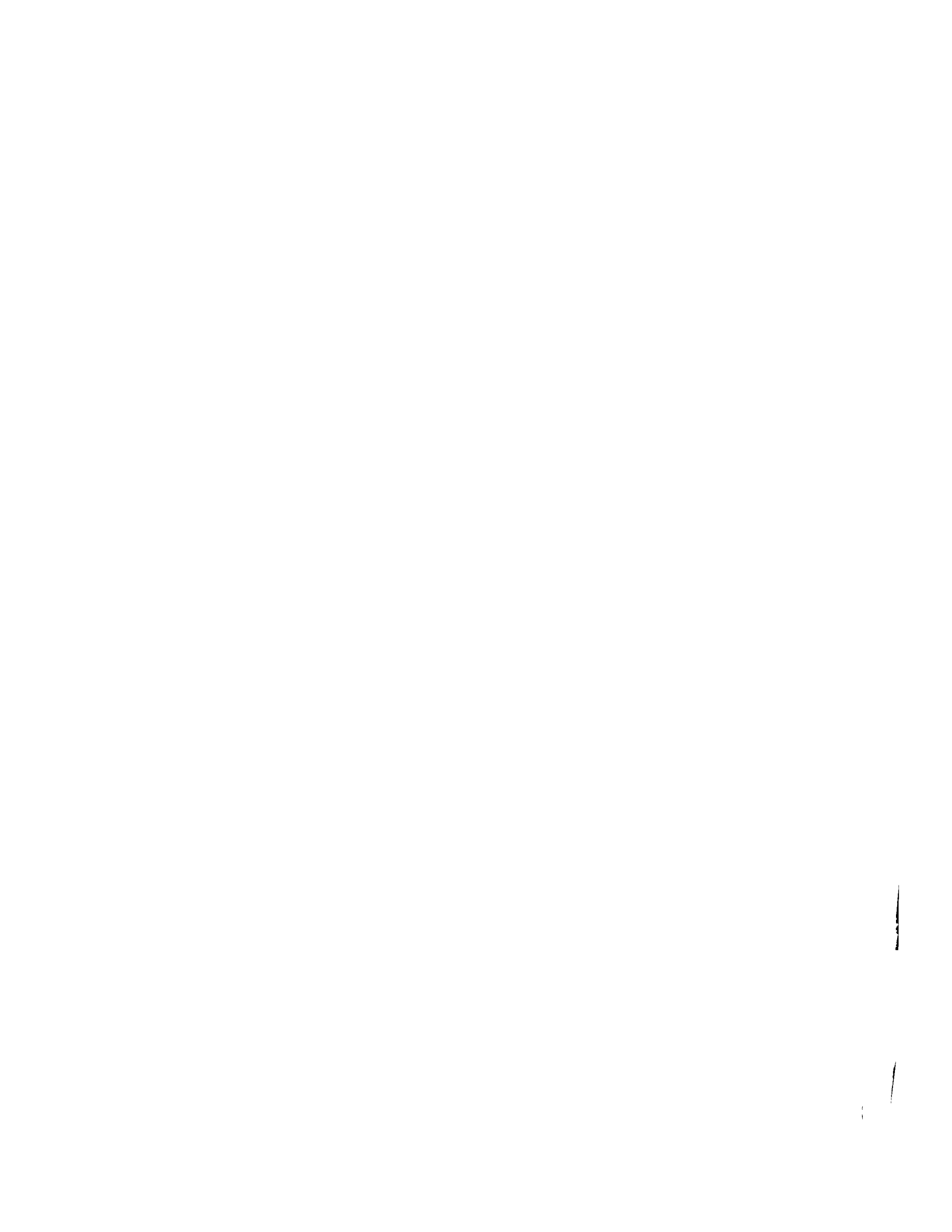


WHITEHEAD, HEIDEGGER AND METAPHYSICS



A CRITICAL EXAMINATION
OF A. N. WHITEHEAD'S METAPHYSICS
IN LIGHT OF
THE LATER MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE
OF ONTO-THEOLOGY

By

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ABSTRACT

It is the critique of Western metaphysics in the thought of the later Martin Heidegger that poses the problem for consideration in this work. Namely, if Western metaphysics as onto-theology has indeed fulfilled its prefigured configurations and found its completion in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, as Heidegger claims, then what place, if any, is left for those theologians inspired by Alfred North Whitehead's metaphysics? To assist in developing a basis upon which to address this issue, I limit this work to a critical examination of Whitehead's metaphysics in light of the later Heidegger's critique of onto-theology. Therefore Heidegger's critique is normative for this project.

The application of Heidegger's critique to Whitehead's metaphysics results in the following conclusion: Whitehead's metaphysics does not commit the mistakes detailed in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. It is demonstrated, further, that the general character of Whitehead's metaphysics as fallibilistic at least leaves his metaphysics open to the possibility of Being (*Sein*).

Specifically, it is shown that Whitehead's metaphysics does not divide entities into existence and essence; nor does it search for *the* explanatory principle (*archē*); nor is God understood as *causa prima* and therefore *causa sui*; nor is Creativity an empty concept and therefore nihilistic; nor is his metaphysics rooted in the *cogito sum*, nor does it anthropomorphize the world in order to secure certainty amongst multiple perspectives. Whitehead's metaphysics does not lead away from Being (*Sein*); rather, it may very well provide an occasion for Being (*Sein*). After this evaluation there are some brief remarks offered about how Whitehead's metaphysics, while not obscuring Being (*Sein*) in any of the ways detailed by Heidegger, also offers a philosophy of nature. This philosophy of nature leaves open the possibility of developing a natural theology that is not necessarily indicted by Heidegger's critique.

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INTRODUCTION

On more than one occasion, thinkers have declared metaphysics to be invalid, untenable, or just plain nonsense. Metaphysicians have become accustomed to the various types of criticisms levelled against their respective projects and have always managed to respond with counterarguments. In the twentieth century, however, a new sort of criticism emerged. It did not claim metaphysics to be nonsensical, or an overextension of human reason, or even some attempt to project an idealized reality. Rather than criticizing any given metaphysics, this new criticism merely announced that metaphysics had ended.

It was the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) who came to this conclusion in his later work. After beginning with the desire to place metaphysics on a more secure basis than ever before, with what he called fundamental ontology, Heidegger eventually abandoned his earlier project in order to effect an escape from metaphysics to meditative thinking. Although the main concern of the later Heidegger is to leave metaphysics, he developed a critique of Western metaphysics in the process. Heidegger claimed that metaphysics neglected or entirely forgot about Being (*Sein*) as such and this neglect is due to an exclusive concern with entities (*Seiende*). In order to substantiate his claim, Heidegger, in several works, offered a sweeping history of the various errors committed by metaphysics, which lead it away from Being (*Sein*). Absent from Heidegger's consideration is a metaphysics developed shortly before his turn away from the discipline.

This new development in metaphysics was introduced by Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). Whitehead published his main metaphysical treatise only two years after Heidegger's first publication of *Being and Time*. Although there was technically enough time for Heidegger, in his later works, to consider Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, this did not occur. It is difficult to speculate about the reasons for the absence of Whitehead in Heidegger's critique, but the geographical distance between the United States and Germany must certainly count as one such reason. Perhaps another reason is that until 1929 Whitehead's reputation was as a mathematician and logician rather than as a metaphysician. Only after moving to Harvard, later in life, did Whitehead turn his attention towards philosophy and, in particular, American Pragmatism. Besides being a contemporary of John Dewey, Whitehead regularly refers to William James as a significant influence. It is possible that the development of Whitehead's metaphysics, under the influence of Pragmatism, also may have served to limit its sphere of influence and prevented it from reaching the attention of Martin Heidegger.

The later Martin Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics creates a problem, namely, if Western metaphysics as onto-theology has indeed fulfilled its prefigured possibilities and found its completion in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, then what place, if any, is left for those theologians inspired by Alfred North Whitehead's metaphysics? This is the broader issue and certainly a large

topic for investigation. To assist in developing a basis upon which to address this issue, I will only examine Whitehead's metaphysics in the light of the later Heidegger's critique of onto-theology. Therefore, my project takes Heidegger's critique as normative. In this respect, the exercise is hypothetical insofar as Heidegger's critique is chosen as a standard by which to assess Whitehead's metaphysics, which is why there is no evaluation of the standard, namely, Heidegger's critique.

There are several reasons for adopting the approach of evaluating Whitehead's metaphysics with Heidegger's critique of onto-theology, including the practical need to define an evaluative boundary. Although Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is not accepted universally, it does, nevertheless, offer one of the more recent and most insightful analyses of the Western philosophical tradition. The number of philosophers who joined Heidegger's chorus in proclaiming the end of metaphysics alone testifies to this fact. Beyond philosophy, Heidegger's work has also influenced many theologians. Rudolph Bultmann understood his demythologization of Christian narratives as inspired by Heidegger's earlier work in *Being and Time*. Heinrich Ott, against Bultmann, claimed that the later Heidegger's thought provided a new basis upon which to pursue Christian theology. If one is interested in metaphysical speculation or natural theology, there is no doubt that Heidegger remains a thinker with whom one must contend.

Given that Whitehead influenced a movement called "process theology," which generates natural theologies and theodicies, an evaluation of his metaphysics is required, if, for no other reason, than because of the highly valued currency of Heidegger's critique. By using Heidegger's critique normatively, the burden of proof is placed squarely upon Whitehead's metaphysics. Methodologically, the success or failure of Whitehead's metaphysics, in this thesis, is determined exclusively within the realm delineated by Heidegger's critique.

The application of Heidegger's critique to Whitehead's metaphysics results in the following conclusion: Given Heidegger's identification of the Ontological Difference, which distinguishes Being (*Sein*) from entities (*Seienden*), and his critique of onto-theology that delineates how traditional metaphysics has obscured, neglected and forgotten Being (*Sein*), the question that this critical examination asks is: Does Whitehead's metaphysics commit the same mistakes as traditional metaphysics? The answer is: *No, Whitehead's metaphysics does not commit the mistakes detailed in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. Whether or not Whitehead's metaphysics obscures Being (Sein) in some other way is beyond the scope of this project, because this is a critical examination of Whitehead's metaphysics in light of the later Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as onto-theology, not a consideration of Being (Sein) in Whitehead's metaphysics. It is demonstrated, however, that the general character of Whitehead's metaphysics as fallibilistic at least leaves his metaphysics open to the possibility of Being (Sein).*

In order to reach this conclusion, however, the gulf between the thought of Whitehead and the later Heidegger must be traversed. To this end, a systematic exposition of the relevant features of Whitehead's philosophy and Heidegger's critique is undertaken. It is only once we are well acquainted with their respective projects that the critical examination proceeds to the conclusion.

Part I exposits the relevant aspects of Whitehead's metaphysics. Chapter I considers the reasons Whitehead finally developed a metaphysics as well as his understanding of the function of metaphysics. What emerges, through an examination of his corpus, is Whitehead's over-arching concern for the harmonization of divergent fields of inquiry. Metaphysics is harmonizing, according to Whitehead, because it should expand our understanding of the diverse aspects of human experience and knowledge. Following from his desire for harmonization and under the influence of the American Pragmatism he encountered at Harvard, Whitehead thinks that metaphysics should have a tentative character. That is, it should be based upon the model of the working hypothesis. Its task is to speculatively describe reality and to ensure that this metaphysical description is always to be checked by reason and experience. As will be demonstrated, he does not think that necessity is introduced into the metaphysical scheme by reason of *a priori* determined axioms, but that it is existence itself that provides the necessity from which reason arises. Metaphysics should also be the critic of the partial formulations offered by other areas of inquiry. These features of metaphysics are in the service of Whitehead's main philosophical interest, which is to determine the nature of entities. Although this concern locates Whitehead squarely within the metaphysical tradition, it is his approach to answering the question that differentiates his metaphysics from previous attempts.

After examining Whitehead's interest in harmonization and the proper function of metaphysics, Chapter II presents Whitehead's criticisms of previous metaphysical systems and his reformed alternative. The general character of past philosophy, according to Whitehead, has been to commit the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. Simply stated, this is to mistake the abstract for the concrete. Section I arranges Whitehead's criticisms chronologically so that a critical history of Western philosophy is presented. Examining the problems identified by Whitehead in Western metaphysics assists in the development of the critical examination conducted in Chapter V, because many of Whitehead's criticisms are similar to those made by Heidegger. Section II turns to Whitehead's reformed alternative metaphysics. It is here that three metaphysical principles are examined in order to illustrate Whitehead's divergence from the dominant metaphysical tradition as critiqued by Heidegger. The principles are: the Reformed Subjectivist Principle, the Ontological Principle, and the Principle of Process. The exposition of these principles provides a general overview of Whitehead's metaphysics. The details of his metaphysics are examined in Chapter III.

Since Heidegger's critique of metaphysics focuses upon how traditional metaphysics constitutes itself as onto-theology, due to its treatment of entities

(*onta*) and God (*theos*), an examination of Whitehead's metaphysics would not be complete without a careful exposition of these concepts. In order to provide a complete account of Whitehead's system, however, two other metaphysical concepts are included in Chapter III, namely, eternal objects and Creativity. Section I details Whitehead's analysis of actual entities as "the final real things of which the world is made up."¹ Actual entities achieve their actuality through the process of concrescence. Section II examines Whitehead's idea of eternal objects, which represents his solution to the classic metaphysical problem of the relationship between matter and form. According to Whitehead, eternal objects partially account for the introduction of possibility and novelty into the actual world, thereby helping to save it from a deadening repetition of its past. Eternal objects are included in our exposition of Whitehead's metaphysics because they are one of the three formative elements of actual entities; the other two formative elements are God and Creativity. According to Whitehead, God is not to be treated as an exception to the metaphysical principles. As a result, he develops an idea of God that differs considerably from the dominant philosophical and theological traditions. Notably, Whitehead's God is involved with the world, rather than completely transcending it. One consequence of this is that Whitehead's God does not function as the *causa prima* and *causa sui* in his metaphysical system. Finally, the role of Creativity is explored. Creativity is one of three ideas that constitute Whitehead's Category of the Ultimate. The other two ideas in this category are "One" and "Many." As is explained in the chapter, Creativity is the name Whitehead gives to his ultimate principle. This principle is exemplified in all entities and yet is no-thing. When the main aspects of Heidegger's characterization of onto-theology are considered it becomes evident why Whitehead's ultimate principle is not subject to Heidegger's critique.

It is with the significant aspects of Whitehead's metaphysics in mind that Heidegger's critique of onto-theology is detailed in Part II. According to Heidegger, the ever-present error of Western metaphysics is its neglect of Being (*Sein*). Western metaphysics neglects Being (*Sein*) because of its exclusive focus upon entities (*Seienden*) and that entity which accounts for all others, namely, God. Thus, Western metaphysics constitutes itself as onto-theology, because only entities (*onta*) and God (*theos*) are admitted into its investigation. The onto-theological constitution of metaphysics and its subsequent neglect of Being (*Sein*) is evidenced in Chapter IV by the exposition of Heidegger's analysis of the history of Western metaphysics. The distinctive features of onto-theology that lead to the neglect of Being (*Sein*) emerge from this exposition. These distinctive features provide the standard by which Whitehead's metaphysics is evaluated.

Although Whitehead never considers Being (*Sein*) as such and on this point is generally indicted in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, the specifics of

¹A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: Corrected Edition*, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press), 18/27. In compliance with current scholarship the first page number is from the 1978 Corrected Edition and the second one is from the 1929 Macmillan edition.

Whitehead's metaphysics are evaluated in Part III, where it is demonstrated that his metaphysics does not commit the same errors as those criticized by Heidegger. Specifically, it is shown that Whitehead's metaphysics does not divide entities into existence and essence; nor does it search for *the* explanatory principle (*archē*); nor is God understood as *causa prima* and therefore *causa sui*; nor is Creativity an empty concept and therefore nihilistic; nor is his metaphysics rooted in the *cogito sum*; nor is he guilty of anthropomorphizing the world in order to secure certainty amongst multiple perspectives. Whitehead's metaphysics does not lead away from Being (*Sein*); rather, it may very well provide an occasion for Being (*Sein*). After this evaluation there are some brief remarks offered about how Whitehead's metaphysics, while not obscuring Being (*Sein*) in any of the ways detailed by Heidegger, also offers a philosophy of nature. This philosophy of nature leaves open the possibility of developing a natural theology that is not necessarily indicted by Heidegger's critique.

PART I: ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD
CHAPTER I
WHY METAPHYSICS?

Introduction:

It is difficult to construct a “logical, coherent, necessary system”² from a lifetime of diverse thought. Some opt for a “temporal analysis,” a genealogy of sorts, and thus provide a series of ideas that are to be considered part of the same set. Although this approach has its advantages, it may fall prey to the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness,³ because of its atomization of ideas. Another approach is to attempt a monolithic presentation giving the appearance of homogeneity, logicalness and self-consistency throughout. Again, as with the first approach, this requires a high degree of abstraction and can easily neglect particularities. In fact, when attempting to characterize the thought of a lifetime it may be necessary to engage in a level of abstraction, possibly to the point of error, so that a complete picture can emerge.

In this chapter both approaches will be used in an attempt to navigate such difficult terrain. The genealogical approach will be used in order to determine what factors led Whitehead to the conclusion that metaphysics could add something new and important to human knowledge, which otherwise could not be provided by mathematics, logic, philosophy of science, religion, and epistemology. We will then turn to a holistic interpretation of Whitehead's thought. At this point, drawing primarily upon the later works, his understanding of the function of metaphysics will be explicated. It is by combining these two approaches, genealogical and holistic, that the dynamic development of Whitehead's ideas can be given their due consideration, without preferring one method of interpretation over the other.

Before embarking upon this consideration of Whitehead's thought, an inconsistency in his use of terminology immediately presents itself. Throughout his work Whitehead interchangeably uses the terms “Philosophy,” “Speculative Philosophy,” and “Metaphysics.” Often, though not always, he refers to the specific area of philosophy when he wants to differentiate it from Philosophy as a discipline, e.g., epistemology, aesthetics, cosmology, etc. The only way to distinguish what Whitehead means when he says “philosophy” is through a contextual analysis that requires a case by case evaluation of his usage. Generally, in his later works, his usage of “philosophy” tends to mean “metaphysics,” and he uses “metaphysics” and “speculative philosophy” synonymously. For the sake of consistency and clarity, the term “metaphysics”

²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3/4.

³A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Mentor Books, 1949), 52, where he writes, “There is an error; but it is merely the accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete. It is an example of what I will call the ‘Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.’ This fallacy is the occasion of great confusion in philosophy.”

will be used when referring to Whitehead's project, although he may have used a different term.

Section I: What led Whitehead to metaphysics?

When reading Whitehead, and those who have offered commentary on his work, it becomes clear the extent to which he was immersed in the Western philosophical tradition. Given that Whitehead's acquaintance with the tradition came solely through his own investigation, rather than formal training,⁴ one explanation for the development of his metaphysics could be an argument analogous to Thomas Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions. Kuhn claims that the majority of "paradigm shifts" are initiated by people new to the field, either because they are young or because they have come to the field from another area of science.⁵ In Whitehead's case he arrives at metaphysics by a rather circuitous route beginning at mathematics and winding through logic, philosophy of science, religion, and epistemology. Although this new arrival may be enough to explain why he was able to understand the tradition critically, the weight of tradition is ever present and often referred to when writing his metaphysics.

In providing an answer to the question, "What led Whitehead to metaphysics?" it is tempting to emphasize one aspect of his thought to the detriment of the others in order to arrive at a coherent account. For example, on the traditional side, one such answer could follow Aristotelian lines and assert that when Whitehead had finished with his consideration of the physical world in his philosophy of science he moved on to his "meta" physics (i.e., the work after his *physis*). On the side of "newness to the field," one might suggest that as a mathematician whose interest in mathematical applications to the physical world were combined with the scientific innovations of his era (Maxwell's work on electromagnetism, the new theory of relativity put forward by Einstein, and the continued investigation and speculation about the quantum world), Whitehead was an overly philosophical scientist. In other words, his interest was solely in the development of a metaphysics derived from the scientific theories of his time. It is difficult to hold these two poles⁶ together and navigate a middle course, which is why the answer to the question of this section is more elusive than, "What led Whitehead to philosophy?"

In order to answer the first question, the second, more general, question

⁴A. N Whitehead, *Science and Philosophy* (Wisdom Library: New York, 1948), 13. In his "Autobiographical Notes" Whitehead writes, "All my lectures (as an undergraduate at Cambridge) were on mathematics, pure and applied." But those lectures were only one side of the Cambridge education, the other side was provided by conversations on "politics, religion, philosophy, literature -- with a bias towards literature."

⁵Thomas Kuhn, *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1970), 90. "Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change."

⁶The one pole is Whitehead's newness to the field (and the novelty that stems from this) and the other pole is his thorough knowledge of the tradition.

should also be considered. This genealogical approach will survey the life of Whitehead, including his autobiographical notes, and will assume some of the categorical divisions made by Victor Lowe.⁷ In the course of the survey the theme of harmonization continuously occurs. That is, from his early mathematical through to his later metaphysical interests, Whitehead is always concerned with analyses that harmonize or bring into relation different areas of investigation and, especially in his more philosophical work, his concern is the harmonization of theory with experience.

Why was Whitehead drawn to philosophy is a two-fold question. The first aspect asks about Whitehead's writing and, finally, teaching philosophy, whereas the second aspect asks about why Whitehead was philosophical at all. Although the answer to the second question has to remain in the realm of pure speculation, this does not prevent such speculation because Whitehead left some clues in his autobiographical notes. There is no doubt that the formal education Whitehead received at Cambridge consisted exclusively of lectures "on mathematics, pure and applied,"⁸ however, the milieu in which he found himself was just as formative as it consisted of conversations on "politics, religion, philosophy, literature – with a bias towards literature."⁹ It is no surprise that in such an environment Whitehead "nearly knew by heart parts of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*"¹⁰ when he received a fellowship in 1885. Certainly his environment and perhaps his strong intuitive (one might even say religious) sense that the world was more than an accidental occurrence are contributing factors to Whitehead's philosophy. Of course, to determine finally why Whitehead was philosophical at all is as difficult as it is to determine why Whitehead was Whitehead.

If the stubborn fact of a "philosophical Whitehead" is given, then the first aspect of the question can be considered. Victor Lowe's article "The Development of Whitehead's Philosophy" asserts that these philosophical tendencies were deeply embedded in Whitehead. For instance, while commenting on Whitehead's *Universal Algebra*, he writes, "This mathematician, in short, has already the reflective self-consciousness of a discerning philosopher."¹¹ Regardless of whether or not Whitehead had the "self-consciousness of a discerning philosopher," there is no doubt that his earlier mathematical and logical works are explicitly interested in the formulation of a single or unifying theory in the place of several divergent ones.

Lowe writes that in *A Treatise on Universal Algebra* Whitehead "does two things: he brings together the characteristic ideas of diverse fields and ... organizes them into a unity on a different level with its own concepts; and then deduces

⁷ Victor Lowe, "The Development of Whitehead's Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, Library of Living Philosophers; volume 3 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1941), 19-124.

⁸A.N. Whitehead, "Autobiographical Notes," in *Science and Philosophy* (Wisdom Library: New York, 1948), 13.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Lowe, "The Development of Whitehead's Philosophy," 33.

applications.”¹² Although his treatise was largely ignored,¹³ it provides insight into Whitehead’s mode of thought. Similarly in his 1905 memoir “On Mathematical Concepts of the Material World,” Whitehead puts forth the idea that the singular unity of a point can no longer be assumed (as it is in scientific materialism) and, as such, new mathematical (perhaps even more logical) analyses need to be developed.¹⁴ It is important to note that here Whitehead is also explicitly concerned with the fact that “our experience of space is an experience of the order of physical things, not of points”¹⁵ and this memoir is one of his first attempts at the unification of experience and theory. As with the *Universal Algebra*, this is a mathematical attempt to harmonize problems that arose from the scientific and mathematical developments of the late nineteenth century.

While Whitehead was working on a second volume of *Universal Algebra* in 1903, Russell published *The Principles of Mathematics* and both realized that their interests were intersecting for their respective projected second volumes and so began their collaboration on *Principia Mathematica*.¹⁶ It was from this period of activity that “On Mathematical Concepts of the Material World” originated and slightly foreshadowed some of the conclusions of *Principia Mathematica*. Of particular note, Whitehead introduced the symbolic logic he and Russell had developed for *Principia Mathematica* and the exposition of “polyadic relations, essential to Geometry,” the further working out of which had been the purpose of the never completed fourth volume of the *Principia*.¹⁷ The *Principia*, in its own way, exhibits Whitehead’s interest in the unification of a multifaceted area of investigation (in this case mathematics) under a single discipline. Although the idea of “‘logic as the essence of philosophy’ is a Leibnitzian conception which took complete possession of Russell’s imagination,” it never captured Whitehead’s.¹⁸ What did capture Whitehead’s imagination was the idea that mathematical relations are species of logical ones, which is evidenced in his contribution to the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.¹⁹ In this article, “Mathematics,” his attack on “the traditional definition of mathematics as the science of magnitude” is derived from the idea he and Russell developed in the *Principia* that “the theory of cardinal numbers is ... but a subdivision of the general theory of classes and relations” which leads him to conclude that “mathematics in general is the ‘science concerned with the logical deduction of consequences from the general premises of all

¹²*Ibid.*, 30.

¹³*Ibid.*, 29. In footnote 29, Lowe speculates why this was the case and concludes that it was due to a combination of a book published one year earlier by Burali-Forte which made many of the same contributions and that the *Universal Algebra* dealt so broadly with the topic that specialists were only interested in certain parts rather than the work as a whole.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁶Whitehead, “Autobiographical Notes,” 17.

¹⁷Lowe, “The Development of Whitehead’s Philosophy,” 38.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 49.

reasoning.”²⁰ Even though the logicism of Whitehead and Russell was eventually disproved,²¹ as with the *Universal Algebra* and *On Mathematical Concepts of the Material World*, it is not the success or failure of the project that matters here, but the fact that these earlier works demonstrate Whitehead’s method as one of harmonization. His interest is in bringing together what would otherwise be considered *distinct* areas of investigation.

In agreement with Lowe,²² no account of this early mathematical-logical period would be complete without mention of *An Introduction to Mathematics*, originally published in 1911. As it was intended as a non-technical exposition of the discipline, there are some remarkably unguarded philosophical assertions in it. Notably, Whitehead’s philosophical stance begins to emerge as he reveals that the “possibility of disentangling the most complex evanescent circumstances into various examples of permanent laws is the controlling idea of modern thought.”²³ In his later works the overarching concern of harmonization is clear, but here is one of the first explicit statements of the idea that theory and experience are not two irreconcilable aspects of life. Whitehead writes, “It is no paradox to say that in our most theoretical moods we may be nearest to our most practical applications.”²⁴ This desire to reconcile two different types of knowledge, i.e. theory and experience, becomes Whitehead’s main concern as he begins his consciously philosophical writing.

It is here that Lowe divides his interpretation of Whitehead’s philosophical development into two sections. He distinguishes between what he calls the “pre-speculative epistemology” of 1914-1917 and Whitehead’s “philosophy of natural science” of 1918-1924.²⁵ Rather than following this distinction, the period from 1914-1924 will be dealt with as a whole. The reason for this is that the essays of 1914-1917 begin to consider the problem of scientific theory in relation to everyday common sense experience, which comes to fruition in the writings of 1918-1924.

Thus far Whitehead’s interest has been characterized as that of harmonization, but it is important to note that this is not an unreflective modernist attempt to bring everything under the gaze of the objective observer. In his earlier works Whitehead was concerned with the relations between the different branches of mathematics and finally with the relationship between logic and mathematics. His attempt at harmonizing the different aspects within the discipline and his

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 511 reads, “Today, a number of philosophers think of logic as the study of first-order languages, and it is widely held that logic should have no ontology. Higher-order systems are either regarded as too obscure to merit attention or are consigned to set theory, part of mathematics proper.”

²²*Ibid.*, 51.

²³A. N. Whitehead, *An Introduction to Mathematics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 4.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 71.

²⁵Lowe, “The Development of Whitehead’s Philosophy,” 52-64 and 64-88 respectively.

attempt to harmonize the two disciplines were not part of a philosophical project of systemization under which all areas of human knowledge could be classified.²⁶ Similarly, when turning his attention towards the relationship of scientific theory and everyday experience, Whitehead does not attempt to assume science and experience under a singular philosophical perspective. Instead, his interest is the possible philosophical explanation for the validity of both science and experience.

In order to achieve this analysis, Whitehead first defines the task of science *vis-à-vis* philosophy (in the 1914-1917 essays) and then, with this definition in place, writes his philosophy of science (1918-1924). One important conclusion of the earlier essays is that science, as a discipline, is not reliant upon metaphysics for either its viability or success. The task of science “is the discovery of the relations which exist within that flux of perceptions, sensations, and emotions which forms our experience of life.”²⁷ Since this is the proper object of science, it follows that the discipline itself is not reliant upon the conclusions of a final metaphysical analysis. Indeed, both science and metaphysics “start from the same given groundwork of immediate experience, and in the main proceed in opposite directions on their diverse tasks.”²⁸ Thus science and metaphysics are engaged with the world of experience, but their respective projects diverge from this point. Metaphysics is interested in “how our perceptions ... relate us to some true reality,” whereas science “gathers up these perceptions into a determinate class” and postulates under what other conditions these could be obtained in order to derive “this single concept of that set of perceptions,” which is “all science needs.”²⁹

Although science does not require an ultimate metaphysical justification in order to be successful, neither does it negate the need for metaphysical analysis, as some scientists and philosophers have argued. In contrast, Whitehead thinks that “science only renders the metaphysical need more urgent. In itself it contributes little directly to the solution of the metaphysical problem.”³⁰ Because science is concerned with the organization and analysis of perceptions, *as perceived*, it never broaches the issue of the relationship between these perceptions and the world. Nonetheless, the accumulation and systematization of experience into various frameworks within the scientific community only furthers the need for a metaphysical explanation of this fact.

Perhaps the most notable instance in the twentieth century where science makes the metaphysical need more acute is the development of Special (1905) and General (1916) Relativity theory by Albert Einstein. The fact that Whitehead

²⁶Perhaps this is why Whitehead only read “one page of Hegel.” See Whitehead, “Process and Reality,” in *Science and Philosophy*, 124, for his encounter with Hegel.

²⁷Whitehead, “The Organisation of Thought,” in *The Aims of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 105.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 108.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Whitehead, “The Anatomy of Some Scientific Ideas,” in *The Aims of Education*, 153.

wrote many articles and a monograph on the new theory of relativity demonstrates his desire to address the philosophical problems raised by it. In his contribution “Einstein’s Theory: An Alternative Suggestion” to *The Times Educational Supplement* of 1920, Whitehead refers to his “communication to the Royal Society in 1906” where he had considered the problem “that the simplicity of points was inconsistent with the relational theory of space,”³¹ showing that some of these ideas were neither new nor foreign to him. There can hardly be any doubt that the dissolution of absolute space and time by science itself only heightened Whitehead’s need for a metaphysical analysis.

This is understandable as the holy trinity of both enlightenment science and philosophy was Time, Space and Matter. Although these concepts may have originally been uncritically adopted by science from philosophy, their success in the advance of science was stellar for nearly three hundred years. By the close of the nineteenth century, however, their advantage was in decline and, as even Whitehead notes in his 1906 memoir, probably no longer scientifically sustainable. It is the advent of Einstein’s Relativity Theory and the development of Quantum Theory in tandem that ends their dominance. Instead, scientists begin to talk of reference-frames, warped space, and the ultimate divisibility of matter.

The quandary, until this day,³² is the unification of these new theories, which has been primarily taken up by scientists in a scientific vein. Whitehead’s philosophy of science and finally his metaphysics represent an attempt from the philosophical side. All three works, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*, *The Concept of Nature*, and *The Principle of Relativity*, are concerned with providing a coherent philosophical explanation of the relationship between our common sense experience and these new scientific theories.

Whitehead begins his philosophical consideration of the problem of relativity in his *Principles of Natural Knowledge* by referring to Berkeley’s *Alciphron*³³ in which the relativity of perception versus a presumed objective state of affairs is raised. The issue that Whitehead wishes to address is not the relation of subjective experiencer to the objective fact, as he points out the perceiver cannot escape her circumstances; rather, his concern is the development of a framework in which the various perceptions can be coherently arranged. He writes, “Our perception of natural events and natural objects is a perception from within nature, and is not an awareness contemplating all nature impartially from without.”³⁴ Throughout this work and *The Concept of Nature* he offers an

³¹A. N. Whitehead, “Einstein’s Theory: An Alternative Suggestion,” *The Times Educational Supplement*, 12 February 1920, 83. This essay is also reprinted in *Science and Philosophy* as “Einstein’s Theory,” 303-314. The quotation is from 308.

³²Here I am referring to the scientific community’s attempt to develop a Grand Unified Theory (GUT) or Theory of Everything (TOE) which would explain Gravity, Electromagnetism, Strong and Weak Nuclear forces, by a single principle.

³³A. N. Whitehead, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919), 9.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

account of nature, both as perceived and as coherent, which involves nature (as event) causing space and time, rather than as matter contained within space and time. In order to do this he develops a theory of events, which are in relation to each other, as the “situations of sense-objects form the whole basis of our natural knowledge of nature, and the whole structure of natural knowledge is founded on the analysis of their relations.”³⁵

The object of his philosophy of science, as Whitehead states in *The Concept of Nature*, is “to lay the basis ... which is the necessary presupposition of a reorganized speculative physics.”³⁶ It is here that he also states his philosophical dissatisfaction with Einstein, writing, “In my judgement he [Einstein] has cramped the development of his brilliant mathematical method in the narrow bounds of a very doubtful philosophy.”³⁷ Once again Whitehead’s interest in harmonization emerges as he thinks the philosophy of science should endeavour to “exhibit all science as one science, or – in case of defeat – the disproof of such a possibility.”³⁸ Whitehead thinks the success of his project, which certainly entails the philosophical account of the basis of all science (including the ability to provide a basis for speculative (relativity) physics that is not limited by a “doubtful philosophy”), is to be found in the analysis of entities. He writes:

The primary task of a philosophy of natural science is to elucidate the concept of nature, considered as one complex fact for knowledge, to exhibit the fundamental entities and the fundamental relations between entities in terms of which all laws of nature have to be stated, and to secure that the entities and relations thus exhibited are adequate for the expression of all the relations between entities which occur in nature.³⁹

It is because of Whitehead’s separation of the philosophy of science from metaphysics that he is acutely aware of the proper subject matter for each. Where philosophy of science concerns itself with perceptions as perceived, metaphysics is supposed to transcend this realm and offer an account of the reality indicated by these perceptions. This is why he leaves to metaphysics “the synthesis of the knower and the known.”⁴⁰ Also, as he develops his analysis of the relationality of entities, this relatedness implies that these entities are not merely billiard balls being knocked around in empty space as the universal clock ticks, but, as they are

³⁵*Ibid.*, 85.

³⁶A. N. Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), vii-viii.

³⁷*Ibid.*, vii. One suspects this concern remained with Whitehead and was the impetus for his own *Principle of Relativity*, the success of which cannot be judged by this author.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 28. See also page 32, where he writes, “Though there is a need of metaphysics whose scope transcends the limitation to nature. The object of such a metaphysical science is not to explain knowledge, but exhibit in its utmost completeness our concept of reality.”

creating their own space and time with their very existence and interaction, they are thoroughly enmeshed in each other's existence. This means, to some extent, that each entity "experiences" the other, but, as he rightly mentions, an analysis of this is beyond the scope of his philosophy of science.⁴¹

One important aspect of Whitehead's philosophy of science is his assertion that science necessarily deals with objects that are abstracted from the flux of experience. This abstraction does not negate the validity of these scientific objects, however, as this is merely the recognition of yet another process. It is this "procedure for disclosing the world as a process of objectification and abstraction" that "makes possible for us comparison, recognition and the cultivation of an orientation."⁴² In other words, abstractions are those things which allow us to postulate a picture of the whole even though we always, necessarily, remain located.

It should be clear that when Whitehead's understanding of the limits, not just of science, but of the philosophy of science, is combined with his desire for harmonization the need for metaphysics emerges. The requirement, as will be demonstrated in Section II of this chapter, is to bring divergent areas of knowledge into relation with each other, i.e., to provide a framework that is able to account for our common sense experience, scientific, religious, aesthetic, and moral knowledge.⁴³ This is why no description of what led Whitehead to metaphysics would be complete without a consideration of his writing on religion and epistemology.

In *Religion in the Making* Whitehead offers his account of the development of religion from its origin in ritual to its final, rational, formulation. In so doing, he points to the need of religion "to have recourse to metaphysics for a scrutiny of its terms."⁴⁴ This is to allow religion to rise above the status of cult and attain universality.⁴⁵ Like science, religion also provides "its own independent evidence, which metaphysics must take account of in framing its description."⁴⁶ Religion gives us a cosmology, which, in turn, needs to be philosophically systematized in order to cohere with our other experiences,⁴⁷

⁴¹Whitehead, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*, 195. He writes, "The theory of percipient objects is beyond the scope of this work of which the aim is to illustrate the principles of natural knowledge by an examination of the data and experiential laws fundamental for physical science. *A percipient object is in some sense beyond nature.*" (emphasis added).

⁴²Michael Welker, "Alfred North Whitehead's Basic Philosophical Problem: The Development of a Relativistic Cosmology," *Process Studies* 16, no.1 (1987): 10.

⁴³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xii/vi.

⁴⁴Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 78.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 44. Whitehead writes, "But even to-day, the two catholic religions of civilization are Christianity and Buddhism, and – if we are to judge by the comparison of their position now with what it has been – both of them are in decay. They have lost their ancient hold upon the world."

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 78. There can be no doubt that this includes substantial amounts of the moral and aesthetic mentioned in the description of metaphysics's task.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 124. Whitehead writes, "Religion starts from the generalization of final truths

whereas “science suggests a cosmology; and whatever suggests a cosmology, suggests a religion.”⁴⁸ Thus, metaphysics is located between science and religion. On the one side, science’s “bottom up” approach requires metaphysical mediation if it is “not to degenerate into a medley of *ad hoc* hypotheses;”⁴⁹ and, on the other side, religion’s “top down” pronouncement of eternal truth requires the same type of metaphysical mediation in order to relate these truths to our daily lives.

Before turning to metaphysics Whitehead delivers the Barbour-Page Lectures in 1927, entitled in book form *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect*, which deals specifically with the epistemological problem of the relationship between the knower and the known. Thus, the question excluded from his philosophy of science is now addressed. A significant part of *Symbolism* critiques the philosophical tradition’s understanding of, and subsequent problem in, demonstrating cause and effect.⁵⁰ Whitehead’s alternative distinguishes between “causal efficacy” and “presentational immediacy.” He argues that since we are immersed in the world, causal efficacy (what we experience) is primary, whereas, presentational immediacy (what we consciously perceive) is, necessarily, an abstraction from our experiences. This argument, in effect, inverts Hume’s and ends the primacy of propositions and their truth values in favour of an understanding where we experience the world and then consciously arrange these experiences into objects and relations (presentational immediacy).⁵¹ An epistemological understanding, added to science and religion, provides Whitehead with information from several divergent areas of human investigation that appear to be distinct and possibly contradictory. Whitehead, with his goal of harmonization, however, thinks that these diverse areas require a philosophical (i.e. metaphysical) framework in order to (i) mediate between them, and (ii) further the development of their respective projects. He can provide this framework because of his philosophical stance; these are all areas of human inquiry about the world in which we live and since we experience the world as ordered (at the level of causal efficacy) a systematic understanding can and should

first perceived as exemplified in particular instances. These truths are amplified into a coherent system and applied to the interpretation of life. They stand or fall – like other truths – by their success in this interpretation. The peculiar character of religious truth is that it explicitly deals with values. It brings into consciousness that permanent side of the universe which we can care for. It thereby provides a meaning, in terms of value, for our own existence, a meaning which flows from the nature of things.”

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁹Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 18.

⁵⁰A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), 30-39, where Whitehead criticizes both Hume and Kant.

⁵¹This argument is further elucidated in Chapter 2 when Whitehead’s criticisms of traditional epistemology, and especially the problems created by David Hume, are considered. The purpose of mentioning Whitehead’s epistemology at this point is to add to the case that as he considered more and more ways of understanding the world (e.g. through natural science, religion, and philosophical theories of knowledge) the need to relate these various areas coherently becomes greater, thus leading him to his metaphysical project.

be developed.⁵²

What led Whitehead to metaphysics? It was a complex understanding of the various areas of human knowledge and the recognition of the limitations inherent in each of these areas combined with the desire to harmonize them. This is not to say that metaphysics provides the final analysis; it neither negates the evidence of these areas of knowledge, nor co-opts it by transcribing it into a metaphysical system. Metaphysics provides the philosophical framework, tentative at best, to bring these diverse fields into relation and in doing so provides new and important insights into them.

Section II: What is the function of metaphysics?

In the twentieth century several new criticisms arose that gave pause to those philosophers and theologians who still took the metaphysical project uncritically at face value. One line of thinking arising from the “hermeneutics of suspicion”⁵³ in the nineteenth century, originated primarily by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, began to call metaphysics into question. Not so much the success or failure of respective projects, but the project itself became suspect. The central aspect of this critique sees metaphysics (epitomized in modernity by G.W.F. Hegel) as an attempt to “totalize” and “reduce” the entirety of existence to a singular, unified, logical system of thought, which in turn is accomplished through the unlimited application of the human intellect.⁵⁴ The problem with thinking this way about the world is that it does a grave injustice (often referred to as “violence”) to the particular individual because it systematizes her under some form of a universal ideal. The result is that the individual loses her particularity and is “reduced” to merely a part of the whole. This critique therefore calls into question the entire metaphysical project, not on the basis of its ability to succeed, but in defence of the particular, subjective side of human life.

Another trend arising in the twentieth century from the thought of Bertrand Russell and the earlier Wittgenstein is the adoption of the scientific belief that a consistently applied method will lead to truth. This line of thinking gives primacy to the role of propositions and their truth or falsity when attempting to analyze the world. As a result, many who are influenced by this approach⁵⁵ do not think metaphysics can provide definitively true or false statements about the world and therefore should no longer be pursued as a discipline.

⁵²The goal of the metaphysical analysis will be considered in the next section “What is the function of metaphysics?”

⁵³Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

⁵⁴Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: an essay on exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969) and the essay “God and Philosophy,” in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. Addriann T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) are representative of this critique of modern metaphysics.

⁵⁵A. J. Ayre, *Logical Positivism* (New York: The Free Press, 1959), for instance.

Finally, almost from its inception,⁵⁶ Christianity has had strong fideistic tendencies that advocate reliance upon revelation rather than reason. This tendency has had a great deal of influence on Christian thinkers in the twentieth century. Earlier in the century, the writing of Karl Barth strongly advocated the development of theology⁵⁷ based upon revelation rather than (Greek) reason. And influenced by the first critique stated above, such recent Christian thinkers as Jean-Luc Marion,⁵⁸ have again challenged metaphysics by claiming that it not only does an injustice to the particularity of the human being but also to God by reducing God to merely one being among many.

Despite these longstanding trends, Whitehead, who was at least aware of the criticism of metaphysics derived from Russell's work, thought that metaphysics could be reformed and thus need not be rejected. An important part of his reformation involves a proper understanding of the function metaphysics is able to perform. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, it is certainly the case that Whitehead was aware of the many failings of metaphysics, particularly as they tend to overstep their boundaries and become rigid uncompromising systems oblivious to actual experience. Thus, it is imperative to discover the question metaphysics seeks to answer and how this question should be answered in order to determine the function of metaphysics.

At two different points in *Process and Reality* Whitehead asks rhetorically about the “true philosophical question” and the “fundamental metaphysical question.”⁵⁹ The “true philosophical question is, How can concrete fact exhibit entities abstract from itself and yet participated in by its own nature?”⁶⁰ and for a more thorough account of this issue refers the reader to the second chapter of his *Principle of Relativity* entitled “The Relatedness of Nature.”⁶¹ Secondly, “Descartes asked the fundamental metaphysical question, What is it to be an actual entity?”⁶² Both these questions reveal Whitehead's own bias on this issue and require further consideration.

If Descartes' is the “fundamental metaphysical” question, then it should be given priority. Although the question is attributed to Descartes, it is Whitehead who asks it. Into the question itself Whitehead introduces one of his own terms, “actual entity,” which he uses to denote any thing or being which comes actually into existence. It is no accident that Whitehead does not distinguish which type of

⁵⁶For instance, Tertullian's dictum “*credo quia absurdum est*,” literally, “I believe because it is absurd.” Taken from, Simon Blackburn, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 88.

⁵⁷Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975).

⁵⁸Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-texte*, trans., Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) and “Phenomenology and Theology,” in *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1977).

⁵⁹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 20/30 and 144/218 respectively.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 20/30.

⁶¹A. N. Whitehead, *The Principle of Relativity with applications to Physical Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 14-39.

⁶²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 144/218.

Cartesian being (mental and unextended or physical and extended) that he asks about here, as Whitehead himself expends much effort on overcoming the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy. Whitehead asserts that all entities have both a mental and a physical aspect, which will become clear in Chapter III as his conception and analysis of entities is considered.

The other important part of the fundamental question, “What *is it to be* an actual entity?” is the “*is it to be*” portion, which does not simply ask about the “existence” of an entity, but about that entity’s very being. If Whitehead had simply wanted to know about something’s existence he would have asked, “What is an actual entity?” not “What is it to be an actual entity?” Whitehead is seeking after *how* an entity exists and this, again, introduces one of his fundamental ideas which is: everything that is (exists), is in a *process* of being. So the “fundamental metaphysical” question, thus far, is more like, “What is the way (the how) an entity comes to exist (be)?”

This is not the end of the question as the “true philosophical question” still needs to be considered. It asks, “How can concrete fact exhibit entities abstract from itself and yet participated in by its own nature?” As with the first question, some explication is required. The issue raised here, as intimated by Whitehead’s reference to the second chapter of *The Principle of Relativity*, is one of relatedness. Namely, what is it about entities in the world that allows us to see them as embodying various aspects of other entities of which they themselves are not a part? Probably the simplest way to illustrate this point is to introduce the idea of genealogical relations. When I see a wooden chair, I am somehow able to realize that the chair exhibits or embodies something of the tree from which it was made, although there is nothing tree-like about the chair. Of course we know that wood comes from trees and therefore a wooden chair must have been a tree at one time, which is a causal chain we have learned, but this is not Whitehead’s interest. Instead, his concern is what is it about the world that allows us to abstract from it as an actual fact and contemplate the idea of “tree” and at the same time see the “treeness” of the chair? This second question thus needs to take into consideration, not just the “howness” of the entities (as in the case of the first question) but also the fact that the “howness” of concrete fact somehow transcends its particularity and embodies something other than itself.

The second question should to be added to the first, in order to construct the question that metaphysics seeks to answer. “What is the way (the how) an entity comes to exist (be) and what is it about the world that this concrete existing fact can exhibit abstractions beyond itself and yet participate in those abstractions at the same time as a concrete existing fact?” To state the question in a less complicated manner, “What is the nature of entities?” Perhaps this is a more traditional statement of the question of metaphysics, but as should be clear by now, Whitehead’s metaphysical investigations are not very traditional.

In 1937, in the essay “Analysis and Meaning,” Whitehead restated the question metaphysics seeks to answer, “Thus the task of philosophy is to penetrate beyond the more obvious accidents to those principles of existence which are presupposed in dim consciousness, as involved in the total meaning of seeming

clarity. Philosophy asks the simple question, “What is it all about?”⁶³ Perhaps even broader in scope than the two previously considered questions, this question is certainly aiming at the same idea. “What is it all about?” entails the first question’s concern with the “howness” of entities, but it also raises the question of value, which is what the second question also seeks to address. “What is it all about?” asks not only of the howness of entities but also of the meaning of existence. It is metaphysics’ task to piece together a coherent framework that can provide an answer to this question. It is with this in mind that we now turn to how Whitehead thinks metaphysics should answer its own question.

Reading Whitehead’s *Process and Reality* it is clear, from the beginning, that he understands his project to be tentative. It is here that we see the influence of science on his philosophy. This does not mean, however, that he adopts the dogmatic⁶⁴ stance that the consistent application of method will lead us ultimately to truth.⁶⁵ Instead we find the humility of a man who recognizes the vastness of existence and who is about to take his first few precarious steps into an attempt to understand it. His metaphysics is an attempt to bring divergent ideas and areas of thought together in a coherent interpretative scheme, not once and for all in its finality, but as a tool that itself can be shaped and reshaped as required by the continued investigation of reality.

Near the start of his project Whitehead writes, “Speculative Philosophy is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of experience can be interpreted.”⁶⁶ Although this appears, at first glance, as a statement from high modernity,⁶⁷ it must be taken in relation with his further conclusion that, “The philosophical scheme should be coherent, logical, and, in respect to its interpretation, applicable and adequate.”⁶⁸ In other words, the framework itself must be alterable. Rather than advocating the construction of a system from *a priori* axioms arrived at by reason, Whitehead suggests that metaphysics needs to have a hypothetical character. In its continual struggle for logical coherency it cannot be disconnected from the reality it claims to systematize. Indeed, the necessity of the system is not provided by reason, but it is in its application where necessity becomes evident.⁶⁹ That is, necessity is not introduced

⁶³Whitehead, “Analysis of Meaning,” in *Science and Philosophy*, 131.

⁶⁴Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xiv/x. Whitehead writes, “In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly.”

⁶⁵Also see, Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, Chapter IX, “Science and Philosophy,” for his characterization of the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment as a kind of “anti-rationalism.”

⁶⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3/4.

⁶⁷André Cloots, “Whitehead’s Late-Modern Concept of Speculative Philosophy,” in *Whitehead and China in the New Millennium Conference Papers* (The Centre for Process Studies, 2002): 140-142. André Cloots’ analysis is that Whitehead is not a modern in the same way as G.W.F. Hegel, rather Whitehead is a late-modern concerned with taking the Romantic reaction into consideration and yet maintaining a trust in the faculty of reason.

⁶⁸Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3/4.

⁶⁹Cloots, “Whitehead’s Late-Modern Concept of Speculative Philosophy,” 140.

into the system by reason; it is existence itself that provides the necessity from which reason arises.⁷⁰ “Thus speculative philosophy embodies the method of the ‘working hypothesis.’”⁷¹ The system is not simply open to new information to be analyzed and assimilated into it; it must also be able to change itself at very fundamental levels when confronted with radically new data.

As a result of the hypothetical methodology of metaphysics, Whitehead asserts, repeatedly, that it should be both descriptive and tentative. Metaphysics is descriptive of the world and our experience in it, and from this basis it tentatively formulates generalizations. Accordingly, “Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical principles. Weakness of insight and deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably.”⁷² It also follows that, “Metaphysical categories are not dogmatic statements of the obvious; they are tentative formulations of the ultimate generalities.”⁷³ In *Adventures of Ideas* he says, “The main method of philosophy in dealing with its evidence is that of descriptive generalization.”⁷⁴ Thus Whitehead is not delineating the world according to logical categories applied from his armchair; rather, as a metaphysician he is actively engaged with the world and is attempting to find those aspects of which it is composed and how they are related in it.

In order to find these commonalities Whitehead thinks that abstraction from concrete fact will allow for discovery. “The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation.”⁷⁵ This quotation from *Process and Reality* demonstrates the pull between speculation guided by hypothesis and actual matter of experiential fact. One’s abstractions are useless if they are irrelevant to one’s lived experience and likewise one’s lived experience is meaningless without some abstraction aiming at a coherent framework.

Metaphysics must balance the demand to be both “logical and coherent” and “applicable and adequate.” The “logical and coherent” aspect comes from the process of abstraction and imaginative speculation, and the “applicable and adequate” comes from the return to earth to confront stubborn fact with the abstractions. The effectiveness of this endeavour “is to be sought in its general success, and not in the peculiar certainty, or initial clarity, of its first principles.”⁷⁶ In the attempt to systematize experience, experience itself is not sacrificed to the ideal of starting from a logically derived, singularly axiomatic Archimedean point

⁷⁰“The ontological principle can be summarized as: no actual entity, then no reason.” (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 19/28). This is a point that will be further elucidated in chapter 2.

⁷¹Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 222.

⁷²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 4/6.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 8/12.

⁷⁴Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 234.

⁷⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 5/7.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 8/12.

from which to move the world. On the contrary, in creating the logical and coherent framework through the method of abstraction, experience itself must be exemplified in this system. “A metaphysical description takes its origin from one select field of interest. It receives its confirmation by establishing itself as adequate and as exemplified in other fields of interest.”⁷⁷ In other words, the attempt to arrive at generalized truths about the world can be deemed successful if these truths are relevant to other areas of specialized thought. Thus it can be said that the experiential aspect is exemplified in the generalization. This requirement is extremely important to Whitehead, as will be demonstrated in Chapter II, where the problems of traditional metaphysics are examined.

