

Saving Whitehead's Universe of Value: An "Ecstatic" Challenge to the Classical Interpretation

Brian G. Henning

ABSTRACT: While most scholars readily recognize that Alfred North Whitehead had deep and penetrating misgivings about the substantial view of individuality, fewer note that these misgivings stem as much from axiological considerations as ontological ones. I contend that, taken in the context of the "classical interpretation" of his metaphysics, Whitehead's bold affirmation that actuality and value are coextensive introduces a potentially serious problem for the adequacy and applicability of his axiology. For if actuality is coextensive with value but actuality is itself limited to subjects of experience, then the objective world can have no intrinsic value. My aim is to demonstrate that, in order to respond to the very serious challenge which the problem of subjectivism represents and save Whitehead's intended universe of value, we must seek an alternative to the classical interpretation of Whitehead's metaphysics. I refer to this alternative as the "ecstatic interpretation."

Everything has some value for itself, for others, and for the whole. This characterizes the meaning of actuality. . . . Existence, in its own nature, is the upholding of value intensity. Also no unit can separate itself from the others, and from the whole. And yet each unit exists in its own right. It upholds value intensity for itself, and this involves sharing value intensity with the universe.¹

WHILE MOST SCHOLARS readily recognize that Alfred North Whitehead had deep and penetrating misgivings about the substantial view of individuality, few note that these misgivings stem as much from axiological considerations as ontological ones.² However, as the passage above indicates, one of Whitehead's chief motivations in developing his philosophy of organism was his absolute commitment to the view that "Existence, in its own nature, is the upholding of value intensity."³ Yet, what is often overlooked by many proponents and critics of Whitehead's philosophy of organism is that, taken in the context of the dominant interpretation of his metaphysics, what I will refer to as the classical interpretation, Whitehead's bold

¹Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1938), p. 111, hereafter MT.

²A very notable exception to this trend in process scholarship is Frederick Ferré's excellent trilogy *Being and Value: Toward a Constructive Postmodern Metaphysics* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1996), *Knowing and Value: Toward a Constructive Postmodern Epistemology* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1998), and *Living and Value: Toward a Constructive Postmodern Ethics* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2001).

³Whitehead, MT, p. 111.

affirmation that actuality and value are coextensive introduces a very serious problem for the adequacy and applicability of his axiology. For if actuality is coextensive with value but actuality is itself limited to subjects of experience, as the classical interpretation contends, then the objective world (that is, superjects or achieved occasions of experience) can have no intrinsic value.

My aim is to demonstrate that in order to respond to the very serious challenge which the problem of subjectivism represents and save Whitehead's intended universe of value, we must seek an alternative to the classical interpretation of Whitehead's metaphysics. In the end, if Whitehead's system is to do justice to the relations between individuals, we must embrace an interpretation that is able to adequately account for the intrinsic value not only of the self but of others and of the whole. Only in this way can we adequately understand the universe of value which Whitehead envisioned.

SUBJECTIVITY, VALUE, AND ACTUALITY

At its root, Whitehead's rejection of substance ontology is intimately connected to his rejection of what he refers to as "vacuous actuality." Whitehead defines vacuous existence in Cartesian terms as, "a *res vera* devoid of subjective immediacy."⁴ Thus, the rejection of the notion of a substance that, in its independence, is devoid of subjective immediacy, suggests that Whitehead extends subjective immediacy to all of reality. But what exactly is entailed by Whitehead's rejection of the notion of mere facts or of bodily substance? Does he then affirm that there are only mental substances? Is he an animist, a panpsychist, or an absolute idealist? From a certain perspective, it would seem that he is each of these. For it is true that he repeatedly affirms what he calls the reformed subjectivist principle: "that apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness" (PR 167). According to this principle, process *is* the becoming of experience:

The [reformed] subjectivist principle is that the whole universe consists of elements disclosed in the analysis of the experiences of subjects. Process is the becoming of experience. It follows that the philosophy of organism entirely accepts the subjectivist bias of modern philosophy. It also accepts Hume's doctrine that nothing is to be received into the philosophical scheme which is not discoverable as an element in objective experience. This is the ontological principle. (PR 166)

Thus, far from repudiating modern philosophy's subjectivist bias or Hume's insistence that nothing can be known apart from experience, Whitehead wholeheartedly embraces the subjectivist principle that "the whole universe consists of elements disclosed in the analysis of the experience of subjects" (PR 166). However, it is important to note what the appellation "subjectivist" does *not* entail. Whitehead's "reformed subjectivist principle" does *not* entail that everything in the universe has

⁴Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (corrected edition), ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, [1929] 1978), p. 29, hereafter PR.

a soul or that everything is conscious.⁵ There is no merely passive stuff, no lifeless bits of matter, but this does not mean that the walls *literally* have ears or that a brook *literally* babbles. Rather, by imputing experience and subjectivity to even the most trivial puff of existence, what Whitehead is denying is that there is anything that is *absolutely determined* by external forces. Even the most trivial puff of existence in some remote galaxy renders determinate a small window of relations that are not determined by its environment. It is in this limited sense that Whitehead claims that every occasion is *causa sui*. That is, in the sense that every occasion to a greater or lesser degree (and this degree can make all the difference, as we will see below) renders determinate its relations to its actual world, it *cannot* be devoid of subjective immediacy or experience. And, as Charles Hartshorne reminds us, "the difference between zero and a finite positive quantity makes *all* the difference when we are seeking the general principles of reality."⁶ For both Hartshorne and Whitehead, since experience and actuality are coextensive, the zero of experience is the zero of actuality. To lose sight of this is to commit what Hartshorne appropriately terms the zero fallacy.⁷ In this sense, rather than being a form of panpsychism or animism, David Ray Griffin has aptly suggested that a more appropriate term for Whitehead's metaphysics is "panexperientialism."⁸ This conclusion effects a fundamental sea change in the conception of value: *if everything is a subject of experience, there can be no mere facts.*

As Whitehead himself states, "if we discard the notion of vacuous existence, we must conceive each actuality as attaining an end for itself. Its very existence is the presentation of its many components to itself, for the sake of its own ends."⁹ If it is the case that nothing is devoid of experience (vacuous actuality), then *everything* that exists must have *some* intrinsic value; there are no "sheer facts." "At the base of existence is the sense of 'worth.' It is the sense of existence for its own sake, of

⁵It is important to recall that, for Whitehead, the macroscopic objects of our world are not actual occasions, but rather "societies" of occasions. However, societies are *not* mere collections or aggregates of entities to which the same class-name applies. This is the difference between a "nexus" and a "society." Whereas a nexus is simply any real fact of togetherness, including extrinsic or aggregative unities such as boulders and mountains, a society is a particular type of nexus that enjoys "social order." That is, a society's constituent occasions share a common, defining characteristic because of the conditions imposed upon them by their *internal* relatedness with previous members of that self-same society. Hence, contrary to aggregate entities, complex, structured societies such as plants and animals are organic entities which are characterized by strong internal relations which make possible a regnant unity. See PR, pp. 89f. and Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1933), p. 203f.

