

Whitehead Idealized: A Naturalized Process Metaphysics

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Whitehead is a realist and he specifically tells us so,¹ but his philosophy of organism has strong idealist currents.² Some have denied his idealist proclivities (see Ross, 13), but Whitehead himself suggests that the cosmological vision of *Process and Reality* could be viewed as “a transformation of some main doctrines of Absolute Idealism onto a realistic basis” (xiii). By virtue of the ontological principle, which Whitehead equates with actuality (*Process* 80), all actual entities emerge from the objective natural configurations of the existent universe. It is in this way that a subject is opposed to an object which is the coming into being of a subject, only to eventually transcend itself as an object. While Whitehead specifies the process by which an actual occasion transcends itself as an objective datum, he neglects to articulate with any precision the process by which a subject emerges from an objective ground.³

Whitehead's account of subjectivity is ultimately grounded in the actuality of God as the nontemporal concrescence of all eternal objects. For Whitehead, God is conceived of as playing the central role in the order and value of cosmic process which lies at the heart of the very question of subjectivity. From this account, God is the source—the ground—of every subjective aim of every actual entity.

But how would the process of subjectivity and concrescence unfold without God? How would a neo-Whiteheadian naturalized account of subjectivity occur without the import of process theism? Following the vision of a process metaphysics without God,⁴ a universe without any one overarching center of value, meaning, or order, but rather a decentered, mesocosmic approach that accounts for the vast plurality of actual entities each with their own limited perspectives, capacities, trajectories, and loci of order, I propose to offer an account of the coming into being and perishing of actual occasions without utilizing either the category of the ultimate or the derived notion of a primordial actual entity: namely, an account of concrescence without God.

While the debate between theistic and nontheistic accounts of Whitehead's system has been epitomized, among others, by Lewis Ford and Donald Sherburne, I do not wish to engage those arguments here; rather, I would like to entertain

the possibility of conceiving each occasion as a process of spontaneous generation in which a particular pattern of organization is derived from itself—from within its own interior constitution—and comes to unify its past within its present immediacy. This particular view leads Ford to question “how an occasion is able to perform this feat, [for if this is so,] we are back to some very mysterious kind of subjectivity” (“Appraisal” 35). It is my intention to offer a possible solution to this very question.

By adopting a naturalistic process metaphysics, I will be primarily concerned with tracing the emergence of subjectivity within nature, thus portraying a naturalistic idealism. Here we may use Whitehead as our guide, a Whitehead idealized. Whitehead is able to collapse the subject-object dichotomy into a concrete unity, thus revealing the cryptic idealism that infiltrates his realism. What is implicit in Whitehead’s system, and thus in need of further elaboration and revision, is how subjectivity derives from its natural immediacy only to transcend itself as immortal fact. What is of particular interest is how the subject arises within nature, from within its own objective corporeality without any appeal to an ultimate or divine principle. By examining Whitehead’s theory of the subject-superject unity, I will show how an actual occasion is in all respects a selfobject.

The Transcendental Thrust

In a number of places, Whitehead tells us that subjectivity arises out of objectivity. According to the doctrine of prehensions, a subject is constituted by its internal relations to precipitated objects in its immediate experiential field. He specifically rejects Kant’s transcendental idealism whereby the objective world is constructed by purely subjective experience, instead prefacing how subjectivity proceeds from the world of objects prehended by an actual entity via the principle of causal efficacy. Whitehead is clear:

Thus for Kant the process whereby there is experience is a process from subjectivity to apparent objectivity. The philosophy of organism inverts this analysis, and explains the process as proceeding from objectivity to subjectivity, namely from the objectivity, whereby the external world is a datum, to the subjectivity, whereby there is one individual experience. (*Process* 156)

By inverting Kant, Whitehead places primacy on the objective world as the *a priori* condition for subjectivity. “For Kant, the world emerges from the subject; for the philosophy of organism, the subject emerges from the world” (*Process* 88). For Whitehead, the subject is always preceded by an object. Furthermore, the subject is always superceded by an object which becomes datum for a future occasion. Because an object both precedes and supercedes a subject, Whitehead is employing his own form of *transcendental realism*: occasions develop out of objects, transcend themselves, perish, and achieve “objective immortality” (*Process* 45). Elsewhere he says, “the world, as known, transcends the subject which is cognisant of it” (*Science* 90). Essentially, a subject transcends itself and becomes an object.