When meeting the challenge of applicability and adequacy it follows that metaphysics is able to perform a two-fold function: the reconciliation of divergent areas of thought, and, to act as critic of partial formulations. Whitehead writes:

I hold that philosophy is the critic of abstractions. Its function is the double one, first of harmonising them by assigning to them their right relative status as abstractions, and secondly of completing them by direct comparison with more concrete intuitions of the universe, and thereby promoting the formation of more complete schemes of thought.⁷⁸

For instance, to bring “the aesthetical, moral, and religious interests into relation with those concepts of the world which have their origin in natural science”⁷⁹ would be the goal of metaphysics. All these areas have their own particular specialized selection and language, and, according to Whitehead, the task of metaphysics is to take these various discourses, which involve their own type of abstractions, and critically evaluate them against each other, thus providing an understanding of the world which transcends the particular discourses but not the world to which they belong. This is why he thinks, “The task of philosophy is to recover the totality obscured by the selection.”⁸⁰ Although the metaphysical standpoint is a “dispassionate consideration of the nature of things, antecedently to any special investigation into their details,”⁸¹ Whitehead is not advocating the Enlightenment ideal of an objective, unrelated observer.⁸² What he is advocating is metaphysics’ ability, on the one hand, not to become mired in particularity and, on the other hand, not to become transcendently irrelevant. Stated positively, Whitehead thinks metaphysics must balance the part with the whole and can do so by carefully considering those aspects of existence which are relevant to all and thereby supply a

⁷⁷Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 89.

⁷⁸Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 88.

⁷⁹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xii/vi.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 15/22.

⁸¹Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 158.

⁸²This will be further elucidated in Chapter II, Section II, “Whitehead’s Reformed Alternative Metaphysics,” in which he puts forward and develops the “Reformed Subjectivist Principle.”

common basis from which to understand the relative, specialized discourses of aesthetics, ethics, religion and science.

In order to accomplish this task, Whitehead thinks metaphysics must develop its own specialized equipment. Just as scientists redesign “pre-existing appliances” as their needs change, so must metaphysics.⁸³ In the case of metaphysics the “pre-existing appliance” is language. When attempting a systematic understanding of the world it is quite likely that terms used in one specialized discipline are not adequate to capture the larger meanings of metaphysics, thus language itself must be modified for the project. “Hence the rôle of literature, the rôle of the special sciences, and the rôle of philosophy: -- in their various ways engaged in finding linguistic expressions for meanings as yet unexpressed.”⁸⁴ Therefore, in its attempt to reconcile the divergent areas of existence, metaphysics’ final function is to help create new ways of understanding the world.

At the end of this section it should be clear that Whitehead does not consider the function of metaphysics to be a simple one. In seeking to answer the question, “What is the nature of entities?” metaphysics has to perform a kind of double movement as it rises from the particular to the abstract and yet returns from the abstract to the particular. Thus, metaphysics is tentative and descriptive in its formulations, as it constantly has to re-evaluate its abstract framework in light of particulars heretofore not recognized, or, in light of newly discovered particulars, particulars most likely discovered through the application of the framework itself. These formulations occur through a process of abstraction that allows for the discovery of those aspects common to the particulars, and yet in their abstraction these formulations may not neglect the particulars, in fact the particulars must be exemplified by them. It is because of this method of discovery that metaphysics can perform its two-fold task of harmonizing divergent areas of thought and acting as critic of partial formulations. Finally, in fulfilling its role, metaphysics needs to reconfigure its implement (language) in order to forge new, more complete, meanings and understandings of the world.

Conclusion:

Thus the genealogical approach demonstrated that from Whitehead’s first published efforts his interest was that of harmonization. Whether it was of distinct areas within a field (as in the case of his *Universal Algebra*) or the unification of divergent fields (as in the case of *Principia Mathematica*) or the reconciliation of experience and theory (as in the case of his philosophy of science), the persistent move towards harmony eventually took Whitehead to metaphysics. This is because metaphysics could provide a framework with which to analyze these diverse areas of human knowledge and experience, a framework that could address the issue of the relationship between the knower and the known with a broad enough scope to be

⁸³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 11/16.

⁸⁴Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 227.

inclusive of our various modes of thought.

In light of this need to develop an interpretative framework, we have considered a holistic interpretation of Whitehead's work. This interpretation asserted that, unlike other metaphysicians, Whitehead's interest is not one of totalization of particularity in favour of a rigid system built upon *a priori* axioms. Instead, the development of a framework that takes account of our everyday experiences is a requirement. The function of metaphysics, according to Whitehead, is to systematize these distinct experiences into something logical, coherent and necessary, neither negating nor nullifying the experiences themselves. In fact, the systematization is able to offer a deeper, more complete, understanding of what would otherwise remain a seemingly unrelated collection of events.

After this discussion of Whitehead's arrival at metaphysics and his consideration of its function, someone familiar with the Western philosophical tradition may be slightly disoriented. The preceding account does not follow the conventional story line of either the goal or formulation of metaphysics. This divergence will become more acute in the next chapter as Whitehead's criticisms of traditional metaphysics are exposed and his alternative considered. As mentioned in Section I, this could be explained by Whitehead's relative newness to the field, but this explanation could possibly negate the validity of his thorough understanding and subsequent criticism of the tradition. Like Whitehead, what we require is a tentative stance where judgement is reserved until his criticisms and reformed alternative metaphysics are carefully examined.

CHAPTER II WHY NOT METAPHYSICS

Introduction:

There can be no doubt that as Whitehead turns his attention towards a metaphysical project, his concern is not to defend the dogmatic philosophical assumptions of the past. In fact, his concern with metaphysics can be described, conservatively, as an attempt to both retrieve and reform the discipline. Much of this motivation comes from his engagement with science, in particular Relativity and Quantum theory, which finally supplanted the dominant Newtonian model.⁸⁵ This is not to claim that Whitehead, like so many other philosophers in the English speaking world, is interested in offering a philosophical justification or account of the new science thereby relegating philosophy to the role of science's handmaiden. Rather, his concern is to determine whether philosophy, and in particular metaphysics, can account for divergent aspects of human experience and knowledge, including the ever-present and powerful area of natural science.

It will become clear in Section I of this chapter that the lack of an adequate philosophical account of the prevalent science is only one of the criticisms Whitehead has of traditional metaphysics. The main problem Whitehead identifies in past metaphysics is a narrowness or "thinness" of analysis, which leads to the establishment of dogmatic certainties through a process of over-simplification. This occurs because often a method is developed for a specific purpose and in order to gain certain investigative results, but the reason, i.e., the limited purpose, for the method is then forgotten. The result is the application of the method beyond the scope of its original intention. In the history of metaphysics, the consequence has often been the methodological creation of an abstraction, which is then mistaken for the actually concrete. It is due to their deficient analyses that many traditional metaphysics remain "stuck" and unable to overcome their own concepts even when presented with information that does not fit their system.

After a consideration of the problems with previous metaphysics, Section II will offer a general treatment of Whitehead's own reformed alternative – the "philosophy of organism." In order to elucidate Whitehead's alternative, Section II will consider three important formulations: the Reformed Subjectivist Principle, the Ontological Principle, and the Principle of Process. Following this is a consideration of the implications of his revisions which demonstrates how Whitehead's alternative is not a superficial reformulation of well-worn concepts, but a new approach to the discipline, which offers the possibility of escaping past errors.

⁸⁵ The impact of Darwin's Theory of Evolution should also be mentioned as the other significant scientific development contributing to the end of the Newtonian model. This is mainly due to the fact that Newton subscribed to *creatio ex nihilo*, which left no possibility for the essence of matter to change; whereas, Whitehead thinks that Darwin provided the scientific theory for the evolution of matter, an idea that Whitehead incorporated into his metaphysics with modification.

Section I: What are the problems with previous metaphysics?

One challenge facing the exposition of Whitehead's thought comes from the complexity of his metaphysical analysis. Often when considering something, he changes perspective in his analysis in order to elucidate some other aspect not immediately evident from the first point of view. To compound this problem, he seldom informs the reader that this shift is to occur and one is left wondering about an apparent contradiction or digression and it is only with several close readings that the analysis begins to look like a coherent whole, rather than a series of unrelated points. Although it is difficult to construct a coherent interpretation from Whitehead's comments about the Western philosophical tradition, his ideas will be presented in as logical a sequence as possible. It will start from his most general characterizations of the discipline and move to his specific evaluation of particular philosophers while following the chronology of Western thought. If one were to attempt a general characterization of Whitehead's criticism of traditional metaphysics, it would have to be that philosophers have repeatedly mistaken the abstract for the concrete and *vice versa*.⁸⁶

Although it is possible to arrange Whitehead's criticisms sequentially, as certain aspects of his criticism are closely related to other aspects, it is important to point out that this does not involve logical relations, i.e., that one criticism necessarily entails the next. Rather, it is a matter of demonstrating how Whitehead understood the history of various philosophical tendencies and concepts. Thus, the exposition given here is not a narrowly linear (logical) one, where point after point is necessarily deduced from the original axiomatic premises, but is a complex inter-related mosaic.

In the previous chapter, Whitehead was shown to emphasize the *tentativeness* of the metaphysical project due in part to the situatedness of the metaphysician. It follows then that his broadest criticism of philosophers is that they overstep their relative positions. Whitehead writes, "The besetting sin of philosophers is that, being merely men, they endeavour to survey the universe from the standpoint of gods."⁸⁷ After the twentieth century, this sort of criticism, whether it be from Anglo-Analytic or Continental philosophers (especially as represented in the post-modern criticisms of G.W.F. Hegel), or from theologians or other religious thinkers, has become a common refrain, and it is interesting that Whitehead anticipated it, since he is often thought of as a logician unduly influenced by nineteenth century poetic romanticism. Instead, it is clear that Whitehead too thinks that the assumption of a universal transcendent position by a philosopher is mistaken and untenable. That philosophers thought this position could be attained is

⁸⁶Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 159. For the purpose of the present analysis "the abstract" is meant as: "To be abstract is to transcend particular concrete occasions of actual happenings," and is not to be confused with the analysis of the process of abstraction, which also involves this type of abstraction that Whitehead provides when discussing the "higher phases" of entities.

⁸⁷Whitehead, "Analysis and Meaning," 132.

indicative of their tendency to over-simplify their analyses (through abstraction) and neglect or discount relevant and important information (the concrete).

Besides the tendency to overstep their own situation, philosophers, since their Greek origins, have also deeply felt the tension between permanence and flux. Heraclitus gave us the world of flux and Parmenides that of permanence. These two early attempts represent extreme positions, which, although readopted periodically throughout Western thought, most philosophers have sought to relate to each other rather than separate. In order to illustrate this point Whitehead quotes the first two lines of a hymn, “Abide with me/Fast fall the eventide”⁸⁸ and writes, “But, in truth, the two lines cannot be torn apart in this way; and we find that a wavering balance between the two is characteristic of the greater number of philosophers.”⁸⁹ Arguably, Whitehead is rather generous when describing the “wavering balance” achieved by the “greater number of philosophers” because, traditionally, they have placed permanence within the category of being thereby associating permanence with being and giving them both ontological priority, whereas, flux was relegated to becoming and often understood as *mere appearance* and given little or no ontological standing.⁹⁰ Whitehead, on the other hand, is interested in recognizing both poles (being/permanence – becoming/flux) and holding them together, without devaluing either side, in his philosophy.

As philosophy attempts to balance these two aspects, it turns to language as its tool, because, historically, philosophy has an uncritical trust in language’s ability to provide an adequate expression of the world and our experience in it. Whitehead writes,

There is an insistent presupposition continually sterilizing philosophical thought. It is the belief, the very natural belief, that mankind has consciously entertained all the fundamental ideas which are applicable to its experience. Further it is held that human language, in single words or in phrases, explicitly expresses these ideas. I will term this presupposition, ‘The Fallacy of the Perfect Dictionary.’”⁹¹

Language, which is itself necessarily an abstraction, is mistaken as an accurate and concrete expression of the world. According to Whitehead this problem is endemic to philosophy, as it extends throughout its history from the Greeks to the

⁸⁸Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 209/318. This is from the hymn “Abide with me” written by Henry F. Lyte (1793-1847), music by William H. Monk (1823-1889) and the Biblical allusion in the first two lines is to Luke 24:29, “But they [the apostles] urged him [Jesus] strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went to stay with them.” (NRSV). Apparently Whitehead is in good company as Mahatma Gandhi also had this hymn as a favourite.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰This tendency will be examined more closely when Whitehead’s criticisms of the traditional conception of God are considered.

⁹¹A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 173. Whitehead also offers three other “fallacies,” which will be considered later in this section.

present, although its form changes slightly in each epoch. “The excessive trust in linguistic phrases has been the well-known reason vitiating so much of the philosophy and physics among the Greeks and among the medieval thinkers who continued the Greek traditions.”⁹² This tradition is continued in the modern era where it is presupposed “that language does enunciate well-defined propositions.”⁹³ With the assumption of adequately expressed propositions, philosophy has then assumed that its “method is dogmatically to indicate premises which are severally clear, distinct and certain; and to erect upon those premises a deductive system of thought.”⁹⁴ Thus we find “the notions of the ‘green leaf’ and of the ‘round ball’ ... at the base of traditional metaphysics.”⁹⁵ In other words, we find subjects and modifiers of subjects, whether they are adjectives or predicates. From this bias has developed, in recent times, the idea that philosophical theories are to be given to the logicians, “Who have countenanced the doctrine that their function [i.e., the function of propositions] is to be judged as to their truth or falsehood.”⁹⁶ Thus, according to Whitehead, due to the uncritical trust in language pervading Western thought, we begin with the modification of the subject by the Greeks; adopt it through the modern period by changing it into the adequacy of premises, which leads to the development of systems deduced from these premises, and finally to the judgement of truth or falsity of these premises (as propositions) by logicians.

It should be no surprise, given his analysis, that Whitehead thinks “the defect of a metaphysical system is the very fact that it is a neat little system of thought, which thereby over-simplifies its expression of the world.”⁹⁷ Indeed, this statement could be taken as Whitehead’s indictment of all previous metaphysical systems, because of their assumption that language can accurately capture the world. The notion of the adequacy of language, leading to an overly simplistic, abstract system of analysis is certainly one of the main contributors to the other philosophical problems that Whitehead identifies.

Notably, Whitehead identifies three fallacies, which can be understood as derivative from philosophy’s fallacious trust in language, and are demonstrative of the tradition’s preference for the abstract over the concrete. They are: the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness, the Fallacy of Simple Location, and the Dogmatic Fallacy. Usually when expositing Whitehead’s thought scholars refer to the first two fallacies mentioned, but the third fallacy is clearly stated in his *Adventures of Ideas* and is an indictment of the tradition itself rather than any specific instance of wrong-headed thinking. A brief examination will demonstrate how these three fallacies are related to each other and philosophy’s

⁹²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 12/17.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 12/18.

⁹⁴*Ibid.* 8/11-12.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 167/253.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 184/281. My addition for clarity in the brackets.

⁹⁷Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 50.

over-simplified analysis due to its uncritical linguistic bias.

The Dogmatic Fallacy “consists in the persuasion that we are capable of producing notions which are adequately defined in respect to the complexity of relationship required for their illustration in the real world.”⁹⁸ Seldom, if ever, do philosophers doubt their ability to articulate their discoveries.⁹⁹ In fact, “Philosophy has been afflicted by the dogmatic fallacy, which is the belief that the principles of its working hypotheses are clear, obvious, and irreformable.”¹⁰⁰ Although this statement is certainly meant as a criticism of philosophy since the Enlightenment, there is no doubt that Whitehead thinks that it is symptomatic of all philosophers since the Greeks.¹⁰¹ This trust in their ability to articulate the complexity of existence has been the primary error committed by philosophers and has led to so many of philosophy’s avoidable problems.

The Fallacies of Misplaced Concreteness and Simple Location are, according to Whitehead, the most serious errors frequently committed by philosophers. The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness is pervasive throughout the history of philosophy whereas the Fallacy of Simple Location is a particularly Modern error. The Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness is “merely the accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete.”¹⁰² Once one assumes the adequacy of language and one’s own ability to express the complexity of the world, the over-simplified terms and ideas arrived at are necessarily abstractions. It is one very small step from these abstractions to the error that these abstractions are indeed concrete, i.e., they are what is essentially real about the world. Obviously, once one begins to mistake abstractions for the concrete it is easy to continue with a line of thinking (most likely the deductive one based upon the clear, and therefore abstract, premises or propositions) that continues to compound its mistakes, thus making its thought more convoluted as it attempts to twist free from, in some cases centuries of, the resulting consequences.

One such instance is the third fallacy, Simple Location, which is the result of Modernity’s attempt to escape past philosophical mistakes. Whitehead thinks that seldom, if ever, is an era aware of its own assumptions. And *the* assumption of

⁹⁸Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 144-5.

⁹⁹Even with his methodological doubt Descartes never once stops in his *Meditations* to consider whether or not he can accurately express that which he cannot doubt, i.e., his own thought. This move to interiority, initiated by Descartes, has never seriously considered the difficulty of articulating the sheer complexity of human thought and in its most extreme form has led to the idea that human intelligence can be replicated, artificially, once we have sophisticated enough computers.

¹⁰⁰Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 223.

¹⁰¹The exception to this criticism is Plato, as Whitehead writes, “It is tacitly assumed, except by Plato, that the more fundamental factors will ever lend themselves for discrimination with particular clarity” (*Adventures of Ideas*, 175). It is also important to note that in making this statement, Whitehead is not exonerating Plato from his criticism; rather, Whitehead is able to make this comment only because of his criticism of Platonic thought as reducing the world of experience to that of “mere appearance.”

¹⁰²Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 52.

Modernity's "whole philosophy of nature" was that of the simple location of matter.¹⁰³ The "presupposition of individual independence is what I have elsewhere called, the 'fallacy of simple location.'"¹⁰⁴ This means "the characteristic common both to space and time is that material can be said to be *here* in space and *here* in time, or *here* in space-time, in a perfectly definitive sense which does not require for its explanation any reference to other regions of space-time."¹⁰⁵ Thus, what occurs in Modernity as it attempts to navigate the morass of inherited philosophical mistakes is its arrival at the notion that matter (or substance) is self-contained and requires nothing other than itself for explanation. This means that it is unrelated to anything else since it neither came from somewhere nor from sometime (e.g. the past), and therefore is isolated through a dissection of space and time. This is the Newtonian (also Cartesian, Lockean, and Humean) understanding of matter as so many billiard balls being knocked around by the application of external forces. It is also one reason why Hume had such a difficult time demonstrating causation.¹⁰⁶ With this final fallacy, it is evident that Modernity inherited the Greek and medieval idea of a primary substance and then modified it to the simple location of matter, which was better suited to the scientific knowledge of the era.¹⁰⁷ This theme of independent existence continues in Whitehead's criticism of the subject-predicate structure of analysis and its associated problems.

As previously mentioned, this exposition of Whitehead should not be taken as a linear, and therefore a logical argument where one premise follows necessarily from the immediately prior premise in a deduction from the original axiom. Whitehead does not present the problems regarding traditional philosophy in this manner, rather, his criticisms are inter-related and mutually compatible. For instance, when the Fallacy of Simple Location is characterized by Whitehead as one of the main errors of Modernity, it is not as though this type of thought occurs *only* in Modernity (in fact, to think such a thing would be to commit the fallacy), since as Whitehead rightly mentions, "The misconception which has haunted philosophic literature throughout the centuries is the notion of 'independent existence.'"¹⁰⁸ It is merely that the Fallacy of Simple Location is a particularly Modern understanding of this notion and to think that the idea of "independent existence" is exclusive to Modernity would be a mistake. Keeping this in mind, the problem of the subject-

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹⁰⁴ Whitehead *Process and Reality*, 137/208.

¹⁰⁵ Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect*, 30-37.

¹⁰⁷ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 49-50/78-79. Whitehead writes, "All modern philosophy hinges around the difficulty of describing the world in terms of subject and predicate; substance and quality, particular and universal. The result always does violence to that immediate experience which we express in our actions, our hopes, our sympathies, our purposes, and which we enjoy in spite of our lack of phrases for its verbal analysis. We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures; whereas under some disguise or other, orthodox philosophy can only introduce us to solitary substances, each enjoying an illusory experience: 'O, Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?'"

¹⁰⁸ Whitehead, "Immortality," in *Science and Philosophy*, 91.

predicate structure, which has been with Western philosophy since its inception, can now be examined.

The most philosophically problematic result of the subject-predicate form of analysis is that it entails the substance-quality distinction. This, as Whitehead mentions, was not originally a problem, as the Greeks, with their initiation of philosophy, “Proceeded on the sound principle that [their] generalizations must be based upon the primary elements of actual experience”¹⁰⁹ and as such “had recourse to common forms of language to suggest [their] generalizations. It found the typical statement, ‘That stone is grey’; and it evolved the generalization that the actual world can be conceived as a collection of primary substances qualified by universal qualities.”¹¹⁰ The philosophical result of this starting point is that, in the attempt to balance the relationship between flux and permanence, being is preferred as an enduring and unchanging substance (certainly an abstraction) over becoming which is relegated to a mere, often accidental, attribute or quality (rather than assuming its rightful place as the cornerstone of concrete meaning). This results primarily in an epistemological problem, namely, the problem of knowing the essence (or substance) of reality. On this topic, Whitehead writes,

Thus in framing cosmological theory, the notion of continuous stuff with permanent attributes, enduring without differentiation, and retaining self-identity through any stretch of time however large or small, has been fundamental. The stuff undergoes change in respect to accidental qualities and relations; but it is numerically self-identical in its character of one actual entity throughout its accidental adventures. The admission of this fundamental metaphysical concept has wrecked the various systems of pluralistic realism.¹¹¹

By “wrecked” it is reasonable to think that Whitehead is referring to the presupposition that the subject-predicate form necessarily expresses some ultimate metaphysical fact, which must entail the substance-quality division and, in turn, effectively denies access to the substance because only its qualities are perceived. If one can only *know* the qualities, then philosophical systems quickly appear asserting the division between appearance (the qualities) and reality (the substance) is absolute. As a result, our everyday experience is not to be trusted or remains somehow less than real, which is why “under some disguise or other, orthodox philosophy can only introduce us to solitary substances, each enjoying an illusory experience.”¹¹² It is “an illusory experience” in the sense that, again, traditionally philosophy abstracts a common substance from our experience and holds it forth as real or essential, but of course, as we can never have an experience of this “solitary substance,” any attempt to claim knowledge of the “thing-in-itself” can at best only

¹⁰⁹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 158/240.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 78/120.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 50/78.

be inferential if not finally illusory. This is due to the other problem created by the substance-quality division, which is its inability to demonstrate a necessary connection between the qualities (or more accurately the accidents) and the essential substance, thus leaving even inferential knowledge of “reality” in question. Perhaps this is why, in his survey of the tradition, Whitehead thinks, that “the evil produced by the Aristotelian ‘primary substance’ is exactly this habit of metaphysical emphasis upon the ‘subject-predicate’ form of proposition.”¹¹³ Whitehead does not, however, hold Aristotle responsible for the philosophical problems that follow. In fact “the simple notion of enduring substance sustaining persistent qualities ... expresses a useful abstract for many purposes of life,” and in the cases of language and logic one can offer a “sound pragmatic defence,” but “in metaphysics the concept is sheer error.”¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, due to the “overemphasis on Aristotle’s logic during the long medieval period,”¹¹⁵ this type of thinking impressed itself upon the European intellect, which assumed the substance-quality formulation even as it tried to disentangle itself from medieval thought. Whitehead mentions, that despite Hume’s radical agenda, it is there in his works¹¹⁶ and for that matter it “triumphed with exclusive dominance in Descartes’ doctrines.”¹¹⁷ As such, the substance-quality concept is a contributing factor to the problems created when Modernity introduced the Subjectivist Principle, which should now be considered.

As the father of modern philosophy Descartes remains, for Whitehead, the touchstone from which his criticism originates. Through his introspective analysis and methodological doubt Descartes cemented the substance-quality distinction. He also, because of his understanding of “actuality” as “a substance with inhering qualities,”¹¹⁸ intensified the subject-object dichotomy. He did this not only with his emphasis on the substance-quality formulation, but he also “laid down the principle, that those substances which are the subjects enjoying conscious experiences provide the primary data for philosophy, namely, themselves as in the enjoyment of such experience.”¹¹⁹ With the conscious (subjective) experiencer as the sole source of information, all else becomes unconscious (objective) non-experiencers that we, as subjects, now have to somehow know. That is, the conscious, subjective experiencer is now thrown into a world of objects about which very little, if anything, can be known, especially if these objects are understood as various substances with inhering qualities.¹²⁰

Philosophy’s response to this problem is the development of the Subjectivist Principle which states, “That the datum in the act of experience can

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 30/45.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 79/122.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 51/81.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 137/209.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 145/219.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 159/241.

¹²⁰In both *Religion and the Making and Process and Reality* Whitehead identifies three Cartesian substances: mind, matter or extended bodies, and God.

be adequately analysed purely in terms of universals,” and that this entails the Sensationalist Principle which states, “That the primary activity in the act of experience is the bare subjective entertainment of the datum, devoid of any subjective form of reception. This is the doctrine of “*mere sensation*,” according to Whitehead.¹²¹ In making the subjectivist turn Descartes moves from the classic formulation, “This stone is grey” to the Modern one, “My perception of this stone as grey.”¹²² Unfortunately, he thoroughly failed to understand the significance of his own subjectivism and imported the substance-quality distinction into his analysis, even though it is not derivable from subjective experience. This also led Hume to assume the substance-quality structure, which seeks to identify universal qualities of substance, while examining his own (subjective) experiences. Since he was looking for universal qualities in his perceptions, as Whitehead points out, Hume could only find the universal quality of “greyness” in his “perception of this stone as grey.”¹²³ Thus Hume “extracts ‘Awareness of sensation of greyness’; and puts it forward as the ultimate datum in this element of experience.”¹²⁴

The point not made explicit in the above exposition is that philosophy understands substance (in the substance-quality structure) as “Aristotle’s definition of primary substance, as always a subject and never a predicate.” Therefore the three factors leading to the Subjectivist Principle are now clear: “(i) The acceptance of the ‘substance-quality’ concept as expressing the ultimate ontological principle. (ii) The acceptance of Aristotle’s definition of a primary substance, as always a subject and never a predicate. (iii) The assumption that the experient subject is a primary subject.”¹²⁵ The merit of Hume and Kant, who Whitehead says represent the second half of the modern period,¹²⁶ is “the explicitness with which they faced the difficulty.”¹²⁷

The difficulty arose, of course, because of Modernity’s inability to free itself from the well-worn concepts it inherited from previous attempts, which it happened to find compatible with the new scientific concepts of the era, and because it did not thoroughly and consistently investigate the consequences of its own subjectivist turn. As useful as the substance-predicate abstraction is, especially as used in language and logic, it does not provide an adequate framework with which to conduct a metaphysical analysis of reality. In fact, when combined with the subjective Cartesian turn,¹²⁸ it tends only to further the

¹²¹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 157/239.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 159/241.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 159/242.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 157/239.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 156/236.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 157/238-239.

¹²⁸It should be noted that Whitehead thinks, if it has not already been made explicit enough, that “the difficulties of all schools of modern philosophy lie in the fact that, having accepted the subjectivist principle, they continue to use philosophical categories derived from another point of view,” and in particular the substance-quality category. (*Ibid.*, 167/253).

substance-quality distinction resulting in the subject-object dichotomy, or, to state the same division in a more Cartesian manner, in the divorce of mind from matter. Descartes' innovation was the investigation of the subject for metaphysical knowledge, but rather than embarking upon a thorough investigation from this starting point, he posited two separate and distinct substances – non-extended minds and extended matter, due to his assumption of conceptual terms derived from other methods of analysis (namely the Greek and medieval, which legitimately used the substance-quality distinction because of its relatively objective starting point).

Thus Descartes' epistemological problem became how to "traverse the distance" between the non-extended mental substance and the extended material substance. In other words, how can a subject *know* an object? Or, how can mind (a distinct substance requiring nothing other than itself) *know* matter (another distinct substance requiring nothing other than itself).¹²⁹ This "fundamental duality" of Modern thought with "*material* on the one hand, and on the other hand *mind*"¹³⁰ is a rather impoverished understanding of the world as "in between there lie the concepts of life, organism, function, instantaneous reality, interaction, order of nature, which collectively form the Achilles heel of the whole system."¹³¹

The result of the subjectivist turn in combination with the importation of the substance-quality formulation is twofold. The consequence of the subjectivist turn is the Kantian subjective construction of the objective, on one side, and on the other the introduction of Vacuous Actuality, which means the exclusion of subjective experience from all else but the conscious subject. The problem, as Whitehead understands it, is that Kant took Hume's conclusions about perception and causality as the problems to be solved and when Kant sought for a solution he had to, in effect, omit one side of the equation – the objective. Because of "the Kantian doctrine of the objective world as a theoretical construct from purely subjective experience," Whitehead thinks that the "development of cosmology has been hampered."¹³² As mentioned, the other result of the Subjectivist Principle is the idea of Vacuous Actuality, which will now be considered.

According to Whitehead, the fact that ideas such as the "green leaf" and the "round ball" provide the base of metaphysics leads to the concept of Vacuous

Whitehead, however, does not think that the Subjectivist Principle should be discarded, but, as will be shown in the next section, that it is in need of reformation.

¹²⁹Of course, we know Descartes' solution to this problem was to posit yet another substance – God. Although this substance has special properties, Whitehead still, rightly, understands the problem as the same, only compounded by a third substance. How can a distinct substance that requires nothing other than itself ever *know* another substance. Whitehead writes, "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" (*Process and Reality*, 190/289).

¹³⁰Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 58.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

¹³²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xiii/viii.

Actuality, which is to be “void of subjective experience.”¹³³ Certainly the substance-quality structure of analysis, which involves the attribution of properties to the subject, e.g. “green leaf,” has contributed to this idea. This alone is not enough to lead to Vacuous Actuality, however, as the subjectivist turn’s division of the world into those *who* perceive and things *which* are perceived is also required. As such, things are “mainly perceived in terms of their passive perspective relationship to the percipient and to each other.”¹³⁴ That is, they are understood as “passive recipients of the qualities with which in sense-perception they are associated.”¹³⁵ Thus Whitehead characterizes this traditional analysis as “vacuous,” by which he means, “Devoid of any individual enjoyment arising from the mere fact of realization in that context.”¹³⁶ There are two problems inherent in this manner of analysis: it continues the substance-quality division and, it also disregards the fact that science has discredited this understanding of matter. Moreover, by reducing entities to passive receptors of qualities, they are deprived of any intrinsic worth, which, according to Whitehead, only comes through “self-enjoyment.”

Although this may sound odd at first, there are three important aspects at issue here that our exposition will consider. One is that science no longer holds to a theory of matter as ultimately extended throughout the universe, as it once did (not that long ago) when it developed the idea of ether. Instead, matter is now understood as energy which takes various complex forms and, as such, we perceive things *as* planets, stars, and trees. The significance of this change in theory is that no entity we encounter is a self-contained existential instance exhibiting certain properties, rather it is a complex inter-relationship where “the environment with its peculiarities seeps into the group-agitation which we term matter, and the group-agitations extend their character to the environment.”¹³⁷ Thus, scientifically, there is no longer such an object as an unrelated, instantaneous, self-contained subject of which we can predicate a quality. Here is the difference between the specialized scientific investigation of matter and the subjectivist investigation, which focussed exclusively on the perception of the conscious subject, upon which philosophy has relied for so long, and is most likely why Whitehead writes, “In this way, the exclusive reliance on sense-perception promotes a false metaphysics.”¹³⁸ This is important to Whitehead, because he thinks it is the task of metaphysics to harmonize our different areas of knowledge and, in this particular instance, philosophy has neglected scientific developments for at least a hundred years.

The second point at issue in Whitehead’s criticism of Vacuous Actuality is

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 167/253.

¹³⁴ Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 219.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 138.

¹³⁸ Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 219.

that it continues the mind-matter dualism.¹³⁹ This is so because of the division of the world into subject perceivers (minds) and non-experiencing objects (dead matter). The conventional criticism of this Cartesian dualism is that non-extended mental substance cannot be affected by extended material substance, which creates, in the very least, an insurmountable epistemological problem. Whitehead recasts this problem in order to solve it with an account of internal relations, whereas, traditional metaphysics has, due to Vacuous Actuality, only concerned itself with external relations. In fact, Whitehead argues it is through this internal relatedness that the dualism and its resulting epistemological problem can be avoided and knowledge rendered possible.

The third point is that Vacuous Actuality deprives everything, except conscious subjects, of intrinsic worth. This creates a philosophical understanding of the world in which humanity sits atop the pyramid of existence, casting its gaze over the world as its exclusive domain. Some have argued that this framework (*Ge-stell*) has resulted in the reduction of the natural world to a kind of “standing-reserve” (*Bestand*) which we approach in a purely calculative manner.¹⁴⁰ Whitehead thinks this reduction of the natural world to merely manipulable, “dead,” objectified matter is a mistake and, instead, places a high premium on the self-aesthetic-realization of everything.¹⁴¹

Since Whitehead’s analysis of Vacuous Actuality entails a failure on the part of philosophy to adequately deal with scientific developments and epistemological issues, these two shortcomings will now be considered. First, the reasons for philosophy’s inability to account for new scientific knowledge will be examined. As part of this consideration, historical and social factors that have influenced the development of philosophy, including those present at the incubation of modern thought, will be taken into account. Secondly, Whitehead’s criticism of philosophy’s neglect of and inability to account for “stubborn fact,” because of its subjectivist turn, will be explicated.

Implicit in Whitehead’s comment about the development of Western philosophy is the history of Europe, which begins with the Greeks. He thinks that

¹³⁹Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead’s Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition* (New York: the Macmillan Company, 1958), 126.

¹⁴⁰Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 26. // “Die Frage nach der Technik,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze, Gesamtausgabe, Band 7* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 27. In the essay “Die Frage nach der Technik,” *Bestand* is introduced on page 17, *Ge-stell* on page 20, and the calculability of nature on page 27 where Heidegger writes, “In a similar way the unconcealment in accordance with which nature presents itself as a calculable complex of the effects of forces can indeed permit correct determinations; but precisely through these successes the danger can remain that in the midst of all that is correct the true will withdraw.” // “Insgleichen kann die Unverborgenheit, dergemäß sich die Natur als ein berechenbarer Wirkungszusammenhang von Kräften darstellt, zwar richtige Feststellungen verstatten, aber gerade durch diese Erfolge die Gefahr bleiben, daß sich in allem Richtigen das Wahre entzieht.”

¹⁴¹This point will be expanded in the next section and Chapter 3, when actual occasions themselves will be examined.

in every epoch “philosophy is tinged with the colouring of some secret imaginative background.”¹⁴² In the case of the Greeks, for instance, their “view of nature...was essentially dramatic.”¹⁴³ In the case of Modern thought Whitehead thinks its defining characteristic was “anti-rationalism” *vis-à-vis* the high rationalism of the medieval period.¹⁴⁴ Before turning to Whitehead’s explication of philosophy’s neglect of scientific developments since the Enlightenment, a note on those factors that have influenced philosophy since its inception is required.

In one of his later essays, *Immortality* (1941), Whitehead says, “The long tradition of European philosophy and theology has been haunted by two misconceptions. One of these misconceptions is the notion of independent existence.”¹⁴⁵ This idea comes from those more “sensitive people” who have either spiritually or intellectually experienced “some ultimate essence of the Universe, and therefore its existence must include an absolute independence of all inferior types.”¹⁴⁶ This idea of independent existence, as we have seen, soon became entrenched as the substance-quality structure of analysis and was finally imported into Modern philosophy, in spite of its subjectivist turn, resulting in a division between subject and object so absolute that the elimination of one side of the equation became the only solution. The second misconception comes from the successful organization of early society, which involved various types (better and worse) of despotism.¹⁴⁷ The idea was that in order to achieve *unity* some type of despotic imposition is required.

Whitehead’s second point is complementary to the first, since independent existence has been rather despotic throughout the philosophical tradition and has been so in two ways. First, independent existence, historically, as in the case of Aristotle’s primary substance and the classical theistic conception of God, entailed unity and the maintenance of this unity throughout the tradition has been like the iron fist of a tyrant, constantly compelling thinkers into narrowly defined cells of thought, usually monistic, from which they could not escape. The combination of Greek philosophical doctrine with Biblical revelation by theologians resulted in the idea that “God must coincide with Being as such; for he cannot be without existence, and therefore equally existence cannot be without him, so that the very meaning of ‘exist’ must be theistic.”¹⁴⁸ This is derived from the theological tradition that posits God’s existence as necessary in all respects

¹⁴²Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 8.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 141. See page 21 where this characterization is dealt with more thoroughly.

¹⁴⁵Whitehead, “Immortality,” 100.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.* In this matter Whitehead specifically indicts Plato, writing, “This error haunted Plato in respect to his Ideas, and more especially in respect to the mathematical Ideas which he so greatly enjoyed.”

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, eds., *Philosophers Speak of God* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000), 8.

and thus leaves all other existence contingent. The necessary existence of God is arrived at for one of two related reasons: either God is necessary as the cause of creation (since nothing necessary can be found in creation) or because theologians maintain necessary existence as a part of God's perfection. These two reasons are compatible, as the logic of perfection entails necessary existence, which can also be arrived at through an analysis of causation. Another consequence of God's necessary existence is that all other existence, although itself conceived as independent, is contingent, in the sense that it either did not have to exist or did not have to be the way that it is. Thus "God must coincide with Being as such" because God is the only necessary existent upon which all else depends. Simply stated, no God means no existence.

Secondly, according to Whitehead, while maintaining the classical concept of God, philosophers and theologians have ascribed to God all the characteristics of the despot. God is absolutely independent, all-powerful and knowing, requiring nothing but Himself. Further, as philosophers assumed a *cosmos* for investigation, the assumption that order *has* to be imposed and imposed by someone with the characteristics of a despot became widely accepted. This also followed from their analysis of causation that states like effects have like causes, which is why substance, although contingent, has independent existence. That is, the cause is necessary and independent (God) and the effect (matter) is contingent and independent. Generally, this line of reasoning is derived from an ontology which asserts a hierarchical understanding of the world. The greatest conceivable being is necessary in all respects (having no accidents), following from which various entities have various grades of independence (e.g. angels are immortal but contingent, humans are mortal and therefore admit more accidental qualities into their being than angels, and so on down the chain). Thus began the rule of God and substance throughout the tradition, which led to innumerable problems, although almost all of which can be understood as relational problems, whether it be the problem of God's relationship to/with the World or the relationship of the substance to/with its predicate. Of course, problems of relation are indicative of the relative status granted to each component and are often the result of an implicit imbalance between the abstract and the concrete.

Besides these two factors, which remain with philosophy until this day, there also has been an inability or reluctance to account for relatively recent scientific discoveries.¹⁴⁹ Whitehead attributes this tendency to the "anti-rationalism of the moderns."¹⁵⁰ Although one may at first find the characterization of Modern thought as "anti-rational" surprising, it needs to be understood in the context of Whitehead's characterization of the medieval period

¹⁴⁹I am not asserting here that science has solved all the philosophical problems and philosophers merely need to become acquainted with the literature. What I am arguing, along with Whitehead, is that philosophy adopted some seventeenth and eighteenth century scientific concepts and began to use these concepts philosophically.

¹⁵⁰Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 141.

as dominated by a high rationalism. Perhaps at no other time in Western civilization was there such a thorough integration of all the areas of knowledge as during the medieval era. When one's science, theology, politics, law, and philosophy are all aspects of the same unified scheme (unified under the despotic rule of God), then everything must make sense. This is the type of rationalism that Whitehead thinks the Moderns rejected.

Certainly this reaction was led by the Scientific Revolution, which was a revolution both in science and in thought. The triumph of this revolution was through its investigation of particulars. That is, the development of a method, which included experimentation and close observation, meant that previously held beliefs about the world were carefully scrutinized and often discredited. For example, the move from a geo-centric universe to a helio-centric one was precipitated by the application of the new scientific method. As the Scientific Revolution gained in success, its fundamental incompatibility with the other areas of human knowledge (as understood by medieval rationalism) became more and more obvious, to the point where the Revolution came to represent the discarding of all previously held beliefs, not just those of science.¹⁵¹ Whitehead characterizes this move against medieval rationalism, which sought to construct a holistic interpretation, as a kind of “anti-rationalism of the moderns,” which “has checked any attempt to harmonize the ultimate concepts of science with ideas drawn from a more concrete survey of the *whole*.”¹⁵² This anti-rationalism also infected Enlightenment philosophers who began to hold that scientific knowledge was not compatible with religious or philosophical knowledge. Unfortunately, the Enlightenment philosophers uncritically adopted many of the then current scientific concepts, especially space, time and matter, in their philosophical analyses, which have remained in philosophy until this day, despite that fact that science has discarded or significantly revised all of its own concepts in the past three hundred years. Thus, on the one hand, philosophy before Whitehead uncritically inherited ideas from science and on the other hand, has refused to consider any new scientific information, because its own anti-rationalist reaction to medieval thought tells it that the gulf between science and philosophy cannot be bridged.

Whitehead, as shown in Chapter I, not only thinks that the areas of science and philosophy are compatible, but that it is precisely the task of speculative philosophy, i.e., metaphysics, to relate them. It is worth noting that had philosophy continued its attempt to unify the different areas of knowledge it could have taken scientific developments into account and found that these new

¹⁵¹This is exemplified in the first sentence of Descartes' first meditation where he writes, “Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them.” J. Cottingham, *et al.*, trans. and eds., *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 76 (AT VII 17).

¹⁵²Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 141. (Emphasis added).

developments were fundamentally incompatible with the substance-quality method of analysis. In other words, had philosophy's scope been greater it may very well have found a solution to one of its most difficult problems in another discipline. This is why Whitehead writes, "It has been a defect of modern philosophies that they throw no light whatever on any scientific principles. Science should investigate particular species, and metaphysics should investigate the generic notions under which those specific principles should fall."¹⁵³ And more to the point, Whitehead indicts "current accounts of perception" as using categories originally formulated by the Greeks, but "the Greeks were ignorant of modern physics," whereas contemporary thinkers should not be and only continue to compound the past philosophical mistakes with their wilful ignorance.¹⁵⁴

As the preceding account came from a consideration of one of the consequences of Vacuous Actuality, namely philosophy's ignorance of science, it should be remembered that the second epistemological consequence of Vacuous Actuality still needs to be considered. Whitehead thinks epistemological problems are finally metaphysical ones and what he finds arising in modern thought is a confusion of the two where poorly developed metaphysics with their resulting ontologies not only cause, but in turn assume, questionable epistemological analyses.¹⁵⁵

The main epistemological problem came from the modern subjectivist turn which entails, even in its "moderate intermediate" form, the dependence of the world upon us "in a way which directly traverses our naïve experience."¹⁵⁶ For example, when Kant subjectively constructs the theoretically objective, the objects with which Kant (and for that matter Hume) concerns himself are not the objects of our experience but are (constructed) objects that fit nicely with his analysis of phenomena. This is why Whitehead thinks, "It is in respect to this 'stubborn fact' that the theories of modern philosophy are weakest," because their conscious subjects rationally constitute the world rather than "confine their attention to the rush of immediate transition."¹⁵⁷

Indeed, traditionally philosophers neglect "perception in the mode of causal efficacy" as they "have disdained the information about the universe obtained through their visceral feelings, and have concentrated on visual feelings."¹⁵⁸ As a result of their focus on visual sensations philosophers have only

¹⁵³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 116/178.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 117/179.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 189/288. Whitehead writes, "All metaphysical theories which admit a disjunction between the component elements of individual experience on the one hand, and on the other hand the component elements of the external world, must inevitably be run into difficulties over the truth and falsehood of propositions, and over the grounds for judgement. The former difficulty is metaphysical, the latter epistemological. But all difficulties as to the first principles are only camouflaged metaphysical difficulties. Thus also the epistemological difficulty is only solvable by an appeal to ontology."

¹⁵⁶Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 90.

¹⁵⁷Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 129/197.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 121/184.

concerned themselves with perception in the mode of “presentational immediacy.” Certainly, some definition of Whitehead’s terminology is now required for the sake of clarity.

First, however, it should be remarked that Whitehead is not denying that perception is the basis for our knowledge of the world, rather his criticism is that, traditionally, philosophers focus upon the more abstract mode of perception (presentational immediacy) to the exclusion of the more primary and concrete mode of experience, which he describes in terms of causal efficacy. This does not imply that modern philosophers thought their sense-perception did not grant them access to the world, and indeed this is the point of agreement between them and Whitehead, but that their subsequent analyses neglect the totality of our experiences in the world. He writes,

In other words, the mass of our moral, emotional, and purposive experience is rendered trivial and accidental. The whole notion of our massive experience conceived as a reaction to clearly envisaged details is fallacious. The relationship should be inverted. The details are a reaction to the totality. They add definition. They introduce powers of judgement.¹⁵⁹

According to Whitehead, our “direct knowledge” of the mode of experience of causal efficacy comes from the fact “that sense-perception of the contemporary world is accompanied by perception of the ‘withness’ of the body. It is this withness that makes the starting point for our knowledge of the circumambient world.”¹⁶⁰ This mode of perception is the more fundamental as we can see relatively non-complex (i.e., non-conscious) organisms displaying it; “a jellyfish advances and withdraws, and in so doing exhibits some perception of causal relationship with the world beyond itself.”¹⁶¹ Unfortunately, Descartes and Hume, and the subsequent philosophical tradition for that matter, “In their theory of direct perceptive knowledge dropped out this withness of the body; and thus confined perception to presentational immediacy.”¹⁶²

In fact, it was Hume who inverted the relationship between presentational immediacy and causal efficacy. Presentational immediacy is that mode of experience where “our perception of the external world is ... the familiar immediate presentation of the contemporary world, by means of our projection of our immediate sensations.”¹⁶³ This means that presentational immediacy “by means of a *sensum*, rescues from vagueness a contemporary spatial region, in respect to its spatial shape and its spatial perspective from the percipient.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 109.

¹⁶⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 81/125.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 176/268.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, 81/125.

¹⁶³Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect*, 13.

¹⁶⁴Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 121/185.

Here is the world of conscious experience that we enjoy, the world consisting of shapes, colours, sounds and odours, in other words, it is the world of clear and distinct presentments. This level of perception is derivative from that of causal efficacy, although not in an intentionally conscious way; it is merely a function of consciousness.¹⁶⁵ At the level of presentational immediacy it is difficult to demonstrate the association of certain colours with shapes or antecedent causes with consequent effects, which was precisely Hume's problem, and so such things are relegated to habitual practice rather than evidence of our experience in the world.¹⁶⁶

The acceptance of Hume's analysis led to the prevailing idea that our knowledge of the world comes exclusively through our five sense-organs¹⁶⁷ and as such that "much philosophical thought is based upon the faked adequacy of some account of various modes of human experience."¹⁶⁸ This in turn leads to an emphasis on "'appearance' in the constitution of experience" and the "disastrous metaphysical doctrine of matter passively illustrating qualities, and devoid of self-enjoyment,"¹⁶⁹ i.e., Vacuous Actuality. As mentioned at the beginning of this exposition, metaphysics has a tendency to assume its own poorly developed epistemology and in the modern period this means that "clarity and distinctness are made the test of metaphysical importance" and as a result "an entire misapprehension of the metaphysical status of appearance" occurs.¹⁷⁰ Namely, appearance is divorced from reality in order to maintain the pre-existing philosophical assumptions and thereby negates the validity of our experience in the world. It becomes superficial, or epiphenomenal, not actually telling us anything *real* or, at best, only allowing us to make certain postulates about *reality* based upon our experience of phenomena. It is with the completion of this explication of the philosophical implications of Vacuous Actuality that we can now turn to Whitehead's final criticism.

The resulting despotism of God due to traditional philosophy's emphasis on unity and independent existence has already been mentioned and will be considered again, because Whitehead thinks that in Western thought there has been an impoverished treatment of God/Ideals. Besides the continual assertion of

¹⁶⁵Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition*, 142. Although Leclerc does not cite the following passage from Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 162, it supports the interpretation, "Thus those elements of our experience which stand out clearly and distinctly in our consciousness are not its basic facts; they are the derivative modifications which arise in the process."

¹⁶⁶In *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect*, 34. Whitehead writes that Hume's initial assumptions are: "(i) Presentational immediacy, and relations between presentationally immediate entities, constitute the only type of perceptive experience, and that (ii) presentational immediacy includes no demonstrative factors disclosing a contemporary world of extended actual things."

¹⁶⁷Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 225.

¹⁶⁸A.N. Whitehead, "Immortality," *Science and Philosophy*, 102.

¹⁶⁹Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 212.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*

a Semitic conception of God,¹⁷¹ there is one other related point. Philosophers have also had a difficult time relating permanence and flux and, as such, have tended to prefer permanence to flux.¹⁷² In fact, they make the permanent world (which is usually the more abstract) the more concrete (in the sense of being imbued with all value and meaning) and the world of flux (which is usually the more immediately concrete) the more abstract (in the sense that it becomes ‘mere appearance,’¹⁷³ without meaning and value).

At the beginning of this section the difficulty in relating flux and permanence was alluded to with Whitehead’s quotation of the hymn, “Abide with me/Fast falls the eventide.” On this subject, he suggests that philosophers trying to relate these two concepts tend to create a “wavering balance” between them.¹⁷⁴ This is, to repeat what was said earlier, certainly a generous interpretation on Whitehead’s part, which, as he continues with his analysis in *Process and Reality*, becomes more and more critical to the point where he considers the world of experience (i.e. flux) to be negated by those thinkers (exemplified by Absolute Idealists such as Bradley) in favour of the Idea(l)(s). In this vein Whitehead writes, “Modern idealisms have merely contributed the unhelpful suggestion that the phenomenal world is one of the inferior avocations of the Absolute.”¹⁷⁵ At best this means the world is a part of the Absolute and thus everything is permeated with its meaning (although by implication nothing else has any meaning itself) and at worst everything other than the Absolute is an illusion or appearance with no ontological status and without the slightest bit of reality or meaning.

As will be demonstrated in the next section of this chapter, Whitehead thinks that the category of “becoming” provides a more inclusive analysis than that of the category of “being.”¹⁷⁶ The trend, however, has been to prefer being to becoming. According to Whitehead, who very much sees himself as reforming the Platonic tradition, this problem was partially created by Plato’s “tendency to separate a static spiritual world from a fluent world of superficial experience.”¹⁷⁷ Plato, however, was only the philosophical originator, whereas, when combined

¹⁷¹It is clear throughout Whitehead’s writings that he thinks the Semitic conception of God is both religiously defective and philosophically inadequate. When discussing Christian philosophers/theologians Whitehead tends to sharpen his point and indict these thinkers for neglecting the primary revelation of their own faith, which revealed God as “suffering companion” not as “all-powerful ruler,” in favour of philosophical doctrine handed down from the Greeks.

¹⁷²There are of course exceptions, which have periodically arisen, e.g. Heraclitus, Nietzsche, Bergson.

¹⁷³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 347/526.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 209/318.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 116/178.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 23/34-35. Whitehead writes, “That *how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity *is*; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming.’ This is the ‘principle of process.’”

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 209/319.

with the revelation of Jehovah, the triumph of the Absolute over the world became complete in Western civilization. And, of course, as with all victories, the champions came to defend it.

The result is centuries of thought that *must* make certain assumptions and then attempt to reconcile these with the actual world and various other areas of human inquiry and knowledge. Whitehead writes, “For example I have mentioned above that in modern Europe history and metaphysics have been constructed with the purpose of supporting the Semitic conception of God.”¹⁷⁸ Due to this,

Among medieval and modern philosophers, anxious to establish the religious significance of God, an unfortunate habit has prevailed of paying to Him metaphysical compliments. He has been conceived as the foundation of the metaphysical situation with its ultimate activity.¹⁷⁹

It is then no surprise that philosophers can produce such “an audacious fudge” as the “best of all possible worlds” in an attempt “to save the face of a creator constructed by ... theologians.”¹⁸⁰

Thus the defenders of the faith perpetuated not only the Semitic conception of God but also the idea of independent existence. God remains “internally complete” and “requiring no relations to anything beyond himself” as the theologians assumed the “barbaric origins” of the proper understanding of the ruler to his people.¹⁸¹ It is the rule of the king over his subjects in a singular manner, where God, like the kings, is “the one absolute, omnipotent, omniscient source of all being.”¹⁸² As mentioned previously in this section, the preference by philosophers for the category of being led them to the conception of God, as the greatest conceivable being,¹⁸³ that attributed to God all the characteristics of being and supremely so. God’s existence is considered necessary, as part of the classical conception of God’s perfection, and necessary for all other existence. God, who causes the world, exists independently as does the existence (substance) created by God, because like causes have like effects; independent existence creates independent existence. In this case, because the cause is equal to or greater than the effect, God as necessarily independent creates that which is not

¹⁷⁸Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 78.

¹⁷⁹Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 179-80.

¹⁸⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 47/74.

