstrates how Einsteinian physics is more compatible with the cosmology of the *Timaeus* than with the Semitic cosmology. In *Adventures of Ideas,* he qualifies his critique: Whereas the issue with medieval interpretations of Plato owed to the influence of the Semitic doctrine of imposition, the issue as it manifests in Descartes and Newton is the result of a modern synthesis of this doctrine with the atomic theory of Epicurus.

The focus of my dissertation has been the epistemological implications evident in contemporary analytic philosophy of the metaphysical presuppositions deriving from this consortium of substantialist-absolutist-positivist-subjectivist thinking. But, as the foregoing suggests, the theological implications are indissociable from the epistemological ones. However brash Whitehead's historical depiction of alternative cosmologies may strike the reader, the categorizations he employs to sketch it are helpful for delineating the sorts of theology he rejects. For instance, he finds pre-seventeenth century Christian theology more promising than post-seventeenth century varieties. In fact, he thinks that for the better part of 1,300 years, it was the theologians who were the ablest thinkers, and those unjustifiably undervalued in (anachronistically) secular histories of philosophy.[26]

[25] Whitehead, 111.
[26] Whitehead, 129.

The theologians of Alexandria and Antioch, definitive of what he takes to be the first formative period of Christian theology, hold Whitehead's greatest esteem. So much so, in fact, that he could write: "These Christian theologians have the distinction of being the only thinkers who in a fundamental metaphysical doctrine have improved upon Plato."[27] These theologians recognized in Plato a deficient account of how the World of Ideas qua source of order shares in the nature of the world. Thus, while Plato may have been the first philosopher for Whitehead because he defined the human being as "capable of the Idea,"[28]—that is, as receptive to the persuasive agency of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, the terms in which he attempted to explain immanent power of the ideal, terms of "imitation" and secondary images—rendered him vulnerable to appropriation.[29] His doctrine of the World-Soul as an emanation from the World of Ideas therefore makes the *Timaeus*, for Whitehead, "Plato's most unfortunate essay in mythology"[30] and the one responsible for "the feeblest side of Christian Theology."[31] It represents Plato's wavering between immanence and imposition, something his later definition of being as power would correct.

Theologians of Alexandria capitalized upon this wavering, finding themselves in need of reconciling a transcendent and immanent God. They needed a doctrine of direct immanence in the person of Christ of a transcendent God, and therefore improved upon Plato's unfortunate mythology by replacing the doctrine of emanations—so ripe for Gnostic outworking—by importing a metaphysics of imposition into a metaphysics of immanence. They therefore showed how "Platonic metaphysics should develop, if it was to give a rational account of the role of the

[27] Whitehead, 168.
[28] Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead,* 498.
[29] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* 168.
[30] Whitehead, 130.
[31] Whitehead, 168.

persuasive agency of God."[32] But while Whitehead admires this move, he saw it as impeded by a genetic flaw. Namely, the metaphysics of imposition is predicated upon a theology of ontological exception. The theologians of Alexandria would never be able to reconcile immanence and imposition from a metaphysical standpoint because their commitment to the latter entails exempting God from the metaphysical categories that apply to the world. In short, they structurally instituted a gulf between the logic of the world's being and the logic of God's being. "The worst of gulf is," Whitehead muses with his iconic restraint, "that it is very difficult to know what is happening on the further side of it."[33] I read him to conclude that an account of the order of the nature that relies upon a doctrine of imposition will always fail to develop a rational metaphysics—a metaphysics that can account for the knowability of the cosmos.

Religion and science alike require a backing of rational metaphysics, and such a metaphysics should not be expected to be simple. We have no ground upon which to expect the answers to our most far-reaching questions to be simple. Indeed, if there is anything Whitehead has not been accused of, it is simplification. In his view, liberal theologians reacting to periods of unbridled dogmatic intolerance have fostered this mistaken expectation, and understandably so: "In view of the horrors produced by bigotry, it is natural for sensitive thinkers to minimize religious dogmas."[34] However, he warns, these "pragmatic reasons" prove to be "dangerous guides," fating all simplifications of religious dogma to shipwreck "upon the rock of the problem of evil."[35] Whitehead wonders about the evidence upon which this expectation of simplicity is founded, for the world disclosed to us by modern physics is anything but simple. The more we

[32] Whitehead, 168.
[33] Whitehead, 169.
[34] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* 76.
[35] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* 77.

look, the stranger the world around us appears. Religious dogmas, to remain adequate, are not to be simplified but fortified. And they are fortified by rational metaphysics—that is, by the endeavor to "express the most general concepts for the all-inclusive universe" and that therefore "critiques meanings."[36] We can avoid rational metaphysical backing upon the basis of bad metaphysical presuppositions. Beliefs built upon such presuppositions may be simple to understand, but they will not for very long be believable.[37]

At the epistemological level, the possibility of the knowability of the cosmos is expressed in terms of the possibility of successful intentional relations between mind and world. In other words, a rational metaphysics cannot admit theological exceptions. And insofar as an irrational explanation is a contradiction in terms, a rational metaphysics is the only sort that could ever hope to account in theory for what the metaphysician exemplifies in practice: the hope for understanding is not in vein. For Whitehead, it is the task of philosophical theology, as a sort of fundamental theology, to provide a rational answer to the question of the relation of reality as permanent with reality as fluent.[38] Such an answer can be achieved only if the proposed "mediator" is not a "transcendent emanation" or metaphysical exception, but a "component in common."[39] A rational understanding of the permanent and fluent aspects of the world requires a doctrine of "real communication between ultimate realities," and one where communication is not merely accidental, but a "part of the essential nature of each physical actuality."[40] In short, it

[36] Whitehead, 83.
[37] Such was the fate of Newton's cosmology, Whitehead argues; it "is very easy to understand and very hard to believe." Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* 131.
[38] Whitehead, 130.
[39] Whitehead, 130.
[40] Whitehead, 134.

requires something like Whitehead's aesthetic ontology, according to which "law" is defined in terms of community of character.

There are plenty of examples of theories of communication between God and the world, to be sure, just not ones of *real* communication. Leibniz's God, for instance, is the supreme monad determining the pre-established harmony for all others. Moreover, this provision is made by way of a communication between God and the world qua windowless monads. Whitehead objects, however, on the basis that no reason can be given as to why they have "windows towards God" and God has "windows towards them"—that is, on the basis that God has been "exempted from the common fate of isolation."[41] Insofar as they all require that such metaphysical exceptions can be made in an attempt to be rational, Leibniz's God, Lucretius's Void, and Plato's Receptacle all "play the same part in cosmological theory."[42] In fact, Whitehead argues that Newton's doctrine of "Empty Space" (critiqued in chapter 1) also plays this role to the extent that he regards it as the "sensorium of God," implicitly combining, on Whitehead's account, the Lucretian Void with the Leibnizian God.[43] In a manner that many later religionists would appreciate, Whitehead anticipates the objection that the problems of cosmology may be written off as the isolated ruminations of philosophers of little consequence in practice. The question of the social, political, economic, and now ecological relevance of religion in our contemporary world might even be construed as the implications of popularized cosmologies.[44] Philosophical theology, he maintains, ought to mitigate the "clashings of senseless compulsion" underwritten by unrationalized cosmological assumptions.[45]

[41] Whitehead, 134.
[42] Whitehead, 135.
[43] Whitehead, 135.
[44] Whitehead, 135.
[45] Whitehead, 170.