Throughout his various writings, Whitehead is preoccupied with the transcendental thrust of an actual entity. Objective reality—causal, presentational, anticipatory—aims toward the beyond. The activity of transcendence is a relation to the objective; it “is essential for any form of realism. For there is in the world for our cognisance, memory of the past, immediacy of realization, and indication of things to come” (*Science* 103). Objectivity always infuses subjectivity; the subject is the ingestion of otherness. “Transcendence begins with the leap from the actuality of the immediate occasion to the notion of personal existence. . . . It is in the nature of the present that it should thus transcend itself by reason of the immanence in it of the ‘other’” (*Adventures* 335). Immanence and transcendence are the engine of novelty belonging to the creative urge of an actual entity seeking objective immortality. “Immanence and transcendence are the characteristics of an object: as a realized determinant it is immanent; as a capacity for determination it is transcendent” (*Process* 239). While the subject perishes, the object is preserved.

Whitehead’s doctrine of prehensions explains a threefold relation between the subject and the object; namely: (i) the subject’s relation to the object; (ii) the object’s relation to the subject; and (iii) their mutual interpenetration. The subject-object contrast may only be properly appreciated as an intrinsic dynamic totality whereby each event and its internal relation is emphasized as a particular moment in the process of becoming. However, for Whitehead, “each event has a character of its own” (“Einstein’s” 133). Thus what becomes important for us to examine is the internal relations of each prehending event that comprises the totality of an occasion. In offering a metaphysics of internal relatedness, Whitehead’s subject-object dichotomy is in fact a distinction internal to ontological unity rather than an explanation of ontological discontinuity. This is why Whitehead’s universe privileges unity and continuity even though we may temporally highlight division, separation, and duality as discrete perspectives and moments of process. Because the act of prehending emphasizes a dynamic internal relation, it becomes necessary to initially focus on such internal operations from the standpoint of the constituent performing the prehending act, namely, the subject.

The subject encounters the facticity of the plurality of objects populating the world which it feels and seizes upon, thus selecting particular features to absorb, value, and enjoy while negating others. This is a one-way internal relation whereby the subject confronts the object and appropriates certain aspects of it into its own internal constitution. A subjective prehending entity enjoys degrees of freedom and purpose as it “decides” what to feed upon and ingest from the object. But the subject’s relation to the object is mediated by two factors: (i) the causal efficaciousness of the past impressing itself into the realm of the percipient occasion’s phenomenological field; and (ii) the manner in which the subject chooses to ingress the object. The inner process of prehending thus leads to the

transformative power of taking what is objectively given in subjective immediacy and mutating it in the process of concrescence.

What becomes important to address is the question of transition. A subject becomes a datum for the future when it achieves satisfaction and perishes into objective fact. The mode of perishing is the logical model for the transition into objectivity. Whitehead asserts:

The world is always becoming, and as it becomes, it passes away and perishes. . . . The world as it passes perishes, and that in perishing it yet remains an element in the future beyond itself. . . . The notion of the prehension of the past means that the past is an element which perishes and thereby remains an element in the state beyond, and thus is objectified. (*Essays* 89)

The transcendental nature of Whitehead's realism lies in his concern with preserving the object. The subject is transitory activity that experiences, enjoys, fades, and dies; in Whitehead's words, it becomes a "dead datum" for the future life of another occasion (*Process* 164). Nevertheless, the subject is embalmed as an object. "Because we perish we are immortal" (*Essays* 89). In the end, it is the object, not the subject, that occupies the "beyond."

While the transition from subjectivity to objectivity is completed through perishing, we need to be concerned with a more primary transition, namely, the transition from objectivity to subjectivity. The real question facing Whitehead is elucidating the transition from object to subject. He tells us that "the subject emerges from the world" (*Process* 88), but this process is left unexplained. It is not enough to presume the facticity of subjectivity without explaining how subjectivity arises. Are we to simply assume that a subject becomes an object thus immortal, which in turn becomes incorporated into a future subject with the process continuing *ad infinitum*; or are we to define how a subject comes into being in the first place?

Whitehead specifically says that the process of becoming proceeds "from objectivity to subjectivity" (*Process* 156). He further explains that an object comes into being through perishing—itsself a subjective completion; but how does a subject come into being? Whitehead states: "Each actual entity is conceived as an act of experience *arising* out of data" (*Process* 40, italics added). From this dictum we can determine that a subject emerges from an object; it does not arise *ex nihilo*. But curiously, Whitehead himself does not specify how this process is carried out. Because subjects arise from data, they cannot just pop up throughout eternity absorbing objects from the past; rather, they have their own formal development. While not explicitly spelled out in his system, we are still able to trace the process of the emergence of subjectivity within nature.