¹⁸¹Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 169.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*

¹⁸³“The greatest conceivable being” is also known as “perfect.” Classical theists have conceived of perfection as necessarily exemplifying being, e.g. Aquinas’ assertion that God is *actus purus* (purely actual) and does not “contain” or involve, in any way, any potentiality or possibility. Neo-classical theists (Whitehead, Hartshorne), on the other hand, maintain that the idea of perfection is *more* complete (or *more* perfect) when potentiality/possibility is included, e.g. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle: Open Court, 1962).

necessarily independent and, yet, is independent, namely, substance.¹⁸⁴ Another way to express this idea is to state that God exemplifies all the valued characteristics of being: permanence (usually expressed as eternal), pure actuality, omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, etc.¹⁸⁵ This combination of divine Biblical and intellectual Greek revelation led to several attempts to reconcile the world with God in which there is “a static God condescending to the world, and of a world *either* thoroughly fluent, *or* accidentally static, but finally fluent.”¹⁸⁶ According to Whitehead these various attempts remain ultimately incoherent as “selected components in the world are exempt from its final fluency, and achieve a static survival.”¹⁸⁷ But there is no reason for the selection of these particular components of the fluid world rather than other aspects which, analogously, could have just as easily been included.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, Charles Hartshorne, following Whitehead, makes a very persuasive case that Morris Cohen’s “Law of Polarity” enjoys “a good deal of support in experience, logic, and intellectual history.”¹⁸⁹ This law states that,

Ultimate contraries are correlatives, mutually interdependent, so that nothing real can be described by the wholly one-sided assertion of simplicity, being, actuality, and the like, each in a ‘pure’ form, devoid and independent of complexity, becoming, potentiality, and related contraries.

Hartshorne argues that the classical theistic conceptions of God amount to the assertion that God is “to be an absolute exception to the Law of Polarity.”¹⁹⁰ God is arrived at through a process of abstraction that seeks to purify one pole (e.g. actual), rather than relate the two poles (e.g. actual *and* potential).¹⁹¹ This abstraction has tended towards conceiving of God as “sheer ‘perfection,’ defined as completeness or maximality of value such that nothing conceivable *could* be added to it” or “in terms of causality, with sheer power or activity, a ‘cause of all,’

¹⁸⁴This is a theological point of considerable difficulty, perhaps made so by Aquinas. As such, I refer the reader to F. C. Copleston’s *Aquinas* (London: Penguin Books, 1955), p.103, where he writes, “Existence was for Aquinas the act by which substance has being; and unless it has being it cannot have accidental modification. He speaks of it as being that which is most intimate and most profound in a thing (*S. T.*, Ia, 8, 1, *ad* 4). He does indeed speak of it as a ‘perfection’, but it is ‘the actuality of all acts and thus the perfection of all perfections’ (*De potentia*, 7, 2, *ad* 9). In other words, existence cannot be numbered among a list of attributes, since it is the foundation of all attributes.”

¹⁸⁵It is mainly nineteenth century German philosophers who advance the argument that, albeit in different forms, God is merely a supreme psychological project of our values, which in turn, has become oppressive to both individuals and society. Of particular note are the writings of Feuerbach, Marx, and Nietzsche.

¹⁸⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 347/526.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 2.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 3

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*, 2.

which is in no aspect of its being the effect of any, an agent which acts but is not acted upon.”¹⁹² In the end we are left with “an entirely static God, with eminent reality, in relation to an entirely fluent world, with deficient reality.”¹⁹³ So, the final “achievement” of so many centuries of thought is to deny the world ontological status, not just philosophically but religiously. This amounts to the denial of the very world that the Western narrative claims to be the creation of God. In other words, the abstract, reified concept is made more concrete and ultimately becomes the master over the world of immediacy, which is the world in which we must yet somehow still live.

It should be apparent now that the relationship between the concrete and the abstract is an overriding concern in Whitehead’s thought, but a warning in this matter is also warranted. Although Whitehead’s criticism is that philosophy has tended to abstract from the concrete and then mistake the abstraction for the concrete, Whitehead is not about to discard either the method of abstraction or abstractions themselves.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, his concern is to identify both abstractions and concretions as such, because according to Whitehead both are required for a complete metaphysical analysis, and to balance them properly. Thus, with Whitehead’s criticisms of traditional philosophy and their respective detrimental influences on various metaphysical attempts in mind, we can now turn to his reformed alternative metaphysics,¹⁹⁵ which he sometimes calls “the philosophy of organism.”

Section II: Whitehead's Reformed Alternative Metaphysics

In the light of Whitehead’s rather extensive criticisms of traditional philosophy and the problems it causes for the various resulting metaphysical projects, this section will focus on some general aspects of his alternative to traditional metaphysics, leaving the consideration of specifics until Chapter III. One suspects, rightly, that Whitehead’s alternative will not only avoid the failings of previous attempts, but that many of the previous notions will be reformed rather than

¹⁹²Charles Hartshorne, “Whitehead’s Idea of God,” in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, 516.

¹⁹³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 346/526.

¹⁹⁴Although abstractions are abstracted from concrete particulars and therefore only offer a partial account of the whole, Whitehead recognizes the value of abstraction, both in our daily experience and in our philosophical understanding of the world. The problem arises when we mistake our everyday abstractions as metaphysically ultimate, rather than critically evaluating them to test if they are adequate. Often Whitehead finds they are not, but this is not the discarding of abstraction, rather Whitehead admits we must abstract in order to understand, and that we must carefully construct and relate our abstractions in an interpretative scheme, i.e., metaphysics.

¹⁹⁵The phrase “reformed alternative metaphysics” is introduced here as a description of Whitehead’s project. Although the terms “reformed” and “alternative” may be understood as mutually incompatible, there are both applicable to Whitehead’s project, because in presenting his alternative to the dominant philosophical tradition he also revises or reforms several concepts from this tradition for his own purposes. Thus, Whitehead’s metaphysics offers an alternative that contains reforms as will become clear throughout the Section II.

discarded. Whitehead will also make additions to his metaphysics not found in earlier schemes, which come about as a result of his leaving behind previously held assumptions and having to entertain new possibilities relevant to his project.

As a general description, Whitehead often refers to his thought as the “philosophy of organism.” Although this may sound, depending on the reader, to be either overly scientific (biological) or perhaps too closely allied with romantic *Naturphilosophie*, neither is the case; rather, the characterization comes from his desire to express the self-creative interconnectedness of reality in his philosophical cosmology.¹⁹⁶ This is not, however, a traditional system deduced from clearly defined axiomatic propositions; it is, following his own recommendation for the method of metaphysics, a general description arising from an appeal “to naïve experience.”¹⁹⁷

Given Whitehead’s criticisms of traditional metaphysics, which focussed upon the mistake of taking the abstract for the concrete, one could easily speculate that his alternative entails an emphasis upon the concrete, as such, to the exclusion of the abstract. While such speculation is understandable, Whitehead’s goal is to reform not reject metaphysics. Although his focus is on the concrete (actually existent), he is also aware that an exclusive concentration on this aspect of reality would result in another impoverished analysis. As mentioned in Chapter I, Section II, the method of speculative philosophy begins on the ground, takes flight in the imagination and returns to the ground for rational evaluation. Thus, in order to elucidate the philosophy of organism we shall begin with Whitehead’s analysis of concrete actuality and then consider the concepts introduced in this analysis.

According to Whitehead, there have been two competing cosmologies in Western thought: (1) Plato’s *Timaeus*, and (2) “the cosmology of the seventeenth century, whose chief authors were Galileo, Descartes, Newton, and Locke.”¹⁹⁸ Although each has its respective problems, Whitehead thinks that “the true solution consists in a fusion of the two previous schemes, with modifications demanded by self-consistency and the advance of knowledge.” And while developing his own cosmology Whitehead respects and wishes to build on “the positive value of the philosophical tradition.”¹⁹⁹ Thus, despite his rather severe criticisms of the tradition, he places himself squarely within it, but as a reformer. Certainly these two dominant cosmologies have provided their own thorough analyses, especially of particular entities, which is also where Whitehead will focus his attention.

Whitehead’s cosmology begins from the ground of existence and, because of

¹⁹⁶This is a point of importance. Whitehead’s interest, despite his background in theoretical mathematics, is in developing a *philosophical* cosmology, not a *physical* cosmology. Due to many factors, cosmology has been the concern of physicists rather than philosophers, so the use of this term could carry connotations (primarily scientific) for the reader, not intended by Whitehead.

¹⁹⁷Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 90. Whitehead writes, “I hold that the ultimate appeal is to naïve experience and that is why I lay such stress on the evidence of poetry.”

¹⁹⁸Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xiv/ix.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*

his method, returns to it. Hence, actual existents, as understood by Whitehead, are a good place to begin an exposition, because they involve, due to their centrality, the other aspects of his cosmology. The most fundamental “unit of actuality” is called an “actual occasion” or “actual entity.”²⁰⁰ Thus, like many traditional philosophers, he begins with an examination of entities, although his understanding of entities differs considerably from previous conceptions. Whitehead’s entities come in and out of existence, partially self-creating, and exhibiting characteristics of their own unique existence: “*How* an actual entity becomes constitutes *what* an actual entity is.”²⁰¹

There are several principles Whitehead uses in order to help elucidate his concept of entities, which are: the Reformed Subjectivist Principle, the Ontological Principle, and the Principle of Process. These do not delineate exclusive components of entities (the way substance and quality traditionally functioned); rather, they express the general governing rules of existence. The reason Whitehead distinguishes them is in order to emphasize the role they play in existing entities (by “existing,” read coming into existence, existing, and passing out of existence) and thereby avoid mistaking any one of these as *the* fundamental concrete aspect, when they are merely useful, but necessary, abstractions from concrete existence for the purposes of explanation.

The Reformed Subjectivist Principle, as the name indicates, is Whitehead’s qualified acceptance of the Modernist subjectivist turn within the philosophical tradition. The positive elements he takes from this tradition are, from Locke, “Human experience as an example upon which to found the generalized description for metaphysics”²⁰² and “Descartes’ discovery that subjective experience is the primary metaphysical situation which is presented to metaphysics for analysis.”²⁰³ Following Locke, Whitehead is recognizing the situatedness of the philosopher or the inescapability of the human condition and that this is *not* an insurmountable barrier to metaphysics, but the necessary starting point. General description can only be made by the human subject and has to have its basis in our experience. This does not mean that human experience is to be taken as the sole source of information for metaphysics. Descartes’ innovation was to take subjective experience as the situation which is most informative for metaphysical analysis. Thus, when the two are taken together, Whitehead finds that subjective experience, when thoroughly investigated, is the departure point of his metaphysics and that subjective human experience provides the best indicators for his tentatively general metaphysical description.

²⁰⁰Generally, “Actual entity” and “actual occasion” are interchangeable. The notable exception is God who is an actual entity, but not an actual occasion.

²⁰¹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 166/252. This is the ninth Category of Explanation, which is the ‘principle of process.’ See also page 23/34-35. For a complete exposition of actual entities, please see Chapter III, Section I.

²⁰²*Ibid.*, 112/172.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, 160/243.

As previously demonstrated, Whitehead thinks that Descartes' subjectivism introduced a new method of analysis and yet Descartes mistakenly retained categories (namely, substance-quality) which were not derivable from the newly posited experiencing subject as the chief and privileged sample of reality. The Reformed Subjectivist Principle seeks to remedy this problem by assuming the Cartesian subjectivism and in so doing rejecting the traditional substance-quality categories, which, he charges, are derived from a very different approach. Whitehead writes,

The reformed subjectivist principle adopted by the philosophy of organism is merely an alternative statement of the principle of relativity (the fourth Category of Explanation). This principle states that it belongs to the nature of a 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming.' Thus all things are to be conceived as qualifications of actual occasions.²⁰⁴

If we recall Whitehead's criticism of Vacuous Actuality, which was the result of Modern subjectivism, we can see that he avoids this problem by accepting subjective experience as the primary situation available for metaphysical analysis. Stated very simply, every entity or "being" that is, exists subjectively. Rather than accepting the dichotomy between subjects and objects, Whitehead is proposing that all entities are subjects that can be "objects" for other subjects, because once a becoming ends subjectively it is said to "perish" and in so doing it can be an object for a subsequent becoming. This is what he means by "it belongs to the nature of a 'being' [entity] that it is a potential for every 'becoming.'" Every entity, which is a subject, can be a part of the process of the formation of another entity (a becoming). Since entities are a part of each other, through their own becoming, the Reformed Subjectivist Principle is able to assert that "the whole universe consists of elements disclosed in the analysis of the experiences of subjects."²⁰⁵ That is, through an analysis of subjective experience we can find out about the general characteristics of reality.

It is important to note here that Whitehead is not working with the Modern conceptions of matter, space and time. That is, he does not understand the universe as matter existing *in* space and time. For him, no doubt influenced by Relativity Theory, *what* everything is, is precisely that because of *how* it is. So, when an investigation into subjective experience is said to yield the general characteristics of existence, it is neither contradictory nor impossible. In fact, it is consistent and necessary. The only access to the general character of existence is through those particulars that constitute it through their own existence. There is no objective

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 166/252. The fourth Category of Explanation reads, "That the potential for being an element in a real concrescence of many entities into one actuality is the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual; and that every item in its universe is involved in each concrescence. In other words, it belongs to the nature of a 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming.' This is the 'principle of relativity.'" (*Ibid.*, 22/33).

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 166/252.

stance from which to survey existence; there is no such thing as finding out about matter or phenomena in space and/or time. Space and time are not filters for our perception of phenomena; rather, space and time are what they are because of the way in which entities are existing (coming into existence, existing, and going out of existence). Everything that is has its own frame of reference, which includes space and time. We can no longer even hold these two up as “objective” criteria by which to assess the world.

Has Whitehead, like so much recent post-modern thought, cemented the subject-object dichotomy in favour of the subject? Rather than relegating the Other to a hypostatized world of the unknowable, Whitehead’s metaphysics remains empirically grounded. What is found in the experience of subjects is the experience of other entities, which are also subjects. This admits a kind of objective element into his thought that may otherwise have been excluded. Recalling Whitehead’s distinction between causal efficacy and presentational immediacy, entities’ primary subjective experiences are of casual efficacy (with presentational immediacy occurring in those with greater cognitive abilities),²⁰⁶ which means that an investigation of experience provides information about the objective world, insofar as it comes from the experience of other subjects’ experiences of other subjects. Collectively, as stated clearly in the fourth Category of Explanation which is merely another expression of the Reformed Subjectivist Principle, the experiences of entities constitute the world. “Finally, the reformed subjectivist principle must be repeated: that apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness.”²⁰⁷ By virtue of existing as experiencing subjects, being what they are by how they become, and providing experiences to other subjects, entities create the being of the world through their very existence, which in turn is experienced by other subjects which in turn creates the world.

The epistemological issue of knowing the objective world is no longer a concern of Whitehead’s metaphysics because the issue assumes not only the subject-object dichotomy but also the substance-quality categories. The information provided for metaphysical analysis comes from the intimate interconnectedness of all entities, not from a subject’s investigation of an object. This means the substance-quality method of analysis is no longer valid (and recall this is true of Modernity’s subjectivism as well, where the non-applicable category was erroneously admitted), because universal qualities are found only with substance not particular existents, “For if a substance requires nothing but itself in order to exist, its survival can tell no tale as to the survival of the order in its environment.”²⁰⁸ The only thing we can gather from a substance is the qualities it exhibits, whereas, the subjective experience of subjects not only tells us about themselves but the world (the order of their environment) in which they exist. That is, Whitehead’s interest is in detailing reality *qua* reality in order to understand its generic aspects in an attempt

²⁰⁶See Chapter III, Section I, where the various different grades of occasions are discussed in detail.

²⁰⁷Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 167/254.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 205/311.

to develop a comprehensive analysis free from the traditional philosophical habit of trying to render these features in terms of substance–quality/accident. Thus the Reformed Subjectivist Principle allows Whitehead to discard the substance-quality paradigm and encounter objects as they are – as projecting subjects.

Continuing to draw upon the positive elements of the philosophical tradition Whitehead also develops the Ontological Principle for his reformed alternative. He accepts Hume’s doctrine “that nothing is to be received into the philosophical scheme which is not discoverable as an element in subjective experience.”²⁰⁹ Certainly this appears the same as the Reformed Subjectivist Principle; however, as mentioned, Whitehead’s analysis is primarily concerned with actual entities as the complex ground of existence. Hume’s doctrine is compatible with Whitehead’s Ontological Principle, which asserts “actual entities are the only *reasons*; so that to search for a *reason* is to search for one or more actual entities”²¹⁰ and it is precisely the subjective experiences of these entities that are admitted into the philosophical scheme. Again, according to Whitehead, the explanation of why things are the way they are, is to only be sought in how it is they are existing.

This divergence from the traditional mode of analysis is due to Whitehead’s transformation of the *idea* of substance (that which requires nothing other than itself to exist) into what he calls “actual entities.”²¹¹ He abandons the idea of an “unchanging subject of change”²¹² in favour of actual entities that are composite; “‘actuality’ is the fundamental exemplification of composition.”²¹³ This is because the “philosophy of organism is a cell-theory of actuality. Each ultimate unit of fact is a cell-complex, not analysable into components with equivalent completeness of actuality.”²¹⁴ Since the basic units of fact are composite, their existence can be traced to antecedent entities, which are objectified in the present ones. Thus, unlike many previous philosophers, Whitehead neither needs nor wants to import reason into the world from another source.²¹⁵ “According to the ontological principle there is nothing which floats into the world from nowhere. Everything in the world is referable to some actual entity.”²¹⁶

The Principle of Process, already stated in this section, reads, “That *how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity is.... Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming.’”²¹⁷ Since actual entities are composite, they are not

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 166/253.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24/37. Here Whitehead is using the term “reason” to mean explanation.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19/28. Whitehead also uses the term “actual occasion.” “Actual entities” or “actual occasions” are the finally ultimate “things” in Whitehead’s metaphysics. His concept of actual entities will be elucidated in the next chapter.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 29/43.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 147/223.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 219/334.

²¹⁵ The source of reason tends to be God, who Whitehead is not excluding from his system (see Chapter III, Section III), but who (as an actual entity) also is only partially responsible for the world (through a divine lure), since actual entities are composite and self-creating.

²¹⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 244/373.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23/34.

statically complete, but find completion in the act of becoming. This completion is only temporary as they in turn pass out of immediate subjective actuality into objectified existence thereby providing parts for other actual entities with which to compose their own becoming.²¹⁸ Thus, the Principle of Process abandons the traditional understanding of entities as substance with inhering qualities and puts forward Whitehead's alternative. This, again, demonstrates that he thinks the category of becoming is more inclusive than that of being, because becoming includes being, whereas being has either excluded becoming or denied it any ontological status. Historically, the category of being has been understood as singularly static and the "unchanging subject of change" (usually conceived as substance). In its place Whitehead thinks that, if entities are thought of in terms of fluency or process, then becoming is the category that most aptly applies to reality.

Although the traditional philosophical problem states that there is a tension between permanence and flux that must be balanced, Whitehead is aware that even this is an oversimplification of the issue. Near the end of *Process and Reality*, during his treatment of ideal opposites, he writes,

But civilized intuition has always, although obscurely, grasped the problem as double and not as single. There is not the mere problem of fluency *and* permanence. There is the double problem: actuality with permanence, requiring fluency as its completion; and actuality with fluency, requiring permanence as its completion.²¹⁹

This statement succinctly encapsulates some of the most difficult and contentious ideas within metaphysics. "Actuality with permanence" can otherwise be expressed as "being" (in the traditional sense) and "actuality with fluency" expresses both "potential" and "becoming." That "actuality with permanence" requires "fluency as its completion" can also be understood as the process of moving from "being," through "becoming" and finally arriving at "not-being"; whereas, "Actuality with fluency, requiring permanence as its completion" involves the process of "not-being becoming being."²²⁰ Perhaps somewhat paradoxical to traditional modes of thought,

²¹⁸Chapter III will explain the becoming of actual entities. It is important to note that rather than "becoming" Whitehead uses the term "conrescence" which he says "is a derivative from the familiar latin [*sic*] verb, meaning 'growing together,'" in order to describe *what* actual entities are (Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 236).

²¹⁹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 347/527.

²²⁰The process is here summarized as "not-being becoming being" because of Whitehead's assertion of the composite nature of actual entities. In other words, the components of actual entities, although existent, are not actual and in this sense can be understood as not-being, insofar as the components represent potentials for any given entity as it becomes, i.e. conresces. Thus, it is in this sense that not-being can become being. Also, as a note of clarification, although the formulation of the process is reminiscently Hegelian, it should not be mistaken as Hegelian, if for no other reason than the fact that Whitehead is not concerned with the progression of *Geist*.

something does not first exist (as actual) and then become (i.e., enter into a state of process); rather, it becomes actual *via* becoming. When it becomes actual the process ends and it “perishes” (in that it no longer subjectively exists), but in perishing it becomes an object for other becoming, including God’s which thereby ensures its objective immortality.

When delineating the becoming of actual entities it is tempting to think of it as an isolated process, which is not the case. Whitehead’s concern is with “the becoming, the being, and the relatedness of ‘actual entities.’”²²¹ Recalling the Ontological Principle (to search for a reason is to search for an actual entity), relatedness comes from the fact that actual entities provide each other with the basic elements of their becoming. Rather than “presuppose a subject which then encounters a datum, and then reacts to the datum,” as do traditional substantialistic philosophies, “The philosophy of organism presupposes a datum which is met with feelings and progressively attains the unity of a subject.”²²² It is the inter-relatedness of all entities as they become being (what they are), but not as isolated events, which are intimately situated within a complexity of entities that Whitehead envisions. Thus, *what* an actual entity *is*, is because of *how* it becomes. This is not only the description of any given actual entity, but all actual entities in their respective becoming as related to all other actual entities in their respective becoming.²²³

Since entities come to be, i.e., become being, Whitehead revises the idea of “being” to mean “individually effective in the aesthetic synthesis,” which is also understood as an “experient synthesis viewed as self-creative, under the limitations laid upon it by its internal relatedness to all other actual occasions.”²²⁴ The self-creation of being through the process of becoming also has to entail the end or not-being of any entity as well. In some sense, when an entity is no longer a unified self-created being, it no longer exists and can be said to not-be. This does not entail a dissolution into nothingness, because Whitehead is not thinking in terms of either/or propositions in his analysis of existence, e.g., either something exists and is said to be (can be placed in the category of being) or it does not exist and is therefore nothing (is in the category of non-existence). He has already distinguished between existent and actual, insofar as actuality involves the process of aesthetic self-creation from those non-actual existents provided primarily by other actualities. The result of this analysis of existence is a “graded envisagement” in which “the actual includes what (in one sense) is not-being as a positive factor in its own achievement. This is the source of error, of truth, of art, of ethics, and of religion. By it, fact is confronted with alternatives.”²²⁵ It is by the Principle of Process itself that not-being is a factor

²²¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xiii/viii.

²²² *Ibid.*, 155/234.

²²³ Recall the Reformed Subjectivist Principle that stated “that it belongs to the nature of a ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming.’ Thus all things are to be conceived as qualifications of actual occasions.” (*Ibid.*, 166/252).

²²⁴ Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 163. This idea will be fully explicated in the next chapter when actual occasions themselves are examined.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

within being and it is this incorporation that prevents mere existential repetition.

The three principles examined, although far from comprehensive, do help to elucidate some of the broad metaphysical themes Whitehead is interested in reforming. With the transformation of substance into composite actual entities, Whitehead is able to offer us the Reformed Subjectivist Principle and develop the Ontological Principle. All three principles considered are themselves abstractions, but abstractions formed only after a careful consideration and thorough analysis of the ground (i.e. actual entities). It appears that Whitehead can satisfy his own methodological requirement of beginning on the ground and taking an imaginative flight only to land again. He can only put forward these principles because they meet his criteria of not violating but elucidating our experience in the world.

The alternative metaphysical vision that Whitehead develops is one that, through its descriptive generalization, attempts to account for all our modes of being. More than this, however, it is also a vision of a unified whole that is itself involved in the process of becoming, which Whitehead describes as “the advance from disjunction to conjunction.”²²⁶ In the process of coming to be,

The novel entity is at once togetherness of the ‘many’ which it finds and also it is one among the disjunctive ‘many’ which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one.²²⁷

Thus Whitehead’s alternative is able to transcend the particularity of the actual entity and survey the whole, but only through the part. This is one way that Whitehead is able to account for the perspective of particulars, and not negate or minimize the particularity of the particular, and yet at the same time offer a coherent, systematic understanding of reality.

It should be evident that as much as Whitehead claims to be drawing upon those positive elements of the philosophical tradition, even those he does use undergo significant transformation. His reformed alternative metaphysics provides, if nothing else, a metaphysics for our era. It is able to bring into relation the specialized discourses of science and philosophy while not negating common sense experience or poetic intuition. The move to process, as his treatise indicates, is a move that enables us better to account for the reality we experience and live. It also opens many more possibilities than it closes, as Whitehead’s framework is designed to be inclusive, rather than exclusive. There is no subject or topic to be *a priori* omitted from metaphysics if it is to succeed and, in order to do so, it must be able to include as many topics as possible. This does not mean, however, a negation or minimization of any of these topics in favour of the comprehensive system. Each area of human knowledge and experience must be considered in its own right and it must be determined whether or not the system can indeed account for it. If not, it is

²²⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21/32.

²²⁷*Ibid.*

the system that requires revision, not the subject. This is how Whitehead, as a metaphysician, attempts to do justice to all aspects of reality.

Conclusion:

There can be no doubt that as a metaphysician Whitehead is well aware of the many failings of traditional metaphysics. Indeed, his criticisms are not merely the standard ones levelled at the discipline, although he does share general criticisms in common with other critics, such as the idea that philosophers have over-stepped their boundaries in pursuit of metaphysics. Besides including these types of usual criticisms, Whitehead also offers a very extensive and sophisticated account of the specific mistakes made by previous metaphysicians. His demonstration of how the subject-predicate structure of analysis, originating in Greek thought, has permeated Western philosophy is but one example. Perhaps his most significant contribution to the history of philosophy comes from his Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. As was demonstrated throughout Section I of this chapter, the continual mistake of philosophers is the identification of the abstract as the concrete. Over and over again this mistake is made, with devastating results for those who attempt to develop their metaphysical systems based upon this error. Whitehead shows us how this can lead to such things as wrongly inverted epistemologies and the ultimate devaluing of *this* world as *mere appearance* in favour of the Ideal.

Although these problems are often the undoing of the metaphysics based upon them, Whitehead does not think that they represent, even cumulatively, the *coup de grâce* for metaphysics. Instead Whitehead firmly locates himself within the Western philosophical tradition, often referring to himself as a neo-Platonist, and draws upon what he considers to be the strongest elements of the tradition. As a reformer Whitehead is able to recognize the philosophical contributions made by preceding great thinkers, take their ideas, and transform them so as to avoid their respective failings while retaining the original insights into reality. For instance, Whitehead changes the idea of substance, as the independently existing unchanging subject of change, into the idea of “actual entities,” which are temporal, composite, inter-dependent and self-creating. Such a radical transformation can occur because Whitehead is guided by his own metaphysical method of descriptive generalization, which begins on the ground, takes imaginative flight and then returns to the ground for critical evaluation. This is why Whitehead posits his Reformed Subjectivist, Ontological and Process principles; they exist as formulations based upon our experiences in and investigations of the world.

It is with Whitehead’s exhaustive critique of traditional metaphysics and the general characteristics of his reformed alternative in mind that we can turn to consider some of the specific ideas of his metaphysical project. Of particular interest are his treatment of actual entities, eternal objects, God, and Creativity. The first three certainly fall within the traditional purview of metaphysics and the differences between his formulations and previous attempts should be noted. Creativity represents a departure from tradition and can be understood as a part of Whitehead’s

contention that the category of becoming is more inclusive than that of being. The examination of these four metaphysical concepts will further demonstrate that Whitehead's reformed alternative successfully avoids the trappings of traditional metaphysics and represents a new and viable metaphysical project.

CHAPTER III FOUR METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTS

Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to examine carefully four of the central metaphysical concepts employed by Whitehead, which are actual occasions, eternal objects, God, and Creativity. Although considered separately, these four concepts are intimately connected within Whitehead's metaphysics. Actual occasions represent ultimately the real aspect of existence, whereas, eternal objects, God and Creativity are the three elements that participate in the formation of actual occasions.

This analysis focuses primarily on *Process and Reality* as it is the most explicit of Whitehead's writings on these matters; however, other material will be incorporated as required. Whitehead's sophisticated analysis is difficult to capture within a few pages of exposition, which is why attention will be paid to his most explicit statements about these concepts. As a result, no overview of his system will be presented. Indeed, we shall ignore the categorial scheme developed at the beginning of *Process and Reality*, although it should be remembered that the function and role of actual entities, eternal objects, and God occur in accordance with his categories. Despite the shortcomings of a concept by concept analysis, the consideration given here of these four metaphysical concepts will capture Whitehead's investigation of the nature of entities.

Given Heidegger's criticism of metaphysics as "onto-theology," it is important to consider Whitehead's understanding of entities (*onta*) and God (*theos*). Creativity and eternal objects have also been included in this exposition, because they participate in both entities and God's becoming, and an analysis without them would not be complete, according to Whitehead. All four concepts – actual entities, eternal objects, God, and Creativity – and their respective interconnected relations are therefore offered.

Section I: Actual Entities/Occasions

This section will consider Whitehead's concept of entities, which he calls "actual entities" or "actual occasions."²²⁸ Given the amount of secondary scholarship produced in the past fifty years on Whitehead's metaphysics, a recapitulation of this secondary literature is not necessary.²²⁹ Instead, this section

²²⁸Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18/27. Whitehead writes, "'Actual entities' – also termed 'actual occasions' – are the final real things of which the world is made up."

²²⁹To name but a few monographs chronologically: Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958); William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); W. Mays, *The Philosophy of Whitehead* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959); Donald W. Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Elizabeth Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience: A Companion to Whitehead's*

will offer a general account of the “nature” of entities, including their process of becoming actual (the phases of concrescence) and their function within Whitehead’s metaphysics.

Historically, ontology has been understood as the investigation of entities or beings, i.e., what is. More than this, however, ontology is not merely an investigation of entities as given, but is an inquiry into the nature of entities themselves.²³⁰ Whitehead, despite his many criticisms of philosophy, remains in this tradition with his conception of “actual entities.” Although we may never consciously perceive an actual entity in isolation, our experiences are constituted by them, as is everything else in existence. Where some philosophers have posited substance (e.g. Aristotle, Aquinas) and others have posited forms or ideals (e.g. Plato, Plotinus, Bradley), as the essentially real aspect of existence from which all else can be derived or explained, Whitehead holds that actual entities are “the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real.”²³¹ Everything that is, is an actual entity, although “they differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space.”²³² Here Whitehead is merely affirming, and restating, his Ontological Principle.

Where Whitehead diverges from the Western philosophical tradition is in his commitment to the idea of actual entities as composites, in fact “‘actuality’ is the fundamental exemplification of composition.”²³³ Although actual entities are the “final real things,” they are not the “unchanging subject of change” exhibiting universal qualities. The introduction of actual entities, as part of Whitehead’s reformed alternative metaphysics, is his attempt to offer a descriptive account of the world that is metaphysically adequate in a way that the substance-accident scheme is not. Certainly the idea of composite actuality is not new to philosophy

Process and Reality (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979); Lewis S. Ford, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics 1925-1929* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); Jorge Luis Nobo, *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Extension and Solidarity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Thomas E. Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance: An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1993).

²³⁰For example, physical sciences investigate entities as given: geology looks at rock, chemistry looks at chemicals, biology at living organisms. Ontology, by contrast, asks about the nature of any given entity: what is rockness, chemicalness, life; and, it also asks about existence itself, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

²³¹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18/27-28. Whitehead also mentions on the same page that John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter XXIII, Section 7, is where the inspiration for actual entities can be found. Reading the *Essay*, the following passage from Section 7 is the most likely candidate for the inspiration: “Because every *substance*, being as apt, by the powers we observe in it, to change some sensible qualities in other subjects as it is to produce in us those simple *ideas* which we receive immediately from it, does, by those new sensible qualities introduced into other subjects, discover to us those powers which do thereby mediately affect our senses, as regularly as its sensible qualities do it immediately.”

²³²*Ibid.*

²³³*Ibid.*, 147/223.

as various analyses, starting with the Greeks, have described the combination of certain elemental aspects, e.g., fire, water, air, earth; individual, property; substance, accident,²³⁴ as constituting the various entities. Unlike this tradition, however, Whitehead's actual entities are "atomic" in the sense that, even though composite, there is no going behind them to find anything *more real*.²³⁵ There is no underlying unity (e.g. substance, monad, *noumena*, "thing-in-itself") of the world, which is essentially unchanging, despite the apparent diversity of entities in the world. It is clear that Whitehead's actual entities come from his realist commitment of offering an adequate description of the world rather than from any other philosophical or theological ideal.

If actual entities are not the "unchanging subject of change," then it must follow that Whitehead leaves the world "baseless," without a foundation, which cannot be good for a metaphysical scheme. Arguably, the shift from substance to process does not entail a baselessness, at least not as Whitehead explains it. Actual entities do have a character or "nature" in the sense of *how they are*. That is, everything that is, i.e., actual entities, *is* in the same way. Actual entities are how the world *is*. They are the basic units of process or becomingness which constitute the world. Every actual entity comes into existence, becomes fully actual, and passes from subjective immediacy into objectified existence. The next part of this chapter will detail this process of becoming in Whitehead's metaphysics.

The technical term Whitehead uses for the process of becoming an actual entity is "concrecence." "The word Concrecence is a derivative from the familiar latin [*sic*] verb, meaning 'growing together'."²³⁶ Whitehead details three distinctive stages of concrecence, which will be examined in detail, first, some observations about the general characteristics of actual occasions should be considered.

As actual entities come into existence they gather into themselves, i.e.,prehend, their immediately prior world. It is these prehensions growing together in the entity that is the concrecence itself. The prehensions come from two sources: the physical world and the eternal objects.²³⁷ The eternal objects are ordered by the primordial nature of God and presented to the world, i.e., to each and every entity concrecing, as potentials to be realized. Whitehead refers to this

²³⁴Reinhardt Grossmann, *The Existence of the World: An Introduction to Ontology* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 1, 2, 14, 15.

²³⁵Donald W. Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) 205-206.

²³⁶Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 236. The "familiar latin [*sic*] verb" is *concrecere* from which concrecence is derived. The term, concrecence, is used in biology and is defined as, "A growing together, coalescence; union of parts, organs, or organisms of a low order." (*Cassell's English Dictionary*, 1974). The original Latin *concrecere* is defined as, "To grow together; to congeal, curdle, clot; to stiffen; to take shape, grow, increase." (*The New College Latin & English Dictionary*, 1988).

²³⁷Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 149/226. Whitehead writes, "If the term 'eternal objects' is disliked, the term 'potentials' would be suitable."

as the “divine lure” of God, which will be considered further in the third section of this chapter. Because actual entities are constituted from primarily two sources, the physical and potential, it follows, according to Whitehead, that every actual entity has a physical and a mental aspect in order to incorporate these physical and potential feelings in its becoming. Whitehead describes the mental and physical poles in actual entities as their “dipolar” nature. In some sense actual entities have the ability to realize novelty within their own being. They are not completely determined by their past, and this is why Whitehead describes them as partially self-causing.²³⁸ As such, every actual entity has both a subjective and “superjective” aspect. The subjective is the immediate realization of itself as an entity (the growing together of the parts into a singular unified entity), whereas, the “superject” is the actual entity’s futural projection, because, by becoming what it is, the entity has closed certain possibilities for the world and opened others, which now continue beyond its own particular existence.²³⁹ Although actual entities are coming into and going out of existence, which Whitehead describes as “perpetual perishing,” they also have a transcendent aspect. Besides “leaving behind” parts of themselves for other actual entities to gather up into their own concrescences, every actual entity’s existence is also experienced (prehended) by God and, as such, achieves “objective immortality.” Perhaps the best, and briefest, description of the nature of an actual entity offered by Whitehead is,

Thus an actual entity has a threefold character: (i) it has the character ‘given’ for it by the past; (ii) it has the subjective character aimed at in its process of concrescence; (iii) it has the superject character, which is the pragmatic value of its

²³⁸*Ibid.*, 86/131, Whitehead writes, “But the admission into, or rejection from, reality of conceptual feeling is the originative decision of the actual occasion. In this sense an actual entity is *causa sui*.” Actual entities have several partial causes, including a decisive self-originary cause and in this sense are self-causing. How these partial causes are arranged and valued in any given entity is the result of that entity’s self-creative act, determined by the grade and location of the entity.

²³⁹*Ibid.*, 29/43 and 289/443. The “superject” is, therefore, meant to contrast with, and supplement, the subject. Whitehead writes (29/43), “It is fundamental to the metaphysical doctrine of the philosophy of organism that the notion of an actual entity as the unchanging subject of change is completely abandoned. An actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences. It is subject-superject, and neither half of this description can for a moment be lost sight of. The term ‘subject’ will mostly be employed when the actual entity is considered in respect to its own real internal constitution. But ‘subject’ is always to be construed as an abbreviation of ‘subject-superject.’” Much later in *Process and Reality* (289/443) Whitehead offers some further insight into his use of the terms subject and superject, when he writes, “An actual entity considered in reference to the publicity of things is a ‘superject’; namely, it arises from the publicity which it finds, and it adds itself to the publicity which it transmits. It is a moment of passage from decided public facts to a novel public fact.” And, “An actual entity considered in reference to the privacy of things is a ‘subject’; namely, it is a moment of the genesis of self-enjoyment. It consists of a purposed self-creation out of materials which are at hand in virtue of their publicity.”

specific satisfaction qualifying the transcendent creativity.”²⁴⁰

The actual entity, taken in isolation, is not the entire picture that Whitehead wishes to present. As much as one could characterize Whitehead’s system as taking a “bottom up” approach in its construction, he does not neglect the “top down” element of existence. In other words, Whitehead incorporates ontological reciprocity throughout his metaphysics. Nowhere is this more evident than in his chapter on God and the World in *Process and Reality*, where he offers a series of statements normally considered to be exclusive of each other, all beginning with the phrase, “It is as true to say....”²⁴¹ This ontological reciprocity is present at all levels of being as Whitehead discerns “four grades of actual occasions, grades which are not to be sharply distinguished from each other.”²⁴² These grades, in order of lowest to highest, are: actual occasions as “empty space,” as “moments in the life-histories of enduring non-living objects,” as “moments in the life-histories of enduring living objects,” and finally as “moments in the life-histories of enduring objects with conscious knowledge.”²⁴³

Although Whitehead here agrees with the Western philosophical tradition in identifying a singular type of entity as constitutive of reality, he deviates from this tradition with the introduction of grades; whereas, historically, philosophers tend to introduce different types of beings (e.g. plant, animal, human, angel, God, finite, infinite, temporal, atemporal/eternal) in order to explain the gradations of existence. Arguably Whitehead takes his idea of ontological reciprocity from contemporary physics which instructs us that “matter is fused into its environment. There is no possibility of a detached, self-contained local existence”; furthermore, “The environment with its peculiarities seeps into the group-agitation which we term matter, and the group-agitations extend their character to the environment.”²⁴⁴ Regardless of the source, Whitehead is not just presenting an analysis of the basic entities constituting the world as self-contained and unrelated indivisible atomic unities; he is detailing how they constitute the world and how, in turn, their participation in the various resulting types of societies influences the very being of these constituent entities. He says that these gradations are “not to be sharply distinguished from each other,” nor should the fact that he details them be given too much importance; nonetheless, that he does distinguish them demonstrates how thoroughly he understands the interdependence of existence to be.

Indeed, the interdependence of existence is Whitehead’s “ultimate metaphysical principle” which he describes as, “The advance from disjunction to

²⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 87/134.

²⁴¹*Ibid.*, 348/528. For example Whitehead writes, “It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.”

²⁴²*Ibid.*, 177/269.

²⁴³*Ibid.*

²⁴⁴Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 138.

conjunction.”²⁴⁵ The idea of concrescence itself exemplifies this principle as every entity coming into actuality prehends certain aspects of the immediate world and unifies them in a completed whole, which in turn provides for the actualization of other entities. In a particularly eloquent passage Whitehead describes this process:

The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the ‘many’ which it finds and also it is one among the disjunctive ‘many’ which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one.²⁴⁶

This passage also happens to illustrate Whitehead’s solution to one of the longest standing philosophical problems, the problem of the One and the Many. Here it is clear that he is not asserting one over the other, or merely eliminating one half of the equation, in order to solve it. It is *both* the One *and* the Many, mutually dependent upon the other in a dynamic relationship. Too often philosophers have developed ontologies that result in the denial of one or the other element of existence. Either the multiplicity of the world is relegated to the realm of mere appearance, or the unity of the world is dismissed as simply an anthropomorphic projection. To understand better Whitehead’s treatment of this topic, which is rooted in his conception of interdependence, an examination of the phases of concrescence is now required.

The analysis of actual occasions presents considerable difficulty for Whitehead’s interpreters. Perhaps one of the most difficult issues is the delineation of phases or stages of concrescence combined with Whitehead’s insistence on the unity of actual occasions and that “this genetic passage from phase to phase is not in physical time.”²⁴⁷ As Whitehead asserts at the end of a discussion of the “satisfaction” of a concrescence, “Time has stood still – if only it could.”²⁴⁸ This is not to claim that actual occasions are non-temporal; their existence is in fact the very reason for time itself. That is, as entities, they are spatio-temporal entities that have “thickness and spread.”²⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Whitehead asserts, “That the analysis of an

²⁴⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21/32.

²⁴⁶*Ibid.*

²⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 283/433.

²⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 154/233.

²⁴⁹William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead’s Metaphysics*, 79-81. In attempting to elucidate the “genetic passage from phase to phase ... not in physical time,” Christian offers what it is not. It is not “priority in physical time;” it is not “the logical priority of a premise to a conclusion;” it is not to “be construed as a whole-part relation; and it “seems risky to construe concrescence as a dialectical process in Hegel’s sense.” Donald Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead’s Process and Reality*, 38-39, thinks that Christian’s reading of Whitehead’s genetic analysis entails a *sui generis* priority. Sherburne suggests this interpretation may seem “*ad hoc* and unsatisfactory, but a better suggestion is hard to find” and casts doubt on whether or not Whitehead is entitled to relegate his own genetic analysis to the status of “only intellectual,” given his emphasis on the phases of concrescence.

actual entity is only intellectual, or, to speak with a wider scope, only objective” and that “in analysis it [an actual entity] can only be understood as a process; it can only be felt as a process, that is to say, as in passage.”²⁵⁰

Although resolving the inherent difficulties of understanding the idea of “genetic passage not in physical time” is beyond the scope of this section, one possible analogy is that of an eruption. Actual entities could be understood as eruptions of existence and thus once existent they are spatio-temporal. Analogously, an eruption is an event that can only be understood as having occurred once it is completed. There is no eruption *per se* to which one can point and clearly delineate; one can only point to the consequences of the event itself. That is, an analysis of the event itself can be had through a process of objective abstraction, in which the stages of the event can be retraced, in order to understand its origin. In a somewhat similar manner, I think Whitehead is offering an analysis in order to understand the origins of actual entities that is “only intellectual” in the sense that it is a retracing of the event’s phases from its objectified end. Of course, no matter what explanation or analogy is offered as soon as phases or stages are introduced one cannot help but think of temporal succession. It should be remembered that, with his adoption of contemporary relativity theory, Whitehead puts forward an epochal theory of time, which understands time as originating from the succession of entities. Given his theory of time, it would be difficult to hold to the temporal succession of phases when time itself only occurs with the succession of entities.

Whitehead identifies three phases of feelings²⁵¹ in a concrescence.²⁵² conformal, conceptual and comparative.²⁵³ The conformal feelings are part of the initial stage of the concrescence in which the actual world is received,²⁵⁴ whereas, the conceptual and comparative feelings arise in subsequent phases. At the initial stage, the concrescence is constituted by simple physical feelings, which Whitehead defines as “one feeling which feels another feeling, but the feeling felt has a subject diverse from the subject of the feeling which feels it.”²⁵⁵ Thus a

²⁵⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 227/347.

²⁵¹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 164/249. “This word ‘feeling’ is a mere technical term; but it has been chosen to suggest that functioning through which the concrescent actuality appropriates the datum so as to make it its own.”

²⁵²*Ibid.*, 26-27/39-41. In the following passages, of this chapter, the different phases of concrescence are detailed, primarily from the subjective viewpoint of the actual occasion. It should be remembered that Whitehead is developing a general description of the world (in this case of entities), and to this end he not only describes the particularity of existence, but also formulates general rules in an attempt to provide an adequate and applicable framework for all actual occasions. In the case of concrescence, there are nine Categorical Obligations, identified by Whitehead, that govern (because they exemplify it) the becoming of actual occasions, which are the Categories of: (i) Subjective Unity, (ii) Objective Identity, (iii) Objective Diversity, (iv) Conceptual Valuation, (v) Conceptual Reversion, (vi) Transmutation, (vii) Subjective Harmony, (viii) Subjective Intensity, and (ix) Freedom and Determination.

²⁵³*Ibid.*, 164/249.

²⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 152/230.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 236/362. Again, it should be mentioned that for Whitehead “feeling” is “a mere technical term” and “does not involve consciousness,” at this stage. “Consciousness originates in

“simple physical feeling has the dual character” of cause and effect insofar as the feeling, as an effect, is subjectively felt while at the same time the original subjectivity of the cause is not lost.²⁵⁶ In other words, the cause has a kind of subjectivity (the particularness from the previous actual entity) which, when projected or objectified, also becomes a subjectively experienced cause that is particular to the new actual entity and yet retains the particularity of the previous one. This is why “simple physical feelings embody the reproductive character of nature” and “in virtue of these feelings time is the conformation of the immediate present to the past. Such feelings are conformal feelings.”²⁵⁷ If nothing else, this description of simple physical feelings as conformation of the present to the past accounts for the relative stability of the world. “The actualities *have* to be felt, while the pure potentials *can* be dismissed.”²⁵⁸ Although there is a subjective experience of the past, the past is objectified in the present. This allows for the continuity of the world from moment to moment and results in the adoption of a relative indeterminism, which is clear, given the general account of actual occasions previously offered in this chapter.²⁵⁹

The second phase of concrescence involves conceptual feelings. “A conceptual feeling is feeling an eternal object in the primary metaphysical character of being an ‘object,’ that is to say, feeling its *capacity* for being a realized determinant process.”²⁶⁰ When combined in the concrescence, the conformal feelings (the experience or prehension of the immediately antecedent world) provides the physical pole of the actual occasion, whereas, the prehension of an eternal object (experienced as a conceptual feeling) provides the mental pole.²⁶¹ “Thus an actual entity is essentially dipolar.”²⁶²

According to Whitehead, conceptual feelings “are primarily derivative from physical feelings, and secondarily from each other.”²⁶³ He then mentions that this analysis does not take God into consideration and concludes that when it does “all conceptual feelings must be derived from physical feelings”,²⁶⁴ however, he can

the higher phases of integration and illuminates those phases with the greater clarity and distinctness.”

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 237-238/363-364. Or as Whitehead writes, “It is a feeling *from* the cause which acquires the subjectivity of the new effect without loss of its original subjectivity in the cause.”

²⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 238/364.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 239/366.

²⁵⁹This is meant to contrast with the doctrine of material determinism, which had gained considerable currency by Whitehead’s time, and, indeed, still enjoys much of this currency today, although in more sophisticated forms.

²⁶⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 239/366. Eternal objects will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

²⁶¹*Ibid.*

²⁶²*Ibid.*

²⁶³*Ibid.*, 247/378.

²⁶⁴*Ibid.* As mentioned above, this assertion is predicated upon Whitehead’s understanding of God as experiencing all entities’ objectifications and in turn providing relevant possibilities for new entities to realize. He writes, “Unfettered conceptual valuation, . . . is only possible once in the universe; since that creative act is objectively immortal as an inescapable

only make this assertion based upon his understanding of God. Nevertheless, conceptual feelings are subjectively experienced as a valuation, either a “valuation up” or “valuation down,” of the eternal objects present in them.²⁶⁵ At this point the eternal objects experienced in the conceptual feelings are prehended either positively or negatively. In other words, there is an experience *both* of what is possible and what is not possible for the entity to become. The fact that the entity has these experiences entails the presence of hybrid physical feelings, which are not merely pure physical feelings, but are feelings that are derived from two sources. One sub-species of hybrid feelings comes from previous “temporal actual entities” that have unified the physical and mental aspects of their existence; when this unification of the physical and mental is objectified for other entities to experience it is received as a hybrid physical feeling. The other sub-species are “those which feel the conceptual feelings of God.”²⁶⁶ Besides these two sub-species, there is also a “secondary origination of conceptual feelings,”²⁶⁷ which is the entity’s experience of “proximate novelties,” that are experienced because of the entity’s “subjective aim.”²⁶⁸ This is Whitehead’s account of how “novelty enters the world; so that even amid stability there is never undifferentiated endurance.”²⁶⁹

In other words, during the second phase of concrescence feelings of identity and differentiation emerge in the form of conceptual feelings. These feelings have at least two sources, hybrid physical feelings derived from previous actual entities and God. Quite possibly, a third source, although Whitehead describes it as secondary, is the feeling of relevant possibilities that the entity is able to experience as it moves towards its complete actualization. This phase demonstrates two important aspects of Whitehead’s thought. The first is that his

condition characterizing creative action.”

²⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 247/378. Earlier (241/368-369) Whitehead writes, “A valuation has three characteristics: (i) the valuation is dependent on the other feelings in its phase of origination. (ii) the valuation determines in what status the eternal object has ingression into the integrated nexus physically felt. (iii) the valuation values up, or down, so as to determine the intensive importance accorded to the eternal object by the subjective form of the integral feeling.” It follows from (iii), although is not clear, that a “valuation up” would increase the role of a particular eternal object within the conceptual feeling and, conversely, a “valuation down” would decrease the role of a particular eternal object within the conceptual feeling.

²⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 246, and 247/377. Whitehead writes, “Apart from the intervention of God, there could be nothing new in the world, and no order in the world. The course of creation would be a dead level of ineffectiveness, with all balance and intensity progressively excluded by the cross currents of incompatibility. The novel hybrid feelings derived from God, with the derivative sympathetic conceptual valuations, are the foundations of progress.”

²⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 249/381. Here Whitehead explicitly identifies two phases within the mental pole itself, “Thus the first phase of the mental pole is conceptual reproduction, and the second phase is a phase of conceptual reversion.”

²⁶⁸*Ibid.* This occurs in accordance with Category V. The Category of Conceptual Reversion. According to Whitehead, “The ‘subjective aim,’ which controls the becoming of a subject, is that subject feeling a proposition with the subjective form of purpose to realize it in that process of self-creation.” (25/37).

²⁶⁹*Ibid.*

analysis is in accordance with his reformed subjectivist principle as the experience of the subject is taken to be primary and, in contrast to the unreformed subjectivist principle, is also always relational. The second is that Whitehead understands the world, at its most metaphysically fundamental level, as dipolar. That is, every existing entity has both a physical and a mental pole. For the purposes of this discussion, the charge of anthropomorphism will not be addressed here, but it should be mentioned that, if nothing else, Whitehead's resolution of the mind/body dichotomy lies within his account of the dipolar actual entity. Although only introduced at the second stage of concrescence, the mental pole itself is not derivative; rather, it "originates as the conceptual counterpart of operations to the physical pole. The two poles are inseparable in their origination."²⁷⁰ The physical and mental poles co-originate within the entity, which provides for the possibility of consciousness in later stages of the concrescence.

Comparative feelings, which arise at the third stage of concrescence, occur in varying degrees. The level achieved by the comparative feeling is dependent upon the level of the occasion. That is, higher grade comparative feelings arise in higher grade occasions, whereas, lower grade feelings occur in lower grade occasions. Recalling that Whitehead describes four grades of actual occasions (as empty space, in enduring non-living objects, in enduring living objects, in enduring objects with conscious knowledge) that are "not to be sharply distinguished from each other," it is clear that Whitehead is now offering an account of the differences among them.

It is important to note that Whitehead is differentiating grades of the same type of feelings (namely, comparative feelings), which occur at this third stage of concrescence, and, it should not be forgotten, that all actual entities have conformal, conceptual and comparative feelings as part of their concrescence, regardless of their grade. Although potentially confusing, this point cannot be overemphasized as some interpreters of Whitehead have divided this third and final stage.²⁷¹ The result, of such a division, is the impression that some types of comparative feelings are dependent upon other types of comparative feelings, rather than being specific to the grade of occasion in which they occur.

There are three grades of comparative feelings: a physical purposes grade, a propositions grade, and an intellectual grade. Due to the co-origination of the physical and mental poles, it follows that "all actual entities include physical

²⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 248/379. Earlier (239/366) Whitehead writes, "Even the physical world cannot be understood without reference to its other side, which is the complex of mental operations." That is, Whitehead's metaphysical description is not complete with only reference to the physical; hence, *metaphysics*.