In my reading, what would constitute the "rationalizing" of these assumptions is the critique of the social symbols informing them. This is precisely the sort of work Whitehead prescribes for Protestant theology—for instance, in suggesting the symbolic replacement of the Book of Revelations with Thucydides's account of the speech of Pericles to the Athenians.[46] It is the latter that presents what ought to be the ideal of civilization and the inspiration of religious sentiment. If philosophy is to be the "self-correction by consciousness of its own initial excess of subjectivity,"[47] it must not artificially narrow the scope of its data. "Philosophy finds religion, and modifies it; and conversely religion is among the data of experience which philosophy must weave into its own scheme."[48] Religions are particularities, species of a broader aesthetic genus.[49] They are translations of "general ideas into particular thoughts, particular emotions, and particular purposes" and are "directed to the end of stretching individual interest beyond its self-defeating particularity."[50] And again, "Religion is an ultimate craving to infuse into the insistent particularity of emotion that non-temporal generality which primarily belongs to conceptual thought alone."[51] It arises only in higher organisms, Whitehead maintains, because the breadth of experience is so great and the quality so complex that we yearn for the reconciliation of the life of emotion and the life of conceptual analysis. This yearning, when unfulfilled, is structurally expressed in religious sentiment. Religions ossify the symbols in terms of how a particular community yearns for this reconciliation—a reconciliation "in which emotional experience illustrates a conceptual justification, and conceptual experience find an emotional illustration."[52]

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[46] Whitehead, 170–71.
[47] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 15.
[48] Whitehead, 15–16.
[49] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* 172.
[50] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 15.
[51] Whitehead*,* 16.
[52] Whitehead, 15.

In short, religions express the unfulfilled yearning for an intellectual justification of brute experience. In this way, religion and science share a common genesis. The "grave divergence" between them, according to Whitehead, has to do with what each takes as its primary data: religion begins from the immediacies of emotion, whereas science takes such emotions themselves as among its percepta.[53]

Philosophy achieves its task only insofar as it reconciles religion and science into a single rational scheme of thought.[54] Emphatically, however, in so doing, philosophy does not *replace* religion or science. Rather, it helps them progress towards their own implicit ideals. "The great social ideal for religion," Whitehead writes, "is that it should be the common basis for the unity of civilization."[55] It is thus that Pericles's speech to the Athenians would better serve to advance Protestant theology than Revelations, for Pericles called to the Athenians to unite not by appealing to the transcendent value or by any display of force, but rather by appealing to that which united them organically: the freedom to be individuals in community. "Athens" was not that which transcended the freedom of its citizens; it was the communication of diversity.

Pericles's very act of addressing them in this way performed the interpretation capable of transforming them into the only thing that could, in the end, save Athens: the will of its people, informed by the lure of their own ideal.[56] By means of his address, the Athenians "became what they were from the cosmic viewpoint: incompatibilities demanding an interpretation to reconcile them, not in general, but here and now, for the Athens they henceforth brought into existence in a

[53] Whitehead, 16.
[54] Whitehead, 15.
[55] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* 172.
[56] My interpretation of Whitehead's appeal to Thucydides's account of the speech of Pericles has taken a great deal of direction from Isabelle Stengers's own. See *Thinking with Whitehead*, 497.

new mode."[57] Whitehead's appeal to the speech of Pericles in short, exemplifies the moral work of interpretation. It is just this sort of work Whitehead himself has offered of humanity's own adventure in civilization in the hopes that such interpretation will show the way it might, like Athens, be saved—and saved "not in general, but here and now." Speculative philosophy must begin always *in medias res,* never in the hopes of achieving a final analysis, but in the hopes that something is achievable nonetheless.

We ought to approach Whitehead's use of the word "God" not only in light of his critique of former theological doctrines, but also in terms of his definition of progress. What I mean is that we must understand Whitehead's use of "God" not in terms of how it can be "defined," but in terms of the conceptual transformations that it effects.

Theology as the Performance of Progress

By the time we get to the "Final Interpretation" of Whitehead's metaphysical scheme in *Process and Reality*, we are told that "God and the world" are not the sorts of things one defines. We can define other ideal opposites: good and evil, joy and sorrow, greatness and triviality, many and one. Such definitions constitute the nature of one's cosmology. But to relate "God" and "world" is to introduce "the note of interpretation."[58] The contrast of God and world, he argues, is not of the same order as all others. This contrast *embodies* the cosmological problem *exemplified* by all the others. In so doing, he claims, the function of this contrast inevitably serves to interpret that problem "as to the quality of creative origination." It is the nature of passage and the passage of nature—its order and chaos, identity and diversity—that occasioned, on his account, candidate theologies in the first place.

[57] Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead,* 497.
[58] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 341.

Perhaps the reason why the "God" of *Religion in the Making* (1926) is not quite the "God" of *Process and Reality* (1928) has something to do with the fact that Whitehead wrote *Symbolism* in the intervening year. Indeed, his historical interpretation of the concept "God" examined in the previous section came several years later in 1933. It is thus that he writes that his theological interpretation involves nothing in the nature of proof and ought to be conceived merely as "suggestions" as to how his system has transformed the cosmological problem of the order of nature.[59] Whitehead's use of the concept "God" is an interpretation of a necessary cosmological function arising out of his system, a function that provides for both the principle of unrest and the principle of limitation inherent to the passage of nature—to the nature of "creative origination."[60] Thus, while the inadequacies of language "might prevent us from attempting a 'definition' of God," Randal Auxier writes, "there is no reason it should prevent us from talking about God. The key is to keep our various levels of meaning ever before us."[61] So long as we keep in mind that the nature of progress in truth lies with the framing (and reframing) of our concepts, so as to maintain a careful watch upon the adequacy of our metaphors and our degrees of abstraction, we may responsibly talk about "God."

