

Inter-subjectivity and process categorization:
co-agency in a unitive paradigm

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Summary of dissertation

Using the Bible as a paradigmatic foundation, the paper discusses the notion of personhood within the context of Whitehead's process metaphysics. Special attention is paid to the establishment of inter-subjective relationship, and the argument is made for co-agency within a unitive paradigm as a necessary condition of our understanding of ourselves as persons. In the development of a co-agentive process model, consideration is given in particular to Feuerbachian projection and the notion of the self as a project.

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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the citation of quoted texts. Whitehead references follow the standard employed by the journal *Process Studies*. Full citations are given in the Bibliography.

Texts by Whitehead

IMM	Immortality
MT	Modes of Thought
PR	Process and Reality
RM	Religion in the Making

Other texts cited

BoG	The Book of God (Josipovici, G)
CFK	Creativity in a Future Key (Ford, L S)
EC	The Essence of Christianity (Feuerbach, L)
FI	Finite and Infinite (Farrer, A)
FIR	Feuerbach and the interpretation of religion (Harvey, V A)
FUT	The Principles for the Philosophy of the Future (Feuerbach, L)
FW	The Freedom of the Will (Farrer, A)
INT	Intensity: An Essay in Whiteheadian Ontology (Jones, J)
IT	I and Thou (Buber, M)
LoG	The Lure of God (Ford, L S)
MP	Metaphysical Personalism (Conti, C)
PBN	The Poetics of Biblical Narrative (Sternberg, M)
SIH	Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human (Bloom, H)
SOAS	Sketch of a System (Neville, R C)
TOD	Thoughts on Death and Immortality (Feuerbach, L)
TVS	Time, Value, and the Self (Lawrence, N)
WATW	Words and the Word (Prickett, S)
WIG	Whitehead's Idea of God (Hartshorne, C)

Preface

The following paper explores issues of personhood within the process framework of Alfred North Whitehead. At the heart of the discussion is the conflict between, on the one hand, the atomicity of Whitehead's metaphysics and, on the other, the competing demand of personalist constructions of inter-subjectivity and the related notion of an enduring personal identity. The Bible is utilized as a foundational text, expressive of the western paradigm.

My principal sources include *Process and Reality* (along with other texts by Whitehead), *The Essence of Christianity* by Ludwig Feuerbach, and the more recent process writings of Lewis Ford (*The Lure of God* and his essay *Creativity in a Future Key*), and Judith Jones (*Intensity*). Other texts underpinning the work include *I and Thou* by Martin Buber, and *Finite and Infinite* and *The Freedom of the Will* by Austin Farrer. Further texts have been used to support and highlight specific areas of discussion.

Special thanks must go to my dissertation Supervisor, Dr Charles Conti, for his continued support and guidance throughout the period of my study, and for his invaluable advice during the preparation of my dissertation outline. It was he who introduced me to many of the ideas that underpin the following discussion, both in seminar discussion and through his book, *Metaphysical Personalism*. I must also thank Lewis Ford, Emeritus Professor (Old Dominion University) and Judith Jones, Associate Professor (Fordham University) for their enthusiastic help and encouraging comments regarding my understanding of enduring subjectivity. Their willingness to engage in lengthy, on-line discussions via the process-philosophy mailbase e-mail list has proved most valuable.

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Chapter 1

Inter-subjectivity and the Biblical context

Personal Identity is a difficult notion. It is dominant in human experience.... We cannot dismiss Personal Identity without dismissing the whole of human thought as expressed in every language. (IMM 690)

When Whitehead wrote the above words in 1941, he was highlighting one of the unresolved problems of the philosophy he had first set out in full in 1929 in *Process and Reality*. The extract is taken from his essay, 'Immortality', and it encapsulates a central theme of this current paper, which is how a sense of enduring identity might be compatible with the broader, atomistic metaphysics of process. Personal identity is characterized by Whitehead as 'a difficult notion' for the reason that subjective endurance (upon which personal identity must surely rest) is seemingly incompatible with a philosophy that requires that particular moments of existence (actual entities) "perpetually perish" subjectively, but are immortal objectively' (PR 29). In discussing this central idea, there are a number of core areas that will be covered, including: the primacy of the self in a Biblical context; the notion of projection and its implications for constructions of self and God; agency and co-agency in process metaphysics; and the role of projection and process in the construction of the concept of personhood. The concept of a unitive paradigm, as prioritized in Whitehead's work and exemplified in western conceptions of God, will form the background to the discussion.

With regard to the broad context of this paper, it should be noted that for Whitehead 'God is an actual entity' (PR 18), and that:

... the actuality of God must also be understood as a multiplicity of actual components in process of creation. (PR 350)

Whitehead's God also enjoys a two-fold nature, termed the 'primordial' and 'consequent' natures (reflecting respectively, the idea of a timeless/conceptual realm and a more concrete actuality that is contingent on the actions of the world). Moreover, although God is regarded in the scheme as essentially similar to the 'most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space' (PR 18), God is yet somehow a complexity of all other acts of becoming through which the consequent nature of God is made and established. Whitehead is insistent that it is by the

saving act of the consequent nature that the 'perpetually perishing' entity is granted objective immortality. However, given that God is the complexity of everything that has existed (that is, the unitive form of existence understood as inescapably connected and objectively preserved), it is difficult to grasp how such a God can enjoy 'Personal Identity'; but equally, it is difficult to entertain the idea of a God in which such identity is absent. The concept of identity — and what it means to be a person — informs and shapes much what follows.

In the first part, the nature of the divine–human relationship as set out in the Bible is explored. It suggests that the Biblical God is not only reflective and supportive of a strong subjectivist ontology, but is presented in such a way as to avoid extreme atomism or absolute separation between competing subjects. The argument is, therefore, that the subjectivist position is primary, but contains within it an understanding *and* realization of inter-subjective positions. The Bible is treated as foundational rather than being factored through theological positions, which enables us to understand God as exemplifying personalist constructions (as opposed to regarding God as the reason for them). This approach will also allow us to reflect on the notion of personal identity inherent in the interaction of competing subjects.

We need not overstate the point, but it is worth noting that the Biblical God is scarcely the uniform, loving God so often a feature of religious talk; nor the God that emerges from philosophical discourse and its focus on, for example, attributes of absolute perfection. The God of the Bible is complex, contradictory and (arguably) *wholly* relational. From the beginning, the structure of the Biblical text deals with relationship: how it emerges, is developed and sustained, threatened and challenged; above all, how it is through dialogue that progress is made.

Space precludes an extensive textual analysis, and, for reasons which will later become clear, the focus will mainly be on the opening chapters of Genesis and the underpinning proposition that it is through inter-subjective relating that a meaningful sense of unitive existence is served and supported. The Biblical text will thus be treated as explicative of how the many

become one, but (and here I mis-quote Whitehead) remain the many and the one¹. Before proceeding, however, it is worth drawing brief attention to Stephen Prickett's discussion of J G Herder's *Essay on the Origin of Language* (1772). Prickett notes Herder's emphasis on 'man's internal dialogue with himself as an integral part of consciousness' (WATW 55), and how it is through the act of naming that an understanding of reality is constructed. This idea of language as defining and containing thought offers scope for an extension into a framework in which the outward expression of ideas effects a creative concrescence through which we draw out distinct entities, each of which can then be re-combined into ever more complex forms. Thus it is through the use of language that the frame of reference is itself formed. In effect, by defining separateness we confirm relationship.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. (Gen 1:1-3)

We can take it that the Bible begins intentionally 'in the beginning', that is without any precursor. There is no past with which to deal, just an immensity of presentness (which itself has resonance with Whitehead's prioritizing of event). It is notable also that although the first, incipient effects of creation (the 'heavens and the earth') are integral to the moment of God's becoming, these elements remain in darkness, void and without form. It is only with the act of speech that differentiation is achieved, with the coming of light. In treating the Bible foundationally, rather than doctrinally, we are obliged to ask the related questions: Why speech? And what is its significance?

Central to any response is that speech is an act of communication, presupposing the 'other' required for relationship; moreover, it is agentive, particularly in the formulation 'Let there be... And there was...' A second factor is that speech is a primal act of externalization; much as a infant's first cry is indicative of life, both because of the sound *and* through the necessary exhalation of breath. Thus the Bible begins by implying relationship, and quickly leads the reader to the point of human creation on the sixth day. It is because of this prioritizing of

¹ Whitehead has it that 'The many become one, and are increased by one' (PR 21).

relational interaction that 'thinking' will not do. God cannot 'think' the world into being, for that would be internalization. It would also constitute a deconstruction into parts, in conflict with the Hebrew Bible's paradigm of God's unity. Whilst internalization might affirm the Cartesian *cogito*, it would be inadequate in terms of the generic theme of creative addition or advance.

As we engage the text we enter each of the stages of creation, and experience a periodic process of creation-by-addition. The work of each day is built upon the work of the previous; and we are assured by the reflective pause at the end of each day's endeavours that — to paraphrase Whitehead — care has been taken that nothing that can be saved is lost (PR 346). It is thus that the Bible establishes not only intentional action as its mode of creative extension, but also creative advancement as its purpose. The relevance of this to Whitehead's work is that, for Whitehead, the notion of creativity, so important in the Biblical and religious conceptions of God, serves as the 'universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact' (PR 21). The progressive concretization of worldly existence expressed in the opening chapter of Genesis can be observed in the background of Whitehead's thought. As Charles Hartshorne comments regarding the metaphysics of process:

It is indeed not the case that succession depends essentially upon perishing, upon the fading of immediacy as events cease to be present events.... It is the reality of the new *as added to that of the old*... that constitutes process. (WIG 542, emphasis in original.)

But this is only part of the story. Relationship is, in the beginning, implicit, not actual. It sits embedded in the text as unrealized potential. In speaking, God anticipates the role that inter-relational dialogue will later play. It is worth also considering the possibility that it is *because* of the act of speech that dialogue does become so important. If we adopt a position that places us inside the literary form, we might regard the opening not only as pre-figuring the subsequent action, but as informing and determining its shape. Again, treating the structure of the text as foundational, the context suggests that we must pay heed to the fact that the earlier remains substantial in relation to the later, just as the creation builds upon its discrete stages. In writing of the overall shape and structure of the Bible, Gabriel Josipovici points to the significance of its opening passages in establishing rhythm as integral to its language, and

— citing Gen 1:3 — he writes:

The rhythm of those 'ands', however, has carried us on, rocking us gently towards a further statement which is also a return, a looking back at what has just been achieved by that creative act....

And so the chapter advances, by means of the basic pattern laid down in the opening... (BoG 64)

This sense of rhythm, of stages of creative advancement, is given emphasis by Gen 2, in which the use of repetition is extended from the linguistic to the thematic by means of the presentation of a second creation scene in which the relational nature of life, of the person-centred focus of the narrative, is made explicit:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Gen 2:7)

The mode of operation has been established, indeed is primary. In the Bible, it is only after the process has been established that the detail can emerge; only once the method has been made evident that the creative purpose can be expressed. We know already from Gen 1:27–31 that the story is a human one, and Gen 2:7 develops this further. However, the relationship is out of balance, asymmetric. God remains apart as the Creator, as the foundation for the human. The sense of relationship is secondary, and the dialogue essentially one-sided. It is this which needs to be overcome. And so it is, in a passage which is striking in its naivety, and which shapes the relational focus of what will follow:

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.
And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? (Gen 3:8–9)

God calls out in uncertainty, ultimately expressing a fury of betrayal that leads to the expulsion of the primordial couple from Eden. In the simple phrase 'Where art thou?' we learn that God doesn't 'know', is blinded by the new self-awareness of the humans who have eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and thereby effected the distinction between subject and object. In this separation we learn that community is God's purpose, and that its rejection is sin. God is presented 'in crisis', needing to choose between the conflicting paradigms of mutual relationship and unquestioned dominion and control.

