A Conspectus of A. N. Whitehead’s Metaphysics

– Peter Sjöstedt–H –

- A system of **panpsycho-panentheism**.
  - i.e. a panpsychism: that all entities have sentience (or, ‘proto-sentience’), combined with a panentheism: that God is nature and more.

- Whitehead calls his system the **Philosophy of Organism** or **Organic Realism**; it is also known as **Process Philosophy**.
  - Every entity is an organism, encapsulated in his sentence:
    - ‘Biology is the study of the larger organisms; whereas physics is the study of the smaller organisms.’ (SMW, ch. VI)
  - It is known as Process Philosophy because in actuality there are no static substances, but only events, occasions, processes.

- The smallest processes are called **actual occasions**, or **actual entities**.
  - These are drops of experience that constitute nature (cf. William James).

- Actual entities are perspectives on the world, somewhat analogous to Leibniz's monads. They are transitory: they become and they perish.

- The process of an actual entity is called a **concrescence** that involves an **initial subjective aim** to create that actual entity, a **prehension** of other actual entities, a **subjective aim** that conduces a **decision**, and a **satisfaction** that completes the process.

- An initial subjective aim is bequeathed by the panentheistic God (see below) that sets off an experiential perspective.

- An actual entity **prehends** other actual entities, but not in the traditional relation of representation-to-object but rather in the relation part-to-whole.
  - i.e. the prehension of an actual entity is the actual inclusion of that other actual entity within itself. This fusion is called **vectoring**, it is referred to by the **Principle of Relativity**. There is no absolute subject-object dichotomy. (cf. Henri Bergson)

- The type of qualia that an actual entity employs for their prehensions are called **eternal objects**. These are metaphysical ‘pure potentials’ and subsist within a realm of ‘God’ (see below).
Prehensions can be positive or negative, physical or conceptual:
- Open positive prehensions are of what is included in the actual entity.
- Open negative prehensions reject entities and concepts for inclusion.
- Open physical prehensions are of other actual entities.
- Open conceptual prehensions are of eternal objects alone.
- There are also impure and hybrid prehensions which are combinations of the above.

An actual entity is determined by past prehensions, but it is also to varying extents self-determined through its subjective aim that strives for experiential aesthetic intensity.

There is thus efficient causality in the inheritance of the prehensions of actual entities, and final causality (teleology) in the subjective aim of actual entities.

Actual entities in aggregate are called nexūs, and if the nexūs share a common characteristic they are called societies.

An electron is an example of a society, as is an atom, molecule and crystal.

Whitehead adopts a dual-aspect theory whereby external appearance correlates to internal experience.

What are traditionally named ‘organisms’ are complex societies.

These high-grade societies transmute a plurality of incoming prehensions into an abstracted unity for ease of comprehension. Common human sense perception is an example thereof.

There are two main species of human perception: perception in the mode of causal efficacy (PMCE) and perception in the mode of presentational immediacy (PMPI):
- PMPI is commonly identified with all perception, being that from the ‘five senses’.
- PMCE is the less distinct yet more ubiquitous internal experience of the actions and experiences of the past and concurrent surroundings flowing into the present.

God is vital for the operations of Whitehead’s system. (S)He has two natures: the primordial and the consequent:
- The primordial nature of God (PNG) is the realm of eternal objects.
  - The eternal objects are ingressed into all our experiences thereby determining the qualitative type of the experience.
- The consequent nature of God (CNG) is the pantheistic unity of all experiences drawn into one higher consciousness.
- PNG is unconscious; CNG is conscious.
– God bestows the initial subjective aim for an actual entity as a *lure* for its concresence and the experiential intensity it evokes.
  o It is God's purpose to enjoy the experiential intensities S(H)e provokes.

– God is not omnipotent as actual entities and their societies have their own teleology.

– God is not omniscient because the future does not yet exist because novelty emerges from actualities via their subjective aim and the infinity of eternal objects.

– God is not omnibenevolent because morality is subordinate to aesthetic appreciation which is God's desire.

  (Thus 'God' is perhaps a misnomer.)

– Above Actual Entities and God, the third main tenet of Whitehead's cosmology is **Creativity**.
  o God conditions creativity but it is beyond His control.

– All but the PNG is subject to flux, to process, to novelty, to creativity.
  o Matter evolves as well as 'organisms', the laws of nature change, even the three dimensions of our extensive epoch will pass into history and in its place a cosmos of unimaginable difference will rise.

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*philosopher.eu* (8:2015)