Although Whitehead does not clarify the development of a subject, he allows for an explanation of how subjectivity is derived. Whitehead tells us that "Actuality in perishing acquires objectivity, while it loses subjective immediacy" (*Process* 29). A subject attains objectivity only on the condition that it becomes an object for the future. But Whitehead also explains that each occasion is a piece

of activity that "arises" out of objective data. Hence he privileges the object as the initial ground of the nascent prehending subject which undergoes internal evolution only to become another objective ground for a future subject. The objective datum is the transcendent product of a previously perished subject. So not only is subjectivity the coming into being of objectivity, but objectivity is the coming to presence of subjectivity and then passing away back into objectivity as a formal advance into creative novelty. The new is always evolving from the old, the present from the past, the possible from the actual.

But by virtue of the fact that a subject already exists as a real actual entity according to the ontological principle, it is already an object to be prehended by other subjects; thus it is an objective fact despite that it does not yet enjoy immortality. From this standpoint, subjectivity is objectified in each moment of existence, only to become something else as its subjective form mutates and takes on further objectified properties. This is why he says that "every item of the universe, including all the other actual entities, is a constituent in the constitution of any one actual occasion" (*Process* 148). While a subject is not yet a completed immortal object, it finds itself arising out of objects. This becomes important for understanding how subjectivity derives from its natural immediacy only to surpass its determined facticity as a self-creative subject. Here lies the seed of Whitehead's idealism infused within his transcendental realism.

The Question of Original Ground

Not only does a subject emanate from the past, but the past is always immanent. This brings us to the question of original ground. How does the subject emerge?—from the object; but how does the object emerge?—from the subject! Is Whitehead merely arguing in a circle? Are we left with the hopelessness of an infinite regress, or is there a solution at hand? The emergent subject transcends itself as an object which in turn becomes the very condition for the future instantiation of subjectivity. But what about genesis—Beginning? From Whitehead's account, we must start from the standpoint of the object. Then how do we account for the transition from objectivity to subjectivity? Whitehead's system is designed in such a way that depending upon where you enter the process, each experiential entity must take into account its immediacy, its possible transcendence, as well as its ancestry. In this sense, subject and object are fused in relation to past, present, and future. Thus subject and object are enveloped in a state of symbiosis, which undergoes division, separation, and modification within a self-articulated complex totality. This way Whitehead dodges (in principle) the accusation of regression because he shows how both the subject and object are equiprimordial—originally an undifferentiated unity.

It is by virtue of the ontological principle that "actual occasions form the ground from which all other types of existence are derivative and abstracted" (*Process* 75). Since an actual occasion is the unification of the subject with its objective counterparts, the subject-object dichotomy is bridged. By appealing to early events, Whitehead can illustrate how a mediated dynamic begets a new

immediate which arises out of the past—from the object, which it in turn arises from a prior state of subjective expression. This is the first element of Whitehead's idealism that deserves our attention.

Let us begin with the object—the past.⁵ Through causal efficacy,⁶ the past gushes into the immediate, saturating the subject's array of possible responses to it. But in order for there to be experience at all on the part of the subject, the object must first give rise to the subject. What is the object's relation to the subject? It is the very condition for subjectivity; hence it is an ontological *a priori*. But what of the object's transition into subjectivity? This is left unexplained. In other words, how does subjectivity arise and unfold *within* objectivity—within nature? Our answer is to be found in an analysis of prehension.

Whitehead explains that the basic constituent structure of an actual entity is disclosed as a concrescence of prehensions. He states: "Every prehension consists of three factors: (a) 'the subject' which is prehending, namely, the actual entity in which that prehension is a concrete element; (ii) the 'datum' which is prehended; (c) the 'subjective form' which is *how* that subject prehends that datum" (*Process* 23). In his ninth category of explanation, he states that "*how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity *is*." Here Whitehead is emphasizing the subjective function, viz. the process by which a subject defines its internal experience. Here he seems to place emphasis on the nature of the subject rather than on the nature of the object; yet the two descriptions "are not independent."

Whitehead clearly introduces an opposition—a contrast—between the subject and the object in his concept of prehension. In fact, the object stands as an intermediate between the agency of the subject and the form in which the object is subjectively felt. This basic division already constitutes a negative dialectic: a subject is opposed to an object which the subject enters into, plunders, and makes part of its internal structure. Yet because of the principle of causal efficacy, the object is an efficient cause that pervades the field of the percipient subject. The subject, however, determines what will be allowed into its interior; by virtue of its own final causal, telic powers, it has the freedom to choose what it wishes to ingress and what it wishes to repudiate.⁷ This is why Whitehead says that an actual occasion is fully determinate (*Process* 26).

If Whitehead privileges the object over the subject, then why is the process of objectification a subjective achievement? "The term 'objectification' refers to the particular mode in which the potentiality of one actual entity is realized in another actual entity" (*Process* 23). Whitehead clearly states that the loci of realization is in the subject: objectification is felt through the specific subjective form or emotional state of an actual entity. Whitehead insists that the subjective aim "controls" the process of becoming (*Process* 25). This constitutes the process of objectification: a subject objectifies another subject which it takes as an object, or prehends an object which has already become immortal. Yet for Whitehead, the object always precedes the subject; it is a datum from the immediate past.