The significance of this passage is that it is here that we first truly encounter the concept of selfhood and personal identity in the Bible. The search for its fulfilment shapes the grand theme of the Bible and its culmination in the Passion. For the moment though, if we were to follow the text of the Pentateuch we would see how the tension between God and humanity stretches into the detailed development of societies: first in the primordial couple and immediate familial ties, and then into the tribalism and later nationalism of Israel. Always the theme of dispute, of competing subjects, is present, expressed through the Israelites' discomfiture with their status as 'chosen', and God's ambivalence towards the object of his choosing. It is this sense of conflict, of the need for self-constructed affirmation *and* mutual dialogue in the context of sustained relationship, which gives emphasis to the need for self-defined identity. The Biblical story presents a model for the establishment of persons, and the purpose of human endeavour is, it would seem, to stand over against God, and not in God's shadow or as wholly contingent and reactive.

That the presentation offered above is at odds with the primary religious and philosophical conceptions of God, with the idea of a perfect, all knowing, all powerful being, is accepted. Yet throughout the Hebrew Bible there are examples of God acting as just such a counterpoint who must be persuaded and cajoled to hold his side of the bargain. Again and again, the Israelites argue, criticize and remind God of his earlier promises, be they of nationhood, or salvation from danger (e.g., Ex 32:12–14). It is as though it is through conflict, or the valuing of contrasts, that the unity of the family, the tribe and the nation must be built. Thus division and identity are played out against declarations of unity, reflecting a developing sense of how collaborative acting tends towards a purposeful symbiosis.

The first rendering of the creation assures the conceptual process of present conformity to past actuality (those reflective pauses at the cessation of each day's work), and beyond this the story illustrates how the individual serves as a central element within a wider context (whether it be Abraham as the father of a nation, Moses as the leader of the Exodus, or Solomon and David as kings). The absolute paradigm for this remains that of Christ in the

New Testament², but the broader implication of the text is that the unity of the many is expressed through the individual, and that individuality acts through its relationship with the many.

The importance of the above for process thought rests not only with the fact that Whitehead's aim was to establish a metaphysics that allowed of God's coherence within the broader scheme, but also that Whitehead sought to present an understanding of God that reflected and respected the religious expression of the western tradition. In *Religion in the Making*, he writes:

The life of Christ is not an exhibition of over-ruling power. Its glory is for those who can discern it, and not for the world. Its power lies in its absence of force. It has the decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point of time. (RM 47)

It seems fair to comment, however, that some of the difficulties faced by process theologians result from the ambivalence towards personhood that permeates Whitehead's detailed scheme. That process philosophy drives towards a unitive paradigm is undoubted, but it does so in a way that risks obscuring the essential need for sustained individuality. If we are to treat God as a relational entity in accordance with personalist principles, then we need to navigate a route through Whitehead's metaphysics that will allow effective personal identity to emerge. Doing so impacts on more than the narrow theological arena; but if we are to remain consistent with the broader requirement of process philosophy that God — albeit now in a personalist frame — exemplifies the metaphysical scheme rather than standing outside in support of it (see PR 343), we need to establish a reading that allows, for both God and the human, processively enduring person-concepts. The wider purpose resolves ultimately to the more general establishment of inter-subjective relationship within a process metaphysic; but in this context, to recur to Whitehead's comment at the head of this chapter: 'Personal identity is a difficult notion.'

² For a detailed consideration of Christ as paradigm see my paper: 'Farrer, Feuerbach and process: the Divine Human as paradigm'.

Chapter 2

Feuerbach and the project

But religion is man's consciousness of himself in his concrete or living totality, in which the identity of self-consciousness exists only as the pregnant, complete unity of *I* and *thou*. (EC 66, emphasis in original)

But from a solitary God the essential need of duality, of love, of community, of the real, completed self-consciousness, of the *alter ego*, is excluded. (EC 67, emphasis in original)

The previous chapter introduced certain themes embedded in the Bible, and touched on their relevance to Whitehead's philosophical scheme. In particular, attention was drawn to the means through which ideas of relationality and selfhood are established in the Bible. Mention was also made of the difficulty which such ideas have in the context of process metaphysics. Before proceeding to a more technical discussion of Whitehead's system, it will, however, be helpful to develop the person-centred framework in greater detail. With this in mind, it is proposed to look at the projectionist ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach. There are two reasons for this: firstly, that Feuerbach placed a high priority on the human element of the divine-human relationship whilst at the same time retaining a careful regard for the religious sensibility through which that relationship is expressed; and secondly, it will be suggested that the concept of projection is fundamental to personalist constructions. In this way the ground will be prepared for the later part of this paper in which it will be argued that it is through the projectionist mechanism that concepts of the self and inter-subjective co-agency can be properly, and effectively, introduced into a process model.

According to Feuerbach's thesis, God is to be understood as a projection of historically unrealized human potential and need. The method is Hegelian; but the focus is an inversion of Hegel's thesis in that rather than Absolute Spirit finding developmental expression through the externalization and (human/historical) accomplishment which leads to the ultimate goal of re-appropriation into Spirit, Feuerbach argues that it is the human who externalizes unrealized attributes and projects them as God. Only by their re-appropriation will humanity achieve the fullness of expression and experience which is its due. Such was Feuerbach's aim; and

because he regarded God as exemplifying that which was yet to be re-appropriated by the human, success was predicated on close and sensitive regard for the nature of religious expression. It follows that the Biblical texts and Christian doctrines are a means through which human advancement will be met, were they but properly understood. Additionally, Feuerbach's teleology suggests that rather than constituting a defining paradigm, the religious ideal serves as a functional script that alters according to the relative state of human achievement.

At the head of this chapter are two quotes drawn from *The Essence of Christianity* concerning the internal life of God (the construction and meaning of the Trinity). Bearing in mind Feuerbach's concern to establish in God certain human concepts ('Self-consciousness necessarily urges itself upon man as something absolute' (EC 65)), we can see in them the negation of the notion of a solitary God, sufficient unto himself in isolation. For Feuerbach:

Participated life is alone true, self-satisfying, divine life:—this simple thought, this truth, natural, immanent in man, is the secret, the supernatural mystery of the Trinity. (EC 67)

God requires relationship, society, self-consciousness; just as does humanity. The projectionist theory is explicit: God must serve as a construct of the essence of humanity, and so what we extract as the essence of God is in reality an essential aspect of ourselves. But there is more going on here than just that, and the 'more' has significance for the incorporation of intentional, or agentive, principles in persons.

We may take it that one of the essential aspects of being a person is that one acts in concert with others, and, if the Biblical text is regarded as paradigmatic, that such acting embraces both individualist and collectivist perspectives. This is the many becoming the one, whilst remaining the one and the many; or, to put it another way, the inter-penetration and continued co-existence of the 'I' and the 'Thou'. If, as Feuerbach wishes to do, we treat God as a human project, the implication should — it would seem — be that God is inter- as well as intra-subjectively relational. That is, the very nature of God-as-projection implicates us in a relationship with that God. Yet if we look closely at Feuerbach's analysis of the Trinity we find something of a retreat back to a position of God's self-sufficiency, to an isolated self-

referencing. Feuerbach's position, which abstracts the part from the whole, only holds as a full expression of projected truth if we allow for a fundamental separation of *type*; that is, if we allow that the project is inherently distinct and separate from the projector; and moreover, that the project–projector relationship is accidental, not necessary. Taking such a view, however, violates not only the theory of projection, but — vitally — also the notion of unity. The following passage is taken from Feuerbach's *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, and is sufficiently significant to warrant being quoted in full:

The Trinity was the highest mystery and the focal point of absolute philosophy and religion. But as was historically and philosophically shown with regard to the essence of Christianity, the secret of the Trinity is the secret of communal and social life; it is the secret of the necessity of the 'thou' for an 'I'; it is the truth that no being — be it man, God, mind, or ego — is for itself alone a true, perfect, and absolute being, that truth and perfection are only the connection and unity of beings equal in their essence. The highest and last principle of philosophy is, therefore, the unity of man with man. All essential relations — the principles of various sciences — are only different kinds and ways of this unity. (FUT, 72)

Accordingly, God's attributes of sociality must, if we are to follow Feuerbach, be regarded fully as exemplifications — or externalized representations — of that which is of human origin; and the concept of projection must be brought within that construct, rather than be allowed to effect but not inform it.

The suggestion put forward by Feuerbach in his consideration of the Trinity is that God is internally structured in the form of a unitive society, and his argument is that this reflects the human need for social community. It is easy enough to see how the idea of 'God relating to God' fits with the parallel notion of a human-to-human relationality, but to leave it at that is to ignore that within the structure offered by the doctrine of the Trinity, and accepted by Feuerbach, is a highly developed sense of active development. The internal structure of the Trinity does not express fixed relationships, but is notably dynamic (God the Father is *I*, God the Son *Thou* (EC 67)). As Van A Harvey points out in *Feuerbach and the interpretation of religion*:

[Feuerbach] did not rely heavily upon the objectification of the predicates of the species [in his analysis of the Trinity], as one might have expected, but, on the nature of self-consciousness itself and then on its social structure. (FIR 75)

Harvey suggests that in order to effect a Trinitarian construction of God, Feuerbach needed to establish first a duality in the projected deity in order to reflect the human sense of

relationship. The full dynamic is then established because:

...differentiation of the I from the Thou generates a third person, the Holy Spirit, which is the 'love of the two divine Persons towards each other'. (FIR 76)¹

In discussing this, Harvey recurs to the more general notion that the 'I is always found together with a Thou' (FIR 76); and he rightly emphasises that although Feuerbach invokes in his general scheme a projection of human predicates, much is also made 'of the social structure of concrete human life' (FIR 77). The implication is that a purely projectionist route cannot fully cope with concrete actuality (presumably because if concrete, then not in need of re-appropriation and therefore not subject to initial projection), but is more appropriately applied to unrealized psychological aspects. (The reason for drawing attention to this is that the concrete nature of Feuerbach's personalist conceptions (e.g., 'a personality without flesh and blood, is an empty shade' (EC 145fn)), together with his overarching concern to relate his ideas to the human circumstance, suggests the need for an integrative approach that allows of the interaction of the potential and the actual. Whitehead's process philosophy offers just such an interaction in its conception of actual entities.)

If the underlying premise on which Feuerbach constructed his philosophy of religion is viable, then we must go beyond the first analytical stage (simple relationality between essences of a similar type: God-with-God/human-with-human), and recognize the significance of the developmental strand implicit in Harvey's social–projectionist model. The Trinity is predicated on the effective internal construction and endurance of relational projects, which are the result both of internally derived need *and* the expression of externally functional ideals. This is emphasised by the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit cited above. And if possible in God, then also possible in the human.