This interpretation, however, is entirely absent in *Symbolism.* In fact, *Symbolism* is the only book of Whitehead's that is entirely free of any reference to either God or religion. It is also the only book in which he explicitly develops a political philosophy—and he does so not on the basis of appeals to transcendent entities or values, but on the basis of his theory of perception.[62]

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[59] Whitehead, 343.
[60] Whitehead, 341.
[61] Randall Auxier, "A Note on Whitehead's View of God in *Religion in the Making*," in Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1996), 247.
[62] I owe this concise observation to Roland Faber, "Uniting Earth to the Blue of Heavens Above: Strange Attractors in Whitehead's *Symbolism*," in *Rethinking Whitehead's Symbolism: Thought, Language, Culture,* eds. Roland Faber, Jeffrey A. Bell, and Joseph Petek (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 56.

He articulates the possibility of social and political critique as inherent to the very nature of symbolic reference, and he articulates the necessity of such a critique if our symbols are not to become destructive of the community they are meant to create. In this way, Whitehead attempts to show how an aesthetics of language can incite what in his previous work he said religion ought to be: world-loyalty.[63]

The power of an interpretation, as in the case of Pericles and the Athenians, is the difference it makes to those who entertain it. Those who entertain Whitehead's theological interpretation of his scheme witness a reframing of theological concepts. Moreover, it is a framing *within* a rational metaphysics. Whitehead judged his scheme to metaphysically necessitate an actual but nontemporal entity in order to account for both the general potentiality of the universe *and* its real potentiality. He therefore posits the dipolar nature of God: qua actual, God is available qua objective data for concrescing subjects, and qua nontemporal, God has no possibility foreclosed to him. As the objecthood of possibility for the world, God plays a cosmological role in every act of becoming. By naming this function "God," Whitehead performs philosophical theology qua theology corrected of its initial excess of subjectivity for the purpose of facilitating its original cosmological task: elucidating the real togetherness of the multifariousness of the world.

The power of Whitehead's theological interpretation of his cosmology is therefore the difference it makes to the adventure for which it seeks to account. By performing the critique and revision of our shared symbols, Whitehead shows how we adapt our thinking to those new elements of life that present as incompatibilities needing to be reconciled. He demonstrates, that is, not what, but how we ought to think in regards to these new elements if we are not to be

[63] Whitehead, *Religion in the Making,* 60.

wrecked by them. Particularly in light of the political and ecological exigencies of our time, thinking with Whitehead could very well prove to be an existential imperative.

EPILOGUE:

THINKING WITH WHITEHEAD ON THE

ETHICS OF HUMAN STRIVING

Introduction

Discussions about human yearning take many forms in contemporary analytic debates, whether it is the problem of intentionality and the inescapability of discourse, to the question of the viability of a postmodern conception of ethical objectivity, to the possibility of a metaphysics of contingency. What is truly at stake in these debates is whether or not we—the finite, fallible, and consistently inconsistent beings that we are—can make sense of the notion of *progress* or degrees of excellence. More specifically, it is the question of whether our striving for improvement in any area of inquiry can achieve in practice what it presupposes in theory—that is, a certain directionality or achievability.

The other side of this presupposition of directionality where we can gauge improvements is that we can recognize and critique *failures*. Of particular relevance is the degree to which we can ground ethical and cultural critiques. In this essay, I argue that Whitehead's philosophy of organism provides a metaphysical account of the development of human capacities for such aspirations that entails an ethics. To work out the ethical entailments of Whitehead's thought is to develop further resources for grounding—or, better yet, *disclosing*—critiques of those practices that impede the creative principle that conditions the very possibility of these human capacities.

In order to explicate this prescriptive aspect of Whitehead's work, I am going to do two things: first, I will enter into conversation with Isabelle Stengers in her major work *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts* (Harvard University Press, 2011) in order to defend a normative reading of Whitehead; and second, I will engage with the later work of

Jacques Derrida on the so-called autoimmunity of democracy in order to *apply* this normative reading to our contemporary situation. I argue that Whitehead's metaphysics enables us to critique, in no uncertain terms, those practices that would, by democratic means, endanger the democratic mode of living. I will pursue this endeavor in the spirit of Cornel West who says that the pragmatist is neither an optimist nor a pessimist—the pragmatist is a prisoner of hope. Indeed, Whitehead himself characterized the metaphysics as an adventure of such hope.[1]

A Normative Reading of Whitehead

In March 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, Whitehead wrote: "Today, after the experience of the last seven years, I see no hope for the future of civilization apart from world unity based on sympathetic compromise within a framework of morality which the United Nations Organization now represents."[2] With this statement, Whitehead begins an article that provides us some of his most explicit ethical and political (read *normative*) assessments. These assessments are not additives; they are entailed by his very metaphysics. This point matters because it informs, even authorizes, our transition between metaphysics as description and metaphysics as prescription—a transition deemed not only unauthorized, but un-authoriz*able*, not only by those who disagree with the whole metaphysical enterprise, but also by many contemporary interpreters of Whitehead. One such interpreter, Isabelle Stengers, writes, "Whiteheadian humor thus thwarts the temptation of making a big deal of the cosmological perspective. There are enough dramatic sciences in human lives; there's no need to add more." She continues, "Christians, Stoics, Nietzscheans, Kantians are all accepted together, with the co-

[1] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 42.
[2] Alfred North Whitehead, "An Appeal to Sanity" (1939), *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 53.

presence of the others being part of the test for each. . . . And if philosophy needs God, it is precisely to resist the passion of taking sides in this regard."[3]

She here references Whitehead's own description of the task of philosophy, which is to never forget the multifariousness of the world. She is right to point out that the first aim of Whitehead's project is to distinguish between what he or any particular thinker or culture takes to be important, and the generic category of importance. She aptly grasps this first major task of Whitehead's work, perhaps most explicitly *Modes of Thought,* which was to expose the presuppositions of language rather than its explicit statements. He sought to arrange the general notions "which are *inherent* in literature, in social organization, in *the efforts* towards understanding physical occurrence."[4] Of course, to this end (as just noted), he had a stake in distinguishing between what we take to be important and importance as a generic category. However, the danger that Stengers—with all her philosophical acumen—still fails to avoid is the one for which Whitehead's system implicitly demands our vigilance. It is the danger of creating false equivalences—that is, of conflating equality and neutrality.

Whitehead himself acknowledged that his work of assemblage—the work of gathering together the general notions presupposed by language—was not to *replace* systematic philosophy but only to necessarily precede it. He wrote, "Before the work of systematization commences, there is a previous task—a very necessary task if we are to avoid the narrowness inherent in all finite systems."[5] The task of assemblage is not, I argue, wholly disconnected from the task of systematization. The reason it must precede systematic philosophy is precisely because it ought to inform it. And the reason it *ought* to inform it is because it makes a difference

[3] Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 496.
[4] Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought,* 1.
[5] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought,* 2.

for the implications (I argue ethical implications) of that system. Stengers seems to stop short of recognizing the way Whitehead thinks the descriptive task contributes to the prescriptive one. Indeed, if Whitehead is really attempting to *save* the adventure of ideas—which Stengers maintains is the point of *Adventures of Ideas*— it would seem to follow that the *means* by which this adventure is immunized from its intrinsic freedom for self-destruction *could not remain merely an additive of comparable value to all others in that adventure.* Whitehead's method, rather, stimulates a categorical shift—one that brings the history of ideas to a greater degree of self-attunement.