⁶Charles Hartshorne, "The Rights of the Subhuman World," *Environmental Ethics* 1 (1979): 52, author's emphasis.

⁷"A logical requirement of any value system is that it should clarify the idea of no value, or the value zero. I hold that, as value diminishes, its limit of zero is not in a form of existence without value, but in total nonexistence. The zero of feeling, or of intrinsic value, and of actuality are one and the same" (Hartshorne, p. 54).

⁸"The term panexperientialism, I should add, is my own, not Whitehead's or Hartshorne's." David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2000), p. 97. In a note Griffin adds, "I first used the term panexperientialism in print, to my knowledge, in Cobb and Griffin 1977, p. 98."

⁹Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1920), pp. 30–31.

existence which is its own justification, of existence with its own character" (MT 109). Given that, for Whitehead, to be an individual is to be essentially related to every other individual, it should begin to be clear that the philosophy of organism embodies a rejection of any form of ontological dualism or bifurcation which might seek to carve reality into unrelatable pieces.¹⁰ Unlike the systems of Descartes and Kant, for example, there is no absolute bifurcation or ontologically ultimate gap between humans and nature, between the animate and the inanimate. Thus, not only is Whitehead rejecting the ontological bifurcation or reduction of nature, he is also rejecting its axiological bifurcation or reduction: "The zero of [value] intensiveness means the collapse of actuality."¹¹ In a processive cosmos such as Whitehead's, everything has value to some degree. There is no longer such a thing as dead, lifeless, valueless stuff. To be actual is to have value.

However, Whitehead's bold affirmation that actuality and value are coextensive introduces a potentially damaging problem for his metaphysics in general and for the applicability of his axiology in particular: if actuality is coextensive with value, but actuality is itself limited to subjects of experience, then the objective world (that is, superjects or achieved occasions of experience) has no intrinsic value. This problem was first formulated explicitly by David L. Schindler in a little-known essay entitled "Whitehead's Inability to Affirm a Universe of Value."¹² Schindler's thesis is representative of the potentially damaging challenge that Whitehead's system is essentially a form of ontological subjectivism. That is, that Whitehead's entire metaphysical project is in danger of collapsing into exactly what it was designed to overcome: a fractured universe of independent subjects each seeking their own ends.

Initially, Schindler's criticism of Whitehead's axiology appears to proceed rather directly from the logic of his (Whitehead's) ontology. As Schindler formulates it, the problem of ontological subjectivism states that, in repudiating vacuous actuality, Whitehead limits actuality and, thereby, value to subjectivity. However, in limiting value to subjectivity he eliminates all ontological warrant for affirming "the value of what is given to us *as other*, that is, the value of what is given objectively."¹³ In other words, if apart from subjects there is bare nothingness, as the reformed subjectivist principle states, then subjects are the sole loci and sole determinants of value. Accordingly, though he may have succeeded in eliminating vacuous and,

¹⁰"Each occasion has its physical inheritance and its mental reaction which drives it on to its self-completion. The world is not merely physical, nor is it merely mental. Nor is it merely *one* with many subordinate phases. Nor is it merely a complete fact in its essence static with the illusion of change. Wherever a vicious dualism appears, it is by reason of mistaking an abstraction for a concrete final fact." Whitehead, *Adventures*, p. 190.

¹¹Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, ed. Judith A. Jones (Bronx: Fordham Univ. Press, 1996), p. 103.

¹²David L. Schindler, "Whitehead's Inability to Affirm a Universe of Value," *Process Studies* 13 (1983): 117–31.

¹³Schindler, p. 118. Schindler asks, "if the value of actuality lies in actuality's character as subject . . . what warrants my assigning value to others, the data, that is, the *objects* in relation to which I (or any actual entity) constitute myself as subject" (p. 121)? Though I am not in a position to develop it here, the question as to the status of the "other" puts the present project into dialogue with much of postmodern philosophy.

therefore, valueless actuality, by limiting the scope of actuality to subjectivity, Whitehead has simultaneously eliminated his ability to affirm the value of the objective world. Hence, Schindler asks, "If value is coextensive at any given instant with the immanent self-seeking which constitutes a subject, then how at any given instant can . . . what is given to the subject as other than the subject, be affirmed as having value—not simply for me, but in itself?"¹⁴

The viability of Whitehead's project hangs on the answer to this question. For, as Schindler rightly goes on to argue, if the objective world has no value in itself, no intrinsic value, the universe of value fundamentally intended by Whitehead, given his account of actuality, collapses into what can be called at best a multiverse of individuals actively seeking their own self-realization. Whitehead's intended philosophy of generosity is undermined by an ontology of what can only be called selfish individualism.¹⁵

Given that actuality and value are, for Whitehead, coextensive, I propose that we proceed by examining how Whiteheadian scholars have traditionally characterized the scope of actuality. For if we find that the scope of actuality has been mischaracterized, then we may safely conclude that Schindler is incorrect regarding the scope of value.

THE CLASSICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVISM

Leclerc and Christian

As it has functioned and continues to function (often unconsciously) as the basis for most commentators' understanding of Whitehead's system, the "classical interpretation" of Whitehead's metaphysics is an appropriate place to begin this analysis. The classical interpretation has principally been defined by two highly influential works: Ivor Leclerc's *Whitehead's Metaphysics* (1958) and William Christian's *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (1959). The work of these two scholars represents the first attempts at a systematic interpretation of Whitehead's metaphysics. Presently, my primary concern is to examine how Leclerc and Christian circumscribe the extension of actuality and its relation to subjectivity.

