

NOTES

1. Parenthetical references of this form are to Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, Corrected Edition, edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York and London: The Free Press, 1978).

2. C. D. Broad, "Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)," *Mind* 57 (April, 1948): 139-145, p. 144.

3. John W. Lango, "Whitehead's Actual Occasions and the New Infinitesimals," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 25 (Winter, 1989): 29-39.

4. These writings are collected in Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). There have been, of course, numerous discussions of Davidson's views in the extensive analytic literature on action theory.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

6. "The Individuation of Events," *ibid.*, p. 179.

7. Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?" in his *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 166.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

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*Process in Context: Essays in Post-Whiteheadian Perspectives*

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Whitehead scholars continue to explore the possible categorical transformations available within the process perspective. The categories of "actual occasion," "eternal entity," "prehension," "ingression," "epochal temporality," and "subjective aim," remain flexible and open to novel conceptual delineations that often put pressure on the classical Whiteheadian framework. Theological refinements drive Whitehead's formulations in new directions and continue to inspire more subtle clarifications and ramifications. These intensifications and refinements go hand and hand with a broadening of process thought which attempts to show how these

basic categories can apply to phenomena as diverse as language, biological systems, quantum events, exhibitiv judgments (e.g., poetry), the history of religions, and the human process. Insofar as process metaphysics has a future it will be measured in terms of its ability to augment its classical conceptual structures with these novel delineations in a wide variety of areas of inquiry.

The purpose of this anthology is to move in this direction by showing how a number of post-Whiteheadian thinkers transform the classical tradition to accomodate insights that have emerged more clearly since the 1920's and '30's. Not only must process thought conform to the continual changes in the biological and physical sciences, it must also develop social and educational theories that can deal with macro-orders where innumerable actual occasions interact to produce and sustain larger unities of meaning. This entails a stretching of the very concept of the actual occasion so that a more flexible metaphysics can serve the needs of these various social orders.

Ivor Leclerc argues, in "Alfred North Whitehead: His Philosophy," that process thought, while sensitive to the death of the Newtonian and Lockean views of the ultimate constituents of matter and perception, must develop a social philosophy that can be responsible to the newer organic view of nature. For Whitehead, each actuality has its source of motion in itself and remains, in some senses, discontinuous with other physical events. At the same time, nature is organic and locates physical and epochal discontinuity within a larger sense of relationality. Our social philosophies still cling to the kind of externality and atomism that flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries and thus fail to recognize the more subtle dialectic between internal relations and discrete epochal events. Leclerc calls for a social theory that can understand the full embeddedness of the self within an organic nature that establishes successive appropriation of events while preserving some sense of epochal discontinuity.

Victor Lowe, in "Whitehead's Philosophy as I See It," starts with brief recollections of his student years under Whitehead and

moves on to an analysis of the relationships among science, value, and experience within process thought. Of most interest is his account of how he came to accept the concept of "eternal objects" after years of skepticism. Lowe discovered that Whitehead did not envision this realm of forms to be somehow fully self-consistent or self-manifest but to include possibilities that were incompatible and unlimited. For Lowe, this preserved pluralism and novelty by opening up the realm of "eternal objects" to endless transformation and configuration. Lowe concludes with a brief description of the primordial and immanent dimensions of God and with Whitehead's denial of the concept of a prior omnipotent creator.

Robert S. Brumbaugh, in "Whiteheadian American Educational Philosophy," carefully traces through what Whitehead had to say concerning the temporal phases of learning. Traditional educational theories are limited to sense data and ignore the larger fabric of experience thus remaining insensitive to the transitions within the learning process. For Whitehead, learning should progress through the stages of romance, precision, and generalization. In the stage of romance the student experiences the far but vague horizons of a new area of inquiry. In the second stage of precision the student develops the skills, information, and detail requisite for transforming a vague horizon into a determinate shape. Finally, in the stage of generalization the student reintegrates the parts that were isolated during the precision stage with the larger and emergent whole. The whole is now seen more vividly than in the romantic stage and its various parts assume their proper correlation with the whole. Brumbaugh further argues that this learning process is religious insofar as learning contributes to the "objective immortality" of the subject matter. In a sense, education is an act of piety that refuses to allow premature decline for any actuality.

Charles Hartshorne, in "The Organism According to Process Philosophy," reprinted from 1978, argues that the life philosophy of Hans Jonas contains many process elements and is thus closer to Whitehead than is often recognized. This essay will be of special value for anyone looking for an introduction to Hartshorne's

own perspective. He touches on several of the main themes in his work and makes the connection among his ideas, and their alleged inevitability, quite clear. Specifically he argues that perception is a form of memory and that it is impossible to have a prehension of a contemporaneous event. His summary of his view of perception is succinct:

The view of experience we have reached is as follows: Every experience has its data, and these are the same as its independently real, temporally prior and necessary, but not strictly sufficient conditions. (They suffice for its possibility, not for its actuality. Even given the conditions, its occurrence, precisely as it is, was contingent and might not have been.) Apart from memory, the data are innerbodily, presumably largely neural. (p. 74)

The body becomes the channel for the prehension of prior events and the datum delivered is directly related to its object and not a mere copy of it. Perception is in effect impersonal memory and is deeply rooted in the orders of the world. Hartshorne is at his best when he deconstructs the copy theory of perception. Hartshorne concludes his essay by contrasting the negative prehensions that surround the human process, growing more numerous as we fade into death, with the positive prehensions of God for whom there can be no negative prehensions. Hartshorne repeats his well known argument that we cannot have personal immortality but will become part of the divine memory and attain a non-personal objective immortality.