What this means is that we must not translate Whitehead's commitment to equality in the work of assemblage into a neutrality in the work of systematization. To do so is to exhibit an inadequate scope of appreciation for his project. Stengers is limited by such a contraction. On the one hand, she recognizes Whitehead's attempts to save the adventure of ideas from self-stultification by making explicit propositions *about* this adventure intended to *transform* that adventure through the feelings it elicits.[6] On the other, she claims that Whitehead's own work is *merely* an aspect of the adventure and not *about* that adventure in any more adequate way. For instance, when she asks what the "ultimate" of this adventure of ideas is, she is certain it is not creativity, "for it is only the ultimate of Whitehead's philosophical construction, referring to his responsibility as a thinker, not to what makes him think."[7] Whitehead was not, however, in the business of such compartmentalization, not only acting on his "responsibility" as a thinker, but also *accounting for* the fact of this responsibility (not to mention his awareness of it) as part of

[6] Stengers, 500.
[7] Stengers, 499.

his standard of schematic adequacy. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find Whitehead ready and able to speak about the ethics of statecraft and the progress of civilization.

One lesson that reading Whitehead teaches is that the mistakes we incur in our judgments often have nothing to do with the content of the claim itself, but rather with an overestimation of the *scale* of its pertinence. This was the basis of Whitehead's critique of modern philosophy's failure to account for the stubborn fact of causal efficacy in perception.[8] It is likewise the basis of Stengers's failure to recognize the prescriptive implications of Whitehead's project. She argues that Whitehead's metaphysical interpretation of the notion of moral responsibility, for instance, renders it a "generic, neutral fact."[9] Rather than enabling us to "escape partiality," Whitehead's metaphysics causes that partiality to "stammer"—that is, to continue to affirm *what* matters "without, for all that, having to affirm that it *must* matter."[10] Stengers denies us *both* a "truth" that transcends our "contingent" evaluations, *and* a nihilistic relativization of all valuation. She permits us only an irreducible moment in the adventure of ideas that is neither arbitrary nor transcendentally authorized. To paraphrase, it is what it is—a partiality that is neither right nor wrong, but neutral.

And yet, to affirm this partiality as a moment in the adventure is to implicitly occupy a perspective on the whole that Stengers explicitly denies us. She sees Whitehead's generality as neutrality and therefore confuses a methodological equality with conclusive neutrality. It is possible that she does this because of a form of aversive Kantianism, which fuels an enduring suspicion of subjectivity.[11] The Kantian subject cannot sincerely make the distinction between

[8] Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effects*, 41–42.
[9] Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 495.
[10] Stengers, 495.
[11] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 248.

equality and neutrality because this subject views its subjectivity as ontologically exceptional, such that any given notion of objectivity is merely another subjective rendering. If the reality of objectivity is denied, then the subject can never know anything other than itself. But if the subject is conceived such that its very conditions of possibility imply the reality of objectivity, then the subject is not exceptional—it is the most intimate self-expression of reality itself. Whitehead's human subject not only presents a perspective on the whole, but it is capable of recreating that perspective, testing it, and realizing its freedom from and within it. Whitehead's subject, in short, can tell us something about reality. And insofar as that something involves the irreducibility of value and a particular function for divinity, to deny Whitehead's subject the possibility of distinguishing equality from neutrality is to deny the possibility of human striving.

To make explicit the normative elements of Whitehead's thought is to enable him to speak to contemporary questions about the possibility of grounding ethical and political critique. He can do this insofar as these normative elements are themselves grounded in a metaphysics of yearning that accounts not only for the possibility of striving after certain ideals, but also for the possibility of discerning better or worse contributions to that striving. Moving forward, when I say something or someone has a metaphysical "yearning," I mean to describe something like a transcendental structure of subjectivity. I understand all subjectivity in Whitehead's thought to be constituted by an ontology of appetition, whereby permanence and change are accounted for by a principle of unrest that operates by persuasion rather than force. Whitehead's ontology entails a particular understanding of how individuals and societies co-constitute by means of a structural or compositional yearning to advance. This advance is sustained by the allurement of possibilities—an allurement demystified by the ontological principle.

In politics, his understanding of the social nature of humanity remains congruent with his understanding of the social nature of reality. The danger in which he finds civilization owes, he claims, to a "perversion" of this proper understanding. If we misunderstand the social character of humanity, we will misunderstand the value of its social systems. Social life ought to be, in his words, the "provision of opportunity."[12] The worth of a social system depends on the opportunity it provides individuals to create and preserve experiences of value. If we appeal to a 1941 Harvard lecture to gain clarity on the topic of value experience, we find that the *experience* of value (or evaluation) can be understood as a process by which established fact "exhibits an immortal world of coordinated value."[13]

Evaluation is the interconnection between actuality and potentiality because it is the activity of modification—on the one hand, the activity of modification needs something to *modify* (namely, matters of fact), and on the other, the activity of modification needs a *perspective* on what has been and a *purpose* for what should be. Action is only *effective* insofar as it involves reference to value (perspective and purpose), and value has no meaning (efficacy) "apart from its necessary reference to the world of passing fact."[14] Evaluation—the activity of conceptual valuation—is therefore the driving force of the creative advance. And it is a persuasive force that operates by means of "incitement towards" and "deterrence from" a "manifold of possibility."[15] This manifold of possibility is not a single line, but an infinity of dimension. Of course, Whitehead writes, "we can only conceive a finite fragment of this spread of grades [of ideas]. But as we choose a single line of advance in such generality, we seem to

[12] Alfred North Whitehead, "Appeal to Sanity," in *Essays in Science and Philosophy,* 1939 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 65.
[13] Whitehead, "Immortality," 81.
[14] Whitehead, 79–80.
[15] Whitehead, 82.

meet a higher type of value. For example, we enjoy a color, but the enjoyment of the picture—if it is a good picture—involves a higher grade of value."[16] We can choose a line of advance because of our capacity for memory and anticipation, which I understand as semiotic access to the past and the future. We learn we must choose a line of advance when we become attuned through the formulation of adequate and applicable propositions made possible by relations of symbolic reference to the values creative of this capacity.