As I am defining it, the classical interpretation is defined primarily by its insistence on a sharp ontological distinction between actual occasions as subjects (actuality in achievement) and as superjects (achieved actuality), a distinction that leads to a view of the superject as devoid of actuality, activity, and creativity. As the following passages from Leclerc and Christian demonstrate, the classical interpretation goes to great lengths to emphasize the fact that once an actual occasion has achieved satisfaction, once it is a superject, its subjective immediacy has perished and, furthermore, that the perishing of subjective immediacy entails the perishing of the *actuality* of the occasion:

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 128.

Whitehead is in full agreement with Aristotle, with Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, and Leibniz, who had emphatically held this [that is, being,] to be act, action, agency. That is to say, being, existing, in the ultimate sense, is acting. To exist is to act; and to act is to exist. There is no being, in any sense, apart from, in separation from, acting, agency. . . . An "actual" entity is an acting entity.¹⁶

Only concreting, i.e., "acting" entities are actual in the full, proper sense. The acting of antecedent actualities is completed; as such they are, in the strict sense, no longer "actual."¹⁷

An actual entity in the process of concrescence is a "subject," creating itself out of "data," its "objects." As we have seen, only those which are in the process of becoming are properly "actual" entities.¹⁸

Thus, when the satisfaction of an occasion exists objectively it no longer exists as an immediate feeling. That is to say *it is no longer actual*.¹⁹

But X can hardly be the reason for the fact that the datum *is* now given for A. Because X has now perished and is *no longer actual*, whereas the only "reasons" according to the ontological principle are *actual entities*.²⁰

For the classical interpretation, then, subjects alone are actual in the full sense because only *acting* occasions are *actual* occasions.²¹ This leaves us with the rather paradoxical conclusion that a past *actual* occasion is not really *actual* at all.²² For both Leclerc and Christian, actuality is strictly limited to the actual occasion *qua* concrescence, that is, as subject. The sharp ontological distinction introduced by Leclerc and Christian is given a systematic basis in the work of the prominent contemporary commentator, George Kline.

In his widely referenced essay, "Form, Concrescence, and Concretum," Kline meticulously sorts out ambiguities in Whitehead's use of certain key terms. Of particular interest to the present discussion is Kline's distinction between two perceived forms of actuality in Whitehead's thought, which he terms actual₁ and actual₂. According to Kline, an occasion is actual₁ when it is "active and self-significant but-not-efficacious," whereas an occasion is actual₂ if it is "efficacious and other-significant but-not-active."²³ Thus, Kline explains, "'actual₁' applies exclusively

¹⁶Ivor Leclerc, "Being and Becoming in Whitehead's Philosophy," *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. Lewis S. Ford and George L. Kline (Bronx: Fordham Univ. Press, 1983), p. 56.

¹⁷Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1958), p. 101.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁹William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), p. 37, emphasis added.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 321, second emphasis added.

²¹Ford uses this concise phrase in *Transforming Process Theism* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2000), p. 10, hereafter TPT.

²²For, as Leclerc puts it, "their own subjective immediacy is then over, and they have 'perished' as actual. That is, they no longer exist in the full sense" (Leclerc, p. 135).

²³George L. Kline, "Form, Concrescence, and Concretum," *Explorations in Whitehead's Philosophy*, ed. Lewis S. Ford and George L. Kline (Bronx: Fordham Univ. Press, 1983), p. 104.

to concrescences, to subjects, to what is present; and 'actual₂' applies exclusively to completed past actual entities."²⁴ By carefully examining the different ways in which Whitehead uses key terms, Kline significantly mitigates the paradoxical nature of the classical interpretation's claim that past occasions are no longer actual; for Kline, past occasions are not actual₁, but they are actual₂. However, far from moving away from the classical interpretation's view of actuality, at the heart of Kline's interpretation is, in his words, the "defense of a sharp ontological—as opposed to merely a functional—distinction between concrescence and concretum."²⁵ According to Kline, "the distinction between concrescence and concretum is a distinction . . . between different (types of) entities."²⁶ Although Kline is correct that Whitehead is often careless in his use of terms such as "actuality," Kline's presupposition of a sharp ontological distinction between the past and the present blinds him to the possibility of an alternative explanation. The problem, I contend, is that Kline and the other proponents of the classical interpretation argue from, rather than toward, the conclusion that there is a sharp ontological distinction between the individual as subject and the individual as superject, which distinction eliminates all activity from the objective functioning of the superject. Given the centrality of this distinction to the classical interpretation, this is a disturbing conclusion. Indeed, as I will argue, the presupposition of a sharp ontological distinction between past and present impedes the development of an interpretation which is able to make sense of Whitehead's varied use of the term "actuality" without resorting to the conclusion that he is "systematically ambiguous."

Furthermore, to the extent that the classical interpretation limits activity, creativity, and, most importantly, actuality, to subjectivity, it to that extent limits importance and value to the subject. As Kline himself puts it, "A concretum has significance—meaning and importance—not for itself but only for something other than itself: namely, the subsequent concrescences which causally objectified it."²⁷ Given such an interpretation, I contend that the problem of ontological subjectivism is unavoidable. That is, in limiting actuality and intrinsic value to the concrescent subject, the classical interpretation is unable to avoid the conclusion that Whitehead's proposed universe of value is in fact a multiverse of egoistic individuals each seeking their own ends. If these conclusions are to be avoided, we must seek out an alternative to the classical interpretation of Whitehead's metaphysics.

Ford's Temporal Interpretation

As one of the most prominent contemporary commentators on process thought and a self-described critic of the classical interpretation, it is appropriate that we next examine the work of Lewis S. Ford. In his most recent and ambitious project,

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 132. See Judith A. Jones's detailed analysis of the problems with Kline's affirmation of a sharp ontological distinction between concrescence and concretum in Judith A. Jones, *Intensity: An Essay in Whiteheadian Ontology* (Nashville: Vanderbilt Univ. Press, 1998), esp. pp. 86–87. See also section of this essay starting on p. 457 for an extended discussion of Jones's "ecstatic" interpretation.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 119.