²⁷¹Donald W. Sherburne in *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, 67, introduces a fourth phase of concrescence that he calls "Phase IV – Complex Comparative Feelings," which suggests that the feelings occurring in this "fourth phase" are somehow dependent upon the third phase of concrescence. What Sherburne does not make explicit is that the feelings of his "fourth phase" of concrescence are in fact feelings experienced at the third phase of concrescence by higher grade entities.

purposes”²⁷² and, in his analysis, Whitehead distinguishes two “species” of physical purpose. Generally, a comparative feeling arises from feeling the “generic contrast”²⁷³ between the actual fact of the physical pole and the pure potential embodied in the mental pole. That all actual occasions have physical purposes accounts for “the persistence of the order of nature,”²⁷⁴ because it is through them that the physical world is reproduced.²⁷⁵

In the first species of physical purpose there is either “adversion” or “aversion” to an eternal object. Adversion is the entity’s reproduction of the physical feeling (and its conceptual counterpart) in itself, which also entails the projection of the physical feeling into the future.²⁷⁶ In other words, the physical object in which this occurs will remain the same. Aversion is the entity’s elimination of a possible eternal object from its world of becoming, which in turn eliminates a possible projection of the entity. “Thus adversions promote stability; and aversions promote change without any indication of the sort of change.”²⁷⁷ Whitehead admits that these adversions and aversions, which occur within the first species of physical purpose, are negligible and what he is in fact describing is “an example of the transference of energy in the physical world.”²⁷⁸ The second species of physical purposes occurs when the mental pole incorporates other relevant and realizable possibilities into the concrescence. These possibilities are then projected as a physical feeling to the next entity, which is perceived as contrast. According to Whitehead, this process accounts for rhythm and vibration in the physical world.²⁷⁹

The second grade of a comparative feeling is felt as a proposition by the actual occasion, hence its name – propositional feeling. The propositional feeling is the entity’s subjective experience of a proposition, which Whitehead describes as a type of entity.²⁸⁰ A proposition “is a complex entity, with determinate actual entities among its components”²⁸¹ that incorporates both the indeterminateness of an eternal object and actual matters of fact.²⁸² That is, it is relevant to a group of actual occasions, but it is not the indeterminate *any* presented by an eternal

²⁷²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 276/421.

²⁷³*Ibid.*

²⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 276/421.

²⁷⁵It is important to remember the four different grades of actual occasions discussed by Whitehead as they help to clarify this complex issue. All actual occasions have physical purposes, but only higher-grade actual occasions have propositional and intellectual feelings. These three different grades of comparative feelings are not exclusive to the comparable grade of actual occasion; rather, the higher the grade of actual occasion the more diverse and complex its feelings and therefore, the more inclusive it is, in the sense of incorporating the various different grades of comparative feelings into its concrescence.

²⁷⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 276/422. An example of a physical purpose maybe cellular metabolism.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 277/422-423.

²⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 246/375-376.

²⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 277-8/423-425.

²⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 256/391-392.

²⁸¹*Ibid.*, 257/393.

²⁸²*Ibid.*, 257/392.

object.²⁸³ Rather, a proposition must be true (conformal) or false (non-conformal) for the entities to which it is relevant.²⁸⁴ Possibility is not only maintained but also made more probable as propositions represent to higher grade occasions very real and immediate alternatives for rejection or realization. Propositions “in their primary role, ... pave the way along which the world advances into novelty.”²⁸⁵ In order to give them ontological status, Whitehead places their locus within “those actual occasions whose actual worlds include the logical subjects of the proposition.”²⁸⁶ This is why the propositional feeling experienced by the actual occasion will be relevant to it. The “subjective” experience of the proposition, as mentioned, is either conformal (true) or non-conformal (false). When a conformal proposition is accepted it is “a confirmation of feeling to fact,”²⁸⁷ whereas the admission of a non-conformal feeling results in the emergence of a novelty, which “may promote or destroy order; it may be good or bad.”²⁸⁸ Whitehead reminds us of this when he writes, “Error is the price we pay for progress.”²⁸⁹ It is not, however, his intention to make normative statements about the becoming of the world. Instead, his goal is to offer an adequate descriptive generalization. Given the emphasis he places upon novelty in his description, it is no surprise that “an essential doctrine of the philosophy of organism [is] that the primary function of a proposition is to be relevant as a lure for feeling.”²⁹⁰ Propositions not only elicit feeling but also elicit stronger and/or new feelings in those higher-grade occasions that experience propositional feelings.

At this point two brief clarifications need to be added. First, although there is either a conformal or non-conformal experience of the proposition, Whitehead points out that “such a feeling does not in itself involve consciousness.”²⁹¹ It is from such feelings, when integrated “with other feelings, either physical feelings or conceptual feelings,” that consciousness arises.²⁹² Second, Whitehead describes propositions in ontological terms (as entities), which means, “They are not primarily for belief, but for feeling at the physical level of unconsciousness.”²⁹³ This moves propositions away from the domain of logic, and “the moralistic preference for true propositions,”²⁹⁴ where they are considered merely as judgements to be made. As Whitehead reminds us, “In the real world it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 257/393.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 186/284.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 187/284.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 186 /283.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 186/284.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 187/284.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25/37.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 256/391.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 186/283-284.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 259/395.

The importance of truth is that it adds interest.”²⁹⁵ It is with these two points of clarification in mind that we can now consider intellectual feelings within concrescence.

The third, and highest, grade of a comparative feeling is an intellectual one. “In an intellectual feeling the datum is the generic contrast between a nexus of actual entities and a proposition with its logical subjects members of the nexus.”²⁹⁶ What occurs is the feeling of contrast between “*in fact*” and “*might be*” as relevant to *the* actual world of the actual entities involved. Subjectively, the experience of this contrast is consciousness.²⁹⁷ Thus, according to what Whitehead considers a correct description of “the plain facts of our conscious experience,” “Consciousness presupposes experience”²⁹⁸ and is achieved by those higher-grade actual occasions in their integration of higher-grade experiences. Given Whitehead’s criticisms of Descartes and Hume elucidated in the previous chapter, it should come as no surprise that, for Whitehead, “The simplicity of clear consciousness is no measure of the complexity of complete existence”²⁹⁹ and in light of Whitehead’s detailed and complex genetic analysis of concrescence it is the case that “consciousness flickers; and even at its brightest, there is a small focal region of clear illumination, and a large penumbral region of experience which tells of intense experience in dim apprehension.”³⁰⁰

Regardless of the grade of occasion and the level of feeling it achieves, all concrescences reach an end, which Whitehead describes as a “satisfaction.”³⁰¹ “The term ‘satisfaction’ means the one complex fully determinate feeling which is the completed phase of the process.”³⁰² It is the point at which all the prehensions and feelings are integrated as a unity; when the actual occasion is itself and no other. At the point of satisfaction there is nothing that is not a part of it (in the sense that all its components have been transformed into its parts and are no longer felt as having come from “elsewhere”), and neither is it something for anything else (which it quickly becomes). As previously mentioned, “Time has stood still – if only it could.”³⁰³ In the satisfaction of the concrescence the problem of “how the many components of the objective content are to be unified in one felt content with its subjective form” is resolved.³⁰⁴ At this point the “tone of the feeling embodied in this satisfaction passes into the world beyond,” where it becomes data for other concrescing occasions. It makes a novel and transcendent contribution to the transcendent world. The satisfied occasion is transcendent in that it offers something new to the world and the world is transcendent in that it continues beyond any

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 259/395-396.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 266/407.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 267/407.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 53/83.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 267/408.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 26/38.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 26/39.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 154/233.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

particular entity. This is why Whitehead can maintain the transcendence of both the actual occasion, as “self-creating creature,” and the world, where novelty is immortally objectified.³⁰⁵

While offering a description Whitehead will often, without indication, change the perspective of his analysis. This is the case when the terms “satisfaction,” “perishing” and “objectification” are used. Whitehead is describing a facet of actuality from different perspectives. The satisfaction, as described above, is the final *subjective* element of the entity’s actualization. In its completion an entity perishes, insofar as it no longer has subjective experience. This does not mean that the entity has passed from existence. It is at this point that it becomes *objective*. This is why Whitehead writes, “Actuality in perishing acquires objectivity, while it loses subjective immediacy.”³⁰⁶ Although no longer in the process of concrescence, the entity remains for the world of concrescing entities to take up into their subjective experience. At the least, what Whitehead offers with his description of satisfaction, perishing and objectification is a metaphysics in accordance with his reformed subjectivist principle and his principle of relativity. At the most, Whitehead offers a metaphysics that effectively balances becoming with being *and* subjectivity with objectivity, as everything that is becomes itself subjectively and is being objectively for others.³⁰⁷

Actual entities, although fundamental, are only the beginning of Whitehead’s general description. He details how they are organized into *nexūs* and societies.³⁰⁸ The move from the microscopic to the macroscopic is governed by the Category of Transmutation, in which a multiplicity of related entities is experienced as a unity. “Any particular fact of togetherness among actual entities is called a ‘nexus.’”³⁰⁹ Some *nexūs* have social order, in which case, Whitehead describes them as societies.³¹⁰ Further, Whitehead details how societies can have within them

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 85/130. There is more to this picture than mentioned, as “objective immortality” involves God’s experience of the world, which will be examined further in Section III of this chapter.

³⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 29/44. To further evidence Whitehead’s position, in *Adventures of Ideas*, 237, he writes, “Thus we should balance Aristotle’s – or, more rightly, Plato’s – doctrine of becoming by a doctrine of perishing. When they perish, occasions pass from the immediacy of being into the not – beings of immediacy. But that does not mean that they are nothing. They remain ‘stubborn fact’: *Pereunt et imputantur* [(The hours) pass away and are put to our account].” My addition.

³⁰⁷For two good expositions of this aspect of Whitehead’s thought, please see: William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead’s Metaphysics*, 21-38; and, Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead’s Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition*, 108-112.

³⁰⁸“*Nexūs*” is the plural of “nexus.”

³⁰⁹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 20/30.

³¹⁰*Ibid.*, 34/50-51. “A nexus enjoys ‘social order’ where (i) there is a common element of form illustrated in the definiteness of each of its included actual entities, and (ii) this common element of form arises in each member of the nexus by reason of the conditions imposed upon it by its prehensions of some other members of the nexus, and (iii) these prehensions impose that condition of reproduction by reason of their inclusion of positive feelings of that common form. Such a nexus is called a ‘society,’ and the common form is the ‘defining characteristic’ of the society.”

subordinate societies and nexūs.³¹¹ The significance of this elaboration of the various types of combinations and structures of actual occasions into nexūs and societies is in its demonstration of Whitehead's commitment to develop a "coherent, logical, and, in respect to its interpretation, applicable and adequate"³¹² description. Whitehead offers a vision, begun with the concrescence of actual occasions, that eventually details the world from its most ethereal and chaotic through to its most concrete and ordered. It is with this in mind that we can now turn our attention towards eternal objects.

Section II: Eternal Objects

In his general metaphysical description of the world, Whitehead details several different types of existence, among which "actual entities and eternal objects stand out with a certain extreme finality."³¹³ Despite the "extreme finality" of their existence, it should be clear that, from the exposition of concrescence, eternal objects participate in the becoming of actual entities. Whitehead is navigating, with the introduction of eternal objects, the philosophical terrain first traversed by Plato and Aristotle. It is the question of how to conceptualize the relationship of form and matter to each other.

Although Whitehead places himself within the Platonic tradition, he does not subscribe to Plato's solution of independent Forms or Ideas that are ontologically prior, and therefore ontologically primary and superior, to particular existents; neither does Whitehead err on the side of Aristotle. That is, while affirming his own ontological principle as in agreement with Aristotle that "apart from things that are actual, there is nothing – nothing either in fact or in efficacy,"³¹⁴ Whitehead maintains the existence of eternal objects as uncreated pure potentials for participation (ingression) in the becoming of actual entities. In other words, Whitehead recognizes the need for at least one element, in this case eternal objects, to transcend any particular becoming in order to account for possibility and novelty within the actual world. Thus, on the one hand, Whitehead refuses to place all signification and value in the realm of form (as Plato did) and, on the other hand, Whitehead refuses to reduce form to dependency upon the actual (as Aristotle did). Certainly, this is not an easy needle to thread.³¹⁵

³¹¹*Ibid.*, 99-100/151-153. See also, Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, Chapter XIII, "The Grouping of Occasions," pages 201-208, for a concise treatment of this topic by Whitehead.

³¹²*Ibid.*, 3/4.

³¹³*Ibid.*, 22/33.

³¹⁴*Ibid.*, 40/64.

³¹⁵Ivor Leclerc, "Whitehead and the Theory of Form," in *Process and Divinity: Philosophical Essays presented to Charles Hartshorne*, ed. William L. Reese, and Eugene Freeman (LaSalle: Open Court, 1964), 127-137, offers a very nice account of Whitehead's navigation between Plato and Aristotle. For instance, Leclerc writes on page 131, "But Whitehead makes a sharper distinction than Aristotle, and in this respect comes a bit closer to Plato. For Whitehead Aristotle has gone too far in his reaction against the doctrine of the *Phaedo*, and has

There is no doubt that the introduction of the term “eternal object” creates difficulties for the student of Western philosophy as it resonates deeply throughout the history of the tradition. It is also somewhat ironic that Whitehead uses the term in order to avoid confusion with previous philosophical language.³¹⁶ The term itself is merely the first hurdle to surmount when considering Whitehead’s eternal objects. Their status as uncreated, atemporal, non-actual, entities presents somewhat of a greater challenge.

In his philosophical writings Whitehead often refers to the “formative elements” of entities, by which he means those things (elements) that contribute to the formation of an actual entity. Consistently he offers three formative elements: God, Creativity, and Eternal Objects.³¹⁷ Recalling the phases of concrescence, eternal objects are experienced as conceptual feelings in the process of coming to be. These conceptual feelings are prehended by the mental pole of the entity and introduce possibility or pure potential into the process. That is, when an eternal object is experienced in the concrescence it is experienced as “the purely general *any* among undetermined actual entities. In itself an eternal object evades any selection among actualities or epochs.”³¹⁸ It is not definitely relevant in the same manner as propositions. “A proposition must be true or false. Herein a proposition differs from an eternal object; for no eternal object is ever true or false.”³¹⁹ Therefore, eternal objects contribute to the formation of actual entities by allowing for the actualization of novelty in a world mainly dominated by the reproduction of its own past. This novelty is not a formless possibility, perhaps only to be experienced as a negation of what already exists, thus resulting

not allowed sufficiently for form as necessarily having a distinct metaphysical status. That is to say, form cannot be consistently regarded as solely a factor in the analysis of actuality; rather, it must be explicitly regarded as having a nature transcending actuality.”

³¹⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 44/69-70. Whitehead writes, “The term ‘Platonic form’ has here been used as the briefest way of indicating the entities in question. But these lectures are not an exegesis of Plato’s writings; the entities in question are not necessarily restricted to those which he would recognize as ‘forms.’ Also the term ‘idea’ has a subjective suggestion in modern philosophy, which is very misleading for my present purposes; and in any case it has been used in many senses and has become ambiguous. The term ‘essence,’ as used by the Critical Realists, also suggests their use of it, which diverges from what I intend. Accordingly, *by way of employing a term devoid of misleading suggestions*, I use the phrase ‘eternal object for what in the preceding paragraph of this section I have termed a ‘Platonic form.’ Any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world is called an ‘eternal object.’” [Emphasis added].

³¹⁷Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 90. Whitehead writes, “These formative elements are: 1. The creativity whereby the actual world has its character of temporal passage to novelty. 2. The realm of ideal entities, or forms, which are in themselves not actual, but are such that they are exemplified in everything that is actual, according to some proportion of relevance. 3. The actual but non-temporal entity whereby the indetermination of mere creativity is transmuted into a determinant freedom. This non-temporal actual entity is what men call God – the supreme God of rationalized religion.” God and Creativity will be considered respectively in this chapter.

³¹⁸Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 256/391.

³¹⁹*Ibid.*, 256/392.

in disintegration and finally chaos; rather, eternal objects provide formed possibilities that are felt in their “*capacity* for being a realized determinant of process.”³²⁰ Although felt as an “any,” eternal objects, as non-actual entities participating in the formulation of an actual entity, are “forms of definiteness”³²¹ to be actualized. They provide for an actual entity *both* the possibility to become something other than a repetition of its past *and* the limitation of that possibility, such that it cannot become just anything at all.

According to Whitehead’s principle of relativity, “The potential for being an element in a real concrescence of many entities into one actuality is the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual.”³²² Later Whitehead states that this principle “directly traverses Aristotle’s dictum, ‘A substance is not present in a subject.’”³²³ It is because Whitehead has transformed the classical understanding of substance to that of actual entity that he can make this claim. His conception of substance (i.e. actual entity) includes the participation of form in it, not form added to matter *simpliciter*,³²⁴ but of one distinct type of entity participating in another. The difficulty Whitehead creates with his principle of relativity is how to reconcile it with his own ontological principle, which asserts that “the reasons for things are always to be found in the composite nature of definite actual entities.”³²⁵ In other words, since eternal objects are not actual entities, in fact, they are described as *non-actual* entities, how can they have the same type of efficacy as actual entities? It seems as though the introduction of the principle of relativity contradicts the ontological principle.

The ontological status of eternal objects, their relationship to God, actual entities, and each other, has certainly been a topic for debate amongst process philosophers and theologians.³²⁶ Eternal objects are by their nature “abstract,” by

³²⁰*Ibid.*, 239/366.

³²¹*Ibid.*, 158/239. Ivor Leclerc, “Whitehead’s Transformation of the Concept of Substance,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 3, no. 12 (1953): 242, writes, “Whitehead has accordingly concluded that the Platonic doctrine must be accepted that there are entities which are eternal and universal; eternal because transition or time is irrelevant to their nature, and universal because they are each capable of characterizing or informing different acting entities. He has termed them ‘eternal objects’; they might perhaps with equal convenience be termed ‘forms’ as a contraction from ‘forms of definiteness’.”

³²²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22/33.

³²³*Ibid.*, 50/79. Whether or not this is the case seems to depend upon one’s understanding of Aristotle. For an assessment of Whitehead’s understanding of Aristotle please see, James W. Felt, “Whitehead’s Misconception of ‘Substance’ in Aristotle,” *Process Studies* 14, no. 4 (1985): 224-236.

³²⁴*Ibid.*, 50/80.

³²⁵*Ibid.*, 19/28.

³²⁶In particular Lewis S. Ford has devoted much energy to this issue in his articles, “Creation of ‘Eternal’ Objects,” *The Modern Schoolman* LXXI, no. 3 (1994): 191-223; and, “Temporality and Transcendence,” in *Hartshorne: Process Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Robert Kane, and Stephen H. Phillips (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 151-167. The fruition of this work is in his treatment of eternal objects in his latest book, *Transforming Process Theism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 210-219. See also: Ivor Leclerc,

which Whitehead means “that what an eternal object is in itself – that is to say, its essence – is comprehensible without reference to some one particular occasion of experience.”³²⁷ Because eternal objects are abstract, each one “stands internally in all its possible relationships.”³²⁸ That is, as abstract non-actual entities, eternal objects are related to each other as possibilities instead of through particular actual entities. What Whitehead is asserting is an ontological realm of potential entities independent of actuality. Thus, the philosophy of organism “admits two classes of entities, mutually exclusive”: actual entities and eternal objects.³²⁹ They are mutually exclusive because they represent two different modes of existence, namely, that of being potential and that of being actual. Mutual exclusivity in their being does not, however, preclude their interaction. “The organic philosophy does not hold that the ‘particular existents’ are prehended apart from universals; on the contrary, it holds they are prehended by the mediation of universals.”³³⁰ Similarly, “An eternal object considered in reference to the publicity of things is a ‘universal’; Its own nature as an entity requires ingression – positive or negative – in every detailed actuality; but its nature does not disclose the private details of any actuality.”³³¹ Whitehead is, once again, developing the idea of ontological reciprocity as he navigates between Plato and Aristotle in this matter. Both possibility and actuality are granted ontological independence as metaphysical categories. Although actuality is a more inclusive category than potentiality, this does not entail a reduction of potentiality to actuality. The assertion of an ontologically independent reality of potential is Whitehead’s recognition of a descriptive metaphysics’ need to account for the introduction of newness or novelty in the actual world. Thus, Whitehead sides with Plato in recognizing eternal, universal, non-actual entities as necessary in order to provide form to temporal, particular, actual entities,³³² but does not go so far as to place all ontological and existential meaning and value in the realm of Form. Likewise, Whitehead sides with Aristotle in recognizing that form and matter require each other, but does not go so far as to deny universal form (i.e. eternal objects) ontological independence. Potentiality and actuality are ontologically distinct and yet, as part of their nature, require mutual and reciprocal

Whitehead’s Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition, 91-99; William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead’s Metaphysics*, 175-279; Everett W. Hall, “Of What Use Are Whitehead’s Eternal Objects,” in *Alfred North Whitehead: Essays on His Philosophy*, ed. George L. Kline (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 102-116; Granville C. Henry and Robert J. Valenza, “Eternal Objects at Sea,” *Process Studies* 30, no. 1 (2001): 55-77.

³²⁷Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 159.

³²⁸*Ibid.*, 165.

³²⁹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 158/239.

³³⁰*Ibid.*, 152/230.

³³¹*Ibid.*, 290/443-444.

³³²*Ibid.*, 149/226. Which is why Whitehead writes, “The definite ingression into a particular actual entity is not to be conceived as the sheer evocation of that eternal object from ‘not-being’ into ‘being’; it is the evocation of determination out of indetermination. Potentiality becomes reality; and yet retains its message of alternatives which the actual entity has avoided.”

participation with each other. It is with this in mind that we can now return to a consideration of Whitehead's ontological principle and his explanation of the ingression of eternal objects into actual entities.

Whitehead offers a stronger formulation of his ontological principle when he writes, "Everything must be somewhere; and here 'somewhere' means 'some actual entity.'"³³³ Recognizing that this assertion has a direct impact on the postulation of non-actual entities, Whitehead immediately claims, "Accordingly the general potentiality of the universe must be somewhere; since it retains its proximate relevance to actual entities for which it is unrealized."³³⁴ His solution to the problem is to place distinguished eternal objects in the primordial nature of God. "This 'somewhere' is the non-temporal actual entity. Thus 'proximate relevance' means 'relevance as in the primordial mind of God.'"³³⁵ It is important to note that this solution does not collapse the ontological realm of potentiality into God, thereby, reducing potentiality to a form of (divine) actuality. "He [God] does not create eternal objects, for his nature requires them in the same degree that they require him."³³⁶ Thus, Whitehead maintains the metaphysical category of potentiality for all actual entities, including God.

The difference between God as actual entity and other actual entities is that God positively prehends all the eternal objects, "The primordial created fact is the unconditioned conceptual valuation of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects. This is the 'primordial nature' of God."³³⁷ This differs from actual entities as their conceptual feelings (of eternal objects) will necessarily be conditioned, due to their situatedness. Although maintaining potentiality as a metaphysically distinct category, God's "conceptual valuation" of eternal objects makes them available for ingression into actual entities. Thus, Whitehead satisfies his ontological principle by having the non-temporal actual entity (God) provide the "somewhere" for potentials, so they can be realized by other actual entities. "Thus the many eternal objects conceived in their bare isolated multiplicity lack any existent character. They require the transition to the conception of them as efficaciously existent by reason of God's conceptual realization of them."³³⁸ Furthermore, in his primordial nature, God "at once exemplifies and establishes the categoreal conditions,"³³⁹ as the conceptual feelings are subjectively felt and valued by God, the "relative relevance of eternal objects for each occasion of actuality"³⁴⁰ is determined. In other words, eternal objects are relevantly available to actual entities, because they are ordered within

³³³ *Ibid.*, 46/73.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.* A consideration of God will be offered in the next section in which the Primordial and Consequent natures of God will be detailed.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 257/392.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 31/46.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 349/529.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 344/522.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the divine actual entity and it is the ingression of eternal objects into actual entities that introduces novelty into the world and saves it from a deadening repetition of its own past.

It is with the introduction of eternal objects as non-actual entities that Whitehead is able to account for possibility, change and novelty within his metaphysics. More than this, however, their conceptual evaluation in the primordial nature of God accounts for their ingression in the concrescence of actual entities, while maintaining the coherence of Whitehead's principle of relativity and ontological principle. Given the role of God, as an actual co-creating entity intimately involved with the process of realization, we should examine Whitehead's conception of God.

Section III: God

In Chapter II, Section I, Whitehead's objections to a completely transcendent and static God were considered as part of his criticisms of the Western philosophical tradition. Given his comments, it should be no surprise that he puts forth a dynamic conception of God as both immanent and transcendent. This is part of his overall metaphysical project, as "God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse."³⁴¹ It follows, as Whitehead is developing a coherent, logical, applicable and adequate speculative scheme, that God is the "chief exemplification" of these metaphysical principles.³⁴²

Before entering into a direct examination of Whitehead's concept of God, a few brief considerations about God and metaphysics are now offered. Throughout his later philosophical writings Whitehead includes God within his purview, which may be one of the factors that led him to metaphysics. In *Science and the Modern World* Whitehead writes, "It may be doubted whether any proper general metaphysics can ever, without the illicit introduction of other considerations, get much further than Aristotle."³⁴³ The reference is to Aristotle's unmoved mover and comes shortly after Whitehead remarks, "It did not lead him very far towards the production of a God available for religious purposes."³⁴⁴ This sentiment is further elucidated in *Process and Reality*, when Whitehead tells us that Aristotle's unmoved mover, when combined with Christian theology's "favourite doctrine" of an "aboriginal, eminently real, transcendent creator" God, is "the fallacy which has infused tragedy into the histories of Christianity and Mahometanism."³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 343/521.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 173-174.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 342/519. From sentiments expressed before and after this quoted passage, it is clear that Whitehead thinks that this combination of a "divine Caesar," personified moralist, and "ultimate philosophical principle," into its conception of God, is, for

Despite the doubt that metaphysical speculation can lead to a religiously available God and the tragedy caused when religions adopt a certain philosophical conception of God, Whitehead wishes to provide a God who is compatible with his metaphysics and available to religion. Whitehead asserts that “apart from any reference to existing religions as they are, or as they ought to be, we must investigate dispassionately what the metaphysical principles, here developed, require on these points, as to the nature of God.”³⁴⁶ In this regard Whitehead’s desire is merely to “add another speaker to that masterpiece, Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*,” so that “religious and moral intuitions” will also have a voice.³⁴⁷ Since these are “exceptional elements in our conscious experience,” they should not be excluded.³⁴⁸ On the other hand, it is clear that Whitehead’s inspiration for developing an idea of God compatible with his metaphysics comes from “the Galilean origin of Christianity” that “dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world.”³⁴⁹ Whitehead is thus proceeding along his firm metaphysical line of thought, all the while inspired by the “brief Galilean vision of humility.”³⁵⁰ Whether or not this allows for a religiously available God is certainly the topic for another dissertation.³⁵¹ That Whitehead is, as usual, approaching his metaphysical project with tentativeness and concern for systematic coherency is indeed evidenced.³⁵²

Whitehead’s God is also an actual entity; however, God’s³⁵³ being is not in the same mode as that of other actual entities. God is that than which no

Christianity at least, idolatrous. Whitehead does not explicitly detail the resulting “tragedy” of this doctrine, but one can simply look at the political history of Christendom (the fact that a Christendom even developed) for examples of how those who thought they were acting in accordance with this doctrine adversely affected both Christians and non-Christians alike, e.g. the Crusades, the Inquisition, anti-popes, the persecution of protestant sects during the Reformation (Anabaptists, Huguenots), etc.

³⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 343/521.

³⁴⁷*Ibid.*

³⁴⁸*Ibid.*

³⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 343/520.

³⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 342/520.

³⁵¹Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 50. Indeed, it is quite possible that Whitehead’s concern is to have a philosophically available God for religion, since, religion already has, *ipso facto*, a religiously available God. This is clear in his assessment of Christianity and Buddhism, “Christianity took the opposite road. It has always been a religion seeking a metaphysics, in contrast to Buddhism which is a metaphysics generating a religion.”

³⁵²Charles Hartshorne, “Whitehead’s Idea of God,” 515-559. Hartshorne offers an excellent exposition detailing Whitehead’s idea of God *vis-à-vis* classical philosophical and theological formulations. Hartshorne writes, “What he [Whitehead] offers us is rather the most technically adequate version of a conception of God which a score of philosophers and theologians of great distinction, and hundreds with humble attainments, have been working out since the fifteenth century, and especially during the last one hundred years.”

³⁵³Whitehead uses the masculine pronoun, inconsistently capitalized, to refer to God. When directly quoting Whitehead I have kept his use of the masculine pronoun, but have otherwise attempted to avoid it where stylistically possible.

greater can be conceived for Whitehead insofar as God is the exemplification of the metaphysical principles. Just as actual entities have a threefold character in their becoming, delineated in Section I of this chapter as the phases of concrescence, so too does God. God experiences both conceptual and physical feelings and integrates them into a unity, because God is a singular unified entity. In other words, God has a primordial nature, which prehends the entire potentiality of existence as eternal objects; a consequent nature, which prehends every actuality of the world; and, a superject nature, which is God's integration and valuation of God's own experiences as a singular whole that, in turn, is objectified for the world to experience, as God establishes the "initial phase of each subjective aim" in the world's plurality of concrescences.³⁵⁴

As we already know, God's primordial nature is the "unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality,"³⁵⁵ which are called eternal objects. This aspect of God is "deficiently actual," according to Whitehead. Since eternal objects are non-actual entities that must be located somewhere, in order to be available for actual entities to experience, the primordial nature of God is actual, insofar as it is part of an actual entity but is deficient in two respects: God's "feelings are only conceptual and so lack the fulness of actuality," and "conceptual feelings, apart from complex integration with physical feelings, are devoid of consciousness in their subjective forms."³⁵⁶ That is, eternal objects are experienced by God potentially as potential³⁵⁷ and until their integration into God's own concrescence are not experienced consciously, which, in the case of God, would be equivalent to actually.³⁵⁸ It is from God's primordial nature that

³⁵⁴Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 344/522, 87-88/134-135, for the three natures of God.

³⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 343/521.

³⁵⁶*Ibid.*

³⁵⁷This statement is explanatory of the first type of deficient actuality mentioned in the previous sentence. I have characterized it in this way in order to contrast Whitehead's position with that of classical theism. When a purely actual God is posited by classical theism, God has no potential, which, critics would charge, when coupled with the doctrines of omniscience and omnipotence results in the negation of potentiality in the rest of creation, therefore eliminating creaturely freedom. Whitehead is emphatically developing a metaphysics that does not have this result, although it includes God.

³⁵⁸This statement is explanatory of the second type of deficient actuality mentioned in the previous sentence. Again, it is to emphasize the deficient actuality of God's primordial nature. The prehension of eternal objects in God's primordial nature, like the prehension of eternal objects by the mental pole of actual entities, does not involve consciousness. It is only later in the concrescence, for God and actual entities alike, when there is a "complex integration with physical feelings" that eternal objects are consciously perceived. Hence, Whitehead writes (*Process and Reality*, 344/521-522), "When we make a distinction of reason, and consider God in the abstraction of primordial actuality, we must ascribe to him neither fullness of feeling, nor consciousness. He is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feeling at the base of things, so that, by reason of this primordial actuality, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation." Just as actual entities prehend eternal objects (already ordered by God's primordial nature) in their mental pole, without or prior to consciousness, and order their relevance for actualization, so too, does God's primordial nature prehend and thereby order the relevance of eternal objects for all creation to actualize, without or prior to consciousness.

possibility can enter into creation and, because it is not sheer possibility, but possibility as valued and ordered within an actuality, the potential introduced into the world is relevant and limiting. When an actual entity prehends conceptual feelings in its mental pole, it is true that these are eternal objects, but they are eternal objects as mediated by God's concrescence, which also includes God's experience of the actual world.³⁵⁹ This allows for the actual entity toprehend positively some relevant possibilities for its own actualization and toprehend negatively the rest. The positive prehension of relevant possibilities³⁶⁰ entails that God is the "lure for feeling, the eternal urge of desire" and the "object of desire" that establishes the "initial phase of each subjective aim."³⁶¹ This is why Whitehead can assert that God "is not *before* all creation, but *with* all creation"³⁶² and that "every entity on its finer side introduces God into the world."³⁶³ Thus, the primordial nature of God is "free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient, and unconscious." Recalling Whitehead's development of dipolar entities, it is clear that the primordial nature of God is not only the analogue to the mental pole of actual entities but that it also exemplifies (as God should) an important facet of reality. In its most general description, God's primordial nature provides the ground for the possibility of actual existence.

The other aspect of God, "which cannot be omitted," is God's consequent nature. Whitehead admits that the main focus of his analysis has been on God's action in the world; however, in keeping with ontological reciprocity, this cannot be a one way relationship. "The completion of God's nature into a fulness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God."³⁶⁴ God experiences all the actual entities as they are objectified in God's subjective experience. That is, everything that is actual is subjectively experienced by God so that nothing is lost. In this sense Whitehead says, "He saves the world" and that "the consequent nature of God is his judgement on the world."³⁶⁵ The judgement of God is not the Biblical final judgement; rather, it is God's evaluation of every moment of actual existence, considered in light of God's

³⁵⁹Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics*, 376. Christian writes, "But it would be a mistake to suppose this is a function of only the primordial nature of God. For the feeling by which the novel possibility is mediated to the concrescence is a hybrid *physical* feeling of God. This remark reminds us that the two natures of God are abstract aspects of a concrete unity of experience."

³⁶⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 224/343. While expositing the Theory of Prehensions Whitehead writes, "Each temporal entity, in one sense, originates from its mental pole, analogously to God himself. It derives from God its basic conceptual aim, relevant to its actual world, yet with indeterminations awaiting its own decisions. This subjective aim, in its successive modifications, remains the unifying factor governing the successive phases of interplay between physical and conceptual feelings."

³⁶¹*Ibid.*, 344/522.

³⁶²*Ibid.* 343/521.

³⁶³Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 155-156.

³⁶⁴Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345/523.

³⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 346/525.

experience of eternal objects (i.e. what could have ideally been). From this, God's wisdom is employed in order to save and use "what in the temporal world is mere wreckage."³⁶⁶ In other words, it is through the consequent nature that God redeems the world. Whitehead describes this aspect of God as "determined, incomplete, consequent, 'everlasting,'³⁶⁷ fully actual, and conscious."³⁶⁸ God's consequent nature is the analogue of an actual entity's physical pole and, because it is in God, this physical pole is the exemplification of the metaphysical principles. In this case, not only is every entity a potential for every becoming but every entity is indeed experienced by at least one other, namely, God.

The final aspect to be considered is God's superject nature. Although not much attention has been given to the superject thus far, it should be mentioned that all actual entities, including God, have a superjective dimension to their being. It is that aspect of an entity that has come into being and can be experienced by others, which Whitehead calls "objective immortality."³⁶⁹ It is thus the unity of God's conceptual and conformal prehensions in his being. This is the third stage of the universe in which there is "the ultimate unity of the multiplicity of actual fact with the primordial conceptual fact."³⁷⁰ Like all actual entities, God has the subject-superject structure, as God subjectively experiences and superjectly projects concrete existence for further becomings.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 345/524.

³⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 346/524-525. "The property of combining creative advance with the retention of mutual immediacy is what in the previous section is meant by 'everlasting.'"

³⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 345/524.

³⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 45/71. "This is the doctrine of the emergent unity of the superject. An actual entity is to be conceived both as a subject presiding over its own immediacy of becoming, and a superject which is the atomic creature exercising its function of objective immortality. It has become a 'being'; and it belongs to the nature of every 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming.'"

³⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 346/525.

³⁷¹This point cannot be over emphasized. As William A. Christian understands it (*An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics*, footnote 121), God is an actual entity in all respects, including that of a unity and a being, not merely a becoming. As mentioned, Christian rightly points out that to think the introduction of possibility into the world as the sole function of the primordial nature of God is a mistake. Yet, as recently as 2001, Whitehead interpreters have made precisely this mistake. Granville C. Henry and Robert J. Valenza, "Eternal Objects at Sea," *Process Studies* 30, no. 1 (2001): 55-77, rest their interpretation on the following passage from *Process and Reality*, 345, "God's conceptual nature is unchanged by reason of its final completeness. But his derivative nature is consequent upon the creative advance." In order to remedy the eternal and unchanging valuation of eternal objects in God's primordial nature, such that they can be modified or adjusted for/to the current situation of the world, Henry and Valenza suggest, "the possibility of a feedback loop in God's primordial and consequent natures so that as the relations between eternal objects are colored by the processive creativity of the actual entities of the world [*sic*]. These colorations become data for God and thereby act to color his own set of valuations – which in turn color the world! We must emphasize that Whitehead, in the passage quoted above, goes on to deny this." He does indeed; however, what is missing from their analysis of the function of eternal objects is the unity of the being (superject nature) of God and the dynamic becoming of God that takes his own being into account. Later in *Process and Reality*, 349, Whitehead writes, "God is primordially one, namely, he is the primordial unity of

Although we have considered only a brief exposition of Whitehead's conception of God, nevertheless a picture has emerged that demonstrates God not just as an actual entity, but as *the* actual entity embodying all the facets of Whitehead's system. God is becoming *and* being; potential *and* actual; subject *and* superject; temporal *and* eternal. Whitehead can make these claims because of the ontological reciprocity he develops between entities which, by extension, also holds true for the relationship between God and the world. As an actual entity *par exemplar* God has to be in a dynamic relationship with the world and the world must also be in a dynamic relationship with God.³⁷² No ontological priority is given to one or taken from the other. Similarly, each has in its/God's respective existence aspects embodied by the other. "God and the World stand over against each other, expressing the final metaphysical truth that appetitive vision and physical enjoyment have equal claim to priority in creation. But no two actualities can be torn apart: each is all in all."³⁷³ It is this final inter-relatedness that allows Whitehead to overcome antitheses and convert them to contrasts.³⁷⁴

As well as developing a metaphysically adequate concept of God, Whitehead also avoids many of the traditional theological pitfalls, e.g. omnipotence and evil, omniscience and freewill. Instead, he presents a vision of God that does not in effect set God over and against the world; rather, God is "the great companion – the fellow-sufferer who understands."³⁷⁵ God is "the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."³⁷⁶ Although this is not the classical theistic conception of God, it is certainly a vision of a God who could be suited to and compatible with the deeper religious intuition of God's incarnation expressed by Christianity, in which case, Whitehead's concept of God would be both more philosophically adequate and religiously appropriate than that of the classical, i.e., mono-polar, theists.

relevance of the many potential forms; in the process he acquires a consequent multiplicity, which the primordial character absorbs into its own unity." Given how meticulously Whitehead has developed the inter-connection of entities in their becoming/being, it is hard to believe that, when developing a metaphysically adequate idea of God as the exemplification of his metaphysical principles, Whitehead would divide one nature from the other *within* a single being, namely God. Again, William A. Christian makes this very clear, *op. cit.* 377, when he writes, "God is also the structural condition of order in the world. As prehended by some actual occasion, God is a determinate being. He is determined in part by his prehensions of the actual world of that occasion. God, so determined, is the initial datum of the hybrid physical feeling from which the initial conceptual aim is derived. Because of the determinate nature of this initial datum, the objective datum of the feeling, namely one of God's own conceptual prehensions, will yield a possibility which is effectively relevant to *that* actual world. It will be a real possibility and not merely a pure possibility. The realm of eternal objects, though unordered in itself, has thus been ordered relative to the new concrescence by God's physical prehensions of the past world."

³⁷²Here I am using the term 'world' as the name for the "totality of entities," as I believe Whitehead uses the term and it should not be mistaken for a singular entity.

³⁷³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 348/529.

³⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 348/528.

³⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 351/532.

³⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 346/526.

Section IV: Creativity

The third formative element that Whitehead introduces into his system is Creativity. Creativity is the “universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact.”³⁷⁷ That is, with the introduction of Creativity Whitehead is offering the ultimate explanation. Unlike previous metaphysicians, Whitehead will not offer an “unmoved mover,” or a “God conceived as a transcendent creator,” or “a monistic ‘Absolute,’” as the ultimate explanatory ground.³⁷⁸ The problem with these types of traditional solutions is, Whitehead believes, that they commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness and thereby mistake the ultimate for the actual. As a result, the ultimate is then endowed with ontological superiority, while everything else is relegated to a kind of ephemeral secondary existence. In the case of monistic philosophies, the entities become fully determined, dependent parts of the whole (e.g. in those of Spinoza, Bradley); whereas, in the case of pluralistic philosophies, the ultimate is either conceived of as an actuality, which, by contrast, removes value from all other actual entities (e.g. in those of Plato, Plotinus, Aquinas), or neglects the ultimate altogether (e.g. scientific materialism, logical positivism).³⁷⁹

Whitehead tries to avoid these errors with a consistent devotion to the development of a pluralistic philosophy, rather than a monism, and by recognizing the need for an ultimate explanation. Explanation, here, is the key word. Creativity does not provide the reason (as an efficient or final cause) for the concrescence of actual entities. Creativity is the nominal description Whitehead gives to that which everything exemplifies and yet is “no thing.” That is, the ultimate. “It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into one complex unity.”³⁸⁰ That this is the case is evidenced by Whitehead’s entire philosophical project. He meticulously details how entities come to be singular unities from a prior multitude; how these multiple unities are in turn related to each other in the formation of complex and enduring unified societies; the role of God, as the primordial unity, providing a multiplicity of possibility in these becomings and their unification in the consequent nature of God. From the “most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space”³⁸¹ through to God, Whitehead shows that “even amid stability there is never undifferentiated endurance.”³⁸² “Each creative act is the universe incarnating itself as one, and there is nothing above it by way of final condition.”³⁸³ The final condition of reality is its continual novel renewal. “But creativity is always found under conditions and

³⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 21/31.

³⁷⁸Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead’s Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition*, 86.

³⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 83-84.

³⁸⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21/31.

³⁸¹*Ibid.*, 18/28.

³⁸²*Ibid.*, 249/381.

³⁸³*Ibid.*, 245/375.

described as conditioned.” Thus the only “place” where the final condition for reality can be observed is as manifested in everything that is. There can be no examination of the ultimate itself, not because it is *a priori* unknowable, but because it is not an actual existent. Whitehead writes,

In all philosophical theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterization through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed ‘creativity’; and God is its primordial, non-temporal, accident.³⁸⁴

This last quotation raises two issues: (1) the status of Whitehead’s God in light of Creativity as ultimate, and (2) the possible violation of Whitehead’s own ontological principle by the category of the ultimate.

As mentioned, the identification of God with the ultimate has been, in Whitehead’s opinion, a mistake. This type of philosophical solution bifurcates reality and then reduces, devalues and denies the ontological status of everything except God. For Whitehead, however, God too is an actual entity, which means that God, like all other actual entities, is “at once a creature of creativity and a condition for creativity.”³⁸⁵ Unlike the other actual entities, God is the “aboriginal instance of this creativity.”³⁸⁶ Although God exemplifies Creativity, God is also the “organ of novelty, aiming at intensification,”³⁸⁷ and “the foundation of order, ... the goad towards novelty”³⁸⁸ and as such is the “actual but non-temporal entity whereby the indetermination of mere creativity is transmuted into a determinate freedom.”³⁸⁹ Thus, God is that entity through which Creativity enters the world productively. Or, in other words, God exemplifies Whitehead’s metaphysical principles including the category of the ultimate.

Does Creativity, as “no thing,” violate Whitehead’s ontological principle, since “the reasons for things are always to be found in the composite natures of definite actual entities”?³⁹⁰ Here the distinction between reason as *cause* and reason as *explanation* needs to be made. In the formulation of the ontological principle Whitehead is clearly referring to reason as cause. Actual entities exist by reason of other actual entities – actual entities cause actual entities. Certainly the cause of something is also the explanation, but not all explanations are causal.

³⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 7/10-11.

³⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 31/47. Does this mean that God in Whitehead’s metaphysics does not meet the traditional Western criterion of God, namely, as “that than which no other greater being can be conceived,” since Creativity “occupies” the place of the ultimate? The short answer is, no. Creativity, as should be clear, is neither actual nor an entity. Although ultimate, Creativity certainly does not meet the definition stated above.

³⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 225/344.

³⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 67/ 104.

³⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 88/135.

³⁸⁹Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 90.

³⁹⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 19/28.

This is the case with Creativity, which is the explanation of why things are the way that they are, but is neither efficiently nor finally causal. Creativity, although not a causal reason, does conform to Whitehead's reformed subjectivist principle, "That nothing is to be received into the philosophical scheme which is not discoverable as an element in subjective experience."³⁹¹ And, if it is discoverable as an element within subjective experience, there can be no other place for this discovery than in an entity.³⁹²

Thus, it is with Creativity as the ultimate explanation that Whitehead includes a third formative element in actual entities. This category of the ultimate neither supercedes God as that than which no greater can be conceived, nor violates the ontological principle. What it provides, along with eternal objects and God, is an explanation of why things are the way they are. Of course, Whitehead's metaphysics is tentative in its formulation and merely strives for logical coherency and adequacy in its description, so the inclusion of the ultimate may not have the finality one might expect. This is primarily due to Whitehead's grounding of his metaphysics, in the category of the ultimate, upon process. His metaphysics is through and through a recognition that it is in the nature of things to come into being and to become, not haphazardly, but as ordered and striving towards novel intensity.

Conclusion:

In keeping with the Western philosophical tradition, Whitehead's metaphysics does not merely investigate beings as given but strives to understand the nature of beings themselves. This is why Whitehead's analysis is not limited to the actual entities that present themselves and includes those formative elements that participate in the processive existence of these entities. His metaphysical description of actuality would not be complete without the consideration of eternal objects, God, and Creativity.

The processive nature of actual entities as composite, yet atomic, units of subjectively immediate becoming passing into objectively immortal existence provides a revised alternative to traditional Western metaphysics. In this conception of actuality Whitehead is able to balance being *and* becoming, form *and* matter, particular *and* universal, without committing the fallacies of previous attempts. Whitehead's success in this matter comes from his commitment to account for the complexity of the world, speculatively and, yet, not to minimize our experience of this world. In doing so he grants potentials, as eternal objects, their own distinct ontological status, in order to explain the occurrence of novelty in a world dominated by its physical past. God is included, not as an exception but as an exemplification, of the metaphysical principles. It is through God that

³⁹¹*Ibid.*, 166/253.

³⁹²André Cloots, "The Metaphysical Significance of Whitehead's Creativity," *Process Studies* 30, no. 1 (2001): 36-54. See pages 47-49 for an extended version of the argument presented here.

eternal objects are distinguished and valued in a manner that is both relevant to and experiencable by actual entities. It is also through God that the world is redeemed, in its objective immortality, as God preserves everything from the world that can be saved. Finally, Creativity is the category of the ultimate by which everything that is, including God, exists. As Whitehead says, “Each creative act is the universe incarnating itself as one, and there is nothing above it by way of final condition.”³⁹³ Creativity, the name Whitehead uses in order to describe the ultimate, is that which is itself “no thing” and is only known through its accidents. These three elements participate in the formation of the actuality that we are and that we experience. Because actuality is the most inclusive, and certainly not exclusive, category for Whitehead, it is only through an investigation into the nature of actuality that these other elements can be revealed.

Since Whitehead offers one of the most technically sophisticated metaphysics, inspired by the scientific innovations of evolution, relativity and quantum theory all the while being cognizant of previous metaphysics’ failings, there is no doubt that he provides an otherwise beleaguered discipline new hope. Whether or not his fallibilistic³⁹⁴ metaphysics, proceeding as it does from his Reformed Subjectivist Principle, with its focus upon actual entities and its inclusion of God, eternal objects and Creativity, can survive Heidegger’s criticism of metaphysics as onto-theology remains to be considered. In moving on to Part II, where we examine Heidegger’s criticism, it will serve us well to keep in mind how deftly Whitehead navigates the treacherous metaphysical waters.

³⁹³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 245/375.

³⁹⁴Simon Blackburn, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 135. “**Fallibilism**: The doctrine due to Peirce, that it is not necessary that beliefs be certain, or grounded on certainty. We may justifiably rest content with beliefs in circumstances in which further evidence, forcing us to revise our opinion, may yet come in. Indeed, since this is always our position, unless we settle for it we shall be driven to scepticism. The view therefore locates a position between dogmatism and scepticism.”

PART II: THE LATER MARTIN HEIDEGGER
CHAPTER IV
THE END OF METAPHYSICS³⁹⁵

Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the central aspect of the later Heidegger's critique³⁹⁶ of metaphysics as onto-theology. To this end several of his later works are considered and the critical theme extracted. His *Nietzsche* provides the general framework for this analysis, as it offers a critical account of the history of Western philosophy beginning with the Greeks and ending with Nietzsche. Other relevant Heidegger texts are also incorporated in this history in order to supplement the exposition of his critique.

The work of the later Heidegger is used, because it is here that he is most explicit in his criticisms. These criticisms arise from a fundamental change in Heidegger's own philosophizing. Where the earlier Heidegger thought that the discipline of philosophy could be reformed through fundamental ontology, the later Heidegger abandons this project with the expressed desire to overcome metaphysics in order to commence with meditative thinking (*Nachdenken*). This desire comes from his analysis of traditional metaphysics' consequences for Western civilization's framework (*Gestell*) for understanding, interacting with, and being in the world. Although his alternative to traditional metaphysics is beyond the scope of this work, it is important to remember his motivations for the critique.

Much of Heidegger's thought is difficult to comprehend, probably due to its originality, and this is true of his critique of metaphysics. One of the most difficult ideas at work in his analysis is his understanding of the relationship between beings (*Seienden*) and Being (*Sein*). What is never explicitly stated, but can certainly be inferred from many of his works, is that beings (*Seienden*) are always indicative of Being (*Sein*). This is the case in the history (*Historie*) of metaphysics as onto-theology, *even though* this history, through its single-minded treatment of beings (*Seienden*), makes beings (*Seienden*) as least indicative of Being (*Sein*) as possible. What Heidegger is attempting to capture in his account of metaphysics as the history (*Geschichte*) of Being (*Sein*), is the *ethos* or framework (*Gestell*) of Western thought. In so doing, he is also trying to show how metaphysics has neglected Being (*Sein*) itself, which is, according to Heidegger, precisely that which cannot be neglected.

It is at this point that an interpretative problem arises. If Being (*Sein*) is

³⁹⁵Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, volume IV, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991), 147. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, Gesamtausgabe, Band 6.2 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 177. The title is taken from a section in *Nietzsche* entitled, "Das Ende der Metaphysik."

³⁹⁶The term "critique" is used here in the conventional sense, rather than the Kantian.

that which cannot be neglected, according to Heidegger, why is there no treatment of Heidegger's understanding of Being (*Sein*) presented in this thesis? Although Heidegger devotes much effort throughout his entire corpus to understanding Being (*Sein*), many of his explicit statements are found in his earlier works. This is of direct relevance to this project, because it is here, in these earlier works, that Heidegger attempts to think the meaning of Being (*Sein*) through *Dasein* (that entity which has for itself the meaning of its own being). This project is abandoned in the thought of the later Heidegger (the topic under discussion here) because of its reliance upon a conscious, productive subject; a subject that tends to representational forms of thinking – even about Being (*Sein*). As will be demonstrated, it is this representational thinking that vitiates Western metaphysics and is a contributing factor in the forgetting of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). The greater challenge that Heidegger sets for himself in his later work is how to think Being (*Sein*) in a non-representational manner. In order to accomplish this task, Heidegger has recourse to “saying” rather than “speaking”; poetic or meditative thinking rather than calculative thinking; the world as a “fourfold” interplay of gods and mortals, earth and sky. These are ways Heidegger thinks Being (*Sein*) can be revealed/concealed after metaphysics is overcome. None of these “positive” treatments of Being (*Sein*), however, add anything substantive to the critique of metaphysics developed by the later Heidegger and presented in this chapter. Certainly Heidegger's main motivation for overcoming metaphysics is its neglect of Being (*Sein*), but to include a treatment of the later Heidegger's understanding of Being (*Sein*) would be a significant deviation from the intended purpose of this thesis while only adding unnecessary length.³⁹⁷

In order to detail Heidegger's understanding of Western metaphysics' systematic neglect of Being (*Sein*), this chapter will follow Heidegger through his history (*Geschichte*) of Being (*Sein*). Heidegger's account begins with his analysis of the original Greek understanding of Being (*Sein*) and how this was filtered through Plato and Aristotle, who definitively formed metaphysics. With the Aristotelian structure in place, metaphysics is then translated into Latin and infused with Christianity. Latin Christianity, i.e., the Scholastics, give definition to metaphysics' central concepts, which in turn carry over to and through the Enlightenment. The Modern philosophers further delineate metaphysics by narrowing its method of investigation, and therefore its content. This culminates in Kant's revolutionary redefinition of metaphysics' scope, through his critique of pure reason, which represents the beginning of the end for metaphysics. The end comes as Nietzsche executes the final prefigured possibility of metaphysics, as it

³⁹⁷I cannot emphasize this point enough. The critique of metaphysics developed by the later Heidegger presented here is more than sufficient for the purpose of evaluating Whitehead's metaphysics. If one wishes to attempt an understanding of the later Heidegger's understanding of Being (*Sein*), I refer the reader to: Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1958); and, Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1987), pp. 227-242, “The Topology of Being.”

was originally framed by Aristotle. At its end, Heidegger thinks there is nothing left for metaphysics but a repetition of its already realized possibilities, which will only lead us further from Being (*Sein*). Heidegger's account of this history will now be considered in detail.