Taking the logic of internally constructed relationality forward, we arrive at a form of society in which we find the dealing of the one with the one-conceived-as-other. This dynamic offers a framework within which to understand the notion of 'self' as an agentive centre that serves as the point of perspective within a relational unity. Experientially, the self has a limited extension

¹ The cited phrase is from EC, page 67.

of focus beyond which it treats experienced data as other. This allows us to regard the self as a focal point of societal coherence and enclosure. It is also evident from our experience as persons that this limited self effects and exhibits a sufficient degree of internal coherence to ensure that it is not overwhelmed by an influx of data. Even while it absorbs, considers and processes data as part of its own experience, a sense of personal identity remains. In simple terms, the limiting aspect enables the relative states of internal and external to emerge, and for the 'I' to recognize its individuality as contextualized by its dealing with the 'not-I'.

A further element of this is that the self (so defined) is not fixed absolutely, and is able to extend or contract its own limits. This has important moral and ethical implications in that it enables shared goals to be brought within the individualistic frame. As persons we can entertain, as our own, ideas offered to us by others. It is this flexibility which makes us persons and allows us the uncertainty of experience so essential to creative development. This is central to a personalist understanding of process thought, in which the act of becoming draws what *might be* in potential, into what *is* in actuality.

It will be recalled that in the opening of Genesis the creation was achieved by the means of an externalization of what — in context — must necessarily have been an internally conceived demand. Furthermore, the expression of that demand (that is, its formal projection) is exemplified by the expulsion from Eden. What begins as the internal entertainment of a relationship becomes substantive only when separation is realized, and when the originating self can interact with the other as a competing, autonomous self. This is the extension of the conceptualized 'not-I' into an effective (and agentively relational) 'Thou'. An internally constructed project has thus been pushed beyond the self-limiting boundary. It is through the acknowledgement of just such a mechanism that we can understand concepts of effective, intentional agency in which propositions are entertained internally and, in their entertainment, can trigger the dynamic of competing possibles. The implication, both from Feuerbach's rendering of the Trinity and from the Bible's rendering of creation, is that the project is internally formulated, but internally *and* externally relevant. Thus the internal construction of an effective 'I' and 'Thou' necessarily leads to external, or inter-subjective, interaction.

By constructing an internal 'other' as the underpinning model of relationship (and if God is regarded as paradigmatic, then this must be the case), the external expression of I–Thou relationships becomes a natural corollary of what is being treated as the primary mode of being. The agentive self therefore cannot but engage in both internal and external expressions of relationship. These inherent aspects of projectionism are central to the understanding of an agentive self, and we can see in Feuerbach's reading of the Holy Spirit a sophisticated rendering of this necessary dynamic.

As a result of his inversion of Hegelian Absolute Spirit, Feuerbach needed to establish a totality of knowledge within the primary experiential constraint of the human condition: separateness. Whereas 'Spirit' can be conceived as a totality, and God can be regarded as unity-in-projection, our very individuality presents a problem. How is the human a 'unity' when the evidence so plainly suggests a multiplicity? The answer is found in the idea of the collective, of the unified functioning and relationality of the defined group. Its ultimate embodiment is, for Feuerbach, in the idea of 'species': the integration of the many into an overarching 'one'. Through being of the same type, humans ultimately share a single experience in which individuality is moderated. As he wrote:

But what the individual man does not know and cannot do all of mankind together knows and can do. Thus, the divine knowledge that knows simultaneously every particular has its reality in the knowledge of the species.
(FUT 17)

This concept of species is consistently portrayed in Feuerbach's work. For example, the internally structured and wholly relational treatment of the Trinity is an elegant expression of species consciousness. Feuerbach's weakness is in not taking into account the projectional facet so important to his broader theory, a failure evident in his thorough prioritizing of the human over any other form of existence. Feuerbach was no holist when it came to the crunch, though he may well have taken to heart the words of Gen 1:26, where the created human is granted 'dominion... over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' Tellingly perhaps, the very next words of Genesis are: 'So God created man in his own image.'

Ultimately then, human advancement provides focus for Feuerbach; and this is regarded as a developmental process that builds on the combined efforts of the present group and its collective history. This favouring of the group (especially with the added aspect of longitudinal species advancement) reduces the significance of the individual, but does not degrade it absolutely. Each part of the whole contributes fully, and therefore has value. Society at its maximal moment of advance is complex, but it is also integratively unified through the notion of the species. As the expression of human unity, it is informed not only by its constituent members, but also by their determining past.

It has been suggested that Feuerbachian projection is important for what it tells us of the nature and function of self, and that its significance resides in the way it allows us to comprehend how our entertainment of ideas can be incorporated into active inter-relationality. In treating the self as the focus of societally coherent enclosure, space is allowed for dynamic inter-relationship within a unitive framework. It is this that offers scope for the retention of identity alongside the enjoyment and embracement of immediate activity. We know our ideas as our own, yet they retain an *apparent* distinctiveness of being that allows of integrative and reflective agency. What Feuerbach fails to offer, however, is a mechanism that can assure the process of projection, and explain the agentive impact of the project. (We must surely regard the projected God as agentive in that God evidently serves as an autonomous other to which the human offers response. However, whilst Hegel was able to rely on the ultimacy of Absolute Spirit to explain the dialectic, that option is undermined by the inversion in which the ultimate metaphysical ground would logically be derivative from the human.)

Whitehead's principles of prehension and concrescence offer a partial solution to the problem. We have already seen that inherent in the concept of projection is the notion of an uncertain (or permeable) boundary that informs our understanding of selfhood. If we transpose this into process terminology, we find that an actual entity is subjectively centred around its initiating aim, but reaches beyond its subjectivity into the experience of an immediate present (which in Whitehead's scheme is treated as objective data). In other words, the core of the

concrecence necessarily reaches beyond its implied (and self-determined) boundary in order to incorporate and evaluate such data as is available to its completion. This, and the more general polarity of the concept of internal and external relationship, will be addressed more fully later on. For the moment though it is sufficient to keep in mind the idea that the standard Whiteheadian notion of transcendence into the future via the objectivity of the superject (see e.g., PR 87, 222, 245) can, and arguably should, be extended into the self-transcendence of the concrecing entity in its very act of becoming. There is in Whitehead's system a clear implication of co-operative interaction between the actual and the non-actual (see, for example, the Category of Subjective Unity (especially PR 248), and the Category of Subjective Harmony (especially PR 254–5)). The following chapters will explore these issues in more detail.

Chapter 3

Process and agency

In the beginning is relation—as category of being, readiness, grasping form, mould for the soul; it is the *a priori* of relation, *the inborn Thou*. (IT 27, emphasis in original)

With this idea Martin Buber expresses what it is to be a person, to be *in* relationship with the other, to be merged inwardly yet outwardly discrete. To reflect and project, and to enter that projection. To be whole.

Buber, like Feuerbach, focuses our attention on the human experience; and in doing so takes care to relate the religious need to the religious context. The approach is considered, and considerate; and it provides a contrast with the anthropocentric emphasis of Feuerbach. Where Feuerbach sought to prioritize the human over God (indeed to deny the independent actuality of God), Buber enables God to remain potent, to exist as more — much more — than projection. The result is a unity that is genuinely shared. It is true that both Feuerbach and Buber place a high demand on the reach of the one into that which is regarded as other, and that for both the aim of integrative relationship is crucial; but in Buber the integration of human with God is a point of conclusion (or better, completion), whereas in Feuerbach the integration is but a step towards re-appropriation.

This difference in emphasis is fundamental, and in Buber it is possible to detect an extension of Feuerbach's position into one related to certain elements of process metaphysics. I refer to those areas of Whitehead's thought that allow the prehending subject to encounter other prehending subjects and to incorporate them into the final complexity of unitive becoming. As Whitehead's 24th 'Category of Explanation' states:

The functioning of one actual entity in the self-creation of another actual entity is the 'objectification' of the former for the latter actual entity. (PR 25)

It is important to note, however, that the prehended subject in Whitehead's scheme is treated as an objectification, and thereby reduced to the status of datum. In contrast, Buber's

approach allows the sustained interaction of subjects. Using the example of a child emerging into personhood, Buber writes:

He has stepped out of the glowing darkness of chaos into the cool light of creation. But he does not possess it yet; he must first draw it truly out, he must make it into a reality for himself, he must find for himself his own world by seeing and hearing and touching and shaping it. Creation reveals, in meeting, its essential nature as form. It does not spill itself into expectant senses, but rises up to meet the grasping senses. (IT 25–26)

Here in Buber we find a strong resonance with Whitehead's affirmation of the principle of prehension, the sense of feeling unto the other and making of that feeling a newly created world. The prioritizing of a self-created and self-determined state of being is explicit. For Buber, and for Whitehead, we are truly what we make ourselves.

Whitehead's model treats the subject as the contextualizing centre of a process of active becoming, and regards all that falls outside the direct activity of such a process as objective. Schematically, it is God that is the embodiment of the totality of existence, both the means and expression of the unity of being:

The completion of God's nature into a fullness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God. He shares with every new creation its actual world; and the concrescent creature is objectified in God as a novel element in God's objectification of that actual world. (PR 345)

Given this, it is not surprising that for Whitehead the distinctive grouping typified by Feuerbach's 'species' is arbitrary, as indeed are all divisions of 'things':

There is no clear division among genera; there is no clear division among species; there are no clear divisions anywhere. (MT 21)

However, this conjunctive principle is overwritten (or better, given contextual meaning) by the careful retention of the objectivity of each 'concrecent creature', or actual entity. In the introductory statement to his categoreal scheme, Whitehead writes:

[N]o two actual entities originate from an identical universe.... The nexus of actual entities in the universe correlate to a concrescence is termed 'the actual world' correlate to that concrescence. (PR 22–23)

In this, Whitehead is affirming the unique perspective of each concrescence. The resultant entity constitutes, in and through itself, the entirety of its world. This is effected through its prehensive grasp of all other entities (and if not grasped — that is, not prehended — then not part of the 'actual world'). The *necessary* unity is instant, not progressive as in Feuerbach (though the superjective function and the need for conformal coherence ensure a relatively

consistent pattern through time¹).

One cannot accuse Whitehead of elegance of expression, but the thrust of what he says is that there is an ultimate value in the becoming of an actual entity, and that this moment is *essentially* unique, *essentially* origivative, *fundamentally* valuable. Thus whilst Feuerbach prioritizes the collective human experience, and Buber offers a fully integrative paradigm of mutuality, Whitehead enables us to entertain a conception of the individual as primary. By this latter is meant that it is through the individual entity that the whole of existence gains expression, and that 'the divine knowledge that knows simultaneously every particular has its reality in the knowledge' not of the species, but in the subjective self-realization of the individual actual entity (see page 15). (The logic of Whitehead's system requires that God is integral to the individual actual entity, for if God were not integral to that entity we would suffer the extreme separation of an wholly transcendent deity. Indeed, in accord with the ontological principle, whatever *is*, is constitutive of the concrescence; hence if God is to be regarded as existent, then God exists uniquely within each concrescence (see PR 148). Thus, the possibility is offered for the pluralized actualization of what is otherwise regarded as an essentially unitive entity. It follows also that there is a necessary co-agentive integration of the concreting subject and God.)