While Whitehead accounts for the relation between the subject and the object, he omits the relation the subject initially has with itself. An objectified datum no longer has an internal relation; once it perishes it dies and becomes immortal. This is why occasions perish, they "do not change" (*Process* 35); "dead nature aims at nothing" (*Modes* 135). But subjects are always evolving; they "enjoy adventures of change." Therefore, we must be able to account for how the subject comes into being through its own internal relations before it encounters external objects in its immediate milieu. The only plausible account we may consider is how a subject derives from its own heredity which it takes as its own natural immediacy. Therefore, subjectivity is born within its own immediate relation to itself out of the manifold data that informs its natural edifice. Because Whitehead insists that an object predates a subject, we may legitimately conjecture that subjectivity awakens within nature—within its own objective corporeality—only to feel the immediacy of its determinate being as a sentient subject. Let us examine how this process may conceivably unfold.

The Emergence of Subjectivity

Subjectivity proceeds from objectivity which becomes a self-external-relation: a subject relates to itself and to an object through its subjective form. But before there is awareness of an extrinsic object—the particular datum it prehends—there has to be a *prior* state of internal organization. The subject must first come into being as a subjective agency before it can distinguish its own interior and subjective aim from the environment it encounters. Here Whitehead is silent; he simply presupposes the structure of the subject which is associated to its array of subjective forms, "such as emotions, valuations, purposes, aversions, aversions, consciousness, etc." (*Process* 24). While Whitehead explains how the actual entity is constituted through prehensions, he does not explain how that one element of an occasion—the "subject"—is constituted.

Before an actual entity achieves concrescence through the unification of the object into its subjective form thus attaining satisfaction, a subject must emerge as a prior shape in the coming to presence of an actual occasion. But how does the subject emerge? It cannot be simply presupposed to exist as a given entity, because Whitehead himself patently says that objectivity precedes subjectivity. Therefore, the only plausible way for a subject to come into being is through its own internal process "arising out of data:" this involves a necessary self-relation derived from its natural immediacy, hence its objective ground.

We are justified in thinking that subjectivity blossoms from the garden of data that is its natural foundation; but what does it mean to have subjectivity? As Whitehead states: "To be an actual occasion is to have self-interest. This self-interest is a feeling of self-valuation; it is an emotional tone" (*Religion* 100). Value is not just given over to the subject by an object, it is self-generated. If an occasion is tantamount to an experiential Self, such "self-interest" may only derive from earlier experience belonging to the self-relatedness of the subject—its

initial feeling as "self-valuation." Before a subject prehends an external object, it would have to first of allprehend itself.

Self-prehension is the initial form a subject takes; it feels its own being within the natural immediacy in which it finds itself.⁸ We may speculate that since the subject arises out of objective data which it takes as its natural immediacy, the subject does not initially distinguish itself from its causal past or antecedent conditions. Its preexisting objective ground is experienced within itself as its own subjective nature, hence there is no separateness between the experiential subject and its felt objective foundation: subject and object are equiprimordial. Whatever objective elements precede the emergence of subjectivity, the sentient subject does not feel them as such. The efficaciousness of causal inheritance is not experienced as an alien force, but rather as the subjective activity of its own being (as becoming). Thus the past is not originally prehended as impersonal, foreign data; it is initially felt as personal experience arising in its immediacy. It is in this way that a subject first feels itself as an undifferentiated oneness with its objective constituency, only to later differentiate itself as a subject who is opposed to objects it encounters in its surround.

Because all subjects derive from nature, the subject's initial relation is to itself as a self-feeling. While Whitehead does not explain this process, we may give him voice. The immediacy of subjectivity is "appetition"—pure "unrest" (*Process* 32). From this unrest, subjectivity emerges as unadulterated self-activity—its own self-experience as feeling which takes other subjective forms, namely, "self-valuation" and "self-interest." As appetite, the subject is merely implicit; it becomes a matter of arousing itself from its natural immediacy which it does as self-feeling.

Appetition as pure activity accounts for the most basal experience of an actual occasion, the subjective element of self-constitutive agency. The awakening of the subject is the self-expressive act of appetite—desire, which takes the initial form of feeling or self-experience. Therefore, in the beginning, the incipient subject is nothing other than its own immediate being and thus relates itself to its own determinations. This process of self-prehension explains the transition from the raw objective data that constitutes the actual entity's most elementary structure to the dawn of unconscious subjectivity. After the embryonic subject acquires initiatory self-familiarity through its feeling activity, it gradually undergoes a series of internal divisions, projections, and modifications experienced as differentiated subjective forms. The crude process of moving from primordial undifferentiation to differentiated self-prehension eventually leads to more sophisticated self- and object-directed aims.