Transforming Process Theism, Ford sets out to boldly reorient the classical interpretation of Whitehead's metaphysics by reconceiving of actuality in terms of temporal modes. Ford contends that, because many process philosophers mistakenly assume that the univocity of actuality called for by Whitehead requires its restriction to one temporal mode, some have mistakenly argued that past actual occasions are no longer actual (TPT 20). Ford notes, as we did above, that this creates the paradoxical situation whereby nascent occasions would arise out of an "actual world" of past occasions which are not themselves actual: "if concrescence is actual, and its outcome merely 'no longer actual,' what do we make of the longstanding tradition that identifies actuality with concrete determinateness? Whitehead is not willing to regard past determinateness as nonactual; they serve as perfectly good reasons according to the ontological principle" (TPT 247–48). In suggesting that an achieved actuality is no less actual than an actuality in attainment, Ford would seem to be in direct opposition to the classical interpretation. Unfortunately, the relationship between Ford's interpretation and the classical interpretation is more complex than it first appears. In one sense, Ford claims to extend actuality to include not only the past, but to the future as well. Thus, explicitly breaking with Whitehead's own view of the future as real but non-actual and of the past as the source of creativity, Ford argues that the future should be conceived not only as actual, but as the locus of creativity and the ultimate source of subjective aim. Accordingly, Ford affirms three modes of actuality coinciding with the three modes of time: "the past as determinately actual, the present as the activity of determination, and the future as activity, transferring the power of creativity to the present" (TPT 11). Hence, rather than defining actuality in terms of activity, as Leclerc and Christian do, Ford defines actuality as what has primacy in a given temporal mode (TPT 248).²⁸

Unfortunately, as the following passages illustrate, Ford provides surprisingly little in the way of justification for his rejection of the past as the locus of creativity and the justification that is given is in danger of begging the question:

As long as the future is thought to contain nothing actual, everything that an occasion needs must be derived from the past. Under that restriction it makes sense to derive creativity from the past, even though every individual past actuality has no creativity. (If it has any creativity, it would still be on the way to becoming past. There is no real pastness unless its creativity has perished.) If the future is actual, and particularly if the future is creativity itself, it can be the source of creativity. If creativity cannot simply well up in the present, nor come from the creativity-less past, it must come from the future. (TPT 12–13)

How can the past be potential? It can neither transfer creativity (as can the future) nor actualize it (as can the present), for the past lacks all creativity. Nor is there anything the past can

²⁸Since the temporal difference between past and present does not introduce the incoherence the principle of ontological primacy was designed to guard against, I propose we adopt a more restricted principle: Only one species of actualities primarily exists in any particular temporal mode. In the present mode only concrescences primarily exist. In the past mode only concrete determinants primarily exist. Actuality signifies whatever has ontological primacy in a given temporal mode" (TPT 248).

do, for it is absolutely immutable, absolutely inert. But the past can be taken up into other modes of actuality by being actively appropriated by them by means of prehension.²⁹

The problem with these claims is that Ford is essentially asserting that the past cannot be the source of creativity based on his own definition of the past, which makes it devoid of creativity. Only grudgingly will Ford acknowledge Whitehead's own explicit claims that it is the past that is the source of creativity: "To be sure, Whitehead seems to suggest in *Adventures of Ideas* that creativity can come from the past" (TPT 12). Again, Ford simply seems unwilling to entertain the possibility that the past could be the source of creativity because he has defined it (the past) in such a way that it is devoid of creativity. Unfortunately, this only begs the question at hand.

Yet, given that Ford's temporal interpretation claims to extend actuality not only to the present, but also to the past and the future, it would seem that he has avoided affirming a form of ontological subjectivism. For if actuality is not coextensive with subjectivity, then neither is value, and egoism is avoided. Right? Unfortunately, the situation is not as simple as this analysis implies.

The difficulty is that, in the present context, the heart of the problem of subjectivism is not merely that actuality is coextensive with subjectivity—this is what might be called its ontological basis. Although it rests on this ontological claim, the problem of subjectivism is essentially axiological. That is, it concerns the axiological status of the past *vis-à-vis* the present or, in other words, the status of the other *vis-à-vis* the subject. Thus, for instance, although Schindler's objection rests on the ontological claim that actuality extends only to the subject, his primary objection concerns "how at any given instant can . . . what is given to the subject as other than the subject, be affirmed as having value—not simply for me, but *in itself*?"³⁰ Hence, what Schindler primarily objects to is the view that the objective world has merely instrumental value. Interpreted in this light, I find that Ford's temporal interpretation ultimately leads to the same undesirable axiological implications as the classical interpretation.

The problem with Ford's temporal interpretation, I contend, is that, as the following passage demonstrates, its adherence to the classical interpretation's strong ontological distinction between the subject and the superject precludes it from truly affirming the actuality and value of the past: "all present becoming is subjective; all past being (the outcome of becoming) is objective, here understood in terms of ontological categories" (TPT 10). This sharp ontological distinction is also clearly seen in Ford's definition of past actual occasions. Like the classical interpretation, Ford claims that the past is "devoid of creativity" (MA 279) and "lacks all active power" (TPT 12). Hence, according to Ford, "While the past is in many ways substantial, it is impotent. No past actuality can influence any other past actuality, and it can only influence present actualities insofar as present actualities actively

²⁹Lewis S. Ford, "Modes of Actuality," *The Modern Schoolman* 67 (1990): 275–83, at 282, hereafter MA.

³⁰Schindler, p. 121, author's emphasis.

appropriate the past" (MA 278–79). In fact, as the following passages demonstrate, Ford goes so far as to claim that past actual occasions are essentially nothing more than the material cause of the present:

While each occasion is actual for itself, it is also potential for every supervening occasion.... This is the concrete particularity the past can provide, and it is the potentiality traditionally associated with *proximate matter* in Aristotelian thought. On this interpretation, the concrete particularity is neither abstract form nor the activity of creativity.³¹

Thus the past serves as the data for the future unqualifiedly, and for present actualities from their limited standpoints. The past is potential for the future (and the present), but differently from the way they are potential with respect to creativity. The future and the present possess the activity, the past the *material for actualization*. The past is primarily potential for the future, and secondarily (as mediated by the future) for the present. (MA 282, emphasis added).