Although the prioritizing of the individual in the above summary runs counter to Whitehead's intention, it is nonetheless the case that his method — and metaphysical scheme — allows the consideration of individualist perspectives as paradigmatic points of focus. The structural bracing of the unique entity (or individual) inheres in, and is central to, the process view of a developmental, creative movement into the new. It also serves as a contrast with those paradigms — including Feuerbach's — that tend to a determinate teleological goal.

Acknowledging this helps us obtain a degree of purchase on the ambiguity of his treatment of the subjective and objective states, particularly when contrasted with the anthropocentric stance adopted by Feuerbach. In its fullness of expression Whitehead's metaphysics requires that each concrescence constitutes a unique universe in which all existence shares; yet

¹ Strictly speaking, Whitehead attributes the conformal function to God as the source of the

ultimately, as has already been noted, it is in the consequent nature of God — and not the individual, which is fleeting in its moment of existence — that completeness of knowledge resides.

One of the problems, or ambiguities, of Whitehead's vision is that it either reduces each entity into a fragment of the greater social unity expressed as God (the subject becomes objectified in God, or indeed in any other operating subject²), or that it so atomises experience by requiring '[t]hat no two actual entities originate from an identical universe' (PR 23), that purposeful coherence becomes problematic. In reality, Whitehead's concerns were eminently more centred on human, social development than such an analysis suggests. Indeed, one of the enduring themes of his work is the establishment of an understanding of relationships, of the nature of structured, social activity through which the drive to creative advancement is expressed and realized³. In this regard he reserved particular criticism for the post-Cartesian tradition that severed the subject from the object, and the mind from body.

In understanding Whitehead's take on the subject–object relationship, we need to recognise that it is generally quite at odds with the normal, substantialist conception of the terms. In particular, subjectivity is at the core of the directing aim of each concrescence, each of which represents a unique completion of unitive existence. It is this defining position that renders the Whiteheadian subject distinct: it is both the heart of the event through which it is itself expressed, and — as superject — its achievement (see PR 29). The subject in Whitehead is the centre of activity; but because not acted upon, it fails of participatory relational interchange with others. The formal role of the subject (and its contrast with object) can be clearly seen in the context of causality.

If we take as a general thesis of causality that the present is produced by the actions of the past, that is that outcome C is the result of actions A and B (where A and B are serially prior to C), then the implication is that C has no influence on its own existence, but serves only as

² principle of limitation (see PR 164, 247).
The objectification of the subject in other subjects represents the standard position of Whiteheadians. The possibility of inter-subjectivity will be addressed later in this essay.

an influence on subsequent events, D... E... ...X. Thus although the present serves as a mediating point between past and future, it tends in its presentness to an extreme determinateness. This conceptualization, which characteristically recurs to substance ontologies in which a substantial entity is the passive recipient of successive effects produced by external agents, is exactly the kind of thinking that Whitehead sought to overturn with his philosophy of organism:

[T]he process of concrescence is its own reason for the decision in respect to the qualitative clothing of feelings. It is finally responsible for the decision by which any lure for feeling is admitted to efficiency. The freedom inherent in the universe is constituted by this element of self-causation. (PR 88)

In so prioritizing 'self-causation', Whitehead requires an ontology in which the present (or at least, the coming into presentness) has a causal agency unto itself. This is played out through his theory of prehensions, in which the entity coming into being structures itself through the process of valuing and ordering data in order to produce an adequate presentation of its subjective aim in terms of actualization. This is the dual perspective of the subject–superject. Taking into consideration the atomistic structure of Whitehead's theory, Lewis Ford comments in *The Lure of God*:

[The process] involves a reversal of our ordinary understanding that causes produce effects. The cause must precede its effect in time, yet it must be presently existent in order to be active in producing its effect. (LoG 5)

It is worth noting here the emphasis on temporal concurrence. The implication is that time is strictly linear; not only in our perception of it, but in its underlying nature. As Whitehead explains:

This passage of the cause into the effect is the cumulative character of time. The irreversibility of time depends on this character. (PR 237)

The question of the irreversibility of time will be addressed in the next chapter. What is of primary importance here, however, is that for a 'cause' to have an 'effect' in the context of temporal linearity a means of integration between, or interpenetration of, past and present must be established. Such a mechanism must unravel the inherent (or at least, apparent) contradiction that suggests that the past (that is, that which has previously occurred) is agentive in the present (that is, that which is determined by the past). We again here run into

³

See *Aims of Education; Science and the Modern World*.

the question of permeable boundaries, such as those discussed earlier in the context of selfhood (see page 16).

Having set out his position in favour of the presentness of agentive action, Ford focuses on the atomicity of time to draw out the inherent contradiction:

If, however, temporal atomicity requires a lapse of time in order to bring the effect into being, its causes are already past and gone before the effect arises. This generates a contradiction: the cause must precede the effect in order to be its cause, yet if it precedes the effect by any lapse of time, the cause can no longer be active or effective in producing the effect. (LoG 5)

Given that cause and effect are not always (at least in so far as we can determine) so closely related in time as to be contiguous, Ford is right in asserting (along with Whitehead) that theories of causality risk sliding into contradiction. Indeed, in terms of theories of the mind and intentionality the problem is even more complex because of the difficulty of finding a mechanism through which the cause *effects* the effect.⁴ The contradiction results firstly from the assumption that each event occurs within its own

division of time; and secondly from the view that causal change is expressed by the transport of an essentially unchanged substance through time (the 'thing itself' upon which agents act). It is partly this lack of co-relationship between the constitutive elements of change that is the problem, but mainly it is that the wrong element (the past event) is prioritized. Ford sees the solution to this problem in Whitehead's re-centring of agency on to the one element that we can reasonably regard as necessarily active:

Whitehead challenged customary thinking by reasoning that it is the event in the present that should be taken to be active. Instead of an active cause producing a passive effect, he argues that there is a present event producing itself out of its passive past causes. (LoG 5)

This active 'presentness' (which is distinct from Whitehead's concept of 'presentational immediacy') is central to a clear articulation of agentive principles, since activity necessarily occurs in the temporal 'now' of its acting. By centring the agentive principle in the moment of becoming (or concrescent process) we can begin to build a model in which the notion of creative self-determination delivers a significant advance on the problem of determinism and

⁴ See Farrer, *The Freedom of the Will*, *passim*.

free-will. The past — and perhaps also the immediately present context — is informative; but the outcome, in Ford's reading of Whitehead, is directed by the emerging entity through its self-ordering of the data. The emerging entity thus ensures the conformity of its actualization with its initial subjective aim. This re-focusing of agency assists in understanding the process through which projected concepts might obtain effective duration and agency. It also serves to grant to persons a formal responsibility for their own actings.

There remains, however, a weakness in Whitehead's position; and it is followed by Ford. The weakness is in the retention of polarized subject-object construction, albeit reconfigured for an event as opposed to substance ontology. For Whitehead, an event, once concluded, is consigned to objective immortality (see PR 29) and — additionally — it is objectivity that characterizes the informative data for a concrescence (when seen as data for that concrescence). When we add in the atomicity of time (and it is this which enables Whitehead to conceptualize each entity as constituting its own universe), we are presented with a model in which the active process of concrescence is regarded as being solely in the ambit of the subject. It is the subject alone that undertakes the evaluative and judgmental decision. Although Ford's analysis of Whitehead illustrates a notable advancement on those theories that place agentive effect in the past, it fails to establish inter-relationality. Much of the difficulty here rests in our understanding of temporal progression, and it is clear from Whitehead's writing that he was conscious of this. As he comments (when discussing the unification of the elements of a concrescence):

This one felt content is the 'satisfaction', whereby the actual entity is its particular individual self; to use Descartes' phrase, 'requiring nothing but itself in order to exist'. In the conception of the actual entity in its phase of satisfaction, the entity has attained its individual separation from other things; it has absorbed the datum, and it has not yet lost itself in the swing back to the 'decision' whereby its appetite becomes an element in the data of other entities superseding it. Time has stood still – if only it could. (PR 154)

Buber, as discussed above, is all about inter-subjectivity, about the nature of relationship. Where Whitehead sought to build a philosophy of organism, Buber offers an altogether more organic approach to the question of our relationship with what we perceive and treat as 'other'. The distinction can be seen in the way Whitehead centres everything on the

'subjective aim' of the concrescence:

[P]rehensions are not independent of each other. The relation between their subjective forms is constituted by the one subjective aim which guides their formation. This correlation of subjective forms is termed 'the mutual sensitivity' of prehensions. (PR 235)

In this, Whitehead is establishing the basis for the conformity of prehensions to a single goal: the actualizing of the complex entity that is the result of the process of concrescence and which is guided by the subjective aim or originative focus. Each element is felt (prehended); and each element — from its own perspective — has a subjective form that necessarily embraces, and is embraced by, the subjective aim. In Whitehead it is axiomatic that the subjective forms operating within a concrescence or nexus must have as their subjective aim the goal of integration with the primary subjective aim of the actual entity within which they are entertained. Thus although the one is created out of the many (see footnote, page 3), this is not a merging of equals, or the co-agentive sharing of goals. The contrast with Buber is significant and intense.

I have noted above, with regard to the development of co-agency, some of the weaknesses in Ford's 1978 book, *The Lure of God*. These include the problem of temporal concurrence, and that the ultimate atomism of each entity precludes the development of co-agentive subject relations. Some of these issues are partly addressed in his 1987 essay 'Creativity in a Future Key'⁵. In this, Ford puts forward a fascinating, if not wholly successful, interpretation of Whiteheadian temporality. The following exploration of the 'Creativity' essay is included because it both opens up the possibility of a limited co-agency, and marks a conceptual break with normative structures of time.

Like Whitehead, Ford finds certain difficulties in the constraints imposed by temporal linearity. This relates centrally to the apparent 'all-at-onceness' of the emergence of a concrescence into time, and the strict limitation of activity to the emerging entity (and its presentness). I suggested earlier (see page 20) that it is possible to read Whitehead in a way that allows the pluralization of God when considered from the standpoint of the present. Ford reaches a

similar conclusion in his 'Creativity' essay, though his route to this end is somewhat different.

In introducing his discussion, Ford stresses that:

If God were the sole creator of the actual occasions, there would be a divine determinism in this event ontology. (CFK 180)

His point is that the self-determining character of the actual entity must be preserved, but that, equally, a means of allowing God an agentive (though partial) role in the process of concrescence must be established. He is attempting to leave room for God to

act as the 'Principle of Limitation', ordering:

...only novel possibilities, determining the metaphysical and cosmic limits of what can and what cannot be actualized, leaving actualization up to the free activity of actual occasions... (CFK 180)

The difficulty for him is that God cannot be treated simply as another entity that is active in the present (since the 'present' relates to the concrescing entity alone), and neither can the agency be derived from the past. Hence, he argues:

Whitehead derived novel possibility from God, the source of novelty for the world, conceived as a present everlasting concrescence or act of becoming. Since novel possibilities are created as future lures for the world, as the way God expresses himself toward the world, we can conceive of them as the manifestation of God's own act of self-creation. If so, divine self-creation can be conceived to be itself future, such that the novel possibilities *are created in the future*.... [W]e wish to modify Whitehead's conceptuality by conceiving God as future activity, *which is also the source of creativity for present occasions*. (CFK 180–181, emphasis added)

Thus, his solution is that the future is agentive with regard to the present, a proposition he accepts 'may seem quite outrageous' (CFK 181).