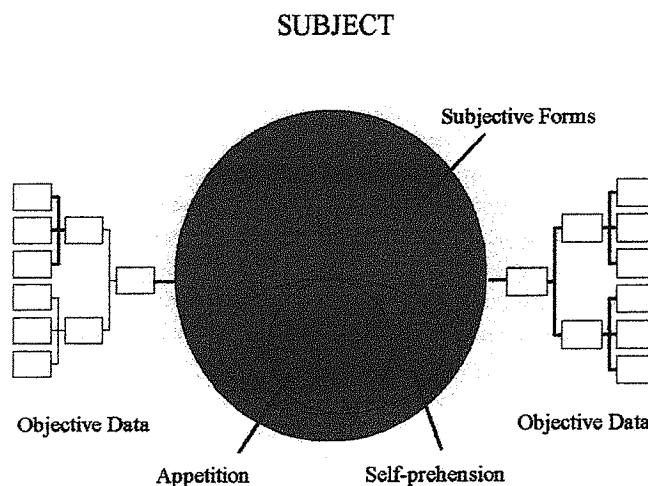


Figure 1

Figure 1 illustrates how a subject comes into being:

(i) When objective data amalgamate into more organized threads of order thus giving rise to experience, they form the ground for subjectivity to unfold. Through gradations of awakening, a subject derives from the sea of objective data that is its natural immediacy.

(ii) Activity is the starting point giving rise to primitive mentation as self-experience. Subjectivity must first be a sentient embodied activity because it derives from the most basic and primitive elements of its physical corporeality. This is why Whitehead insists that physical prehensions precede conceptual ones (*Process* 26-27). From this pure activity, the implicit subject experiences an unrest or unease that is the expression of its desire or appetite.

(iii) A subject first finds itself in a state of undifferentiation with its natural determinacy. Appetition becomes the drive to wake itself from its dormant undifferentiated immediacy to determinate mediacy.

(iv) As unrest or appetite, the subject awakens from its immediate undifferentiated state to find itself as a feeling, desirous entity; yet still being only a primitive organization, it is not yet a full actual occasion.

(v) As self-feeling, the subject takes itself as its first object and thus prehends itself. Self-prehension is the initial form that derives from its appetite or desire which is the preliminary stage of moving beyond its undifferentiated immediacy.

(vi) When the subject seizes itself as its original object, it imbues itself with value, interest, emotion, purpose, etc.—the modified and projected expression of its appetition—which takes on several other subjective forms and mutations especially as it interacts with objects populating its experiential field. After undergoing its own internal maturation, it is now a subjective agent ready to encounter the manifold of objects that permeate its milieu; yet it is only one element in the constitution of an actual occasion.

Moving from an undifferentiated indeterminate immediacy to a differentiated determinate mediacy is a basic dialectical maneuver that is already the teleological expression of the subject's subjective form. Whitehead says, "the feelings are inseparable from the end at which they aim; and this end is the feeler. The feelings aim at the feeler as their final cause," hence a self-prehension (*Process* 222). Thus the coming into being of a subject is a mediated self-related dynamic whereby each modification in form is the transmutation of earlier primitive processes. When the subject encounters the population of objects from the efficacious past which foists itself upon the organism as stubborn fact in presentational immediacy, its internal constitution alters in added complexity with respect to its aim, form, creative novelty, and developmental maturity belonging to the higher phases of concrescence. Taken together, this process articulates the inner development of an actual occasion.

Because Whitehead's system starts with the most primitive or elementary configurations of events and moves toward more unified structural complexifications of experience, the basic dynamic of mediated immediacy serves as the logical model for the process of becoming. An actual entity is the unification of the subject with objective prehended data incorporated from its surround and transmuted into a self-created subjective expression which perishes back into objective immortality. This process continues into eternity whereby objects beget subjects which beget objects, each an ontologically joined totality, undifferentiated in essence, differentiated only by form. Because subjects transcend themselves as immortal objects, and objective configurations become the ground for the birth of subjectivity, Whitehead's metaphysics is properly said to be a transcendental realism however tinged with idealistic affinities. Having examined the conditions and initial process of the unfolding of subjectivity, we may now turn our attention to Whitehead's theory of the subject-superject which further fleshes out the cryptic idealism entrenched in his realistic enterprise.