When Whitehead introduces a theory whereby concreting occasions are derived from past actualities, these past actualities severally contribute their particular achieved values to the new concrecence. In this sense they contribute *matter* for the form supplied by the subjective aim.³²

The careful reader will have noted that in the final quotation Ford argues that "past actualities severally contribute their particular achieved *values* to the new concrecence." But wouldn't this refute my claim that Ford only extends instrumental value to past actual occasions and, therefore, does not avoid axiological subjectivism? To answer this question, we must first know in what sense past occasions can be said to "contribute their value." Do they have value merely for the subject (instrumental value) or do they have value in themselves (intrinsic value)? It is here that Ford's descriptions of past actualities as "material for actualization" or "proximate matter" are particularly germane. If past actual occasions are merely the passive, impotent, and inactive material out of which nascent occasions create themselves, and if past actual occasions "can only influence present actualities insofar as present actualities actively appropriate the past,"³³ then they could only "contribute themselves" as instrumentally valuable. Hence, in conceiving of past occasions as actual but wholly impotent and passive, Ford ultimately drains them of all intrinsic value.

Upon closer examination, then, although Ford's temporal interpretation appears to refute the ontological basis of the problem of subjectivism by extending actuality beyond the subject to include both the objective world and future creativity, in that this reinterpretation retains the sharp ontological distinction that renders the objective world wholly passive, it does not significantly alter the axiological status of achieved actual occasions and, consequently, it fails to avoid the axiological implications of

³¹Lewis S. Ford, "Nancy Frankenberry's Conception of the Power of the Past," *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 14 (1993): 294, emphasis added.

³²Lewis S. Ford, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics 1925–1929*, (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1984), p. 87, emphasis added.

³³MA 278–79.

the problem of subjectivism. The subject is still the sole determinant and, therefore, locus of intrinsic value. Hence, although Ford's reformulation of Whitehead's ontology may have much to suggest itself, in the final analysis, its axiological implications are not distinguishable from those of the classical interpretation.³⁴

This conclusion brings to light a crucial discovery: if Whitehead is truly to affirm a universe of value, if intrinsic value is not to be limited merely to concreting subjects, he must affirm not only that the objective world is actual, but that in an important sense it is not wholly impotent and passive. Only in this way will it be possible to meaningfully affirm the *intrinsic* value of the objective world. Hence, what is needed is an interpretation of Whitehead's metaphysics that makes past actual occasions both actual and in some sense active. Only in this way will it be possible to avoid an axiological subjectivism and solipsism.

AN "ECSTATIC" CHALLENGE

The pervasiveness of what I have been calling the classical interpretation is difficult to calculate. However, I suspect that it unconsciously infects much of Whiteheadian scholarship, particularly in analyses which seek to apply Whitehead's work to specific topics, e.g., physics, psychology, education, political science, ethics, and so on. If my conclusions above are correct, this should be a very disturbing trend. Luckily, however, there is a growing body of scholars, such as Jorge Luis Nobo, Nancy Frankenberry, Elizabeth Kraus, and Judith A. Jones, who provide the basis for a radically new understanding of Whitehead's metaphysics. Borrowing a phrase used by Jones, I refer to their collective interpretations of Whitehead's system as the "ecstatic interpretation" or an interpretation that is willing to challenge the sharp ontological distinction between past and present. The term "ecstasy," which derives from the Greek *ex* ("out") and *histanai* ("to stand"), literally means to stand outside oneself. As will gradually become clear, this term, familiar in existential and phenomenological contexts, is an appropriate description of those interpretations of Whitehead that emphasize the unity of the subject-superject and, because of this, insist that the past is in some sense active in its role in causing subsequent occasions. As with my analysis of the classical interpretation, I will begin by examining in some detail these authors' interpretations, focusing particularly on the status of the superject. Having established this context, I then evaluate its success in responding to the problem of subjectivism.

Like Ford, the defender of the ecstatic interpretation of Whitehead's metaphysics argues that the classical interpretation is mistaken in its restriction of actuality to the concreting subject.³⁵ However, in addition to affirming the actuality of both subjects and superjects, the ecstatic interpretation goes on to repudiate the sharp ontological

³⁴Because their axiological implications are the same, unless otherwise noted, future references to the classical interpretation should be taken to include Ford's temporal interpretation.

³⁵For instance, as Nobo argues in *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Extension and Solidarity* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1986), "an entity is actual when it has, or has had, significance for itself" (p. 294, author's emphasis). Accordingly, an actual occasion *qua* superject is just as actual as an actual occasion *qua* subject.

distinction between the subject and superject that is the heart of the classical interpretation. Instead, the ecstatic interpretation emphasizes those passages, like the following from *Process and Reality*, in which Whitehead insists on the unity of the actual occasion: "the theory of 'prehensions' embodies a protest against the 'bifurcation' of nature. It embodies even more than that: its protest is against the bifurcation of actualities" (PR 290).

Significantly, the theory of prehension manifests this "protest" by denying the existence of merely public or merely private facts. It contends that the distinction between an occasion's public life (*qua* superject) and its private life (*qua* subject) is only "a distinction of reason, and is not a distinction between mutually exclusive concrete facts. . . . Prehensions have public careers, but they are born privately" (PR 290). Thus, the theory of prehensions reverses the bifurcation not only of nature, but of actualities as well: "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" (PR 29, emphasis added).³⁶ Hence, the ecstatic interpretation insists that we take seriously Whitehead's claim that, "to be actual must mean that all things are alike objects . . . and that all actual things are subjects" (PR 56). Insofar as something is actual it "has two sides, namely, its individual self and its signification in the universe [and] either of these aspects is a factor in the other" (PR 120).

Subjectivity is an aspect of, but in no way exhausts, actuality. What truly defines the ecstatic interpretation, however, is its affirmation that not only is the objective world *actual*, but that, in an important, though not identical, sense, it is also *active*. Nancy Frankenberry and Elizabeth Kraus were two of the first process philosophers to suggest such a view. Frankenberry and Kraus argue that, far from impotent, the past is active and has the power to influence the present *as itself*.³⁷ As Frankenberry puts it, "the energy of this process has been transformed into the energy of a fully formed object that will play its causal role in the creating of later occasions of experience. Satisfaction spells the death of the process of unification but not the end of the creative energy involved."³⁸ Once it has achieved its satisfaction by rendering determinate its relations to the elements in its actual world, an actual occasion's subjectivity (process of self-determination) perishes, but the emotional energy achieved in that process does not. Far from being dead, impotent, or passive, then,

³⁶As Jorge Luis Nobo notes, by "at once" Whitehead does not mean that an actual occasion is simultaneously both a subject and a superject. An entity cannot be both a process of development and a completed product of development at the same time. One must, in some sense, follow the other. "In other words, an actual entity first exists as subject, and then as superject. Both modes of existence cannot belong to it at once. Nevertheless, *in regard to its complete history*, an actual entity is both process *and* product, both becoming *and* being, both subject *and* superject" (Nobo, p. 16, author's emphases).