In developing his position, Ford puts forward a concept of creativity that keeps it inside the ontological principle in that its occurrence is 'ingredient in specific actualities' (CFK 182). It is not relevant in this context to enter into all the particulars of Ford's argument, but it should be noted that in seeking a location for creativity he arrives at a position whereby:

...it can be derived neither from the past nor the present (from itself) nor from a nontemporal creator... What other source is there than the future? (CFK 186)

⁵ Published in *New Essays in Metaphysics*, (ed. Neville, RC). See bibliography for full

Ford is relying on the view that God, as an actual entity in the process of becoming, never fully achieves the point of completion. Completion would result in God being thrust into an objective state. Ford's God is thus characterized:

... as a single everlasting concrescence or unifactory (*sic*) activity, forever future, forever unifying, never terminating in any past determinate actuality, yet forever generating novel possibilities. (CFK 186)

This allows us to conceptualize a model in which God is an actualizing entity that is the contemporary of any other actualizing entity. That is, it grants a possible sharing of the presentness of becoming, but, because not actualized, God nevertheless remains distinct from the objective position of entities perceived in presentational immediateness. It should be clear from the foregoing that such a position allows the introduction of concepts of co-agency (see also PR 235). However, this is not Ford's argument. Rather, he maintains that the required (agentive) creativity *belongs* to the future. The position is partially sustained by the following:

[P]resent activity... is individualized by its particular standpoint, separate from other contemporary activities of unification, and driving towards concrete, determinate unity. (CFK 187)

This is contrasted with the indeterminate aspect of God's prehensions which are 'without specific standpoint' and 'unified only in terms of possibility' (both CFK 187). Ford is again specifically rejecting the concurrent interaction of competing subjects.

In offering the above, Ford remains faithful to the Whiteheadian notion of a God that 'saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life' (PR 346), and one that serves as the realm of possibility. He rightly stresses that the identification of God with future activity does not preclude the consideration of conceptions of simultaneous present creativity (so long as the simultaneity relates solely to the relationship between the individual concrescence and God). It is at this stage of the argument that Ford reveals what is behind his revision of Whitehead, and the key is his understanding of the term 'future'.

Ford accepts that in the realm of actual events, 'there is no way that the future can pass over into the present' (CFK 188). He argues instead for a consideration of the Whiteheadian notion

of a realm of becoming (the distinction is between concreteness and concrecence), and suggests:

The order of succession for being in terms of what is earlier and what is later turns out to be the opposite of what it is for becoming. The order for being is the succession of determinate actualities, the latest of which verges on the present. In contrast, the order for becoming is the succession of phases of determination, the latest of which, being the most determinate, verges on the past. The earliest phase of determination or concrecence, being the least determinate, verges on the future. (CFK 188)

This is ingenious, and allows a consideration of temporal categories in terms of effect:

because least determinate, the generalized drive to creative becoming is regarded as future since it lacks the concrete data from which the concrecence can derive determinate form.

Ford thus concludes:

Being earlier, that future can influence the later present. (CFK 189)

It need hardly be stated that Ford's view is unusual, and he acknowledges that his proposal 'clearly runs counter to a widespread interpretation of Whitehead's analysis of becoming'⁶ (CFK 189). The point he makes — and I think it is one worth making — is that there is a real distinction in how we may choose to consider the internal phases of concrecence and how we normally regard the succession of events. In this, he appears to be relying on the notion of an entity emerging into present immediacy in a completed state, the 'all-at-onceness' referred to on page 26.

As we are now nearing the conclusion of this digression through Ford's discussion of creativity, it will be useful to summarize the key points of the argument. According to Ford, agency arises in the presentness of becoming. It cannot arise out of past events, which are considered as objectified. Additionally, God can be conceived as an (agentive) expression of future creativity. An actual entity is therefore the centre of a co-agentive collaboration that draws on both its own (present) creativity and that future creativity defined as God. Its determinate drive is derived out of its present prehensions and their proximity to (but not prehension of) the immediate past. The future creativity provides the general (non-determinate) drive to novel formulations together with a principle of limitation (the need to

conform). The element of novelty is a logical outcome of the fact

that the future deals only with the realm of possibility, and not determinate actualities.

It was mentioned above that Ford's argument leads him to propose a pluralization of God, when regarded from the standpoint of the present. The means by which he arrives at this conclusion are relatively simple, once the concept of future creativity is taken on board. In essence, he relies on the idea that God is to be generally understood as 'unificatory activity'. When an entity in the process of becoming draws on future creativity, it is at once drawing on an active aspect of a unitive concrescence which is treated as 'other', but at the same time taking it within its own subjective (and determinate) world. Thus the general unity of God as future creativity becomes pluralized as it is drawn into the welter of competing, determinate universes which constitute presentness. Ford describes it thus:

To be sure, the future becomes present, but what this means is that the unificatory activity generating possible means of unification divides itself into the many contemporary activities of actualization. The present is the self-diremption of the future. The one cosmic activity of the future breaks up into the many activities of the present.... God is always ahead of the present; when any particular activity becomes present, it is no longer part of the divine activity. (CFK 193)

We began this chapter by looking at Buber's integrative approach to subject relations, epitomized by his conception of the I–Thou relationship, and we have ended it with a proposition that in order to effect God's agency, God (conceptualized as future activity) must be splintered into a pluralized present. Along the way we have explored certain aspects of a Whiteheadian view of agency. We have thus moved from a simple statement of mutuality (Buber's) to a complex Whiteheadian position that draws a degree of co-agency from the asymmetric relationship between the determinate concrescence (finite) and God-as-future-activity (infinite). This does not, however, deliver co-agency of equivalent subjects, or the intense mutuality described and demanded by Buber. What we have achieved, however, is a view of process metaphysics allowing: a) the prioritization of persons as unitive expressions of reality; and b) via two routes (Ford's, and my own offered on page 20) an understanding of how a singular reference

⁶ He is referring here to emphasis in *Process and Reality* on phases within the process of concrescence. See PR *passim*.

can be transmuted into pluralized actuality across the atomistic Whiteheadian framework.

Chapter 4

Process and inter-subjectivity

[T]he life of every person other than myself is something complete in itself and presented to me as a unity. (FI 149)

If we are to deal properly with the concept of inter-subjectivity, it is incumbent upon us to relate what we say to persons, to the very human experience that we share. Such was driving force behind Feuerbach's anthropological approach; and, in its own way, such is it with Austin Farrer's personalist metaphysics. Farrer recognized that there is something very particular about persons, and sought to apply his high regard for inter-personal relationality to his conception of God. He saw that 'Existence, if the notion is made explicit, connotes activity' (FI 30), which brings him into proximity with the prioritization of event made explicit in Whitehead. What is more, and here we find the link with the projectionist theory of Feuerbach, he could say (when talking of 'the function of our own existence as *imago Dei*' (FI 49)):

First we have to see how we ascend, as it were, within ourselves to the top of ourselves in the act of fulfilling our own nature... Then second, we have to take this summit of the human spirit, and discover in what way it can be further elevated to stand as an indication of the divine nature. (FI 49)

Implicit in this is that the individual, or at that least the sense of personal individuality, endures.

From our normative, human perspective we may, I would suggest, take it as given that any meaningful concept of persons involves the kind of subjective endurance that is embedded in the inter-personalist construction of Buber, and in the intentionalist focus of Farrer who suggests that 'the basic form of personal action is heedful bodily behaviour' (FW 17). Farrer continues:

We can act intentionally without deliberating previously...; but we cannot deliberate, except with a view to intentional action. (FW 17)

Farrer emphasises the agentic aspect of personhood, and it is clear from the above that he (at least at this stage) regards agency as necessarily being brought into physical effect.

Certainly, a central focus of *The Freedom of the Will* is one of understanding the relationship

between mind (the seat of purposeful intentionality) and body (the medium of effect). In this Farrer is close to Whitehead in the attempt to undermine the Cartesian hegemony of mind and body as competing types of substance. As exemplified in the opening of the Bible (see Chapter 1), thought alone is not enough. A thought without an act is incomplete, a potential but not an actuality. We may take it then, that, in this Farrerian context, the concept 'action' requires 'actualization' to be meaningful; and in the personalist context we might further wish to require persons to have conscious awareness of their own acting.

Charles Conti draws attention in *Metaphysical Personalism* to the similarities and divergences between Farrer and Whitehead, and pays particular attention to the difficulty Farrer found in getting properly away from substance ontologies whilst affirming the event ontology of *esse est operari*. Like Whitehead, Farrer rejects the Cartesian divide, but equally *with* Whitehead he adopts a dipolar perspective in which the (agentive) individual is regarded as a unity of mind (the mental pole in Whitehead) with body (the physical pole in Whitehead). We have already noted Whitehead's difficulty with subject–object constructions (see page 24). A related tension is exhibited in Farrer¹ with regard to the conception of the mind and body, as can be seen in the following:

Without bodily perception and bodily action, imagination would lack not so much a cause as a theme. (FW 18)

In a phrase such as this we can see a tacit acknowledgement that the physical is to be regarded as a *mode* of actuality, but not (despite the insistence on 'bodily action') as its *determining* feature. Indeed, Farrer's strong use of performatives (see MP 38–39)

suggests that effective agency may be as much a conceptual as a physical actualization (that is, that the change is as much one of inner status as of outer appearance).

We have already seen how Whitehead tends to treat each event as unique in itself, and how the Whiteheadian conception of 'subject' relates strictly to the directive agent of the emerging phases of that event. This reflects the underpinning requirements of the categorial scheme,

¹ The development of Farrer's thought is explored in detail in *Metaphysical Personalism*, and is characterized there by the phrase 'Purging the [Aristotelian] Leaven'.

the first category of which states:

(i) *The Category of Subjective Unity*. The many feelings which belong to an incomplete phase in the process of an actual entity, though unintegrated by reason of the incompleteness of the phase, are compatible for integration by reason of the unity of their subject. (PR 26)

Thus, from the beginning, Whitehead is not arguing in favour of an extreme atomism of reality: relativity and relationship are also of concern. In the final analysis (or, when analysis is excluded) there is a real drawing together of themes and effects within the unitary whole. Indeed, it is this need to derive wholeness from diversity that underpins the entire process of concrescence. By defining the subject as the unifying agent of an actual entity, Whitehead assures a paradigm in which anything that is considered is necessarily integrated with that which considers it. Be it a microscopic actual entity or a complex entity designated a 'person', it cannot but be integrated with the environment with which it emerges into being. As Robert Neville observes in his essay 'Sketch of a System'²:

[A] harmony is in itself a way of focusing or containing in perspective its whole world of components.... This gives expression to the ancient intuition that somehow the whole world is contained in each thing. The limitation to this intuition is that a thing can contain only those other things to which it is ordered: Where orders are not congruent, there is indeterminate relation. (SOAS 263)

Neville is expressing a Whiteheadian view here, but from the perspective of a single event (or 'thing'). The question remains of whether the harmonious integration of which he speaks is indeed no more than a singular perspective; and if more, whether it remains that same 'thing' in its extension across time.

