

Deleuze's Encounter With Whitehead

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In a short chapter of *The Fold* (1993) that constitutes his only extended discussion of Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze praises Whitehead for asking the question, “What Is an Event?” (76). Whitehead’s *Process and Reality* (1929/1978) marks only the third time – after the Stoics and Leibniz – that events move to the center of philosophical thought. Deleuze wrote less about Whitehead than he did about the other figures in his philosophical counter-canon: Lucretius, the Stoics, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Foucault. But Whitehead is arguably as important to Deleuze as any of these other thinkers. It is only today, in the wake of Isabelle Stengers’ great book *Penser avec Whitehead* (2002), that it has become possible, for the first time, to measure the full extent of Deleuze’s encounter with Whitehead. My work here is deeply indebted to Stengers, as well as to James Williams (2005) and to Keith Robinson (2006), both of whom have written illuminatingly about Whitehead and Deleuze.

“What is an event?” is, of course, a quintessentially Deleuzian question. And Whitehead marks an important turning-point in the history of philosophy because he affirms that, in fact, everything is an event. The world, he says, is made of events, and nothing but events: happenings rather than things, verbs rather than nouns, processes rather than substances. Becoming is the deepest dimension of Being. Even a seemingly solid and permanent object is an event; or, better, a multiplicity and a series of events. Whitehead gives the example of Cleopatra’s Needle on the Victoria Embankment in London (1920/2004, 165ff.). Now, we know, of course, that this monument is not just “there.” It has a history. Its granite was sculpted by human hands, sometime around 1450 BC. It was moved from Heliopolis to Alexandria in 12 BC, and again from Alexandria to London in 1877-1878 AD. And some day, no doubt, it will be destroyed, or otherwise cease to exist. But for Whitehead, there is much more to it than that. Cleopatra’s

Needle isn't just a solid, impassive object upon which certain grand historical events – being sculpted, being moved – have occasionally supervened. Rather, it is eventful at every moment. From second to second, even as it stands seemingly motionless, Cleopatra's Needle is actively *happening*. It never remains the same. "A physicist who looks on that part of the life of nature as a dance of electrons, will tell you that daily it has lost some molecules and gained others, and even the plain man can see that it gets dirtier and is occasionally washed" (167). At every instant, the mere standing-in-place of Cleopatra's Needle is an event: a renewal, a novelty, a fresh creation.

That is what Whitehead means, when he says that events – which he also calls "actual entities" or "actual occasions" – are the ultimate components of reality. However, I am being a little sloppy here. Strictly speaking, Whitehead distinguishes between *occasions* and *events*, and between *entities* and *societies*. He "use[s] the term 'event' in the more general sense of a nexus of actual occasions, inter-related in some determinate fashion in one extensive quantum. An actual occasion is the limiting type of an event with only one member" (1929/1978, 73). At the limit, an event may be just one particular occasion, a single incident of becoming. But more generally, it is a group of such incidents, a multiplicity of becomings: what Whitehead calls a *nexus*. A nexus is "a particular fact of togetherness among actual entities" (20); that is to say, it is a mathematical set of occasions, contiguous in space and time, or otherwise adhering to one another. When the elements of a nexus are united, not just by contiguity, but also by a "defining characteristic" that is common to all of them, and that they have all "inherited" from one another, or acquired by a common process, then Whitehead calls it a society (34). A society is "self-sustaining; in other words. . . it is its own reason. . . The real actual things that endure," and that we encounter in everyday experience, "are all societies" (1933/1967, 203-204). Whitehead sometimes also calls them *enduring objects* (1929/1978, 35, 109). Cleopatra's Needle is a society, or an enduring object; for that matter, so am I myself (161).

To summarize, an "occasion" is the process by which anything becomes; while an "event" – applying to a nexus or a society – is an extensive set, or a temporal series, of such occasions. This contrast between individual becomings, and the progressive summation of such becomings, is crucial to Whitehead's metaphysics. An actual occasion is something like what Deleuze calls a singularity: a point of inflection or of discontinuous transformation. No actual occasion comes into being *ex nihilo*; rather, it inherits its "data" from past occasions. Yet each actual

occasion is also self-creating, or *causa sui*, by virtue of the novel way in which it treats these pre-existing data or prior occasions. Hence, no occasion is the same as any other; each occasion introduces something new into the world. This means that each occasion, taken in itself, is a *quantum*: a discrete, indivisible unit of becoming. But this also means that occasions are strictly limited in scope. Once an occasion happens, it is already over, already dead. Once it has reached its final “satisfaction,” it no longer has any vital power. “An actual occasion. . . never changes,” Whitehead says; “it only becomes and perishes” (1933/1967, 204). And a perished occasion subsists only as a “datum”: a sort of raw material, that any subsequent occasion may take up in its own turn, in order to transform it in a new process of self-creation.

In contrast to the immediate becoming and perishing of actual occasions, change always involves a comparison. It can be understood as a passage *between* occasions, or as the “route of inheritance” (1929/1978, 279) from one incident of becoming to another. Therefore change is the mark of an event, understood in Whitehead’s broader sense. “The fundamental meaning of the notion of ‘change’ is the difference between actual occasions comprised in some determinate event” (73; cf. 80). Since each actual occasion is atomistic and self-contained, and events only arise in the gap or passage between them, there is “no continuity of becoming,” Whitehead says, but only “a becoming of continuity” (35).¹ Becoming is not continuous, because each occasion, each act of becoming, is unique: a “production of novelty” that is also a new form of “concrete togetherness” (21), or what Whitehead calls a *concrecence*. Something new has been added to the universe; it marks a radical break with whatever was there before. For its part, continuity always has to *become*, precisely because it is never given in advance. The con-

¹Robinson (2007) argues that one major difference between Whitehead and Deleuze is precisely that “Deleuze is committed to a continuity of becoming but Whitehead is committed to the idea of a becoming of continuity.” The problem for both thinkers is how to resolve the conflicting claims of unity and multiplicity, or how to achieve what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call “the magic formula we all seek – PLURALISM = MONISM” (20). Deleuze, following Spinoza and Bergson, opts for radical continuity, and hence leans towards monism more than Whitehead, whose quantum theory of events puts more of an emphasis on irreducible plurality.