Lewis S. Ford, in "Inclusive Occasions," makes a masterful argument in favor of a broadened account of the inner nature of the actual occasion. This essay is perhaps the most important in the volume because it addresses serious issues at the heart of the epochal theory of societies of occasions. Some post-Whiteheadians, most notably F. Bradford Wallack (in *The Epochal Nature of Process in Whitehead's Metaphysics*, SUNY Press 1980), wish to reject the notion that actual occasions are extremely small

in favor of the view that they can have any spatio-temporal configuration. They make this move because of the complexities involved in the social theory of occasions, that is, with the notion that a society of occasions will have features that are discontinuous with its constituents. Ford's specific concern is with developing a theory of what he calls "sub-occasions" that will account for social groupings in the inorganic realm. Ford wishes to preserve the concept of temporal atomicity, as well as the concept of physical prehension, while showing how an infinitesimal actual occasion will contribute to its own society of occasions. Rather than call a cell, for example, one actual occasion (and thereby reject the classical view), Ford argues that it is constituted by sub-occasions that have hybrid physical prehensions contributing to the contour of the larger society itself. The link between inclusive (social) occasions and included occasions is through the concept of "subjective end." Ford summarizes his position as follows:

Inclusive and included occasions cannot influence each other as contemporaries, as Whitehead no doubt saw, but the inclusive occasion, by making its modifications of subjective aim objectively available to included occasions in terms of 'subjective ends,' can influence them by the way in which they hybridly prehend it. (p. 130)

The inclusive occasion can relate to its sub-occasions through common ends rather than through the prehension of a contemporary event, which is impossible. Ford refers to his revised process model as a "swiss cheese" view of the relation between inclusive and included occasions. The holes in the cheese are the sub-occasions that are part of the cheese but not directly prehend as such. Yet they fully contribute to the society within which they prevail by participating, in a hybrid manner, in the common subjective aim or end. Ford works through these conceptual reconstructions in a sharp and forceful fashion. For those wishing to preserve the notion that actual occasions must be extremely small,

Ford's proposed "swiss cheese" model will be of great interest.

James W. Felt, in "Intuition, Event-Atomism, and the Self," applies process categories to Bergson's understanding of *durée* and argues that the Bergsonian distinction between intuition and intellect is fully compatible with the process account of experience. Whitehead understands the continuity and flow of the intuitive realm but also recognizes the abstract discontinuity that belongs to the realm of the intellect. Felt argues that Whitehead's epochal view of events might appear too much like a strobe light in which each flash of experience is discontinuous with other flashes and thereby ignores deeper continuities. The corrective is within the process view when more properly understood. Whitehead often seemed to abstract away from experience in his analyses yet his understanding of the felt continuities remained throughout. It is this sense that must be recaptured.

Harold Holz, in "Infinity, Infinitesimalism and Dialectic as Principles of a Process-Philosophy," attempts to relate metamathematics and decision theory (or, what he also calls "play theory") to process metaphysics and a secularized analysis of the absolute. In dialogue with post-Kantian idealism and the neo-Kantianism of Habermas and Apel, Holz envisions the world as an artwork that conforms to the transcendental rules of game theory. These transcendental rules pertain to, ". . .the sufficient ground a priori of infinite possible worlds or universes whatever these may be thought of" (p. 166). The play-rule principle acknowledges the endless potential transformations within these possible worlds and relates them to a process analysis of the absolute. For Holz, reality is thus the final result of a process of structuralizing that works through multiple perspectives and their transcendental grounds. This process is a playful dialectic that both seeks transcendental grounds and correlates the grounded perspectives with each other and the absolute. Decision theory thus has a metaphysical grounding that is transcendental and dialectic at the same time. While Holz's prose is tortuous and oftentimes murky, his overall project represents an exciting extension of process thought into areas that

directly relate to transcendental semiotics and play theories.

The anthology also includes essays on the evolution of physics toward a process perspective (dealing with the thought of Maxwell, Prigogine, Planck, and Boltzmann), the relation of process thought to structural linguistics (as applied to slavic languages), and a reprint of Dorothy M. Emmet's 1952 essay "Coleridge on the Growth of the Mind." The anthology concludes with Wolf-Gazo's rather breezy and slightly pretentious piece, "American Philosophy as Process Philosophy: On Peirce, Royce, and Process in Community," that calls for a new sense of community, based on Peirce and Royce, which gives a sociological analysis of the concept of the "community of interpretation." Wolf-Gazo wants to take the Turner Thesis and apply it to the history of classical American philosophy. Readers will no doubt note that numerous writers have already studied the classical American tradition through the Frontier Thesis and have shown how the westward expansion influenced the basic categories of pragmatism and naturalism. Wolf-Gazo's call for an assimilation of the Turner Thesis thus comes considerably after the fact.

This volume contains some important essays, most notably those of Hartshorne (available elsewhere), Ford, and for the hardy reader, Holz. However, its overall quality is rather weak and does not significantly advance into its reputed territory of "post-Whiteheadian perspectives." It is unclear how the process perspective will continue to advance in the decades ahead. In competition with it is the much more generic perspective of ordinal naturalism, not to mention the perspectives slowly emerging out of semiotics. Insofar as semiotic analyses allow for a supporting metaphysics, which is a recognition slow in coming, they will provide alternative frameworks to the process perspective. Careful studies of organic and inorganic forms of semiosis are underway that will be friendly to some process concepts, such as that of "prehension," but may be critical of others. Systematic and generic analyses of all of the basic orders of nature may show the provincial quality of the concept of "epochal temporality" and its corollary the "actual occasion."

Process thought has already opened up a new world for philosophical theology. In its next evolutionary phase it must press onward into orders of analysis that are currently being explored through the generic frameworks of ordinality and semiotics. This anthology provides only a limited glimpse of the more promising dimensions of a post-Whiteheadian worldview while failing to situate its oftentimes exaggerated claims within the competing movements of Western and Eastern philosophy.

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