In considering temporal endurance there are two areas to address: firstly, the idea of serial repetition; and secondly, whether, given the atomistic treatment of time in Whitehead's scheme, each component entity within the linked series truly shares a common factor or core. That is, we need to establish both entitive repetition (to give an enduring object), and then to assess whether such an object enjoys an enduring subjective core that transcends the atomicity of the progression. In order to understand the process position better, and its impact on possible treatments of inter-subjectivity, it will be helpful to look briefly at how Whitehead

conceives entitive endurance; and, in the context of persons, how a sense of self-identity emerges that makes me believe, in an essential (though not rigid) way, that I am today the person I was yesterday and will be tomorrow.

Now, for the sake of simplicity, consider a society of the 'personal' type. Such a society will be a linear succession of actual occasions forming a historical route in which some defining characteristic is inherited by each occasion from its predecessors. A society of this sort is an 'enduring object'. (PR 198)

Taking the above as our guide, it is evident that for Whitehead the idea of an enduring entity relates to the inheritance of a 'defining characteristic'. Whitehead is careful to make clear that a 'personal' society in this context is somewhat more broadly defined than our general notion of persons, and that he is referring to those objects that we consider as substantial and enduring. The conception hinges on the linearity of the succession of actual occasions, and the mutual experience of a defining characteristic. In low-grade objects there is a maximal conformity to the immediately prior state, so that the resulting complex entity is minimally related to the external world, and (in effect) wholly consistent with its inherited defining characteristic. Hence a stone remains a stone, irrespective of the changes occurring around it. In more complex, or high-grade, organisms, a significant element of the contextual world enters into the succession of becoming so that environmental awareness becomes incorporated as part of each actual occasion within the historical line. We can regard this both as the transmission of cognitive memory and as relevant contextualization between successive occasions, and it is characterized by the kind of progression-by-addition which was earlier discussed in a Biblical context.

In order to establish the second part of the equation (the notion of a subjective core that persists across what are regarded as successive and discrete events) we need to find a mechanism whereby the core information can be transmitted (or better, can transcend) from one entity to another. It is here that particular difficulties arise in Whiteheadian paradigms. The heart of the problem is that each occasion along the historical line is defined as unique. We have already seen that the past is regarded as passive with regard to agency, and

² Published in *New Essays in Metaphysics*, (ed. Neville, RC). See bibliography for full

therefore the transmission of the line of inheritance is largely to be effected by the subject of the present. This must be achieved via the prehension of data, of which the immediately prior subjective state is just one constituent (others include conceptual factors, and data derived from the influence of the immediate present). The most obvious mechanism of transmission (or transcendence) is the superject.

The superject is by definition the expression of the subject with which it is linked in the term subject–superject. We know also that it serves as the objectification of its own becoming and that it is regarded as informing the putative subjective aim of its successor. It can therefore be regarded as the external expression of internal motive, or the public face of the private process. But if we allow the superject a fully determining role in the subsequent occasion, we are tending to remit agency to a past or passive state. Whatever else it is, the superject is not the essential core for which we are seeking since it is the concrete expression of the unique aim of each occasion. At best, it is the mode of transport.

A clue to how the problem might be resolved is found in the term ‘defining characteristic’ (see page 35), or what Neville here terms ‘essential features’:

A discursive individual harmonizes an organized group of occasions each of which has essential features deriving not only from its present, which function to integrate the conditions, but also from its past and future occasions... Essential features from past occasions are those entering as conditions that mark those conditions as the individual’s own past states (in contrast to the states of other things in the past). (SOAS 267)

What we are seeking therefore might be thought of as an element that serves as the maximal influence on the historical and progressive line. In God we might term this ‘creativity’³, and in the human we can regard it as those special features that enable us to distinguish one agentive person from another. Physical appearance is an aspect of this, but perhaps of more importance is the sense of personal identification with our own historical past and prospective future. It is this self-identification which enables us to regard ourselves as *essentially* the same person, despite the progressive physical and psychological changes we undergo. The Whiteheadian view leads us to conclude, however, that each discrete moment constitutes a

citation.

unique 'self', that there is no direct continuity between one event and the next. It requires, in fact, that in a very specific way I am not the person I was yesterday, and nor will my tomorrow be wholly determined by what I am today.

If this is indeed the case, then we might wish to pose the question: how do we come to terms with experiential continuity, whilst at the same time treating each event as unique in itself? True, the consequent nature of God serves to preserve each instance or occasion, and thereby provides a perspectival continuity; but this is limited to the point of view of God. From the creaturely perspective (those entities that emerge and then perish into objective immortality) we need to uncover a different mechanism. The fact of the distinction between myself yesterday and myself today may well be *psychologically* meaningful, but this is not enough. The natural state of personhood predisposes us to a sense of developmental growth, of coherence with our past, and of directive action (within limits) to our future. Superjective transmission enables a good deal of this to take place, but it is just one of a number of possible influences. That it is *usually* primary (thereby committing all that I am in this moment into the subjective aim of all (or nearly all) that I will be in the next) does not mean that it is *necessarily* so, and in this it fails the test of essentialness.

Judith Jones, in *Intensity*, draws on Whitehead's Category of Subjective Intensity to reach towards a semi-agentive position. The category reads thus:

(viii) *The Category of Subjective Intensity*. The subjective aim, whereby there is origination of conceptual feeling, is at intensity of feeling (α) in the immediate subject, and (β) in the *relevant* future.

This double aim—at the *immediate* present and the *relevant* future—is less divided than appears on the surface. For the determination of the *relevant* future, and the *anticipatory* feeling respecting provision for its grade of intensity, are elements affecting the immediate complex of feeling. The greater part of morality hinges on the determination of relevance in the future. The relevant future consists of those elements in the anticipated future which are felt with effective intensity by the present subject by reason of the real potentiality for them to be derived from itself. (PR 27, emphasis in original)

Jones' basic thesis rests on a reading of Whitehead in which the intensity of feeling for the

³ For a detailed discussion see my essay 'Whitehead and the God of Religion' in which I argue that creativity (development with a future viewpoint) is the necessary character of a 'first being'.

relevant future is fully actualized within the present concrescence, thus blurring the distinction between the private face of the entity (the entity-in-concrescence) and its public face (the entity-as-*concretum*). This brings into focus the issue of how we treat the entity in terms of itself (subjectively) *and* in terms of its function as data in the becoming of other entities (objectively). Specifically, Jones allows that where an actual entity is a factor in the process of concrescence of a subsequent actual entity then the subjective nature of the prior entity is fully preserved. The earlier is thus agentive with regard to the latter, and the past active in the present:

Both individuality of concrescent process and 'sameness' of enduring character refer to intensive achievement. . . . [W]herever the contrasts achieved by an individual are reiterated in another individual, the original individual *is* there in the agentive sense. (INT 130, emphasis in original)

Jones' general use of 'intensity' as a primary informant to the satisfaction of a concrescence (its completion, and transformation from concrescence to *concretum*) serves as the mechanism through which our notion of 'character' might be transmitted. Regarded from this light, it is the intensive character of the former actual entity which serves as an agentive influence on the final formulation of the subsequent becoming. In simple terms, Jones rejects the idea that the actual entity loses its internal subjectivity (that is, its private nature) in its transition of status into objectified data regarded from the perspective of an other. This 'other' includes the succeeding actualization within the historical line of an enduring entity, but is not limited to only that. Here we find not only a soft form of inter-subjectivity, but also a distinctive treatment of temporality. By allowing the active inclusion of a prior subject within the present subject we are treating temporal locations as movable. This is because if the prior subject is originally constructed at a particular moment in the temporal line — and if Jones is right — it can repeat itself in its fullness of nature at a later moment. Implicit in this is that there is a repetition of temporal condition.

As with the case of Ford's 'creativity of the future', we might object that Jones' position is counter-intuitive. It is interesting to note, however, that our paradigmatic frame for this paper (the Bible) engages in precisely such methods. Meir Sternberg in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* comments on how, in the Bible, aspects of the past are repeatedly and actively

brought into the present frame, notably via the mechanism of the genealogy which is described as 'a lump of pastness' (PBN 45)⁴. The point I am making is that it is consistent with human experience to entertain a degree of uncertainty regarding time, or at least with regard to the absolute objectification of that which is past. This is more than the feeling of *déjà vu*, or present remembering of past event. The Biblical structure suggests an agentive function — a real presentness — of the prior state that is consistent with the concept of co-agency within a unitive paradigm.

The reason for drawing attention to Jones' thesis is that it offers, from within the mainstream of current Whiteheadian thought, a model in which inter-subjectivity takes a central role. As she states with reference to Whitehead's Category of Objective Diversity (see PR 26):

[F]or the experience of contrasts to be meaningful to the existence of the present entity, they must experience the component elements of the contrast (objectified entities) as realities of the *same ontological stature* as themselves. This is not just a new perspective on the meaning of past actualities—this is the real and actual inclusion of actualities as actualities in the full agentive sense in other actualities. (INT 55, emphasis added)

This explains how an entity might share in another's sense of being. Moreover, if we regard the sense of personal identity that inheres within the concrescence as entertaining maximal intensity, we can allow the superject, which effects the transition from one successive moment to the next (and 'contains' that private subjectivity), to truly effect the experience of continuity in personhood. From this, the soft inter-subjectivity of the successive condition of an enduring entity can be extended to full inter-subjectivity and co-agency. In terms of the earlier discussion of projection, this offers a route whereby the internally formulated project can remain internally relevant whilst at the same time being externally active (see page 14).

In light of the above, and because of his strong argument in favour of perduring identity, it is interesting at this juncture to look briefly at Nathaniel Lawrence's discussion of temporality in his Whiteheadian essay, 'Time, Value, and the Self'⁵. In his discussion of the self he notes that 'memory bridges physical time, drawing together in one present consciousness the

⁴ I have discussed this at greater length in my essay 'Language, conflict and coherence in the Bible'.

significance of past events' (TVS 162). Jones of course suggests rather more than this, that it is the actuality (and not just the significance of that

actuality) which is brought into the present, but Lawrence is in fact edging towards a conception of time-reversal and it is this that is of primary interest here (see page 23).