In any case, the advantage of Whitehead’s “event epochalism,” or atomism on the level of actual occasions, is – as George R. Lucas (1990) explains – that it allows him “to avoid the skeptical implications of an apparent ‘paradox of becoming’ common to Bergson and James. The paradox is that an undifferentiated continuity of becoming, since it neither begins nor ends, cannot itself be conceived of as determinate or concrete, nor can it meaningfully be said to give rise to a plurality of distinct existents” (113). For an attempt to revise Whitehead in the direction of a (more Bergsonian or Deleuzian) continuity of becoming, see Sha Xin Wei (2005).

tinuity implied by the existence of an enduring object – like Cleopatra’s Needle, or like myself – is something that always needs to be actively produced. Nothing comes into being once and for all; and nothing just sustains itself in being, as if by inertia or its own inner force. Rather, an object can only endure insofar as it renews itself, or creates itself afresh, over and over again.²

At every moment, then, the continuing existence of Cleopatra’s Needle is a new event. You can’t bump into the same obelisk twice. All the more so, in that the same logic holds for me myself, and for my perception of the Needle. At any given instant, my encounter with the Needle is itself an event (1920/2004, 169). This encounter might take the form of my surprise at seeing the Needle for the first time; of my close scrutiny of its aesthetic features; of my barely conscious recognition of it as I walk negligently by; of the pain in my forehead, as I knock against it, without looking; of my vague memory of having seen it years ago; or even, if I have never been to London, of my reading about it in Whitehead’s book. Each of these encounters is a fresh event; and each of the selves to which it happens is also a fresh event. Perceiving the Needle is not something that happens to me as an already-constituted subject; but rather something that constitutes me anew as a subject. Or, as Whitehead likes to put it, I am less the subject of this event than I am its *superject*, the remnant it leaves behind. I am an entity that “emerges from the world” (1929/1978, 88), rather than one that projects towards the world, or that phenomenologically “intends” it.

For Whitehead, there is no *ontological* difference between what we generally call physical objects, and what we generally call mental or subjective acts. Whitehead is in accord with William James (1996) in rejecting “the radical dualism of thought and thing” (28), and insisting rather that “thoughts in the concrete are made of the same stuff as things are” (37). The sheer material existence of Cleopatra’s Needle is an event; and so is my perception of the Needle. Whitehead thus insists upon what Deleuze (1994) calls the “univocity” of Being: that “Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said,” even when “that of which it is said differs” (36). Of course, my perception of the Needle is not the same thing as the Needle itself, which stands there whether I look at it or not. Or, to put it more

²This implies that Whitehead rejects Spinoza’s basic principle of *conatus*, the claim that “each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being,” and that this striving is “the actual essence of the thing itself” (*Ethics*, Part III, Propositions 6 and 7). For Whitehead, things do not strive to persist in their own being, but rather to become other than they were, to make some alteration in the “data” that they receive. An entity’s “satisfaction” consists, not in persisting in its own being, but in achieving difference and novelty, in introducing something new into the world.

precisely, the event by which the Needle stands on the Victoria Embankment is different from the event by which I perceive the Needle standing on the Victoria Embankment. But these events are both of the same nature; they are both “spoken” or expressed in the same way; and they exist together in one and the same world.³

In order to speak adequately – which is to say, univocally – about events, Whitehead rejects the “subject-predicate forms of thought” (1929/1978, 7) that have dominated Western philosophy since Descartes. In subject-predicate thought, an underlying substance or subject is assumed to remain the same, no matter what “secondary qualities” are attributed to it, or predicated of it. Events are subordinated to the subjects to whom they happen, or to the substances upon which they supervene. Even at its best, as with Spinoza, classical thought still leaves us with a division between “one substance, *causa sui*,” on the one hand, and the many affections of this substance, “its individualized modes” on the other. Whitehead declares that his own philosophy “is closely allied to Spinoza’s scheme of thought.” But he criticizes “the gap in [Spinoza’s] system” that is due to “the arbitrary introduction of the ‘modes’ ” (6-7). The trouble with Spinoza, in other words, is that he “bases his philosophy upon the monistic substance, of which the actual occasions are inferior modes”; Whitehead’s philosophy “inverts this point of view” (81). In altogether abolishing the distinction between substance and mode, Whitehead converts Spinoza from a logic of monism to one of pluralism (74). In *Process and Reality*, “morphological description is replaced by description of dynamic process. Also Spinoza’s ‘modes’ now become the sheer actualities; so that, though analysis of them increases our understanding, it does not lead us to the discovery of any higher grade of reality” (7). For Whitehead, there is nothing besides the modes, no unified substance that subsumes them – not even immanently. Even God, Whitehead suggests, is *natura naturata* as well as

³Whitehead’s commitment to univocity is questioned by Robinson (2007), who argues for “the persistence of the assumption of an analogical structure of being in Whitehead’s thought.” This would entail “an irreducible break with Deleuze,” since Deleuze’s doctrine of radical univocity excludes analogical thought altogether. Analogy implies an underlying similarity; but Deleuze always insists upon a primordial difference that subtends, and ruptures, any apparent similarities. For Deleuze, analogical reasoning necessarily implies a collapse back into dualist and representationalist thought. I would suggest, however, that although Whitehead sometimes argues by means of analogy – as Robinson demonstrates – on the deepest level his ontology is not an analogical one. And indeed, Robinson concedes that the differences he notices between Whitehead and Deleuze are matters of “balance” or emphasis, rather than fundamental incompatibilities. In any case, my aim here is not to equate Whitehead and Deleuze, but to suggest that Whitehead offers certain inflections, and shifts of perspective, that may be useful in dealing with what we usually think of as Deleuzian problems.

natura naturans, “at once a creature of creativity and a condition for creativity. It shares this double character with all creatures” (31). In itself, every individual “actual entity satisfies Spinoza’s notion of substance: it is *causa sui*” (222). The modes, affections, or actual occasions are all there is.⁴

There is therefore no stable and essential distinction, for Whitehead, between mind and matter, or between subject and object. There is also no stable and essential distinction between human and non-human, or even between living and non-living. It’s not that such distinctions are unimportant; often they are of the greatest pragmatic importance. I should not treat a human being the way that I treat a stone. But we need to remember that these distinctions are always situational. They are differences of degree, not differences of essence or kind. Whitehead seeks to produce a metaphysics that is non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric. This means that he is a secular and naturalistic thinker, but one of a very special sort. He rejects supernatural explanations, holding to what he calls the *ontological principle*: the claim that “actual entities are the only *reasons*” (24), that “the search for a reason is always the search for an actual fact which is the vehicle of that reason” (40). For “there is nothing which floats into the world from nowhere. Everything in the actual world is referable to some actual entity” (244). This means that empiricism is ultimately correct: all our knowledge comes from experience, and there is nothing outside experience, or beyond it. Even the concept of God needs to be secularized, explained in empirical terms, and located within phenomenal experience (207).

In this regard, it is important to note that Whitehead always seeks – as does Deleuze, after him – to conciliate his arguments with the findings of experimental science. Too many twentieth-century philosophers reject science and technology as abusive “enframings” of experience (Heidegger), or as exercises in “instrumental reason” (Horkheimer and Adorno). Whitehead, however, is positively stimulated by the science of his day: the theory of relativity, and to a lesser extent quantum mechanics. One of his goals is to create a metaphysics that frees itself from the outdated assumptions of classical (Cartesian and Newtonian) thought as thoroughly as twentieth-century physics does. This doesn’t mean that philosophy is subsumed into science (as certain positivist and analytical philosophers would wish); Whitehead, no less than Deleuze, insists upon the essential difference be-

⁴Whitehead’s rejection of Spinoza’s monism in favor of William James’ pluralism goes along with his rejection of Spinoza’s *conatus* in favor of James’ (and Bergson’s) sense of continual change, becoming or process, or what he also calls *creativity*.

tween the philosophical enterprise and the scientific one, and the irreducibility of the former to the latter. But Whitehead's metaphysics always presumes a respect for the findings of physical science. Today, Whitehead's thought (like that of Deleuze) can be brought into fruitful contact with such lively areas of contemporary scientific research and debate as complexity theory (Robinson 2005) and neurobiology (Pred 2005; Meyer 2005).