Section I: The Inception of Metaphysics as Onto-theology

Although there is a break between the earlier and later Heidegger, some common aspects persist. This is certainly the case with the question of Being (*Sein*). The question is first formulated in *Being and Time*, section II, which prompts the introduction of the ontological difference between Being (*Sein*) and entities (*Seienden*),³⁹⁸ as Heidegger begins his fundamental ontology. Both of these, the question of Being (*Sein*) and the ontological difference, remain constants throughout his work.³⁹⁹ In *Nietzsche*, using the ontological difference to develop a more critical reading of Western philosophy, Heidegger divides the question in two: the guiding question (*die Leitfrage*) and the grounding question (*die Grundfrage*).⁴⁰⁰ The guiding question of philosophy is: What is a being? (*Was ist das Seiende?*); whereas, the grounding question is: What is Being? (*Was ist das Sein?*). It is Heidegger's critique that Western philosophy, from its Greek inception, has been exclusively interested in answering the guiding question. It is due to this singular focus on beings, or entities themselves, that Western metaphysics develops as onto-theology. That is, metaphysics only investigates entities (*onta*) and the greatest of all entities (*theos*) and in doing so never considers, and therefore never answers, the grounding question, thereby neglecting Being (*Sein*).

Section II: The Greeks

In the last three sections of the second volume of *Nietzsche*, Heidegger presents some of his most condensed criticisms of Western metaphysics. It is here, in "Metaphysics as the History of Being," that he clearly identifies Aristotle as the initiator of metaphysics. This is not to dismiss the Greek thinkers prior to Aristotle;

³⁹⁸Many translators translate "*das Seiende*" as "being," probably because it contrasts nicely with "*das Sein*" as "Being." At the risk of insensitively employing Latin cognates, I prefer the term "entity" to translate "*das Seiende*" because of its clarity for the English reader.

³⁹⁹Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962), 24-28. // *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 2 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 5-8. "The Formal Structure of the Question of Being." // "Die formale Struktur der Frage nach dem Sein." The translators offer in footnote 3, p. 31, a good definition of the ontological difference, "While the terms 'ontisch' ('ontical') and 'ontologisch' ('ontological') are not explicitly defined, their meanings will emerge rather clearly. Ontological inquiry is concerned primarily with *Being*; ontical inquiry is concerned primarily with *entities* and the facts about them."

⁴⁰⁰Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, 67-8. // *Nietzsche*, erster Band, Gesamtausgabe, Band 6.1 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 64-65.

rather, it is to emphasize the effect of Aristotle upon all subsequent philosophy, also known as metaphysics.⁴⁰¹ According to Heidegger, Being (*Sein*) is first understood by the Greeks in a twofold manner: as “emerging (*physis*)” and as “unconcealment (*aletheia*).” This original Greek understanding is expressed by Aristotle later as “presence and permanence in the sense of enduring (*ousia*)” and it is with this that “metaphysics proper begins.”⁴⁰²

Western metaphysics, as definitively formalized by Aristotle, is through and through onto-theological in its structure. Heidegger says that it would “be rash to assert that metaphysics is theology because it is ontology”; rather, metaphysics is theology because it makes “a statement about God.”⁴⁰³ The question then, according to Heidegger, is “How does deity enter into philosophy, not just Modern philosophy, but philosophy as such?”⁴⁰⁴ Throughout many of his later writings, Heidegger periodically mentions how Greek philosophy and Christian theology are antithetical, e.g., calling the idea of “Christian philosophy ... even more contradictory than a square circle,”⁴⁰⁵ in light of which, it is important to note that Heidegger identifies the introduction of deity into philosophy as prior to any Greek-Christian synthesis. The question then remains, whence comes God?

The answer to this question is found in the answer to Aristotle’s question, namely, ““And, moreover, that which is sought both of old and now and forever and forever missed is, what is being?” (*Met. Z 1, 1028 b 2 sqq.*)”⁴⁰⁶ This question

⁴⁰¹Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 63. // *Der Satz vom Grund*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 10 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 92. Heidegger writes, “Aristotle’s *Physics* remains the fundamental book of what later is called metaphysics. This book determines the warp and woof of the whole of Western thinking, even at that place where it, as modern thinking, appears to think at odds with ancient thinking.” // “Die »Physik« des Aristoteles bleibt das Grundbuch dessen, was man später Metaphysik nennt. Diese bestimmt das Gefüge des gesamten abendländischen Denkens, auch dort, wo es als neuzeitliches Denken gegen das antike Denken zu denken scheint.”

⁴⁰²Martin Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 4. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 367. “In the beginning of its history, Being opens itself out as emerging (*physis*) and unconcealment (*aletheia*). From there it reaches the formulation of presence and permanence in the sense of enduring (*ousia*). Metaphysics proper begins with this.” // “Im Anfang seiner Geschichte lichtet sich Sein als aufgang (*physis*) und Entbergung (*aletheia*). Von dort her gelangt es in das Gepräge von Anwesenheit und Beständigkeit im Sinne des Verweilens (*ousia*). Damit beginnt die eigenliche Metaphysik.”

⁴⁰³Martin Heidegger, “The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics,” in *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), 55/122. This translation includes the German text as well and therefore the second page number refers the reader to the German in this volume. “Indessen wäre es voreilig zu behaupten, die Metaphysik sei Theologie, weil sei Ontologie sei. Zuvor wird man sagen: Die Metaphysik ist deshalb Theologie, ein Aussagen über Gott, weil der Gott in die Philosophie kommt.”

⁴⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 55/122. “Wie kommt der Gott in die Philosophie, nicht nur in die neuzeitliche, sondern in die Philosophie als solche?”

⁴⁰⁵Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 88. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 116.

⁴⁰⁶Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde

is, for Heidegger, the essence of the “fundamental metaphysical position” of Western philosophy.⁴⁰⁷ It is identified as such because to inquire about entity (*Seiende*) in itself is to ask about every single one of them in their entirety. That is, it is a question about the nature or essence of entity. The question is not about any given entity; rather, it is a question *beyond* the particular entities themselves. This concern is not that of science, in the sense of *post physikam*, but is philosophical in the sense of *trans* or *meta physikam*.⁴⁰⁸

Metaphysics, *meta ta physika*, is knowledge and inquiry that posit being as *physis*. Metaphysics does so in such a way that in and through the positing it inquires out beyond being, asking about being *as* being. To inquire into the *archē* – to ask the question *ti to on?* [What is an entity? / *Was ist das Seiende?*] – is metaphysics.⁴⁰⁹

The inquiry into the *archē*, which is translated into Latin as *principium*, is the search for the beginning. This beginning is not merely the logical start of the sequence; it is the search for the ultimate reason or absolute explanation. Stated differently, it is the search for what stands “at the beginning of all; hence, to rule,”⁴¹⁰ and therefore rules over all entities, or, is the rule to which everything (in existence) must adhere. In the case of Aristotle, who provides the first answer to his own question, the investigation leads to “‘the first principles and causes,’ namely of being”⁴¹¹ and it is upon arrival at the unmoved mover that God is introduced into metaphysics. This is why, from its very inception, metaphysics has been onto-theology. In Aristotle’s defining question, entities are asked about *as* entities (*onta*) and the answer to the question initiates a search for that which is

(New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1958), 53/52. This is a translation of *Was ist das – die Philosophie?* (Tübingen: Verlag Günther Neske Pfullingen, 1956), that includes the German, to which the second page number in the citation refers. Above I have quoted the more traditional translation of Aristotle’s text as offered in this monograph by the translators. Heidegger’s German translation of the same passage reads, “Und so ist den einstmals schon und auch jetzt und immerfort dasjenige, wohin (die Philosophie) sich auf den Weg begibt und wohin sie immer wieder den Zugang nicht findet, (das Gefragte dieses): Was ist das Seiende? (τί το ον).” // The English translation of which reads, “And thus, as in the past, is now too and will be ever more, that towards which (philosophy) is moving and to which it again and again does not find access, is (the question raised) – what is being? (*ti to on*).”

⁴⁰⁷Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. II, 187. // *Nietzsche*, erster Band, 405. “Das Wesen einer metaphysischen Grundstellung.”

⁴⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 189/407. “Solches Wissen von den φυσικά ist nicht nur post physicam, sondern trans physicam.”

⁴⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 189, my addition / 407-408. “μετα τα φυσικά ist das Wissen und Fragen, welches das Seiende als φύσις ansetzt, so zwar, daß es im Ansatz und durch den Ansatz über das Seiende hinaus fragt, indem es nach dem Seienden als Seiendem fragt. Das Fragen nach der αρχή, das Fragen der Frage: τί το ον, ist Metaphysik.”

⁴¹⁰*Ibid.*, 187/405.

⁴¹¹Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, 57/56. “»die ersten Gründe und Ursachen« – nämlich des Seienden.”

beyond and therefore explanatory of entities. This inevitably leads metaphysics to the positing of a first principle or cause, which is not subject to the same conditions as all other entities and is therefore metaphysically ultimate. Thus, according to Heidegger, metaphysics incorporates a God (*theos*), the metaphysically ultimate idea, as a necessary aspect of its explanation. Although God is introduced as a result of the ontological aspect of metaphysics, it is “rash to assert that metaphysics is theology because it is ontology,” because metaphysics does not merely derive *theos* from *onta*; it also makes a statement about God. The search for the “beginning rule” leads to the formulation of it (the rule) and this is precisely where metaphysics is also theology. “The Being of beings is represented fundamentally, in the sense of ground, only as *causa sui*. This is the metaphysical concept of God.”⁴¹² That is, philosophy makes a statement about God prior to the consideration of any religious tradition. Thus, Heidegger is able to characterize metaphysics as onto-theological in its origin for these reasons: (1) the questioning of entity itself, and, (2) the theological assertion it makes in answering the question. It is with the onto-theological structure of metaphysics before us that we can now consider the consequences of this particular formulation.

Although Aristotle is responsible for the definitive structure of Western metaphysics, his thought merely represents the culmination of previous Greek philosophy. According to Heidegger, Greek philosophy first employed the term “*physis*” when “questioning about beings (entities) as such and as a whole.”⁴¹³ That is, *physis* is “Being itself, by virtue of which beings first become and then remain observable.”⁴¹⁴ This means that the ontological difference between Being and entities, noted by Heidegger, is present when the earliest philosophical thoughts are expressed. It also shows that these earlier formulations were concerned with how entities present themselves, or, are present. In fact, “for the Greeks, ‘Being’ fundamentally means presence.”⁴¹⁵

The ontological difference does not necessarily entail a disassociation of Being and entities. It is only with determination that the two can be separated and, finally, one ignored. Although the presencing of entities, expressed as Being (*Sein*), has a double meaning for the Greeks [(i) those entities which are present,

⁴¹²Heidegger, “The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics,” 60/127. “Das Sein des Seienden wird im Sinne des Grundens gründlich nur als *causa sui* vorgestellt. Damit ist der metaphysische Begriff von Gott genannt.”

⁴¹³Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 14. // *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 40 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 15. “... durch die das Fragen nach dem Seienden als solchem im Ganzen seinen wahrhaften Anfang nahm, nannte man das Seiende φύσις.”

⁴¹⁴*Ibid.*, 15/17. “Die φύσις ist das Sein selbst, kraft dessen das Seiende erst beobachtbar wird und bleibt.”

⁴¹⁵*Ibid.*, 64/65. “»Sein« besagt im Grunde für die Griechen Anwesenheit.” Recall Heidegger’s analysis on page 150, which identifies two types of presence experienced by the early Greeks: emerging (*physis*), and unconcealment (*aletheia*).

and (ii) that by which entities are able to be present],⁴¹⁶ it is the second meaning that was emphasized as the more fundamental aspect of presence. This is mainly due to Plato, who with the introduction of Forms (or Ideas), transformed the original meaning of presencing or appearing (i.e., *physis*) as “the emerging sway” into “the surfacing of its likeness.”⁴¹⁷ Where the earlier Greeks understood presence as both emerging (*physis*) and unconcealment (*aletheia*), Plato, with his focus on that which allows for entities to appear, relegates the appearance of entities (*physis*) to that of merely appearing and transforms *aletheia*, the truth of *physis*,⁴¹⁸ into *ousia*, the “beingness of being.”⁴¹⁹ In other words, Plato’s search for “that which allows for entities to be present” led him to his Forms or Ideas. With the positing of these Ideas as that which allows for entities to appear, entities became representations of the Ideas, the accuracy of which remain to be judged against the Ideas. Here is the original division of reality into “Thatness” (existing entities) and “Whatness” (essential possibility).⁴²⁰ Thus, by the time Aristotle formulates his definitive question, What is an entity? (*ti to on?*, which Heidegger translates as, *Was ist das Seiende?*), he has inherited Plato’s reinterpretation of the original Greek philosophical understanding.

Although Aristotle does not accept Plato’s analysis, which results in *ousia* understood as *idea* and *physis* as the appearance of the *idea*, Aristotle was “able to think *ousia* as *energeia* only in opposition to *ousia* as *idea*.”⁴²¹ This is the classic distinction between Plato and Aristotle’s respective answers to the form-substance issue. Generally, it is thought that Plato placed form over substance as the ontologically prior and primary aspect of existence, whereas, Aristotle gave substance ontological priority and relegated form to a secondary function. In agreement with this conventional interpretation, Heidegger writes,

⁴¹⁶*Ibid.*, 67/68. Heidegger writes, “For the Greeks ‘Being’ says *constancy* in a twofold sense: 1. Standing-in-itself as arising and standing forth (*physis*), 2. But, as such, ‘constantly,’ that is, enduringly, abiding (*ousia*).” / “»Sein« sagt für die Griechen: die *Ständigkeit* in dem Doppelsinne: 1. Das In-sich-stehen als Ent-stehendes (φύσις), 2. Als solches aber »ständig«, d.h. bleibend, Verweilen (ούσία).”

⁴¹⁷*Ibid.*, 197/193. “Das Erscheinende, Erscheinung, ist nicht mehr die φύσις, das aufgehende Walten, ..., sondern Erscheinung ist das Auftauchen des Abbildes.”

⁴¹⁸*Ibid.* “Die Wahrheit der φύσις.”

⁴¹⁹Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” 8. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 371. “What Plato thought as the true, and for him sole, beingness (*ousia*) of beings...” // “Was Platon als die eigentliche und für ihn einzige Seiendheit (ούσία) des Seienden dachte...”

⁴²⁰*Ibid.*, 1/363. “Whatness and Thatness in the Essential Beginning of Metaphysics: *idea* and *energeia*” // “Was-sein und Daß-sein im Wesensbeginn der Metaphysik: ιδέα und ενέργεια.”

⁴²¹*Ibid.*, 10/373. “Gleichwohl hat Aristoteles wiederum nur im Gegenzug zur ούσία als ιδέα die ούσία als ενέργεια denken können.” Although Heidegger uses the term “*energeia*” throughout this section of *Nietzsche*, early on he says, page 6/368, “Instead of *energeia*, Aristotle also uses the word “*entelecheia*” which he himself coined.” // “Statt ενέργεια gebraucht Aristoteles auch das vom ihm selbst geprägte Wort εντελέχεια.” Thus entelechy should be read when *energeia* is used in order to avoid confusing *energeia* with the meaning of the English word “energy.”

Since Aristotle thinks *ousia* (presence) in the primary sense of *energeia* and since this presence means nothing other than what in a changed interpretation is later called *actualitas*, ‘actuality,’ ‘existence,’ and ‘reality,’ the Aristotelian treatment of the distinction reveals a priority of the later so-called *existentia* over the *essentia*.⁴²²

Aristotle’s emphasis on entities themselves (*existentia*) as they are present, in reaction to Plato’s interpretation, is, according to Heidegger, what plots metaphysics’ course henceforth, to its end, with Friedrich Nietzsche.

The change from the pre-Socratic understanding of Being (*Sein*) as *physis* (emerging) to the Aristotelian understanding of Being (*Sein*) as *ousia* (“what presences of itself”)⁴²³ also entails a change in the understanding of truth (*aletheia*) from “the unconcealment of beings” to “the correctness of the reasoned proposition.”⁴²⁴ Where the unconcealment of beings themselves was the original Greek understanding of truth, according to Heidegger, the Platonic division of Form from substance and the subsequent Aristotelian inversion, meant a continued emphasis upon entities, not as they emerge, but how they appear or are presented. The concern then shifts, with Aristotle, to the adequacy of the entity present for the purpose of accurate judgement.

Although the subject-object dichotomy is not explicitly formulated until Descartes, the Aristotelian concern with the ability to judge the truth or falsity of that which is present, i.e., entities, makes the role of the human intellect more central than ever. It is important to note, as Heidegger does, that the Greeks, not having made the subjectivist turn, did not conceive of their experiences in terms of subjects and objects, but this does not mean that they did not experience things “as having the character of an over-against.”⁴²⁵ Nonetheless, the over-against character of entities certainly begins the emphasis on what would now be called the objective aspect of reality and, by contrast, introduces what would now be called the subjective.

Since Aristotle’s interest is in the accuracy of judging entities as they appear, his treatment of Being (*Sein*) becomes an investigation of “the categories and their order.”⁴²⁶ That is, that which makes the presence of entities possible,

⁴²²*Ibid.*, 8/371. “Insofern jedoch Aristoteles die ουσία (Anwesenheit) im erstrangigen Sinne als ἐνέργεια denkt, diese Anwesenheit aber nichts anderes meint als das, was in gewandelter Auslegung später *actualitas*, »Wirklichkeit« und »Existenz« und »Dasein« genannt wird, enthüllt die Aristotelische Darlegung der Unterscheidung einen Vorrang der später sogenannten *existentia* vor der *essentia*.”

⁴²³*Ibid.*, 16/380. “... daß die Kennzeichnung des von sich her Anwesenden (ουσία) hier bereits auf ein gewandeltes Wesen der Wahrheit gestützt wird.”

⁴²⁴*Ibid.*, 17/380. “...Wandel des Wesens der Wahrheit von der Inverborgenheit des Seienden zur Richtige des durchnehmenden Ausagens.”

⁴²⁵Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 82. // *Der Satz vom Grund*, 121. “Für die Griechen entbirgt sich das Anwesende zwar im Charakter des Gegenüber.”

⁴²⁶Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 200. // *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 195. “... den Kategorien und ihrer Ordnung.”

what Heidegger says was the original Greek understanding of Being (*Sein*), is now formulated as explanatory categories into which the various types of entities can be placed. This is why Heidegger writes, “The goal of all ontology is the theory of categories.”⁴²⁷ Thus, Aristotle provides the general framework within which Western metaphysics proceeds. The ontological difference between entities (*Seienden*) and Being (*Sein*) is, from Aristotle onward, the difference between the accurate judgement of the present entities as they pertain to the various explanatory categories.

It seems that Heidegger has offered a rather traditional historical account of the development of Greek philosophy from its nebulous, perhaps even esoteric, beginning through Plato’s and Aristotle’s respective formulations and refinements. The purpose of his account, however, is to demonstrate how Being (*Sein*) was originally understood and expressed and how this understanding and expression changed to an emphasis on entities (*Seienden*) and began to neglect Being (*Sein*). This is why Heidegger asserts that “the history of Being begins, and indeed necessarily, *with the forgetting of Being*.”⁴²⁸ Rather than investigating Being (*Sein*) itself, metaphysics becomes preoccupied with entities and as such, when considering Being (*Sein*), metaphysics only treats Being (*Sein*) as an entity, often as the highest or greatest entity. This further demonstrates why and how metaphysics is onto-theology. In its search for the *archē*, metaphysics conceptualizes Being (*Sein*) in two related ways: “The unifying One in the sense of what is everywhere primal and thus most universal; and at the same time it is the unifying One in the sense of the All-Highest (Zeus).”⁴²⁹ The search for that which makes the presencing of entities possible, which is also responsible for how they are present, becomes the search for a single entity that is explanatory of all other entities. It is precisely in this search for the single explanatory entity that, according to Heidegger, Being (*Sein*) is forgotten.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷*Ibid.* “Das Ziel aller Ontologie ist die Kategorienlehre.”

⁴²⁸Martin Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead,’” in *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 109. // “Nietzsches Wort »Gott ist tot«,” in *Holzwege*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 5 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 263. “Die Geschichte des Seins beginnt und zwar notwendig *mit der Vergessenheit des Seins*.”

⁴²⁹Heidegger, “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” 69/137. “Einmal das Eine Einende im Sinne des überall Ersten und so Allgemeinen und zugleich das Eine Einende im Sinne des Höchsten (Zeus).”

⁴³⁰Martin Heidegger, “Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics,’” in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 280. // “Einleitung zu: »Was ist Metaphysik«,” in *Wegmarken*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 9 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 369. Heidegger writes, “Meanwhile the truth of Being has remained concealed from metaphysics during its long history from Anaximander to Nietzsche.” Later in this essay, p. 290, Heidegger rhetorically asks, “How does it come about that beings take precedence everywhere and lay claim to every ‘is,’ while that which is not a being – namely, the Nothing thus understood as Being itself – remains forgotten? How does it come about that with Being It is really nothing and that the Nothing does not properly prevail?” // “Inzwischen bleibt der Metaphysik während ihre Geschichte von Anaximander bis zu Nietzsche die Wahrheit des Seins verborgen.” Later in this

Section III: The Romans and Christians

After Aristotle configures metaphysics as onto-theology, two other factors help to determine the future of Western metaphysics. The first is the translation of the Greek philosophical language into Latin. The second is the influence of the newly emerging Christian religion.

Language, especially its structure, is repeatedly identified as a problem by Heidegger. The issue, for him, is to what extent, if any, are we able to free ourselves from the metaphysical assumptions of our Western languages in order to overcome metaphysics and commence thinking.⁴³¹ This issue seems to intensify in languages that rely heavily upon a subject-predicate structure, such as Latin, the Romance Languages, and English.⁴³² In Heidegger's treatment of the development of metaphysics the first stage after the Greeks is the translation of their philosophical terms into Latin. Heidegger uses the translation of the Greek "*physis*" into Latin as "*natura*" (to be born) as an example of how the original content of the term can be lost.⁴³³ Further, he says, "This is true not only of the Latin translation of *this* word but of all other translations of Greek philosophical language into Roman."⁴³⁴ The issue of translation may seem, at first, a linguistic or semantic issue, and it is, but it is also indicative of the conceptual consequences language has for metaphysics. "The change of metaphysics at its beginning releases *energeia* into *actualitas*, *ousia* into the *substantia*, *aletheia* into the *adaequatio*."⁴³⁵ This translation into Latin further entrenches metaphysics in its

essay, p. 382, Heidegger rhetorically asks, "Woher kommt es, daß überall Seiendes den Vorrang hat und jegliches »ist« für sich beansprucht, während das, was nicht ein Seiendes ist, das so verstandene Nichts als das Sein selbst, vergessen bleibt? Woher kommt es, daß Es mit dem Sein eigentlich nichts ist und das Nichts eigentlich nicht west?"

⁴³¹Heidegger, "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics," 73/142. He writes, "Our Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking, each in its own way. It must remain an open question whether the nature of Western languages is in itself marked with the exclusive brand of metaphysics, and thus marked permanently by onto-theo-logic, or whether these languages offer other possibilities of utterance – and that means at the same time of a telling silence." // "Unsere abendländischen Sprachen sind in je verschiedener Weise Sprachen des metaphysischen Denkens. Ob das Wesen der abendländischen Sprachen in sich nur metaphysische und darum endgültig durch die Onto-Theo-Logik geprägt ist, oder ob diese Sprachen andere Möglichkeiten des Sagens und d. h. zugleich des sagenden Nichtsagens gewähren, muß offen bleiben."

⁴³²According to Heidegger, German was closer to Greek than these other languages, especially older German uninfluenced by the importation of transliterated Latin philosophical language.

⁴³³Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 14. // *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 15. "Man gebraucht die lateinische Übersetzung *natura*, was eigentlich »geboren werden«, »Geburt« bedeutet."

⁴³⁴*Ibid.*, 14/15-16. "Das gilt nicht nur von lateinischen Übersetzung *diese* Wortes, sondern von allen anderen Übersetzungen der griechischen Philosophensprache ins Römische."

⁴³⁵Heidegger, "Metaphysics as History of Being," 28. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 393. "Der Wandel der beginnenden Metaphysik entläßt die *ενέργεια* die *actualitas*, die *ουσία* in die

exclusive concern for entities and its search for a principle explanatory of these entities. Being (*Sein*) is understood exclusively as *actualitas* (reality) in this new formulation, which also further changes the “interpretation of the *truth* of being.”⁴³⁶ The truth of being was “what lies beneath” (*hypokeimenon*),⁴³⁷ but this becomes substance (*substantia*) and finally, according to Heidegger, substance becomes subject, such that “on the basis of the *cogito sum* man becomes what is properly foundational, becomes *quod substat*, substance.”⁴³⁸ Although the Greeks and early Latin thinkers had not yet made the subjectivist turn, this translation provided the conceptual basis for the turn. As the search for the explanatory principle, the *reason* for entities, becomes conflated with human reason, the *subiectum* (also known as the *ratio*, “for what underlies”⁴³⁹) “becomes the name which names the subject in the subject-object relationship, and also the subject in the subject-predicate relationship.”⁴⁴⁰ The investigation of that which is present (“the real is truly what is in being and thus decisive for everything possible and necessary”⁴⁴¹) begins the division between those that are perceived and those who perceive. The conflation of human reason with *reason* originates with the emergence of Christianity.

The introduction of Christian considerations into Western metaphysics, according to Heidegger, reorients its thinking. Before the translation of Greek into Latin, early Christian thinkers had already identified Heraclitus’ *Logos* with St. John’s. This is merely another way in which the original Greek understanding of Being (*Sein*) is lost to the rest of Western metaphysics. “But in principle we can say: in the New Testament, from the start, *logos* does not mean, as in Heraclitus, the Being of beings, the gatheredness of that which contends, but *logos* means *one* particular being, namely, the Son of God.”⁴⁴² Although Christian revelation originates independently of Greek thought, Christianity, because of its concern with God’s creation, generally, and creatures (especially humanity), in particular, already finds within Greek philosophy, as revised by Aristotle, fertile material with which to begin a more systematic expression of its

substantia, die ἀλήθεια in die adaequatio.”

⁴³⁶Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 130. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 162. “Auslegung der Wahrheit des Seienden.”

⁴³⁷Aristotle used the term “*ousia*.”

⁴³⁸Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 130. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 162. “... daß auf dem grunde des cogito sum der Mensch zum eigentlich Zugrundeliegenden wird, zu dem, quod substat, zur Substanz.”

⁴³⁹Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” 28. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 393. “Ratio ist demgemäß der andere Name für *subiectum*, das Unterliegende.”

⁴⁴⁰*Ibid.* “Das »*subiectum*« wird fortan zum Namen, der sowohl das Subjekt in der Subjekt – Objekt – Beziehung als auch das Subjekt in der Subjekt – Prädikat – Beziehung nennt.”

⁴⁴¹*Ibid.*, 13/376. “...ist das Wirkliche das eigentliche und deshalb auch für alles Mögliche und Notwendig das maßgebende Seiende.”

⁴⁴²Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 143. // *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 143. “Grundsätzlich aber ist zu sagen: *Logos* meint im Neuen Testament von vornherein nicht wie bei *Heraklit* das Sein des Seienden, die Gesammeltheit des Gegenstrebigen, sondern *Logos* meint *ein* besonderes Seiendes, nämlich den Sohn Gottes.”

revelation. This version of history is so widely accepted that Heidegger simply echoes a common, if not explicitly expressed, sentiment: “The Greeks are the classics of philosophy because they were not yet full-fledged Christian theologians.”⁴⁴³ It is because the Greeks had already begun their search for *the* explanatory principle of all entities that the Christian theologians, having the revealed answer, found Greek philosophy amenable. “When Being is changed to *actualitas* (reality), beings are what is real.”⁴⁴⁴ This change means that entities are understood as “working, in the sense of causal making,” which is compatible with the “representational thinking of the biblical-Christian faith.”⁴⁴⁵

When, “Christianity reinterprets the Being of beings as Being-created”⁴⁴⁶ it engages in representational thinking about entities. The Aristotelian desire to discover the explanatory principle of all entities is adopted by Christian theologians and supported by the religious belief that “beings have been created by God – that is, have been thought out rationally in advance.”⁴⁴⁷ Thus, the search for *a* reason is bolstered when revelation confirms philosophy’s pursuit. What may have once been a vaguely formed idea, with only circumstantial evidence, is now clarified to the point where existence itself, not just any given entity, has *a* reason, namely, the divine *fiat*.

The other element of Greek thought with which Christian revelation found itself compatible was Plato’s division of reality. The *Idea*, or truth, was removed from the sensible world and placed in the non-sensible one. According to Heidegger, this resulted in a “chasm” between the “the real Being somewhere up there” and the “merely apparent beings here below.”⁴⁴⁸ Of course, Aristotle did his best to remedy this situation by giving ontological priority to substance over Form, but, recalling Heidegger’s comment that Aristotle could only do this in opposition to Plato, the division between entities (*existentia*) and their reality (*essentia*) nonetheless remained. “Christian doctrine then established itself in this chasm, while at the same time reinterpreting the Below as the created and the Above as the Creator.”⁴⁴⁹ This reinterpretation is, according to Heidegger, a

⁴⁴³*Ibid.*, 134/135. “Die Griechen sind nach dieser vielfach landestüblichen Geschichtsauffassung die Klassiker der Philosophie, weil sie noch nicht voll ausgewachsene christliche Theologen waren.”

⁴⁴⁴Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” 14. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 377. “Wenn das Sein sich zur *actualitas* (Wirklichkeit) gewandelt hat, ist das Seiende Wirklich.”

⁴⁴⁵*Ibid.* “... das Wirken im Sinne des verursachenden Machen.” “... , dessen sich das Vorstellen des biblisch-christlichen Schöpfungsglaubens bemächtigen kann, ...”

⁴⁴⁶Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 207. // *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 202. “Das Christentum deutet das Sein des Seiende zum Geschaffensein um.”

⁴⁴⁷*Ibid.* “Weil das Seiende ein von Gott Geschaffenes, d. h. rational Vorgeordnetes ist.” The consequence of which is, once God is removed from the equation in Modernity, the demand for human reason to completely calculate Being (*Sein*) and thereby completely dominate entities with “mathematically structured technology (mathematisch gefügten Technik).”

⁴⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 111/113. “... dem wirklichen Sein irgendwo” and “... dem nur scheinbaren Seienden hier unter.”

⁴⁴⁹*Ibid.* “... jene Kluft, in der dann die Lehre des Christentums unter gleichzeitiger Umdeutung des Unteren zum Geschaffenen und des Oberen zum Schöpfer sich ansiedelt.”

distortion, which leads him to agree with Nietzsche that “Christianity is Platonism for the people.”⁴⁵⁰ For Heidegger, the distortion is the further loss of the original Greek insights as filtered through Plato and Aristotle, Christianity, and finally Latin Christianity, the defining form of Christianity for subsequent European philosophy.

Section IV: The Scholastics

Medieval Christianity set the philosophical terms and conceptual framework eventually adopted and adapted by Modern Enlightenment philosophy.⁴⁵¹ This is evidenced where “*Idea* becomes *idea*, and this becomes representational thought. *Energeia* becomes *actualitas*, and this becomes actuality.”⁴⁵² Further, the distinction between “*what* beings are and *that* beings are” is captured succinctly in “the scholastic language of metaphysics” that uses “essence” to denote the *what* of entities and “existence” for the *that* of entities.⁴⁵³ The translation of *energeia* into *actualitas* (reality) entails that “the real is truly what is in being and thus decisive for everything possible and necessary.”⁴⁵⁴ As this translation is combined with Christian theology, what is “in being” comes to be understood as creatures and *the* Creator, who, of all entities “in being,” is superlatively, i.e., the greatest being. These Latin translations and theological combinations are the variations that continue metaphysics down its self-induced path to its final formulation.

When Christianity fills the Platonic chasm between the real and the apparent with the terms “creator” and “created,” the creator finds a home in

⁴⁵⁰*Ibid.* “... und sie verstellt.” Here Heidegger is expressing agreement with Nietzsche’s comment in the preface of his *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (London: The Penguin Group, 1973), 14, “But the struggle against Plato, or, to express it more plainly and for ‘the people’, the struggle against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia – for Christianity is Platonism for ‘the people’...” // *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (München: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1968), 6, “Aber der Kampf gegen Plato, oder um es verständlicher und fürs »Volks« – zu sagen, der Kampf gegen den christlich-kirchlichen Druck von Jahrtausend – denn Christentum ist Platonismus fürs »Volks«...”

⁴⁵¹Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, 31/30. Heidegger writes, “However, the originally Greek nature of philosophy, in the era of its modern-European sway, has been guided and ruled by Christian conceptions. The dominance of these conceptions was mediated by the Middle Ages.” // “Allein – das ursprünglich griechische Wesen der Philosophie wird in der Epoche seines neuzeitlich-europäischen Waltens von Vorstellungen des Christentums geleitet und beherrscht. Die Herrschaft dieser Vorstellungen ist durch das Mittelalter vermittelt.”

⁴⁵²Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” 11. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 374. “Die *ἰδέα* wird zur *idea* und diese zur Vorstellung. Die *ἐνέργεια* wird zur *actualitas* und diese zur Wirklichkeit.”

⁴⁵³*Ibid.*, 2/364. “... was ein Seiendes ist, und dem, daß dieses Seiende ist;” “Die Schulsprache der Metaphysik kennt diese Unterscheidung als diejenige zwischen *essentia* und *existentia*.”

⁴⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 13/376. “Seit dem Wandel der *ἐνέργεια* zur *actualitas* (Wirklichkeit) ist das Wirkliche das eigentliche und deshalb auch für alles Mögliche und Notwendige das Maßgebende Seiende.”

metaphysics as the *causa sui* and, therefore, *causa prima*. It is here that the conflation of *causa* and *actus* occurs. The translation of *energeia* into *actualitas* retains a residual of the original meaning which involved the idea of *energeia* as “workness (*Werkheit*),” in the sense of “the presencing, standing there in unconcealment, of what is set up,”⁴⁵⁵ but is confused when the concept *actualitas* (reality) is employed as it comes to mean “working, in the sense of causal making.”⁴⁵⁶ The result is “the reality of human action and divine creation can be explained in terms of this.”⁴⁵⁷ The conceptual expression of reality as “that which is actual” is also understood as having causal efficacy. Theologically, that which is the greatest reality, God as *actus purus* (pure actuality), is causally actual in two ways: as *the* cause of it all (*causa prima*), and, as self-causing (*causa sui*). God is self-causing, because, logically, *the* cause of reality cannot itself be caused by another cause.

Although arrived at logically, this argument originates from a confessional rather than philosophically justifiable premise. The God of philosophy is reasoned out in detail, but this reasoning only occurs within the faith of the philosophers. It is “through faith that man is certain of the reality of the highest real being, and thus at the same time also of his own real continuance in eternal bliss.”⁴⁵⁸ The merging of Christian faith with Greek reason allows metaphysics a more secure standpoint (secured by faith) from which to pursue its investigation of entities and the reason or principle that stands behind or above those entities.

One problem with this merger is that reason forgets its grounding in faith and begins to make pronouncements about God based upon reason rather than faith. Particularly, as Whitehead noted, the assertion of a self-caused, purely actual deity leads to the idea of a God not available for religious purposes or, as Heidegger says, “Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this god. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance

⁴⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 5/368. “... das in der Unverborgenheit da-stehende Anwesen des Her- und Hin- und Aufgestellten.”

⁴⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 14/377. “... das Wirken im Sinne des verursachenden Machens.”

⁴⁵⁷*Ibid.* “... von hier aus läßt sich die Wirklichkeit des menschlichen Tuns und göttlichen Schaffens erklären.”

⁴⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 23/388. “Durch den Glauben ist der Mensch der Wirklichkeit des höchsten Wirklichen und damit zugleich auch der wirklichen Beständigkeit seiner selbst in der ewigen Seligkeit gewiß.” Elsewhere, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead,’” *The Question Concerning Technology*, 90. // *Holzwege, Gesamtausgabe*, Band 5, “Nietzsches Wort »Gott ist tot«,“ (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 244-5. Heidegger writes, “At the beginning of the modern age the question was freshly raised as to how man, within the totality of what is, i.e., before that ground of everything in being which is itself most in being (God), can become certain and remain certain of his own sure continuance, i.e., his salvation. This question of the certainty of salvation is the question of justification, i.e., of justice (*iustitia*).” // “Im Beginn der Neuzeit ist die Frage neu erwacht, wie der Mensch im Ganzen des Seienden und d. h. vor dem seiendsten Grund alles Seienden (Gott) der Beständigkeit seiner selbst, d. h. seines Heils gewiß werden und sein kann. Deises Frage der Heilsgewißheit ist die Frage der Rechtfertigung, d. h. der Gerechtigkeit (*iustitia*),” which further demonstrates how Heidegger thinks the metaphysical project is underpinned and motivated by faith.

before this god.”⁴⁵⁹ On the other hand, God as *causa prima* and *causa sui* is completely available for philosophical purposes. This God allows philosophy to follow “the reason giving path back to the *ultima ratio*, the final accounting.”⁴⁶⁰ Here metaphysics realizes its goal of finding the ultimate reason, also achieving its highest expression, in rational medieval natural theology. Hence Heidegger is able to write:

But because the whole of beings is the effected and effecting product of a first producer, an appropriate structure enters the whole of beings which determines itself as the co-responding of the actual produced being to the producer as the highest being. The reality of the grain of sand, of plants, animals, men, numbers, co-responds to the making of the first maker. It is at the same time like and unlike his reality.⁴⁶¹

Existence is at the same time like God’s reality, because, as the effect, it reflects the divine cause (according to philosophy); whereas, existence is unlike the divine reality, because the world is corrupt (according to religion). This emphasis on reality as *actualitas*, according to Heidegger, “Determines the progression of the history of Being, throughout which the essential determination once begun is carried out in its prefigured completion.”⁴⁶² Whether the inclusion of Christianity is historically necessary or merely accidental is not the issue, because the aspects of Greek philosophy utilized by Christian theologians were set upon their trajectories prior to any merger. What Christian theology accomplishes, with its attempt to express rationally the revealed divine nature and its relationship to the world, is the further specification of these trajectories in accordance with their original formulation. Being (*Sein*) continues to be conceived exclusively in terms of present actuality, to which Christianity adds a revelation-based justification, further strengthening this mode of Western thought.

The final contribution to be considered is Medieval theology’s assertion that God as the *summum ens* is the *summum bonum*. God as the *summum ens* can be discovered logically with the application of reason, whereas the introduction of the *summum bonum* comes from faith. Philosophers and theologians have

⁴⁵⁹Heidegger, “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics,” 72/140. “Zu diesem Gott kann der Mensch weder beten, noch kann er ihm opfern. Vor der Causa sui kann der Mensch weder aus Scheu ins Knie fallen, noch kann er vor diesem Gott muzizieren und tanzen.”

⁴⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 60/127. “... die dem begründenden Rückgang auf die *ultima ratio*, die letzte Rechenschaft.”

⁴⁶¹Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” 18. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 382. “Weil aber das Ganze des Seienden das Gewirkte-Wirkende eines ersten Wirkers ist, kommt in das Ganze des Seienden ein eigenes Gefüge, das sich als Entsprechung des jeweilig Gewirkten zum Wiker als dem höchsten Seienden bestimmt. Die Wirklichkeit des Staubkorns, der Gewäse, der Tiere, der Menschen, der Zahlen entspricht dem Wirken des ersten Wirkers; sie ist mit seiner Wirklichkeit gleich und ungleich zumal.”

⁴⁶²*Ibid.* “... bestimmt den Fortgang der Geschichte des Sein, durch den die begonnene Wesenbestimmung bis in ihre vorgespägte Vollendung ausgetragen wird.”

attempted to justify this faith with rational argumentation usually asserting that perfection (understood as the highest good), by definition, requires existence. Whether or not existence is predicable of God is not Heidegger's concern. The definition of God as *summum ens* and *summum bonum* reinforces metaphysics' investigation of entities, including the greatest of all entities, because it provides certainty to the project. Although the human condition may be flawed and limited when compared to the perfection of God, it is precisely this perfection, expressed as *summum bonum*, that secures our knowledge. At the root of it all there is an ultimate goodness that ensures that finally we will not be deceived or prevented from understanding everything.⁴⁶³ It is from this point that metaphysics continues its development, as Heidegger writes, "The originally Greek nature of philosophy, in the era of its modern-European sway, has been guided and ruled by Christian concepts. The dominance of these conceptions was mediated by the Middle ages."⁴⁶⁴

Section V: The Enlightenment

It is certainly the case that the Enlightenment has been identified as *the* culprit responsible for so much misdirected philosophizing and that Martin Heidegger's name appears frequently as one of the seminal critics of Modernity and its metaphysics. As demonstrated in the preceding material, Heidegger's criticism of metaphysics does not begin with the Enlightenment; however, he does find in the Enlightenment, especially in Leibniz, the "fundamental question of metaphysics" (*die Grundfrage der Metaphysik*).⁴⁶⁵ Leibniz is identified as

⁴⁶³Of course the Protestant Reformers strongly disagreed with this point, but, as the final sentence of the paragraph indicates, Heidegger thinks that it was the medieval scholastic tradition that was definitive for later metaphysics.

⁴⁶⁴Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, 31/30. "... das ursprünglich griechische Wesen der Philosophie wird in der Epoche seines neuzeitlich-europäischen Waltens von Vorstellungen des Christentums geleitet und beherrscht. Die Herrschaft dieser Vorstellungen ist durch das Mittelalter vermittelt."

⁴⁶⁵Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 96. // "Was ist Metaphysik?," in *Wegmarken*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 9, (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 122. Heidegger writes, "So that it swings back to the fundamental question of metaphysics that the nothing itself compels: Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather Nothing?" // "... auf daß es ständig zurückschwinge in die Grundfrage der Metaphysik, die das Nichts selbst erzwingt: Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?" Of course, this is Heidegger's 1929 formulation of Leibniz's question, which Heidegger quotes directly twenty years later in "Introduction to *What is Metaphysics*" in *Pathmarks*, 289, "Pourquoi il y a plutôt quelque chose que rien?"/ "Einleitung zu: »Was ist Metaphysik?«," *Wegmarken*, 381. It should also be noted that Heidegger also identified Leibniz's question "as first in rank – 'Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?' - is thus the fundamental question of metaphysics. Metaphysics stands as the name for the center and core that determines all philosophy," in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 19 // *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 19-20, "Die

having stated the fundamental question of metaphysics not only because his formulation becomes definitive for subsequent metaphysics, but also because his formulation is the crystallized expression of all previous metaphysics, as begun by Aristotle. Heidegger thinks that Leibniz epitomizes Western metaphysics' exclusive concern with entities as entities and the search for the foundational principle (*archē*), which results in the neglect of Being (*Sein*). In order to contextualize properly this interpretation, Heidegger's analysis of Descartes and Leibniz will be considered. This will lead us to the culmination of Enlightenment thought as embodied in Immanuel Kant and to metaphysics' end where it realizes its final prefigured possibility in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Modern metaphysics, as initiated by Descartes, continues within the domain of investigation circumscribed by Aristotle. Although the history of philosophy, as told conventionally, would deny any relationship between Aristotelian thought and the radical Cartesian reorientation, for Heidegger, Modern metaphysics actually further removes itself from the original Greek understanding of Being (*Sein*) and therefore continues the Aristotelian project. The nature of the question does change, slightly, with Descartes; where Aristotle asked "what is an entity?" (*ti to on?* [*Was ist das Seiende?*]), "Descartes asks what that being (*Seiende*) is that is true being (*Seiende*) in the sense of *ens certum*?"⁴⁶⁶ In this respect, Descartes' investigation is narrower in scope than previous metaphysics, as he is concerned primarily with a particular type of entity, namely, the *certain* entity.

The search for the certain entity is a reconfiguration of metaphysics insofar as it combines the two aspects of traditional thought into one. Rather than following the conventional method of investigating entities as entities and then asking for their ultimate cause, Descartes, in his quest for mathematically derived certainty,⁴⁶⁷ conjoins the two traditional concerns when he arrives at the "thinking I" (*ego cogito*) as foundational. The investigation remains within the Aristotelian vein, as it continues to search for that which underlies (*hypokeimenon*),⁴⁶⁸ but

von uns als rangmäßig erste gekennzeichnete Frage: »Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?« ist daher die metaphysische Grundfrage. Metaphysik gilt als der Name für die bestimmende Mitte und den Kern aller Philosophie."

⁴⁶⁶Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?*, 85-87/84-86. "Descartes fragt: welches ist dasjenige Seiende, das im Sinne des *ens certum* das wahrhaft Seiende ist?"

⁴⁶⁷Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, trans. W. B. Barton and Vera Deutsch. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967), 103. // *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 42, (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984), 104. Heidegger writes, "Descartes does not doubt because he is a skeptic; rather, he must become a doubter because he posits the mathematical as the absolute ground and seeks for all knowledge a foundation that will be in accord with it." // "Descartes zweifelt nicht, weil er ein Skeptiker ist, sondern er muß zum Zweifler werden, weil er das Mathematische als absoluten Grund ansetzt und eine ihm entsprechende Unterlage für alles Wissen sucht."

⁴⁶⁸Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead,'" 83. // "Nietzsches Wort »Gott ist tot«,“ 238. Heidegger writes, "Descartes also asks, as does Aristotle, concerning the *hypokeimenon*." / "Auch Descartes fragt wie Aristoteles nach dem *ύποκειμενον*."

Descartes' desire to question all he had learned in his childhood and thereby to land firmly upon the Archimedean point necessarily entails the refocusing of metaphysics' scope. Detailing Modernity's new emphasis, Heidegger writes,

The subject-concept arises from the new interpretation of the *truth* of being, which according to the tradition is thought as *ousia*, *hypokeimenon*, and *subiectum*, in the following way: on the basis of the *cogito sum* man becomes what is properly foundational, becomes *quod substat*, substance. The concept of the subject is nothing other than the restriction of the transformed concept of substance to man as the one who represents, in whose representing both what is represented and the one representing are firmly founded in their cohesion.⁴⁶⁹

That is, by beginning with the *ego*, Descartes locates the aspect of reality which is permanently subsisting throughout time and space, i.e., substance, within humanity. This is how, according to Heidegger, substance becomes subject.

In contrast to Medieval theology, the Enlightenment no longer accepts tradition as its source for truth. Descartes helps to usher in the Enlightenment by providing an independent and universally verifiable source that is neither reliant upon previous pronouncements (e.g. Aristotle, Patristic liturgy), nor upon faith (e.g. The Holy Bible). When tradition is rejected, a new basis, as secure as the previous one, must be sought. When considering this phenomenon Heidegger asks, "In what way does man, on his own terms and for himself, first arrive at a primary, unshakable truth, and what is that truth?"⁴⁷⁰ Of course, this truth is the *ego cogito*, with its transformation of substance into subject, which also redefines truth. Truth must be *certain* truth. What one knows, truthfully, one must also be certain of. In order to guarantee certainty one must have fully disclosed knowledge of that which knows, namely, the *ego*. This is why Heidegger asserts, "In the order of the transcendental genesis of the object, the subject is the first object of ontological representation. *Ego cogito is cogito: me cogitare.*"⁴⁷¹ The subject is the first certain, and therefore true, object of Modern metaphysics.

The consequence of this is the circumscription of the meaning of truth.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 130. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 162. "Der Subjektbegriff entspringt der neuen Auslegung der *Wahrheit* des Seienden, das nach der Überlieferung als οὐσία, ὑποκείμενον, und subiectum gedacht ist, dadurch, daß auf dem Grunde des cogito sum der Mensch zum eigentlich Zugrundeliegenden wird, zu dem quod substat, zur Substanz. Der Subjektbegriff ist nichts anderes als die Einschränkung des gewandelten Substanzbegriffes auf den Menschen als den Vorstellenden, in dessen Vorstellen das Vorgestellte und der Vorstellende in ihrer Zusammengehörigkeit fest-gestellt sind."

⁴⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 89/117. "Auf welchem Wege gelangt der Mensch von sich aus und für sich zu einer ersten unerschütterlichen Wahrheit, und welches ist diese erste Wahrheit?"

⁴⁷¹Heidegger, "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The End of Philosophy*, 87-88. // "Überwindung der Metaphysik," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 7, (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 72. "Das Subjekt ist in der Ordnung der transzendentalen Genesis des Gegenstandes das erste Objekt des ontologischen Vorstellens. *Ego cogito ist cogito: me cogitare.*"

⁴⁷²Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. III, 238. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 286. Heidegger writes,

Since Aristotle, truth has become more narrowly defined from its original understanding by early Greek thinkers through the Medieval scholastics. The Enlightenment, with its investigation of the subject, places the truthful verification of objects in doubt. Things no longer appear or present themselves for examination; instead, the epistemological issue, arising from the ontology, becomes whether or not that which is perceived has “the certainty of guaranteed representation.”⁴⁷³ This guarantee comes, ultimately, from the subject’s consciousness or faculty of reason. Since the “I” (*ego*) is that entity through which certainty is achieved, because it is the constantly present entity, the subject is therefore ultimately explanatory of all other entities insofar as they must be present to the subject in order to even be identified as such, that is, not merely as an entity, but as an objective entity.

The redefinition of substance as subject also entails the redefinition of entities as objects. This is the classic Cartesian division of the world into subjective non-extended entities and objective extended entities. Although Western metaphysics as onto-theology has always been interested in entities as entities, while neglecting Being (*Sein*), Descartes moves metaphysics further down this path. The world is again divided in order to gain more knowledge. The original Platonic division managed to subsist through the Middle Ages, in no small part due to the injection of Christian revelation, but here Descartes divides the world of appearance into the internal and the external in an attempt to wrest reality away from the divine. The result, however, is the replacement of divine reason with human reason. “Until Descartes everything present-at-hand for itself was a ‘subject’; but now the ‘I’ becomes the special subject, that with regard to which all the remaining things first determine themselves as such.”⁴⁷⁴ “The things themselves become ‘objects.’”⁴⁷⁵ The privileging of the conscious subject and the subsequent relegation of all other entities to the realm of “object,” initiated by Descartes, results in the preoccupation, by later philosophers, with reason – its function and its limits.

The exercise of human reason in order to attain knowledge is embodied in Leibniz’s thought, especially when he develops his Principle of Sufficient Reason.

“In the beginning of metaphysics something was decided concerning the essence of truth as *alētheia* (unconcealment and revealing), namely, that the essence of truth would in future times retreat before the determination of truth as approximation (*homoiōsis, adaequatio*), which alone took root in it.” // “Im Beginn der Metaphysik wird über das Wesen der Wahrheit als ἀλήθεια (Unverborgenheit und Entbergung) dahin entschieden, daß diese Wesen vor der in ihm erst gewurzelten Bestimmung der Wahrheit als Angleichung (ὁμοίωσις, adaequatio) künftighin zurücktritt, aber neimais verschwindet.”

⁴⁷³Heidegger, “Overcoming Metaphysics,” 88. // “Überwindung der Metaphysik,” 73, “... ist im Grunde die auf der Wahrheit als der Gewißheit des sichernden Vorstellens.”

⁴⁷⁴Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, 105. // *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, 106. “Bis zu Descartes galt als »Subjekt« jedes für sich vorhandene Ding; jetzt aber wird das »Ich« zum aus gezeichneten Subjekt, zu demjenigen, mit Bezug auf welches die übrigen Dinge erst als solche sich bestimmen.”

⁴⁷⁵*Ibid.* “Die Dinge selbst werden zu »Objekten«.”

One problem with the rationalist turn to human reason is its unjustified overextension to areas where it is not applicable, as Kant demonstrated. Arguably, this is true of Leibniz's philosophy, which shall now be considered, as Heidegger devotes considerable attention to the role of Leibniz in the history of metaphysics.

As mentioned, Heidegger thinks that Leibniz formulates *the* fundamental question of metaphysics as, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" This question asks about the ultimate reason (*archē* or *principium*) for the existence of entities, because it is concerned with their cause. It is also clear from Heidegger's restatement of the question, "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?" (*Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?*), that he understands the question to be about entities as entities rather than the nature of existence itself, because onto-theological metaphysics conceives of existence itself exclusively as the totality of all entities. That is, the question already has defined the terms of its inquiry. There are only entities to investigate, because, by negation, that which is not an entity is "no thing" (nothing) and nothing, by definition, need not be investigated. It is in this sense that Heidegger is able to maintain that Leibniz epitomizes metaphysics as onto-theology.

As a Modern rationalist, Leibniz focuses upon the exercise of human reason (*ratio*) as the method through which all entities can come to be known. More than this, however, Leibniz extends Reason to all entities, because, as creatures, they exhibit the divine causation within their very nature. The Reason of the world is best demonstrated by the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which states, "*Nihil est sine ratione*. One translates it: nothing is without a reason."⁴⁷⁶ This principle asserts the rationality of entities in their entirety based upon the certain representation of these entities to cognition.

Heidegger finds that the Principle of Reason is slightly more complex than its original formulation, as a later version defines it as "*principium reddendae rationis*" or the principle of rendering reasons.⁴⁷⁷ The rendering of reasons, for all Modern thinkers, including Leibniz, is a rendering to the conscious subject.

According to the *principium reddendae rationis*, cognition must render to cognition the reason for what is encountered - and that means give it back (*reddere*) to cognition - if it is to be a discerning cognition. In a discerning cognition a reason is rendered to the discerning I.⁴⁷⁸

Expressed here is the Modern bias for the accurate representation of entities to the

⁴⁷⁶Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 3. // *Der Satz vom Grund*, 3. "Der Satz vom Grund lautet: *Nihil est sine ratione*. Man übersetzt: Nichts ist ohne Grund."