First he stresses the need for contextual relevance as a determining factor in the drawing of diverse events into present consciousness, but (in what is a distinctly psychologized reading) adds:

And if we ask what events prior to *this* moment of consciousness are responsible for the selective disposition that has operated *now*, we are driven back to previous occasions in which prior consciousness is the integrating factor. (TVS 162, emphasis in original)

The point is that it is in the present that the context is formed, and that the drive to find strong determinism in past events is misplaced. Lawrence continues:

Even in pathological cases, however, psychoanalysis itself presumes that conscious recognition of past influences will loosen their hold on present volition. Psychoanalysis is deterministic only in its diagnosis. Its practice is directed toward freeing the consciousness from its entrapment in a submerged past. (TVS 162)

Lawrence uses this discussion of consciousness to develop a theory of event in which the temporal measure is relative to the agency of the event itself. Having suggested that Newtonian time deals with 'processes whose component units are so minute that the irreversibility of time is virtually assured' (TVS 165), he continues:

What we do is peg our conception of temporal passage to the succession of dominantly physical events, each of which is a complete phase in the endurance of the physical object. But philosophically there should be no special primacy about this type of process. (TVS 165)

The argument is that different processes are completed within time-frames relative to their individual completion. On one level Lawrence is simply talking about the sub-processes within a nexus (the example he uses is that of the trial of Socrates, each moment of which contributes the larger event of 'the ingression of justice' (TVS 165)), but he makes the important point that we need to distinguish between the internal completeness of an event and its external significance. He concludes:

⁵ Published in *The Relevance of Whitehead*, (ed. Leclerc, I). See bibliography for full

The reversibility of time lies in this, that *what is over and done with, in its relation to some particular temporal process, may quite easily be as yet incomplete with respect to some supervenient process* whose unit blocks are temporally longer, and for which it may have significance still. The past is irrevocable only if the perspective on it be arbitrarily confined. (TVS 166, emphasis in original)

The relevance of Lawrence's argument is that it offers, through its existential focus, tangential support to Jones. Where Jones deals with the detail of concrescence, Lawrence explodes the concept into the realm of thematic, cultural experience. He almost certainly overstates the claim of temporal reversal, but in doing so reveals an intuitive insight into the realities of personal experience and extended identity. Pegging him back to the identity question, his reading allows for a continuing agency of persons extending beyond the reality of the specific moment (his main argument is that Socrates can indeed receive justice through his sons). In acknowledging the idea of completion as an abstraction, he recognizes that in human terms a life is primarily meaningful in its purposeful fulfilment, of which death may be a defining moment. Defining, but not absolute. We can see this in the paradigm of Christ's Passion. Such a view is also evident in the following anticipation of the superjective function. The author is Feuerbach:

The last word that you speak is death, in which you totally express yourself and impart yourself to others. Death is the ultimate act of communication. You live only as long as you have something to communicate, only as long as there still remains in you something that is not yet communicated, and, therefore, only as long as there exists a boundary between you and others which is still to be canceled. (TOD 121)

If death can be thought of as the superjective realization of a life, then (in process terms) it remains the case that, as superject, the completed life remains informative of subsequent becomings. Indeed 'death' loses its absolute status if we follow Lawrence, in that so long as the life with which it is connected is (even potentially) agentive, then completion is an illusion. Lawrence's position offers support to Jones' idea of recurrent agency (although his method of arriving at this differs), as well as to the need to consider entitive endurance on the macro rather than micro level. In effect, he comes close to arguing for 'being' as a condition of agency, rather than agency as an attribute of being.

Thus to conclude this part of the discussion, if 'personal identity' constitutes the maximal characteristic of a concrescence (that is, that the sense of personhood is the element of greatest intensity), then we may have uncovered a means by which that feeling is able to effect its self-transcendence to successive occasions along an historical line. We have termed this 'soft' inter-subjectivity to distinguish it from the fully inter-relational position of Buber's I-Thou construction, and indeed Jones' broader co-agentive model. These have been placed alongside a model in which the completion of an event is itself treated in relative terms (following which, so must our conception of what constitutes an actual entity). It remains, however, to ask whether we might not consider that the very notion of 'self' is itself a construct.

Chapter 5

The self as construct

The moral struggle is the most evident instance of an act of will, because in it we are concerned with the choice of willing or not willing. But this is no reason for thinking that willing is restricted to the moral struggle; and the definition of will which we extract from an examination of that struggle does not suggest any such limitation. *For it defines will simply as the self-actualising potency of a project.* (FI 169, emphasis added)

It was suggested in Chapter 1 that speech presupposes another. But it does more than this. In formulating ideas into words we make them concrete even before we speak, and in so doing create a space within which we can move. We establish goals and commit to them; or we can explore and reject the created form. As with the concrescence of an actual entity, the formation of a sentence grows from the data available, and its meaning remains in balance until we reach the stop. Once spoken, it cannot be retracted. The thought has moved from a private potential to a public object. It is this that makes speech so potent, and language so problematic.

In this context it is worth returning to Farrer's treatment of performatives, the idea of a phrase that effects a change in status simply by its expression. We can characterize such language in terms of intensity so that, in the actualization of the words, the intensive intending of the speaker transcends the subjective boundary and enters into the subjectivity of an other. That is, the projection expressed in the form of language is capable of agency, the effect of which is not dependent on the comprehension of the words, but on the incorporation of the embedded intensive load into the subjective self-realization of their target. In this, intentional intensification of the language is crucial, and it is notable that, in a broader context, Farrer saw in intentional acts the move from the potential to the actual¹.

Our acts of intending create the space in which the value of one possibility is contrasted with the presumed outcome of another, and a choice made. These contrasts have form, albeit

hidden within the privacy of our subjective frame. The difficulty in considering such acts rests in the need to abstract the point of transition that marks the shift from mindful consideration to considered action. We can readily adduce examples where the process seems clear, even if the evidence for the basis of the decision is not (e.g., the roulette player switching from red to black after 'weighing' the odds); but often the decision comes within a continuous flow of activity and can hardly be thought of as having undergone considered reflection. Farrer draws an example from the game of tennis, and the precise but unconscious reaction of the player to the ball (FW 22–23). But even here the act is 'intended'. And so again we meet with the blurring of the private and the public state, as the deciding and the decision merge into a unity of activity.

If we accept Farrer's view we find that the period of reflection, the careful construction of an inner space in which to weigh and measure possible outcomes, is less helpful to us than we might have hoped. Rather, we may need to regard the intending as mutually implicated with the intended, just as the subject is implicated with the superject. By this is meant that the action cannot be separated from its context; and that the context is as much conceptual as physical. Although we may need to stretch its meaning, what we are considering is, in Whitehead's terms, a 'proposition':

[T]he datum of an impure prehension is a proposition, otherwise termed a 'theory'.
(PR 184)

The impurity to which he refers is a reflection of the merging taking place between an eternal object (from the mental pole in his system), and 'a physical prehension originating in the physical pole' (PR 184). Whitehead suggests two forms of proposition, the 'conformal' and 'non-conformal' (PR 186–7), and treats the latter thus:

When a non-conformal proposition is admitted into feeling, the reaction to the datum has resulted in the synthesis of fact with the alternative potentiality of the complex predicate. A novelty has emerged into creation.... [I]t is new, a new type of individual, and not merely a new intensity of individual feeling. That member of the locus has introduced a new form into the actual world; or, at least, an old form in a new function. (PR 187)

Here we have Whitehead's argument for the concretization of unrealized potentials.

¹ This is explored extensively in *The Freedom of the Will* (see for example FW 48).

The distinction Whitehead places on the creation of the new (as opposed to a change in intensity) is important. The newness of the novel emergence effects a change of more than just perspective, which latter comprises the subjective ordering of the relative degree of intensity of the emerging entity's constituents. It is the balance between these complementary constituents which shapes the public face of what ultimately emerges into being. Newness, however, be it intense or not, is the ingression of creative advance. If the proposition constitutes a significant challenge to the original position, we are faced with a dynamic that places innovation against habit. We are forced into intentional acts. It has already been noted that Whitehead treats the process of concrescence as atemporal, requiring an entity (or event) to emerge into being 'all at once'. In treating the 'intending' of Farrer as the entertaining of a Whiteheadian proposition we bring the personalist dynamics of the former into a productive relationship with the metaphysical requirements of the latter. As Whitehead wrote in *Modes of Thought*:

The characterization of this conceptual feeling is the sense of what might be and what might have been... In its highest development, this becomes the entertainment of the Ideal. (MT 36–37)

Whitehead regards such developments as actualizing in the human sphere through our sense of morality and 'the mystic sense of religion' (MT 37). He links this to the notion of 'importance' in a general sense, and to 'interest' in the context of individual feeling (see MT 11). The process is itself related to the principle of intensity discussed by Jones. Whitehead expresses it thus:

[T]here are two aspects to Importance; one based on the unity of the Universe, the other on the individuality of the details. The word 'Interest' suggests the latter aspect; the word 'Importance' leans towards the former. In some sense or other *interest always modifies expression*. (MT 11, emphasis added)

The two aspects relate, of course, to the unitive integration of the unique universe and to its specific character as presented by the particular concrescence.

In relating the foregoing discussion to our treatment of the general notion of projection, and in particular the projection of God in process terms, we need to be clear about what we mean by a project. For Feuerbach, the underlying meaning of the term resides in the disjunctive

realization of an essentially human attribute; in effect, its misplacement, and its function as a lure to ultimate re-appropriation and the completion of the human. The Feuerbachian tradition has tended, through writers such as Freud, to place a specifically psychological meaning on the word so that 'projection' has come to signify a rejected mental complex, exemplified, for example, in the way in which Freud adheres to the curative function implicit in Feuerbach's Hegelian structure. In both Feuerbach and Freud, the function of the project is to signify and identify a stage in the advance to fulfilment.

The position in a Whiteheadian context is slightly different, not least because the notion of 'fulfilment' must be re-configured as 'creative advance'. The projection doesn't reflect an existing condition, but rather represents a creative actualization in its own right. In treating a projection in these terms, there are a number of stages to be considered. The first can be thought of in terms of a non-conformal proposition that enjoys sufficient intensity to affect the character of the emerging concrescence in which it is entertained, but which lacks the degree of intensity required to alter the 'stubborn fact' of the actual world (see PR 129). The non-conformal status is important in that it is this that generates the internal dynamic. The concept of 'sufficient' intensity indicates that the degree of intensity is adequate in terms of relational perspectives (it informs in some way how the world appears from the perspective of the entertaining entity), but inadequate in terms of affecting the public face of that entity (it does not constitute an element that can be prehended (or better, abstracted for the purposes of integration) by other entities in the process of concrescence. It is, in this context, wholly private²). In terms of persons the proposition may be consciously or unconsciously integrated; the significance is in the fact that the proposition is now an informing element in the character of that person.

If this is all a projection were, it would remain of interest in terms of personal psychology, but its broader importance would be limited. The position I wish to offer goes a stage further, and recurs to the internal dynamics of both the opening of Genesis and the internal structure of the Trinity. The aim is to establish a means whereby the internal entertainment of the (non-

conformal) proposition can develop in such a way as to become entitive in its own right. It is this which will enable the private consideration of, for example, the notion 'God' to effect the entitive actualization of God as an actual being.

If we accept that the projection can, in its initial formulation, be considered as a private, subjective form within the conceptual region (or 'mental pole'³) of the type of enduring entity known as a person, we are doing no more than accepting the principle that conscious or unconscious thoughts can be derived from Whiteheadian propositions. Let us also take it that, in its initial integration, the proposition has sufficient intensity to be no more than present (that is, it remains unconscious). From this position we have a number of threads that can be followed. These include: gradual de-intensification (so that the proposition gradually loses potency and constitutes little or none of the subsequent occasions in the life of the person); relative stability (so that the proposition remains informative, but in a broader sense 'inactive'); and finally, relative degrees of further intensification. It is this latter category which is of interest to us here.

When we talk about the intensification of an intensity there are a number of plausible outcomes, the most important of which are: a) intensification sufficient to bring the proposition into the consciousness of the person as a recognized thought; b) intensification sufficient to effect a public reconfiguration of the concrescence, for example as an act or physical change; c) intensification sufficient to effect a prehensible subjective form available for incorporation in or with 'competing' subjects. In terms of projection, and in order to remain within the broad area sketched out by Feuerbach, it is c) with which we are here primarily concerned, though options a) and b) are significant in terms of intentional creative acts.