But Whitehead's ontological principle also implies that physical science – with its rejection of the “search for a reason,” its separation of questions of *how* from questions of *why* – is not altogether adequate for comprehending reality. It is incomplete. As Isabelle Stengers (2005) puts it, science is a necessary condition for understanding the world, but not a sufficient one (37ff). To stop at the level of scientific explanation would be to accept the “bifurcation of nature into two systems of reality,” one the realm of “molecules and electrons,” and the other that of mental phenomena (Locke's “secondary qualities”) like “the greenness of the trees, the song of the birds, the warmth of the sun” (Whitehead 1920/2004, 30-31). In order to overcome this bifurcation, Whitehead, like Leibniz, seeks a “sufficient reason” for all phenomena. And as Deleuze (1993) says, commenting on Leibniz, “a cause is not the reason being sought” here (41); or at least, the causality traced by physical science is not *enough* of a reason. As Deleuze further explains, Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason “claims that everything that happens to a thing – causations included – has a reason. If an event is called what happens to a thing, whether it undergoes the event or makes it happen, it can be said that sufficient reason is what includes the event as one of its predicates.” We cannot ignore the physical chain of causality that is at work in a given event; but we do not want our explanation to stop there. We also “require to understand,” as Whitehead says (cited in Stengers 2005, 42), the reason behind this chain of causality, the “decision” that makes of it what it is. Whitehead (1929/1978) warns us that such “‘decision’ cannot be construed as a casual adjunct of an actual entity. It constitutes the very meaning of actuality” (43).

Whitehead's ontological principle thus makes the same metaphysical demand as Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason – except that Whitehead, once again, rejects the subject-predicate form of thought found in Leibniz. For Whitehead, events do not “happen to” things: rather, events themselves *are* the only things. An event is not “one of [the thing's] predicates,” but the very thing itself.⁵ Where

⁵As I have already noted, the things *to which* events happen are not actual entities or occasions, but societies and enduring objects. At the same time, these societies and enduring objects are

Leibniz refers all final causes and sufficient reasons to God, the ground of being and the architect of a “pre-established harmony,” Whitehead inverts this logic. In Whitehead’s account, God is the *result* of the sufficient reasons, or final causes, of all finite entities, rather than their ground. In a world of process rather than predication, the sufficient reason for any actual occasion is “decided” by, and is entirely immanent to, the occasion itself. Each actual entity is the architect of its own private “pre-established harmony” (27; cf. 224). In contrast to Leibniz’s God, what Whitehead calls the “consequent nature of God” (345ff.) only works *ex post facto*, gathering these many little private harmonies, without exception, into a grand, public, and never-completed “conceptual harmonization” (346).

All this implies a new, modernist sort of “harmony”: one that does not exclude dissonances, but encompasses them within itself as well. In dealing with “antitheses,” or “apparent self-contradictions,” Whitehead’s God neither selects among the alternative possibilities in the manner of Leibniz’s divinity, nor “sublates” the oppositions into a higher, self-reflexive and self-differentiating unity in the manner of Hegel’s Absolute. Rather, Whitehead’s God operates “a shift of meaning which converts the opposition into a contrast” (348).⁶ Where Leibniz’s God selects “the best of all possible worlds” by excluding impossibilities, Whitehead’s God affirms, without preference or restriction, the “discordant multiplicity of actual things” (349). Or, as Deleuze (1993) puts it: for Whitehead, in contrast to Leibniz, “bifurcations, divergences, impossibilities, and discord belong to the same motley world. . . Even God desists from being a Being who compares worlds and chooses the richest compossible. He becomes Process, a process that at once affirms impossibles and passes through them” (81).⁷

themselves composed of nothing more than a set of actual occasions, together with the “historical routes” (63) or “routes of inheritance” (180) that link them together.

⁶This merits more extended commentary than I am able to give it here. Whitehead’s resolution of antitheses – by operating “a shift of meaning,” and by converting conceptual oppositions into aesthetic “contrasts” – has a strong affinity with Kant’s decidedly non-Hegelian (or anti-Hegelian in anticipation) treatment of antitheses, or “Antinomies,” in the “Transcendental Dialectic” section of the First Critique.

⁷Tim Clark (2002) questions Deleuze’s reading of Whitehead as a thinker of disjunction, impossibility, and “chaosmology.” Closely reading Whitehead’s account of God in *Process and Reality* and elsewhere, Clark concludes that Whitehead does not quite affirm difference, impossibility, openness, and the “disjunctive synthesis” in the radical manner that Deleuze himself does. “Within Whitehead’s system, the universe remains, in principle, only semi-open” rather than “radically open” (202).

In other words, although Whitehead goes beyond the Baroque harmony of Leibniz, he doesn’t quite move to the “dissipation of tonality,” “polytonality,” and (citing Boulez) “polyphony of poly-

What difference does this approach make to Whitehead's understanding of the world? How does his "philosophy of organism" compare to more conventional varieties of empiricism and naturalism? The most important difference, I think, is this. In rejecting the bifurcation of nature, and in requiring a sufficient reason for all phenomena, Whitehead necessarily challenges the founding assumption of modern scientific reason: that of a "split subject" (Lacan 1978, 138ff.), or a figure of Man as "empirico-transcendental doublet" (Foucault 1970, 318ff.). For Whitehead, the experimenter cannot be separated from the experiment, because they are both present in the world in the same manner. I cannot observe other entities any differently from how I observe myself. There can be no formal, permanent distinction between the observing self (the self as transcendental subject, or subject of enunciation) and the self being observed (the self as object in the world, or subject of the statement). Therefore there can be neither phenomenology nor positivism, and neither cognitivism nor behaviorism. Whitehead underscores this point by using the same vocabulary to describe the biological world, and even the inorganic world, as he does the human world. He suggests that categories like will, desire, and creation are valid, not just for us, but for non-human (and even non-organic) entities as well. He writes without embarrassment of the "feelings" and "satisfactions" of a plant, an inorganic object like Cleopatra's Needle, or even an electron. Every event or entity has what he calls both "mental" and "physical" poles, and both a "private" and a "public" dimension. In the vast interconnections of the universe, everything both perceives and is perceived.

Weird as this may sound, it is a necessary consequence of Whitehead's pursuit of univocity, or of what Manuel Delanda (2006) calls a *flat ontology*: one in which entities on different scales, and of different levels of reflexivity and complexity, are all treated in the same manner.⁸ When Whitehead writes of the "mental pole"

phonies" that Deleuze (1993) finds in the modernist "neo-Baroque" (82). Harmony is more than just a metaphor here; but in looking at Whitehead's aesthetics of "harmony," I think that we need to get away from Deleuze's implicit endorsement of the modernist narrative of the progressive expansion and liberation of harmony in Western concert music, culminating in the twelve-tone method of composers like Boulez.