Here is how Whitehead understands the emergence of our capacity for the experience of value. Life emerges in proportion to the dominance of what he calls the basic factors of experience: consciousness, memory, and anticipation.[17] The greater the capacity for experience, the greater the capacity for novelty. This is because memory of the past and anticipation of the future provide greater degrees of freedom from present conformity to the immediate past. As Whitehead writes, "The universe is material in proportion to the restriction of memory and anticipation."[18] Since the degree of freedom is proportional to the degree of conceptual valuation, the emergence of factors for experience represents the world of value receiving "into its unity the scattered effectiveness of realized activities, transformed by the supremacy of its own ideals."[19] The emergence of factors for experience reveals to us—the products of such emergence—a "glimpse of the origin of that drive towards limited ideals of perfection which haunts the Universe"; it reveals to us, in other words, not only how but why we are aware of ourselves and of each other, and what we ought to do about it given the fact that we have such awareness.[20] Whereas the material world "suggests to us no concepts of good or evil because we can discern

[16] Whitehead, 88.
[17] Whitehead, 91.
[18] Whitehead, 91.
[19] Whitehead, 94.
[20] Whitehead, 94.

in it no system of grades of values," as the most intense expression of valuation qua evaluators in the universe, we can discern in our own conditions of becoming grades of value and ways of impeding or supporting them.[21] It is only thus that we can make sense of "[t]he insistent notions of Right and Wrong, Achievement and Failure" that "haunt our imagination."[22]

Our capacities for judgment, for evaluation, are therefore a product of and participant in an incessant yearning qua creative mechanism. For Whitehead, the multiplicity of activity in the universe is unified in exemplifying this yearning, and the coordinating principle of this "array of aspirations" is termed God.[23] God, like value and ideas, has no independent existence, but rather names the persuasiveness of the ideal coordination of value—and by implication, therefore names the *susceptibility to* persuasion of those beings that creatively yearn for such ideal. Individuality does not, after all, mean substantial independence.[24] Actual occasions to be determinate individuals are always a "sort" of occurrence. The "how" of actual entities is always a nontemporal entity.[25] For us, these nontemporal entities are Whitehead's "Ideas." The multiplicity of occasions attesting to "that drive towards limited ideals of perfection which haunts the Universe" are thereby accounted for by the only nontemporal actuality.[26] God, as the unity of value of these drives, names the ideal of perfection—moral, and more broadly, aesthetic.[27] God is what Whitehead names the "how" of our susceptibility to ideals.

Although Stengers recognizes the centrality of accounting for this susceptibility to Whitehead's own evaluations—noting that what "saves" Plato for him is "the affirmation that the

[21] Whitehead, 88.
[22] Whitehead, 94.
[23] Whitehead, "Appeal to Sanity," 65.
[24] Whitehead, 83.
[25] Whitehead, 83.
[26] Whitehead, 94.
[27] Whitehead, 94.

divine element in the world" must be understood in terms of the erotic or allurement, and that human beings must thereby be defined by their "susceptibility" to this lure—she fails to recognize that this centrality is not only to Whitehead's accounting *for*, but experience *of*, this susceptibility.[28] I suggest that it was in his very attempt to *account for* this susceptibility to moral and aesthetic ideals that Whitehead exhibited his most intense manifestation of it. When Whitehead describes metaphysics as an adventure of hope, we must not make too much of the adventure without remembering what we have hope in—that our reason does not have ends that are ill-suited. This is the hope of rationalism: that we have not been ontologically duped by our interest in getting things right.

We must be very careful at this point in the discussion not to commit either of two potential errors. On the one hand, we should not conceive of the object of our yearning as abstract ideals, which remain at the end of some closed teleology. Whitehead refuses the predetermination of *what* the ideal coordination of value is in advance, and therefore *how* it comes to be. He insists only *that* creation yearns or has the appetitive structure for *an* actualization of higher grades of value. The manifold possibility of these grades of value cannot be understood "as a single line of increasing generality," but rather "this variation may be conceived as a spread involving an infinitude of dimensions."[29]

On the other hand, we should not treat ideals as unknowable-in-principle, such that we could never know if we have achieved better or worse approximations of it. As beings of adequate complexity for language, we are both more capable of abstraction through symbolic reference than any other creature, *and* more capable of novelty via evaluation because of that

[28] Whitehead, "Immortality," 88.
[29] Whitehead, 88.

reach of relation. But because "abstract" is not synonymous with "out of relation" for Whitehead, these capabilities ought never to be regarded as somehow detached from the world of activity. In fact, in one of his more lucid uses of the descriptor "evil," Whitehead argues that the activity of conceptual evaluation—our very mode of being qua becoming—"becomes evil when it aims at an impossible abstraction from the communal activities of action."[30]

There are historical exemplifications of both kinds of error for which Whitehead provides metaphysical grounds to critique. The former error is exemplified in the Kantian regulative ideal, and the latter is exemplified by the Derridean use of *aporia*. But before we can appreciate Whitehead's alternative, we must gain some purchase on what is at stake for us in each erroneous account—namely, the possibility of avoiding a predetermined onto-theo-teleology, on the one hand, and the possibility of knowing when we have genuinely achieved better or worse results with our actions, on the other. For the purposes of this Epilogue, my treatment of the former will be brief, as I expect my treatment of the latter to be the more novel contribution to Whitehead studies.

The first error owes to the fact that regulative ideals presuppose an architectonic of subjectivity antithetical to Whitehead's aesthetic ontology. A regulative ideal—qua a priori structuring of subjectivity—threatens any genuine possibility of alterity and novelty for Whitehead. It exhibits precisely that form of modern philosophical subjectivism that Whitehead rejects— namely, the notion that a subject constructs its object according to categories given a priori. Roland Faber has argued, for example, that Whitehead's "God" designates neither a fact nor a regulative ideal—neither an existing entity nor an ethical imperative—because when

[30] Roland Faber, "De-Ontologizing God: Levinas, Deleuze, and Whitehead," in *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernisms*, eds. Catherin Keller and Anne Daniell (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), 217.

aesthetics replace pure reason as the foundation of transcendental criticism, conditions of possibility are only ever "given" after the events constitutive of them.[31] Whitehead thereby rejects Kant's notion of a Transcendental Subject that serves to ground any understanding of a regulative ideal, insisting that "the process of experiencing does not 'understand' forms of universals; rather, it 'feels' singularities (PR, 230), or intensities (PR, 244; cf. PR 27, Cat. Oblg. VIII)." Subjectivity is the result of a generic process, not constructive of it.[32]

It follows that for Whitehead, one can speak of transcendental conditions of experience *without* speaking of a priori conditions of experience. To do so enables one to speak of the "transcendental conditions of the creative self-constitution of events"—not the conditions of possible experience, but of actual experience.[33] Regulative ideals are parasitic upon the possibility of a priori conditions of experience, but are unviable within a system that rejects apriorism without compromising the possibility of metaphysics.