Taking then the initial notion of an entertained proposition, I am suggesting that it enjoy a degree of intensification sufficient to allow movement from a state of full containment within the broader society to one where it is available for abstractive prehension. In saying this, I am

² The term 'wholly private' contradicts Whitehead. See pages 52–54 for clarification.

aware that we have not yet addressed how such intensification might arise, but we might regard this as a normal aspect of the process of concrecence in that the intensification can be derived from any available data source. Where the source of such intensification is subjectively centred (that is, it is found in the internal development of the subjective aim) we might conjecture that the intensification will lead to subjective recognition (the proposition emerges into consciousness). What is needed is a model in which the propositional form engages with an appropriate context external to the primary subjective aim of the concrecence.

The reason for this is that the external context provides a relevant focal point for the entertaining subject that allows the subject to regard its previously internalized propositional form as existing externally. The interiorized 'wish' (as one might have it in psychological terms⁴) is potentiated by its adhesion to an exteriorized structure (this is simply something existing within the public realm). The full attachment to the primary subject or person is maintained, although the subjective perspective of the 'actual world' is altered. The effect is that of resonance, of recognition (when sufficiently intense, as in those cases of sudden flashes of clarity), and of revelatory truth (when the projected content redounds fully upon the projector). On the individual level this is part of the psychoanalytical process; on the broad scale it is the fulfilment of Feuerbachian teleology. The 'truth' referred to is psychological, not epistemological; but it may yet be agentively potent.

There is, however, a second part of this process to be considered. According to the broad relational aspect of Whitehead's system, it is necessary that what prehends can be prehended; and that what is prehended can prehend. The implication of this is that the exteriorized proposition, in being treated as exterior, is functionally different only by degree (and not by type⁵) from other exterior entities. If this is indeed the case, two possibilities suggest themselves: firstly, that the exteriorized proposition is available as data to other

³ I dislike this term. In this context I am using 'conceptual region' to indicate a non-physical form or nexus within the broader society that is the person.

⁴ I am relying broadly on the psychoanalytical structure proposed by Freud, both for convenience and because of the conceptual links between Freud and Feuerbach.

⁵ See pages 11 and 13, above.

subjects in the process of concrescence; and secondly, that the exteriorized proposition can be regarded as a subject in its own right. To recur to Whitehead: 'A novelty has emerged into creation' (PR 187).

It will be recalled that 'propositions' are, in the context under consideration, impure or hybrid prehensions. It will be also noted that what has been proposed is, in fact, no more radical than a suggestion that once an eternal object is integrated into a concrescence it takes on the status of a participant in the actual world. Maintaining this line of argument, we need now to look at the impact of the exteriorized proposition. In

its *effect*, it serves as potential data for competing concrescences (those with which the proposition is not originatively linked). As such, the proposition can be incorporated into other subjects in the same way as any other objectified entity. We may wish to regard this as the transmission of information; or, when of maximal impact, as the development of a shared conceptual framework (its pluralization into the many). In this, hints of Feuerbach's species consciousness are detectable, as are the grounds for paradigmatic shifts in human cultural life and consciousness. In its *enjoyment*, however, the propositional entity constitutes its own subject and is therefore necessarily capable of *full processive actualization*. The suggestion is that a proposition originally entertained within the confines of the subjective state of a person has become a fully entitive construct capable of appropriate autonomy. In Biblical terms, the word has become flesh.

If this is indeed the case, we have a model through which the propositional notion of 'otherness' (upon which I–Thou constructions depend) has become an effective and substantive reality in the actual world. In saying this, the claim is being made that the very notion of the self that underpins our thinking is constructed. In a different context, Harold Bloom, in what can be seen as a practical application of the theoretical positions under discussion, has argued at length that our modern notion of persons is indeed such a construct, and that Shakespeare 'invented the human as we continue to know it' (SIH xviii). The argument also enables us to extend the Feuerbachian notion of God-as-project into one in which the projected God is realized as a functionally autonomous competing subject. Our

project now stands over against us, just as the human stands over against God in our reading of the Bible (see page 7).

Chapter 6

Unity and self

I referred above (page 48) to the idea of the 'wholly private' and wish briefly to return to the concept. Whitehead was clear in his rejection of such a notion:

[T]here is no element in the universe capable of pure privacy. If we could obtain a complete analysis of meaning, the notion of pure privacy would be seen to be self-contradictory. (PR 212)

I think we can accept that Whitehead is broadly correct in his assertion, for the reason of 'indeterminate relation' (see page 34). Pure privacy constitutes unfeasible isolation. Furthermore, much of Jones' argument (upon which I have placed a certain reliance) depends on this unfeasibility: whatever *is*, is by reason of its relations. The point I was making in the previous chapter is that even if we ultimately must reject it, the wholly private state is a concept with special resonance in the context of human relations. Our own sense of ourselves *as selves* depends on such privacy, on the sense of *self*-containment, and on the functional exclusivity of being a person (being able to claim our own act as our own). In our relations (which is how we experience the world) we are public, but in our self-construction we force a distinction and formulate the context in which we act. In this way we make a claim on the 'wholly private' as defining the part of our nature that allows the relating to have meaning. As with the Trinitarian construction, it is through the withdrawal into persons that we reach out to the other and, in that reaching, engage with the competing subject of the other whilst retaining the subjective notion of ourselves.

Remaining with the notion of privacy, it will be recalled that the concept of private/public is integral to that of subject/object constructions, and that a significant element of process thinking revolves around the treatment of subject and object as perspectival rather than absolute conditions. In an on-line discussion with Lewis Ford, Ford commented:

There is no becoming (except God's) which does not terminate in being. The becoming is a process of determination, of unifying the many, whereas the being is the unity achieved. The subjective immediacy of unification perishes in the unity attained. Subjectivity as present immediacy, objectivity as past determinateness is a new way of looking at subject and object. There is no

duality, no dichotomy, no subject/object chasm; both necessarily require each other. (E-Mail)¹

The discussion had originally centred on an idea I had introduced of an existing subjective core. In response to the above I commented that the exception granted to God suggested a fundamental difference between God and the rest of reality, and that we might better conceive all actuality as enjoying a ceaseless processive existence. I was concerned at the strong objectivity in Ford's reading of Whitehead and the corollary that the objective state lacks actuality *because* it lacks activity. As a person I must regard myself as always in the process of becoming, and thus metaphysically no different from God *except* at the point of abstraction. Indeed, it is the very act of abstracting that projects the private/public distinction, since in our entertainment of a thought we establish a polarity in relation to that thought. This effectively takes us outside the process of unification in the fact of discrimination. In our subjective mode we objectify that which we regard; and in so doing make private that which is otherwise public.

The problem with the above argument is, however, that 'private' implies a subject in which to be private. If subjective immediacy perishes on objectification, then where or in what is the 'privacy' located? Either we are treating the objectified entity as sense data and entertain the privacy in ourselves (that is, we must disregard the reality of the entity as other), or we are forced to accept a notion of competing but unintegrated subjects. A third option is that we objectify ourselves in our abstraction through our adoption of a point of perspective, and in so doing remove ourselves from the flow of event. This runs the risk of a psychologized position (such as that offered by Lawrence), but might be appropriate as a re-statement of Buber's I-It formulation: in identifying the other we erect a boundary that precludes inter-subjective relationship. This, I suggested, is privation, not privatization. In Whitehead's words, we have 'attained... individual separation from other things' (see PR 154).

¹ See bibliography for full citation. The on-line discussion involved a number of participants, but primarily myself, Lewis Ford and Judith Jones. The discussion that follows is based on one of

It is accepted that if Ford intended his position to deny the possibility of an initial subject entering into the subjectivity of an alternate focus of unification (that is, to deny co-agency), then it might be sufficient. This seems, however, to run counter to, for example, the common experience of sympathetic human engagement. Whilst we need the conditions to be appropriate for such shared subjectivity to occur, it remains the case that shared subjectivity is at the heart of our sense of real fulfilment and constitutes the fullness of personhood so central to the western paradigm. Thus, the notion of 'wholly private' needs to be regarded as achievable, albeit through projection. This may be thought of as the condition underpinning the status 'self'.

If we allow this underpinning, then we find that in effecting the idea of the self we both project *and* effect a microcosmic unity. This generates a context of purposeful agency, and enables us to own our act and to press that act against the other. Our experience becomes one of a subjectively determined abstraction of discrete identities competing within a unitive framework of necessary relationship. In our meeting with the other, we share that proposition. Moreover, if we allow that co-agency is the mode through which meaningful self-identity is expressed, then self-identity is the means through which that unity is enjoyed. Ford may be right, therefore, in saying that subject and object require each other, but he is mistaken in treating objectification as of absolute rather than conditional status. He follows Whitehead's categoreal scheme in making the distinction, but pays insufficient regard to the abstractive nature of the analytical process through which the scheme is itself expressed.

The story of Genesis treats the need for relation as primordial, and the Trinity expresses the dynamic. And in Buber's use of the I–Thou construction we embrace a full co-agency, a sharing of being going beyond the mere blurring of boundaries (I-It is a failure of relating). There is no true private and there is no true public face *except* at the point at which we ourselves withdraw to consider. Thus in our actions we are *essentially* co-agentive, and 'to relate' means to relate with and through other subjects. The boundary of the self is permeable, *because* projected; and our conscious self-realization as persons effects its own

dynamic. Thus we personalize the notion of will, and leave intact the need to reach beyond that boundary as a condition of selfhood. We may choose to withdraw psychologically from this integrative model, but this merely enhances the sense (not reality) of privacy. We do not alter the fact of the implied relation in our withdrawal from it, but simply feel it as muted and unsuccessful.

Ultimately we may take it that our sense of personal identity is conditional, for it is only through meeting with the other that we can understand the uniqueness of the personal enterprise. Implicit in this is that the enterprise is itself effective only in the context of unity. If it were not, the existential tension of personal being would be lost. We have also seen that our projects effect real changes of status and condition. It follows from this that even though our sense of self begins as a projection, our engagement with that project effects a real outcome. Indeed, it is on this that our understanding of who we are depends. As Whitehead commented, 'Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical first principles' (PR 4); but we might add that, if we are to understand at all, it is incumbent upon us to engage fully in and with the reality we ourselves have shaped.

In Whitehead we find an affirmation of the unity of experience within the function of the individual creative expression of that unity, and in extension we can regard it that we co-create of necessity. Beyond this, our projects pluralize themselves in their conceptual and creative freedom, and thus share the potential for creative interaction and growth. Yet we remain stubbornly individual (despite the difficulty of the notion), because to do otherwise would be to lose the very perspective that enables the one to be known by the many and the many by the one. It is in this, in our conception of ourselves as selves and in our dealing with others as both co-agentive and competing selves, that we affirm the unity of the paradigm within which we together walk.

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The e-mail discussion referred to in the text (and cited under Ford, above) can be found in full at: www.mailbase.ac.uk, under the 'process-philosophy' list. The discussion ran from early February until March 1999, mainly under the heading 'Subjective Continuity'.

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