But even granting Clark's interpretation, Whitehead is sufficiently open as regards God and the "chaosmos" as to not altogether exclude Deleuze's reading – at least in the way that I am citing it here. I return to the question of Whitehead's God in a later chapter. Overall, I am less concerned with reconstructing Whitehead's thought precisely than in delineating the outlines of the encounter between Whitehead and Deleuze, an encounter that changes our apprehension of both of them.

⁸It is sometimes argued that Whitehead's distinction between actual entities and societies, or between occasions (which are atomistic) and events (which involve change), violates the dictum of a flat ontology, and reintroduces the very "bifurcation of nature" that Whitehead is so concerned

of an electron, or a monument, we must remember that “mental operations do not necessarily involve consciousness”; indeed, most often they happen entirely without consciousness (1929/1978, 85). Whitehead derives his terms from our ordinary language about human thought, feeling, and behavior; in this way, he signals his distance from any sort of positivism, or from what more recently has come to be called “eliminative materialism.” But he also radically de-anthropomorphizes these terms, in order to distinguish his position from any simple privileging of the human, or from the “panpsychism” of which he is sometimes accused. It is not the case that we human beings have some special essence of “mentality,” while trees and rocks and electrons don’t. But neither is our sentience just an illusion. The difference is rather one of degree. The “mental pole” of an occasion contributing to the existence of a tree or a rock or an electron is never entirely absent, but it is so feeble as to be “negligible.” In contrast, the “mental pole” of an occasion that contributes to my consciousness, or to my identity, is intense, active, and largely dominant.

To avoid the anthropomorphic – or at least cognitive and rationalistic – connotations of words like “mentality” and “perception,” Whitehead invents the term *prehension* for the act by which one actual occasion takes up and responds to another. Clear and distinct human sense-perception, as it is conceived in the classical philosophical tradition from Descartes to the positivists of the twentieth century, is one sort of prehension. But it is far from the only one. Our lives are filled with experiences of “non-sensuous perception” (1933/1967, 180-181): from our awareness of the immediate past (181), to the feelings we have “that we see *by our eyes*, and taste *by our palates*” (1929/1978, 122). In the same way, “a jellyfish advances and withdraws, and in so doing exhibits some perception of causal relationship with the world beyond itself; a plant grows downwards to the damp earth, and upwards to the light” (176). These are all prehensions. For that matter, the earth prehends the sun that gives it energy; the stone prehends the earth to which it falls. Cleopatra’s Needle prehends its material surroundings; and I prehend,

to overcome. As I have already suggested, Whitehead needs this distinction, in order to affirm the actuality of meaningful change – or what he calls the “creative advance into novelty” (28 and *passim*) – and to avoid reducing becoming to what Ernst Bloch (1986), criticizing both Bergson and the endless alternation of fashions in capitalist consumer society, calls “sheer aimless infinity and incessant changeability; where everything ought to be constantly new, everything remains just as it was. . . a merely endless, contentless zigzag” (140).

In any case, the dictum of a flat ontology at least applies to anything that we may encounter in lived experience; since everything from a neutrino to the cosmos as a whole is equally a “society” in Whitehead’s definition of the term.

among other things, the Needle. A new entity comes into being by prehending other entities; every event *is* the prehension of other events.

All this applies, it should be noted, not only to the encounter between subject and object, but just as much to what is commonly called the “identity” of the individual subject. Self-identity, the relation of a subject to itself, has the same structure as the relation of a subject to an object. They are both grounded in prehensions. I prehend Cleopatra’s Needle afresh every time I pass it, or think about it. But also, I continually prehend myself; I renew myself in being, at every instant, by prehending what I was just a moment ago, “between a tenth of a second and half a second ago.” Such an immediate past “is gone, and yet it is here. It is our indubitable self, the foundation of our present existence” (1933/1967, 181). An “enduring object” can only persist through time, and retain a certain “identity” amidst the becomings that it passes through, by virtue of “a genetic character inherited through a historic route of actual occasions” (1929/1978, 109). I am only the “same,” only able to “sustain a character” (35), to the extent that I continually, and actively, take up this inheritance from the immediate past. My self-identity, or the manner in which I relate to myself, is the expression of such an inheritance: the process by which I receive it, reflect upon it, and transform it, again and again.⁹ And the same could be said, more or less, for Cleopatra’s Needle. The only difference is that I take up my inheritance from the past on a higher and more reflexive level than does a plant, a stone, or an electron.

If Being is univocal, and everything is an event, and the human and the rational hold no special privileges, then epistemology must be demoted from the central role that it generally holds in post-Cartesian (and especially post-Kantian) thought. The whole point of Whitehead’s philosophy is “to free our notions from participation in an epistemological theory of sense-perception” (1929/1978, 73).

⁹In other words, I am continually caught up in what Foucault calls “the care of the self,” or the practice of constructing and governing “the relationship of the self to itself” (1997, 300). Much more needs to be said about this process of self-constitution, and how it differs from the ways that the subject is conceived in “subject-predicate forms of thought” – or for that matter, from the ways that it is conceived in forms of thought that critique or deconstruct the “subject-predicate” approach, but without proposing any alternative, constructivist account.

I think that Whitehead’s understanding of subjectivity as process (and Foucault’s account as well, for that matter) is best grasped in relation to Kant’s discussions of time as “the form of inner sense,” and of the constitution of the “I” as transcendental unity of apperception. Whitehead “inverts” the Kantian analysis (1929/1978, 156) – or, as I prefer to say, *converts* it from a cognitive to an experiential basis – by replacing Kant’s abstract temporality with Bergson’s “concrete duration,” or better with what William James calls the “specious present.”

It no longer makes sense to separate the theory of *how* we know from the theory of *what* we know. Whitehead points out the unacknowledged ontological premises lying behind traditional philosophy's epistemological investigations: Descartes' methodical doubt, Hume's skepticism, and Kant's transcendental deduction. In all these cases, continuity and causality are in fact already pre-assumed by the arguments that claim to put them into doubt (or, in the case of Kant, to ground and authorize them). Hume, for instance, questions causality by arguing that all we can really know of a necessary link between events is their constant conjunction in memory. Such a conjunction, Hume says, must be ascribed to our habits and associations; it is in our minds, rather than in the world. But Whitehead rejects this very distinction. He remarks that "it is difficult to understand why Hume exempts 'habit' from the same criticism as that applied to the notion of 'cause.' We have no 'impression' of 'habit,' just as we have no 'impression' of 'cause.' Cause, repetition, habit are all in the same boat" (140).

In other words, habits and mental associations could not themselves be posited without the hidden assumption of what Whitehead calls *causal efficacy*: "the sense of derivation from an immediate past, and of passage to an immediate future" (178). So where Hume separates subjective impressions from objective matters of fact, and argues that we cannot make inferences from the former to the latter, Whitehead notes that the logics, and the contents, of these two ostensibly separate realms are in fact entirely the same. There is no reason why mental events should be treated any differently than any other sort of events; they are all parts of the same stream of experience. If Hume were consistent, he would have to reject habit, memory, and mental association on the same grounds that he rejects causality. The lesson is that epistemological meta-questions ("how do we know what exists?"; "do we really know what we think we know about what exists?") have the same ontological status as the first-order questions to which they ostensibly refer ("what exists?"). Whitehead thus short-circuits the entire process of epistemological reflection. There is no metalanguage, and epistemology collapses back into ontology.