³⁷As Frankenberry notes in "The Power of the Past," *Process Studies* 13 (1983): 132–42, one benefit of this emphasis on the activity of past occasions is that it diminishes and downplays the miraculousness of the *causa sui* element of concrescence, which element has been the target of numerous criticisms of Whitehead's metaphysics. "Without a proper appreciation of the power of the past as immanent in the initial conformal phase of concrescence, the *causa sui* character of the concrescence is apt to be exaggerated, and the notion of emergence will seem to be *ex nihilo*" (p. 135).

³⁸Frankenberry, p. 137.

for Frankenberry and Kraus, superjects are throbbing pulses of energy which are active in forming occasions beyond themselves.³⁹ "Thus, perishing [that is, satisfaction] is not so much a tragedy an entity falls passive victim to, but its self-initiated shift to a new mode of *activity*. It is a beginning, not an end; an existential culmination, not an existential frustration. It marks the subject's entrance into objective immortality as a functioning agent."⁴⁰ Of course, this is not to say that the activity of the superject is the same as that of the subject. As Frankenberry convincingly argues in the following passage, subjects are active in the process of self-creation, whereas objects are active in other-creation:

To be sure, subjects are active in self-creation, but objects are active in other-creation. The activity of subjects is teleological self-determination, while that of objects is *efficient causation*. Both activities are conjointly constitutive of the subjects. Without the past creative energies, no new present self-creativity could come about; without the private creativity, no new public energy could come about. Each is for the sake of the other and neither has any meaning apart from their dialectical unity.⁴¹

Accordingly, *qua* efficient, not only is the past actual, it must also be active.

The heart of Jorge Nobo's colossus of a work, *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Extension and Solidarity*, illuminates the sense in which objects are efficient causes by focusing on Whitehead's concept of "transition." Nobo's primary difficulty with the classical interpretation—what he calls the "received interpretation"—is that, in placing all activity solely in the concrescent subject, it effectively collapses the process of transition into the process of concrescence and, in so doing, it unknowingly destroys Whitehead's theory of genuine efficient causation. For, according to Nobo, genuine efficient causation is causation that *really produces* its effect; causation that *really determines* its effect in part, though not in whole; and causation that—in addition, and not merely—conditions the subsequent self-determining phases of the effect that it has produced. In place of Whitehead's theory of efficient causation, but still under the same, if now undeserved, title, most received interpretations give us what in the end is no more than a theory of *material causation*, a theory where the already-attained actualities are the material, but in no sense the efficient, causes of the actualities in attainment.⁴²

Although it is not possible to examine in its full depth Nobo's very nuanced interpretation of the phases of concrescence, the following quotation helps clarify how Nobo conceives of the crucial relationship between transition and concrescence:

³⁹It is important to note that neither Frankenberry nor Kraus deny that subjectivity perishes in the achievement of satisfaction, which is necessary to have any real achievement. What they do deny is that the perishing of subjectivity implies that the superject is dead, lifeless, or passive.

⁴⁰Elizabeth M. Kraus, "Existence as Transaction: A Whiteheadian Study of Causality," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1985): 349–66 at 360, emphasis added.

⁴¹Frankenberry, p. 140, emphasis added.

⁴²Nobo, p. 32, author's emphases. Nobo is quite right that, in missing the full importance of this and other key metaphysical principles, the "major received interpretations endanger significant areas of the applicability of Whitehead's organic metaphysics" (p. 8).

the newborn subject itself, as well as each of its initial feelings, is an *effect produced by the attained actualities in its actual world*. In other words, in the conformal phase of its existence, an occasion is entirely the product of the efficient past, and is not in any way the cause of itself. Accordingly, each subject, through no choice of its own, is *thrown* into existence as conformally feeling its given actual world. The actual world both produces and conditions it.⁴³

Accordingly, in sharp contrast to the classical interpretation, which limits all activity to the nascent subject, for Nobo, in the “conformal” or the “datum” phase of an occasion’s existence, it is past, already achieved occasions that are active in producing the nascent occasion. At the heart of Nobo’s interpretation, then, is the view that past actual occasions are not merely the dead matter out of which nascent occasions create themselves as logs are used to build a cabin. Past occasions *actively* impose themselves on each and every future occasion; they demand to be reckoned with.⁴⁴

There is a crucial piece of the ecstatic interpretation that has not yet been unearthed. While Kraus and Frankenberry persuasively argue for the active power of the past, and while Nobo very thoroughly develops an interpretation of transition and concrecence that does not reduce the one to the other, if we are to successfully respond to the problems of ontological and axiological subjectivism, we must develop a positive account of the nature of the individuals that are achieved in these processes. Put in the form of a question, we might ask, “What is the nature of an individual in Whitehead’s philosophy of organism?” In order to answer this fundamental question, I propose we investigate the rich work of Judith A. Jones.

In her groundbreaking work *Intensity: An Essay in Whiteheadian Cosmology*, Jones further develops the insights of Frankenberry, Kraus, and Nobo by developing an account of Whitehead’s metaphysics based on her notion of “ecstatic individuality” or “ecstatic existence.”⁴⁵ By focusing on the constitution of actuality in terms of intensities of contrast, Jones finds that, contrary to the classical interpretation,

⁴³Ibid., p. 79, author’s emphases.

