CREATIVITY AS ETERNAL OBJECT IN WHITEHEAD

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore the position that A. N. Whitehead's ultimate principle of creativity may be identified explicitly as an eternal object. Such an interpretation seems to lend greater coherence to the categoreal scheme in *Process and Reality* and establish Whitehead's metaphysics as more of a rationalistic enterprise than most commentators are willing to admit. It would be rationalistic to the extent that its ultimate principle illustrates one of the categories of existence. That is, creativity may be viewed as an eternal object rather than a surd element which falls outside the categoreal scheme. As eternal object, creativity would serve as the very foundation of rationality in Whitehead's metaphysical system.
This paper attempts to explore the position that A. N. Whitehead's ultimate principle of creativity may be identified explicitly as an eternal object. ¹ Such an interpretation seems to lend greater coherence to the categorial scheme in *Process and Reality* and establish Whitehead's metaphysics as more of a rationalistic enterprise than most commentators are willing to admit. It would be rationalistic to the extent that its ultimate principle illustrates one of the categories of existence. That is, creativity may be viewed as an eternal object rather than a surd element which falls outside the categorial scheme. As eternal object, creativity would serve as the very foundation of rationality in Whitehead's metaphysical system.

¹ Charles Hartshorne and A. H. Johnson have been the main defenders of this position. Hartshorne goes so far as to identify creativity and the necessary aspect of God. He argues that this is the only eternal object necessary in process metaphysics. He does recognize this as a departure from Whitehead. "[H]ere I seem not to be Whiteheadian--I think there is but one eternal object; God's fixed essence, as distinct from his contingent actuality." (*Philosophical Interrogations*, ed. by Sydney and Beatrice Rome [New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964], p. 347; Compare: Creative Synthesis and Philosphic Method [London: SCM Press; LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1970], p. 65.) Whitehead would, of course, object to such a reduction of the multiplicity of eternal objects to one. Johnson is on sounder ground when he suggests that creativity is one of many eternal objects. In a tutorial interview, he notes that "Whitehead admitted that he applies the term 'creativity' to both (a) the eternal object 'creativity' and (b) the exemplifications of this eternal object." ("Whitehead as Teacher and Philosopher," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 29 [March, 1969], p. 374; compare: Whitehead's Theory of Reality [New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962], p. 70.) We are indebted to Johnson for highlighting this distinction between creativity as abstract eternal object and as eternal object exemplified in the concrete. In this paper we will try to clarify and extend his insight by analyzing the notion of creativity in light of the notions of abstractive hierarchies and the distinction between the individual and relational essences of eternal objects as discussed in Chapter X of *Science and the Modern World*. 

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The first section of this paper considers creativity as an eternal object in the abstract. Chapter X of *Science and the Modern World* will be our primary resource for clarifying the place of the Category of the Ultimate in the logical hierarchy of ideas which constitutes the narrow definition of metaphysical "system." Abstracted from its concrete applications, system takes on the appearance of a completed body of related possibilities open to objective analysis. The second section of this paper considers creativity as exemplified in the concrete. This section is necessary to restore the living relevance or germaneness of Whitehead's system to the actual world. The ontological analysis of the Category of the Ultimate and especially creativity will aid in clarifying the concrete function of these notions in relation to other elements exemplified in actual occasions.

Creativity In The Abstract

1. Metaphysical System As A Finite Abstractive Hierarchy

In chapter X of *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead rejects the Humean ground for differentiation between mental functioning and physical event. "Abruptness" is chosen as an alternative sign for identifying the presence of cognitive experience in its various forms. Whitehead expresses this in common-sense terms, "We always find that we have thought of just this—whatever it may be—and no more." Complexity is not thereby eliminated from mental experience, only limited as to a maximum grade in any situation. Whitehead is not quarreling over theory. He is disputing the accuracy of Hume's description of the facts of mental experience. The above should be applicable to a metaphysical system taken as whole, whether implicitly or explicitly formulated. Then the categorial scheme of PR would seem to represent one limited though enviably complex vision of the real. The present section will explore this possibility in brief.

2 Whitehead defines Speculative Philosophy as "the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which any element of our experience can be interpreted." (Process and Reality [New York: Macmillan, 1929] , p. 4. Hereafter "PR" in text and notes.)


5 *SMW*, 247.
Cognitive experience, according to Whitehead, necessarily involves a reference to transcendental entities called "eternal objects." The "individual essence" of an eternal object designates its particular individuality. Eternal objects are also internally related to one another by their "relational essences." The multiplicity of eternal objects is thus described as a Realm "because each eternal object has its status in this general systematic complex of mutual relatedness."  