The Subject-Superject: A Selfobject Unity

It is easy to misunderstand Whitehead's definition of an actual occasion. Because he refers to an object being prehended by a subject, one is led to believe that the subject is the prehending entity, thus the actual occasion. But Whitehead informs us otherwise. The subject never exists independent from the previous objective elements that saturate its inner constitution—subject and object are one:

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 be mostly 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.' (*Process* 29)

The superject is the objective complement to the subjective form of a subject; it is the data of objects that conditions the process of concrescence "exercising its function of objective immortality" (*Process* 45). The superject is essentially the objective component of the concrescing occasion. In short, it is the object of the subject-object contrast.

The superject has a transcendent function as object, itself the projection of the subject that aims toward satisfaction. Whitehead states: "The operations of an organism are directed towards the organism as a 'superject,' and are not directed from the organism as a 'subject.' The operations are directed *from* antecedent organisms and *to* the immediate organism. They are 'vectors,' in that they convey the many things into the constitution of the single superject" (*Process* 151). The objective data prehended within an actual occasion serves as the efficient cause which becomes incorporated within the final cause that propels the entity to complete itself through perishing. In essence, the superject is the subjectified object on its way toward becoming objectively immortal.

During the life of a concrescing occasion, Whitehead closes the subject-object divide and collapses it into a concrete unity. Because there is no ontological distinction between the internal constitution of the subject and the objective properties it prehends, the subject and superject are united into the singular totality of an actual occasion. The unity of the subject-superject is what I will refer to as a *selfobject*. The term selfobject is used to denote how objects permeate the inner structure and self-cohesion of an entity which is to be viewed as being inextricable from its interior and its self-relation. An actual entity is a selfobject that undergoes evolution with respect to the subjective and objective elements of its self-expression. The only time when an occasion is purely an object is when it has perished. Recall that Whitehead always privileges the object over the subject. Indeed, the objective functions of the superject operative within the subjective components of an actual entity are present from the moment of inception of the subject—in the domain of unrest and self-prehension—to its final satisfaction. "The philosophy of organism seeks to describe how objective data pass into subjective satisfaction, and how order in the objective data provides intensity in the subjective satisfaction" (*Process* 88).

The subject takes itself as an object—a selfobject, which is the expression of appetite. As unrest, the immature entity is suffused with a drive, a primal 'given' order that is oriented toward an end. This drive leads to gradations of intensity in the attainment of satisfaction and is the impetus behind the differentiating movements in the internal constitution of an entity.⁹ Whitehead says, "That 'intensity' in the *formal constitution* of a subject-superject involves 'appetition'

in the *objective* functioning as superject" (*Process* 83). The objective elements of an occasion's antecedent past infuse the very appetitive drive itself which stays with the selfobject until its very moment of perishing. In fact, Whitehead states that "satisfaction' is the 'superject'" itself (*Process* 84).

Depicted earlier, the subject initially takes itself as an object which it prehends as a self-feeling. In taking itself as an object it converts its natural immediacy into subjective mediacy whereby the object devolves into the subject. This is the preliminary phase in the constitution of a selfobject felt as subject. Once its subjective structure is constituted, it enters into a formal relation with itself and with the manifold universe as the emergence of a space-time quantum. This is the second and more proper phase of its selfobject constitution followed by many progressive sub-phases of experience that lend order to the process of concrecence. The formal relation between subject and object ripens in complexity as the subject perpetually encounters the plethora of contiguous data external to it. The subject, already the succession of antecedent objective processes, is opposed to an object which it confronts, engulfing its efficaciousness and taking it into its self-structure. The self-external-relation of subjectivity is the melting of the object within the self. In other words, the entity takes data from its ancestry and its immediate surround and makes it part of its Self.

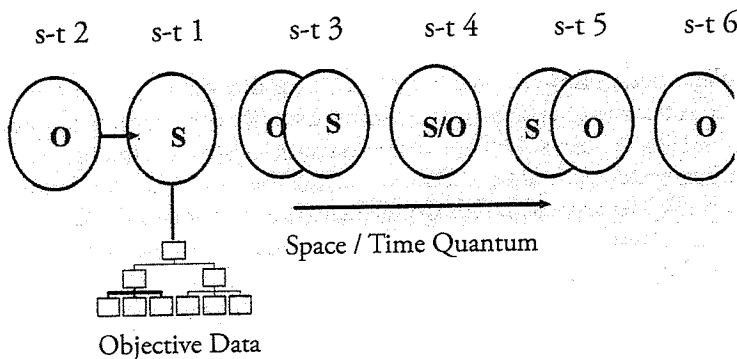


Figure 2

Figure 2 demonstrates how the selfobject process is carried out:

(s-t 1) The subject evolves out of the precession of objects it inherits from the past which forms its ground.

(s-t 2) As a subject becomes constituted through its subjective forms, it receives further causal impressions from the steady stream of objects in its contemporaneous immediacy.