Although there are significant differences in how they do so, Whitehead and Derrida both reject the architectonic of regulative ideals because it compromises any account of genuine alterity and novelty. However, Derrida's insistence on the aporetic structure of ideals—specifically, for my purposes, the aporia of justice and its relation to what he dubs the "autoimmunity of democracy"—itself has significant problems that can be addressed through encounter with Whitehead's aesthetic ontology. While it is undoubtedly imperative that we recognize the full extent to which we fall short of the ideals of our higher selves, I argue that we are incapable of making sense of this falling short if we insist on the aporetic structure of justice.

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[31] Roland Faber, "De-Ontologizing God, 217.
[32] Roland Faber, 218.
[33] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 34.

The aporia, which I will explore in depth in the following section, thereby exhibits the second error that Whitehead enables us to avoid in any account of human yearning.

Derrida's Aporia

Derrida claims that a definition of democracy is impossible to settle in principle because its content points towards the indecideability of justice. This constitutive openness in the concept of democracy—its paradoxical self-infliction of a freedom to undermine itself—is at the same time its greatest asset and greatest risk. Derrida calls this constitutive risk its "autoimmunity" or suicidism. He describes this aporetic element of democracy as having to do "with freedom itself, with the freedom at play" in its very concept.[34]

The question Derrida asks is whether or not it is more democratic to silence those who disagree with democracy as a political system or to allow those voices to lead to democracy's own self-destruction. In technical terms, both could be considered "democratic." But they are mutually exclusive:

> One will never actually be able to "prove" that there is more democracy in granting or in refusing the right to vote to immigrants, notably those who live and work in the national territory, nor that there is more or less democracy in a straight majority as opposed to proportional voting; both forms of voting are democratic, and yet both also protect their democratic character through exclusion . . . . One electoral law is thus always at the same time more and less democratic than another; it is the force of force, a weakness of force and the force of a weakness; which means that democracy protects itself and maintains itself precisely by limiting and threatening itself.[35]

[34] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues,* 34.
[35] Derrida, 36.

Derrida argues that it is the oscillation inherent in democracy that preserves its meaning precisely by preventing a stabilization of its meaning. The strict majority approach, while democratic, also runs the risk of self-contradiction or mass error:

> There is something paradigmatic in this autoimmune suicide: fascist and Nazi totalitarianisms came into power or ascended to power through formally normal and formally democratic electoral processes. Since plebs are also a form of the people or the *demos*, we shall leave open here all the formidable questions regarding the legitimacy or democratic legality of the plebiscite—along with the demagogy of the leader, *Fuhrer,* or *Duce*—as well as questions regarding the many different forms of direct or non-representative democracy, the referendum, elections with direct, universal suffrage, and so on. [36]

Derrida's description of the democratic is this: Democracy has an aporetic structure that both calls for and evades actualization. Democracy is therefore always not-yet and necessarily right now. The following passage helps clarify what Derrida means when he characterizes the "democracy to come" as, in essence, a hope without hopefulness:

> The "to come" not only points to the promise but suggests that democracy will never exist, in the sense of a present existence: not because it will be deferred but because it will always remain aporetic in its structure (force *without* force, incalculable singularity *and* calculable equality, indivisible sovereignty *and* divisible or shared sovereignty, and empty name, a despairing messianicity or a messinicity in despair, and so on). [37]

Democracy is never "here" because as an unconditional, the democracy-to-come is an opening—a radical openness—to the other. It is important to bracket, just for the moment, the role of the aporia in this definition and to focus simply on the way Derrida takes the unconditional to place a demand upon on conscience. The demand is for deconstruction as justice. Democracy to come, then, names the unpresentable—the thinkable yet unknowable.

[36] Derrida, 34.
[37] Derrida, 86–87.

Actual democratic regimes are aporetic because their authority rests upon an anarchic, unjustifiable, prelegal decision that commits the very violence it seeks to undo. This is its autoimmunity—at once its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. Democracy is thus "the only paradigm that is universalizable, with its chance and its fragility. But in order for this historicity—unique among all political systems—to be complete, it must be freed not only from the Idea in the Kantian sense but from all teleology, all onto-theo-teleology."[38]

It must be freed from teleology because the "mystical foundation" of the law is not telic, but anarchic. Law is first established by an extra- or prelegal decision that is unjustifiable, precisely because it is prior to all legality. Derrida's quasi-transcendental is not a regulative ideal or idea; it is not reified. Law is not oriented towards an ideal that can never be instantiated. To be free from all onto-theo-teleology, then, means to stop focusing on what presents itself to us (subjects, objects, perceptions, conceptions, propositional assertions) and to turn towards *that* which is denied and deferred by presence—*différance*—to the play of difference. To be free from the history of ontology, of Being, is to see that there is no Transcendental Signified, no Archimedean point that grounds meaning, truth, or reason.[39] It is to see grammar rather than substance. It is akin to Schelling's turn from the Absolute to the Unprethinkable, but Derrida's turn to difference is too complete.

The function of language depends on a contrast between difference and identity that cannot be reduced or dissociated. On the one hand, the differential aspect of language is the semiotic aspect; but on the other hand, it is only at the level of propositions that meaning is

[38] Derrida, 86–87.
[39] Jacques Derrida, "*Ousia* and *Gramm*é," in *Margins in Philosophy*, 1972, trans. Alan Bass (Sussex, England: Harvester Press, 1982), Part 2.

constituted. Propositions rely on presence, on relations, identity—better yet, on *assertions*, on social practices. They take the structure of identity: "something as something." The point is worth repeating that Schelling himself understood that predication is impossible without some underlying identity of all difference.

Whitehead's aesthetic account of rationality, which takes thinking as a form of feeling, emphasizes that identity and difference can be understood only in relation to one another. Derrida's metaphysical commitment to difference over identity prohibits his quasi-transcendental from being in practice what he claims it to be in theory: namely, effective.

If all language is onto-theological, is constituted or underwritten by the metaphysics of presence as Derrida takes it to be, only the sort of self-ironizing discourse can minimize its inherent violence. But in trying to name *that* which we think as that which we cannot know, Derrida insists on a difference that does not *make* a difference—or, perhaps, a *différance* that does not make a difference. But if language is a mode of relation, then how we think and speak makes all the difference. "The key to the history of mankind," wrote Whitehead, "lies in this fact—as we think, we live."[40]

A Whiteheadian Deconstruction of Aporia

In this section, I propose Whitehead's pragmatic-transcendental approach as therapy for those who find Derrida's aporia paralyzing or directionless—even despite Derrida's claims that his aporias are wrought with moments for decision and responsibility. To be sure, he writes, "As to the aporia, . . . [it] is not a paralyzing structure, something that simply blocks the way with a simple negative effect. The aporia is the experience of responsibility. It is only by going through

[40] Alfred North Whitehead, "The Study of the Past," 201.

a set of contradictory injunctions, impossible choices, that we make a choice. If I know what I have to do, if I know in advance what has to be done, then there is no responsibility."[41] But why must this be so?