The doctrine of internal relations would seem to frustrate the possibility of finite truth implied in the abrupt character of human knowledge. "In so far as there are internal relations, everything must depend upon everything else. But if this be the case, we cannot know about anything till we equally know everything else. Apparently, therefore, we are under the necessity of saying everything at once. This supposed necessity is palpably untrue. Accordingly it is incumbent on us to explain how there can be internal relations, seeing that we admit finite truths." Whitehead grounds his explanation on the "analytic character" of the realm of eternal objects. "By this character it is meant that the status of any eternal object 'A' in this realm is capable of analysis into an indefinite number of subordinate relationships of limited scope." The realm of possibility is void of principles of selection and consequently any division among relationships is possible. An important qualification must be made in regard to this doctrine. We should not lose sight of the fact that every division abstracts from the totality of possible relationships. No particular division ever exhausts the meaning or individual essence of an eternal object.

More specifically, division by analysis means the exhibition of the general scheme of relatedness of eternal objects as a multiplicity of complex eternal objects.  

6 SMW, 229. This is why the traditional term "universal" is inadequate for Whitehead's purposes. See PR, 76.

7 SMW, 231.

8 SMW, 235.

9 SMW, 236.

10 SMW, 236.

11 SMW, 240.
The individual essence of a complex eternal object is constituted by the individual essences of a definite number of component eternal objects. "A definite finite relationship involving the definite eternal objects of a limited set of such objects is itself an eternal object: it is those eternal objects as in that relationship. I will call such an eternal object 'complex.' The eternal objects which are the relata in a complex eternal object will be called the 'components' of that eternal object."^12

The complexity of an eternal object is thus exhibited by its analysis into a relationship of component eternal objects. These in turn may be complex. The process of winnowing reduction continues until the grade of simple eternal objects is reached.^13 A simple eternal object is defined negatively as that which is not analyzable into a relationship of component eternal objects. Such a pattern of interconnected complexities based on a group of simple eternal objects defines an "abstractive hierarchy." "Thus an abstractive hierarchy springs from its base; it includes every successive grade from its base either indefinitely onwards, or to its maximum grade; and it is 'connected' by the reappearance in a higher grade of any set of its members belonging to lower grades, in the function of a set of components or derivative components of at least one member of the hierarchy."^14 Should progress in thought through successive grades of increasing complexity stop with a complex eternal object of a definite grade, then we are dealing with a "finite abstractive hierarchy" with that eternal object as its vertex. This is the case with things apprehended as mental. "But the things apprehended as mental are always subject to the condition that we come to a stop when we attempt to explore ever higher grades of complexity in their realised relationships. We always find that we have thought of just this--whatever it may be--and of no more. There is a limitation which breaks off the finite concept from the higher grades of illimitable complexity."^15

The notion of "system" would seem to be a large-scale example of a finite abstractive hierarchy. The categorial scheme of PR, considered as a logically complete system of ideas, represents the finite vision of one philosopher.

12 SMW, 239.
13 SMW, 244.
14 SMW, 242.
15 SMW, 247.
The finitude will become more evident as commentators gradually discover the limitations which express the highest grade of complexity allowed by this system. After all, "no one man, no limited society of men, and no one epoch can think of everything at once."  

Whitehead aimed at the ideal of perfect adaptability of system to all facts in all epochs and he realized that his hierarchy of ideas would be judged on its relevance to physical events. Actual occasions by their very nature involve the more concrete mode of ingredience of eternal objects. This means there is a togetherness of the individual essences of eternal objects which is inclusive of all degrees of complexity. Consequently, an "infinite abstractive hierarchy" is to be associated with the "physical" existence of an actual occasion. System, then, in principle can only approximate concreteness with its infinite complexity. The abstract and the concrete remain distinct ontological orders and never coincide.

The history of speculative philosophy testifies to man's unquenchable drive to "explore ever higher grades of complexity" from the shoulders of past achievement. We as critics can be mistaken about the exact limits of previous explorations. Nevertheless, the possibility of an objective study of the history of ideas presumes, for example, that Whitehead "thought of just this--whatever it may be--and of no more." His description of mental functioning in Chapter X of guarantees at least the theoretical possibility of exhausting the meaning of his finite hierarchical system by logical analysis.

2. The Concept Of "Being"

Ages of criticism will gradually bring to light the complex eternal object which constitutes the vertex of Whitehead's system. For the time being we will content ourselves with a brief examination of the foundation on which this hierarchy seems to rest.

16 SMW, 226.
17 SMW, 242.
18 SMW, 245.
20 SMW, 247.
Whitehead states that "the Category of the Ultimate expresses the
general principle presupposed in the three more special categories."  The latter categories introduce different types, explanations, and
obligations of being. In the first category we might expect Whitehead
to develop his understanding of being in general.

Whitehead invites comparison of his category of the ultimate with
the notion of primary substance found in Aristotle's logical works.
The term "substance" denotes those things that are really real
for Aristotle. This is to be contrasted with the various ways in
which substance is found modified. A primary substance is the
ultimate subject of all predication. It is the most fundamental com­
poite being with which the logician is concerned. Only the individ­
ual concrete substance satisfies this definition in the strictest sense.