(s-t 3) The prehensive process ensues as an object penetrates the interior of the subject which it receives both seizing and negating certain attributes it chooses to address, producing grades of intensities in its subjective ingressions, emotions, valuations, and purposes, thus:

(s-t 4) securing a symbiotic experience whereby the object becomes merged within the subject.

(s-t 5) This merger results in a selfobject unity that is itself a process of transition toward higher grades of complexification which shift in their transcendence toward satisfaction. Superjective pressures advance the selfobject into greater stages of creative novelty and gain increased objectification which

(s-t 6) culminate in perishing and objective immortality that completes the subjective aim of a concreting occasion.

The subject-superject process is an endless dialectic of mediated dynamics whereby subjectivity comes into being from objectivity and passes over again into objectivity only to be constituted as subjectivity—insofar as each subjective constitution is a re-constitution of objective data; thus an object bears a subject which bears an object. This is a self-contained process; a subject is opposed to an object which comes to find itself in the object, i.e., from objective data, which is nothing other than a return to itself. Therefore an actual entity comes to be what it already is, the process of its own becoming.

The subject-superject unity defined here as an experiential selfobject flow involves a two phase process of symbiosis and differentiation: (i) the first phase takes place on the initial primordial level of the emergence of the nascent subject whereby it arises from its natural objective, symbiotic immediacy and finds itself as an appetitive, sentient, self-feeling being-in-becoming. Through internal division and differentiation from its previous shape, it acquires distinct subjective forms which it imbues onto objects in its environment. (ii) This process of projecting its subjective aims and valuation on external objects which it incorporates into its internal structure is once again an entering into a symbiotic relation with what it prehends, only to go through further separation and individuation from the selfobject unity to objectivity as a transcendent piece of data that perishes into the void of brute fact.

There is actually a two-way relation between the subject-object dyad: the first is the objective instantiation of the superject as appetite into the implicit, dormant embryonic subject that arises from its unrest as a differentiated form. This polarity leads to a fuller mutual relation as the subject ingests the object that foists itself on the subject, but which in turn imbues with its own aims and internal projections. While the superject is the transcendent principle that is satisfaction, the subject-superject are ontologically indistinguishable in their aims. The primacy of objectivity is instantiated in an actual entity *a priori* and infiltrates all permutations of subjective form. By virtue of its facticity—its thrownness, an entity begins as an object and ends as an object, only to be reborn as another piece of subjectivity.

Conclusion

Throughout this project, I have attempted to set forth a naturalized idealist process account of concrecence utilizing and re-appropriating the more cryptic dimensions of Whitehead's idealistic thought intertwined within his firm

commitment to realism as evinced by his efforts to subjectify objective nature. Through this account of a neo-Whiteheadian idealism, metaphysical commitments to a category of the ultimate and/or any appeal to God who serves as the ground of all subjectivity is displaced. From a process view that celebrates an idealized naturalism, we may embrace a reconceptualization of how novel subjective immediacy emerges from the perishing of prior subjective immediacy explaining how objectivity can of itself give rise to subjectivity.

The theoretical implications of this approach cannot be exhausted here, but we may see how our empirical observations of the world lend confirmation to a naturalized account of subjectivity that remains faithful to the main tenets of Whitehead's system. For example, when an entity perishes, we may observe how this act gives rise to the emergence of other entities, such as when flora grow from a compost pile or emerge from the remains of an animal carcass, itself giving rise to new life and societies after being digested by other hungry organisms. We may also see affinities with reproductive biology when an ovum and sperm perish through transmutation to zygote, embryo, then fetus; and with cognitive science in observing how consciousness and self-consciousness developmentally emerge from the biochemical and physiological configurations that partially constitute the nature of mind-brain dependence. In all of these cases, object gives rise to subject only to become another object; hence subjectivity is the spawn of objective immediacy.

It may be argued that the idealistic pole of Whitehead's thinking is a modernization of panpsychism.¹⁰ But Whitehead is not an idealist such as those in the German Idealist tradition because instead of an absolute subject, self, mind, will, or pure thought thinking itself and the world into existence from a purely subjective ground, he shows how objectivity is the necessary precondition for every subjective form of creative pulse to materialize and thrive. This is the foundation of his transcendental realism: actual occasions arise out of nature and surpass themselves as immortal fact. His acceptance of a revised subjectivist principle is embodied in his doctrine of prehensions;¹¹ thus whatever is actual experiences. Yet for Whitehead, experience is the experience of objects whose experience is constituted by the inclusion of otherness that is "immanent" within their own interior constitutions. But because he situates the drive toward novelty and objective immortality within a purposeful, valuative self-feeling subject that desires to complete itself through unity with the complex totality of cosmic process, his underlying idealism is representative of many Modern philosophies of the will. Indeed, Whitehead's philosophy of organism is a dynamic self-articulated complex holism, a metaphysics few idealists could ever aspire to surpass.