⁴⁷⁷*Ibid.* 22/34.

⁴⁷⁸*Ibid.* "Gemäß dem *principium reddendae rationis* muß das Vorstellen, wenn es ein erkennendes sein soll, den Grund des Begegnenden auf das Vorstellen zu und d. h. ihm zurückgeben (*reddere*). Im erkennenden Vorstellen wird dem erkennenden Ich der Grund zugestellt."

subject, which, according to Heidegger, determines objects as objects because of its original definition of the conscious subject as *the* source of certainty. It is with the conscious subject as foundational that metaphysics continues to limit the scope of its investigation, on the one hand, and enlarge it, on the other. The limitation comes from its exclusive concern with entities as entities, whereas, the enlargement comes within this newly delineated realm, as metaphysics convinces itself that it can have complete knowledge of reality by simply cataloguing all entities, including the greatest one.

It is important to remember that this project is driven from within the conscious subject and not by, what would normally be referred to as, objective reality.⁴⁷⁹ That is, the Principle of Reason is not valid because Leibniz has succeeded in identifying the ultimate objective explanation of entities; instead, the Principle of Reason is valid because it predetermines everything that could even be an entity, i.e., experienced as an “is.” Heidegger writes, “Something ‘is,’ which means, can be identified as being a being, only if it is stated in a sentence that satisfies the fundamental principle of reason as the fundamental principle of founding.”⁴⁸⁰ It is through the Principle of Reason, therefore, that Leibniz is able to secure the certain representation of entities to the subject. Unlike Descartes, whose non-extended conscious subject’s connection to extensive objects remained questionable, Leibniz is able to provide the rational (subjective) foundation for all (objective) knowledge.

This secured knowledge is not merely the certainty of representations. It is a knowledge that encompasses all entities, represented or not. The rendering of reasons requires more than accurate representation; it requires a thorough explanation of the object itself. “Reason (*ratio*) is related to the effect (*efficere*) as cause (*causa*); reason must itself be sufficient (*sufficiens, sufficere*). This sufficiency is required by the *perfectio* (*perficere*) of the object.”⁴⁸¹ The *perfectio* of the object is not an assessment of its ontological status; rather, it is perfect in the

⁴⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 80/118. Heidegger writes, “Formally, one can even say that the objectness of objects, that is, the Objectivity of Objects is completely based in subjectivity.” // “Formelhaft kann man auch sagen: Alle Gegenständigkeit der Gegenstände, d. h. alle Objectivität der Objekte beruht in der Subjektivität.”

⁴⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 23/36. “Dies sagt jetzt: Etwas »ist« nur, d. h. ist als Seiendes ausgewiesen, wenn es in einem Satz ausgesagt ist, der dem Grundsatz des Grundes als dem Grundsatz der Begründung genügt.” To further illustrate this point Heidegger, on page 22-23/35, writes, “So it may seem that the *principium reddendae rationis* thereby concerns only knowledge, but *not* those things which *are* in some other manner. Is the validity of the *principium reddendae rationis* limited to cognition? On the contrary, the *principium rationis* in its ordinary formulation is valid for everything which in any manner *is*.” // “Das *principium reddendae rationis* betrifft somit nur Erkennen, *nicht* aber, so will es scheinen, jegliches, was irgendwie sonst noch *ist*. Bleibt die Geltung des *principium reddendae rationis* auf das Erkennen beschränkt? Dem steht entgegen, daß das *principium rationis* in seiner gewöhnlichen Fassung von jeglichen gilt, was auf irgendeine Weise *ist*.”

⁴⁸¹*Ibid.*, 33/50. “Der Grund (*ratio*) ist als Ursache (*causa*) auf den Effekt (*efficere*) bezogen; der Grund selber muß zureichend sein (*sufficiens, sufficere*). Dieses Zureichen wird verlangt und bestimmt durch die *perfectio* (*perficere*) des Gegenstandes.”

sense of “the completeness of the conditions for its possibility.”⁴⁸² The complete explanation of the cause of the object secures its status as perfectly knowable, which entails the sufficiency of reason. It is thus through reason that the reasons (causes) for the existence of entities can be known. The reason for reasons, which is arrived at through reason, is the ultimate reason – God.

Throughout *The Principle of Reason*, Heidegger demonstrates the circularity of the principle and repeatedly questions its grounding. For our purposes, its validity is not the issue, but, rather, our concern is with its effect upon the history of metaphysics. The consequence of Leibniz’s principle is that it makes all entities transparently available to human reason. In many ways metaphysics as onto-theology is epitomized by Leibniz’s thought, although it does not end until Nietzsche. According to Heidegger, the Principle of Reason’s “injunction unleashes the universal and total reckoning up of everything as something calculable.”⁴⁸³ Perhaps more than any other development in the history of metaphysics, the Principle of Reason defines the terms of all subsequent thought. It introduces both the requirement of and the ability to account for all entities, whether they are past, present, future, actual or potential, created or creator. Heidegger writes,

For with him [Leibniz] *ratio* is the *principium*, the prevailing demand that is normative for all beings with regard to their being. It requires the rendering of the account of the very possibility for a full accounting which computes everything that is a being. The *ratio sufficiens*, the genuinely and uniquely sufficient reason, the *summa ratio*, the final account of exhaustive calculability, of the calculus of the universe, is *Deus*, God.⁴⁸⁴

Here it is clear that Heidegger understands Leibniz’s project as a type of metaphysical calculus, which includes God for ontological rather than theological reasons.⁴⁸⁵ This framework of calculation established by Leibniz is, according to Heidegger, decisive in the further neglect of Being (*Sein*). As such, metaphysics sheds the few residual religious elements left from Christian Medieval thought

⁴⁸²*Ibid.* “... der Voll-ständigkeit der Bedingungen seiner Möglichkeit.”

⁴⁸³*Ibid.*, 80/119. “... deren Machtanspruch entfesselt die universale und totale Verechnung von allem zum Berechenbaren.”

⁴⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 101/150. “Denn hier ist die *ratio* das *principium*, der für alles Seiende hinsichtlich seines Seins maßgebende und beherrschende Anspruch. Er verlangt die Zustellung der Rechenschaft für die Möglichkeit einer Durchrechnung, die alles, was ist, als Seiendes errechnet. Die *ratio sufficiens*, der eigentlich und einzig zureichende Grund, die *summa ratio*, die höchste Rechenschaft für die durchgängige Berechenbarkeit, für den Kalkül des Univerums, ist *Deus*, Gott.”

⁴⁸⁵Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” 44. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 408. Heidegger writes, “The god who acts here as ground is not theologically, but purely ontologically, namely, as the highest being in whom all beings and Being itself are caused.” // “Der hier als Grund wesende Gott ist nicht theologisch, sondern rein ontologisch gedacht, nämlich als das höchste Seiende, in dem alles Seiende und das Sein selbst verursacht ist.”

end. Where Leibniz' thinking comes to fruition in the development of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, Kant merely assumes this as the necessary starting point from which all else must follow. Or, as Heidegger writes, "the normative horizons of the Kantian position could only open up in the light of the principle of reason as strictly and completely formulated by Leibniz."⁴⁸⁹ Kant's attention, focussed by Leibniz, concentrates on an even more fundamental aspect than previous Enlightenment metaphysics. Until now the goal was to find an axiomatic point from which to construct a metaphysics, as evidenced by Descartes' *ego cogito* and Leibniz' *principium rationis*. Kant, with his critical investigation of pure reason, arrives at that which grounds the axiomatic point, or, that which allows for the "condition for the possibility of," namely, the synthetic *a priori*.

The search for the ground of the axiomatic principles previously posited is, according to Heidegger, in line with the preceding thought. In *What is a Thing? (Die Frage nach dem Ding)*, Heidegger first examines the "mathematical" nature of Modern metaphysics and then Kant's continuation of this method of philosophizing.⁴⁹⁰ This Modern mathematical method seeks to establish an axiom or axioms from which all else is deducible. Although Kant remains in this tradition, "The way which he conceives and establishes these axioms brings about a revolution."⁴⁹¹ The Kantian revolution is the separation of the noumenal and phenomenal in order to achieve the certainty that eluded previous attempts.

In the demonstration of synthetic *a priori* judgements Kant secures, in pure reason, the conditions for the possibility not just of experience, but of the accurate and certain intuition of phenomena.⁴⁹² This is why Kant's solution to Hume's scepticism is derived from Leibnizian rationalism rather than from British empiricism. The problem with rational metaphysics was that it could not establish the "exactly determined conditions" under which synthetic *a priori*

⁴⁸⁹Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 74. // *Der Satz vom Grund*, 109. "... die maßgebenden Horizonte der kantischen Fragestellung sich erst im Lichte der strengen und vorständigen Fassung des Satzes vom Grund durch Leibniz öffnen konnten."

⁴⁹⁰For example, Heidegger writes on page 108/108, "The question of the thing is now anchored in pure reason, i.e. in the mathematical unfolding of its principles" // "Die Frage nach dem Ding ist jetzt in der reinen Vernunft verankert, d. h. in der mathematischen Entfaltung ihrer Grundsätze"; page 122/124, "We can already gather from this 'critique' the 'mathematical' feature of modern metaphysics is retained, namely, to determine in advance out of principles the being of what is" // "Wir entnehmen hieraus schon, daß in dieser »Kritik« der »mathematische« Grundzug der neuzeitlichen Metaphysik festgehalten wird, nämlich im vorhinein aus Grundsätzen das Sein des Seienden zu bestimmen"; page 184/188, "According to this, the basic mathematical characteristic is the decisive: the recourse to axioms in every determination of what is. Kant remains within this tradition. However, the way which he conceives and establishes these axioms brings about a revolution" // "Darnach ist der mathematische Grundzug entscheidend: der Rückgang auf Axiome bei aller Bestimmung des Seienden. Kant bleibt in dieser Überlieferung. Allein die Art, wie er die Axiome faßt und begründet, bringt eine Umwälzung."

⁴⁹¹Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, 184. // *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, 188. "... die Art, wie er die Axiome faßt und begründet, bringt eine Umwälzung."

⁴⁹²Kant uses the term *Anschauung*, usually translated "intuition."

and plainly lays out existence (*onta* and *theos*) in its entirety for our comprehension. Since Heidegger's critique demonstrates that Western metaphysics results in the "exhaustive calculability" of the universe, it is no surprise that Leibniz was the first to offer a thoroughly rational justification of God and creation, literally, a *theodicy*. Once metaphysics installs itself as the grand accountant,⁴⁸⁶ excluding nothing from its purview, it follows that the need to investigate critically the faculty of reason arises, in order to determine its limits. This is, of course, the next variation of metaphysics, which is executed by Immanuel Kant.

The unrestrained use of human reason in order to prove the existence of God, the perfection of creation and the certainty of our knowledge is bound to have its critics. Indeed, the criticism of the British empiricists is an objection against such rationalism on behalf of experience itself.⁴⁸⁷ Although it was these objections that awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumber,⁴⁸⁸ it was Leibniz, according to Heidegger, who nonetheless provides the reason for Kant's critical investigation of the faculty of pure reason. Certainly, this assertion deviates from the traditional history of philosophy in which Hume's scepticism about causality combined with his criticisms of the philosophical proofs for God are understood as the respective death knells for rational metaphysics. Heidegger does not discount Kant's solution, in fact, Heidegger greatly admires Kant's establishment of a necessary relationship between concepts and intuitions; Heidegger's concern, however, is primarily with the form of the solution and secondarily with the content. That is, Heidegger concentrates upon why Kant solves the rationalist-empiricist problem the way he does and then upon the consequences of this solution for the rest of metaphysics.

If Leibniz is the epitome of Modern metaphysics as onto-theology then Kant, who takes his leave from Leibniz's finale, represents the beginning of the

⁴⁸⁶It is important to note that Heidegger also mentions those who continued the Leibnizian project, namely, Wolff and Baumgarten, and their influence, even in Kant's lifetime. This rational metaphysical project is most certainly onto-theology in one of its most obvious forms. See, for instance, *What is a Thing?*, 118. // *Die Frage nach dem Ding?*, 119, "The foundation is ontology, and the apex of the building is theology. The first is concerned with what belongs to a thing as such, to anything that is in general (or *in communi*), to the *ens commune*. Theology is concerned with the highest being and that which is, in the most essential sense, the *summum ens*. With regard to content we also find this arrangement of metaphysics in the Middle Ages, in fact even in Aristotle." // "Der Baugrund ist die Ontologie und die Spitze des Baues die Theologie. Jene handelt von dem, was zu einem Ding überhaupt, zu einem Seienden im allgemeinen (oder in communi), dem *ens commune* gehört; diese, die Theologie, handelt vom höchsten und eigentlichsten Seienden schlechthin, vom *summum ens*. Inhaltlich finden wir diese Gliederung der Metaphysik auch im Mittelalter, sogar schon bei Aristoteles."

⁴⁸⁷Although David Hume's objections are indeed philosophically damaging, there is no doubt that Voltaire's *Candide* did as much to discredit Leibnizian metaphysics.

⁴⁸⁸Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. Lewis W. Beck (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1950), 8. Kant writes, "I openly confess my recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy quite a new direction."

judgements would be possible, hence its failure, according to Heidegger.⁴⁹³ Rather than attempting a solution based upon the empiricists' objections, Kant continued in the mathematical vein and concluded that "those principles which necessarily underlie our human knowledge as conditions of its possibility must have the character of synthetic judgements *a priori*."⁴⁹⁴ In other words, Kant fulfills the Leibnizian desire to ground everything in reason. Hence, "Kant was the first to be able not simply to accept and affirm the rule of principles, but to ground it from the nature of the understanding itself."⁴⁹⁵ Hence Kant succeeds where Leibniz fails. The Principle of Sufficient Reason was always open to sceptical questioning, because it was never demonstrated *a priori*, and therefore remained disprovable. Kant's achievement is the securing of the possibility of experience of objects prior to any experience, such that, when they are experienced, they are experienced accurately and in relation with each other, i.e., spatially, temporally and, also in causal relationships. Now, due to Kant, entities' reasons can indeed be rendered.⁴⁹⁶

Until Descartes' subjectivist turn, things, those which are experienced as over and against, were not conceived of as objects *per se*. In the case of Descartes, objects became objects through the investigation of the subject, whereas, Kant's addition to Modern metaphysics defines objects in their objectivity before any experience. As Heidegger observes, "Principles which ground the essence of an object cannot be grounded upon the object."⁴⁹⁷ Thus the objectiveness of the objects themselves is cemented prior to their experience. The advantage of Kant's solution is that the *a priori* definition of objectness removes all doubt about the objects themselves as they are experienced. "The pure understanding provides the possibility of the correspondence to the objects thanks to the objectivity of appearances, i.e., of the thingness of things for us."⁴⁹⁸ The calculability of all (experienceable) entities as entities and the (scientific)

⁴⁹³Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, 168. // *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, 172. "Synthetische Urteile a priori sind nämlich, wie sich zeigen wird, nur unter genau bestimmten Bedingungen möglich, welche Bedingungen die rationale Metaphysik nicht zu erfüllen vermag."

⁴⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 169/172-173. "Diejenigen Grundsätze, die unserer menschlichen Erkenntnis notwendig als Bedingungen ihrer Möglichkeit zugrunde liegen, müssen den Charakter von synthetischen Urteilen a priori haben."

⁴⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 186/189. "Erst Kant ist imstande, das Walten von Grundsätzen nicht einfach hinzunehmen und zu bejahen, sondern es aus dem Wesen des Verstandes selbst zu begründen."

⁴⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 189/192-193. For example, Heidegger writes, "According to this metaphysical origin of the source of principles, that source is the pure understanding. These principles, in turn, are the 'source of all truth,' i.e., of the possibility for our experiences to be at all able to correspond to objects." / "Gemäß dieser seiner metaphysischen Herkunft ist der reine Verstand der Quell der Grundsätze. Diese Grundsätze ihrerseits sind die »Quelle aller Wahrheit«, d. h. der Möglichkeit, daß unsere Erfahrungen überhaupt mit Gegenständen übereinstimmen können."

⁴⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 185/188. "Grundsätze, die das Wesen des Gegenstandes begründen, können nicht auf den Gegenstand gegründet sein."

⁴⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 189-190/193. "Der reine Verstand gibt die Möglichkeit der Übereinstimmung mit dem Gegenstand dank der Gegenständlichkeit der Erscheinungen, d. h. der Dingheit der Dinge für uns."

knowledge that results from this are secured for the rest of metaphysics' history. In other words, with the acceptance of Kant's schema, knowledge of the world, which is defined as scientific and mathematical, is guaranteed. Kant resolves the metaphysical problems of the Rationalists and provides the necessary conditions for the possibility of empiricism, which quickly becomes positivism.

In order to demonstrate Kant's centrality Heidegger quotes from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "The conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are likewise conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*' (A 158, B 197)"⁴⁹⁹ and states that in understanding this principle one does not merely know "one book among the writing of philosophy, but masters a fundamental posture of the history of man."⁵⁰⁰ That is, a posture which is determinative for all successive metaphysics. Of course, the term "metaphysics" is now used with a narrower meaning and those who follow have a narrower field to investigate, as epistemology takes over from traditional metaphysical investigation. Kant's demonstration of causality "grounded completely *a priori* in the understanding,"⁵⁰¹ for example, eliminates the need, previously felt by metaphysicians, to ask about causality itself. The security of the objectivity of the objects leaves philosophers with but one realm to investigate – the objective.

The noumena-phenomena division, which guarantees the truth of our experiences but denies us all knowledge of what things are in-themselves, is a further variant in the history of metaphysics. Given the history of metaphysics as onto-theology, so far discussed by Heidegger, it should be no surprise that Kant represents the beginning of the end. The structure of metaphysics remains essentially the same, even with Descartes' and Leibniz' modifications, but Kant's solution to the rationalist-empiricist debate, although ultimately maintaining the onto-theological structure, strikes the first blow against it. God (*theos*) is relegated to a postulate of practical reason, *a priori* unknowable, in favour of the certainty of entities (*onta*).

Section VI: Nietzsche⁵⁰²

One consequence of Kant's philosophy was the development of German Idealism,⁵⁰³ which sought the synthesis of the transcendental division. The issue

⁴⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 183/186. "»... die Bedingungen der *Möglichkeit der Erfahrung* überhaupt sind zugleich Bedingungen der *Möglichkeit der Gegenstände der Erfahrung*«."

⁵⁰⁰*Ibid.* "... kennt nicht nur ein Buch aus dem Schrifttum der Philosophie, sondern beherrscht eine Grundstellung unseres geschichtlichen Daseins."

⁵⁰¹Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: The Macmillan Press, Inc., 1929), 125 (A91/B123).

⁵⁰²Due to an absence of a systematic treatment of German Idealism and Neo-Kantianism by Heidegger when writing on the history of philosophy as metaphysics, the following three paragraphs have been provided in order to bridge the gap between Kant and Nietzsche.

⁵⁰³Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. III, 95-96 // *Nietzsche*, erster Band, 526. Heidegger writes, "Kant first explicitly perceived and thought the creative character of reason in his doctrine of the transcendental imagination. The conception of the essence of absolute reason in the metaphysics

for the German Idealists becomes the mediation of the subject-object dichotomy into a unity, e.g., no longer the thing-in-itself, but the thing-in-itself-for-itself, or “the absolute self-knowing of absolute spirit.”⁵⁰⁴ This development in metaphysics is merely the traditional onto-theological project as it could be further developed after Kant. With the noumena-phenomena division, metaphysics is left with two final variations for realization: *either* the noumenal *or* the phenomenal. The penultimate variant, taking the form of Idealism, seeks not just to retain the transcendental but to elevate it to the all-encompassing absolute. The phenomenal realm becomes so much grist for the *Geist* mill as it progresses through history.⁵⁰⁵

The ultimate metaphysical variation is fully realized in Nietzsche, according to Heidegger. Before Nietzsche, however, Neo-Kantianism (marked by the collapse of the transcendental division) introduces a further metaphysical permutation in the form of value philosophy. As the idea of the in-itself, finally unknowable but somehow here in the world nonetheless, is assumed, metaphysics turns to values. “Even in Christian theology we define God, the *summum ens qua summum bonum*, as the highest value.”⁵⁰⁶ The Neo-Kantian collapse of the transcendental division maintains the objectivity of the object and thereby allows science exclusive knowledge of the objective world while relegating all other knowledge to the subjective, which is coloured through the goggles of worldviews (*Weltanschauungen*), i.e., our values. “Value and the valuable become the positivistic substitute for the metaphysical.”⁵⁰⁷ Those who accept the Neo-Kantian division remain certain of their scientific knowledge and nothing else. Traditional metaphysical concerns are either neglected, because they are not

of German Idealism (in Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) is thoroughly based on the Kantian insight into the essence of reason as a ‘formative,’ creative ‘force.’” // “Den dichtenden Charakter der Vernunft hat Kant zum ersten Male in seiner Lehre von der transzendentalen Einbildungskraft eigens gesehen und durchdacht. Die Auffassung des Wesens der absoluten Vernunft in der Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus (bei Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) gründet durchaus auf der Kantischen Einsicht in das Wesen der Vernunft als einer »bildenden«, dichtenden »Kraft«.”

⁵⁰⁴Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 65. // *Der Satz vom Grund*, 95. “... absoluten Sichselbstwissen des absoluten Geistes.”

⁵⁰⁵William Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, 3rd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 359. Richardson writes several pages on Hegel and Heidegger almost all of which is comparative. Drawing from Heidegger’s essays “Hegel and the Greeks” and “Hegel’s Concept of Experience,” Richardson writes, “To interpret Being as subject-centered present-ness is to bring to a culmination the conception of truth-as-certitude, for, when all is said and done, this whole conception expands Absolute Certitude (Self-awareness) into Being itself.” This is compatible with the interpretation of Heidegger’s history of metaphysics as so far discussed, as Richardson’s assessment of Heidegger’s understanding is that Hegel moves the Cartesian *ego cogito* into the realm otherwise reserved for Being (*Sein*). This demonstrates Hegel’s exclusive concern for entities (*Seiende*) and his complete neglect of Being (*Sein*).

⁵⁰⁶Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead,’” 70-71. // “Nietzsches Wort »Gott ist tot«,” 227. “Sogar in der christlichen Theologie bestimmt mann Gott, das summum ens qua summum bonum, als den höchsten.”

⁵⁰⁷*Ibid.* “Der Wert und das Werthafte wird zum positivistischen Ersatz für das Metaphysische.”

relevant to the scientific project, or are reduced to a system of values, which are the result of human situatedness or worldview. As metaphysical truth moves from a postulate of practical reason to a value held for no objective reason, the end of metaphysics cannot be far.

The negation of *this* world, as only “mere appearance” in favour of the *other* world, in which all value is placed (accomplished lastly by German Idealism), is central to Nietzsche’s analysis of European nihilism. In fact, he identifies this type of Platonic thought as permeating all Western philosophy, compounded by Christianity, as *the* cause of European nihilism. Given his analysis, it is not surprising that when presented with the noumena-phenomena choice he chooses phenomena and the value(s) of *this* world. Nietzsche’s decision is the final metaphysical choice. The triumph of the Absolute spirit, with its negation of the world, leads Nietzsche to object in favour of value and worldview. His objection executes the ultimate variation in the history of metaphysics. Unlike the German Idealists, who sought some kind of synthesis between the two realms (although finally favouring the noumenal), Nietzsche simply removes the noumenal. No longer shall the *other* world contain all value. Nietzsche’s desire is to have us live in the real world *with* value and truth.

When Nietzsche’s madman proclaims the death of God, it is, for Nietzsche, a cultural diagnosis. The devaluing of the highest values, also known as nihilism, plagues European culture. Heidegger, by contrast, understands Nietzsche’s words philosophically. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche attempted to overcome nihilism by overturning the Platonic structure of philosophy. “Nietzsche holds this overturning of metaphysics to be the overcoming of metaphysics. But every overturning of this kind remains only a self-deluding entanglement in the Same that has become unknowable.”⁵⁰⁸ In making his objection in favour of value, Nietzsche completes metaphysics. “That means: It has gone through the sphere of prefigured possibilities.”⁵⁰⁹ That Nietzsche finally remains within the realm delineated by the guiding question of metaphysics (What is an entity? / *Was ist das Seiende?*), as formed by Aristotle, should be considered next.

In forming his alternative to, or, as Heidegger characterizes it, his inversion of, Platonism, Nietzsche’s focus is nevertheless upon entities. In other words, Nietzsche’s investigative method is that of previous philosophers. His concern is the identification of entities as such and the abstraction from this particularity to the universal explanatory principle. Because of his exclusive concern with entities, “the grounding question remains [What is Being? / *Was ist das Sein?*] as foreign to Nietzsche as it does to the history of thought prior to

⁵⁰⁸Ibid., 75/232. “Nietzsche halt diese Umkehrung für die Überwindung der Metaphysik. Allein, jede Umkehrung dieser Art bleibt nur die sich selbst blendende Verstrickung in das unkenbar gewordene Selbe.”

⁵⁰⁹Heidegger, “Overcoming Metaphysics,” 95. // “Überwindung Metaphysik,” 81. “Mit Nietzsches Metaphysik ist die Philosophie vollendet. Das will sagen: sie hat den Umkreis der vorgezeichneten Möglichkeiten abgeschrieben.”

him.”⁵¹⁰ Due to his inversion of the Platonic scheme, Nietzsche attempts to locate the explanatory principle within the world.

In his reaction against Platonism, generally, and German Idealism’s absolute transcendence in particular, Nietzsche’s philosophy is tinged with nineteenth century positivism. As previously mentioned, Nietzsche’s solution to the noumena-phenomena division is to choose the phenomenal. By cutting the noumenal loose, Nietzsche’s project is to relocate value in the phenomenal.

This kind of overcoming of metaphysics, which Nietzsche has in mind in the spirit of nineteenth century positivism, is only the final entanglement in metaphysics, although in a higher form. It looks as if the ‘meta,’ the transcendence to the suprasensuous, were replaced by the persistence in the elemental world of sensuousness, whereas actually the oblivion of Being is only completed and the suprasensuous is let loose and furthered by the will to power.⁵¹¹

Given Heidegger’s criticism that all metaphysics operate with the ontological difference, the difference between entities (*Seienden*) and Being (*Sein*), and then concern themselves exclusively with entities and neglect Being, here he demonstrates the applicability of his critique to Nietzsche. Nietzsche is shown to employ the ontological difference and complete Western metaphysics’ forgetting of Being (*Sein*), in his reaction to Platonism and, rather than succeeding in the banishment of the noumenal (suprasensuous), he only further entrenches it in his Will to Power. *Where previous philosophers posited a theos as the explanatory principle, Nietzsche posits the Will to Power.* Although originally an attempt to counteract nihilism, as Heidegger understands it, the Will to Power is just an empty abstraction, and therefore just as nihilistic, as previous formulations. It is empty, because the explanatory principle is nothing more than the abstraction from entities, which, by definition, excludes Being (*Sein*). This is why the Will to Power is identified as the letting loose of the suprasensuous (noumenal) that leads to the oblivion of Being.⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, 67. // *Nietzsche*, erster Band, 64. My addition. “... die Grund-frage bleibt Nietzsche ebenso fremd wie der Geschichte des Denkens vor ihm.”

⁵¹¹Heidegger, “Overcoming Metaphysics,” 92. // “Überwindung Metaphysik,” 77-78. “Diese Art der Überwindung der Metaphysik, die Nietzsche im Auge hat und dies im Sinne des Positivismus des 19. Jahrhunderts, ist, wenngleich in einer höheren Verwandlung, nur die endgültige Verstrickung in die Metaphysik. Zwar hat es den Anschein, als sei das »Meta«, die Transzendenz ins Übersinnliche, zugunsten des Beharrens im Elementaren der Sinnlichkeit beseitigt, während doch nur die Seinsvergessenheit vollendet und das Übersinnliche als der Wille zur Macht losgelassen und betrieben wird.”

⁵¹²Heidegger, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead,’” 104-105. // “Nietzsches Wort: »Gott ist tot«,” 259. For example Heidegger writes, “If, however, value does not let Being be Being, does not let it be what it is as Being itself, then this supposed overcoming is above all the consummation of nihilism. For now metaphysics not only does not think Being itself, but this not-thinking of Being clothes itself in the illusion that it does think Being in the most exalted manner, in that it esteems Being as a value, so that all questions concerning Being become and remain

In the completion of metaphysics Nietzsche thinks two central elements of Modern metaphysics together – Descartes' search for certainty, which led to the *ego cogito* (understood as subjectivity) and the noumena (understood as Truth), first introduced by Kant in order to regain the Cartesian certainty lost to the sceptics. In other words, Nietzsche retains the desire to acquire certainty (truth), but is not willing to posit an ultimately unknowable realm in order to secure it. The security of certainty comes from "the intuitive self-certainty of subjectness" which "proves to be the justification belonging to the will to power."⁵¹³ The Will to Power replaces the suprasensuous (noumena) as the guarantor of truth (understood as certainty), because justification (that which secures certainty), for Nietzsche, is derived from subjectivity rather than the *other* world. The result of Nietzsche's Will to Power, according to Heidegger, is that "this ruthless and extreme anthropomorphizing of the world tears away the last illusions of the fundamental metaphysical position; it takes the positing of man as *subiectum* seriously."⁵¹⁴ Thus Nietzsche, thinking through Descartes, places truth within the realm of the subject as a value. Where Nietzsche thinks he has jettisoned the noumenal in favour of the value of *this* world, Heidegger thinks Nietzsche has merely traded the suprasensuous for the sensuous and thereby completed metaphysics.

Heidegger offers further evidence of Nietzsche's completion of metaphysics when he states that, "As an *ontology*, even Nietzsche's metaphysics is *at the same time* theology."⁵¹⁵ That is, Nietzsche's project, for all its claims to radical overcomings, is the same as previous metaphysics. Granted, Nietzsche's metaphysics is a kind of negative theology, because of his claim "God is dead," but "that is an expression not of atheism but of ontotheology, in that metaphysics in which nihilism proper is fulfilled."⁵¹⁶ It is a metaphysics in which nihilism proper is fulfilled, because Nietzsche's inversion of the Platonic structure negates that which contributes to the historical neglect of Being (*Sein*), namely, God (*theos*).⁵¹⁷ The neglect of Being (*Sein*) is, according to Heidegger, the real cause of nihilism.

superfluous." // "Wenn jedoch der Wert das Sein nicht das Sein sein läßt, was es als das Sein selbst ist, dann ist die vermeintliche Überwindung allererst die Vollendung des Nihilismus. Denn jetzt denkt die Metaphysik nicht nur nicht das Sein selbst, sondern dieses Nicht-denken des Seins hüllt sich in den Anschein, es denke doch, indem es das Sein als Wert schätze, das Sein in der würdigsten Weise, so daß alles Fragen nach dem Sein überflüssig werde und bleibe."

⁵¹³*Ibid.*, 91/246. "... die einsichtige Selbstgewißheit der Subjektivität als die Rechtfertigung des Willens zur Macht gemäß der Gerechtigkeit."

⁵¹⁴Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 3, 155. // *Nietzsche*, erster Band, 590-591. "... diese rücksichtslose und ins Äußerste gestellte Vermenschlichung der Welt wirft die letzten Illusionen der neuzeitlichen metaphysischen Grundstellung auf die Seite und macht Ernst mit der Ansetzung des Menschen als *subiectum*."

⁵¹⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 4, 210. // zweiter Band, 314. "Auch Nietzsches Metaphysik ist *als Ontologie*, ..., *zugleich* Theologie."

⁵¹⁶*Ibid.*, "... das ist nicht das Wort des Atheismus, sondern das Wort der Onto-Theologie derjenigen Metaphysik, in der sich der eigentliche Nihilismus vollendet."

⁵¹⁷This is a difficult point to express. Although the idea of God as an abstraction from

The onto-theological structure of metaphysics finds its completion in Nietzsche as he seeks to locate value (truth) in this world. His reaction is, as described by Heidegger, partially on behalf of nineteenth century positivism, which, like Nietzsche, wants to derive all truth exclusively from this world. The rejection of the noumenal in favour of the phenomenal leaves metaphysics with its most impoverished analysis yet as it no longer leaves open the possibility of entertaining Being (*Sein*), because Being is not an entity; it is no-thing. Metaphysics is thus left with the certainty of the subject and its ability to comprehend and manipulate all the other entities in existence as “man now has disposal over the whole of beings as such in an essential way, for he provides the measure for the beingness of every individual being.”⁵¹⁸ For metaphysics there is no place left to go. There only remains the constant repetition of its previously composed variations. It is at an end.

Conclusion:

The central aspect of Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics as onto-theology is that metaphysics *is* onto-theology. Western metaphysics’ exclusive concern with entities (*onta*), which also entails the introduction of deity (*theos*), means the constant neglect of Being (*Sein*). The early Greeks original understanding of Being (*Sein*) was transformed through Plato and Aristotle into a focus upon presence. From this point forward, metaphysics only considered what was present and that which allowed for things to be present. Since Being (*Sein*) is not a thing (no-thing), and therefore is never present in the ontological mode defined by traditional metaphysics, Being (*Sein*) was never investigated.

As metaphysics proceeds from Aristotle it is translated into Latin and infused with Christianity. These two occurrences entail the further restriction of metaphysics’ scope. The Latin language, according to Heidegger, distorted the meaning of the original Greek terms. Christianity bolstered metaphysics’ pursuit of the foundational principle (*archē*) for entities with the belief that it had the revealed answer. Scholastic metaphysics, working within both Latin and Christianity, developed sophisticated systematics which were definitive for the terms and concepts used by the Enlightenment. Modernity, with its turn away from authoritative tradition to self-evident certainty, continued to narrow the field of metaphysical investigation. As the subject became the first object of ontological investigation, the terms of metaphysics changed. The Rationalists

entities has led to the neglect of Being (*Sein*) its negation does not therefore entail the non-neglect of Being (*Sein*), rather the opposite becomes true. Nietzsche’s negation of God closes the possibility of even the neglect of Being (*Sein*) and therefore means the *a priori* neglect of Being (*Sein*).

⁵¹⁸Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 121. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 151. “... deshalb verfügt der Mensch hier wesentlich über das Seiende als solches im Ganzen, denn er gibt das Maß für die Seiendheit eines jeglichen Seienden.”

sought security in Reason, while the Empiricists could find none in experience. Kant resolved this problem with his own kind of Copernican revolution, which saw the shift to synthetic *a priori* judgements as the guarantor of the possibility of objective experience. Kant's solution divided the world further into the noumenal and the phenomenal, which left metaphysics having to choose between them. After the German Idealists chose the noumenal and absolutely transcended the world, Nietzsche realized the final variant and chose the phenomenal in favour of value and this world.

When metaphysics arrives at its end, it is as far as possible from Being (*Sein*). Every new variation introduced, every new concept, every new method, has inevitably led metaphysics away from Being (*Sein*). According to Heidegger, the end of metaphysics gives humanity complete disposal over all entities, and closes the possibility of a novel experience of Being (*Sein*). Due to our philosophizing, we leave ourselves with a “dead” world for our manipulation. Our ways of thinking about the world are old and stale and going mouldy. What is required is a break from these modes of thought, from our framework (*Gestell*), in order to reinvigorate us and the world, in order to begin to experience entities, not as entities, but as indicative of Being (*Sein*), and in order to dwell poetically.

Although it is difficult to assess our chances of making this break into poetic dwelling, Heidegger has indeed succeeded in delineating the various problems with metaphysics. Certainly, some of his criticisms are remarkably similar to Whitehead's, e.g., that God as *actus purus* is not available for religious purposes. Among other factors, the similarity of Whitehead's criticisms to those of Heidegger assists in the demonstration that Whitehead's metaphysics is indeed a break from the onto-theologizing as criticized by Heidegger.

PART III: CRITICAL EXAMINATION

CHAPTER V

WHITEHEAD'S METAPHYSICS AND AN OCCASION FOR BEING

Introduction:

This chapter will conduct a critical examination of Whitehead's metaphysics with the later Martin Heidegger's critique of onto-theology. It should be clear, given the preceding exposition, what the major aspects of Whitehead's metaphysics are and how he developed his metaphysics through a critical engagement with the Western philosophical tradition. Similarly, the main points of Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics as onto-theology were also considered. Due to the esoteric nature of the material, such a lengthy exposition of both thinkers was required in order to provide a sufficient basis for a critical examination.

The tools used in this evaluation are Heideggerian. This means that the framework provided by Heidegger in his critique of onto-theology will function normatively for assessing Whitehead's metaphysics. Although some Process theologians may not agree with using Heidegger to evaluate Whitehead, it is important that Whitehead be considered in light of the Later Heidegger, if for no other reason than because of his great influence on many contemporary theologians.⁵¹⁹ The fact that many Process theologians have not critically considered their metaphysical stance in relation to the later Heidegger amounts to a sin of omission⁵²⁰ and also allows those influenced by the later Heidegger to simply dismiss Process Theology as mired in *onto-theology*.

Given Heidegger's Ontological Difference, which distinguishes Being (*Sein*) from entities (*Seienden*), and his critique of metaphysics that delineates how traditional metaphysics has obscured, neglected and forgotten Being (*Sein*), the question that this critical examination must ask is: Does Whitehead's metaphysics commit the same mistakes as traditional metaphysics? The answer is: No, Whitehead's metaphysics does not commit the mistakes detailed in

⁵¹⁹For instance, Jean-Luc Marion, "Phenomenology and Theology," *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1977), provides theologians with an account of why, mainly due to Heidegger, they can no longer rely upon metaphysics (onto-theology) in their pursuit.

⁵²⁰Although there have been many comparisons of Whitehead and Heidegger in the published record, dating as far back as 1953, there has been no extensive critical evaluation of Whitehead's metaphysics in light of the later Heidegger's thought, which, given the complexity of their respective work, would be required. There are two exceptions to this: Raymond J. Devetterre, "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique," *Cross Currents* 30 (1980): 309-322; and, Lewis S. Ford, "Whitehead and the Ontological Difference," *Philosophy Today* 29 (1985): 148-155.

Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. Whether or not Whitehead's metaphysics obscures Being (*Sein*) in some other way is beyond the scope of this project, because this is a critical examination of Whitehead's metaphysics in light of the later Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as onto-theology, not a consideration of Being (*Sein*) in Whitehead's metaphysics. It is demonstrated, however, that the general character of Whitehead's metaphysics as fallibilistic at least leaves his metaphysics open to the possibility of Being (*Sein*).⁵²¹

In order to accomplish this critical evaluation, first, there will be a brief restatement of the relevant points of Heidegger's critique. This is followed by a lengthy examination of the three metaphysical principles (Principle of Process, Ontological Principle, Reformed Subjectivist Principle) and the four metaphysical concepts (actual entities, eternal objects, God, Creativity) of Whitehead, which were discussed in Chapters II and III. In each case, it is demonstrated that Whitehead does not commit the same mistakes as previous metaphysicians. Instead of narrowing his investigation to an *a priori* axiomatic first principle, upon which all else depends, Whitehead expands his scope of inquiry through descriptive generalizations and functional definitions, which are open to *a posteriori* correction, as he develops a fallibilistic metaphysics. This comes from his commitment to conceive of a complete fact. Although Whitehead begins with Aristotle's question (*ti to on?*, understood by Heidegger as, *Was ist das Seiende?*), he moves from the ontic realm of this question to the ontological, because of his innovative analysis of entities (*Seiende*). Lastly, it is argued that, while leaving open the possibility of Being (*Sein*), Whitehead provides us with a philosophy of nature as well. The implications of this are twofold. Those theologians who would dismiss Process Theology as merely another variant of *onto-theology* should undertake a thorough study of Whitehead's metaphysics, and those natural theologies based upon Whitehead's thought are not necessarily indicted by Heidegger's critique of onto-theology.

Section I: Heidegger and the Oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*)

According to Heidegger, metaphysics has, due to its exclusive concern with entities (*Seienden*), neglected, forgotten, and obscured Being (*Sein*), that is, has fallen into *Seinsvergessenheit*. In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger first brought to Western philosophy's attention that all of its ontology is characterized by the Ontological Difference. At that time, he thought that traditional ontology had focussed too much upon entities (what he called the "ontic") and needed to turn its attention to a fundamental ontology which would investigate that entity (*Seiende*) "which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it,"⁵²²

⁵²¹ See page 84, footnote 394, for the definition of "fallibilism."

⁵²² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32 // *Sein und Zeit*, 16, "Das Dasein ist ein Seiendes, das nicht nur unter anderem Seienden vorkommt. Es ist vielmehr dadurch ontisch ausgezeichnet, daß es diesem Seienden im seinem Sein *um* dieses Sein selbst geht."

namely, *Dasein*. In his later thought Heidegger abandons the earlier project of developing a fundamental ontology based upon a phenomenological analysis of *Dasein* altogether, because of his own critique of metaphysics. Rather than further compound the neglect of Being (*Sein*) by engaging in ontology, fundamental or otherwise, with its entitive vocabulary, concepts, categories, etc., the later Heidegger becomes convinced of the futility of this manner of philosophizing and advocates its end and overcoming.⁵²³

It is in his later thought where Heidegger, employing the Ontological Difference, develops the Guiding question of philosophy (What is an entity?/*Was ist das Seiende?*) and the Grounding question (What is Being?/*Was ist das Sein?*). According to his analysis, Western metaphysics has focussed exclusively upon the Guiding question and never upon the Grounding question. This bias, originating with the Greeks, formalized by Aristotle and assumed throughout the rest of Western philosophy, results in metaphysics as onto-theology. Metaphysics understands, Heidegger argues, its sole area of investigation to be entities (*Seienden*). This leads to the examination of all entities as entities (*Seienden/onta*) and a search for the explanatory entity, often conceived of as divine (God/*theos*). Hence Being (*Sein*) is neglected, because traditional metaphysics thinks it has thoroughly accomplished its task of delineating everything that exists. All entities (*Seienden*) are examined and their essence determined which, in turn, is then either associated or equated with (depending upon the type of system developed) the superlative entity (*das Seiende*) – God. Surely, according to this project, there is nothing else. This is precisely Heidegger's point. Because Being (*Sein*) is not an entity (no-thing), it does not generally fall under metaphysics' purview. If a particular metaphysics attempts a treatment of Being (*Sein*) it equates Being (*Sein*) with ground (usually called God), because traditional metaphysics only treat Being (*Sein*) as ground rather than exploring the difference as difference between Being (*Sein*) and entities (*Seienden*).⁵²⁴ So, either Being (*Sein*) is neglected entirely or obscured by identification with ground as the special class of divine entity.⁵²⁵ The result, as demonstrated throughout Chapter IV, is that traditional metaphysics never attempt, Heidegger charges, an answer to the Grounding question of philosophy (*Was ist das Sein?*).

This is further demonstrated by Heidegger's account, in *Nietzsche*, of

⁵²³See Chapter IV.

⁵²⁴Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, 32//96. "But Being, since the beginning of Western thought, has been interpreted as the ground in which every being as such is grounded." // "Dieses wird jedoch seit der Frühzeit des abendländischen Denkens als der Grund ausgelegt, worin jedes Seiende als Seiendes gründet." Also see Joan Stambaugh's introduction pp. 16-17.

⁵²⁵Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 27. // *Der Satz vom Grund*, 42. "What is to be posited as the *ultima ratio* of *Natura*, as the furthest, highest – and that means first – existing reason for the nature of things, is what one usually calls God." // "Als die *ultima ratio* der *Natura*, als der äußerste, höchste und d. h. erste seines Grund für die Natur der Dinge ist das zu setzen, was man Gott zu nennen pflegt."

“Metaphysics as History of Being.”⁵²⁶ The first sub-section⁵²⁷ provides an analysis of how metaphysics interpreted, through the Ontological Difference, the original understanding of Being (*Sein*) as emerging (*physis*) and unconcealment (*aletheia*) into that of presence and permanence (*ousia*).⁵²⁸ This division of Whatness and Thatness is a division first of Being (*Sein*), as present, and secondly of that which is itself present, i.e., entities (*Seienden*). In other words, only a single aspect of Being (*Sein*) is investigated, namely, that which makes possible the presence of entities (*Seienden*). Traditionally metaphysics has approached this division through an investigation of those entities present (“Thatness” or existence) followed by a search for *the* reason for their existence, which is the “Whatness” or essence of entities (*Seienden*). The priority given to existence over essence by Aristotle leads metaphysics down the path of thinking existence as “actuality” and further away from Being (*Sein*). According to Heidegger, “Oblivion of Being means: the self-concealing of the origin of Being divided into Whatness and Thatness in favour of Being which opens out beings as beings and remains unquestioned as *Being*.”⁵²⁹

Traditional metaphysics divides the Guiding Question of philosophy into “Whatness” and “Thatness” such that this division resembles the Ontological Difference. The division of the Guiding Question is a mirror of the Ontological Difference, as it in some sense reflects the Ontological Difference and therefore is a kind of representative understanding of Being (*Sein*). At the same time, however, the essence-existence (Whatness-Thatness) division obscures Being (*Sein*) because this division merely reflects the Ontological Difference rather than thinking about the Ontological Difference itself. This division reduces Western metaphysics’ understanding of Being (*Sein*) to presence (existence) and permanence (essence). Being (*Sein*) is obscured or forgotten as metaphysicians convince themselves that their respective projects have succeeded in detailing all of reality – existentially *and* essentially.

This is the start of “the tradition of the truth about beings which goes under the title of ‘metaphysics’ [and] develops into a pile of distortions, no longer recognizing itself, covering up the primordial essence of Being.”⁵³⁰ The division

⁵²⁶Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being,” // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 363. “Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins.”

⁵²⁷*Ibid.* “Whatness and Thatness in the Essential Beginning of Metaphysics: *idea* and *energeia*” // “Was-sein und Daß-sein im Wesensbeginn der Metaphysik: *ιδέα* und *ενέργεια*.”

⁵²⁸*Ibid.*, 4 // 367. “In the beginning of its history, Being opens itself out as emerging (*physis*) and unconcealment (*aletheia*). From there it reaches the formulation of presence and permanence in the sense of enduring (*ousia*). Metaphysics proper begins with this.” // “Im Anfang seiner Geschichte lichtet sich Sein als *Aufgang* (*φύσις*) und *Entbergung* (*ἀλήθεια*). Von dort her gelangt es in *Gepräge* von *Anwesenheit* und *Beständigkeit* im Sinne des *Verweilens* (*ουσία*). Damit beginnt die *eigentliche* Metaphysik.”

⁵²⁹*Ibid.*, 3-4 // 366. “Seinsvergessenheit besagt dann: das Sichverbergen der Herkunft des in Was- und Daß-sein unterscheidenen Seins zugunsten des Seins, welches das Seiende als Seiendes lichtet und *als Sein* unbefragt bleibt.”

⁵³⁰*Ibid.*, 14 // 378. “Die als »Metaphysik« verlaufende Überlieferung der Wahrheit über

of entities into Whatness and Thatness follows from the original distortion of Being (*Sein*) as present and permanent. It is with this understanding in place that Western metaphysics begins its search for the explanatory principle (*archē*). Since the Thatness of entities is evident in their presentation, the philosophical quest begins for the permanence (essence) which underlies and accounts for the presence of entities.⁵³¹ The first concern of Western metaphysics is to identify that which is most universal about entities as that which accounts for their unity, i.e., that which is essential to their actual presence. This is where metaphysics “thinks of the Being of beings” as the “ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere.”⁵³² It is no accident that Heidegger identifies Leibniz as having asked *the* fundamental philosophical metaphysical question (Why is there something rather than nothing?), since the answer to the question (the Principle of Reason) exemplifies the metaphysical desire to account for all entities as such in their existence. Whatever metaphysics posits as the unifying aspect of existence (e.g. substance, subject, monad, *Geist*, will to power), which accounts for what entities are, needs to be accounted for as well. “This ground itself needs to be properly accounted for by that for which it accounts, that is, by the causation through the supremely original matter – and that is the cause as *causa sui*. This is the right name for the god of philosophy.”⁵³³

As the distortion of Being (*Sein*) continues, metaphysics seeks to account for the essence of existence with another entity, “Whether it be a supreme being in the sense of the first cause, [or] whether it be the distinctive being in the sense of the subject of subjectivity, as the condition of the possibility of all objectivity.”⁵³⁴ That is, metaphysics takes what little echo of Being (*Sein*) still remains in the Whatness-Thatness division and conceives of it ontically. Being (*Sein*) becomes entity (*Seiende*). Due to metaphysics’ own logic, as directed by its exclusive focus upon entities, “The Being of beings is represented fundamentally, in the sense of ground, only as *causa sui*. This is the metaphysical concept of God.”⁵³⁵ According to Heidegger’s critique of Western metaphysics,

das Seiende entfaltet sich einer sich selbst nicht mehr kennenden Anhäufung von Verdeckungen des anfänglichen Wesens des Seins.” (my parenthetical addition).

⁵³¹The Whatness of entities has two related aspects: that which “underlies” every entity, which is traditionally understood as “substance” and therefore is the universal unity of the Thatness (existence) of entities; and, the principle (*archē*) that governs what entities are.

⁵³²Heidegger, “The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics,” 58 // 125, “... ergründenden Einheit des Allgemeinen, d. h. des überall Gleich-Gültigen.”

⁵³³Heidegger, “The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics,” 72 // 140, “... welcher Grund selbst aus dem von ihm Begründeten her der ihm gemäßen Begründung, d. h. der Verursachung durch die ursprünglichste Sache bedarf. Dies ist die Ursache als die *Causa sui*. So lautet der sachgerechte Name für den Gott in der Philosophie.”

⁵³⁴Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 208. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 312, “... sei diese das höchste Seiende im Sinne der obersten Ursache, sei es das ausgezeichnete Seiende im Sinne des Subjektes der Subjektivität als der Bedingung der Möglichkeit aller Objektivität.”

⁵³⁵Heidegger, “The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics,” 60 // 127, “... das Sein des Seienden wird im Sinne des Grundes gründlich nur als *causa sui* vorgestellt. Damit ist

the reason for all reasons cannot merely be another ordinary entity among entities; it must be *the* causally greatest entity.⁵³⁶

Among the consequences that result from the *modus operandi* of Western metaphysics, there are two specific ones which are relevant to our evaluation of Whitehead. First, is Heidegger's assertion that Being (*Sein*), when considered by metaphysicians, is arrived at through a method of abstraction, which makes Being (*Sein*) the "most universal and therefore emptiest concept" about which "nothing further can be predicated."⁵³⁷ The problem with this method of abstraction is that with "the interpretation of Being (*Sein*) as the most universal, nothing is said about Being (*Sein*) itself, but only about the way in which metaphysics thinks about the *concept* of Being."⁵³⁸ According to Heidegger, "The essence of nihilism is the history in which there is nothing to Being itself,"⁵³⁹ and that history is the history of Western metaphysics. It is on this point that Heidegger even indicts Nietzsche as a nihilist,⁵⁴⁰ because Nietzsche (like all metaphysicians before) has at the centre of his philosophy the emptiest concept and anything that is empty at its core is finally nihilistic. Thus, Heidegger writes, "Consequently, Nietzsche's metaphysics is not an overcoming of nihilism. It is the ultimate entanglement in nihilism."⁵⁴¹ Certainly, the relevance of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as nihilistic due to its empty conception of Being (*Sein*) will have to be applied to Whitehead's idea of Creativity, which he describes as a component in the Category of the Ultimate.

The second consequence of metaphysical philosophizing detailed in Heidegger's critique is the development of the idea of "what underlies" (*hypokeimenon*) from its Aristotelian formulation as *ousia*, to its Medieval incarnation as *substantia*, to the Modern version of *subject*.⁵⁴² In the completion of metaphysics, Nietzsche is first to recognize the full consequence of the Cartesian subjectivist turn. Heidegger characterizes Nietzsche's position as a "ruthless and extreme anthropomorphizing of the world" that "tears away the last

der metaphysische Begriff von Gott genannt."

⁵³⁶How metaphysics proceeds through its history to distort Being (*das Sein*) from its original Greek experience until the end of metaphysics itself has been extensively detailed in Chapter IV.

⁵³⁷Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 157. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 189, "... der allgemeinste und deshalb leerste Begriff" (and 188) "... über das Sein selbst ließe sich nichts weiter aussagen."

⁵³⁸*Ibid.*, "... durch die Auslegung des Seins als des Allgemeinen wird über das Sein selbst nichts gesagt, sondern nur über die Art, wie die Metaphysik über den *Begriff* des Sein denkt."

⁵³⁹*Ibid.*, 201 // 304, "... das Wesen des Nihilismus ist die Geschichte, in der es mit dem Sein selbst nichts ist."

⁵⁴⁰Cf. Chapter IV, section VI: Nietzsche.

⁵⁴¹*Ibid.*, 203 // 306, "Nietzsches Metaphysik ist demnach keine Überwindung des Nihilismus. Sie ist die Letzte Verstrickung in den Nihilismus."