Whitehead substitutes a more dynamic sort of composition. "In
their natures, entities are disjunctively 'many' in process of passage
into conjunctive unity. This Category of the Ultimate replaces Aris­
totle's category of 'primary substance.'"

According to Whitehead, concrescence or individual concrete
process and not substantial "Fact" is ultimate in the nature of things.
"The very essence of real actuality--that is, of the completely real--
is 'process.'" Actual entities are the primary illustrations of
process. The term "actual entities" designates the ultimate type
of composition. In sum, real actuality or being-as-process is predi­
cated of actual entities and of all other entities derivatively.

21 PR, 31.

22 The Greek term "ousia" is actually an abstractive form of the word
for "being." See J. Owens, A History of Ancient Western Philosophy,

23 PR, 32.


25 "In the philosophy of organism it is assumed that an actual entity
is composite. 'Actuality' is the fundamental exemplification of
composition; all other meanings of 'composition' are referent to
this root meaning" (PR, 223).
If the categorial scheme as a whole constitutes a finite abstractive hierarchy, then being-as-process may be identified as an eternal object of the lowest complex grade. Being-as-process is analysable into the essential components of "creativity," "many," and "one." "Creativity" denotes the unifying, originating, and synthesizing activity in itself. "Many" denotes "disjunctive diversity," or "conditioned potentialities" available for synthesis. "One" denotes the "singularity of an entity," or the "achieved outcome of the synthesis." In the logical order, these are "ultimate notions... presupposed in all the more special categories." They are "inexpressible" in terms of simpler or higher universals. That is, "multiplicity," "creativity," and "unity" are not reducible to any lower grade of complexity. It would seem appropriate to describe them as simple eternal objects.

This set of eternal objects of zero complexity must form the base of Whitehead's scheme. All other generic notions logically "spring" from this base. Being-as-process in itself is a derived notion. The individual essences of the three simple objects "constitute" the individual essence of being-as-process, the ultimate complex object.

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26 This term will be used below as a substitute for "concrescence" or "real actuality."

27 PR, 31-32.

28 PR, 31, SMW, 254.

29 PR, 31, SMW, 254

30 PR, 31.

31 PR, 30, 32.

32 SMW, 242.

33 SMW, 240.
The latter excludes other possible relationships into which these simple objects could enter. Thus the concept of being-as-process involves an abstraction from the realm of possibility. Being-as-process, however, is less complex (i.e., less specific and more general) and therefore less abstract than other objects which it in turn supports in the abstractive hierarchy. In virtue of its low grade of abstraction from possibility, being-as-process is conceived as occupying the foremost position in Whitehead's categorial scheme. The category of the ultimate is the systematic expression of the concept of "being-as-process."

34 For example, Whitehead states in SMW, "So far as the general metaphysical situation is concerned, there might have been an indiscriminate modal pluralism apart from logical or other limitation" (p. 256). In other words, we can conceive of a metaphysical alternative to the world of process described by Whitehead. Greek atomism offers a good illustration of an "indiscriminate modal pluralism." The logical connection between the notions of "unity" and "multiplicity" would be different in a system devoid of creativity. If such a system were an adequate description of the facts, then the world would have to be radically different than Whitehead experienced it. Also, the ultimate metaphysical category, and consequently the rest of the system, would be radically different than Whitehead conceived it. A non-process metaphysics is expressible in terms of eternal objects much as fiction would be. But it could never supercede Whiteheadian metaphysics as a stage in the growth of a common system. It would be a different system altogether. Eternal objects would not have the same general function and ordering in atomism, for example, as they do in process metaphysics. They would not be eternal objects at all. In sum, atomism is a metaphysical possibility. Given a completely different metaphysical situation, atomism might present the most adequate explanation of the facts. But it is not a "systematic" possibility as far as Whitehead is concerned. The categorial scheme of PR could not be adapted to such a situation without destroying the very essence of the system.

35 Note SMW, 245-46. "Some confusion of thought has been caused by the fact that abstraction from possibility runs in the opposite direction to an abstraction from actuality, so far as degree of abstractness is concerned.... Simple eternal objects represent the extreme abstraction from an actual occasion; whereas simple eternal objects represent the minimum of abstraction from the realm of possibility. It will, I think, be found that, when a high degree of abstraction is spoken of, abstraction from the realm of possibility is what is usually meant--in other words, an elaborate logical construction."
3. The Universal Of Universals

Whitehead applies the term "universal" to eternal objects considered as abstract but necessarily ordered to the concrete. Even the most abstract discussion of eternal objects must include at least indeterminate reference to the concrete. "An eternal object considered in reference to the publicity of things is a universal;" namely, in its own nature it refers to the general public facts of the world without any disclosure of the empirical details of its own implication in them. Its own nature as an entity requires ingress--positive or negative--in every detailed actuality; but its nature does not disclose the private details of any actuality."\(^{36}\) In this context, "its own nature" must refer to the "relational essence" of an eternal object. "An eternal object, considered as an abstract entity, cannot be divorced from its reference to actuality generally; though it is disconnected from its actual modes of ingress into definite actual occasions. This principle is expressed by the statement that each eternal object has a 'relational essence.' This relational essence determines how it is possible for the object to have ingress into actual occasions."\(^{37}\) "Relational essence" expresses necessary reference to possibility in general and actuality in general.