This rejection of epistemology is what leads Deleuze (1994) to praise "the list of empirico-ideal notions that we find in Whitehead, which makes *Process and Reality* one of the greatest books of modern philosophy" (284-285). Deleuze opposes Whitehead's (1929/1978) proliferating list of categories – a list that includes "the Category of the Ultimate," together with eight "Categories of Existence," twenty-seven Categories of Explanation," and nine "Categorial Obligations" (20-28) – to

the twelve fixed Categories of the understanding in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's categories are logical and epistemological; they "belong to the world of representation," and concern the ways in which we organize – and thereby present to ourselves – the data that we receive from the senses. But Whitehead's categories do not perform any such function. They are "generic notions inevitably presupposed in our reflective experience" (18), but they do not *represent* that experience, nor explain how it is possible for us to *know* things in experience. They cannot be *applied to* experience, because they are already located *within* experience itself. Deleuze (1994) calls them "notions which are really open and which betray an empirical and pluralist sense of Ideas... Such notions... are conditions of real experience, and not only of possible experience" (284-285).

Kant's categories of understanding are universal, and intrinsic to the mind that imposes them upon an otherwise inchoate external reality. But Whitehead's categories are not imposed by the mind. They are immanent to the "data" – the events or actual occasions – out of which they arise by a process of abstraction. "It is a complete mistake," Whitehead (1929/1978) says, "to ask how concrete particular fact can be built up out of universals. The answer is, 'In no way.' The true philosophic question is, How can concrete fact exhibit entities abstract from itself and yet participated in by its own nature?" (20). Whitehead abstracts "empirico-ideal" categories from the events that participate in them, rather than imposing *a priori* categories upon phenomena that remain external to them. In analyzing events, he does not assume any priority of the subject, but rather traces its genesis alongside that of the world in which it finds itself. And he delineates the conditions of real experience, which determine concrete processes of emergence, rather than proposing apodictic conditions for all possible experience. Whitehead rejects Kant's "endeavor to balance the world upon thought – oblivious to the scanty supply of thinking." But he still agrees with Kant on the fundamental principle "that the task of the critical reason is the analysis of constructs; and 'construction' is 'process'" (151). Whitehead is far from simply rejecting Kant; rather, he converts Kant's "transcendental idealism" into something like what Deleuze calls "transcendental empiricism."¹⁰

¹⁰As Robinson (2006) forcefully puts it, "the key context for understanding... Whitehead is to refuse to read Whitehead as simply a pre-Kantian metaphysical realist... Rather, Whitehead's pre-Kantianism plays much the same role in his thought as it does in Deleuze: a way of approaching and confronting the aporias of Kantianism as preparation for the laying out of an essentially post-Kantian philosophy of creativity and becoming. Whitehead is a deeply post-Kantian philosopher in much the same way that Deleuze is post-Kantian" (72).

Deleuze's own "transcendental empiricism" centers on his notion of the virtual. I think that this much-disputed concept can best be understood in Kantian terms. The virtual is the transcendental condition of all experience. And Ideas in the virtual, which are always "problematic or problematizing," are Deleuze's (1994) equivalent of "regulative ideas" in Kant (168ff.). For Kant, as Deleuze points out, "problematic Ideas are both objective and undetermined." They cannot be presented directly, or re-presented; but their very indeterminacy "is a perfectly positive, objective structure which acts as a focus or horizon within perception." The error of metaphysical dogmatism is to use these Ideas constitutively: to take their objects as determinate, transcendent entities. This is to forget that such objects "can be neither given nor known." The correlative error of skepticism is to think that, since the Ideas are indeterminate and unrepresentable, they are thereby merely subjective, and their objects merely fictive. This is to forget that "problems have an objective value," and that "'problematic' does not mean only a particularly important species of subjective acts, but a dimension of objectivity as such which is occupied by these acts." Against both of these errors, Kant upholds the regulative and transcendental use of the Ideas. A regulative idea does not determine any particular solution in advance. But operating as a guideline, or as a frame of reference, the regulative idea works *problematically*, to establish the conditions out of which solutions, or "decisions," can emerge. In positing a process of this sort, Kant invents the notion of the transcendental realm, or of what Deleuze will call the virtual.

There are, of course, important differences between Kant's transcendental argument and Deleuze's invocation of the virtual. For one thing, Kant's stance is legislative and juridical: he seeks to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate uses of reason. Deleuze seeks rather (citing Artaud) "to have done with the judgment of God"; his criterion is constructivist rather than juridical, concerned with pushing forces to the limits of what they can do, rather than with evaluating their legitimacy. Also, Kant's transcendental realm determines the necessary form – but only the form – of all possible experience. Deleuze's virtual, in contrast, is "genetic and productive" of actual experience (1983, 51-52). Finally, Kant's transcendental realm has the structure of a subjectivity; at the very least, it takes on the bare form of the "I" in the "transcendental unity of apperception." But Deleuze's virtual is an "impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field" (1990, 102); it does not have the form of a consciousness. In making these corrections to Kant, Deleuze himself does what he credits Nietzsche with doing: he "stands [Kantian] critique on its feet, just as Marx does with the [Hegelian] dialectic" (1983, 89).

To convert Kant from transcendental idealism to transcendental empiricism, and from a juridico-legislative project to a constructivist one, means to move from the possible to the virtual, and from merely formal conditions of possibility to concrete conditions of actualization. Deleuze's transformation of Kant thus leads directly to his famous distinction between the virtual and the possible. For Deleuze, the possible is an empty form, defined only by the principle of non-contradiction. To say that something is possible is to say nothing more than that its concept cannot be excluded *a priori*, on logical grounds alone. This means that possibility is a purely negative category; it lacks any proper being of its own. Mere possibility is not generative or productive; it is not *enough* to make anything happen. It does not satisfy the principle of sufficient reason. This is why Deleuze (1994) says that "the possible is opposed to the real" (211). Something that is merely possible has no claim to existence, and no intrinsic mode of being. Its only positive characteristics are those that it borrows from the real that it is not. The possible "refers to the form of identity in the concept"; it "is understood as an image of the real, while the real is supposed to resemble the possible" (211-212). That is to say, the possible is exactly like the real, except for the contingency that it does not, in fact, exist. And the real is nothing more than the the working-out of what was already prefigured and envisioned as possible. In this mirror play of resemblances, there can be nothing new or unexpected. When a possibility is realized – when it *does* come into existence – no actual creation has taken place. As Deleuze says, "it is difficult to understand what existence adds to the concept when all it does is double like with like" (212).