It strikes me as though Derrida's aporia is a hypostatic expression of a difficult decision, not an impossible one. Perhaps part of the problem is that Derrida moves between different uses of "responsibility" without indicating as much. On the one hand, he uses "responsibility" to mean an experience; on the other hand, he uses it to mean action, something we "take." The aporia is something we must *experience* before we can decide, and the aporia is the experience of responsibility. At the same time, however, it is only by passing through the anxiety of the aporia, of not knowing what to do, that we can *take* responsibility by making the decision.

But the matter is even more complex because Derrida says "I will never know that I have made a good decision. . . . One never knows who is taking the responsibility, or if it is the right one, and so on."[42] When he says that he does not know "who" takes responsibility, he is referring to his deconstruction of the verb "to forgive." One cannot say "*I* make a decision" or "*I* forgive" because if the decision or the forgiveness were within one's power, then one has not really experienced the incompatibility of the two injunctions (the conditional and the unconditional). To experience the aporia is to recognize that one is ensconced in an economy of forgiveness that is at once inimical to pure forgiveness and the only place in which we encounter its absence, so to speak. Derrida relies on spatial metaphors in order to communicate the dialectical agency within the self through which decision and forgiveness are achieved: "For me to do something, which is forgiving or deciding, I must do something that is higher, larger and other than me . . . .

[41] Jacques Derrida, "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida," in *Questioning God*, eds. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scalon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 62.
[42] Derrida, 62.

[T]he one who forgives, the one who decides, the one who takes responsibility is the other in me."[43] It is the "other" who decides, but the decision is "in me." Derrida resists the either/or language of agency and passivity, arguing instead that "I" *must* decide and yet, for a decision to arise out of the aporia, I cannot decide from within the economy of forgiveness in which I cannot escape. I must and cannot be "I" who decides, who forgives. And yet, as I pointed out earlier, Derrida insists that "we have to take responsibility . . . to negotiate the best response in an impossible situation."[44] He has not made a mistake; he fully intends both statements to conflict. It is precisely this conflict that *performs* the aporia. And yet, the performance begs the question of decision in the course of demonstrating its conditions of mutual possibility and impossibility. We *must* negotiate the *best* response, but we can never know if we have done so or what that is. So how are we to so negotiate? Better yet, *why* must we if we cannot?

Perhaps the term "aporia" has exhausted its expressive power at this point because its meaning belies its operation. Derrida uses "aporia" *like* a transcendental, even though he does not *take* it to be such. Like he says of the notion of pure forgiveness, we "need" it even if there is no such thing: "We need at least a reference to an absolute forgiveness, an unconditional something, in order, first of all, to know what we mean as much as possible, and to think what we think, even if we cannot know it."[45] But how are we to think about "forgiveness" when we are, at once, told that it is not something that could be thought because "it" never presents itself as such, and at the same time, that *that* which never presents itself, which is never at hand, is yet something that we have created because we need it in order to understand what we mean? How are we to think about the aporia?

[43] Derrida, 63.
[44] Derrida, 58.
[45] Derrida, 62.

The structural difficulty of Derrida's use of aporia to describe forgiveness, decision, and responsibility, and (because the structure is the same throughout) *democracy* comes to the fore when we realize that all the while we have been *talking* or *writing* about the aporia, we have been operating within the economy inimical to it. Bernstein jests in a footnote along these lines: "If one wanted to be playfully deconstructive about Derrida's text, one might point out that 'negotiate' is a word that belongs to the semantic field of economy and calculation. It belongs to the semantic field of 'conditional forgiveness.' Yet Derrida says, 'We have to *negotiate between* the unconditional and the conditional.'"[46]

Whitehead insists on being mindful of our practices. For him, knowledge is not cut off from action but is rather a mode of association in the world. Indeed, he proclaimed, "The key to the history of mankind lies in this fact—as we think, we live."[47] Whitehead's use of "eternal objects" and other such terms operate similarly to Derrida's "quasi-transcendentals" insofar as they stand for functions, which for the purposes of analysis are artificially treated as discrete objects. Whitehead is extremely cognizant of this artificiality and insists upon it time and again. Derrida, however, admits these notions *function* as transcendentals without actually being transcendentals in the classical sense. But he does *not* admit as much about the *problem* that their function brings into focus—the incompatible injunction. Derrida is insufficiently pragmatic in this sense. It is this insufficiency that is, for lack of a better word, responsible for Derrida's equivocation on what he means by the imperative of negotiation.

[46] Richard J. Bernstein, "The Aporia of Forgiveness: Richard J. Bernstein," *Constellations* 13 (3):394–406 (2006): endnote 6.
[47] Whitehead, "The Study of the Past," 201.

If Derrida had remained mindful of the fact that "as we think, we live," perhaps who would have recognized, as did Bernstein, that "there is no escape from judgment"?[48] Judgment is the very thing that enabled Derrida's claim to elide it. As Bernstein notes, "Derrida would never even be able to state his aporia unless he presupposed that we could make a 'rigorous' distinction between the unforgivable and the forgivable —and between unconditional and conditional forgiveness. But I am inclined to say — in the spirit of Wittgenstein —that there is no rigorous distinction between what is unforgiveable and forgivable except the line that we draw."[49] It is this very fact, the fact that *we* draw the line, which Whitehead took as his starting point.

It is in this way that Whitehead can help deconstruct the aporetic structure of democracy and the many ethical dilemmas this structure seems to pose. With Whitehead we can respond to Derrida's claim that democracy will always be threatened by autoimmunity because of the conflict between the double couple "freedom and equality" and "equality according to number and equality according to worth." According to the ethics of process, we can subordinate the law of numbers to the law of value because the final real thing in Whitehead's metaphysics is evaluative—the product of a process of evaluative decision—of the whole world.

We can respect the fact that for Derrida, an attuned self is also the same self that is capable of robbing someone else of their conditions of attunement. Whitehead himself recognizes that "all life is robbery" and the reality of scarcity. But he does not conclude that the positive value of instantiating the democratic ethic is equal to the negative value of its violation. It is a matter of increments, not eternal contrasts.

[48] Bernstein, "The Aporia of Forgiveness," 401.
[49] Bernstein, 401.

The Self-Prescriptiveness of Democracy

Actuality is the condition of all value, and to be actual is to realize certain possibilities rather than others. To be actual is, in a sense, the ontological robbery of another possible entity's chance to become actual. Even so, certain actualizations are better for the creative advance, and so creative of greater modes of relevance than others. To appreciate or emphasize certain elements of the past in the creation of one's own character necessarily trivializes others—but this is to disproportionately appreciate equality by worth over equality by number. This is to depart from Derrida's way of holding the contrast of democracy together as if it were predestined to forever oscillate with a fixed value.