Every eternal object must be internally related to every other eternal object. "There is a general fact of systematic mutual relatedness which is inherent in the character of possibility."\(^{38}\) Every eternal object has its proper status in this realm. The relationships to other objects are relatively indeterminate in abstraction from the actual fact of ingress. The latter defines the concrete togetherness of "individual essences." This constitutes relational determinateness in the fullest sense.

In a previous section we developed the idea that a finite abstractive hierarchy consists of multiple levels of complexity based on a set of simple eternal objects. We can infer that any given level of

\(^{36}\) **PR**, 444. Whitehead usually associates the term "universal" with Aristotle's classificatory analysis. The latter "distorts the true vision of the metaphysical situation" when used in metaphysical description (**SMW**, 244). Besides, "universals" does not exactly correspond to the entities Whitehead calls eternal objects (**PR**, 76). The very absence of qualification in the above text from **PR** (444), however, may indicate his acceptance of at least one use of the term which will help us decipher the Category of the Ultimate.

\(^{37}\) **SMW**, 229-30.

\(^{38}\) **SMW**, 231.
complexity involves relatively determinate relationships with lower levels (the more general) and relatively indeterminate relationships with higher levels (the more special). That is, the individual essences of eternal objects of the lower complex grade constitute the individual essence of the higher. The relational essence of the higher complex object "A" requires reference to those objects "which are specifically involved in its individual essence."  

39 SMW, 240.  

40 SMW, 237. The occurrence of "individual essence" in this abstract context may seem incompatible with other statements of Whitehead. For example, "Relationships (as in possibility) do not involve the individual essence of the eternal objects" (SMW, 237), and "within the realm of possibility... eternal objects are devoid of real togetherness [of their individual essences]" (SMW, 244). We can give intelligible meaning to these passages if "reference," in the case of complex objects, implies a minimal sort of togetherness. Whitehead provides the key distinction in his description of mental functioning, later in the same chapter (X) of SMW: "A complete occasion includes that which in cognitive experience takes the form of memory, anticipation, imagination, and thought. These elements in an experient occasion are also modes of inclusion of complex eternal objects in the synthetic prehension, as elements in the emergent value. They differ from the concreteness of full inclusion. In a sense this difference is inexplicable; for each mode of inclusion is of its own kind, not to be explained in terms of anything else" (SMW, 246). Less than "full inclusion" designates something short of "real" togetherness, or the maximal mode of full inclusion. Minimal inclusion (or the "abrupt" realization [SMW, 254], or the "ideal" realization of eternal objects [PR, 64]) should designate a different "kind" of togetherness, "mental" togetherness. Then it would seem that a hierarchy of complex objects is already one step removed from "barren inefficient disjunction of abstract potentialities" (PR, 64). Hierarchical complexity itself presupposes that "ultimate, basic adjustment of the togetherness of eternal objects on which creative order depends" (PR, 48), that "definite eternal relatedness in respect to which the real togetherness [of realization within an actual occasion] is achieved" (SMW, 238). The logical order of possibility is only available for abstract consideration with God's primordial valuation as background. The primordial nature of God constitutes the ontological ground of all logical order (SMW, 258). Compare: "This ideal realization of potentials in a primordial actual entity constitutes the metaphysical stability whereby the actual process exemplifies general principles of metaphysics, and attains the ends proper to specific types of emergent order" (PR, 64).
As regards higher levels of complexity, the relational essence of "A" is determinable by reference to "A" alone. "The whole principle is that a particular determination can be made of the how of some definite relationship of a definite eternal object A to a definite finite number n of other eternal objects, without any determination of the other n objects, X₁, X₂,...Xₙ, except that they have, each of them, the requisite status to play their respective parts in that multiple relationship." An understanding of the relational essence of "A" does not require reference to the individual essence of objects more special than itself. Rather, all objects relatively more complex than "A" depend on "A" as a component of their individual essences.

In sum, every complex eternal object in a finite abstractive hierarchy synthesizes lower levels of complexity and in turn serves as an element in more complex syntheses. The former relation requires reference to the individual essences of the other objects. The latter relation involves indefinite reference to "any" eternal objects, provided they have the requisite relational essence.

Depending on where analysis of possibility begins, a complex object "A" can be viewed as general or special synthesis. From the vantage point of greater complexity (say "B"), "A" appears "general" in comparison with "B". On the other hand, "A" would appear "special" if compared with objects of a lower complex grade.