The virtual, on the other hand, is altogether real in its own right; it "possesses a full reality by itself" (211). It is just that this reality is not actual. The virtual is like a field of energies that have not yet been expended, or a reservoir of potentialities that have not yet been tapped. That is to say, the virtual is not composed of actual entities; but the potential for change that it offers is real in its own way. In the Proustian formulation so frequently used by Deleuze, the virtual is "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" (208). One can in fact explain the virtual in entirely physicalist terms: as Gilbert Simondon (2005) did in work that greatly influenced Deleuze, and as Manuel Delanda (2002) has more recently done. But Deleuze most often describes the virtual as a transcendental field or structure, conditioning and generating the actual. The virtual is a principle of emergence, or of creation. As such, it does not prefigure or predetermine the actualities that emerge from it. Rather, it is the impelling force, or the principle, that allows each actual entity to appear (to manifest itself) as something new,

something without precedence or resemblance, something that has never existed in the universe in quite that way before. That is why the virtual is entirely distinct from the possible. If anything, it is closer to Nietzsche's will-to-power, or Bergson's *élan vital*. All of these must be understood, not as inner essences, but as post-Kantian "syntheses" of difference: transcendental conditions for dynamic becoming, rather than for static being (cf. Deleuze 1983, 51-52).

The virtual works as a transcendental condition for the actual by providing a sufficient reason for whatever happens. This brings us back to the distinction – or better, the gap – between sufficient reason and ordinary causality. Linear causality, of the sort that physical science traces, is always, and only, a relation among bodies. It is a matter, as Deleuze puts it in *The Logic of Sense* (1990), of "bodies with their tensions, physical qualities, actions and passions, and the corresponding 'states of affairs.' These states of affairs, actions and passions, are determined by the mixtures of bodies. . . all bodies are causes – causes in relation to each other and for each other" (4). Everything in the world is determined by such physical causes; they constitute a necessary condition for every event – but as we have seen, not a sufficient one.

This linear causality, and this necessity, are what Kant seeks to guarantee against Hume's skepticism. But if we accept Whitehead's critique of Hume, then we can only conclude that Kant's very search for such a guarantee is superfluous. Causal efficacy is always already at work in the depths of bodies. Kant never questions Hume's initial dubious assumption: that causality cannot be found *out there*, in the world, and that consequently it can only be located *in here*, in the mind of the perceiver. Hume appeals to habit as the basis of the mind's ascription of causality to things; Kant's transcendental argument converts this empirical generalization into an *a priori* necessity. But Kant still accepts what Whitehead (1929/1978) calls the *subjectivist* and *sensationalist* principles derived from Locke and Hume (157).¹¹ In consequence, Kant's transcendental deduction remains caught within "a logic of tracing and reproduction" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12), "a tracing of the transcendental from the empirical" (Deleuze 1994, 143). Kant merely transfers the structure of causal efficacy from the world to the subject apprehending the world. The possible just doubles the real, without adding anything to it.

¹¹As Whitehead specifies: "The subjectivist principle is, that the datum in the act of experience can be adequately analysed purely in terms of universals.

"The sensationalist principle is, that the primary activity in the act of experience is the bare subjective entertainment of the datum, devoid of any subjective form of reception. This is the doctrine of mere sensation" (157).

Deleuze converts Kant's argument from possibility to virtuality, and from the role of guaranteeing causal efficacy to one of providing sufficient reasons, by positing a different sort of transcendental logic. Alongside the actual, material "connection" of physical causes to one another, there is also a virtual relation, or a "bond," linking "effects or incorporeal events" among themselves (1990, 6). The virtual is the realm of effects separated from their causes: "effects in the causal sense, but also sonorous, optical, or linguistic 'effects'" (7), or what in the movies are called 'special effects.' Effects come after causes, of course, in the physical world of bodies. But transcendently, these incorporeal special effects establish a strange precedence. Considered apart from their physical causes, and independently of any bodily instantiation, they are something like the generative conditions – the 'meanings' and the 'reasons', or what Whitehead calls the final causes – for the very processes that physically give rise to them.

Deleuze calls such generative after-effects "quasi-causes" (6). Quasi-causality is "an unreal and ghostly causality" (33), more an insinuation than a determination. It happens, not in the bodily density of the living present, but in an "instant without thickness and without extension, which subdivides each present into past and future" (164). The quasi-cause "is nothing outside of its effect"; but neither can it just be identified with, or reduced to, its effect. For "it haunts this effect. . . it maintains with the effect an immanent relation which turns the product, the moment that it is produced, into something productive" (95). In itself, the virtual quasi-cause partakes only of "extra-being"; it is "sterile, inefficacious, and on the surface of things" (7). But at the same time, by virtue of its infinite relations, and insofar as it "evades the present" (165), the quasi-cause is also a principle of creativity. Looking forward, it *induces* the process of actualization; looking backward, it is an *expression* of that process. Deleuze's transcendental realm is thus "an aggregate of noncausal correspondences which form a system of echoes, of resumptive and resonances, a system of signs – in short, an expressive quasi-causality, and not at all a necessitating causality" (170). Only in this ghostly, paradoxical way can Deleuze posit a transcendental that neither copies the actual, nor prefigures it.

What does all this have to do with Whitehead? As far as I know, Whitehead never uses the word *virtual*. But as Robinson (2006) notes, Whitehead's "distinction between the actual and the potential. . . resembles the Deleuzian distinction between the actual and the virtual" (72). And potentiality, for Whitehead, is always something more, and other, than mere possibility. Alongside events or actual entities,

Whitehead also posits what he calls “eternal objects.” These are “Pure Potentials” (22), or “potentials for the process of becoming” (29). If actual entities are singular “occasions” of becoming, then eternal objects provide “the ‘qualities’ and ‘relations’” (191) that enter into, and help to define, these occasions. When “the potentiality of an eternal object is realized in a particular actual entity,” it “contribut[es] to the definiteness of that actual entity” (23). It gives it a particular character. Eternal objects thus take on something of the role that universals (48; 158), predicates (186), Platonic forms (44), and ideas (52; 149) played in older metaphysical systems. But we have already seen that, for Whitehead, “concrete particular fact” cannot simply “be built up out of universals”; it is more the other way around. Universals, or “things which are eternal,” can and must be abstracted from “things which are temporal” (40). But they cannot be conceived by themselves, in the absence of the empirical, temporal entities that they inform. Eternal objects, therefore, are neither *a priori* logical structures, nor Platonic essences, nor constitutive rational ideas. They are adverbial, rather than substantive; they determine and express *how* actual entities relate to one another, take one another up, and “enter into each others’ constitutions” (148-149). Like Kantian and Deleuzian ideas, eternal objects work regulatively, or problematically.