⁴⁴Interestingly, W. Norris Clarke, a contemporary neo-Thomist, argues in *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Univ. Press, 2001) for a very similar view of causality which he also describes in ecstatic terms. “It involves an *efficacious, productive power* in the cause such that the cause makes the effect to be, in whole or in part. It is the positive overflow of one being into another, ‘the ecstasy of one being in another,’ as Etienne Gilson has put it, rooted in the radical fecundity of the act of existence as inner act and energy of every real being, in virtue of which, given the opportunity, it naturally flows over and communicates being to others according to its capacities” (p. 187). See also, “Thus efficient causality is the immanence of the cause at work in the effect, as long as the effect is still being actually produced—a presence not by identity of essence but by a continuum of power as the cause powers over and communicates being in some way to the effect, ‘the ecstasy of the cause in the effect,’ as Gilson aptly puts it” (p. 190). For a discussion of Clarke’s work from a process perspective, see Brian G. Henning, “Getting Substance to Go All the Way: Norris Clarke’s Neo-Thomism and the Process Turn,” *Modern Schoolman* 81 (2004): 215–25.

⁴⁵See, “I have elected to term this capacity for intrusion that appears to be the very mark of what Whitehead means by actuality the ‘ecstatic existence’ of an individual subject. Past and future aspects of the intensive actuality procured by concrecence are to be conceived of a piece with the subject of concrecence considered as an atomic fact. An actuality is intensively deep in the rich ontological sense of being ecstatically located in (a) whatever contributes to its so as to be provocative of it as an occasion and (b) whatever includes it as an element in its (the future actuality’s) satisfaction” (Jones, p. 71).

“*qua* actual, there is no distinction between the agentive decisions and contrasts effected in those decisions; the decision *is* the contrast.”⁴⁶ If there is no difference between the decisions of subjects and the contrasts achieved by those decisions, then, Jones concludes, “an entity exists with the ontological status of *its* subjectivity to *some* degree in every subject in which it comes to have influence (and, to an extent, in every subject from which it originally derived).”⁴⁷ Hence, whereas most commentators focus on the differences between the subject and the superject, Jones begins by examining the aim of process.

Focusing on Whitehead’s eighth Categoreal Obligation, the category of subjective intensity, Jones notes that “Whitehead ties the ultimate teleological concerns of process—subjective aim—to the concept of intensity.”⁴⁸ Insofar as the aim of process is at intensity, what is achieved in satisfaction is an intensity of contrast, not a static product; again, “the decision *is* the contrast.”⁴⁹ Accordingly, since what is achieved in satisfaction is a contrast, it becomes impossible to describe an actual occasion’s objective functioning in another as passive, static, or dead. Thus, for Jones, “[t]he only thing in Whitehead’s scheme that is bereft of inherent activity is an eternal object.”⁵⁰ *Qua* intensity of contrast, a satisfied occasion is incurably active. According to Jones, then, what is achieved in satisfaction understood as an intensity of contrast is “nothing other than the felt unity of aesthetic achievement.”⁵¹ However, Jones is quick to remind her reader that this aesthetic achievement is not something completely independent or private. Rather, it is by definition something that is “‘self-retentive,’ ‘infectious,’ requiring for its very essence the presence, internal to it, of former aesthetic achievement.”⁵² Importantly, therefore, even as objectified, occasions are “yet themselves, in the ontologically significant sense of individuality of existence.”⁵³ Consequently, as Jones suggests in the following important passage, the notion of ecstatic existence greatly problematizes the sharp ontological distinctions that the classical interpretation imputes:

I contend that the effort to attach ontological status to anything in the Whiteheadian system—objective datum, satisfaction, subjective form, feeling, character, actuality, and so on—as if anything else were being discussed except the achievement of aesthetic intensity, will inevitably produce a picture of Whiteheadian atomism as cryptosubstantialist, when in fact such an effort is itself the cryptosubstantialism infecting the subject matter with its presuppositions about the nature of individuality.⁵⁴

Hence, central to Jones’s project is the view that the internal relatedness of one individual in another entails the real repetition of the past, *as itself*, in the present nascent

⁴⁶Jones, p. 89.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. xii, author’s emphasis.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 97.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., p. 94.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 103.

occasion. Like Kraus, Frankenberry, and Nobo, Jones achieves this by denying the classical interpretation's ontologizing of the subject and the superject because, in so doing, she finds that it essentially repeats the metaphysical errors that Whitehead's system was explicitly developed to avoid. For, according to Jones,

some sense may be made of Whitehead's atomism, which does not require the sharp ontological distinction that seems to lurk behind the verbal ambiguities. Such a distinction seems to me to participate in a major error identified by Whitehead in philosophies of substance: it asserts a kind of independence—the independence of agency—which isolates each individual as such in its own ontological "space," if you will. We recall it was precisely this isolation, *not* the fact of persistence, of substance that Whitehead deplored.⁵⁵

For Jones, then, if Whitehead's metaphysics is to be the exposition of how all actual occasions are internally related, then any absolute, ontological form of independence must be out of bounds.⁵⁶ To truly affirm the internal relatedness of one individual in another, there can be no absolute independence, even of agency. Hence, Jones is arguing that Whitehead's system requires that the subject and the superject are "existentially of a piece."⁵⁷ The implication of this stance cannot be overstated. For if the subject and the superject are one, then "To assert the 'objective' functioning of the superject of satisfaction in the becoming of other entities need not require that subjectivity in all senses wholly perish, nor does it necessitate a view of an entity as a 'closed-up' individuality."⁵⁸ Insofar as subjectivity does not wholly perish, the superject is *not* a static product, a dead datum, or a passive object. Hence, Jones's notion of ecstatic individuality eliminates the sharp ontological bifurcation of the subject from the superject introduced by the classical interpretation. The implication of this is the denial of any strong form of independence within Whitehead's system. Inasmuch as Whitehead's metaphysics is an attempt to account for the organic relations between occasions, Jones's notion of ecstatic individuality beautifully captures the elusive balance between the one and the many at which Whitehead aimed.

By re-orienting the locus of value to include the actual occasion as a whole, as subject-superject, the ecstatic interpretation put forth by Kraus, Frankenberry, Nobo, and Jones contains the key to responding to the problems of ontological and axiological subjectivism. For in affirming the unity, actuality, and activity of the actual occasion as a subject-superject, the ecstatic interpretation not only avoids ontological subjectivism, more importantly, by affirming the intrinsic value of the actual occasion as a whole, as both subject and superject, it avoids axiological subjectivism. At any given moment, therefore, what is given to the subject as other has value not simply for me, but in itself, intrinsically.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 95.