Every abstractive hierarchy presupposes a "first grade of complexity." The notion of being-as-process constitutes the first grade of complexity in the categorial scheme of PR. This unique complex object is synthesized as a component in all other levels of complexity. It is presupposed by more complex objects expressed in the other categories. The relational essence of every complex object in Whitehead's scheme involves necessary reference to being-as-process. Being-as-process in the abstract is composed only of simple elements.

A simple eternal object by definition neither synthesizes lower grade complexity nor simplicity. This should apply to creativity. Creativity functions in the abstract as an irreducible principle of

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41 SMW, 236.
42 SMW, 242.
all synthesis. It is not composed of or reducible to other simples. It is a universally common component synthesized in all complex objects of the categorial scheme. Whitehead calls it "the universal of universals."

Creativity is an exceptional universal because it is that simple object which distinguishes process metaphysics from others. It is also exceptional insofar as its relational essence demands positive ingression in every actuality. It shares this status with the notion of being-as-process and other strictly metaphysical universals.

In its relational essence every eternal object is patient of external relations to concrete realizations. Determination of those relations, however, depends on the manner of actual ingression. As a rule, relational essence in the abstract signifies the indeterminate "either positive or negative mode." Every eternal object is intrinsically determinate in the sense that it must ingress one way or the other. The absolute neutrality involved in the denial of the latter would be characteristic of Platonic Forms.

The disjunctive notion of "positive or negative ingression" already presupposes the positive "ingression" of being-as-process and its

43 It remains to be seen whether all the categories in Whitehead's scheme express metaphysical as contrasted with cosmological generalities. There is no question about the Category of the Ultimate. Other eternal objects which represent metaphysical first principles also must be positively exemplified in every actuality, since "we can never catch the actual world taking a holiday from their sway" (PR, 7).

44 The general fact of the synthetic prehension of all eternal objects into every occasion wears the double aspect of the indeterminate relatedness of each eternal object to occasions generally, and of its determinate relatedness to each particular occasion. This statement summarizes the account of how external relations are possible" (SMW, 235).

45 The unique status of being-as-process and creativity seems to exclude the term "ingression." Strictly speaking, "'ingression' refers to the particular mode in which the potentiality of an eternal object is realized in a particular actual entity" (category of explanation vii, PR, 34). Being-as-process and creativity do provide the formal character of actual existence, and to that extent some such term as ingression is applicable.
key component creativity. Otherwise, even the weak form of negative ingression manifest in mental experience would be unintelligible. Denial of concrete existence to possibilities prehended conceptually is the meaning of mental experience. This activity of suspension presupposes an agent with status in the actual world. The root meaning of concrete agent and the positive ingression of being-as-process are necessarily co-extensive. 'Actuality' means nothing else than this ultimate entry into the concrete, in abstraction from which there is mere non-entity."^{46}

Creativity In The Concrete

1. Ultimate Metaphysical Principle

When we view Whitehead's Category of the Ultimate in its metaphysical application, creativity emerges as the ultimate principle of being in composite process. Aristotle supplemented his logical view of being in first philosophy. There he found it necessary to designate form as ontologically prior to both matter and the sensible composite.\(^{47}\) Form contributes determination, perfection, unity, and ultimately being to the composite. Similarly, Whitehead expresses through creativity the fundamental intrinsic source of novelty, origination, unity, and actual existence. Creativity corresponds to substantial form, the absolutely primary substance of Aristotle in the ontological order.

The comparison with Aristotle should not be construed to mean that Whitehead himself succumbed to "the evil produced by the Aristotelian 'primary substances' [which] is exactly this habit of metaphysical emphasis upon the 'substance-predicate' form of proposition."\(^{48}\) Many Aristotelians have established the logical category of being at the heart of metaphysics.\(^{49}\) This entails the doctrine of "diverse subjects qualified by their private worlds of experience."\(^{50}\)

\(^{46}\) *PR*, 321.

\(^{47}\) *Metaphysics* Z 3, 1029a 5-7.

\(^{48}\) *PR*, 45.

\(^{49}\) Whitehead carefully notes that "this dominance of his logic does not seem to have been characteristic of Aristotle's own metaphysical speculations" (*PR*, 45).