In my Whiteheadian view, democracy can be realized in such a way that its conditions of possibility outweigh in value its conditions of impossibility over time. This is because democracy is the political expression of the metaphysical conditions of value-creation, which means, in effect, that democracy is self-prescriptive insofar as there exists in nature a *lure* towards creativity. Whitehead seeks to elucidate just how this is so, in part by showing how at both the metaphysical and the human level, personal identity or character arises through a pattern of activity, which realizes certain possibilities rather than others. This pattern of realization amounts to one's way of appreciating—taking into account and responding to—the past. The "maintenance of character" is the continual interplay of actuality and possibility—of choosing one among the possible ways of relating to what is actual, where the habitual way of relating in this way amounts to a personality or character.[50]

This account of character challenges the notion that value is *either* for oneself or for others, and therefore, that one either behaves selfishly or unselfishly. Each person, as both

[50] Whitehead, "Immortality," 87.

congruent with and undetermined by their past, can be described in Whitehead's language as having aesthetic value. This value is both for oneself and for others. Keeping to the ontological principle and the principle of relativity, we might say that no value could ever be merely intrinsic nor merely instrumental. The problem with much scholarship in process ethics is that only one of these two types of values is emphasized. Such privileging violates Whitehead's seldom but rich explicit statements on morals:

> Everything has some value for itself, for others, and for the whole. This characterizes the meaning of actuality. By reason of this character, constituting reality, the conception of morals arises. We have no right to deface the value experience which is the very essence of the universe. Existence, in its own nature, is the upholding of value intensity. Also no unit can separate itself from the others, and from the whole. And yet each unit exists in its own right. It upholds the value intensity for itself, and this involves sharing value intensity with the universe. Everything that in any sense exists has two sides, namely, its individual self and its signification in the universe. Also either of these aspects is a fact of the other.[51]

Value is not monadic. It is relational. Our understanding of the relationality of actuality is inseparable from our understanding of the relationality of value because each actual entity is an appreciation of the world and becomes a value entering to some degree in every future actuality. As Brian G. Henning writes, "In achieving a felt contrast of value intensity, every individual will contribute that value to others. In determining what it is, each individual has intrinsic value for its own sake and in contributing its achievement of value to others, it has value for those in its community and for the whole universe."[52] Of course, "individual" in Henning's use does not mean a human "individual" because Whitehead describes human beings as personally ordered

[51] Whitehead, *Modes of Thought,* 111; quoted by Brian G. Henning, "Is there an Ethics of Creativity?", in *Whiteheadian Ethics: Abstracts and Papers from the Ethics Section of the Philosophy Group at the 6th International Whitehead Conference at the University of Salzburg, July 2007* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 127.
[52] Henning, 126.

"societies." But I think the point keeps integrity when applied to the level of human relations as well. Neither one of these valences can be ignored without losing the sense of the other. What this means is that value-for-self and value-for others (including value-for-God) are not competitive, but caught up in each other. This point is in disagreement with Hartshorne, who defends divine contributionism—the idea that an entity's value is entirely reducible to the contribution it makes to the divine life.

Process ethics derives from an account of the aim of the creative process generally, even though it is only capable of being explicit or specifiable when personal societies (e.g., human individuals) capable of a reflective degree of cognition emerge. Only then, we have seen, can freedom be sufficient to talk of moral responsibility. But, as Henning notes, "Although morality only becomes relevant with the emergence of moral agents who are complex enough to be conscious and free enough to be responsible, the aim of morality is the same as that of every form of process."[53] The aim of morality is congruent with the aim of the creative process more generally—the aim at beauty. The aim at beauty is, as I discussed earlier, the aim not only at harmony but at more and more complex contrasts. Too little complexity of contrast becomes unvaried and uncreative, while too much complexity without order becomes chaotic and equally uncreative of aesthetic value.

To deny that we could ever know if we have made a better or worse decision, that we had negotiated fairly and responsibly, has the effect of impoverishing the very deed for which deconstruction calls, according to Derrida. The claim to the aporetic structure of democracy stands and falls on the assumption that the violence of community is equivalent to or exceeds the value of what it achieves. On Derrida's account, social unity is not an ideal that is fostered by

[53] Henning, 126–27.

democracy because democracy is also violent. And yet, if selection is violent because of what it forces into triviality, then all processes that create value also destroy it. But the demand to realize the conditions of value-creation remains implicit in our aim of inquiry. The demand is not for an essentialized picture of perfection or universal harmony without pain or loss. Value, to repeat, is not monadic; it cannot be compounded and accelerated, so to speak, until it reaches an escape velocity that allows it to break free from the imperfect world order. It obtains in relations between actual things, and these relations can only ever hope to select for the greatest possible retention and perpetuation of value. This might mean that at the political level, vehemence and fierceness lead to the greatest conditions of value-creation and retention. Human agency is real and imperative.

Whereas, for Derrida, deconstruction is justice insofar as it insists on the primacy of difference, for Whitehead, to hypostasize difference is to deny the conditions of possibility for making the distinction in the first place. For Derrida, to allow the play of *diffèrance* is the work of *archi*-violence.[54] But for Whitehead's aesthetic ontology, neither identity nor difference is absolute or primary—whether this is among finally real entities or among the language we use to speak of them. Metaphysics in this sense is not violent as Derrida decries insofar as it does not submit the other to anticipatory horizons. On the contrary, Whitehead's metaphysics makes the resistance to closure the rule, and static presence the exception for the sole purpose of analysis.

But—and here is the rub—this resistance is then prescriptive. It begins to look as if the naturalistic fallacy in ethics no longer makes sense since with Whitehead, we can begin to speak of an authorizer of our normative aims in nature—the "judge" arising out of the nature of things.

[54] John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 21.

We can do this insofar as understanding how the creative process generative of human beings as agent-patients can reveal the implicit ideal at which we ought to aim. The ethics of process are democratic ethics because the way we understand the constitution of the self in relation to the world tells us what it means to be a self in a world who must decide how to act.

Whitehead's account of "personal identity" is that of the "effective process" by which "the essential coordination of values dominates the essential differentiation of fact" and thereby furthers the creative process—the many become one and are increased by one because of the coordination of value organizing the multiplicity of fact. This amounts to the claim that the value achieved by community exceeds the violence of what it excludes precisely because the principle of organization, of coordination, is one that resists closure. Democracy is a mode of living, one that is fraught with difficulties. And yet, it is knowledge of this fact, of what such a mode of living demands of us, that makes it possible to recognize when stagnation threatens to compromise that very structure.

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