⁵⁴²Heidegger, "Metaphysics as History of Being," 26-32, the subsection entitled, "The Transformation of Hypokeimenon to Subiectum." // *Nietzsche* II, 391-397, the subsection entitled, "Der Wandel des ὑποκείμενον zum subiectum."

illusions of the fundamental metaphysical position; it takes the positing of man as *subiectum* seriously.”⁵⁴³ Given Whitehead’s Reformed Subjectivist Principle, which takes its inspiration from Modernity, but extends subjectivity beyond the human realm, it will be incumbent upon us to determine if Whitehead is also specifically indicted by Heidegger’s criticism of Nietzsche. To this end, we should be clear about the nature of Heidegger’s critique. Nietzsche’s “extreme anthropomorphizing of the world” means, according to Heidegger, that,

Nietzsche most unequivocally certifies the rootedness of his fundamental metaphysical position in the *cogito sum*. ‘Truth’ and ‘Being’ mean the same for Nietzsche: specifically, they mean what is established in representing and securing.⁵⁴⁴

Therefore, when considering Whitehead’s Reformed Subjectivist Principle, we will have to determine whether or not: (i) it is rooted in the *cogito sum*, and (ii) it is derived from a concern to secure the certainty of representation amidst a multitude of perspectives and thus equates “Truth and “Being.”

Although Whitehead never considers Being (*Sein*) as such and on this point is generally indicted in Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics, the specifics of Whitehead’s metaphysics remain to be considered. According to Heidegger, the exclusive focus upon entities leads metaphysics to forget or obscure Being (*Sein*). The full effects of this course of thinking come to fruition in Nietzsche’s philosophy, which ends metaphysics by executing the final prefigured possibility. This would lead one who accepts Heidegger’s critique to easily locate Whitehead as merely another metaphysician who is repeating past mistakes instead of shedding himself of onto-theology in order to commence with thinking. Instead, it will be demonstrated that, due to Whitehead’s concern with entities as entities, his metaphysics does not divide entities into existence and essence; nor does it search for *the* explanatory principle (*archē*); nor is God understood as *causa prima* and therefore *causa sui*; nor is Creativity an empty concept and therefore nihilistic; nor is his metaphysics rooted in the *cogito sum*; nor is he guilty of anthropomorphizing the world in order to secure certainty amongst multiple perspectives. Whitehead’s metaphysics does not lead away from Being (*Sein*); rather, it may very well provide an occasion for Being (*Sein*).

Section II: Whitehead and an Occasion for Being

Since, according to Heidegger, an exclusive concern with the guiding

⁵⁴³Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. III, 155. // *Nietzsche*, erster Band, 590-591, “... diese rücksichtslose und ins Äußerste gestellte Vermenschlichung der Welt wirft die letzten Illusionen der neuzeitlichen metaphysischen Grundstellung auf die Seite und macht Ernst mit der Ansetzung des Menschen als *subiectum*.”

⁵⁴⁴*Ibid.*, vol. IV, 131. // zweiter Band, 163, “Nietzsche am eindeutigsten die Verwurzelung seiner metaphysischen Grundstellung im *cogito sum*. »Wahrheit« und »Sein« besagen für Nietzsche dasselbe: nämlich das im Vorstellen und Sicherstellen Festgemachte.”

question of Western metaphysics, “What is an entity?” (*Was ist das Seiende?/τι το ον?*), leads to the oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*), a *prima facie* case could plausibly be made that Whitehead too is indicted in this analysis. As explored in Chapter I, Whitehead is interested in answering the question, “What is the nature of entities?”⁵⁴⁵ This question certainly seems to be the same as Aristotle’s.⁵⁴⁶ Despite its relative simplicity, this question necessitates metaphysical investigation because the search to “conceive of a complete [*παντελής*] fact”⁵⁴⁷ extends beyond the actual fact to that which is explanatory of it. This is what all metaphysics have sought, in their various systems, and Whitehead is no exception.

Although Whitehead⁵⁴⁸ makes no mention of the Ontological Difference, there can be no doubt that, like previous metaphysicians, Whitehead’s exclusive concern with entities means the Ontological Difference is present, but ignored, in his metaphysics. Western metaphysics’ neglect of this difference as difference has meant that it pursued a path of prefigured possibilities contained in Aristotle’s metaphysical formulation and ultimately realized by Nietzsche. Whitehead places himself squarely within this tradition by constantly referring to the various philosophers, from Plato to Bergson, whose ideas he often times embraces and at other times revises for his metaphysical purposes. Whitehead takes as much from the tradition as he contributes and, like past reformers, it is in his contributions that he distinguishes himself.

Inspired by the “radical empiricism” of William James, Whitehead in effect performs the *epochē* advocated by phenomenologists, including Heidegger. “To the things themselves” rings throughout Whitehead’s metaphysics as much as it does in the writings of Husserl and Heidegger.⁵⁴⁹ In Whitehead’s case, the

⁵⁴⁵Cf., Chapter I, p. 18.

⁵⁴⁶Leclerc, *Whitehead’s Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition*, 17-20.

⁵⁴⁷Whitehead, *Adventure of Ideas*, 158.

⁵⁴⁸Charles Malik, *The Metaphysics of Time in the Philosophies of A.N. Whitehead and M. Heidegger* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1937), 261. Whitehead supervised this dissertation in which Malik writes, “But a phenomenon, as that which is to be shown or displayed or elicited or brought out, is not this or that being, but *the being (Sein)* of these beings (*des Seienden*). And it is this *Sein* which, on account of a peculiar character of human nature which Heidegger will later carefully delimit and point out, has a constant tendency to get itself hidden and covered up, and which therefore requires constantly to be brought out and shown.” Here Malik clearly identifies the difference between entities (*Seienden*) and Being (*Sein*) and refers to the forgetting or oblivion of Being (*Seinsvergessenheit*). Since this dissertation was written some eight years after the publication of *Process and Reality* it is difficult to assess how much Malik’s treatment of Heidegger could have influenced a mature Whitehead.

⁵⁴⁹Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd Rev. ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 73-74. For example, he writes, “There is, in fact, a striking parallel in the diagnosis of this scientific crisis in the nearly simultaneous but independent work of Husserl and Whitehead, although there is no evidence for mutual or one-sided influence: Whitehead, in *The Concept of Nature* (1920) and again in *Science and the Modern World* (1926), found the source of both the grandeurs and miseries of modern science in the “bifurcation” which it had introduced between a merely objective and a merely mentalistic or

desire to account for the diversity of human discourses, whether it is common sense experience, scientific, religious, or social, within a generally descriptive framework is the motivation for his project. That is, rather than attempt a reduction of all human endeavours to a singular explanatory method, Whitehead, taking these areas of human endeavours as non-reducible stubborn facts, seeks an expansion of our understanding that would see them maintain their integrity *and* be brought into relation with each other. It is in this service that Whitehead develops his metaphysics, which in turn, provides a novel examination of entities (*Seienden*/the ontic) that, instead of leading away from, or to the oblivion of, Being (*Sein*), may allow for an occasion of Being. In order to demonstrate this claim, the three metaphysical principles (Reformed Subjectivist, Ontological, and Process) and the four metaphysical concepts (actual entities, eternal objects, God, Creativity) will be re-examined in light of the Later Heidegger's critique. Before this re-examination, however, some general characteristics of Whitehead's metaphysics need to be considered.

The novel analysis of entities provided by Whitehead arises from his commitment to a method of general description. It is this method that sets Whitehead apart from, at least, Enlightenment philosophy, if not the entire tradition. Given his immersion in the Enlightenment tradition, the previous statement is rather paradoxical and therefore difficult to explain. Although Whitehead devotes much time to extensive analyses of passages from John Locke's work in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead also refers to Descartes, Newton, Hume, and Kant. It is in his attention to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where Whitehead finds that "any one of these writers is one-sided in his presentation of the groundwork of experience, but as a whole they give a general presentation which dominates the development of subsequent philosophy."⁵⁵⁰ Whitehead also admits that he had anticipated a long study of the differences among those listed above; however, "A careful examination of their exact statements disclosed that in the main the philosophy of organism is a recurrence to pre-Kantian modes of thought."⁵⁵¹ It is here, on the first page of his preface to *Process and Reality*, that Whitehead separates himself from the culmination of Enlightenment philosophy. In his penchant for understatement, Whitehead claims he is philosophizing in a pre-Kantian mode. This might lead one to think Whitehead is simply reverting to either a pre-critical empiricism (Locke, Hume)

private branch of nature. Similarly Husserl, in his last work on *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* (1936), blamed the contemporary crisis on the split between Galilean objectivism and Cartesian subjectivism. This does not mean that Whitehead and Husserl also agreed on the therapy. But there is enough in Whitehead's appeal to a return to the realism of immediate "prehension" as the matrix of all scientific abstractions to make a comparison with some of Husserl's last and particularly fertile ideas appropriate." Also see, Ervin Laszlo, *Beyond Scepticism and Realism: A Constructive Exploration of Husserlian and Whiteheadian Methods of Inquiry* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

⁵⁵⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xi/v-vi.

⁵⁵¹*Ibid.*, xi (vi).

or to a pre-critical rationalism (Descartes, Leibniz), when in fact neither is the case. Whitehead does not accept Kant's rationally inspired solution to the rationalist-empiricist debate, notably the grounding of the possibility of experience in *a priori* synthetic judgements; instead, Whitehead, taking his cue from radical empiricism, offers his own solution.

In its simplest expression, Whitehead develops a metaphysics based upon experience; rather than the possibility of experience. In other words, Whitehead's transcendental analysis is *a posteriori* as it is garnered through a descriptive generalization rather than arrived at through the delineation of the *a priori* knowledge contained in the faculty of reason. This means there is no *a priori* determination of experience or objects or principles. Whitehead's method, although mathematically inspired, is not modelled upon the Cartesian geometric-deductive procedure, which, as demonstrated in Heidegger's analysis, also underpinned Kant's methodology. Whitehead's mathematically influenced method is more akin to an algebraic model in which functions are developed through a process of postulating, testing, and revising as necessary, in order to demonstrate their adequacy.⁵⁵² When one is not concerned with the *a priori* guarantor of the certainty of accurate representation of phenomena to the faculty of reason in order to secure truth, but instead develops a philosophy of organism based upon aesthetic experience⁵⁵³ which leads to the formulation of hypothetical

⁵⁵²James Bradley, "Whitehead, Heidegger, and the Paradoxes of the New," *Process Studies* 20, no. 3 (1991): 127-150, for an excellent analysis of Whitehead's mathematical, but algebraic, oriented philosophizing.

⁵⁵³The term "aesthetic experience" comes from Whitehead. On page 127-128 he defines it as "feeling arising out of the realization of contrast under identity." Besides this basic functional definition, this term requires further clarification due to the association of "aesthetic" with beauty. The Greek root, *aisthētes*, meaning, "One who perceives" is included in Whitehead's use of aesthetic. This comes as no surprise since the introduction of "percipients" in his earlier philosophy of science was transformed into "actual entities" in his metaphysics. As part of his Reformed Subjectivist Principle, all entities have a subjective aspect that entails, in the very least, a certain type of perception or feeling, namely, "prehensions." These are not the clear and distinct objects of presentational immediacy found in conscious subjects. They are the components, inherited from the actual and possible immediately antecedent world, that finally form the actual entity. Prehensions, however, are not passively received by already formed entities. They are ordered or valued in accordance with the subjective aim of the concurring entity. According to Whitehead, "Value is inherent in actuality itself. To be an actual entity is to have self-interest. This self-interest is a feeling of self-valuation; it is an emotional tone. ... It is the ultimate enjoyment of being actual" (*Religion in the Making*, 100). In a later work we find, "Another consequence is that actuality is in its essence composition. Power is the compulsion of composition. ... The essence of power is the drive towards aesthetic worth for its own sake. All power is derivative from this fact of composition attaining worth for itself" (*Modes of Thought*, 119). This means "aesthetic experience," for Whitehead, also includes the possibility of the experience of beauty, goodness, and the sublime. For example, he writes, "This line of thought extends Kant's argument. He saw the necessity for God in the moral order. But with his metaphysics rejected the argument from the cosmos. The metaphysical doctrine, here expounded, finds the foundations of the world in the aesthetic experience, rather than – as with Kant – in the cognitive and conceptive experience. All order is therefore aesthetic order, and the moral order is merely certain aspects of aesthetic order. The actual world is the outcome of the aesthetic order,

explanatory categories, one's metaphysics is not continuous with the history of Western Enlightenment philosophy. In other words, Whitehead breaks from Western metaphysics at the same point that Heidegger sees its crystallization. Once Kant solves the rationalist-empiricist problem there is nothing left for Western metaphysics to do but play out the two remaining possibilities, represented respectively by German Idealism and Friedrich Nietzsche. Whitehead does not accept Kant's solution, thus his break from Kant⁵⁵⁴ is from the path leading to metaphysics' completion. There is no doubt that Whitehead's path is also metaphysical, but it is, nonetheless, possibly a path leading to Being (*Sein*) rather than away from it.

Whitehead's point of departure from the Enlightenment, although concealed in philosophical language, is a move away from reason, as "the most stiff-necked adversary of thought"⁵⁵⁵ towards an aesthetic philosophy informed by reason whose task "is to fathom the deeper depths of the many-sidedness of things," all the while knowing that "however far our gaze penetrates, there are always heights beyond which block our vision."⁵⁵⁶ At the centre of Whitehead's metaphysics we do not find *the* rationally formulated explanatory principle, e.g., the principle of sufficient reason; instead, there is the concreting actual entity. This concreting is a process co-originating from the physically antecedent actual world and from the mentally antecedent possible world of eternal objects (as relevantly ordered in God's primordial nature) which is internally determined by a subjective aim and is externally free.⁵⁵⁷ According to Whitehead, "The subjective aim is seeking width with its contrasts, within the unity of general design."⁵⁵⁸ This is because "an actual fact is a fact of aesthetic experience. All aesthetic experience is feeling arising out of the realization of contrast under

and the aesthetic order is derived from the immanence of God" (*Religion in the Making*, 104-105). Here Whitehead "builds in," at the most fundamental level of existence the possibility of the realization of ethics and the experience of beauty. In a similar fashion he does the same when he includes a mental pole in actual entities that provides for the possibility of consciousness in more complex organisms. Thus, my characterization of Whitehead's metaphysics as based upon "aesthetic experience," attempts to capture the fullness of his meaning as it ranges from the slightest preference, to beauty, to the sublime, and certainly includes, but not exclusively, sensory experience.

⁵⁵⁴Given the fundamental differences between Whitehead and Kant, it is difficult to conceive of any beneficial comparisons even in their respective treatments of the aesthetic; however, for argument to the contrary see, George R. Lucas, Jr., *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead: An Analytic and Historical Assessment of Process Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY: 1989), 73-92. Also see, James Bradley, "Transcendentalism and Speculative Realism," *Process Studies* 23 (1994): 155-191, and, Lewis S. Ford, "Structural Affinities Between Kant and Whitehead," *International Philosophical Quarterly* XXXVIII/3 (September 1998): 233-244.

⁵⁵⁵Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'," 112. // "Nietzsches Wort »Gott ist tot«, 267, "Vernunft die hartnäckigste Widersacherin des Denkens ist."

⁵⁵⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 342/519.

⁵⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 27/41. "(ix) *The Category of Freedom and Determination*. The concreting of each individual actual entity is internally determined and is externally free."

⁵⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 279/426.

identity.”⁵⁵⁹ From this doctrine Whitehead postulates his Categorical Obligations which constitute the general description of any actual entity’s concrescence.

As stated, metaphysical explanation for Whitehead comes in the form of descriptive generalization. Because descriptive generalization is hypothetical in character, there is nothing in Whitehead’s metaphysical explanations that introduce necessity. All the categories of existence, explanation, obligation and even the ultimate are Whitehead’s hypothesis as to the final order of reality. The success of which is not to be judged by how clear and certain his first principles are, indeed Whitehead’s methodology eschews such things,⁵⁶⁰ but is found in how adequately they account for our diverse areas of knowledge and experience. According to Whitehead, such a project can be undertaken because our primary mode of experiencing the world is in the form of causal efficacy which informs us of a basic world order; otherwise, Whitehead would not have attempted a *cosmology*. As a part of this insight Whitehead develops his Ontological Principle, which states “no actual entity, then no reason.”⁵⁶¹ The reason introduced into Whitehead’s metaphysics is not, as stated, the principle of sufficient reason that requires every effect to have a singularly sufficient cause; however, Whitehead’s Ontological Principle could be considered as a weaker version of the principle of sufficient reason, insofar as, Whitehead recognizes that his ultimate metaphysical explanation lies in his postulation of actual entities. Whitehead is not in search of some ultimate plan that imbues reality with divine reason, as Heidegger thinks the principle of sufficient reason does in the history of Western metaphysics, but merely seeks an interpretive framework that remains open.

The core of Whitehead’s metaphysics is aesthetic experience, from which rational interpretation follows. This means, for Whitehead, that the light of reason only flickers dimly “in a late derivative phase of complex integrations” and therefore “those elements of our experience which stand out clearly and distinctly in our consciousness are not its basic facts; they are the derivative modifications which arise in the process.”⁵⁶² The contrast to Enlightenment metaphysics cannot be greater, which is why at this point traditional philosophical language begins to fail. Whitehead is suggesting that there is a fundamental experience of being in the world which is aesthetically guided and from which our higher cognitive abilities (and the pre-occupations associated with these, e.g. art, philosophy, science, religion) arise. Everything is not immediately revealed in the eternal light of reason; there is no metaphysics of presence in Whitehead. Instead, the process is tentative and continually changing as new ideas about the world emerge

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 280/427.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 8/12. Whitehead writes, “The verification of the rationalistic scheme is to be sought in its general success, and not in the peculiar certainty, or initial clarity, of its first principles.”

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19/28.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, 162/245.

and old ones are forgotten or no longer ring true.⁵⁶³ It is upon this aesthetic basis that Whitehead asserts “that Beauty is a wider, more fundamental, notion than Truth” and that the “teleology of the Universe is directed to the production of Beauty.”⁵⁶⁴ It is with these general characteristics of Whitehead’s thought in mind that we can now turn to a re-examination of his three metaphysical principles and four metaphysical concepts.

Whitehead’s Three Metaphysical Principles

(i) The Principle of Process

In light of Heidegger’s history of the compounded errors of Western metaphysics, the first of Whitehead’s principles to be reconsidered must be the Principle of Process. The first misinterpretation of Being (*Sein*) comes in the form of presence and permanence, which according to Heidegger, manifests itself in the division of entities (*Seienden*) into Whatness and Thatness. The Whatness-Thatness distinction is the first step away from Being (*Sein*) leading down the path to the inevitable end of metaphysics. The issue, for Whitehead, is whether he, along with the rest of Western metaphysics, also takes this first step away from Being (*Sein*). Whitehead’s clearest statement on this issue is offered in the Principle of Process, which states, “That *how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming.’ This is the ‘principle of process.’”⁵⁶⁵

Before proceeding with the evaluation, it is important to note that Whitehead was not unfamiliar with the type of thinking delineated by Heidegger. Although not using Heidegger’s terms, Whitehead’s identification of the fallacies of misplaced concreteness and simply location indicate the philosophical tradition’s preference for experience in the mode of presentational immediacy. Whitehead was well aware of the bias for permanently present, self-contained entities, as they have a certain utilitarian value, but, according to his criticisms of the tradition, ultimately fail to reveal much of the depth of reality.

If one were to retain the language of existence (Thatness) and essence (Whatness) when describing Whitehead’s Principle of Process, it would be clear that neither existence nor essence is privileged over the other, nor does one precede the other. The “being,” i.e., essence, of an actual entity is constituted by its “becoming,” i.e., existence. To rephrase this in Heidegger’s terms, *that* entities are, according to Whitehead, is *what* entities are. Although Whitehead, acknowledging the Western metaphysical tradition, is willing to continue

⁵⁶³Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 131. On the topic of religious doctrine, Whitehead says, “But if the same dogma be used intolerantly so as to check the employment of other modes of analyzing the subject matter, then, for all its truth, it will be doing the work of a falsehood.”

⁵⁶⁴Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 265.

⁵⁶⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 23/34-35.

distinguishing between existence and essence for the sake of analysis, his conception of entities does not engage in the Whatness-Thatness division of previous metaphysics. The theme of ontological reciprocity as explored throughout Part I, remains operative at all times in Whitehead's system. The traditional bifurcation of reality into existence and essence, with its resulting problems, will not be admitted by Whitehead. Instead, he posits an analysis of entities whereby their process of existing is indeed their essence. The issue is no longer whether essence precedes existence or existence precedes essence, for Whitehead, the essence of existence is to be found in existence itself, because the concept of becoming is more inclusive than that of being. The existence Whitehead delineates is one in which its reality is constituted by its process. Process is reality. Reality is a product of becoming, not being itself.

As previously demonstrated,⁵⁶⁶ this does not mean Whitehead collapses existence into fluency. His concept of actuality, which involves both a fluent subjective aspect and a static objective aspect, allows for permanence as well as presence in his metaphysics. Unlike Aristotle, however, Whitehead's account of permanence does not arise from a desire to account for that which (permanently) underlies entities; instead, Whitehead's desire is to account for stability amidst fluency and, conversely, to account for fluency amidst stability. This comes from his commitment to avoid separating the real, or "really real," from that which is experienced, usually named "appearance." Thus the Principle of Process does not divide entities into existence and essence and neither does it then designate the essence of entities to be more real than their existential appearance.

The only other evaluation of the applicability of Heidegger's criticism to Whitehead comes from Raymond J. Devetterre's article "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique."⁵⁶⁷ In this article Devetterre indeed claims that Whitehead does make the existence-essence division in entities. Devetterre indicates his agreement with Whitehead, that the experiences (prehensions) of actual entities constitute their essence, when he quotes Whitehead as saying, the concrescence of an actual entity is "an act of experience arising out of data. It is the process of 'feeling' the many data, so as to absorb them into the unity of one individual 'satisfaction.'"⁵⁶⁸ According to Devetterre, an actual entity's prehensions "are not sufficient to make the entity actual, to make it 'be.' Something else has to account for its existence."⁵⁶⁹ This something else is identified by Devetterre as "Creativity," because it is the "ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality."⁵⁷⁰

Whitehead's understanding of Creativity will certainly be given its due in our re-examination of his four metaphysical concepts; however, a few remarks are

⁵⁶⁶Chapter II, pp. 51-53.

⁵⁶⁷Raymond J Devetterre, "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique," *Cross Currents* 30 (1980): 309-322.

⁵⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 316. Quoting Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 40/65.

⁵⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁰*Ibid.* Quoting Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 31/47.

warranted here in light of Devetterre's assertion. There is no doubt that "Creativity," "many," and "one," according to Whitehead, are the "three notions [that] complete the Category of the Ultimate" which "replaces Aristotle's category of 'primary substance.'"⁵⁷¹ Nor is there any doubt that "'Creativity' is another rendering of the Aristotelian 'matter,' and of the modern 'neutral stuff'" and that "Creativity is without a character of its own in exactly the same sense in which the Aristotelian 'matter' is without a character of its own."⁵⁷² Whether these statements indicate that Creativity, when added to prehensions, is the sufficient reason for the actuality of entities is not at all clear, unless Devetterre thinks all the other components present in a concrescence can be accounted for by Creativity.

Whitehead does clearly state that "'actuality' is the fundamental exemplification of composition"⁵⁷³ and, according to his Ontological Principle, "to search for a *reason* is to search for one or more actual entities."⁵⁷⁴ As explicated in Chapter III, a concrescence, which consists of (i) physical (positive and negative) prehensions, (ii) mental (positive and negative) prehensions, (iii) the initial aim from God and the subjective aim from the entity itself, is not actual until it has achieved satisfaction. The satisfaction of the concrescence is primarily directed by the subjective aim and derived, in accordance with the Ontological Principle, from one or more actual entities. "In its self-creation the actual entity is guided by its ideal of itself as individual satisfaction and as transcendent creator. The enjoyment of this ideal is the 'subjective aim,' by reason of which the actual entity is a determinate process." The "determinate process" concludes in the entity's satisfaction, "Which constitutes the completion of the actual togetherness of the discrete components."⁵⁷⁵ Certainly, for every actual existent the Category of the Ultimate holds true, but this does not entail the division of actual entities into existence and essence. If prehensions are understood as the essence of entities, then the existence of these prehensions is contributed primarily, but not exclusively, from the subjective aims of past actual entities, which may be in some sense attributable to Creativity. Of course, one long standing problem for Whitehead interpreters is how to reconcile Creativity, which is not an actual entity, with the Ontological Principle's requirement that actual entities are the only reasons.

Given the composite nature of actual entities and the respective valuations, devaluations, regressions, etc., that occur within a concrescence, any distinction between essence and existence made by Whitehead, like in so many other instances in *Process and Reality*, would be for analytical purposes and always heavily qualified. The Principle of Process, of which Devetterre makes no mention, is the best general description of the "nature" of reality. To borrow from

⁵⁷¹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21/32.

⁵⁷²*Ibid.*, 31/47.

⁵⁷³*Ibid.*, 147/223.

⁵⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 24/37.

⁵⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 85/130.

Heidegger, in Whitehead's metaphysics: existence exists; it asks not why. How existence exists is what existence is. There are, of course, reasons or explanations for any given particular existent, but there is not some underlying permanent aspect of reality that accounts for all that is present. It is, therefore, problematic to claim that the actuality of actual entities is derived from Creativity.⁵⁷⁶ If, according to the Ontological Principle, actual entities are the only reasons, then, either the causal efficacy that Devetterre wishes to ascribe to Creativity (itself not an actual entity) is nullified or we have discovered an obvious contradiction in Whitehead's own system, another point not considered by Devetterre.

As the "highest generality" and the "universal of universals"⁵⁷⁷ Creativity will be considered in light of Heidegger's remarks about the nihilism inherent in traditional metaphysics' mistaken conception of Being (*Sein*). As relevant to Devetterre's treatment of this issue, it should be noted that God is "at once a creature of creativity and a condition for creativity. It [God] shares this double character with all creatures."⁵⁷⁸ That is, all actual entities, regardless of their grade, are conditioned by Creativity and condition Creativity. The issue is not one of causal efficacy in accordance with the Ontological Principle's search for reasons. "'Creativity,' 'many,' 'one' are the ultimate notions" Whitehead places in the most inclusive Category of the Ultimate. Creativity is the "principle of novelty."⁵⁷⁹ It is not the foundational principle (*archē*) which accounts for everything. It is that which is exemplified in everything that is; it is how (and therefore what) everything is. Unlike traditional principles (*principium*, *archē*) that account for and govern reality with tyrannical unity, Creativity should be understood as a feature of reality itself, as much "caused" by entities as "causing" entities, since actual entities are self-creating. This idea, although not new to Whitehead, is a departure from traditional modes of thought. It is simply the idea, now common through much of science (especially physics and ecology), that there is a reciprocally creative relationship between entities and their environment. For example, gravity does not first exist as an immutable natural

⁵⁷⁶Devetterre, "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique," 316. He writes, "The dichotomy of essence-existence is thus apparent in Whitehead's notion of the actual entity: its existence is the actuality derived from creativity and its essence is its prehensions." It should also be noted that this is a rather curious analysis of existence and essence, which is formulated upon the textual evidence in *Process and Reality*, rather than with reference to any historical treatment of the matter. Given that Whitehead replaces Aristotle's category of "primary substance" with the Category of the Ultimate and defines "'Creativity' [as] another rendering of the Aristotelian 'matter,' and of the modern 'neutral stuff,'" (PR 31), when making his criticism, one would expect Devetterre to identify Creativity as the essence of actual entities rather than their prehensions. If Devetterre had made this criticism instead, it could have had the force of Western metaphysics behind it, as Creativity could have been associated with essence as possibility and prehensions with existence as actuality. Once again a traditional analysis of Whitehead is problematic, because eternal objects, as ordered in the primordial nature of God, supply possibility to the world and prehensions, although existent, are not actualities.

⁵⁷⁷Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 31/47, 21/31.

⁵⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 31/47.

⁵⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 21/31.

law under which everything develops. Gravity itself has occurred along with the rest of the physical universe. Likewise, Gravity will not always exist. As matter becomes less dense and is converted to energy, Gravity itself will weaken and eventually pass from existence.⁵⁸⁰ As goes matter, so goes Gravity. Adopting this insight, Whitehead applies it cosmologically. We have seen this idea of ontological reciprocity consistently throughout Whitehead's metaphysics, specifically in Chapter III's discussion of actual entities when Whitehead told us that, "There is no possibility of a detached, self-contained local existence," and that "the environment with its peculiarities seeps into the group-agitation which we term matter, and the group-agitations extend their character to the environment."⁵⁸¹ It should be no surprise that this central idea is extended throughout Whitehead's metaphysics, including to Creativity. This means, Creativity is as much a product of actual entities, as actual entities are the products of Creativity. Existence exists; Whitehead speculatively describes. In the light of the extension of ontological reciprocity to the relationship between Creativity and actual entities, it is problematic to claim that Creativity represents a division between existence and essence in actual entities. Having demonstrated that the Whatness-Thatness division does not exist in Whitehead's metaphysics, we can now turn to a consideration of whether or not Whitehead is susceptible to the consequence of a division he does not make, namely, the search for the *archē*.

(ii) The Ontological Principle

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Heidegger's critique follows metaphysics from its Whatness-Thatness division to its search for the explanatory principle (*archē* or *principium*). It is difficult to locate a single explanatory principle in Whitehead's metaphysics, due, in no small part, to his refusal to divide entities into existence and essence. Since actuality is the exemplification of composition for Whitehead, there are several factors in any given concrescence that can be delineated as partially explanatory of, in the sense of participating in, an entity. The most obvious generic or generalized explanatory principle is the Ontological Principle, which states, "No actual entity, then no reason" and "that actual entities are the only *reasons*; so that to search for a *reason* is to search for one or more actual entities."⁵⁸² Whether this is Whitehead's version of the Principle of Reason can now be considered.

The difference between the Ontological Principle and Principle of Reason begins with their names. According to Heidegger, the need to account for the existence of all entities, leading to the Principle of Reason, is not derived from the desire to account for any given entity, but to account for existence itself. The desire to account for existence itself leads to the theological component of

⁵⁸⁰It was Einstein's General Theory of Relativity (1905), with which Whitehead was well acquainted, that linked mass and gravity.

⁵⁸¹Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 138.

⁵⁸²*Ibid.*, 19/28, 24/37.

metaphysics as onto-theology. In traditional philosophical language, it is Aristotle's refusal to accept an infinite causal regress, which becomes the theologians' revelation of *creatio ex nihilo*. The result is the introduction of divine reason in order to explain existence itself. The Principle of Reason, in fact, does not explain any given entity, but it rationally accounts for all entities and our ability to know them through our faculty of reason. Thus the Principle of Reason accounts for entities by Reason itself. The Ontological Principle, by contrast, is explanatory of any given entity; it introduces neither divine nor human reason. The Ontological Principle, like the Principle of Reason, is about entities, but, unlike the Principle of Reason, the Ontological Principle remains ontological, i.e., it tells us that entities themselves are the only reasons for entities.

At this point, criticism no longer comes just from Heidegger, but the dominant philosophical tradition. The Ontological Principle, the traditionalists will charge, is a truism⁵⁸³ and therefore explains nothing; furthermore, entities causing entities does not account for *why* there are any entities at all and rather not nothing.⁵⁸⁴ These criticisms come from a philosophical tradition defined by Aristotle and Christian theology. As much as Whitehead's refusal to identify *the* explanatory principle for all entities can be understood as a radical break from this tradition, perhaps leading to interpretations that Whitehead's metaphysics is anarchical (for having no *archē*) or even "chaosmotic,"⁵⁸⁵ it would be better to think of Whitehead as within a pre-Aristotelian Platonic tradition. This is where Whitehead draws inspiration from Plato's *Timaeus*, in which matter is posited as a primordial existent along with a Demiurge who shapes it. Recalling Chapter II, Section II, Whitehead identified Plato's *Timaeus* as one of the competing cosmologies in Western thought; the other cosmology came from the seventeenth century and was authored by Galileo, Descartes, Newton, and Locke. Although both of these cosmologies, with their respective strengths, require mediation and modification, according to Whitehead, here he is clearly siding with the Platonic model and accepts an infinite causal regress. *The* question of philosophy contains a hidden premise, namely, that an infinite causal regress is not acceptable as a legitimate explanation for why there is something rather than nothing. It is upon

⁵⁸³The statement "entities cause entities" is a generalized truism, where "entities" stands for any specific entity, thus it is just as unhelpful to say, "entities cause entities" as "elephants cause elephants" or "people cause people." These types of statements do not offer an explanation of the cause of entities, elephants, or people, themselves.

⁵⁸⁴This is, of course, *the* question of philosophy, according to Heidegger. It is also interesting that these charges demonstrate Whitehead's break with the traditional search for reason, in light of Devetterre's assertions that a Heideggerian analysis would indeed find the Ontological Principle "to be a causal ground" (Devetterre, 319).

⁵⁸⁵See for instance, Catherine Keller, "Process and Chaosmos: The Whiteheadian Fold in the Discourse of Difference," 55-72, and Tim Clark, "A Whiteheadian Chaosmos? Process Philosophy from a Deleuzian Perspective," 191-208, in *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernisms*, eds. Catherine Keller and Anne Daniel (Albany: SUNY, 2002). The term "chaosmos," was employed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who in turn took the word from James Joyce.

this hidden premise that the *causa prima* is sought and then identified as the *causa sui*. Whitehead, by contrast, adopting the Platonic model of the Demiurge co-creating the world with matter, never considers *the* question of philosophy and therefore does not introduce *theos* into his metaphysics as *causa prima* and *sui*. In other words, Whitehead's metaphysics is not onto-theological in its constitution.

Whitehead's disagreement with the predominant metaphysical model is evidenced when he writes,

This belief in a final order, popular in religious and philosophical thought, seems to be due to the prevalent fallacy that all types of seriality necessarily involves terminal instances. It follows that Tennyson's phrase, '...one far-off divine event/To which the whole creation moves,' presents a fallacious conception of the universe.'⁵⁸⁶

Other than asserting that the search for terminal points to a serial is fallacious, when applied to the universe, Whitehead does not offer any direct argument for his position.

Indirectly, Whitehead makes a cumulative case throughout his metaphysics. Although the search for a *causa prima* as *causa sui* is never an issue for Whitehead, he does consider the idea of *causa sui* in relation to entities. Whitehead's search for self-causing entities does come from a desire to locate the terminals of certain types of serials, namely, concrescences; rather than from any intention to delineate a final order.⁵⁸⁷ Once again departing from tradition, Whitehead identifies actual entities as self-creating entities and, as such, they also contribute to the self-creation of the world.⁵⁸⁸ This is why to search for a reason is to search for an actual entity; they are the only reasons. Actual entities as self-creating creatures are explanatory of themselves and the world. The Ontological Principle is far from a "conflation of logical reasons with real causes," as Devetterre claims.⁵⁸⁹ Whitehead's actual entities are the real causes, even of

⁵⁸⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 111/169.

⁵⁸⁷Certainly one explanation for Whitehead's departure from traditional philosophical analyses would be the influence of modern science, in which statistical probability replaced the classical notion of physical laws and causality. That is, while there can be inferences from subsequent events to antecedent ones, the subsequent events cannot be predicted *exactly* from antecedent events. What can be predicted from antecedent conditions is a range of predictable events organized in terms of probability.

⁵⁸⁸Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 85/130, Whitehead writes, "The world is self-creative; and the actual entity as self-creating creature passes into its immortal function of part-creator of the transcendent world. In its self-creation the actual entity is guided by its ideal of itself as individual satisfaction and as transcendent creator. The enjoyment of this ideal is the 'subjective aim,' by reason of which the actual entity is a determinate process." Further on page 255 (390) he says, "They are the creation of their own creature. The point to be noticed is that the actual entity, in a state of process during which it is not fully definite, determines its own ultimate definiteness."

⁵⁸⁹Devetterre, "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique," 319.

logical reasons.

While the Ontological Principle does not account for why there is something rather than nothing, it does, generally, account for why things are the way they are. This type of explanation will not satisfy the traditional metaphysician, but then again, the traditional metaphysician obscures Being (*Sein*) by dividing entities into existence and essence and then by searching for *the* explanatory principle, which finally introduces God into the constitution of metaphysics. Whitehead's Ontological Principle does not follow from an existence-essence division of entities and it does not introduce God as *causa prima* and *sui*.⁵⁹⁰ In Whitehead's metaphysics, actuality as the exemplification of composition is at worst, from a Heideggerian standpoint, poly-archival.⁵⁹¹ There are several contributing factors, all derived from actual entities, in any given actual entity. Of course, Whitehead is the first to admit that any explanatory principle he employs is arrived at through an abstraction from the world and is therefore dependent upon and conditioned by the world. What Whitehead is attempting to capture is an adequate analysis of the interconnectedness of reality, which involves many facets: actualities, possibilities, God, Creativity, etc. Every one of these facets is necessary, but none alone is sufficient to explain why entities are the way they are.

Since Whitehead neither divides entities nor seeks an explanatory principle dependent upon God as *causa prima* and *sui*, one cannot claim that his metaphysics commits the same metaphysical errors as those detailed in Heidegger's critique. It has already been granted that Whitehead's focus is exclusively upon entities (*Seienden*), but his course of thought does not lead him to develop an idea of the Being of beings (*Sein des Seienden*), which is where traditional metaphysics halts its inquiry. Whitehead's acceptance of an infinite causal regress and his resulting refusal to entertain *the* question of philosophy is leading him to a dynamic, interdependent formulation of reality, conceived of as an open rather than closed system. Whitehead's failure to consider Being (*Sein*) is different from those traditional metaphysicians who can never consider Being (*Sein*). Their metaphysics only realize the prefigured possibilities of metaphysics by adding to and further compounding the distortions of Being (*Sein*). Instead of furthering metaphysics' obscuring of Being (*Sein*), Whitehead is offering a

⁵⁹⁰The Ontological Principle does introduce God insofar as God is an actual entity.

⁵⁹¹It is interesting to note that in *Being and Time*, 170/131, the earlier Heidegger writes, "But the fact that something primordial is underivable does not rule out the possibility that a multiplicity of characteristics of Being may be constitutive for it. If these show themselves, then existentially they are equiprimordial. The phenomenon of *equiprimordiality* of constitutive items has often been disregarded in ontology, because of a methodologically unrestrained tendency to derive everything and anything from some simple 'primal ground.'" // "Die Unableitbarkeit eines Ursprünglichen schließt aber eine Mannigfaltigkeit der dafür konstitutiven Seinscharaktere nicht aus. Zeigen sich solche, dann sind sie existenzial gleichursprünglich. Das Phänomen der *Gleichursprünglichkeit* der konstitutiven Momente ist in der Ontologie oft mißachtet worden zufolge einer methodisch ungezügelter Tendenz zur Herunftsnachweisung von allem und jedem aus einem einfachen »Urgrund«."

metaphysical account of entities (*Seienden*) free from previous philosophical mistakes, which leads us towards the possibility of Being (*Sein*), by developing an open system that refuses to accept its own investigation as final. Where traditional metaphysics arrives at the Being of beings and proclaims its task complete, Whitehead remains tentative in his formulations seeking constant revision.

(iii) The Reformed Subjectivist Principle

The last of Whitehead's metaphysical principles to be re-examined in the light of Heidegger's critique is the Reformed Subjectivist Principle. Heidegger's criticism of Nietzsche's Will to Power as a "ruthless and extreme anthropomorphizing of the world"⁵⁹² indicates that Heidegger is not just criticizing substance-based metaphysics. Indeed, Heidegger traces the development of the idea of "that which underlies" (*hypokeimenon*) from *ousia* to *substantia* and *subiectum* to the subject of Modern metaphysics. The subjectivism of Modernity, fully realized in Nietzsche, further obscures Being (*Sein*) because the *cogito sum* becomes the standard by which all other entities must be judged. As Heidegger tells us, Being (*Sein*) is finally thought of as Truth, when Nietzsche introduces the Will to Power (the final version of the *cogito sum*) as the means of securing and representing.⁵⁹³ There is no doubt that Whitehead's Reformed Subjectivist Principle is inspired by the subjectivism of modern metaphysics; the question remains, however, whether Whitehead is indicted in the tradition or, as with the Ontological Principle and the Principle of Process, he makes a break from it.

Raymond Devetterre is convinced that the Reformed Subjectivist Principle implicates Whitehead in Heidegger's critique. Modern metaphysics continues the "oblivion of Being by thinking in terms of notions such as thinking, desiring, willing, feeling, etc., that characterize subjectivity."⁵⁹⁴ Although his characterization of Heidegger's critique is accurate, Devetterre offers little more than this statement, thus claiming Whitehead is a participant in this Modernist metaphysical tradition without conducting a thorough investigation.

One of the most difficult aspects of Whitehead's thought with which to come to terms, especially when contrasted with the later Heidegger's, is his reliance upon previous philosophical innovations. Where Whitehead sees novel insight, to be used as inspiration and modified to suit his own philosophical purposes, others see Whitehead as unqualifiedly accepting dated and problematic ideas, whether it is "Platonic eternal objects" or "Cartesian subjectivism." This is understandable when Whitehead makes statements like, "The philosophy of

⁵⁹²Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 3, 155. // *Nietzsche*, erster Band, 590. "... diese rücksichtslose und ins Äußerste gestellte Vermenschlichung der Welt...."

⁵⁹³See p. 207-8.

⁵⁹⁴Raymond Devetterre, "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique," 320.

organism entirely accepts the subjectivist bias of modern philosophy,”⁵⁹⁵ which Devetterre rightly mentions in his article.⁵⁹⁶ To separate such assertions from the context of Whitehead’s thought is indeed to commit the Fallacy of Simple Location. Whitehead’s broadest, and often most controversial, assertions are always qualified. This is certainly the case with the Reformed Subjectivist Principle.

The major qualification Whitehead places upon the Reformed Subjectivist Principle is that it is “merely an alternative statement to the principle of relativity (the fourth Category of explanation). This category states that it belongs to the nature of a ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming.’”⁵⁹⁷ The acceptance of the “subjectivist bias of modern philosophy” does not entail, for Whitehead, the positing of non-extended thinking subjects and extended objects. Both the Reformed Subjectivist Principle and Whitehead’s objection to vacuous actuality, considered in Chapter II, make this clear. Vacuous actuality is the result of the maintenance of categories no longer applicable to the subjectivity introduced by Modern philosophy. In turn, vacuous actuality stands in contrast to subjectivity, which is conceived entirely in terms of conscious, thinking subjects, i.e., humanity. “These categories are not wrong, but they deal with abstractions unsuitable for metaphysical use.”⁵⁹⁸ The category of substance-quality, which Modernity reconfigures as subject-object, is rejected by Whitehead as he redefines the relationship, with the Reformed Subjectivist Principle, as subject-superject.

The subject-superject analysis of actual entities is in accordance with his assertion that “apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness.”⁵⁹⁹ Far from being an uncritical embrace of Modern subjectivism, this statement embodies Whitehead’s alternative. In Whitehead’s metaphysics, knowledge of objects is not garnered by inquisitive subjects. He proposes a schema that understands reality as the interconnected experiences of everything that is. As previously discussed, actual entities have a subject character during their concrescences which ends in their satisfaction and, once subjectively complete, these entities become available for other concrescences through their projected superject character.⁶⁰⁰ This is how Whitehead can affirm “Hume’s doctrine that nothing is to be received into the philosophical scheme which is not discoverable as an element of subjective experience.”⁶⁰¹ Again, this

⁵⁹⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 166/253.

⁵⁹⁶Raymond Devetterre, “Whitehead’s Metaphysics and Heidegger’s Critique,” 319.

⁵⁹⁷Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 166/252.

⁵⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 167/253.

⁵⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 167/254.

⁶⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 45/71. “This is the doctrine of the emergent unity of the superject. An actual entity is to be conceived both as a subject presiding over its own immediacy of becoming, and a superject which is the atomic creature exercising its function of objective immortality. It has become a ‘being’; and it belongs to the nature of every ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming.’” Cf. Chapter III, Sections I and III.

⁶⁰¹*Ibid.*, 166/253.

is not an acceptance of Modernity's version of substance as subject. Whitehead says, "For if a substance requires nothing but itself in order to exist, its survival can tell no tale as to the survival of the order in its environment."⁶⁰² This is also true of the Modern subject. *It has been shown that both Whitehead and Heidegger understand Modern subjectivism, with its subject-object dichotomy, as a further modification of the substance-quality division.* The philosophical consequence of positing, not just an unrelated essential substance, but a *conscious* unrelated essential substance is the division of the world into that which is certainly known by the subject in her subjectivity and that which is yet to be known, because it is objective. In order to bridge this gulf, the conditions for the possibility of the certain and accurate representation (i.e., true knowledge) of the not yet known must be secured by the knower. Because the knower (subject) is finally unrelated to the not yet known (objects), she must find within herself (e.g., her faculty of reason) that which allows for the possibility of the true knowledge of objects. Like a substance, the Modern subject requires nothing other than herself, because true knowledge is secured *a priori*, and therefore "can tell no tale as to the survival of the order in [her] environment."

Following Heidegger's analysis, this is as true for Descartes as it is for Nietzsche. The Will to Power, which Heidegger characterizes as a ruthless anthropomorphization of the world, is Western metaphysics' final version of the unrelated substance which underlies all entities and thereby provides presence and permanence. Amidst the perspectivalism of *this* world, no longer secured in its truth by the *other* world, the Will to Power provides security and certainty. Humanity remains the measure and measurer, the *cogito sum*, by which all is judged. The Nietzschean overturning of Platonism entails the location of all truth within this world, which is why Heidegger thinks Nietzsche equates Truth and Being (*Sein*). For Nietzsche, according to Heidegger, humanity is "the being before whom all beings are brought and through whom they are justified as such. Thus man comes to be a ground founded on himself, and a measure of the truth concerning beings as such."⁶⁰³ Being (*Sein*) is finally obscured by the last metaphysician who refuses to look beyond this world and who, therefore, is left entangled in entities. Nietzsche's refusal to consider the suprasensuous means, unlike past metaphysicians, that he cannot even misidentify Being (*Sein*) as God. The desire to place all meaning in this world, that is, in entities, is a further restriction of Being (*Sein*) such that the ultimate becomes what the entity securely knows. This is why "'Truth' and 'Being' mean the same for Nietzsche,"⁶⁰⁴ as truth (defined by Nietzsche as that which is secured for representation through the

⁶⁰²*Ibid.*, 205/311.

⁶⁰³Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. III, 239 // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 287, "... derjenige seiende, vor den alles Seiende gebraucht und durch den es als ein solches gerechtfertigt wird. Der Mensch wird so zu dem auf sich selbst gestellten Grund und Maß der Wahrheit über das Seiende als ein solches."

⁶⁰⁴*Ibid.*, vol. IV, 131. // zweiter Band, 163, "»Wahrheit« und »Sein« besagen für Nietzsche."

Will to Power) assumes the place of the ultimate in Nietzsche's metaphysics. The ultimate, whatever it may be identified as, is the metaphysician's idea of the Being of beings rather than an investigation of Being (*Sein*) as Being, according to Heidegger.⁶⁰⁵

Returning to Whitehead, it is clear that his Reformed Subjectivist Principle (or any other aspect of his metaphysics) is not rooted in the *cogito sum* and that he does not equate truth with Being (*Sein*). Although accepting Modernity's subjectivism, Whitehead rejects the *cogito sum* and the related subject-object dichotomy as an unnecessary bifurcation created by the importation of previously held categories that are no longer applicable. Again, there is no light of reason, understood as a conscious unrelated substance, shining at the centre of Whitehead's metaphysics. The *cogito sum* assumes that our basic mode of experience in the world is the perception of clear and distinct presentations. For Whitehead, consciousness slowly arises and flickers only in extremely complex and well ordered societies, which means, the experience of presentational immediacy is a derivative abstraction. In rejecting presentational immediacy as our primary mode of experience, Whitehead breaks with Enlightenment tradition. According to Whitehead, the subjectivity of subjects comes from their concreting experiences, not from some fully formed conscious mind that mysteriously contains clear and distinct ideas. Hence, Whitehead's *Reformed Subjectivist Principle*. Because it is a pre-Kantian reformation, Whitehead is not "ruthlessly anthropomorphizing the world," as Heidegger charged of Nietzsche. Nietzsche's Will to Power, for Heidegger, is an unholy incarnation of the transcendental *ego (cogito sum)* in order to secure truth. Whitehead's *Reformed Subjectivist Principle* is the recognition that the *cogito sum* is merely one, rather abstract, type of experience among a multitude of experiences which constitute the world.

As Modernity becomes exclusively concerned with the certain representation of objects to conscious subjects, i.e., truth, it follows that Whitehead's break with the tradition does not lead him down this same path. Indeed, "In the real world it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true. The importance of truth is that it adds interest."⁶⁰⁶ We cannot forget that Whitehead is developing a metaphysics based upon aesthetic experience rather than cognition. In such a metaphysics truth could never eclipse Being (*Sein*), because it is not given the primacy it has in other systems. Truth as certainty of representation is only an issue for a *cogito sum* based position, which, when its variations are realized, results in Nietzsche's Will to Power as the ultimate subjective securing of truth. By contrast, Whitehead provides a role for truth in his system as that which adds interest. Whitehead can make this assertion because he has posited his basic metaphysical idea as a unit of experience, i.e., the

⁶⁰⁵Of course this last will point will be discussed when we re-examine Whitehead's idea of Creativity.

⁶⁰⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 259/395-396.

actual entity, which arises from its antecedent world. An actual entity, as an inter and intra-related subject, can tell tales of its environment and therefore the relative truth or falsity of an entity's experiences and decisions, both potentially and actually, are felt by the entity. Although truth adds interest, it does not necessitate obligation. In the case of a true proposition, for Whitehead, that proposition remains one among many to be potentially considered by an actual entity or nexus. Often times, as we know from our own experience, truth does not necessarily provide the most interesting option. *In other words, Whitehead leaves his system open for the realization of novelty, true or not, by its constituents. This is a radically different vision from that of Nietzsche whose sole concern was to secure certain truth amidst many perspectives and did so by reducing truth to value as determined by the Will to Power.* Whitehead admits perspectivalism and truth to his metaphysics, but nowhere does truth rely upon cognitive certainty. Truth, like beauty, *eros*, harmony and intensity, helps to lure the world into adventure and novelty.

Although Whitehead clearly rejects the *ego cogito* of Enlightenment philosophy, still one may object that Whitehead's idea of an actual entity nonetheless embodies the productive or synthesizing subject that Heidegger criticizes. It is possible that such an objection comes from either a confusion of terminology or a misreading of Whitehead. The treatment of the concrescence of actual entities by Whitehead certainly involves types of synthesizing and production, but these are not of the same order as those criticized by Heidegger. The actuality produced at the completion of a concrescence is not a clear and distinct object to be represented accurately back to a conscious subject for the sake of truth; rather, it is the coming to be of a "stubborn fact" that contributes to the reality of the world independent of any conscious perception of it. Likewise, the synthesis of prehensions that occurs within a concrescence is not the same type of synthesizing as that done by the *ego cogito* criticized by Heidegger. The "growing together" of non-actual existents in a concrescence, although partial determined by the subjective aim of the actual entity, again, is not what Heidegger means when he criticizes a synthesizing subject. Heidegger's problem with the synthesizing subject is that it is conscious and places itself at the centre of a metaphysical system and becomes the standard to which all is represented and against which all is judged. The end result of this trend within Western metaphysics is the reduction of Being (*Sein*) to truth. More than this, however, this truth is not objective and eternal, but subjective and relative. This is the end of metaphysics in the Nietzschean "worldview" (*Weltanschauung*). In clarifying this terminology any misreading of Whitehead's position also should have been avoided. Namely, Whitehead's acceptance of "subjectivity" is not an acceptance of the productive or synthesizing subject that Heidegger criticizes in traditional metaphysics.

Having reconsidered the three metaphysical principles and demonstrated how Whitehead does not commit the same errors in his investigation of entities as past philosophers, we should now re-examine the four metaphysical concepts.

Due to the complexity of Whitehead's metaphysics, it has been necessary to introduce some of the relevant Heideggerian criticisms in our treatment of the metaphysical principles. There remain, however, several critical points to consider as we place actual entities, eternal objects, God, and Creativity under Heidegger's scrutiny.

Whitehead's Four Metaphysical Concepts

(i) Actual Entities

The first, and in this regard, probably the most problematic treatment metaphysicians offer of entities, according to Heidegger, is their division into Thatness and Whatness. As it has been demonstrated that Whitehead does not engage in such a bifurcation, our re-examination of actual entities will have a different focus. There are two additional criticisms Devetterre makes in his Heideggerian critique of actual entities; that actual entities result in an appearance-reality division, and, due to Whitehead's preoccupation with Aristotle's question, Whitehead is concerned with the Being of beings rather than Being as Being.

Although Whitehead does not make the traditional supersensible-sensible division in his metaphysics, Devetterre's first claim is that Whitehead's actual entities are the "final realities," of which there can never be an experience. The realm of appearance, i.e., of our experience, is constituted by nexūs and societies.⁶⁰⁷ "Actual entities are timeless, changeless, motionless; nexūs are temporal, changing, moving."⁶⁰⁸ Quoting Whitehead, Devetterre further tells us that an actual entity's "genetic passage from phase to phase is not in physical time," "the doctrine of internal relations makes it impossible to attribute 'change' to any actual entity," and "an actual entity never moves."⁶⁰⁹ Placing these passages in such a sequence certainly could lead one to conclude that Whitehead's actual entities are merely another name for traditional metaphysics' substance, as that "unchanging subject of change" to which properties are attributed accidentally, and that there is in Whitehead's metaphysics a division of the world into the "really real" actual entity and the "appearance" of its experienceable accidents.