\(^{50}\) *SMW*, 218.
By this stroke, "materialistic philosophies" effectively curtail the meaning of emergent evolution. A static sort of change reigns supreme. Evolution merely describes what happens between substances. For Whitehead, such a theory of external relations utterly fails to do justice to our experience of organic purpose and progress. We always discover in our experience a multiplicity of things subordinated in a novel concrete unity, and in the context of movement from less complex to more complex structures. Creativity is the "fundamental inescapable fact" which makes this possible. An adequate account, then, of multiplicity and dynamism in nature requires an underlying activity—a substantial activity—expressing itself in individual embodiments, and evolving in achievements of organism.\(^{53}\)

In this respect, creativity is more akin to Aristotle's primary matter than form. Whitehead's emphasis on "the pure notion of activity," however, excludes "the notion of passive receptivity, either of 'form,' or of external relations."\(^{54}\) Whitehead then can direct attention to Spinoza's infinite substance to help complete our understanding of this substrate activity.\(^{55}\) Activity can be conceived as individualizing itself into a multiplicity of modes. "Each individual activity is nothing but the mode in which the general activity is individualized by the imposed conditions."\(^{56}\)

This analogy is also subject to misinterpretation if carried to an extreme. According to Whitehead, Spinoza's doctrine of substance remains consistent as long as God alone is allowed a "final, 'eminent' reality." "The gap in the system is the arbitrary introduction of the

\(^{51}\) For this usage of "materialistic," see SMW, 157 and 219.

\(^{52}\) PR, 321. Compare: "'Creation Now' is a matter-of-fact which is one aspect of the Universe—namely, the fact of immediate origination" ("Immortality," Essays in Science and Philosophy, p. 87).

\(^{53}\) SMW, 157. For variations on this phrase "underlying activity," see SMW, 103, 155, 181, 219.

\(^{54}\) PR, 46.

\(^{55}\) The analogy with Spinoza is dominant in SMW. See especially pp. 102-3, 255. But it also occurs in PR, for example, 10-11.

\(^{56}\) SMW, 255.
Spinoza and proponents of absolute idealism merely offer another variation on the "substance-quality" theme. Application of this theme to Whitehead's system implies substantializing or reifying creativity. Numerous texts lend support to the Spinozistic reading of Whitehead. Creativity is said to "introduce" novelty, "originate" each novel situation, "meet" dead datum with vivifying novelty, "poise" before itself possibility, actuality and purpose, as if creativity itself were a concrete actuality in addition to its individualizations.

The majority of relevant texts, however, leave no room for such an interpretation of Whitehead's thought. His main intention is expressed in statements such as, "creativity is not an external agency with its own ulterior purposes." Every actual occasion is causa sui because it brings together the universe by its own creative act. Whitehead transforms Spinoza's "modes" into "sheer actualities; so that, though analysis of them increases our understanding, it does not lead us to the discovery of any higher grade of reality." Actual entities are the final realities in Whitehead's system. Creativity is inseparable from its modes. "There are not two actual entities, the creativity and the creature. There is only one entity which is the self-creating creature." Creativity should not be conceived as a being in

57 PR, 10.
58 PR, 31, PR, 32, PR, 249, SMW, 219.
59 PR, 339.
61 PR, 10.
63 Religion in the Making, p. 102. Compare: "No things are 'together' except in experience; and no things are, in any sense of 'are,' except as components in experience or as immediacies of process which are occasions in self-creation" (Adventures of Ideas, p. 304).
itself. Rather, it is a factor, 64 or formative element, 65 or ultimate principle 66 disclosed in the analysis of temporal actual occasions.

2. The Character Of Creativity

Use of the term "character" in Whitehead's descriptions of creativity brings out the unique metaphysical status of this principle. Creativity is no ordinary universal. It is the "universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact." 67 Whitehead contrasts the concrete role of an eternal object and its abstract reference to the concrete. The term "universal" is appropriate to the latter, "character" to the former. "An eternal object considered in reference to the privacy of things is a 'quality' or 'characteristic;' namely, in its own nature, as exemplified in any actuality, it constitutes an element in the private definiteness of that actuality. It refers itself publicly; but it is enjoyed privately." 68

Several key texts lend support to the interpretation of creativity as an eternal object contributing character to concrete process: "The general activity [creativity]...is a general metaphysical character which underlies all occasions, in a particular mode for each occasion." 69 "The creativity [is that formative element] whereby the actual world has its character of temporal passage to novelty." 70 "Value cannot be considered apart from the activity [creativity] which is the primary character of the [temporal] world." 71 It is important to note the

64 This term is used by Whitehead in Adventures of Ideas, Modes of Thought, Essays in Science and Philosophy, and Religion in the Making.
65 This phrase is used in Religion in the Making.
66 PR, 31.
67 PR, 31.
69 SMW, 255.
70 Religion in the Making, p. 90.
context in which these statements occur. In each case Whitehead itemizes elements disclosed in the analysis of concrete occasions in the actual world. Creativity as discovered in the concrete stands out as an unique eternal object meriting special attention. It constitutes the very essence of each instance of being-as-process. "Process for its intelligibility involves the notion of a creative activity belonging to the very essence of each occasion."72 Other objects may fail to contribute aesthetic value to an actual occasion. Then they are conceived "as forming an element in the systematic substratum of unfulfilled content."73 This means their individual essences have been excluded from synthesis as irrelevant. The individual essence of creativity, however, must be positively exemplified in every occasion. Creativity constitutes the necessary condition of all actuality or aesthetic synthesis.