Notes

1. In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead tells us he adopts a position of "provisional realism" (64, 91); however, in *Process and Reality*, he is more committed: "my obligations to the English and American Realists are obvious" (xii).

Also in *The Interpretation of Science*, Whitehead specifically adopts "realism (under this heading of relativity)" (141).

2. In a number of works, George R. Lucas, Jr. addresses the idealism-realism tension in Whitehead with an emphasis on how his idealistic resonances were derived. Lucas argues that much of the confusion surrounding Whitehead's position is largely the result of the historical realist revolt against idealism inevitably devolving into contention and paradox. Whitehead is seen as attempting to ameliorate this dilemma by unifying the idealist-realist polarity through his own evolutionary cosmology, thus aligning with later critical realists exasperated by their own failed endeavors. Cf. *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead*, Ch.3.

3. Lewis Ford provides a meticulous exegesis of Whitehead's account of subjectivity in, "Subjectivity in the Making"; however, he was not able to show, in my opinion, how Whitehead accounts for the emergence of the subject from an object other than appealing to God as a first principle. Even if we were to accept this supposition, it becomes important to delineate the process by which subjectivity arises from objectivity.

4. Donald Sherburne challenges the coherence of the concept of God in a number of articles, however, his essay, "Decentering Whitehead," more specifically points toward a neo-Whiteheadian naturalism. George Allan also provides a strong account of a godless metaphysics in "The Primacy of the Mesocosm," arguing that mesocosmic complexity defined as the intermediate experience of our environment and action with contingent boundaries, capacities, and trajectories displaces Whitehead's appeal to a primordial occasion of creative purpose. Of course there is a long history to this issue which is beyond the scope of this immediate investigation, yet a few words are in order. George Lucas provides an informative and thoughtful account of the historical development of the theism-naturalism debate that continues to divide the field, perhaps in part due to constraints by the various over-identification with specific group loyalties. Victor Lowe's query into whether some of the issues evoked by Whitehead's theistic turn could not be better worked out within a purely naturalistic framework (see *Understanding Whitehead* 87ff) sparked the contemporary Sherburne-Ford debate. In "An Appraisal of Whiteheadian Nontheism," Ford directly challenges Sherburne's nontheistic account of Whitehead primarily represented in his views outlined in "Whitehead Without God." For a complete review, see Lucas, *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead* 161-64.

5. The role of the past poses many problems for the nature of objectification and concrescence. Sherburne, among others, has been concerned with the role of the causal past and its implication for a process naturalism. From a process theistic account, any reference to the past must necessarily be grounded in God, a position defended by Christian, Hartshorne, and Cobb. Because my account throughout the remainder of this article attempts to delineate the ground, scope, and process of objectification within a naturalistic framework, the reader may want to consult George Lucas' review of this earlier historical debate. Cf. *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead* 164-74.

6. Whitehead first discusses perception in the mode of causal efficacy in Chapter II of *Symbolism*.

7. Whitehead explains that when an actual entity perishes into objective immortality, "it loses the final causation which is its internal principle of unrest, and it acquires efficient causation whereby it is a ground of obligation characterizing the creativity" (*Process* 29).

8. Following Jorge Luis Nobo who claims that for Whitehead becoming produces being (see "Whitehead's Principle of Process"), Lewis Ford argues in "Subjectivity in the Making," that a subject never strictly has a unity, for when it does become a unity this constitutes being, thus its process of becoming is over. Within this context, I wish to equate the subject's being with its present immediacy, that which it prehends as part of its experience and internal process in the moment, thus its being-as-becoming.

9. I am in general agreement with Jude Jones' position that actuality is a repetitious occurrence of dynamic pattern she equates with intensity that lies on a continuum of realized contrasting values. The process of an entity as the realization of value—whether this be the determinate fullness of an entity we designate by its concrescence, reiteration or reappearances we attribute to its inherited genetic past, or its future objectifications—is a meaningful processive trajectory of intensity. See Judith Jones, *Intensity*.

10. See Nathaniel Lawrence's discussion in *Alfred North Whitehead* 30-31; and Bernhard Rensch's, "The Meaning of Panpsychistic Identism for a Universal Evolutionary Picture" 191-204.

11. Jorge Luis Nobo argues that Whitehead's organic philosophy is actually a repudiation rather than a revision of the subjectivist principle (cf. *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Extension and Solidarity* 375-80). But Whitehead specifically says that "the philosophy of organism admits the subjectivist doctrine" which he redefines (*Process* 190). Nobo correctly emphasizes the objectivist doctrine in Whitehead, but as we have seen, Whitehead himself subjectifies objectivity.

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