To be more precise, Whitehead defines eternal objects as follows: “any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world is called an ‘eternal object’” (44). This means that eternal objects include sensory qualities, like colors (*blueness* or *greenness*) and tactile sensations (*softness* or *roughness*), conceptual abstractions like shapes (a *helix*, or a *dodecahedron*) and numbers (*seven*, or *the square root of minus two*), moral qualities (like *bravery* or *cowardice*), physical fundamentals (like *gravitational attraction* or *electric charge*), and much more besides. An eternal object can also be “a determinate way in which a feeling can feel... an emotion, or an intensity, or an aversion, or an aversion, or a pleasure, or a pain” (291).¹² “Sensa” – or what today are more commonly called “qualia” – are eternal objects; so are affects or emotions; and so are “contrasts, or patterns,” or anything else that can “express a manner of relatedness between other eternal objects” (114). There is, in fact, “an indefinite progression of categories, as we proceed from ‘contrasts’ to ‘contrasts of contrasts,’ and on indefinitely to higher grades of contrasts” (22). The levels and complexities proliferate, without limit. But regardless of level, eternal objects are ideal abstractions that nevertheless (unlike Platonic

¹²It is important to recall here that, for Whitehead, all entities feel and have feelings, and not just sentient ones.

forms) can only be encountered *within* experience, when they are “selected” and “felt” by particular actual occasions. For this reason, they are well described as “empirico-ideal notions.”

Whitehead’s use of the word “eternal” might seem to be a strange move, in the context of a philosophy grounded in events, becomings, and continual change and novelty. And indeed, as if acknowledging this, he remarks that, “if the term ‘eternal objects’ is disliked, the term ‘potentials’ would be suitable” instead (149). But if Whitehead prefers to retain the appellation “eternal objects,” this is precisely because he seeks – like Nietzsche, Bergson, and Deleuze – to reject the Platonic separation between eternity and time, the binary opposition that sets a higher world of permanence and perfection (“a static, spiritual heaven”) against an imperfect lower world of flux (209). The two instead must continually interpenetrate. For “permanence can be snatched only out of flux; and the passing moment can find its adequate intensity only by its submission to permanence. Those who would disjoin the two elements can find no interpretation of patent facts” (338). Actual entities continually perish; but the relations between them, or the patterns that they make, tend to recur, or endure. Thus “it is not ‘substance’ which is permanent, but ‘form.’” And even forms do not subsist absolutely, but continually “suffer changing relations” (29). In asserting this, Whitehead converts Plato from idealism to empiricism, just as he similarly converts Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant.¹³

When Whitehead says that forms as well as substances, or eternal objects as well as actual entities, must be accepted as real, he is arguing very much in the spirit of the *radical empiricism* of William James (1996). For James, *experience* is the sole criterion of reality; we live in “a world of pure experience” (39-91). Classical empiricism has great difficulty in making sense of relations, as well as of emotions, contrasts and patterns, and all the other phenomena that Whitehead classifies as “eternal objects.” Since these cannot be recognized as “things,” or as direct “im-

¹³The distinction between perishing substances and permanent forms is relevant to the way in which so much “postmodern” and “posthuman” thought – from cybernetics to complexity theory – is concerned with form rather than substance. As Katherine Hayles (1999) puts it, postmodernity is characterized by a dialectic of pattern and randomness, rather than one of presence and absence (27 and *passim*). Today, we are all still Platonists, to the extent that we believe in recurring patterns that can be instantiated indifferently in any number of material substrates. The same mathematical equations are supposed to describe the development of the weather, the changing balances between predators and prey in an ecosystem, the irregularities of a heart murmur, and the fluctuations of the stock market. Whitehead seeks both to acknowledge this inveterate Platonism, and to indicate its limitations.

pressions of sensation,” they are relegated to the status of mental fictions (habits, derivatives, secondary qualities, and so on). But James says that, in a world of pure experience, “relations” are every bit as real as “things”: “the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system” (42). Whitehead argues, by the same logic, that eternal objects must be accounted as real as the actual entities which they qualify, and which select them, include them, and incarnate them. Eternal objects are real, because they are themselves “experienced relations,” or primordial elements of experience.¹⁴

But even though eternal objects are altogether real, they are not the same as actual entities. Like Deleuze’s virtualities, they are precisely not actual. This is because, in themselves, they are not causally determined, and they cannot make anything happen. Eternal objects “involve in their own natures indecision” and “indetermination” (Whitehead 1929/1978, 29); they always imply alternatives, contingencies, situations that could have been otherwise. This patch of wall is yellow, but it might have been blue. This means that their role is essentially passive. “An eternal object is always a potentiality for actual entities; but in itself, as conceptually felt, it is neutral as to the fact of its physical ingression in any particular actual entity of the temporal world” (44). You might say that yellowness “in itself,” understood as a pure potentiality, is utterly indifferent to the actual yellow color of this particular patch of wall. Yellowness *per se* has no causal efficacy, and no influence over the “decision” by which it is admitted (or not) into any particular actual state of affairs. Eternal objects, like Deleuze’s quasi-causes, are neutral, sterile, and inefficacious, as powerless as they are indifferent.

¹⁴David Lapoujade (2000) reads James as a transcendental empiricist. Where classical empiricism “begin[s] with an anarchic distribution of sensible *minima*—psychic atoms” (190), James’ “radical empiricism” instead posits what Deleuze calls a plane of immanence, or “an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field.” At the same time, in contrast to the transcendental reductions of Kant and Husserl, which posit the pure form of the “I” as the *a priori* condition for all experience, James’ transcendental “pure experience” does not take the form of a subjectivity or a consciousness. It is rather a flux “pure of all form,” and “free. . . from the categories with which it is traditionally partitioned” (193).

For his part, Whitehead simply makes more fully explicit the transcendental argument that is implicit in the work of James. He follows James in positing “pure experience” as a fundamental category: “apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness” (1929/1978, 167). And amidst all this experience, he says, “we find ourselves in a buzzing world” (50) – deliberately echoing James’ famous description of the “blooming, buzzing confusion” of the stream of consciousness.

At the same time, every event, every actual occasion, involves the *actualization* of certain of these mere potentialities. Each actual entity is determined by what Whitehead calls the *ingression* of specific eternal objects into it. “The term ‘ingression’ refers to the particular mode in which the potentiality of an eternal object is realized in a particular actual entity, contributing to the definiteness of that actual entity” (23). Each actual entity creates itself, in a process of decision, by making a *selection* among the potentialities offered to it by eternal objects. The concrescence of each actual entity involves the rejection of some eternal objects, and the active “entertainment,” or “admi[ssion] into feeling” (188), of others. And by a kind of circular process, the eternal objects thus admitted or entertained serve to define and determine the entity that selected them. That is why – or better, how – this particular patch of wall actually *is* yellow. By offering themselves for actualization, and by determining the very entities that select and actualize them, eternal objects play a transcendental, quasi-causal role in the constitution of the actual world.¹⁵

Whitehead also explains the difference, and the relation, between eternal objects and actual entities by noting that the former “*can* be dismissed” at any moment, while the latter always “*have* to be felt” (239). Potentialities are optional; they may or may not be fulfilled. But actualities cannot be avoided. Indeed, “an actual entity in the actual world of a subject *must* enter into the concrescence of that subject by *some* simple causal feeling, however vague, trivial, and submerged” (239). An actual entity can, in fact, be rejected or excluded, by the process of what Whitehead calls a *negative prehension*: “the definite exclusion of [a given] item from positive contribution to the subject’s own real internal constitution” (41). But even this is a sort of backhanded acknowledgement, an active response to something that cannot just be ignored. Even “the negative prehension of an entity is a positive fact with its emotional subjective form” (41-42).¹⁶ An actual entity has causal

¹⁵The actual and the potential thus reciprocally determine one another in Whitehead, much as the actual and the virtual are reciprocally determining in Deleuze. James Williams (2005, 77-100) rigorously examines “the concept of reciprocal determination” in both thinkers.