The first text cited above also contains an apparent denial that creativity has the status of an eternal object: "The general activity is not an entity in the sense in which occasions or eternal objects are entities. It is a general metaphysical character which underlies all occasions, in a particular mode for each occasion."74 The statement as a whole can be construed in favor of the positive thesis if emphasis falls on "character," and "considered in the abstract" is inserted after "eternal objects." Creativity is uniquely exemplified in the actual world. It "underlies all occasions." That is, it contributes primary determination.75 Creativity "characterizes" an actual occasion as self-creative and therefore concrete and actually existent. Thus it provides the ontological ground for further characterization.

But how is this primary determination ordered to all other determinations in an actual occasion? PR contains the clue which points back to Chapter X of SMW. In the section "Some Derivative Notions," Whitehead states that creativity "is that ultimate notion

72 Modes of Thought, p, 206.
73 SMW, 234.
74 SMW, 255.
75 Compare: categories of explanation xx, xxiv, PR, 38.
of the highest generality at the base of actuality.\textsuperscript{76} This recalls our previous discussion of abstractive hierarchies. Here we are dealing with concrete actual occasions rather than the notion of logical system.

The concrete ingredient of eternal objects in an actual occasion always involves an "infinite abstractive hierarchy."\textsuperscript{77} This type of hierarchy includes member eternal objects belonging to all degrees of complexity. More importantly, there is a real togetherness of their individual essences. Every object in respect to some of its possible relationships to other objects is positively operative in the aesthetic synthesis. Synthesis is "productive of the occasion as an experience for its own sake."\textsuperscript{79} The result of such togetherness is "the achievement of an emergent value."\textsuperscript{80} This value constitutes a new type of entity not to be defined in terms of anything else.

The associated hierarchy is only an intrinsic formal cause of the achievement. "This associated hierarchy is the shaper, or pattern, or form, of the occasion insofar as the occasion is constituted of what enters into its full realization."\textsuperscript{81} Eternal objects which are positively prehended in an occasion lend their individual essences, or meaning, or content to the synthesis. But in themselves, eternal objects are valueless and merely represent potential achievement.

A principle of "fusion" is required to explain the real togetherness of individual essences which produces value.\textsuperscript{82} Creativity

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} \textit{PR}, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{77} \textit{SMW}, 244-45. "Associated hierarchy" is the abbreviated form preferred by Whitehead.
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{SMW}, 237, 244.
\item \textsuperscript{79} \textit{SMW}, 245.
\item \textsuperscript{80} \textit{SMW}, 238.
\item \textsuperscript{81} \textit{SMW}, 245.
\item \textsuperscript{82} \textit{SMW}, 244. For use of the term "fusion" compare: \textit{SMW}, 157, \textit{PR}, 393, \textit{Religion in the Making}, p. 157, \textit{Modes of Thought}, p. 207.
\end{itemize}
is the name for "the synthetic activity which prehends valueless possibility into superjicient informed value." It is the dynamic bond which effects synthetic unity. Such a principle must be located at the base of every associated hierarchy. Creativity as a simple eternal object can be conceived as the ultimate source of "connectedness" of an occasion, for "an abstractive hierarchy springs from its base." Creativity provides the unifying base for all actual determinations in being-as-process. In order to carry out this function, creativity must be described as the least restricted, limited, determined eternal object exemplified in the concrete. So that it might be common to all other determinations, creativity in its individual essence must be simple and devoid of such determinations. In comparison with an actual entity in its totality, creativity strikes us as indeterminate. "This protean character of the creativity forbids us from conceiving it as an actual entity. For its character lacks determinateness." But note, it does possess some "character" of its own. Here, character must signify that minimum of determination which constitutes the necessary but insufficient condition of all real actuality.

Through its individual essence of "existential fusion," creativity establishes the synthetic context of being-as-process. Further determinations arise in this context. This unique eternal object has

83 SMW, 238.
84 SMW, 245.
85 SMW, 242.
86 Religion in the Making, p. 92. Whitehead's association of "character" with creativity deserves serious attention. Otherwise, an irrational emphasis is too easily read into his thought. With his usual clarity, William James makes this point against an American Hegelian: "Pure being, he [the Hegelian] says, has no determinations. But the having none is itself a determination. Wherefore pure being contradicts its own self, and so on. Why not take heed to the 'meaning' of what is said? When we make the predication concerning pure being, our meaning is merely the denial of all other determinations than the particular one we make" ("On Some Hegelisms," in Will to Believe and Other Essays, [New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956], p. 282).
87 This of course does not imply a relation of "temporal" priority.
a nature of its own. This nature involves dynamic potential related-
ness as regards any actuality. "It is the function of actuality to char-
acterize the creativity." Whitehead is referring to this function
when he says, "Creativity is without a character of its own in exact-
ly the same sense in which the Aristotelian 'matter' is without a
character of its own." In other words, neither matter nor creativ-
ity is a complete actuality in itself. Exemplified creativity is never
found in a pure state, isolated from actual occasions. It is "always
found under conditions and described as conditioned." In this
sense, creativity is dependent for its actuality on actual occasions.
"In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in
virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterization
through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents
is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate
is termed 'creativity.'" This is primarily a question of ontological
dependence. But the very intelligibility of this ultimate principle is
also at stake.