Whitehead most likely did not commit this mistake, because he devotes much criticism to the "unchanging subject of change" and the resulting bifurcation of reality. The difficulty in comprehending Whitehead's *Process and Reality* is in the combination of its complexity, its innovation, and its constant referral to previous metaphysics. All three of the passages cited by Devetterre were removed from their context and, as such, neglect the complexity of

⁶⁰⁷Raymond Devetterre, "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique," 317.

⁶⁰⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁹*Ibid.* See also, *Process and Reality*, 283/434, 59/92, 73/113.

Whitehead's system. The "genetic passage from phase to phase ... not in physical time" of the concrescence of actual entities is definitely one of the most difficult challenges for Whitehead interpreters to explain. As previously considered,⁶¹⁰ the transition from actual entity to actual entity is time, according to Whitehead's epochal theory of time. Thus, the concrescence itself is not temporal, but for the purpose of analysis can be considered in phases. In response to Devetterre, an actual entity is not identical to its phases of concrescence.⁶¹¹ The phases of concrescence, not in physical time, are descriptive of the growing together of the non-actual elements that constitute the actual entity. Actual entities are "in" time, or, more accurately, actual entities are time, since the passage from one actual entity to another is time.

The temporal aspect of actual entities is directly relevant to the second passage cited by Devetterre. Actual entities, when fully actualized in the achievement of their satisfaction, become "objective" data for further concrescences, i.e., have a superject nature. This is one way in which Whitehead balances becoming and being (flux and permanence). An *actual* entity perishes subjectively in its satisfaction but remains immortally objective. This is why actual entities do not "change." That Whitehead places "change" in quotations should provide an indication that his assertion is not to be understood as universally valid for actual entities. When satisfied, an actual entity objectively participates in the transcendent world of being, which, in turn, involves it in subsequent concrescences. The objective actual entity does not "change" as it is complete and provides this objectified (superject) aspect of itself for other actual entities' prehensions. This does not mean that actual entities are "unchanging subjects of change" that "tell no tale of their environment"; far from it. Because actual entities are composite unities partially derived from the antecedent physical world, partially from the antecedent possible world, and directed towards their satisfaction by a subjective aim, actual entities tell us of their environment because, at the same time that they add to their environment, they derive from their environment

Devetterre's third quotation from Whitehead, "An actual entity never moves," also needs to be contextualized. This statement comes after a brief discussion of Newton, during which Whitehead states, "The surprising fact emerges that we must identify the atomized quantum of extension correlative to an actual entity, with Newton's absolute place and absolute duration." Then Whitehead says, "Thus an actual entity never moves; it is where it is and what it

⁶¹⁰Cf., Chapter III, Section I: Actual Entities.

⁶¹¹At this point one may be inclined to revise Devetterre's original criticism and identify the phases of concrescence as the "real" and the resulting actual entity as the "appearance" of reality. Since the phases of concrescence are not *in time*, they may be the unchanging subject of change, never experienceable by us. The problem here is twofold. First, we are talking about phases in the coming to be of an actual entity, which in no way fits any classical definition of substance. Second, the phases of the concrescence are experiences specific to that concrescing actual entity. We can no more experience this than we can experience each other's subjectivity.

is.”⁶¹² Again, Whitehead is analyzing the objective aspect of actual entities, in this case, their physical location. Actual entities provide the atomic units of which the world consists and, in order to do so, they must have an aspect of permanence (being) about them, which includes a constant location. Keeping in mind that actual entities constitute societies and nexūs, insofar as actual entities are members of societies and nexūs, actual entities do not move; they are local.

It should be evident that the three passages Devetterre quotes in support of his criticism that Whitehead makes the reality-appearance division are not relevant to his claim. The genetic passage of the phases of concrescence is not identical with actual entities and therefore cannot be used to suggest that actual entities are not in time. Similarly, the claim that actual entities do not “change” or move is taken from the context of a broader point. The hallmark, and perhaps frustration, of Whitehead’s metaphysics is his constant qualification, which is also true of these two passages. Objectified (superject) actual entities do not change or move; subjective actual entities do change and move.⁶¹³ This is part of the dipolar structure of actual entities that Whitehead so meticulously develops in his metaphysics. Although the replies to Devetterre’s examples have demonstrated that in each case the quotations do not support his claim of a reality-appearance division, it does not necessarily follow that his general criticism has been disproved.

Devetterre writes, “In Whitehead, however, the non-appearing really real things are not the same as the real things that appear to us.”⁶¹⁴ Although Whitehead’s division does not result in the classic sensible-supersensible or mental-physical dichotomy, Devetterre reminds us, that for Heidegger, “It is the reality-appearance bifurcation ... that is the crucial flaw in metaphysical thinking.”⁶¹⁵ The problem with Devetterre’s criticism, however, is his requirement that the “really real” appear to us in order to avoid a bifurcation. This type of requirement could lead to a naïve empiricism or a positivism that neither Whitehead nor Heidegger would accept. In Whitehead’s case, actual entities, as the *res verae*, constitute the objects of our common sense experience. It is through his method of general speculative description that Whitehead arrives at his conception of an actual entity as that which can account for the way things are. Whitehead avoids a bifurcation, because actual entities are as real as the nexūs and societies constituted by them. The passage from Heidegger that Devetterre quotes, reads, “Metaphysical thinking rests upon this distinction between what truly is and what, measured against this, constitutes all that is not truly in being.”⁶¹⁶ As stated, actual entities are real and account for what they

⁶¹²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 73/113.

⁶¹³Of course, “move” has not been defined by Devetterre. Whitehead uses his theory of concrescence to account for “the association of endurance with rhythm and physical vibration.” (*Process and Reality*, 279/426).

⁶¹⁴Devetterre, “Whitehead’s Metaphysics and Heidegger’s Critique,” 317.

⁶¹⁵*Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶Heidegger, “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. II, 230. // “Wer ist

constitute, which is also real. Whitehead's *Process and Reality* is, in large part, a general reply to British neo-Hegelianism and specifically to F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, which asserts an opposition between reality and appearance. The agenda Whitehead sets throughout his entire *magnum opus* is the explanation of process *as* reality; that process *is* reality; that no division is to be made between reality and process; that it is as true to say process constitutes reality as it is to say reality constitutes process; that there is nothing, bare nothingness (and certainly nothing *more* real) beyond the reality of the process of entities from the microscopic to the macroscopic.

At the end of his article Devetterre, rightly, refers to Whitehead's exclusive concern with entities, which could lead him to the forgetting of Being (*Sein*) as he would become preoccupied with the Being of beings rather than Being as Being (*Sein qua Sein*).⁶¹⁷ It is interesting to note, however, that Devetterre mediates this strong claim by following it with comments about how Whitehead's metaphysics is not as susceptible to this criticism as more traditional substance based philosophies and, while suggesting that a dialogue is possible between Whitehead and Heidegger, Devetterre urges process thinkers to first confront Heidegger's critique in order to facilitate such a dialogue. At this point, we should reiterate our main argument, to wit: although Whitehead does not examine Being as Being (*Sein qua Sein*), neither does he commit the same mistakes that led previous metaphysicians to forget or obscure Being (*Sein*). In a response to Devetterre, Lewis Ford suggests,

He (Devetterre) does not show that Whitehead obscures Being or neglects primordial thinking unless metaphysics *eo ipso* does so. To make that argument, Devetterre would have to show that these three characteristics of metaphysical thinking necessarily follow from its neglect of Being. Even so, the argument might just commit the fallacy of affirming the consequent as applied to Whitehead, since he could exemplify these three principles for other reasons than neglecting Being. What is really needed is the reverse argument: that these three principles of metaphysics exemplified by Whitehead necessarily lead to the obscuring of Being. Such a demonstration is not undertaken.⁶¹⁸

Instead of taking up Professor Ford's challenge, to prove that Whitehead's metaphysics exemplifies those characteristics which lead to the obscuring of Being (*Sein*), we continue to argue that, contrary to Devetterre's claim, Whitehead does not exemplify the characteristics of metaphysics identified by Heidegger.

Since Whitehead neither divides actual entities into existence-essence nor

Nietzsches Zarathustra," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 120, "das metaphysische Denken beruht auf dem Unterscheid zwischen dem, was wahrhaft ist, und dem, was, daran gemessen, das nicht wahrhaft Seiende ausmacht."

⁶¹⁷Devetterre, "Whitehead's Metaphysics and Heidegger's Critique," 320.

⁶¹⁸Ford, "Whitehead and the Ontological Difference," 149.

creates an appearance-reality division with his idea of entity, his metaphysics is not the same as those criticized by Heidegger. It is this type of metaphysical categorizing, according to Heidegger, that begins the oblivion of Being (*Sein*). In contrast, Whitehead's descriptive generalizations are eventually formulated as categories, which exemplify entities, instead of determining entities in accordance to categories. The introduction of eternal objects into Whitehead's philosophy also follows this method. Eternal objects are not posited as some ethereal realm of perfection by which all else's reality is judged. Whitehead introduces them in order to help account for how novelty emerges amongst stability.

(ii) Eternal Objects

The last three metaphysical concepts to be re-examined, eternal objects, God and Creativity, are described, by Whitehead, as the formative elements of entities. In the case of eternal objects, their relevance to Heidegger's critique comes from their role in Whitehead's metaphysics. The philosophical dilemma of balancing form and substance occurs because of the division of reality, first by Plato and secondly by Aristotle. As such, Heidegger does not address this issue, because to do so would be to engage in the traditional categorial thinking of metaphysics.⁶¹⁹ Although Whitehead does not divide reality, he does remain concerned with an analysis of entities and, thus, with that which is explanatory of entities.

Whitehead introduces possibility (eternal objects) into his metaphysics while avoiding the problems traditionally associated with such an idea. Notably, Whitehead assigns actuality and potentiality their own distinctive ontological status without dichotomizing or ranking them and by requiring their mutual interaction. Eternal objects can be understood as an aspect of Whitehead's ontological thematization of Creativity, insofar as they represent specified and relevant options for the world to actualize. They are neither sheer, undefined abysmal non-being nor are they logical permutations of actuality. Eternal objects are non-actual entities which are prehended either positively or negatively and therefore allow for the introduction of novelty, within limits, into the world. As one of the formative elements, eternal objects do not obscure Being (*Sein*) because they are not placed in a hypostatized realm over the fluidity of the world, thus creating a duality preferring permanence to flux. Or, stated in Heidegger's language, eternal objects are not conceived of as the Being of beings and thereby obscure Being (*Sein*) because they are not used as the standard by which all other existence is judged. Instead, they intimately participate in the world, because they are ordered in the primordial nature of God, which Whitehead describes as deficient in actuality, and are prehended during the concrescence of actual

⁶¹⁹The possible exception to this assertion would be in *Being and Time*, 67//56, where the earlier Heidegger, says, "The 'essence' of *Dasein* lies in its existence." // "Das »Wesen« des *Daseins* liegt in seiner Existenz."

entities.

Here we again encounter the ontological reciprocity that permeates Whitehead's metaphysics. Even his eternal objects are incorporated as one element, in this case a permanent element, in the becoming of existence. They are one more way Whitehead balances becoming and being and, in so balancing, he does not develop a metaphysics in the single minded pursuit of *that* which accounts for entities, i.e., the Being of beings.⁶²⁰ As previously mentioned, the worst Whitehead can be accused of is the development of a poly-archival metaphysics, because he does not think existence can be reduced to a singular explanatory principle. Since Whitehead is not searching for such a principle, he never arrives at the Being of beings, which is why, in the case of eternal objects, it is clear that they do not represent the Being of beings.

(iii) God

If we are going to find the Being of beings in Whitehead's metaphysics God and Creativity would be the two likely sources. There is no doubt that God represents the greatest entity in Whitehead's metaphysics. What is in doubt, is whether this entails the configuring of God as the Being of beings which then obscures Being (*Sein*). Somewhat paradoxically, Whitehead's assertion that his God "is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles"⁶²¹ places his metaphysics at odds with the tradition. Throughout Western metaphysics the introduction of God, as the greatest entity, requires an exceptional existence when compared to the world. Heidegger demonstrates how this occurs when God is arrived at as the *causa prima* and therefore *causa sui*. Metaphysicians, employing the principle of sufficient reason, know that like causes have like effects and that for every effect there must be a cause. This leads back to the first cause, which cannot be the first cause unless it is a self-caused first cause. In other words, the first cause must be unlike all other causes. In its inception with Aristotle, metaphysics posits God, an unmoved mover, which is the exception to the categories. God, as the exceptional existent and therefore the exception to existence, becomes even more acute when Christianity is added to Greek philosophy. Where the world is finite, temporal, and corrupt; God is infinite, eternal, and perfect. In order to account for motion, efficient causation, the necessity of all possible existence, the gradations of existence, and the order of the world in which entities are directed to their proper end,⁶²² classic Christian

⁶²⁰It is also significant that Whitehead maintains both God and a functional equivalent of Platonic Forms (eternal objects) without hypostatizing them. Indeed, there is no "other world" (*Hinterwelt*) that negates the value of *this* world in Whitehead's metaphysics. Instead, we find his ontological reciprocity requiring the interaction of the two for their respective completion.

⁶²¹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 343/520.

⁶²²These are Aquinas' five cosmological proofs for God's existence. See, John Hick, *The Existence of God* (New York: The Macmillan Publishing Company, 1964), 82-85. Taken from *Summa Theologica*, Third Article: Whether God Exists?

theists conceived of a God who transcends these existential categories essentially. That is, they posit a God who moves and causes things, but is finally unmoved; whose existence is necessary for everything else, because all other existence is contingent; who is the greatest good by which all else is judged; who is the end-in-itself towards whom all is directed. This is the God of classical theism who is “the Supreme as Eternal Consciousness, Knowing but not including the world.”⁶²³ In other words, this is the God who is finally everything the world is only temporarily. Contrary to this tradition, Whitehead thinks, “Among medieval and modern philosophers, anxious to establish the religious significance of God, an unfortunate habit has prevailed of paying to Him metaphysical compliments.”⁶²⁴ These metaphysical compliments result in a conception of God who embodies everything the world is not, finally, and who therefore transcends the metaphysical categories, by offering the ultimate finality. According to the traditional metaphysicians, when all of existence, i.e., every entity (*Seiende*), and the greatest entity of all, i.e., the Being of beings, is detailed, there can be nothing else. They think they have completed their task, Heidegger tell us, and thereby mistake God for Being (*Sein*).

The God of the philosophers is through and through onto-theological. This God is said to transcend the categories because God’s existence is explanatory of all else, namely, that which can be categorized. This is the logic of onto-theology, according to Heidegger. There is everything which is ontically, i.e., entities, and then there is the investigation beyond the ontic, i.e., to the highest being or principle or cause, which is ontology incorporating theology. Since Whitehead’s God is the chief exemplification of metaphysical principles, rather than their exception, Whitehead does not mistake God for Being (*Sein*) because God does not function as the Being of beings.

Like eternal objects and Creativity, God is a formative element in the concrescence of actual entities, which makes God, as an entity, *partially* responsible for all existence. Unlike traditional metaphysics, Whitehead’s God does not provide the sole explanation of the world. The “metaphysical compliments” paid to God by other metaphysicians are not found in *Process and Reality*. The logic of onto-theology, identified by Heidegger, is not applicable here. By identifying God as the superlative entity it seems Whitehead has committed the same mistake as previous metaphysicians, but, upon closer examination, it will be demonstrated that this is not the case. The most significant divergence from the tradition by Whitehead is his philosophical method. His commitment to descriptive generalization as the primary mode of philosophizing and his rejection of “classical empiricism” in favour of “radical empiricism”

⁶²³ Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, eds., *Philosophers Speak of God*, 17.

⁶²⁴ Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 179. See also Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle: Open Court, 1962), *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: SUNY, 1984), and with William L. Reese eds., *Philosophers Speak of God* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000), 1-25, for several detailed studies of Western philosophy and theology’s one-sided analyses of God and the world.

remain apparent in the development of his idea of God. This stands in contrast to those onto-theologians who employ the mathematically inspired method of positing *a priori* axioms in order to justify God as the *causa prima* and then continue to pay metaphysical compliments to God by adding all the other essential characteristics of being. According to Whitehead, God “does not create the world, he saves it: or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty and goodness.”⁶²⁵

What the traditional metaphysicians have failed to recognize, with their onto-theo-logical reasoning, valid as it may be, is that there is more to reality than what is allowed by their conclusion. According to Heidegger, this methodology obscures Being (*Sein*). According to Whitehead, this method leads to “the vicious separation of the flux from the permanence,”⁶²⁶ and ignores the “civilized intuition” that the problem is not merely that of “fluency *and* permanence,” but that permanence requires fluency for its completion and fluency requires permanence for its completion.⁶²⁷ Although stated in different terms, this is a point of agreement between Whitehead and Heidegger. The attribution of all the essential characteristics of being to the traditional God could only lead to the mistaking of this God as Being (*Sein*). Whitehead understood, and was also critical, of this tendency in Western Christian thought, which is why he wrote, “When the Western world accepted Christianity, Caesar conquered; and the received text of Western theology was edited by his lawyers,” and thus “the Church gave unto God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar.”⁶²⁸ For Heidegger, the result is idolatrous because the theologians obscure Being (*Sein*) and objectify the revelation of God into a logical concept.⁶²⁹ For Whitehead, the result is idolatrous because the theologians ignore the revelation of the incarnated “Galilean vision of humility,” instead preferring a “divine Caesar.”⁶³⁰

Furthermore, Heidegger’s critique of the “logic” of onto-theology is not applicable to Whitehead’s formulation of God, because Whitehead rejects “God in the image of an ultimate philosophical principle” on the basis the arguments advanced in Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.⁶³¹ The acceptance of Hume’s criticisms further evidences Whitehead’s claim that his philosophy is a return to pre-Kantian modes of thought. Rather than accepting Kant’s solution, Whitehead develops his own philosophy inspired by the radical empiricism of American pragmatism. Since Whitehead is not in search of God as the “ultimate

⁶²⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 346/526.

⁶²⁶*Ibid.*

⁶²⁷*Ibid.*, 347/527.

⁶²⁸*Ibid.*, 342/519 and 342/520.

⁶²⁹See Martin Heidegger, “The Theological Discussion of ‘The Problem of a Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Today’s Theology’ – Some Pointers to Its Major Aspects,” in *The Piety of Thinking*, trans. James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 22-31.

⁶³⁰Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 342/519 and 343/520.

⁶³¹*Ibid.*, 343/520.

philosophical principle,” he arrives at God neither as the superlative entity through *a priori* axiomatic reasoning nor as a postulate of practical reason. Instead, “We must investigate dispassionately what the metaphysical principles, here developed, require on these points, as to the nature of God.”⁶³² In other words, Whitehead’s idea of God arises from his investigation of entities (*Seienden*) and the generalized descriptions that follow from it. This is why “there is nothing here in the nature of proof,”⁶³³ for the existence of God. Given Whitehead’s development of a fallibilistic metaphysics, reliant upon generalizations and abduction,⁶³⁴ God, as the greatest entity, is postulated in accordance with the requirements of philosophical adequacy rather than in accord with the dogmatic certainty of either the *a prioristic* logicians or the Church.

Whitehead’s God is philosophically adequate for his metaphysics.⁶³⁵ The intuitive requirement that permanence requires flux and flux requires permanence for their respective completion, is exemplified by the relationship between God and the world. The flux of the world is balanced by God’s permanence and, conversely, the permanence of God is balanced by the world of flux. More than this, however, “It is as true to say that God is permanent and the world fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent.”⁶³⁶ Both the world and God have fluent and permanent aspects because of their interaction; this is a further realization of Whitehead’s ontological reciprocity. God lures the world into creation with a divine order and, in turn, God saves the world. Similarly, the order of the world requires God to respond relevantly to it and, in turn, the world glorifies God.⁶³⁷ This final ontological reciprocity occurs within the grip of

⁶³²*Ibid.*, 343/521.

⁶³³*Ibid.*

⁶³⁴Simon Blackburn, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, “**Abduction**: The term introduced by Peirce for the process of using evidence to reach a wider conclusion, as in inference to the best explanation. Peirce describes abduction as a creative process, but stressed that the results are subject to rational evaluation. However he anticipated later pessimism about the prospects of a confirmation theory, denying that we can assess the result of abduction in terms of probability.” Also see, C.S. Peirce, “Abduction and Induction,” *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, edited by Justus Buchler, 150-156 (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955), where Peirce writes on p. 151, “The first starting of a hypothesis and the entertaining of it, whether as a simple interrogation or with any degree of confidence, is an inferential step which I propose to call *abduction* [or *retroduction*]. This will include a preference for any one hypothesis over others which would equally explain the facts, so long as this preference is not based upon any previous knowledge bearing upon the truth of the hypotheses, nor on any testing of any of the hypotheses, after having admitted them on probation. I call all such inference by the peculiar name, *abduction*, because its legitimacy depends upon altogether different principles from those of other kinds of inference.” Also see, K. T. Fann, *Pierce’s Theory of Abduction*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970.

⁶³⁵Cf., Chapter III, Section III.

⁶³⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 348/528.

⁶³⁷*Ibid.*, 349/529-530. It is quite possible that Whitehead not only develops a philosophically adequate God but also one who is also compatible with religious (mainly Christian) insight. Whitehead writes, “The theme of Cosmology, which is the basis of all religions, is the story of the dynamic effort of the World passing into everlasting unity, and of the

Creativity, which is an ingredient in the Category of the Ultimate.

Classical theists criticize Whitehead's conception of God for remaining a subject of metaphysical categories, because Whitehead's God lacks transcendence and the other perfections that they think are necessary (e.g., omnipotence, immutability, etc.) for the superlative entity.⁶³⁸ It is precisely this criticism from the classical theists that demonstrates the inapplicability of Heidegger's critique to Whitehead's God. Although Whitehead identifies God as the superlative actual entity, his God remains metaphysically derived and therefore does not ascend to the status of the Being of all beings, unlike in the metaphysics of the classical theists as demonstrated by Heidegger. In contrast to these classical theists, Whitehead's God does not assume *the* essential characteristics of being and therefore cannot be mistaken for Being (*Sein*). Whitehead's God is immersed in and with the world. There is a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between God and the world. In examining this relationship, it is demonstrated that God does not dwell in some suprasensuous, really real, *a priori* axiomatically postulated, state, which, by comparison, leaves a sensible, accidental, and merely apparent world. Because Whitehead refuses to divide reality, all of his explanations come from the world. More accurately, Whitehead's explanations come from actual entities and the idea of God is no exception. As an actual entity God is included in the first Category of Existence and is subject to the Category of the Ultimate as well as the twenty-seven Categories of Explanation and nine Categorical Obligations. If there is anything beyond God that functions as the Being of being for Whitehead, it would be Creativity, to which we now turn.

(iv) Creativity

The issue to be considered in this section is whether Creativity fulfills the role of *archē*, as the most abstract and therefore emptiest concept, in Whitehead's metaphysics. According to the logic of onto-theology, the identification of the *archē* is arrived at through the abstraction from entities, as that which accounts for entities. That is, the *archē*, in traditional metaphysics, is *the* answer to *the* question of philosophy: Why is there something rather than nothing? Since an infinite causal regress is not accepted as a legitimate answer, traditionally philosophers search for a causal explanation unlike all other causes, because they require an originary instance. Of course the answers vary, but they all share the

static majesty of God's vision, accomplishing its purpose of completion by absorption of the World's multiplicity of effort."

⁶³⁸Stephen Lee Ely, "The Religious Availability of Whitehead's God: A Critical Analysis," in *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. Lewis S. Ford and George L. Kline (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 207. For example, Ely writes, "The God that Whitehead derives from metaphysical analysis is not the God of religions. Whatever religious value Whitehead's God may have depends on aspects of God that lie beyond reason – aspects that Whitehead either intuits, guesses at, or has faith in. And if this is the upshot, why should not religionists intuit, guess at, or have faith in a God who is more of a God?"

same characteristic; the *archē* must be *causa prima* as *causa sui*, whether it is understood through revelation as personal or through reason as impersonal.

In light of Whitehead's acceptance of an infinite causal regress, Creativity does not fulfill the role of *archē*, conceived of as *causa prima* and *causa sui*. Whitehead is not in search of *the* sufficient reason for entities; rather, his search is for that general description which explains the nature of entities. Again, this is not the division of entities into existence and essence, because *how* entities are is *what* they are, according to Whitehead. Thus the search for the nature of actual entities is not for that which underlies and causes them; it is a search for that which explains why actual entities become entities, i.e., it is a search for an account of their concrescence. This search leads Whitehead to Creativity.

Framed in conventional philosophical language, Whitehead's description of Creativity seems, but only seems, to meet Heidegger's criteria for an *archē*. Whitehead writes,

'Creativity' is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into one complex unity. 'Creativity' is the principle of *novelty*.⁶³⁹

Certainly as the "universal of universals" and "the principle of novelty" we have found Whitehead's *archē* in Creativity. It is the most generalized description of reality, as abstracted from entities, and is the principle (*archē*, *principium*) explanatory of the nature of entities.

On the contrary, Creativity, although explanatory, is not causal; affirming it is not based on the principle of sufficient reason, which can only be understood causally. The ultimate description of reality is "the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction."⁶⁴⁰ This is what entities do. Creativity as the principle of novelty is the explanatory description of the nature (concrescence) of actual entities. There is a unity to existence, otherwise Whitehead would not have written a cosmology. This is not the monarchical (*mono-archē*) unity of previous philosophers and theologians; rather, it is the unity of multifariousness. It is the unity of the constant move from disjunction to conjunction, which, in turn, results in further disjunction. It is a unity of permanence *and* flux, of being *and* becoming, of God *and* the world, of the One *and* the Many. It is "the many become one, *and* ... increased by one."⁶⁴¹

This is further evidenced in Whitehead's conception of the Category of the Ultimate. Although it "replaces Aristotle's category of 'primary substance,'" this should not be understood as a substitution of one type of substance for

⁶³⁹Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21/31.

⁶⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹*Ibid.* Emphasis added.

another. Neither should it be considered an exchange of one principle (*archē*) for another. Whitehead's Category of the Ultimate is composite, not singular, and fulfills the *function* that primary substance performed in Aristotle's thought. The Category of the Ultimate is composed of "Creativity," "One," and "Many." This means that Creativity is a component in the replacement of Aristotle's primary substance, namely, as that which accounts for novelty or novel togetherness in the world. Creativity alone, however, is not sufficient to account for why reality is the way that it is. The ideas of "one" and "many" are also included in Whitehead's consideration of the ultimate. It is the interaction of the one and the many, facilitated by Creativity, that finally accounts for the nature of reality. Whitehead writes,

These ultimate notions of 'production of novelty' and of 'concrete togetherness' are inexplicable either in terms of higher universals or in terms of the components participating in the concrescence. The analysis of the components abstracts from the concrescence. The sole appeal is to intuition.⁶⁴²

As a replacement for Aristotle's matter and modernity's neutral stuff, Creativity fulfills the function of that which is explanatory of the nature of entities. The difference between Whitehead and previous metaphysicians is that, for Whitehead, Creativity remains no-thing, rather than conceived of as some-thing that underlies entities.

Here it is instructive to consult Heidegger's analysis of Western metaphysics' conventional understanding of Being (*Sein*). He writes,

In the beginning of his lecture on physics Aristotle has sentences about the being of beings that show that being is *Φύσις* (*physis*)—that which of itself is overt. This means that self-revealing is a trait of being. But our ordinary hearing and speaking always misunderstands this sentence when we say it in this straightforward way. Self-revealing is a basic trait of being. This sounds like the following: there is being, and one of the characteristics being has, among others, is that it reveals itself. But being is not equipped with the characteristic that it reveals itself, rather self-revealing belongs to what is apropos of being. Being has its propriety in self-revealing. Being is not beforehand something for itself that only then brings about a self-revealing. Self-revealing is not a characteristic of being, rather self-revealing belongs in the property of being.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴²Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 21-22/32. Of course, the sole appeal is not to a Kantian intuition.

⁶⁴³Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 69. // *Der Satz vom Grund*, 120, "Aristoteles sagt im Beginn seiner Physikvorlesung Sätze über das Sein des Seienden, die zeigen: Sein ist φύσις, das von sich her Offenkundige. Dies sagt: Sichentbergen ist ein Grundzug des Seins. Aber schon dieser Satz bleibt in der Weise, wie wir ihn geradewegs aussagen, für unser gewöhnliches Hören und Sprechen immer mißverständlich. Sichentbergen ist ein Grundzug

It is because of our philosophical habits, since Aristotle, that we hear Being (*Sein*) as some-(one)-thing that has properties, in this case, the property of self-revealing. It should be clear, as it is here, that Heidegger is not only opposed to such an understanding of Being (*Sein*), but considers it a misstep in the history of metaphysical error.

Given Whitehead's assertions about Creativity, it is arguable that he does not hear Aristotle's statement about Being (*Sein*) in the usual manner. It is possible that Whitehead hears something similar to what Heidegger hears, because what Whitehead calls Creativity is not some-(one)-thing that has the property of creation or newness or novelty; it is the principle of novelty. It conditions entities and is conditioned by them; this is how it reveals itself. Creativity reveals itself in everything that is. This is its nature, but this does not entail that everything that exists is a mere manifestation or appearance of something else with greater reality, as previously thought (e.g., substance, God, monads, *Geist*).

Perhaps this is where Whitehead, yet again, encounters the limits of the English language. The Ontological Difference is not as readily recognizable in English syntax as in German (being/being vs. *Sein/Seiende*). Even to characterize Creativity as the "ising" of the "is," would leave us with a misconception, because it would only indicate an aspect of "is" and, therefore, fail to capture its full meaning. Creativity is. It is no-thing and therefore is not predicable. Much like Heidegger's Being (*Sein*), when we say "is" we are indicating Creativity.⁶⁴⁴ For example, the statement "the entity is" includes Creativity as that which is exemplified in the "is" of the entity. Rather than engage in such confusion, Whitehead chose "Creativity" as the functionally descriptive name for the is-ising of entities.

Due to the conceptual, cultural, and linguistic obstacles it is practically impossible to equate Whitehead's Creativity with Heidegger's Being (*Sein*). Our concern remains whether Creativity fulfills the traditional role of *archē* in Whitehead's metaphysics, thereby obscuring or forgetting Being (*Sein*). Although it is the principle of novelty, Creativity is not an *archē*, at least not in any traditional sense.⁶⁴⁵ Creativity is no-thing, itself conditioning and conditioned

des Seins. Dies hört sich so an: Es gibt Sein, und dieses Sein hat dann außerdem noch die Beschaffenheit, daß es sich entbirgt. Aber Sein ist nicht mit der Beschaffenheit ausgestattet, daß es sich entbirgt, sondern das Sichentbergen gehört zum Eigenen des Seins. Sein hat sein Eigenes im Sichentbergen. Sein ist nicht zuvor etwas für sich, das dann erst ein Sichentbergen bewerkstelligt. Sichentbergen ist keine Beschaffenheit des Seins, sondern: Sichentbergen gehört in die Eigenschaft des Seins."

⁶⁴⁴Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, 21, writes of Heidegger, "If we consider this fulfillment with reference to Being, thought completes the process of non-concealment by bringing Being into that form of manifestation that is most proper to the nature of man: language, through which he says 'is.'"

⁶⁴⁵Cf., 130-133, where Creativity was considered in relation to Devetterre's Heideggerian critique of Whitehead.

by entities “without a character of its own.” “It is that ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality. It cannot be characterized, because all characters are more special than itself.”⁶⁴⁶ As much as this description demonstrates the anarchical (non-*archē*) nature of Creativity, it does leave open one final question for Whitehead’s metaphysics in light of Heidegger’s critique. Does Whitehead place at the centre of his philosophy the most abstract and emptiest concept, therefore making him a nihilist?

The issue of nihilism arises because, according to Heidegger’s analysis of metaphysics, all metaphysics are nihilistic.⁶⁴⁷ Heidegger claims that there are two factors that lead metaphysics to nihilism. One is the neglect or forgetting of Being (*Sein*). The other is the placement of something other than Being (*Sein*) at the centre of the investigation. This is illustrated in Heidegger’s analysis of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Where Nietzsche understood nihilism to be a cultural condition, induced by the Platonic-Christian *ethos*, Heidegger thinks that nihilism radiates from metaphysics and Nietzsche’s attempt to overturn Platonism is the finally nihilistic entanglement.

The spectre of nihilism that swept through nineteenth and twentieth century Continental thought may have even made it to America. Whitehead notes that “philosophy has been afflicted by the dogmatic fallacy, which is the belief that the principles of its working hypotheses are clear, obvious, and irreformable” and that there are two different types of reaction to this fallacy. These reactions are either to discard method and claim to “uphold no system” or:

To assume, often tacitly, that if there can be any intellectual analysis it must proceed according to some one discarded dogmatic method, and thence to deduce that *intellect* is intrinsically tied to erroneous fictions. This type is illustrated by the anti-intellectualism of Nietzsche and Bergson, and tinges American Pragmatism.⁶⁴⁸

Although not framed in terms of nihilism, anti-intellectualism with its discarding of method and system leads philosophers to be “prey to the delusive clarities of detached expression.”⁶⁴⁹ The lack of coherence, logic, and applicability in any philosophizing would not meet Whitehead’s criteria for metaphysics and certainly would appear, at best, as a series of unconnected, contextless, meaningless,

⁶⁴⁶Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 31/47.

⁶⁴⁷Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, 205. // *Nietzsche*, zweiter Band, 309. He writes, “*Metaphysics as metaphysics is nihilism proper*. The essence of nihilism is historically as metaphysics, and the metaphysics of Plato is no less nihilistic than that of Nietzsche. In the former, the essence of nihilism is merely concealed; on the latter, it comes completely to appearance.” // “*Die Metaphysik ist als Metaphysik der eigenliche Nihilismus*. Das Wesen des Nihilismus ist geschichtlich als die Metaphysik, die Metaphysik Platons ist nicht weniger nihilistisch als die Metaphysik Nietzsches. In jener bleibt das Wesen des Nihilismus nur verborgen, in deiser kommt es voll zum Erscheinen.”

⁶⁴⁸Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 223.

⁶⁴⁹*Ibid.*

assertions. These statements would offer no further insight; on the contrary, they would be without content, perhaps referencing only themselves. Word play for the sake of the play can only lead to insurmountable subjectivism and, as Heidegger demonstrated, nihilism.⁶⁵⁰ In this light, whether or not Whitehead's metaphysics is nihilistic still remains to be considered.

Although Heidegger provides us with two reasons for the endemic nihilism of Western metaphysics, they are not causally related. One is the neglect of Being (*Sein*); the other is the replacement of Being (*Sein*) with some other, usually superlative, entity within any given metaphysics. For instance, Heidegger writes, "For now metaphysics not only does not think Being itself, but this not-thinking of Being clothes itself in the illusion that it does think Being in the most exalted manner."⁶⁵¹ Methodologically, according to Heidegger, metaphysics' exclusive concern with the Guiding Question of philosophy (*Was ist das Seiende?*) entails an *a priori* exclusion of Being (*Sein*) from its investigation, such that, when metaphysics investigates beyond individual entities it can only arrive at an entity abstracted from all particularity, which, by definition, is the most universal. In good phenomenologically inspired hermeneutical form, Heidegger demonstrates how the answer is already circumscribed by the question.

Whitehead is certainly associated with a part of this tradition, as we previously considered his exclusive concern with entities. As with other metaphysicians, Whitehead's goal "to conceive a complete [*παντελής*] fact" leads him from the ontic to the ontological.⁶⁵² Insofar as Whitehead never considers Being as Being (*Sein qua Sein*), the charge of nihilism can be levelled from a Heideggerian perspective.⁶⁵³ Rather than investigating the difficulties inherent in a consideration of Being as Being (*Sein qua Sein*), especially a non-metaphysical

⁶⁵⁰As early as 1964, Schubert Ogden, "Objectivity and Theology," *The reality of God and Other Essays* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1967), 94, identified Whitehead's divergence from the dominant metaphysical tradition when he wrote, "All but completely ignored by most theologians, however, is that metaphysics itself has recently past through one of the decisive transformations in its long history and is now showing every sign of having a future as well as a past. I cannot detail this important development here, beyond suggesting that as good a characterization of it as any is Hartshorne's, when he says that 'Leibniz was its Newton,' and 'Whitehead its Einstein.'" In Whitehead's thought especially, all the main themes of the metaphysical tradition are given a neoclassical expression, which seeks to incorporate the contributions of modern philosophy, while also showing how its criticisms of classical metaphysics might possibly be met and overcome." On Whitehead's divergence from post-modernity see, for example, David Ray Griffin and John B. Cobb, eds., *Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy: Peirce, James, Bergson, Whitehead, and Hartshorne* (Albany: SUNY, 1992) and Robert Cummings Neville, *The Highroad Around Modernism* (Albany: SUNY, 1992).

⁶⁵¹Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead,'" 104. // "Nietzsches Wort »Gott ist tot«,» 259, "Denn jetzt denkt die Metaphysik nicht nur nicht das Sein selbst, sondern dieses Nicht-denken des Seins hüllt sich in den Anschein, es denke doch."

⁶⁵²Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 158. Here Whitehead is citing Plato's *Sophist*, 248 E, and mentions that "*παντελής* is often wrongly translated by 'absolute.'"

⁶⁵³The consideration of Being as Being (*Sein qua Sein*) also eluded much of Heidegger's thought. One exception may be found in *The Question of Being*.

consideration as advocated by Heidegger, our focus remains on the relevant features of Whitehead's thought.

When Heidegger characterizes the idea of Being found in the Western metaphysical tradition as an abstracted and empty concept, he is finding fault with the mathematically inspired *a priori* axiomatic reasoning that allows traditional metaphysics to begin with a primary, causal, and originary occurrence. In other words, the method that arrives at the superlative entity as *causa prima* and *causa sui*, is a method of abstraction, because it seeks that which is universally and eternally valid. A paradox of this method becomes clear through Heidegger's critique where the superlative entity is described as both entirely unique and yet empty. There is nothing else like it, as it is exempt from the usual metaphysical categories, but, in order to achieve this uniqueness, all particularity is removed from it. The *a priori* axiomatic answer to the question of philosophy is itself an empty abstraction; hence, the nihilism of metaphysics, according to Heidegger.

As previously granted, Whitehead's failure to investigate Being as Being (*Sein qua Sein*) would indict him as a nihilistic metaphysician; however, the indictment must be qualified. When Whitehead's investigation moves from the ontic to the ontological, it is not an *a priori* axiomatic move to a first principle that accounts for why there is something rather than nothing. Whitehead's metaphysics is not centred like other traditional systems of thought.⁶⁵⁴ Although "Creativity' is the universal of universals," it is not in any sense the *archē*. Creativity is arrived at through descriptive generalization, rather than *a priori* derived axioms, and is one element in Whitehead's composite Category of the Ultimate. In light of the characterization of Whitehead's metaphysics as poly-archival, involving the One and the Many and Creativity in a constant interplay, it is clear that his metaphysics does not follow from the dominant tradition critiqued by Heidegger. Indeed, it is even possible to re-describe the Category of the Ultimate in terms amenable to Heidegger's thought. Could not the process of a disjunctive multiplicity becoming a conjunctive unity, which in turn, becomes a disjunctive multiplicity also be described as an ever shifting ground that is at the same time both revealing and concealing?

If Whitehead is a nihilist it is not because he obscures Being (*Sein*) with an abstract and empty concept at the centre of his philosophy. His exclusive concern with the nature of entities certainly may have prevented him from considering Being as Being (*Sein qua Sein*), but his methodological deviation from traditional metaphysicians does not lead him to the same nihilistic dead end. It is Whitehead's commitment to an open system, corrected *a posteriori*, rather than the conventional approach of an *a priori* dogmatically derived, non-correctable, closed system that allows for the possibility of Being (*Sein*) in his

⁶⁵⁴ It should be clear from the material presented throughout this chapter that the author cannot disagree more with any attempt to characterize Whitehead's philosophy as "centred" around God, whose removal is then required for the sake of coherence. For such an argument, please see, for instance, Donald W. Sherburne, "Decentering Whitehead," *Process Studies* 15 (1986) 83-94.

metaphysics. In the very least, if the path to Being (*Sein*) is not closed, an escape from nihilism remains possible.

Conclusion:

When thinkers as innovative as Whitehead and Heidegger appear, one challenge will always be how to understand them in relation with the philosophical tradition. The problem becomes somewhat more acute when one attempts to relate the two through their relationship with this tradition. Despite these difficulties, what has emerged here is a picture of two thinkers' divergence from conventional philosophy. Of course, Whitehead wishes to reform the tradition rather than overcome or end it; whereas, Heidegger thinks it is beyond reform. The risk all reformers encounter, however, is that their proposals are too radical and result in the creation of something entirely new. Conversely, the risk faced by revolutionaries, who want to overcome or put an end to something, is that their energies are completely absorbed by the endeavour, leaving nothing after their success. Although this may not be the case with Whitehead and Heidegger, it is now evident that Whitehead's philosophy offers us a point of departure from the dominant philosophical tradition.

It is only after a sustained examination of their respective frameworks, analyses, concepts, language, and terminology that any similarities are found. We will recall that on Heidegger's critique metaphysics proceeds from an empty, axiomatic, monarchical foundation. We can see that the following quotation from Whitehead signals his agreement with such a critique,

As long as the temporal world is conceived as a self-sufficient completion of the creative act, explicable by its derivation from an ultimate principle which is at once eminently real and the unmoved mover, from this conclusion there is no escape: the best that we can say of the turmoil is, 'For so he giveth his beloved – sleep.'⁶⁵⁵

Here Whitehead includes, along with philosophical assumptions, the religious elements that have contributed to such a conception of the world. Whether it comes from reason, revelation, or a combination of the two, the consequence of such an understanding of reality must be nihilism. If no one can affect the world in which we toil, the best we can hope for is some form of oblivion. It does not matter if it is eternal rest or pure nothingness, just as long as we are put out of our misery. Whitehead clearly understands himself as offering an alternative to this religio-philosophical, or what Heidegger may very well have called the onto-theological, view of the world. In *Adventures of Ideas* Whitehead identifies a

⁶⁵⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 342/519. Here Whitehead is quoting Psalm 127:2, "It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved," (NRSV).

“New Reformation” taking shape in the earlier twentieth century that is reacting to both the high rationalism of Modernity and its dogmatic rejection by Christian leaders.⁶⁵⁶ He thinks that this New Reformation will require an intellectual framework to help formulate its intuitions coherently. Although Whitehead does not explicitly state that he is offering such an intellectual framework, he provides one for our consideration. It is the “doctrine of dogmatic finality”⁶⁵⁷ that Whitehead finds the most objectionable, hence his commitment to reform.

The argument made throughout this chapter has, to a certain degree, been *via negativa*. That is, it was demonstrated that Whitehead does not commit the same mistakes as previous metaphysicians. Of course, Whitehead offers nothing concrete about Being (*Sein*) either, and on this account is indicted in Heidegger’s critique. Although Whitehead’s investigation begins with the guiding question of philosophy (*Was ist das Seiende?*), which, according to Heidegger circumscribes the possible answers throughout the history of Western metaphysics, it is Whitehead’s desire to conceive of a complete fact that marks his move from the ontic to the ontological. It is at this point that Whitehead deviates from the tradition and offers an alternative metaphysics that does not *a priori* delimit its field of inquiry. As demonstrated, Whitehead remains open to the possibility of Being (*Sein*) because he does not posit a superlative entity as the Being of beings. Instead, we find a composite Category of the Ultimate arrived at through speculative generalization that is not conceived of in entitive terms. This is where Whitehead’s investigation becomes truly metaphysical as it leaves the realm originally delineated by Aristotle’s guiding question of philosophy.

This interpretation is not unfounded, since Heidegger would not *a priori* restrict the paths to Being (*Sein*). Some paths, notably, the Western metaphysical path, *a priori* restrict themselves from considering Being (*Sein*). Indeed, because Heidegger maintains that there is a relationship between Being (*Sein*) and entities (*Seiende*), he does not deny that traditional metaphysics has had nothing to do with Being (*Sein*), only that it was forgetful and restrictive, because of its starting point and subsequent development. Again, this point is not shared by Whitehead, as his understanding of metaphysics is as *last* rather than as *first* philosophy, which why he wrote, “the verification of a rationalistic scheme is to be sought in its general success, and not in the peculiar certainty, or initial clarity, of its first principles.”⁶⁵⁸

Although Heidegger does not exclude any path to Being (*Sein*), he does question the adequacy of our philosophical language. He writes, “What if even the language of metaphysics and metaphysics itself, whether it be that of the living or of the dead God, *as* metaphysics, formed that barrier which forbids a

⁶⁵⁶Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 162.

⁶⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 8/12. By “general success” I would suggest that Whitehead means the harmonization of divergent fields of inquiry within a metaphysical framework and the ability of this framework to offer new insights into these fields.

crossing over of the line, that is, the overcoming of nihilism?”⁶⁵⁹ If the answer to this question is affirmative, and it likely is for Heidegger, then it would follow that there could not simply be an “exchange of an old terminology for a new one.”⁶⁶⁰ Language would have to be transformed in order to allow for the contemplation of Being (*Sein*). This is because “the question as to the essence of Being dies off, if it does not surrender the language of metaphysics, because metaphysical conception forbids thinking the question as to the essence of Being.”⁶⁶¹

Perhaps it is metaphysical language that prevents Whitehead from considering Being (*Sein*). Then again, Heidegger’s comments are directed at the dominant Western philosophical tradition, which understands metaphysics to be first philosophy. Within this tradition metaphysical concepts are derived from reason and applied to the world. Whitehead arrives at his terms mainly as functional definitions open to revision. Several times Whitehead also takes philosophers to task for having a naïve trust in the clarity of language.⁶⁶² In contrast to this prevailing fallacy, Whitehead thinks that “the tool required for philosophy is language” and that philosophy should redesign “language in the same way that, in physical science, pre-existing appliances are redesigned.”⁶⁶³ Although Whitehead always locates his language in relation to previous metaphysicians, his philosophy is not a mere exchange of terminology. The introduction of “subject-superject” is not the next variation on subject-object, which itself is a variant of substance-quality. The introduction of “prehension” is not a substitution for “intuition” or “experience” or “sense data.” The introduction of “actual entity” is not a re-working of *ousia*, substance, monad, *Geist*, or the Will to Power. These terms arise because of Whitehead’s own criticisms of the metaphysical tradition; criticisms that lead him to reject these well-worn concepts in order to place his metaphysical project on a different footing. In order to illustrate this point, an analogy to paradigm shifts in the natural sciences is helpful. Even though terms persist from shift to shift (and, of course, many are removed and many added), their meanings are no longer the

⁶⁵⁹Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1958), 70/71. This volume has German/English facing pages, to which the page numbers refer. “Wie, wenn gar die Sprache der Metaphysik und die Metaphysik selbst, sei sie die des lebendigen oder toten Gottes, als Metaphysik jene Schranke bildeten, die einen Übergang über die Linie, d. h. die Überwindung des Nihilismus verwerht?” Despite Heidegger’s criticism of Nietzsche, this passage strongly echoes Nietzsche’s sentiment in *Twilight of the Idols* where he writes, “I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar.”

⁶⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 73/72, “... die Auswechslung einer alten Terminologie gegen eine neue.”

⁶⁶¹*Ibid.*, “... die Frage nach dem Wesen des Seins stirbt ab, wenn sie die Sprache der Metaphysik nicht aufgibt, weil das Metaphysische Vorstellen es verwerht, die Frage nach dem Wesen des Seins zu denken.”

⁶⁶²Cf., Chapter II, p. 26, where the “Fallacy of the Perfect Dictionary” was discussed in detail.

⁶⁶³Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 11/16.

same, because the *Gestell* or overall form has changed. Similarly, the reference points in Whitehead's metaphysics are not the conventional ones, thus, his terminology is creating new meanings for metaphysics.⁶⁶⁴ Heidegger may not have envisioned this type of linguistic revision as he called upon philosophers to abandon metaphysics and think poetically. Nevertheless, it should certainly be considered as an option, if for no other reason than, because Whitehead is inspired as much by poetry as by philosophy, science, and religion.⁶⁶⁵

The respective role of language in the thought of Whitehead and Heidegger also helps to reveal an important difference between them. Where Heidegger understands language to be "the house of being" that "in its home human beings dwell",⁶⁶⁶ Whitehead thinks that "every proposition proposing a fact must, in its complete analysis, propose the general character of the universe required for that fact."⁶⁶⁷ Heidegger's concern is with humanity's relationship with Being (*Sein*) as mediated through language; Whitehead's concern is with how language allows us to formulate a cosmology or metaphysics. Hans Jonas was certainly aware of this difference when he wrote, "No philosophy of nature can issue from Heidegger's thought." According to Jonas, "A study of Whitehead is urgently recommended to Heideggerians. *Inter alia*, it may inject a modicum of qualification into the unquestioningly accepted thesis of the 'end of metaphysics.'" In his analysis Jonas focuses exclusively upon the ontic innovations introduced by Whitehead, and rightly so, since they do not run afoul of conventional metaphysical pitfalls.⁶⁶⁸

It is, nonetheless, Whitehead's desire to conceive of a complete fact that leads him from the ontic to the ontological. This is why in the full consideration of such a fact the "general character of the universe" emerges. As mentioned

⁶⁶⁴It must be observed, somewhat ironically, that the general lack of interest in Whitehead's philosophy is due in no small part to the difficulty presented by his language use, especially, in those instances where he redefines the conventional meanings of terms. For some reason, this same fate does not seem to have befallen Heidegger.

⁶⁶⁵Charles Hartshorne, *Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers: An Evaluation of Western Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY, 1983), 325, he comments, "And Heidegger wants us to turn to the poets for illumination. (So does Whitehead, but there is still quite a difference between Heidegger's Hölderlin and Whitehead's Wordsworth and Shelley. Here is a subject for research)" and on page 327 Hartshorne writes, "Whitehead's doctrine of prehension as feeling of feeling gives a technical expression to his similar belief, derived from Wordsworth and Shelley, more, perhaps, than from any philosopher."

⁶⁶⁶Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 239. // "Brief über den Humanismus," *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe, Band 9* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 313, "Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins. In ihrer Behausung wohnt der Mensch."

⁶⁶⁷Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 11/17.

⁶⁶⁸Hans Jonas, *The Review of Metaphysics* XVIII, no.1, issue 69 (1964): 224. He writes of Heideggerians, "On the other hand, they would find there (in Whitehead), in the rigor of concept, much of what they welcome in Heidegger's innovations: the break with 'substance,' the event-character of being, the reduction of entity to actual occasion, the inwardness of occasion as experience, the context of occasions as prehensions, and so on."

above, and this seems to be overlooked by Jonas, Whitehead's metaphysics (although not thinking Being as Being [*Sein qua Sein*]) does not *a priori* exclude Being (*Sein*). Given the relationship between Being (*Sein*) and entities (*Seiende*) and Whitehead's commitment to an open analysis of descriptive generalization, it is quite possible that all of his ontic innovations are leading us to the thinking of Being (*Sein*) while still providing us with an understanding of entities and a philosophy of nature.

This last point is indicative of Whitehead's thought. Had he been aware of the Ontological Difference as formulated by Heidegger, Whitehead would have had to consider whether it was a legitimate bifurcation and certainly would never have advocated the consideration of only one side of the division. Herbert Spiegelberg raises this issue in *The Phenomenological Movement*, when he writes,

One of the crucial questions for Heidegger's philosophy of Being is how far not only the 'ontological difference,' but this conception of the place of Being in relation to beings is tenable. Otherwise the whole emphasis on Being at the expense of beings may amount to a case of 'misplaced concreteness' (Whitehead), i.e., of hypostatizing Being into a separate entity.⁶⁶⁹

Whatever else Being (*Sein*) may be for Heidegger it is definitely not as an entity. Conversely, in order to commit the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness one does not have to specifically identify an entity; one only has to make the "error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete."⁶⁷⁰ This too is rather unlikely given Heidegger's extensive analysis of Western metaphysics' endemic nihilism, due to the placing of an abstract and empty concept at its core. It would certainly be one fallacy Heidegger avoids, just as Whitehead avoids nihilism by not positing an axiomatic, abstract, concept at the centre of his philosophy.

Finally, Whitehead's metaphysics offers a viable alternative that is not necessarily indicted by Heidegger's critique. This presents a challenge for those theologians who accept Heidegger's critique and inform us that metaphysics and its associated discipline – natural theology – have ended. The failure of some Process Theologians to consider Heidegger's critique is certainly a sin of omission, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, but it is no greater than that of those who would dismiss Process Theology as merely onto-theology without first considering Whitehead and the natural theologies he inspired.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 349.

⁶⁷⁰Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 52.

⁶⁷¹Notably, Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1967) and John B. Cobb Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology, Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), as well as the scores of process theologians producing numerous and diverse publications to this day. Also of note is Ian G. Barbour who prefers the term "theology of nature" in his book *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

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