¹⁶Strictly speaking, Whitehead uses the term “negative prehension” to designate both the exclusion of an actual entity and the exclusion of an eternal object. But although a negative prehension of an actual entity “may eliminate its distinctive importance,” nevertheless “in some way, by some trace of causal feeling, the remote actual entity is [still] prehended positively. In the case of an eternal object, there is no such necessity” (239). Actual entities, you might say, can only be excluded via something like (psychoanalytic) repression; while eternal objects can actually be dismissed, without residue, when subject to a negative prehension. This follows from the very nature of eternal objects: that, although they are real, they are not “facts,” and they have no causal efficacy.

efficacy, because in itself it is entirely determined; it is empirically “given,” and this “givenness” means Necessity (42-43). Once actual entities have completed their process, once the ingression of eternal objects into them has been fixed, they “are devoid of all indetermination. . . They are complete and determinate. . . devoid of all indecision” (29). Every event thus culminates in a “stubborn matter of fact” (239), a state of affairs that has no potential left, and that cannot be otherwise than it is. An event consists precisely in this movement from potentiality (and indeterminacy) into actuality (and complete determination). The process of actualization follows a trajectory from the mere, disinterested (aesthetic) “envisagement” of eternal objects (44) to a pragmatic interest in some of these objects, and their incorporation within “stubborn fact which cannot be evaded” (43).

In the course of fully determining itself, an actual entity thus perishes, and subsists only as a “datum” for other entities toprehend in their own turn. An eternal object, on the other hand, is not exhausted by the event into which it ingresses, or which includes it; it “never loses its ‘accent’ of potentiality” (239). It remains available for other events, other actualizations. This is another mark of the transcendental. As Deleuze (1994) similarly says, referring both to Kantian Ideas and to his own notion of the problematic virtual, “true problems are Ideas, and. . . these Ideas do not disappear with ‘their’ solutions, since they are the indispensable condition without which no solution would ever exist” (168). Eternal objects and problematic Ideas never disappear. They are “indispensible conditions” that cannot be grasped outside of the actualities that they condition, and that incarnate them. But they also cannot be reduced to those actualities, and cannot be contained within them. They are not actual, but they haunt the actual. They subsist, like specters, outside of their ingressions and actualizations, and according to a different temporal logic than that of the “specious present of the percipient” (Whitehead 1929/1978, 169), the present in which things happen. This outside, this extra-being, this space without “simple location” (137), this time in which “a future and past divide the present at every instant and subdivide it ad infinitum into past and future, in both directions at once” (Deleuze 1990, 164): all this is the realm of the transcendental.

Kant’s transcendental deduction serves (at least) two purposes. It has both a juridical use, and a problematic or speculative use. The juridical use is to determine the legitimate conditions of rationality: to “make reason secure in its rightful claims and. . . dismiss all [its] baseless pretensions” (1996, 8). The problematic or speculative use of the deduction is to answer the three basic questions: “What can I

know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?” (735). In converting Kant from transcendental idealism to transcendental empiricism, Whitehead and Deleuze re-fashion both of these uses. The juridical use of the transcendental deduction is displaced, as I have already suggested, from Kant’s “tribunal” in which reason turns back upon and scrutinizes itself, into an evaluation according to immanent criteria.¹⁷ And the problematic use of the transcendental deduction is transformed, because Whitehead and Deleuze ask different sorts of questions than Kant does. The fundamental questions that Whitehead and Deleuze ask, and seek to answer with their transcendental arguments about eternal objects and the virtual, are these: How is it that there is always something new? How are novelty and change possible? How can we account for a future that is different from, and not merely predetermined by, the past? And behind all these is the question with which I began: “What is an Event?”

The shift from Kant’s questions to Whitehead’s and Deleuze’s questions is largely an historical one, deeply embedded in the progress (if we can still call it that) of our modernity. Kant, of course, is a great thinker of Enlightenment, which he famously defines as “man’s emergence from his self-imposed immaturity” into intellectual adulthood (1983, 41). Foucault (1997), commenting on Kant’s Enlightenment text some two centuries later, remarks that “the historical event of

¹⁷I have already mentioned Deleuze’s rejection of questions of legitimation, his desire “to have done with the judgment of God.” But Deleuze’s immanent and constructivist mode of thought also, in its own way, involves a kind of critical self-reflexivity, and thereby poses the transcendental question of the *limit*: “You never reach the Body without Organs, you can’t reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 150). An experimental, constructivist practice seeks to affirm itself to the full extent of what it can do (a concept that Deleuze develops in his discussions of Spinoza’s *conatus*, and Nietzsche’s doctrine of active forces). But this means precisely pushing a force, or a practice, to its limits, and confronting the Body without Organs as ultimate limit. This is where we face the question of blockages and flows, “emptied bodies” and “full ones,” accomplishments and further problematizations.

Whitehead (1929/1978), for his part, is always circumspect in his critiques. When he discusses other philosophical systems, he always recognizes their validity within limits, but criticizes the attempt to push beyond these limits: “the chief error in philosophy is overstatement. The aim at generalization is sound, but the estimate of success is exaggerated. There are two main forms of such overstatement. One form is what I have termed elsewhere the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness’ . . . The other form of overstatement consists in a false estimate of logical procedure in respect to certainty, and in respect to premises” (7-8). In many ways, this is very close to Kant’s project of rejecting the dogmatic excesses of rationalism, but without adopting, in their place, a generalized (and eventually self-discrediting) skepticism. The difference of course, is one of affect or temperament: Whitehead’s genial and relaxed mode of critique is far removed from Kant’s high seriousness and severity.

the Enlightenment did not make us mature adults, and we have not reached that stage yet” (319). Nonetheless, he praises Kant’s stance for providing “a point of departure: the outline of what one might call the attitude of modernity” (309). And he urges us today to continue Kant’s reflection in the form of “an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (319). This is the task that lies behind Whitehead’s and Deleuze’s renewals of the Kantian transcendental argument. As for the shift from foundational questions about knowing, obligation, and belief to pragmatic, constructivist questions about events, potentialities, and the process of actualizing them, this is not a betrayal of Kant, but an urgent and necessary renewal of his legacy, at a time when “all that is solid melts into air,” and when we are told that the grand narratives of modernity are dead (Lyotard 1984), and even that “we have never been modern” in the first place (Latour 1993). For, as Deleuze and Guattari (1994) suggest, “it may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today” (75). It is such a task, with the aim of converting ourselves to this kind of belief, that Whitehead (1938/1968) envisions as “the use of philosophy,” which is “to maintain an active novelty of fundamental ideas illuminating the social system” (174).

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