⁵⁶As Ford generously reminded me in personal correspondence, it is important to recognize that, although a present nascent individual is internally related to the past, the past is externally related to the present. That is, the dependence is asymmetrical.

⁵⁷"Past and future aspects of the intensive actuality procured by concrescence are to be conceived as existentially of a piece with the subject of concrescence considered as an atomic fact" (Jones, p. 71).

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 29.

The fundamental *basis* of this description is that our experience is a value experience, expressing a vague sense of maintenance or discard; and that this value experience differentiates itself in the sense of many existences with value experience; and that this sense of the multiplicity of value experience again differentiates it into the totality of value experience, and the many other value experiences, and the egoistic value experience. There is the feeling of the ego, the others, the totality. (MT 110, author's emphasis)

Initially, this passage simply reiterates the conclusion that self-worth is at the base of experience. But, Whitehead continues, this fundamental value experience differentiates itself into the recognition of the value of the diverse individuals of the world for each other. Accordingly, and this is fundamental, the value experience at the base of existence is not solipsistic; self-value *essentially* involves the real presence (objective functioning) of other values as themselves. This thesis is at the heart of Jones's ecstatic interpretation which claims that

the functioning of an existent in another existent must be ascribed to the internal account of the first existent, as much as it is to be ascribed to the present self-constitution of an entity in concrescence. The fully determinate feeling characterizing the "satisfaction" of any occasion includes elements whose sources lie in *other* entities that to some significant extent retain their character as determinate unities of feeling *in themselves* even as they are objectified in a present concrescence. The objective functioning of one thing in another, in other words, never completely loses the subjective, agentive quality of feeling that first brought it into being.⁵⁹

Put differently, the individual's egoistic upholding of value intensity for itself cannot be taken apart from its sharing its value intensity with the universe. Hence, when an actual entity functions objectively it still has intrinsic value—it is yet itself; what else might it be? Accordingly, as Whitehead writes in *Modes of Thought*, "There must be value beyond ourselves. Otherwise every thing experienced would be merely barren detail in our own solipsist mode of existence" (MT 102). The attention to and recognition of this fact is the essence of morality.

However, Whitehead does not stop here. For this recognition of a multiplicity of values in the world is further differentiated into the sense of the value of the whole objective world, which is at once a community derivative from the interrelations of its component individuals and necessary for the existence of each of these individuals.⁶⁰ Interestingly, as we see in the following passage from *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead characterizes this sense of the value of the whole as a religious intuition:

The moment of religious consciousness starts from self-valuation, but it broadens into the concept of the world as a realm of adjusted values, mutually intensifying or mutually destructive. The intuition into the actual world gives a particular definite content to the bare notion of a principle of determining the grading of values.⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 3, author's emphases.

⁶⁰Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 59.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 59–60.

According to Whitehead, then, the religious intuition is this recognition of the value of the whole, which includes, but does not devour, the value of others and of the individual.

At its core, therefore, value is neither monistic nor solipsistic. Rather, in keeping with Whitehead's organic conception of individuality, self-value is always intertwined with the value of others and with the value of the whole. The true import of this crucial conclusion only begins to become clear in the following lengthy passage, part of which began this essay:

The basis of democracy is the common fact of value experience, as constituting the essential nature of each pulsation of actuality. Everything has some value for itself, for others, and for the whole. This characterizes the meaning of actuality. By reason of this character, constituting reality, the conception of morals arises. We have no right to deface the value experience which is the very essence of the universe. Existence, in its own nature, is the upholding of value intensity. Also no unit can separate itself from the others, and from the whole. And yet each unit exists in its own right. It upholds the value intensity for itself, and this involves sharing value intensity with the universe. Everything that in any sense exists has two sides, namely, its individual self and its signification in the universe. Also either of these aspects is a factor of the other. (MT 111)

What is important to note in this rich passage is, first, that the very meaning of actuality is characterized by this triad of self, other, whole. Each actual entity has self-value, is self-important, but this realization does not entail, as it all too often does in ethical theory, that the individual is the sole locus of value which must be protected at all costs. What these debates over moral considerability miss is that each individual, *qua* value experience, has value not only for itself, but also value for others and for the whole. In politico-ethical terms, this is to say that every individual is a locus of value, but each individual also has value for its community and even for the whole cosmos. Classical liberal atomic individualism is not, on this interpretation, an option, nor is simplistic communitarianism. Every entity "exists in its own right" and "upholds value intensity for itself," but this upholding of value intensity for oneself *necessarily* involves "sharing value intensity with the universe" (MT 109). Every entity is self-important *and* important to the universe. To put this in more familiar terms, everything that in any sense exists has intrinsic value, which includes having instrumental value, and religious value. This axiological triad of self, other, and whole captures the essence of Whitehead's unique sense of intrinsic value. To have intrinsic value is (1) to have incorporated the values of others (conrescence), (2) to subsequently become a (instrumental) value for others (principle of relativity), and (3) thereby to contribute to the value experience of the whole, i.e., for God.⁶²

Importantly, not only does this triadic structure characterize the meaning of actuality, but it is also the reason that the conception of morals arises (MT 111). For if it were the case that each entity was only understood in terms of egoistic self-value,

⁶²According to Whitehead, each of these divisions are "on a level. No one in any sense precedes the other" (MT 117).

then the conception of morals would not arise. In such a world, each entity would, like Adam Smith's invisible hand requires, simply strive for its own selfish ends. This would be egoism and even solipsism on an ontological level. If solipsism were true, the conception of morality would not even arise. However, because every entity has some value not only for itself but also for others and for the whole universe, the conception of morality becomes possible. For if it is the case that each entity's own value essentially involves the values of others, solipsism and egoism become impossible, at least ontologically speaking.

In the end, then, the important question is not *whether* others have intrinsic value, but whether the intrinsic value of others and of the whole is *recognized, appreciated, and affirmed*. That is, actuality is intrinsically valuable and it is the *obligation* of each individual to recognize that value. The other does not have value because I, in some anthropomorphic sense, affirm it. The other and the whole are *intrinsically* valuable. That everything is intrinsically valuable is up to each individual to recognize and appreciate. Thus, given the ecstatic interpretation, we may confidently affirm that Whitehead does indeed affirm a true universe of value.