

## 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 **concrecence** 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:
  - **Positive prehensions** are of what is included in the actual entity.
  - **Negative prehensions** reject entities and concepts for inclusion.
  - **Physical prehensions** are of other actual entities.
  - **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 concrecence 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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