Interpreted from the latter point of view, "characterize" means
"describe as conditioned;" that is, describe in terms of things more
determinate or special than creativity itself. A minimum of intelligi-
bility must be attributed to creativity by reason of implication in
actual occasions. We might be tempted to apply reductive analysis
to this notion in itself. Then Whitehead can only reply, creativity
"is the ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality.
It cannot be characterized, because all characters are more special
than itself." Here "characterized" would imply complexity analyz-
able into component eternal objects and reducable to a lower level
of complexity. Creativity is a simple eternal object at the base of
every associated hierarchy and therefore an "ultimate behind all
forms, inexplicable by forms." The essence of creativity cannot be

88 PR, 344. Earlier in PR Whitehead says actual entities constitute
the "shifting" character of creativity (47). The term "shifting" refers
to "transition" rather than "concrescence."

89 PR, 47.
90 PR, 47.
91 PR, 10-11.
92 PR, 47.
93 PR, 30.
grasped in terms of forms more general than itself.\textsuperscript{94} Analysis is
inefficacious at this point and the only recourse is "intuition."\textsuperscript{95}

Whitehead's frequent remarks on the inadequacy of language are
graphically illustrated in this context. "No language can be anything but elliptical, requiring a leap of the imagination to understand its meaning in its relevance to immediate experience."\textsuperscript{96} "Creativity" does strain the imagination. It is undoubtedly the most obscure and least intelligible of notions given categorial expression in Whitehead's scheme. But it is knowable. "There is no first principle which is in itself unknowable, not to be captured by a flash of insight."\textsuperscript{97}

Moreover, the principle of creativity grounds the intelligibility of all other eternal objects exemplified in the concrete. The infinite abstractive hierarchy associated with an actual occasion exhibits the "connectedness" of that occasion. "This connectedness of an occasion is necessary for its synthetic unity and for its intelligibility."\textsuperscript{98} Creativity is the ultimate intrinsic source of connectedness, and therefore of unity and intelligibility. This would seem to justify Whitehead's faith in reason; the faith "that at the base of things

\textsuperscript{94} This is a logical reading of the above text (PR, 30), if we must incorporate it into our general interpretation of creativity. We are not convinced that it should be used as a primary source for constructing a general interpretation of creativity. (Otherwise, on the other hand reference could be made to Modes of Thought, p. 114, where Whitehead speaks of a "form of creation." Here he seems to have creativity in mind.) Whitehead repudiates the language of "forms" because of its platonic connotations (See PR, 69-70). Since "form" is not exactly equivalent to "eternal object," the above text remains ambiguous as far as Whitehead's theory of creativity is concerned. The same charge is not effective against use of the term "universal." The text from PR (444) shows that Whitehead gives "universal" a technical meaning in his system.

\textsuperscript{95} PR, 32.
\textsuperscript{96} PR, 20.
\textsuperscript{97} PR, 6.
\textsuperscript{98} SMW, 245.
we should not find mere arbitrary mystery." The metaphysical search for first principles culminates in creativity, the ultimate "reason." 

Summary

In the metaphysical order, creativity is the emptiest and least informative object predicable of an actual occasion. This can be contrasted with its logical status. "Simple eternal objects represent the extreme abstraction from an actual occasion; whereas simple eternal objects represent the minimum of abstraction from the realm of possibility." Since the concrete occasion involves an infinite abstractive hierarchy, we can only approximate its concreteness through predication of ever higher grades of complexity.

Considered in abstraction from other objects exemplified in an actual occasion, creativity is the least concrete. It is, however, the necessary condition of all concreteness. Considered in abstraction from the realm of eternal objects, creativity is the least abstract. It is a supreme limit in both orders and constitutes the principle of convergence or ultimate link between actuality and possibility in the philosophy of organism.

99 SMW, 27. It is interesting to note that Whitehead himself never uses such terms as "irrational" or "surd" with respect to creativity.

100 See Adventures of Ideas, p. 181: "The initial situation includes a factor of activity which is the reason for the origin of that occasion of experience" (emphasis added). Compare: Modes of Thought, p. 206. "Process for its intelligibility involves the notion of a creative activity belonging to the very essence of each occasion" (emphasis added). Perhaps we may conceive of creativity as the Reason behind all reasons. The ontological principle states that "actual entities are the only 'reasons;' so that to search for a 'reason' is to search for one or more actual inteties" (PR, 37). The interpretation of creativity as an eternal object is reconcilable with this text as long as we avoid reifying creativity. It is an ultimate "principle," not a substantial thing underlying actual entities.

101 SMW, 246.

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